

The Role And Potential Of The Acmeological Approach In The Professional Development Of Future Preschool Educators

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Abstract: The rapid transformation of early childhood education places new demands on the professional formation of future preschool educators. Beyond mastering methods of teaching and caregiving, pre-service educators are expected to design developmentally appropriate learning environments, build ethical and emotionally secure interactions, collaborate with families, and continuously improve their practice. In this context, the acmeological approach offers a productive methodological lens because it focuses on the закономерности (regularities), conditions, and technologies of reaching professional maturity, personal excellence, and sustainable growth toward “acme,” understood as a peak level of professional and personal development that opens further horizons rather than ending development. The purpose of this article is to analyze the role and potential of the acmeological approach in the professional development of future preschool educators and to present an integrative conceptual model that connects acmeological ideas with contemporary teacher education. The study is based on an integrative review of psychological, pedagogical, and acmeological literature and a conceptual synthesis that translates core acmeological constructs—subjectivity, self-development, reflexive regulation, value-meaning orientation, and professional mastery—into the realities of preschool pedagogy. The results show that the acmeological approach strengthens teacher education in three interconnected ways: it clarifies the developmental logic of professional growth, expands the focus from competence acquisition to self-transformative professionalization, and provides a basis for building supportive yet demanding educational environments in which reflective practice, mentorship, and evidence-informed design become routine. The article discusses implementation opportunities, potential risks of “perfectionism pressure,” and directions for further research on acmeological diagnostics and program design in early childhood teacher education.

Keywords: Acmeology, professional development, future preschool educators, teacher education, reflexive practice, professional mastery, educational design, subjectivity.

Introduction: Early childhood education is an area where the quality of professional work is directly linked to the well-being, development, and long-term life chances of children. Preschool educators work with a developmental period characterized by rapid cognitive, emotional, social, and language changes, and their professional actions often have delayed but profound effects. At the same time, modern preschool institutions operate in conditions of curricular renewal, increasing attention to inclusion and diversity, higher expectations for safety and child protection, and a growing demand for partnership with families and communities. These trends shift teacher education

from a narrow transmission of methods toward a more complex model of professional formation in which competence, identity, responsibility, and reflective judgment are developed together.

Traditional competency-based models remain essential because they provide structure, transparency, and measurable outcomes. However, they may be insufficient when the goal is not only to prepare a graduate who “can perform” but to cultivate a professional who can grow, adapt, and maintain quality in uncertain or emotionally demanding situations. The professional development of a preschool educator includes mastering pedagogical technologies and,

simultaneously, the formation of internal resources that support ethical decision-making, emotional self-regulation, and a stable orientation toward child-centered practice. It also includes the ability to design the educational process as a meaningful system rather than a set of isolated activities. This is where the acmeological approach becomes particularly relevant.

Acmeology, developed largely in the post-Soviet scientific tradition, studies the patterns and conditions of reaching the highest levels of personal and professional development. Unlike views that interpret “peak” as a final stage, acmeological thinking treats acme as a dynamic point of maturity from which new trajectories open. For teacher education, this shift is important because it frames professional development as a life-long movement supported by self-analysis, goal-setting, mentoring, and constructive feedback rather than as a one-time mastery of a fixed professional standard.

In the context of preparing preschool educators, the acmeological approach can serve as a bridge between psychological theories of development, pedagogical models of professional competence, and the practical realities of everyday work in early childhood settings. It allows teacher educators to articulate not only “what to teach” but also “how to build conditions for professional growth,” and it strengthens the educational process by focusing on subjectivity, reflexivity, and values. This article addresses the following problem: how can the role and potential of the acmeological approach be conceptualized and translated into the professional development of future preschool educators in a way that is compatible with contemporary teacher education requirements?

The aim of the article is to analyze the role and potential of the acmeological approach in the professional development of future preschool educators and to offer a conceptual synthesis that can guide program design, practicum organization, and reflective assessment. The objectives include clarifying the acmeological interpretation of professional development, identifying the professional tasks of preschool educators that particularly benefit from an acmeological lens, and discussing implementation opportunities and limitations in teacher education practice.

