

# The Effect of Preschool Educational Managers' Perceptual Skills in Coaches' Associative in the Educational Issues

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between preschool managers' perceptual skills and coaches' associative in the educational issues in the city of Isfahan. The statistical population of this study includes coaches of preschools in the city of Isfahan in 2013-2014 academic years. A sample of 300 coaches has been selected from this population through multi-step sampling method. Two researcher-developed questionnaires have been used for collecting the research data and measuring managers' perceptual skills and coaches' associative. Cronbachs' Alpha Coefficient has been used for measuring reliability of the questionnaire. The coefficient was 0.90 for questionnaire of managers' perceptual skills and 0.88 for questionnaire of coaches associative. In order to analyze the research data and test the hypotheses, multi-variable regression model, Pearson correlation coefficient, and Freedman test have been employed. The results of this study revealed that many of preschools managers had moderate levels of perceptual skills. Another part of the results showed that from components of coaches associative in educational issues, some of them were in low levels and others were in higher levels. In other words, "participation in planning and goal-setting" and "presentation of suggestions and solutions or solving problems" are two factors which were in lower levels. On the other hand, "revolution and improvement in affairs" and "active participation in group decision making and activities and believe on participation" are two factors which were in higher levels. Finally, there is a significant relationship between preschool managers' perceptual skills and coaches' associative in the educational issues.

**Keywords:** management, educational management, skills, perceptual skills, participation, decision making, participation in decision making

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, educating preschools students is considered as an important, sensitive, and necessary issue in educational affairs. Indeed, contacting children, coaches, and parents at different levels of preschools requires supervision, screening, and sound and scientific management. Teaching necessary knowledge and modern management methods in this level is considered as an investment in relating human resources, child, and their families. It also results in scientific and practical thoughts and positive efficiency at this level. Based on the national and international reports, there are about 12 million children with 6 years old or less than 6 years. There are several issues and interests about them such as welfare issues and interests, national plans on children, changing educational system and international comparative plans across the world. In such conditions, the constructive and sensitive role of managers and administrators in preschools, schools, and other educational and cultural institutes has been recognized. At this level, administrators and managers should be able to direct their efforts in providing appropriate and favorable plans and employing human resources and families' participation in their affairs. It is the directive, supportive, and participative role of administrators and managers to create relationship among themselves, families, and society in its best manner. As a result, the children's successful experiences will be secured (Mofidi, 2011). Indeed, Principle is a planner and designer who use others' suggestions and advices in his/her ongoing effort to create a two-way relationship between organizational goals and employees (Dabi, 2008). The reason is that today's complex conditions, variable environments, and bounded rationality lead that everybody uses cooperation and collaboration for achieving his/her goals. Indeed, making rational and regular and comprehensive decisions is the singular path of achieving organizational and individual goal (Mirsepasi, 2004: 18). Therefore, effective leadership and management is the main necessity of implementing and evaluating educational plans. In past decades, educational leadership and management

methods have been changed in different societies seriously. The modern thoughts in educational affairs imply necessity of change and revolution in educational management for its officers. So, it is necessary that management is attended more than past times. On the other hand, the officers should be able to do many serious efforts in terms of education, evaluation, and employment of schools administrators and managers. In other words, educational efforts need leaders and managers who not only have expertise in educational issues, but also who are able to understand and resolve the educational problems and interests (Niknami, 1995: 11). The reason is that such leaders and managers face different aspects of students and teachers (Haghshenas, 1999: 75).

On the other hand, complexity and diversity of educational managers' functions is so much that only professional and educated managers can do them. Nowadays, educational managers undertake different functions and responsibilities that imply different skills and competencies (Pardakhtchi, 1995), (Hematian, 2008). Mirkamali (2005) suggests the following items as main functions of educational Principles:

1. **Recognizing needs and planning affairs:** it refers to educational planning which is a staff affair at higher levels of organizations. It also refers to curriculum planning which is considered as one of the most important functions of schools managers and teachers.
2. **Supplying and organizing necessary resources and facilities:** it refers to the supply of appropriate human resources and supply of physical and technological facilities and equipment.
3. **Providing technical skills:** This means practical and technical abilities.

