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21st-Century Competence Structures Model of University Teachers: Mapping Teachers and Students Views

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Abstract: In recent years, there has been an increase in student enrollment in the country's higher education institutions. Thus, in 2024, the number of students admitted to the bachelor's level of higher education increased by 8.5 per cent compared to 2023, reaching 57.4 thousand people in Azerbaijan. Compared to the previous academic year, the number of students increased by 15.1 thousand people, or 6.5 per cent (www.stat.gov.az). According to the State Exam Centre of Azerbaijan, in 2025, 88,756 people participated in the competition for higher education institutions. Of them, 57,236 people (including 6,461 sub-bachelors) were admitted to higher education institutions (www.dim.gov.az). This article examines the competencies of university teachers. A qualitative and quantitative research design was employed in this study. The survey of students to analyse their attitudes, and the interviews with teachers and students to gain an in-depth understanding of the complex problem. Data were analysed thematically to extract key patterns and insights. Not only academic background, but also personal skills and qualities stand out as the features most valued by students. The positive correlations mentioned between knowledge and social and personal skills of the teachers ($r=0.466^{**}$; $r=0.552^{**}$; $p=0.01$), and the negative correlation between knowledge or academic skills and administrative skills of the teachers ($r=-0.033^{**}$; $p=0.01$). Academic competence, expanding knowledge in science, the importance of assessment skills, and the use of modern

technological devices were mentioned more often by teachers than by students. In contrast, students highlighted personal–moral competence, motivational determinants, and encouragement for learners more than teachers’ reviews. A positive correlation was observed between the codes “Motivation competence” and “Personal competence” ($r=0.23$; $df=4$; $p<0.05$) — practical value. The resulting framework is also helpful for individual teachers as a tool for reflecting on their teaching characteristics and improving their practice in higher-level educational settings.

Keywords: competence, university teachers, students’ attitude, higher education, teaching quality

Introduction

In the modern world, there are new demands and various problems that university teachers and academicians are facing. According to authors and researchers, the educational setting has a special responsibility due to these challenges (Yakubova et al. 2020; Abykanov et al. 2016).

As Kelvin Seifert and colleagues mentioned today, teaching is different from in the past (Kelvin et al., 2009). The challenges that the instructors meet are increased diversity, instructional technology, greater accountability, and increased professionalism in teaching (Kelvin et al., 2009).

Solving these problems, managing groups and interpersonal relationships, and transferring knowledge are the main features of the teachers’ competence. What is competence? Blaskova (2014) believes that competences represent a summary of academic knowledge, personal skills and behavioural models of an individual (Blaskova et al., 2014). That idea and approach have been justified by other researchers, such as Kravcakova, Bugelova (2011), Roets, Van Hiel and Kruglanski (2013), Valica and Rohn (2013), Mocinic, Lazaric and Gortan-Carlin (2022) and others. According to education policies in the European Higher Education Area, it has been mentioned that the key to a successful university education lies in synergy between research and teaching, which needs to be student-centred and accompanied by strengthening the quality of teaching (Mocinic et al., 2022).

An increasing number of students, requirements of educational systems, growing expectations of the society, and challenges of the labour market have been highlighted as the main reasons for these demands (Schofer et al., 2005; Jonassan, 2008; Biggs, 2011; Mocinic et al., 2022).

This paper is structured as follows: the literature review outlines the theoretical foundations of competence of university teachers, and effective teaching process, its features, and also challenges; the methodology section details the research design and data collection processes; the findings and discussion present insights from university students’ survey and interview with both of the sides: teachers and students opinion; and the conclusion offers recommendations for future research and practice.

Research problem: Getting a high level of university teachers’ competence is one of the special targets of the modern educational system. Searching this problem from different points of view: teachers and students can develop the success of education, achievement and supportive conditions in educational settings. Being aware of students’ approaches can help find more varied solutions in this area.

Research focus: The main purpose of the study is to investigate the university teachers’ competence, teachers’ and students’ approaches based on quantitative and qualitative methods.

Research aim and research questions.

This is an exploratory study and has a hypothesis and research questions. The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What does the existing empirical literature state about the competences (high-level and low-level) of university teachers?

- How do the university students describe the teachers' competence?
- How are the differences in students' attitudes observed from various academic courses and years? Are there any differences between teachers' and students' approaches to the teachers' competence?
- What kind of reflections do the students have when they observe the university teachers' low level of competence?

Literature review

Competences of the university teachers

David Ch. Berliner (1988) distinguished the stages of the skills development of teachers into five steps: novices, advanced beginner, competent teachers, proficient, and experts (Berliner, 1988). The more important question is whether the stages make sense, rather than whether the trip from novice to expert takes how many years. In addition, we should note that a person who is typically at one stage of development may, in particular situations, show characteristics of individuals who are at another stage of development. Also, expertise is considered to be highly contextualised. It may not transfer from situation to situation very well (Berliner, 1988).

