



# EXPERIENCE IN DEVELOPING THE PROJECT COMPETENCE OF FUTURE ENVIRONMENT DESIGN SPECIALISTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF UKRAINE AND ABROAD

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## Abstract

*Relevance* Within the framework of European integration, the societal value of design as a vital element of the national revival of the Ukrainian state is intensifying; shifts in urban renovation standards for spaces and city infrastructure necessitate an increasing demand for qualified environment designers who possess advanced professional competence, spatial-volumetric thinking, theoretical knowledge, and practical skills; consequently, the need to identify innovative strategies for ensuring the quality of professional training for environment design specialists in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) arises, alongside incorporating their positive attributes to enhance the design education system in Ukraine.

*Purpose:* The study aims to conduct a theoretical and comparative analysis of "Environment Design" educational programmes at leading HEIs in Ukraine and abroad; furthermore, based on the findings, it identifies the specificities of practical experience in developing the project competence of future environment design specialists.

*Methods:* Theoretical analysis and synthesis were employed to investigate HEI educational programmes; a systemic-structural approach helped identify the interconnections between curricula and their educational components targeted at developing the project competence of future environment designers; finally, a comparative analysis served to distinguish specific features of professional training for these specialists in both Ukrainian and foreign HEIs, which influence their project competence development levels within the educational process.

*Results:* Based on the analysis of educational programmes (EPs) from domestic HEIs and leading global universities, the study identifies and evaluates the characteristics of project competence development; the findings reveal that the domestic model emphasises the integration of artistic disciplines with the core "Projecting" course, whereas international programmes demonstrate a deeper implementation of project-based learning principles, sustainable design, digital tools, and communication.

*Conclusions:* The development of project competence in future environment designers constitutes a dynamic process; a key distinction of foreign programmes is a higher degree of student engagement in authentic collaboration with industry and communities; for Ukrainian education, updating teaching and methodological resources and monitoring the development levels of students' project competence appears highly promising.

**Keywords:** *professional training, project activities, environment design, projecting, project competence of environment design specialists.*

**Introduction.** The contemporary world is characterised by global challenges: socio-economic and political transformations, ecology and climate change, urbanisation, and the rapid development of

digital technologies. These factors drive an increasing demand for specialists with advanced project competence, who possess profound theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and the

capacity to solve complex environment design problems.

Scholarly interest focuses on fostering a conducive educational environment and pedagogical conditions within specific higher education institutions; this interest partially highlights the content of educational programmes in general and their individual components in particular, teaching staff activities, and student project activities, where learning opportunities and tools must fully comply with contemporary requirements and the programme objectives of training specialists in the "B2 Design" field. Project-Based Learning (PBL) represents a contemporary pedagogical approach where the educational process is organised through students' execution of relevant complex projects aimed at solving real-world or practice-oriented problems, integrating knowledge, and developing critical thinking, autonomy, and teamwork skills.

**Sources.** To achieve robust conclusions regarding the state of project competence development among future environment design specialists in leading HEIs of Ukraine and abroad, the study analysed two groups of sources. The first group encompassed scholarly research by Ukrainian and foreign academics concerning educational systems in Ukraine, European countries, and the USA. Specifically, the characteristics of higher education organisation in the EU are described in the work "Educational Systems of European Union Countries: General Characteristics" by S. Sysoieva and T. Krystopchuk (2012), while the specificities of higher education organisation in the USA are detailed in the works of L. Knodel (2012). Furthermore, G. Poberezska (2005) conducted a theoretical analysis of higher education development in Europe and Ukraine in the dissertation study "Trends in Higher Education Development in Western European Countries and Ukraine". The monograph edited by V. Radkevych, "Modern Models of Vocational Education and Training in EU Countries: Comparative Experience" (2018), highlights the theoretical analysis of the problem of VET system development in EU countries. Notably, the monograph "Strategies for the Development of Educational Systems in Global Countries" by D. Kucherenko and O. Martyniuk (2011) examines educational systems worldwide

and their strategic planning. O. Fursa (2014), in the foundational work "Trends in the Development of Design Education in Ukraine", highlights the development and establishment of domestic design education in higher schools. Finally, the work "Higher Education Curriculum in the United States" (2023) provides an overview of training programmes and curricula in US higher education.

