

Challenges and Critical Areas of Kindergarten Management in the Slovak Republic

Mária Pisoňová¹, Nina Bodoríková¹

¹ Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Faculty of Education, Dražovská 4, Nitra 949 01, Slovakia

Abstract – A significant milestone for kindergartens in Slovakia was the year 2021, when the obligation to complete pre-primary education was enshrined in legislation. This change brought new challenges in the field of management, which are reflected in increased demands on kindergarten principals, not only in the pedagogical, but also in the legal, economic and personnel areas.

The aim of the presented paper is to identify problematic areas of management in kindergartens from the perspective of principals and to analyse factors that affect the effectiveness of their managerial activities. The authors devote themselves to a comprehensive analysis of the current state of kindergarten management in Slovakia, focusing on selected aspects, including the specifics of the organization of pre-primary education, requirements for kindergarten principals, the legislative framework, as well as necessary managerial competencies.

The research findings point to the need for systematic support for principals through further education, mentoring and optimization of management processes. In conclusion, recommendations are formulated for improving the quality of kindergarten management, with an emphasis on connecting theory with practice and developing the leadership skills of principals.

Keywords – Management, principals, leadership, skills, kindergartens.

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Corresponding author: Nina Bodoríková,
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Faculty of
Education, Dražovská 4, Nitra 949 01, Slovakia

Email: nbodorikova@ukf.sk

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1. Introduction

A kindergarten principal should be able to manage the school and be a person with professional knowledge in the field of school management. It is clear that the kindergarten principal can greatly influence what the school is like and the level of interest parents will have in it. As stipulated by law, kindergarten principals have three basic roles: *leader, manager and implementer of pedagogical practice*.

One of the priorities of kindergarten principals, in addition to ensuring the proper functioning of the entrusted institution, is also ensuring the process of pedagogical management of the kindergarten. However, currently, principals are more concerned with amendments to the School Act, the Act on Pedagogical Employees, the new Decree on Kindergarten and many other legislative changes that significantly affect the organization and quality of pre-primary education, while they must constantly respond to new requirements regarding management, financing, staffing and implementation of changes in practice. It must be noted that the burden of kindergarten principals with administrative work can distract them from leading the pedagogical process, in which they should be the main participants (as discussed in many international research findings). For the above reasons, it is necessary to carry out a research study aimed at *identifying problematic areas of management from the perspective of kindergarten principals*.

1.1. Kindergartens in Slovakia

Kindergartens play a key role in pre-primary education and provide children with their first systematic experience with the school environment. They are a place where children's basic social and appropriate cognitive skills are formed, which places high demands on their management and organization. Effective management of kindergartens is therefore considered essential for ensuring quality education and the harmonious development of children.

Kindergarten is defined as an "educational facility for preschool children" [1] and can be distinguished into those with legal personality and those without legal personality.

If a kindergarten is not established as a legal entity, i.e. does not have legal personality, it is part of another legal entity, for example a municipality. It can also be part of a merger with a primary school into one legal entity: Primary school with kindergarten [2].

Kindergartens in Slovakia became part of the school system for the first time in history on 22 May 2008 on the basis of Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education (School Act) and on amendments and supplements to certain acts [3]. Pre-primary education in kindergarten is most often attended by children aged 3 to 6, with the basic mission of upbringing and education being to achieve an appropriate cognitive, sensorimotor and socio-emotional level, which is the basis for further school education in primary school, as well as the basis for life in society.

Based on the aforementioned factors, the kindergarten principal is seen as having a significant impact on the character of the school and on the degree of interest parents show in it. The kindergarten principal holds a key position in the management process. His/her task is not only to ensure the smooth running of the school, but also to create conditions for high-quality pre-primary education. He/she is responsible for strategic planning, effective management of the pedagogical process, leadership and motivation of employees, as well as communication with parents and the wider community. In addition, he must be familiar with current legislation and ensure that the school meets all requirements arising from applicable regulations.

