

UDC 372.2.091.313 :316.46
DOI: 10.52534/msu-pp3.2024.29

Galyna Vatamaniuk*

PhD in Pedagogy, Associate Professor
Kamianets-Podilskyi National Ivan Ohiienko University
32300, 62 Ohiienko Str., Kamianets-Podilskyi, Ukraine
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4236-107X>

Tetiana Dutkevych

PhD in Pedagogy, Professor
Kamianets-Podilskyi National Ivan Ohiienko University
32300, 62 Ohiienko Str., Kamianets-Podilskyi, Ukraine
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3792-7195>

Project-based learning as a means of forming leadership qualities in senior preschool children

Article's History:

Received: 13.05.2024
Revised: 25.08.2024
Accepted: 25.09.2024

Suggested Citation:

Vatamaniuk, G., & Dutkevych, T. (2024). Project-based learning as a means of forming leadership qualities in senior preschool children. *Scientific Bulletin of Mukachevo State University. Series "Pedagogy and Psychology"*, 10(3), 29-39. doi: 10.52534/msu-pp3.2024.29.

Abstract. The relevance of this research is determined by the modern demands of Ukrainian society for the formation of motivated, responsible citizens who can successfully fulfil leadership roles. The aim of the study was to find an answer to the question of how project-based learning contributes to the development of leadership qualities in older preschool children. The research employed structural-functional, terminological, humanistic, genetic, activity-functional, and competency-based approaches, as well as general scientific logical methods (analysis, the unity of induction and deduction, modelling, and systematisation). Leadership qualities (independence, initiative, creativity, responsibility, communicativeness, organisational skills, partnership, empathy) were defined as components of leadership as a child's social competence. It is shown that project-based learning involves the organisation of children's activities to create a project, which is based on the need to solve a life problem, achieve a certain goal, to obtain a specific result through the sequential solution of current tasks. Project-based learning aligns with the demands of the modern age, expanding the space for children's creativity, stimulating thinking, boosting motivation, and enabling educators and children to be partners, avoiding displays of dominance. Project-based learning successfully fosters leadership qualities such as communicativeness, organisational skills, partnership, and empathy in senior preschool children, as it is built on group interaction with its inherent phenomena of role distribution, communication, and mutual understanding. By modelling the process of solving real-life problems during the project, children develop leadership qualities such as independence, initiative, creativity, and responsibility. The specific capabilities of project-based learning in developing leadership qualities lie in providing opportunities for children to exhibit leadership qualities in interactions with both peers and adults; fostering various types of leadership (communicative and business, formal and informal, etc.) and the acquisition of different leadership roles (organiser, expert, idea generator, communicator); and preventing "negative" leader traits such as arrogance, dominance, and egocentrism

Keywords: personality; leadership; senior preschooler; educational project; cooperation; educator

*Corresponding author



INTRODUCTION

Developing socially active citizens is one of the primary goals of modern society, a crucial issue in education at all ages, including the preschool years. Preschool children are at a stage of intensive development, laying the foundation for their personality, and developing life skills that will remain important in adulthood. The direction and intensity of a child's activity in childhood determine what the child absorbs from their environment, what their personal qualities will be in the future, and their ability to interact with others and achieve success in life, even in the most challenging situations, thanks to their adaptability, flexibility, resourcefulness, decisiveness, and creativity. Therefore, fostering leadership qualities in children, such as responsibility, independence, initiative, and the ability to effectively communicate and interact with society, is a pressing challenge for modern preschool education.

In the Basic Component of Preschool Education, a child's interactions with their environment (social, material, and natural) are considered crucial factors in the development of personal competence. It emphasises that children's happiness and positive outlook are fostered through cooperation and friendly relationships between children and adults (Order of the Ministry of..., 2021). Children gain life experience through communication and interaction in various social groups (family, preschool group, neighbourhood playgroups, etc.), where they learn typical group roles, values, and norms of behaviour, and they learn to both meet group expectations and influence the group.

Leadership is a crucial socially oriented personal competence, the ability to unite people, motivate them towards a common goal, and overcome obstacles along the way. Research suggests that leadership is a phenomenon of social groups and is determined by the group's perception of one of its members as a leader. The group assigns the leader a formal or informal role, the fulfilment of which is designed to contribute to achieving a common goal (Nestulya *et al.*, 2020). From a psychological perspective, the concept of leadership only makes sense in the context of interpersonal relationships and reflects the presence in the leader of those personal qualities that correspond to group values. A leader is a group member who is respected and trusted by others and is entrusted with defining group goals and making decisions on behalf of everyone. Thus, the leader sets the direction for group activity, which simultaneously corresponds to group norms and values (Vynoslavskaja & Kononets, 2021). Various types of leadership are noted, and the importance of developing a variant that increases the effectiveness of group activity is emphasised (Fouraki *et al.*, 2020). From a pedagogical perspective, the leader is a motivator and a bearer of organisational abilities, thanks to which the group acquires integrity and cohesion in its activity to achieve a set goal (Voronov, 2021).

Although different social groups have leaders with varying qualities, numerous studies have enabled the generalisation of certain personality traits that allow individuals to assume leadership positions. For instance, it has

been found that leaders must be able to influence people, improve group morale, and introduce innovations (Deligiannidou *et al.*, 2020); be authentic, humble, possess organisational skills, be communicative, and empathetic (Ganske & Carbon, 2023). A crucial leadership quality is the ability to respond sensitively to the emotional states of others in communication and to consider the emotional context of social interaction in their behaviour. Leaders build relationships and solve problems, are resilient and persistent in difficult situations, and know when, how, and whom to turn to for help. However, leaders also exhibit negative qualities such as manipulation, narcissism, reduced empathy, and aggression, which can gradually weaken an individual's leadership position within a group (Vadvilavičius & Stelmokienė, 2019).

