Reflection Report

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1. CBC, CBE, and CBA as a System

Competency-based learning focuses on teaching students practical and applicable skills. There is no room for unnecessary content — learners acquire only the essential 21st-century skills. This type of learning is guided by a specific curriculum that ensures high effectiveness for both the teacher and the student. The competency-based learning curriculum clearly structures learning objectives, teaching methods, content, and strategies that meet learners' needs. Through this approach, students are able to develop skills such as solving real-life problems, working collaboratively, and engaging in teamwork. For example, learners of the Kazakh language acquire grammar by analyzing texts in depth. When analyzing non-continuous texts like flight tickets, theater schedules, or movie listings, students also learn to extract important real-world information. The power of a competency-based curriculum lies in its clear goals, practical teaching approach, strong interdisciplinary connections, active learning process, flexible pacing, and authentic assessment methods. When a strong curriculum is in place, students understand exactly what they are expected to learn. It also provides a direction for where to begin. Instead of memorizing facts, it is more important for students to recognize what they don't yet understand—this awareness guides their next steps. Competency-based education is built on six principles: fairness, focus on skills, clarity, individualized support, mastery before progress, and flexible pacing. These principles create a learning environment that respects each learner's uniqueness and supports their progress. Improving lesson planning alone is not enough; schools must also aim to build a full learning

environment that supports skill-based education. Today, Kazakhstani schools are actively implementing the three core directions of competency-based education: learner-centered teaching, professional teacher training, and the development of a positive school culture. As evidence, the national project "JailyMektep" has been successfully launched and implemented in Kazakhstan. Another example is the ongoing national initiative "1000 Leaders in Education," which has been running for a second year and demonstrates the country's strong support for competency-based education. Once the curriculum is implemented, the assessment system must also align with competency-based principles. This type of assessment focuses not on memorized knowledge but on how learners apply what they know—what they can do, what they've learned, and how effectively they can implement that knowledge. For instance, in a literature lesson, when a student analyzes a character's actions in a story and distinguishes between good and bad behaviors — and consciously chooses not to repeat the negative ones—this indicates that the competency-based learning has been effective.

2. Curriculum Development and Learning Goals

In a competency-based education system, three essential components work in close connection: theCompetency-Based Curriculum (CBC), Competency-Based Education (CBE), and Competency-Based Assessment (CBA). All three (CBC, CBE, and CBA) aim to teach students how to apply the most recognized 21st-century skills in real-life contexts — such as critical thinking, communication, citizenship, creativity, perseverance, and collaboration. Learners who develop technical, cognitive, social, and metacognitive skills are better adapted to live successfully in a rapidly changing world. The Competency-Based Curriculum defines learning objectives that guide the content delivery of each subject. Identifying lesson objectives based on subject-level goals using the SMART approach helps guide student learning, support their progress, and provide a clear foundation for assessment. The SMART principle is a powerful tool that ensures specificity, attainability, and result-orientation. Since the learning objectives in Kazakhstan's national curriculum are designed based on competencies, using the SMART approach to determine lesson goals is highly effective. Additionally, these objectives promote the development of key competencies such as critical thinking, communication, personal responsibility, creativity, and digital literacy—all through long-term, diverse, and experience-based learning activities. Each objective is aimed at developing a specific skill. By consistently completing tasks aligned with these learning objectives, students gradually master core competencies.