The second group of sources includes the First (Bachelor's) Level Higher Education Standard for the "022 Design" specialty, official HEI websites, and their educational programmes, curricula, and educational components. The theoretical analysis of these sources constitutes the initial stage of our research; this analysis aims to enhance academic staff awareness and inform their strategies for developing the project competence of environment design bachelors within the educational process, alongside providing advisory and methodological support via existing high-quality teaching and methodological materials.

Within the context of the research objectives, the study examined the experience of teaching staff in environment design departments at Ukrainian higher education institutions; analysed curricula, educational programmes, teaching and methodological support, lecture notes, and design department web pages; and involved attendance at semester and examination reviews of specialised disciplines, as well as the defence of coursework and qualification papers.

**The aim of the article** is to conduct a theoretical and comparative analysis of educational programmes in the "Environment Design" specialty at leading HEIs in Ukraine and abroad and to identify, based on the results obtained, the specificities of practical experience in developing the project competence of future environment design specialists.

**Methods:** theoretical analysis and generalisation – to examine HEI educational programmes; a systemic-structural approach – to identify the interconnection between educational programmes and their components aimed at developing the project competence of future environment designers; comparative analysis – to distinguish the specific characteristics of professional training for such specialists in both Ukraine and foreign HEIs that influence their level

of project competence development within the educational process.

**Results and Discussion.** Given the recognised importance of project competence and contemporary digital technologies, there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms for effectively developing knowledge, skills, and abilities in environment design bachelor's programmes within the context of different higher education systems. Notably, for Ukraine, which is currently in a phase of European integration and digital transformation, it is vital to analyse the current state with a subsequent comparison to international experience.

We define professional training as a process oriented towards cultivating the readiness of future environment designers for professional activity according to the Bachelor's educational level and the acquisition of relevant qualifications in higher education institutions. According to the Unified State Electronic Database on Education as of November 2025, professional training in the "B2 Design" specialty in Ukraine is conducted in 45 higher education institutions, 33 of which offer Bachelor's programmes in environment design (Registry of Educational Entities: Higher Education Institutions, 2025).

Recognised and authoritative higher education institutions in Ukraine include departments and units at the National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture, the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts, the Institute of Architecture and Design (IARD) of the Lviv Polytechnic National University, the Mykhailo Boichuk Kyiv State Academy of Decorative and Applied Arts and Design, the Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, the Lviv National Academy of Arts, the Salvador Dali Art Academy of Contemporary Arts, as well as other artistic, technical, and pedagogical higher education institutions in Ukraine.

This translation and editorial refinement adhere to the strict 1:1 sentence mapping and structural constraints required for high-tier journal submission. British English (UK) conventions and the "Slavic-English" filter have been applied to ensure academic rigour.

Within the professional training system for future environment designers, project activities are

implemented through semester, term, and qualification projects, grounded in constructive pedagogical interaction between the educator and learners. This process employs independent, individual, and collective forms of work, facilitating the development of practical skills and fostering the project and communicative competencies of students. Executing creative tasks and addressing project-related challenges enhances motivation for design activities and stimulates the development of socially significant personal qualities, the capacity for goal setting, the search for non-standard solutions, the activation of cognitive activity, and the cultivation of research potential, alongside the refinement of organisational skills regarding workspace management.

Project activities for future environment designers focus on developing a motivational-evaluative attitude toward professional practice, enhancing project competence, creative imagination, and spatial, artistic, and figurative thinking. The emphasis within these activities lies on the analytical study of subject-spatial design projects, the cultivation of an individual authorial style, and the advancement of the capacity for creative self-expression, reflection, self-development, and the self-assessment of professional outcomes. Orienting students toward the independent execution of professional tasks and their critical analysis enhances project competence levels, which subsequently ensures the high-quality performance of design projects.

The following section examines environment design educational programmes at leading higher education institutions in Ukraine.

