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PEDAGOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF DEVELOPING THE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF A FUTURE PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER

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Abstract: This article examines the pedagogical and psychological foundations that underpin the formation of professional competence in prospective physical education teachers. The author argues that competence in this field cannot be reduced to motor skill or sport-specific knowledge alone; rather, it emerges from the interplay of subject mastery, didactic ability, communicative flexibility, and a stable set of personal and motivational qualities. Drawing on contemporary competence theory and the practice of teacher preparation, the study identifies the structural components of professional competence and clarifies how pedagogical influences and psychological mechanisms jointly shape its growth. Particular attention is given to reflective thinking, motivation for self-development, and the capacity to manage one's own emotional state during instruction. The findings suggest that an integrated pedagogical-psychological approach, built around practice-oriented learning and continuous self-assessment, produces more sustainable professional readiness than approaches that treat these dimensions separately.

Keywords: professional competence, physical education teacher, pedagogical preparation, psychological readiness, reflection, motivation, self-development, teacher training.

1. Introduction

The modernization of school education places new demands on the figure of the physical education teacher. Where earlier expectations centered chiefly on athletic demonstration and the supervision of physical activity, today's school requires an educator who can design a healthful learning environment, individualize instruction, and shape pupils' attitudes toward lifelong physical culture. This shift moves the professional preparation of physical education specialists away from a narrow skills model and toward the cultivation of a broad, transferable professional competence. Understanding how such competence is formed, and which pedagogical and psychological factors accelerate or hinder its growth, has therefore become a pressing question for teacher-training institutions.

Professional competence is best understood as an integrative characteristic of personality that unites theoretical knowledge, practical ability, and value orientation into a single capacity for effective professional action. For the future physical education teacher this capacity has a distinctive profile: it combines biomechanical and physiological knowledge, methodical command of motor instruction, the communicative skill needed to lead diverse groups of children, and a resilient psychological core capable of withstanding the physical and emotional load of the profession. Because these elements develop at different rates and respond to different influences, their formation cannot be left to chance; it must be guided by a deliberate pedagogical-psychological strategy.

The purpose of this article is to clarify the pedagogical and psychological characteristics that govern the development of professional competence in future physical education teachers, and to outline the conditions under which this development proceeds most effectively. The discussion first defines the structural composition of professional competence, then analyzes the pedagogical and psychological dimensions in turn, and finally proposes an integrated set of conditions for their coordinated growth.

2. The Structure of Professional Competence

Contemporary competence theory treats professional competence not as a list of isolated abilities but as a hierarchically organized system in which separate components reinforce one another. For the physical education teacher, four interdependent components can be distinguished. The first is the cognitive component, which encompasses knowledge of anatomy, physiology, the theory and methodology of physical education, and the principles of healthy development. The second is the operational, or activity-based, component, expressed in the practical mastery of teaching techniques, the ability to construct and adjust a lesson, and skill in demonstrating and correcting movement. The third is the communicative component, which determines how the teacher establishes contact with pupils, regulates group dynamics, and motivates participation. The fourth is the personal-motivational component, embracing professional values, the drive toward self-improvement, and the emotional-volitional stability needed to sustain effort over time.

What distinguishes a competent specialist from a merely knowledgeable one is the capacity to mobilize these components simultaneously in response to a concrete pedagogical situation. A novice may possess sound theoretical knowledge yet fail to translate it into a coherent lesson, or may command excellent personal technique while being unable to explain a movement to a struggling pupil. Competence, in this sense, is the bridge between potential and performance. Recognizing this, teacher preparation must aim not at accumulating the components separately but at integrating them, so that knowledge, skill, communication, and motivation function as a unified professional instrument.

3. Pedagogical Characteristics of Competence Development

The pedagogical dimension of competence development concerns the organized conditions, methods, and forms of instruction through which a student teacher is guided from theoretical understanding toward independent professional action. A central feature of this dimension is its practice-oriented character. Physical education is a profession learned chiefly through doing, and competence matures only when the student is repeatedly placed in situations that demand real teaching decisions. Microteaching, supervised school placements, and the gradual transfer of responsibility from mentor to student each create such situations and allow abstract knowledge to acquire a working, situational form.

A second pedagogical characteristic is the principle of gradual complication. Competence does not appear in a single leap; it is assembled through a sequence of tasks that move from simple imitation of a model toward independent design and critical evaluation of one's own lessons. Early stages emphasize the correct reproduction of demonstrated techniques, while later stages require the student to plan, adapt, and justify methodical choices for pupils of differing ages and abilities. This staged progression respects the natural logic of skill formation and prevents the discouragement that follows premature exposure to fully independent practice.

A third characteristic is the central role of pedagogical reflection. The most powerful instrument of professional growth is the student's own analysis of completed activity: identifying what succeeded, diagnosing what failed, and reformulating an approach for the next attempt. When mentors deliberately cultivate this habit through guided debriefing, video review, and structured self-assessment, the student begins to learn from experience rather than merely accumulate it. Reflection thus converts ordinary teaching practice into a continuous engine of development, and its systematic encouragement is among the surest pedagogical means of advancing competence.

