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**SCIENTIFIC AND PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE
CONVERGENCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOFT-
COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES OF MANAGERIAL
PERSONNEL**

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Abstract. The article examines the scientific and pedagogical foundations of the convergence of two processes that have traditionally been organised separately in the system of continuing education of managerial personnel: professional development (in-service training) and the development of soft competencies. It is argued that the fragmentation of these processes weakens the transfer of learning into managerial practice, whereas their purposeful convergence produces a synergetic effect. Drawing on competency-based, andragogical and systemic approaches and on experiential learning theory, the author clarifies the concept of “convergence of professional development and soft-competency development processes”, formulates its principles and stages, and proposes a structural-functional model comprising target, content, process, technological and evaluative components. The pedagogical mechanisms, conditions, and the criteria and indicators of effectiveness of convergence are substantiated.

Keywords: managerial personnel, professional development, soft competencies, convergence, andragogy, competency-based approach, experiential learning, transfer of training, pedagogical model.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of public administration, the digitalisation of the economy and the growing complexity of organisational environments have substantially changed the requirements imposed on managerial personnel. According to the Future of Jobs Report 2025 of the World Economic Forum, analytical thinking, resilience, flexibility and agility, leadership and social influence, as well as creative thinking remain among the core skills that employers expect up to 2030 [24]. These are predominantly soft competencies, that is, cross-functional personal, communicative and managerial abilities that determine how professional knowledge and technical skills are actually applied in real situations.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the modernisation of the system of training, retraining and advanced training of managerial personnel has become one of the strategic priorities of state policy. The Law “On Education” establishes continuing professional development





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as an integral element of lifelong education [1]. The Decree of the President on radically improving personnel policy and the system of state civil service sets the task of forming a professional, proactive and accountable management corps [2], while the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026 and the Strategy “Uzbekistan – 2030” emphasise the formation of a new generation of competent leaders capable of implementing reforms [3; 4].

At the same time, the analysis of practice shows that in-service training programmes for leaders are still largely oriented towards the transmission of regulatory and functional knowledge, whereas the development of leadership, communication, emotional intelligence and teamwork is implemented episodically, in separate trainings that are weakly connected with the content of professional development. This separation gives rise to a well-documented problem: a considerable portion of what is learned in training is not transferred to the workplace [5; 6]. Knowledge acquired without the corresponding interpersonal and self-regulatory competencies remains “inert”, while soft-skills trainings detached from real managerial tasks are perceived by leaders as abstract and of little practical value.

Thus, the scientific problem of the present study lies in the contradiction between the objective need for integral professional and personal development of the leader and the fragmented organisation of the processes of professional development and soft-competency development in the system of continuing education.

The aim of the article is to substantiate the scientific and pedagogical foundations of the convergence of these two processes and to develop a conceptual model for its implementation in the system of advanced training of managerial personnel. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set: to clarify the content of the concept of convergence in relation to leaders’ continuing education; to determine its principles and stages; to develop a structural-functional model and pedagogical mechanisms of convergence; and to define the criteria and indicators for assessing its effectiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical basis of the study is formed by several complementary lines of research. The competency-based approach originates in the work of D. McClelland, who argued that competencies predict job performance better than traditional intelligence tests [17], and R. Boyatzis, who described the competent manager as a combination of underlying characteristics causally related to effective performance [7]. D. Goleman extended this approach by demonstrating the decisive role of emotional competencies in leadership effectiveness [9]. The economic significance of soft skills was convincingly shown by J. Heckman and T. Kautz, who found that non-cognitive skills predict success in life and work on a par with cognitive abilities [10], while M. Robles identified integrity, communication, courtesy, responsibility and teamwork among the soft skills most demanded by executives [21]. In post-Soviet pedagogy, I. Zimnyaya substantiated key competencies as a new paradigm of educational outcomes and singled out competencies of





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social interaction and communication as their integral part [26], and E. Zeer considered professional development as a continuous process of the formation of the personality of a professional, in which competencies, professionally important qualities and meta-professional abilities develop in unity [25].

The andragogical approach of M. Knowles postulates that adult learners are self-directed, draw on accumulated experience, and are motivated by problem-centred learning that is immediately applicable to their roles [12]. The theory of experiential learning of D. Kolb describes learning as a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation [13], and J. Mezirow's theory of transformative learning highlights the role of critical reflection in changing the frames of reference of adults [18]. R. Revans, the founder of action learning, showed that managers learn most effectively when they work in small groups on real, unresolved organisational problems and reflect together on their actions [20]. These theories explain why soft competencies cannot be developed through the transmission of information alone and require experience-based, collaborative and reflective formats.

The systemic approach is represented by P. Senge's concept of the learning organisation, in which personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking are interrelated disciplines [23]. In the field of leadership development, D. Day distinguished between leader development (building individual human capital) and leadership development (building relational and social capital) and emphasised the importance of embedding development in the context of work [8]. The longitudinal study of M. McCall, M. Lombardo and A. Morrison demonstrated that executives develop primarily through challenging assignments, significant relationships and hardships rather than through formal courses [16], an idea later generalised in the 70:20:10 framework [15].

