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Development of a Cognitive Map of Youth Social Competencies

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Abstract

The modern professional attaches great importance to the development of social skills, such as the ability to communicate effectively, work in a team, empathy and conflict management. Without the skills of interpersonal interaction, self-regulation and self-development, as well as a formed core of values that allows one to navigate a rapidly changing world, no individual can be a sought-after employee or an effective entrepreneur or manager. This fact determines that in the modern education system, including higher professional education, a competency-based approach is used. At the state level, a system has been created that ensures the formation of social competencies of young people. Thus, the competency-based approach is reflected both in federal educational standards and in numerous studies in the field of education and human resource management in business. As a result, science and practice have already accumulated some experience in understanding social competencies in the context of their formation and development. At the same time, modeling social competencies is an important scientific task from the point of view of determining the results of educational activities and assessing its quality. The authors of this study set a goal to develop a cognitive map of social competencies of young people based on studying the genesis of the competency-based approach and the conceptualization of social competencies in higher professional education.

The study showed that the competency-based approach has existed for many years in many countries and is an objective necessity in the formation of young specialists. Based on the analysis of various approaches to the interpretation of "social competencies", using tools such as content analysis, tag cloud and cognitive map, the authors built their own model of social competencies. The results obtained can be used by educational organizations both to formulate the results of mastering educational programs and for their further evaluation. Also, the results obtained can be useful to a wide range of practitioners: teachers, specialists in corporate training and personnel selection, as well as managers in the education system.

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1. Introduction

Traditionally, the competency-based approach in Russian education is associated with entry into the "Bologna Process" – a system aimed at unifying European education, as a result of which mutual recognition of higher education diplomas would be achieved. For two decades, the Russian Federation adhered to the principles of the Bologna process and rebuilt its traditional education system in the 20th century to European standards. At the beginning of 2023, a decision was made to initiate the reverse process (Poslanie Prezidenta...). Does this mean that the word competence will disappear from the Russian educational space?

Let us turn to the history of the origin of this term. The first mentions of competencies and their management go back to ancient times. For example, the outstanding work "Artshastra", written by the prime minister of the great Indian Emperor Chandragupta Maurya, more than 3000 years ago and representing one of the greatest works of mankind, covering the fundamentals and practical applications of many fields of knowledge, including human resource management (Warier, 2014).

According to the large encyclopedic dictionary, competence (from the Latin compete – jointly achieve, achieve, comply, approach) is knowledge, experience in a particular field (Bol'shoj enciklopedicheskij...).

The term "competence" was first used by R. White in 1959 to describe personality traits that ensure excellent performance of any work (Rol' kompetencij..., 2013). Also, the famous American linguist N. Chomsky used the word competence to denote the knowledge of language by the speaker or listener (Homskij, 1972).

Then more and more works appeared devoted to competencies and competence in education, not only in the linguistic environment. Experts traditionally distinguish three stages in the development of a competent approach to education:

1) 1960–1970, when the concepts of competence and competencies were introduced into scientific circulation and the prerequisites were created for their differentiation. N. Chomsky introduces the concept of "communicative competence";

2) 1970–1990 – the terms competence and competencies become generally accepted in the theory and practice of language learning, and the concept of "social competence/competency" appears;

3) From 1999 to the present – the Bologna process, within the framework of which uniform requirements for competencies are being developed as a result of mastering educational programs at various levels of professional education.

Should we believe that the word competency is alien to Russian education and is only the result of joining the Bologna process? The analysis of the archival Federal State Educational Standards approved by the State Committee of the Russian Federation for Higher Education (Goskomvuz) in 1993–1996 (Arhiv standartov GOS VPO) indicates that the words "competence" and "competency" are not really presented in them, but there is a subsection 2.1 "General requirements for education specialist" and subsequent subsections describing the requirements for theoretical and practical knowledge, as well as professional and supra-professional skills, which are determined, among other things, by the category of "ability", as well as competencies in the latest educational standards of Russia of the 21st century.

Thus, we can conclude that the term competency is not an innovation of the Bologna process, but an objectively formed approach in education that describes an individual's ability to carry out certain types of professional activities. Moreover, this approach was formed both in foreign countries and in Russia. For example, in the State educational standard for higher education in the major 061100 "Management", approved on 02/03/1996, there is the following requirement for a specialist: "capable of project activities in the professional field, knows the principles of systems analysis, knows how to build and use models for description and forecasting various phenomena, carry out their qualitative and quantitative analysis."

