

IMPROVING THE COLLABORATIVE WORKING SKILLS OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION STAFF BASED ON INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT METHODS

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Abstract. *The effectiveness of preschool educational organizations increasingly depends not only on the individual professional competence of educators, but also on the quality of collaboration among teachers, methodologists, psychologists, caregivers, administrators, and families. In contemporary early childhood education, innovative management methods create new opportunities for developing a cooperative professional culture, strengthening shared responsibility, and improving the pedagogical quality of preschool institutions. This article examines the improvement of collaborative working skills among preschool educational organization staff through innovative management approaches. The study is based on the IMRAD structure and applies a qualitative-analytical research design. The methodological basis of the article includes theoretical analysis, comparative review of international experience, pedagogical observation, expert assessment, and modelling of an innovation-oriented management mechanism. The findings show that collaborative working skills are enhanced when preschool leaders introduce participatory decision-making, distributed leadership, digital communication tools, professional learning communities, reflective meetings, mentoring systems, and project-based teamwork. The article argues that innovative management should not be limited to administrative modernization; rather, it should become a systematic pedagogical mechanism aimed at transforming staff interaction, professional motivation, institutional trust, and collective responsibility. The proposed model can be used by preschool directors, deputy directors, methodologists, and education policymakers to improve the effectiveness of teamwork in preschool educational organizations.*

Keywords: *preschool education, innovative management, collaborative working skills, early childhood education, staff teamwork, distributed leadership, professional learning community, pedagogical management, educational organization, professional development.*

Introduction. Preschool education is the first institutional stage in the lifelong learning system. It prepares children for school, supports their cognitive, emotional, social, speech, physical, and moral development, and creates the foundation for successful socialization. Therefore, the quality of preschool education depends on a complex system of factors, including curriculum content, pedagogical methods, learning environment, family participation, material resources, and, most importantly, the professional cooperation of staff members. In a preschool educational organization, no specialist can ensure educational quality in isolation. The educator organizes daily pedagogical processes, the psychologist supports children's emotional and social development, the methodologist coordinates didactic work, the medical worker monitors health-related conditions, the administration regulates institutional processes, and parents contribute to

continuity between home and preschool. For this reason, collaboration is not an additional skill, but a fundamental component of preschool management and pedagogical effectiveness.

In recent years, the concept of educational management has undergone significant transformation. Traditional hierarchical management, based mainly on control, instruction, reporting, and administrative discipline, is no longer sufficient for modern preschool institutions. Contemporary preschool organizations require flexible, participatory, innovative, and human-centered management models. Innovative management methods are characterized by openness to change, digitalization of organizational processes, evidence-based decision-making, professional reflection, collaborative planning, teamwork, mentoring, distributed leadership, and continuous improvement. Such approaches allow preschool staff to move from individual performance to collective responsibility.

The relevance of the present article is determined by several factors. First, preschool educational organizations operate in an environment of increasing social expectations. Parents expect preschool institutions not only to care for children, but also to ensure their intellectual, emotional, moral, and communicative development. Second, modern pedagogical standards require interdisciplinary cooperation among educators and specialists. Third, the professional workload of preschool employees is increasing, and this requires effective internal communication, mutual support, and rational distribution of responsibilities. Fourth, innovative management methods create new opportunities for strengthening staff motivation and reducing professional isolation.

Collaborative working skills among preschool staff include the ability to plan educational activities together, exchange professional experience, jointly solve pedagogical problems, provide constructive feedback, participate in collective decision-making, respect professional roles, resolve conflicts ethically, and coordinate actions in the interests of children's development. These skills are especially important in preschool education because children's development is holistic. A child's speech development, emotional stability, social behavior, motor activity, creativity, and cognitive growth are interrelated. Therefore, staff collaboration must also be holistic and integrated.

The scientific problem of this article can be formulated as follows: although innovative management methods are increasingly recognized as necessary for preschool educational organizations, their potential for improving the collaborative working skills of staff is not always systematically implemented. In many preschool institutions, collaboration is understood mainly as formal meetings, reporting, or joint participation in events. However, real collaboration requires a deeper organizational culture based on trust, shared goals, professional dialogue, and collective reflection.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the pedagogical and managerial possibilities of improving the collaborative working skills of preschool educational organization staff through innovative management methods.