As the Berliner highlighted:

“What looks to be so easy for the expert and so clumsy for the novice is the result of thousands of hours of experience and reflection” (Berliner, 1988)

Robert J. Marzano and John Brown presented the main ideas of being successful teachers in “Art and Science of Teaching” (2009). Establishing and communicating learning goals, identifying critical-input experiences, using previewing strategies, using cooperative learning, discussions, helping students elaborate on new content, summarising and reflecting knowledge, designing and using assessments in the educational process were mentioned as the main responsibilities.

Marzano mentioned that cooperative learning and other small-group processes allow students to experience content from multiple perspectives. However, larger groups may also be used effectively. These intimate settings provide students with multiple reference points, including opportunities to see how others view new content. Students can also benefit from seeing how others react to their own processing of new information. Small-group activities can be used before a critical-input experience. They can also be used throughout a critical-input experience. In either case, it is important to help students apply operating rules such as the following, which are essential to group success:

1. Be willing to add your perspective to any discussion.
2. Respect the opinions of other people.
3. Make sure you understand others' points of view.
4. Be willing to ask questions if you don't understand something.
5. Be willing to answer questions other group members ask you about your ideas (Marzano, 2009).

The authors discussed the main cognitive biases and faulty logic in the thinking process. Meanwhile, additional cognitive, affective and social interaction strategies for promoting student engagement were demonstrated as part of successful teaching. Not only effective teaching strategies, but also establishing classroom rules, procedures and organisational aspects of the work were highlighted by the authors.

One of the main aspects of teachers' competence is related to identifying students' expectations. Perhaps the hardest part of examining one's expectations is examining the underlying reasons. Certainly, it is reasonable that a teacher might have lower expectations for students who do not perform well in the beginning stages of a class. However, as students demonstrate increased competence, this opinion should abate. This behaviour by a teacher would not be an example of systematic differential treatment. What a

teacher is looking for here is systematic patterns of expectations based on features like a student's ethnicity, appearance, verbal patterns, socioeconomic status, and the like (Marzano, 2009).

John Hattie analysed the art of teaching based on more than 50,000 studies and 800+ meta-analyses that form the basis of the discussion in the book, "LearnVisible teaching and Teaching". According to J.Hattie visible teaching and learning occurs when learning is the explicit goal, when it is appropriately challenging, when the teacher and the student both (in their various ways) seek to get the the challenging goal, when there is deliberate practice aimed at attaining mastery of the goal, when there is feedback given and sought, and when there are active, passionate, and engaging people (teacher, student, peers, and so on) participating in the act of learning (Hattie, 2008).

In 2023, John Hattie returned to his ground-breaking Visible Learning Study. The first book was published in 2008 based on a synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement. Over the last 15 years, the research base underlying the Visible Learning project has constantly grown to more than 2,100 meta-analyses, drawn from more than 130,000 studies, and involved more than 400 million students from all around the world (Hattie, 2023).

It is teachers seeing learning through the eyes of students, and students seeing teaching as the key to their ongoing learning. The remarkable feature of the evidence is that the biggest effects on student learning occur when teachers become learners of their own teaching, and when students become their own teachers. When students become their own teachers, they exhibit the self-regulatory attributes that seem most desirable for learners (self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-assessment, self-teaching). Thus, it is visible teaching and learning by teachers and students that makes the difference (Hattie, 2008).

Hattie mentioned the questions about conceptions of teaching that have led to teachers making decisions about the future:

- What is best to teach?
- what materials to choose, with no regard to any evidence (other than prior use) that these are the optimal materials (and so often these materials are made by the cottage industry in teachers' homes);
- how to keep students engaged and busy, but not ensure that they actually learn;
- What activities can be more interesting for the learners?
- How to maximise the challenge of the learning goals and create structures for students to learn via the challenge, rather than structuring the material so that it is easy to learn.

Studying students' attitude towards teachers' skills and abilities, the authors stated that school is not only a place to disseminate knowledge, but also an environment for personality and moral development (Waani & Kandowanko, 2019). Students' attitudes towards teachers can affect teaching effectiveness, the quality of communication in the classroom and the school environment in general (Suprayitno & Wahyudi, 2020). Therefore, to improve the quality of education today, it is necessary to thoroughly understand the factors that influence students' attitudes towards teachers, as well as how education can be a means to overcome these ethical challenges.

For a long period, teachers were respected as unquestionable authorities in the world of education (Pradana & Ma'ruf, 2015). In the current era, this approach and dynamic have changed. The difference in the students' attitudes towards teachers has changed quite significantly. This may lead to a more critical attitude towards teachers, and students may ask more questions or participate more actively in class discussions. On the other hand, this change also poses its own challenges (Suwardana, 2018). Some students may have a disrespectful attitude towards teachers. In this context, it is important to find a balance between the two sides.

According to literature materials, not only in terms of achievement and reputation of university research, but also excellence in teaching and learning, teachers' competence is an indicator of the quality of higher education (Mocinic et.al., 2022). As Mocinic and colleagues mentioned, teaching competence is a complex and valuable aspect of the success of higher educational settings.