Finally, the pedagogical dimension depends on a supportive and demanding educational environment. The relationship between mentor and student, the example set by experienced colleagues, and the institutional culture of the training establishment all shape how readily a future teacher adopts professional standards. An environment that combines high expectations with genuine support

encourages the student to take initiative, accept constructive criticism, and persist through the inevitable difficulties of early practice.

4. Psychological Characteristics of Competence Development

If the pedagogical dimension supplies the external conditions of growth, the psychological dimension describes the internal mechanisms that make growth possible. The first and most decisive of these is professional motivation. A student who perceives teaching physical culture as personally meaningful, and who connects it with values such as children's health and well-being, invests sustained effort in self-improvement and tolerates the setbacks of early practice. Where such intrinsic motivation is weak, even well-designed instruction yields shallow and unstable results. Strengthening the motivational basis of the profession is therefore a psychological priority in teacher preparation.

A second psychological characteristic is the development of professional self-awareness and an adequate self-concept. The future teacher must form a realistic picture of personal strengths and limitations, neither inflated by overconfidence nor paralyzed by self-doubt. An accurate professional self-image allows the student to set appropriate goals, accept feedback without defensiveness, and direct effort where it is most needed. The formation of this self-awareness is closely tied to reflection, but it is a psychological rather than purely pedagogical phenomenon, rooted in the individual's evolving sense of professional identity.

A third characteristic is emotional-volitional stability. The work of a physical education teacher unfolds in a dynamic, often unpredictable environment, where injuries, conflicts, and lapses of discipline demand calm and rapid decisions. The capacity to regulate one's own emotional state, to remain composed under pressure, and to sustain volitional effort across a demanding schedule is indispensable to professional success. This stability is not innate; it can be cultivated through graduated exposure to challenging situations, through training in self-regulation techniques, and through the confidence that accumulated mastery brings.

A fourth psychological characteristic concerns cognitive and creative flexibility. Competent teaching requires the ability to read a situation quickly, to abandon a plan that is not working, and to improvise an alternative that suits the pupils in front of the teacher. This adaptive thinking develops as the student accumulates a varied repertoire of experience and learns to draw on it selectively. Together, motivation, self-awareness, emotional stability, and flexibility constitute the psychological foundation upon which observable pedagogical competence is built.

5. Integrated Pedagogical-Psychological Conditions and Methods

The principal claim of this article is that pedagogical and psychological factors do not operate in isolation; their effect is multiplied when they are coordinated within a single, coherent system of preparation. A practice-oriented curriculum (a pedagogical instrument) develops competence most powerfully when it is accompanied by deliberate motivational support and self-regulation training (psychological instruments). Reflection, similarly, belongs to both dimensions at once: it is a pedagogical technique that mentors organize and a psychological process that reshapes the student's professional self. The task of teacher preparation is therefore to design conditions in which these influences converge.

Several conditions support such convergence. The first is the systematic use of practice-oriented and problem-based methods, in which students confront authentic teaching dilemmas rather than abstract exercises. The second is continuous diagnostic feedback that addresses not only what the student did but how the student reasoned and felt while doing it, thereby linking external performance with internal experience. The third is the purposeful cultivation of reflective and self-assessment skills, supported by tools such as video analysis, teaching portfolios, and structured peer review. The fourth is individualization, whereby instruction is adjusted to the motivational profile, temperament, and

developmental pace of each student, recognizing that competence forms along different trajectories for different individuals.

When these conditions are combined, the components of professional competence cease to develop as parallel but separate lines and begin instead to integrate. The student who reflects on a difficult lesson simultaneously refines methodical knowledge, strengthens self-awareness, and reinforces motivation. In this way an integrated pedagogical-psychological approach produces a more durable and transferable professional readiness than the sum of its parts, and equips the future physical education teacher to continue developing independently throughout a professional career.

6. Conclusion

The development of professional competence in future physical education teachers is a complex process governed jointly by pedagogical and psychological factors. On the pedagogical side, competence matures through practice-oriented, gradually complicating, and reflection-rich instruction conducted within a supportive yet demanding educational environment. On the psychological side, it rests on professional motivation, an adequate self-concept, emotional-volitional stability, and cognitive flexibility. Neither dimension is sufficient alone: technique without motivation is fragile, and motivation without methodical mastery is ineffective.

The most productive path to competence therefore lies in integrating these dimensions within a unified system of preparation that links external pedagogical conditions with internal psychological mechanisms. Such an approach not only accelerates the formation of competence during training but also lays the foundation for continuous professional self-development. Future research may usefully focus on diagnostic instruments capable of tracking the joint pedagogical-psychological growth of competence and on the design of training programs that operationalize the integrated conditions outlined here.

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