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## Section 1. Education system

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### THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE METHODOLOGY OF DEVELOPING VOCAL PERFORMANCE SKILLS IN FUTURE MUSIC TEACHERS

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#### Abstract

This article discusses the historical formation and improvement of methods for developing vocal performance skills. It analyzes sound production, singing techniques, pedagogical concepts, and the activities of prominent vocal pedagogues from ancient civilizations to the era of the Italian vocal school. The study also highlights the emergence of new genres and styles, as well as the significance of mixed breathing techniques in vocal art.

**Keywords:** *vocal performance, methodology, breathing technique, opera, pedagogy, music*

#### Introduction

In the global educational system, professional efforts are being directed toward improving the methodology of developing vocal performance skills in future music teachers, alongside integrating creative technologies for musical education into the teaching process. The Association European des Conservatoires (AEC – European Association of Conservatoires) has spearheaded international initiatives under the project title “Instrumental and Vocal Teacher Education” (the “INVITE” project). Furthermore, the INVITE network conducts comprehensive research on curriculum design tailored for future music teachers. This project strength-

ens institutional collaboration among educational facilities worldwide and serves to optimize the exchange of pedagogical and methodological resources.

Specifically, systematic work is being undertaken to implement and adapt world-renowned vocal methodologies into the educational workflow, such as the Bel Canto system in the Italian vocal school, the Estill Voice Training (EVT) method in England, and the Speech Level Singing (SLS) technique in the United States. Concurrently, the International Network for Vocal and Instrumental Teacher Education fosters international research, collaborative networks, and practical applications aimed at elevating the

professional competence, methodological proficiency, and overall quality of education among specialists in both domains.

Leading music academies, conservatories, and scientific research centers worldwide are actively conducting academic studies to establish unified approaches, common standards, and innovative frameworks for training vocal and instrumental instructors. Special scholarly attention is paid to developing the vocal performance art of future music teachers through creative reflection. This is achieved by anchoring instruction in prominent global paradigms, including the Physiological Vocal Theory in France, the Estill Voice Training theory in the United States, the Complete Vocal Technique (CVT) in Europe, the Functional Voice Training theory in Italy, and the Alexander Technique in Australia.

In recent years, the Republic of Uzbekistan has established robust regulatory frameworks and material-technical foundations to elevate the quality of personnel training, introduce essential curricula and textbooks aligned with international standards, and host prestigious republican-level competitions. These include the Republican Song Competition “Yangi O‘zbekistonda erkin va farovon yashaylik” (“Let us live freely and prosperously in New Uzbekistan”), the “Batyrlar Zakirov Contemporary Estrada” Singers Competition, the “Republican Young Maqom Performers” Competition, as well as the “Yoshlar ovozi” (“Voice of Youth”), “Yosh ijrochilar” (“Young Performers”), “San’at g‘unchalari” (“Buds of Art”), “Ovoz” (“The Voice”), and “Eng yaxshi qo‘shiq va musiqa asarlari” (“Best Song and Musical Works”) competitions. Further notable events comprise the “Juraxon Sultanov and Mamurjon Uzoqov Young Maqom Performers” Competition, the “Ijod bahori” (“Spring of Creativity”) festival, the creative contest “San’atim senga, obod yurtim!” (“My Art to You, My Prosperous Country!”), the “Young Vocal Performers” Competition, and the “Yoshlik bahori” (“Spring of Youth”) Republican Festival of Young Opera Singers.

Implementing targeted programs for social sector development and modernization, advancing education, culture, science, literature, art, and sports, and refining state youth policy have been designated as top strategic

priorities. Consequently, the younger generation’s interest in musical arts is expanding. Against the backdrop of rapid modern transformations, the opportunities to host both offline and online formats of prominent festivals and contests are continuously broadening. Notable examples include “Maestro”, “Improvisation”, “Musical Art”, “Modern Sound”, “Open Asia”, “Sharq Taronalari” (“Melodies of the East”), “Navro‘z Sadolari”, the “International Jazz Festival”, “Tashkent Spring”, “Boysun Bahori”, “Bahor Nafasi”, “Dunyo Sadolari”, “Nurli Navolar”, and the “International Festival of Bakhshi Art”.

Improving the methodology of developing vocal performance skills is intrinsically linked to its historical evolution. Festivities and competitions in Ancient Egypt, Asia, and Ancient Greece were structured and performed in the form of dithyrambs. In Ancient Greece, solo performers wrote their own poetry and composed their own melodies. During that period, male voices were classified into several distinct types:

Netoide – a vocal type for virtuosos, used to perform works of an arioso nature.

Mesoide – a vocal type designated for singing popular songs and choral works.

Iratoide – a vocal type employed specifically for performing tragic works. Due to the advancement of theoretical concepts in music history during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, treatises began to emerge that scientifically linked singing and its technical methods to the process of sound production. These works have survived to the present day and continue to prove effective in improving the methodology of developing vocal performance skills in future music teachers.

### Literature Review

The great Roman theorist and teacher Giuseffo Zarlino (1517–1590), in his treatise *Le Istituzioni Harmoniche*, noted that “the throat, tongue, palate, and lungs provided by nature produce sound, and from this sound, words and songs are born. Speech requires that vowels remain stable during pronunciation; through this, students must be taught meaningful declamation, ensuring that vowels do not become overly simplistic” (Zarlino G., 1558).

Another prominent Italian vocal pedagogue, Lodovico Zacconi (1555–1627), in

his monumental and enduring work *Prattica de Musica*, wrote: “In performing solo polyphonic works, a singer can execute the piece properly only if they know how to blend their voice with the harmony of the other parts”. Zacconi recommended that in order to master the use of ornaments (melismas) within a piece, students should listen to and learn from the performance styles of accomplished vocalists. In his view, chest tones were considered natural because they possess a distinct musicality and resonance; at the same time, this technique required a firm and powerful articulation of consonants. He emphasized that vocalises should be sung on vowels, and that pharyngeal agility depended on continuous practice and the study of triole (triplets) and passages. Mastering these techniques systematically and gradually allowed the singer to execute works at a rapid tempo (Lodovico Zacconi. 1592).

### Results

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the great tenor, composer, and reformer Giulio Caccini (1545–1618) established a circle in Florence consisting of composers and poets. Composers such as Caccini, Peri, and Cavalieri, alongside poets like Corsi, Bardi, and Rinuccini, possessed exceptional musical talents, which led to the successful implementation of this artistic reform. This circle was later transformed into the Florentine Camerata (Bardi’s Academy). This musical reform served as the foundation for the emergence of the opera, oratorio, and cantata genres. In 1601, Caccini published a collection of madrigals titled *Le Nuove Musiche* (“The New Music”). This work contains profound insights into vocal methodology and remains a vital source for the development of vocal performance. One of Giulio Caccini’s greatest contributions to vocal pedagogy was his methodology of voice development through the “exclamation” (*esclamazione*) style, which enriched the expressive content of the performance (Caccini G., 1602).

### Discussion

By the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the dramatic narrative and textual content of opera became secondary, while greater emphasis was placed on the growth of virtuosic vocal performance. The dramatic achievements previ-

ously reached in 18<sup>th</sup> century Italian opera music began to give way to an unprecedented rise in technical vocal competitions among singers. During this period, castrati singers elevated the art of vocal performance to its absolute peak. Representatives of the castrati school, such as Tosi, Ferri, Caffarelli, Farinelli, Bernacchi, Uberti-Porporino, Marchesi, and others, dedicated themselves to the advancement of vocal technique. These singers were capable of executing two-octave scales in a single breath. Among the students of the great pedagogue Nicola Porpora, the most famous castrati singers – Caffarelli, Farinelli, Bernacchi, Uberti-Porporino, Apianni – as well as female singers like Mingotti, Gabrielli, and others, made significant contributions to the development of vocal art. Porpora taught his students to perform works at a virtuosic level while deeply feeling their expressive and profound meaning. Although his scientific treatises detailing his mentorship methods have not survived, his compiled vocal exercises and the famous “single-sheet” exercises used to train Caffarelli for five years occupy a crucial place in the heritage of vocal performance (Nadine Winston. 2025).

Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868) made a profound contribution to the evolution of the Italian vocal school. The virtuosic parts in his operas successfully revealed the heroic character within the melodic lines. His most exceptional works played a vital role in the social life of Italy. As a representative of Classicism, the great Rossini also laid the foundation for a new artistic movement in Italy: Romanticism (Richard Osborne. 2007).

### Conclusion

This era coincided with the intensification of revolutionary liberation movements in Italy. It was precisely during this time that the creative paths of the major composers Vincenzo Bellini and Gaetano Donizetti flourished. Although Bellini lived for only 34 years, he left behind monumental masterpieces such as *Norma*, *Il Pirata*, and *La Sonnambula*. These operas continue to be performed on global stages to this day. Working alongside Bellini, the longer-lived G. Donizetti created a vast number of operatic works, the most famous of which are *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *L’elisir d’amore*. Both

composers created within the framework of Romanticism, focusing primarily on the fioritura (vocal ornamentation) style and successfully developing bel canto (beautiful singing) techniques. During that period, singers predominantly utilized the thoracic (chest) breathing technique. Giuseppe Verdi, the great and powerful 19<sup>th</sup> century composer, was celebrated as a national pride of his time. He possessed a heroic status in Italy's

influential political landscape and was a genius composer who introduced musical drama to the development of vocal pedagogy. His 26 tragic operas demanded that singers utilize the costo-abdominal breathing technique. This mixed breathing technique led to the emergence of voices with immense volume and power. Consequently, a highly significant and unprecedented direction was established within the Italian vocal school.

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## THE INSTITUTIONAL GAP IN TEACHER CONTINUING EDUCATION: CROSS-NATIONAL EVIDENCE ON BARRIERS TO TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

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### Abstract

Continuing professional education (CPE) for teachers faces growing pressure to equip educators with technological competencies that instructional practice now demands – yet the infrastructure through which such competencies are developed remains poorly understood and underexamined. International comparative data indicate that existing CPE systems are failing to meet this demand at both scale and quality. Drawing on data from OECD TALIS 2024, Pearson School Report 2023, Tech4Teachers 2024, and the TCEA/SETDA EdTech Landscape Report (2024), this paper identifies and analyses six systemic barriers constraining technology integration in teacher CPE: coverage deficits, knowledge gaps, low programme effectiveness, superficial adoption patterns, absent mandatory competency standards, and structural time constraints. The analysis demonstrates that these barriers do not operate independently but form a self-reinforcing institutional system – one that resists incremental, single-barrier intervention. The analysis draws on the DigCompEdu and TPACK theoretical frameworks, with UNESCO SDG4 and ISTE Standards as policy reference points. The paper argues that before evidence-based CPE redesign is feasible, the nature, scope, and interdependence of these barriers must be systematically established – a diagnostic contribution this paper makes explicit. The findings conclude with research-oriented propositions for future programme-level and policy-level investigation.

**Keywords:** *continuing professional education, in-service teacher training, educational technology integration, digital competence, TPACK, DigCompEdu, technology adoption barriers, teacher certification policy, OECD TALIS*

### 1. Introduction

Emerging technologies have reshaped the competency demands of classroom teaching faster than institutional systems have been able to respond. International policy frameworks – from UNESCO’s Education 2030 (UNESCO, 2018) to the ISTE Standards

for Educators (ISTE, 2017) – have set progressively more explicit requirements for teacher technological competence. Yet the systems through which practising teachers are expected to develop these competencies – programmes of continuing professional education – are, on the latest international

evidence, critically underprepared for this task (UNESCO. 2018).

Data from Pearson School Report 2023 and Tech4Teachers (2024) indicate that only 17% of teachers currently access CPE specifically addressing digital tools and educational technology – leaving the overwhelming majority of the practising workforce without formal institutional support in this domain. OECD TALIS 2024 data deepen this picture: among teachers who do not use instructional technology, 75% identify lack of knowledge as the primary barrier – a figure that points not to individual unwillingness but to a structural failure of professional preparation. Concurrently, only 55% of teachers report that their CPE programmes positively affect classroom practice – indicating that where provision exists, its design fails to connect with practical instructional contexts (Pearson. 2023).

These patterns are not geographically isolated or incidental. They recur across contexts as varied as the United States, England, and the broader OECD zone, implicating failures of both scale and substantive programme quality. They therefore warrant analytical attention not as a loose collection of separate policy failures but as a coherent and interconnected institutional phenomenon.

This paper is explicitly diagnostic in character. It does not report on specific interventions or programme evaluations. Rather, it establishes the systematic groundwork that must precede any serious reform of teacher CPE: a structured analysis of what the international evidence reveals about why technology integration in teacher professional education is failing, and how these failures relate to one another. This diagnostic function constitutes a substantive scholarly contribution in its own right. The central research question is: What is the nature, severity, and systemic character of the barriers constraining effective technology integration in teacher CPE, as documented in major international datasets from 2023 to 2024. The paper argues that these barriers – spanning coverage, knowledge, programme quality, adoption depth, standards alignment, and time – constitute an interconnected system of institutional failure whose self-reinforcing logic accounts for both the persistence of the problem and the insufficiency of previous targeted interventions.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the theoretical and empirical literature on CPE effectiveness and technology integration. Section 3 describes the methodological approach to data synthesis. Section 4 presents a taxonomy of six barriers identified in the international evidence base. Section 5 discusses the systemic interdependencies among these barriers. Section 6 advances research-oriented propositions for future inquiry and programme redesign. Section 7 concludes with a synthesis of the diagnostic argument.

