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THE ROLE OF THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK IN DEVELOPING LANGUAGE TEACHERS' RESEARCH COMPETENCE: INTEGRATION OF ISCED, ISCO AND THE CEFR

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Abstract. Research activity should begin not merely with the selection of a title, but with the formulation of a research concept that explains why a problem deserves investigation, where it is located in the education system, which professional function it affects, what communicative capability is required, and what educational or human-capital value may result. This article examines the role of conceptualization in developing research competence among language teachers. It uses a targeted scoping review and conceptual synthesis of recent scholarship (2021–2026) from international, post-Soviet/Central Asian, and Uzbek contexts, complemented by foundational international frameworks and the author's earlier published work on CEFR implementation, teacher competence, and ISCED-oriented professional development. The analysis identifies four recurring issues: confusion between research topic and research concept; dependence of novice researchers on supervisor-generated topics; a research-practice gap in language teacher education; and persistent reduction of CEFR to certification or examination levels rather than a broader framework for communicative action. The article proposes an integrated ISCED–ISCO–CEFR conceptual model. ISCED locates the educational level and expected learning outcomes; ISCO clarifies occupational tasks, skill level, and employability; CEFR describes the communicative capability needed to function as a social agent in academic and professional environments. Their intersection supports a five-question concept protocol that precedes research questions and methodology. The paper argues that conceptual competence is a foundational component of research competence: a research title identifies what is studied, whereas a research concept explains why the study should exist and what change it is intended to produce.

Keywords: research concept; research competence; language teachers; CEFR; ISCED; ISCO; communicative competence; employability; human capital; teacher research.

TIL O‘QITUVCHILARINING TADQIQOTCHILIK KOMPETENSIYASINI RIVOJLANTIRISHDA TADQIQOT KONSEPSIYASINING O‘RNI: ISCED, ISCO VA CEFR INTEGRATSIYASI

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Annotatsiya. Ilmiy tadqiqot faoliyati faqat mavzu tanlashdan emas, balki muammo nima uchun o‘rganilishi lozimligini, u ta’lim tizimining qaysi bosqichida joylashganini, qaysi kasbiy funksiyaga ta’sir qilishini, qanday kommunikativ salohiyat zarurligini hamda ta’lim va inson kapitaliga qanday qiymat yaratishini izohlovchi tadqiqot konsepsiyasini shakllantirishdan boshlanishi kerak. Mazkur maqolada til o‘qituvchilarida tadqiqotchilik kompetensiyasini rivojlantirishda konseptuallashtirishning roli tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot 2021–2026-yillardagi xalqaro, postsovet/Markaziy Osiyo va O‘zbekiston ilmiy manbalarining maqsadli skoping sharhi va konseptual sinteziga, shuningdek, CEFRni tatbiq etish, pedagog kasbiy kompetensiyasi va ISCEDga yo‘naltirilgan kasbiy rivojlanish bo‘yicha muallifning avvalgi nashrlariga tayangan. Tahlil to‘rtta asosiy muammoni ko‘rsatdi: tadqiqot mavzusi bilan tadqiqot konsepsiyasining chalkashishi; yosh tadqiqotchilarning ilmiy rahbar tomonidan berilgan mavzuga haddan tashqari bog‘lanishi; til ta’limida tadqiqot va amaliyot o‘rtasidagi uzilish; CEFRning keng kommunikativ ramka emas, asosan sertifikat yoki imtihon darajasi sifatida tor talqin qilinishi. Maqolada ISCED–ISCO–CEFR integrativ modeli taklif qilinadi. ISCED ta’lim bosqichi va kutilayotgan natijalarni, ISCO kasbiy vazifalar, malaka darajasi va bandlikni, CEFR esa akademik va kasbiy muhitda ijtimoiy agent sifatida faoliyat yuritish uchun zarur kommunikativ qobiliyatni aniqlashga xizmat qiladi. Ularning kesishmasi tadqiqot savoli va metodologiyasidan oldin qo‘llanadigan besh savolli konsept protokolini yaratadi. Maqola konseptual kompetensiyani tadqiqotchilik kompetensiyasining poydevori sifatida talqin qiladi: tadqiqot nomi nimani o‘rganishni ko‘rsatsa, tadqiqot konsepsiyasi nima uchun ushbu tadqiqot mavjud bo‘lishi kerakligini va qanday o‘zgarishga xizmat qilishini tushuntiradi.

