

Enhancing Human Resource Management Competencies of Preschool Education Institution Directors in The Context of Digital Transformation

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Abstract. *This scientific article is dedicated to a comprehensive study of the human resource management competencies of preschool education institution directors. The article analyzes modern management methods, strategies for developing leadership skills in the context of digital transformation, mechanisms for motivating pedagogical staff, and ensuring their professional development. The study takes into account the newly introduced requirements under the “Resolution No. 531 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, dated August 27, 2024”, as well as opportunities provided within the framework of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed with the European Union.*

Key words: *preschool education, human resources, leadership competencies, staff development, pedagogical management, organizational efficiency, preschool education cluster, innovative competencies, digital transformation, managerial skills, labor potential, psychophysiological component, professional-qualification component, digital management, continuous education.*

Introduction

The recent Resolution No. 531 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, dated August 27, 2024, initiates a transformative phase in the selection and training of leadership for preschool education institutions. From January 1, 2025, a mandatory management training course and certification system will be introduced for directors of state preschool institutions. This reform underscores the necessity to strengthen directors’ human resource management skills to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving digital economy.[1]

Uzbekistan’s enhanced cooperation agreement with the European Union reflects a strategic commitment to digital transformation. Through active participation in programs such as Horizon Europe and Erasmus+, Uzbekistan is systematically adopting international experience in education. This process requires preschool directors to develop advanced competencies that align with global standards, ensuring effective management and modernization of educational institutions.[2]

A modern preschool director must possess data-driven decision-making skills to monitor pedagogical processes, evaluate staff performance, and analyze children’s developmental progress. The ability to interpret and apply statistical information to institutional strategy is crucial for fostering an environment of continuous improvement. Moreover, digital literacy, including managing electronic documentation systems and digital learning platforms, is now a core competency. Directors must ensure the secure handling of sensitive data, protect information systems from cyber threats, and optimize digital resources to facilitate remote work and continuous access to information.[3]

Participation in international programs offers both methodological and practical advantages. Comparative analysis enables directors to study preschool education systems in different countries, identifying best practices for adaptation locally. Innovative pedagogical technologies allow the integration of new teaching approaches grounded in global experience. Such exposure supports both the enhancement of traditional pedagogical methods and the development of entirely new instructional models.

Starting September 1, 2025, directors holding management certificates will receive a 30% monthly allowance in addition to their official salary. This financial incentive encourages continuous professional growth, motivates staff through exemplary leadership, and fosters a competitive culture in institutions. The “Human Capital Development” project, supported by the World Bank, highlights the strategic importance of investing in early childhood education, professional development, and modern pedagogical methods.

Literature review:

Research conducted by E.A. Hanushek emphasizes that “the most important assets of an organization are its human resources” . He argues that although investment in technology is essential for the improvement of education systems, the contribution of human resources remains even more critical. This idea is particularly relevant for preschool institutions, where the competence and professionalism of pedagogical staff directly shape children’s early development. At this stage, educators influence not only learning but also children’s communication skills, emotional growth, and creativity.[4]

In their study, F. Ghebregiorgis and L. Karsten note that human resource management has evolved into a distinct professional field in developed organizations . According to them, successful education systems treat HRM as a strategic component, giving special attention to staff selection, training, motivation, and long-term development. Such an approach significantly enhances organizational efficiency and long-term sustainability.

W.J. Orlikowski and S.R. Barley define HRM as a continuous process that includes four essential functions: recruiting personnel, supporting their development, motivating them, and retaining qualified staff [5]. This definition directly applies to preschool education, where directors must handle not only hiring but also the ongoing professional growth and capacity building of their employees.

Stephen Jenner’s research provides further insight by showing that teams led by internally appointed managers perform better than those led by externally selected leaders. This finding underscores the importance of developing internal leadership potential in preschool institutions. Preparing promising staff members for future managerial roles strengthens organizational stability and improves overall effectiveness.

International assessments also highlight the significance of human capital development in Uzbekistan. The World Bank’s Human Capital Index recognizes Uzbekistan as the first country in Central Asia to support the Human Capital Development Project, reflecting global acknowledgment of ongoing national reforms. Studies conducted by international organizations show that digital transformation in preschool education requires not only the adoption of new technologies but also a fundamental shift in management philosophy.

N.Sh. Abdullayeva highlights the role of the “educational-scientific complex laboratory” as an innovative platform within the preschool education cluster. Such laboratories contribute to the development of scientific and methodological resources, pilot programs, and innovative research. These functions align closely with digital-era leadership competencies such as data-based decision-making, electronic documentation, and digital security. They help preschool leaders transition from traditional administrative roles to modern, technology-oriented management functions.

