

MECHANISMS FOR DIAGNOSING THE INTELLECTUAL POTENTIAL OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION ORGANIZATION MANAGERS

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ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
This article examines the theoretical and methodological foundations, content, and pedagogical mechanisms for diagnosing the intellectual potential of preschool education organization managers. It highlights the importance of analytical thinking, problem-solving, strategic planning, creativity, communicative competence, information management, and reflective practice as key components of managerial intellectual potential. The article also analyzes the use of observation, interviews, questionnaires, tests, problem-situation modelling, expert assessment, and self-assessment in the diagnostic process. The need to organize assessment based on clear criteria, indicators, and developmental levels is substantiated. Practical recommendations are proposed for using diagnostic results to improve the professional development and managerial effectiveness of preschool education leaders.	Preschool education, manager, intellectual potential, diagnosis, analytical thinking, creativity, strategic planning, reflection, managerial competence, assessment criteria.

Introduction

Today, the effective functioning of the preschool education system, the improvement of the quality of the educational process, and the professional development of the teaching staff depend to a considerable extent on the intellectual potential of the organisation’s head. The manager of a preschool education organisation is not merely an administrator; they are also a specialist who strategically plans the educational process, brings the teaching staff together, resolves challenging situations, and manages innovation. Therefore, developing diagnostic mechanisms that identify, assess, and support the development of a manager’s intellectual capacities is an important and timely issue in educational research.

Intellectual potential encompasses an individual’s existing knowledge, thinking operations, ability to analyse information, solve problems independently, generate new ideas, and consciously improve their own performance. In managerial work, this potential is reflected in the soundness of decisions, the quality of teamwork, the efficient use of resources, and the ability to determine the organisation’s future development priorities.

Diagnosing intellectual potential is not limited to determining a manager’s level of knowledge. It also covers the manager’s thinking style, response to situations, decision-making strategies, ability to adopt innovations, and critical approach to professional practice. For this reason, the diagnostic process should be comprehensive, systematic, and developmental in nature.

The intellectual potential of a preschool education organisation's manager is understood as an integrated system of knowledge, intellectual abilities, creative thinking, analytical approaches, and reflective skills that enable effective management. In addition to the manager's individual characteristics, this potential develops through professional experience, a commitment to lifelong learning, and the ability to apply accumulated knowledge in new situations.

Analytical thinking is an important component of a manager's intellectual potential. It enables a manager to analyse information about the organisation's activities, identify the causes of existing problems, understand relationships among different factors, and compare alternative solutions. For example, when addressing difficulties observed in the work of the teaching staff, a manager should look beyond the visible symptoms, investigate the underlying causes, and determine appropriate management measures.

Strategic thinking is also an important indicator of intellectual potential. A manager with strategic thinking considers not only the organisation's current needs but also its future development opportunities. They seek to set goals, identify priorities, allocate available resources, and anticipate expected outcomes. This approach helps to improve the quality of education and management effectiveness in a preschool education organisation on a consistent basis.

Creative thinking is demonstrated when a manager goes beyond standard solutions, develops new ideas, and proposes unconventional yet well-founded approaches to existing problems. In preschool education, introducing innovative pedagogical technologies, supporting teachers' initiatives, and developing new forms of cooperation with parents require a creative approach.

In addition, communicative competence plays an important role in translating a manager's intellectual potential into practice. The ability to express ideas clearly, listen to others' perspectives, communicate on the basis of evidence, and resolve disagreements constructively affects the effectiveness of management decisions. Reflective ability enables a manager to analyse their own performance, identify shortcomings, and improve future working practices.

Thus, a manager's intellectual potential is not simply a collection of separate abilities; rather, it is an integrated system of analytical, creative, strategic, communicative, and reflective capacities.

A diagnostic mechanism refers to the process of collecting reliable information about a manager's intellectual potential, analysing it according to established criteria, interpreting the results, and determining measures for further development. This mechanism is organised through interrelated stages, methods, assessment criteria, and pedagogical conditions.

At the first stage, the aims and objectives of the diagnosis are established. This involves clarifying which intellectual characteristics of the manager need to be identified, how the assessment results will be used, and which methods will be applied. The purpose of diagnosis should not be limited to identifying shortcomings; it should also identify the manager's strengths and determine prospects for professional development.