The National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture (hereinafter: NAVAA) serves as one of Ukraine's premier artistic institutions, providing specialist training in environment design and architecture within the "Architecture of Buildings and Structures" educational programme. This educational programme aims to prepare highly qualified specialists capable of logical thinking, applying fundamental knowledge, and developing cutting-edge, innovative skills to solve complex specialised tasks and practical problems within the professional field of architecture and urban planning. The programme maintains a primary applied orientation and considers the current state of

the architectural sector, focusing on pertinent issues of architecture, urban planning, and the organisation of surrounding spaces. Professional training emphasises the ability to develop creative architectural solutions and the advancement of effective comprehensive skills for addressing professional challenges (NAVAA, 2025). Analysis of student qualification projects demonstrates a high level of professional training and meticulousness in selecting project themes that address a wide spectrum of contemporary societal demands.

The Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts (hereinafter: KSADA) is a leading Ukrainian artistic university with a long history and a recognised school for training environment designers. The "Environment Design" educational programme is implemented at the Faculty of Environment Design, which prepares Bachelors and Masters in the "B2 Design" specialty. Alongside other specialisations, the "Environment Design" programme builds upon the sixty-year experience of the Kharkiv State Academy of Design and the century-long history of the Kharkiv Art School. Professional training for environment designers at KSADA is comprehensive, integrating academic art education, contemporary digital technologies, practical work on authentic projects, and active participation in the country's creative life. Considerable attention is devoted to students acquiring knowledge and practical skills in designing specialised types of environments – including residential, public, and industrial spaces. The Academy ensures a high level of professional training, enabling graduates to remain competitive in both the Ukrainian and international labour markets (KSADA, 2023).

The Institute of Architecture and Design of Lviv Polytechnic National University (hereinafter: IARD) represents one of the largest and oldest centres for architectural and design training in Ukraine. The institute offers Bachelor's educational programmes in "Architecture and Urban Planning" and "Design" (including "Visual Design" and "Interior and Spatial Environment Design"). IARD curricula combine traditional artistic and architectural disciplines with modern approaches, actively integrating project-based learning methods and digital skills into the educational process. To ensure an individualised learning approach, students

are granted the opportunity to select educational blocks at the end of their second year. This significant choice enables future specialists to define their professional interests and priorities, allowing them to construct their own educational trajectory through elective subjects in the third and fourth years. Within the available elective blocks, students can choose a direction that best reveals their abilities and creative potential. Educators from various departments specialising in different spheres of multifaceted architectural and design education assist them in this process. Furthermore, the institute actively collaborates with international partners and offers several foreign programmes for study and internships, such as the Baltic University Programme, DAAD, Erasmus+, and NAWA (IARD, 2024).

The Mykhailo Boichuk Kyiv State Academy of Decorative and Applied Arts and Design (hereinafter: KSADAAD) is a premier Ukrainian artistic higher education institution that prepares specialists in decorative-applied arts and design, specifically environment designers. The Department of Environment Design within the Faculty of Design serves as the graduating department for this specialisation. The department prepares specialists capable of creative thinking and rapid adaptation to dynamic societal demands. Students undertake tasks related to the organisation of residential and industrial building environments, public spaces in modern urban settings, and the creation of inclusive/barrier-free environments; additionally, they engage in the creative design of emergency housing and rapidly-assembled comfortable modular homes (KSADAAD, 2024). The training of environment designers at this institution maintains a high professional standard by blending classical Ukrainian artistic traditions with contemporary design trends, thereby ensuring a sustained demand for graduates in professional markets both in Ukraine and abroad.

Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts (hereinafter: KNUCA) aims its "Environment Design" educational programme at preparing specialists capable of solving complex tasks in environment design, including the planning of interiors, landscapes, small architectural forms, furniture, and decorative finishes. The curricula focus on developing comprehensive competencies

in informational, analytical, cultural, aesthetic, functional-typological, and technological solutions for project challenges. A primary objective of the educational programme involves developing skills in working with modern software, technological equipment, and materials. The educational process focuses on adapting knowledge to real professional conditions, with students participating in national and international creative projects and competitions. Training at KNUCA maintains a comprehensive, practice-oriented character with an emphasis on modern technologies, project activities, and creative competency development, guaranteeing graduate employability in domestic and international labour markets (KNUCA, 2020).