Leadership is not an innate ability possessed only by certain children; leadership qualities can be developed in every child by creating the appropriate conditions and using specially selected methods. Important leadership qualities in children include activity, responsibility, initiative, and emotional resilience. A preschool leader is an initiative-taking, engaged, and creatively oriented individual who inspires their peers through their example, encouraging imitation and collaboration in engaging activities (Voronov, 2021).

Contemporary preschool education programmes emphasise that the development of social skills is a crucial aspect of a child's upbringing, aimed at ensuring that children acquire moral and value-based guidelines for their behaviour and relationships with others. This includes gaining skills for emotionally positive interactions and relationships, as well as etiquette habits, and learning various social roles, including leadership roles (Kononko, 2019). In a relatively stable group of children, as in any stable social group, processes of structuring and hierarchisation occur. Selectivity in relationships among senior preschoolers can be observed, resulting in the formation of stable micro-groups (3-5 members) consisting of children who play together for extended periods. Among their peers, children distinguish friends with whom they interact most willingly and frequently, and those with whom they prefer not to interact. Groups of senior preschoolers are quite structured, with the emergence of group status and hierarchy (Pirozhenko, 2019). Moreover, a child's group status influences their interactions with peers and, consequently, becomes a significant factor in their personal development. A child with high status finds it easier to assume leadership roles within a peer group, as they become an attractive object of imitation for others. Conversely, a low interpersonal status adversely affects the formation of a child's personality, alienating them from their peers and hindering their acceptance into group activities. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that a child's group status is dynamic, meaning that the child has the opportunity to fulfil both leadership and follower roles. The aforementioned considerations provide grounds for the assertion that the leadership position of a senior preschooler is a crucial and indispensable factor in

their personal development. Consequently, educators must create favourable psychological and pedagogical conditions and employ effective methods to increase a child's interpersonal status, so that they have the opportunity to assume a leadership role in various communicative situations.

The foundational approaches for implementing tasks aimed at developing leadership qualities in preschool children are activity-based and competence-oriented methods. The combination of these approaches allows for the implementation of a project-based model of organising the educational process. As T.L. Gurkovska & L.I. Solovyova (2023) note, contemporary preschool practice involves a more active involvement of families in the educational process, providing opportunities to develop preschoolers' leadership qualities in social contexts of interaction between representatives of different age groups (children, educators, parents). Given that leadership qualities are formed through communication and interaction, alongside the need for greater family involvement in children's upbringing, it can be anticipated that project-based methods are the most suitable tools for addressing these objectives. However, the issue of using project-based learning to develop leadership qualities in senior preschoolers remains unexplored in contemporary psychological and pedagogical science, which has motivated the authors to conduct this research. The aim of this article was to highlight the specific features of applying project-based learning in developing leadership qualities in senior preschool children. The objectives of the article were as follows:

1. To substantiate the appropriateness of employing project technology as an effective means of developing leadership qualities in senior preschoolers;
2. To reveal the key properties of project technology that enable it to serve as a tool for fostering leadership qualities in senior preschool children;
3. To identify the specific impact of project-based learning on the formation of leadership qualities in senior preschoolers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study of the features of developing leadership qualities in senior preschool children through project-based learning relied on the application of scientific-methodological approaches and research methods. A structural-functional approach was used to organise the research, defining its relevance, objectives, tasks, key concepts, and stages. The research problem was structured into separate components – such as identifying the essence of leadership, its manifestations in children, and analysing the specific features of project-based learning that allow for the development of children's leadership qualities. A terminological approach was used to illuminate the concepts of project-based learning, leadership, and its qualities in children. The main interpretations of the concepts were considered, and their authorial versions were provided. A humanistic approach is an axiom in conducting psychological and

pedagogical research. It manifests as human-centredness and child-centredness. To study it in more detail and apply it effectively, the studies of H.V. Belenka *et al.* (2016) and T.O. Pirozhenko (2019) were used.

A humanistic approach was implemented to determine the value orientation of developing leadership qualities in preschoolers, focusing on positive leadership qualities defined as those that contribute to the personal development of the leader's followers. In the research process, following the genetic approach, the age characteristics of senior preschoolers and the specific nature of their manifestations of leadership were taken into account, particularly in play, during educational activities, and in formal and informal communication with various partners (adults and children). The activity-functional approach enabled the interpretation of project-based learning as one of the means of engaging children in group activities, which inherently involve the assumption of leadership roles. In the context of the competency-based approach, the authors defined the leadership qualities of a senior preschooler as a combination of value-motivational, knowledge, and behavioural components that determine the child's ability to perform leadership roles during communication and cooperation.

General scientific logical methods were employed, including analysis (identifying the essential features of project-based learning, the main leadership qualities and roles of senior preschoolers), the unity of induction and deduction (providing examples, facts, and their generalisation to conclude), modelling (imagining the impact of project-based learning on the development of leadership qualities in various types of children's activities), and systematisation (revealing the connections between the phenomena under study, the mechanisms by which project-based learning influences the development of leadership qualities). The observation was used as an empirical method, which allowed for consideration of the age characteristics of preschoolers and is widely used in psychological and pedagogical research. During observation, children behaved freely, were trusting towards the researcher, and were eager to communicate with them. The observation method was used to identify the impact of specific situations of using project-based learning on the development of leadership qualities in preschoolers. The purpose of the observation was to identify those aspects of project-based learning that provide favourable conditions for the distribution of group roles into leaders and followers, the flexible change of leadership roles, as well as leadership and follower roles among children, and the involvement of different age-sex categories in children's partner interaction during project implementation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The challenges of implementing project-based learning in preschool education are reflected in scholarly and methodological works, where researchers express various opinions on the essence of the concept of "project"

