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## The level of formation of Transversal competence in the context of higher education: The case of Kazakhstan

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### Abstract

**Relevance.** The relevance of this study is underscored by the rapidly evolving landscape of the 21st century, characterized by technological advancements, shifts in the labor market, and ongoing environmental and political changes.

**Purpose.** The purpose of this study is to enable students to understand the importance of transversal competence.

**Methodology.** The research methodology was based on a systematic and comprehensive approach. The questionnaire was conducted to determine how well students could understand and perceive the concept of transversal competence.

**Results.** This article discusses the components and methods of transversal competence of students as citizens in accordance with the education system in the context of a post-industrial society. During the analysis, a questionnaire of the TRANSMOD project (2014) was used for analyzing the formation of transversal competences and transversal skills in the educational programs of the specialties "Pedagogy and Psychology" of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. The level of development and the importance of developing transversal competences of students in higher education system were considered.

**Conclusions.** Based on the results of the survey, it was concluded that in the modern education system it is necessary to provide new professional disciplines aimed at developing transversal competences. In conclusion, it is obvious that

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teaching staff have a special place in the formation of both professional and transversal competences in the training of future specialists.

**Keywords:** skills; digital society; questionnaire; professional disciplines; teaching staff.

## **Introduction**

The 21st century is a period of information and opportunities. The rapid development of technology and the era of digital devices, changes in the labor market, environmental and political changes have led to significant changes in attitudes and values towards knowledge and skills. In this regard, one of the main goals of the education system is to train a competent specialist who will be able to apply the acquired skills in the course of training. For university graduates in modern society, it is necessary not only to have certain qualifications, but also to have skills of further self-improvement, which will allow young specialists to remain constantly competitive in the labor market and work actively in their chosen professional field.

Transversal competences are considered as an important part of the education system in many countries. The network of Asia-Pacific research institutes in nine countries in these regions are introducing transversal skills into their curriculum, which is undoubtedly one of the key issues in the global education system [1]. It is obvious that teaching staff are in a position to form a specialist who meets the requirements of society in accordance with the updated content of education. In this regard, the 4K model of education in Kazakhstan is also focused on the components of transversal competence, such as creativity, critical thinking, communication and teamwork skills [2].

Training of specialists who meet all the requirements of employers is sometimes a serious challenge for educational institutions. This is due to the rapid and quick changes in the labor market and the education system. However, it is clear that transversal competences can fill this gap, albeit to a lesser extent. This is because transversal skills include the following skills necessary for society and the labor market: problem solving, negotiation, emotion management, empathy and communication, etc. These skills work in parallel with knowledge and values to build these skills in the specialist. In the education system, this process is called “magic glue” because it connects skills, additionally develops other digital skills, such as information literacy [3].

Transversal skills are also used as 21st century skills, soft skills and global skills. They include critical thinking, leadership, the ability to use digital information tools, problem solving and teamwork. These skills are “the foundation of personal development” and an important part of the formation of any knowledge and skills [4]. For example, for teacher psychologists, knowledge in their field is a professional skill, and speaking a foreign language, informational and digital literacy are transversal skills. On the other hand, digital skills are considered as a professional skill for information workers, and on the contrary, as an important transversal skill for teaching staff.

The purpose of this study is to enable students to understand the importance of transversal competence. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the answers to the key questions are presented in this article:

- Do you know about the concepts of “transversal skills” and “transversal competence”?
- What transversal skills are aimed at the formation or development of your learning process?
- Demonstrate the transversal skills you have.
- The importance of information and communication technologies (ICT) for you in the learning process.
- Does the transversal competence of the specialist play an important role in achieving high professional success?

## **Literature Review**

According to modern educational concepts, the purpose of education is to train specialists who have competitive core competences that are capable of systematic thinking and action, have creative activity, leadership qualities, and are characterized by initiative and independence. In this regard, the terms “competence” and “competency” are becoming increasingly common in the educational environment. In addition to the fact that these terms are widely used in the pedagogical sciences, there are still no well-defined common definitions, which was found out during the study. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the term “competence” first came into use in 1605 [5].

In “Competence in modern society: Its identification, development and release”, J. Raven [6] identified competence as a life success that occurs in a socially significant environment. In addition, he paid special attention to 39 main types of competence. Today, it is observed that the core competences identified by the author are considered as components of transversal competence. The author focused on some of them: self-control, self-discipline, the ability to think critically, the ability to independently solve complex problems, self-confidence, etc. In her works, the Kazakh scientist Sh. Taubayeva [7] states: “competence is an integrated property of the individual, which is defined as a general ability and readiness for action, based on the knowledge and experience acquired in the process of learning and socialization”.