## 2. Literature Review

### ***2.1 Conceptual Framework: TPACK and DigCompEdu as Analytical Lenses***

The predominant theoretical framework for understanding technology integration in teaching practice remains Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), introduced by Mishra and Koehler (Mishra P., Koehler, M. J., 2006). TPACK posits that effective technology use in the classroom requires not merely technical proficiency but an integrated command of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and technological knowledge simultaneously. The framework implies that CPE programmes targeting technology integration must engage all three knowledge domains – a standard that, as subsequent research has shown, most existing programmes fail to meet (Mishra P., Koehler, M. J., 2006).

Complementary to TPACK, the European Digital Competence Framework for Educators provides a policy-oriented competency model specifying six areas of digital competence for teaching professionals, from professional engagement to facilitating learners' digital development. DigCompEdu has been incorporated into teacher education policy across multiple EU member states and offers a developmental progression model – from foundational to highly specialised competency – that can inform both curriculum design and CPE benchmarking (Redecker C., 2017).

Together, TPACK and DigCompEdu define the theoretical horizon against which existing CPE provision can be assessed. Both frameworks make clear that digital competency in teaching is not a discrete skill but a complex, developmentally structured professional capacity – a characterisation with

direct implications for the adequacy of prevailing CPE formats.

## **2.2 The Effectiveness of Teacher Continuing Professional Education**

The research literature on CPE effectiveness converges on several design principles. Darling-Hammond in a comprehensive review commissioned by the Learning Policy Institute, identify content focus, active learning, coherence, sustained duration, and collaborative participation as defining characteristics of high-quality professional development. Short, one-off workshops – historically the dominant format for in-service teacher training – are consistently associated with negligible or transient effects on classroom practice (Darling-Hammond L., Hyler M. E., Gardner M., 2017; Guskey T. R., 2022). Joyce and Showers (2002) estimate that the transfer of new skills to practice requires not only initial instruction but follow-up coaching – resources that most CPE providers do not systematically offer (Joyce B., Showers B., 2003).

These findings are particularly salient in the context of technology-focused CPE, where skills evolve rapidly and where the gap between nominal exposure and actual pedagogical application is especially pronounced. Voogt argue that sustainable technology integration requires school-level conditions – shared vision, collaborative culture, leadership support – that training programmes alone cannot create (Voogt J., Fisser P., Pareja Roblin N., Tondeur J., van Braak, J., 2013). This positions CPE effectiveness as a problem not merely of programme design but of institutional ecology.

## **2.3 Technology Integration in Education: Emerging Evidence**

Scholarly attention to technology-specific teacher competencies has grown substantially since 2019 Holmes in his analysis of educational technology policy, argue that the pace of instructional technology adoption has consistently outrun the development of supporting pedagogical frameworks and teacher preparation capacity (Holmes W., Porayska-Pomsta K., Holstein K., Sutherland E., Baker T., Shum S. B., Santos O. C., Rodrigo M. T., Cukurova M., Bittencourt I. I., Koedinger K. R., 2022).

A conceptually important distinction – applicable to emerging instructional technologies of all kinds – separates foundational understanding of a technology’s mechanisms from the practical pedagogical capacity to deploy it for specific instructional ends. Evidence from OECD TALIS 2024 illustrates this gap clearly: among teachers who do use instructional technologies, use is anchored at lower-complexity tasks (summarisation, content generation, lesson planning) rather than at pedagogically critical applications such as student performance analysis or adaptive differentiation (OECD. 2024). This distribution suggests that even where technology adoption has occurred, it has not penetrated the functions where its transformative potential is greatest.

Celik empirically examined teachers’ perceptions of digital competency and found significant variation across subject areas and school types, with the majority of respondents reporting insufficient institutional support for technology skill development (Celik I., Muukkonen H., Dede C., 2024).

## **2.4 Barriers to Educational Technology Adoption**

The literature on barriers to EdTech adoption distinguishes between first-order barriers (external, resource-related constraints: access, time, institutional support) and second-order barriers (internal, belief-related constraints: teacher attitudes, confidence, pedagogical values), synthesised findings from 48 studies and identified lack of knowledge and skills, lack of resources, and lack of time as the three most frequently reported barriers – a taxonomy that maps directly onto the data examined in the present paper. The persistence of these findings across nearly two decades of research underscores that the barriers under analysis are structural rather than transient (Ertmer P. A., 1999).

While first-order barriers have diminished with the proliferation of affordable devices and broadband access, second-order barriers – particularly knowledge and confidence deficits regarding instructional technologies – remain persistent and, in the view of some scholars, more consequential (Ertmer P. A., Ottenbreit-Leftwich A. T., Sadik O., Sendurur E., Sendurur P., 2012).

### 3. Methodology

This paper employs a critical document analysis approach, drawing on secondary data from four major international datasets published in 2023–2024: OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2024, Pearson School Report 2023, Tech4Teachers 2024, and the TCEA/SETDA EdTech Landscape Report (2024) (OECD. (2024)).

The selection of these sources was guided by three criteria: international or multi-national scope, recency, with all primary data collected no earlier than 2022, and methodological transparency. Data were extracted, systematically organised, and analysed with respect to six thematic categories corresponding to distinct types of structural barrier. Barriers were categorised by type and assessed for severity of impact, drawing on criticality evaluations in the source documentation where available.

This approach is appropriate for generating a structured, evidence-grounded diagnostic analysis of a policy-relevant problem domain – precisely the kind of foundational scholarly work that must precede effective programme reform. Its principal limitation is reliance on reported aggregate data rather than primary observation or experimental intervention, findings should accordingly be interpreted as descriptive and diagnostic rather than causal. A further limitation relates to source verification: several dataset reports remained in final publication processing at the time of writing, and all figures cited refer to data as reported in publicly available summary documentation.

The value of this methodological approach lies in its capacity to surface structural patterns across diverse national contexts. Where individual case studies or programme evaluations might capture local variation, the cross-dataset synthesis employed here reveals the systemic character of CPE failures – a level of analysis essential to informing policy-level intervention.

#### 4. Structural Barriers to Technology Integration in Teacher CPE:

##### A Cross-Dataset Analysis

#### **4.1 Coverage Deficit: Systemic Gaps in Access to Technology-Focused CPE**

The most foundational barrier is one of scale. Data from Pearson School Report and Tech 4 Teachers (2024) indicate that only 17% of teachers currently access CPE specifically addressing digital tools and educational technology – leaving the overwhelming majority of the practising workforce without formal institutional support in this domain (Pearson. 2023). This pattern is consistent with earlier estimates from the European Commission's Education and Training Monitor 2023, which documented persistent disparities in access to technology-focused CPE across member states (European Commission. 2023).

The scale of this deficit reframes the technology integration problem at its root. Inadequate technology use in classrooms is not primarily a question of teacher attitudes or motivation; it is a consequence of the system's failure to deliver the professional education through which relevant competency could be developed. A CPE infrastructure that reaches one in six teachers is not a functional system operating below capacity – it is a system that has not been built for the task it is assigned.

#### **4.2 The Knowledge Gap as the Dominant Self-Reported Barrier**

OECD TALIS 2024 data indicate that 75% of teachers who do not use instructional technologies cite lack of knowledge as the primary reason – by a substantial margin the most frequently reported barrier. This figure is consistent with two simultaneous dynamics: CPE provision has not reached most teachers, and where it has, it has not adequately addressed technology-specific knowledge needs. The evidence examined here suggests both operate concurrently rather than in sequence (OECD. (2024)).

The analytical significance of the knowledge gap extends beyond its prevalence. It functions as a pre-conditional barrier – one that renders other proposed interventions ineffective until it is addressed. A teacher without foundational understanding of available instructional technologies cannot benefit from institutional support structures, collaborative professional cultures, or protected learning time, however generously these are provided. Closing the knowledge gap is therefore not one reform priority among several; it is the precondition for others.

### **4.3 Low Perceived Effectiveness of CPE Programmes**

OECD TALIS 2024 data indicate that only 55% of teachers report their CPE programmes have a positive effect on classroom practice – meaning that nearly half of those who do access professional education find it without practical value. This figure shifts the analytic frame: the problem is not reach alone but quality (OECD. (2024). The predominance of short, lecture-format workshops – consistently identified as the least effective CPE modality likely accounts for much of this pattern, compounded by content that is generic rather than subject-specific or practice-embedded (Darling-Hammond L., Hyler M. E., Gardner M., 2017).

Low perceived effectiveness carries compounding institutional consequences. Teachers who do not experience CPE as practically useful are less likely to engage with subsequent professional learning opportunities, generating a cycle of disengagement that reinforces the coverage deficit identified in Section 4.1. Effectiveness failure and access failure are thus mutually sustaining rather than independent problems.

### **4.4 Superficial Technology Adoption Patterns Among Current Users**

Among teachers who do use instructional technologies, OECD TALIS 2024 US subsample data reveal a pronounced concentration of use at low-complexity, administrative tasks: topic summarisation (73%), lesson planning (70%), and generating instructional materials (70%). By contrast, only 18% use available tools for student performance analysis – one of the functions with the greatest potential for instructional impact (OECD. (2024). Even where adoption has occurred, it has not reached the pedagogically critical applications where the transformative potential of instructional technology is greatest.

This distribution is precisely what TPACK theory predicts when technology access outpaces pedagogical integration. Without CPE that develops the intersection of technological and pedagogical knowledge, adoption defaults to the path of least resistance: familiar, low-stakes tasks that require minimal reconceptualisation of practice. Access to tools is necessary but not sufficient; what is absent is the professional education that converts tool access into pedagogically meaningful use.

### **4.5 Absent or Inconsistent Mandatory Digital Competency Standards**

In the United States, only 11% of states require school districts to maintain educational technology plans (TCEA/SETDA) (TCEA, SETDA. 2024). In England, digital competencies remain unembedded in Initial Teacher Training or Qualified Teacher Status standards as of 2024 (Tech4Teachers) (Tech 4Teachers. (2024). The absence of mandatory standards removes the institutional incentive structure through which CPE providers would otherwise develop technology-specific content – and leaves individual teachers without a professional benchmark against which to assess or direct their own competency development. In EU DigCompEdu has been adopted as a binding instrument, more systematic integration of digital competency into teacher education curricula has followed (European Commission, 2023) (European Commission. 2023; Redecker C., 2017).

### **4.6 Time as a Structural Constraint**

OECD TALIS 2024 data indicate that 63% of teachers cite insufficient time as their primary barrier to technology-focused CPE, with approximately 60% reporting scheduling conflicts as the operative mechanism (OECD. 2024). The structural character of this barrier is sharpened by the nature of the domain: unlike subject content knowledge, which evolves gradually, instructional technology landscapes shift substantially within a single academic year. CPE in this domain must therefore be conceived as a continuous, embedded professional process rather than a periodic event – a conception that is particularly difficult to sustain within existing workload and scheduling structures.

The time barrier operates through two distinct pathways. Directly, it excludes teachers from available CPE opportunities. Indirectly, it precludes the sustained, practice-embedded professional learning that research consistently identifies as most effective (Darling-Hammond L., Hyler M. E., Gardner M., 2017). Both pathways lead to the same outcome: the reinforcement of the knowledge gap documented in Section 4.2. Time is accordingly not a peripheral logistical constraint but among the most structurally entrenched of the six barriers analysed here.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 *The Barriers as an Interconnected System*

Considered in isolation, each of the six barriers presents as a distinct and tractable problem. Taken together, however, they constitute a self-reinforcing institutional system: the absence of mandatory standards reduces institutional investment in CPE, low investment produces coverage deficits, coverage deficits perpetuate knowledge gaps, knowledge gaps limit technology adoption, where adoption occurs, time constraints and ineffective CPE design restrict its pedagogical depth, low perceived CPE effectiveness reduces teacher engagement with professional learning, and reduced engagement reinforces coverage deficits. This causal loop explains both the persistence of the problem and the insufficiency of single-barrier interventions.

The systemic character of these barriers has direct implications for research and policy design. Studies that examine isolated barriers – time alone, or access alone – will consistently produce findings that appear tractable in principle but prove intractable in practice, because the unaddressed barriers reconstitute the problem through alternative pathways. Research that maps the interdependencies, as this paper attempts, provides the structural understanding necessary to design coordinated interventions.

### 5.2 *Alignment with International Policy Frameworks*

The barriers identified stand in sharp contrast to the expectations of internationally recognised frameworks. UNESCO Education 2030 (UNESCO) calls for qualified, professionally supported teachers as a prerequisite for SDG4 (UNESCO, 2018). ISTE Standards (ISTE) specify educator roles – digital citizen, designer, analyst – that require competencies well beyond the surface-level technology use patterns currently documented. EU DigCompEdu posits six progressive competency areas, the foundational tier of which presupposes access to functional digital CPE infrastructure (Redecker C., 2017).

The gap between these frameworks and the empirical reality documented here indicates that policy commitment to digital teacher competency has not been translated into the institutional mechanisms neces-

sary for implementation at scale. This is not a knowledge problem – the design principles for effective CPE are well established and internationally documented. It is a structural problem, in which the incentive architecture of CPE systems has not been aligned with the competency expectations embedded in policy frameworks.

The preceding analysis illustrates why the diagnostic work undertaken in this paper constitutes a necessary precondition for evidence-based CPE reform rather than a lesser contribution to be superseded by intervention studies. A field that moves to programme redesign without first establishing the structural character of the problem risks repeating the pattern that the 55% effectiveness figure reflects: well-intentioned programmes that address visible symptoms while leaving the underlying architecture intact.

