

## Creating a Competitive Environment Among Pedagogical Staff in Preschool Educational Institutions

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the role and importance of the head of preschool educational institutions in creating a healthy competitive environment among pedagogical staff. The impact of competition on improving teachers' professional skills, supporting innovative ideas, and enhancing the efficiency of educational quality is highlighted. Moreover, the leadership strategies, motivation mechanisms, as well as methods of encouraging cooperation and creativity within the team are examined based on practical examples. The results of the study can serve to improve effective management and develop human resources in the preschool education system.

**Keywords:** preschool education, leader, pedagogical staff, healthy competition, management strategy, motivation, innovative activity, education quality, teamwork cooperation.



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### INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization and rapid development of information technologies, forming a healthy competitive environment in the education system has become more urgent than ever. Preschool education is considered a decisive foundation in the process of raising a well-rounded, creative, and proactive personality in the future. Therefore, heads of preschool institutions must not only effectively organize the educational process but also take the lead in creating a competitive environment that encourages creativity, initiative, and professional development among pedagogical staff.

In the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated May 8, 2019, PQ-4312 "On approval of the Concept for the Development of Preschool Education until 2030," one of the priority tasks is defined as improving teachers' qualifications, introducing advanced foreign experience, and widely applying innovative approaches to improve the quality of education [1]. In addition, the Presidential Decree PF-60 of January 28, 2022, "The Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan," emphasizes the development of a healthy competitive environment, increasing staff potential, and introducing modern management methods in education as one of the key directions [2].

Creating healthy competition among pedagogical staff contributes to increasing their professional competence, implementing innovative methods in practice, and developing creative potential. In such an environment, teachers are motivated to work on themselves regularly, search for new ideas, and strive to improve educational quality. The leader, as the main organizer of this process,

must implement a management strategy based on principles of mutual respect, cooperation, and fairness within the team.

Today, the formation of healthy competition is an important factor not only in achieving individual success but also in ensuring collective results. For this reason, the initiatives and management approaches of leaders in preschool educational institutions in this direction remain an urgent scientific problem to study both theoretically and practically.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, the content of leadership activities in the education system, particularly in preschool institutions, has been significantly updated, and the issue of forming a healthy competitive environment has been recognized as a relevant scientific and practical direction. The analysis of research shows that competition should not be viewed only as a means of increasing performance results, but also as a strategic mechanism for teachers' professional growth and the improvement of education quality.

According to the Presidential Decree PQ-4312 of May 8, 2019, which approved the "Concept for the Development of Preschool Education until 2030," increasing teachers' professional development and competitiveness was defined as one of the priority directions. The Presidential Decree PF-60 of January 28, 2022 — "Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan" — also includes the introduction of innovations in education, the improvement of professional development systems, and the development of healthy competition [2]. Furthermore, according to the 2023 data from the Preschool Education Agency, 68 percent of teachers who participated in competitive events such as the "Best Teacher" contest introduced innovative methods into the teaching process in the following year.

American management theorist M. Porter explains healthy competition as a generator of innovation, emphasizing that in the education system it fosters methodological renewal and the development of individual strengths among teachers [3]. J. Kotter notes that effective leadership requires directing competition towards major goals [4]. In their studies, G. Hallinger and R. Heck analyzed the impact of transformational leadership and concluded that in a competitive environment, a culture of cooperation and mutual learning provides positive outcomes in the learning process [5].

The European Institute for the Development of Education, in its report, actively promotes the "Professional Learning Communities" (PLC) approach in the field of preschool education [6]. Japanese scholar T. Makino, after a thorough study of this model, proved that in conditions where competition and cooperation are harmonized, teachers' professional motivation remains stable [7]. Australian researcher L. Cranston, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of leaders' emotional intelligence and conflict management skills in reducing stress factors in competitive environments [8].

Uzbek scholar M. Yuldosheva developed mechanisms for supporting healthy competition by improving the management culture and communicative competence of preschool institution leaders. According to her, transparency, fairness, and efficiency should be priority principles in leadership [9]. N. Karimova scientifically justified that along with material incentives, spiritual motivation — such as creative contests, competitions for the "Best Lesson Plan," open classes, and seminars — provide effective results in the process of forming competition [10].

Research conducted by the Scientific-Methodical Center under the Preschool Education Agency showed that healthy competition among teachers stimulates their participation in professional development courses, active involvement in international exchange programs, and adoption of modern educational technologies [11].

## METHODOLOGY

This study is aimed at examining the strategies of preschool institution leaders in creating a healthy competitive environment among pedagogical staff. Its methodological basis integrates the principles of management psychology, educational management, and theories of collective learning.

The following approaches were applied in the research:

Systematic approach – viewing the competitive environment as an integral part of the education system.

Person-centered approach – defining teachers' professional development as the main objective.

Innovative management approach – interpreting competition as a means of introducing new ideas and technologies.