And yet, why did it become necessary to abandon traditional KAS (ZUN in Russian): "knowledge", "abilities" and "skills", and turn to competencies? The answer to this question lies in the area of the social and economic changes that are taking place in society, namely: the gradual complication of the labor market, the emergence of new professions that impose specific qualification requirements, leading to the emergence of such concepts as supra-professional

knowledge and metaskills, as well as the strengthening role of cognitive and information and communication skills that help a specialist in any field adapt to a rapidly changing world. New economic and social realities have led to the formation of new requirements for graduates of higher educational institutions, expressed in the presence of systemic, analytical, creative, cognitive, self-organizing, communicative and moral principles in the personality of a professional.

Undoubtedly, globalization and the resulting desire for unification spurred the development of a competency-based approach in education, giving rise to the Bologna process. A UNESCO report from 1997 places great emphasis on such important characteristics of graduates as the ability to work in a team, initiative, the ability to communicate and express oneself in various ways, as well as the ability to understand cultural differences, etc. (Doklad mezhdunarodnoj..., 1997).

A good example of the implementation of the Bologna process is the Tuning program (TUNING Educational Structures in Europe), developed under the supervision of the universities of Deusto from Spain and Groningen from the Netherlands for the implementation of the large-scale Socrates-Erasmus project of the European Commission. Representatives of more than 100 universities from 16 countries worked on the program, as a result of which core competencies were formulated as the results of educational programs, serving as an effective tool for selecting methodological material and drawing up curricula and programs. According to the tuning system, a graduate must have instrumental, interpersonal and systemic competencies.

In the context of this research, interpersonal skills are a key focus, as outlined in the Tuning program. These skills include:
– Capacity for self-evaluation and constructive criticism;
– Collaboration within a team setting;
– Strong interpersonal communication abilities;
– Proficiency in interdisciplinary teamwork;
– Effective communication with specialists from various disciplines;
– Understanding and appreciation of diversity and intercultural nuances;
– Adaptability to working in an international setting;
– Dedication to upholding ethical standards.

Thus, in general, the competency-based approach is a concept used in professional education and development to determine its goals and content, as well as to evaluate the results of the educational process, select the best for a vacant position, etc. And competencies and competence themselves require the integration of many disciplines, that is, they are a product of interdisciplinarity in the training and development of professionals.

In order for the competency-based approach to most fully realize its objectives in the field of youth development in educational organizations, it is advisable to conduct a study of various approaches to understanding social competencies and carry out modeling of social competencies using various tools, including cognitive maps. It is important to note that although there is currently a large amount of research on the social competencies of young people, there is no tool that would allow them to be modeled in the form of specific results of educational activities and personality development. This is precisely what this work aims to achieve.

2. Materials and methods
To achieve the set scientific aim, the authors analyzed various sources on competencies, including social competencies. The study used methods such as semantic analysis, content analysis, tag cloud construction and cognitive map development. The methodological basis of the study was scientific publications on the competency-based approach in education and human resource management.

It should be noted that often in a professional environment you can hear two concepts: "competence" and "competency". In order to prevent the merging of two terms, it is worth drawing a line between them. A.V. Khutorskoy does it as follows:

Competency refers to a combination of interconnected personal traits (knowledge, skills, abilities, and methods of operation) tailored to a particular set of tasks and processes, essential for performing high-quality work in relation to them.

Competence involves an individual's acquisition of the necessary skills, along with their personal attitude towards these skills and the specific subject matter (Hutorskoj, 2017).

It is important to emphasize that the concept of competence is a property not only of pedagogy and the field of education. Currently, in management and the theory and practice of

human resource management in an organization, a competency-based approach is also used, which consists of drawing up competency models for a specific organization, identifying general and specific competencies, as well as general corporate, managerial, professional and many other types. There are different approaches to understanding management competencies, the most common being European and American (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of American and European approaches to the study of competencies

Comparison criterion	American	European
Conceptual approach	Description of employee behavior	Description of job tasks or expected results
Concept of competency	Competence is a fundamental attribute of an employee, enabling them to exhibit appropriate behavior and attain exceptional results in the workplace	Competency is the ability of an employee to act in accordance with the standards accepted in the organization
Important aspects	Individual characteristics manifested in behavior: personal characteristics, motives, values, habits, self-image, knowledge, skills, abilities.	"Iceberg of competencies": cognitive competencies – functional competencies – personal competencies – ethical competencies – meta-competencies
The essence of the approach	Determine what an employee should do to achieve peak performance	Set a minimum standard that must be achieved by an employee

