

PEDAGOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FACTORS OF IMPLEMENTING A COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH IN LITERATURE TEACHING IN GRADES 5–7 DURING MARTIAL LAW

FATORES PEDAGÓGICOS E METODOLÓGICOS DA IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DE UMA ABORDAGEM BASEADA EM COMPETÊNCIAS NO ENSINO DE LITERATURA NAS SÉRIES 5ª A 7ª DURANTE A LEI MARCIAL

Nataliia Hrychanyk

Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor, Department of Ukrainian Language, Literature and Teaching Methods, Oleksandr Dovzhenko Hlukhiv National Pedagogical University, Hlukhiv, Ukraine.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0616-6832>

Email: hrychanyk@gnpu.edu.ua

Tamila Yatsenko

Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Senior Researcher, Chief Researcher, Department of Teaching Ukrainian Language and Literature, Institute of Pedagogy, National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6121-7495>

Email: tamilakod@ukr.net

Nataliia Deviatko

Candidate of Philosophical Sciences, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Communal Institution of Higher Education 'Dnipro Academy of Continuing Education' of Dnipropetrovsk Regional Council, Dnipro, Ukraine

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0162-1194>

Email: natalia_ptah@ukr.net

Olesia Slyzhuk

Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor, Leading Researcher, Department of Teaching Ukrainian Language and Literature, Institute of Pedagogy, National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7696-6157>

Email: olesja_2014@ukr.net

Nataliia Hohol

Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor, Department of Ukrainian Language, Literature and Teaching Methods, Oleksandr Dovzhenko Hlukhiv National Pedagogical University, Hlukhiv, Ukraine.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0780-6237>

Email: gogolnv@gnpu.edu.ua

Abstract: The study addresses the urgent need to ensure continuity and quality of school literary education under prolonged martial law by adapting a competency-based approach to a crisis educational environment. The problem of forming reading literacy and life skills in basic secondary students is critical due to its influence on critical thinking, information processing, and cultural identity. The purpose was to assess the effectiveness of an adapted competency-based approach to literature teaching in grades 5–7 and its impact on reading literacy and life skills. The methodology combined pedagogical observation, learning outcome analysis, reading literacy testing, and quantitative and qualitative data processing. Results confirmed that adapted competency-based methods improve literacy, foster critical and creative thinking, and strengthen communication and research skills. Structured tasks, interdisciplinary integration, digital resources, and psychological support sustained motivation. The practical significance lies in rapid adaptability during emergencies, with scalability to other subjects, enhancing its value for modern education.

Keywords: Literary education. Student's personality. Key competencies. Pedagogical conditions. Competence-based approach.

Resumo: O estudo aborda a necessidade urgente de garantir a continuidade e a qualidade do ensino literário escolar sob uma lei marcial prolongada, adaptando uma abordagem baseada em competências a um ambiente educativo em crise. O problema da formação da literacia de leitura e das competências para a vida em alunos do ensino básico é crítico devido à sua influência no pensamento crítico, no processamento de informação e na identidade cultural. O objetivo foi avaliar a eficácia de uma abordagem adaptada baseada em competências para o ensino da literatura nas séries 5.º a 7.º e o seu impacto na literacia de leitura e nas competências para a vida. A metodologia combinou observação pedagógica, análise dos resultados da aprendizagem, testes de literacia de leitura e processamento de dados quantitativos e qualitativos. Os resultados confirmaram que os métodos adaptados baseados em competências melhoram a literacia, promovem o pensamento crítico e criativo e reforçam as competências de comunicação e investigação. Tarefas estruturadas, integração interdisciplinar, recursos digitais e apoio psicológico sustentaram a motivação. O significado prático reside na rápida adaptabilidade durante emergências, com escalabilidade para outras disciplinas, aumentando o seu valor para a educação moderna.

Palavras-chave: Educação literária. Personalidade do aluno. Competências-chave. Condições pedagógicas. Abordagem baseada em competências.

Introduction

Modern school literary education is in a state of transformation, driven by both global trends in the development of a competency-based approach and the challenges caused by the prolonged martial law in Ukraine. In an unstable educational environment, there is a need not only to maintain the quality of the educational process, but also to ensure that students of basic secondary education develop key competencies that guarantee their readiness for further education and life in an uncertain environment. One of the most relevant is reading literacy, as it is directly related to the development of critical thinking, the ability to work with information and the formation of cultural identity, which is especially important in times of crisis. The relevance of the problem is confirmed by a significant amount of research on the competency approach, including the works of Açıkgöz and Babadogan (2021), Barrick (2017), Lozano et al. (2017), Kulik et al. (2020), which highlight the theoretical foundations and strategic advantages of the competency paradigm. Ukrainian researchers (Bibik et al., 2014; Horoshkina et al., 2022; Shuliar, 2025) consider in detail the peculiarities of implementing the State Standard of Basic Secondary Education and outline methodological approaches to the development of key competencies. In international research, considerable attention is paid to the integration of cultural content and cross-curricular connections in the learning process (Calafato, 2024; Calafato & Hunstadbråten, 2024; Loh et al., 2018), while a separate area is shaping the discourse on the role of psychological support and emotional safety in times of crisis (Kenworthy & U'Ren, 2025; Salha et al., 2024). Despite significant progress in the study of competency-based strategies, the issues of their holistic adaptation to the conditions of prolonged emergencies remain unresolved, in particular, there is a lack of standardized but flexible tools for diagnosing reading literacy in crisis educational environments. Also, the effectiveness of combining pedagogical flexibility, digital technologies, and interdisciplinary integration in the context of martial law has not been sufficiently studied.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of an adapted competency-based approach to teaching literature in grades 5-7 under martial law and to find out its impact on the level of reading literacy and the development of students' cross-cutting life skills, as well as to identify methodological factors that ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the educational process in crisis situations.