Research on training effectiveness provides the evaluative basis of the study. D. Kirkpatrick's four-level model (reaction, learning, behaviour, results) remains the most widely used framework for assessing training outcomes [11], and K. Kraiger, J. Ford and E. Salas proposed a multidimensional classification of learning outcomes into cognitive, skill-based and affective ones [14]. T. Baldwin and J. Ford formulated a model of the transfer of training in which trainee characteristics, training design and the work environment jointly determine whether learning is applied on the job [5]. The meta-analysis of B. Blume and colleagues confirmed this model and showed that interpersonal ("open") skills are more sensitive to the transfer climate than technical ("closed") skills [6]. E. Salas and co-authors summarised the evidence on what matters before, during and after training, stressing needs analysis, practice with feedback and post-training support [22].

Finally, the term convergence is used in the natural and social sciences to denote the process of drawing together and mutual penetration of initially different systems, leading to the emergence of new integral properties. In pedagogy, the term is increasingly applied to the integration of disciplines, educational formats and learning environments. However,





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the analysis of the literature shows that the convergence of professional development and soft-competency development as two processes of leaders' continuing education has not yet been the subject of special research, which determines the novelty of the present work.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is theoretical and conceptual in nature. Its methodological basis comprises the systemic, competency-based, andragogical, activity-based and acmeological approaches. The systemic approach made it possible to consider professional development and soft-competency development as subsystems of a single system of the leader's continuing education; the competency-based approach – to define the expected results in terms of an integral competency profile; the andragogical approach – to take into account the specifics of adult learners; the activity-based approach – to link learning with real managerial tasks; and the acmeological approach – to orient development towards the peak of the leader's professional maturity.

The following methods were employed: theoretical analysis and synthesis of philosophical, psychological, pedagogical and management literature; comparative analysis of regulatory documents and programmes of advanced training of managerial personnel; systemic-structural and functional analysis; conceptual modelling; and generalisation of the author's pedagogical experience in organising advanced training courses for leaders.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The essence of convergence. Based on the analysis, we define the convergence of professional development and soft-competency development processes of managerial personnel as a purposeful, pedagogically managed process of the mutual integration of the aims, content, forms, technologies and assessment tools of in-service training and soft-competency development, as a result of which an integral system of the leader's continuing professional and personal development emerges, possessing a synergetic effect that cannot be achieved through the separate implementation of these processes.

Three levels of convergence can be distinguished: (1) the content level, at which soft competencies are embedded into professional modules through managerial cases rather than delivered as separate courses; (2) the procedural-technological level, at which common active and experiential methods, digital platforms and mentoring tools serve both processes simultaneously; and (3) the outcome level, at which a unified competency profile of the leader and a single system of assessment are applied. Convergence should be distinguished from simple integration: while integration combines elements, convergence presupposes their mutual transformation, so that professional knowledge is acquired through the exercise of soft competencies, and soft competencies are developed on the material of professional tasks.

Principles of convergence. Convergence is based on the following principles: integrativity – the unity of professional and personal development goals; andragogical





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orientation – reliance on the experience, self-direction and practical needs of the adult learner; contextuality – learning through the real tasks of the leader's organisation; reflexivity – systematic reflection on one's own managerial behaviour; continuity – linking pre-course diagnostics, the course itself and post-course support in the workplace; personalisation – individual development trajectories based on competency diagnostics; and measurability – the use of behavioural indicators to evaluate results.

Structural-functional model. The proposed model consists of five interrelated components (Table 1). The target component sets a unified competency profile combining professional and soft competencies. The content component is built on a modular basis, where each functional module (for example, strategic planning, financial management, human resource management, digital transformation) includes a soft-competency block. The process component integrates the phases of Kolb's cycle into each module. The technological component provides a blended learning environment. The evaluative component applies an integrated assessment based on Kirkpatrick's levels.

Table 1

Components of the convergence model of professional development and soft-competency development

Component	Professional development line	Soft-competency line and point of convergence
Target	Updating regulatory, managerial and sectoral knowledge	Leadership, communication, emotional intelligence, teamwork; unified competency profile of the leader
Content	Normative-legal and functional modules	Soft skills embedded into each functional module through real managerial cases
Process	Lectures, seminars, attestation-oriented courses	Experiential, reflective and peer-learning formats (case study, coaching, action learning, simulation)
Technology	LMS-based distance courses	Blended environment with digital portfolio, 360° feedback and mentoring tools
Evaluation	Knowledge tests, certificates	Integrated four-level assessment (reaction, learning, behaviour, results) with behavioural indicators



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Stages of the convergence process. The implementation of the model is a cyclical process consisting of four stages (Table 2). Each stage has its own aim, tools and expected result, and the result of the final stage becomes the starting point of a new cycle of the leader's development.

