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ACQUISITION OF CORE COMPETENCIES BY UNIVERSITY BACHELOR DEGREE LEARNERS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF DISCIPLINE "BUSINESS ENGLISH"

Business and industry leaders persist in urging higher education institutions to cultivate graduates who possess not only expertise in their respective fields but also critical soft skills. These include teamwork, creative thinking, complex problem-solving, and adaptability in varied environments. Furthermore, as automation increasingly dominates manufacturing processes, the demand for a diverse skill set will undoubtedly grow. Consequently, colleges and universities must remain at the forefront of curriculum and program development to equip students with the most relevant skills for the evolving economy. The article research results have revealed that students' core competencies will be always actual, demanded as well as properly identified and formed on conditions of: engaging in continuous dialogue with local businesses and industry representatives at both state and national levels to align practical expectations with academic practices; implementing innovative curricular changes to incorporate real-world expectations throughout all academic programs; equipping students with the skills necessary to collaborate effectively within their field, utilizing technology and working in diverse, multidisciplinary teams; instructing students to apply their disciplinary knowledge in innovative and creative manners; developing a thorough record of student learning that accurately reflects their mastery and educational progress; mapping and analyzing the academic structure of the core curriculum within the system. Moreover, the novelty of the ongoing study might be proved with additional core competencies to the "Business English" curriculum such as a competency of adaptability and leaning flexibility, lifelong-learning competency and partnership competency acquisition of which will increase Bachelors' academic and professional preparation and enhance their competitiveness on the labor market in certain business sector.

Key words: *skills, core competences, adaptability and flexibility, life-learning, partnership, curriculum, Business English, academic studies, collaboration, disciplines, industries.*

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ЗДОБУТТЯ КЛЮЧОВИХ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТЕЙ СТУДЕНТАМИ-БАКАЛАВРАМИ В РАМКАХ ДИСЦИПЛІНИ "ДІЛОВА АНГЛІЙСЬКА МОВА" ПІД ЧАС НАВЧАННЯ В УНІВЕРСИТЕТІ

Лідери бізнесу та індустрії наполегливо закликають вищі заклади освіти виховувати випускників, які володіють не лише досвідом у відповідних галузях, а й критично важливими навичками спілкування. До них належать командна робота, творче мислення, розв'язання складних проблем і здатність адаптуватися до різноманітних умов. Крім того, оскільки автоматизація все більше домінує у виробничих процесах, попит на різноманітні навички, безсумнівно, зростатиме. Отже, університети повинні залишатися провідними в розробленні навчальних планів і програм, щоб озброїти студентів відповідними навичками для економіки, що розвивається. Результати дослідження статті показали, що основні компетенції студентів завжди будуть актуальними, затребуваними, а також належним чином визначеними та сформованими за таких умов: участі в постійному діалозі з місцевим бізнесом та представниками промисловості і на державному, і на національному рівнях для узгодження практичних очікувань з академічними практиками; упровадження інноваційних змін у навчальні програми для включення конкурентних компетентностей у всі академічні програми; озброєння студентів навичками використання новітніх технологій та навичками роботи в різноманітних мультидисциплінарних командах, необхідними для ефективної співпраці у своїй галузі; навчання студентів застосовувати свої дисциплінарні знання в новаторських і творчих ситуаціях. Крім того, новизна поточного дослідження може бути підтверджена додатковими основними компетенціями до навчальної програми "Ділова англійська мова", такими як компетенція адаптивності та гнучкості, компетенції навчання впродовж життя та компетенції партнерства, набуття яких підвищить академічну та професійну підготовку бакалаврів та їх конкурентоспроможність на ринку праці в певному секторі бізнесу.

Ключові слова: *навички, ключові компетенції, адаптивність і гнучкість, безперервне навчання, партнерство, навчальний план, ділова англійська мова, академічне навчання, співпраця, дисципліни, галузі.*

Problem Statement. The notion of 'core skills' has emerged as a pivotal topic in discussions regarding post-16 education and training policies. The precise definition of these skills has been the focus of extensive debate, which remains unresolved. Various organizations, including the CBI, FEU, NCVQ, and NCC/SEAC, have developed differing lists of core skills, and a universally accepted version has yet to be established. Nevertheless, there is a broad consensus that proficiency in core skill areas such as communication, numeracy, information technology, and problem-solving is essential for indi-

viduals, both as learners in foundational education and training and as prospective employees in dynamic and adaptable job roles. Furthermore, there is a shared belief that core skills can serve as a catalyst for the necessary reforms in post-compulsory education and training.