At the second stage, diagnostic instruments are selected and developed. Questionnaires, test tasks, situational problems, interview questions, and observation criteria are adapted to the manager's actual management activities. It is advisable for the tasks to address the organisational characteristics of preschool education institutions, work with teaching staff, the maintenance of educational quality, and resource management.

At the third stage, diagnostic data are collected. Rather than drawing conclusions from a single test result, several methods should be used. For example, a test can help identify theoretical knowledge,

situational tasks can reveal practical thinking, and observation can provide insight into characteristics demonstrated in real work.

At the fourth stage, the collected data are analysed using established criteria and indicators. The results are compared to identify the manager's strengths and the areas requiring improvement. Assessment should be transparent, consistent, and based on requirements established in advance.

At the fifth stage, individual development recommendations are prepared. Based on the diagnostic results, a development programme may be designed for the manager, including professional development, analysis of challenging situations, independent learning, exchange of experience, and reflective activities.

At the sixth stage, a follow-up diagnosis is conducted. Initial and subsequent results are compared to assess the effectiveness of the selected development measures. In this way, diagnosis becomes a system that supports continuous professional development rather than a one-off monitoring activity.

Clearly defining criteria and indicators is important when diagnosing the intellectual potential of preschool education managers. Within the scope of this article, it is proposed that a diagnostic model based on the following criteria be used.

The first criterion is the cognitive-analytical criterion. It reflects the manager's management-related knowledge and ability to select and analyse information, identify problems, understand cause-and-effect relationships, and draw well-founded conclusions. Possible indicators include the accuracy of data analysis, logical reasoning, comparison of alternative solutions, and the extent to which decisions are supported by evidence.

The second criterion is the creative-innovative criterion. It characterises the manager's ability to generate new ideas, adapt to non-standard situations, propose innovative solutions, and remain open to change. Indicators may include the number and substance of alternative ideas, the practical feasibility of proposals, readiness to adopt new methods, and initiative.

The third criterion is the strategic-management criterion. It covers the ability to set goals, identify priorities, plan resources, anticipate risks, and assess the potential consequences of management decisions. Under this criterion, the quality of planning, consistency of decisions, forward-looking assessment of problems, and orientation towards results are examined.

The fourth criterion is the communication-and-collaboration criterion. It reflects the manager's ability to communicate effectively with teaching staff, parents, and other partners, exchange ideas, consider different perspectives, and resolve disagreements constructively. Indicators include active listening, clear expression of ideas, evidence-based communication, and the ability to make decisions collaboratively.

The fifth criterion is the reflection-and-self-development criterion. It reflects the manager's ability to analyse their own work, learn from mistakes, assess their intellectual capacities, and set professional development goals. Its indicators include a critical attitude towards one's own performance, willingness to accept feedback, commitment to independent learning, and the ability to develop a personal development plan.

These criteria make it possible to assess different dimensions of a manager's intellectual potential comprehensively. When applying them, the characteristics of the organisation, the manager's responsibilities, and the aims of the diagnosis should be taken into account.

Diagnostic methods

Observation is particularly important when diagnosing managers' intellectual potential. This method is used to examine how a manager analyses information, makes decisions, communicates with the teaching staff, and responds to challenging situations in day-to-day work. Observations should be recorded according to predetermined criteria and based on specific behaviours rather than personal impressions.

Interviews help explore a manager's views on management, problem-solving strategies, and professional development needs in greater depth. During an interview, the manager may be asked to explain why a particular decision was chosen, what evidence informed it, and how alternative options were evaluated.

Questionnaires and self-assessment methods help identify how managers perceive their intellectual capacities, strengths, and development needs. However, self-assessment results should be compared with findings from other methods, because an individual's assessment of their own abilities may differ from their actual performance.

Testing can be used to assess selected indicators related to logical reasoning, analytical ability, information comprehension, and problem-solving. Test tasks should have a clearly defined purpose, be formulated in an understandable way, and use predetermined scoring criteria. Before concluding that a particular test measures intellectual potential comprehensively, its reliability and validity must be established.

