

MRSTI 14.27.37

DOI 10.59941/2960-0642-2025-1-218-231

## Issues of pedagogical leadership in the works of modern researchers as a basis for finding informal ways of teacher professional development

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**Abstract.** The article deals with aspects of pedagogical leadership, focusing on non-positional leadership and its importance for teachers' professional development. Pedagogical leadership is defined by scholars as a process of influencing the educational process, carried out not only through formal positions, but also through the support and motivation of colleagues. Research has shown that successful teacher leadership is based on cooperation and exchange of experience between teachers, and informal forms of learning allow them to adapt more effectively to modern challenges and introduce innovative teaching methods. The article presents examples of successful application of these methods in the world educational practice, where teacher-leaders become active agents of change, supporting their colleagues in their professional growth. Thus, non-positional leadership and informal ways of professional development are seen as key elements of pedagogical leadership that contribute to the quality of education and professional development of the teacher.



Key words: teacher, educational process, pedagogical leadership, non-positional leadership, informal leadership, professional development.



**Қалай дәйексөз алуға болады / Как цитировать / How to cite:**

Akifjeva, O. A., Mukanova, S. D., Britvina, V. V. Issues of pedagogical leadership in the works of modern researchers as a basis for finding informal ways of teacher professional development [Text] // Scientific and pedagogical journal "Bilim". – Astana: NAE named after Y. Altynsarin, 2025. – №1. – P. 218-231.

### Introduction

The issue of pedagogical leadership is a key

aspect of the modern educational process, as the quality of learning and development of students largely depends on it. Educa-

tional leadership goes beyond management and includes the ability to inspire and motivate both students and colleagues. Modern research in the field of educational leadership pays considerable attention to informal ways of teachers' professional development, which is especially relevant in the context of rapidly changing educational standards and challenges.

Pedagogical leadership in the modern sense is not limited to formal positions such as school principal or head teacher. It involves influencing the educational process, the quality of teaching and the professional development of colleagues by working together, sharing experiences and finding innovative solutions. Teacher leaders play an important role in creating a cultural climate that supports learning and development of all participants in the educational process [1].

One of the main areas of current research on teacher leadership is the study of informal ways of teachers' professional development. Methods such as mentoring, peer coaching, participation in professional communities and online courses are becoming important tools for continuous learning and sharing [2].

Informal ways of professional development allow teachers to adapt to current educational realities by integrating new approaches to teaching and helping them become more flexible and ready for change [3]. While formal courses and professional development programs remain important, informal forms such as coaching and self-study provide opportunities for continuous growth.

One of the priority directions of the Concept of development of preschool, secondary, technical and vocational education of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023 - 2029 is that the processes of development of the education system of Kazakhstan make the priority direction of continuous professional development of teachers, which should be built into the course training on the difficulties and needs of teachers themselves [4]. Thus, the development of pedagogical leadership becomes one of the key tasks in the framework of continuous professional development of teachers, which will allow

teachers not only to improve their skills, but also to become leaders in educational processes, contributing to the quality of learning and the success of students.

## Materials and methods

To study the issues of pedagogical leadership and informal ways of teachers' professional development, this article used such research methods as analysis of scientific literature, comparative analysis of leadership models, qualitative analysis of successful practices, generalization and systematization of data.

The review of current research on teacher leadership, professional development and methods of teacher support allowed us to identify key approaches to leadership in education and assess their impact on teachers' professional development. A comparison of different models of informal professional development, such as mentoring, peer coaching and participation in professional communities allowed us to identify the most effective ways to support teachers' professional development. Qualitative analysis allowed us to identify successful examples of implementation of mentoring and coaching programs in educational institutions. Based on the data obtained, the results were summarized, which made it possible to identify key trends and formulate conclusions regarding the role of pedagogical leadership in the professional development of teachers.

The use of these research methods provided an opportunity to comprehensively examine the problem and offer recommendations for improving the educator support system.

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The key databases and academic resources

we used for our literature search were Web of Science, Scopus and EBSCO search engines, which allowed us to identify relevant and authoritative sources of information.