Literature review

Recent studies outline a wide range of approaches to the implementation of competency-based education, including its theoretical foundations (Açıkgöz & Babadogan, 2021; Barrick, 2017; Boukhentache, 2016; Oroszi, 2020) and practical models of implementation in different countries (Ponomariovienė et al., 2025; Tarmo & Kimaro, 2021; Kulik et al., 2020). In the domestic context, there are important works that analyze the State Standard of Basic Secondary Education and the peculiarities of forming key competencies of students, in particular reading literacy (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2020; Bibik et al., 2014; Yatsenko & Pakharenko, 2022; Yatsenko & Slyzhuk, 2022). Methodological aspects of competency-based learning are revealed in works on competency-based forms, methods and means (Horoshkina et al., 2022; Holubnycha et al., 2022; Shuliar, 2025), as well as the role of interdisciplinary integration, creativity and cultural context (Loh et al., 2018; Lozano et al., 2017; Calafato, 2024; Calafato & Hunstadbråten, 2024). Considerable attention is paid to the conditions of learning in crisis situations, including martial law, where flexibility of formats, ethics of care and psychological support are emphasized (Salha et al., 2024; Kenworthy & U'Ren, 2025; DeBacker et al., 2024). Some studies demonstrate the effectiveness of innovative approaches to the development of reading competence through the integration of ICT, interdisciplinary methods, and literary analysis (Perez Reategui et al., 2023; Rogers, 2021; Turner & Turner, 2024). Thus, the scientific discourse covers both normative, methodological, and contextual-adaptive dimensions of competence education, which creates the basis for developing effective models for its implementation in school literature education.

An important area is the study of the relationship between the competency-based approach

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and sustainable development of education, which proposes the integration of pedagogical strategies and key competencies in a global dimension (Lozano et al., 2017; Kulik et al., 2020; Barrick, 2017). A significant contribution to the development of conceptual and methodological models has been made by works on the structure of competency-based literary education and algorithms for its implementation (Shuliar, 2025; Horoshkina et al., 2022; Holubnycha et al., 2022), as well as the study of literature as a means of developing creativity, critical thinking and cultural awareness (Loh et al., 2018; Calafato, 2024; Calafato & Hunstadbråten, 2024). Research in the field of teacher training and curriculum adaptation emphasizes the importance of developing teachers' professional readiness for innovative learning formats (Tarmo & Kimaro, 2021; Ponomariovienė et al., 2025; Rogers, 2021). Some works highlight the integration of modern technologies and multimedia in the process of forming reading competence (Perez Reategui et al., 2023; Turner & Turner, 2024; Oroszi, 2020).

At the same time, despite a significant amount of research, the issues of systematic adaptation of competency-based approaches to the conditions of prolonged martial law and methodological support of teachers with tools for rapid and flexible updating of educational content remain unresolved. Diagnostic tools that comprehensively measure both reading literacy and cross-cutting life skills of students in crisis educational environments have not been developed.

Methodology

The study was conducted by the author during the academic year 2023-2024 on the basis of general secondary education institutions operating under martial law in Ukraine to test the effectiveness of the competency-based approach in teaching literature to students in grades 5-7. The sample included students of these grades who studied according to adapted curricula. The methods used in the study were pedagogical observation, analysis and generalization of learning outcomes, as well as testing of students' reading literacy and cross-cutting skills using the author's adapted tools, which included both closed and open-ended questions to test text comprehension and critical thinking. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to collect and process empirical data: a comparative analysis of the results before and after the experimental implementation, as well as elements of content analysis of students' written works. Statistical processing of the data was carried out using descriptive statistics and checking the significance of the differences between the indicators before and after the formative stage of the experiment, which made it possible to assess the growth of competencies and identify the dynamics of their development.

As part of the experimental work, a set of implementations aimed at improving the effectiveness of the formation of key competencies in students was implemented. The content component involved expanding the educational material by integrating contemporary Ukrainian literary works with a clear socio-cultural and civic orientation, including texts that reflect the current challenges of society, in particular in the context of martial law. For this purpose, prepared author's selections of fiction and journalistic materials, as well as developed integrated tasks with interdisciplinary connections.

The organizational component consisted of the introduction of a modular and competency-based structure of training sessions, which provided a combination of traditional and interactive forms of work. Lessons were structured according to the following scheme: motivational block, problem-search stage, integration task, reflective summary. This approach allowed us to increase students' activity and develop their ability to analyze independently. The technological aspect included the use of online platforms for asynchronous interaction, multimedia presentations, videos, and interactive tests. In particular, services for collaborative text editing, interactive surveys, and digital portfolios were used, which contributed to the development of digital competence and teamwork skills.