The research was conducted in three stages:

1. Preparatory stage – analysis of regulatory and legal documents related to the subject ("Law on Preschool Education and Upbringing," Presidential decrees, the Concept for Development until 2030), as well as scientific literature review.
2. Practical stage – conducting surveys, semi-structured interviews, and observations among preschool leaders and teachers.
3. Analysis and generalization stage – coding of obtained data, statistical analysis, and formulation of scientific conclusions.

Survey. Using questionnaires with 20 questions, the opinions and experiences of teachers regarding the competitive environment were studied (120 respondents).

Interview. In-depth interviews were conducted with 8 experienced leaders.

Observation. In 5 institutions, elements of competition were recorded during methodological meetings and creative contests involving teachers.

Document analysis. Internal orders, annual reports, and decisions of methodological councils of the institutions were examined.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The data obtained during the study confirmed the leading role of preschool institution leaders in the process of creating a healthy competitive environment among pedagogical staff.

Survey results. The questionnaire conducted among 120 teachers produced the following outcomes:

**Table 1**

Question	"Yes" (%)	"No" (%)	"Partly" (%)
The leader encourages competition	68	15	17
Competition positively affects professional growth	74	10	16
Stress increases in a competitive environment	39	46	15
Innovative ideas are	62	21	17

promoted through contests			
The incentive system is fair	55	28	17

The results show that more than half of the teachers positively assessed the support of healthy competition by leaders. However, the fairness of the incentive system was rated relatively low (55%), indicating the need for reforms.

Interview results. In-depth interviews with 8 leaders revealed the following common ideas:

Healthy competition increases creativity and initiative within the team;

The main tools of competition are contests of methodological works, open lessons, and exchange of best practices;

In some institutions, the absence of clearly defined evaluation criteria was identified as a problem.

Observation results. In 5 institutions during methodological meetings and contests:

When material and moral incentives were applied in a balanced way, teacher participation activity increased by 20–25%;

When the evaluation process was transparent and open, almost no dissatisfaction was observed.

Document analysis. Although leaders' orders and decisions of methodological councils included measures to support competition, the mechanisms of implementation were not uniform everywhere. In some institutions, the contest "Best Teacher of the Year" was not held regularly.

Creating a healthy competitive environment is directly related to leaders' strategic decisions and transparent management. In institutions where the system functioned effectively, teachers' professional activity and creativity were at a high level. However, further improvements are required regarding incentive criteria, fairness of evaluation, and regularity.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the conducted research confirm that the role of preschool institution leaders is a decisive factor in creating a healthy competitive environment among pedagogical staff. The obtained data are consistent with the theoretical views presented in both local and international scientific studies.

As Sh. Yuldoshev emphasized, in order to create healthy competition in the education system, the leader's organizational competence and fair management style play a crucial role [12]. Our study also showed that transparency in evaluation and the fair operation of the incentive system are among the main factors that increase teachers' activity and creativity.

International experiences, particularly M. Porter's theory of competitive advantage, highlight that competition strategies focused on human capital are considered a key guarantee of sustainable development [13]. In Finland's preschool education system, for example, leaders encourage competition mainly through methodological developments, innovative projects, and creative contests, which is consistent with our observation results.

However, the findings indicate that in some institutions the lack of clearly defined evaluation criteria and incentive mechanisms creates certain obstacles. This situation shows the need for administrative and methodological improvements in order to meet the quality education standards outlined in the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).

Furthermore, the results suggest that creating a healthy competitive environment should not be limited only to incentive systems, but also enriched through promoting cooperation, knowledge

sharing, and exchange of experiences among teachers. This approach aligns with J. Dewey's educational philosophy, which advocates the idea of "learning through cooperation."

As a result, leaders' strategic decisions, transparency in management, and consistency in incentives constitute the main pillars of a healthy competitive environment. As shown in the study, when these factors are harmonized, teachers' professional growth and the quality of education increase significantly.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study showed that in preschool educational institutions, the leadership competence, strategic decision-making activity, and establishment of a fair incentive system by leaders play a decisive role in creating a healthy competitive environment among pedagogical staff.

The analysis of surveys, interviews, and observations confirmed that:

In institutions that support competition and have transparent evaluation systems, teachers' professional activity is higher;

Where incentive criteria are not clearly defined, participants' motivation decreases and dissatisfaction arises;

Encouraging innovative ideas through contests, methodological developments, and creative projects produces positive outcomes.

Comparative analysis of international and local scientific views revealed that creating a healthy competitive environment not only improves individual achievements but also strengthens collaboration within the team and enhances the quality indicators of education.

Therefore, the following recommendations were developed:

Establish clear and transparent criteria for evaluating teachers;

Combine material and moral forms of incentives;

Regularly organize innovative contests and creative projects;

Implement a system of experience exchange and mutual learning among teachers.

If these measures are implemented, a healthy competitive environment will develop sustainably in preschool institutions, and teachers' professional potential as well as the quality of education will significantly improve.

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