(Linnyck, 2020; Kozak, 2022; Teslenko, 2022). Generalising different approaches, it can be noted that project-based learning is fundamentally based on organising children's activities to create a project, as a phenomenon that involves a conscious, meaningful desire of its performers to solve a specific life problem, achieve a certain goal, and obtain a concrete result through the sequential solution of current tasks. An educational project is a creative, initiative, motivated, and relevant self-activity for children, their specific practical-creative activity, and a step-by-step movement towards achieving a goal. Project-based learning meets the demands of the time, as it expands the space for children's creativity, activates thinking, strengthens motivation, and provides teachers and children with the opportunity to be partners, avoiding manifestations of dominance, superiority, and pressure (Kozak & Korol, 2019). Senior preschoolers strive for communication and interaction with their peers, understand and highly appreciate the opportunities for partner cooperation with them (Karabaieva, 2019). A partnership among senior preschoolers in project activities determines children's communication and cooperation based on equality, mutual respect, and mutual acceptance, which are based on the readiness of each participant to listen to and support each other. This allows the teacher to practically implement the humanistic values of early childhood education, in particular, the idea that each child is a valuable individual with individual experience of getting to know and mastering the environment. Working on a project allows its performers to develop informational, research, and communicative competencies, the ability to self-learn and effectively use knowledge in practice (Kulalaieva *et al.*, 2020).

Uniting children through shared interests and goals in the process of completing a project generates collective experiences that foster goodwill, tolerance, and empathy in their relationships with each other. A sense of "team spirit" is born in the child, which becomes the foundation of emotional intelligence, cohesion, and civic-mindedness. In the process of communication and interaction with peers, a child has the opportunity to engage in various types of children's activities, under the influence of which they experience intellectual (interest, surprise, doubt, joy, curiosity, a sense of the new) and moral (respect, support, understanding, sympathy) experiences. Children encounter obstacles and challenges in achieving the project's objectives together, which aids them in successfully overcoming difficulties and experiencing the joy of success, even in what may seem like a "childish" but nonetheless significant undertaking for them (Vyzhva, 2020; Kotyk *et al.*, 2021).

Therefore, project-based learning is an effective tool for organising children's partnerships based on equality, mutual assistance, and mutual respect, which are manifested in the process of solving a problem that is significant and emotionally attractive to children. Project-based learning, as a way for preschoolers to acquire important social roles, becomes a priority for ensuring children's success, rejecting the discriminatory division of them into categories and levels. Only such an approach allows the formation of a

dynamic system of social roles of a leader and their follower in preschoolers. Project-based learning involves working on a project as a joint endeavour for children, aimed at solving an interesting and significant problem for them. The implementation of a project has a certain structure, which is determined by the logic of the problem-solving process and includes defining the goal and objectives, stages (plan) of their implementation, discussing options for solving the problem, choosing the most successful option, implementing the chosen method using certain methods and techniques, and evaluating the results obtained, correlating them with the planned ones. During the discussion of the most successful ways to solve the problem, children learn to consider such aspects as economic feasibility, realism, availability of resources, duration of implementation, and so on. Thus, in project-based activities, children need to independently determine the goal, the steps to achieve it through the completion of several sequential tasks, and find adequate forms, methods, and techniques for their implementation (Teslenko, 2022). Children's activity is creative, exploratory, independent, and initiative-based, and is carried out in a group form.

This technology allows for the modelling of the creative process, the essence of which is the search and cognitive activity of children with its inherent ambiguity and multivariance, which gives everyone space to express their ideas on ways to solve the problem, activates children's mental activity, group discussions, debates, and a careful yet critical attitude towards each other's proposals. Working on a project, children gain experience in research work, learn to independently answer questions, and acquire the knowledge they need to navigate their environment. They are not consumers but creators who independently determine their goals, seek ways to achieve them and obtain real socially useful results. Therefore, the project method should be considered a certain research technology that allows the teacher to organise children's cognition of the world and gives the child the opportunity to feel like an active and responsible actor, a transformer of the world.

Project-based activities in preschool education institutions take the form of teamwork among children, where each participant plays their role, and only combined action ensures a shared result, revealing to each child the importance of their participation for others. Communication among children plays a crucial role in this work, as it develops their communicative skills, which form the foundation of basic leadership qualities (the ability to negotiate, accept or reject others' opinions, the ability to respond to others' suggestions, evaluate and control each other, coordinate and harmonise their actions). If, in individual work, a child may give up in the face of difficulties, in a team they are helped by others, who together can solve much larger and more complex tasks (Yehorova, 2021; Rashid, 2022). Throughout the project, the significance of not only the collective result but also the individual contributions of each participant becomes evident. This dynamic allows for the flexible shifting of group roles, enabling a child to function

as a leader or follower, an initiator or executor, depending on the context and needs of the project.

Preschool education practice has accumulated various options for using project-based learning, which differ in scale, content, social significance, duration of projects, as well as the quantitative, age, and sex composition of the groups of “projectors” and the nature of adult participation in the implementation of children’s projects. Projects are implemented in two main forms: either as a teacher’s project activity or as a methodology for a teacher to manage children’s project work. Projects are typically implemented in two main forms: either as the educator’s own project work or as a method for managing children’s project activities. Educational challenges serve as the basis for the educator’s project, through which they seek effective ways to improve their work with children. The educator’s project is seen as an innovative endeavour aimed at mastering new and effective teaching technologies, methods, and techniques. The educator’s efforts to enhance the educational process must be creative, as this directly influences the creativity of the children they teach. An educator’s project activity contributes to the organised, planned, and at the same time operational solution of their professional problems, in particular, those related to modern challenges regarding the education of children from internally displaced families, early support for children in difficult life situations, the implementation of innovative technologies and methods of preschool education, the systematic updating of didactic materials, etc. In turn, children’s project work as one of the innovative technologies of preschool education can be an object in an educator’s project, which involves mastering the corresponding competencies ((Boyatzis *et al.*, 2019; Yehorova, 2021).