The difference between transversal competences and core competences is that even when transferred to another field within the scope of application, these competences are considered generative in the sense that they can be reused in other areas (to some extent) without losing their relevance [8]. These competences are also called independent competences because they are freely applied in each field. Therefore, transversal competence is considered the main value for students. Core competences are formed and developed only in a specific area. Looking at the meaning of the term transversal competence, it is the ability of students to communicate, manage, compose and recognize [9].

The meaning of the concept of transversal competence is often unclear. These competences are considered as generic competences, strategic competences, and strategic

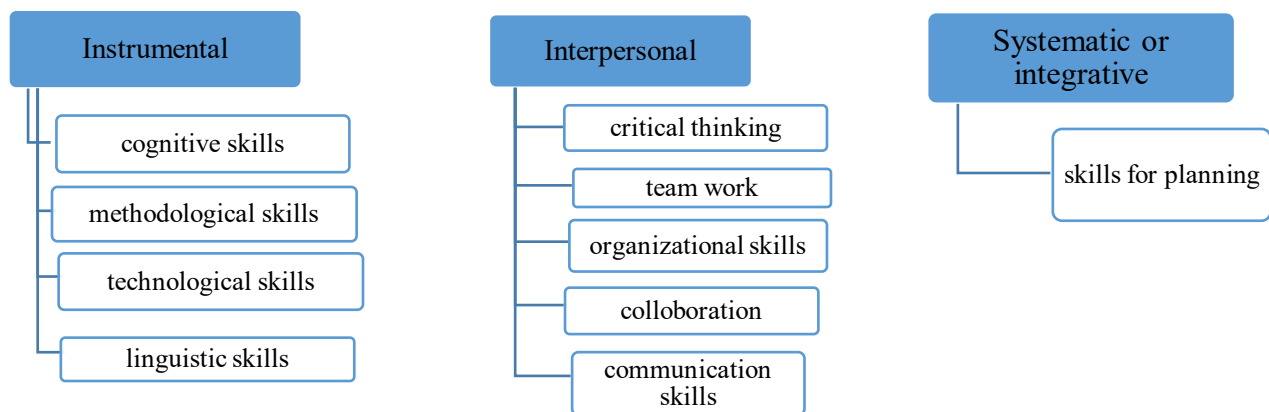
distinctive (core) competences [10-13]. According to CEDEFOP, transversal skills are skills that individuals acquire in the course of their professional activities or in accordance with other types of work [14]. These skills can be developed in relation to the types of activities performed in their spare time, or in the learning process. In most cases, transversal skills are skills that are relevant to any job and profession and can also be quickly transferred to another field [14].

Transversal skills are also used under the names soft skills, transferable skills, interdisciplinary skills, 21st century skills, and social and emotional skills [15]. These skills allow future specialists to become more skilled and become citizens who can solve social and economic problems. Young professionals associate success in their field with soft skills. However, the combination of soft and hard skills will certainly speed up the achievement of the goal. Transversal skills are also used as 21st century skills, soft skills and global skills. According to I. Suto [16], there was no clear, unified definition for “skills of the 21st century” and it is not expected to exist until this period taking into account a wide range of applications of these skills by education professionals, politicians, teaching

staff, employers, engineers, medical professionals, etc. [17].

According to H. Ashbaugh and K.M. Johnstone [18] and P. De Lange et al. [19], transversal competences are a set of skills needed to complement professional competences and necessary for specialists in order to succeed in a particular field [20]. There are statements that one of the main requirements of a prosperous society is the presence of communication skills and tolerance among students. In recent years, these structures have been considered as components of transversal competence. In the work of Zh. Akparova [21], it was noted that one of the professional and pedagogical personal qualities of a teacher is tolerance. In addition to the above-mentioned skills, transversal competences also include analytical skills, social and civic skills, leadership and entrepreneurial skills, and global citizenship. The Tuning Project divided transversal competence into the following types: instrumental, interpersonal, systematic or integrative [22].

The development of certain components of transversal competence on the basis of disciplines in educational programs according to this category is presented below (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Structures of transversal competence

Summarizing the above information, it can be concluded that transversal competence is a set of skills that are considered necessary for future specialists to achieve their goals in the right and effective way, covering many areas of education and science in a developing society.

