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PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF THE DEMONSTRATION OF COGNITIVE PROPERTIES OF LEADERS OF PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract. This article provides a scientific and theoretical analysis of the psychological determinants of the manifestation of cognitive characteristics of leaders of preschool and school educational organizations. The increasing demands placed on the leader in the modern education system, the complexity of management activities, and the processes of digital transformation make in-depth study of the cognitive potential of leaders an urgent scientific problem. The study considers cognitive complexity, reflective thinking, metacognitive control, adaptive thinking, decision-making, and strategic thinking as the main psychological determinants determining the professional effectiveness of a leader. The article highlights the impact of cognitive determinants on the management effectiveness of leaders of preschool and school educational organizations based on a conceptual model. The results of the study indicate the need to develop cognitive competencies in the system of training and advanced training of leaders.

Keywords: cognitive characteristics, cognitive complexity, psychological determinants, educational management, decision-making, leadership scheme, systematic thinking, cognitive complexity, preschool education.

The reforms being implemented in the world education system are fundamentally changing the requirements for the professional competencies of leaders of educational organizations. Globalization, digital transformation, the rapid development of artificial intelligence technologies and the increasing complexity of the process of managing educational organizations require leaders to have a high level of analytical thinking, strategic planning, reflexive analysis and the ability to make effective decisions in complex management situations. Therefore, the study of the cognitive characteristics of leaders and their psychological determinants in the field of educational management has become one of the priority scientific areas of modern pedagogical psychology.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, modernization of the preschool and school education system, increasing management efficiency and developing the professional potential of managerial personnel are also priority areas of state policy. In this regard, identifying the psychological determinants of the manifestation of cognitive characteristics of leaders and scientifically substantiating their role in management activities is of urgent theoretical and practical importance.

The daily activities of the head of an educational organization are characterized by a continuous decision-making process: he makes decisions at hundreds of different levels, often in conditions of incomplete information, during the day. The quality of these decisions is determined by the cognitive characteristics of the leader - the ability to perceive the situation, analyze, systematize and draw practical conclusions based on it. Recent studies in the psychology of educational management show that these characteristics are formed not by chance, but through

specific psychological determinants - including professional experience, internal representations (schemas) about leadership, and the level of systematic thinking.

The cognitive characteristics of the head of an educational organization are not innate or static qualities, but are a dynamic structure formed through professional experience, manifested through specific psychological mechanisms (schema formation, development of systematic thinking), while the structural appearance of this structure differs depending on the category of organization (preschool/school).

A leader's internal "theory of leadership"—that is, their subjective conception (schema) of what leadership is—is an important cognitive determinant of how they perform specific leadership tasks. A study based on interviews with US school principals identified five leadership schemas:

relational leadership,
leadership by personal example,
distributed leadership,
servant leadership,
directive leadership.

Importantly, while leaders with different schemas perform similar instructional leadership tasks, the way they do so differs significantly depending on their schema—for example, a leader with a relational schema focuses primarily on maintaining a positive attitude when providing feedback to a teacher, while a leader with a directive schema prioritizes giving clear instructions.

This result leads to an important methodological conclusion that it is necessary to understand the cognitive characteristics of a leader not only by assessing the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of his decisions, but also by identifying the deep scheme behind them, because it is this scheme that determines the different "way of thinking" of different leaders in similar situations.

A school is a complex system consisting of a large number of interconnected elements (students, teachers, parents, programs, infrastructure), and the leader's ability to perceive this system as a whole - systemic thinking - is an important manifestation of his cognitive characteristics. Based on qualitative research, it was found that effective decision-making is manifested in three aspects of systemic thinking:

expanding choice possibilities,
identifying the possible consequences of various alternative options,
searching and analyzing relevant information.

Leaders with systems thinking see the situation not as a single problem, but as a set of factors that influence each other, and accordingly take into account indirect, long-term channels of influence. The determinant of systems thinking plays a particularly important role in the implementation of "instructive leadership" by the leader - because improving the quality of education is often not carried out directly, but indirectly through various factors (teacher competence, school climate, resources). Therefore, leaders with a high level of systems thinking are more likely to achieve long-term, sustainable results.

Cognitive complexity—the ability to perceive and differentiate a situation along multiple independent dimensions—has been identified as a key predictor of a leader's ability to activate organizational learning mechanisms through an innovation environment. A study of 131 school principals and 1,279 teachers in Israel found that leaders with high cognitive complexity encouraged employees to think in the same way, by reframing conflicting information into a new, integrated understanding rather than dismissing or simplifying it.

In the context of modern management, digital cognitive competence—the ability to quickly analyze information and make decisions using information and communication technologies—is

seen as a new, expanding component of cognitive characteristics. The cognitive profile of a modern leader encompasses not only traditional analytical skills, but also the ability to think effectively in a digital environment.

Most of the determinants discussed above have been studied in the sample of general school leaders, and the specific appearance of cognitive determinants in the context of preschool education is of particular interest. In a study conducted in China with the participation of 294 preschool educators, the transformational leadership style of the leader included a cognitive component such as intellectual stimulation. In preschool education, the cognitive characteristics of the leader are more often manifested indirectly through the daily interaction with educators rather than through directly observable "official" decisions. The structural difference is that the general school leader works with a multi-level, subject-specific pedagogical team, which places high demands on cognitive complexity; the preschool leader works in a relatively small, but daily, high-intensity environment that requires the integration of information of various natures (pedagogical, medical, social). Therefore, the ability to integrate information from different fields (child development psychology, health standards, communication with parents) may be of particular priority in the cognitive profile of a preschool education leader.

The results obtained indicate that the cognitive characteristics of a leader are not static, innate qualities, but are a dynamic structure formed through professional experience and manifested through various psychological mechanisms (schema, systematic thinking, cognitive complexity).

A particularly important methodological conclusion is that when assessing the cognitive quality of a leader, it is necessary to take into account not only the result of his decisions, but also the scheme and thinking process behind the decision.

Two leaders may achieve similar results from the outside, but their cognitive path — the way they perceive and analyze the situation — may be fundamentally different, which will determine their effectiveness in future, new, previously unmet situations.

The conducted systematic analysis confirmed that the manifestation of cognitive characteristics of leaders of preschool and school educational organizations is determined by several interrelated psychological determinants - professional experience (expertise), leadership scheme, level of systematic thinking, cognitive complexity and digital-cognitive competence. These determinants are hierarchically interconnected, with professional experience playing a key role, and other determinants are formed on this basis. The structural weight of these determinants differs between leaders of preschool and school education.

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