As mentioned above, in Slovakia, compulsory pre-primary education has been enacted since 2021. For a child who has reached the age of five by 31 August, which precedes the start of the school year from which the child will complete compulsory school attendance in primary school [4]. Compulsory pre-primary education in kindergarten lasts one school year. If a child has not reached school readiness after reaching the age of six, based on the written consent of the relevant counselling and prevention facility, the written consent of the general practitioner for children and adolescents and with the informed consent of the legal representative or representative of the facility, the kindergarten principal decides on the continuation of compulsory pre-primary education in kindergarten [5].

The goal of kindergarten is to support the development of children in several areas. The main areas of development are the social-emotional, intellectual, physical, moral and aesthetic areas. The main task of kindergarten is to build and develop children's abilities and skills, as well as to ensure the prerequisites for further education - preparing the child for entry into primary school (achieving school competence).

As part of the educational activities in kindergarten, the child acquires the initial foundations in seven areas. These are communication competences, mathematical competences and competences in the field of science and technology, digital competences, competences to learn, solve problems, think creatively and critically, social and personal competences, civic competences and, last but not least, work competences.

A school principal is *"a person who is the most important school manager and carries out state administration at the first level of management of the system of schools and school facilities."* as shown by [6].

The competence profile of a kindergarten principal is a broad topic that can be viewed from different perspectives. The authors [7], [8] analysed the key competencies needed for kindergarten principals in the context of quality management, while the authors [9], [10], [11] focused on identifying leadership skills in the educational environment. The studies [12], [13], [14] specified a competency model for kindergarten principals, emphasizing theoretical foundations and practical implications for their professional development.

In this view, the key role of the principal is primarily to ensure quality pre-primary education, while it is necessary to emphasize the need for the comprehensive development of kindergarten principals so that they can effectively manage the school, support teachers, and create a high-quality learning environment for children. A kindergarten principal with self-management competence should also be able to manage his/her own professional development, develop him/herself with the aim of increasing the quality of his/her work and should also participate in teamwork. With personal competencies, the principal should be able to plan and achieve optimal results and also lead others to achieve results and set goals [15].

The qualification requirements that a kindergarten principal must meet are governed by Act No. 138/2019 Coll. on pedagogical employees and professional employees and on amendments and supplements to certain acts [16], as revised in accordance with professional standards.

Nowadays, a kindergarten principal performs a dual role: Serving as a school manager while also acting as a pedagogical staff member who teaches with a reduced teaching load, depending on the size of the school.

For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that [17] developed a Director's Competence Model, inspired by other competency models while taking into account and respecting the specific nature of the work of a kindergarten principal.

The given model is composed of three areas of competence: a) *Managerial competencies*, b) *Personal competencies*, c) *Professional competencies*, while the individual areas of competence influence, condition, and intersect with each other, especially in such categories as personality traits, knowledge and skills.

1.2. Managerial Functions in the Work of a Kindergarten Principal

According to [18], the internal system of kindergarten management in terms of the focus of the principal's management activities can be divided into:

Pedagogical management: If pedagogical management is to be effective, it assumes that the kindergarten principal has created a school development concept, which represents a strategic plan for the school, which should include a concept of competencies, teaching and a concept of the kindergarten educational system. The kindergarten principal also fulfils teaching duties as a teacher. A problem that comes to the fore is the real impossibility of implementing quality teaching, related to the increasing duties and responsibilities of the school principal in non-pedagogical areas [19].

Professional and methodological management: The goal is to actively involve not only teachers but also other school employees in current issues of upbringing and education, as well as in the development of the school educational programme, the plan for professional education of employees, the effectiveness of the work of the school principal's advisory bodies such as the pedagogical council or methodological association (if established), cooperation with other schools and the public [20].

Personnel management: Represents activities such as searching for and acquiring new employees based on the current needs of the school, adapting newly hired employees to the new work environment, caring for professional and pedagogical growth, developing career positions in the school, evaluating and motivating employees, determining salaries and allocating variable salary components, planning vacations for recreation and recovery.

Economic management: Includes activities related to the creation of the school budget for the following period, planning of financial resources, its ongoing disbursement and evaluation. The school principal is responsible for the budget and the efficient, economical and purposeful use of financial resources intended for ensuring the school's activities.