The objectives of the article are: to clarify the theoretical essence of innovative management in preschool education; to define the structure of collaborative working skills among preschool staff; to identify innovative management methods that support teamwork; to propose a

conceptual model for improving collaboration in preschool educational organizations; and to determine the expected pedagogical outcomes of such improvement.

The research hypothesis is that if innovative management methods are systematically introduced into preschool educational organizations, then the collaborative working skills of staff will improve because participatory leadership, professional learning communities, mentoring, digital communication, and reflective management create favorable conditions for professional cooperation, mutual trust, and shared responsibility.

Materials and Methods. This study was conducted on the basis of a qualitative-analytical research design. The selected approach is appropriate because the problem of improving collaborative working skills in preschool educational organizations is not limited to measurable administrative indicators. It also involves professional attitudes, interpersonal communication, organizational culture, leadership style, motivation, and pedagogical values. Therefore, the article combines theoretical analysis, comparative review, pedagogical modelling, and expert interpretation.

The materials of the study include scientific literature on early childhood education management, innovative leadership, collaborative leadership, distributed leadership, professional learning communities, staff development, and teamwork in educational organizations. In addition, the study uses conceptual ideas from international research on early childhood education and care, especially those related to leadership for quality, staff professional development, and collaborative culture.

The methodological framework of the study consists of five main methods.

First, theoretical analysis was used to examine the concepts of innovative management, collaborative working skills, preschool staff development, and educational leadership. This method made it possible to identify the theoretical relationship between management innovation and staff cooperation.

Second, comparative analysis was applied to study international approaches to collaborative leadership in early childhood education. This helped to distinguish between traditional administrative management and innovation-oriented management. Comparative analysis also showed that successful preschool organizations often rely on teamwork, shared responsibility, continuous professional learning, and internal communication.

Third, pedagogical modelling was used to develop a conceptual model for improving collaborative working skills among preschool educational organization staff. The model includes the purpose, principles, management methods, implementation stages, assessment criteria, and expected outcomes.

Fourth, expert assessment was used at the theoretical level to determine which management methods are most relevant for preschool organizations. The expert logic was based on the practical needs of preschool institutions: communication, coordination, professional support, conflict prevention, pedagogical planning, and quality improvement.

Fifth, reflective analysis was used to interpret the possible outcomes of innovative management methods. Reflective analysis is especially important in preschool education because staff development is closely connected with self-assessment, professional dialogue, and continuous improvement.

The object of the study is the management process in preschool educational organizations.

The subject of the study is the improvement of collaborative working skills among preschool educational organization staff through innovative management methods.

The article focuses on the following categories of staff: preschool teachers, assistant teachers, methodologists, psychologists, speech therapists, music teachers, physical education instructors, medical workers, caregivers, administrative staff, and preschool leaders. This broad approach is necessary because collaboration in preschool organizations must involve all participants in the educational environment.

The main criteria used to analyze collaborative working skills are: communication culture, joint planning, role coordination, mutual professional support, conflict resolution, shared decision-making, reflective practice, digital cooperation, responsibility for common results, and openness to innovation.

Results. The results of the study show that innovative management methods can significantly improve the collaborative working skills of preschool educational organization staff when they are implemented systematically and not formally. The analysis identified several key findings.

1. Innovative management transforms collaboration from formal interaction into professional partnership. In traditional preschool management, cooperation is often limited to scheduled meetings, administrative instructions, and preparation for institutional events. Staff members may work in the same organization but remain professionally isolated. Innovative management changes this situation by creating conditions for active participation, professional dialogue, mutual learning, and joint decision-making.

The first important result is that collaboration becomes effective when the preschool leader acts not only as an administrator, but also as a facilitator of professional interaction. A facilitator-leader supports communication among staff, encourages initiative, organizes reflective discussions, and helps employees solve problems collectively. In such an environment, teachers and specialists do not wait only for instructions; they participate in identifying problems and developing solutions.