Kalit so‘zlar: tadqiqot konsepsiyasi; tadqiqotchilik kompetensiyasi; til o‘qituvchisi; CEFR; ISCED; ISCO; kommunikativ kompetensiya; bandlik; inson kapitali; pedagogik tadqiqot.

Introduction

In educational research, a title may be technically correct, topical, and even attractive while the conceptual reason for the study remains unclear. This distinction becomes especially important in doctoral and teacher research, where novice researchers may be able to state an object, subject, hypothesis, or set of methods but may struggle to explain the central concept that connects the real problem, the knowledge gap, the intended educational change, and the wider professional or social value of the study. Recent scholarship confirms that conceptual and theoretical frameworks remain difficult threshold concepts for doctoral researchers. Erdoğan (2023), analysing 87 doctoral theses in physics education, found continuing inconsistency in the use of theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Similarly, recent methodological scholarship notes that novice researchers frequently experience confusion about what a conceptual framework is and how it differs from a theoretical framework. These difficulties matter because conceptual framing is not an ornamental section of a thesis: it gives intellectual direction to the research problem, questions, design, interpretation, and contribution.

A second difficulty concerns ownership of the research idea. Gruber and Crispeels (2024), in a qualitative study of PhD students, demonstrated the strong influence of supervisors, existing project goals, networks, and prior laboratory work on idea generation. Such influence is not inherently negative: supervision is essential to doctoral development. The problem arises when the researcher receives a topic without reconstructing its conceptual logic independently. A supervisor-generated title can be an appropriate starting point, but it should not remain the researcher's only explanation for why the study exists. Doctoral progression therefore requires movement from borrowed topic to owned concept, and from procedural compliance to intellectual autonomy.

This problem is highly relevant to language education. Teacher research is increasingly recognised as a means of linking professional development with classroom improvement, yet the research-practice nexus remains fragile. Li and Li's (2025) systematic review of 54 studies in language teacher education found persistent disconnection between research and teaching and emphasised the need for ecological conditions that support practitioner-researcher collaboration. Pinninti (2025) showed that English language teachers can develop action-research competence when they learn to identify a contextual problem, formulate a research question, collect and interpret evidence, design action, evaluate change, and disseminate findings. In Kazakhstan, Mombekova (2024) conceptualised future foreign-

language teachers' research competence through motivational-personal, cognitive, behavioural, constructive-designing, transmissive, and reflective-evaluative components. Goodman et al. (2025) likewise showed that teacher educators in Kazakhstan can learn to value action research, although practical constraints and limited self-efficacy may hinder sustained use. These studies demonstrate that research competence is developable; however, they leave room for a more explicit account of the conceptual competence that should precede method selection.

The Uzbek context adds a second conceptual challenge: the interpretation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Uzbekistan's 2012 Presidential Resolution No. PQ-1875 initiated a major reform of foreign-language education, followed by CEFR-oriented standards and national certification mechanisms. In the author's earlier work, CEFR was treated as a reference architecture for aligning learning, teaching, assessment, educational levels, and real-life language use, rather than as a single examination. The author's 2017 monograph emphasised the integration of foreign-language competence with real-life needs and the transformation from knowledge-focused outcomes toward functional language use. Her 2020 professional-development model further linked international education classification, lifelong learning, teacher competence, and labour-market requirements. These earlier positions are consistent with current Council of Europe guidance, which describes CEFR as much more than proficiency scales and highlights the user/learner as a social agent, mediation, plurilingualism, interaction, autonomy, and action-oriented learning.

Nevertheless, in everyday educational discourse in Uzbekistan, the expressions "CEFR certificate", "IELTS", and "TOEFL" are still sometimes treated as if they represented competing examination systems of the same type. This is conceptually inaccurate. CEFR is a common reference framework for describing proficiency and supporting curriculum, teaching, assessment, and recognition of qualifications; IELTS, TOEFL, Cambridge examinations, TestDaF, DELF/DALF, HSK, TOPIK, and other systems are specific examinations or certification systems with their own score structures. Uzbekistan's current policy itself reflects this distinction by recognising a national foreign-language certificate alongside multiple international certificates and mapping acceptable results to proficiency requirements such as B2. The distinction is not terminological only: when CEFR is reduced to an examination label, teachers may focus on score acquisition or grammar coverage rather than on the communicative performance, mediation, autonomy, and authentic academic/professional participation that the framework is intended to support.