Legal management: Includes the application of generally binding legal standards to the conditions of the kindergarten.

A prerequisite for the school principal to master these requirements is his/her high legal awareness, orientation and control in the relevant generally binding legal regulations. At the same time, the principal, in accordance with the applicable legislation, draws up internal regulations (internal school regulations, organizational regulations, salary regulations, security regulations, personal data protection directive, treasury regulations, shredding regulations, internal wage regulations and various other directives...).

2. Methodology

The persistent problems in the management of kindergartens, as well as the excessive administrative burden of principals, the lack of qualified personnel, unclear legislative requirements and limited opportunities for professional development, point to the need for a deeper analysis of this issue. Insufficient coordination between management bodies, financial constraints and growing demands for the quality of preschool education further complicate the effective management of these institutions.

For the above reasons, it was considered necessary to carry out research, *the main goal of which was to identify problematic areas of the management process from the perspective of kindergarten principals in Slovakia.*

To analyse and process the research results, a total of 187 questionnaires were distributed. The research tool consisted of a questionnaire with twenty-one items, which were both closed and open-ended, or with the possibility of choosing an alternative. The coding of individual items was carried out in MS Excel and subsequently processed using the freely available statistical software R.

The research sample consisted of kindergarten principals from all over Slovakia (principals of state, private and church kindergartens were addressed). Before submitting the questionnaire, all respondents were informed about the purpose and nature of the questionnaire and also that the data obtained were anonymous and would be used exclusively for scientific purposes.

To process and evaluate the results, quantitative and qualitative methods were used, namely within the framework of comparative data analysis and frequency determination. The coding of individual items was carried out in the MS Excel programme and subsequently processed using the freely available statistical software R. In an effort to obtain the most objective research results, the dependence between variables was also investigated.

Within this framework, the proportion of occurrence of certain answers was determined using mathematical and statistical methods: Chi-square test and Fisher's test of independence.

Stated hypotheses:

H1: *The area of pedagogical management and the length of management experience are independent.*

Specification: The answers to the item *problematic aspects in the area of pedagogical management* and to the item *length of management experience* are independent.

H2: *The area of personnel management and age are independent.*

Specification: The answers to the item *problematic aspects in the area of personnel management* and to the item *age of respondents* are independent.

H3: *The area of economic management and the type of school are independent.*

Specification: The answers to the item *problematic aspects in the area of economic management* and to the item *type of school* are independent.

H4: *The area of legal management and the method of management training are independent.*

Specification: The answers to the item *problematic aspects in the area of legal management* and to the item *method of management training* are independent.

H5: *The area of professional and methodological management and the method of management training are independent.*

Specificity: The answers to the item *problematic aspects in the area of professional and methodological management* and to the item on *the method of managerial training* are independent.

3. Results – Descriptive Part

This section presents the basic characteristics of the research sample and key variables relevant to the study. It includes information on the age of respondents, types of kindergartens, length of managerial experience, and level of management education. In addition, attention is given to the identification of problematic areas across various domains of school management as perceived by principals.

Age of respondents: Table 1 shows that the largest number of respondents fall into the category of 51 and over, specifically 86 respondents, which makes up 46% of that group. The issue of the high age of school principals may change in the near future.

The amendment to the Act on Pedagogical Employees reduced the requirements for the position of leading pedagogical employees and so principals may also show interest in managing the organization at a younger age.

The second place was made up of 33.2% of respondents aged 41 to 50. The third place was occupied by 22 respondents or 11.8% of kindergarten principals aged 36 to 40. The category of 31 - 35 years consisted of 15 respondents or 8% and the category under 30 was the least represented, with only 2 respondents or 1.1%.