Source: compiled by the authors

In addition, specialists in the field of business, management and human resource management traditionally highlight the competencies of the organization as its key factors of competitiveness, the competencies of the employee (staff), as well as the competencies of the position, that is, a description of the requirements for the level of competencies that a specialist must have this position (Figure 1).

competencies of an organization	competencies of an employee (staff)	competencies of a position
• general (key) • specific	• corporate • personal: managerial and professional	• corporate • personal • professional

Fig. 1. Types of competencies in management theory and practice
Source: compiled by the authors

In order for organizations to multiply and demonstrate their key competencies at a high level, they need highly professional personnel, that is, hired workers who, in turn, have competencies of the appropriate quality. All this leads to the fact that the competency-based approach in education and management should be closely linked. The competencies included in the educational standards of vocational education must be agreed upon with potential employers of graduates, which is currently happening. For example, the Financial University implements all its educational programs and coordinates them with leading employer organizations (Oficial'nyj sajt…). This is necessary in order to ensure compliance between the competencies of the position in the organization and those competencies that the graduate will have upon completion of a particular educational program.

At the same time, much in organizing teaching using a competency-based approach depends on the educational organizations themselves, because they are responsible for training future professionals

and developing the potential of the country's youth. For example, according to a number of regulations of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, competencies are defined for each level of the educational process.

Let us look at the list of competencies that schoolchildren, students and university graduates need to master (Figure 2).

Competencies for schoolchildren	Competencies for students	Competencies for graduates
• Able to independently acquire knowledge • Apply knowledge in practice to solve a variety of problems • Work with various information • Think independently and critically • Flexibly adapt to changing living conditions • Self-discipline • Knowledge about ensuring life safety (life safety) • Ability to work together	• Search, critical analysis and synthesis of information • Development and implementation of projects, the ability to identify tasks within the framework of the set goal • Analyze, summarize and argue obtained and available information • Initiative and leadership • Ability to communicate and intercultural interaction and adaptation • Self-organization and self-development • Ensuring and observing life safety (life safety) • Teamwork (ability to interact socially)	• Competent to work with information • Creative application of existing knowledge, skills and experience • High professionalism • Systematic, logical, critical thinking • High flexibility and ability to adapt in a short time; stress resistance • Self-perfection • Following the norms and rules of life safety, their compliance and ensuring implementation • Teamwork ("team player")

Fig. 2. List of competencies for schoolchildren, students and graduates
Source: compiled by the authors

As discussed earlier, the competency-based approach to education and human resource management was a response to unprecedented global changes in the world in general, and in the economy in particular. Globalization, computerization and further digitalization, the incredibly fast pace of scientific discoveries and their implementation in practical life and production necessitate the training of highly qualified specialists who can quickly adapt to changes, work in a multicultural environment, and constantly develop and improve their skills. All these requirements are reflected in the concept of "social competencies". As noted by Yu.V. Kopytova, recently there has been an acceleration in the pace of development of this issue in the specialized and scientific literature, many publications on the topic have appeared, which is due to the actualization of the need for social competencies for the reasons described earlier (Kopytova, 2018).

As previous studies have shown, to date, a unified understanding of social competencies has not been formed in the scientific community. Some experts define social competencies through the success of an individual in society, others through the ability to interact with people around them, and still others through the skills of solving various social problems (Belyaeva, 2005). Social competencies can be defined through the specific skills that an individual possesses, through the social status that he has achieved at a certain point in his life, through his relationships with loved ones, colleagues, partners, etc., as the ability to behave in accordance with the context of the situation, as personal effectiveness and achievement of set goals. All this indicates a wide variety of social competencies, since each of these points of view is fair in its own way.

It becomes obvious that social competence is inextricably linked with social interaction and the individual's manifestation in society. In essence, it is a whole body of knowledge and practical skills necessary to achieve individual goals. On the main functions of social competencies T.B. Belyaeva refers:

1. Social orientation can be understood in three ways, including situational, retrospective and prospective social orientation. The first, includes individual's awareness of his own social status in the current moment; the second, is a representation of knowledge of the origin of current social status, and the third, is a vision of his future social status and a plan for achieving it.

2. Adaptation, expressed in the ability to adapt to constantly changing social conditions.

3. Integration, ensuring the inclusion of the experience of an individual, a collective, a people into its self-awareness (Belyaeva, 2005).