The article employs an integrative literature review and conceptual modeling. Sources were selected from the fields of acmeology, psychology of professional development, pedagogy, and early childhood education. The review focused on foundational works that define the acmeological approach and describe professionalization as a developmental process, as well as on influential international works on reflective practice, experiential learning, and teacher knowledge. The analysis combined theoretical comparison with thematic synthesis. Core concepts were identified and interpreted through their relevance to the professional tasks and developmental realities of preschool educators. Conceptual modeling was then used to construct an integrative framework describing how acmeological mechanisms—such as reflexive self-regulation, value-meaning orientation, and subjectivity—can be embedded into teacher education through curriculum design, practicum structures, and pedagogical interaction between teacher educators and students.

Because the purpose of the article is theoretical and conceptual, it does not report an empirical experiment or statistical data. Instead, it provides analytically grounded results in the form of a synthesized model and a set of evidence-informed implications. The trustworthiness of the synthesis is supported by triangulation across multiple theoretical traditions and by aligning acmeological constructs with widely recognized concepts in teacher education research, including reflective practice and knowledge growth in teaching.

The analysis shows that the acmeological approach plays a distinct role in the professional development of future preschool educators because it reframes teacher education as a developmental trajectory rather than a collection of discrete competences. This trajectory can be described as movement from externally guided learning toward self-regulated professional growth. In early stages, students rely on explicit instructions, templates, and normative expectations. As professionalization progresses, they develop the ability to make context-sensitive pedagogical decisions and to justify them ethically and developmentally. Acmeology contributes by making this movement explicit and by proposing mechanisms through which it can be supported.

A key acmeological contribution is the focus on subjectivity. For future preschool educators, subjectivity is expressed in the ability to see oneself as an active author of professional actions, responsible not only for “doing activities” but for designing developmental conditions for children. In practical terms, this means that planning is not treated as bureaucratic documentation but as intellectual and moral work: analyzing children’s needs, defining meaningful goals, anticipating emotional and social dynamics, selecting methods that support play and exploration, and constructing an environment that is safe and inclusive. Acmeological thinking strengthens this shift because it ties professional mastery to personal responsibility and self-development.

Another result concerns reflexivity as a central mechanism of professional growth. Preschool educators constantly interpret children’s behavior, respond to emotional signals, and adapt the educational process in real time. These actions require reflection both “in action” and “on action,” meaning that the educator learns not only after events but during them. In an acmeological interpretation, reflexivity is not an optional skill; it is a developmental engine that converts experience into professional growth. When teacher education intentionally structures reflective cycles—through guided observation, reflective writing, mentor dialogue, and analysis of pedagogical cases—students begin to transform episodic experience into a coherent professional worldview. This is especially important in preschool contexts, where subtle changes in communication style or environment design can produce significant developmental differences.

The value-meaning dimension is equally important. Acmeological development is not purely technical; it presupposes a stable value orientation that gives meaning to professional effort. In early childhood education, this orientation is closely related to respect for the child, the ethics of care, developmental appropriateness, and responsibility toward families. The acmeological approach helps future educators connect their values to professional actions, so that planning and implementation become consistent with ethical commitments. This integration reduces the risk of formalism, in which educational plans look correct on paper but fail to create a supportive learning

environment in practice.

The synthesis also indicates that the acmeological approach has strong potential for developing self-regulation and resilience. Preschool educators often face emotional labor, including managing children’s distress, responding to parental concerns, and maintaining calm under pressure. Acmeological frameworks treat self-regulation as a resource that can be developed through purposeful training. In teacher education, this implies that professional development should include not only methodical competence but also psychological readiness: the capacity to manage stress, maintain empathy without burnout, and preserve professional judgment under uncertainty. When such readiness is framed as part of professional mastery, students learn to treat self-care and emotional competence as professional responsibilities rather than private issues.

From the perspective of program design, the results suggest an integrative acmeological model of professional development for future preschool educators. In this model, professional growth is supported by a continuous interplay of experience, reflection, value clarification, and progressively complex professional tasks. The model assumes that students move through qualitative changes: from reproducing known methods to constructing context-sensitive educational designs; from seeking external approval to establishing internal professional criteria; and from fragmented skills to an integrated professional identity. These shifts are accelerated when the educational environment combines support and high expectations, including meaningful feedback, mentorship, and opportunities for independent pedagogical decision-making during practicum.