3. Assessment Quality: Validity, Reliability, and Fairness

Students learn by completing well-constructed tasks and practical activities aimed at achieving clear and meaningful learning objectives. Active learning methods are highly effective. During group work, students develop essential personal competencies. Group discussions and role-playing activities are powerful tools for developing problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and social skills. When assessing students' knowledge using an eight-step test format, it is crucial to keep in mind several key considerations: clearly defining what is being assessed; identifying which learning objectives should be covered; choosing an effective format; ensuring that the conditions and instructions for the test are accessible to all students; constructing high-quality questions aligned with learning objectives; maintaining balance in content, skills, and difficulty levels; formulating reliable and transparent assessment criteria; and providing accurate and appropriate evaluation. When analyzing the final test of the course participants, I can conclude that the test creators followed all eight stages of assessment design. All test takers were given equal conditions — they accessed the test at the same time and were given 45 minutes to answer 24 questions. The results of the test: All 25 participants scored above the minimum threshold. The group's average score was 40. 80% of participants scored above 40, which indicates that the content of the test was valid and corresponded to the learning objectives covered in the two-week course. However, 30% of participants scored below the group average. According to the survey results, external factors influenced their performance. Some test questions required comparing and analyzing 2–3 texts and selecting the correct answer based on comprehension. These types of questions aimed to assess students' competency-based understanding. Since the test was administered in an online format, the fairness of the evaluation was maintained. The test was designed based on subject-specific content covered during the two-week course, ensuring both fairness and consideration of learners' diversity. Due to the unavailability of answer keys, a full analysis of the test could not be conducted. Therefore, the analysis was based only on the final scores.

4. Grading and Standard Setting

In competency-based assessment, the quality of test tasks plays a key role in ensuring the validity, fairness, and significance of the student achievement evaluation process. Given the content-specific features of the subjects Kazakh Language and Kazakh Literature, using open-ended questions in tests is considered effective. Open-ended questions are particularly useful for assessing depth of understanding, logical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. A high-quality test is composed of relevant, objective, effective, precise, and neutral questions. When designing test questions, it is essential to ensure that they are aligned with learning objectives, are clear and specific, avoid complex grammar, ambiguity, or opinion-based/subjective phrasing. In developing answer options for multiple-choice questions, it is important to strictly follow the principles of Effectiveness (E), Objectivity (O), Specificity (S),

and Neutrality (N). Providing only one clearly correct answer enhances the reliability of the test. Including distractors that may confuse unprepared students improves the overall quality of the question. Distractors should be uniform in structure and grammatically consistent to ensure fair assessment. The length of the options and their arrangement in a logical or neutral order also affect how students reason through the question. Well-designed open-ended tasks should be clear and provide room for varied responses. Concise and focused open-ended questions improve the authenticity and objectivity of the task. There are various methods for determining the cut-off score in test assessments. It can also be defined after the test is administered. For instance, if most learners score low, the cut-off score can be adjusted based on those results. If a test is poorly performed overall, this may indicate unfairness and calls for a detailed analysis. Cut-off scores can be determined both before and after the test. An honest and fair analysis of test results also serves to evaluate the validity and reliability of the test itself.

5. Use of Rubrics

Rubrics help ensure that assessment in competency-based learning is transparent, fair, and aligned with learning objectives. That's why I actively use them in my teaching practice. After completing the course "Competency-Based Assessment Tools for Orleu Trainers", I began applying the main components of rubrics more effectively. I used a rubric to assess the final task of the course. The rubric for writing the methodological justification of a functional literacy development task consisted of 3 levels: basic level, intermediate level, and advanced level. Assessment Criteria: • Alignment with the learning objective; • Suitability for students' age and individual characteristics; • Focus on skill development; • Integration of interdisciplinary links. Rubric Descriptions: 1. Basic Level: Designs a functional literacy task aligned with the learning objective, taking into account students' age characteristics and aimed at skill development. 2. Intermediate Level: Designs a functional literacy task aligned with the learning objective, considering both age and individual characteristics of students and aimed at skill development. 3. Advanced Level: Designs a functional literacy task aligned with the learning objective, considering students' age and individual characteristics, and includes interdisciplinary integration to support skill development. This rubric ensured fairness and objectivity in evaluating course participants. Before writing the methodological justification for the functional literacy task, the participants were introduced to the rubric and conducted a group analysis of it. The 4-step rubric development process is a key factor for successful application. Therefore, the following four steps should be followed: 1. Define the task 2. Identify the assessment criteria 3. Determine performance levels 4. Develop clear descriptors A well-structured and clearly defined rubric has a positive impact on assessing competency-based learning.

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