



CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS A MECHANISM FOR DEVELOPING THE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF DEPUTY DIRECTORS FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Nurillo Jambilov

Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages

PhD student

Article history:	Abstract:
<p>Received: 10th March 2026 Accepted: 8th April 2026</p>	<p>The quality of secondary education is closely related not only to the professional competence of teachers but also to the managerial, pedagogical, analytical, and leadership competence of school administrators. Among them, deputy directors for academic affairs hold a particularly important position because they coordinate the teaching-learning process, monitor curriculum implementation, support teachers methodologically, analyze educational outcomes, and participate in school improvement. In the context of educational reforms, their role is gradually shifting from routine administrative control to instructional leadership and evidence-based management. Therefore, continuous professional development may serve as an effective mechanism for developing their professional competence. This article examines the role of continuous professional development in improving the professional competence of deputy directors for academic affairs in secondary schools. The study is based on theoretical analysis, comparative review, and synthesis of competence-based, instructional leadership, and professional learning approaches. The article proposes a CPD model consisting of needs assessment, individual development planning, modular training, mentoring, school-based practice, monitoring, feedback, and reflective portfolio development. The findings suggest that CPD for deputy directors should be systematic, practice-oriented, collaborative, digitally supported, and connected with real school improvement tasks.</p>

Keywords: continuous professional development, deputy director, academic affairs, professional competence, secondary school, instructional leadership, education management, teacher support, school improvement

1. INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, secondary schools are expected to respond to rapid social, technological, pedagogical, and managerial changes. The quality of education is no longer determined only by curriculum content or teacher qualification. It is also strongly influenced by the effectiveness of school leadership, internal management, professional learning culture, and the ability of school administrators to support teachers and students in a systematic way. For this reason, the professional development of school leaders has become one of the central issues in modern education management.

Deputy directors for academic affairs play a key role in this process. In many secondary schools, they are responsible for organizing the educational process, coordinating curriculum implementation, monitoring lesson quality, supervising assessment procedures, supporting teachers methodologically, analyzing student achievement, and ensuring that school activities correspond to national educational standards. However, in practice, their work is often interpreted mainly as administrative control: checking documents, preparing schedules, collecting reports, and monitoring attendance. Although these duties are necessary, they are not sufficient for modern school development.

Contemporary educational management requires deputy directors to act as instructional leaders, teacher mentors, data analysts, digital managers, communicators, and reflective practitioners. The OECD TALIS 2018 report treats teachers and school leaders as lifelong learners and emphasizes the importance of professional knowledge, skills, continuous development, school climate, and professional learning in improving educational practice. Similarly, UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report on leadership states that leadership is at the heart of quality education and that school leaders influence learning outcomes through their ability to guide teaching, support educators, and create conditions for improvement.

In Uzbekistan, the issue is also highly relevant. The National Program for the Development of School Education in 2022-2026 was approved to modernize school education, introduce improved curricula, apply international experience, and strengthen the quality of public education. These reforms cannot be implemented effectively without competent

school-level managers who understand curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, digital technologies, teacher development, and educational quality monitoring.

Therefore, continuous professional development, or CPD, should be considered one of the most important mechanisms for developing the professional competence of deputy directors for academic affairs. CPD is not a one-time training course or formal seminar. It is a continuous, systematic, needs-based, and practice-oriented process through which professionals update their knowledge, improve their skills, reflect on their experience, and adapt to new educational demands.

The purpose of this article is to analyze continuous professional development as a mechanism for developing the professional competence of deputy directors for academic affairs in secondary schools and to propose a practical CPD model suitable for education management.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This article is based on a qualitative conceptual research design. The main methods used in the study are theoretical analysis, comparative review, document analysis, synthesis, and model construction. Since the purpose of the article is to develop a conceptual and methodological basis for CPD, the study focuses on analyzing existing theories and frameworks rather than presenting experimental statistical data.

The theoretical basis of the article includes competence-based education, instructional leadership, school improvement theory, and adult professional learning. The competence-based approach is important because it views professional competence not simply as knowledge but as the ability to apply knowledge, skills, values, and experience effectively in real professional situations. McClelland’s theory of competence emphasized that professional effectiveness should be assessed through actual performance rather than only formal qualification or theoretical knowledge. Boyatzis, Spencer and Spencer, and Weinert further developed the idea that competence is multidimensional and includes cognitive, behavioral, motivational, and social components.

The instructional leadership approach is also central to this study. It explains how school leaders influence teaching and learning by defining educational goals, coordinating curriculum, monitoring student progress, supervising instruction, and supporting teacher professional development. For deputy directors for academic affairs, this approach is especially relevant because their daily responsibilities are directly connected with teaching quality, curriculum implementation, lesson observation, assessment, and methodological support.