This article therefore addresses two connected questions. First, what role does a clearly formulated research concept play in the development of research competence among language teachers? Second, how can the international classifications ISCED, ISCO, and CEFR be integrated to help language-teacher researchers connect an educational problem with level, professional function, communicative capability, employability, and human-capital impact? The study proposes that conceptual competence should be treated as a foundational component of research competence and offers a practical concept protocol for language-teacher research.

Methods

Research design

The study employed a targeted scoping literature review combined with conceptual synthesis. The purpose was not to produce a statistically exhaustive meta-analysis, but to identify recent patterns in scholarship on conceptual framing, doctoral idea formation, teacher research competence, language-teacher research, and CEFR-oriented communicative practice, and then to synthesise these patterns with internationally recognised education, occupation, and language frameworks. This design is appropriate for a concept-building article in which heterogeneous sources—empirical studies, systematic reviews, methodological articles, international standards, policy documents, and earlier published conceptual work—must be compared to generate an integrated model.

Search scope and source groups

The primary publication window was between 2021 and September 2026. Searches prioritised peer-reviewed and openly accessible sources found through ERIC, ScienceDirect/Elsevier, Wiley, Springer-linked repositories, SciELO, Taylor & Francis, national university repositories, and Uzbek academic journal portals. Search combinations included research concept, conceptual framework, doctoral research, idea generation, supervisor influence, research competence, teacher-researcher, foreign-language teacher, language teacher research, CEFR, communicative competence, action research, ISCED, ISCO, employability, and human capital. To preserve regional relevance, the review was organised into three contextual layers: (a) international scholarship; (b) post-Soviet/Central Asian scholarship, particularly Kazakhstan and Russia; and (c) Uzbekistan. Foundational sources older than five years were included only where necessary to define CEFR, ISCED, ISCO, Uzbekistan's 2012 reform trajectory, or the author's previously published conceptual position.

Inclusion and analytical procedure

Sources were included when they contributed directly to one or more analytical categories: (1) conceptual or theoretical framing in research; (2) doctoral/novice researcher idea formation and supervision; (3) research competence or teacher research; (4) language-teacher professional development; (5) CEFR as a framework for communicative learning, teaching, and assessment; (6) ISCED as a classification of education programmes and qualifications; or (7) ISCO as a classification of occupations based on tasks, skill level, and skill specialisation. The sources were read comparatively and coded conceptually rather than statistically. The synthesis asked what each framework contributes to the formulation of a meaningful research concept and where current scholarship leaves an unresolved conceptual gap.

Positionality and practice-informed observation

The author's professional experience in language-education reform, doctoral evaluation, teacher development, joint educational programmes, and academic mobility informed the problem identification. These observations were not treated as empirical data and no statistical claims are made from them. They were used only to identify practice-relevant questions and to test whether the conceptual model could explain recurring situations, such as a doctoral candidate's inability to articulate the concept behind a dissertation topic or a Master's-level student's difficulty functioning communicatively in a host academic environment despite formal educational progression. This distinction between professional observation and research evidence is maintained throughout the Discussion.

Results

Theme 1: Conceptual framing is a research competence, not a formatting requirement

The first theme is that conceptual framing performs a substantive intellectual function. Erdoğan (2023) showed that even doctoral theses may use theoretical and conceptual frameworks without clearly distinguishing their roles. Recent methodological analysis similarly describes these notions as persistent sources of confusion for novice researchers. A conceptual framework organises relationships among the central constructs of a study and helps align the research problem, questions, evidence, interpretation, and contribution. Thus, the ability to formulate a concept should be considered part of research competence rather than merely part of thesis formatting.

The literature also shows that idea generation is socially situated. Gruber and Crispeels (2024) found that PhD students' ideas develop through

interaction with supervisors, networks, project goals, and previous research. Their findings support a developmental view: novice researchers may legitimately begin within a supervisor's conceptual space, but doctoral education should move them toward increasing autonomy. The present synthesis therefore distinguishes three stages: topic reception, conceptual reconstruction, and independent research ownership. A topic received from a supervisor becomes academically meaningful only when the researcher can explain the problem mechanism, relevant constructs, knowledge gap, intended beneficiaries, and expected contribution in his or her own analytical language.

Theme 2: Language-teacher research competence is increasingly action-oriented, but concept formation remains under-specified

Recent language-teacher research focuses strongly on reflective inquiry, classroom problem-solving, action research, and the ability to connect evidence with professional improvement. Pinninti (2025) demonstrated a developmental sequence in which teachers critically examined their contexts, selected research questions, gathered and interpreted evidence, designed and evaluated actions, and shared their findings. Gilliland et al. (2023) emphasised that teacher research is systematically situated within teachers' own pedagogical contexts and raises distinctive ethical questions because teachers occupy dual roles as practitioners and researchers. Li and Li (2025) concluded that the teaching-research nexus depends not only on individual practitioner dispositions but also on institutional and collaborative conditions.

