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Creating a Project-Based Learning Environment in Preschool Preparatory Groups: Methodological Approaches and Pedagogical Effectiveness

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Article information:

Manuscript received: 03 May 2026; **Accepted:** 25 May 2026; **Published:** 07 Jun 2026

Abstract: The modernization of preschool education requires the implementation of innovative pedagogical approaches that foster children's cognitive, social, and creative development. Project-Based Learning (PBL) is increasingly recognized as an effective child-centered methodology that promotes active participation, independent thinking, and competency-based learning. This study explores methodological approaches to establishing a project-based learning environment in preschool preparatory groups and evaluates its pedagogical effectiveness among children aged 5–7 years. The research employed pedagogical observation, activity analysis, comparative assessment, and reflective evaluation. Findings indicate that project-based activities significantly improve children's motivation, creativity, collaboration, communication, and problem-solving abilities. The study concludes that PBL contributes to the development of key competencies necessary for successful school readiness and supports holistic child development.

Keywords: project-based learning, preschool education, preparatory groups, educational environment, competencies, STEAM education, child-centered learning.

1. Introduction

The rapid development of modern society and the increasing demands of the twenty-first century have transformed educational priorities worldwide. Contemporary education focuses not only on knowledge acquisition but also on the development of competencies that enable learners to think critically, communicate effectively, solve problems creatively, and adapt to changing environments [1]. These competencies begin to form during early childhood, making preschool education a crucial stage in a child's overall development.

Educational reforms in Uzbekistan have emphasized the modernization of preschool education through innovative pedagogical technologies and learner-centered approaches. The national preschool curriculum highlights the importance of fostering cognitive, social, emotional, and creative competencies through active participation in learning activities [2].

Among innovative educational approaches, Project-Based Learning (PBL) has attracted considerable attention due to its practical orientation and emphasis on experiential learning. Rooted in the educational philosophies of John Dewey and William Kilpatrick, PBL encourages children to investigate meaningful questions, solve real-life problems, and engage in collaborative learning experiences [3]. In preschool settings, project activities allow children to explore topics related to their interests and

daily experiences while developing essential academic and social skills [4]. Despite its growing popularity, educators often face challenges in organizing and assessing project-based activities that correspond to children's developmental characteristics. Therefore, there is a need for methodological guidance on creating effective project-based learning environments in preschool preparatory groups [5].

The purpose of this study is to examine methodological approaches to implementing project-based learning in preschool education and to evaluate its impact on children's comprehensive development [6].

2. Methods

This study utilized qualitative pedagogical research methods to investigate the effectiveness of project-based learning in preschool preparatory groups.

The research was conducted in preschool preparatory groups consisting of children aged 5–7 years. A project-based learning environment was designed and implemented according to children's developmental needs and educational objectives.

The following methods were employed:

- Pedagogical observation of children's participation during project activities;
- Analysis of educational products and completed project tasks;
- Comparative assessment of children's competencies before and after project implementation;
- Reflective evaluation involving teachers' observations and feedback.

3. Results and Discussion

Organization of Project Activities

The project-based learning process was structured into five consecutive stages:

1. Problem Identification – selecting topics relevant to children's interests and experiences;
2. Project Planning – determining objectives, resources, and activity sequences;
3. Project Implementation – conducting investigations, experiments, creative tasks, and collaborative activities;
4. Presentation – sharing project outcomes through exhibitions, demonstrations, and discussions;
5. Evaluation and Reflection – assessing achievements and discussing learning experiences [7].

To enhance interdisciplinary learning, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) elements were integrated into project activities whenever appropriate [8].

The implementation of project-based learning demonstrated positive effects across multiple developmental domains.

Children showed increased curiosity, improved observation skills, and stronger abilities to analyze and interpret information. Participation in project activities encouraged independent inquiry and active knowledge construction [9].

Collaborative project work improved children's communication skills, teamwork, and ability to negotiate with peers. Children became more confident in expressing their ideas and participating in group discussions.

Project activities stimulated imagination and creativity through artistic expression, design tasks, and innovative problem-solving opportunities. Children demonstrated greater flexibility in generating ideas and creating original products [10].

Development of Key Competencies

The findings revealed substantial progress in:

- Critical thinking;
- Problem-solving abilities;
- Communication competence;
- Self-regulation and independence;
- Collaboration and social responsibility

Overall, project-based learning transformed children from passive recipients of information into active participants in the educational process [11].

The results confirm the effectiveness of project-based learning as an innovative pedagogical approach in preschool education. Consistent with the theories of Dewey (1938) and Kilpatrick (1918), the findings suggest that meaningful learning occurs when children actively engage in authentic experiences [12].

The integration of STEAM principles further enhanced learning outcomes by connecting theoretical concepts with practical exploration. Through hands-on investigations and creative activities, children developed a deeper understanding of their environment while simultaneously acquiring transferable competencies [13].

Furthermore, project-based learning aligns with contemporary competency-based education models that prioritize holistic development over rote memorization. The observed improvements in communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking support previous studies emphasizing the role of experiential learning in early childhood education [14].

Nevertheless, successful implementation requires careful planning, appropriate teacher guidance, and sufficient educational resources. Educators should be provided with methodological support and professional development opportunities to effectively organize project-based activities [15].

4. Conclusion

Project-Based Learning represents an effective methodology for creating a child-centered educational environment in preschool preparatory groups. The study demonstrates that project activities significantly contribute to children's cognitive, social, emotional, and creative development while fostering key competencies necessary for school readiness.

The integration of project-based methodologies and STEAM elements enhances children's motivation, independence, and engagement in the learning process. Therefore, broader implementation of project-based learning approaches is recommended in preschool educational institutions to improve educational quality and support comprehensive child development.

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