The article also draws on international professional learning standards. Learning Forward describes professional learning through the conditions, processes, and content that lead to high-quality teaching, leading, and learning. This idea is important because CPD for deputy directors should not be limited to theoretical lectures. It should include leadership conditions, collaborative processes, and content connected with curriculum, assessment, instruction, and school improvement.

The materials analyzed in this study include international reports on school leadership and professional development, national education reform documents, and scientific literature on professional competence, CPD, and education management. The analysis was conducted in four stages:

First, the professional responsibilities of deputy directors for academic affairs were examined from the perspective of modern education management.

Second, these responsibilities were compared with international approaches to school leadership and professional learning.

Third, the key competence domains necessary for deputy directors were identified.

Fourth, a CPD mechanism was developed as a cyclical model that connects diagnosis, training, practice, monitoring, feedback, and reflection.

3. RESULTS

The analysis shows that continuous professional development can serve as a systematic mechanism for improving the professional competence of deputy directors for academic affairs. The effectiveness of this mechanism depends on whether CPD is organized as a continuous professional cycle rather than as an occasional formal event.

The first result of the study is the identification of the core professional competence domains that should be developed through CPD. These domains include strategic-managerial competence, pedagogical-methodological competence, analytical-diagnostic competence, digital competence, communicative-leadership competence, and reflective-ethical competence.

Table 1

Competence domain	Meaning	CPD focus
Strategic-managerial competence	Ability to plan, organize, coordinate, and make decisions	School development planning, educational quality management
Pedagogical-methodological competence	Ability to support teachers and improve instruction	Lesson observation, feedback, teacher mentoring
Analytical-diagnostic competence	Ability to collect, interpret, and use educational data	Assessment analysis, learning gap diagnosis
Digital competence	Ability to use digital tools for management and monitoring	E-journals, digital platforms, data dashboards
Communicative-leadership competence	Ability to motivate, communicate, and lead teams	Professional dialogue, conflict management, teamwork

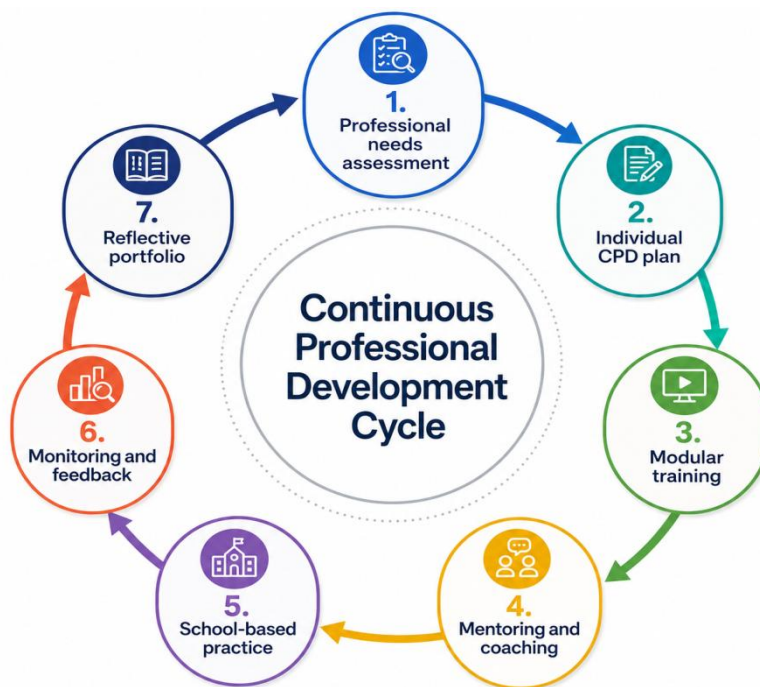
Reflective-ethical competence	Ability to evaluate one’s actions and make fair decisions	Reflective diary, portfolio, ethical leadership
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The second result is that CPD should be directly connected with the real functions of deputy directors. In many cases, professional development programs are too general and do not respond to the actual needs of school administrators. For example, a deputy director does not need only theoretical information about “modern education”; he or she needs practical tools for observing lessons, giving feedback, analyzing assessment results, supporting weak teachers, organizing methodological meetings, and using data for school improvement.