Leadership in education has been a relevant topic of research since the 19th century, which is confirmed by the fact that the first leadership issues, according to the above search engines, began to be raised by scholars in 1852. This indicates that researchers of that time were already aware of the importance of leadership for the successful development of educational systems and processes, emphasizing its significance for achieving high educational standards and forming a professional community of educators.

The works were searched in the databases of peer-reviewed scientific publications Web of Science and Scopus using keywords such as “pedagogical leadership” and “non-positional leadership”. The keywords “pedagogical leadership” were used to find papers from the period 2014-2024 in the journals “Journal of Research in Science Teaching” (410 articles), “British Journal of Educational Technology” (740 articles), “Journal of Computer Assisted Learning” (476 articles), “Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy” (439 articles), The Modern Language Journal (406 articles), British Educational Research Journal (398 articles), The Curriculum Journal (384 articles), European Journal of Education (367 articles), Science Education (365 articles), and others. We excluded articles that did not present the results of the study or that did not provide sufficient information about the data collection and analysis process, participants, and other important aspects of the study.

Unfortunately, no articles were found for the keywords “non-positional leadership”. The lack of articles on the keywords, “non-positional leadership” may be due to the fact that this term was introduced relatively recently, in 2003 [5]. Compared to other leadership concepts that have a longer history of research, “nonpositional leadership” has not yet been widely reported in the academic literature and, in our opinion, requires more time to generate extensive research interest

and publications. In addition, there may be a lack of research specifically on this concept or it may not yet have found widespread application in educational practice and theory.

We selected several articles, using the keywords, “informal leadership in education” in order to find informal ways of teacher professional development.

In general, it is possible to note a significant interest of researchers in the issues of leadership in education.

## Results

Research on educational leadership demonstrates that the role of school leaders has a major impact on educational outcomes, teacher motivation and development, and school culture in general.

Leithwood, Sun, and Pollock’s “How School Leaders Contribute to Student Success: The Four Paths Framework” explores how school leaders influence student success through four key paths [6]. The Rational Path focuses on student academic success. School leaders influence student success through implementing effective curricula, supporting teacher professional development, and implementing new instructional technologies. They also work to improve teacher professional development and curriculum to ensure students have the resources they need to achieve high levels of achievement. The Emotional Path is related to emotional support for students. The authors emphasize that leaders play an important role in creating a supportive school environment where students feel secure and motivated. The study emphasizes the importance of creating a psychologically comfortable environment where students feel supported by teachers and confident in their abilities. The Organizational Path in which leaders actively engage teachers in professional development processes, creating conditions for collaboration and sharing. Research shows that effective leaders foster a culture of continuous teacher learning and development, which in turn has a positive impact on student achievement. Leaders actively encour-

age teachers to participate in trainings and workshops to improve their skills and knowledge. The Family Path emphasizes the importance of creating an environment that supports harmonious relationships between school, family, and community. Leaders work to strengthen the interaction between the school and parents by involving them in the learning process and school activities.

The study by Leithwood and colleagues highlights that school leaders exert a complex influence on student success through a combination of pedagogical, emotional, organizational, and social factors.

Hallinger's article "Reviewing Reviews of Research in Educational Leadership: An Empirical Assessment" reviews existing research on educational leadership to assess which areas have been most studied and which need further attention. Hallinger focuses on analyzing several decades of research and suggests new directions for studying the role of school principals [7].

School leaders who prioritize trust and caring can create the conditions for effective organizational learning and academic success for students [8].

A Literature Review of School Leadership Policy Reforms offers a detailed analysis of the factors influencing the adoption of school leadership reforms and the global trends that are shaping these reforms in OECD countries. The paper emphasizes how the role of school leadership has evolved from administrative functions to more complex management tasks focusing on school autonomy, accountability, and student outcomes. The article points out that school leadership reforms are largely reactive and are being introduced in response to changes in governance structures and the global emphasis on accountability and results. The role of the school leader continues to evolve, with increasing expectations that they will not only manage schools but also act as agents of change to facilitate collaboration and improve pedagogical practices. However, further research is needed to explore how leadership practices can be adapted to different contexts for reforms to be effective

and sustainable [9].

