

Professional Competencies of Leaders in the Preschool and School Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan

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Annotation:

The article analyzes in detail investments in the education system, goals and measures aimed at developing the education system, the international program for assessing the educational achievements of students PIRLS, TIMSS, PISA and TALIS, the integration of the republic's education system into the world education system. The article also provides a framework of key competencies, professionally important qualities of leaders of the preschool and school education system, the specifics of management activities, personal characteristics of an education director, a model of a modern leader, and a professional profile of an education director.

Key words: Investments, development, international programs, PIRLS, TIMSS, PISA, TALIS, integration of the education system, framework settings, key competencies, professionally important qualities, specificity, management, personal characteristics, model of a modern leader, professionogram.

Uzbekistan has chosen and is implementing a course toward building a democratic, rule-of-law state and a civil society that ensures the strict observance of human rights and freedoms, the formation of a socially oriented market economy, the development of modern technologies, the spiritual renewal of society, and integration into the global community.

Uzbekistan's unique development model, designed with consideration for the country's socio-political structure and traditions, has led to the dominance and irreversibility of universally recognized principles and norms of socio-political, socio-economic, and spiritual life. These principles not only define the country's current state but also determine its future progress.

A key condition for the country's development is the operation of a well-functioning system of continuous education, built on the foundation of advancements in the modern economy, science, culture, engineering, and technology. This system must ensure the formation of a new generation of professionals with the ability to set and solve long-term challenges, a high level of general and professional culture, creative social and personal activity, and the ability to navigate socio-political life independently.

The Republic recognizes the critical importance of investing in the skills and education of its population. In recent years, ambitious goals have been set, along with a series of measures aimed at achieving them.

➤ **Preschool Education**

The primary focus is on expanding the system and increasing enrollment to ensure equal access to quality preschool education and to enhance children's readiness for school.

➤ **General Secondary Education**

The key priorities include improving students' academic performance in both national and international assessments, enhancing the professional competencies of teachers, and developing 21st-century teaching standards. These standards encompass both regulatory aspects (such as professional certification) and qualitative criteria (such as the attributes of a modern teacher). Uzbekistan also aims to rank among the top 30 countries in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) by 2030. To achieve this, the country plans to participate in several international studies, including PIRLS, TIMSS, PISA, and TALIS, in order to continuously monitor education using comparative indicators in both primary and secondary education. Additionally, efforts will be made to improve the national system for assessing student achievements and education quality.

➤ **Higher Education**

The main priorities in higher education include increasing participation rates—both in terms of gender parity and accessibility for students with disabilities—and improving the quality of exam results and ICT skills among youth and adults. Moreover, by 2030, Uzbekistan's universities aim to be among the world's top 500 universities.

With globalization and the rapid advancement of information and technological processes, scholars and experts in acmeology, professional studies, and psychology have increasingly pointed out the universal nature of professional activities and their consolidation. They note that this will lead to changes in qualification structures. Specifically, while a certain universal minimum set of knowledge, skills, and abilities will become standardized, specialization levels and quality will rise sharply. In today's world, professional success depends on functional literacy and a high level of universal (methodological) knowledge. These qualities will enable individuals to navigate the integrated global space effectively and plan their careers accordingly.

The European Community has recognized a trend toward the formation of a minimum necessary set of knowledge, skills, and abilities that allows for the standardization of education systems across different countries while also granting citizens of other nations the right and opportunity to participate in European processes. At the international political level, this function was fulfilled by the Bologna Agreement (1999). The Bologna Process is, in essence, a mechanism for integrating new countries into European integration and global globalization through the education system.

In the modern context of globalization, technological advancement, humanization, cultural shifts, and professionalization, the following components of functional literacy are required: computer

literacy, language literacy, symbolic literacy, civic and legal literacy, environmental literacy, activity-based literacy, and humanitarian literacy.

In 2006, the Council of Europe introduced the following definition of competencies:

“Competencies are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes within a given context. Key competencies are those necessary for all individuals to achieve personal fulfillment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion, and employment.”

The framework defines eight key competencies:

1. Communication in the native language
2. Communication in foreign languages
3. Mathematical literacy and basic competencies in science and technology
4. Computer literacy
5. Learning-to-learn skills
6. Social and civic competencies
7. A sense of innovation and entrepreneurship
8. Cultural awareness and the ability to express oneself in the cultural sphere.