The Department of Environment Design at the Lviv National Academy of Arts (hereinafter: LNAA) defines its learning objectives as the development of specialists capable of solving complex tasks and practical problems in environment design, characterised by multifaceted conditions and the application of specific design theories and methods. To achieve a high level of training, the "Environment Design" programme provides a fundamental theoretical component in the humanities, ensures mastery of fundamental artistic disciplines – sculpture, drawing, and painting – and offers in-depth knowledge in professional subjects such as ergonomics, building typology, construction, contemporary interior materials, colour science, and engineering networks. The programme addresses challenges not only in interior design for public and residential buildings but also in the planning of urban and local residential spaces. The primary focus of the educational programme lies in preparing specialists who possess design theory and methodology, are capable of solving pertinent professional tasks, and can generate new ideas within the context of global design trends while implementing projects in collaboration with the professional community (LNAA, 2023).

The Salvador Dali Art Academy of Contemporary Arts (hereinafter: SDAACA) is an artistic higher education institution specialising in training design professionals, particularly environment designers. Professional training aims to develop highly mobile, competitive specialists oriented toward creative self-development and career growth. The emphasis lies on the development of an

individual authorial style, creative thinking, and project culture. The training of environment designers at the academy is based on a combination of creative approaches, practical orientation, and innovative computer technologies. The academy cultivates professional creative specialists capable of succeeding in environment design, creating original projects, and adapting to modern labour market challenges (SDAACA, 2025).

Following an analysis of educational programmes at leading domestic HEIs within the professional training system for future environment designers, it is evident that project activities are implemented through semester, term, and qualification projects, grounded in constructive pedagogical interaction between the educator and students. The educational process employs independent, individual, and collective forms of work, facilitating the development of practical skills, communication, and the project competence of learners. Executing creative tasks and addressing project problems enhances motivation for design activities and stimulates the development of socially significant personal qualities, the capacity for goal setting, the search for non-standard solutions, the activation of cognitive activity, and the cultivation of research potential, alongside the refinement of organisational skills regarding workspace management.

The project activity of future environment designers is characterised by an orientation toward cultivating a motivational-value attitude toward professional activity, developing project competence, and fostering creative imagination, volumetric-spatial thinking, and artistic-figurative thinking.

The specificity of professional training within design education lies in the integration of humanitarian and vocationally oriented components of the educational process. Studying fine arts disciplines (specifically "Drawing", "Painting", "Anatomy", and "Graphic Techniques") as well as specialised training courses (such as "Composition", "Colour Science", "Typography", "Architectonics", "Bionics", "Ergonomics", "Building Typology", "Materials Science", "Morphology", "Modelling", and "Computer Graphics") remains particularly significant, among which the core profiling discipline "Projecting" occupies the leading position. In our view, this specific discipline acts as

a catalyst for developing the project competence of future environment design specialists. Consequently, reorienting the educational process from an emphasis on cognitive-perceptual aspects – the effectiveness of which is determined by the learner's intellectual and creative potential – toward the development of volumetric-spatial, visual-figurative, and associative thinking, visual memory, psychophysiological perception, and imagination appears appropriate; furthermore, this shift should prioritise cultivating the practical skills necessary for creating innovative design objects within environmental spaces.

Simultaneously, within the context of our study, the researchers analysed educational programmes from leading universities in Poland, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Finland, the United Kingdom, and the USA offered at the first (Bachelor's) level in environment design, interior design, landscape architecture, or related fields. The analysis encompassed the structure of educational programmes, the emphasis on project-based learning, the integration of digital technologies, and, primarily, the specific characteristics of project competence development in future environment designers.

Leading international educational programmes in environment design within foreign educational institutions warrant detailed consideration.

Higher education institutions in Poland, such as SWPS University (Faculty of Design, School of Form), the University of Warsaw (Spatial Planning), Warsaw University of Technology (Architecture), Gdańsk University of Technology (Spatial Development), Cracow University of Technology (Spatial Management), and the International European University (Interior Design), actively combine project-based learning and modern digital technologies with the long-standing traditions of European education (Bachelors degrees in design studies in Poland, 2025; IEU. School of architecture and engineering: Environmental design, n.d.).