Knapp, M. examines the role of school leaders in the context of school improvement reform in Austria, emphasizing their function as "gap managers" between legal requirements and local traditions. The author analyzes how school leaders can manage these gaps to ensure effective implementation of reforms in educational practice. The author notes that existing legal requirements for educational institutions often do not match local traditions and culture. This creates challenges for school leaders who must find a balance between complying with legislation and meeting the needs of their school. The article emphasizes the importance of change management skills for school leaders. They need to be able to effectively communicate change by involving teachers and other educational stakeholders in the process of implementing reforms. The article also provides recommendations for preparing school leaders to fulfill their roles in the context of reforms. This includes the need for training and support from education authorities and the formation of support networks between schools [10].

The article "Fostering collaborative teacher learning: A typology of school leadership" explores the importance of teacher collaboration and the role of school leadership in this process. The authors identify different types of leadership that foster collaborative teacher learning. Depending on the leadership style (e.g., directive, distributed, supportive), the ways in which school leaders can encourage collaboration among teachers vary. Collaborative learning not only improves instructional practice, but also contributes to overall job satisfaction among teachers. The study emphasizes that collaboration among teachers can lead to more effective teaching practices and better student outcomes. The authors also emphasize that the success of leadership models depends on the context of the school. For example, schools with high levels of autonomy may implement more innovative approaches to collaborative learning compared to more centralized institutions. Based on this research, the authors offer recommendations for educational policy makers and school administrators,

emphasizing the need to support and train leaders who can effectively manage collaborative learning processes [11].

The article by Geijsel, F., Schenke, W., van Driel, J., & Volman, M. explores the strategic role of school leaders in implementing inquiry-based practices in the educational process. The authors seek to understand how leaders can support and develop a culture of inquiry-based learning in their schools. School leaders play a key role in creating the conditions for implementing an inquiry-based approach. Their ability to manage change, support teachers, and create collaboration among staff directly affects the success of integrating such practices [12].

This article presents several strategies that school leaders can use to implement a research-based approach:

- Supporting teachers' professional growth through training and development.
- Create platforms for teachers and school leaders to share their experiences.
- Utilize data and research findings to inform practice and informed decision making.

The authors conclude that successful implementation of research-based practices in schools requires a strategic approach by school leaders. Their ability to manage change, support and involve teachers in the learning process are key factors in creating a culture of inquiry-based learning.

Thus, research on educational leadership confirms that the role of school leaders has a significant impact on educational outcomes, teacher motivation, and the development of school culture. For example, research by Leitao P. and colleagues indicates a direct link between effective leadership and improved student achievement [13]. The same statement is found in the works of Hallam, P., & Baudi, C., who emphasize the importance of support from leaders to increase teacher engagement [14].

These conclusions were also reached by the authors MacBride, J., & MacIver [15], who showed that school leadership influences the culture of the institution and promotes the development of collective cooperation. The results of the study by Henderson A. emphasize the importance of transformational leadership, which creates a favorable environment for innovation and professional growth of educators [16].

Kazakhstani scholars in recent years have begun to actively explore the topic of leadership in education, especially in the context of the reforms that are taking place in the country. In particular, Qanay Gulmira in the project "Teacher Leadership in Kazakhstan" emphasizes the importance of increasing leadership capacity among teachers. This project, launched in cooperation with international organizations, promotes the development of teachers' professionalism and support for school leaders in the context of constant educational changes [17].

Another key initiative is the creation of a new platform for school managers and teachers that aims to train educational leaders. This is a project of the Center for Pedagogical Excellence (2024), which promotes the professional development of teachers and the creation of a leadership culture in schools in Kazakhstan

The work of Kemmis et al. is devoted to the professional development of teachers and their leadership role in schools in Kazakhstan. The main focus is on bottom-up approaches to reforming the education system through the development of teachers' leadership [18].

Research shows that successful educational leadership must include elements of transformational, distributed, and instructional leadership. The emotional intelligence of leaders, their ability to motivate and support teachers, and their attention to resources and professional development are all key aspects that influence school success and student academic achievement.

Research on informal leadership in education conducted between 2014 and 2024

shows that informal leaders among teachers play a key role in improving the quality of the educational process, professional growth of colleagues and the development of school culture.