Project-based learning is geared towards a new style of educational work for educators with children. It allows not only preschoolers but also adults, primarily educators and parents, to be united into teams. The educator teaches children to work on a project, but does so indirectly through the organisation of children’s search and cognitive interaction, skilfully managing which achieves a complex of significant developmental and educational results. A special interaction arises between the educator and the team of children working on the project. An important advantage of project-based learning is the humanistic and partnership position of the educator, who acts as an organiser, coordinator, and advisor, rather than a controller or mentor. The professional tasks of the educator are to interest children in the problem that the project is to solve, to create a certain intrigue, to direct the children’s efforts towards expressing ideas, searching for answers, and implementing their ideas. Any problem does not have predetermined ways of solving it but requires searching for and constructing them. In other words, project-based work creates conditions for finding various ways to solve a given problem and creating a planned final product in a meaningful and rich interaction between children with each other and with the educator. The children’s goal is to find answers, create a final product, and pose new problems. The atmosphere of shared interest adds

a positive emotional tone to the relationships within the group, fostering cooperation and encouraging the children to be attentive to one another. At the same time, the educator must plan the children’s work in advance, find that children’s activity that will be interesting and meaningful, and which can unite the efforts of participants in its implementation. Developing a project is a creative endeavour not only for children, but also requires the psychological, pedagogical, and methodological skills of the educator, their innovative and research activity in the interests of improving the quality of the educational process. Children’s project-based learning work becomes a subject of professional analysis of its effectiveness and shortcomings for the educator, which serves as a basis for further improvement of the method.

The scale of project-based learning varies in terms of the complexity of tasks, and the number of stages of their implementation, which determines the duration of children’s work on a particular project. Short-term projects are designed for one lesson or one day, while long-term projects can take several weeks. There are so-called mega-projects, work on which is particularly large-scale, involving a significant number of performers (several children’s groups, parental involvement, etc.). For example, the project “Seasons in Our Park” requires multiple stages of work throughout the calendar year, which allows children to observe changes in the park’s nature and take care of its order. Each stage is completed with a summary in the form of a photo exhibition, the production and subsequent presentation of crafts from natural materials, the arrangement of nature corners in the children’s group room according to the seasons, etc. In large group projects, conditions are created for the interaction of a significant number of performers, of different ages and experiences, and for a child, the opportunity arises to learn new ways of behaviour, to flexibly change them depending on the individual characteristics of partners, which significantly expands the repertoire of their soft skills, as important leadership qualities (Gurkovska & Solovyova, 2023). In some cases, so-called micro-projects are used, when project work is carried out in families together with children’s parents. This could be the preparation of a poster (a poem, an appliqué, or embroidery) on an interesting and important topic for children.

The conditions for the successful implementation of project-based learning apply to both children and the educator. The inclusion of preschoolers in project-based learning involves adhering to such pedagogical conditions as taking into account the desires and experience of its performers; understanding the problem and its acceptance by children as an interesting task; the availability of informational and material resources; interaction and cooperation between the educator and children; the freedom of children to express their own opinions, in choosing ways to solve the problem; and the playful nature of project work. From the educator’s side, important conditions are mastery of the project method, constant contact with the children’s group, friendly and interested support for children’s initiative, which gives space for their self-expression; a creative

approach to preparing tasks for project work that meet the requirements of problematic nature, innovation, ensure children's openness to the new, and form a need for knowledge and mastery of the environment (Kozak, 2022).

The implementation of project-based learning involves adhering to certain didactic principles, among which the leading role is played by such fundamental conditions as activity (children's interested perception of the project problem, readiness to solve it); productivity (the pragmatic orientation of solving the problem in order to obtain a subjectively or socially valuable result); technological nature (the sequential solution of a number of tasks in the process of solving the problem, each completed task serves as a basis for the next); openness to the new (creation of a communicative-cognitive environment conducive to both achieving the goal and initiating new projects); reliance on the subject's experience of children (taking into account the cognitive, creative, and motor-sensory abilities of the child, in accordance with age and individual life path; ensuring the playful nature of tasks); the connection of project tasks with significant problems of the present (a creative-research attitude of children to the environment); cooperation and partnership (group form of project implementation, distribution and coordination of work areas, combination of individual and collective) (Linnyck, 2020).

The unique social dynamics within a group of preschool children engaged in a project provide a nurturing environment for the development of key leadership qualities. The collaborative partnerships inherent in this interaction foster a dynamic shift between the roles of leader and follower. Each child has the opportunity to express their thoughts, suggestions, and ideas, which are then discussed, accepted, or rejected by their peers. Through this process, children develop and demonstrate essential leadership attributes such as assertiveness, independence, and initiative. The pedagogical potential of project-based learning in fostering children's leadership is defined by a range of inherent educational functions, namely: didactic, developmental, cognitive, and affective. The didactic function involves developing children's ability to independently acquire new knowledge and apply it to various areas of life such as social, domestic, natural, health, and aesthetic spheres; and cultivating the skill of explaining and defending their viewpoints in discussions with peers. The cognitive function entails enhancing children's motivation to learn; refining cognitive processes like attention, memory, thinking, speech, and imagination; fostering the ability to critically evaluate statements, opinions, and ideas; and developing higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalisation, and classification. The developmental function pertains to the child as an individual, focusing on their self-regulation (the ability to manage emotions and willpower and overcome challenges), and their abilities (creative, investigative, communicative-organisational etc.).