## 6. Research Propositions and Recommendations for Programme Redesign

The following propositions are advanced not as programmatic prescriptions but as evidence-grounded directions for inquiry and design. Each is derived directly from the diagnostic findings of Sections 4 and 5 and is intended to guide the agenda-setting work that must precede systematic CPE reform.

**Proposition: Mandatory Competency Standards as Structural Lever.** The most structurally significant intervention is the integration of technology competency requirements into teacher certification and ongoing professional accreditation. Research is needed to examine the mechanisms through which mandatory standards have produced CPE infrastructure change.

**Proposition: CPE Programme Redesign on Evidence-Based Principles.** CPE programmes should be redesigned in accordance with established effectiveness principles: sustained duration, active and contextualised learning formats, subject-specific content, and embedded coaching. Technology-specific content should explicitly address higher-complexity pedagogical applications – student performance analysis, adaptive differentiation, technology-enhanced formative assessment – rather than administrative efficiency tasks alone. Programme evaluation

studies using pre-post designs with practice observation data are needed to assess which redesign elements produce the greatest gains in classroom technology integration.

Proposition: Protected Time as a Policy Variable. The time constraint documented in Section 4.6 requires policy-level attention: research examining jurisdictions that have institutionalised protected professional learning time within teachers' contractual schedules.

Proposition: Longitudinal Research on CPE and Technology Integration Trajectories. The field requires longitudinal studies tracking not only CPE participation rates and self-reported confidence but observable changes in teaching behaviour, the quality and complexity of technology application over time, and downstream effects on student learning outcomes. Such studies would transform the diagnostic picture offered in this paper into a causal understanding capable of informing programme investment decisions at both institutional and policy levels.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper has identified and critically analysed six structural barriers to technology integration in continuing professional education for teachers, drawing on international comparative data from 2023 to 2024. The central argument has been that these barriers – coverage deficits, knowledge gaps, low CPE effectiveness, superficial technology

adoption, absent mandatory standards, and time constraints – do not constitute isolated policy challenges but form a self-reinforcing institutional system, each barrier enabling and amplifying the others.

This systemic character has two important implications. First, it explains why incremental, single-barrier interventions have consistently proven insufficient: addressing one node of a causal loop while others remain intact does not break the loop. Second, it establishes the diagnostic function of this paper as a substantive scholarly contribution in its own right. Before effective CPE reform can be designed, the structural architecture of the problem must be understood – not assumed, not approximated from case studies, but mapped through systematic analysis of the available evidence base.

The teaching profession's capacity to meaningfully deploy instructional technology in service of student learning is, increasingly, a prerequisite for educational quality at scale. The evidence reviewed here indicates that this capacity is not being systematically developed through existing CPE infrastructure, and that the structural conditions required to develop it – mandatory standards, adequate coverage, effective programme design, and protected learning time – are well understood, internationally documented, and in principle achievable. The work of achieving them begins with the clarity of diagnosis.

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## Section 2. General pedagogy

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### DIDACTIC POSSIBILITIES OF AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEECH SKILLS

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#### Abstract

Modern methods of teaching foreign languages are undergoing profound changes due to the digitalization of education, globalization and the rapid development of multimedia technologies. In these conditions, the use of authentic materials is of particular importance as one of the most effective means of developing speech skills. Authentic materials created by native speakers for real communication make it possible to bring the learning process closer to the natural language environment, which is especially important in an era when traditional textbooks are no longer able to reflect the dynamics of modern language, its hybrid forms, Internet discourse and multimodal formats. The relevance of this topic is reinforced by the fact that in 2024–2026 there is a sharp increase in the influence of social networks, video platforms, podcasts and digital services, which form new communication models, new genres and new speech practices. In these conditions, teaching a foreign language should take into account not only classical forms of speech, but also modern ways of interaction characteristic of the digital society.

**Keywords:** *interaction characteristic, authentic materials, multimodal forms of communication, traditional textbooks, dynamics of language, communicative competence*

The relevance of using authentic materials is reinforced by the fact that the modern language environment is rapidly changing under the influence of social networks, video platforms, podcasts, digital services and multimodal forms of communication. Traditional textbooks, even the most modern ones, do not have time to reflect the dynamics of

language, the emergence of new lexical units, hybrid genres, Internet memes, and visual-auditory forms of expression. In this regard, the methodists of Uzbekistan, such as Sh. Rakhmatullaev, M. Khamraev and D. Abdullayeva, emphasize the need to integrate authentic materials into the learning process as a means of forming real communicative

competence of students who are able to function in the global information space (Rakhmatullayev Sh., 2023.p.78).

The use of authentic materials allows students to immerse themselves in the natural language environment, providing contact with live speech, modern lexical models, cultural realities and communicative norms. Unlike adapted educational texts, which often simplify the structure of the language, authentic materials retain their natural complexity, which contributes to the development of perception skills and understanding of real speech. This is especially important in conditions where students are faced with the need to communicate with native speakers in the professional, academic or household sphere. Research by Uzbek and foreign methodologists shows that regular work with authentic materials significantly increases the level of formation of listening and speaking skills, promotes the development of intercultural competence and forms a stable motivation to learn a language (Gao X., 2024, p. 62).

Authentic materials acquire special importance in the development of listening skills. Authentic audio and video materials allow you to perceive the natural speech of native speakers, including various accents, speech tempo, emotional coloring and background noises. This creates conditions as close as possible to real communication, which is impossible when using artificially created educational audio recordings. Video materials have an additional advantage because they include non – verbal elements such as facial expressions, gestures, and intonation, which makes the perception process more natural. Uzbek researcher H. Turaev notes that video materials are one of the most effective means of developing multimodal information perception skills, which is especially important in the digital age (Turaev H., 2022. p. 45).

Authentic materials play an equally important role in the development of speaking skills. They allow you to simulate real communicative situations, stimulate the development of spontaneous speech, form the ability to express your own opinion, argue a position, and participate in a discussion. Based on authentic dialogues, scenes from films, interviews, and video blogs, students can re-

produce real communication models, master modern speech cliches, and study the peculiarities of conversational style, slang, and emotionally tinged speech. This is especially important in conditions where modern communication is characterized by a high degree of informality, hybrid genres and the active use of multimodal means of expression.

Authentic texts also have significant potential for developing reading skills. They allow you to expand your vocabulary, get acquainted with modern language norms, and explore various genres – from news articles and analytical reviews to social media posts, comments, instructions, and promotional materials. Working with such texts promotes the development of critical thinking, the ability to analyze information, compare points of view, identify arguments and evaluate the reliability of sources. In the context of information overload and the spread of unreliable data, these skills become especially important.

An important aspect of using authentic materials is their impact on the formation of students' intercultural competence. In the context of globalization, proficiency in a foreign language implies not only the ability to competently construct statements, but also the ability to understand cultural norms, values, and behavioral patterns characteristic of native speakers. Authentic materials allow students to get in touch with real cultural contexts, to see how language functions in everyday life, in the professional sphere, and in the media space. Through the analysis of videos, news reports, social networks, and promotional materials, students get the opportunity to observe cultural features that cannot be conveyed in adapted educational texts. Uzbek researchers such as N. Abdurakhmanova and U. Yuldashev emphasize that intercultural competence is becoming a key component of professional training, especially in the context of expanding international educational programs and academic mobility (Abdurakhmanova N., 2023. p. 67). The use of authentic materials also contributes to the development of critical thinking, which is especially important in the modern information society. Students are faced with the need to analyze, compare and evaluate information presented in various sources. Authentic texts, especially media and Internet

discourse materials, often contain elements of subjectivity, emotionality, and evaluativeness, which creates favorable conditions for the formation of critical analysis skills. Students learn to identify the author's position, determine the reliability of information, and compare different points of view. This contributes to the development of independent thinking and the formation of skills necessary for successful communication in modern society. Special attention in the methodology is paid to the issue of selecting authentic materials. Since such materials are created for native speakers, they may contain complex lexical and grammatical constructions, culturally specific elements, slang, idioms, which may make it difficult for students to perceive them.

Therefore, an important methodological principle is the principle of accessibility, which involves selecting materials based on the level of language proficiency. At the initial stages of training, preference should be given to short, visually supported materials such as commercials, short videos, and simple dialogues. At more advanced stages, you can use analytical articles, interviews, documentaries, and podcasts. Uzbek methodologist M. Khamrayev emphasizes that competent selection of materials avoids overloading students and ensures a gradual complication of educational material, which corresponds to the principles of developmental learning (Khamrayev M., 2024. p. 58).

Equally important is the issue of methodological organization of work with authentic materials. The effectiveness of their use depends on how well the system of tasks aimed at developing various speech skills is built. The teacher needs to create conditions under which authentic material becomes not just an object of perception, but also an incentive for active speech activity. For example, working

with video material may include the stages of a preliminary discussion of the topic, forecasting the content, analyzing key fragments, and performing communicative tasks related to discussing what they saw. This approach allows students to activate their mental activity, develop information analysis and interpretation skills, and develop the ability to express their own opinions. An important advantage of authentic materials is their ability to increase students' motivation. Modern students and schoolchildren actively interact with the digital environment, use social networks, watch video blogs, listen to podcasts, and read online publications. The inclusion of these materials in the learning process makes learning more interesting, modern and meaningful for students. They see that the language they are learning is a living communication tool, not a set of abstract rules. This contributes to the formation of internal motivation, which is a key factor in the successful acquisition of a foreign language. Research conducted in Uzbekistan shows that the use of authentic materials significantly increases students' interest in learning the language and promotes deeper learning of the material (Yuldashev U., 2023, p. 102).

Thus, authentic materials have significant didactic potential, allowing them to develop all types of speech activity, form intercultural competence, develop critical thinking, increase students' motivation and adapt them to real communication conditions. Their use meets modern requirements for teaching foreign languages, focused on the formation of practical skills and competencies necessary for successful communication in a global society. In the context of digitalization and the rapid development of information technology, authentic materials are becoming an integral part of the educational process, ensuring its relevance, effectiveness and practical orientation.

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## INTEGRATING COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO NON-PHILOLOGICAL STUDENTS: A CONTEMPORARY HIGHER EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of the integration of a communicative approach and digital technologies in teaching English to students of non-philological specialties. The theoretical foundations of communicative learning are considered, the role of digital educational resources is revealed, and the prospects for the development of language education in the context of the digital transformation of higher education are substantiated.

**Keywords:** *communicative approach, digital technologies, English, non-philological specialties, higher education, ICT*

The current stage of higher education development is characterized by the active introduction of digital technologies and the rethinking of traditional pedagogical approaches. In the context of globalization and digitalization of society, knowledge of English is becoming the most important tool for professional communication. This is especially true for students of non-philological specialties, for whom a foreign language acts not as a subject of specialization, but as a means of professional interaction.

In this regard, the integration of a communicative approach and digital technologies is of particular importance. Communicative learning is focused on developing the ability to use language in real-world communication

situations, while digital technologies provide access to a variety of educational resources and create an interactive learning environment. Thus, the study of the features of the integration of these approaches is an urgent scientific task.

Theoretical foundations of communicative learning. Communicative approach to teaching foreign languages has emerged as an alternative to traditional grammar and translation methods. Its main goal is to form a communicative competence that includes linguistic, sociolinguistic, discursive and strategic components (Himes D., 1972).

According to modern research, communicative learning involves the use of authentic materials, modeling of real speech situations

and active involvement of students in the communication process (Passov E.I., 1991). An important characteristic of this approach is the focus on the practical use of language, and not just on the assimilation of grammatical rules. In addition, the communicative approach is closely related to the activity-based approach, in which learning is considered as a process of active student interaction (Leontiev A.A., 2003). This is especially important for students of non-philological fields, as it allows them to link language learning with their future professional activities.

Thus, communicative learning creates conditions for the formation of practical language skills and the development of communicative competence. The role of digital technologies in English language teaching. Digital technologies play a key role in modernizing the educational process. They include a wide range of tools: online platforms, mobile applications, e-learning resources, distance learning systems, and multimedia tools. The use of digital technologies in English language teaching makes it possible to implement the principle of individualization of learning, since students can work at their own pace and choose educational resources in accordance with their needs (Semenova T.V., 2019).

In addition, the digital environment helps to increase the motivation of students. Interactive tasks, gamification and multimedia elements make the learning process more attractive and effective (Clark R., Mayer R., 2016). Particular importance is access to authentic materials (videos, podcasts, online articles) that allow students to immerse themselves in the language environment and develop skills in perceiving live speech (Galiskova N.D., 2018).

Consequently, digital technologies significantly expand the possibilities of teaching a foreign language and increase its effectiveness. Integration of communication approach and digital technologies. The integration of a communicative approach and digital technologies is one of the most promising areas for the development of language education. It involves combining traditional communication methods with modern digital tools.

One of the forms of such integration is blended learning, which combines face-to-face classes with online activities (Graham K.,

2006). Under this model, students have the opportunity to practice their language skills both in the classroom and in a digital environment. Digital technologies make it possible to implement communication tasks in an interactive form: online discussions, video conferences, joint projects, and the use of educational platforms. This contributes to the development of real communication skills and the formation of intercultural competence (Bykov V.Yu., 2020).

In addition, an important area is the use of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) technology, which involves the study of professional disciplines in a foreign language (Coyle D., 2010). This is especially important for students of non-philological specialties, as it allows them to integrate language training with professional training.

Thus, the integration of a communicative approach and digital technologies ensure a more effective formation of linguistic and professional competencies. Development prospects in modern higher education. In the context of the digital transformation of education, the integration of communicative learning and digital technologies is gaining strategic importance.