A study by Tietjen, M., & Murphy, A. showed that informal leaders, such as mentor teachers, can have a strong influence on the development of professional competencies of their colleagues. These leaders, without formal authority, through personal example and support, help build professional communities and improve pedagogical practice. They help create a collaborative environment where experienced teachers share knowledge with young professionals, fostering continuous professional growth. The work of Hills, S., & Roberts, L. emphasizes that informal leaders play a central role in shaping school culture by motivating other teachers through personal authority and example. These leaders often influence school innovations and the implementation of new pedagogical methods by initiating changes that do not always come from the administration.

In the course of the study, we concluded that foreign scholars consider distributed leadership as a key form of informal leadership, which is actively used in education to improve the efficiency and flexibility of school management.

For example, Woods & Roberts argue that distributed leadership promotes social justice in schools because it involves all participants in the educational process - teachers, staff and students. This allows for a more inclusive environment where diverse voices are heard and considered in decision-making. It reduces hierarchy by ensuring equitable participation, which is a key feature of informal leadership where authority and responsibility are delegated at different levels [19].

In turn, the study of Bolden & Gosling, emphasizes that distributed leadership is an important model in educational institutions, as it allows organizing collective management and co-management of processes. It is an example of informal leadership where

different employees assume leadership roles without having formal titles. This helps to adapt school management to complex and changing conditions [20].

Harris & Jones see distributed leadership as central to the concept of the school as a learning organization [21]. They argue that flexibility and management effectiveness are achieved when leadership roles are shared among different school stakeholders, exemplifying an informal approach to leadership. This fosters collective development and decision making, which enhances the learning process and helps to cope with challenges.

Spillane & Coldren discuss the practical aspects of governance through the distribution of leadership roles. The authors emphasize that school leaders can delegate tasks and authority to teachers and staff, thus strengthening collective management. This corresponds to informal leadership, when decisions are made not only from above, but also at the level of staff directly involved in school processes [22].

Murphy & Torre link distributed leadership with the visionary approach, stating that successful schools support innovation and development through the involvement of all employees [23]. In this approach, each participant becomes an informal leader, sharing responsibility for implementing school change and innovation.

Research by Spillane, J., & Harris, A. demonstrates that informal leaders are an important element of distributed leadership in schools. They help distribute responsibility for decision-making and support for change among educators, leading to greater teacher involvement in school management and development processes. These leaders, who work without formal titles, are often able to engage colleagues in collective action and increase their ownership of the learning process [24]. Studies by Nguyen, H., & Ho, T. have shown that informal leaders have a significant impact on the motivation of their colleagues by increasing job satisfaction and maintaining a positive attitude in the team [25]. These teachers act as "bridges" between



administrators and colleagues, creating an atmosphere of trust and cooperation, which has a positive effect on the school environment and teacher motivation.

Thus, distributed leadership is considered by foreign scholars as the main form of informal leadership, when leadership roles and authority are transferred from formal leaders to teachers and other school staff, which contributes to the improvement of the educational process and the development of an inclusive and flexible school culture.

In Kazakhstan, the central research on non-position leadership in education belongs to Qanay Gulmira. She actively analyzes the role of teachers as non-formal leaders and their influence on the development of the educational environment and school culture. Qanay emphasizes the importance of non-position leadership for successful implementation of educational reforms and improving the quality of learning.

The article by Qanay, G. examines the development of non-position teacher leadership in four schools in Kazakhstan [17]. The study focuses on strategies and conditions that contribute to the development of teacher leadership in the educational system. This process contributes to the improvement of both school culture and educational outcomes of students.

