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SELF-IMPROVEMENT OF A PRESCHOOL TEACHER THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOFT SKILLS

In recent years researchers have become increasingly interested in the development of soft skills in teacher education. Soft skills such as communication, empathy, and time management play an important role in the professional activity of preschool educators. These skills help teachers interact effectively with children, parents, and colleagues and create a positive educational environment. In modern education, teachers are expected not only to have professional knowledge but also to possess strong interpersonal abilities. Therefore, the development of soft skills is considered an important component of the professional self-improvement of future preschool teachers.

Many studies on soft skills are based on the analysis of international and national educational journals published over the last decade. In particular, researchers such as S. Malik note that the concept of “skill” has a long history and refers to the ability to effectively apply knowledge in practice. In other words, skills are not only about knowing something, but also about being able to use this knowledge in real-life situations. It is also emphasized that knowledge and skills are closely connected and support each other in the learning process [1]. The term “soft skills” appeared relatively recently, but became widely used in education and professional training.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the role of soft skills in the self-improvement of preschool teachers. The study aims to identify key soft skills, examine their impact on professional activity, and provide practical exercises for developing communication and time management skills.

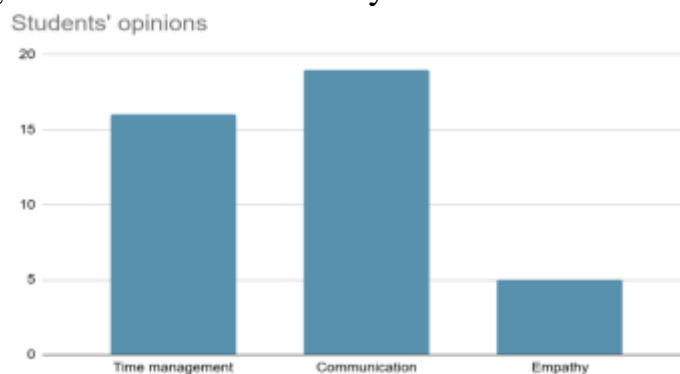
Soft skills are a combination of personal and interpersonal abilities that ensure effective communication, cooperation, and self-organization. Among the most important soft skills for a preschool teacher are communication, empathy, emotional intelligence, and time management. First of all, communication skills play a key role in the professional activity of an educator. According to M. Robles, communication is one of the most demanded competencies in modern professions [2]. In the context of preschool education, communication helps teachers explain tasks clearly, maintain children’s attention, and build trust. In our opinion, the ability to communicate effectively is especially important because young children perceive information not only through words but also through tone, gestures, and emotions.

Secondly, empathy is essential for understanding children’s feelings and emotional states. J. Heckman and T. Kautz emphasize that emotional skills significantly influence social behaviour and interaction [3]. Empathy allows the teacher to support children, reduce anxiety, and create a psychologically comfortable environment. In working with parents, empathy helps educators better understand their concerns and build respectful relationships. Soft skills also play an important role in cooperation with parents. Effective communication allows teachers to inform parents about their child’s progress, discuss difficulties, and find common solutions. Children need a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills to succeed in modern life.

Their ability to achieve goals, cooperate with others, and manage emotions is essential for development [4, p. 142]. For example, polite dialogue, active listening, and clear explanations help avoid conflicts and build trust between the teacher and the family.

To develop communication skills, future educators can use various practical exercises. If we speak from personal experience, soft skills such as communication and time management are important for future educators because they communicate with children and need to find a special approach to each child. It is also important to arrive on time for practical classes, as this shows respect for others and demonstrates your responsibility. According to methodological materials, various games such as “Telephone,” “Describe the Toy,” and “Kind Words” are effective for developing communication skills in preschool children. These activities help children learn to listen, express their thoughts, and interact with others [5].

Time management is an important soft skill for both students and preschool educators, as it helps organize activities, increase productivity, and reduce stress. For example, creating a “to-do list” helps organize daily tasks and set priorities. The “Pomodoro technique,” developed by Cirillo, improves concentration by dividing work into short intervals with breaks [6]. We strongly believe that these methods are especially helpful for students who combine studying, practice, and personal life. For preschool teachers, time management helps plan daily activities, manage group work, and ensure a balanced routine for children. Proper time organization also allows educators to provide sufficient attention to each child and communicate effectively with parents. We surveyed 40 students on what should be the top priority for a preschool teacher/student, and their opinions were divided. Most preschool students consider that all skills are necessary, but the most important one is effective communication. Less responders put time management on the first place and the empathy skill is regarded as the main skill by the least number of preschool students.



To conclude, the analysis of the role of soft skills in the professional activity of preschool teachers shows that communication, empathy, and time management are key components of effective pedagogical work. The study demonstrates that soft skills are not only an addition to professional knowledge but an essential element of a teacher’s competence. In addition, the use of practical exercises, such as role-playing, active listening, and time management techniques, contributes to the development of these skills among future educators. Further research in this area may focus on developing new methods for forming soft skills in future preschool teachers and checking how effective they are in practice.

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