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# STRATEGIES TO PREVENT STAFF TURNOVER IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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**Abstract:**This article examines the theoretical and practical aspects of staff turnover in preschool educational organizations, its primary causes, and strategies for its prevention. The study aims to substantiate effective organizational-pedagogical mechanisms for attracting, onboarding, professionally developing, incentivizing, and retaining pedagogical staff within these organizations. The scientific novelty of the article lies in the development of an integrated "5R" model for preventing staff turnover in preschool educational organizations and the formulation of corresponding KPI metrics for assessment.
**Keywords:** preschool education, pedagogical staff, staff turnover, staff retention, working conditions, professional development, motivation, incentives, mentoring, leadership, HR strategy, KPI.

**INTRODUCTION.** Preschool education is a vital social institution that fosters an individual's intellectual, socio-emotional, communicative, and physical development during the early stages of life. The quality of the educational process depends largely on the professional competence, working conditions, motivation, and long-term retention prospects of the educators working in preschool institutions.

From this perspective, reducing staff turnover in preschool institutions is a strategic issue linked not only to human resource management but also to the quality of education, the continuity of the pedagogical process, and the organization's sustainable development.

Uzbekistan's preschool education system has been developing rapidly in recent years. According to official data, by the end of 2024, nearly 700,000 educators were employed across more than 38,000 preschool institutions in the country. During 2024, 4,644 kindergartens were established, creating additional places for children and raising the preschool education coverage rate to 76 percent [1].

Official data for the end of 2025 indicates that preschool education coverage reached 78 percent, while coverage of six-year-olds by school preparation programs reached 98 percent [2]. A Presidential decree aimed at improving the preschool education and upbringing system places special emphasis on enhancing the capacity of pedagogical staff, developing a network of innovative preschool educational organizations, and refining the content of education [3].

These processes present a dual challenge for the preschool education system: on the one hand, attracting new, qualified educators to the system, and on the other, retaining existing qualified personnel within the organization.

International studies also confirm the urgency of this issue. According to OECD data, attracting and retaining qualified personnel in the preschool education sector has long been a pressing problem. Low wages, insufficient social recognition of the profession, unsatisfactory working conditions, and limited opportunities for professional development are cited as factors contributing to high staff turnover [4].

Furthermore, the OECD's *TALIS Starting Strong 2024* study notes that staff stress levels are influenced by shortages of time, resources, and personnel, as well as multitasking, paperwork, and additional duties. Conversely, satisfaction with wages, autonomy, and leadership is identified as a resource that helps reduce stress [5]. A key theoretical conclusion of the study is that staff turnover is not merely an instance of an employee leaving a job; rather, it is a complex process formed within the chain of: working conditions → satisfaction → motivation → stress → intention to leave → actual turnover.

Therefore, the aim is to provide a scientific and methodological basis for strategies to prevent staff turnover in preschool educational organizations and to propose a comprehensive strategic model for practical application.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. to elucidate the essence and nature of the concept of staff turnover;
2. to classify the primary factors contributing to staff turnover in preschool educational organizations;
3. to analyze factors influencing staff retention as identified in international studies;
4. to substantiate the impact of leadership, working conditions, and professional development on staff turnover;
5. to develop a staff retention strategy for preschool educational organizations;
6. to propose a KPI system for evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy.

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

The subject of the study comprises the organizational, psychological, professional, and motivational mechanisms for retaining pedagogical staff within the organization.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS.** The methodological basis of the study comprises the theories of human capital, strategic management, and work motivation, as well as concepts of pedagogical management and professional development.

The following methods were employed in the study:

Systems analysis. Staff turnover was analyzed as the result of the interplay between economic, organizational, psychological, professional, and social factors.

Comparative analysis. OECD studies regarding the working conditions, stress levels, job satisfaction, and staff retention of preschool education personnel were compared with current trends in Uzbekistan's preschool education system.

In its 2019 report, the OECD emphasizes that, alongside improving wages, it is essential to enhance working conditions and expand professional development opportunities to ensure staff retention [4].

Content analysis. International scientific-analytical reports on the subject, as well as official data and regulatory documents concerning the preschool education sector in the Republic of Uzbekistan, were analyzed.

Strategic modeling. A "5R" model was developed to address the prevention of staff turnover:

Recruitment → Retention → Recognition → Renewal → Resilience

Its components are:

- Recruitment — attracting qualified personnel;
- Retention — retaining personnel;
- Recognition — acknowledging work and contributions;
- Renewal — professional renewal and development; • Resilience — ensuring professional and organizational stability.

Expert approach. The role of the preschool educational organization's director and management staff in reducing staff turnover was evaluated from the perspective of strategic management.

**RESULTS.** The concept of staff turnover refers to changes in the workforce composition resulting from the termination of employment—whether voluntary or initiated by the organization—of staff members over a specific period.

In the preschool education sector, this concept takes on a broader significance. This is because the departure of an educator or teacher is not merely a turnover of labor resources; it can also lead to the disruption of the pedagogical and emotional bonds formed with the children.

The OECD's TALIS Starting Strong 2024 study notes that high staff turnover can negatively impact the stability of the organization and the children's stable connections with educators [5].