In addition to Qanay, G., there are also other authors who study this topic in Kazakhstan. For example, Dinara Sapanova's works focus

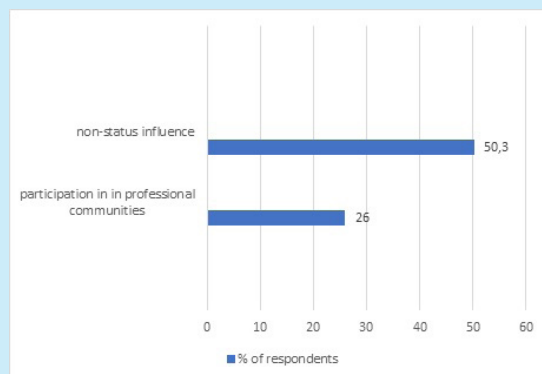
on effective school leadership strategies and its impact on the learning process and interaction in teams. Studies by other scholars, such as Gulnar Shaimerdenova, also focus on non-position leadership and its role in creating support and trust between teachers in the school environment.

Thus, the study of non-position leadership in education in Kazakhstan is actively developing, and the contribution of Qanay, G., as well as other authors, emphasizes its importance for modern educational practice.

In October 2024, within the framework of the regional seminar 'Teacher's professional development: from theory to practice', which was held on the basis of KSU "Comprehensive School №23" of Karaganda city, a survey of school principals and teachers on the understanding of non-position leadership was conducted.

65 headmasters and 112 teachers of schools in Karaganda city took part in this survey. The main objective of the survey was to analyze the level of development of non-position leadership in schools, factors influencing its formation, as well as to identify the main problems and prospective directions of its development.

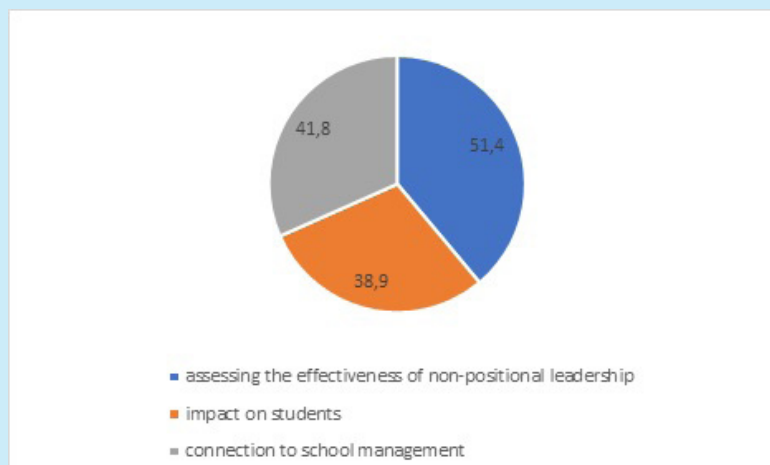
The majority of respondents (50.3%) defined non-position leadership as a teacher's influence on the quality of education without formal leadership status, and 26% associated it with active participation in professional communities (figure 1).



**Figure 1. Definition of non-positional leadership**

At the same time, it should be noted that 37.9% assessed the level of development of non-position leadership in their school as average, 30.5% - as high, and only 4.5% not-

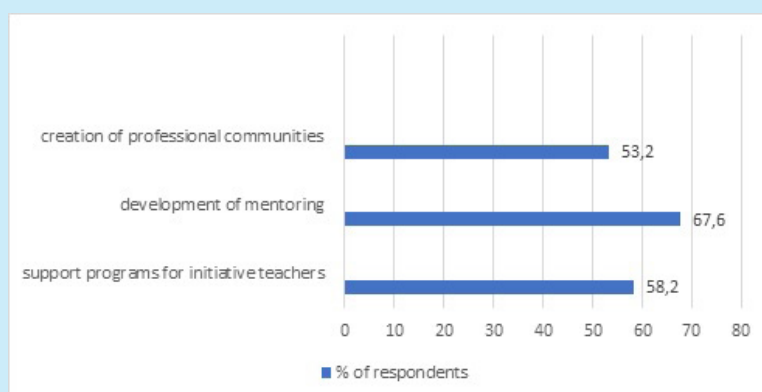
ed its complete absence. The main forms of manifestation of non-position leadership were identified (figure 2).



*Figure 2. The issues requiring further study*

Among the issues requiring further study, respondents identified ways of assessing the effectiveness of non-positional leadership (51.4%), its impact on students (38.9%), and its connection to school management (41.8%).

