THE IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICAL TRAINING IN FORMING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF SEWING STUDENTS

Akbarova Mukaddaskhon
Master of Industrial Training at Bagdad District Technical College No.1
Uzbekistan
mukaddasakbarova@gmail.com

Abstract

The preparation of competitive and professionally competent specialists in the sewing and garment industry is one of the key tasks of modern vocational education systems. The rapid development of fashion technologies, the diversification of textile materials, and the increasing requirements of the labor market demand that graduates possess not only theoretical knowledge but also strong practical skills and professional competencies. In sewing education, professional competence is closely connected with the ability to perform technological operations, work with modern equipment, apply design principles, ensure product quality, and adapt to real production conditions. This extended thesis explores the significance of practical training in forming professional competencies of sewing students. It analyzes the conceptual foundations of competence-based vocational education, identifies the main groups of competencies required in the sewing profession, and examines the pedagogical role of practical training in integrating knowledge with professional practice. The thesis also discusses effective forms and methods of organizing practical training, including workshops, project-based learning, simulations of production environments, and internships in garment enterprises. Special attention is paid to the influence of practical training on students' professional readiness, motivation, employability, and personal development. The study argues that high-quality practical training is a decisive factor in preparing sewing students for successful professional activity and sustainable career development in the modern garment industry.

Keywords: practical training, professional competencies, vocational education, sewing students, garment industry, skills development

Introduction

In the context of globalization and rapid technological development, vocational education systems face the challenge of preparing specialists who are capable of responding to the dynamic demands of the labor market. The sewing and garment

industry is one of the sectors where professional success depends heavily on practical skills, technological accuracy, and the ability to apply knowledge in real production situations. Employers expect graduates of vocational institutions to be ready for work from the first days of employment, which requires not only familiarity with theoretical concepts but also well-formed professional competencies. Despite the recognized importance of practical skills, in many educational institutions theoretical instruction still dominates over practical training. Students often acquire fragmented knowledge of textile science, garment construction, and production technology, but experience difficulties when they are required to perform complex operations independently. This discrepancy between educational outcomes and labor market expectations leads to problems such as low employability of graduates, prolonged adaptation periods in enterprises, and dissatisfaction among employers. Practical training plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and professional activity. It provides students with opportunities to engage in real or simulated professional tasks, make decisions, solve production problems, and take responsibility for the quality of their work. Through systematic practical training, students not only develop technical skills but also form professional thinking, work discipline, and a sense of professional identity.

The purpose of this extended thesis is to examine the importance of practical training in forming professional competencies of sewing students. The objectives include analyzing the concept of professional competence in vocational education, identifying key competencies required for sewing specialists, exploring the pedagogical functions of practical training, and discussing effective organizational forms and methods of practical training in sewing education. The thesis also highlights the impact of practical training on students' professional readiness and employability and outlines challenges and perspectives for improving practical training in vocational institutions.

Theoretical Foundations of Professional Competence in Sewing Education

Professional competence is understood as an integrated characteristic of an individual that combines knowledge, skills, abilities, values, and personal qualities necessary for effective professional activity. In vocational education, competence-based approaches emphasize learning outcomes that reflect real professional requirements rather than only academic achievements. For sewing students, professional competence includes not only the ability to perform specific technological operations but also understanding the logic of production processes, ensuring product quality, and adapting to technological and organizational changes in the garment industry.

The formation of professional competence in sewing education is based on the interaction of several components. The cognitive component involves theoretical knowledge of textile materials, pattern construction, garment design, technological sequences, equipment operation, and quality standards. The operational component includes practical skills and abilities to carry out cutting, sewing, pressing, finishing, and quality control operations. The motivational component reflects students' interest in the profession, professional values, and commitment to high-quality work. The social component includes teamwork skills, professional communication, and the ability to cooperate with colleagues and supervisors. The reflective component involves self-assessment, awareness of strengths and weaknesses, and readiness for continuous professional improvement. In the sewing profession, competence is highly context-dependent. The quality of professional performance depends not only on individual skills but also on the ability to work within production systems, follow technological discipline, and meet deadlines. Therefore, competence formation requires learning environments that simulate or reproduce real professional contexts. Practical training provides such environments and enables students to experience professional roles and responsibilities.