*Table 2***Stages of the convergence process**

Stage	Content and tools	Expected result
Diagnostic	Analysis of training needs of the organisation; self-assessment and 360° feedback on professional and soft competencies	Individual competency profile and development plan
Design	Construction of integrated modules; selection of cases from the practice of learners' organisations; distribution of classroom, distance and workplace learning	Integrated programme with a personal learning trajectory
Implementation	Case study, simulations, action learning groups, coaching, peer consulting, work-based projects	Acquired knowledge and practised behavioural patterns
Reflective-evaluative	Reflective journal, digital portfolio, repeated 360° feedback, supervisor's assessment, post-course mentoring	Evidence of behavioural change and new development goals

Pedagogical mechanisms. The model is implemented through four andragogical mechanisms. The diagnostic-motivational mechanism includes pre-course assessment of competencies and the formulation of an individual development plan, which creates the learner's personal meaning of training. The experiential-reflective mechanism ensures that each professional topic is studied through a real or simulated managerial situation followed by structured reflection, which simultaneously develops professional knowledge and communicative, decision-making and emotional competencies. The collaborative mechanism relies on action learning groups and peer consulting, in which leaders solve real organisational problems in teams, thereby developing teamwork, negotiation and leadership skills in the context of professional tasks. The support-transfer mechanism extends learning into the workplace through mentoring, coaching sessions and a digital





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portfolio, following the logic of the 70:20:10 framework, according to which most managerial development occurs through challenging work experience and relationships [15; 16].

Pedagogical conditions. The effective functioning of the model requires: the development of integrated programmes based on a unified competency profile; the preparation of trainers capable of combining the roles of subject expert, facilitator and coach; the creation of a digital educational environment supporting blended learning and electronic portfolios; the involvement of the leader's organisation in setting learning objectives and supporting transfer; and the introduction of assessment criteria focused on behavioural change rather than on the reproduction of knowledge alone.

Criteria and indicators of effectiveness. Taking into account the classification of learning outcomes by K. Kraiger et al. [14] and D. Kirkpatrick's levels [11], four criteria for assessing the effectiveness of convergence are proposed (Table 3). Their combined use makes it possible to evaluate not only what the leader knows, but also how his or her managerial behaviour and the performance of the unit change.

Table 3

Criteria, indicators and diagnostic tools for assessing the effectiveness of convergence

Criterion	Indicators	Diagnostic tools
Cognitive	Depth and systematic nature of professional and managerial knowledge; understanding of the nature of soft competencies	Tests, case analysis, problem-solving tasks
Activity-behavioural	Demonstration of leadership, communication, teamwork and decision-making behaviour in managerial situations	360° feedback, behavioural observation, simulations
Personal-reflective	Self-awareness, emotional self-regulation, readiness for self-development	Reflective journal, self-assessment questionnaires, portfolio
Organisational-resultative	Application of learning at work; changes in team climate and unit performance	Supervisor's assessment, project results, performance indicators

DISCUSSION

The proposed approach is consistent with international evidence that training effectiveness increases when learning is contextualised, practice-oriented and supported after the course [5; 22]. The distinction between "closed" and "open" skills made by B. Blume et al. [6] is of particular importance: since soft competencies belong to open skills





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whose transfer depends on the work environment, their development must be integrated with the professional context and supported within the organisation. The convergence model addresses this requirement by embedding soft competencies into professional modules and extending learning beyond the classroom through the support-transfer mechanism.

The model also corresponds to the national priorities of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of personnel policy, which require not only the renewal of leaders' professional knowledge but also the formation of such qualities as initiative, responsibility, openness to dialogue and the ability to lead change [2; 4].

At the same time, certain limitations should be recognised. First, convergence increases the requirements for programme design and trainer qualification, which may be a barrier for advanced training institutions with limited resources. Second, the measurement of soft competencies remains methodologically complex: self-assessment is subject to bias and should therefore be triangulated with 360° feedback and behavioural observation. Third, the use of learning-style typologies to tailor instruction should be treated with caution, since the empirical evidence for the so-called “meshing hypothesis” is weak [19]; personalisation should instead be based on competency gaps and work tasks. These issues define directions for further empirical research.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study allows the following conclusions to be drawn. First, the fragmented organisation of professional development and soft-competency development of managerial personnel reduces the effectiveness of training and the transfer of learning to managerial practice. Second, the convergence of these processes is defined as a pedagogically managed mutual integration of their aims, content, technologies and assessment, generating a synergetic effect in the professional and personal development of the leader. Third, the scientific and pedagogical foundations of convergence are formed by the competency-based, andragogical, experiential, systemic and evaluative approaches. Fourth, the proposed five-component model, implemented in four stages through diagnostic-motivational, experiential-reflective, collaborative and support-transfer mechanisms and evaluated by cognitive, activity-behavioural, personal-reflective and organisational-resultative criteria, can serve as a conceptual basis for redesigning advanced training programmes for managerial personnel.

On this basis, the following recommendations are made for institutions of advanced training: to develop programmes for leaders on the basis of a unified competency profile that includes both professional and soft competencies; to embed soft-competency blocks into each functional module instead of offering them as separate courses; to introduce pre-course diagnostics and post-course mentoring as mandatory elements of the programme; to train teaching staff in facilitation and coaching; and to supplement traditional knowledge tests with behavioural assessment tools.





Further research will focus on the experimental verification of the model, the development of behavioural indicators of leaders' soft competencies, and digital tools supporting the convergence of training processes.

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