

DOI:10.31379/sed.3.3.2024.32

UDK 658.5:004.8:330.341.1

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# INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL TRAJECTORIES AS A TOOL FOR FORMING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF FUTURE SOCIONOMIC SPECIALISTS

## Abstract

The article examines the role of individual educational trajectories in the formation of professional competencies of future socio-economic specialists in the context of transformations in the higher education system. It is substantiated that the transition to a competency-based approach changes the logic of the educational process, focusing it on the development of the ability to act, make decisions, and adapt to conditions of uncertainty. The key groups of competencies necessary for effective professional activity are systematized, including social, intercultural, communicative, socio-informational, and cognitive competencies.

The essence of the individual educational trajectory is defined as a personalized pathway for student development, and its structural components are characterized, namely content, activity, and organizational dimensions. The mechanisms for implementing individual educational trajectories in higher education are analyzed, particularly through elective courses, individual study plans, academic mobility, and practical training.

It is proved that individual educational trajectories contribute to the integration of theoretical knowledge and practical experience, the formation of professional readiness, and the enhancement of the competitiveness of future specialists. It is substantiated that their implementation is a necessary condition for the modernization of higher education and the transition to a student-centered learning model.

**Keywords:** competency-based approach, professional competencies, individual educational trajectory, socio-economic sphere, higher education, student-centered learning, professional training, individualization of learning

Received: 26/11/2024

Accepted: 09/12/2024

Published: 26/12/2024

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DOI: 10.31379/sed.3.3.2024.32

# ІНДИВІДУАЛЬНІ ОСВІТНІ ТРАЄКТОРІЇ ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ ФОРМУВАННЯ ПРОФЕСІЙНИХ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТЕЙ МАЙБУТНІХ ФАХІВЦІВ СОЦІОНОМІЧНОЇ СФЕРИ

## Анотація

У статті досліджено роль індивідуальних освітніх траєкторій у формуванні професійних компетентностей майбутніх фахівців соціономічної сфери в умовах трансформації системи вищої освіти. Обґрунтовано, що перехід до компетентнісного підходу змінює логіку освітнього процесу, орієнтуючи його на формування здатності діяти, приймати рішення та адаптуватися до умов невизначеності. Систематизовано ключові групи компетентностей, необхідних для ефективної професійної діяльності, зокрема соціальну, міжкультурну, комунікативну, соціально-інформаційну та когнітивну.

Визначено сутність індивідуальної освітньої траєкторії як персоналізованого шляху розвитку здобувача освіти та охарактеризовано її структурні складові: змістову, діяльнишу та організаційну. Проаналізовано механізми реалізації індивідуальних освітніх траєкторій у системі вищої освіти, зокрема через вибіркові дисципліни, індивідуальні навчальні плани, академічну мобільність і практичну підготовку.

Доведено, що індивідуальні освітні траєкторії сприяють інтеграції теоретичних знань і практичного досвіду, формуванню професійної готовності та підвищенню конкурентоспроможності майбутніх фахівців. Обґрунтовано, що їх реалізація є необхідною умовою модернізації вищої освіти та переходу до студентоцентрованої моделі навчання.

**Ключові слова:** компетентнісний підхід, професійні компетентності, індивідуальна освітня траєкторія, соціономічна сфера, вища освіта, студентоцентроване навчання, професійна підготовка, індивідуалізація навчання

Подано: 26/11/2024  
Прийнято: 09/12/2024  
Опубліковано: 26/12/2024

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## Introduction

The current stage of higher education development is characterized by profound transformational processes driven by globalization, digitalization, socio-economic instability, and increasing requirements for the quality of professional training of specialists. Under these conditions, the traditional knowledge-based model of education is gradually losing its effectiveness, giving way to the competency-based approach, which focuses the educational process on developing the ability to act, make decisions, and take responsibility in real professional situations [1; 2; 12]. This issue is of particular relevance for the socionomic sphere, where professional activity is implemented within the “human–human” system and requires a high level of social responsibility, communicative interaction, and adaptability to change [4; 5].

Modern challenges related to social transformations, migration processes, digitalization of society, and the growing level of uncertainty necessitate the training of specialists who are capable not only of performing professional functions but also of adapting to new conditions, effectively interacting with various social groups, and making decisions in complex situations [6; 13]. In this context, professional training should ensure the formation of an integrated system of competencies, including social, communicative, intercultural, informational, and personal components.

