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The Role of Legal Literacy in the Work of a Preschool Educational Institution Director

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Abstract: This article explores the importance of legal literacy in the professional activities of preschool directors in the Republic of Uzbekistan. It examines the regulatory framework for managing the preschool education system and analyzes key areas of legal competence for directors, including organizing the educational process, labor relations, financial and economic activities, and ensuring the protection of students' rights. It substantiates the need to continually improve the legal awareness of directors in the context of reforming the education system in Uzbekistan. It concludes that legal literacy is a crucial factor in the effective management and sustainable development of preschool educational institutions.

Keywords: legal literacy, preschool director, education management, legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, legal awareness, educational law, administrative liability

1. Introduction

In recent years, the Republic of Uzbekistan has implemented large-scale reforms aimed at modernizing preschool education and improving its quality and accessibility. Within this reform environment, the director of a preschool educational organization is expected to combine pedagogical leadership with lawful and accountable management. The legal basis of this responsibility begins with the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan [1], the Law "On Education" [2], the Law "On Preschool Education and Upbringing" [3], the Labor Code [4], and relevant resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers concerning the preschool education system [5].

Legal literacy is therefore not limited to knowledge of statutory texts. It is an integrative professional quality that includes understanding the hierarchy and scope of legal norms, applying them to management decisions, and maintaining a value-oriented commitment to legality, responsibility, and the protection of participants in the educational process. Uzbek scholarship on educational law emphasizes the importance of a legal foundation for institutional governance [6], while studies of preschool management underline the growing managerial demands created by modernization [8].

For preschool directors, legal competence is particularly relevant to personnel administration, occupational safety, financial discipline, procurement, contractual relations, educational standards, and the protection of children's rights. Errors in these areas may expose the institution and its head to administrative, financial, or labor-related disputes. Pedagogical-management literature likewise positions the head of an educational organization as a central actor in coordinating institutional resources and responsibilities [10].

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The present study examines the role of legal literacy in the professional work of preschool educational institution directors in Uzbekistan. It focuses on the conceptual components of legal literacy, the regulatory areas in which directors most frequently exercise legal responsibility, and practical directions for strengthening legal competence in institutional management.

1.1. Literature Review

The literature on legal competence in educational management converges on the view that lawful administration requires more than episodic consultation of regulations. Mirsolieva emphasizes innovation and management quality in education while also recognizing the importance of managerial competence in institutional development [9]. Yuldashev specifically addresses the legal foundations of educational-institution management and the administrator's responsibility for ensuring compliance with applicable norms [11]. These perspectives support treating legal literacy as part of professional managerial competence rather than as a separate technical skill.

Research on competence formation further indicates that legal knowledge must be converted into practical decision-making ability. Yuracyuk's work on the formation of legal competence in future managers highlights the developmental nature of such competence [12], while Shamienova connects legal culture with the broader educational environment and professional formation [13]. Shaidurov similarly treats legal literacy as an element of professional preparation in education [14]. Together, these studies suggest three interrelated dimensions: cognitive knowledge of law, practical-operational ability to apply legal norms, and a value-motivational orientation toward legality and responsibility.

2. Materials and Methods

This study used a qualitative conceptual and normative-legal review design. The analysis combined the principal legal acts governing preschool education and employment relations in the Republic of Uzbekistan with scholarly literature on educational management, legal competence, legal culture, and administrator training. The regulatory corpus included the Constitution, the Law "On Education," the Law "On Preschool Education and Upbringing," the Labor Code, and relevant Cabinet of Ministers regulations [1], [2], [3], [4], [5].

The analytical procedure was conducted in three stages. First, the legal sources were reviewed to identify the director's formal responsibilities in educational organization, labor relations, financial and economic activity, safety, contractual relations, and rights protection. Second, the scholarly sources were thematically examined to identify recurring dimensions of legal literacy and approaches to competence development [6], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14], [15]. Third, the legal and scholarly findings were synthesized into practical categories describing how legal literacy supports lawful decision-making and institutional risk prevention. Because the study is conceptual and document-based, its results are interpretive and are intended to provide a structured basis for subsequent empirical investigation.

3. Result

The analysis shows that legal literacy functions as a cross-cutting managerial competence for preschool directors. Its cognitive component consists of knowledge of the regulatory framework; its practical-operational component concerns the ability to apply legal norms to institutional decisions; and its value-motivational component concerns respect for law, responsibility, and protection of the rights of children, parents, and employees. This structure is consistent with scholarship that treats legal competence and legal culture as developable professional qualities [7], [12], [13], [14].

In labor relations, the director acts as the employer's representative and must correctly manage employment contracts, personnel documentation, performance evaluation, incentives, disciplinary measures, occupational health, and safety. In financial and economic activity, legal literacy supports lawful budgeting, contracting, procurement,

and interaction with supervisory bodies. In the educational domain, it supports compliance with state requirements, internal regulations, sanitary standards, and the duty to provide a safe learning environment [2], [3], [4], [5].

The synthesis also indicates that legal literacy has a preventive function. Directors with stronger legal competence are better positioned to identify legal risks before they become disputes, respond appropriately to citizens' inquiries, document decisions, and maintain transparent relationships with parents, staff, and public authorities. Accordingly, systematic legal training, advisory support, case-based learning, decision algorithms, and reflective practice emerge as practical mechanisms for reducing management risk and strengthening institutional legal culture [7], [15].

4. Discussion

The findings reinforce the view that the work of a preschool director is simultaneously pedagogical, managerial, and legal. The regulatory framework establishes explicit duties, but effective compliance depends on the director's capacity to interpret those duties in concrete managerial situations. This explains why formal familiarity with legislation alone is insufficient: legal literacy must include practical judgment and a stable legal culture. Such an interpretation is compatible with the competence-development perspective advanced in prior research [7], [12] and with studies emphasizing legal culture in professional education [13].

A second implication concerns the relationship between legal literacy and institutional effectiveness. Lawful personnel decisions, transparent financial procedures, properly documented contractual relations, and protection of children's rights are not peripheral administrative tasks; they directly affect organizational stability, trust, and the quality of educational governance. The educational-management literature supports this integrated view of the director's responsibilities [8], [10], [11].

The results also indicate that professional development should be continuous and practice-oriented. Changes in legislation, financing mechanisms, public-private partnerships, and administrative oversight require directors to update their knowledge and test it against realistic cases. Targeted legal-literacy training for educational administrators is therefore especially relevant [15]. Institutions should complement formal courses with consultations, case discussions, document-review exercises, and periodic assessment of legal competence. This study is limited by its conceptual and document-based design; future research should develop validated instruments, assess preschool directors empirically, compare competence across institutional contexts, and examine whether structured legal training reduces management errors, disputes, and compliance risks.

5. Conclusion

Legal literacy is an essential component of the professional competence of preschool educational institution directors in Uzbekistan. It enables directors to translate the national regulatory framework into lawful decisions concerning educational organization, employment relations, financial management, safety, contractual interaction, and rights protection. The study identifies legal literacy as a combination of legal knowledge, practical application skills, and a value-based commitment to legality and responsibility. Strengthening this competence through systematic and practice-oriented professional development can reduce legal risks, support transparent governance, protect children and staff, and contribute to the sustainable development of preschool institutions. Future empirical research is needed to measure these competencies and evaluate the effectiveness of structured legal-literacy development programs.

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