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## Formation of key competencies through the studying geopolitics at school

The present study analyzes the development of key competencies in secondary school students through the studying geopolitics in the school geography course. The relevance of this study is due to the need of preparing students for life in a globalized world, which requires the formation of competencies, such as critical thinking, information literacy, general cultural skills, teamwork etc. Studying of geopolitics help students better understand international relations and global processes, which is important for their adaptation and successful socialization. The primary objective is to examine the role of studying of geopolitics in formation of key competencies in students. The research method includes content analysis of educational materials, qualitative analysis of practical assignments of the geopolitics section in high school geography textbooks, a review of scientific publications regarding the development of key competencies, and a survey among school students. 101 students of 10-11 grades took part in the survey, the result of which confirm that most students realize the importance of geopolitics for the analysis and solution of global problems, such as diplomatic conflict resolution and crisis forecasting. Practical tasks in textbooks demonstrate how creative projects and tasks help students to development of competencies essential for adaptation in the modern globalized world. Thus, the competency-based approach highlights significance of the comprehensive development of students to solve complex problems and interact in international environment.

**Keywords:** geopolitics, school education, key competencies, critical thinking, globalization, teaching methods.

### Introduction

The modern educational paradigm requires that students develop key competencies that go beyond the simple acquisition of facts. Along with acquiring geographical knowledge, for students is important to develop skills and core competencies that will help them critically think about real-world issues, interact with people and places, and become increasingly independent and capable members of society [1, 2]. These competencies are essential for successful adaptation in a changing world. Competence is the capability and willingness of an individual to effectively apply knowledge, abilities, and skills in various situations. It is created within the context of a competency-based approach [3, 4], which includes active learning methods and practical activities. An education system grounded in this approach prepares students or successful adaptation in the world by fostering skills such as communication, critical thinking, develops cross-cultural understanding and the ability to learn independently, etc. In this context, the study of geopolitics in school curricula plays an important role. Geopolitics in school education covers the section, which study the relationship between geographical, political and economic factors in the international arena [5].

Thus, the educational paradigm focused on the competency-based approach and the inclusion of geopolitics in school curricula complement each other. They contribute to the holistic development of students, preparing them to tackle complex issues in modern world.

In this work, we will try to answer the following questions: What competencies can be considered as key for students? How do school programs integrate the study of geopolitics to form key competencies in students? How does the study of geopolitics at school help prepare students for life in a globalized world?

The purpose of the work is to identify the key competencies formed in secondary school students by studying geopolitics in the school curriculum, and to evaluate their importance in preparing for life in a globalized world.

Tasks of the work:

- to determine the list of key competencies formed in students when studying geopolitics;
- to study how school programs integrate geopolitical topics to form these competencies;
- to assess the importance of key competencies for preparing students for life in a globalized world.

### *Materials and methods*

To study the formation of competencies within the school geography course by studying the “Geopolitics” section, we used geography textbooks for senior grades of Kazakhstan, scientific articles and studies on the competency-based method in education, as well as national educational standards. The research methodology included several stages and approaches that provide a comprehensive understanding of the competency’s formation process in schoolchildren. First, a content analysis of educational materials was conducted, in particular, geography textbooks for 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. The aim of this work is to determine the key topics covered in the “Geopolitics” section, in addition to the methods and approaches to their teaching. Particular attention was paid to the practical works and project works and also to the methodological instructions for them. It was made to understand how these assignments can help school children develop some competencies during the studying of this section. Next, a qualitative analysis of scientific articles and studies on the competency-based approach in education and, in particular, the formation of competencies through the study of geography and geopolitics was conducted. This analysis included a study of the theoretical foundations of the competence-based approach, as well as practical examples of its implementation in the educational systems of different countries. Particular emphasis was placed on studies conducted within the context of Kazakhstan to understand the specifics of the national educational system. At the next stage, a survey method was used ([Google Forms](#)) to confirm the assumptions about the influence of studying of geopolitics on the formation of competencies. The survey was conducted among 101 high school students of grades 10-11 in Almaty, and its purpose was to identify what competencies students develop in the process of studying geopolitics. The survey questions were aimed at assessing the understanding of key geopolitical topics, their significance and influence on the awareness of global challenges and international relations. The survey results were compared with the findings of the analysis of educational materials and scientific research. This made it possible to identify general trends and features of the formation of competencies through the study of geopolitics, as well as to determine the key competencies developed in the learning process.