Key Professional Competencies of Sewing Students

The professional activity of sewing specialists requires a wide range of competencies that can be grouped into several categories. Technical and technological competencies are central to the profession and include the ability to operate sewing machines and equipment, select appropriate tools and materials, perform different types of seams and stitches, and follow technological maps and production instructions. Sewing students must also be able to diagnose and correct defects in garments and equipment settings. Design and creative competencies involve the ability to work with patterns, adjust designs to individual measurements, and apply aesthetic principles in garment creation. Even in industrial production, sewing specialists often need to adapt standard models to specific requirements, which requires creativity and a sense of style. These competencies are particularly important in small ateliers and custom tailoring, where individualization of garments is a key value. Organizational competencies include planning work processes, managing time, organizing the workplace according to ergonomic and safety requirements, and maintaining technological discipline. Sewing students must learn to work efficiently in conditions of limited time and resources while ensuring high quality of products. Communicative competencies involve interaction

with colleagues, supervisors, designers, and clients. Effective communication is necessary for clarifying technical requirements, coordinating work in teams, and ensuring mutual understanding in production processes. Personal-professional qualities such as responsibility, accuracy, patience, diligence, stress resistance, and adaptability are also essential competencies for sewing specialists. These qualities influence professional reliability and productivity and are formed mainly through practical experience in real or simulated production environments.

The Role of Practical Training in Competence Formation

Practical training is the main pedagogical tool for forming professional competencies of sewing students. It provides conditions for active learning, where students are not passive recipients of information but active participants in professional activity. Through practical training, students learn to apply theoretical knowledge in concrete situations, which enhances the meaningfulness and durability of learning outcomes. One of the key functions of practical training is the integration of theory and practice. In sewing education, theoretical concepts such as fabric properties, technological sequences, and design principles acquire practical significance when students apply them in real tasks. For example, understanding the elasticity and shrinkage of fabrics becomes meaningful when incorrect fabric selection leads to defects in finished garments. Through such experiences, students develop a deeper understanding of theoretical knowledge. Practical training also supports the development of procedural skills, which are essential for professional performance. Sewing operations require precise coordination of movements, control of machine speed, and adherence to technological sequences. These skills are formed through repeated practice, gradual automation, and continuous feedback from instructors.

Another important role of practical training is the development of professional thinking and problem-solving abilities. In real or simulated production environments, students encounter various problems, such as fabric defects, pattern mismatches, equipment malfunctions, or time constraints. Solving these problems requires analytical thinking, flexibility, and decision-making skills. Practical training creates opportunities for developing these competencies in authentic contexts. Practical training also contributes to the formation of professional motivation and identity. When students see tangible results of their work, such as a finished garment that meets quality standards, they experience a sense of achievement and professional pride. This emotional experience strengthens their motivation for learning and professional development.

Moreover, practical training helps students understand the social significance of their profession and their future role in the labor market.

Forms and Methods of Practical Training in Sewing Education

The organization of practical training significantly influences its effectiveness in forming professional competencies. Different forms and methods of practical training can be combined to create a comprehensive learning experience for sewing students. Workshop-based training is the most traditional form and provides opportunities for systematic practice of sewing operations under the guidance of instructors. Well-equipped workshops allow students to gradually master basic and advanced skills and receive timely feedback.

Project-based learning is an effective method that involves students in the complete cycle of garment production, from design to finished product. By working on projects, students develop not only technical skills but also planning, creativity, teamwork, and responsibility. Projects can be oriented toward real client needs or market demands, which increases their relevance and motivational potential.