In modern words, the universities have started new strategies for the improvement of pedagogical, psychological and methodical competencies of teachers. There are various special programs implemented based on the North European and American context that improve teaching competencies (Biggs et al., 2011).

In Azerbaijan, secondary school teachers are involved in certification. This certification is carried out to verify the professional level and professional suitability of educators engaged in pedagogical activities in state general education institutions. But there isn't any system or programs to check and improve the university teachers' competence in our country.

This problem is observed not only in Azerbaijan, but also in other countries, such as Croatia (Mocinic et.al., 2022). The authors highlighted that there isn't systematic training for the university teachers.

What is competence? Following the definition of the European Commission (2019):

(...) competences are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes; knowledge is composed of the concepts, facts and figures, ideas and theories which are already established, and support the understanding of a certain area or subject; skills are defined as the ability to carry out processes and use the existing knowledge to achieve results, and attitudes describe the disposition and mindset to act or react to ideas, persons or situations. (p. 5)

M.Blaskova and colleagues mentioned that "Competence (in terms of professional competence) is a summary of the key professional and personal skills/talents and behavioural patterns that an individual needs to have and demonstrate in order to successfully accomplish the defined professional goals and perform the relating professional tasks, duties, and responsibilities" (Blaskova et al., 2015).

"Competence is the ability to do something successfully or efficiently," (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003). In other words, competence is a set of knowledge, skills, experience, and qualities that support goal achievement. Competences are not only simple skills. These are the observable ways in which we achieve effective performance (Hronik, 2007). "Competences, without any compromise, reveal differences between average and excellent individuals. ..." (Kubes, Spillerova & Kurnicky, 2004). Plaminek and Fiser have a different view of defining the competence substance when relating competences to performance and success. For Fiser and colleagues, success is measured by results achieved, and these results are derived from the competence of people. (Plaminek and Fiser, 2005).

Vass V. explored the higher education process and mentioned that innovative teaching methods and formative assessment had strong coherence (Vass V., 2024). Assessment had been explored, and its strong, significant feedback to the learning and teaching process was highlighted. Specifically, the author described the diagnostic and formative assessment as a pragmatic and useful function in planning curricula, learning, and the teaching process.

As Dr Vass stated, the effective learning and teaching process focuses on innovation, creativity, personalised, and collaborative learning (Vass V., 2024). In another study, Dr Vass and colleagues searched for creativity in the development of the whole personality in the educational process (Vass et al., 2024). They mentioned that a positive attitude towards creativity was needed throughout our lives, not only in learning. A problem-solving attitude also supports learning and reactions to change. Experiential learning methods were also studied, and it was stated that these methods provide space for students to gain experience, experiential knowledge, and develop memory skills in face-to-face teaching. The feedback also

showed that creative activities carried out in a community for a common purpose can also provide a recreational opportunity, making participants more open to new knowledge (Vass V., 2024). According to these facts, it can be suggested that these skills are the main components of teachers' high-level competence.

Raven and Stephenson highlighted that the teachers of modern educational settings should demonstrate general competence in the following areas: 1. Meaning competence; 2. Relationship competence; 3. Learning competence – identifying solutions to tasks and reflecting on experiences to improve next tasks; 4. Changing competence – acting in new ways when the task or situation calls for it (Raven & Stephenson, 2001).

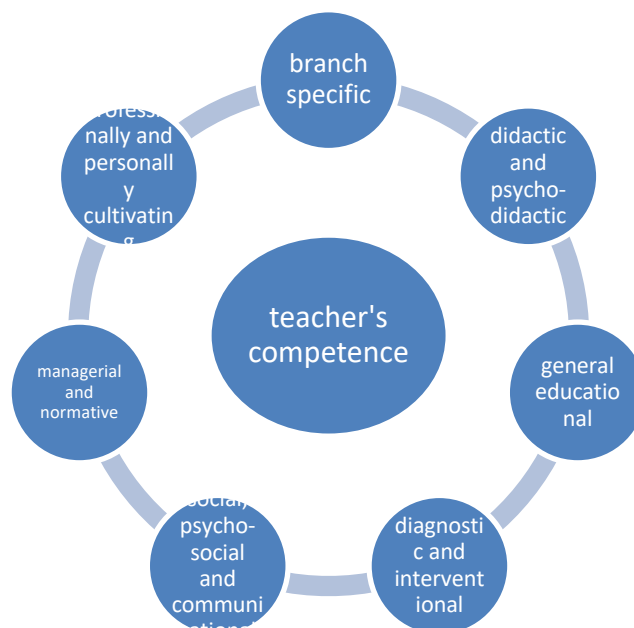
In a systematic review study carried out in 2015 with 25 articles, Jerez Yáñez, Orsini Sánchez, and Hasbún Heldac (2016) identify three types of competence of an 'excellent teacher' in higher education:

- generic competences (personal, attitudinal and communicational characteristics) that constitute the set of characteristics, attitudes and cross-curricular knowledge required in any professional area and that are transferable to different fields;
- pedagogical competences (teaching and learning strategies and planning and management) and that constitute the set of skills, capabilities and aptitudes that are developed exclusively in a pedagogical setting and mainly involve the methods used to facilitate learning, as well as planning and management practices;
- and disciplinary competences, which are less valued by students than by teachers and that constitute the minimum required knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a given disciplinary field to teach.