Thus, staff turnover manifests as a progression:

a staffing issue → an issue of educational quality → an issue of organizational stability.

Key factors of staff turnover. Based on a synthesis of research findings, the factors influencing staff turnover in preschool education organizations can be categorized into five main groups.

| Factors | Key aspects |
|---|---|
| Economic | wages, financial incentives, benefits package |
| Organizational | workload, working hours, role ambiguity |
| Professional | career growth, professional development, performance assessment |
| Psychological | stress, emotional exhaustion, professional burnout |
| Managerial | leadership style, communication, fair treatment |

According to OECD research, a lack of resources, time, and personnel capacity, as well as the need to multitask, figure prominently among the key sources of employee stress [5].

Furthermore, a 2019 OECD report identifies low wages, low professional status, challenging working conditions, and limited opportunities for professional development as major obstacles to attracting and retaining staff [4].

The impact of workload and stress. The work of a preschool educator encompasses pedagogical, upbringing-related, communicative, psychological, and organizational tasks simultaneously.

The educator:

- conducts activities with children;
- ensures child safety;
- monitors individual development;
- communicates with parents;
- maintains pedagogical documentation;
- prepares for events;
- develops methodological materials;
- participates in team-based tasks.

Such multitasking can reduce the time available for the educator's core activity: engaging in high-quality pedagogical interaction with the child.

OECD data from 2025 also indicates that "multitasking" is a widespread source of stress for preschool education staff across many countries [5]. Therefore, optimizing workload must be a key strategic priority in preventing staff turnover.

The role of leadership in staff retention. The director of a preschool educational organization is a central figure in reducing staff turnover.

A leader's actions—such as:

- listening to the employee;
- making fair decisions;
- distributing tasks equitably;
- supporting the initiatives of educators;
- creating opportunities for professional growth;
- and acknowledging work achievements—

—all influence the employee's attitude toward the organization.

The OECD TALIS *Starting Strong 2024* study identifies satisfaction with leadership as a crucial resource for mitigating employee stress [4].

Furthermore, the OECD study highlights the necessity for leaders to possess competencies in providing feedback, fostering collaboration, and managing human resources [4].

Professional development and career opportunities. Another significant factor in staff turnover is whether an employee can envision their professional future within the organization.

If an educator cannot answer the question,

"How will I develop within this organization over the next 3–5 years?"

their long-term motivation toward the organization may decline. The OECD TALIS "Starting Strong 2024" study highlights that shaping career trajectories is a key strategy for attracting and retaining personnel [6].

Based on this, the following professional growth trajectory can be implemented in preschool education organizations:

Educator → Experienced Educator → Methodologist → Senior Educator → Mentor Educator → Leadership Talent Pool.

This model enables employees to envision a professional future within the organization.

The "5R" strategic model for personnel retention. As a result of the research, the following comprehensive model was proposed for preschool education organizations:

1. Recruitment — targeted personnel attraction

When selecting personnel, it is essential to evaluate not only diplomas and work experience but also competencies such as:

- ability to communicate with children;
- pedagogical motivation;
- emotional stability;
- digital competence;
- teamwork skills;
- innovative approach.

2. Retention — personnel retention

In this area, the following are implemented:

- fair distribution of work;
- favorable working conditions;
- workload standardization;
- onboarding/adaptation program;

- mentoring;
- psychological support system.

3. Recognition — acknowledging work. The following forms of recognizing educators' work are proposed:

- "Best Educator";
- "Innovative Educator";
- "Best Pedagogical Initiative"; • "Best methodological resource";
- A letter of appreciation from the supervisor;
- A referral to professional development courses;
- An opportunity to participate in conferences and seminars.

4. Renewal — professional renewal for every educator:
It is proposed to develop an
"Individual Professional Development Card."
It includes:

| **Area** | **Indicator** |
|---|---|
| Methodological competence | Open lesson |
| Digital competence | Use of digital tools |
| Innovative activity | Implementation of new methods |
| Scientific-methodological activity | Articles, abstracts, developed materials |
| Mentoring | Assistance to a novice teacher |
| Attestation | Qualification category |
| Professional courses | Certificates |

...is reflected.

5. Resilience — to ensure the professional resilience of educators, the following are established:

- stress prevention;
- psychological counseling;
- team communication;
- early conflict detection;
- open dialogue between management and staff;
- an emotional support system.

Staff turnover monitoring system. To manage staff turnover, the organization requires a continuous HR monitoring system.
It may encompass the following indicators:

1. number of employees who have left;
2. number of newly hired employees;
3. proportion of new employees remaining in the organization after one year;
4. employee satisfaction;
5. level of professional stress;
6. participation in professional development;
7. satisfaction with management;
8. satisfaction with workload;
9. internal career advancement;

10. mentorship coverage.

The staff turnover rate can be calculated using the following formula:

K_q=\frac{K_{ket}}{K_{o‘rt}}\times100

where:

Kq — staff turnover rate;

Kket — number of employees who left during a specific period;

Ko‘rt — average number of employees during that period.