## Materials and Methods

The main function of the teacher is not a direct impact on the student, but their interaction. Thus, educational programs have a special place in the process of cooperation. The main purpose of this analysis of the educational program of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian national university (bachelor's degree) in the specialties of pedagogy and psychology was to determine what competences students develop in their field and how this process is carried out. The educational program of the university is developed within the framework of documentation based on the Professional standard of the teacher [23]. According to this standard, the values of the teaching profession are:

- respect for the student's personality, rights and freedoms;

- expressing tolerance for other beliefs, worldviews and traditions;
- openness to cultural diversity;
- flexibility, adaptability, ability to empathize;
- understanding personal values, language and communication;
- skills of independent learning, analytical and critical thinking skills;
- communicative and language skills;
- skills of cooperation, the ability to resolve disputes.

These are the structures of transversal competence that underlie the topic of this article. Thus, it can be concluded that these are the main skills that must be found in pedagogical specialists in accordance with the professional standard of the teacher. The emergence of new professional and scientific directions has made significant changes in the labor market. The questionnaire was conducted to determine how well students could understand and perceive the concept of transversal competence. The research methodology was based on a systematic and comprehensive approach. In a systematic

approach, it can be concluded that the identification of factors, causes and consequences that affect the formation of transversal competence of students is clearly visible.

The questionnaire consists of 10 questions related to such aspects as the respondent's academic knowledge, the respondent's data on transversal skills, competences and their formation and development, and the assessment of transversal skills. Due to the lack of tools related to transversal competence in the Kazakh language, these test questions were translated into Kazakh from the TRANSMOD project questionnaire. The questionnaire, prepared specifically for the TRANSMOD project, consists of 32 questions developed in partnership with the University of Craiova (Romania), Bifrost University (Iceland) and Nesna University College (Norway). Also, some issues have been adapted and changed in coordination with the teaching staff [24].

Due to the fact that the research work was carried out during the state of emergency in the country, special attention was paid to the relationship between the life and study of students in the process of distance learning. The survey was conducted among undergraduates of the 3rd and 4th courses on the specialty "Pedagogy and Psychology" including two higher education institutions. 24 students (48%) from L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University and 26 students (52%) from M.Kh. Dulaty Taraz Regional University. Confidentiality is ensured in accordance with the requirements of the university.

## **Results and Discussion**

During the analysis of the educational program, it was found that several disciplines are taught in order to develop transversal competences in students. At present, in order to meet the demand for oral and written communication in the Kazakh, Russian and foreign languages in the use of communication tools and digital technologies, as well as in solving cultural and professional problems, the following disciplines have been introduced into the educational process: "Foreign (Kazakh, Russian) language", "Speech culture". The main purpose of these disciplines is to establish communication and solve problems in oral and written form in the Kazakh, Russian and foreign languages.

According to world analysts, digitalization affects the change of social paradigms of people, as well as opens up many opportunities for the development of thinking and the acquisition of new knowledge [25]. On the basis of the disciplines "Digital Technology in Industry", "Information and Communication Technologies", "Media Pedagogy", it is planned to teach the ability to use digital technology, various information and communication technologies in the search, storage, processing, protection and dissemination of information. Today, society is increasingly interested in the concepts of "business culture and" entrepreneurship" and it is becoming one of the most relevant topics. One of the most important requirements is the formation and development of the business culture of teaching staff. After all, a teacher is an important figure in society who guides the development of future generations.

The key word in the definition of "teacher's business culture" is "business", which includes not only activity, creativity and continuous development, but also the ability to independently set goals and achieve results, that is, the culture of a professional teacher [26]. In today's developing

society, in a new, unstable world of economic relations, in order to change and develop the personality, the teacher in the educational process must be exactly as described above. In order to form and develop the above-mentioned components of transversal competence in future specialists, the disciplines "Entrepreneurship and Business", "Business Culture" have been introduced. According to J. Willems and C. Bossu [27], new technologies lead to social changes and can contribute to development through freedom of speech, education, democratic and civic principles. From the above conclusions, it can be seen that such components of transversal competence as citizenship and global citizenship also occupy a special place in the field of education. Therefore, such disciplines as "Module of social and political education", "Anti-corruption culture", "Philosophy" in the educational program of the university provide students with the opportunity to apply philosophical knowledge in the formation of a worldview, as well as analyze the main stages and patterns of historical development in the formation of citizenship and global citizenship.