As a result of participating in project-based activities, preschool children gain experience in taking on leadership roles in situations that require each child to demonstrate

responsibility, independence in achieving set goals, and initiative in determining methods of action. They also learn perseverance, attentiveness, and sensitivity towards the behaviour of their peers, as well as the ability to collaboratively overcome challenges and obstacles while negotiating and coordinating their actions. Furthermore, they develop the capacity to evaluate their own actions and those of other participants in the project appropriately. New opportunities for developing children's leadership skills arise from involving parents, administrators, and sometimes community members in children's project-based activities, thereby expanding and enriching their collaboration. Preschoolers involved in project-based activities develop leadership qualities through partnerships and collaboration among all educational stakeholders, which is underpinned by principles such as: prioritising supportive and motivating interactions (where the focus in teamwork is on inclusion rather than achievement); fostering mutual exchange of knowledge, skills, and abilities among children (where individual experiences become collective assets); and partially delegating authority to children (Romanovskiy & Ponomaryov, 2019; Voronov, 2021).

Developing leadership skills through project-based learning requires a specific pedagogical approach that encourages each child to express their unique individuality, initiative, and autonomy. Educators guiding children's project work should focus on implementing humanistic principles of respect and love for the child, where adults gently and carefully support children in self-expression, discovery, and creativity. Educators face unique challenges, such as guiding rather than dictating, accompanying rather than instructing, and stimulating rather than evaluating. To maximise the development of leadership qualities through project-based learning, educators must embrace children's enthusiasm and the bustling atmosphere in the group as positive signs of engagement. This includes their eagerness to find solutions, their willingness to express their thoughts and ideas, their debates, their frustrations with setbacks, and their joy in their successes. The organisation of project-based activities requires the active participation of each child, who should engage willingly, demonstrate initiative, and feel their significance. Educators should foster children's independence, involve their families in the project to promote positive parent-child interactions and family engagement and act as supportive mentors in sourcing resources. They should encourage children's creativity and initiative, tolerate mistakes as learning opportunities, celebrate successes, and provide emotional support. Educators should demonstrate a consistently positive attitude, encourage imaginative thinking, and be sensitive to children's emotional needs while fostering collaboration and communication among peers.

Project-based learning for preschool children, with direct adult involvement and support, is focused on solving problems through a sequence of interconnected stages. The goal-setting stage begins with the educator presenting a problem to the children or, in some cases, creating

conditions for children to independently identify a problem as an obstacle to achieving a desired outcome. Children should be motivated to solve the problem as this will stimulate goal setting and encourage them to think critically and offer suggestions. Senior preschoolers are often motivated when the problem is linked to play or when it aligns with their ethical or moral values (e.g., wanting to please a parent or make a gift for a friend). The next stage involves planning the work, determining the sequence of tasks and the conditions for their completion. To stimulate children's problem-solving, educators can brainstorm ideas and suggestions with the children and assist in finding information and resources. The core of project-based work is implementing ideas to solve the problem, with the educator providing differentiated support. The process concludes with comparing the actual outcome to the planned one, encouraging children to reflect on their successes and failures, and discussing future project possibilities. Throughout the project, educators should maintain emotional connections with children, showing genuine interest and support for their efforts, and helping them overcome challenges (Olynyk, 2019; Teslenko, 2022).

Project-based learning offers children an active and creative approach to exploring their environment, fostering an understanding of its interconnectedness. It also highlights the role of knowledge and information in navigating the world through various activities. Each project typically involves a complex range of activities, with one or more types of activity predominating. For example, the development of leadership skills through the program "A Leader Lives in Everyone" (Voronov, 2021) occurs within activities typical of the preschool age, such as communication, cognition, play, exploration, and creative expression. The program assesses leadership development in preschoolers using three criteria: the desire for a leadership position within the peer group (motivation), teamwork and communication skills, and fundamental leadership qualities. Each criterion has specific indicators within different types of child activities. For instance, in *communicative* activities, a child strives for a leadership role among peers by engaging, persuading, and encouraging others to participate in joint activities, as well as presenting their own and shared achievements. They constructively interact within the team by negotiating, seeking help, reconciling, apologising, assisting, forgiving, empathising, providing support, and responding appropriately to the emotional expressions of others. Additionally, they demonstrate leadership qualities such as initiative, confidence, and resourcefulness. During *cognitive* activities, a child expresses joy in their own discoveries and holds authority among peers due to their knowledge across various domains, desiring to share what they have learned with others. They demonstrate motivation for exploration and derive pleasure from their understanding; they organise their peers into games, act actively and persuasively in research, and confidently apply their acquired knowledge in their activities. Furthermore, they exhibit fundamental qualities such

as initiative, creativity, determination, and observance. In *play* activities, a preschooler strives to be at the centre of joint planning and discussion regarding the forthcoming game, including its narrative arc. They seek to lead a group of children in selecting game attributes, assigning roles, and setting up the play environment. Senior preschoolers aim to negotiate the content, plot, role distribution, and dynamics of the game's development, including the use of substitutes and props. A child's leadership is manifested not only in their ability to propose the game's storyline and role allocation but also in their capacity to organise the game even when conceding the opportunity to perform the most appealing role. In the play, the child exhibits essential leadership qualities such as responsibility, initiative, perseverance, ingenuity, empathy, and a desire to excel.