Key competencies are considered equally important, as each one contributes to success in a knowledge-based society. Many competencies overlap and interconnect—skills essential in one area support competence in another. Proficiency in fundamental skills, such as language, literacy, numeracy, information management, and information technology, forms the foundation for learning. Meanwhile, learning-to-learn skills support the entire educational process.

An analysis of national and international sources on professional competencies (competences) and qualifications (qualification) has shown that these categories do not have a strict distinction. The difference between them can only be understood in the context of their intended use. Competencies generally refer to a minimum, basic set of knowledge, skills, abilities, and aptitudes. However, the set of knowledge, skills, and abilities alone does not fully define "competence." Competence is a necessary condition, a kind of link between an individual and their professional field. Competencies provide minimum guarantees for a person's socialization and protection of their right to work. Therefore, the terms "competence" and "competency" are used when discussing employment (after a person has been hired and granted the right to perform a specific function) or when addressing philosophical and organizational issues of workforce training.

The term "qualification" is most often used to confirm the fact of acquired education, as recorded in certificates and diplomas. In policy documents and international regulatory acts on education policy, the term "qualification" is preferred. Competence is used as a complementary characteristic of qualification.

The Bologna Process does not define or establish a specific set of competencies and qualifications. The right to determine the composition of competencies and qualifications remains with scholars and specialists in each individual country.

The Bologna Process in countries with developing economies has sparked numerous discussions and publications at the level of pedagogical scientific communications. When the adaptation of the new approach was just beginning, scientific communications took the form of terminological disputes that had no practical resolution, logical distinctions, or conclusions. This led to a certain trend towards a competency-based approach and, as a consequence, confusion and blending of concepts such as "competence," "competencies," "qualification," and "functional literacy." At the

same time, the long-standing scientific-pedagogical debate about knowledge, skills, and abilities was renewed. The penetration of terms and definitions from one field into another began. For example, the term "key competencies" was primarily used in business education for preparing managers and specialists in entrepreneurship. Now, this term is used almost everywhere, including in pedagogy.

The professionally important qualities of leaders in the preschool and school education system are those that exist as a result of the activity and are characteristic only of leaders. The personal aspect includes anthropological and axiological characteristics (values, spiritual self-determination, will, etc.). However, the successful implementation of activities is possible when the personal and the professional do not contradict each other and do not create internal conflict.

The professionally important qualities of education leaders must be coordinated and not contradict the essence of management activity itself. If the substantive goals and tasks, as well as methods of activity implementation, conflict with a person's attitudes and abilities, it leads either to the "exclusion" of the person from the profession or to a change in the very nature of management activities.

The specifics of management activity largely determine the requirements for personal qualities. If the management system is hierarchical, stable, and strictly regulated, the person is required to exhibit submission, obedience, discipline, and so on. Emotionality and individuality are not necessary in such systems. In democratic systems of management, the attitude toward people changes—the legal aspect of activities becomes more important than the human one. In legal systems, a person acquires new statuses—they become a citizen within the framework of social and public relations, or a subject of labor and professional relations, functioning according to certain norms and rules. In democratic systems, the leader, who takes on most of the responsibility, is required to demonstrate such qualities as independence, creativity, mobility, flexibility, and reflectiveness when making decisions, the ability to argue their point of view, listen to others, engage in discussions, work both in a team and individually, and so on.

Conditionally, the personal characteristics of an education leader, derived from management activities, can be divided into three groups:

1. qualities necessary for understanding and analyzing specific situations of group interaction; organizational, team, and executive qualities, etc.;
2. communicative qualities: the ability to engage in dialogue, understand others, convey decisions, analyze collective and individual works, etc.;
3. Cognitive qualities: the ability to reflect, independence and logical thinking, critical thinking, the ability to reconstruct and reproduce ideas, etc.

During transitional periods of reforms and transformations, when it is necessary to significantly and radically change the type of management activity, leaders must possess the following qualities: principled stance, persistence, the ability to inspire and lead people, form a team from scratch, and justify their decisions, among others.

There are many psychological tests that can identify personal qualities necessary for specific professions and activity situations. Knowledge and ability can be acquired through learning. Responsibility as a phenomenon begins to manifest only under conditions where the social mechanism of "demand-response" is in place.