The "concept of creativity" was introduced into the education system 70 years ago, and this topic has aroused the interest of many scientists. J. Guilford [28] divided thinking into two types: convergent (proposing one good idea) and divergent (generating multiple solutions). He believes that divergent thinking is the basis of creativity. There are three components to divergent thinking: fluency (finding multiple solutions to the problem), flexibility (simultaneous consideration of different alternatives), and originality (selection of different ideas) [29].

Universities pay great attention not only to the training of future specialists, but also to the education of citizens who are able to think critically, analyze global and local information, and determine their civic position. In this case, the subject "Creative pedagogy" is taught, aimed at developing critical thinking of future specialists. This discipline is a great source of knowledge that students not only develop themselves, but also provide their future students. A creative thinking pedagogical psychologist has the ability to work with new questions, concepts, conclusions, assumptions, reflections on their mental actions and has the opportunity to develop the ability to analytical activity. Transversal competences are known not only in the context of the future, but also in the context of the present and the current situation. These competences have not lost their significance both for the younger generation, who can keep up with the development of society, and for the older generation, who can solve the opportunities and difficulties of society.

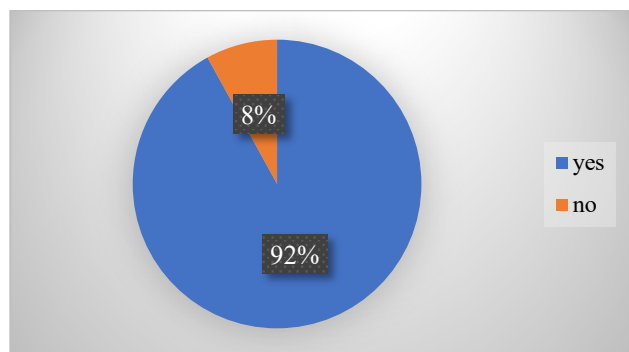
Today, the environmental situation is a matter of concern for the whole world, and it is considered as one of the components of explored competence. The analysis of the educational program revealed that the discipline "Fundamentals of Ecology and Life Safety" is taught to future specialists in order to raise awareness of environmental conditions. In the previous decade, educational programs for undergraduate students focused exclusively on basic knowledge, and subsequently began to pay special attention to the development of other skills, including transversal competences, as they are highly valued in the labor market. These include ethical skills that

are not developed only in the course of education. Therefore, this is also considered in the educational program for the formation of multi-ethnic culture through the disciplines “Fundamentals of National Education”, “Ethno-pedagogy and Ethno-psychology”, “Professional Ethics in Psychological and Pedagogical Activities” [30] (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Disciplines aimed at the development of transversal competence

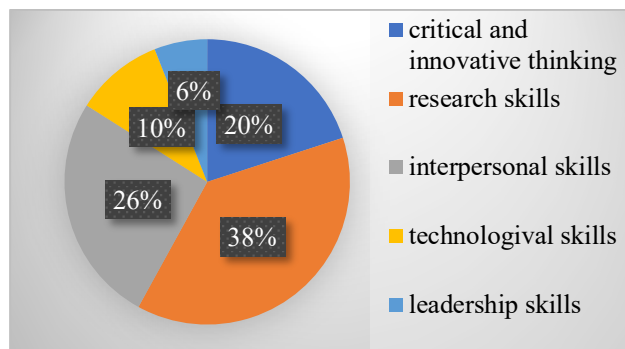
Course Code	Course Name	Total of credits
ICT 1105	Information and communication technologies	5
FL 1103 (1)	Foreign language	5
K(R)L 1104 (1)	Kazakh (Russian) language	5
SPKM 1107	Social and Political Knowledge Module	8
PEPEA 1212	Professional ethics in psychological and educational activities	5
FNE 1211	Fundamentals of national education	5
EE1211	Ethnopedagogy and ethnopsychology	5
EB 1106	Entrepreneurship and business	5
DTBBA 1108	Digital technologies by branches of application	5
ACC 1109	Anti-corruption culture	5
FELS 1110	Fundamentals of ecology and life safety	5
SC 1121	Speech culture	5
BC 1111	Business culture	5
Phil 2102	Philosophy	5
CP2217	Creative pedagogy	5
MPG2217	Media-pedagogy	5

The survey showed the following results. Transversal skills are one of the values that allow future professionals to become a single entity, as well as to adapt and grow together in a changing society. In general, the following results show that the vast majority of students or more precisely, 92% (34) are well acquainted with these concepts, while the remaining 16 students (8%) are not yet familiar with these concepts. At the same time, the assessment of respondents shows that higher education institutions in Kazakhstan are developing transversal skills (Figure 2).