### *Results and discussion*

There are many interpretations of the term “competence”. A.V. Khutorskoy gives the following definition of the term, that competence — is an alienated, predetermined social requirement for the educational preparation of a person, necessary for effective and productive activity in a specific area [6]. Messick [7] describes competence as the knowledge and abilities a person processes in a particular subject area, irrespective of how they are acquired, whether through training, experience or other means. Key competencies are vital skills and abilities that enable a person to comprehend situations and achieve success in both personal and professional life in today’s society. These competencies are most important for the comprehensive development of students. The DeSeCo (Definition and Selection of Competencies) project [8], initiated by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), also developed its own classification of key competencies necessary for successful functioning in modern society [9; 44]. This classification includes various competencies aimed at effective interaction in heterogeneous groups, autonomous action and instrumental use of resources (Table 1).

Table 1

## Selected key competencies in the DeSeCo project

Weinert (2001, p. 52)	Canto & Dupuy (2001, p. 79–90)	Haste (2001, p. 103–117)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Oral and written mastery of the mother tongue</li> <li>■ Mathematical knowledge</li> <li>■ Reading competency for rapid acquisition and correct processing of written information</li> <li>■ Mastery of at least one foreign language</li> <li>■ Media competence</li> <li>■ Independent learning strategies</li> <li>■ Social competencies</li> <li>■ Divergent thinking, critical judgements and self-criticism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Competencies for coping with complexity</li> <li>■ Perceptive competencies</li> <li>■ Normative competencies</li> <li>■ Co-operative competencies</li> <li>■ Narrative competencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Technological competence</li> <li>■ Dealing with ambiguity and diversity</li> <li>■ Finding and sustaining community links</li> <li>■ Management of motivation, emotion and desire</li> <li>■ Agency and responsibility</li> </ul>

## Continuation of Table 1

Perrenoud (2001, p. 133–144)	LeVy & Murnane (2001, p. 153)	Ridgeway (2001, p. 207–210)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Being able to identify, evaluate and defend one's resources, rights, limits and needs</li> <li>■ Being able, individually or in a group, to form and conduct projects and to develop strategies</li> <li>■ Being able to analyse situations, relationships and force fields systematically</li> <li>■ Being able to co-operate, act in synergy and participate in a collective and share leadership</li> <li>■ Being able to build and operate democratic-type organizations and systems of collective action</li> <li>■ Being able to manage and resolve conflicts</li> <li>■ Being able to play by the rules, using them and elaborating on them</li> <li>■ Being able to construct negotiated orders over and above cultural differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Basic reading and mathematics skills</li> <li>■ Ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing</li> <li>■ Ability to work productively in groups</li> <li>■ Ability to relate well to other people</li> <li>■ Familiarity with computers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Joining and functioning in groups               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ability to take the role of the other</li> <li>● Ability to negotiate in the face of conflicting interests in order to find mutually acceptable solutions</li> <li>● Ability to operate democratically in groups</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Self-concept and emotion management</li> <li>■ Computer literacy</li> </ul>

There are different classifications of key competencies, such as the 5 key competencies of the European Council, A.V. Khutorskoy [6], I.A. Zymnaya [10], O.A. Salnikova [11]. The authors conclude that A.V. Khutorskoy's classification currently serves as the basis for further exploration of competencies by various authors. Therefore, in our work we will examine in detail how the study of geopolitics plays a role in developing key competencies proposed by Khutorskoy. We will examine how different aspects of geopolitics can enhance student's cognitive, organizational, creative, communicative, and ideological qualities.

Thus, core competencies, according to A. Khutorskoy include value-semantic, informational, general cultural, communicative, educational and cognitive, social and labor, personal competence (Fig. 1).

