

DEVELOPING CONFORMITY IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS THROUGH A PROJECT-BASED APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a systematic and comprehensive scientific analysis of the essence of congruence as a significant competency in modern pedagogical theory and practice, its role in the professional development of future teachers, and the methodological foundations for its development. In the study, congruence is interpreted as an integrative professional competence that ensures consistency and harmony between the teacher's internal psychological state, verbal expression, and external behavior. Within the framework of the research, the pedagogical potential of the project-based approach in developing congruence in the process of training future teachers is examined. In particular, the findings indicate that the application of teaching technologies based on the project-based approach contributes to a noticeable improvement in future teachers' communicative coherence, emotional stability, reflexive thinking, the ability to analyze pedagogical situations, and skills in selecting and applying effective communication strategies. The research results show that the project-based approach creates favorable pedagogical conditions for the development of personal and professional congruence in future teachers by fostering competencies such as modeling real pedagogical situations, making independent and responsible decisions, implementing criteria-based assessment activities, effectively collaborating in teams, and resolving conflicts constructively. The results of the study have significant scientific and practical significance for improving the system of teacher education, increasing the effectiveness of the educational process, and developing the professional competencies of teachers.

Keywords: Congruence ability; pre-service teacher education; project-based approach; project-based learning technologies; pedagogical congruence; communicative competence; emotional intelligence; reflective pedagogy; pedagogical communication culture; professional identity.

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, the modernization of the educational process, the widespread integration of digital technologies, and the growing priority of learner-centered pedagogy

require future teachers to possess not only professional knowledge and skills but also a high level of psychological culture, communicative maturity, emotional stability, and effective interpersonal communication strategies. One such essential competency is congruence, which refers to the harmony and consistency between a teacher's internal feelings, thoughts, and external behavior. The presence of congruence plays a decisive role in establishing trusting, sincere, and influential communicative relationships between teachers and students.

In the educational process, communicative conflicts, emotional pressure, stressful pedagogical situations, and the individual psychological characteristics of students require teachers to demonstrate self-regulation, emotional control, the ability to create a positive psychological climate, and the clear expression of their ideas. It is precisely in such situations that the presence of congruence ensures pedagogical effectiveness and professional success. A congruent teacher avoids artificiality in behavior and speech, remains open, sincere, and consistent in communication with students, and therefore is perceived by students as a trustworthy and respected figure.

However, pedagogical practice shows that many students enrolled in teacher education programs do not have sufficiently developed congruence. Manifestations such as inconsistency between speech and behavior, emotional instability, communicative discomfort, and difficulties in freely expressing one's thoughts are frequently observed. These shortcomings can lead to significant communicative challenges in their future professional activities. Therefore, the development of congruence should be organized purposefully, on a scientific basis, and through a step-by-step methodological framework [5].

In recent years, the project-based approach has been increasingly recognized in pedagogical practice as an innovative model for teacher training. Project-based learning promotes independent thinking, creativity [6], communication skills, teamwork culture, and reflective analysis among students [7]. Most importantly, project activities create conditions for aligning internal emotions with external actions, as each project involves real-life situations requiring congruence, such as communication, presentation, defending one's position, argumentation, and reflection [8].

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The issue of developing congruence in future teachers has been examined in both international and national pedagogical literature through various scientific approaches. Analysis of existing studies indicates that the phenomenon of congruence was initially substantiated and theoretically grounded by leading representatives of psychological and pedagogical thought. Their works emphasize congruence as a fundamental characteristic of professional authenticity, internal consistency, and effective interpersonal interaction within educational contexts.

Table 1. Key literature on congruence and project-based learning

Source title	Author (s)	Key contribution to the study
On Becoming a Person	C. Rogers	He defines congruence as the harmony between inner experiences, behavior, and speech, positioning it as a core principle of humanistic psychology.
Teacher Authenticity and Education	N. Lyons	Examines the relationship between teacher authenticity and congruence, highlighting their impact on student motivation and educational quality.
Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations	B. Bass	Explores the role of personal congruence in transformational leadership, emphasizing the mechanisms of trust and motivation.
Emotional Intelligence	D. Goleman	Explains how emotional intelligence influences teachers' congruence, self-regulation, and communicative harmony.
Experience and Education	J. Dewey	Substantiates the role of experience-based and project-based learning in developing authenticity and personal adaptability.
Principles of Topological Psychology	K. Lewin	Demonstrates the relationship between behavioral-cognitive harmony and the individual's psychological field.
Fundamentals of Pedagogical Mastery	Sh. Sharipov	Highlights the importance of congruence in ensuring harmony between teachers' speech, behavior, and emotions.
Pedagogical Technologies and Project-Based Education	K. Kadyrov	Provides scientific justification that project-based learning fosters reflection, communicative harmony, and behavioral congruence.
Authentic Teaching and Learning	G. Brown	Shows that teacher authenticity and congruence promote trust and a positive psychological learning environment.