Educational programmes focus on mastering practical skills and a multidisciplinary approach with an emphasis on social design and the revitalisation of the historical environment, preserving local cultural identity, and the harmonious integration of new objects into the existing urban context. Learners participate in

authentic projects, learning from experienced specialists and collaborating with colleagues, business representatives, and the public.

Project-based learning in the professional education of German universities, building upon the legacy of prominent design schools such as the Weimar Bauhaus State School of Industrial Arts and the Ulm School of Design, is regarded as a systemic, structured approach to developing the competencies of future specialists who perceive their task as the organisation of the human environment. Notably, Bauhaus University Weimar offers a Bachelor's programme in architecture lasting six semesters, traditionally characterised by a creative and functional approach to architecture, engineering solutions, and aesthetics. Project management plays a crucial role in ensuring quality assurance, cost control, and adherence to deadlines in construction (Bauhaus. Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering, 2025).

Swedish universities, particularly Linnaeus University (educational programmes "Design and Change" and "Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Communication"), actively position design as a tool for achieving sustainability and social change through the rational use of natural resources. Digital methods and projecting tools form part of the curriculum, complemented by a persistent emphasis on implementing real-world projects, often in collaboration with local and regional enterprises, organisations, and communities (Design and change: Bachelor's programme (Linnaeus University, 2025).

The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), one of Norway's leading universities, offers a wide range of programmes in architecture, urban planning, graphic design, and environment design. NTNU emphasises "learning by doing", encouraging learners toward activity and research while maintaining a careful attitude toward nature. Interdisciplinary collaboration exists between architecture and civil engineering students, including "Design-Build-Test" (DBT) projects (NTNU. About the Faculty of Architecture and Design, 2025).

Finnish universities, such as LAB University of Applied Sciences (Sustainable Construction Technology, Sustainable Solutions Engineering, Sustainable Design Business) and Häme University

of Applied Sciences (HAMK) (Smart and Sustainable Design), distinguish themselves by focusing on sustainability, the circular economy, and the "Sustainable Design Business" concept, where design is viewed through the prism of business models and environmental responsibility. Instruction includes the use of digital tools and software, focusing on a practice-oriented approach and project experience (Sustainable design bachelor's degrees in Finland, 2025).

Leading UK universities, such as the University of Cambridge and University College London (UCL), specifically the Bartlett School of Architecture, offer programmes that combine art and science with design.

Cambridge educational programmes focus on the history and philosophy of architecture and urbanism, contemporary culture, and structural and environmental design. The Bartlett School of Architecture at UCL is renowned for its creativity and innovation, featuring digital fabrication workshops and advanced computer laboratories. Digital project representation skills are taught from the first year. The emphasis is placed on studio learning, where learners have dedicated workspaces and work on projects through regular discussions and critical reviews. Study trips and internships constitute a mandatory part of the curriculum (UK architecture and environmental design courses, 2025; UCL. Undergraduate architecture degrees – Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment, 2025).

The US higher education system is characterised by a large number of private institutions compared to public ones. Another characteristic feature is a high degree of decentralisation and autonomy. Leading US universities, such as the University of Oregon, California State Polytechnic University Pomona, Marywood University, Miami University Oxford, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, and Auburn University (interior design programmes), as well as Parsons School of Design (BFA Interior Design) and Cornell University (Human-Centred Design, BFA Interior Design), traditionally demonstrate high levels of integration between project skills and cutting-edge digital computer technologies.

Educational programmes concentrate on solving issues related to the systemic functioning of the modern metropolis, including the design of

residential, administrative, and industrial developments, as well as public and recreational spaces. The Cornell University programme in Human-Centred Design integrates multidisciplinary training in environment design, urban studies, ecology, and ergonomics, with an emphasis on solving the multifaceted problems and challenges of modern urban planning (CU. Human-centered design: Interior design BFA, 2025; CalPoly. College of environmental design, 2025).

International programmes demonstrate an emphasis on integrating the principles of "sustainable design", "ecological building design", and the "circular economy" into environment design educational curricula. This indicates a global paradigm shift in design education—a transition from purely aesthetic or functional considerations to a holistic approach that prioritises responsibility for design outcomes, self-reflection, self-improvement, resource efficiency, and systemic social changes.