Table 1. *Items frequency: Research sample by age of respondents*

Age of Respondents	n	%
a) under 30 years old	2	1
b) 31 – 35 years old	15	8
c) 36 – 40 years old	22	12
d) 41 – 50 years old	62	33
e) 51 years and older	86	46

Type of school: Kindergarten principals with legal personality must be able to manage the school in terms of personnel, economy, law and pedagogy and are subject to higher demands and requirements than kindergarten principals without legal personality. Table 2 shows that the research is dominated by respondents who manage kindergartens without legal personality, namely 121 respondents, and 61 respondents manage kindergartens with legal personality. Another option was mentioned by 5 respondents who are leading employees in a primary school with a kindergarten, which are connected by merging into one legal entity, which is a primary school with a kindergarten and are located in municipalities.

Table 2. *Items frequency: Research sample by school type*

Type of school	n	%
a) kindergarten with legal personality	61	33
b) kindergarten without legal personality	121	65
c) other option - specify which	5	2
c 1) primary school connected to kindergarten	5	2

Length of managerial experience as a kindergarten principal: The length of managerial experience was an important variable in the research, as attention was also given to the number of terms respondents had served as principals, i.e. how many times they had been appointed to a leadership position.

One term of office lasts five years. As shown in Table 3, a substantial proportion of kindergarten principals, 41% (76 respondents) reported 0–5 years of experience, indicating that they are in their first term of office and are newcomers to the position. It is gratifying to find that these principals make up almost half of the respondents surveyed and the trend of senior employees in the position of principal almost until retirement is slowly becoming a thing of the past. Although the table also shows a still high representation of principals who indicated a length of managerial experience of 21 years or more, which is 17% - 33 respondents. With the same representation, 33 respondents indicated a length of management experience of 6–10 years, which means that these respondents are elected for the second time to the position of principal. The table indicates that respondents with 11–15 years of managerial experience are less represented, accounting for 26 respondents (14%). Respondents who have been elected four times with a management experience of 16–20 years were the least of the respondents, namely 19, i.e. 11%.

Table 3. Items frequency: Length of management experience

Length of Management Experience	n	%
a) 0 – 5 years	76	41
b) 6 – 10 years	33	17
c) 11 – 15 years	26	14
d) 16 – 20 years	19	11
e) 21 and over	33	17

Completed management education before taking up the position of kindergarten principal:

As shown in Table 4, the highest representation was observed among respondents who had completed functional education, namely 115, i.e. 62% of kindergarten principals. Through functional education, pedagogical employees acquired professional competencies necessary for the performance of management activities. Only 9 respondents stated that they had received education at a university focusing on educational management (4%). 29 respondents, i.e. 16%, did not complete any preparation and 34 respondents, i.e. 18%, acquired knowledge through self-study before taking up the position.

Table 4. Items frequency: Completed management education before taking up the position

Completed Management Education	n	%
a) none	29	16
b) knowledge acquired through self-study	34	18
c) functional education	115	62
d) university education focused on educational management	9	4

The problematic aspects of management activities in the field of pedagogical management:

This item focused on evaluating how respondents perceive pedagogical management (Table 5). The answers were relatively balanced, 42% of all respondents consider this area to be problematic, i.e. 79 respondents, 3% of respondents answered that they cannot express an opinion on this area, which is only 6 respondents, and for 102 respondents (55%) this area does not represent a problem.

Respondents who identified this area as problematic most often cited the creation of a professional education plan, the creation of a school development strategy, in methodological guidance of teachers, cooperation with legal representatives of children as the cause of problems.

Table 5. Items frequency: Perception of problematic issues in the area of pedagogical management

Answer	n	%
a) yes, state the problem	79	42
a 1) in the creation of a professional education plan	27	15
a 2) in the creation of a school development strategy	18	10
a 3) in the methodological guidance of teachers	10	6
a 4) in cooperation with the legal representatives of children	8	4
a 5) in the creation of employee evaluation criteria	6	3
a 6) in the lack of interest of pedagogical employees	5	2
a 7) in the administrative burden	5	2
b) no	102	55
c) I cannot express myself	6	3

The problematic aspects of management activities in the area of personnel management:

As in the previous item, prior to evaluating the causes of the problems, attention was directed to whether respondents consider the area of personnel management to be problematic, as shown in Table 6. A total of 47% of respondents consider this area to be problematic, while 51% do not consider it to be problematic and 2% of respondents cannot comment on this area.