In *research and exploratory activities*, the child initiates the creation of an idea and its implementation through transformative actions, following the natural purpose of the object. They propose suggestions during group discussions about the task and create simple diagrams or symbols based on this information. The child shows readiness to participate in research and exploratory activities and invites others to join, offering to explain the meaning of the task set by the educator. They engage in group discussions about the task and strive to be the first to collaboratively analyse a straightforward diagram or plan for task execution. The child performs investigative tasks in pairs, threes, or teams, coordinating their actions with others, suggesting various ways to expand the task, and distributing responsibilities among the children. They propose different methods for documenting results, such as drawings, photographs, or video materials, and can assess the complexity of tasks, foresee rational approaches for their execution, and develop a clear algorithm of actions, while responsibly selecting the necessary equipment. They exhibit fundamental qualities such as initiative, interest, perseverance, resourcefulness, and persuasiveness.

The manifestation of leadership in *artistic and aesthetic activities* is characterised by a creative approach to the conception and execution of artistic endeavours by the intended idea and the natural purpose of the object. This includes the generation of ideas and inspiring peers with a desire to realise them, as well as demonstrating effective communication skills and the ability to speak persuasively while actively listening to others. The child leader exhibits co-creation with their peers during the dramatization of works, the invention of storylines, and the selection of the theatre for their performances. They strive for collaborative participation in singing, dancing, drawing, sculpting, and role-playing, aligning their interests with the desires of other children during collective artistic creation and celebrating the shared outcome. Furthermore, they display fundamental leadership qualities, such as an accurate assessment of their own achievements, kindness in interactions, a determination to achieve goals and creativity.

Project-based learning provides opportunities for the development of a variety of leadership roles, such as idea

generator, expert, organiser, and communicator. When confronted with a problem that requires a solution, children are encouraged to share their ideas and suggestions. A child becomes a leader at this stage if they can generate a significant number of ideas that interest others. The leader as an expert is characterised by their willingness and ability to evaluate these suggestions critically, identify their strengths and weaknesses and share their insights with the group. An expert possesses not only the necessary knowledge and skills to understand, analyse, and define the problem but also the ability to evaluate their peers' ideas and suggest improvements. The leader as an organiser is responsible for uniting the project team, assigning roles, facilitating collaborative planning, and ensuring that the work is carried out in the most effective sequence. The leader as a communicator fosters a positive group atmosphere, provides encouragement and support, and maintains emotional resilience in the face of setbacks and challenges. They inspire confidence in others and help to alleviate anxiety and negative emotions.

The socio-psychological mechanisms driving the development of leadership potential in preschoolers through project-based learning include trust, motivation, freedom of choice, and a sense of purpose for all participants in the educational process. A mutual sense of trust between adults and children fosters daily opportunities for motivated and active engagement in various learning experiences, promoting responsible independence. By granting children freedom of choice in terms of content, methods, resources, and context, a sustained interest, active participation, and a sense of purpose are cultivated. Such an approach is highly conducive to the growth of individual leadership potential in preschoolers. While a clear leader may not always emerge in a group project, every child exhibits leadership qualities. This is facilitated by the personal qualities of "sub-leaders". In some cases, educators may aim to develop leadership skills in specific children. Priority forms and methods in project-based learning for developing leadership qualities in senior preschool children include integrated activities using interactive teaching methods, dialogues, self-presentations, strategic games, collaborative task completion, and preliminary group discussions of goals and plans. Other effective methods include problem-solving discussions, research-based games, group intellectual games with competitive elements, collective creation of educational stories and projects, team games with elements of competition and self-organisation, sports events and recreational activities, theatrical performances, collective storytelling for game projects, collaborative creative activities, self-organised team quests, role-playing and intellectual games with competitive elements, taking turns, collaborative work, joint completion of tasks, modelling the structure of the work process through various activities, experiments, observations, and problem-solving tasks with prior group discussions of solutions. All of these methods can be implemented independently or within the context of larger projects. Their diversity ensures that each child finds their place

within the child-adult community, creating exceptional opportunities for the development of leadership qualities.

The themes of educational projects can vary widely, such as "Museum of Our Homeland", "Autumn in My Town", "How a Book is Made", "Vitamins: Our Helpers", "Christmas Decoration Factory", "Our Playground", and many more. The leadership potential of these projects depends on the set goals, the conditions created by adults for their implementation, consideration of children's age and interests, and the educator's readiness to foster leadership in the children's group. For example, one potential project is "Museum of Our Homeland". This project focuses on local history, is collaborative in nature, and is informational in its purpose. The goal of the project is to develop leadership roles such as expert, idea generator, and motivator. The project tasks involve developing children's cooperation skills, their ability to express and discuss various proposals, and their ability to unite and coordinate efforts to achieve a common goal. It also aims to foster aesthetic sensibilities and a desire to protect the local environment. Equipment and materials include stationery, videos, and local history books. The project's outcome is an exhibition of local history museum materials on the group's premises. Participants include children, parents, educators, and museum staff. The duration is 10 days. Preliminary work includes a visit to a local museum in the town or village. During the project, children are assigned different roles. A "museum director" takes on a leading role, assigning tasks to their "subordinates" (museum staff, specialists in flora and fauna, local history, and geography) whose goal is to prepare a new exhibition of museum exhibits about the nature, history, and geography of the local area. To achieve this, children engage with their parents at home, bringing in antique items, amulets, minerals, photos of local plants and animals, and interesting videos on electronic devices. A museum worker consults with children and educators as needed. The "museum director" ensures that each "employee" fulfils their assigned tasks, requiring them to interact with other "specialists", parents, and the educator. Over time, other children take on leadership roles, developing management skills through simulated situations such as the director being away, ill, or resigning. Upon completion of the research, a presentation is organised to showcase the project outcomes. With the help of adults, a new local history exhibition is set up in the group room or music room. Children from other groups and parents are invited. The "director" shares the history and purpose of the museum with the audience, highlighting the most active participants and those who made exceptional contributions. The "tour guides" then present the museum exhibits, explaining what the children have learned through the project.