2. Distributed leadership strengthens shared responsibility. One of the most effective innovative management methods is distributed leadership. This approach means that leadership functions are not concentrated only in the hands of the director. Instead, certain responsibilities are shared among methodologists, experienced teachers, psychologists, group leaders, and project coordinators. Distributed leadership does not weaken the authority of the preschool director. On the contrary, it increases organizational effectiveness because each staff member becomes responsible for a specific area of development.

For example, one educator may coordinate inclusive education activities, another may lead environmental education projects, a psychologist may organize emotional development programs, and a methodologist may supervise lesson planning quality. As a result, staff members develop initiative, responsibility, and professional confidence. Collaborative working skills improve because employees learn to coordinate their roles, consult each other, and work toward common institutional goals.

3. Professional learning communities improve pedagogical cooperation. The study shows that professional learning communities are one of the most productive mechanisms for improving staff collaboration. A professional learning community is a group of educators and specialists who regularly meet to analyze pedagogical problems, share experience, discuss children's development, study new methods, and plan improvements.

In preschool organizations, professional learning communities may be organized around topics such as speech development, social-emotional learning, school readiness, inclusive education, play-based learning, family cooperation, health-preserving technologies, or digital resources. These communities encourage teachers to move beyond individual experience and build collective professional knowledge.

The effectiveness of professional learning communities depends on several conditions: regular meetings, clear goals, open discussion, evidence-based reflection, respectful communication, practical tasks, and feedback. When these conditions are met, staff members become more willing to exchange ideas, accept constructive criticism, and support each other.

4. Digital management tools improve communication and coordination. Digitalization is an important component of innovative management. In preschool educational organizations, digital tools can improve staff collaboration by making communication faster, more transparent, and more systematic. Digital platforms, shared calendars, online planning documents, electronic portfolios, communication groups, and internal databases allow staff to coordinate daily activities more effectively.

For example, teachers can use shared digital plans to coordinate weekly educational activities. Methodologists can provide online feedback on lesson plans. Psychologists can share recommendations for working with children who need additional emotional support. Administrators can monitor tasks without unnecessary paperwork. Parents can also be involved through digital communication channels, which improves continuity between preschool and family.

However, digital tools should not replace live professional communication. They should support collaboration, not create additional bureaucratic pressure. Therefore, digital management must be simple, purposeful, and pedagogically meaningful.

Discussion. The results of the study confirm that innovative management methods have strong potential for improving collaborative working skills among preschool educational organization staff. However, this improvement does not happen automatically. Innovation in management must be systematic, purposeful, and adapted to the real conditions of preschool institutions.

The first discussion point concerns the difference between formal and real collaboration. In many educational organizations, collaboration is officially declared, but in practice staff members continue to work separately. Meetings may be held, plans may be written, and reports may be submitted, but these actions do not necessarily create professional partnership. Real collaboration begins when staff members jointly analyze children's needs, share responsibility for educational outcomes, and participate in improving the pedagogical process.

The second discussion point is the role of leadership. Preschool leaders are central to the development of collaborative culture. If the director uses only authoritarian methods, staff

members may avoid initiative and wait for instructions. If the director uses overly passive management, cooperation may become unorganized. Therefore, innovative leadership requires balance: the leader must provide direction, but also create space for participation. This balance is achieved through distributed leadership, facilitation, mentoring, and reflective management.

The third important issue is psychological safety. Staff members will not collaborate effectively if they fear criticism, punishment, or humiliation. Innovative management must create an environment in which employees can openly express ideas, admit difficulties, and ask for support. Psychological safety is especially important in preschool education because teachers often work under emotional pressure. They interact with young children, parents, colleagues, and administrators every day. Without a supportive team, professional burnout may increase.

The fourth discussion point concerns professional learning. Collaborative skills cannot be improved only through administrative orders. Staff members need training, practice, observation, feedback, and reflection. Professional learning communities are effective because they connect learning with real pedagogical practice. Instead of attending one-time seminars, preschool staff regularly discuss their work, analyze children's development, and test new methods.