Competences of university teachers have been searched by numerous authors, such as Boyer (1990), Laurillard (1994), Vašutová (2005), Elton (2006), Lueddeke (2008), Spilková (2011), Hartley, Hilsdon, Keenan, Sinfield & Verity (2011); Kucharčíková (2013); Hoidn & Kärkkäinen (2014), etc. Teachers' competences are seen as capacities of excellence (Slavík et al., 2012, p. 74). According to Slavík and others, the university teacher's competences can be divided into seven clusters. It has been presented in the following picture:

Figure 1

Competence of the teachers



Valica and Rohn listed the teacher's competence profile, which consists of the following four components:

- expert/technical competences;
- moral and ethical responsibilities;
- pedagogical-psychological and didactic-methodological competences;
- self-developing competence (Valica & Rohn, 2013).

Blaskova and Blasko worked out the list of competences in the framework of the project Development of culture quality at the University of Zilina, based on European standards of higher education – DEQUA (funded by the European Union), which is different from the previous two lists. That classification has consisted of following 8 competences (DEQUA, 2012; Blaskova & Blasko, 2012): a) role model competence; technical (expert) competence; b) mature personality competence; c) scientific competence; d) critically thinking competence; e) moral and ethical competence; f) acclaimed author's competence; g) excellent teaching competence; h) communication competence; i) motivation competence. As the authors mentioned, the competence model of university teachers should also consider new, progressive and relevant educational strategies. Problem-based learning (PBL) offers an attractive alternative to traditional approaches by shifting the emphasis from what is taught to what the student learns. PBL is designed to develop transferable skills along with the appropriate discipline-specific knowledge (Barrows, 1985; Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000).

Francesc M. Esteve-Mon and colleagues differentiated digital teaching competence, too. The authors mentioned that digital teaching competence (DTC) comprises the set of skills, knowledge and attitudes required by teachers to promote student learning, in a digitally rich world, by designing and transforming classroom practices and enriching their own professional development (Francesc M. Esteve-Mon et al., 2022).

Digital learning competence has been noted in the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC)'s classification. The Research Centre defines this. Competence in six areas (Redecker, C., & Punie, Y., 2017):

- professional engagement, which includes both collaborative work, communication, and professional and reflective development;
- digital resources, i.e. their selection, creation, modification or management;
- teaching and learning, which includes aspects of teaching, support, and collaborative and self-directed learning;
- assessment, which includes strategies for evaluation, evidence analysis and feedback;
- empowering learners, which incorporates aspects of accessibility and inclusion, personalised learning and active participation;
- facilitating learners' digital competence.

The majority of the studies and articles focused on examining the university teachers' own perception of their competence, academic knowledge, pedagogical, psychological and personal skills and abilities. However, it is interesting that the students' reflection and their thoughts about the high-level and low-level teachers' competence.

According to N. Gumanova (2022), two similar qualitative research projects on professional competences from 2014 focused on students' reflections and views on the competences of university teachers. The authors mentioned Semrádová and Hubáčková's study (2014), which collected reflections of students from 2009 to 2013. These researchers' analysis concluded that participants in their study emphasised the importance of competences related to communication, teamwork, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, enhancement of students' independence, and ability for reflection and self-reflection. Students stressed the university teachers' personal and pedagogical qualities; on the other hand,

there was an absence of competences related to scientific and professional as well as organisational and managerial activities (Gumanova et al., 2022). The second author who examined this problem based on the students' reflection was Blašková and colleagues (2014); their research was on a sample of 395 students, which examined what type of competences teachers should possess. In the second stage of the project, they focused on the reflections and opinions of 686 students on the types of competences a university teacher should definitely not possess. Especially in that study, the negative aspects and low level of competence problems were analysed. The students yet again primarily focused on personality traits and prerequisites, most often stating that teachers ought not to be biased or unfair, arrogant, conceited, or act unprofessionally or lack knowledge in their field (Blašková et al., 2014).

What kind of situations are the indicators of a low level of competence? Blaskova and colleagues explained that condition.

- Low level of professional competence;
- Low level of educational competence;
- Low level of motivational competence;
- Low level of communicational competence;
- Low level of personal competence;
- Low level of science and research competence;
- Low level of publication competence.

