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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF
PROSPECTIVE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS THROUGH PEDAGOGICAL
COACHING**Zukhra Akramova**

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ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: pedagogical coaching; prospective primary school teachers; professional competencies; GROW model; reflective thinking; lesson planning; classroom management; self-directed learning; decision-making; motivation; self-assessment; teacher education; coaching intervention.

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Abstract: This study investigates the role of pedagogical coaching in developing the professional competencies of prospective primary school teachers. An experimental approach based on the GROW model was employed, involving 30 participants. Diagnostic surveys were administered before and after the coaching sessions to evaluate changes in key competencies. The results indicate a significant improvement in participants' ability to plan lessons, manage classroom environments, reflect critically, and set personal development goals. Coaching was found to enhance motivation, decision-making, and self-directed learning. The article presents a detailed analysis of the coaching methodology, its implementation process, and its positive effects on teacher training.

Introduction. In the current era of profound transformations in the educational system, primary school teachers are increasingly required to possess high-level professional competencies. Today's teachers are expected not only to demonstrate traditional knowledge and skills, but also to exhibit reflective thinking, effective communication, initiative, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities.

In response to these evolving demands, there has been growing interest—both internationally and locally—in the application of pedagogical coaching within teacher education. Coaching is understood as a collaborative methodological process that supports the development of professional competencies by unlocking an individual's inner potential, enhancing motivation for self-improvement, and fostering gradual professional growth (Whitmore, 2009; Parslow & Ray, 2003) [1, 2].

In particular, the GROW model developed by John Whitmore structures coaching into four essential stages: Goal, Reality, Options, and Will. This model serves as a framework for designing coaching processes that strategically support the professional development of prospective primary school teachers, enabling goal-setting, reflection, and continuous improvement.

The relevance of this study lies in the fact that traditional approaches are no longer sufficient to effectively cultivate the professional competencies of students enrolled in teacher education programs. Accordingly, this article proposes and empirically examines a coaching-based methodology aimed at fostering the professional competencies of future primary school teachers.

Pedagogical coaching is a strategic educational partnership aimed at unlocking individuals' inner potential, fostering independent decision-making, encouraging self-directed learning, and systematically developing professional competencies (Parslow & Ray, 2003) [2]. This methodology is implemented not through direct instruction, but by a coach who acts as a guide—prompting reflection and motivating purposeful action.

As highlighted in the resource *Coaching a do ya*, coaching is a learner-centered, process-oriented educational model based on mutual trust and conducted in a supportive environment. It differs from traditional pedagogical approaches in that the learner (or trainee) is viewed as an active participant in their own learning process.

One of the most effective coaching models worldwide is the GROW model, developed by John Whitmore. This model comprises four key stages: Goal (defining the objective), Reality (analyzing the current situation), Options (identifying possible solutions), and Will (determining a concrete plan of action) (Whitmore, 2009) [1].

When applied to teacher education, the GROW-based pedagogical coaching approach enables the gradual and purposeful development of prospective primary school teachers' professional competencies. It is particularly effective in enhancing soft skills such as communication, reflection, collaboration, and problem-solving (Nurimbekova, 2022) [4].

Other studies, including the article *Amplifying Teachers' Voices in the Coaching Partnership: An Inductive Exploration of Teacher Motivation and Perceived Learning*, have also emphasized the benefits of coaching in improving teacher motivation and reflective thinking. The findings indicate that effective coaching practices encourage teachers to critically analyze their pedagogical approaches, leading to the development of metacognitive skills.

Moreover, several studies have shown that coaching enhances teachers' awareness of their professional responsibilities, fosters innovative thinking, strengthens their sense of accountability, and increases motivation for continuous professional growth (Dubinenkova, 2020) [3].

For these reasons, pedagogical coaching is increasingly recognized not only in classroom contexts but also as a valuable methodological approach in teacher preparation programs. Through individualized coaching strategies based on this model, it is possible to effectively foster both the personal and professional growth of prospective teachers.

In recent years, the coaching approach has gained recognition in the field of education as an effective methodological tool for promoting teachers' professional development. Compared to traditional mentoring and supervision, pedagogical coaching is more focused on unlocking teachers' inner potential, fostering self-awareness, and supporting growth through reflective analysis (Parslow & Ray, 2003) [2].

