



EMPOWERING WOMEN IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP THROUGH EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT TRAINING IN GENERAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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ABOUT THE LEARNING CYCLE ON INCREASING WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

This case study is a result of the KIX EMAP Learning Cycle "Increasing Women's Representation in School Leadership". Facilitated by Dr Fenot Aklog and Dr Cathryn Magno, this Learning Cycle ran from 18 September 2024 to 28 February 2025. The course equipped participants with the conceptual and analytical tools for understanding conditions that promote and serve as barriers to the recruitment, development, and retention of women in school leadership roles. Sixteen national teams took part in this Learning Cycle, including Albania, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Moldova, Nepal, Pakistan (Punjab), Pakistan (Sindh), Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.



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Since 2018, Olga Tarlev has actively contributed to the National Agency for Quality in Education and Research. Her work focuses on developing and implementing diverse educational projects across Moldova, overseeing the accreditation of educational institutions and shaping methodologies, evaluation standards and regulatory requirements.

In addition to her institutional contributions, she has substantial experience in professional development, having conducted workshops, training sessions and online courses on various aspects of teaching technologies and instructional tools. Her expertise extends to providing methodological support to educational institutions, fostering innovation and promoting high-quality education throughout Moldova.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATU	Administrative Territorial Unit
EMAP	Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Pacific
GD	Government Decision
GPE KIX	Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
ISCED	International Standard of Education Classification
LC6	KIX EMAP Learning Cycle 6
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
MoER	Ministry of Education and Research
NAQAER	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UN	United Nations

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We express our sincere gratitude to the local educational authorities whose support was essential in the development of this policy brief on the promotion of women in school leadership in Moldova. The findings presented in this document are based on data collected through questionnaires completed by school leaders from general education institutions and made possible with the assistance of these local structures.

We thank the management of educational institutions for their active involvement and valuable insights, which were instrumental in identifying both challenges and opportunities in the education system. Their contributions ensured a transparent and effective consultation process and played a key role in building a robust and reliable data set.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief explores the challenges surrounding women's representation in school leadership roles in Moldova, focusing on the critical gap in management training designed to empower women in educational leadership. Although women make up the majority of the education workforce, they remain underrepresented in decision-making positions, especially at the local government level. Many assume leadership roles without prior training in educational management, limiting their effectiveness and career progression.

To better understand this issue, the LC6 team conducted a national survey of 1,081 school leaders from October through November 2024. Of the respondents, 94.8% were women. The survey explored their career pathways, qualifications, leadership challenges and access to training. The findings reveal that

nearly one-third of female leaders had not participated in accredited training in educational management in the past four years, and many entered leadership roles without formal preparation.

The brief highlights barriers, such as the timing and content of leadership training, as well as enabling factors, such as policy frameworks, maternity leave and continuing education opportunities. It concludes with actionable recommendations, including mandatory management certification, expanded mentorship, improved work-life balance policies and the creation of professional development platforms. Strengthening the leadership pipeline for women is essential for advancing equity and improving school governance across Moldova.

1. INTRODUCTION

School management plays a vital role in ensuring the quality of the educational process in Moldovan institutions. Schools are essential spaces for developing the knowledge, skills and values needed by the next generation. Effective school leaders drive innovation, support the continuous professional development of teachers and foster meaningful engagement with parents and the wider community. They are also responsible for upholding educational standards and managing resources in a fair, transparent manner.

In the context of Moldova's education system, which faces multiple challenges (including population decline due to migration and limited financial resources), strong, well-prepared leadership is crucial for maintaining educational quality and meeting the diverse needs of students. As such, effective school management is not only a cornerstone of school improvement but also a key lever for shaping the future of Moldovan society.

Women's representation in school leadership is a critical issue with significant implications for the quality of education and the overall school environment. Although women make up a large share of school management staff in Moldova, they remain underrepresented in leadership roles at the local government level. One of the key barriers to advancement is the lack of accessible initial vocational training in educational management for women entering leadership positions. This gap not only limits women's professional opportunities but also affects schools' organisational culture and performance.

Diverse leadership brings important benefits. In a rapidly changing world, inclusive leadership enhances decision-making, supports innovation and fosters equitable and responsive educational environments. Promoting women in school leadership is therefore not only an equity issue but also a strategic imperative for strengthening school governance and student outcomes.