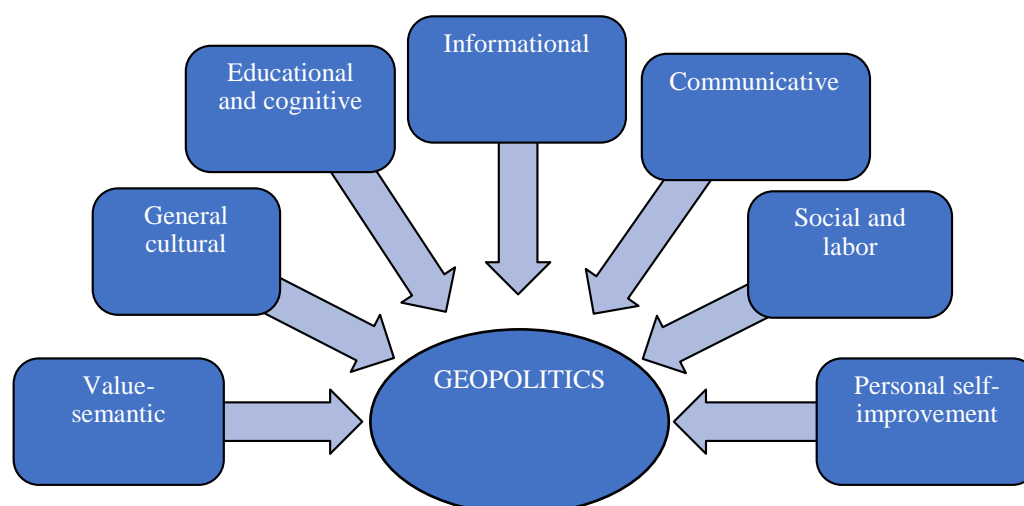


Figure 1. Group of key competencies according to A.V. Khutorskoy

This classification emphasizes the importance of an integrated method for developing competencies, focusing on universal skills necessary for the successful socialization and personal development of students.

*How do school curricula integrate the study of geopolitics to develop key competencies in secondary school students?*

Geography textbooks in Kazakhstan for grades 10-11 include a whole section devoted to geopolitics. This section includes the following key topics: basics of geopolitics; relevance of geopolitics; global geopolitical space; geopolitics and geographical factors; morphology of state territory; national boundaries; contemporary geopolitical processes; enhancing Kazakhstan's geopolitical security; Kazakhstan's relations with international organizations. An important aspect of studying geopolitics at school is the implementation of practical assignments aimed at developing specific competencies in students. An example of such assignments can be creative projects integrated into textbooks. Let us consider examples of practical work presented in geography textbooks for 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades.

*Practical work № 13 (Fig. 2) from the 10th grade textbook [12; 192].*

*Topic:* Developing solutions to strengthen the borders of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

*Assignment description.* Students are asked to develop solutions to strengthen the borders of Kazakhstan based on the textbook text and official information. This assignment helps students gain a deeper understanding of geopolitical realities and the importance of national security.

*Developing key competencies:*

- Value-based competencies: analyzing geopolitical stability and border security can help to students understand the importance of the state border and its strengthening for national security, enhancing their patriotism and responsibility.
- General cultural competencies: expanding horizons and developing intercultural competence through studying religious and cultural factors in strengthening borders.
- Educational and cognitive competencies: developing cognitive activity and independence in learning through researching information, analyzing data and developing proposals.
- Information competencies: skills in working with official documents, analyzing cartographic and text data.
- Communicative competencies: ability to clearly express thoughts, work in a group and interact with other participants.
- Social and labor competencies: skills in teamwork, planning and distributing tasks.
- Personal self-improvement competencies: developing critical thinking, self-esteem and responsibility for one's decisions and actions.

*Practical work № 22 (Fig. 3) from the 11th grade textbook [13; 235].*

*Topic:* Expanding Kazakhstan's geopolitical cooperation.

*Assignment description.* Students are asked to develop recommendations for improving Kazakhstan's ties with various organizations such as Central Asia, the European Union, the UN, and the Shanghai Cooper-



ation Organization. These assignments help students gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of international relations and geopolitical priorities.

Developing key competencies:

- Value-based competencies: understanding the importance of international cooperation and developing value orientations based on global and national interests.
- General cultural competencies: expanding horizons, understanding and respecting cultural diversity and international traditions.
- Educational and cognitive competencies: developing cognitive activity and gaining independence by gathering and analyzing information;
- Informational competencies: involve the ability to search for and analyze information, which helps students process data and develop critical thinking skills.
- Communicative competencies: the ability to express ideas, collaborate in a team, work with classmates and defend their point of view.
- Social and labor competencies: abilities in teamwork, planning and distributing tasks.
- Personal self-improvement competencies: personal growth, self-esteem, self-control, goal setting, decision-making and responsibility for actions.