Fani (1996) points out perceptual and initiative skills are the most important skills of managers. Also Rezaeian (2005) states that perceptual skill is the ability of observing big images for recognizing important elements and components of any situation and understanding relationships between them. He also points out that perceptual skill is the ability of understanding total organizational complexities and perceiving everybody's position in the organization. Such knowledge helps the person to act in accordance with total system goals. Mirkamali (1994) believes on perceptual skill as a general knowledge and stresses that perceptual skill is a general knowledge for manager by which he/she achieve necessary information for understanding general issues and perceiving total issues. He also indicates that a manager with general knowledge is a person who perceives and analyzes the individual factors of social life and its effective factors and environmental factors. As a result, such a manager will be able to develop and apply suitable solutions in practice.

Daresh and Playko (2008) consider skills of perceiving self and environment as the main skills of managers. They concluded that there is a significant relationship between Principles' skills of perceiving self and environment and teachers tendency for changing schools comprehensively and seriously in terms of students' affairs. Schneider (2006) studies the correct thinking ability and rational decision making in especial conditions and controlling especial situations. Finally, he suggests several empirical implications such as necessary skills of educational managers.

Shirazi (1994) believes that coordination and combination of activities and interests of teachers, experts, and non-educational employees toward shared goals needs perceptual skill of schools managers. He also points out that the relationship between school and educational and system and the relationship between people and national social, political, and economic forces needs managers' perceptual skills.

It should be noted that a large part of the managers' time and energy is allocated to problem solving and decision making. Indeed, planning, organizing, leadership, and control are the main function of a manager. At all levels, managers are deciding to solve the potential problems and then actualize their decisions (Alagheb and, 2005: 23). Educational institutes face different decision making situations in their daily affairs in terms of different affairs and issues. Among different organizations which deciding in terms of their goals and functions, educational systems have an especial position. Educational institutes not only make different decisions in their day-to-day affairs as other organizations, but also they are responsible of teachers' questions and needs and parents and societies' issues and interests (Mirkamali, 2005: 170-172).

With regard to the complexity of affairs, rapid changes in environments, and bounded rationality of everybody, cooperation and collaboration are the singular option by which we will be able to achieve our goals and purposes (Mirsepasi, 2004: 1-14). All in all, participation is the main prerequisite of development and improvement in educational affairs. From mankind creation times to now, participation had relations with our life. It also has been considered as one of the important instruments of life during past times and now. Attempt to develop productivity through participation that modern management following it can be possible through sound planning and optimal application of human and physical resources (Elahi, 2009).

Learning and development of human resources is one of the most important functions of participation. Hylky (1985) believes that the employees' participation in planning, decision making, and implementing steps provides an environment in which development of human resources can be possible. Nowadays, organizations need human resources development for creating any cultural, economic, and social development. It is widely-accepted rule that human supports his/her own affairs. Therefore, employees' participation in developing perspectives and making decisions results in their supportive behaviors in that affairs (Mirkamali, 1996), (Hamidi and Asefi, 2010).

Cole (1993) summarizes benefits of participation as following section: 1: participation results in better outcomes and also may result in the persons' self-actualization and integration. 2: improvement encourages human capital through educations. 3: it provides the most appropriate policy in functional integration. 4: it paves the grounds for employees' participation in performance improvement. 5: it makes the low level employees to maintain and improve job processes. 6: it generalizes political democracy to workplaces (Mirkamali and Malekinia, 2008). Rice and Schneider (1994) consider participation in decision making as a complex phenomenon and define it as trust on others' participation in activities. Pet Man (1980) believes that participation is a process in which two or more participants cooperate in defining strategies, policies, and different decisions and also influences each other (Ramezani, 2005). According to Harper (1988), employees' participation in managerial decisions refers to the process which paves the ground for employees' participation in organizational decisions. As Lack et al. (1988) stress, participation is participative decision making either through a manager and a subordinate or through a manager and a group of employees (Rahnavard and Radmanesh, 2003).