One of the key mechanisms for implementing the competency-based approach is the individualization of the educational process, which is reflected in the concept of individual educational trajectories. According

DOI: 10.31379/sed.3.3.2024.32

to the current legislation of Ukraine, an individual educational trajectory is defined as a personalized path for realizing the potential of a student, formed with consideration of their abilities, interests, needs, and opportunities [8; 9]. In modern conditions, this concept acquires special significance, as it allows combining standardized requirements of educational programs with individual needs of students and ensures flexibility of the educational process.

An analysis of contemporary studies shows that the issue of forming individual educational trajectories is actively developed in both domestic and foreign research. In particular, recent studies focus on digital tools supporting individual educational choice, automation of trajectory design, and the development of adaptive educational systems [17–20]. At the same time, despite a significant number of scientific works, the relationship between individual educational trajectories and the formation of professional competencies specifically in the socio-economic sphere remains insufficiently explored, as this field is characterized by increased complexity of professional activity and the need to integrate personal and professional qualities.

Thus, the relevance of the study is determined by the necessity of theoretically substantiating individual educational trajectories as an effective tool for forming professional competence of future socio-economic specialists in the context of contemporary social challenges and transformations in the higher education system.

### Literature review

An analysis of scientific sources indicates that the problem of forming professional competencies of future specialists in the socio-economic sphere is considered in modern pedagogical science within the context of the transition from a knowledge-based model of education to a competency-based paradigm. I. Bekh defines the competency-based approach as one of the leading features of modern education, as it orients the educational process not only toward the acquisition of knowledge but also toward the individual's ability to apply it in changing social conditions [1, p. 21]. I. Hushlevska emphasizes that the concept of competence in both domestic and foreign pedagogy is interpreted as an integrated characteristic of the individual that combines knowledge, skills, experience, values, and readiness for activity [2, p. 22]. O. Sliusarenko develops this position by focusing on the criterial nature of competence, that is, the need to define such characteristics of educational outcomes that can not only be declared but also demonstrated in real activity [3, p. 287].

A separate direction of scientific analysis is represented by studies in which the competency-based approach is linked to the specifics of training specialists in the socio-economic sphere. S. Arkhypova considers the formation of key competencies of future social sphere specialists as a process that involves the combination of theoretical training, practice-oriented learning, and personal development [4, p. 7]. T. Tiulpa interprets the socio-economic sphere as a specific field for the formation of social competence, since professional activity in this sphere is directly related to interaction, responsibility, support for individuals, and response to complex life situations [5, p. 133]. O. Pryshliak emphasizes the intercultural dimension of training specialists in socio-economic professions, noting that a modern specialist must be ready to interact with people from different ethnocultural, religious, social, and value-based groups [6, p. 238].

A significant body of scientific literature is devoted to the problem of individualization of the educational process. S. Aliksieieva analyzes the individual educational trajectory as a path from its design to practical implementation and emphasizes the importance of combining student choice with educational planning and learner responsibility [7]. The Law of Ukraine "On Education" defines an individual educational trajectory as a personalized path for realizing the potential of a learner, formed with consideration of their abilities, interests, needs, motivation, and opportunities [8]. The Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" establishes the right of students to choose educational components within the educational program and curriculum, thereby creating a regulatory framework for the individualization of professional training [9]. In 2024, this provision was further updated by the Law of Ukraine No. 3642-IX concerning the development of individual educational trajectories and the improvement of the educational process in higher education [17].

Recent studies from 2023–2024 confirm the growing scientific interest in individual educational trajectories,

particularly in the context of digitalization, war conditions, academic mobility, and the need for adaptability of the educational environment. In a 2023 study, A. Shevchenko examines the individual educational trajectory in modern Ukrainian higher education as a tool for the adaptability of the educational environment, enabling consideration of individual characteristics of students and prediction of the success of their educational progress [18]. O. Buinytska and co-authors (2024) analyze the possibility of implementing individual educational trajectories through the “Catalog of Elective Disciplines” module in the e-learning system, which is especially important for the digital support of student choice and educational planning [19]. A study devoted to the automation of building individual educational trajectories of higher education students substantiates the importance of digital tools for personalizing learning, shaping the selection of educational components, and supporting students in their professional development [20]. The literature review allows concluding that the competency-based approach and individual educational trajectories are interrelated components of the modernization of higher education. Competencies require activity, reflection, practice, and integration of personal experience, whereas individual educational trajectories create organizational conditions for such integration. Therefore, the individualization of learning should be considered not as a departure from educational standards, but as a mechanism for achieving professional outcomes in a flexible, student-centered, and practice-oriented manner [7; 10; 11; 17; 19].