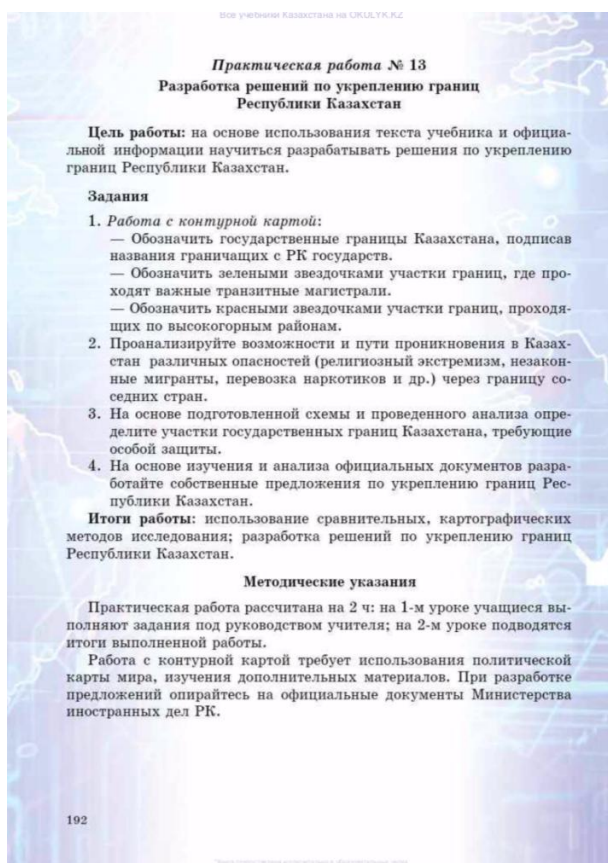


Figure 2. Example of an assignment from a 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook

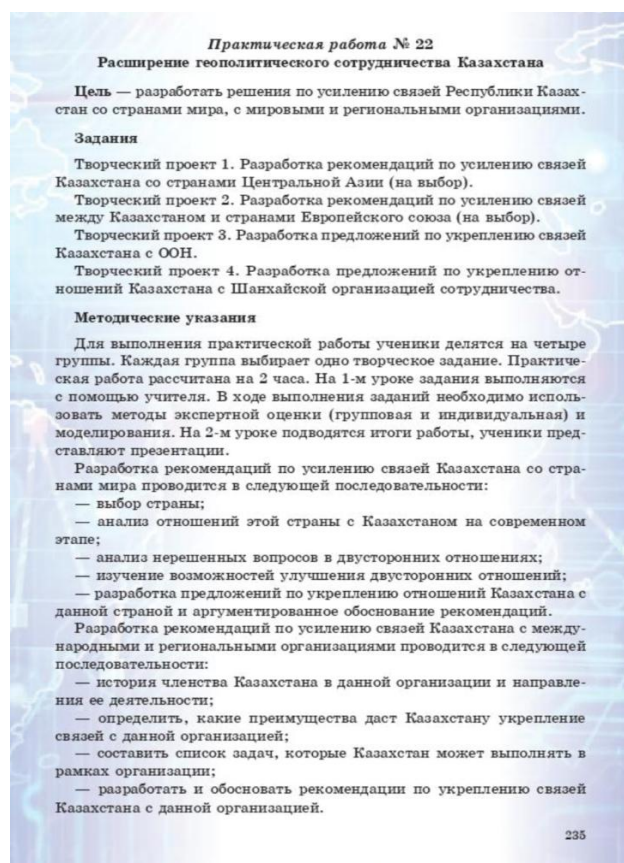


Figure 3. Example of an assignment from a 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook

The results of a survey conducted among 101 students of grades 10-11 in Almaty revealed that the concept of geopolitics is closely related to geography and its influence on the foreign policy of countries. Data analysis shows that students understand the practical importance of knowledge of geopolitics for solving global problems. The majority of respondents (61.4 %) believe that this knowledge is important for diplomatic conflict resolution, which indicates their awareness of global challenges. Students also highlight the role of geopolitics in developing sustainable development strategies (24.8 %) and forecasting crises (7.9 %), focusing on the importance of an analytical approach and strategic thinking. Most respondents named the economy (more than 30 % give the maximum score) and demography as key factors in the geopolitical potential of countries, which emphasize their ability to highlight significant aspects. Information and natural

factors, on the contrary, were rated as less significant. Students' support for the idea of multipolar world (86.1 %), where influence is distributed among several centers of power, reflects their understanding of the diversity of contemporary international relations (Fig. 4). They named United States (90.1 %), China (72.3 %), Russia (56.4 %), and the European Union (56.4 %) as the most important players on the global stage (Fig. 5), demonstrating their awareness of global interconnections and the importance of the balance of power. In their assessment of current conflicts, students signed out the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine (52.8 %) and the conflict in Syria (37.6 %) as the most significant (Fig. 6), linking them to key global trends such as regional conflicts (32.7 %) and competition between global actors (17.8 %) (Fig. 7). This underscores their understanding of the relationship between local crisis and global challenges. In the context of Kazakhstan, respondents consider economic cooperation (50.5 %) to be the most important aspect of relations with neighboring countries, which is consistent with the identification of international relations (22.8 %) and geographical locations (27.7 %) as key factors determining the country's geopolitical position. Such responses illustrate students' awareness of the importance of strategic resources and Kazakhstan's role in strengthening regional integration and its position on the world stage.

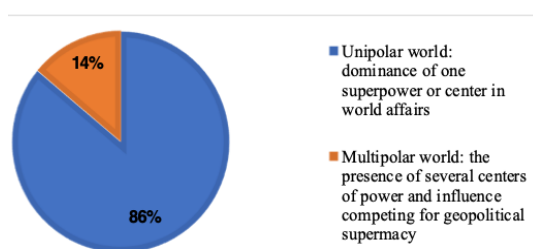


Figure 4. Current global geopolitical landscape

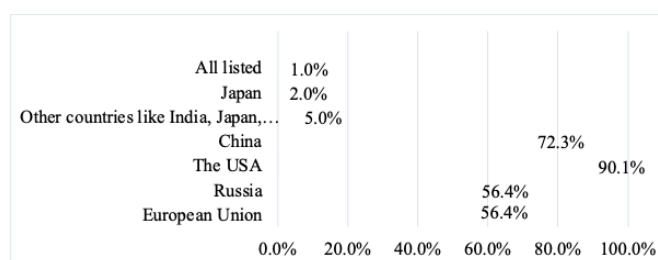


Figure 5. Key actors in modern geopolitics

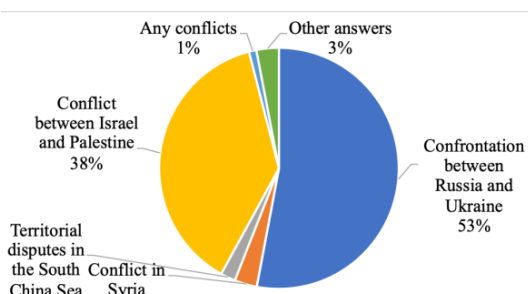


Figure 6. Geopolitical conflicts

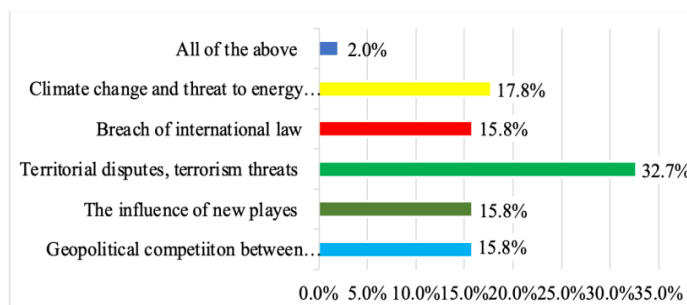


Figure 7. Geopolitical trends

Studying geopolitics at school helps students develop critical thinking skills, enabling them to analyze and evaluate geopolitical situations and events, understand international relations, political and economic systems, and recognize their role and responsibility in a global society. It helps develop analytical skills for collecting, interpreting and using information in decision-making, improves intercultural competence through familiarity with the cultural and social aspects of different countries and peoples, and strengthens the ability to process and manage information, including its search, analysis and critical evaluation. Students also develop their skills of communication which is necessary for debating and discussing on complex topics. They learn to make informed choices that affect both their personal and professional spheres, and become conscious of global issues like climate change, economic instability and international conflicts (Fig. 8).