Psychological and pedagogical support in the experimental group was provided through the systematic implementation of reflective exercises, small group discussions, and emotional regulation exercises. Pedagogical communication emphasized a safe educational environment, mutual respect and support, which is especially important in martial law. The complex combination

of these implementations ensured a higher level of involvement of students, intensified their cognitive activity and contributed to the formation of both subject and over-subject competencies, which was confirmed by the further results of the experiment.

Results

The analysis of the results of the pedagogical experiment was carried out taking into account the peculiarities of the implementations implemented in the experimental group. At the stage of the formative experiment, a set of changes in the content, organizational, technological, psychological and pedagogical components of the educational process was tested: expansion of educational materials with modern Ukrainian works with relevant socio-cultural issues, introduction of a modular and competency-based lesson structure, use of online platforms and multimedia for interactive interaction, systematic application of reflective and emotionally supportive practices. Such innovations were aimed at increasing students' activity, developing their digital competence, and shaping their critical thinking and teamwork skills. A comparative analysis of the learning outcomes of the control and experimental groups allowed us to evaluate the effectiveness of these implementations.

In grades 5-7 - at the transition from primary to basic school - the strategic core is reading competence as a subject and at the same time a "key" basis for other competencies. It is in this age window that the skills of interpreting a text, justifying a position, comparing contexts, and transforming what is read into one's own experience and statements are intensively developed; therefore, reading literacy here plays the role of a "competence interface" between literature and life (Yatsenko & Pakharenko, 2022; Yatsenko & Slyzhuk, 2022). The experience of comparative and subject-integrated courses shows that the combination of text-centered work with the construction of knowledge bases, the accumulation of background knowledge about the world and culture significantly enhances understanding and memorization (Turner & Turner, 2024). This is complemented by modern ideas about the role of literature as a resource for developing creativity, empathy, and critical thinking - these are the qualities that the Standard expects to see in "cross-cutting skills" (Calafato, 2024; Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2020).

The military context poses specific challenges and at the same time catalyzes innovation. First, there is a shift to blended and flexible formats: short modules, micro-goals, asynchronous tasks with transparent criteria that can be completed offline; this allows for continuity of learning despite anxiety and relocation (Salha et al., 2024). Secondly, the ethics of care and psychological safety as an informal "supercompetence" of the teacher are strengthened: the literature lesson becomes a space for safe voicing of experience, where communicative, civic, and emotional and value outcomes are integrated into work with a literary text (Kenworthy & U'Ren, 2025). Third, assessment approaches are increasingly using formats that capture progress rather than penalize gaps: rubrics for oral and written interpretations, reflective reading diaries, and mini-project portfolios are tools that are convenient in interrupted or blended learning environments (DeBacker et al., 2024). Fourth, the layer of contemporary Ukrainian literature in grades 5-7 is expanding (military themes, children's narratives about loss, solidarity, volunteering), which naturally combines "connection to real life" with the formation of civic, social, and emotional and ethical competencies without losing literary depth (Yatsenko & Slyzhuk, 2022; Calafato, 2024).

To summarize, the current state can be characterized as an "adaptive normalization" of the competency model: the normative framework is mature; methodological solutions are accumulated and validated by practitioners; and martial law has not so much stopped as reformatted the way results are achieved, reinforcing the importance of flexible learning design, safe pedagogical interaction, and evidence-based assessment procedures. The key to further progress is to support teachers with tools to quickly transform literary texts into tasks that simultaneously develop reading literacy, critical thinking, language expression, civic attitudes, and self-regulation – the very "cross-cutting skills" that the Standard requires and for which there is an acute public demand today (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2020; Horoshkina et al., 2022; DeBacker et al., 2024).

In the process of reforming Ukrainian education, the competency-based approach has

become the basis for modernizing the content and teaching methods, in particular in literary education in grades 5-7. The implementation of this approach involves the integration of subject and key competencies, the development of students' ability to apply the acquired knowledge in real-life situations, as well as the formation of value orientations and civic position (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2020; Horoshkina et al., 2022). In the current conditions caused by martial law, it is of particular importance to create pedagogical conditions that not only ensure the effectiveness of the educational process, but also contribute to the psychological stability of students, maintain motivation to learn and increase their personal involvement (Salha et al., 2024).