Critics of highly specialized A levels have identified core skills as a means to incorporate breadth and balance into the academic curriculum. Proponents of competence-based vocational education regard these skills as vital for facilitating skills transfer and ensuring the portability of qualifications. Additionally, advocates for a unified post-16 curriculum perceive them as a potential link between academic and vocational pathways. There is a general consensus that these skills are essential components for student advancement to higher levels of education and training, as well as for meeting the National Education and Training Targets. Some, such as Nicholas Tate from SCAA, argue that these skills can also serve as a means to reintegrate moral values into the curriculum (Anthony P., Smith N., Strohl J., 2021).

Core skills have attained a nearly revered status within specialized discussions surrounding Post-Compulsory Education and Training (PCET). Nevertheless, as this article will demonstrate, there is scant evidence that the instruction of core skills is achieving the outcomes that are often anticipated or attributed to it. The levels of student achievement in vocational courses related to mathematics and language are still perceived to be significantly inadequate, falling well short of the standards observed in similar courses in countries such as France, Germany, and Sweden. This deficiency is arguably a contributing factor to the low rates of course completion and progression. Furthermore, core skills have yet to be integrated into A-level programs, and there is minimal evidence to suggest that their incorporation into vocational courses has effectively narrowed the gap between academic and vocational education. Employers continue to express concerns regarding the insufficient level of core skills among young recruits, and there remains no evidence that the teaching of these skills has resulted in a workforce equipped with more adaptable competencies. In fact, some evidence suggests that in specific areas of vocational training, such as NVQ Bricklaying, the adoption of competence-based approaches to core skills may have diminished the overall competence of trainees, as they have been instructed solely in performing narrowly defined tasks without a solid foundation in the essential knowledge and skills that support these tasks (Barack, L., 2024).

The central thesis of this article posits that core skills teaching cannot serve as a substitute for ongoing general education, regardless of any modifications made. The primary issue highlighted is that core skills instruction, as it is often delivered in vocational programs across various continental nations, falls short of fulfilling the broader educational needs. Achieving the valuable goals associated with core skills education necessitates a more focused and rigorous commitment to general education. The distinct emphasis on core skills within the English educational framework stems from a specific pedagogical history, and it is essential to examine this history to comprehend the policy developments and inherent constraints of this approach (Barack, L., 2024).

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications. It is evident that the 21st century demands new dimensions of knowledge and skills that are integral to being an educated individual. A crucial responsibility of the University System of Georgia (USG) will be to consistently evaluate and update the fundamental components of its degree programs to ensure they align with the essential learning requirements of our evolving world. Furthermore, the USG and its affiliated universities must maintain a collaborative relationship with local businesses, as well as state and national industries, to guarantee that graduates possess the relevant skills deemed necessary.

According to Carnevale and Smith (2021) from the Center for Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University, the emerging knowledge-based economy necessitates a distinct array of knowledge and skills that employers seek in their future workforce. These competencies encompass foundational skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, alongside the ability to learn effectively; strong communication skills, including listening and verbal expression; adaptability, which involves problem-solving and creative thinking; teamwork capabilities, such as interpersonal skills, negotiation, and collaboration; organizational effectiveness and leadership; personal management skills, including self-esteem and goal setting; and resilience (Carnevale & Smith, 2021).

Higher education institutions must remain proactive in ensuring that their graduates acquire the skills that are considered essential by the business and industry sectors. This can be achieved through the reform of curricula or the creation of comprehensive rubrics that evaluate the integration of these skills within the current curriculum. Institutions must diligently strive towards this objective, which may involve collaboration with local and regional corporate and governmental partners willing to support the development of these skills in educational settings. Additionally, it may necessitate a transformation of teaching methodologies to emphasize skill acquisition over mere knowledge dissemination in academic courses (Carnevale A., Smith, N., 2024).

The landscape of work is evolving and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Recently, entrepreneur Mark Cuban articulated his concerns regarding the impact of automation on manufacturing and various industries, suggesting that it will necessitate a fundamentally different type of workforce. Cuban stated, “I personally think there’s going to be a greater demand in 10 years for liberal arts majors than there were for programming majors and maybe even engineering, because when the data is all being spit out for you, options are being spit out for

you, you need a different perspective in order to have a different view of the data. And so having someone who is more of a freer thinker."