In the contemporary management theories, the issue of employees' participation in decision making processes is considered by many authors and researchers. This is why that many methods and mechanisms have been developed for facilitating employees' participation in different decisions. Many countries have used this method in different manners and have concluded different results (Alvani, 2005: 21). This is why that examination and recognition of educational managers' skills is a very important issue. As a result, the authors of this study were determined to investigate the relationship between preschool managers' perceptual skills and coaches' associative in the educational issues in the city of Isfahan.

## 2. Research questions

1. Is there any significant difference among components of coaches' participation in developing educational designs?
2. Is there any significant relationship between educational managers' perceptual skills and the extent of coaches' participation in developing educational designs in terms of participation in planning and goal-setting, presentation of suggestions and solutions or solving problems, revolution and improvement in affairs, and active participation in group decision making and activities and believe on participation?
3. Is there any significant correlation between managers' perceptual skills and the extent of coaches' participation in developing educational designs?
4. How is the correlation between educational managers' perceptual skills and the extent of coaches' participation in developing educational designs?
5. Are managers' perceptual skills are effective on the coaches' participation in developing educational designs?
6. Is coaches' participation in developing educational designs can be predicted through managers' perceptual skills?

## 3. Research methodology

This study is a practical research from purpose view and is a descriptive-correlational research from research methodological view. The statistical population of this study includes managers and teachers of preschools in the city of Isfahan. The population consists of 300 members. The sample members have been selected through multi-step sampling method. For this purpose, the city has been divided into three municipality areas including north, center, and south areas and then an educational area has been selected from each municipality area. In other words, 5<sup>th</sup> educational area of north, 2<sup>th</sup> area of center, and 3<sup>th</sup> area of south area have been selected for selecting sample members. In the next step, 20 preschools have been selected from every selected area. In the final step, 5 coaches have been selected from every selected preschool.

### 3.1. Data collection instrument

In order to measure managers' perceptual skills and coaches' participation, two research-developed questionnaires have been used. The first questionnaire (managers' perceptual skills) consists of 15 items which have been developed in five-point Likert scale. In this scale, "1" refers to very low and "5" refers to very high. Cronbachs' Alpha Coefficient was 0.90. The coefficient confirms reliability of the first questionnaire. This second questionnaire consists of 30 items. The coefficient of this questionnaire was 0.88 by which reliability of the questionnaire is confirmed. This questionnaire consists of four components of coaches' participation including participation in planning and goal-setting, presentation of suggestions and solutions or solving problems, revolution and improvement in affairs, and active participation in group decision making and activities and believe on participation. In order to examine and confirm validity of the questionnaires, their content validity has been investigated. For this purpose, the questionnaires have been reviewed by educational management and educational planning experts and professors.

### 3.2. Data analysis methods

In order to analyze the research data and test the hypotheses, both descriptive and inferential statistics have been

used. Descriptive and inferential statistics include averages, standard deviation, Freedman test, Pearson Correlation coefficient, and multi-variable regression test. These tests have been done in the SPSS 16.

#### 4. Findings

**Table 1: the descriptive measure of sample members**

Variables	N	Average	Maximum score	Minimum score	Standard deviation
<b>Perceptual skill</b>	300	2.638	4.07	2.00	0.418
<b>participation in planning and goal-setting</b>	300	2.090	4.50	1.25	0.531
<b>presentation of suggestions and solutions or solving problems</b>	300	3.355	4.33	1.92	0.668
<b>revolution and improvement in affairs</b>	300	2.066	3.38	1.38	0.348
<b>and active participation in group decision making and activities and believe on participation</b>	300	3.219	4.50	1.33	0.854
<b>Overall participation</b>	300	2.813	3.57	1.80	0.518

The summary of descriptive measures of research variables have been presented in table 1.