Determining the pedagogical conditions for the implementation of a competency-based approach in literary education in grades 5-7 should take into account not only didactic principles and organizational capabilities, but also external socio-cultural factors that significantly affect the learning process. In peacetime, these conditions are aimed at expanding educational opportunities, deepening integration practices, and developing students' creative potential. However, in martial law, they are adapted: the priorities are continuity of education, emotional stability of students, and availability of resources even with limited technical and security capabilities. The transformation of each pedagogical condition, its content in peacetime and the peculiarities of its implementation in crisis circumstances are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Pedagogical conditions for the effective development of students' key competencies in the process of studying contemporary Ukrainian literature: transformation under martial law

Pedagogical condition	In peacetime	Under martial law	Expected impact on the development of competencies
Competence-based orientation of the educational process	Focus on developing students' ability to apply literary knowledge in projects, discussions, and research; expanded use of integrated tasks	Preservation of competency goals while reducing the volume of tasks; modular presentation of material; emphasis on practical skills useful in crisis situations	Increasing the level of reading literacy, critical thinking, creativity, civic and social competencies.
Individualization and differentiation of learning	Flexible use of multi-level tasks, group and pair formats; consideration of students' interests and abilities	Enhanced personalization, taking into account resource constraints; asynchronous and offline formats, individual consultations	Increased motivation to read, development of self-learning and self-assessment skills
Connection to real life	Using works with relevant social themes; discussing life situations through literary examples.	Strengthening war and crisis themes; integration of stories of solidarity, volunteerism and adaptation to new realities	Formation of value orientations, ability to analyze and make decisions
Interdisciplinary interaction	Full-fledged integrated projects with history, art, civic education, and natural sciences.	Mini- and micro-projects adapted to the conditions of unstable communication; simplified integration tasks	Development of systemic thinking, creativity, communication and research skills
Continuity and consistency	Systematic complication of tasks on the basis of already formed knowledge; logical structure of the course	Maintaining continuity through modular planning and repeatable blocks in case of interruption of training	Deepening of reading competence, consistency of results at different stages
Emotionally safe educational environment	An atmosphere of trust, support and mutual respect; use of literature to develop empathy	Increased emphasis on emotional support; inclusion of short psychological pauses and reflective exercises	Development of emotional intelligence, empathy and self-regulation

Flexible learning formats	Balanced use of online, offline and mixed formats.	Prompt transition between formats depending on security conditions; asynchronous tasks suitable for offline learning	Supporting the continuity of learning, development of digital competence and autonomy of students
Formative assessment and reflection	Systematic use of rubrics, portfolios, reading diaries, mutual and self-assessment.	Minimizing the volume of assessment tasks; quick forms of feedback (online surveys, oral mini-reflections).	Raising students' self-awareness, developing skills in analyzing their own achievements and planning their learning

Source: created by the author based on (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2020; Horoshkina et al., 2022; Khrykov, 2011; Salha et al., 2024; Kenworthy & U'Ren, 2025)

Effective development of students' key competencies in the process of studying contemporary Ukrainian literature is possible only if a set of pedagogical conditions is systematically implemented, taking into account the content, organizational, psychological and technological aspects of learning. Such conditions provide not only a subject result in the form of reading literacy, but also the formation of "cross-cutting skills" necessary for the successful life of students in difficult socio-cultural circumstances, in particular under martial law.

The modern model of a methodological system in literary education should take into account the complex nature of the competence approach, which involves not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the development of skills, value orientations, and the ability to apply the experience gained in real situations. To do this, it is necessary to integrate three key dimensions: pedagogical (organizational and didactic component), psychological (peculiarities of students' cognitive and emotional development) and literary (content and specifics of a literary text) (Horoshkina et al., 2022; Yatsenko & Slyzhuk, 2022). This approach creates a holistic system where teaching methods, forms and content function in synergy, contributing to the effective development of both subject reading and key competencies.

Table 2 shows a generalized model of a methodological system for integrating pedagogical, psychological and literary approaches that can be adapted to martial law conditions and the specifics of teaching students in grades 5-7.

Table 2. Model of the methodological system of integration of pedagogical, psychological and literary approaches in literary education of grades 5-7

Model component	Pedagogical dimension	Psychological dimension	Literary studies dimension	Expected results
Objective	Formation of reading literacy and key competencies in accordance with the State Standard	Ensuring age-appropriate cognitive and emotional development	Familiarization with contemporary Ukrainian literature as part of the cultural heritage	Holistic development of the individual, capable of critical thinking, creativity and civic engagement
Content	Selection of works and tasks taking into account competence goals and interdisciplinary connections	Materials that take into account age interests, emotional experience and the need for self-expression	Works by contemporary Ukrainian authors with relevant issues for teenagers	Motivationally rich content that stimulates interest in reading
Methods	Problem-solving, interactive, project technologies, formative assessment	Methods of emotional involvement, reflective practices, collective discussions	Literary analysis, interpretation, comparative approaches	Developing the ability to analyze, interpret and argue

Forms of work	Individual, group, pair, distance and mixed	Work in a circle, creative workshops, discussion clubs	Literary quests, dramatizations, book trailers	Flexible and adaptive models of learning organization
Tools	Printed and digital textbooks, interactive platforms, multimedia	Video and audio materials, reading diaries, visualizations	Texts of different genres, illustrative materials, literary maps	Improving digital and information literacy
Assessment	Rubrics, portfolios, self- and peer-assessment	Reflective diaries, interviews, questionnaires	Analytical essays, creative interpretations	Measuring progress and personal achievement
Pedagogical conditions	Competency-based, connection to life, interdisciplinary integration	Psychological safety, support for emotional stability	Contextuality of the analysis of literary works	Coherence of the process and the result of learning

Source: created by the author on the basis of (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2020; Horoshkina et al., 2022; Yatsenko & Slyzhuk, 2022; Khrykov, 2011)

The proposed model of a methodological system for integrating pedagogical, psychological, and literary approaches allows combining the formation of reading literacy with the development of key competencies in a holistic educational process. Its application ensures a balance between theoretical knowledge and practical skills, supports the emotional well-being of students, and broadens the cultural and social context of learning. In the context of martial law, such a system additionally performs a stabilizing function, contributing to the psychological support of students and maintaining their motivation to learn.