The Central Asian evidence is consistent with this direction. Mombekova (2024) proposed a multidimensional model of research competence for future foreign-language teachers and later highlighted methodological, creative, and independent research skills. Goodman et al. (2025), working with teacher educators from five Kazakhstani institutions, found that action-research professional development increased perceived value of inquiry but also revealed practical constraints and developing self-efficacy. In Russia, Zhang and Shcheglova (2021) described linguistic research competence through motivational, informational, cognitive-communicative, activity-based, reflective, creative, and personal components. Across these studies, research competence is broad and developmental. However, explicit instruction in how to construct the central concept that connects the educational problem to the professional and social purpose of research is less visible.

Uzbek research also points to a readiness gap. Sarimsakova (2025) reported a significant gap between EFL teachers' beliefs about the importance of

research competence and their actual engagement in research activities, arguing for stronger continuing professional development in research knowledge and skills. Nabikhonova (2025) linked project-based learning with independent inquiry, critical thinking, and research readiness among pre-service English teachers. Azizov (2023) documented the shift in Uzbekistan after 2012 from grammar-translation-oriented expectations toward CEFR-informed communicative, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and strategic competences. Together, these studies suggest that Uzbekistan is not lacking discourse on research competence or communicative competence; rather, a missing bridge is the explicit conceptual logic that connects a real educational problem to research design and eventual professional impact.

Theme 3: CEFR is a common reference framework, not a competing examination

The third finding concerns conceptual accuracy in language education. The Council of Europe describes CEFR as a framework that supports the establishment of learning and teaching objectives, curriculum review, material design, recognition of qualifications, and educational and occupational mobility. The Companion Volume extends the framework through mediation, plurilingual/pluricultural competence, online interaction, phonological competence, and a stronger action-oriented view of the learner as a social agent. In other words, CEFR is a common language for describing communicative development across languages and contexts; it is not itself equivalent to IELTS, TOEFL, HSK, TOPIK, DELF/DALF, TestDaF, or other examination systems.

This distinction was already explicit in the author's earlier CEFR-oriented materials. The author's handbook and monograph differentiated a reference framework of performance levels from tests designed for particular assessment purposes and argued that grammar should support purposeful language use rather than become the primary curriculum objective. The same materials emphasised authentic language use, "can do" outcomes, integration of language with students' specialities, and collaboration between language and content teachers. The 2017 DSc research further linked CEFR implementation with educational stages, quality assurance, teacher competence, and the integration of foreign language into specialised learning. These earlier positions are relevant because current Uzbek policy still recognises both national foreign-language certificates and multiple international certificates, indicating that proficiency frameworks and test instruments are conceptually distinct even when their results are mapped for admissions or certification purposes.

The practical consequence of misunderstanding CEFR is significant. When the framework is interpreted mainly as a certificate label, teaching may become test-driven or grammar-dominant. Yet the CEFR's C1 descriptor, for example, concerns flexible and effective language use for social, academic, and professional purposes, not isolated knowledge about grammar. This matters especially in higher education and mobility settings. A student may progress to Master's-level education while lacking the communicative repertoire necessary to participate fully in academic interaction, mediation, teamwork, research discussion, or everyday host-environment communication. Formal educational level and communicative capability must therefore be treated as related but non-equivalent dimensions.

Theme 4: ISCED, ISCO, and CEFR provide three complementary lenses for research concept formation

The final theme emerged from integrating international classifications. ISCED provides a globally agreed architecture for categorising education programmes and qualifications and supports comparison across national systems. It helps a researcher locate a problem at a specific educational stage and ask what learning outcomes should reasonably be expected at that level. ISCO, by contrast, classifies occupations according to the tasks and duties of jobs, skill level, and skill specialisation. It therefore helps connect education to actual professional functions and employability. CEFR contributes a third dimension: the communicative activities, strategies, and competences needed for the learner or graduate to act effectively in real-world academic, social, and professional contexts.

These frameworks should not be mechanically merged into a single classification. Their value lies in triangulation. ISCED answers where the learner is positioned educationally; ISCO asks what tasks and responsibilities the future professional must perform; CEFR asks what communicative capability is needed to perform and participate successfully. Their intersection can expose gaps that remain invisible when only one framework is used. For example, a Master's student may occupy an advanced ISCED level but still require development in CEFR-mediated academic interaction; a language graduate may possess high general proficiency but lack the specialised discourse needed for an ISCO-defined professional function; a teacher may have formal qualifications but lack the research and communicative competence required to diagnose workplace or classroom problems.