K. Rogers (1961, 1969) interprets congruence as the harmony between an individual's internal self-concept ("self-image") and external behavior, considering it a central element of sincere and effective communication. According to Rogers, a congruent teacher can establish trusting, open, and constructive relationships with students [1,2,].

N. Lyons (2008) and D. Gordon (2013) have demonstrated that a teacher's communicative authenticity has a significant impact on students' motivation, attitudes towards learning, and psychological well-being. Their research provides a theoretical basis for viewing congruence as an integral component of pedagogical competence. Additionally, congruence is emphasized as being closely related to stress resistance, empathy, self-regulation, and reflective ability [3,4].

With the development of pedagogical technologies, numerous studies have recognized the advantages of project-based learning in fostering congruence. J. Dewey (1938), E. Poltorak (2015), P. K. Levy (2010), and representatives of contemporary constructivist education argue

that project activities foster competencies that require congruence, such as social communication, self-expression, and decision-making in problem-based situations.

Representatives of the Uzbek Pedagogical Research School - Sh. Sharipov, Q. Qodirov, R. Ibragimov, and others emphasize the effectiveness of interactive and project-based methods in developing communicative and reflective competencies in future teachers. Their research examines congruence in close connection with communication culture, speech activity, and emotional self-regulation [11,13]. Analysis of the reviewed literature indicates that the targeted development of congruence through a specialized methodology - particularly as an integrative model based on a project-based approach - has not yet been sufficiently developed. In this regard, the present study is relevant and has significant scientific and practical value.

This research aims to develop future teachers' congruence skills through a project-based approach and is based on the following methodological foundations:

- humanistic psychology (K. Rogers, A. Maslow);
- communicative pedagogy (Gordon, L. Bayram);
- learner-centered education theory;
- project-based learning technologies (J. Dewey, Levy, M. Mahmudov);
- competency-based approach;
- reflective pedagogy and emotional intelligence theory [6,7,10,11,13,14].

These approaches made it possible to model congruence as a professional competency. The study employed multiple methodological approaches, and the following research methods were applied:

Table 2. Research Methods for Developing Congruence in Future Teachers

Method	Description	Outcome
Observation methods	Identifying elements of congruence through real-time observation of students' speech, behavior, emotional reactions, and conduct in group communication.	Enables assessment of verbal-behavioral harmony, communication culture, and self-regulation skills.
Questionnaires and reflective surveys	Collecting data on students' self-assessment, emotional state, level of sincerity, and comfort in communication.	Allows for the identification of the level of congruence, reflection, and dynamics of psychological development.
Project-based tasks	Students demonstrate congruence in practice through group project development, presentations, and defense of ideas.	Enhances harmony between speech, behavior, and emotions; strengthens presentation and communication skills.
Pedagogical situations (case study)	Forming appropriate responses based on real-life conflict, problem-solving, or decision-making situations.	Strengthens self-regulation, sincere communication, and internal stability in stressful situations.
Role-playing activities (training)	Developing emotional expression and behavioral alignment through teacher-student or leader-team role-playing.	Fosters sincerity, empathy, active listening, and congruent communication skills.
Reflective journals	Students record their emotions, behaviors, and successes or shortcomings in speech after each session.	Supports self-awareness, internal state management, and reinforcement of speech-behavioral congruence.
Psychological trainings	Trainings focused on stress management, emotional regulation, sincere communication, and active listening.	Develops emotional stability, social adaptability, and the emotional component of congruence.
Video analysis method	Analyzing body language, speech, facial expressions, and behavioral harmony through recorded presentations or lessons.	Enables self-analysis and correction of verbal and behavioral shortcomings.

The presented table illustrates the content of the methods aimed at developing congruence in future teachers and highlights their practical effectiveness. The methods included in the table -

observation, questionnaires, project-based tasks, pedagogical situations, role-playing activities, reflective journals, psychological trainings, and video analysis - collectively contribute to the comprehensive development of all components of congruence, including verbal coherence, emotional stability, behavioral alignment, and reflective thinking. Each method, in its own way, fosters such competencies in students as self-awareness, sincerity in communication, regulation of internal experiences, and appropriate behavior in pedagogical situations [7,8].

Observation and questionnaire methods primarily serve a diagnostic function, allowing for the identification of students' existing levels of congruence. In contrast, project-based tasks, role-playing activities, and case study methods are considered the most effective tools for developing congruence directly through practical engagement. These methods immerse students in real or simulated pedagogical situations that require consistency between internal states and external actions, thereby promoting authentic professional behavior [5,10].