Traditionally, experts distinguish a three-level structure of social competencies:

1) Emotional-value core as a set of attitudes, values, relations, etc.;

2) Cognitive abilities, predetermined by the value core, on the basis of which the individual selects information and assimilates it (cognitive substructure);

3) Behavior, depending on the first two levels, on the basis of which the individual interprets the information received and reacts to it accordingly. It is the third level that can be called superficial, that is, the visible social environment (operational substructure).

Differences in the understanding of social competencies also determine differences in the interpretation of their structure. Thus, M. Argyle believes that social competence includes the following four main components:

1) Social sensitivity – accuracy in understanding another person;

2) Key abilities of interpersonal interaction;

3) The ability to show social approval and reward;

4) Presence of balance and calmness (Argyle, 1994).

In turn, V.N. Kunitsyna, N.V. Kazarinova, V.M. Pogolsha social competencies multi-component (operational, verbal, socio-psychological, ego-competence), which involve the development of the ability to express one's thoughts orally and in writing, have a minimal understanding of the structure and functioning of society, its traditions, values, customs, social roles structure, acceptance of diversity and knowing of methods of conflict resolution as well as awareness of one's personal characteristics, characteristics and traits, advantages and disadvantages, reasons for success and failure, possession of self-organization and self-regulation skills (Kunicyna, et al., 2003).

Krasnokutskaya S.N. defines "social competence" through the process of integrating an individual into the social system, entering the social environment through mastering its social norms, rules and values, knowledge, skills, habits that allow him to function successfully in society, that is, the process of socialization. This is reflected in the performance of such functions as being a family man, a professional and a citizen in all their complexity and diversity. That is, a person, in the process of his formation and development, must learn to cooperate, build contacts, be flexible and responsible (Krasnokutskaya, 2006). In the approach of this specialist, it is important to note the versatility of the individual's social roles, the successful development of which in the process of life is achieved through mastering a wide range of social competencies.

According to E.A. Priborovich, the most important component of social competencies are health-saving and health-creating skills (Priborovich, 2017). Of course, a person will not be able to realize the fullness of his social roles and reveal his full potential if he cannot count on his good physical health, which largely depends on his own knowledge, skills, abilities and habits. These elements, undoubtedly, should be reflected in the modern map of social competencies of young people, since the development of potential cannot be achieved without a strong foundation of physical health. A generally recognized specialist in the field of competence I.A. Zimnyaya identifies the following parameters of social and personal competence: normative ideals and personal values, creative activity, tendencies towards favorable cooperative relationships, openness to experience, communicative competence, activity, responsibility, conscientiousness and the ability for self-regulation (Zimnyaya, 2004).

V.Sh. Gabozova, N.I. Malyuk understand social competencies through the criteria of social success: economic independence, adaptability, social responsibility, citizenship and activity, self-organization, the achievement of which is not possible without cultural development based on the values of humanism (Gabozova, Malyuk, 2016).

According to T. Abdulazimova social competence of students is a certain level (low, basic or advanced) of development of an individual, at which he understands his place in society, successfully interacts with it, accepts his citizenship, maintains health and masters ICT technologies at the student level (Abdulazimova, 2019).

Achieving a high level of social competence involves various aspects such as the ability to communicate effectively, work in groups, make responsible decisions, understand one's own goals and needs, as well as the ability to find one's role in society, resolve conflicts, and self-regulate. (Alekseeva i dr., 2017).

Age characteristics cannot be ignored. Thus, young people, compared to older generations, cope worse with life problems; sometimes they lack not only responsibility for their actions and the ability to self-organization and self-discipline, but also the analytical abilities to adequately assess what is happening.

That is, the question arises about certain personal characteristics in the area of self-determination, self-actualization, and generally understanding one's own purpose. Globally, this matters not only for their professional activities, but also for their overall success in life. This also includes achievement motivation, teamwork skills, the ability to negotiate, adaptability and curiosity (Povov, 2020). Social and personal competencies I.V. Plaskina, K.V. Drozd, A.V. Zobkov are considered as a complex systemic formation, as a set of competencies that relate to the person himself as an individual and contribute to successful interaction with other people and society, self-development and self-realization (Plaksina i dr., 2011).