The fifth issue is digitalization. Digital tools can improve collaboration, but they may also create additional workload if poorly implemented. Therefore, preschool organizations should use digital tools selectively and purposefully. The main question should not be "Which technology is new?" but "Which technology improves communication, planning, and pedagogical quality?" Digital management should simplify cooperation, not complicate it.

The sixth discussion point is the need for assessment. If preschool organizations want to improve collaborative working skills, they must assess them. Assessment may include observation, self-assessment questionnaires, peer feedback, analysis of team projects, and monitoring of communication quality. Assessment should be developmental rather than punitive. Its purpose is to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Based on the analysis, the following conceptual model is proposed.

Conceptual Model for Improving Collaborative Working Skills through Innovative Management

Purpose: to improve the collaborative working skills of preschool educational organization staff through innovative, participatory, and reflective management methods.

Principles: human-centered leadership, shared responsibility, openness, trust, professional dialogue, digital transparency, continuous learning, role coordination, inclusiveness, and evidence-based improvement.

Innovative management methods: distributed leadership, professional learning communities, mentoring, coaching, project-based teamwork, digital communication, reflective meetings, participatory decision-making, peer observation, and internal quality monitoring.

Implementation stages:

1. Diagnostic stage: identifying the current level of staff collaboration, communication problems, professional needs, and organizational barriers.
2. Planning stage: defining collaboration goals, creating working groups, distributing responsibilities, and selecting management methods.

3. Implementation stage: organizing mentoring, professional learning communities, team projects, digital communication, and reflective meetings.

4. Monitoring stage: observing team interaction, collecting feedback, analyzing difficulties, and adjusting management actions.

5. Evaluation stage: assessing changes in staff collaboration, institutional climate, pedagogical quality, and professional motivation.

Assessment criteria: communication effectiveness, participation in joint planning, mutual support, role clarity, conflict resolution, professional initiative, reflective practice, digital cooperation, responsibility for shared outcomes, and satisfaction with teamwork.

Expected outcomes: improved staff collaboration, stronger professional culture, increased pedagogical quality, reduced professional isolation, better communication with families, higher staff motivation, and more effective preschool management.

This model demonstrates that innovative management is not a single method but a system of interconnected managerial and pedagogical actions. Its success depends on the consistency of implementation and the readiness of staff to participate in organizational change.

Conclusion. The improvement of collaborative working skills among preschool educational organization staff is one of the most important conditions for ensuring the quality of early childhood education. Preschool institutions are complex pedagogical environments where children's development depends on the coordinated work of teachers, specialists, administrators, caregivers, and families. Therefore, collaboration must be considered a strategic component of preschool management.

The study shows that innovative management methods create favorable conditions for developing a collaborative professional culture. Distributed leadership strengthens shared responsibility; professional learning communities support collective pedagogical knowledge; mentoring helps young and experienced staff cooperate; project-based teamwork increases initiative; digital tools improve communication and coordination; reflective meetings develop problem-solving culture; and participatory decision-making increases staff motivation.

At the same time, innovative management should not be understood only as the introduction of new technologies or administrative reforms. Its deeper meaning lies in changing the culture of professional interaction. A preschool organization becomes truly innovative when staff members trust each other, learn together, solve problems collectively, and share responsibility for children's development.

The practical significance of the article is that the proposed model can be used in preschool educational organizations to improve teamwork and institutional effectiveness. Preschool leaders may apply the model in staff development programs, internal methodological work, quality monitoring, and strategic planning. The article also has theoretical significance because it clarifies the relationship between innovative management and collaborative working skills in the context of preschool education.

Future research may focus on empirical testing of the proposed model in preschool educational organizations, development of diagnostic tools for measuring collaborative working skills, and comparative analysis of collaboration practices in different preschool systems. It is also

important to study the relationship between staff collaboration and children's developmental outcomes.

In conclusion, innovative management methods are a powerful mechanism for improving the collaborative working skills of preschool staff. When these methods are implemented systematically, preschool educational organizations become more open, flexible, supportive, and effective. Such institutions are better prepared to respond to the needs of children, families, and society.

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