Support programs for initiative teachers (58.2%), development of mentoring (67.6%), and creation of professional communities (53.2%) were suggested as measures to develop non-positional leadership (figure 3).



*Figure 3. Measures to develop non-positional leadership*



The survey results show that non-position leadership plays a significant role in the educational process, contributing to knowledge sharing, professional development of teachers and improving the quality of education. However, there are still unresolved issues related to the assessment of the effectiveness of this phenomenon and its impact on students.

The survey results also show that for further development of non-position leadership it is necessary to strengthen support of administration, create favorable conditions for teachers' professional development, and develop tools for assessing the impact of teacher leadership on educational outcomes.

In connection with the above, we believe that the development of non-position leadership can become a key factor in the formation of an innovative educational environment focused on continuous improvement of the educational process.

## Discussion

The discussion of the results of this study allows us to draw a number of important conclusions about the role of teachers' network communities in their professional development and improving the quality of the educational process. As the results of the study have shown, participation in network communities not only strengthens teachers' professional skills, but also their confidence in applying innovative approaches and technologies. Teachers note that network communities provide an opportunity for continuous exchange of experience, which is especially important in the conditions of reforming educational systems [26].

An important aspect revealed in the course of the research is that network communities contribute to the formation of teachers' leadership skills. As the survey data show, many teachers became more confident in their abilities and got an opportunity to become informal leaders among colleagues by organizing seminars, master classes and participating in writing scientific articles. This confirms the theoretical provisions on

the importance of informal leadership for professional development and creating a sustainable school culture [27].

Moreover, online communities, such as Teacher's Tuesday, are becoming an important platform for innovation, as evidenced by the increasing number of teachers certified and writing research papers. This demonstrates that working together in an online community helps educators to cope with contemporary challenges, adapt their teaching methods and improve the quality of education. Gningue S.M, Peach R., Jarrah A.M. and Wardat Y. research also confirms that informal leaders among teachers play a significant role in maintaining a positive school climate and teacher motivation, which contributes to improved student outcomes [25].

Thus, it can be concluded that teacher networks play a key role in teachers' professional development by facilitating the sharing of experiences, support and leadership development, which ultimately leads to improved educational outcomes and a more inclusive and flexible educational environment.

## Conclusion

Educational leadership plays a key role in providing quality education and professional development for teachers. Informal ways of professional development become an important part of this process, allowing teachers to actively participate in each other's learning, share experiences and constantly adapt to new challenges. In the modern school environment, teacher leaders are not only administrators, but also teachers who, by their example and support, help their colleagues to reach new heights in their profession.

It can be safely stated that leadership in education plays a key role in the formation of a successful educational environment. It not only influences students' academic achievements, but also their personal development, motivation and engagement in the learning process [1]. Effective leaders in schools foster a culture of trust and cooperation, which,

in turn, builds team spirit and increases the satisfaction of both teachers and students [8; 22].

Furthermore, research shows that distributed leadership and informal leadership roles have a significant impact on the development of teachers' professional skills and on the creation of inclusive educational environments [20; 27]. This emphasizes the importance of involving all educational stakeholders in decision-making and improving practices.

Studies by Kazakhstani authors such as Gulmira Qanay and Dinara Sapanova also emphasize the importance of leadership in education. Qanay, G. emphasizes non-positional teacher leadership as an important factor contributing to professional development and supporting innovation in educational institutions. Sapanova explores how school leadership can be an effective element of innovation in the educational system, contributing not only to improved learning outcomes, but also to a more inclusive and supportive educational environment [17].

Additionally, it should be noted that teacher leadership, specifically non-positional leadership, remains a relatively unexplored aspect in the context of teacher leadership, yet it plays a significant role in teachers' professional development. Research suggests that teacher leadership, especially in its informal manifestations, can foster collective learning and collaboration among colleagues. Non-positional leadership, in turn, provides opportunities for teachers to contribute to decision-making and influence school culture, which many authors believe is critical to creating an inspiring and supportive educational environment [27].

The study identified several effective ways of teachers' professional development, such as: non-positioned leadership, informal forms of professional development, and teacher networking communities.