Table1
Three-lens framework for locating a research problem

Framework	Primary lens	Core question for the researcher	Research value
ISCED	Education level / qualification	At what educational level does the problem occur, and what outcomes are expected there?	Locates the problem in the education continuum.
ISCO	Occupation / tasks / skill level	Which professional function, task, or employability requirement is affected?	Links education to real professional performance.
CEFR	Communicative capability	What must the learner/graduate be able to do through language in authentic contexts?	Links language learning to social, academic, and professional action.

Proposed Concept-to-Research Protocol

The synthesis resulted in a five-question protocol that should be answered before a research title is finalised and before a methodology is selected:

1. Educational location (ISCED): At what educational level or transition does the problem occur, and what outcome should be expected at that level?

2. Professional function (ISCO): Which real task, role, occupational responsibility, or employability requirement is affected by the problem?

3. Communicative capability (CEFR): What must the learner, teacher, or graduate be able to understand, produce, interact about, mediate, or accomplish through language?

4. Scientific gap: What is not yet adequately explained, measured, designed, or solved in the existing literature or local practice?

5. Human-capital impact: If the problem is addressed successfully, what educational, professional, institutional, or socio-economic value should improve?

Only after these questions are answered should the researcher formulate a precise title, research questions, variables or constructs, methodology, evidence strategy, and expected contribution. The proposed pathway can be summarised as: Real problem → Educational location → Professional function → Communicative capability → Knowledge gap → Research concept → Research question → Methodology → Evidence → Educational/professional impact.

Discussion

From supervisor-given topic to researcher-owned concept

The central implication of the review is that research competence should not be reduced to methodological technique. A researcher can learn how to administer a questionnaire, calculate statistics, conduct interviews, or format an IMRAD paper and still lack conceptual ownership of the study. The literature on doctoral idea generation suggests that supervision naturally shapes early research trajectories, but autonomy develops when the researcher becomes able to generate, evaluate, and justify ideas. For doctoral education, the pedagogical goal should therefore be not to eliminate supervisor influence but to transform it: supervisor-generated direction should lead to researcher-owned conceptual reasoning.

This has direct consequences for doctoral seminars and defence preparation. Instead of asking only for the title, object, subject, methods, and novelty, supervisors and scientific councils can ask candidates to explain the concept in plain but academically precise terms: What problem exists? For whom? At which level? Why has existing knowledge not solved it? What professional function is affected? What evidence would demonstrate improvement? These questions test whether the researcher understands the study as an intellectual system rather than as a sequence of formal dissertation components.

Reframing CEFR in Uzbekistan: from “exam level” to communicative architecture

The second implication is specific to language education. Uzbekistan has more than a decade of CEFR-oriented reform, and current policy recognises national and international language certificates in relation to

proficiency requirements. Yet policy adoption does not automatically produce conceptual understanding. The continued everyday use of "CEFR" as shorthand for a national exam can obscure the framework's broader purpose. A national examination can be CEFR-aligned; it does not become "the CEFR". IELTS and TOEFL can be related to CEFR levels for particular decisions; they do not become CEFR itself. This clarification is particularly important for researchers because conceptual errors at the framework level distort research questions, instruments, and interpretations.

A narrow certificate-centred understanding also risks reinforcing grammar-dominant or test-driven practice. Grammar remains essential, but within CEFR it serves communicative action. The author's earlier handbook already argued that grammar should be taught as a resource for purposeful performance and that assessment should examine what learners can do in authentic contexts. Azizov's (2023) analysis similarly describes Uzbekistan's shift from grammar-translation traditions toward broader communicative competences. Current CEFR guidance further foregrounds mediation, social agency, plurilingualism, interaction, and collaboration. For language-teacher researchers, these constructs provide rich sources of authentic research concepts: how students mediate technical information, participate in academic discussion, collaborate across languages, communicate within professional genres, or transfer language competence into workplace performance.

Educational level does not guarantee communicative readiness

The ISCED–CEFR distinction is especially useful for interpreting mobility and graduate readiness. The author's recent professional observation during academic mobility in Minsk involved Master's-level students who experienced difficulty participating in ordinary and academic communication in the host environment. This observation is not presented as empirical evidence and cannot support a population-level conclusion. It is, however, a meaningful practice signal: advanced formal educational status does not automatically guarantee the communicative readiness required for mobility, research collaboration, or professional participation. The appropriate response is not anecdotal judgement but a researchable question: what communicative, multilingual, and academic-language thresholds are actually required at different educational stages and for different mobility contexts?