The first question of this study indicates that is there any significant difference among components of coaches' participation in developing educational designs?

**Table 2: the results of Freedman test in terms of the relationship between the extent of coaches' participation in four components.**

Variables	Frequency	Average				Value of freedman test	df	Sig
		participation in planning and goal-setting	presentation of suggestions and solutions or solving problems	revolution and improvement in affairs	active participation in group decision making and activities and believe on participation			
<b>Respondents</b>	299	3.59	3.25	1.69	1.47	620.89	3	0.000

The results of the first question revealed that there is a significant difference between four components of coaches' participation in developing educational designs. The results of comparison indicated that presentation of suggestions and solutions or solving problems is the first component and active participation in group decision making and activities and believe on participation is the last factor from ranking perspective.

The second question indicates that is there any significant relationship between educational managers' perceptual skills and the extent of coaches' participation in developing educational designs?

**Table 3: the results of Pearson correlation coefficient in terms of the relationship between educational managers' perceptual skills and coaches' participation**

Components		participation in planning and goal-setting	presentation of suggestions and solutions or solving problems	revolution and improvement in affairs	active participation in group decision making and activities and believe on participation	Overall participation
<b>Perceptual skills</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient</b>	0.12	0.83	0.72		0.80.815
	<b>Sig</b>	0.030	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	<b>Frequency</b>	300	300	295	299	294

The results of above table revealed that there is a significant relationship between educational managers' perceptual skills and the extent of coaches' participation in terms of developing educational designs participation in planning and goal-setting, presentation of suggestions and solutions or solving problem, revolution and improvement in affairs, and active participation in group decision making and activities and believe on

participation.

The third question of this study indicates that is there any significant correlation between managers' perceptual skills and the extent of coaches' participation in developing educational designs?

**Table 4: the results of partial correlation coefficient of managers' perceptual skills**

Statistical measures	Standard coefficient of regression	Partial correlation coefficient	Minimum level	T	Sig
Variables					
Perceptual skills	0.13	0.19	0.35	3.45	0.001

The results of this table indicated that the correlation coefficient between managers' perceptual skills and the extent of coaches' participation in developing educational designs is 0.19. As a result, this variable can be added to regression model.

The fourth question of this study indicates that how is the correlation between educational managers' perceptual skills and the extent of coaches' participation in developing educational designs?

**Table 5: the measures and statistics of regression analysis in terms of the effects of educational managers' perceptual skills on the extent of coaches' participation**

Multi-variable correlation coefficient	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Standard error
0.91	0.83	0.83	0.209

The results of the table revealed that the correlation between educational managers' perceptual skills and the extent of coaches' participation in developing educational designs is 0.91. Therefore, explained variance is 0.83.

The fifth question indicates that are managers' perceptual skills are effective on the coaches' participation in developing educational designs?

**Table 6: the results of regression analysis of variance**

Source of variation	Df	S.S	M.S	F	Sig
Regression effect	3	65.87	21.95	501.71	0.000
Remained effect	289	12.64	0.044		
Sum	292	78.52			

The results of the table revealed that the effect of educational managers' perceptual skills is significant in explaining coaches' participation in developing educational designs. It can be said that there is a significant relationship between managers' perceptual skills are effective on the coaches' participation in developing educational designs.

Finally, the sixth question indicates that is coaches' participation in developing educational designs can be predicted through managers' perceptual skills?