It should be noted that educational leadership and its informal aspects are becoming the basis for finding new ways of professional development for teachers. This opens new

horizons for research and practice, contributing to more effective and inclusive education systems. It is important to continue to explore and implement these approaches in order to respond to the challenges facing contemporary education.

The study also revealed a lack of systematic research on the topic of non-positioned leadership. Although the concept is being actively discussed, there is a lack of empirical evidence on its implementation in schools. More qualitative and quantitative research is needed to validate the effectiveness of this form of leadership. Also, despite the success of network communities, more systematized programs and courses for professional development of teachers are needed, especially in the context of working with modern educational technologies and methods. These directions require deeper analysis and adaptation to the conditions of the education system of Kazakhstan for more successful implementation.

Thus, despite the lack of research on pedagogical and non-position leadership, their impact on teachers' professional development and the general atmosphere in educational institutions is undeniable. This emphasizes the need for further research aimed at a thorough understanding and implementation of the principles of pedagogical and non-position leadership. These principles can become the basis for finding informal ways of teachers' professional development, which will significantly improve the quality of education and create a supportive educational environment conducive to the development of all participants in the learning process.

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## Вопросы педагогического лидерства в работах современных исследователей как основа для поиска неформальных путей профессионального развития учителя

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**Аннотация.** В статье рассматриваются аспекты педагогического лидерства с акцентом на непозиционное лидерство и его значение для профессионального развития учителей. Педагогическое лидерство определяется учеными как процесс влияния на образовательный процесс, осуществляемый не только через формальные позиции, но и через поддержку и мотивацию коллег. Исследования показали, что успешное педагогическое лидерство основано на сотрудничестве и обмене опытом между учителями, а неформальные формы обучения позволяют им эффективнее адаптироваться к современным вызовам и внедрять инновационные методы обучения. В статье представлены примеры успешного применения этих методов в мировой образовательной практике, где учителя-лидеры становятся активными проводниками изменений, поддерживая своих коллег в их профессиональном росте. Таким образом, непозиционное лидерство и неформальные способы профессионального развития рассматриваются как ключевые элементы педагогического лидерства, способствующие повышению качества образования и профессиональному росту учителя.



**Ключевые слова:** учитель, образовательный процесс, педагогическое лидерство, непозиционное лидерство, неформальное лидерство, профессиональное развитие.

## Қазіргі зерттеушілердің еңбектеріндегі педагогикалық көшбасшылық мәселелері мұғалімнің кәсіби дамуының бейресми жолдарын іздеудің негізі ретінде

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**Аңдатпа.** Мақалада позициялық емес көшбасшылыққа баса назар аудара отырып, нұсқаулық көшбасшылығының аспектілері және оның мұғалімнің кәсіби дамуы үшін салдары қарастырылады. Педагогикалық көшбасшылықты ғалымдар тек формальды позициялар арқылы ғана емес, сонымен қатар әріптестердің қолдауы мен ынталандыруы арқылы жүзеге асырылатын оқу-тәрбие процесіне әсер ету процесі ретінде анықтайды. Зерттеулер көрсеткендей, мұғалімнің табысты көшбасшылығы мұғалімдер арасындағы ынтымақтастық пен тәжірибе алмасуға негізделген, ал оқытудың бейресми түрлері оларға заманауи талаптарға тиімдірек бейімделуге және оқытудың инновациялық әдістерін енгізуге мүмкіндік береді. Мақалада осы әдістерді әлемдік білім беру тәжірибесінде сәтті қолдану мысалдары келтірілген, мұнда мұғалімдер көшбасшылары өздерінің кәсіби өсуінде әріптестеріне қолдау

көрсете отырып, өзгерістердің белсенді агенттеріне айналады. Осылайша, позициялық емес көшбасшылық және кәсіби дамудың бейресми жолдары педагогикалық көшбасшылықтың негізгі элементтері ретінде мұғалімдердің білім сапасын арттыруға және кәсіби өсуіне ықпал етеді.



**Кілтті сөздер:** мұғалім, оқу-тәрбие процесі, педагогикалық көшбасшылық, позициялық емес көшбасшылық, бейресми көшбасшылық, кәсіби даму.

*Material received on 06.01.2025*