## Aims and Objectives

The aim of the study is to substantiate individual educational trajectories as a tool for forming professional competencies of future specialists in the socio-economic sphere in the context of the transformation of the higher education system based on the competency-based approach.

The objectives of the study are: to characterize the competency-based approach as a methodological foundation for training specialists in the socio-economic sphere; to systematize the main groups of professional competencies necessary for effective activity in the socio-economic sphere; to clarify the essence of the individual educational trajectory as a personalized pathway for realizing the potential of a learner; to determine the structural components of the individual educational trajectory; to analyze the mechanisms of its implementation in the higher education system; and to substantiate the significance of individual educational trajectories for the formation of professional competence and the enhancement of the competitiveness of future specialists.

## Methods

The study has a theoretical and analytical nature and is aimed at generalizing scientific approaches to the formation of professional competencies of future specialists in the socio-economic sphere and determining the role of individual educational trajectories in this process. The methodological basis of the study consists of the provisions of the competency-based approach, concepts of professional training of social sphere specialists, and theories of the individualization of learning [1; 3; 7].

In the course of the research, a set of general scientific and special methods was used. The method of analysis was applied to examine scientific sources that reveal the essence of competence, its structure, and the peculiarities of its formation in the socio-economic sphere. This made it possible to identify the key components of professional training and to systematize existing approaches to the classification of competencies [2; 4; 6].

The method of synthesis was used to integrate theoretical provisions of various authors into a coherent research concept that combines the competency-based approach with mechanisms for implementing individual educational trajectories. This made it possible to form the logical structure of the article and to substantiate the relationship between competencies and the individualization of the educational process [3; 5].

The method of generalization was applied to systematize the key competencies of future specialists in the socio-economic sphere and to determine their role in professional activity. This allowed the formation of an integrated model of professional readiness that takes into account contemporary social challenges and

labor market needs [4; 6; 12].

The method of structural and logical analysis was used to determine the structure of the individual educational trajectory and to establish the relationships between its components. This made it possible to distinguish the content, activity, and organizational dimensions of the educational trajectory and to substantiate their importance for the formation of professional competencies [7; 10].

A comparative analysis method was also applied to compare traditional and competency-based models of education, which made it possible to identify the advantages of individualized learning and its impact on the quality of professional training [11; 13].

The study does not involve the use of empirical data or statistical analysis, which is обусловлено its theoretical orientation. At the same time, the research takes into account regulatory and legal provisions, in particular the Law of Ukraine “On Education” and the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education,” which define the right of learners to form an individual educational trajectory and to choose educational components within the framework of an educational program [8; 9].

Thus, the applied methodological framework made it possible to comprehensively study the problem of forming professional competencies of future specialists in the socio-economic sphere and to substantiate the role of individual educational trajectories as an effective mechanism for modernizing the educational process.

## Results

The first result of the study is the clarification of the essence of the competency-based approach as a methodological foundation for forming the professional readiness of future specialists in the socio-economic sphere. An analysis of contemporary scientific approaches indicates that the transition from a knowledge-based model of education to a competency-based one fundamentally changes the logic of the educational process: the outcome of learning is no longer the volume of acquired information, but the ability to act, make decisions, and take responsibility in real professional situations [1; 2; 10; 11]. In this context, competence is considered as an integrated characteristic of the individual that combines knowledge, skills, experience, values, and readiness for activity under conditions of uncertainty.

The competency-based approach acquires particular relevance in the socio-economic sphere, where professional activity is implemented within the “human–human” system and involves constant interaction with various social groups, including vulnerable populations. Under such conditions, the effectiveness of a specialist’s activity is determined not only by the level of theoretical training, but also by the ability to communicate, demonstrate empathy, adapt, and make decisions in complex life situations [3; 4].

Professional competence in the socio-economic sphere is formed as a dynamic system that develops through activity and social interaction. It is manifested in the ability to work under conditions of uncertainty, solve social problems, adhere to ethical standards, and provide support to individuals in difficult life circumstances [5]. Thus, competence functions not only as an outcome of education, but also as a characteristic of professional behavior.