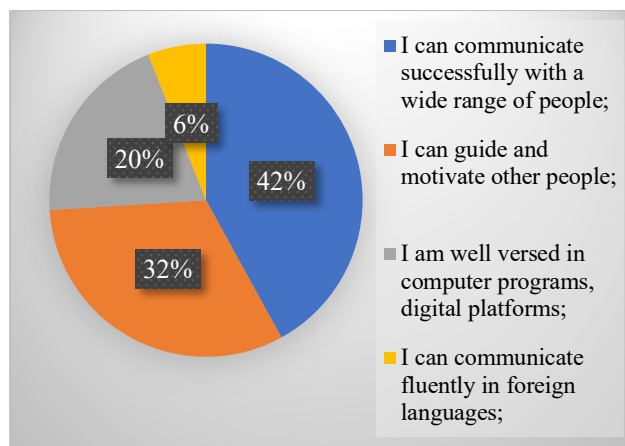
**Figure 2.** Do you know about the concepts of “transversal skills” and “transversal competence”?

It is known that transversal competences are also widely recognized as competences of the 21st century, and from the conclusions of students who participated in the internship, teaching staff attach great importance to the formation and development of this competence. The majority of respondents (38%) believe that research skills will be developed in the learning process, and 26% believe that the development of interpersonal skills will be considered. 10 respondents stated that critical and innovative thinking will be developed, and the remaining 10% focused on technological skills and 6% focused on leadership skills. All structures of transversal skills are the values of the modern digital age (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** What transversal skills are aimed at the formation or development of your learning process?

One of the most important components of transversal competence is communication. Taking into account the fact that the ability to communicate with children, the ability to find the right approach to students, the ability to communicate with them pedagogically are very necessary skills for future teaching staff-psychologists, it was found that 42% (11) of respondents noticed this skill in themselves. The reason why specialists in all fields, especially teaching staff, pay special attention to the development of transversal skills is that they form “flexible skills” in the younger generation. In this regard, motivation also plays a special role. It was found that 32% (16) of students learned this skill. The remaining 20% (10) of respondents considered themselves Digital Natives, that is, they used computer programs and platforms, while 3 students (6%) claimed to be fluent in foreign languages [31]. All these identified skills are also the most important requirements in the labor market (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** The transversal skills you have

It turned out that 25 students (50%) who took part the internship considered ICT resources as a tool for working with PDF, DOC, PPT, etc., while the remaining 28% (14 teaching staff) as communication platforms, 22% (11 students) – as educational tools for students with the help of a teacher within various programs. It is noted that the generation of the 21st century has different abilities and capabilities, so the educational process should be organized differently. It is obvious that this structure of transversal competence also plays an important role in education (Figure 5).

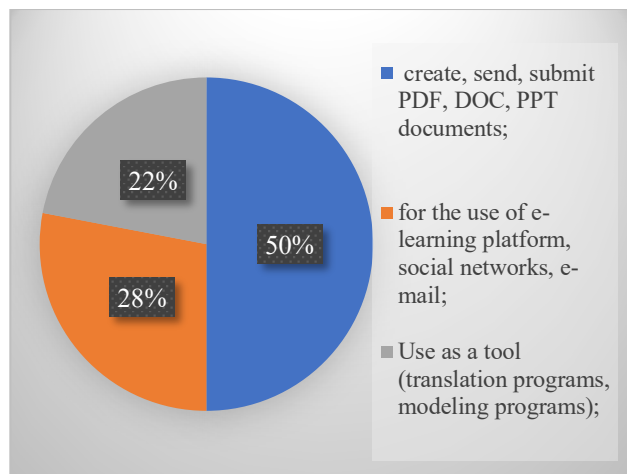


Figure 5. The importance of ICT in the learning process

Since the profession of teaching staff-psychologists is closely connected with society, all the above-mentioned transversal skills are particularly relevant in the era of digitalization. They lead to a change in society as a whole, in particular in the educational process, and a change in the professional concepts of teaching staff-psychologists. In the survey, a large number of students 92% (46) concluded that transversal competence is particularly important for high achievement, while 8% (4) disagreed (Figure 6).