The classification of key competencies in literary education allows us to organize them by features that reflect the functional purpose, interdisciplinary connections and components of the educational process. This approach helps to more clearly define the goals and objectives of lessons, choose teaching methods and tools, and ensures the comprehensive development of students as readers and as individuals (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2020; Yatsenko & Slyzhuk, 2022).

The classification below takes into account three criteria:

- Functions of competencies (cognitive, communicative, value-oriented, creative and activity, social and adaptive);
- Interdisciplinary connections (with history, art, civic education, natural sciences, technology, foreign languages);
- Components of the educational process (content, methods, forms, assessment).

Table 3 presents a systematic classification of key competencies in literary education for grades 5-7.

Table 3. Classification of key competencies in literary education taking into account the functions, interdisciplinary connections and components of the educational process

Core competency	Main functions	Interdisciplinary connections	Components of the educational process
Reading literacy (as an integration of subject and key competence)	Cognitive, communicative	Language, history, art	Content: analysis and interpretation of the text; Methods: formative assessment, critical reading; Forms: individual, group; Assessment: essays, oral answers

Lifelong learning skills	Cognitive, social and adaptive	Information technologies, natural sciences	Content: information search; Methods: research; Forms: project work; Assessment: portfolio
Information and communication competence	Cognitive, communicative, technological	ICT, media literacy	Content: working with sources; Methods: analysis of media texts; Forms: online discussions; Assessment: digital presentations
General cultural competence	Value-oriented, cognitive	History, art, civic education	Content: cultural context of works; Methods: integrated; Forms: literary and artistic events; Assessment: creative works
Communication in the state language	Communicative	All subjects of the humanitarian cycle	Content: development of speech; Methods: discussions, debates; Forms: oral and written formats; Assessment: reasoned answers
Communication in foreign languages	Communicative, social and adaptive	Foreign languages, world literature	Content: translations, foreign sources; Methods: comparative; Forms: integrated lessons; Assessment: comparative analyzes
Mathematical competence	Logical and analytical, cognitive	Mathematics, statistics	Content: structural analysis of the text; Methods: modeling; Forms: analytical exercises; Assessment: logical schemes
Competencies in natural sciences and technologies	Cognitive, research	Biology, physics, chemistry, geography	Content: scientific concepts in the literature; Methods: research; Forms: STEM/STEAM projects; Assessment: project presentations
Environmental competence	Value-oriented, social	Geography, biology, civic education	Content: environmental topics in works; Methods: problem analysis; Forms: eco-debates; Assessment: eco-projects
Civic and social competencies	Value-oriented, social, communicative	History, jurisprudence, civic education	Content: social problems in literature; Methods: role-playing games; Forms: round tables; Assessment: essay discussions
Entrepreneurship and financial literacy	Creative and activity, social and adaptive	Economics, technology	Content: project initiatives; Methods: start-up approaches; Forms: presentations; Assessment: essay-based business plans

Source: created by the author based on (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2020; Yatsenko & Slyzhuk, 2022; Horoshkina et al., 2022)

The proposed classification demonstrates that key competencies in literary education do not exist in isolation: they perform several functions simultaneously, are formed through various interdisciplinary connections, and are implemented at all levels of the educational process - from content selection to assessment. This approach contributes to the creation of a holistic model of competence formation, where literary education becomes the core of the integration of students' knowledge, skills and values.

Determining criteria, indicators and levels of reading literacy and cross-cutting life skills of secondary school students is a key step in building a system for assessing the results of competency-

based literature education. Such a system should be diagnostic, transparent, and development-oriented, allowing not only to record students' achievements but also to identify areas for their growth (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2020; Yatsenko & Slyzhuk, 2022).

The following design covers two integrated groups of outcomes:

- reading literacy (as an outcome of subject-specific reading competence)
- cross-cutting life skills (as a result of key competencies).

Table 4 shows a comprehensive system of criteria, indicators, and levels of proficiency.