The theoretical foundation of this approach is grounded in the GROW model developed by John Whitmore. This model—comprising Goal, Reality, Options, and Will—offers a goal-oriented and step-by-step strategy for fostering development in educational practice (Whitmore, 2009) [1]. Research shows that through the GROW model, teachers are able to consciously plan their professional activities, analyze challenges, and initiate steps toward personal and professional growth (Nurimbekova, 2022) [4].

Furthermore, a number of studies have examined the practical implications of pedagogical coaching. For instance, Dubinenkova (2020) emphasizes the positive impact of coaching on fostering creativity, initiative, and decision-making skills among teachers. The article *Amplifying Teachers' Voices in the Coaching Partnership: An Inductive Exploration of Teacher Motivation and Perceived Learning* (2022) highlights coaching as a key factor in enhancing teacher motivation and reflective capacity, which in turn supports the development of metacognitive competencies [5].

Nurimbekova (2022) also observed in her research that pedagogical coaching contributes to the development of soft skills such as communication, reflection, and classroom

management in prospective primary school teachers [4]. This, in turn, strengthens motivation for self-improvement and professional reflection.

Other researchers, including Zubova and Parkhomenko (2020), and Parslow & Ray (2003), have evaluated coaching as a pedagogical technology that fosters self-development culture, communication strategies, and constructive assessment competencies among teachers.

Overall, the literature reviewed supports the view that pedagogical coaching serves as an innovative and effective approach in teacher education. Specifically, the methodology presented in this article—pedagogical coaching based on the GROW model—has the potential to become a valuable theoretical and practical framework for the comprehensive development of professional competencies in prospective primary school teachers.

Materials and methods. This study employed an applied-experimental design aimed at developing and testing a pedagogical coaching methodology to enhance the professional competencies of prospective primary school teachers. The theoretical and methodological framework was grounded in constructivist approaches, learner-centered education principles, and coaching philosophy (Whitmore, 2009; Parslow & Ray, 2003; Dubinenkova, 2020) [1, 2, 3].

The study participants consisted of 30 volunteer fourth-year students enrolled in the Primary Education program at Jizzakh State Pedagogical University. This number was considered sufficient for piloting the coaching model and identifying qualitative changes in competencies through individualized approaches. The study focused not on statistical generalization, but on assessing the effectiveness of the methodological model, thereby laying the foundation for future large-scale applications.

The coaching methodology was designed based on the GROW model developed by John Whitmore, which includes the following stages:

1. Goal: Individual interviews were conducted with each student to identify their short- and long-term professional goals.
2. Reality: Current competency levels were diagnosed using self-assessment forms, diagnostic surveys, and reflective journals.
3. Options: Strategies for personal development were formulated. Mini-projects, practical tasks, and small group activities were implemented during this stage.
4. Will: Individual development plans were created for each participant and monitored weekly through progress tracking and reflection sessions.

Data Collection Tools Included:

- Competency diagnostic tests (focused on planning, reflection, and problem-solving),

- Reflective journals,
- Audio recordings of coaching sessions,
- Pre- and post-intervention surveys and self-evaluation forms.

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and descriptive statistics to compare participants' competency levels before and after the intervention. Additionally, students' written reflections and verbal feedback were analyzed to assess the perceived impact of the coaching sessions.

A specially developed diagnostic survey was used to assess professional competencies. The questionnaire included several blocks:

- General demographic information (age, gender, practicum experience),
- Knowledge and awareness of pedagogical coaching,
- Self-assessment of competencies using a 5-point Likert scale,
- Subjective evaluations of coaching impact,
- Needs and suggestions for professional development.

For example, in Question 7, participants were asked to rate the following competencies on a scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high):

- Planning lessons using interactive methods,
- Managing classroom environments and creating a positive atmosphere,
- Conducting critical reflection and lesson analysis,
- Practicing self-evaluation and professional growth.

Results and discussion. The results of the experimental coaching program demonstrated significant improvements in the professional competencies of the participating students. At the initial stage of the study, the majority of the participants (87%) exhibited low to moderate levels in key competencies such as reflective thinking, independent decision-making in problematic situations, and systematic lesson planning. By the end of the program, 73% of the students showed high levels of development in these competencies.