In Moldova, advancing women's leadership requires addressing persistent barriers, which include gender stereotypes, institutional cultures that reinforce inequality and limited access to professional development resources. Women also face structural challenges in reconciling professional responsibilities with family and caregiving roles.

The lack of effective and accessible initial and ongoing training programmes in educational management has emerged

as a significant challenge. Many women assume leadership roles without the preparation needed to navigate complex managerial demands. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive strategy to expand access to initial vocational training and leadership development programmes that are specifically designed to support women's career progression.

This policy brief calls for the design and implementation of training pathways that prepare and empower women to lead. Increasing the number of women who receive formal training in educational management will not only improve the quality and equity of school leadership but also ensure that school governance better reflects the needs and values of Moldovan society.

1.1 Country Context

The Republic of Moldova is a small, landlocked country situated between Romania and Ukraine, positioned at the cultural, geographic and economic crossroads of Eastern and Western Europe. As of January 1, 2024, Moldova had an estimated population of 2.4 million people (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2024).

Administratively, Moldova comprises 32 districts and two regions with special status – Autonomous Territorial Unit Gagauzia and the Transnistrian region – as well as 898 administrative-territorial units. It is a diverse, multi-ethnic country where 25% of the population belong to minority groups. The largest ethnic minorities include Ukrainians (6.6%), Gagauz (4.6%), Russians (4.1%), Bulgarians (1.9%), Roma (0.3%) and other ethno-linguistic groups (0.5%).

Despite its cultural diversity, Moldova faces serious demographic and socio-economic challenges, which include a declining and aging population, rising energy insecurity and the economic impact of regional instability. Low living standards in rural areas and high emigration rates, particularly among young people, have led to widespread labour shortages.

Women make up more than half of Moldova's population (52%) yet face structural barriers that limit their participation in leadership roles across sectors, including education. Contributing factors include unequal access to leadership development programmes, persistent gender stereotypes and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. Moldova also has one of the world's highest emigration rates. While 46%

of emigrants are men and 54% are women, women tend to migrate later in life, as caregiving responsibilities often delay their mobility.

In the political sphere, Moldova has made notable progress in increasing women’s representation, particularly through gender quota legislation. Following the 2019 local elections, the proportion of women elected to district and municipal councils rose to 27%, a 10% increase from the previous elections, whereas women’s representation at the local level reached 37%, up by six percentage points. In national politics, the 2021 parliamentary elections resulted in women holding 40% of seats in Parliament (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, 2024).

The 2025 Global Gender Gap Index shows that, compared to the 2024 edition, the Republic of Moldova moved up in the gender parity rankings (81.3%, seventh) and joined the top 10 countries (World Economic Forum, 2025). Despite these advances, significant gender disparities remain in decision-making roles beyond the political arena, particularly in educational leadership.

1.2 Moldova’s Education System

The Republic of Moldova’s education system is highly centralised, with all key responsibilities for policy, strategy and implementation held by the Ministry of Education and Research (MoER). Educational levels in Moldova are structured in accordance with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-2011) as shown in Figure 1.

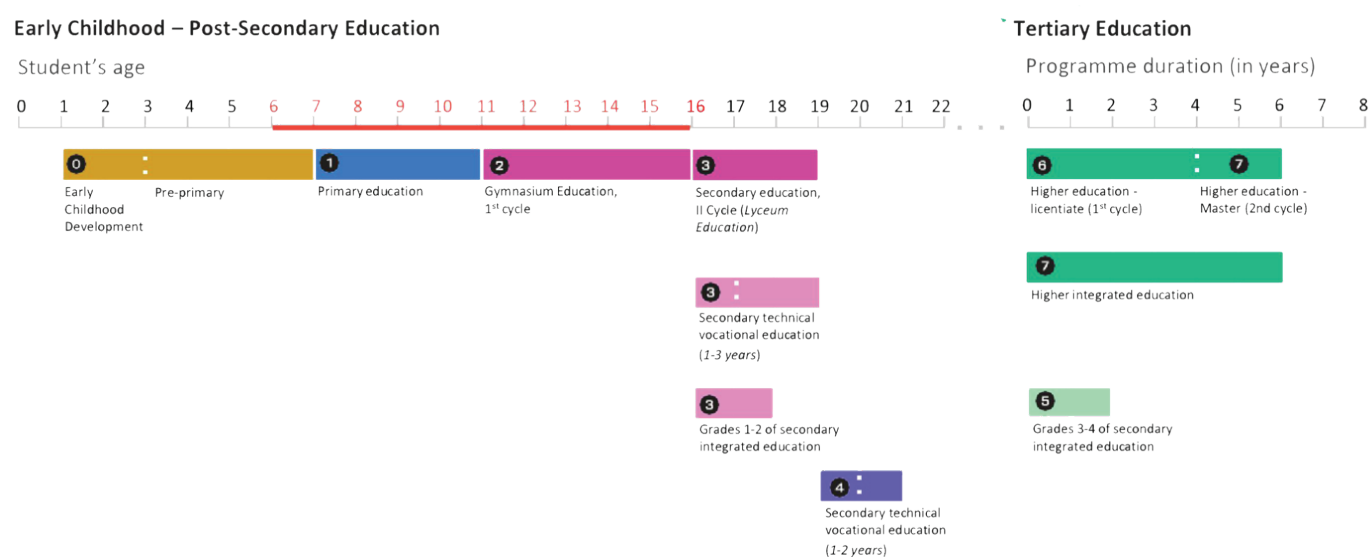
Compulsory education begins with preschool and ends with lower secondary education, typically at age 16. After completing compulsory education, students can continue to high school or pursue vocational or technical training aligned with labour market needs. Moldova also offers part-time high

