



Journal Website:
<https://theusajournals.com/index.php/ijp>

Copyright: Original content from this work may be used under the terms of the creative commons attributes 4.0 licence.

THE CONCEPT OF AUTOCOMPETENCE: A KEY QUALITY FOR PRESCHOOL EDUCATION LEADERS

Submission Date: November 09, 2024, **Accepted Date:** November 14, 2024,

Published Date: November 19, 2024

Crossref doi: <https://doi.org/10.37547/ijp/Volume04Issue11-33>

Normirzayev Farhodjon Muminovich

Doctoral student at Namangan State University, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

Autocompetence, defined as the ability to self-regulate, reflect, and autonomously develop one's skills, is increasingly recognized as a crucial quality for leaders in preschool education. This article explores the multifaceted concept of autocompetence, its theoretical foundations, and its practical significance in early childhood leadership. By examining current research and best practices, we discuss strategies for cultivating autocompetence among preschool education leaders. Fostering autocompetence enhances leaders' effectiveness, promotes innovation, and creates supportive environments for both educators and children, ultimately contributing to improved educational outcomes and the holistic development of young learners.

KEYWORDS

Autocompetence, Preschool Education, Leadership, Self-Regulation, Professional Development, Early Childhood Education, Reflective Practice, Self-Directed Learning, Educational Innovation, Organizational Culture.

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, preschool education leaders play a pivotal role in shaping the foundational experiences of young children. The increasing diversity of student populations, technological advancements, and evolving educational policies present complex challenges that require leaders to be more than just

knowledgeable administrators. They must be adaptable, self-motivated, and capable of leading with vision and innovation.

Autocompetence emerges as a vital quality in this context, enabling leaders to navigate complexities effectively and inspire their teams. It encompasses the

ability to self-regulate, reflect critically, and adapt one's skills autonomously. This article delves into the concept of autocompetence, exploring its theoretical underpinnings and its crucial role in early childhood leadership. We also discuss practical strategies for developing autocompetence among preschool education leaders, highlighting how this quality can enhance leadership effectiveness and contribute to positive outcomes for educators and children alike.

Autocompetence is rooted in several psychological and educational theories. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), emphasizes the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation. Autocompetence aligns closely with the autonomy component, where individuals are self-motivated to pursue growth and learning. Additionally, the concept is linked to Self-Regulated Learning (SRL), as described by Zimmerman (2000), which involves proactive processes that individuals use to acquire skills, such as goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-reflection. For leaders, SRL translates into managing their learning and professional development effectively. Furthermore, Flavell's (1979) notion of metacognition—the awareness and control of one's cognitive processes—plays a significant role, as autocompetent leaders are metacognitively aware, reflecting on their thought processes to enhance decision-making and problem-solving.

Autocompetence comprises several key components:

- **Self-Regulation:** This is the capacity to control one's behavior, emotions, and thoughts in the pursuit of long-term goals. For leaders, it means maintaining focus, managing time effectively, and persisting in the face of challenges.

- **Reflective Practice:** Involving continuous self-evaluation of experiences and actions to gain insights and improve future performance, reflective practice requires critical analysis of decisions and their outcomes.

- **Autonomous Problem-Solving:** This is the ability to identify challenges proactively and develop solutions independently, necessitating confidence, creativity, and initiative.

- **Continuous Learning:** Reflecting a commitment to lifelong education, continuous learning involves staying updated with the latest research and embracing new ideas and methodologies.

- **Adaptability:** This refers to the flexibility to adjust strategies and approaches in response to changing circumstances and new information.

While traditional competencies focus on specific skills or knowledge areas, autocompetence is a meta-competency that enables leaders to acquire and enhance other competencies. It centers on the process of learning and adapting rather than solely on content. This distinction is crucial in dynamic fields like preschool education, where the ability to learn and adapt is as important as existing knowledge.