This is where the three-lens model becomes productive. ISCED identifies the educational stage; CEFR helps specify communication requirements; ISCO helps determine the professional tasks graduates are expected to

perform. For a Master's student in linguistics, for example, the relevant language target is not simply a certificate score. It may include the ability to discuss research, mediate between languages, read disciplinary literature, present arguments, collaborate with supervisors, and interact socially in the host environment. Such outcomes can be converted into researchable constructs and authentic assessment tasks.

Employability and human capital as endpoints of language research

The inclusion of ISCO prevents language research from ending at classroom performance alone. ISCO defines occupations through tasks and duties and organises them by skill level and specialisation. This makes it possible to ask whether a learning outcome corresponds to what graduates will actually need to do. The author's 2020 ISCED-oriented professional-development work already argued that educational quality should be aligned with labour-market needs, lifelong learning, and internationally recognised competence. The present article extends this logic by adding ISCO as an explicit occupational lens and by placing the research concept at the centre of the alignment process.

This does not mean that every language study must become utilitarian or narrowly employment-driven. Language education has cultural, cognitive, civic, and humanistic purposes that exceed labour-market value. Rather, employability is one important dimension of human-capital impact, particularly in higher education, ESP, academic mobility, teacher education, and professional-language programmes. A conceptually mature study should be able to state which dimension of value it targets: communicative participation, academic progression, professional performance, inclusion, intercultural mediation, lifelong learning, or another defensible outcome.

Implications for teacher education and research training

The proposed model suggests several changes for language-teacher education. First, research-methods courses should introduce "concept formulation" before method selection and require students to produce a one-page concept map connecting problem, context, framework, beneficiaries, gap, and intended change. Second, CEFR education should distinguish framework, descriptors, curriculum alignment, and examination systems explicitly. Third, research tasks should be drawn from authentic educational and professional problems rather than from title lists alone. Fourth, teacher-researchers should be encouraged to work across disciplines with content specialists and employers when the research problem concerns specialised language use. Finally, doctoral and Master's

programmes should treat the ability to explain a research concept orally as a progression threshold alongside written proposal requirements.

These implications also support a broader shift from “research as academic obligation” to “research as structured problem solving”. Such a shift is compatible with current international work on teacher research and the teaching-research nexus, while also responding to a specific regional need: helping researchers move from reproducing established titles toward identifying real educational and socio-economic challenges that require evidence-based solutions.

Conclusion

This article argues that the research concept is a foundational but under-explicit component of research competence among language teachers. Recent international and regional scholarship shows growing attention to action research, reflective practice, research literacy, doctoral autonomy, and practitioner-researcher collaboration. At the same time, novice researchers may still struggle to distinguish topic, theoretical framework, conceptual framework, and research purpose, while supervisor influence can delay independent ownership of the research idea. In Uzbekistan, these research-development challenges intersect with a second conceptual issue: CEFR is still sometimes understood primarily as an examination label rather than as a broad reference framework for communicative learning, teaching, assessment, mediation, social agency, and mobility.

The proposed ISCED–ISCO–CEFR model addresses these gaps by locating a research problem simultaneously in education, professional activity, and communication. ISCED identifies the educational stage; ISCO clarifies occupational functions and skill expectations; CEFR specifies communicative capability in authentic contexts. Their intersection leads to a five-question Concept-to-Research Protocol that precedes title formulation and methodology. The core proposition is simple but consequential: a research title identifies what is studied; a research concept explains why the study should exist, what problem mechanism it addresses, and what educational, professional, or human-capital change it seeks to produce. Future empirical research should test the protocol with Master’s students, doctoral candidates, and practising language teachers in Uzbekistan and compare its effect on research-question quality, methodological alignment, and researcher autonomy.

Limitations

The present paper is a conceptual study based on a targeted scoping review rather than an exhaustive systematic review of all databases. The author’s

professional observations are used to motivate questions but are not analysed as empirical data. The proposed model therefore requires future testing through structured interviews, proposal analysis, intervention studies, and longitudinal tracking of researcher development. In addition, ISCED, ISCO, and CEFR were designed for different purposes and should not be treated as interchangeable classification systems; the model uses them as complementary analytical lenses.

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