The main problem in this area is considered to be the recruitment of new employees, the motivation system and ensuring the professional growth of employees.

Table 6. Items frequency: Perception of problematic issues in the area of personnel management

Answer	n	%
a) yes, please state the problem	87	47
a 1) in hiring new employees	31	17
a 2) in the motivation system	17	10
a 3) in ensuring the professional growth of employees	13	7
a 4) in creating criteria for filling a job position	11	6
a 5) in adapting new employees	6	3
a 6) in the absence of qualified teaching staff	6	3
a 7) in the founder	3	1
b) no	96	51
c) I cannot express myself	4	2

The problematic aspects of management activities in the field of economic management:

As far as economic management in kindergarten is concerned, as shown in Table 7, only a third (33%) of respondents reported no problems in this management area. More than half (53%) of respondents said this area is problematic for them. Up to 14% of respondents could not directly assess this area of management. The most problematic in economic planning was often reported to be budget creation, financial planning, managerial accounting and public procurement.

Table 7. Items frequency: Perception of problematic issues in the area of economic management

Answer	n	%
a) yes, please state the problem	100	53
a 1) in budget creation	41	22
a 2) in financial planning	20	11
a 3) in managerial accounting	12	7
a 4) in public procurement	10	5
a 5) in obtaining funds from extra - budgetary sources	7	4
a 6) in creation of projects	5	2
a 7) in the founder	5	2
b) no	62	33
c) I cannot express myself	25	14

The problematic aspects of management activities in the field of professional-methodological management:

As indicated in Table 8, the professional-methodological management of the kindergarten is perceived as a problematic component by 44% of all respondents. A little more than half of the respondents (51%) consider this area to be trouble - free. Up to 5% of respondents were unable to comment on this aspect. In this area, respondents claimed that the most problematic process is engaging teachers in the concept of school development, ensuring professional development of teachers by updating education, and the decision - making acts of the principal and control activities.

Table 8. Items frequency: Perception of problematic issues in the field of expertise - methodological management

Answer	n	%
a) yes, please state the problem	82	44
a 1) in the process of engaging teachers into the school development concept	24	13
a 2) in ensuring the professional development of teachers for further innovative education	20	11
a 3) in the decision -making acts of the principal	18	10
a 4) in the control activities	8	4
a 5) in time management	6	3
a 6) in applying SWOT analysis	4	2
a 7) in the creation of a vision	2	1
b) no	95	51
c) I cannot express myself	10	5

The problematic aspects of management activities in the field of legal management:

In the field of legal management, as shown in Table 9, up to 60% of respondents encounter problems. 38% of respondents said they did not perceive problems in this area and 2% of respondents commented on this area with the answer "I cannot express myself". Respondents reported that the most problematic was little or no mastery of legislation and relevant legal regulations, which quite often change. In addition, they also reported insufficient education in this area.

Table 9. Items frequency: Perception of problematic issues in the field of legal management

Answer	n	%
a) yes, please state the problem	112	60
a 1) in the control and orientation in the relevant legislative regulations	48	25
a 2) in insufficient education in this area	19	10
a 3) in a rapidly changing legislation and laws	15	8
a 4) in school legislative standards	11	6
a 5) In the protection of personal data	9	5
a 6) in the Labor Code	7	4
a 7) in criminal law	3	2
b) no	71	38
c) I cannot express myself	4	2

4. Results – Relational Part

In the subsequent stage of data analysis, the validity of the proposed hypotheses was verified using independence statistical tests between two variables. In each case, pairs of questionnaire items were examined to identify relationships between responses. For this purpose, the chi square test (χ^2 test) and Fisher's exact test of independence were applied. When testing statistical hypotheses, both the zero hypothesis (H_0) and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) are formulated. Prior to testing, the significance level is determined, representing the acceptable probability of error. The analysis employed the commonly used significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, indicating a 5% risk of rejecting the zero hypothesis when it is actually true. Additionally, significance levels of 1% and 10% may also be considered. The zero hypothesis is rejected if the calculated p-value is lower than the chosen significance level.