The inclusion of geopolitical topics in the geography curriculum reflects the need to prepare students to understand complex international relations and global processes, which is quite important in the context of country's geopolitical position. This process not only helps students gain knowledge about complex global processes, but also cultivates essential competencies required for a successful and meaningful life in the contemporary world. Competencies such as critical thinking, information literacy, communication skills, and teamwork play a significant role in preparing students for life in a globalized world. Examples of practical works, such as research about the role of international organizations, show how school programs can foster the development of these main competencies and prepare learners to actively participate in solving global problems.

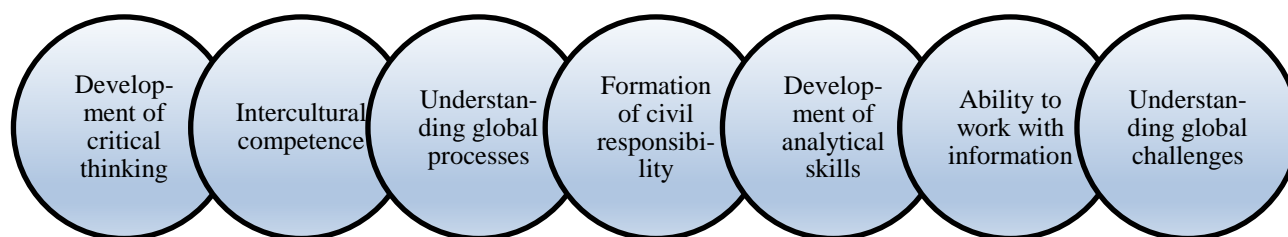


Figure 8. Key competencies for life in a globalized world, formed through the study of geopolitics

The study results indicate that integrating geopolitics into the school curriculum plays an essential role in forming key competencies essential for students' successful socialization and professional growth in a globalized world.

To ensure the full development of competencies in learners, it is quite essential to increase the number of activities aimed at self-regulation skills [14]. To enhance the teaching of geopolitics in schools, it is important to integrate more role-playing games and simulations that foster critical thinking and empathy [15]. Martini's research [16] emphasizes the importance of active learning, which contributes to a better understanding and critical understanding of complex political discourses, which in turn contributes social emancipation of students and their readiness for active participation in political life. The introduction of subject-specific abilities into curricula allows for the formation of critical thinking skills in students through the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of information, especially in the context of interactions between natural processes and human activity, as well as decisions on sustainable development issues [17]. Thus, just as studying geopolitics through various methods develops critical thinking skills, critical thinking helps students identify hidden motives and biases, evaluate the credibility of sources, and consider different perspectives and arguments, which helps in the formation of more accurate and balanced conclusions [18]. Critical thinking and geopolitics therefore mutually enrich each other, developing students' ability to deeply and comprehensively evaluate complex international issues. It is important that the competency concepts are validated through practical application and measurement, which requires careful design of learning situations and test items [19]. Such approaches will help students not only understand current global events, but also participate effectively in global society by making informed decisions and actively interacting with different cultures and communities.

### *Conclusion*

The study of geopolitics in school curricula is essential in developing key competencies, which are crucial for students' successful adaptation and professional growth in today's world. This section not only expands knowledge about the world, but also promotes the development of critical thinking, intercultural sensitivity and global awareness of students. The inclusion of geopolitics in school programs helps to deepen the understanding of geopolitical processes and develops the ability to analyze complex situations. These findings are supported by the results of survey conducted among 101 high school students in grades 10-11 in Almaty. The study showed that students see the practical importance of geopolitics for analyzing and solving global problems. Students note the importance of geopolitical knowledge for diplomatic conflict resolution, developing sustainable development strategies, and forecasting crises, emphasizing the importance of an analytical approach. Among the key factors of countries' geopolitical potential, they highlight economic and demography, demonstrating the ability to focus on the most significant aspects. Further research in this area can focus on assessing the effectiveness of various teaching methods and their influence to the development of students' competencies. It is important to consider how active learning methods, such as role-playing games and simulations, deepen the understanding of geopolitical processes and help to development of critical thinking ability. Practical tasks and creative projects help students apply theoretical knowledge in practice, strengthening their communication and organizational skills. Despite existing challenges and limitations, the potential for growth of this educational field offers extensive opportunities to enhance the educational quality and prepare students for the demands of a globalized world.