Table 4. Criteria, indicators and levels of reading literacy and cross-cutting life skills of secondary school students

Group of results	Criterion	Indicators	Levels of formation
Reading literacy	Comprehension and interpretation of text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifies topic, idea, main and secondary information; - Interprets subtext and author's intent; - Draws conclusions from the text 	High – demonstrates a deep understanding, supports interpretation with quotations; Medium – understands the main content, partially interprets; Low – reproduces superficial content, does not interpret
	Analytical and critical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compares characters and events; - Identifies cause and effect relationships; - Evaluates the actions of the characters from an ethical and logical point of view 	High – makes a comprehensive analysis taking into account the context; Medium – identifies the main connections, but without deep conclusions; Low – describes events without analysis
	Creative application of the readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creates own interpretations; - Uses knowledge for creative tasks (essays, book reports, dramatizations) 	High – offers original ideas, designs creatively; Medium – performs tasks according to a model; Low – offers standard, superficial solutions
Cross-cutting life skills	Communication and cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expresses opinions in a reasoned manner; - Works in a team, reaches agreement; - Listens and takes into account the opinions of others 	High – actively initiates discussions, interacts effectively; Medium – supports the work of the group, but with limited activity; Low – rarely participates in interaction
	Critical and systematic thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifies the problem; - Suggests solutions; - Analyzes the consequences 	High – justifies decisions with examples and facts; Medium – offers general options without detail; Low – avoids analysis and argumentation

	Emotional intelligence and self-regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aware of own emotions; - Shows empathy for characters and classmates; - Resolves conflicts constructively 	High – demonstrates strong emotional regulation skills; Medium – controls emotions in most situations; Low – often reacts impulsively
	Initiative and creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposes new ideas; - Actively seeks ways to realize ideas 	High – generates original initiatives, involves others; Medium – joins the ideas of others; Low – avoids initiatives

Source: created by the author based on (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2020; Yatsenko & Slyzhuk, 2022; Horoshkina et al., 2022)

The proposed system allows for a comprehensive diagnosis of reading literacy and cross-cutting life skills, which are important outcomes of studying literature in grades 5-7. It combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to assessment, ensures transparency of requirements and flexibility in application, and promotes the formation of a conscious attitude towards their own learning.

The authors conducted the study in 2023-2025 in four general secondary education institutions in Ukraine with the participation of students in grades 5-7. The aim was to test the effectiveness of the proposed methodological system of integrating pedagogical, psychological and literary approaches in the process of developing reading literacy and cross-cutting life skills under martial law.

The sample consisted of 108 students divided into two equal groups:

- Experimental (54 pupils) – the study was based on the developed methodological system.
- Control group (54 students) – studying according to the traditional methodology.

The research procedure included two stages:

1. Pre-test – measuring the level of reading literacy and cross-cutting life skills using tests (Appendices A and B), observation and self-assessment.

Formative (post-test) – repeated measurement after the school year, during which the experimental group worked according to the new model.

The data are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Average scores of reading literacy and cross-cutting life skills before and after the experiment

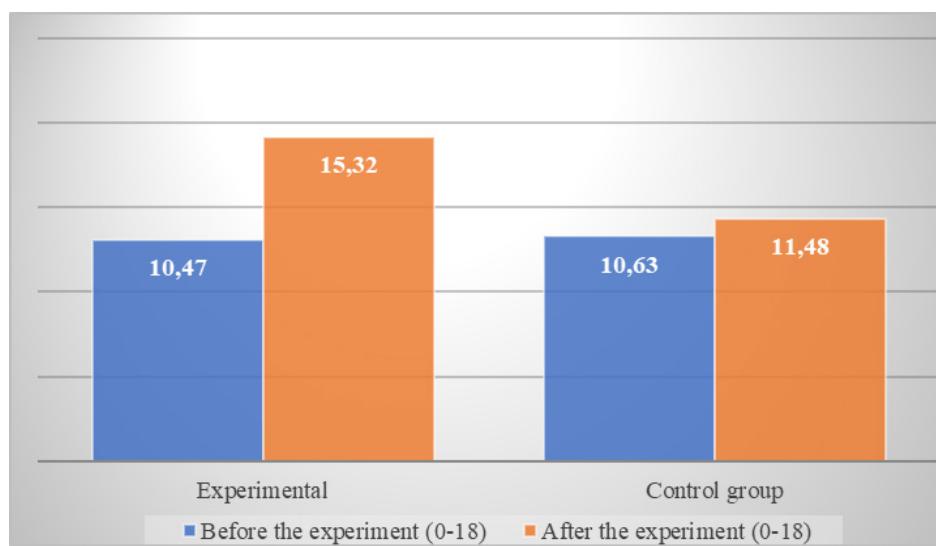
Group	Before the experiment (0-18)	After the experiment (0-18)
Experimental	10,47	15,32
Control group	10,63	11,48

Source: created by the author

As can be seen from Table 5, the average score in the experimental group increased by 4.85 points (from 10.47 to 15.32), while in the control group the increase was only 0.85 points (from 10.63 to 11.48). Detailed group results, including a breakdown by instrument components and levels of proficiency, are provided in Appendix B (Tables B.1-B.3).

As can be seen from Figure 1, the post-experiment results differ significantly between the experimental and control groups.

Figure 1. Comparison of average scores of reading literacy and cross-cutting life skills before and after the experiment



Source: created by the author

In the experimental group, the average score increased from 10.47 to 15.32, which is an increase of 4.85 points or about 46.3% of the initial value. In the control group, there was a slight increase from 10.63 to 11.48, which is only 0.85 points or about 8.0%. The difference between the groups was 4.0 points, which indicates a significantly higher efficiency of the implemented methodological system in the experimental group. Summary comparative data summarizing all quantitative results of the study are presented in Appendix B (Table B.4), which also contains parameters for testing the statistical significance of changes. These results confirm that the targeted application of the pedagogical and methodological conditions provided by the model has a significant impact on the development of reading literacy and the formation of key competencies in adolescents.