The result of the test, i.e. dependence or independence between the answers, will also show the appropriate graphic representation, which is a mosaic chart in this case. All analyses were performed in freely available Statistical Software R.

4.1. Managing practice:

1. H_0 : The perception of the pedagogical management area and the length of the managing practice are independent.
- H_1 : The perception of the pedagogical management area and the length of the managing practice are dependent.

The conclusion of the testing is that there is no statistically significant dependence between the length of practice and the perception of the area of pedagogical management. Thus, the problematic issues of the pedagogical management, which are creation of the school's work plan, the creation of the employee's professional training plan, the creation of evaluation criteria, as well as cooperation with the legal representatives, the methodological guidance of teachers and others, in this area respondents reported independently regarding the duration of the managing practice.

This is illustrated in Figure 1, where the distribution of colours representing responses to the perception of management in the pedagogical area, do not change due to the length of the managing practice. The height of the individual rectangles within each category for length of practice for answer "yes" as well as "no" show little difference.

This means that their frequency is not very different. Furthermore, the width of the individual rectangles reflects the representation of the respective categories in terms of length of practice.

The widest is a rectangle for 0-5 years of experience, so this category is the most represented among respondents. Conclusion: The zero hypothesis is not rejected.

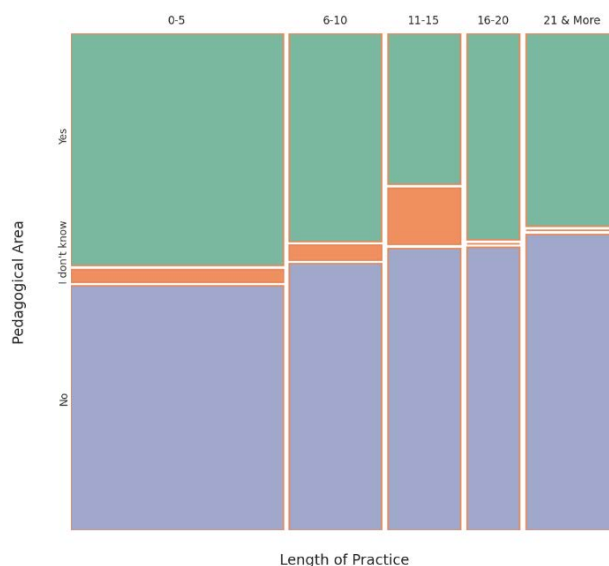


Figure 1. Relationship between length of practice and perception of pedagogical management

4.2. Items Evaluation: The Problematic Issues in the Field of Personnel Management and Age of Respondents

2. H_0 : The perception of the area of personnel management and age are independent.
- H_1 : The perception of the area of personnel management and age are dependent.

Similarly, as in the verification of the previous hypothesis, the testing did not show statistically significant dependence between the age of respondents and the perception of their personnel management. Personnel management encompasses activities such as organizing the selection process, recruiting new employees, establishing criteria for job positions, onboarding new staff, supporting the professional development of pedagogical employees, as well as implementing motivation and evaluation systems. This is illustrated in Figure 2, which shows that the perception of personnel management does not depend on the age of the respondents. Conclusion: The zero hypothesis is not rejected.

