

Mechanisms for Creating Pedagogical Conditions to Develop Managerial Skills of Deputy Directors in Preschool Educational Institutions

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Abstract: This article provides an in-depth analysis of the pedagogical conditions necessary for developing the managerial skills of deputy directors in preschool educational institutions. In the modern educational environment, the professional and managerial competence of leadership personnel directly impacts the quality of education. The study explores the nature and content of managerial competencies, methodological approaches aimed at their development, the role of practical training and seminars, examples from foreign practices, and mechanisms for adapting the pedagogical environment to preschool education. The author proposes practical recommendations to enhance the professional development of leadership personnel in the preschool education system.

Keywords: Preschool education, leadership staff, deputy director, managerial skills, pedagogical conditions, management, professional development, training, seminar, foreign experience, methodology, competence.

Introduction: In today's era of rapid educational transformation, the development of an effective, sustainable, and innovative preschool education system is increasingly recognized as a strategic priority in many countries. At the heart of this transformation lies the professional capacity and leadership potential of educational managers, particularly deputy directors of preschool institutions. These individuals serve not merely as administrative assistants but as dynamic leaders who guide teaching staff, manage institutional development, and ensure quality educational outcomes for early learners.

The preschool stage plays a foundational role in the development of cognitive, social, and emotional skills. Thus, the management quality at this level profoundly influences the trajectory of a child's lifelong learning. In this context, the managerial competence of deputy directors becomes critically important. It extends beyond routine supervision to encompass leadership in pedagogical planning, conflict resolution, staff development, digital transformation, and engagement with families and communities. Their ability to motivate, innovate, and adapt within diverse and complex environments makes them pivotal actors in

educational success.

Despite this, existing systems of professional preparation and development often fail to address the full scope of competencies required for leadership in early childhood settings. Training programs remain largely theoretical, insufficiently adapted to the specific roles and daily realities of deputy directors, and underutilize international best practices. In many instances, leadership development is treated as a secondary concern, and managerial training is provided in a generalized format, disconnected from real institutional needs.

At the same time, societal expectations regarding transparency, accountability, and innovation in education are rising. The advent of digital technologies, data-driven decision-making, and inclusive practices further necessitate the evolution of managerial roles in preschool organizations. Therefore, establishing well-defined pedagogical conditions that enable deputy directors to develop, refine, and apply effective managerial skills is essential for institutional progress.

This article aims to explore and systematize mechanisms for creating such pedagogical conditions.

Drawing upon theoretical analysis, empirical research, and international experience, the study seeks to propose actionable strategies for professionalizing the managerial role of deputy directors. By focusing on practical tools, training formats, and support systems, the article contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable educational leadership in the preschool sector.

METHODS

This research utilized a multi-method approach grounded in systematic and activity-based paradigms, allowing for both theoretical and empirical exploration of the managerial competencies of deputy directors in preschool institutions. Initially, a theoretical-descriptive method was employed to conduct an in-depth content analysis of national regulatory documents, educational standards, and scholarly literature. This included analysis of policies issued by ministries of education, professional standards for educational leaders, and academic research on leadership development in early childhood education. These resources provided a solid foundation for identifying conceptual frameworks, key terminologies, and prevailing trends in the field of educational management.

Building on this foundation, an empirical research design was developed, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. A structured survey was administered to 120 deputy directors from 37 public and private preschool institutions in urban and rural areas. The questionnaire focused on multiple dimensions of managerial activity, including strategic planning, time management, staff communication, leadership styles, digital tool usage, and innovation implementation. Responses were analyzed statistically to reveal trends and gaps in managerial competence. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with 20 participants, including deputy directors, lead educators, and methodologists. These interviews allowed the researcher to gather rich, contextual insights into the lived experiences, challenges, and leadership practices in early childhood settings. Questions focused on internal communication systems, decision-making procedures, conflict resolution methods, and the role of deputy directors in guiding pedagogical teams. Classroom and institutional observations were carried out over a three-month period, targeting deputy directors' interactions with staff, their participation in pedagogical councils, and involvement in parent outreach programs. Observation checklists included indicators such as initiative in leadership, emotional intelligence, and delegation of responsibilities.

Finally, a comparative international case study analysis was performed. Selected case studies included Finland, Singapore, South Korea, and New Zealand—countries known for their strong educational leadership models. The researcher reviewed international training modules, mentorship models, certification systems, and online professional development tools. These were evaluated based on adaptability, cost-efficiency, inclusivity, and impact on institutional performance. The final stage involved synthesizing all data using thematic coding, triangulation, and matrix analysis to extract practical implications for the creation of pedagogical conditions supporting leadership development.

RESULTS

The findings from the empirical phase of the study revealed significant disparities between the existing competencies of deputy directors and the skills demanded by the modern preschool education environment. While nearly 85% of participants demonstrated a strong foundation in traditional pedagogical knowledge and classroom support, only 40% reported confidence in implementing strategic leadership tools, such as change management models, performance monitoring, or innovation planning.

Quantitative data revealed that 63% of deputy directors had never received formal training in human resource management or project leadership, and over 70% were unfamiliar with digital data analysis tools used in administrative decision-making. Despite their essential role in school development planning, many lacked trainings in budgeting, risk forecasting, or external partnership building.