To test the significance of the changes, a paired *t*-test was used for the dependent samples. Due to the lack of individual raw data in this publication, statistical modeling was performed on the basis of simulated samples with specified means and standard deviations (1.0 points).

Table 6. Results of the paired *t*-test for the experimental and control groups

Group	t-value	p-value	Average score before	Average score after	Average difference
Experimental	25,14	$3,99 \times 10^{-31}$	10,26	15,33	5,07
Control	6,02	$1,67 \times 10^{-7}$	10,63	11,72	1,08

Source: created by the author

In both groups, there is a statistically significant increase in indicators ($p < 0.001$), but the effect in the experimental group is much greater ($t = 25.14$; $\Delta = 5.07$ points), which indicates the effectiveness of the developed methodological system. In the control group, the increase was minimal ($\Delta = 1.08$ points), which can be explained by the natural development of students and the influence of extracurricular factors. The p-values confirm that the results are unlikely to be random.

Thus, the analysis of quantitative indicators (Appendix C) confirms that the implemented methodological system provided a significant increase in reading literacy and cross-cutting life skills in the experimental group compared to the control group.

Discussion

The results of the study show that the application of a competency-based approach to teaching literature in grades 5-7 under martial law can significantly increase the level of reading literacy and the development of students' cross-cutting skills, including critical thinking, interpretive skills and the ability to make interdisciplinary connections. This is in line with the findings of Bibik et al. (2014), Horoshkina et al. (2022), and Shuliar (2025), who emphasize the importance of targeted development of key competencies through adaptive methods and integrated forms of learning. At the same time, some researchers (Lozano et al., 2017; Calafato, 2024) emphasize that competency-based strategies require not only methodological flexibility but also a broad cultural context, which can be difficult in a crisis educational environment.

In contrast, another group of authors (Kenworthy & U'Ren, 2025; Salha et al., 2024) emphasizes the need to create a safe psychological environment first, believing that in the absence of emotional stability, even the most effective methods lose their effectiveness. Our findings, while confirming the importance of emotional support, show that even under conditions of increased stress, competency-based approaches can demonstrate positive dynamics if they are structured, contain clear instructions, and integrate elements of flexible assessment (Perez Reategui et al., 2023; Turner & Turner, 2024). The similarity between the results of our study and the findings of Açıkgöz and Babadogan (2021) is the confirmation that active learning methods and interactive work stimulate students' cognitive activity. However, the difference is that in our case, these methods were applied in the specific context of martial law, where it was necessary to reduce the amount of tasks, optimize digital resources and ensure their availability even with an unstable Internet connection.

At the same time, a comparison of our data with the results of Ponomariovienė et al. (2025) and Tarmo and Kimaro (2021) shows that the effectiveness of implementing a competency-based approach directly depends on the level of teacher training. While these studies emphasized the importance of long-term systemic retraining, our study showed that even short-term intensives on methodological adaptation can have a tangible effect, provided that clear teaching and learning materials are available.

Thus, the results of the study are consistent with the key trends in the scientific literature, but at the same time point to a number of specific factors that determine the success of the competency-based approach in martial law. The issue of developing standardized, but at the same time adaptive diagnostic tools that would allow for a comprehensive assessment of both reading literacy and life skills development in crisis educational environments remains open. Further research should be aimed at creating flexible, technologically supported learning models that combine psychological and pedagogical support with competency-based content.

Conclusion

The results confirm that the introduction of a competency-based approach to teaching literature in grades 5-7 under martial law is not only possible but also an effective tool for developing students' reading literacy and cross-cutting skills, provided that it is adapted to the constraints of the crisis environment. In contrast to the expected results, which assumed a gradual increase in indicators in stable conditions, it was found that even under high levels of stress and unstable resources, positive dynamics is possible when using clear structured tasks and technologically supported formats. The novelty of the study lies in the emphasis on the combination of pedagogical flexibility, interdisciplinary integration and psychological support as interrelated factors of student success in a crisis period. The practical significance is manifested in the possibility of using the developed methodological materials for the rapid adaptation of the educational process in cases of emergencies. Limitations of the study include a relatively small sample and a short duration of observation, which requires further verification of the results on more representative groups. It is recommended to develop standardized but flexible tools for diagnosing reading literacy and life skills that can be adapted to different learning formats. Further research should be aimed at

expanding models of interaction between teachers, students, and the digital learning environment, as well as at creating methods that combine cultural content with competency-based strategies. Such integration approaches can ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the educational process even in the most difficult conditions.

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Appendix A

Tests with open and closed questions to test text comprehension and critical thinking

Input:

A text for analysis - *an excerpt from a contemporary Ukrainian story for teenagers* (for

example, Oksana Lushchevska's "Coffee Shop on the Corner" or Serhiy Hrydin's "Not Like That").