While recognising the significant potential of project-based learning in developing leadership qualities among senior preschool children, it is important to acknowledge certain challenges in its implementation. Ensuring active participation from every child can often be hindered by uneven levels of communicative and linguistic

development among project participants, as well as differences in their personal experiences, which can impede effective communication and the identification of shared interests. Consequently, this can obstruct collaboration (Belenka *et al.*, 2016; Pirozhenko, 2019). At times, during the execution of a project, educators must address manifestations of so-called negative leadership qualities, particularly when a child seeks to establish themselves as the dominant figure within their peer group. This can manifest as arrogance, disregard for others' opinions, aggression, or egocentrism. For such a leader, the essence of the project may become centred around subordinating other group members to themselves (or to their ideas), which contradicts the values of partnership. As a result, teamwork can devolve into interpersonal conflicts, struggles for dominance, and the establishment of hierarchical relationships, posing a significant threat to the effectiveness of project-based learning. This situation may arise because educators may find it convenient to have a consistent helper, but it is essential to ensure that all children have opportunities to contribute and explore various roles. In conclusion, project-based learning is well-suited to the developmental stage of senior preschool children and serves as an effective means of fostering essential leadership qualities. This occurs through the assumption of various leadership roles during the collaborative activities of children engaged in the creation and implementation of a project, which is a significant and socially valuable endeavour.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the conducted research, the authors concluded that project-based learning has significant educational potential, particularly in fostering the development of leadership qualities in senior preschool children through both personalised and communicative approaches. Project-based learning combines crucial educational factors such as the opportunity for each child to express their unique creativity, build a cohesive group, promote active

communication and interaction, encourage children to engage actively and responsibly with the world, overcome challenges, and develop the ability to think critically about non-standard situations (analysis, planning, and forecasting). The group-based nature of project-based learning fosters a collaborative environment characterised by role distribution, communication, mutual understanding, and cooperation, providing a favourable context for developing leadership qualities such as communicativeness, organisational skills, partnership, and empathy in senior preschool children.

By simulating real-world problem-solving, project-based learning fosters the development of essential leadership qualities such as independence, initiative, creativity, and responsibility in preschool children. The specific benefits of project-based learning for developing leadership skills include the involvement of individuals from different age groups (children, educators, and parents), allowing children to demonstrate leadership not only with their peers but also with adults; the diversity of forms and methods within project-based learning, which facilitates the development of various leadership styles (communicative and business, formal and informal) and the adoption of different leadership roles (such as organiser, expert, idea generator, and communicator); and the collaborative nature of projects, which helps prevent the emergence of negative leadership traits like arrogance, dominance, and egocentrism. Future research should focus on identifying the competencies required for educators to effectively implement project-based learning, as well as developing and testing specific methodologies for fostering leadership skills in senior preschoolers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

REFERENCES

- [1] Belenka, H.V., *et al.* (2016). *Child: An educational program for children from two to seven years old*. Kyiv: Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University.
- [2] Boyatzis, R., McKee, A., & Goleman, D. (2019). *Leader's emotional intelligence*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.
- [3] Deligiannidou, T., Athanailidis, I., Laios, A., & Stafyla, A. (2020). Determining effective leadership qualities of a school principal from the perception of PE teachers in Greece. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 20(3), 2126-2135. doi: 10.7752/jpes.2020.s3286.
- [4] Fouraki, V., Stavrou, N.A.M., Apostolidis, N., & Psychountaki, M. (2020). Coach and athlete leadership behaviors: Examining their role in athlete's satisfaction. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 20(6), 3212-3220. doi: 10.7752/jpes.2020.s6435.
- [5] Ganske, P., & Carbon, C.C. (2023). Successful clusters through successful communication: Why clusters should be managed by place leaders. *Frontiers in Communication*, 8, article number 1194103. doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2023.1194103.
- [6] Gurkovska, T.L., & Solovyova, L.I. (2023). *Teachers and parents: Points of contact for active cooperation*. Kyiv: Institute of Psychology named after H.S. Kostyuk.
- [7] Karabaieva, I.I. (2019). *Features of value orientation formation at modern preschool children*. *Actual problems of psychology. Collection of scientific works of the Institute of Psychology named after H.S. Kostyuk*, 4(15), 63-75.
- [8] Kononko, O.L. (2019). *Preschool child development program "I am in the World" (new version). In two parts. Part II. From three to six (seven) years*. Kyiv: MCFER-Ukraine.