The ability to cooperate as one of the important social competencies can be considered in the context of its three-component structure: knowledge, skills and relationships to achieve common goals (Parygina, 2020). When entering educational institutions, people inevitably interact with other members of society. However, certain conditions are necessary for the successful development of collaboration skills:

– social (adaptation to the socio-cultural environment, interaction with people of different ages, encouragement of teamwork);

– psychological and pedagogical (support and guidance in socio-cultural activities, encouragement of initiative);

– organizational and subject-related (creating a convenient and stimulating environment, developed infrastructure) (Rusakova, 2021).

As noted by T.P. Grass, V.I. Petrishchev, Y.A. Romanyuk based on their study of the experience of socialization of students in US schools, the social competencies of schoolchildren are formed under the influence of economic adaptation. The practical significance of social competencies is revealed in American schools through economic activity and the assimilation of market relations: students learn to formulate and implement their business ideas already in high school (Grass, et al., 2018).

Thus, an analysis of an extensive number of sources on the study of social competencies of young people in Russia and abroad indicates that social competencies are a complex multicomponent phenomenon that ensures individuals success in the modern world. To specify social competencies in order to formulate the results of youth development, it is advisable to carry out their modeling, for which the tool of cognitive maps will be used, as well as content analysis and the construction of a tag cloud using specialized online services.

During the content analysis, key semantic units will be identified from the sources analyzed above, dedicated specifically to social competencies (Abdulazimova, 2019; Alekseeva i dr., 2017; Argyle, 1994; Belyaeva, 2005; Gabozova, Malyuk, 2016; Grass, et al., 2018; Zimnyaya, 2004; Krasnokutskaya, 2006; Kunicyna, et al., 2003; Plaksina i dr., 2011; Povov, 2020; Priborovich, 2017; Rusakova, 2021).

3. Results

A cognitive map is a method of understanding phenomena by modeling the relationships between objects. The term was first introduced in 1948 by E.C. Tolman to designate the structure of the surrounding reality formed in the brain as a result of cognition (Tolmen, 1980). Subsequently, American political scientist and economist Robert Axelrod described the use of cognitive maps for making management decisions under conditions of uncertainty (Axelrod, 1976).

Currently, cognitive maps have found wide application in psychology, management and business, project management, marketing, engineering and software development, etc. In general, a cognitive map is a graph whose nodes are concepts, and the connecting lines are relationships between concepts that explain the relationships between them.

At the first stage of developing a cognitive map of social competencies, it is important to identify the concepts that will be involved in the vertices of the graph. To do this, we will conduct a content analysis of various sources on the issue of social competencies. All sources were discussed in the previous subsection of the article. From them, fragments were isolated containing the structure and description of social competencies from the point of view of various researchers and specialists. A tag cloud was compiled from available sources using the online service, Figure 3

(Servis dlya…, 2023). A tag cloud is a way to visualize text with the most frequently occurring words appearing larger than less frequently occurring words.

Fig. 3. Tag cloud about social competencies
Source: compiled by the authors using the world's cloud service

As can be seen from Figure 2, the most frequently occurring words in sources about social competencies, in addition to repeating the stimulus word itself (social and competence), are the following: emotions, responsibility, empathy, team, to adapt, communication, understanding, knowledge, skill, behavior, feelings, goals, behavior of others, etc. (the conclusion was made taking into account different endings of the same words). That is, social competencies are about interacting with other people to achieve certain goals, taking into account emotions and feelings, as well as the manifestation of empathy and cognitive abilities.

This is also confirmed by content analysis conducted using the Advego online service (Semanticheskij analiz…, 2023). The semantic core of all sources on social competencies is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Semantic core of social competencies

Phrase/word	N	Frequency, %
social	43	2.74
knowledge	24	1.53
ability	21	1.34
competence	20	1.28
emotion	20	1.28
ability	18	1.15
skill	13	0.83
attitude	9	0.57

Phrase/word	N	Frequency, %
value	9	0.57
individual	8	0.51
competence	8	0.51
solution	8	0.51
feeling	8	0.51
achievement	7	0.45
behavior	7	0.45
system	7	0.45
information	6	0.38
norm	6	0.38
responsibility	6	0.38
understanding	6	0.38
acceptance	6	0.38
work	6	0.38
situation	6	0.38
own	6	0.38
social competence	6	0.38/0.77
interaction	5	0.32
choice	5	0.32
communicative	5	0.32
thought	5	0.32
image	5	0.32
awareness	5	0.32
understand	5	0.32
development	5	0.32
emotional	5	0.32
adapt	4	0.26
group	4	0.26
desired	4	0.26
knowledge of the market system	4	0.26/0.77
team	4	0.26
conflict	4	0.26
personality	4	0.26
motivation	4	0.26
society	4	0.26
job	4	0.26
self-regulation	4	0.26

Source: compiled by the authors using the Advego service.