The field of preschool education is subject to frequent changes due to policy shifts, technological advancements, and cultural and demographic transformations. Leaders must adapt to changes in educational standards, regulations, and funding that can significantly impact preschool operations. The integration of technology in classrooms requires leaders to adjust curricula and teaching methods. Increasing diversity demands culturally responsive leadership and inclusive practices. Autocompetent

leaders anticipate these changes, understand their implications, and modify their strategies accordingly. They are proactive in updating policies, procedures, and curricula to meet new requirements and embrace opportunities for improvement.

Innovation is essential for improving educational outcomes. Autocompetent leaders embrace new ideas and are open to experimenting with novel teaching methods, technologies, and organizational structures. They encourage creativity by fostering a supportive environment where staff can propose and implement innovative solutions. By staying informed through continuous learning, they remain aware of the latest research and best practices. They implement evidence-based practices by critically evaluating new approaches and adopting those with proven effectiveness.

Leaders with autocompetence recognize the importance of developing their team's skills. They model lifelong learning, and their commitment to personal growth inspires staff to pursue their own development. By providing opportunities for professional development, such as workshops, conferences, and training programs, they facilitate access to resources that enhance educators' skills. They foster reflective practice by encouraging educators to reflect on their teaching, which enhances self-awareness and instructional quality. Additionally, they offer mentorship and coaching, providing guidance and support to help staff set and achieve professional goals.

Autocompetent leadership positively impacts children's learning by creating engaging environments that stimulate curiosity and exploration. Implementing developmentally appropriate practices, they support

age-appropriate learning experiences. By promoting autonomy in children, they encourage self-directed learning, fostering independence and confidence. They also address individual needs by tailoring approaches to meet diverse learning styles and abilities, demonstrating adaptability in their leadership.

Autocompetent leaders contribute to organizational resilience through strategic planning, setting clear goals, and developing flexible plans to achieve them. Their effective problem-solving skills enable them to navigate challenges and mitigate risks, which is essential for crisis management. By cultivating a positive culture, they create a supportive and collaborative environment that boosts morale and engagement. Continuous evaluation and adaptation lead to sustained organizational growth and success, ensuring long-term improvement.

Implementing reflective practices is essential for developing autocompetence. Self-assessment tools, such as questionnaires and checklists, can help leaders evaluate their competencies and identify areas for growth. Engaging in critical incident analysis allows them to reflect on specific events to understand what happened, why it happened, and how to improve future responses. Action research, involving systematic inquiry into one's practices, informs changes and enhancements. Reflective writing, such as maintaining journals, helps document thoughts and experiences, clarifying thinking and tracking progress over time.

Engaging with professional learning communities (PLCs) offers collaborative learning opportunities. Sharing knowledge and experiences with peers fosters collective problem-solving and provides emotional and professional support, reducing isolation. PLCs

encourage accountability through regular meetings and shared goals, promoting consistent progress. They also facilitate resource sharing, providing access to a broader range of materials, ideas, and strategies that enhance learning.

Ongoing education is critical for autocompetence. Pursuing formal education, such as advanced degrees or certifications, deepens expertise. Informal learning, including reading professional journals, listening to podcasts, and engaging in online forums, keeps leaders informed about current trends. Cross-disciplinary learning, exploring fields like psychology, sociology, and technology, broadens perspectives and enriches understanding. Participating in reflective workshops focuses on developing reflective and metacognitive skills essential for autocompetence.

Mentorship accelerates the development of autocompetence by providing experienced guidance. Mentors offer insights based on their own experiences, and personalized support addresses specific challenges and goals. They can introduce leaders to valuable professional contacts, expanding their networks. Feedback mechanisms through mentorship provide constructive criticism, aiding in self-improvement and professional growth.

Technology enhances autocompetence by offering e-learning platforms that facilitate flexible learning through online courses and resources. Collaboration tools, such as communication and project management software, enable leaders to communicate and collaborate effectively with peers. Utilizing data analysis software helps in analyzing educational data, informing decision-making processes. Educational apps can assist with

organization, time management, and reflective practice, improving efficiency and productivity.

Autocompetent leaders boost teacher efficacy by providing necessary resources, ensuring that teachers have the materials and support needed to succeed. By empowering decision-making, they involve teachers in curriculum development and policy decisions, enhancing ownership and commitment. Recognizing achievements, they acknowledge and celebrate successes, which motivates staff. Facilitating professional growth, they offer career advancement opportunities, helping to retain talented educators.