Simulation of production environments involves organizing practical training in ways that resemble real industrial conditions. This may include creating production lines, assigning professional roles, setting time and quality standards, and introducing elements of production management. Simulation helps students adapt to the rhythm and organizational requirements of real production and develop organizational and communicative competencies. Internships in garment enterprises provide students with direct experience of real working conditions. During internships, students observe professional practices, interact with experienced workers, and perform real tasks. This experience helps students understand the realities of the profession, develop professional discipline, and establish connections with potential employers. Internships also allow students to test their competencies in authentic contexts and identify areas for further improvement. The use of modern educational technologies, such as digital pattern-making software, virtual simulations, and online resources, can further enhance practical training. Integrating digital tools into practical training helps students develop digital competencies that are increasingly important in the modern garment industry.

The Impact of Practical Training on Professional Readiness and Employability

High-quality practical training significantly increases the professional readiness and employability of sewing students. Graduates who have extensive practical

experience are better prepared to meet employer expectations and adapt to workplace requirements. They require less time for adaptation and training in enterprises and can contribute to production processes more quickly. Practical training helps students develop a realistic understanding of professional roles, responsibilities, and working conditions. This understanding reduces the gap between educational experiences and professional reality and prevents professional disillusionment. Students who have experienced real production environments are more likely to make informed career choices and demonstrate higher professional commitment.

Moreover, practical training contributes to the development of transferable skills such as problem-solving, communication, teamwork, and time management. These skills are valued by employers across different sectors and increase graduates' overall employability. Practical training also provides opportunities for professional networking. During internships and collaborative projects with enterprises, students can establish contacts with potential employers, which increases their chances of employment after graduation. Positive impressions formed during practical training can lead to job offers and long-term professional cooperation.

Challenges and Prospects for Improving Practical Training

Despite its importance, practical training in sewing education faces several challenges. Limited material and technical resources in educational institutions can reduce the quality and relevance of practical training. Outdated equipment and insufficient access to modern technologies hinder the development of competencies required by the contemporary garment industry. Another challenge is the insufficient integration of vocational education institutions with the garment industry. In some cases, internships are formal and do not provide meaningful learning experiences. Strengthening partnerships with enterprises and involving industry professionals in educational processes can help address this issue. Teacher qualification and professional development are also critical factors. Instructors need to update their professional skills and stay informed about technological innovations in the garment industry. Continuous professional development programs and cooperation with industry can support teachers in fulfilling this role. Looking to the future, the improvement of practical training requires a systemic approach that includes modernization of educational environments, development of competency-based curricula, use of active learning methods, and strengthening cooperation with industry. Integrating digital technologies and innovative

pedagogical approaches can further enhance the effectiveness of practical training and prepare sewing students for the challenges of the modern labor market.

Conclusion

Practical training is a fundamental component of sewing education and a key factor in forming professional competencies of sewing students. It ensures the integration of theoretical knowledge with real professional practice and supports the development of technical skills, professional thinking, motivation, and personal-professional qualities. Through practical training, students gain experience in solving real production problems, adapting to professional environments, and fulfilling professional roles. Effective practical training enhances students' professional readiness and employability, contributes to their confidence and professional identity, and supports sustainable career development in the garment industry. However, the quality of practical training depends on adequate resources, qualified instructors, meaningful cooperation with industry, and well-designed pedagogical methods. By investing in high-quality practical training and adopting competency-based approaches, vocational education institutions can ensure the preparation of competent and competitive sewing specialists who are ready to meet the demands of the modern garment industry.

References

1. UNESCO. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET): Issues, Concerns and Prospects. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2015.
2. Billett, S. Vocational Education: Purposes, Traditions and Prospects. Dordrecht: Springer, 2011.
3. Rauner, F., & Maclean, R. (Eds.). Handbook of Technical and Vocational Education and Training Research. Dordrecht: Springer, 2008.
4. Gonczi, A. Competency-Based Education and Training: A Key Issue in Vocational Education and Training. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 1994.
5. Brown, P., Green, A., & Lauder, H. Skills and Training for Economic Development. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
6. Kadolph, S. J. (Ed.). Textiles. 11th ed. Boston: Pearson Education, 2010.
7. Cooklin, G. Garment Technology for Fashion Designers. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.