However, it is not appropriate to evaluate this indicator in isolation. It is advisable to conduct a comprehensive analysis using indicators such as employee satisfaction, stress, workload, professional growth, and the quality of leadership.

Strategic measures to prevent staff turnover

| Strategic Area | Key Measure | Expected Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| Personnel Selection | Competency-based selection | Attracting suitable personnel |
| Onboarding | 3–6 month adaptation program | Retention of new employees |
| Mentoring | Pairing a young educator with an experienced one | Professional adjustment |
| Workload | Redistribution of tasks | Stress reduction |
| Incentives | Financial and non-financial incentives | Increased motivation |
| Professional Growth | Individual development plan | Enhanced career opportunities |
| Leadership | Feedback and open communication | Building trust |
| Psychological Support | Stress prevention | Professional stability |
| Monitoring | Quarterly HR analysis | Early identification of turnover causes |

**DISCUSSION.** Research findings indicate that staff turnover in preschool education institutions cannot be attributed to a single factor.

For instance, while salary is a crucial condition for staff retention, it is not the only factor. A 2019 OECD analysis highlights the need to focus on working conditions, professional development, and the quality of work alongside salary improvements [4].

The results of TALIS Starting Strong 2024 further support this view: satisfaction with salary, autonomy, and leadership serves as vital resources for mitigating employee stress [5].

Consequently, an optimal strategy for staff retention in preschool education institutions can be formulated as follows:

Staff retention = decent working conditions + fair incentives + professional growth + quality leadership + psychological stability.

Under this approach, the director's role extends beyond merely filling vacancies; the director must proactively identify and manage the factors that influence staff retention.

In this context, it is advisable for preschool education institution directors to shift their focus from "personnel management" to "human capital development."

This approach is particularly important given the ongoing expansion of the preschool education system in Uzbekistan. In 2024, the system comprised over 38,000 preschool educational organizations (PEOs) and nearly 700,000 educators [1]. The goal of reaching 78% enrollment coverage by 2025 and the measures aimed at developing the "New Generation" network of PEOs by 2026 make the issue of ensuring the quality and stability of personnel even more critical [2; 3].

The proposed "QOLISh" model. To implement the "5R" model discussed in the article at the level of the preschool educational organization, the practical "QOLISh" model is proposed.

Q — Regular assessment of satisfaction

Conducting quarterly anonymous surveys among educators regarding:

- working conditions;
- wages;
- leadership/management;
- team relations;
- professional growth;
- workload.

O — Open dialogue

Organizing a monthly "Open Dialogue Hour" between the director and educators.

L — Position and professional growth

Developing an individual professional development trajectory for each educator.

I — Workload optimization

Reducing excessive administrative and repetitive tasks; ensuring fair distribution of duties.

Sh — Personal support

Addressing the professional, psychological, and social needs of the educator.

KPI system for evaluating the strategy's effectiveness. The effectiveness of the strategy to prevent staff turnover can be evaluated using the following KPIs:

| № | KPI | Target Direction |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Staff turnover rate | Reduce |
| 2 | 1-year employee retention rate | Increase |
| 3 | Employee satisfaction index | Increase |
| 4 | New employee onboarding/adaptation level | Increase |
| 5 | Mentorship coverage | Approach 100% |
| 6 | Participation in professional development | Increase |
| 7 | Internal career advancement | Increase |
| 8 | Work-related stress index | Reduce |
| 9 | Satisfaction with leadership | Increase |
| 10 | Employee willingness to continue working | Increase |

These indicators should be analyzed on a quarterly basis, and adjustments made to the personnel policy based on the results.

**CONCLUSION.** The study determined that staff turnover in preschool educational organizations is a multifactorial organizational-pedagogical phenomenon. Factors such as working conditions, workload, material and non-material incentives, opportunities for professional growth, psychological stability, and the quality of leadership all exert an interconnected influence on its development.

First, it should be emphasized that the priority strategy must be the prevention of staff turnover rather than merely combating it.

Second, it is more effective to identify the factors leading an educator to leave—not after they have already resigned, but during the period when the intention to leave the organization is forming.

Third, international studies by the OECD demonstrate that working conditions, workload, stress, salary satisfaction, autonomy, and leadership quality are inextricably linked to staff retention [5; 4].

Fourth, the director of a preschool educational organization must act as a strategic leader in preventing staff turnover. Their role extends beyond recruitment to include fostering a favorable working environment, facilitating professional growth, and cultivating a sense of belonging to the organization among the staff. Fifth, the "5R" model proposed in the article—Recruitment, Retention, Recognition, Renewal, and Resilience—encompasses the entire process within preschool educational organizations, ranging from staff recruitment to professional development and long-term retention.

Sixth, the strategy for reducing staff turnover should be monitored using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). This assessment should go beyond merely tracking the number of departures to evaluate employee satisfaction, stress levels, professional growth, satisfaction with leadership, and the level of adaptation.

On this basis, it is advisable to develop a "Staff Recruitment, Development, and Retention Program" for preschool educational organizations and incorporate it into the organization's annual development plan.

The strategic goal of this program should be:

"To establish an integrated system that spans from the recruitment of a qualified educator to their long-term professional and personal development within the organization."

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