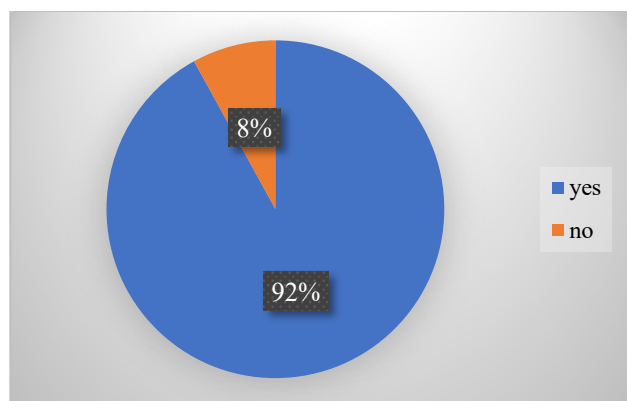


Figure 6. The importance of transversal competence of a specialist for achieving high results in professional activity

Consideration and analysis of works related to transversal competence, competences and skills of 21st

century allowed to identify the diversity and many components of this competence and to determine the level of formation and development of higher education in Kazakhstan. The study of the theoretical foundations of the concepts of “transversal competence” and “transversal skills” became the basis for their specification and systematization. Prerequisite for professional education is the training of a transversal competent specialist who is competitive in the labor market on the basis of interactive educational methods of the innovative education system focused on action, digital educational resources.

## Conclusions

Based on the results of the conducted research, it was determined that in the strategies, educational programs and materials of higher educational institutions, significant importance is attached to transversal competences and skills. It is obvious that teaching staff, based on the development of these competences and skills, not only provide professional education to future specialists, but also contribute to the training of qualified personnel demanded in the labor market using new learning technologies in the educational process. It should also be noted that many structures of transversal competence, as found in the course of research, are not yet fully integrated into the learning system, but, on the other hand, some new structures are developing very well. Therefore, the education system and training of professionals should be built in the direction of creative and innovative thinking, the development of soft and hard skills, as well as the training of specialists so that they can conquer the global labor market.

In conclusion, the importance of transversal competence in the professional sphere of future specialists, in the educational process has already been discussed, but this is not a simple one-way process. This is a set of skills that are formed and developed as a result of joint work of a comprehensive teacher and students, both in traditional and non-traditional forms of learning. In this regard, first of all, it is obvious that teaching staff have a special place in the formation of both professional and transversal competences in the training of future specialists. Moreover, based on the results of the survey, it was concluded that in the modern education system it is necessary to provide new professional disciplines aimed at developing transversal competences.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interests to disclose.

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## **Рівень сформованості трансверсальної компетентності в контексті вищої освіти: Кейс Казахстану**

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## **Анотація**

**Актуальність.** Актуальність цього дослідження підкреслюється стрімкими змінами ландшафту 21 століття, який характеризується технологічним прогресом, змінами на ринку праці та постійними екологічними та політичними змінами.

**Мета.** Мета цього дослідження полягає в тому, щоб дати студентам змогу зрозуміти важливість трансверсальної компетентності.

**Методологія.** Методологія дослідження базувалася на системному та комплексному підході. Було проведено анкетування, щоб визначити, наскільки добре студенти можуть зрозуміти та сприйняти концепцію трансверсальної компетентності.

**Результати.** У статті розглядаються компоненти та методи трансверсальної компетентності студента як громадянина відповідно до системи освіти в контексті постіндустріального суспільства. Під час аналізу було використано опитувальник проекту TRANSMOD (2014) для аналізу сформованості наскрізних компетенцій і наскрізних умінь за освітніми програмами спеціальностей “Педагогіка і психологія” у Євразійському національному університеті імені Л.М. Гумільова. Також розглянуто рівень розвитку та важливість розвитку трансверсальних компетентностей студентів у системі вищої освіти.

**Висновки.** За результатами опитування було зроблено висновок про необхідність у сучасній системі освіти передбачити нові професійні дисципліни, спрямовані на розвиток трансверсальних компетентностей. Підсумовуючи, очевидно, що педагогічні працівники займають особливе місце у формуванні як професійних, так і наскрізних компетентностей у підготовці майбутніх спеціалістів.

**Ключові слова:** навички; цифрове суспільство; анкетування; фахові дисципліни; педагогічний колектив.