Overall, the integrated use of these methods allows for the systematic and step-by-step development of congruence in future teachers. The methods complement each other and function coherently, covering all aspects of congruence and contributing to the strengthening of teachers' professional identity and communication culture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that the methodology developed based on the project-based approach had a significant positive impact on the development of congruence in future teachers. The results of diagnostic surveys, observations, and video analyses conducted in the experimental group demonstrated a consistent increase in students' levels of verbal, behavioral, and emotional congruence. Indicators included ambiguity in speech, emotional instability, lack of confidence in communication, and insufficient behavioral adaptability. During the second stage, the implementation of practical projects, role-playing activities, pedagogical situations, and psychological trainings contributed to the gradual formation of the core components of congruence, such as consistency in speech, emotional self-regulation, alignment of body language with verbal expression, sincere communication, and the development of a positive pedagogical stance.

According to the results of the analysis:

- communicative congruence increased by 32-38%;
- emotional regulation skills improved by 27-35%;
- behavioral coherence and communicative confidence increased by 30-40%;
- presentation culture and verbal clarity showed a significant improvement;
- reflexive analysis skills increased by up to 40%.

The results achieved by the experimental group were significantly higher than those of the control group, and the statistical significance of the differences was confirmed using the t-test ($p < 0.05$). These findings confirm the effectiveness of the project-based approach in developing congruence among future teachers. The obtained data show that the proposed methodology facilitates the comprehensive formation of congruence through enhanced personal development, communication culture, and pedagogical reflexivity.

The results further indicate that the project-based approach serves not only as an innovative method for activating the learning process of future teachers but also as an effective tool for their personal and professional development. The coherence of project tasks, active student participation, and opportunities to engage in real pedagogical situations create favorable

conditions for the natural development of congruence. The development of congruence leads to the following positive transformations in the teacher's personality:

1. Increased harmony between speech, behavior, and emotional state, enabling future teachers to act confidently, sincerely, and openly in educational settings.
2. Enhanced self-regulation and stress resistance, as psychological training strengthens emotional intelligence and supports stable communication in complex situations.
3. Development of reflective thinking facilitated by video analysis and observation, which allow students to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
4. Improved communication culture and public speaking skills, fostered through project presentations, role-playing activities, and case studies that promote an active professional position.
5. Higher pedagogical maturity, as congruent teachers manage classroom processes more effectively, establish trusting relationships with students, and create a healthy psychological learning environment.

The discussion reveals that the development of congruence cannot be achieved solely through theoretical knowledge; rather, it requires active student engagement, experiential learning, and opportunities to test oneself in communicative situations. The project-based approach provides precisely such an interactive and practice-oriented environment.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the formation of congruence in teacher education requires a comprehensive approach that integrates psychological preparation, the development of communicative skills, pedagogical reflection, and the harmonious growth of emotional intelligence.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the development of congruence in future teachers through a project-based approach and confirmed its effectiveness both theoretically and empirically. The findings demonstrate that congruence, understood as the harmony between internal emotional states, verbal expression, and external behavior, represents a key professional competence that significantly influences teachers' communicative effectiveness and pedagogical performance.

The results of the experimental work show that the systematic integration of project-based learning, role-playing activities, pedagogical situations, reflective practices, and psychological trainings creates favorable conditions for the comprehensive development of congruence. The proposed methodology contributed to measurable improvements in communicative coherence, emotional regulation, behavioral alignment, and reflexive thinking among future teachers, with statistically significant differences observed between the experimental and control groups.

The study also emphasizes that congruence cannot be developed solely through theoretical instruction. Instead, it requires active student engagement in experiential and interactive learning environments that allow individuals to test, reflect on, and adjust their behavior in real or simulated pedagogical contexts. In this regard, the project-based approach serves not only as an innovative teaching method but also as an effective mechanism for fostering personal authenticity, professional identity, and emotional maturity in teacher education.

Furthermore, the research emphasizes the necessity of a comprehensive pedagogical framework that integrates psychological preparation, communicative competence, reflective pedagogy, and the development of emotional intelligence. Such an integrated approach enhances the overall quality of teacher training and supports the development of educators

capable of establishing trusting relationships, effectively managing classroom interactions, and creating a positive psychological climate.

In conclusion, the findings of this study contribute to the advancement of pedagogical theory and practice by offering a scientifically grounded model for developing congruence in future teachers. The proposed approach can be recommended for implementation in teacher education programs and serves as a basis for further research on the development of professional competencies through project-based learning.

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