

A MODEL FOR THE FORMATION OF FREELANCING COMPETENCIES AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

Purxanova Tolganay Jumanazarovna

*Computer Science teacher at Secondary School No. 48 with
advanced instruction in selected subjects,
Nukus, Republic of Karakalpakstan
E-mail: purxanovatolganay@gmail.com*

Abstract. *This paper provides a scientific and theoretical foundation for the structural model of developing freelancing competencies among general secondary school students and the mechanisms for its implementation in the educational process. In the context of the rapid development of the digital economy and platform-based employment, fostering freelancing competencies has become increasingly important for preparing students for their future professional careers. The study presents the structural components of the freelancing competency development model, including the goal-oriented, content, organizational-activity, and outcome blocks, as well as the step-by-step mechanisms for implementing the model in educational practice. In addition, the paper analyzes the pedagogical conditions for utilizing information and educational environments and examines the role of WebQuest technology in developing students' freelancing competencies.*

Keywords: *freelancing competencies, competency development model, implementation mechanisms, information and educational environment, WebQuest technology, pedagogical conditions, general secondary education.*

The modern labor market is undergoing profound transformations. Traditional employment models are increasingly being replaced by flexible and individualized forms of work, particularly freelancing. The rapid growth in the number of freelancers worldwide has created new challenges for education systems, requiring schools not only to provide students with conventional professional knowledge but also to equip them with competencies such as organizing independent work, collaborating remotely, and effectively promoting their services in the labor market.

In Uzbekistan, for example, more than 5,000 citizens have registered on the **Upwork** platform; however, only about 13% of them are active users. This situation highlights the urgent need to prepare qualified professionals for the freelance labor market. Consequently, developing freelancing competencies among students in general secondary education has emerged as an important scientific and pedagogical issue.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a scientific justification for a model of developing freelancing competencies among general secondary school students and to propose mechanisms for its effective implementation within the educational process.

Freelancing competencies refer to an individual's ability to organize and perform independent professional activities effectively. Analysis of existing research indicates that freelancing competencies can be divided into two major categories: **professional competencies (hard skills)** and **personal competencies (soft skills)**.

Professional competencies include specific occupational skills such as programming, web design, graphic design, copywriting, translation, social media marketing (SMM), and video editing. Personal competencies encompass time management, self-discipline, communication skills, financial management, adaptability, networking, and marketing and personal branding.

International experience demonstrates that successful freelancers are distinguished primarily by their well-developed soft skills. For example, within the framework of the **"Free to Lance"** project implemented in Bangladesh, students aged 12–14 developed freelancing competencies through training in photography, content creation, graphic design, logo design, and data entry.

The proposed model for developing freelancing competencies among students consists of several interconnected structural components organized into the following blocks.

The primary objective of this block is to develop freelancing competencies among students in general secondary education. Based on this objective, the following tasks are identified:

- introducing students to the fundamentals of freelancing;
- developing practical skills in information and communication technologies (ICT);
- fostering independent work habits, time management, and remote collaboration skills;
- enhancing students' entrepreneurial competencies and financial literacy.

The content block includes educational materials, topics, and learning activities designed to develop freelancing competencies. It consists of the following modules:

- **Theoretical module** – fundamentals of freelancing, familiarization with freelance platforms, professional ethics, and principles of contract preparation;
- **Practical module** – hands-on activities aimed at developing competencies in programming, graphic design, content creation, social media marketing (SMM), and other professional skills;
- **Project-based module** – completing projects based on real client assignments and developing a professional portfolio;
- **Developmental module** – training sessions focused on enhancing soft skills such as time management, communication, and financial literacy.

WebQuest technology plays a significant role in developing students' freelancing competencies. A **WebQuest** is a problem-based learning activity designed to organize students' independent inquiry and research within an information and educational environment using Internet resources as the primary source of information [1].

The outcome block includes the criteria and indicators used to evaluate the level of students' freelancing competencies. These include:

- **Cognitive criterion** – the level of knowledge regarding the fundamentals of freelancing;
- **Activity criterion** – the degree to which practical skills and competencies have been developed;
- **Motivational criterion** – students' interest in and motivation toward freelancing activities;
- **Personal criterion** – the level of development of soft skills.

The implementation of the proposed model for developing students' freelancing competencies in the educational process is based on the following mechanisms [2].

Research indicates that developing students' freelancing competencies through information and educational environments requires compliance with several essential pedagogical conditions:

1. **Clearly defined educational objectives** – establishing specific learning goals before introducing the information and educational environment;
2. **Technological infrastructure** – ensuring the availability of reliable and sustainable technological infrastructure;
3. **Professional development of teachers** – enhancing teachers' digital literacy and technological competencies;
4. **Students' readiness and digital literacy** – preparing students to effectively use digital technologies;
5. **Supportive learning environment** – ensuring the seamless integration of the information and educational environment into the teaching and learning process;
6. **Assessment and feedback strategies** – implementing an effective system of assessment and continuous feedback;
7. **Ethical and safe use of technology** – promoting digital citizenship and ensuring information security.

Extracurricular activities play a vital role in developing students' freelancing competencies. Research demonstrates that clubs, competitions, project-based activities, and master classes effectively contribute to the acquisition of practical freelancing skills.

The experience of the "**Free to Lance**" project illustrates this approach. Within the framework of the **Human Library** initiative, students acquire various skills through YouTube and other online platforms and subsequently teach these skills to their peers. This practice creates a collaborative learning environment while increasing students' confidence and self-efficacy [3].

The successful implementation of the model requires active cooperation with various social partners, including:

- collaboration with IT companies and professional freelancers through internships and master classes;

- cooperation with parents and local communities to raise awareness of the importance of freelancing;
- collaboration with international freelance platforms such as **Upwork**, **Fiverr**, and **Freelancer.com** to develop students' practical platform-related competencies.

A USAID-supported training program conducted in Turkmenistan illustrates the effectiveness of this approach. Twenty-four young professionals acquired competencies in working on platforms such as **Upwork**, **Freelancer**, and **TopTal**, communicating with clients, using productivity tools such as **Airtable** and **Asana**, pricing their services, and developing their personal brands [4].

The implementation process should include a systematic monitoring and evaluation framework consisting of:

- **Initial diagnostic assessment** – identifying students' baseline knowledge and competencies;
- **Formative assessment** – monitoring the dynamics of competency development throughout the learning process;
- **Summative assessment** – evaluating the final level of students' freelancing competencies.

The effectiveness of the proposed model for developing students' freelancing competencies was experimentally evaluated in general secondary schools located in the Pakhtakor District of Jizzakh Region, Uzbekistan. A total of **81 students** participated in the experimental group.

At the conclusion of the experimental study, mathematical and statistical analysis using the **Student's t -test** and **Fisher's criterion** was conducted. The results demonstrated that the academic performance of students in the experimental group was **9.2% higher** than that of students in the control group [5].

The proposed model for developing freelancing competencies among general secondary school students consists of four interrelated components: the **goal-oriented**, **content**, **organizational and activity**, and **outcome** blocks. The integration of these components ensures the effectiveness of the educational process.

The implementation mechanisms encompass the establishment of appropriate pedagogical conditions, the organization of extracurricular learning activities, the development of social partnerships, and the introduction of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system.

The findings of the experimental study confirm the effectiveness of both the proposed model and its implementation mechanisms, as evidenced by a **9.2% improvement in students' academic achievement**. Future research should focus on developing specialized instructional modules for specific freelancing professions, such as programming, graphic design, copywriting, and related fields, and on evaluating their effectiveness through further experimental studies.

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