One of the key trends is the development of adaptive educational systems that use elements of artificial intelligence to personalize learning (Holmes W., 2019). Such systems make it possible to take into account the individual characteristics of students and improve the effectiveness of learning. Another important area is the expansion of distance and blended learning, which is especially important in the context of global challenges and digitalization of education. In addition, there is an increased interdisciplinary approach in which foreign language teaching is integrated with professional disciplines. This contributes to the formation of complex competencies that are in demand in the modern labor market (Zimnaya I.A., 2004).

Thus, the development prospects are linked to the further digitalization of education and the improvement of teaching methods. The integration of a communicative approach and digital technologies is the most important direction for the modernization of English language teaching for students of non-philological specialties. This approach

helps to increase the effectiveness of the educational process, the development of communicative competence and the formation of professional skills. In the future, it is nec-

essary to further study the mechanisms of digital technology integration and develop innovative teaching methods that meet the requirements of modern society.

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## THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF STUDENT SELF-ORGANIZATION IN A DIGITAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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### Abstract

This article examines current issues as well as the theoretical and methodological foundations of student self-organisation in the context of the digital transformation of higher education. The rationale for choosing this topic lies in the fact that the role of digital technologies, distance learning and e-learning resources has increased today. All of this requires a high degree of independence from students. The article also presents an analysis of the scientific and pedagogical literature devoted to the issue of personal self-organisation. Prospects for further research into this topic are identified.

**Keywords:** *higher education, digital transformation, self-organisation, teaching technologies, self-directed learning*

In today's world, the digital transformation of the education system is intrinsically linked to the development of modern society, and in this process it is bringing about fundamental changes in the content and organisation of higher education. The rapid development of information and communication technologies, the widespread implementation of distance and blended learning formats, artificial intelligence, the organisation of the learning process using LMS platforms, and its reliance on digital resources and online communication tools are placing new demands on students' learning activities. In modern circumstances, a student must not merely be a recipient of ready-made knowl-

edge, but must also emerge as an active organiser, manager and responsible agent of their own learning.

The work being carried out in the higher education system in our country in the context of globalisation and digital transformation, including the enhancement of vocational training for our future youth in line with modern requirements and the further elevation of innovative approaches to higher levels has become one of the priority areas. The reforms being carried out in this regard have been reflected in strategic documents. As an example of this, the 'Digital Uzbekistan – 2030' strategy, (Decree No. PD-60) 'On Approving the Concept for the Development of

the Public Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030' (Abdukodirov, A.A., 2015), and the Presidential Decree No. PF-5847 of 8 October 2019 'Concept for the Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan's Higher Education System until 2030' Priority directions for the consistent reform of the higher education system, determined on the basis of the Presidential Decrees (Decree No. PD-60), are aimed at preparing highly qualified specialists with modern knowledge and skills, This also entails taking the preparation of highly qualified specialists, who are able to work independently and self-organise in a digital learning environment, to a new qualitative level. Furthermore, the modernisation of the higher education system, The strategic priority of ensuring the sustainable development of the social sphere and economic sectors through the widespread introduction of advanced pedagogical and digital technologies into the educational process has been specifically recognised.

Furthermore, our research findings have revealed that the concept of students' self-organisation has been extensively and thoroughly examined in scientific studies conducted by scholars from CIS countries, foreign nations and our republic.

First and foremost, in the work entitled "India" by Abu Rayhan Biruni, one of our great thinkers, 'the scientific thinking of people begins with their self-awareness.' One must first be able to distinguish one's own capacities from one's limitations" (Abu Rayhan Beruni, Hindistan. 1963). Thus, one of the very first stages in the development of our thinking begins with the individual's self-awareness. Only a person who is self-aware and self-understanding can distinguish between the opportunities and limitations afforded to them.

Abu Ali ibn Sina, in his work *The Canon of Medicine*, also offers numerous definitions of self-organisation. In particular, he explains that throughout life one should adhere to the concept of moderation, namely in eating, sleep and labour activities, and furthermore he left his reflections on the ability to regulate the balance between appetite and reason, and on ensuring inner harmony in a person's mental state (Abu Ali ibn Sina. 1993). We know that to this day Abu Ali ibn

Sina's works are widely used in the medical field. However, our great scholar did not stop there but also conducted research in the field of pedagogy. He defined self-organisation as 'the conscious regulation of both physical and mental equilibrium,' emphasising that it is the regulation of one's own organisation.

Yusuf Khos Hājib's 'Qutadg'u Bilig' is primarily a moral-didactic work, embodying ideas on self-organisation. In this work, the personal and political spheres are treated in a complementary fashion. Furthermore, ideas on self-organisation are also presented. Accordingly, it explains and elaborates on personal self-restraint, the primacy of reason and justice, the unity of word and deed, valuing time and adhering to discipline, as well as the concept of a word and its fulfilment. (Yusuf Khos Khojib. 1971).

The work emphasises that if a person's inner virtues are not properly cultivated, they cannot achieve external success, and that moral self-control leads to a responsible way of life. The Sultan of the Realm of Poetry, our great forebear Alisher Navoi, also recorded his thoughts on self-organisation in his work 'Mahbub-ul-Qulub.' In the work, special emphasis is placed on the ability to rein in one's desires, to work constantly on oneself, on honesty and integrity, and on the harmony between knowledge and practice and their outcomes. Alisher Navoi's work is primarily devoted to human morality and the ideals of the perfect person. Navoi portrays the self-formation of individuals as a process of spiritual self-cultivation and striving for perfection.

In these works, special attention is paid to important motivational processes, such as self-organisation and the ability to work independently on oneself, as factors serving to ensure the individual's psychological development, special attention is paid to important motivational processes such as self-organisation, independent work on oneself, the ability to manage one's own activities and self-assessment skills, and scientific ideas are put forward in this regard.

R. A. Sabirjanov, based on the results of his research, R. A. Sabirjanov, drawing on the results of his research, writes about the constant use of computer technologies by students of philological disciplines in higher education institutions in the Republic of Uz-

bekistan during the independent work process and, as a result, the role and conditions of self-organisation (Sabirjanov, R.A., 2019).

M. S. Otazhovanova's 'Theoretical Foundations of the Problem of Developing Students' Self-Organisation in their Academic Activities through the Use of Time Management Technology', In the article entitled 'Theoretical Foundations of the Problem of Developing Students' Self-Organisation in Learning Activities through the Use of Time Management Technology,' the author distinguishes the specific nature of the relationship between the teaching process and its greater reliance on independent activity. (the teaching process) from general secondary education, emphasising the distinctiveness of the relationships between them and their greater reliance on independent activity. It also notes that students at higher education institutions possess a certain level of self-organisation skills, but the skills necessary for effective planning and management of their academic activities have not yet been fully developed. As a result, it has been scientifically demonstrated that, despite students' abilities and high aspirations, this may be the reason why educational outcomes fail to meet expectations. It was explained that students should make effective use of time-management technologies in their self-governance, and that these technologies can greatly assist in developing their self-organisation (Otajonova, M., 2023).

In the CIS countries as well, many scholars have expressed views on self-organisation in their research. In particular, among the scholars who have studied the characteristics of the self-organisation process in students' learning activities at a higher education institution are S. S. Amirov (Amirov, S.S. 2008; T.N. Boldysheva (Boldysheva, T.N., 2011), G. Dobrovetskaya (Dobrovetskaya, G., 2006, V.I. Donsov (Donsov, V.I., 2004) and other scholars have reflected this in their own scientific research. The need to re-examine the issue of developing self-organisation skills in the educational process on the basis of innovative approaches is primarily linked to enhancing the effectiveness of educational activity. This issue has been extensively covered in the scientific research of Yu. K. Babansky (Babansky, Yu. K., 1982), N. F. Talizina (Talyzina, N. F., 1984) and oth-

er scholars. Moreover, the systematic analysis and modelling of the unified pedagogical process have been substantiated in the scientific works of scholars such as V. P. Bepalko, V. I. Zagvyazinskiy and V. V. Kraevskiy.

The term 'self-organization' was first used in a scientific publication in 1947 by William Ashby (Ashby W. R., 1947). Furthermore, as a pedagogical category, this concept is regarded not only as an individual quality but also as a competence developed in the educational process.

The concept of self-organisation can be defined as follows: each person consciously plans and regulates their own activity, as well as their internal psychological processes, motivation, emotional stability, stress resilience and integrative-pedagogical abilities. Self-organisation improves each person's life activities and increases their level of intrinsic motivation.

According to the results of our research, self-organisation of the individual as a pedagogical category includes the following: it determines the substantive quality of the educational process; it reveals the internal mechanism of personal development; explains the effectiveness of independent learning; defines the student's position as a subject in the pedagogical process.

Thus, in pedagogy, under conditions of digitalisation, the self-formation of the individual is regarded as a pedagogical category, and its theoretical and methodological foundations have been developed and scientifically substantiated by scholars. However, despite various reforms being carried out in pedagogy, the issue of developing pedagogical technologies that effectively support students' self-organisation processes has not yet been systematically explored or studied to a sufficient extent. Particularly at a time when the theoretical and methodological integration of young people's self-governance mechanisms with the opportunities of the digital environment demands in-depth research, it is essential that we pay special attention to these matters.

In our view, the promising scientific directions that should be developed in this area in the future encompass a number of important issues. In particular, integrative pedagogical models of a digital learning environment that support the process of student self-organisa-

tion, the development of flexible pedagogic technologies aimed at effectively managing independent learning activities is of great importance. Furthermore, alongside creating effective mechanisms that provide students with pedagogic and psychological support during the digital learning process, Improving the methodology for the integrated application of reflective monitoring and self-assessment tools with digital platforms is also one of the pressing tasks in this area today.

From this perspective, creating pedagogical technologies that foster students' self-or-

ganisation skills in a digital learning environment is of great importance. Scientifically substantiating such technologies, developing their theoretical principles and determining their practical effectiveness through experimental trials is currently regarded as one of the pressing scientific issues. Addressing such issues serves to enhance the effectiveness of the educational process, foster independent development strategies in students, and develop their modern competencies. Therefore, research in this field is considered important not only theoretically but also practically.

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## Section 3. General psychology

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### CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS OF CAUCASIAN ALBANIA – KHACHKAR. PSYCHOLOGY OF THE PEOPLES OF THE CAUCASUS

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#### Abstract

The cross has an older history. Again, it is not connected with Europe and the West, but with Asia and the East. But let's also say that the cross came to the Turks from outside as a symbol of religious faith. In time, the Turks saw it on the chest of the Buddha (statue). This happens 600 years before the time of Christianity. It is also known that in the 4th century, Christianity was still not recognized as an independent religion. It was considered a branch of Judaism. See, all this confirms the Asian origin of the cross. It is from this period that the cross became a symbol of Christianity with the help of George and took its place in the dome of the Armenian church. First, the cross, and then temples, prayers, icons, church bells – everything in church paraphernalia – all of these gained important citizenship rights among Armenians by passing through the Turks.

**Keywords:** *Albanian, Armenian, cross, religion, Islam, Christianity, Turkish, monument, cross stone*

#### History

Turkic tribes had an undeniable role in the administration of the Albanian state, in the development of its culture and architecture. That's why many historians use the term "Albanian-Turkish architecture" when talking about Albanian architecture, which is completely consistent with that period. In the early and mature medieval commemorative plastic of Caucasian Albania, certain pre-Christian worldviews and symbolic im-

ages were reflected. The images of the Albanian cross stones were formed over many centuries, first under the influence of two, then three religions, which were organically crossed in the images of stelae of religious symbolism. All the uniqueness, originality and fundamental difference of Armenian khachkars of cross stones comes from this. As shown in the formation of Albanian grave, memorial and border stelae, cross stones, the ideas about the structure of the world on

them have been proven to be pre-Christian Turkish stelae.

With this, Armenian “Khachkars” began to appear in Tsarist Russia and Bolshevik Russia. In fact, the root of the word khachkar is a word of Persian origin, which was transferred from the Persian language to the Armenian language. This word means “work, hard work” in Persian, and when translated into Armenian, it means “deaf”, stone. Therefore, the meaning of the word “khachkar” in Armenian is “cross stone”. The chairman of the Albanian-Udi Christian community, Robert Mobili, specifically stated in his statement, “They falsify the Albanian cultural heritage and monuments belonging to the Udinese and present them as Armenian churches. Armenians changed the inscriptions and crosses on the churches. This seems obvious. Crosses of Albanian churches are different” (Aliyev Z., p. 3).

The Albanian cross is the only cross in the world that has signs that include signs of pre-Christian beliefs and understanding of the universe. All the compositions of these crosses are reflected as a symbol of the connection between heaven and earth, the sun, light, light and fertility. All Albanian inscribed stones, with the regular placement of pre-Christian beliefs and cosmic forces, form unique images subject to religious-artistic laws, which are not found in the cross images of other nations (Shanidze, 1938, p. 3).

In the monuments of the Albanian period, especially in the artistic compositions in the decor of the cross stones, in addition to the cross, which is a symbol of Christianity, various elements of Turkish beliefs, worldview, art traditions and culture can be observed. All this unequivocally confirms that the Albanian monuments belong to the Turkish ethnoculture. British orientalist and archaeologist K. Wilson, talking about ancient Iranian culture, shows that “... the obtained information and signs suggest that the oldest cultural center was Azerbaijan” (Aliyeva K. M., 1999, p. 56–57).

Because Albanian crosses have three leaves and belong to the type of “rose-leaf” crosses. They are also called “liliaflur” cross in some literature, and the “trinity” on the arms and wings of these crosses represents the ancient beliefs of the Albanians (Sun,

Moon and Fire) (Smirnova Inna. 2006, p. 12–19).