school programmes for adults and graduates of vocational education. The country’s higher education system offers a broad range of bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral programmes aimed at training professionals in various fields.

Since 2014, Moldova has implemented several key educational reforms to modernise its system and improve financial and structural efficiency. The Education Code established a legal framework for the organisation, governance and long-term development of the education sector (Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, 2014) established. In 2013, Moldova introduced per-pupil funding, and a new funding model for early childhood education is to be piloted in 2025 to improve resource allocation. The selection process for school principals and deputy principals was reformed in 2015 and further updated in 2022 to increase leadership accountability. To support curriculum modernisation and international alignment, Moldova joined the Bologna Process in 1999, and inclusion policies have been promoted to ensure equitable access to education since 2004.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of the Republic of Moldova (2024), the general primary and secondary education system in Moldova consists of 1,185 institutions, most of which (98%) are financed from public funds. There are 335,100 students enrolled, including 1,000 in evening schools and 29,900 secondary school graduates, of whom 10,800 have obtained a baccalaureate diploma. The teaching and managerial workforce totals 25,800 employees, of whom 3,200 (13%) are in management roles and 22,600 (88%) are teachers. Educational institutions are predominantly in rural areas (872 schools) rather than urban ones (313 schools). The number of teaching and managerial staff decreased by 0.8% compared to the previous year.

Figure 1. Moldova’s International Standard of Education Classification (ISCED) Diagram



Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, 2021.

2. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP POLICIES AND PATHWAYS

2.1 School Leadership Policies

School management policies in Moldova are structured to ensure the effective recruitment, appointment, training, retention and evaluation of school principals. The MoER has developed a legislative framework that defines professional standards for school principals. The Regulation on the Organisation and Conduct of the Competition for the Position of Director and Deputy Director in General Education Institutions, elaborated by Order of the MoER. 163 of 23.03.2015, regulates the appointment process, requiring candidates to hold a university degree in pedagogy, to have at least three years of teaching experience and to be under 65 years of age at the time of application (MoER, 2015).

Management evaluation is another important aspect of these policies. School principals are subject to annual performance evaluations based on six priority areas: vision and strategies, curriculum, human resources, financial and material resources, structures and procedures and community partnerships. In the period 2020–2023, managers were subjected once every 5 years to the evaluation procedure carried out by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (NAQAER). However, this evaluation process was suspended in 2024 at the order of MoER (Order no. 1099 of 30.08.2023, no. 1698 of 18.12.2023).

Another key matter related to school managers is the policy of evaluating managers: Attestation, a voluntary process, allows school managers to advance through three managerial grades every five years. This process is regulated by the Regulation on the Certification of Management Staff in General and Technical Vocational Education, approved by MoER order no. 1100 of 30.08M.2023, and is carried out in collaboration with the Local Specialised Bodies for Education and trade unions (MoER, 2023).