It is posited that the growing reliance on technology will create a divide within the labor market. Traditional middle-skill positions are likely to face increasing automation. Conversely, roles that necessitate a high degree of situational adaptability, interpersonal communication, and the creative application of complex motor skills are less likely to be supplanted by machines. Likewise, positions that demand advanced problem-solving, analytical thinking, and design capabilities will be occupied by individuals who can leverage technology in innovative and efficient manners. While many current middle-skill jobs may be overtaken by automated systems, a significant number will transition into roles that involve collaboration between humans and machines. Ultimately, the critical factor will be the ability to integrate knowledge and skills creatively within a dynamic environment. Future higher education curricula must therefore emphasize the creative application of disciplinary knowledge alongside the development of emerging technological tools.

Contemporary higher education primarily trains students to perform tasks independently. When collaboration is necessary, it typically occurs within groups composed of peers from the same academic discipline. However, this approach is increasingly misaligned with the practices of modern industries, where the benefits of cognitive diversity in developing and refining solutions to intricate challenges are becoming increasingly evident. Therefore, a crucial aspect of future higher education will be to equip graduates with the ability to apply their disciplinary knowledge within a diverse team, fostering effective collaboration among varied perspectives (Carnevale A., Smith, N., 2024).

In addition to developing these competencies, educational institutions must equip students with the language necessary to engage with employers regarding the skills they have acquired. It is essential for students to be able to translate their classroom learning into workplace applications. This capability will help to close the communication gap that often exists between businesses and universities concerning skill development. Achieving success in this regard will necessitate a greater investment by colleges and universities in their career planning and advising services.

A survey conducted in 2014 revealed that 47 percent of first-year students sought career guidance immediately upon entering college. By 2018, this figure had risen to 67 percent among all incoming first-year students. This trend indicates a growing demand for career planning and advising within higher education, as well as an opportunity to strengthen connections between post-secondary institutions and K-12 education. To address the future needs of students, colleges and universities must not only provide comprehensive academic counseling but also ensure that students have access to career counseling. This level of support should include guidance on students' general aptitudes and talents for various career paths, as well as essential skills for job applications, such as resume development, participation in mock interviews, and access to electronic databases for their career portfolios (King, M., 2021).

Purpose of the Article. Language learning strategies are recognized as crucial factors in achieving successful language acquisition. Learners who adeptly apply suitable strategies are more capable of managing uncertainties related to task requirements, articulating their thoughts, or assessing their own abilities. A notable difficulty for non-native speakers is the concurrent challenge of learning to write while simultaneously acquiring the language. The emphasis on strategies, particularly in the context of academic writing, has frequently been neglected, especially among learners with lower proficiency. In the field of second and foreign language education, both educators and researchers have focused on identifying and implementing the language learning strategies utilized by successful learners. It is posited that proficient language learners may employ distinctive strategies that could be advantageous for others. There is a belief that language learning strategies can greatly enhance the current state of academic writing, which presents various challenges for university students.

The purpose of the article is to identify and give the analysis of such core competencies like adaptability and flexibility, lifelong-learning and partnership along with case study examples of their practical implementation the during study of "Business English" course.

Presentation of the Main Research Material. "Business English" is a course designed for students, aimed at equipping them with essential language skills. This program is directed to facilitate effective communication in various formal and informal settings, enhance fluency and confidence in professional English usage, and empower participants to focus on their individual language learning requirements.

The primary objective of the "Business English" course is to enhance students' overall language proficiency, with a particular focus on business-related language. This goal is achieved through the students' acquisition, command, and mastery of both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Such competencies will empower them to engage in business-related communication, interpersonal interactions, and systemic understanding, enabling them to communicate effectively in English across a variety of business contexts. This proficiency will be applicable in both public and private organizations, agencies, and companies within Kosovo and internationally, which may require business language services.

More specifically, the "Business English" course seeks to cultivate the following knowledge, skills, and competencies in students:

– A foundational understanding of essential business vocabulary and related subject areas pertinent to

their future careers, sufficient to enhance their ability to comprehend and communicate fluently in English across diverse business scenarios.