How can we understand a low level of intercultural competence? - Intercultural competences were searched by Fernandez-Aguero and colleagues' study, which was carried out in 2019 (Fernández-Agüero, Chancay-Cedeño, 2019). It suggested the need to develop intercultural attitudes in their pedagogical practice. Another mixed design research project on this topic was implemented one year later (Zelenková & Hanesová, 2019). Those authors argue the importance of teachers' intercultural competences, and try to relate that problem to the international cooperation at universities.

The literature underscores the importance of effective teaching models and the main ideas of competence of university teachers. Academic background and knowledge, personal characteristic features, social-emotional skills, pedagogical abilities, formative and summative assessment during the activities, administrative and management skills, using modern technological gadgets, research and publication opportunities and other features were presented as the determinants of the teacher's competence.

It is also important to highlight one point: there is a significant gap in the existing literature: the lack of studies on the competence of university teachers in higher educational settings within Azerbaijan.

The next gap is related to students' review analysis. Most research focuses on studies, policy papers, and teachers' own attitudes about this problem. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to the opposite side of the problem: how do the students accept and estimate the low level of competence of the teachers? Learning their attitude, we can understand the problem from the students' point of view, and work on the future by implementing programs to improve the teachers' skills and competencies.

Materials and Methods

The first target of the study is to analyse literature materials published about university teachers' competence. The next aim is to conduct a survey among the students and summarise their reviews about the competencies of teachers. The questionnaire-based survey focused on the low-level and high-level features, and students' subjective attitude to the problem. A semi-structured interview with teachers and students was planned for the quantitative analysis of the problem.

The interpretive methodological approach was chosen in the study. This approach focuses on understanding the subjective beliefs and attitudes of the participants. It was emphasised that although interpretive methodology has strengths as providing a more detailed understanding of social context, it has

limitations as being subjective and at risk of any biases (Bransford et al., 1972; Schwandt, 1994; Crotty, 1998; Hughes & Sharrock, 1997).

Sample and participants

In the first stage of the study, 184 students from universities in Azerbaijan participated in the survey. After the survey, qualitative method – interviews were executed with a small group of 10 university teachers, and 10 students to get more detailed information about the competence of the teachers.

Research instrument

Both qualitative and quantitative research designs were employed, incorporating an online survey, semi-structured interviews with students, and teachers. Due to the lack of an already existing instrument that would fit the needs of this research, a questionnaire was prepared entitled “Students’ reflection about the university teachers’ competence (high level and low level differentiations” suitable for the higher education context in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The survey and interview materials were pilot-tested and examined by the Ethics Committee. The respondents were asked to answer the questions and describe the situation (open-ended questions). So the items demand both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Ethical issues

The research was approved by an ethics committee at Khazar University, 2025. Each of the participants gave their informed consent for participating in the study (were informed of the withdrawal possibility, with no other consequences on their status, etc).

Results

184 students from different universities in Azerbaijan participated in the survey and filled out the form. In the first stage, online questionnaires were developed and distributed among university students in the capital city of Azerbaijan, Baku. All questionnaires were administered in the Azerbaijani language since students who were asked to participate in the study were students studying their majors in Azerbaijani and English. Data were anonymous, and respondents were not asked to put any identifiable information. The data collection took place during October-December, 2025. The demographic characteristics of the study sample are shown in the table. As it is seen from the table, more female students (52.2%) participated in the study compared to male students (47.8%). Students from different age groups took part in the study, and the prevailing age group was 17-25.

The percentage of the students from state and private universities was similar, 49,5% of them were from private universities, 50,5% of them from public universities.