A modern education leader is someone who thinks culturally, develops educational activities at different levels, and is capable of taking responsibility for their decisions and actions in specific situations.

Numerous pedagogical and psychological studies have established that there are certain overlapping characteristics in the management activities of leaders at different levels, which allow for modeling their core qualities. The following qualities are most commonly identified by various authors:

- **Intelligence.** It should be above average, but not at the level of genius. The ability to solve complex and abstract problems is key.
- **Initiative and business activity.** This implies motivation to act, independence, and resourcefulness.
- **Self-confidence,** linked to a high self-assessment of competence and a high level of aspirations.
- **The so-called "helicopter factor,"** or the ability to rise above the details and perceive the situation in a broader context.

In the professionogram of a leader proposed by scholars, there are three blocks of qualities:

1. General qualities include:

- Extraordinary intelligence
- Fundamental knowledge
- Sufficient experience

2. The second block includes **specific qualities**:

- Ideological and moral qualities, which express worldview, culture, moral motivation for actions, and civic qualities.
- Scientific-professional qualities include knowledge and experience that characterize technical-economic and managerial competence, as well as the theoretical and practical level of competence.
- Organizational qualities include everything related to the ability to select and assign staff, plan their work, ensure clear control, etc.
- Psychophysical qualities include somatic and psychological traits necessary for a worker in a managerial profession (good health, tendency toward systematic thinking, developed imagination, trained memory, and willpower).

3. The third block includes **specific personal and business qualities**, primarily represented by psychological and pedagogical qualities.

Psychological and pedagogical qualities include:

- Communicativeness - the ability to quickly establish contact with people and interact with them.
- Empathy - the ability to empathize, catch people's moods, and identify their attitudes and expectations.
- Psychoanalytic ability, i.e., self-control, self-criticism, self-assessment of one's actions.
- Stress resistance, i.e., physical fitness, self-suggestion, ability to switch and manage emotions.
- Eloquence - the ability to master one's words perfectly, meaning the ability to persuade and convince with speech.
- Visual appeal - the external attractiveness of a person.

The presence of specific personal-business qualities creates the image of a leader and the effect of their personal charisma.

The following qualities of a modern leader should be recognized as the most successful:

- **High professionalism.** Regardless of the leader's organizational qualities, the most important thing for them has always been and remains high professionalism, knowledge of the essence and specifics of their specialty. This is the foundation of the leader's authority, and it determines the quality of task execution.
- **Responsibility and reliability.** The lack of these management qualities is something we constantly feel in everyday life, reaping the consequences of years of discouraging irresponsibility.
- **Self-confidence and the ability to influence subordinates.** The success of management activity is determined by this quality. Its manifestation resonates deeply with subordinates. Why? First, because in difficult situations, one can rely on such a leader. This creates the corresponding emotional tone among subordinates. Second, the leader's confidence, by the law of psychological contagion, is transferred to subordinates, and they act accordingly.
- **Independence.** The key is that the leader must have their own perspective on emerging issues, their own professional and personal identity, and maintain this in their subordinates. No matter how good the deputies and consultants are, and no matter what advice the leader receives from the people around them, the final decision must be made by the leader themselves.
- **Ability to solve tasks creatively and a desire for achievement.** Here, we are closely touching upon the issue of the leader's intellect. What matters most for a leader is practical intelligence, i.e., the ability to solve daily management problems creatively. The relationship between the leader's intellect and the effectiveness of their activity is an interesting topic.
- **Emotional stability and stress resistance.** It is extremely important for a leader to control their emotional expressions. They must build even and professional relationships with everyone, regardless of their mood or personal feelings. It has been proven that in most cases, emotional instability reduces a person's confidence in their abilities, and thus their managerial activity.
- **Communicability, sociability, closeness to subordinates.** According to several authors, managers spend more than three-quarters of their working time communicating (through verbal communication). Most leaders believe that the main reason a capable manager does not succeed in their career is poor interaction with their colleagues and subordinates. A leader can make balanced and rational decisions only when they know the real state of affairs, actively interact with their subordinates, and rely on them. All of this is possible only if the leader develops communicability and sociability.

A deep comparative analysis of the actual state of continuous education, the design of new theories, and methodologies for forming the professionally important qualities of leaders in the preschool and school education system becomes an urgent and necessary step in the development of education systems.

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