**Table 7: the results of the added variables to regression model**

Statistical measures	B	SE.B	Standard B	T	Sig
Variables					
Perceptual skills	0.12	0.036	0.13	3.45	0.001
Fixed value	-0.57	0.093	-	-6.23	0.000

The results of table 7 revealed that managers' perceptual skills were effective in coaches' participation in developing educational designs. As a result, coaches' participation in developing educational designs can be predicted through managers' perceptual skills. The regression model has been presented in the following section.

$$\hat{Y} = a + x_1b_1 + b_2x_2 + B_3x_3$$

$$\hat{Y}_{\text{participation}} = -0.57 + X_1 \cdot 0.12 \longrightarrow$$

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between preschool Principals' perceptual skills and coaches' associative in the educational issues in the city of Isfahan. In order to this, 6 questions have been developed and then these questions have been answered. The results of the relationship between educational managers' perceptual skills and the extent of coaches' participation in developing educational designs have been presented in table 3. Based on the results of this question, it can be said that educational managers' perceptual skills and the extent of coaches' participation in developing educational designs. Based on another part of our findings which have been presented in tables 5, 6, and 7, it can be said that educational managers' perceptual skills are effective on the coaches' participation in developing educational designs. In other words, it is possible to predict the extent of coaches' participation in developing educational designs through perceptual skills of educational managers. The results of this study are in consistency with previous findings that some of them have been presented and discussed in the following section. The results of the study which has been done by Kazemi Kord Asiabi (2002) revealed that there is a significant relationship between managers' perception of situations,

needs, competencies, and parents' participation in school affairs. Another part of the results of this study indicated that there is a significant relationship between managers' effort to encourage others to participation in decision making and attracting parents' attention toward school affairs. The results of our study are supported by findings of Kazemi Kord Asiabi (2002). The results of our study also are supported by findings of Darsh and Playko (2008). Darsh and Playko (2008) found that there is a significant relationship between managers' perception of self and environment and their tendency toward changing schools and educational affairs seriously. The results of our study also are supported by findings of Tak et al. (2008). Tak et al. (2008) found that there is a significant relationship between managers' initiation and teachers' motivation to participate in educational affairs such as change and improvement in educational affairs. The results of our study are supported by findings of Schneider (2006). Schneider (2006) found that sound thought (rational decision making in especial situations, having control of especial situations, and encouraging employees to offer suggestions and solutions) is one of the most important characteristics of employees' success. In summary, the results of our study are supported by findings of Schneider (2006), Daresh and Playko (2008), Tak et al. (2008), and Kazemi Kord Asiabi (2002). According to Shirazi (1994) and Veriyish and Kountze (1994), it can be said that managers' perceptual skills result in better perception and recognition of organizational situations and their complexities. It also can be effective on the thought ability in solving social and environmental issues and suggesting practical solutions for them.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be said that most educational managers have low levels of perceptual skills in preschools. Also it should be noted that there is a significant relationship between educational managers' perceptual skills and the components of coaches' associative in the educational issues. The correlation between these variables was 0.85. The relationship was direct and positive. In other words, as much as the educational managers' perceptual skills in preschools, the coaches' associative in the educational issues (four components) will be increased. Indeed, improvement of educational managers' perceptual skills in preschools can be effective on the coaches' associative in the educational issues especially in terms of participation in planning and goal-setting and presentation of suggestions and solutions or solving problems. Also it is possible to predict coaches' associative in the educational issues through perceptual skills of educational managers. As the results showed, the perceptual skills of educational managers were in low levels in the under study areas.

All in all, the authors of this paper have attempted to investigate and review different aspects of preschools management such as functions, skills, and different types of decisions. They also were determined to present a regular classification which can be used by educational managers and officers. Indeed, assessment of managers' perceptual skills is a serious necessity in educational organizations. It is necessary to develop standardized forms through continuous evaluation process in order to examine and control managers' skills and recognize their strengths and weaknesses. Since preschool schools period is 3-6 years and it is an important time in children's education, educational managers and officers should be aware from this fact and its importance. So, it is necessary to appoint qualified managers in these positions.

As the results of our study showed, perceptual skills of educational managers were not in high levels. This is why that their education should be considered as one of the prioritized programs in educational organizations. For example, educational workshops and brochures can be effective in educating perceptual skills for educational managers. Because preschools are under control of different organizations such educational organization and each of these organizations has their own goals, it is necessary to coordinate these organizations and develop shares goals between them. As a result, their success and excellence will be possible.

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