The third result is the proposed CPD mechanism for deputy directors for academic affairs. This mechanism includes seven interconnected stages:

1. Needs assessment - the CPD process should begin with identifying the real professional needs of deputy directors. This can be done through self-assessment, teacher feedback, school documentation analysis, lesson observation results, interviews, and student achievement data. Without diagnosis, CPD may become general, repetitive, and ineffective.
2. Individual professional development plan - after diagnosis, each deputy director should have an individual CPD plan. This plan should identify priority areas for improvement, expected outcomes, training modules, practical tasks, mentoring activities, and evaluation indicators.
3. Modular training - CPD should be organized through practical modules. These modules may include instructional leadership, curriculum management, assessment literacy, data-informed decision-making, digital leadership, teacher mentoring, communication skills, and reflective practice.
4. Mentoring and coaching - deputy directors need professional support from experienced school leaders, trainers, or mentors. Mentoring helps transform theoretical knowledge into practical behavior. Coaching conversations can help deputy directors analyze real problems, make better decisions, and reflect on their professional actions.
5. School-based practical tasks - effective CPD should include tasks implemented in the deputy director’s own school. For example, participants may conduct lesson observations, organize peer learning groups, analyze assessment results, prepare a teacher support plan, or design a small school improvement project.
6. Monitoring and feedback - the CPD process should be monitored continuously. Feedback may come from school principals, teachers, trainers, mentors, and the deputy directors themselves. Monitoring should not be punitive; it should help participants understand their progress and identify further needs.
7. Reflective portfolio - at the final stage, deputy directors should collect evidence of professional growth in a reflective portfolio. This portfolio may include lesson observation notes, feedback forms, training certificates, reflective diaries, school improvement plans, teacher mentoring records, and examples of data analysis.

Based on these stages, the proposed CPD model can be presented as follows:



Picture 1

The model is cyclical. After reflection, a new diagnosis begins, and the professional development process continues. This means that CPD is not a completed event but a permanent professional habit.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that CPD can become an effective mechanism for developing the professional competence of deputy directors for academic affairs only when it is systematic, contextual, and practice-oriented. If CPD is organized as a formal requirement, it may produce certificates but not real professional change. However, if it is connected with school improvement, teacher support, and evidence-based management, it can transform the professional role of deputy directors.

One of the main problems in the traditional professional development of school administrators is its fragmented nature. Training sessions are often short, theory-heavy, and disconnected from everyday school practice. Participants may receive information, but they may not have enough opportunity to apply it, receive feedback, and reflect on the results. As a result, professional development remains external and temporary. For deputy directors, this is especially problematic because their work requires practical decision-making, communication, monitoring, and leadership in real situations.

A modern CPD system should be based on adult learning principles. Adults learn more effectively when learning is relevant to their professional needs, connected with real problems, collaborative, and immediately applicable. Deputy directors are experienced practitioners; therefore, their CPD should respect their professional background and involve problem-solving, case analysis, peer discussion, mentoring, and reflection.

CPD should also improve analytical-diagnostic competence. Modern school management requires the ability to work with data. Deputy directors should know how to analyze student achievement, attendance, assessment results, teacher performance, and curriculum implementation. However, data should not be used only for reports. It should help answer practical questions like Which students need support? Which subjects show weak results? Which teachers need mentoring? Which methods are effective?

Digital competence is another essential part of CPD. In modern education systems, school leaders increasingly use electronic journals, learning management systems, digital resources, online communication platforms, and data dashboards. Yet digitalization itself does not guarantee quality. If deputy directors do not understand how to use digital tools pedagogically and analytically, technology may only increase administrative workload. Therefore, CPD should teach not only how to use digital platforms but also how to interpret digital information and make decisions based on it.

Communicative and ethical competence must also be developed through CPD. Deputy directors communicate with teachers, students, parents, principals, and education authorities. Their leadership style affects the psychological climate of the school. If communication is authoritarian, teachers may resist change. If communication is supportive, fair, and professional, teachers are more likely to cooperate. Ethical competence is especially important in teacher evaluation, conflict resolution, and decision-making. Fairness, transparency, responsibility, and respect should become core professional values.

Reflection is perhaps the most important feature of effective CPD. A deputy director who reflects on professional actions can learn from experience, correct mistakes, and improve leadership behavior. Reflective portfolios, professional diaries, peer feedback, and coaching sessions can help deputy directors move from routine performance to conscious professional growth. Thus, CPD should be viewed not as an additional activity but as a central mechanism of school improvement.

5. CONCLUSION

The professional competence of deputy directors for academic affairs is one of the key factors influencing the quality of secondary education. In modern schools, deputy directors are expected not only to manage documentation and control the educational process but also to act as instructional leaders, teacher mentors, curriculum coordinators, data analysts, digital managers, communicators, and reflective practitioners.

This article has argued that CPD can serve as an effective mechanism for developing these competencies. It should be systematic, needs-based, practice-oriented, collaborative, digitally supported, and evidence-informed. It should begin with professional diagnosis, continue through individual development planning and modular training, and be strengthened through mentoring, school-based practice, monitoring, feedback, and reflective portfolio development. CPD should become a continuous professional culture that helps deputy directors improve their leadership practice, support teachers more effectively, and contribute to the sustainable improvement of school quality.

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