Those semantic units that will be used in the future when drawing up a cognitive map of social competencies are highlighted in bold in Table 2. Out of the 45 most frequently occurring words, we selected exactly those words that designate or are related to the designation of certain facets of social competence. That is, words such as skill, ability and actually social, competence, competencies, etc. were excluded. Verbs that denote actions that we have already chosen, for example, understand/understanding, were also excluded. We used the word "own" in the variant of the prefix "self-", but we did not use the words "image", "thought" and "situation", since they are more contextual than meaning-forming. We did not use the word "desired", since we mean that individuals a priori act based on their desires and aspirations.

4. Discussion
The obtained and described results (semantic units), which are presented in Table 2, will be used to designate the vertices of the cognitive map graph. In turn, the relationships between the

vertices of the graph will be predetermined according to what was described by T.V. Belyaeva model of social competence, consisting of three levels: the value core, cognitive and behavioral aspects (Figure 4).

The value core is a set of moral and ethical norms, beliefs and values, as well as motivational attitudes, among which one can highlight humanism, patriotism, tolerance, respect for oneself and others, intelligence, the desire to change the world for the better, etc. It is in the process of educating an individual that the value core of his life is formed, including social competencies. Based on this value-semantic core, the individual forms ideas (mental representations) about himself, other people, society, economics, politics and his profession. All these ideas are closely interconnected, as shown in the figure by bidirectional arrows. These ideas, or representations, that is, the cognitive aspect of competencies, in turn, predetermine the behavior of the individual: those specific actions that the individual performs in the process of his life, social interaction, development and professional self-realization.

Thus, the study of existing concepts in the competency-based approach in education and human resource management made it possible to identify existing approaches to understanding competencies and, in particular, social competencies, which are expressed in effective interaction and achievement of goals by an individual in various spheres of public life. Using content analysis tools, the key components of social competencies were identified, which were later used in the development of the author's cognitive map of social competencies. The compiled map can be used in the development of educational standards and programs, as well as to assess the level of development of social competencies among young people in order to draw up a further trajectory for the development of youth potential in an educational organization, region, or country as a whole.
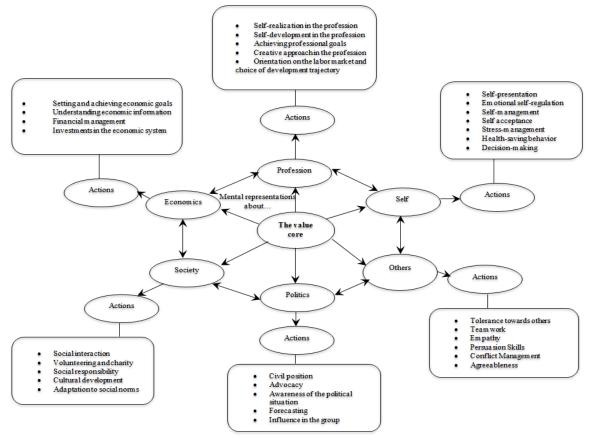

Fig. 4. Proposed cognitive map of youth social competencies
Source: compiled by the authors

5. Conclusion

Social competencies are the most important element in the development and education of young people, since without them, effective interaction between individual members of society is unlikely and, as a result, it is impossible to ensure the progressive development of society as a

whole. Each individual, in order to achieve personal goals, must, to one degree or another, possess a wide range of social competencies that are formed throughout life, but the foundation, of course, is laid at the stage of growing up in the family and educational organizations.

As a result of the study, the main trends in the development of a competent approach in Russia and abroad in education and human resource management were identified, and various approaches to understanding social competencies and emotional intelligence as one of the key components of social competencies were identified. All this made it possible to form a conceptual pool of categories from which a cognitive map of social competencies was subsequently modeled.

As a result of the use of content analysis, the most frequently occurring semantic units in descriptions of the social competencies of young people were obtained. Next, all these semantic units were analyzed and selected to compile a cognitive map of social competencies.

The resulting cognitive map of social competencies can be used to develop educational standards and individual academic disciplines and curricula, as well as to assess the development results of young people during training in a particular educational organization.

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