– The capability to identify, describe, analyze, and synthesize issues related to business language, allowing them to articulate their thoughts and ideas with increased precision, and to apply their course knowledge both independently and collaboratively.

– Proficiency in utilizing authentic business resources, conducting terminological research, managing information, and employing computer-assisted translation software, terminology, and other IT tools for professional business applications.

– The ability to collaborate with various professionals engaged in the business process, such as CEOs, directors, managers, bankers, financial advisors, business English translators, and subject matter experts, thereby enhancing their teamwork, negotiation, meeting, and leadership skills.

– Improving students' self-perception as business professionals, along with their self-confidence, focus, memory, initiative, and creativity, fosters a strong sense of intellectual curiosity and motivation.

Additionally, cultivating communicative and transferable skills in English enhances their abilities in organization and planning, problem identification and resolution, as well as monitoring, self-evaluation, and revision.

Students will exhibit effective communication and organizational skills, assuming responsibility for both individual and collective achievements.

– *Students will showcase their ability to strategically apply knowledge within educational and business contexts, ensuring adherence to ethical and social considerations throughout the learning experience.*

– *Students will demonstrate the ability to articulate and justify their decisions regarding business matters, evaluate the contributions of others involved, and express their viewpoints in a manner that minimizes or resolves potential conflicts.*

– *Students will show proficiency in identifying, describing, and analyzing the various interpersonal dynamics that influence business processes.*

– *Students will collaborate effectively with one another in the capacities of colleagues and researchers, recognizing potential challenges in each scenario and formulating strategies to address or negotiate these issues.*

– *Students will acknowledge the benefits and possible pitfalls of collaborative efforts, equipping themselves to prevent or resolve conflicts as they arise (King, M., 2021).*

In the framework of the ongoing study, considering the "Business English" course findings we are going to suggest three core competencies acquisition of which will increase Bachelors' academic and professional preparation and enhance their competitiveness on the labor market in certain business sector.

Competency of Adaptability and Leaning Flexibility. There is a pressing need to continuously develop more agile degree programs, and simultaneously, significant opportunities are emerging to create a more adaptable learning environment than ever before. In recent years, a range of computer-assisted learning tools has been introduced to improve education across various disciplines, from mathematics to psychology.

These technology-driven platforms, which utilize predictive analytics, offer immediate and personalized feedback to students striving to acquire new skills or knowledge. Such tools deliver essential real-time progress updates to both students and educators, while increasingly leveraging insights from learning science to customize the delivery of instructional content and assessment methods to suit individual learners.

Additionally, these technologies equip instructors with resources to intervene when students encounter difficulties with the material. Although these computer-assisted learning tools have predominantly been utilized in the fields of science and social sciences, we anticipate a gradual expansion in the adoption of adaptive learning platforms and artificial intelligence across a broader range of subjects in the near future.

Furthermore, learning technologies facilitate collaborative learning opportunities that were previously unfeasible. For instance, digital document readers enable both instructors and students to annotate texts and share their notes with classmates. Likewise, students can interact with their peers or pose questions to the instructor while engaging with the reading material (Figure 1) (King, M., 2021).

Figure 1. Benefits of Adaptability and Flexibility Competence

Case Study of the University of Georgia. The University of Georgia has launched the Active Learning Summer Institute (ALSI), a program designed for faculty to engage in a six-week course redesign initiative aimed at fostering the implementation of active learning strategies. The cur-

riculum encompasses backward course design (Wiggins and McTighe), the alignment of instructional objectives with assessments and learning activities, rubric development, the Transparency in Teaching and Learning framework, session-level lesson planning utilizing the BOPPPS model, and principles of Universal Design for Learning, among other components. This intensive six-week institute is anticipated to influence the educational experience of over 8,000 students in its inaugural year.

Competency of Lifelong-learning. Historically, higher education has been characterized by a defined temporal structure. Students typically transition from high school to college, engaging in undergraduate studies and potentially pursuing graduate education as a precursor to entering the workforce. However, this progression has recently become more dynamic, and it is anticipated that the demand for such flexibility will grow in the coming years as individuals increasingly require opportunities for lifelong and comprehensive learning.