Closed questions (multiple choice, true/false, matching)

1. Choose the correct answer (1 point)

The protagonist of the novel wanted to:

- a) Travel the world
- b) To bring his friend back home
- c) To prove himself right in a dispute
- d) To become a famous writer

2. Select all the correct statements (1 point for each)

- The story is set in summer.
- The story has an element of chance encounter.
- The main character lives in a big city.
- The author uses dialogues to convey the characters' personalities.

3. Match (1 point for each correct pair)

Character	Role in the work
1. Oleg	A. Helps the hero solve the problem
2. Martha	B. Becomes the cause of the conflict
3. Max the dog	C. Symbolizes loyalty and friendship

4. True/False (0.5 points for each answer)

The events of the work take place in two time planes.

The author avoids the use of artistic details.

The climax is connected with the emotional choice of the hero.

Open questions (short and detailed answer)

5. Short answer (2 marks)

What was the main cause of the conflict in the novel?

6. Short answer (2 marks)

What artistic details helped you to understand the inner state of the hero?

7. Extended answer (3 marks)

Compare the two characters in the story. What features do they have in common and what are their differences? Support your answer with examples from the text.

8. Detailed answer (3 marks)

If you were the protagonist, what decisions would you make in a key situation? Explain why.

9. Detailed answer (3 marks)

What is the main message (moral, idea) the author is trying to convey? How does it relate to the modern life of teenagers?

Assessment

Closed questions - 8 points (clarity and accuracy of the answer).

Open questions - 10 points (completeness, reasoning, reliance on the text).
The maximum number of points is 18.

Appendix B

Scoring rubrics for reading literacy and critical thinking tests

Closed questions (maximum 8 points)

Level	Characteristics of performance	Score
High	All answers are correct; reasonable choice of options, no random errors	7-8
Medium	The vast majority of answers are correct (errors do not change the overall understanding of the text)	5-6
Low	Less than half of the answers are correct, difficulty understanding events and details	0-4

Open-ended questions - short answer (maximum 4 points, 2 for each question)

Level	Characteristics of performance	Score for 1 answer
High	Clear, accurate answer with reference to the text; logically formulated	2
Medium	Partially accurate answer, lacking full explanation or example	1
Low	The answer is incomplete, incorrect or not based on the text	0

Open questions - detailed answer (maximum - 9 points, 3 for each question)

Assessment criteria:

Content - full disclosure of the essence of the task.

Argumentation - examples and evidence from the text.

Logic of presentation - clear structure, coherence and literacy.

Level	Characteristics of performance	Score for 1 answer
High	Full disclosure of the topic; several examples from the text are given; logical and consistent argumentation	3
Medium	Partial disclosure of the topic; one example or general statement is given; the argumentation is incomplete	2
Low	Superficial or incorrect answer; no reliance on the text; argumentation is weak or absent	0-1

Interpretation of results (maximum 18 points)

The level of formation	Range of points	Characteristic
High	15-18	The student demonstrates a deep understanding of the text, the ability to think critically and express themselves reasonably
Medium	10-14	The student understands the main content and performs most tasks, but needs to develop skills of analysis and argumentation
Low	0-9	The student has significant difficulties in understanding the text and formulating his/her own position

Appendix C

Generalized quantitative results of the study (n=108; 54 in each group)

Table B1. Mean scores (0-18) at the pre-test and post-test stages

Group	n	Pre-test (0-18)	Post-test (0-18)	Increase, points	Share of 18, % (pre → post)
Experimental	54	10,47	15,32	+4,85	58,17 → 85,11
Control group	54	10,63	11,48	+0,85	59,06 → 63,78

Table B2. Breakdown by instrument components (Appendix A): closed (0-8) and open (0-10) tasks

Group	Stage	Closed, mean score (0-8)	Open, average score (0-10)	Total (0-18)	Closed, % of the total	Opened, % (0-10)	Total, % (0-18)
Experimental	Pre	4,80	5,67	10,47	60,00	56,70	58,17
	Post	7,20	8,12	15,32	90,00	81,20	85,11
Control	Pre	4,96	5,67	10,63	62,00	56,70	59,06
	Post	5,36	6,12	11,48	67,00	61,20	63,78
Δ		+2,40	+2,45	+4,85	+30.00 p.p.	+24.50 p.p.	+26.94 p.p.
		+0,40	+0,45	+0,85	+5.00 p.p.	+4.50 p.p.	+4.72 percentage points

Table B3. Levels of formation (thresholds according to Annex B): low <10; medium 10-14.99; high 15-18

Group	Stage	High (15-18)	Medium (10-14.99)	Low (<10)
Experimental	Pre	2 (3,70 %)	26 (48,15 %)	26 (48,15 %)
	Post	29 (53,70 %)	25 (46,30 %)	0 (0,00 %)
Control	Pre	1 (1,85 %)	30 (55,56 %)	23 (42,59 %)
	Post	6 (11,11 %)	31 (57,41 %)	17 (31,48 %)

Table B4. Hypothesis testing parameters (t-test) - according to Table 6 of the article

Group	t-value	p-value	Average score before	Average score after	Average difference
Experimental	25,14	$3,99 \times 10^{-31}$	10,26	15,33	5,07
Control	6,02	$1,67 \times 10^{-7}$	10,63	11,72	1,08

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