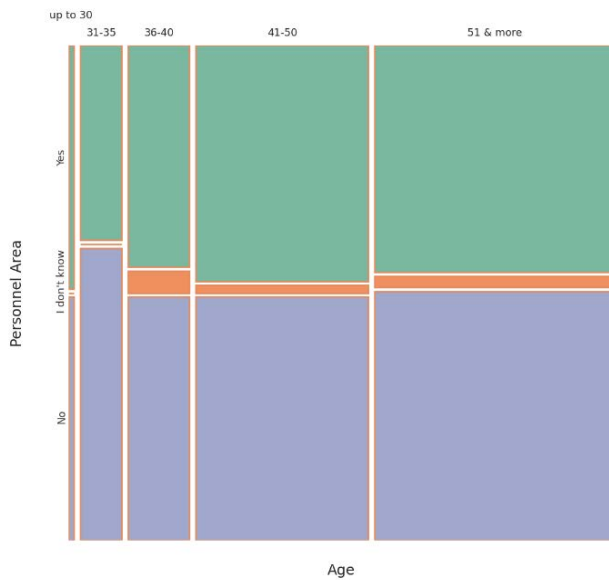


Figure 2. Relationship between age and perception of the personnel area

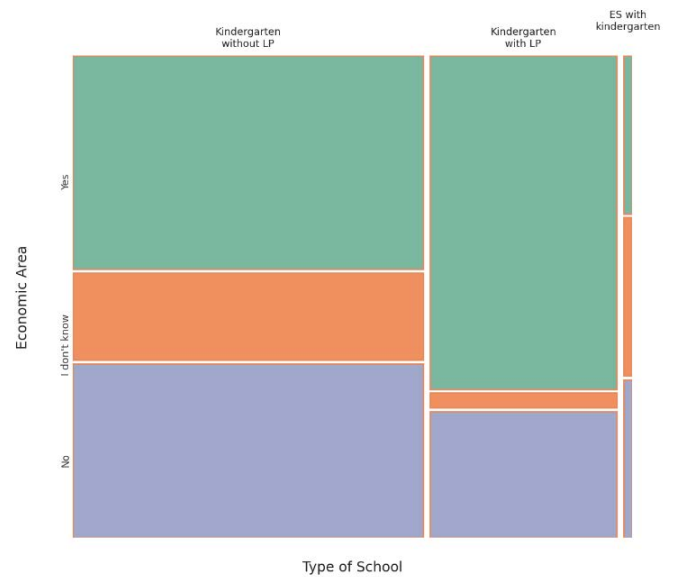


Figure 3. Relationship between school type and perception of economic management

4.3. Items Evaluation: The Problematic Issues in the Area of Economic Management and School Type

3. H_0 : Perception of the area of economic management and school type are independent.

H_1 : Perception of the area of economic management and school type are dependent.

Verification of the given hypothesis led to statistically significant results. Thus, a statistically significant relationship was identified between the type of school and the perception of economic management.

Economic management such as financial planning, budgeting, management accounting, public procurement, school business activities, obtaining funds from extra-budgetary sources, project creation and others were reported by respondents with legal personality as more problematic. This is illustrated in Figure 3, which shows that respondents from kindergartens with legal personality perceive this sphere as more problematic than principals of kindergartens without legal personality. In kindergartens connected to primary schools, which are the fewest among respondents, the distribution of answers is approximately the same. Conclusion: The zero hypothesis is rejected.

4.4. Items Evaluation: The Problematic Issues in the Area of Legal Management and the Method of Managerial Training

4. H_0 : The perception of the area of legal management and the method of managerial training are independent.

H_1 : The perception of the area of legal management and the method of managerial training are dependent.

In this hypothesis, a statistically significant dependence between the method of managerial training and the perception of the area of legal management was not demonstrated. As demonstrated in Figure 4, which shows that whether respondents consider the given area to be problematic does not depend on their preparation for the given position. Conclusion: The zero hypothesis is not rejected.

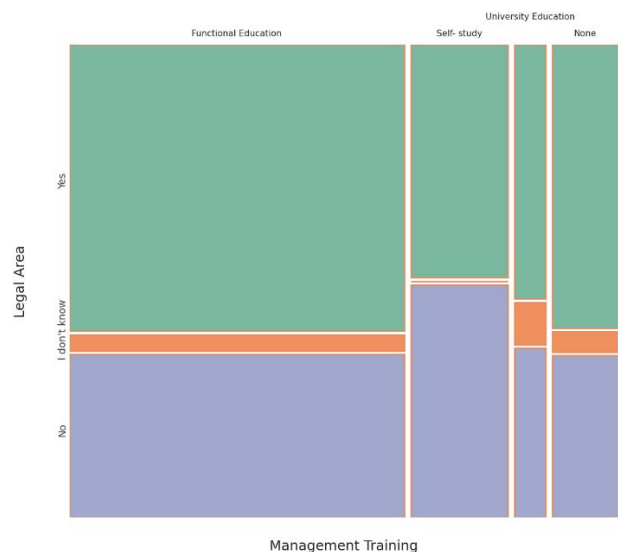


Figure 4. Relationship between management training and perception of legal governance

4.5. Items Evaluation: The Problematic Issues in the Area of Professional and Methodological Management and the Method of Management Training

5. H_0 : The perception of the area of professional and methodological management and the method of management training are independent.