However, all the examples shown by Galichyan were taken from the area where Albanians lived (Tbilisi suburbs, Sulfa of Iran), and later Armenianized with minor changes.

Albanian cross stones are amazing for their plasticity, depth of thought, and their boldness in solving architectural-artistic issues resulting from the organic synthesis of architecture, art, and religious symbolism based on folk beliefs and traditions formed over the centuries. Theorists divide the Albanian cross stones into four groups according to their artistic composition and unique image characteristics, which are Khachin, Arsak, Juga and Yeniveng cross stones.

According to researchers studying the Albanian stelae, they bear the influence of ancient anthropomorphic artworks. R. Goyushov, after examining the female statue discovered in the Khinisli settlement, notes that this ancient work of art undoubtedly had a religious significance. The opinions of various researchers about the anthropomorphic origin of early medieval Albanian stelae are confirmed by many tombstones of Azerbaijan and Dagestan, which belong to the greater part of the territory, as well as to historical Caucasian Albania. Many stelae of Dagestan are carved in an anthropomorphic form with a prominent human head (Akhundov, D., Akhundov, M., 1984, p. 39–48).

Crossing of Christian iconography, Muslim decor and symbols of pagan religions in the memorial works of Albanians (Azerbaijani) freely practicing Christianity or Islam is their main distinguishing feature.

Research conducted in Julfa region shows that Turks lived in this area 4–3 thousand years ago – historical monuments were discovered in Mahabbir, Goynuk, Ameniyyar villages. It was determined that Julfa was a place where Turkic tribes lived since ancient times. After the spread of Christianity in this geography, 24 large Turkish families (and 8 small Turkish families) together with the Shahdag peoples living here create the state of Albania.

According to the information of Claudius Ptolemy, one of the ancient authors and numerous other written historical sources, the territory of the Caucasian Albania state,

which was formed in the territory of Azerbaijan, covered an area from the beginning of our era to the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century from the Araz River in the south to the North Caucasus, in the east from the west coast of the Caspian Sea to the lands located west of Lake Goycha.

There are hundreds of temples, churches and monasteries belonging to the rich architectural heritage of Caucasian Albania on the territory of Azerbaijan. In particular, Julfa has a necropolis belonging to the Albanian period. The Juga necropolis, where ancient cross stones are located, is located in the western part of the city. The oldest graves in the cemetery belong to the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the last graves to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In addition to hundreds of Albanian cross stones, the necropolis contains a large number of chests decorated with various Christian motifs, ram and horse-shaped tombstones from the Aggoyunlu and Garagoyunlu periods. According to Alexandre de Rod, a French traveler who visited Julfa in 1648, there were up to 10,000 cross stones in the cemetery even then. Due to the Ottoman-Safavid wars in Nakhchivan, the occupation and genocidal policy of the Armenians who moved here after the Turkmenchay Treaty, and the occupation of Tsarist Russia and the Bolsheviks, the Juga Necropolis, like many monuments here, was damaged, and only a part of those cross stones arrived in 1903–1904.

The Armenians moved to these areas by the Russians at different times, the inscriptions of the Albanian monuments were defaced and replaced with new fake inscriptions indicating that the temples belonged to Armenians. Especially during the Soviet occupation, hundreds of examples of Albanian cultural heritage were stolen from Julfa and taken to Armenia, and they are currently exhibited as Armenian khachkars in the courtyard of Uchmuadzin cathedral. Changes were made on the crossstones taken to Uchmuadzi,

their Albanian written parts were erased or completely broken, but Albanian inscriptions still remain on many crossstones left in Cuga.

They just got fed up with renewing the boring Armenian cross stones, which do not have any artistic meaning, and recently they started using the artistic examples and ornaments of the Albanian cross stones.

In this way, Armenians carved cross stones, headstones and sign stones using the method of engraving and embossing, which is the same as the decorative design of a large number of Albanian cross stones (only by changing the ornaments and decorations of these stones) in different parts of Azerbaijan, in the areas that were once recreation centers of the region, on the roadsides, around the springs, in well-maintained places of public residential centers, in gardens, parks, on top of architectural monuments, in cemeteries and in various residential areas.

Experts know that the height of Armenian khachkars was 1.25 to 1.75 times higher than their width. In some cases, it was taken twice as high as wide. Crossing of Christian iconography, Muslim decor and symbolism of old religions in memorial works of Albanians freely practicing Christianity or Islam is one of the main distinguishing features of Albanian cross stones and Armenian khachkars (Aliyev Z. B., 2019, p. 24–26).

### Conclusion

The elements of Turkish shamanism are clearly visible in the monuments with Albanian crosses, while the Armenians have no mythology, so their khachkars are devoid of motifs. And most importantly, as someone who studies Armenian and Albanian khans, I can confidently say that you know just by looking at their material. Unlike Albanian cross stones, Armenian khachkars were mostly made of tuff stone, which is soft and easy to rub, while Albanian cross stones were made of traditional local hard rock stones.

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## Section 4. Higher professional education

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### THE IMPACT OF STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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#### Abstract

In recent years, student-centered learning has gained increasing attention as an effective alternative to traditional teacher-centered instruction. This study explores the influencing of student-centered learning on students' academic achievement and motivation. The research is based on an analysis of recent scholarly literature comparing traditional and student-centered approaches in various educational contexts. The findings suggest that student-centered learning creates a more engaging educational environment where students take a more active role in the learning process. Such approaches help learners develop independent thinking skills, participate more confidently in classroom activities, and understand the subject more deeply. In addition, increased interaction and autonomy often have a positive effect on students' motivation and overall academic achievement. The study also highlights that the wider use of student-centered methods in higher education may contribute to more effective and meaningful learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** *student-centered learning, academic achievement, motivation, higher education, teaching methods*

Over the past decades, there has been a gradual shift in educational paradigms from teacher-centered instruction to more learner-focused approaches. Traditional teaching methods often position students as passive recipients of knowledge, whereas student-centered learning emphasizes active engagement, autonomy, and collaboration. This shift reflects broader changes in how learning is

understood in modern pedagogy. Student-centered learning is based on the idea that students learn more effectively when they are actively involved in the learning process. Instead of simply listening to lectures, learners are encouraged to participate, ask questions, and take responsibility for their own progress. As a result, the classroom becomes a more interactive and dynamic environment.

Recent studies have increasingly emphasized the value of this approach in modern education. For example, According to Wang (2023), students who study in student-centered learning environments are often more motivated and demonstrate stronger academic performance than learners taught through traditional lecture-based methods. This can be explained by the fact that students are more engaged in the learning process and feel a greater sense of responsibility for their own progress. In a similar vein, Munif et al. (2025) reported that student-centered methods contribute to improved academic achievement by encouraging active participation, collaboration, and deeper engagement with the material. When students are given the opportunity to discuss ideas, work together, and apply what they learn in practice, they are more likely to understand the content at a deeper level and retain it for longer.

Despite these promising findings, questions remain regarding how and why student-centered learning affects academic outcomes. Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of student-centered learning on academic achievement by analyzing recent empirical research. This study employs a qualitative research design based on a review and analysis of existing academic literature. The selected sources include peer-reviewed journal articles that focus on student-centered learning and its impact on academic performance.

The analysis draws mainly on studies by Wang (2023), Munif et al. (2025), Bonem et al. (2020), and Jackson et al. (2025). These sources were selected because they are directly relevant to the topic, follow sound research methods, and focus on higher education settings. Together, they offer a balanced and reliable basis for understanding how student-centered learning influences academic outcomes. The research process involved identifying key themes across the selected studies, such as student engagement, learning environment, teaching practices, and academic outcomes. A comparative approach was used to examine differences between traditional and student-centered methods. By synthesizing findings from multiple sources, the aim of the study to provide a clearer understanding of how student-centered learning contributes to academic success.

The analysis of the selected studies reveals several consistent patterns regarding the effectiveness of student-centered learning. First, student-centered approaches significantly enhance student engagement. Learners are more likely to participate actively in class activities when they are given opportunities to express their ideas and collaborate with peers. This increased involvement contributes to a more meaningful learning experience. Second, academic achievement tends to improve in student-centered environments. Wang (2023) also noted that students taught through student-centered methods generally performed better on assessments than those studying in traditional classroom settings. The study suggests that active participation in the learning process can positively influence both understanding and academic achievement. Similarly, Munif et al. (2025) observed clear improvements in students' academic results after student-centered strategies were introduced, indicating that these methods can have a consistent and positive impact on learning outcomes.

Another important point that emerges from the analysis is the role of the learning environment. It is not only the teaching technique itself that matters, but also the overall atmosphere in which learning takes place. According to Bonem et al. (2020), the overall classroom atmosphere particularly how teaching is conducted has a strong influence on student outcomes. A supportive and interactive environment encourages deeper understanding and better retention of knowledge. Additionally, Jackson et al. (2025) demonstrated that the use of specific learner-centered teaching practices is positively associated with higher exam performance. Their findings suggest that not just the approach itself, but the consistent application of effective strategies plays a key role in improving academic results.

The findings of this study demonstrate that student-centered learning has a positive impact on academic achievement. One of the main reasons for this is the increased level of student engagement. When students are actively involved in the learning process, they tend to understand and remember information more effectively. Another significant factor is the development of critical thinking skills. Student-centered approaches often

require learners to analyze information, solve problems, and apply knowledge in new contexts. These skills are essential for academic success and lifelong learning.

At the same time, the effectiveness of student-centered learning depends on how it is implemented. As Bonem et al. (2020) suggest, the quality of the learning environment plays a crucial role. Simply adopting a student-centered approach is not enough; it must be supported by appropriate teaching practices and a positive classroom atmosphere. Furthermore, teachers play a key role in facilitating this process. They need to guide students, provide feedback, and create opportunities for meaningful interaction. This requires not only pedagogical knowledge but also flexibility and adaptability.

While the benefits are clear, some challenges remain. Moving away from traditional, teacher-led instruction can be demanding for both teachers and students. It often requires a shift in mindset, as well as adjust-

ments in teaching practices and assessment methods. Teachers may need time to redesign their lessons and become comfortable with new roles, while students may also need guidance to adapt to a more active and independent way of learning.

In conclusion, student-centered learning represents an effective approach to improving academic achievement in modern education. The findings of this study show that such approaches enhance student engagement, motivation, and overall performance. By creating interactive and supportive learning environments, educators can help students take a more active role in their education. However, successful implementation requires careful planning, appropriate teaching strategies, and continuous professional development for teachers. Future research could explore how student-centered learning can be adapted to different educational contexts and how its long-term impact on learning outcomes can be further improved.

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## Section 5. Psychological aspects of historical events

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### SHEKI – OSSIKA. AN ANCIENT CITY OF CAUCASIAN ALBANIA

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#### Abstract

Ossika is recognized as one of the ancient cities listed in Caucasian Albania, as documented by the ancient Greek cartographer and geographer Claudius Ptolemy during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. It has been proposed by Minorsky that Ossika could potentially be equated with the vanished city of Sheki. In the latter half of the 19th century, I. Yanovsky used Ptolemy's map and coordinates to determine the approximate location of this city. According to Yanovsky, Ossika is situated southwest of Nukha and in close proximity to the village of Shekili. However, Minorsky casts doubt on other proposed identifications.

**Keywords:** *Azerbaijan, Caucasus, Ossika, Caucasian Albania*

In 1924, at the Eastern Faculty of Azerbaijan State University, a course of lectures delivered by V. V. Bartold was devoted to the history of Caucasian Albania. Localizing the territory of Caspiana, V. V. Bartold attributes this region to the area at the confluence of the Araxes and Kura rivers, where the city of Baylakan was later located, while the territory of Albania was "located directly near the Caspian Sea."

A more interesting brief article by V. Bartold on the history of medieval Arran was published in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. According to V. V. Bartold, Arran corresponded to Albania; its territory extended from Der-

bent to Tiflis, and to the south and southwest it ended at the Araxes River (Araz – Z. G.). Later, Arran was the name for the region between Shirvan and Azerbaijan (the interfluvium of the Kura and Araxes). The city of Partav (Barda), to which the capital of Albania was transferred in the 6th century AD, was located on the Terter River. As late as the 10th century, in the area of the city of Barda, people spoke "Arrani," i.e., "Albanian." Arran was conquered by the Arabs under Caliph Uthman (644–656). V. V. Bartold says nothing about the settlement of tribes and socio-economic relations in medieval Albania.

In 1926, the scientific work of A. A. Bakikhanov, "Gulistan-i Iram" (The Rose Garden of Iram), was published, where he first describes the history of Azerbaijan from ancient times up to its incorporation into the Russian Empire in 1813. In his research, A. A. Bakikhanov localizes the ancient settlement of Caucasian Albania at the site of present-day Derbent, Niga at the site of Nukha, the Albanus River as Samur, and the Casius River as Manas. He identifies Kemakhiya as Shamakhi, and Kabala or Kabalaka as present-day Gabala. As the ancient Roman erudite writer Pliny the Elder wrote in the 1st century BC, this was one of the ancient cities of Caucasian Albania, the main city, i.e., the capital.

In an article on the history of Sheki, published in 1927 in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, V. Minorsky also touches upon the history of Caucasian Albania. In ancient times, the Sheki region was part of Albania, which was a confederation of multilingual tribes (Z.G.: presumably living in Caucasian Albania). The remnants of these tribes are the Udi people, originating from the region of Otena, which was located on the territory of present-day Ganja, Shamkir, and Tovuz. The Udi language is related to the Shahdag group of languages (Khinalug, Budukh, etc.). According to Vladimir Minorsky, Kabala and the Albanian Gates correspond to Gabala and the pass leading to the Samur valley (the road from Khachmaz and Kutkashen (Gabala)).