The influence of autocompetent leadership extends to students, leading to higher engagement as innovative and well-supported teachers deliver more engaging lessons. Improved development occurs through holistic approaches that address cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth. Leaders who value diversity implement inclusive practices, ensuring all students' needs are met. Strong leadership fosters parental involvement by building partnerships with families, enhancing learning support at home.

Collaboration is enhanced through activities that promote camaraderie and trust among staff. Establishing a shared vision and goals through clear communication of organizational objectives aligns efforts across the institution. Open communication channels encourage feedback and dialogue at all levels, improving transparency and trust. Interdisciplinary collaboration, working with specialists such as speech therapists or psychologists, broadens support for students and enriches educational practices.

Autocompetent leaders drive organizations forward through strategic innovation, implementing new programs or curricula that set the institution apart. By engaging in community involvement, they build relationships with community stakeholders, enhancing the organization's reputation and support. Effective financial stewardship ensures sustainability through prudent management of resources. They may also engage in policy advocacy, influencing educational policy to lead to broader systemic improvements.

CONCLUSION

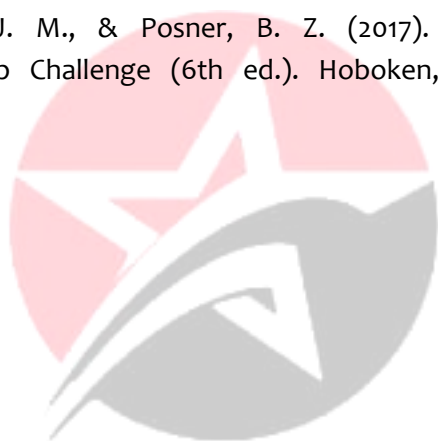
Autocompetence is a transformative quality for preschool education leaders, enabling them to meet the demands of their roles with confidence and agility. By cultivating self-regulation, reflective practice, autonomous problem-solving, continuous learning, and adaptability, leaders can drive positive change within their organizations. The development of autocompetence should be an intentional process, supported by reflective practices, professional learning communities, ongoing education, mentorship, and the strategic use of technology.

As the early childhood education landscape continues to evolve, the importance of autocompetent leadership cannot be overstated. Such leaders are instrumental in fostering environments that support educators' professional growth and children's holistic development. By prioritizing autocompetence, we can ensure that preschool education remains responsive, innovative, and capable of preparing young learners for the complexities of the future

REFERENCES

1. Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. New York, NY: W.H. Freeman.
2. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “What” and “Why” of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268.
3. Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and Cognitive Monitoring: A New Area of Cognitive–Developmental Inquiry. *American Psychologist*, 34(10), 906–911.
4. Heikka, J., Waniganayake, M., & Hujala, E. (2013). Contextualizing Distributed Leadership Within Early Childhood Education: Current Understandings, Research Evidence and Future Challenges. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 41(1), 30–44.
5. Rodd, J. (2013). *Leadership in Early Childhood: The Pathway to Professionalism* (4th ed.). Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.
6. Senge, P. M. (2006). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
7. Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M., & Thomas, S. (2006). Professional Learning Communities: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Educational Change*, 7(4), 221–258.
8. Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Attaining Self-Regulation: A Social Cognitive Perspective. In M. Boekaerts, P. R. Pintrich, & M. Zeidner (Eds.), *Handbook of Self-Regulation* (pp. 13–39). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
9. National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (2020). *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.
10. Thornton, K. (2010). School Leadership and Student Outcomes: The Best Evidence Synthesis. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 24(2), 139–158.

11. Killion, J., & Hirsh, S. (2011). *The Elements of Effective Teaching: Professional Learning*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.
12. Roberts, C., & Pruitt, E. Z. (2009). *Schools as Professional Learning Communities: Collaborative Activities and Strategies for Professional Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
13. Schon, D. A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
14. Brookfield, S. D. (2017). *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
15. Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The Leadership Challenge* (6th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.



OSCAR
PUBLISHING SERVICES