Furthermore, Sh.N. Qosimova’s analysis of the labor potential components of preschool directors offers a valuable theoretical foundation for understanding HRM competencies. She identifies two major components: the psychophysiological aspect (health, age, personality traits) and the professional-qualification aspect (education, experience, and professional mobility). Traits such as creativity, initiative, and adaptability are increasingly important in today’s rapidly changing

environment. Professional mobility, supported by programs like Horizon Europe and Erasmus, highlights the need for continuous learning and skill enhancement among preschool leaders.[6]

Overall, the literature shows that strengthening human resource management competencies among preschool directors is both a national and global priority. In the age of digital transformation, shifting from traditional managerial roles to modern, innovation-driven functions has become an urgent requirement for improving the effectiveness and quality of preschool education.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach, combining document analysis, comparative methods, and case studies to examine human resource management competencies of preschool education institution directors. Primary data sources include the official Resolution No. 531 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, strategic policy documents, and reports from international programs such as Horizon Europe and Erasmus+. Secondary sources include scholarly articles, international assessments, and studies on leadership and human resource management in early childhood education.

The research applies a systematic analysis framework to evaluate the competencies required for effective digital-era leadership, focusing on data-driven decision-making, digital literacy, staff motivation, and professional development. Comparative methods are used to benchmark Uzbekistan's preschool management practices against international standards, identifying best practices and areas for improvement. Additionally, the study analyzes pedagogical management models and organizational strategies to assess the integration of modern technologies, digital tools, and innovative teaching methodologies within institutional operations.

Through this methodology, the study aims to provide evidence-based insights into the strategic development of leadership competencies, emphasizing the alignment of directors' skills with both national reform objectives and global educational trends. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of how enhanced human resource management can support institutional effectiveness, staff professional growth, and overall quality in preschool education.

Results and Discussion

Considering the viewpoints presented by the researchers mentioned above, it becomes evident that human resource management in preschool education institutions requires deliberate, systematic, and strategic attention. The effectiveness of these institutions largely depends on the professional capacity, motivation, and stability of their pedagogical staff. Therefore, several core aspects must be prioritized to ensure sustainable improvement in the quality of early childhood education.[7]

Firstly, continuous professional development should be viewed as a fundamental component of institutional growth. Preschool educators operate in a rapidly evolving pedagogical environment, where new teaching methodologies, digital tools, and child-centered approaches are constantly emerging. Ensuring that teachers are regularly engaged in professional learning activities—such as training sessions, workshops, methodological seminars, and practice-based learning communities—plays a critical role in strengthening their professional competencies. Exposure to updated curricula, creative teaching strategies, and innovative educational models equips teachers with the skills needed to respond effectively to the diverse developmental needs of children. Moreover, ongoing professional development supports educators in integrating digital technologies into the learning process, promoting interactive, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate teaching practices that align with contemporary educational standards.[8]

Secondly, the establishment of an effective motivational system is essential for maintaining teacher engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction. Motivation in preschool education must be addressed through a balanced combination of financial and non-financial incentives. While competitive salaries, bonuses, and financial recognition remain important, research shows that intangible forms of appreciation—including public recognition, opportunities for career advancement, supportive leadership, and positive workplace culture—can have an equally significant impact on staff morale. A well-structured motivation strategy acknowledges the professional contributions of teachers,

reinforces their sense of value within the organization, and encourages higher levels of responsibility and initiative. Recognition of individual achievements, open communication between management and staff, and the creation of a collaborative working environment all help enhance teachers' self-efficacy and long-term commitment to the institution.[9]

Furthermore, in the context of digital transformation and increasing demands for innovation, these two aspects—continuous professional development and motivation—become even more closely intertwined. Professional development strengthens teachers' competencies, while a strong motivational system ensures that these competencies are applied effectively in daily practice. Together, they create a favorable environment that supports professional growth, promotes innovation in teaching, and ultimately improves the overall quality of preschool education services.[10]

Conclusion

The analysis of human resource management within preschool education institutions demonstrates that strengthening the competencies of directors is essential for ensuring the quality and sustainability of early childhood education, especially in the era of rapid digital transformation. As digital tools and data-driven decision-making become integral to educational governance, directors are required to adopt new managerial approaches that go beyond traditional administrative practices. Effective leadership now depends on the ability to integrate technology with strategic human resource planning, support continuous professional development, and cultivate a motivated, adaptable, and innovative workforce.

The findings highlight that directors must be able to create conditions that encourage lifelong learning among staff, promote the effective use of digital resources, and foster a culture of collaboration and openness to innovation. Equally important is the establishment of a balanced motivation system that recognizes both the professional contributions and the developmental needs of educators. Such an approach enhances staff engagement, strengthens organizational resilience, and improves overall institutional performance.

In this context, developing human resource management competencies emerges as a critical factor for navigating the challenges of digitalization. By equipping preschool leaders with modern managerial skills—ranging from human capital development to digital literacy and data-informed leadership—institutions can better respond to contemporary demands and ensure meaningful improvements in early childhood education. Ultimately, enhancing these competencies contributes to building more effective, future-oriented preschool education systems capable of supporting children's holistic development in a rapidly changing world.

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