



## CONTEXTUAL LEARNING AS A NEW PARADIGM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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### Abstract.

The article examines the transition in Uzbekistan's higher education system from traditional formal-disciplinary learning to a problem-based, active, and professionally oriented approach. It highlights the role of contextual learning (A.A. Verbitsky) in modeling future professional activities through semiotic, simulation, and social teaching models. The study emphasizes the importance of activity-based learning, problem-solving, and collaborative methods in fostering professional competencies. The advantages of contextual learning, including enhanced student engagement and motivation, are discussed, along with challenges in implementation. The paper concludes with recommendations for further research and adaptation to modern labor market demands.

**Keywords:** contextual learning, professional education, activity-based approach, problem-based learning, higher education reform, Uzbekistan, competence development, simulation modeling, collaborative learning.

Currently, changes are taking place in the higher education system of Uzbekistan. One of these changes is the transition from a formal-disciplinary to a problem-based, active, and professionally oriented type of learning. This shift requires corresponding methodological changes, an expansion of the range of applied approaches, technologies, and forms and methods of teaching.

In recent decades, with the introduction of the competency-based education model, the role of the contextual approach to student learning in higher education (according to A.A. Verbitsky) has been growing. The main idea of contextual learning is to model students' future professional activities in various forms of educational activities, encompassing both its subject-technological and social components.

At the same time, it is important to note that "context" in this case is considered as a fundamental meaning-forming factor in designing scenarios for the implementation of professional education. In the theory of contextual learning, this concept is interpreted as "a system of internal and external conditions of a person's life and activities that influence their perception, understanding, and transformation of a specific situation"[1].

Expanding on this idea, from the perspective of contextual learning theory, creating diverse contexts of life and professional activities in the educational process fills students' cognitive activity with personal meaning, fosters a high level of engagement, cognitive and professional motivation, and ultimately leads to the mastery of a holistic professional activity[3].

To better understand the mechanisms of contextual learning, it is necessary to examine its general model, represented through three basic types (forms) of student activities:

- academic-type learning activities, dominated by lectures and seminars;
- simulation-based professional activities, embodied in business (role-playing) games, specialized courses, and seminars;
- educational-professional activities.

These basic types of activities in contextual learning correspond to three teaching models:

- Semiotic learning model, which includes a system of tasks involving work with texts and the processing of symbolic information; here, verbal or written texts contain theoretical information about a specific area of professional culture. The unit of student work is a speech act.

- Simulation learning model, which requires the student to go beyond symbolic information, correlating it with future professional activities, where the student engages in solving professional tasks. The unit of student work is a professional action.

- Social learning model, in which tasks must be performed in collaborative, collective forms of work involving two or more participants in the educational process. Such joint problem-solving provides experience in teamwork within a future professional environment.

It is important to emphasize that contextual learning is based on activity theory (by A.N. Leontiev)[4], according to which the assimilation of social experience occurs as a result of the subject's active engagement. Thus, in contextual learning, the emphasis on the activity-based component of learning is strengthened.

The key guidelines for organizing such learning are its core principles:

- personal and meaningful inclusion of the student in the learning process,  
- modeling of the subject and social content, forms, and conditions of professional activity in the learning process,

- dialogic communication, collaborative work, and interpersonal interaction,

- problem-based learning content.

Of particular importance in this system is the principle of problem-based content and the process of its unfolding in students' cognitive activities. A problem situation serves as the basic unit of learning content. According to the foundational principles of contextual learning theory, problem situations are considered as situations of difficulty, the resolution of which leads to the assimilation and application of professional knowledge and competencies, as well as the acquisition of practical experience.

For the practical implementation of this theoretical approach in contextual learning, it is proposed to fully utilize active and interactive teaching methods based on activity-based and dialogic forms of cognition. At the same time, it is noted that a comprehensive approach is needed, combining various forms, methods, and tools of active learning with traditional methods[2].

The advantages of contextual learning become evident when analyzing its key features:

- from the outset, the student is placed in an active position, as academic subjects are presented as objects of activity (learning, simulation-based professional, educational-professional) with specific scenarios for their development;

- through a combination of individual and collective forms of work, the full potential of student engagement is activated—from the level of perception to the level of social activity in joint decision-making;

- knowledge is acquired by students in the context of resolving modeled problem situations of an educational-professional and social nature, fostering cognitive and professional motivation and personal meaning in the learning process.

Uzbekistan's transition to contextual learning in higher education reflects a global trend toward practice-oriented and activity-based approaches in specialist training. The implementation of semiotic, simulation, and social learning models allows students not only to acquire theoretical knowledge but also to develop professional competencies through the modeling of real-life situations.

The key value of the contextual approach lies in its ability to bridge academic learning with the demands of the modern labor market. The use of problem situations, interactive methods, and collaborative work fosters critical thinking, motivation, and teamwork skills. However, the successful implementation of this model requires further methodological



refinement, instructor training, and the adaptation of educational programs to specific disciplines.

In the future, contextual learning could become the foundation for a flexible higher education system that meets the challenges of the digital economy and rapidly changing professional standards. To achieve this, it is necessary to continue research in this field, summarize best practices, and strengthen collaboration between universities and employers.

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