Ossika is one of the listed ancient cities of Caucasian Albania, according to the ancient Greek cartographer and geographer Claudius Ptolemy (1st-2nd centuries AD). Ossika, as Minorsky suggested, may correspond to the vanished city of Sheki. In the late first half of the 19th century, I. Yanovsky, based on Ptolemy's map and coordinates, determined the location of this city, i.e., Ossika, as southwest of the city of Nukha, not far from the village of Shekili. However, according to Minorsky, other identifications are doubtful. The toponym "Nukha" itself appears only in the 18th century after its destruction by a natural disaster. However, considering the construction of cities by the Sasanians and Arabs, they probably meant the restoration of settlements that had existed before them.

It is necessary to analyze a short but substantive article by A. E. Krymsky on the histo-

ry of Caucasian Albania concerning the cities of Kabala and Sheki. A. E. Krymsky asserts that the territory of Albania was located on the left and right banks of the Kura River from Iberia to the Caspian Sea. Albanians lived on both banks, despite the political border that sometimes ran along the Kura. Subsequently, Albania or (Aghvania) was called Arran and covered both banks of the Kura River from Derbent to Georgia. Later, Arran is localized only on the right bank of the Kura, between the Kura and Araxes.

Regarding the toponym Niga, researchers' opinions differ: S. S. Veliyev, following A. A. Bakikhanov, believes that Ptolemy thus designated ancient Sheki – Nukha, destroyed by the earthquake of 1772 (Bakikhanov A. A., p. 13). Muravyov localizes Niga in the area of Dzveli Anaga in eastern Georgia, near Tibaani (Veliyev S. S. 1976, p. 132).

Not far from the Sheki region of Azerbaijan, in 66 BC, on the bank of the Aldzhigan-chay (i.e., this river), the fiercest battle took place between the Albanians and the Roman legions. The work of B. Dorn contains interesting information about the reason the Romans named this river Albanus. The fact is that in Latin, "alba" means "white." During the flood, streams flowing into the Albanus River – Aldzhigan-chay – carry white, foamy water. The author draws an analogy with the name of the Kura River valley, which in Azerbaijani sounds like Agdash, due to the white sand covering it (Krymsky A. E., p. 342). It is appropriate here to recall the words of the French geographer and sociologist Jean Jacques Élisée Reclus that "rivers carry on their waves both the history and the life of peoples."

Thus, regarding the localization of Ossika, the analogy with the name Sheki is simply obvious. This name is associated with the ancient Eastern tribe of the Saks – one of the branches of the Scythians, whose totem was the deer. Their name also gave rise to the name of ancient Sakasena – one of the regions of Caucasian Albania, which occupied the right bank of the Kura and part of the plain of Garabagh.

Sakasena (Greek Σακασηνήν, Sakasena from Persian Saka-šayana – "inhabited territory of the Saks" Bartold V. V., 1925). is a historical region on the territory of modern Azerbaijan. It was the former core of the

Scythian kingdom of Ishkuza that existed in the 7th-6th centuries BC (Bartold V. V., 1925). It received its name from the Scythian tribes (Saks in the Eastern tradition) (Bartold W., 1913). At the end of the 6th – beginning of the 5th century BC, it was part of the satrapy of Media under the Achaemenids (Krymsky A. E.).

In this regard, when analyzing written sources, we consider only those ancient authors whose information touches upon issues directly related to the ancient cities of Caucasian Albania. Thus, in Strabo's "Geography," consisting of 17 books, Book 11 (P. 490–533) is devoted to the study of the Caucasus, Hyrcania, Parthia, Bactria, Media, and Armenia. In his account of the ancient cities of Caucasian Albania, Strabo mentions only two cities in Utia – Ainiania and Anariaca: "The Ainianes in Utia built a city." The Ainianes were a Thessalian tribe, and therefore, from Strabo's text, it can be concluded that Greek settlers lived in the territory of Utia. A clear example is the writing on stone stelae with inscriptions in ancient Greek discovered on the territory of Sheki (in the village of Dekhne).

The first information about the cities of Caucasian Albania is found in the encyclopedic work of the ancient Roman writer Pliny the Elder (22 or 24 BC – 79 AD), who considered Kabalaka-Khabalaka (Gabala) one of the main ancient cities of Caucasian Albania. According to the ancient Greek geographer and cartographer Claudius Ptolemy (who lived in Alexandria in the 2nd century AD), this city was located between two rivers, the Albanus and the Casius. Ptolemy also indicated the existence here of six settlements besides Kabala: Khobota, Moziata, Misia, Khadana, and Alama. The author mentions two settlements in the interfluvium of the Casius and Herrus: Tiauna and Tabilaka. Regarding the city of Tabilaka, according to V. V. Latyshev, the manuscripts of Ptolemy instead of this name contain Pliny's word Cabalaka. The last city on Ptolemy's list is Tilbis, located between the Herrus River and the Soana River.

In his work "On the Question of the Borders of Ancient Albania" (Moscow, 1937, Vol. I), S. V. Yushkov points out that the Soana River is the Terek River, Herrus is the Aksay, Kaysiy is the Sulak, and Albanus is the Samur. He also stated that the entire mod-

ern territory of Dagestan was entirely part of the state of Caucasian Albania (Yushkov S. V., 1937). As Ptolemy reports, the Albanus River originates in the upper reaches of the Caucasus Mountains, and these two rivers flow into the Caspian Sea. Between these two rivers, Ptolemy lists the following settlements: Mosisa, Iobula, Iuna, Embolayon, Adiabla, Ablana, Mamekhia, Ossika, Sioda, as well as Samunida, i.e., Samunis (Mingachevir – Z.G.). Along with Samunis at the mouth of the Kura River, Ptolemy places the ancient city of Baruka, and along the western shore of the Caspian, cities such as Taleiba, Gelda, Albania, and Gaytara. Ptolemy's text on cities states: "Beyond the mouth of the Soana River – the city of Telayba, at the mouth of the Albanus River – the city of Gaytara or Gangara, beyond which is the mouth of the Kura River." The ancient city of Gaytara or Gangara – the existence of this city suggests Baku; according to K. V. Trever, the ancient city of Baku grew up on the site where this ancient city once stood. Academician V. V. Bartold argued that Gaytara was located south of Baku, on the site of Alat, where "the railway from Tiflis approaches the Caspian Sea," beyond which is the mouth of the Kura River, at the mouth of the Pirsaat. Ptolemy also provides a list of cities and settlements indicating their location between specific rivers and with degrees.

According to Strabo, before the emergence of a unified Albanian state in the second half of the 2nd century BC, a state was formed as a result of the unification of 26 tribes and nationalities speaking different languages and having their own king. Ptolemy reports the existence of 29 settlements in Caucasian Albania: "the Alban people hold the whole plain along the Cyrus" ("planitium omnem a Cyro usque Albanorum gens tenet").

Until recently, archaeological evidence for written sources was insufficient. However, excavations conducted on the territory of Sheki in two necropolises, "Tepebashi" and "Yonjaly," in the village of Fazyl, confirmed the fact that ancient Scythians lived here. During the period of Alexander the Great and the fall of the Achaemenid Empire, the territory of Sakasena was incorporated into the territory of Atropatene, and then into Caucasian Albania. We know that the first Albanian king, Aran, was from the Sisak tribe. Written

sources and found artifacts confirm that the state structure of Albania was based on the state structure of the ancient Scythians. Here we clearly observe the Early Iron Age, the Iron Age, and the gradual transition from the Sakian era to the ancient period.

Archaeological excavations in the village of Fazyl reflect the culture of various Turkic peoples united in the states of Mannaia, the Scythian Kingdom, Atropatene, and Albania, which played an important role in ethno-political history, as well as in the process of forming a single people on the territory of

Azerbaijan. In Albania, various ethnic groups and religions met and interacted, forming a distinctive and rich culture. Along with the worship of the moon, sky, sun, and the single god Tangri, Christianity gradually developed. Evidence of this is the church in the village of Kish – the mother of churches in the Caucasus, founded by Elisaeus in the 1st century AD.

In the 21st century, one of the oldest cities in Azerbaijan – Sheki – became part of the UNESCO cultural heritage. Having absorbed many cultures, the city of Sheki remembers its ancient history.

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## Section 6. Psychology

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### ELEANOR ROOSEVELT DECLARED, "NO ONE CAN MAKE YOU FEEL INFERIOR WITHOUT YOUR CONSENT". IS SHE RIGHT?

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#### Abstract

Through a discussion of Eleanor Roosevelt's quote, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent," this paper uses psychology and sociology research to explore how such a view is oversimplified and idealistic. Since consenting or giving permission is a conscious choice, this paper argues that by attributing feelings of inferiority to weakness, choice, or lack of willpower, Roosevelt's perspective overlooks the pivotal role of subconscious conditioning and past trauma in feelings of inferiority.

**Keywords:** *inferiority, perception, psychology, consent, conscious, unconscious, sociology, Festinger's social comparison theory, Daryl J. Bem's self-perception theory, emotion schema theory, Cognitive Behavior Therapy(CBT)*

#### Introduction

Consent is permitting something to occur, and feelings of inferiority are perceptions of not being good enough. According to John Locke, perception is an **unconscious** process of receiving ideas. However, consenting or giving permission is a **conscious** choice (Berkeley, 1961). Therefore, Eleanor Roosevelt's quote, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent," is misleading. For example, in Kenneth and Mamie Clark's doll tests of racial perceptions due to segregation, most of the Black children chose the white doll over the identical Black doll, which demonstrates that they see Black people like themselves as infe-

rior due to societal conditioning without conscious choice or consent (Clark & Clark, 1949).

In one of my favorite books, *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway, after the biggest marlin that the fisherman Santiago has ever seen is lost to savage forces of nature, he famously says, "A man can be destroyed but not defeated." By saying this, Santiago states that he will never consent to feeling inferior, even if he is physically on the edge of life and death. Such a never-give-up attitude has inspired numerous readers over many generations. However, there is one major problem: Santiago, the fisherman with ultimate willpower, is fictional. In the real

world, psychologists have shown that individuals' feelings often arise from conditioning and subconscious processes, not active choice. The word "consent", in contrast, implies an active choice. To cope with this sad reality, psychological research has provided ways to cope with feelings of inferiority by retraining the subconscious process of automatic feelings, making those scientific ways more effective than wishing to be the man with infinite willpower. Hence, Eleanor Roosevelt's quote is oversimplified and idealistic because she overlooks the pivotal role of subconscious conditioning in feelings of inferiority by attributing such feelings to weakness and lack of willpower.

### Psychological Studies

Discovering the how and why behind feelings of inferiority involves the idea of perception, a fundamental concept of psychology that has long been studied by researchers. Cognitively, how do individuals form self-perceptions? Is the process conscious or subconscious? Leon Festinger's social comparison theory suggests that people evaluate their abilities and self-worth by subconsciously comparing themselves to others. For those comparisons, individuals prefer objective standards. However, in the absence of objective standards, people have a hardwired instinct to compare themselves to others (Suls & Wheeler, 2012, pp. 1, 460–482).

In other words, people do not wake up and choose to compare themselves to others, but rather their brains naturally do so in the absence of objective data. Research by Jerry Suls and Ladd Wheeler shows that comparing yourself to others will cause you to refine your thought patterns according to the results of these comparisons (Suls & Wheeler, 2012, pp. 1, 460–482). These results demonstrate that when we repeatedly find ourselves on the losing end of social comparisons, it perpetuates a loop of negative thoughts that condition us to feel inferior. The innate, instinctive tendency to compare oneself to others quietly uses data we collect from those comparisons to sculpt our self-perceptions.

Daryl J. Bem's self-perception theory demonstrates another reason why people can feel inferior without consent – individuals' attitudes and emotions are often inferred

from observing their behavior in context. That means it is natural for people to feel unworthy when their behavior falls below expectations. Bem's study includes a fascinating example that uses cartoons and colored lights to show that participants' perceptions are influenced by previous behaviors.

In this experiment, participants are initially asked to rate a series of cartoons as "funny," "unfunny," or "neutral." Then, they undergo a training session in which they need to answer simple questions about themselves with colored lights. They are instructed to tell the truth under an amber light or lie under a green light. After the training session, participants will re-rate their "neutral" cartoons as either "funny" or "unfunny" with green and amber lights. However, they are not reminded to follow the rules from the "training" session. Finally, after the lights are turned off, they are asked to re-rate the cartoons that they previously rated as neutral based on their honest opinions as either "funny," "unfunny," or "neutral" (Bem, 1967). Just as the Self Perception Theory predicts, people who say that the cartoon is funny under the truth light are more likely to rate the same cartoon as funny when asked for their honest opinion. That is, the truth light has molded their perception like clay!

Inferiority can occur without consent because one's opinions of oneself and others are subconsciously inferred from observation. For example, if the teacher gives you a bad test grade by mistake, you will likely infer that you are stupid or lazy because society conditions you to believe that your grades define your intelligence or work ethic, even if it is not your fault. Self-perception theory reveals that our convictions are not self-determined. Instead, self-perception is something that we infer based on numerous factors, such as the event, our environment, and our upbringing. With perception's tentative, inference-based nature, our perceptions of self are based more on our environments than our personalities. Therefore, by succumbing to negative sentiment, individuals do not actively "consent" to feeling inferior. Instead, their environment and upbringing, which are beyond their control, strongly influence their self-esteem.