Table 1

Demographic features of the study sample

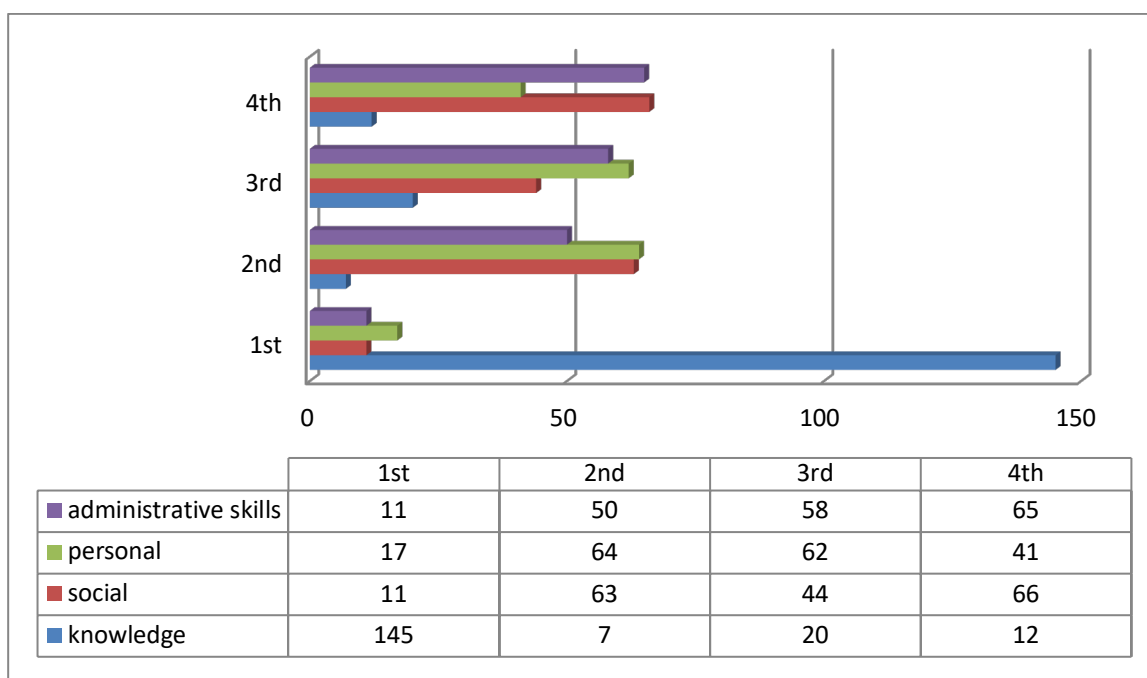
		Frequency	Valid (percentage)
Gender	Male	88	47,8%
	Female	96	52,2%
University	Public	93	50,5%
	Private	91	49,5%
Degree	Undergraduate	125	67,9%
	Postgraduate	59	32,1%
Years	1 st	5	2,7%
	2 nd	58	31,5%
	3 rd	37	20,1%
	4 th	16	8,7%
	>4 th year	68	37%
Specialties	Technical science	51	27,7%

Social science and Humanitarian science	78	43,4%
Administrative and economics	55	29,9%

The study attempted to explore the teachers' competence based on students' approach and how they assessed 4 main features of competence: academic knowledge, social, personal and administrative skills. The following diagrams present the results:

Figure 2

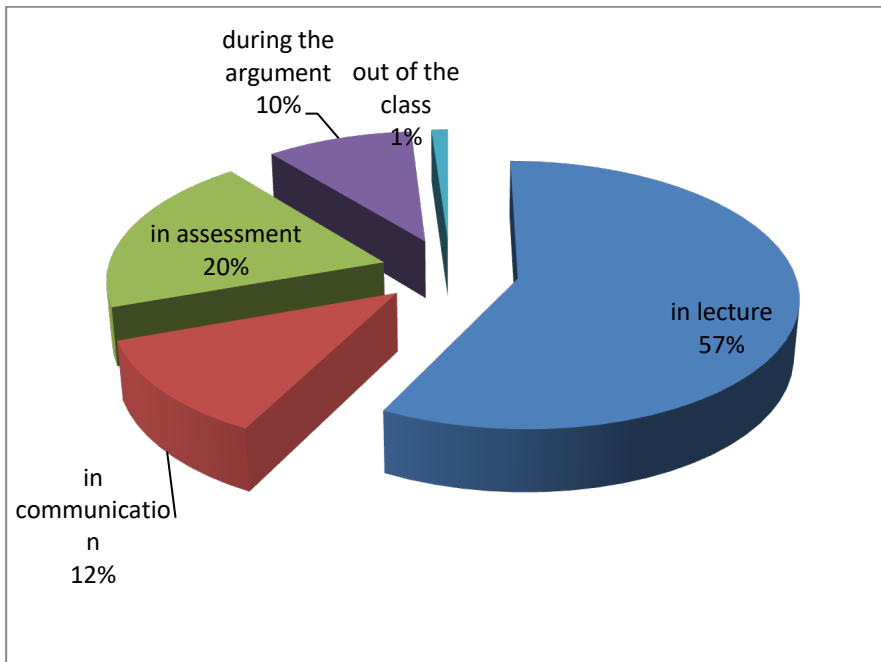
Competence of the teachers



Academic knowledge of the teachers was mentioned as the first and important skill, their personal and social skills were highlighted as the next main features, or part of competence. The situation, or condition, in which the students observed the teachers' competence changed in various cases: during the lecture, communication, assessment, argument, and out of the class. The majority of them (57,6%) thought that it could be realised during the lecture process easily. The statistics of the results were presented in the following bar chart.