The situational-modelling method is an effective tool for identifying the practical thinking of a preschool education organisation's manager. For example, the manager may be presented with a situation involving a disagreement among teachers, a complaint from parents about educational quality, or a need to use available resources efficiently. The assessment examines how the manager analyses the situation, identifies the problem, develops alternative solutions, and justifies the selected decision. Under the expert-assessment method, the manager's performance is analysed by relevant specialists using established criteria. To ensure objectivity, it is important to gather information from several sources, apply the criteria consistently, and minimise the influence of personal relationships. Where necessary, a comprehensive assessment can be conducted by comparing self-assessment, expert opinions, and the results of practical tasks.

Determining levels of intellectual potential

A provisional classification consisting of high, intermediate, and initial levels can be used to analyse a manager's intellectual potential. These levels are proposed within the diagnostic model, and the relevant indicators and assessment thresholds should be developed before they are applied.

At the high level, a manager analyses information independently, identifies the causes of problems, compares several alternative solutions, and explains decisions using evidence. The manager engages in strategic planning, develops innovative proposals, collaborates effectively with the team, and regularly reflects on their own performance. Such a manager demonstrates a relatively independent approach to adapting to new conditions and managing change.

At the intermediate level, a manager possesses the necessary knowledge and skills but may need additional information or methodological support when dealing with complex situations. The manager can resolve routine management problems, but may experience some difficulties in developing alternative solutions, assessing long-term consequences, or reflecting systematically on their work.

At the initial level, a noticeable need for development may be observed in the manager's analytical and strategic thinking, independent decision-making, development of new approaches, and analysis of performance outcomes. In such cases, it is advisable to establish an individual development plan and organise practical training, mentoring, professional consultation, and independent learning.

It is not appropriate to reach a final conclusion about a manager's level on the basis of a single indicator or a general impression. Assessment criteria, indicators, task difficulty, and procedures for calculating results should be developed in advance, piloted where possible, and applied consistently to all participants.

The results of diagnosing the intellectual potential of preschool education managers serve as an important source of information for identifying areas of professional development. If difficulties related to analytical thinking are identified, tasks focused on data analysis, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, and supporting decisions with evidence may be recommended. To develop creativity, methods such as idea generation, proposing different solutions to challenging situations, and planning innovative projects can be used.

To improve strategic thinking, managers may be given practical tasks involving the analysis of an organisation's development prospects, the setting of goals and objectives, resource allocation, and the assessment of expected outcomes. Team discussions, role-play activities, negotiations, and the analysis of conflict situations can be effective tools for developing communication skills.

To develop reflective capacity, it is important for managers to keep an analytical diary of their work, evaluate the results of completed tasks, seek colleagues' feedback, and set specific goals for future activities. Such practices help managers understand their own capacities and take responsibility for their professional growth.

Several pedagogical conditions are necessary for the effective use of diagnostic mechanisms. First, assessment criteria should be appropriate to the specific characteristics of managerial work. Second, diagnostic results should be stored in accordance with confidentiality requirements and professional ethics. Third, assessment should preferably be used to identify development needs and strengthen professional potential, rather than as a means of punishment or comparison among managers. Fourth, clear recommendations should be developed based on diagnostic findings, and their implementation should be reviewed at subsequent stages.

Diagnosing the intellectual potential of preschool education organisation managers is an important pedagogical process that supports effective institutional management, coordination of the teaching staff, and the expansion of opportunities for innovative development. This process requires more than identifying a manager's level of knowledge; it involves a comprehensive examination of analytical and creative thinking, strategic planning, communicative competence, and reflective practice.

The diagnostic model proposed in this article covers the stages of setting objectives, selecting diagnostic instruments, collecting data, analysing results against established criteria, preparing individual development recommendations, and conducting follow-up diagnosis. This approach helps ensure that diagnosis is consistent and developmental in nature.

When assessing intellectual potential, it is important to use several diagnostic methods, establish clear criteria and indicators, interpret results cautiously, and take individual development needs into account. In particular, combining the modelling of real management situations with expert assessment and reflective analysis creates conditions for a more in-depth examination of managers' practical capacities.

Overall, improving mechanisms for diagnosing the intellectual potential of preschool education organisation managers can help develop managers' professional competence, strengthen the evidence base for management decisions, and foster a high-quality management environment within educational organisations. When implementing these mechanisms, it is necessary to examine the reliability of diagnostic instruments, pilot the criteria, and improve development programmes in light of the results obtained.

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