

ANALYSIS OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES OF LABOUR PROTECTION SPECIALISTS

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Abstract. The number of occupational diseases and accidents occurring at work in the Republic of Latvia are decreasing from year to year, nevertheless it is one of the highest in the European Union. This is due to several reasons e.g. insufficient competence of employees, employers and also labour protection specialists. Determination of competences is particularly important when taking into account the necessity to define learning outcomes in all educational programs in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the National Qualifications Framework of Latvia developed on its basis in 2010.

In order to reduce risk of injuries and occupational diseases at work, labour protection specialists in cooperation with employers and employees have to ensure safe work environment. To be able to fully carry out these tasks, labour protection specialists have to be competent. Labour protection specialists have to possess various competences as they have to draw employees and employers` attention to the places that are dangerous in a technological process, to explain legal requirements to be followed at work and they also have to provide professional instructions to employees. The aim of the research is to determine the competences that labour protection specialists have to possess, carry out the analysis of possibilities to acquire these competences and determine their conformity with the EQF. **Keywords:** labour protection, competences, education of labour protection specialist, the EQF.

Introduction

With the development of new technologies the scope of knowledge required for performing work reduces, which, in its turn, leads to work specialization. At the same time, this knowledge should become more profound. There might even be cases when an employee is not familiar with all technological process. Whereas labour protection specialists are in a completely different situation, according to the legislation they can work in different areas without specializing in a certain area. This means these specialists have to have multi-disciplinary knowledge and skills so that they would be able to understand a technological process and be aware of the places that may endanger employees` health and safety. When inspecting the duties a specialist in labour protection has to perform, we see that they have to apply knowledge that covers a wide range of scientific disciplines. We can say that the competences of a specialist in labour protection are comprised of many inter-related competencies.

Research methods

Research methods comprise reflection from personal experience and analysis of literature sources.

Results and discussion

The concept "competence" has recently been analyzed as a social pedagogical problem. New social processes occur in modern society and give a new meaning to the term "competence".

Opinions determine the concept of competence, its nature, content and formation conditions:

- ✓ awareness of the value of lifelong learning;
- ✓ active involvement in the process of personal development thus emphasizing qualitative human activity,
- ✓ formation of common educational space as a result of socio-economic processes, availability of common information, etc.

The concept of competence gets a new content and has higher demands, and forms in a wider social environment.

In modern society the concept of competence emerges in a new quality, as it is characterized by a shift of scientific paradigm.

Paradigm shift is understood as a model of thinking of a certain age, a world scene, a cultural activity or a scientific view of the world.

Scientific theory mentions signs of the shift of paradigm:

- ✓ the phenomena that cannot be explained by the existing theories turn up in scientific development process;
- ✓ new scientific evidence facilitate search for new research methods;
- ✓ scientific study of the phenomena and scientific understanding are expanding and changing.

We can formulate competence as skills, knowledge and attitudes that can be acquired and successfully applied.

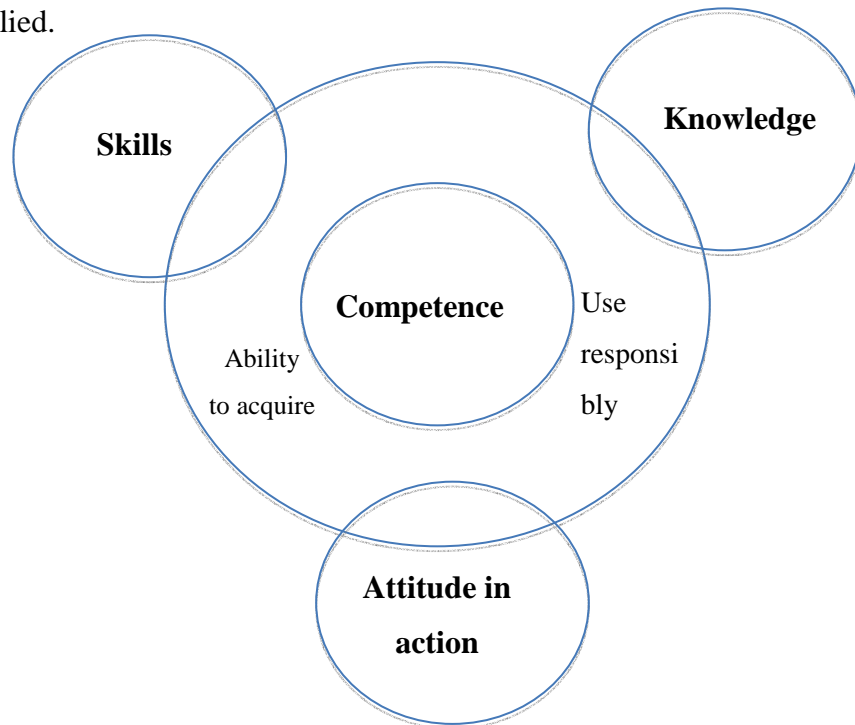


Fig.1 The competence model has been developed on the basis of the formulation of competence given by B. Briede

When speaking about competence categories, they have to be classified. Classification of competences should be understood as a reflection of the content of competence from "general" to "special" and "specific".