Figure 3

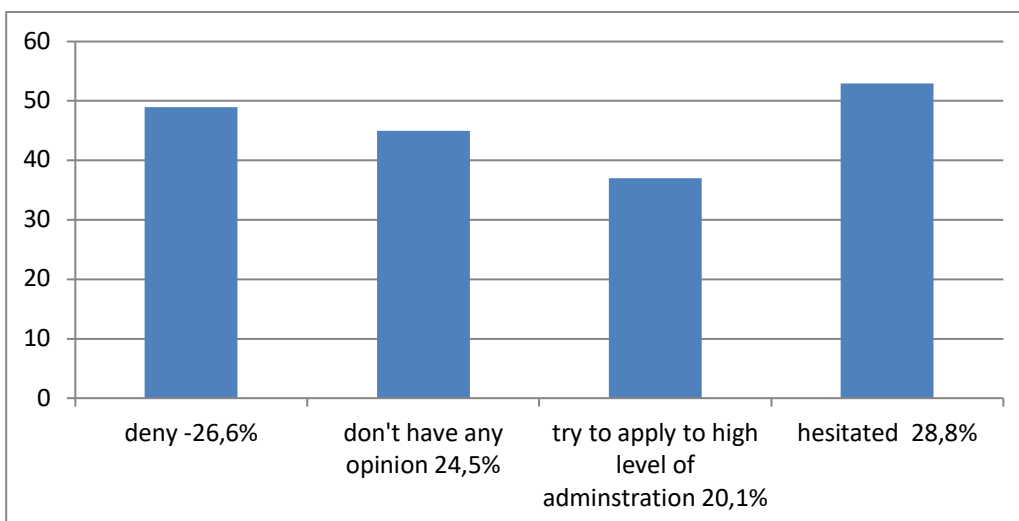
Students' observation conditions



The next research question was how the students react in these cases, and whether they comment or express their opinion. Based on the survey results, only 26,6% of them mentioned that they deny in these cases, and didn't accept the low level of competence of the teachers. However, 24,5% didn't have any opinion, and 28,8% had hesitation about the next steps; they didn't want to mention their perspective. Comparing the results based on two groups- bachelor's and master's degrees, 32% of the undergraduate students didn't express their opinion about this problem, and only 7% of graduate students had hesitation about this case ($F=21.6$; $t=4.2$; $df=182$; $p=0.000$).

Figure 4

Students' approach to low levels of the teachers' competence



How do the teachers accept this low level of competence from the students' perspective?- 57,6% of the students mentioned that teachers were aware that their competence wasn't enough for teaching, and auditory. 19,6% of them thought that the teachers weren't aware of or didn't accept their low level of skills.

However, 12% of them noted that although teachers understood the problem, they tried to disguise it; the other participants preferred not to answer that question.

Discussion

The following items were summarised, examining the students' reviews about the cases when they observed the low level of competence of the teachers:

- Lack of objectivity in assessment;
- Lack of knowledge;
- Talking about personal problems in class;
- Comparing the student with themselves;
- Using the phone in class for personal use;
- Aggressive attitude towards the student;
- Inadequate approach and interpersonal problems;
- Leaving the student's questions unanswered;
- Lack of ability to use modern technologies in the lesson.

According to the students' answers, a lack of academic knowledge, low level of social-emotional abilities, effective interpersonal communication skills, applying ICT during the lecture, assessment and grading problems were observed in the various situations.

Comparing the results based on the education level of the students (graduate and undergraduate), both groups mentioned academic skills first, and then social skills as part of competence ($F=81.9$; $t=3$; $df=182$; $p=0.001$; $F=20$; $df=182$; $p=0.000$). Administrative abilities of the teachers were noted as the last features of the competence ($F=1,65$; $t=3,2$; $df=182$; $p=0,001$).

The study attempts to explore the correlation among the competence skills of the teachers (based on students' reviews). The positive correlation mentioned between knowledge and social, personal skills of the teachers ($r=0.466^{**}$; $r=0.552^{**}$; $p=0.01$); the negative correlation between knowledge or academic skills and administrative skills of the teachers ($r=-0.033^{**}$; $p=0.01$).

Another finding of the study shows that over the years, students' approaches to teachers' competence were similar. The academic knowledge of the teachers was mentioned as the first competence skill of the academicians ($r=0.22^{**}$; $p=0.01$).

The next purpose of this study is to examine teachers' and students' interview results about competence. This research presents an approach to analysing the content of interviews and categorising them through the MAXQDA 2020 data analysis software. 10 university teachers' and 10 students' answers were uploaded to MAXQDA as separate files. The coding process was carried out, focusing on the main components of competence of the teachers from both points of view: students and teachers. These codes are as follows:

- a) Scientific competence (knowledge and awareness about the branch);
- b) Personality competence (moral and ethical competence)
- c) Motivational competence (support students, provide feedback, explain the problem)
- d) Critical thinking competence (reflective thinking) encourages students to engage in self-monitoring and self-regulation)
- e) Assessment and technical competence

The frequency and rate of the codes were presented in the following table:

Table 2*Distributions of the codes*

Themes/codes	n	%
Scientific/ academic competence	80	21,3%
- Teachers' interview	42	11,2%
- Students' interview	38	10,1%
Personality –moral and ethical competence	89	23,7%
- Teachers' interview	36	9,6%
- Students' interview	53	14,1%
Motivation competence (support students, provide feedbacks, explain the problem)	81	21,6%
- Teachers' interview	24	6,4%
- Students' interview	57	15,2%
Critical thinking competence (reflective thinking, encourage students to engage self-monitoring, self-regulation)	82	21,8%
- Teachers' interview	34	9,06%
- Students' interview	48	12,8%
Assessment and technical competence	43	11,4%
- Teachers' interview	24	6,4%
- Students' interview	19	5%
Total	375	100%

Academic competence, expanding knowledge in the science and importance of assessment skills, using modern technological devices, was mentioned by teachers more than students, while the students highlighted the personal –moral competence, motivational determinants, and encouraged learners more than teachers' review. The positive correlation was determined between the codes "Motivation competence" and "Personal competence" ($r = 0,23^*$; $df=4$; $p<0.05$).