The survey also indicated that only 27% of deputy directors had access to customized professional development plans based on their leadership profiles. Most existing programs focused heavily on pedagogy and general administration without addressing real-time leadership scenarios, crisis management, digital leadership, or reflective practices.

Interview responses uncovered recurring themes: frustration with bureaucratic overload, lack of autonomy in initiating innovation, and a desire for community-based professional support. Many deputy directors expressed a preference for peer-learning networks, scenario-based workshops, and regular feedback from senior mentors. Respondents stated that traditional lectures and general seminars had limited impact, while hands-on, simulation-based workshops helped them acquire concrete leadership behaviors.

International case studies provided valuable insight. For example, Finland's model incorporates coaching,

continuous peer collaboration, and flexible learning trajectories. Singapore offers a tiered leadership framework with strong digital integration and cross-school mentorships. South Korea mandates that preschool leaders engage in reflective digital portfolios reviewed annually. These strategies produced demonstrably higher leadership efficacy and institutional performance outcomes.

Observations confirmed that where deputy directors employed structured planning, team motivation strategies, and performance evaluations, staff morale was higher, and educational outcomes were more consistent. Conversely, in institutions where such competencies were underdeveloped, communication gaps, staff turnover, and resistance to curriculum changes were prevalent.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study highlight a systemic challenge: the disconnection between current training models and the complex, evolving demands placed on deputy directors in preschool institutions. The current landscape reveals a fragmented approach to leadership development, marked by a lack of coherence, customization, and alignment with real-world institutional needs.

To bridge this gap, the first priority must be a paradigm shift in leadership training methodology. Traditional, one-size-fits-all training programs must be replaced with differentiated learning models that respond to the evolving professional identity of deputy directors. These models should begin with a diagnostic self-assessment that maps leadership strengths, weaknesses, and development goals. Such personalized planning ensures that training programs address specific challenges, such as conflict management, digital strategy, or emotional intelligence.

Secondly, educational institutions and training providers must adopt experiential learning approaches. Activity-based strategies such as design thinking, leadership simulations, collaborative projects, and action research help leaders internalize knowledge by applying it in dynamic, authentic contexts. This also promotes a mindset of lifelong learning and encourages experimentation, feedback-seeking, and adaptability.

Another crucial recommendation is the formal integration of digital literacy and innovation management into professional development curricula. Digital dashboards, learning analytics, and performance management tools are becoming indispensable for leaders. Institutions must facilitate digital upskilling and provide deputy directors with

access to educational technology resources.

Cross-institutional mentorship, coaching, and peer collaboration should also be prioritized. These elements help deputy directors break professional isolation, reflect on their practices, and adopt evidence-based innovations. Peer networks, learning circles, and mentorship programs also contribute to psychological safety, allowing emerging leaders to take calculated risks and challenge the status quo.

Finally, national policy and institutional leadership must work in tandem to build systemic mechanisms for long-term leadership development. These include performance-based recognition systems, transparent career progression models, and institutional incentives for innovation. Furthermore, leveraging international experiences in a culturally sensitive manner will enhance the adaptability and resilience of the local preschool management ecosystem.

In conclusion, the creation of pedagogical conditions for developing managerial competencies must be intentional, sustained, and evidence-informed. Only through a holistic, integrated strategy can deputy directors be equipped to lead change, inspire teams, and elevate preschool education quality.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the critical importance of developing the managerial competencies of deputy directors in preschool educational institutions as a cornerstone of effective leadership and institutional excellence. As the educational environment becomes increasingly complex, deputy directors are required to function not only as operational managers but also as visionary leaders capable of shaping school culture, implementing reforms, and fostering innovation. Without the necessary pedagogical and managerial conditions to support their development, these professionals' risk being inadequately prepared for the multifaceted responsibilities they shoulder.

The research clearly demonstrates that current professional development systems often fall short in terms of relevance, personalization, and alignment with modern managerial demands. Training programs are largely theoretical, fail to reflect real-life leadership challenges, and do not provide sufficient follow-up or mentorship. Meanwhile, the lack of structured, practice-oriented learning opportunities has a tangible negative effect on institutional dynamics, including staff motivation, teamwork, innovation, and the overall quality of preschool services.

To address these challenges, a multi-tiered strategy is needed. First, personalized and competency-based

development paths must be integrated into the career trajectories of deputy directors. These should be supported by diagnostic tools, mentorship systems, and flexible modular learning. Second, practice-based learning should become central to managerial training, incorporating simulations, case studies, digital tools, and real-time decision-making tasks. These approaches help to develop practical leadership capabilities, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and resilience. Third, strategic use of international experience can provide scalable and adaptable models for building effective pedagogical conditions in local contexts.

Moreover, the institutional and policy environment must support a long-term vision for leadership development. This includes revising standards for early childhood management training, incentivizing innovation, fostering peer learning communities, and integrating digital technologies into administrative and pedagogical functions.

In conclusion, investing in the professional growth of deputy directors through well-structured pedagogical mechanisms is not merely an internal organizational need but a systemic imperative. Such investment directly contributes to the sustainability and quality of preschool education, fostering environments where leadership, innovation, and educational excellence flourish in tandem.

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