The emotion schema theory, a popular and recent psychology theory widely discussed in academia and used for therapies, can also

provide an explanation why people can feel inferior without consent. According to the emotion schema theory, emotion schemas or thought patterns used to organize knowledge are triggered by external stimuli and resulting changes in hormone levels (Izard, 1993). Moreover, psychological studies have found that emotional schemas are sculpted by childhood experience (e.g., Gottman et al., 1996; Greenberg, 2004; Young et al., 2003) and cultural influence (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992). In other words, emotion schemas are automatic psychological and physiological responses set up throughout our youth and the environment in which we grow up.

Along the same line, psychologists find that childhood trauma is a common cause of feelings of inferiority without consent because emotional responses are involuntarily trained by childhood experience. The study by Yansen Zhang provides an extreme example: A Chinese girl named Xiao Tian has always had low self-esteem. She regularly endured physical and sexual abuse from her stepfather, and her mother did nothing about it. These negative experiences led to an extreme fear of men and boys, along with feelings of inferiority due to a lack of love. Xiao Tian communicates logically, speaks earnestly, has good judgment, focused attention, and decent intelligence. Nonetheless, the abuse she had suffered, and her mother's lack of support caused Xiao Tian to believe she was incompetent, unlovable, and worthless (Zhang, 2024). Xiao Tian's case study demonstrates that adverse childhood experiences can create negative thought patterns by default. Negative interactions with any group can induce fear of that group, and feeling unloved growing up can foster feelings of inferiority. Therefore, in the case of Xiao Tian and many other trauma victims, inferiority does not result from consent or active choice. Instead, it results from automatic conditioning from a traumatic upbringing.

### **Overcoming Feelings of Inferiority by Scientific Methods**

Traditionally, bullying victims were frequently told to "toughen up," as if they were weaklings giving consent to feel inferior. However, that piece of advice is faulty, dismissive, and ineffective. As a matter of fact, bullying rates have skyrocketed over the years, and

bullying is now a national mental health epidemic. So, what is the real cause of bullying, and how can we scientifically get rid of it? According to John Saroyan, victims of bullying are often different from their peer group and struggle with fitting in. They think, look, or act in ways their peers perceive as weird. Once mocked, they may internalize their peers' negativity and construct a negative self-image. This creation of a negative self-image causes anxiety, loneliness, insecurity, and isolation, which will eventually lead to self-blame, low self-esteem, and mental health disorders (Saroyan, 2019). In other words, bullying causes the creation of harmful core beliefs because children are not consciously aware that being bullied is not their fault. Such negative self-belief will lead the victims to automatically form mental patterns of inferiority.

Although people can feel inferior without consent, modern psychology has developed ways to overcome those feelings. For example, one study shows that consistently increases self-efficacy in adolescent bullying victims (Kim, J. W., & Kim, H. S.). This study demonstrates that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) increases self-efficacy by effectively challenging negative core beliefs that bullying victims previously formed. After their core beliefs of weakness and inferiority are replaced with more positive ones, their self-esteem automatically goes up. Later, the increase in self-esteem after therapy will help people further reinforce the idea that they are strong and confident, forming a positive mental feedback loop. Such methods of retraining children's core beliefs have helped many bullying victims and have proven to be a more effective and superior way than simply asking children to "toughen up."

Therapies based on psychological results, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), are not limited to helping bullying victims. Through CBT, people learn to challenge negative thought patterns like inferiority complexes and foster healthier thought patterns and coping mechanisms. For example, throughout her therapy, Xiao Tian learned to cope with the core beliefs of "I am incompetent, unlovable, and worthless" by forming the healthier beliefs of "I am capable, valuable, and worthy of love" by learning the reasoning behind her core beliefs, destroying unhealthy

intermediate beliefs, and challenging automatic thinking. At the end of her therapy, her scores for depression, anxiety, and inferiority returned to normal leading to equanimity and emotional stability (Zhang, 2024). This case study demonstrates that modern therapy techniques, such as CBT, can help individuals overcome feelings of inferiority by teaching them the reasoning behind negative core beliefs. Once a person understands the reasoning and logic behind unhealthy core beliefs, it is easier to challenge them and form healthier alternatives, leading to higher self-esteem.

Coping mechanisms are another area where therapies based on modern psychology, such as CBT, can help reduce people's uncontrollable feelings of inferiority. For example, outside of bullying or trauma, envy is another potential source of people's feelings of inferiority. CBT can mitigate such inferior feelings by modifying people's coping mechanisms and transforming people's counterproductive envy into constructive envy. A recent study showcases how CBT works in this situation. First, with the help of clinicians, clients recognize sources of envy beyond personal control, including cultural, social, and evolutionary factors. Then, the clinicians will guide the clients to accept envy and transform it into admiration and emulation. Lastly, along with learning techniques to address sour aspects of envy and methods to modify automatic, unhealthy assumptions, clients can gradual-

ly reduce avoidance, sabotage, and giving up (Leahy, 2021, P. 45(3), 418–427). This study on therapy and envy demonstrates another way CBT diminishes feelings of inferiority in people. With the help of clinicians, clients can identify unhealthy patterns, reroute destructive coping mechanisms, and ultimately form more constructive ones to productively channel their social comparison instincts.

### Conclusion

Eleanor Roosevelt's claim that no one can make you feel inferior without consent fails because it assumes conscious control over involuntary processes. As demonstrated through social conditioning studies, social comparison theory, and emotional schema theory the formation of inferiority feelings arises from processes beneath the threshold of conscious choice. Anything as abrasive as trauma or as subtle as consistently finding yourself on the losing end of social comparison can cause feelings of inferiority without conscious choice or consent. Simply pretending one is as strong as Santiago the fisherman is not nearly enough to counter feelings of inferiority. In contrast, therapies based on modern psychology have proved that they can help trauma victims like Xiao Tan and non-traumatized individuals boost their self-esteem and happiness through various scientific measures, such as challenging negative self-beliefs and modifying coping mechanisms.

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## Section 7. Social psychology

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### ETHICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL NORMS IN BUSINESS AND ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION: THE ROLE OF THE "SENSE OF SIGNIFICANCE" AND EMOTIONAL RESONANCE

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#### Abstract

In modern organizational and academic environments, the effectiveness of communication depends not only on formal regulations, but also on the quality of ethical and psychological norms that shape intersubjective relations. This article comparatively analyzes the fundamental factors affecting mutual relations in business and academic spheres, with a special focus on the existential "sense of significance" as a core psychological need. Drawing on clinical psychology, management ethics, and historical retrospective examples, the study demonstrates that institutional indifference to professional identity leads to destructive behavioral patterns, professional alienation, and even escapism. Conversely, sincere recognition, adherence to title sensitivity, and acts of "emotional resonance"—especially during crises and institutional loneliness—serve as powerful mechanisms for preserving moral integrity and fostering scientific creativity. The article substantiates the creative power of empathy through historical cases and contemporary academic management practices. The results are of practical importance for developing humanistic management strategies in scientific institutions and higher education.

**Keywords:** *business communication; academic communication; sense of significance; title sensitivity; emotional resonance; humanistic management; institutional loneliness; professional alienation*

#### 1. Introduction

Communication constitutes an essential component of human existence and social interaction. Through continuous communicative processes, individuals exchange their thoughts, emotions, values, and inner experi-

ences, thereby establishing the fundamental basis for both interpersonal and professional relationships. The essence of this process is reflected in its etymological origin: the Latin term *communicare* means "to share," "to communicate," or "to create common

meaning.” This concept denotes not merely the transmission of information but also the establishment of moral, ethical, and social unity among communicative subjects.

In contemporary society, the rapid development of social relations and the intensification of information exchange have significantly increased the importance of business and academic communication. Under these conditions, individuals are evaluated not only on the basis of their professional competencies, but also according to their ethical values, psychological characteristics, and internal motivational factors. In both spheres, purposeful, structured, and effective forms of communication serve as fundamental determinants of the quality of cooperation and the overall humanitarian climate.

While professional ethics, official subordination and civilized rules of conduct are taken as the basis in business communication, the norms of scientific cooperation, intellectual exchange and academic honesty are at the forefront in the academic field. In these specific contexts, the improper establishment of ethical and psychological norms leads to alienation of individuals, the breakdown of internal motivation and the ineffectiveness of institutional cooperation. On the contrary, relationships based on respect, empathy and open dialogue are an absolute prerequisite for both the preservation of professional identity and the formation of civilized management architecture.

The present article focuses on two central psychological phenomena – the “sense of significance” and “emotional resonance”—as key variables that determine the success or failure of ethical communication in business and academic settings. By integrating theoretical analysis with historical and empirical evidence, this study aims to demonstrate how institutional recognition or indifference shapes professional behavior and to propose humanistic management strategies for scientific institutions.

The effectiveness of business and academic relations is determined not only by formal institutional mechanisms, but primarily by the quality of ethical and psychological norms that regulate the communication process. The transformations taking place in the modern sphere of management and science

have also subjected the rules of corporate behavior to internal changes (Mammadova, 2025: 54). Science, by its very nature, is an intrinsically communicative enterprise in which the generation and advancement of knowledge depend not on the isolated activities of individual researchers, but on the institutionalized mechanisms of scholarly collaboration manifested through scientific publications, academic discourse, and the broader intellectual environment (Talishinski & Namazova, 2022: 131).

In organizational behavior theory, an individual’s perceived status and professional identity within a corporate environment are closely shaped by how effectively the organization’s structures and culture enable the satisfaction of intrinsic ego-related needs. The most important psychological criterion that determines the character structure of subjects and corporate behavioral norms in business and academic communication systems is the resources through which individuals provide their “sense of importance” or “sense of significance.”

In the intellectual environment, this need is manifested in individuals’ mastery of modern scientific paradigms, attempts to gain status in high-index international databases, and the desire to publicize the scientific achievements of their academic graduates. A constructive business communication architecture should direct this legitimate need for recognition of academic staff into channels of scientific creativity, effective teaching, and institutional development, and should appreciate the individual’s professional identity precisely on this basis.

However, academic subjects whose constructive contributions and professional performance are not meaningfully recognized and who face institutional indifference tend to adopt destructive behavioral patterns to satisfy their internal “hunger for significance.” This paradox in management psychology proves that an individual who cannot gain favor in positive ways chooses negative trajectories, such as deliberately creating conflicts in the work environment, demonstrating destructive opposition to official regulations, or violating discipline, in order to demonstrate his presence and social weight.

According to the empirical results of organizational psychology, employees who are unable to obtain positive attention through genuine performance, scholarly output, or professional dedication resort to non-constructive defense mechanisms to satisfy this fundamental moral hunger. Such subjects try to attract corporate attention to themselves by constantly highlighting their personal problems, professional burnout or simulated dissatisfaction in the business environment. In this way, they simulate their sense of significance.

In this regard, the architecture of civilized academic governance accepts as the main ethical-psychological norm the sincere encouragement of individuals' inner will to significance in the realm of scientific creativity, rational research, and positive academic dialogue, without pushing them into such negative and manipulative trajectories. In essence, such a sincere approach is fully consistent with the philosophy of Martin Buber, in which individuals are rescued from the meaninglessness of administrative business and accepted and encouraged as "You" (true personality) in the realm of mutual humanistic responsibility (Buber, 1970: 33).

Empirical studies of clinical psychology and neuropathology prove that while approximately half of mental disorders and internal degradations are caused by physical, organic or toxic causes, the other large part is entirely functional-moral in nature. There are frequent cases when individuals completely break away from mental reality and take refuge in an imaginary world, even though there are no pathological changes in their brain tissues.

Observations conducted in the field of psychiatry show that the fundamental reason for these difficult situations is the individual's complete inability to find the love, social status, family harmony and, most importantly, "a sense of significance" that he needs in the real world, within the family or society. For example, it is a classic psychological situation in which an individual whose moral aspirations have been undermined by the harsh constraints of real life, and who persistently encounters indifference and social isolation within both familial and broader social environments, may

retreat from reality as a form of internal psychological defense.

Such individuals create an artificial aristocratic status for themselves in the fantasy world, forgetting the harsh reality and imagining themselves in an environment surrounded by imaginary high ranks, titles and great respect. Even experts admit that artificially returning such individuals to that bitter and cold reality sometimes means depriving them of that so-called happiness in the dream world (Freud, 1993: 91). This shocking psychological reality is the clearest evidence of the existential hunger of human existence for the need to "be significant and appreciated."

This fundamental psychological pattern provides a profound explanation for the phenomenon of "professional alienation" and the emergence of passive or even destructive disengagement among individuals within corporate and academic governance structures. If a person needs this spiritual appreciation to the extent of escaping reality in order to maintain a sense of inner significance, it is not difficult to infer what potential for intellectual flourishing and scientific innovation could be unlocked through the sincere, timely, and authentic expression of recognition and encouragement within everyday professional communication.

In business and academic management, the titular sensitivity of individuals is the most prominent manifestation of the internal need for "significance" of individuals. Political and cultural history shows that even the greatest historical figures have approached the acquisition of titles and symbolic privileges as a fundamental necessity in order to protect their public identities and be recognized.

For example, George Washington's desire to be addressed as "Mighty President of the United States," the struggle of Christopher Columbus for the title of "Admiral of the Ocean," the demand of Catherine II for the title "Her Imperial Majesty" in her letters, the attempts of the great William Shakespeare to obtain a noble coat of arms for his family, and Victor Hugo's ambition to have the city of Paris named after him are historical manifestations of this psychological need (Carnegie, 1981: 40–41).