- [9] Kotyk, T., Sichka, V., Ragozina, V., Vasilieva, S., Havrysh, N., & Ponomarenko, T. (2021). Neuro pedagogical fundamentals of preschool and primary school children emotional intelligence development. *BRAIN. Broad Research in Artificial Intelligence and Neuroscience*, 12(4), 278-296. doi: 10.18662/brain/12.4/250.
- [10] Kozak, L.V. (2022). *Project activity in preschool education institutions*. Kyiv: TOV NVP.
- [11] Kozak, L.V., & Korol, G.A. (2019). Project activity as a factor in the cognitive preschool children' development. *Innovative Pedagogy*, 18(3), 169-174. doi: 10.32843/2663-6085-2019-18-3-36.
- [12] Kulalaieva, N., Gerliand, T., Kalenskyi, A., Romanova, H., & Miroshnichenko, V. (2020). Monitoring and usage of project technologies in vocational education institutions. *BRAIN. Broad Research in Artificial Intelligence and Neuroscience*, 11(2), 230-242. doi: 10.18662/brain/11.2/86.
- [13] Linnyck, O. (2020). [How to organize preschoolers' project activities](#). *Educator & Methodyst DNZ*, 10, 11-13.
- [14] Nestulya, O.O., Nestulya, S.I., & Kononets, N.V. (2020). *Fundamentals of leadership: An electronic guide*. Poltava: PUET.
- [15] Olyinyk, L. (2019). [Homeland psychological and pedagogical studies about whole world picture formation in preschoolers](#). *Educational Investigations*, 2(3-4), 114-122.
- [16] Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 33 "On Basic Component of Preschool Education. New Edition and Tips for Educational Process Organizing". (2021, January). Retrieved from https://mon.gov.ua/storage/app/media/rizne/2021/12.01/Pro_novu_redaktsiyu%20Bazovoho%20komponenta%20doshkilnoyi%20osvity.pdf.
- [17] Pirozhenko, T.O. (2019). [Child's communicative and speech development as a factor of interpersonal communication strategy choosing](#). *Actual Problems of Psychology. Collection of Scientific Works of the Institute of Psychology named after H.S. Kostyuk*, 4(15), 4-20.
- [18] Rashid, A.M.M. (2022). The effect of servant leadership on job outcomes: The mediating role of trust in coworkers. *Frontiers in Communication*, 7, article number 928066. doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2022.928066.
- [19] Romanovskiy, O., & Ponomaryov, O. (2019). Leader may be everyone. *Leader. Elite. Society*, 2, 5-15. doi: 10.20998/2616-3241.2019.2.01.
- [20] Teslenko, S.O. (2022). Project activity as one of the effective methods for forming ecological culture in senior preschoolers. *Colloquium-Journal*, 13(136), 13-16. doi: 10.24412/2520-6990-2022-13136-13-16.
- [21] Vadvilavičius, T., & Stelmokienė, A. (2019). Development of scenarios for leadership psychology research to reveal the relationships between leader's dark triad traits and full range leadership styles. *International Journal of Psychology: Biopsychosocial*, 23, 95-111. doi: 10.7220/2345-024X.23.5.
- [22] Voronov, V. (2021). *Partial program "The leader lives in everyone" for preschool children*. Retrieved from <https://mon.gov.ua/storage/app/media/doshkilna/programi/2022/09/02/Prohrama.osv.ditey.rannohe.ta.doshkil.viku-OSVI.PIKLUVANNYA.02.09.2022.pdf>.
- [23] Vynoslavskaya, O., & Kononets, M. (2021). Ethical leadership distinctive features in the organization activity. *Lviv University Bulletin. Series of Philosophical and Political Studies*, 35, 16-23.
- [24] Vyzhva, M. (2020). Modern leadership theories: A humanistic perspective. *Problems of Modern Psychology: Collection of Science Works*, 47, 9-26. doi: 10.32626/2227-6246.2020-47.
- [25] Yehorova, I.V. (2021). *The implementing pedagogical projects practice*. Ivano-Frankivsk: Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University.

Галина Ватаманюк

Кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент

Кам'янець-Подільський національний університет імені Івана Огієнка

32302, вул. Огієнка, 61, м. Кам'янець-Подільський, Україна

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4236-107X>

Тетяна Дуткевич

Кандидат психологічних наук, професор

Кам'янець-Подільський національний університет імені Івана Огієнка

32302, вул. Огієнка, 61, м. Кам'янець-Подільський, Україна

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3792-7195>

Проектна технологія як засіб формування лідерських якостей у дітей старшого дошкільного віку

Анотація. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена сучасними запитами українського суспільства на формування мотивованих, відповідальних громадян, що можуть успішно виконувати лідерські ролі. Метою роботи став пошук відповіді на питання про те, як за допомогою проектної технології відбувається формування лідерських якостей старших дошкільників. У дослідженні застосовано структурно-функціональний, термінологічний, гуманістичний, генетичний, діяльнісно-функціональний та компетентнісний підходи, а також загальнонаукові логічні методи (аналіз, єдність індукції та дедукції, моделювання, систематизація). Лідерські якості (самостійність, ініціативність, креативність, відповідальність, комунікабельність, організаторські вміння, партнерство, співчутливість) визначено складовими лідерства, як соціальної компетентності дитини. Показано, що проектна технологія передбачає організацію діяльності дітей зі створення проекту, в основі якого лежить потреба у вирішенні життєвої проблеми, у досягненні певної цілі, отриманні конкретного результату завдяки послідовному вирішенню поточних завдань. Технологія проектів відповідає вимогам часу, розширює простір для творчості дитини, активізує мислення, підсилює вмотивованість, надає педагогу й дітям можливість бути партнерами, уникаючи проявів домінантності. Проектна технологія дозволяє успішно формувати у старших дошкільників лідерські якості комунікабельності, організаторських умінь, партнерства, співчутливості, оскільки побудована на груповій взаємодії дітей з властивими їй явищами розподілу групових ролей, спілкування, взаєморозуміння. Моделювання дітьми під час виконання проекту процесу вирішення життєвих проблем дозволяє розвивати у них такі лідерські якості, як самостійність, ініціативність, креативність, відповідальність. Специфічні можливості проектної технології у формуванні лідерських якостей полягають у забезпеченні можливостей для прояву дитиною лідерських якостей у спілкуванні як з однолітками, так і з людьми іншого віку; формування різних видів лідерства (комунікативного і ділового, офіційного і неофіційного тощо) та засвоєння різних лідерських ролей (організатора, експерта, генератора ідей, комунікатора); попередження «негативних» рис лідера – таких як зверхність, домінантність, егоцентризм

Ключові слова: особистість; лідерство; старший дошкільник; освітній проект; співпраця; педагог