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### **Мектепте геосаясатты оқу арқылы негізгі құзыреттіліктерді қалыптастыру**

Мақалада мектеп география курсына геосаясатты зерттеу арқылы оқушылардың негізгі құзыреттіліктерін қалыптастыру қарастырылған. Жұмыстың өзектілігі мынада: оқушылардың жаһанданған әлемдегі өмірге бейімделуі қажеттілігі. Бұл процесс ақпараттық сауаттылық, сыни ойлау, командада жұмыс жасай білу қабілеті сияқты негізгі құзыреттерді қалыптастыруды қажет етеді. Мектеп бағдарламасындағы геосаясат бөлімі оқушыларға халықтар арасындағы қатынастар мен жаһандағы процестерді түсінуге көмегін береді, бұл сала білім алушылардың сәтті әлеуметтенуі мен өмірге бейімдеуі үшін өте маңызды. Зерттеу мақсаты — мектептегі білім алушылардың негізгі құзыреттіліктерін қалыптастыру барысында география пәні аясында геосаясат бөлімін зерттеудің рөліне талдау жасау. Ұсынылған жұмыста оқу материалдарын контент-талдау әдістері қолданылды, жоғары сыныптардың географиясы бойынша оқулықтардағы геосаясат бөлімінің практикалық тапсырмаларын сапалы талдау, оқушылардың негізгі құзыреттіліктерін қалыптастыру бойынша ғылыми зерттеулер мен жарияланымдарға шолу жасалды, сондай-ақ білім алушыларға жүргізілген сауалнаманы қамтиды. Сауалнамаға 10-11 сыныптардың 101 оқушысы қатысты, оның нәтижесі оқушылардың көпшілігі геосаясаттың дипломатиялық қақтығыстарды шешу және дағдарысты болжау сияқты жаһандық мәселелерді талдау және шешу үшін маңыздылығын түсінетінін растайды. Мектеп оқулықтарында берілген практикалық тапсырмалар мен шығармашылық жобалар жалпы білім алушылардың негізгі құзыреттіліктерін дамытуға да ықпалы зор екені айқындалды. Осылайша, құзыреттілік тәсіл оқу барысындағы күрделі мәселелерді шешуге және халықаралық ортадағы өзара әрекеттесуге мектеп білім алушыларының кешенді дамуындағы өзектілігін көрсетеді.

*Кілт сөздер:* геосаясат, мектептегі білім, негізгі құзыреттіліктер, сыни ойлау, жаһандану, оқыту әдістері.

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### **Формирование ключевых компетенций через изучение геополитики в школе**

В данной статье рассматривается формирование ключевых компетенций у учащихся посредством изучения геополитики в школьном курсе географии. Актуальность работы заключается в необходимости подготовки учащихся к жизни в глобализированном мире, что требует формирования ключевых компетенций, таких как критическое мышление, информационная грамотность, общекультурные навыки, умение работать в команде и т.д. Изучение геополитики в школьной программе помогает учащимся лучше понимать международные отношения и глобальные процессы, что важно для их адаптации и успешной социализации. Целью исследования является анализ роли изучения геополитики в школьных программах в формировании ключевых компетенций у учащихся. В представленной работе использовались методы контент-анализа учебных материалов, качественный анализ практических заданий раздела геополитики в учебниках по географии старших классов, обзор научных исследований и публикаций по формированию ключевых компетенций у учащихся, а также опрос обучающихся. В анкетировании приняли участие 101 учащийся 10-11 классов, результаты которого подтверждают, что большинство из опрошенных осознают важность геополитики для анализа и решения глобальных проблем, таких как дипломатическое разрешение конфликтов и прогнозирование кризисов. Практические задания в учебниках демонстрируют, как творческие проекты и задачи способствуют развитию компетенций, необходимых для успешной адаптации в современном глобализированном мире. Таким образом, компетентностный подход подчеркивает важность комплексного развития учащихся для решения сложных задач и взаимодействия в международной среде.

*Ключевые слова:* геополитика, школьное образование, ключевые компетенции, критическое мышление, глобализация, методы обучения.

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