2.2 Accessing School Management Positions in General Education Institutions

The typical path to school leadership positions in Moldova begins with a bachelor's degree in education or a related field, followed by teaching experience and involvement in school management structures. Teachers often progress through roles on institutional committees, such as the

methodological committee, the quality assurance committee or the interdisciplinary interschool committee. However, this path does not always ensure that candidates gain practical leadership experience before taking up a managerial position.

The Regulation on the Organisation and Conduct of the Competition for the Position of Director and Deputy Director allows teachers with at least 3 years of teaching experience to apply for management positions, even without initial training in educational management. This creates a gap, as some candidates may not have the necessary administrative and leadership skills when taking on principal or deputy principal roles.

Although Moldova's Education Code provides support for newly qualified teachers, including reduced teaching duties and mentoring, there is no equivalent structured training programme for aspiring school principals. The current misalignment between teacher induction programmes and leadership readiness highlights a discrepancy in policies at the national level, which can affect the effectiveness of school leadership.

2.3 Women in School Leadership Roles in Moldova: Findings from the National Survey

According to the latest Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) study on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in Moldova (MLSP, 2024), by the end of 2024, women aged 15 and over were **twice as likely as men** to work in the public administration, education, health and social care sectors – **34.2% of women** compared to **13.0% of men**. In contrast, **men were more likely than women** to work in agriculture, with **25.4% of men** employed in the sector compared to **17.1% of women**.

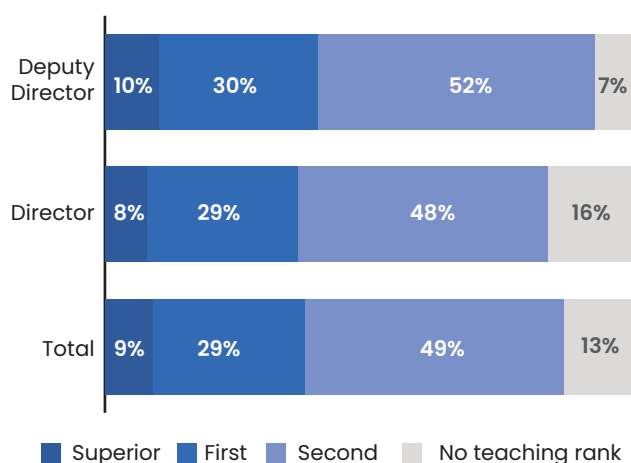
Despite the high concentration of women in the education sector, there is very limited data or research available on women in school leadership roles in Moldova. To address this gap, the Learning Cycle 6 team designed and conducted the **Moldova School Leadership Survey**, a national survey targeting school directors and deputy directors. The survey was administered in **October and November 2024** and gathered responses from **1,081 school leaders** across the country. Of these, **1,025 respondents (94.8%) were female**,

and 56 (5.2%) were male. This policy brief draws exclusively on the responses of female school leaders to explore their professional pathways, qualifications, challenges and priorities and to inform recommendations for advancing women in school leadership. The Appendix provides the geographic and professional background of the female sample.

2.3.1 Credentials and Career Pathways of Female School Leaders

The survey findings offer key insights into the professional credentials and career pathways of female school directors and deputy directors in Moldova, including their teacher ranks, managerial ranks and attainment of a master's degree in educational management.

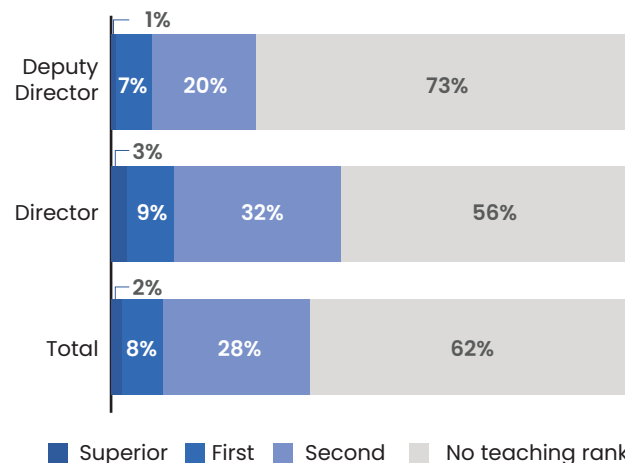
Figure 2. Female School Leaders' Teacher Rankings



Teacher Ranks. A majority of female school leaders hold formal teaching ranks, with 49% at the Second, 29% at the First and 9% at the Superior rank. Notably, 13% of female leaders do not hold a teaching rank, a proportion that is higher among directors (16%) than deputy directors (7%) (see Figure 2).