Classifications tend to be "generalizational" and "target orientated". "General/generalizational classification" reflects a logical order of the system of objects including three types of meta-classification.

1. Between equipollent single-level objects (processes).
2. Between different objects of the same level.
3. Between different objects of different levels.

This general/ generalizational classification will have the status of fundamental law. This general/ generalizational classification based on the fundamental laws of natural sciences becomes Mendeleev Periodic System of Chemical Elements.

Target orientated classification is used to manage and explore a variety of operations. The relationship between the "general/ generalizational classification" and "target orientated classification" shows the connection between nature and phenomena. The more thoroughly the classification shows a diversity of "nature" of phenomena to be classified, the more distinct its proximity to the general/ generalizational classification is. The less "nature" classification has, the more it approaches artificial or target oriented classification. If a classification is described as more introverted, it can be more described as extrovert. (Subetto. A.I. 1994)

The more extrovert is the classification, the stronger it is, while introvert classifications allow understanding the nature of classifications. Classifications can be general, superficial i.e. intended for showing off, or substantial and fundamental i.e. profound. The movement of classification process in the coordinate system from extrovert to introvert is a reflection of the classification process from external signs, i.e. classification of the main qualities, to internal phenomena, the main qualities of the classification. In fact, it is the movement of classification from external qualities to internal qualities of the objects to be classified.

A postulate of mono-qualitative and multi-qualitative unity, based on the principle internal-external assumptions, acquires a new interpretation in the dynamics of qualification process. This interpretation manifests itself as the extrovert classification, whose diversity is reflected in the classification of multi-qualitative objects, including their external qualities, while the introvert classification, whose uniformity is ideally reflected by the classification of mono-qualitative objects, including their essential (internal) qualities.

Using theory of Meta classification, the classification model of competences labour protection specialist should have was developed.

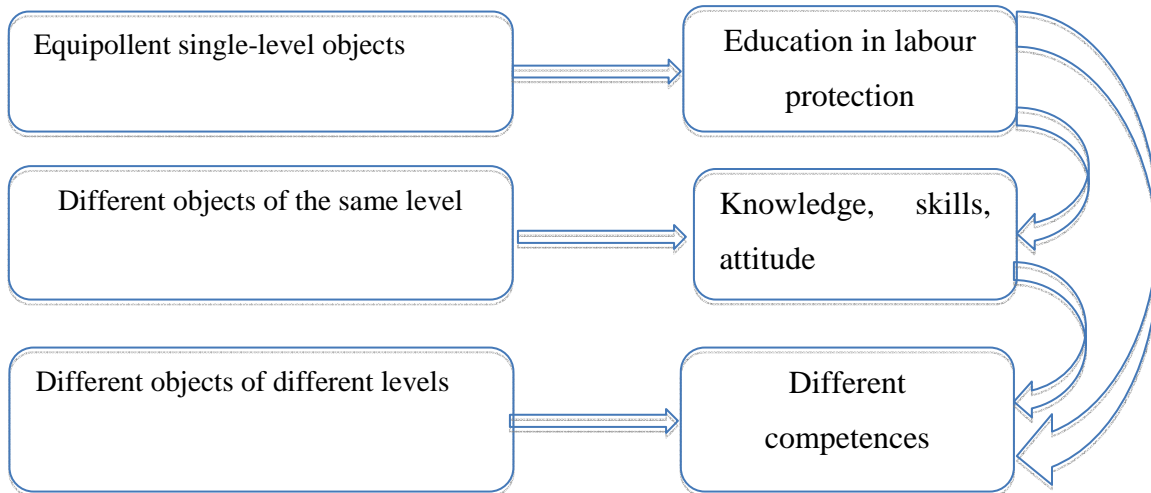


Fig.2 The classification model used to classify competences possessed by labour protection specialists is based on three Meta classification types by Subetto A.I., this is the author's interpretation.

According to legislation the following skills are mentioned as a competency-building elements for labor protection specialists:

- ✓ ability to run a business in such a way as to ensure a safe and healthy working environment;
- ✓ ability to plan business activities in such a way as to ensure safe and healthy working environment;
- ✓ to organize business activities in such a way as to ensure safe and healthy working environment;
- ✓ implementation of business activities so that safe and healthy working environment is ensured.

While carrying out analysis of the occupational standard a classification model of the competences of labour protection specialists from the general to special and specific was developed.