The results highlight the potential of the acmeological approach to enrich teacher education by adding a developmental and personal dimension to competency frameworks. International traditions of teacher education have long emphasized reflection, professional knowledge growth, and the centrality of experience. The acmeological approach resonates with these ideas but differs in its explicit orientation toward professional peaks and toward the systematic cultivation of conditions that help a person reach maturity in a chosen profession. For future preschool educators, this orientation is significant because the

profession requires not only “knowing what to do” but also becoming a person who can sustain child-centered, ethical, and developmentally grounded practice.

One of the strengths of the acmeological approach is its compatibility with reflective practice. Reflection-in-action, described in classic works on professional thinking, becomes in acmeology a structured path of self-development. In preschool pedagogy, reflection is not merely analytical; it is deeply relational. Educators reflect on how they interpret children’s emotions, how they use language, how they regulate their own reactions, and how they create conditions for autonomy and cooperation. The acmeological lens helps to connect these reflections to a broader professional trajectory, so that everyday decisions become part of a purposeful movement toward mastery.

Another important point is the relationship between acmeology and pedagogical knowledge. Research on teaching emphasizes that professional growth includes learning to integrate subject knowledge, pedagogy, and knowledge of learners. For preschool educators, “subject knowledge” is often interdisciplinary and embedded in play, communication, and early literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional development. Acmeology does not replace knowledge-based preparation; it provides a developmental framework that motivates knowledge growth and helps students transform knowledge into wise action. When future educators see themselves as developing professionals moving toward maturity, they are more likely to engage deeply with theory, seek evidence, and treat practice as an arena for thoughtful experimentation.

The acmeological approach also supports the development of educational design competence. Designing the educational process in preschool means more than scheduling activities; it includes creating an environment that invites exploration, planning interactions that foster language and self-regulation, and ensuring inclusion for children with different needs. An acmeological program would not present design as a technical routine but as a professional art grounded in reflection and values. This perspective is particularly relevant when teacher education aims to prepare graduates who can adapt to diverse institutional contexts and innovate responsibly.

At the same time, the acmeological orientation toward “peaks” introduces potential risks if misunderstood. If “acme” is interpreted as constant maximum performance, students may develop perfectionism, anxiety, or a fear of mistakes. In early childhood education, such dynamics can undermine empathy and spontaneity and may lead to emotional exhaustion. Therefore, implementation requires a careful pedagogical culture that frames acme not as unattainable idealization but as sustainable excellence supported by self-care, collaboration, and ethical boundaries. Teacher educators and mentors play a decisive role here. Their feedback must encourage growth without creating pressure that disconnects students from realistic professional development.

A further limitation is that acmeological constructs can remain abstract unless they are operationalized through concrete educational practices. Teacher education programs need tools that translate acmeology into curriculum elements, practicum tasks, reflective assignments, and assessment practices. This calls for acmeological diagnostics that measure not only knowledge and skills but also reflective maturity, value consistency, self-regulation, and readiness for continuous development. Such diagnostics must be ethically designed so that they support learning rather than label students. The development of valid and reliable instruments, especially tailored to early childhood teacher education, remains a promising direction for future research.

Finally, the discussion suggests that acmeology can contribute to institutional culture in teacher education. A university or college that adopts an acmeological orientation treats students as developing professionals, builds mentorship networks, and creates environments where growth is visible and supported. This culture is particularly important for preschool educators, whose work is sometimes socially undervalued despite its developmental significance. An acmeological perspective can strengthen professional identity and raise the perceived status of preschool pedagogy by highlighting its complexity and the high level of mastery it requires.

The acmeological approach has substantial potential to strengthen the professional development of future preschool educators because it frames professionalization as a dynamic trajectory toward

maturity and sustainable excellence. It clarifies the logic of growth from externally guided learning to self-regulated professional development, highlights subjectivity and reflexivity as central mechanisms, and integrates values, emotional competence, and self-regulation into the understanding of professional mastery. For early childhood teacher education, this is particularly relevant because the educator's work requires not only methodological competence but also ethical sensitivity, emotional stability, and the ability to design a supportive environment for children's development.

The conceptual synthesis presented in this article shows that implementing an acmeological approach can enrich curriculum design, practicum organization, mentoring practices, and reflective assessment. At the same time, responsible implementation must avoid turning "acme" into a source of perfectionist pressure and should instead support realistic, collaborative, and ethically grounded growth. Future research should focus on developing acmeological diagnostics for pre-service preschool educators, studying program effectiveness in different institutional contexts, and designing evidence-based training technologies that integrate acmeological principles with modern teacher education standards.

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