Managerial Ranks. The managerial rank system appears to be less commonly attained among female school leaders (see Figure 3). Over 62% reported having no formal managerial rank. Among directors, 32% held a Second rank compared to 20% of deputy directors. Only 2% of all female leaders held the Superior managerial rank, and this was rare among deputy directors (1%).

Figure 3. Female School Leaders' Managerial Ranks



Master's Degree in Educational Management. Just over one-third (34%) of respondents had a master's degree in educational management, while 714 managers (66%) do not hold a master's degree at all (see Figure 4). Of those with a

master's, over half (58%) earned their degree after becoming a school leader, suggesting that many pursue advanced studies while in their leadership roles (see Figure 5).

Figure 4. School Leaders with a Master's Degree in Educational Management

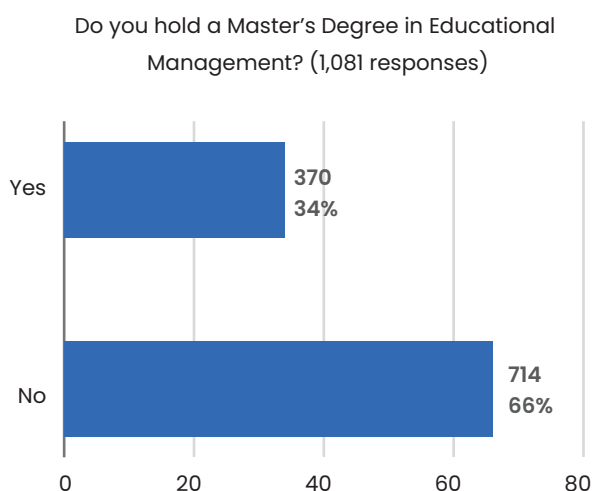
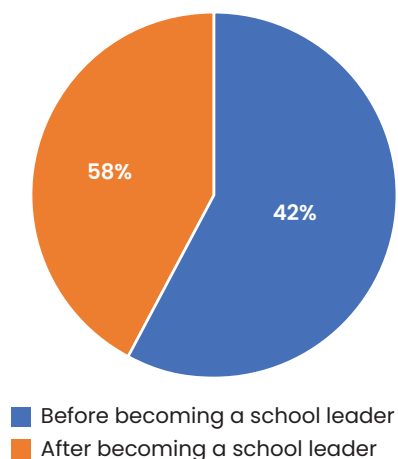


Figure 5. Timing of School Master's Degree Attainment



2.3.2 Pathways into School Leadership.

Among current female school directors, 44% previously served as deputy directors, whereas the majority (56%) transitioned into the director role without prior experience as a deputy. This finding highlights the varied career trajectories into school leadership and suggests that for many women, the directorship may be their first formal leadership role.

2.3.3 Participation in School Leadership In-Service Training

According to the Education Code (Art. 135, para. 1, letter q), school management staff are required to continually improve their professional qualifications. Based on the findings of the Moldova School Leadership Survey, 71% of female school directors and deputy directors participated in professional development between 2020 and 2024. Notably, nearly one-third (32%) of all surveyed female school leaders reported not participating in any accredited professional development during this period, with non-participation significantly higher among deputy directors (48%) than among directors (23%).

The timing of female school leaders' engagement in in-service professional development in educational management varies (see Figure 6). Overall, 82% of female school leaders completed these courses after becoming school leaders, with a larger share among deputy directors (89%) than directors (80%).

2.3.4 Areas for Improvement in Leadership in Service

Training

When asked about the areas of educational management that require greater emphasis in leadership training programmes, female school directors and deputy directors offered a clear, albeit varied, set of priorities (see Table 1). At the top of the list was change management. Cited by nearly a quarter of all female directors and deputy directors (25%), this topic stood out as especially critical for those navigating shifting educational policies, reforms and school-level transitions.

Another significant area of focus for school leadership in-service training was evaluation and control, named by 17% of female leaders overall. This topic encompasses the tools and strategies used to assess both teaching quality and institutional performance. Deputy directors were again more likely than directors to emphasise this area, with 20% calling for more robust preparation in conducting performance evaluations and managing accountability systems. The responses suggest that female directors and deputy directors desire greater clarity and confidence in meeting external expectations for monitoring and reporting, particularly in a context where such tasks are increasingly complex.