This reality directly determines how the ethics of official speech should be established in higher education and scientific institutions. In academic communication, adherence to official forms of address, honest expression of scientific degrees and specialist statuses is not a simple bureaucratic procedure, but a key indicator of fundamental ethical respect for the intellectual identity of the other party.

Ignoring these scientific titles in business communication by the head of the department or the management of the institute or violating the rules of subordination creates sharp alienation in individuals and paralyzes the atmosphere of sincere scientific cooperation. When individuals' need for recognition and appreciation within a socio-professional environment is obstructed by administrative indifference or institutional detachment, it gives rise to the emergence of manipulative and destructive forms of behavior.

The disregard of the scientific identity of the employee by the leader completely dries up the scientific creativity environment, turning business communication into a cold bureaucratic mechanism. The ethics of civil academic management considers it the highest humanitarian norm of management to nourish not only the material needs of the staff under his/her control, but also their intellectual self and scientific pride with sincere words of sympathy.

A sincere word of appreciation expressed by the official leadership for the academic staff becomes a powerful stimulus that leaves an indelible mark on the memory and professional motivation of scientists

for years. The experiences of pedagogy and management psychology show that instead of constantly criticizing any shortcomings or dull sides of individuals, timely recognition and formal appreciation of a unique advantage, a compensatory talent endowed by nature or intellectual self, can be the beginning of a completely new creative phase in the professional life of the subject (Carnegie, 1981: 43).

### Conclusion

In the sociology of business communication, one of the most important parameters determining the effectiveness of sympathy and appreciation mechanisms is the phenomenon of "emotional resonance." Analysis of corporate and macro-social management practices shows that the most crucial time for individuals to gain moral appreciation and internal support is during the "loneliness" stages when they face mass crises, administrative pressures, or professional failures.

As one of the dramatic examples of sociopolitical history, it is possible to cite the fate of the German Emperor Wilhelm II, who was forced to emigrate after being removed from power and his country in a major political crisis at the end of the First World War. Historical documents prove that at the peak of mass hatred and general aggression, a sincere, honest and admiring letter written to the emperor by an ordinary child created such a crushing emotional resonance in his spiritual world that the former ruler took this step as the greatest psychological shield of his entire life and once and for all united his fate with that family.

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## Section 8. Specialized branches of pedagogy

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### INNOVATIVE METHOD FOR DANCE-CHOREOGRAPHIC THERAPY FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER: STRUCTURED CHOREOGRAPHY AS A THERAPEUTIC TOOL

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#### Abstract

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is one of the fastest-growing neurodevelopmental conditions: according to CDC data, in the United States today 1 in 36 children is diagnosed with ASD. Traditional approaches – applied behavior analysis (ABA), speech therapy and occupational therapy – do not fully meet the need for additional body-based methods that operate through movement and emotional engagement. This article presents an innovative method of dance-choreographic therapy for children with ASD based on using elements of folk choreography as a structured therapeutic tool. The method is built on a synthesis of three fields of knowledge: academic choreography, Ukrainian folk dance, and an understanding of sensory processing characteristics in ASD. A four-component structure – rhythmic foundation, spatial navigation, emotional expression, and sensory regulation – is implemented in 25–30-minute group sessions with a predictable six-phase structure. The method relies on current scientific literature in the field of dance/movement therapy (DMT) and was empirically piloted at the EIFC and Ahead with Autism organizations (California, 2024–2025) on a sample of five children. Preliminary clinical observations show positive changes in social interaction, communication, motor development, emotional regulation, and behavior. Plans for formalizing results foresee the use of standardized assessment tools (ABLLS-R, VB-MAPP, Vineland-3, CARS-2, SRS-2, ABC) within a controlled pilot study.

**Keywords:** *autism spectrum disorder, dance/movement therapy, folk choreography, structured movement, rhythmic therapy, child psychology, special education, sensory regulation, social interaction*

## Introduction

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by difficulties in social interaction, communication, and repetitive patterns of behavior. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2023), approximately 1 in 36 children in the United States has an ASD diagnosis, a significant increase from the 1 in 150 in 2000. Rising prevalence alongside persistent shortages of therapeutic resources creates an urgent need for effective, scalable, and culturally adaptive supplementary approaches.

Existing therapeutic interventions – applied behavior analysis (ABA), speech therapy, occupational therapy – are primary tools for working with children with ASD. However, research literature and practitioner experience point to the need for approaches that work through the body, movement, and emotional engagement rather than solely through cognitive-behavioral models (Aithal et al., 2021; Fang et al., 2025).

Dance/movement therapy (DMT) exists as a recognized form of therapy, but most existing DMT approaches are based on free improvisation and psychotherapeutic movement analysis. The present method fundamentally differs from traditional DMT in that it uses structured choreography rooted in folk dance elements as the primary therapeutic instrument. The aim of this article is to present the theoretical basis, component structure, and practical implementation of this method, and to outline prospects for its formal evaluation.

## Theoretical foundation

The methodology is based on a synthesis of three areas of knowledge. The first is professional choreography and dance pedagogy, which ensures a systematic structure of lessons, taking into account consistency, repetition, and a gradual increase in complexity of the material. The second is Ukrainian folk choreography, which possesses a number of characteristics particularly valuable in working with children with ASD: a clear rhythmic structure, group formations (round dances, paired formations), a vivid visual component, and strong emotional expressiveness. The third is a modern understanding of the char-

acteristics of sensory processing in ASD, including hyper- and hyposensitivity to various stimuli and the need for sensory regulation.

The scientific validity of the method is supported by the current literature in the field of DMT and ASD. A study by Fang et al. (2025) on a sample of 28 children with autism demonstrated a significant decrease in the level of stereotypical behavior and an increase in social skills on the ABC, RBS-R, SRS, and SCQ scales after 11 months of DMT intervention. Millman et al. (2021) in a literature review, showed that the rhythmic structures of folk dances – including the Balkan tradition – improved the communication and social skills of children with ASD. A pilot study by Aithal et al. (2021) confirmed the suitability of the group DMT format for the social and emotional well-being of children with ASD, regardless of verbal or nonverbal communication. Wang et al. (2022) in a controlled trial of a mixed program of music therapy and DMT (CARS and ATEC scales) recorded a significant improvement in social communication in the experimental group.

The key principles of the method are: (1) predictability through structure, which reduces anxiety in children with ASD; (2) repetition with variation, which develops cognitive flexibility; (3) movement as non-verbal communication for children with speech difficulties; (4) cultural context as a motivator; (5) adaptability to the individual capabilities of the child; (6) inclusiveness, which provides for joint activities of children with ASD and neurotypical children.

## Four-component structure of the method

Component 1: Rhythmic foundation. Use of rhythmic patterns from folk choreography as the organizing structure for movement. A clear repeating rhythm acts as an external “organizer,” helping the child to sequence bodily movements. This includes stomps, claps, turns, hops, rhythmic slaps, alternation of fast and slow movements, repeating motor combinations of 2–3 actions, synchronization with music, and stops on cue.

Component 2: Spatial Navigation. The use of spatial formations of folk dance to develop spatial orientation and social interaction. The circle dance creates safe physical

contact, the need to coordinate actions with the group, and a sense of belonging. Specific formations include a simple circle dance, a “snake,” a “gate,” a “star,” a “spiral,” a “cross,” “diagonals,” and division into an inner and outer circle.

Component 3: Emotional expression through gesture and image. Using the figurative system of folk dance to develop emotional intelligence and nonverbal communication. Pantomime elements – imitation of actions, depiction of natural phenomena, and the expression of emotional states – become a tool for teaching the recognition and expression of emotions. This program includes the “Mirror” exercise, short movement games set to music (“Wheels,” “Chicken Pi,” “Travel”), working with props (ribbons, handkerchiefs), conveying basic emotions through gestures and facial expressions, “Animal Image,” “Weather,” and “Show and Guess.”

Component 4: Sensory Regulation through Movement. Different types of movement influence different sensory systems: spinning and twirling provide vestibular stimulation, stomping and jumping stimulate proprioception, smooth arm movements develop kinesthetic perception, and changes in tempo foster self-regulation. Specific elements include Carousel, Tree in the Wind, Cossack, Heavy Steps, Light Steps, Hand Waves, Level Change, and Spring.

### **Practical implementation**

Session format: duration 25–30 minutes, frequency 1–2 times per week, group size 2–3 children, age 4–12 years, three skill levels (beginner, intermediate, advanced). The presence of an assistant depends on the level of support children require.

The structure of a one session consists of six phases: (1) greeting ritual (1–2 min) to provide predictability and reduce anxiety; (2) a warm-up/rhythmic preparation (3–5 min); (3) floor gymnastics (5–6 min); (4) the main part – dance elements (10–12 min), including practicing one- and two-step instructions through movement and simple spatial constructions; (5) free movement with direction (5–6 min); (6) closing ritual (5 min) to ensure a smooth transition to the next activity.

The Progression across levels follows this schedule. Beginner level (months 1–3) focuses on habituation to session structure, simple rhythmic patterns of 2–3 movements, minimal tactile contact, and short formations. Intermediate level (months 3–6) introduces more complex patterns of 4–6 movements, paired work, more complex formations (snake, gate), and use of props. Advanced level (6+ months) includes learning short dance combinations, group formations with partner changes, dance stories with multiple “acts,” and preparation for demonstration performances.

### **Preliminary clinical observations**

The observations below were obtained while working with five children with ASD at two therapeutic organizations – EIFC and Ahead with Autism (California, USA, 2024–2025). The author acknowledges that this sample size is limited and insufficient for statistically significant conclusions about the method’s effectiveness in a wider population. The presented cases should be regarded solely as preliminary clinical observations characteristic of an early development stage of a new therapeutic approach. Small sample sizes at initial stages are typical in developing new therapeutic methods. Written informed consent from parents or legal guardians was obtained prior to work with each child; to comply with HIPAA requirements, identifying data is not provided.

In the area of social interaction: children who initially avoided physical contact began voluntarily participating in circle formations requiring hand-to-hand contact after 4–6 weeks; increased eye contact during paired exercises; spontaneous initiation toward a dance partner; independently approaching peers and entering the circle without verbal or physical prompting; calm responses to other children’s participation in the activity.

In the area of communication: children with limited speech began using gestures and movements from sessions for communication outside the dance room; increased vocalization during rhythmic exercises; improved understanding of nonverbal cues; faster and more consistent response to their own name and simple instructions; emergence of emotional coloring in sounds and reactions (intonation, laughter, expressions of pleasure).

In the area of motor development: improved movement coordination, sense of rhythm, fine motor skills through work with props, posture, and body control. In emotional regulation: reduced signs of anxiety during sessions, ability to tolerate changes in routine structure after reaching advanced level, expression of joy and pleasure from movement.

In the area of behavior: reduction of stereotyped movements (stimming) during sessions, increased attention span to 8–10 minutes, improved ability to follow instructions, decreased task avoidance and protest behaviors during transitions due to the predictable session structure.

### **Assessment methodology and prospects for formalization**

Observational data are a standard first stage in developing new therapeutic approaches and form the basis for formal research. For subsequent evaluation of the method's effectiveness within a planned controlled pilot study, six standardized instruments are proposed: ABLLS-R (Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills – Revised) for assessment of language and learning skills, following instructions and imitation; VB-MAPP (Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program) for assessment of verbal behavior and social milestones; Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales (Vineland-3) for adaptive behavior in communication, socialization, and motor domains; CARS-2 (Childhood Autism Rating Scale, Second Edition) as a standardized severity measure for ASD symptoms; SRS-2 (Social Responsiveness Scale, Second Edition) for social responsiveness and communication; ABC (Aberrant Behavior Checklist) for problematic behaviors including stereotypies and aggression.

The planned pilot study includes pre- and post-testing, control and experimental groups, and a fixed intervention protocol. Implementing this protocol will enable translation of the method from practice-based evidence to evidence-based practice consistent with U.S. standards.

### **Significance and scaling potential**

The method fills three significant gaps. First – between choreography and therapy:

professional choreographers typically do not work with children with developmental differences, while dance therapists often lack academic choreographic training. Second – between cultural preservation and therapy: for the growing Ukrainian diaspora in the U.S. (which increased significantly after 2022), as well as for other immigrant communities, the method offers dual value. Third – between group and individual therapy: most approaches for children with ASD are individual, whereas this method proposes a group format that itself serves as a therapeutic tool.

Scaling potential includes adaptation to use elements of other cultural dance traditions (Mexican, Armenian, Indian folk choreography), integration into existing therapeutic organizations' programs, formalization into training curricula for practitioner preparation, and application not only to children with ASD but also to children with ADHD, speech delay, and anxiety disorders. Implementation in U.S. institutions is carried out in partnership with licensed therapeutic organizations (EIFC and Ahead with Autism) and complies with federal legislation requirements (IDEA, ADA, Section 504).

### **Conclusion**

The innovative dance-choreographic therapy method represents a systematic approach that uses structured folk choreography as a therapeutic tool for children with ASD. The method is grounded in a synthesis of academic choreography, folk dance tradition, and contemporary understanding of sensory processing differences in ASD, and aligns with current DMT literature. Preliminary clinical observations in a sample of five children show positive changes in social interaction, communication, motor development, emotional regulation, and behavior.

Further research should include a controlled pilot study using standardized assessment tools to elevate the method to evidence-based practice. The method has significant scaling potential across cultural contexts and groups of children with developmental differences, and could be institutionalized as a training curriculum for specialists at the intersection of choreography and special education.

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