The second result of the study is the systematization of key competencies of future specialists in the socio-economic sphere. Based on the generalization of scientific approaches, five main groups of competencies have been identified: social, intercultural, communicative, socio-informational, and cognitive (personal) [3; 6; 12; 13]. Taken together, they form an integrated model of professional readiness that ensures the effectiveness of a specialist’s activity in the context of contemporary social challenges.

**Table 1 – Core competencies of future socio-economic specialists**

Indicator	Content characteristics	Functional significance
Social competence	Knowledge of social institutions, norms, and protection mechanisms	Ensures the resolution of social problems
Intercultural competence	Tolerance and intercultural interaction	Promotes social integration
Communicative competence	Dialogue, active listening, and interaction	Serves as a key professional tool

Socio-informational competence	Ability to work with data and digital resources	Facilitates adaptation to the digital environment
Cognitive competence	Self-development and reflection	Ensures professional maturity

Source: author's development based on [3–6]

It has been established that competencies are not formed in isolation, but in interconnection, forming an integrated system [14; 15]. In particular, the effectiveness of communicative activity depends on the level of cognitive maturity, while social competence is impossible without intercultural sensitivity.

The third result of the study is the clarification of the essence of the individual educational trajectory as a mechanism for implementing the competency-based approach. It is defined as a personalized pathway of learner development, formed through the selection of learning content, forms of activity, pace, and opportunities for professional growth [7; 8]. The individual educational trajectory implies the active role of the student as a subject of the educational process who independently plans, implements, and evaluates their own educational development.

**Table 2 – Structural components of the individual educational trajectory of future socio-economic specialists**

Indicator	Content characteristics	Practical significance
Content dimension	Selection of disciplines and modules	Individualization of learning
Activity dimension	Methods, practical activities, and independent work	Formation of professional skills
Organizational dimension	Individual study plans, schedules, and mobility	Flexibility of the educational process
Learning pace	Individual rate of mastering learning material	Adaptation to students' capabilities
Practical component	Internships and project-based activities	Integration of theory and practice

Source: author's development based on [7–10]

The fourth result of the study is the identification of pedagogical conditions for the formation of individual educational trajectories. These include the flexibility of educational programs, the possibility of choice, advisory support, and transparency of assessment procedures. The effectiveness of individualization depends on the combination of institutional organization of the educational process and the personal activity of the student [7; 9].

The fifth result is the analysis of tools for implementing individual educational trajectories. It has been established that elective courses, individual study plans, academic mobility, and practical training play a key role. Of particular importance is the students' right to choose at least 25% of ECTS credits, which ensures the real individualization of learning [9].

**Table 3 – Tools for implementing individual educational trajectories in higher education**

Indicator	Implementation mechanism	Educational effect
Elective courses	Course catalogs and student choice	Personalization of competencies
Individual study plan	Development of a personalized curriculum	Responsibility for learning
Academic mobility	Exchange programs	Acquisition of intercultural experience
Practice placement	Selection of internship base	Development of professional skills
Certificate programs	Additional courses	Deepening of specialization
Flexible learning schedule	Individual learning conditions	Adaptation to learners' needs

Source: author's development based on [7; 9; 10]

The sixth result is the substantiation of the role of practice-oriented components in the structure of the individual educational trajectory. It has been established that practical training, project-based activities, and participation in real social processes ensure the formation of integrated professional competence. This is of particular importance in the socioeconomic sphere, where professional activity is associated with work under conditions of uncertainty, social risks, and crisis situations.

Thus, individual educational trajectories act as a key mechanism for implementing the competency-based approach, ensuring the combination of standardized educational requirements with the individual needs, interests, and professional goals of learners.

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## Discussion (optional)

The results of the study allow us to assert that individual educational trajectories are not an auxiliary or secondary element of the educational process, but rather act as a key mechanism for implementing the competency-based approach in the training of future specialists in the socioeconomic sphere. If competence is considered as an integrated readiness for professional activity, its formation requires not only the transfer of knowledge, but also the creation of conditions for active engagement, reflection, choice, and responsibility on the part of the learner [1; 2].