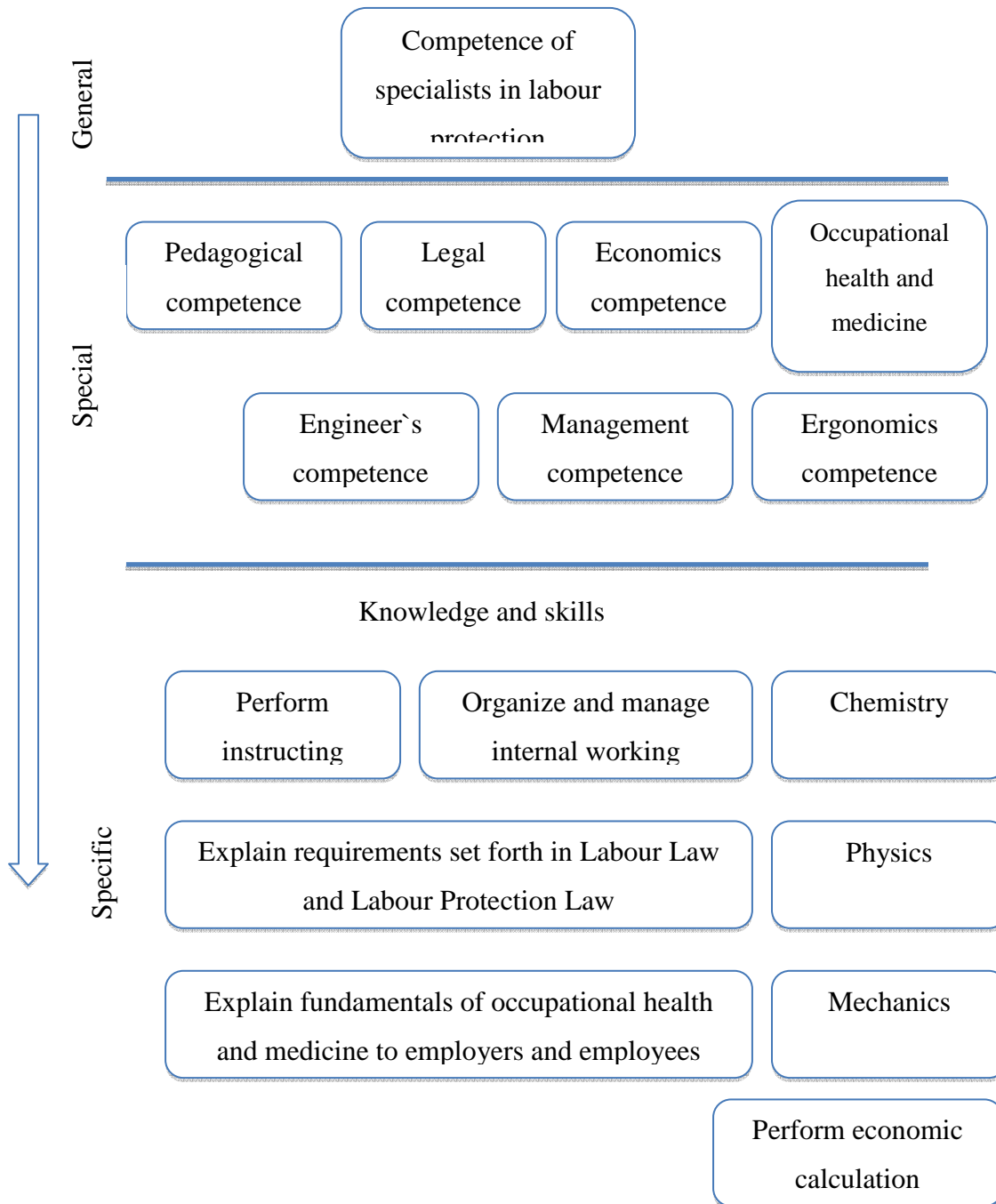


Fig. 3 The classification model of the competences of labor protection specialists, the author`s research

Starting with 2010 European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) is being introduced with the aim to make the process of moving to another country or changing a job easier

for students and employees, as well as to facilitate the possibility to start studying in another educational establishment.

Eight reference levels will be used in the EQF which are based on the results of learning processes (defined in connection with knowledge, skills and competence). The EQF “learning outcomes” are defined as formulations on what students know, understand and are able to do after completion of the training, so a greater emphasis is laid on learning outcomes rather than on learning process (length of training session). Learning outcomes are divided into three categories:

1. knowledge;
2. skills;
3. competences.

This suggests that qualifications (in different combinations) cover a wide range of learning outcomes, including theoretical knowledge, practical and technical skills as well as social skills, most important of which is the ability to cooperate.

Conclusions

1. The new "competence" fully complies with the EQF.
2. The specific skills, a specialist in labour protection must have, comprise a number of scientific disciplines.
3. The current education system does not provide labour protection specialists with possibility to acquire comprehensive skills in labour protection.

The study was financially supported by the ESF project “Support for doctoral programme realization of Latvia University of Agriculture (04,4-08/EF2.D2.35)”



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