While every higher education institution aims to foster lifelong learners, the ongoing educational journey of graduates tends to be largely disconnected from their colleges. Aside from alumni who return for advanced studies at the master's or doctoral levels, most graduates have minimal educational engagement with their institutions after graduation. Future workers are expected to change not only their employers but also their professions multiple times throughout their careers. In fact, many may find themselves in fields that are not yet established. As a result, there will be a persistent and vibrant need for graduates at all levels to update or reorient their skills to remain prepared for emerging job opportunities and various life stages (Figure 2) (Wells, K., 2020).

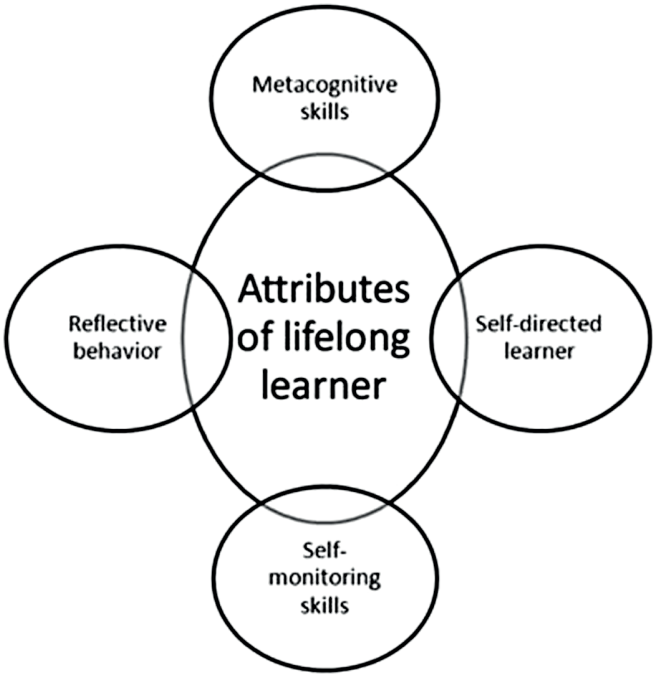

Figure 2. Life-learning Competence Cultivation

Case Study of the Boise State University. Boise State University provides pre-tenure faculty with a range of professional development opportunities aimed at promoting the use of evidence-based teaching methods. Participants are encouraged to establish a network of colleagues throughout the campus for consultation regarding their teaching practices, as well as to create a teaching portfolio that will be beneficial during the tenure and promotion evaluation process. Each participant is required to complete ten professional development activities, of which four are mandatory, focusing on course design, digital fluency, service learning, and assessment process mapping. Additionally, participants are invited to select at least six further activities, which may include attending a pedagogical conference, joining a teaching-learning community, or delivering a teaching presentation. Furthermore, participants are required to write a reflection paper that articulates their insights gained about the teaching process and outlines their plans for ongoing professional growth.

Competency of Partnership. To address future challenges, universities must cultivate strong partnerships that will enhance their core functions. While universities have effectively collaborated with local communities to provide services and activities for residents, these partnerships have been somewhat limited in scope. Additionally, although universities have engaged with businesses and industries to foster research and innovation initiatives, collaborations that align with the educational objectives of universities have not progressed as swiftly. A portion of this issue can be attributed to the universities themselves.

Historically, higher education, particularly in terms of curriculum and pedagogy, has operated in a somewhat isolated manner, with minimal input from corporate or community stakeholders. To maintain their relevance moving forward, universities need to improve their engagement with business and community partners (Figure 3).

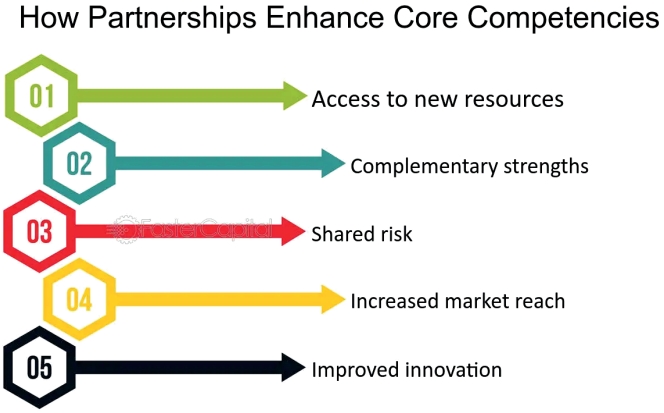

Figure 3. Strengths of Partnership Competency

Institutional collaborations with businesses and industries are expected to grow, and it is also anticipated

that coalitions of institutions will establish more robust partnerships to enhance efficiencies in response to the rising costs of delivering their offerings. The University System has been a leading innovator in online education, uniting a consortium of schools to leverage economies of scale in providing online courses and degree programs. In the future, both higher education and K-12 systems are likely to adopt systemwide and collective-impact partnerships to foster a coordinated educational ecosystem across the state. Indeed, it is possible that the distinctions among higher education institutions will increasingly focus less on the educational content, which may become quite similar, and more on the unique experiences that each institution provides (Wells, K., 2020).