The widespread implementation of advanced projecting and modelling tools as core pedagogical methods is another notable trend. Digital modelling, automated design systems, BIM, and cutting-edge virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) technologies, as well as three-dimensional printing, are no longer considered additional but are fundamental to modern design practice and, consequently, to effective design education.

**Conclusions.** The key differences in foreign educational programmes include a higher degree of student engagement in authentic collaboration during training as a result of implementing project-oriented methods, the development of communicative and presentational skills, teamwork experience, and the establishment and expansion of interdisciplinary links and rapid software implementation. The strength of domestic educational programmes lies in the fact that the educational process is thoroughly based on academic fine arts disciplines combined with modern digital technologies, the relevant preservation of national cultural traditions, and a steady trend toward specialists meeting contemporary professional requirements of European and global labour markets.

Following the theoretical and comparative analysis of educational programmes in Ukrainian and foreign HEIs, one can conclude that the project

competence development of future designers should encompass numerous categories, such as innovation, manufacturability, utility, aesthetics, inclusivity, and environmental friendliness, as the dynamics of socio-cultural processes in society currently demand their full interaction within design objects. Today, these categories of project competence require updating according to contemporary requirements and implementation within teaching and

methodological support, particularly for the core discipline "Projecting".

Monitoring the development levels of project competence among educational stakeholders and evaluating the quality of training tasks and qualification projects in the "B2 Design" specialty represents a promising way to enhance the professional training of future environment designers.

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# ДОСВІД РОЗВИТКУ ПРОЄКТНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ МАЙБУТНІХ ФАХІВЦІВ З ДИЗАЙНУ СЕРЕДОВИЩА У ЗВО УКРАЇНИ ТА ЗАРУБІЖЖЯ

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## Реферат:

*Актуальність:* в умовах євроінтеграційних процесів посилюється суспільне значення дизайну як важливої складової національного відродження Української держави; зміни стандартів щодо реновації урбаністичного простору й інфраструктури міст зумовлюють зростаючу потребу у кваліфікованих дизайнерах середовища із розвинутою професійною компетентністю, об'ємно-просторовим мисленням, теоретичними знаннями та практичними вміннями й навичками; звідси актуалізується необхідність пошуку інноваційних способів забезпечення якості професійної підготовки фахівців з дизайну середовища у ЗВО та врахування їх позитивних аспектів при вдосконаленні системи дизайн-освіти України.

*Метою* статті є проведення теоретичного і порівняльного аналізу освітніх програм за спеціальністю «Дизайн середовища» провідних ЗВО України та зарубіжжя та визначення на основі отриманих результатів особливостей практичного досвіду розвитку проєктної компетентності майбутніх фахівців з дизайну середовища.

*Методи:* теоретичний аналіз і узагальнення – для вивчення освітніх програм ЗВО; системно-структурний підхід – для виявлення взаємозв'язку між ОП та їх освітніми компонентами, націлених на розвиток проєктної компетентності майбутніх дизайнерів середовища; порівняльний аналіз – для виокремлення специфічних особливостей професійної підготовки таких фахівців як в Україні, так і в зарубіжних ЗВО, що впливають на їх рівень розвиненості проєктної компетентності в освітньому процесі.

*Результати:* на основі аналізу освітніх програм (ОП) вітчизняних ЗВО та провідних університетів світу визначено й проаналізовано особливості розвитку проєктної компетентності; встановлено, що у вітчизняній моделі акцент зроблено на інтеграції художніх дисциплін із профільним курсом «Проектування», тоді як міжнародні ОП демонструють глибшу імплементацію принципів проєктного навчання, «сталого дизайну», цифрових інструментів і комунікативності.

*Висновки:* розвиток проєктної компетентності майбутнього дизайнера середовища є динамічним процесом; ключовою відмінністю зарубіжних програм є вища ступінь залученості студентів до реальної співпраці з промисловістю та громадами; для української освіти перспективним є оновлення навчально-методичного забезпечення та моніторинг рівнів сформованості проєктної компетентності здобувачів освіти.

**Ключові слова:** професійна підготовка, проєктна діяльність, дизайн середовища, проектування, проєктна компетентність фахівців з дизайну середовища.

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