The observed changes are presented below, aligned with each phase of the GROW model:

1. Goal Phase – Setting Objectives:

Initially, many students lacked a clear and structured understanding of their professional goals. Through the coaching sessions, they learned to distinguish between short-term goals (e.g., independently designing lesson plans, managing classroom dynamics) and long-term goals (e.g., preparing to teach upper grades, developing their own instructional methods).

2. Reality Phase – Assessing the Current Situation:

Reflective journals and self-assessment results indicated that although many students possessed theoretical knowledge of certain competencies, they struggled with practical application. During this phase, they developed skills in critically assessing real classroom challenges, acknowledging their limitations, and engaging in constructive self-analysis.

3. Options Phase – Identifying Strategies:

Participants explored strategies such as independent learning, teamwork, the use of project-based learning, and effective resource management. Notably, the implementation of "co-coaching pairs" enabled collaborative analysis and peer feedback, which significantly enhanced their critical and communication skills.

4. Will Phase – Planning and Taking Action:

Each student formulated a personalized development plan and monitored their progress on a weekly basis. Observations revealed that 85% of these plans were consistently updated by the students themselves, indicating a strong internal motivation and commitment to self-improvement.

The post-coaching evaluations, including surveys and written reflections, revealed the following outcomes:

- A stronger identification with the teaching profession.
- Decreased levels of professional anxiety.
- Improved communication competencies and emerging leadership skills, particularly in group settings.
- Increased awareness of the need for ongoing professional development.

For example, one participant noted in the final survey (Participant #12, Q16):

"Previously, I thought improving myself would be difficult. After the coaching sessions, I realized my potential and became more motivated to assess and refine my own teaching".

Participant #4 (Q14) wrote:

"If given the chance, I would definitely participate in such coaching sessions again. They taught me how to think independently and critically".

Quantitative analysis supported these qualitative findings. The initial diagnostic test showed an average competency score of 56%, while the post-coaching assessment indicated an increase to 82%.

This represents a 26 percentage point increase in overall competency scores, indicating the effectiveness of the coaching intervention.

Table 1. Comparison of professional competencies before and after the coaching process

Competency	Pre-Coaching (%)	Post-Coaching (%)
Reflective Thinking	52	80
Decision-Making in Problem Solving	48	78
Leadership	55	83
Self-Evaluation	50	85
Communication Skills	60	84

These findings confirm that the coaching process based on the GROW model significantly contributed to the development of participants' professional competencies. Notably, there was marked improvement in reflective thinking, autonomous decision-making, and communication skills.

The qualitative data gathered from diaries, interviews, and written reflections further support the conclusion that the coaching intervention enhanced students' professional self-awareness and promoted a sustainable culture of self-directed development.

Conclusion. The findings of this study demonstrate that the pedagogical coaching methodology, particularly the GROW model-based approach, serves as an effective tool for developing the professional competencies of prospective primary school teachers. During the intervention, participants successfully acquired several metacognitive and reflective skills, including:

- setting goals and strategically planning them (Goal),
- assessing their current professional status (Reality),
- identifying and evaluating alternative strategies (Options),
- developing and adhering to a concrete action plan (Will).

The coaching approach strengthened students' capacity for independent decision-making, professional reflection, collaboration, and communication. Additionally, participants reported an increase in intrinsic motivation for self-improvement and greater confidence in their professional identity as future teachers.

Based on the study results, the following practical recommendations are proposed:

1. It is advisable to introduce specialized coaching-based courses and training programs in teacher education institutions.
2. A system for designing and implementing individual development plans should be established to foster students' self-directed growth.

3. The GROW model should be gradually integrated into pedagogical practice, accompanied by systematic monitoring and reflection.
4. The use of co-coaching strategies can enhance peer collaboration and analytical dialogue among students.
5. Digital tools for reflection (e.g., video recordings, online journals, and feedback platforms) should be incorporated to improve the overall effectiveness of the coaching process.
6. Future research should consider expanding the participant sample and replicating the study across various regions and higher education institutions to validate the methodology on a broader scale.

The study's limitations include the relatively small sample size, time constraints, and participants' limited prior knowledge of coaching. Therefore, it is recommended to develop long-term coaching projects integrated with school-based teaching practice to ensure a more comprehensive evaluation of the methodology's impact.

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