Case Study of the Walmart. Walmart has introduced an initiative for employees pursuing degrees in business or supply chain management, allowing them to contribute just $1 daily towards their education at one of three designated nonprofit institutions. The company will cover the remaining expenses associated with tuition, books, and fees. This collaboration between Walmart, the largest private employer in the United States, and the University of Florida, Brandman University, and Bellevue University aims to facilitate affordable or even debt-free college education for participating employees. Additionally, Guild Education plays a crucial role in this program by managing the educational benefits. Guild offers enrollment and success coaching to help students and employees effectively navigate the complexities of higher education while balancing their work commitments.

Prospects for Further Issue Exploration. A cohesive curriculum, which encompasses various pathways, must possess a principle of integration; there must be an element that binds it together beyond its formal structure. Without this, it will not be regarded as a unified entity, even if it is conceptually part of a singular framework. There needs to be a sense of unity in the foundational aims and objectives. This unity cannot be adequately provided by core skills for several reasons. Firstly, core skills were not initially developed with the entire post-16 curriculum and qualifications system in mind, but were primarily intended for vocational courses. It is therefore unsurprising that they have not been incorporated into A levels, as they are based on a concept of 'competence' that fundamentally conflicts with the knowledge-oriented rationale of academic courses. Secondly, due to their limited and specific objectives, core skills cannot function as a common core for both academic and vocational programs. It can be argued that no curriculum area originating from the workforce, characterized by its intricate division of labor and diverse social stratifications, can attain the level of universality necessary to serve as a shared foundation for education.

Future curricular innovations and modifications within the classroom must create avenues for students to develop and refine these critical skills. Pedagogical advancements, such as the flipped classroom model and improved integration of technology, will facilitate opportunities for students to practice and recognize these skills. Furthermore, collaborative projects and enhanced case studies that address real-world corporate and community challenges will enable students to apply and hone their abilities. Additionally, it is essential for college and university students to engage more deeply in high-impact experiences, including undergraduate research, leadership roles, cooperative education placements, internships, mentorships with local and regional enterprises, and study abroad programs, to further solidify these competencies (Wolf, A., 2022).

In the future, higher education institutions will seek to establish methods for verifying that students are acquiring these vital skills. Although this concept is not novel, many universities are now implementing alternative transcripts and badges to document and validate skill acquisition. Others are utilizing electronic portfolios to capture and authenticate these competencies. Such portfolios offer students the chance to compile a lasting record of projects or classroom artifacts that showcase their abilities to prospective evaluators.

Recent research has significantly explored how the design of higher education curricula impacts student learning and overall degree attainment. By analyzing the course transcripts of graduates within the System, we have identified which courses in the curricular framework play a disproportionately influential role in the overall learning experience. Success in these key courses is closely linked to further academic achievement, while difficulties in these areas often result in challenges in other subjects (Young, M., Hodgson, A. and Leney, T., 2023).

Recent research indicates that enhanced student learning in fundamental courses not only contributes to success in those specific classes but also positively impacts overall achievement throughout a degree program. At present, this research has primarily focused on course-level evaluations; however, we foresee a future where a more detailed approach becomes feasible. By mapping the academic genome that identifies the core learning components of the System's curriculum and the interconnections among them, we can conduct an in-depth analysis of the learning elements crucial for a better grasp of subsequent concepts and overall success. This mapping will serve as the foundational framework for competency-based education and personalized learning analytics platforms. Similar to how the public availability of Google Maps data has spurred various innovative applications like Zillow and Yelp, and how the mapping of the human genome has facilitated gene-specific medical advancements, we expect that mapping the System's academic genome will foster future innovations in learning.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

No artificial intelligence tools or materials were used in the manuscript.

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