H_1 : The perception of the area of professional and methodological management and the method of management training are dependent.

After testing, no statistically significant relationship was identified between the method of management training and the perception of the area of professional and methodological management. Clearly seen in Figure 5, the perception of this area such as: The process of strategic planning of the school, the application of SWOT analysis, the creation of the school strategy, missions, visions, organizational and time management, school marketing, decision-making acts of the principal, types and specifics of control activities in the school, social ethics, etc. does not depend on the method of preparation for the performance of a management position. Conclusion: The zero hypothesis is not rejected.

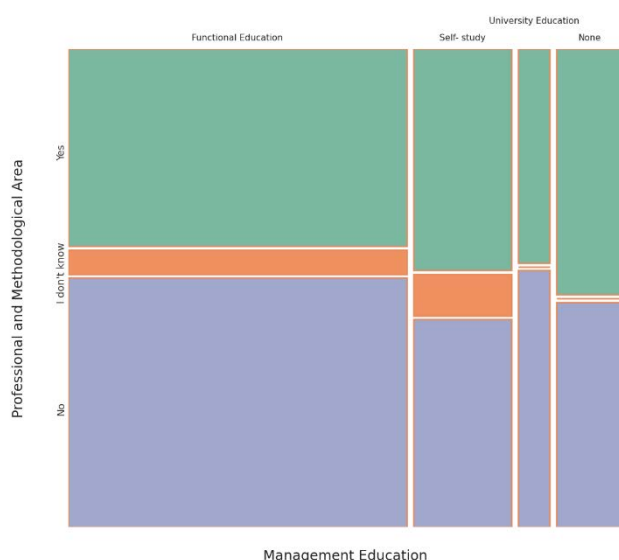


Figure 5. Relationship between management education and perception of professional and methodological management

5. Conclusion

The constantly changing demands on kindergarten principals point to the growing complexity of pre-primary education management. The research has identified several critical areas, with the most significant problems being in legal and economic management.

Principals often encounter ambiguities in legislative norms, while frequent amendments to laws and decrees cause problems in their application in practice. In the area of economic management, the main challenges are financing kindergartens, budgeting and ensuring the sustainability of financing from various sources.

The research findings have shown that the administrative burden of principals often negatively affects their ability to engage in pedagogical management and strategic development of the school. This factor can have a long-term impact on the quality of pre-primary education, as principals, instead of pedagogical leadership, have to devote most of their time to bureaucratic and administrative duties. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure a more efficient division of labour and strengthen administrative support for principals, for example through assistant principals or expert teams for the legislative and financial agenda.

The requirement established by legislation in 2019 to complete basic functional education prior to assuming a management position represents a positive step towards improving the preparation of future principals. However, basic management competencies are not sufficient for effective management of all aspects of school management, therefore it is necessary to support continuous education and professional development of principals. It is important for principals to consciously develop their skills in the areas of pedagogical leadership, personnel management, strategic planning and legislative orientation.

One of the possible solutions to increase the quality of kindergarten management is the introduction of regular training and mentoring programmes for principals. Cooperation with experienced experts in the field of school management could significantly help both new and experienced principals in managing the challenges that kindergarten management brings. Equally important is the connection of academic knowledge with practical application, which would prevent the ineffective implementation of theoretical models without real usability in practice.

Last but not least, it is necessary to increase attention to the systemic support of kindergarten principals from the founders and the Ministry of Education. It is necessary to create mechanisms that will allow principals to focus on the real priorities of school management - the quality of the educational process, innovations in pre-primary education and the development of the pedagogical team. Improving management training, professional support and legislative certainty can significantly contribute to more effective management of kindergartens and thus to a higher quality of pre-primary education in Slovakia.

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