The findings of the study are consistent with scientific approaches according to which competencies are

formed through the combination of theoretical training, practical experience, and personal development [3; 5]. In this context, the individual educational trajectory provides the necessary organizational conditions for integrating these components, enabling students not only to acquire knowledge but also to apply it in various educational and professional situations.

This issue is of particular importance in the socio-economic sphere, where professional activity is associated with a high level of uncertainty, emotional burden, and social responsibility. Future specialists will work with individuals in difficult life circumstances, interact with vulnerable groups, participate in social protection processes, and make decisions under conditions of limited information. In such contexts, formal qualifications alone are insufficient; the formation of social competence, communicative maturity, intercultural sensitivity, and self-regulation is essential [4; 6].

In the context of contemporary transformations, including socio-economic instability, digitalization, and increasing levels of social risk, the importance of individual educational trajectories is growing [12; 13; 16]. They make it possible to adapt the educational process to changing conditions, ensure flexibility in training, and foster the ability for lifelong learning. This corresponds to modern requirements for professional training, according to which a specialist must be capable not only of performing professional functions but also of adapting to new challenges and changes in the social environment [7; 10].

At the same time, the results of the study indicate that the freedom of choice underlying the individual educational trajectory should not be interpreted as a lack of structure. The effectiveness of individualized learning can be achieved only if it is institutionally supported through educational programs, course catalogs, individual study plans, and systems of academic advising. Thus, the individual educational trajectory combines two interrelated principles—freedom of choice and institutional structuring [7; 9].

An important aspect is also the transformation of the teacher's role in the context of implementing individual educational trajectories. The teacher ceases to be solely a transmitter of knowledge and instead assumes the roles of a consultant, facilitator, and partner in the educational design process. This approach corresponds to the competency-based paradigm, as it promotes the development of students' ability for independent thinking, decision-making, and responsibility for their own development [1; 3].

At the same time, it should be noted that the results of the study have certain limitations. In particular, the research is theoretical and analytical in nature and does not include empirical measurement of the effectiveness of individual educational trajectories. However, the conducted analysis makes it possible to substantiate the logic of their implementation and to identify key mechanisms that can be applied in educational practice and require further empirical verification [5; 7].

Therefore, individual educational trajectories should be considered as a strategic tool for modernizing the higher education system, ensuring the transition from standardized training to a flexible, learner-centered model of professional development for future specialists.

## Conclusions

The results of the study have shown that the transition to a competency-based approach fundamentally changes the logic of professional training of future specialists in the socio-economic sphere. The outcome of higher education is not only the acquisition of knowledge, but also the formation of an integrated readiness for responsible professional activity within the "human-human" system, which combines knowledge, skills, values, and practical experience [1; 2; 10].

The study systematizes five key groups of competencies: social, intercultural, communicative, socio-informational, and cognitive (personal). It has been proven that these competencies form an interconnected system in which each element reinforces the others, ensuring the integrity of professional training and the ability of a specialist to act under conditions of uncertainty and social challenges [3; 4; 6; 12].

It is substantiated that the individual educational trajectory is a personalized pathway for realizing the potential of a learner in the process of professional training. It includes content, activity, and organizational dimensions that ensure flexibility, adaptability, and practical orientation of the educational process. The implementation of individual educational trajectories contributes to the transformation of the student from an object of learning into an active subject of the educational process and professional

development [7; 8; 11].

It has been established that the effectiveness of individual educational trajectories depends on the combination of institutional conditions and the personal activity of the learner. In particular, the availability of elective courses, individual study plans, opportunities for academic mobility, and the legally established right to choose at least 25% of ECTS credits creates a real mechanism for the individualization of learning and increases students' responsibility for their own educational outcomes [9].

It has been determined that practice-oriented components of the educational process, including internships, project-based activities, and participation in real professional situations, play a crucial role in the formation of professional competencies. They ensure the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical experience and contribute to preparing specialists for activity under conditions of social risks and uncertainty [14; 15].

The overall conclusion is that individual educational trajectories represent a strategic tool for modernizing the higher education system, enabling the transition to a flexible, student-centered model of professional training. In the socio-economic sphere, where the effectiveness of professional activity is determined by the level of communication, social responsibility, adaptability, and personal maturity, their implementation is a necessary condition for preparing competitive specialists capable of acting effectively and making well-informed decisions in the context of contemporary societal challenges and uncertainty.

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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### FUNDING

The authors received no funding for this article.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.