According to the teachers' interview results, a positive correlation was mentioned between "Academic" and "Personal competence" codes ($r = 0,34^*$; $df=4$; $p<0.05$). Increased motivational competence was observed, with a high level of critical thinking and encouraging the students' abilities; these competence codes were proximate to one another, and this indicates that there is the same directional correlation among these codes as well ($r = 0.42^*$; $df=3$; $p<0.05$).

Limitations

The limitations of the study on students' attitudes towards teachers at the university may include several things. Firstly, there is a possibility of bias from respondents in giving answers that are considered socially desirable rather than actual answers. Second, limitations in obtaining a broadly representative sample from a variety of student backgrounds and university conditions. Third, it is difficult to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs in overcoming ethical challenges objectively and

thoroughly. Fourth, there is limited time and resources to conduct a thorough and in-depth study, which may limit the depth of analysis and generalizability of the findings.

Conclusion

Based on the conducted literature review (Boyer (1990); Laurillard (1994); Vašutová (2005); Elton (2006); Lueddeke (2008); Spilková (2011); Hartley, Hilsdon, Keenan, Sinfield & Verity (2011); Kucharčíková (2013); Hoidn & Kärkkäinen (2014)), it can be concluded that the main features of the university teachers are their academic, social-emotional, administrative and technical skills. However, the importance of the skills varies across the different cases and conditions. The findings of the current study show that study participants, university students, observed the teachers' low level of competence during the lectures, exams, and communication.

Consistent with the research question, study findings showed that the academic background of the teachers (how they know the material, explain the topic, present new material and how they answer the students' questions) was mentioned as the first important point. The results were similar for the graduate and undergraduate level students. Social-emotional skills of the teachers, how they understand their own emotions, and students' emotional state, empathy among them, trying to motivate them, influence them positively, support and care, were the next important points that were highlighted by the students. The grading and assessment during the exams, using objective test and quiz materials, and presenting the grading rubric effectively, were also noted by students as the teachers' skills.

The next research question of the study is related to the conditions under which the participants observe the university teachers' low level of competence.

We can assume that the lack of knowledge and social-emotional abilities of the teachers, incorrect assessment and grading of students, discussing other problems during the class activity, and intervening in the students' personal lives negatively impact students' self-esteem and motivation, or in other cases were estimated as the low level of competence of the teachers.

The study results let us mention that nearly 47% of them can express their opinion related to the teachers' insufficient pedagogical and academic performance (26,6% of them mentioned that they disagree in these cases, and didn't accept the low level of competence of the teachers. Moreover 20% of the participants could discuss it with the administration or the faculty. However, more than 50% of the student didn't want to mention their approach, because of the hesitation. This anxiety and hesitation of bachelor's degree students were observed more than those of master's degree learners. This case can be a research question for the next studies- why don't the students express their approach about the teachers' low level of competence, and what are the reasons for their anxious behaviour?

In this research, a phenomenological approach, one of the qualitative research methods, was preferred. Accordingly, the university teachers' competence was examined in depth through the subjective experiences of students. During the next stage of the research, data analysis was carried out using the interview method, which is frequently used in qualitative research. The process includes the stages of data preparation, coding, grouping similar codes under themes, and interpretation of findings.

In line with the phenomenological research approach, the participants' experiences were focused on, and meaningful themes were created by identifying important statements. The coding process was used as the basic tool for breaking down and interpreting the data into small parts. In the pre-coding stage, noteworthy quotations were identified, and then these codes were grouped according to their similarities to create provisional themes (Saldana, 2019). Students' and university teachers' opinions supporting the created themes were tabulated.

Suggestions for Future Research

In conclusion, the findings of this research show that students have a high level of awareness regarding their teachers' different competencies (academic, personal, motivational, technical, administrative, etc.).

On the other hand, this study attempted to search for this problem based on the approach of Azerbaijani students in public and private universities. Sometimes we think that the low level of educational achievement is related to the students' background and insufficient abilities. The study allowed us to discuss this problem based on the teachers' competence and how to change this situation. For future research, qualitative interviews need to be conducted with a large population, and from various regions of universities. Based on the results, a special program and implementation can be presented for higher educational settings. These results can be effective for getting academic achievements, successful results, and a student-friendly environment at universities.

This study has various limitations that prevent us from applying the study findings to the whole student population in Azerbaijan. Therefore, it is suggested to conduct further study that would address the limitations of the current study and help to further explore the university teachers' competence in the higher educational process.

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Conflict of interest

None.

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