Figure 6. Female School Leaders' Timing of Educational Management Professional Development

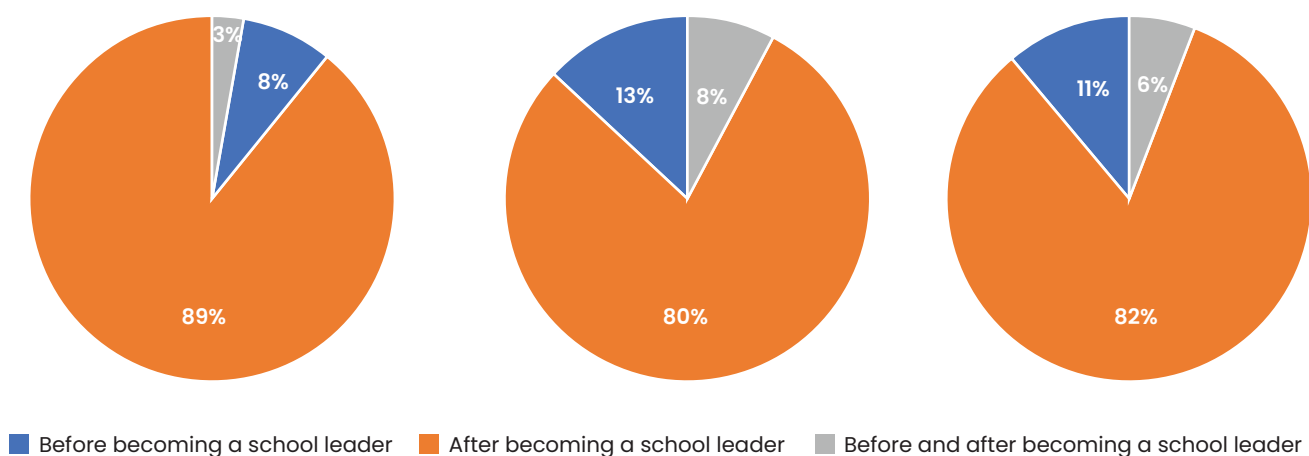


Table 1. Female School Leaders' In-Service Training Needs and Areas for Improvement

	Deputy Director	Director	Total
Change management: implementing new practices and technologies in the educational process	22%	26%	25%
Evaluation and control: monitoring academic and administrative performance to improve education quality	20%	15%	17%
Resource organisation: efficient management of human, financial and material resources	6%	19%	14%
Educational planning: developing goals and strategies for schools	13%	12%	13%
Conflict management: resolving misunderstandings and problems in the educational environment	13%	12%	12%
Communication: managing relationships among all stakeholders in education	8%	6%	7%
Professional development: continual training of teaching and administrative staff	6%	4%	5%
Activity coordination: ensuring good collaboration between teachers, students and parents	7%	3%	4%

3. BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

3.1 Challenges Facing Women in School Leadership Roles

The national survey results reveal that female school leaders in Moldova face a range of complex, overlapping challenges in their daily work (see Table A2 in the Appendix). Among the more frequently cited issues, particularly among directors, was the pressure of initiating and managing school physical infrastructure projects. Nearly one in three leaders (29%) identified this as a significant concern, with the percentage rising to 35% among directors. The data suggest that directors often shoulder the responsibility of navigating bureaucratic and funding hurdles to upgrade school facilities, a task that is both time and resource intensive.

Equally pressing was the struggle to maintain a sustainable balance between professional and personal responsibilities. The dual demands of administrative work and personal life were the second-most common challenge overall (28%) and were especially pronounced among deputy directors, 33% of whom named it as a primary concern.

Administrative burdens also emerged as a common source of difficulty for female school leaders. The preparation and management of internal institutional documentation, while essential to school functioning, was reported as a notable challenge by 9% of respondents. Deputy directors, in particular, cited the expectation to manage school-level tasks on a par with directors.

Participation in professional development posed its own challenge. For some school leaders, particularly deputy directors (10%), maintaining consistent engagement with training opportunities was difficult due to time constraints or lack of access.

Other reported challenges included managing human resources effectively (6%), dealing with limited support from students' families (4%) and navigating strained relationships with local public authorities. A small but meaningful number of respondents also mentioned systemic issues, such as limited access to information and gender-based constraints, suggesting that school leadership remains shaped not only by internal dynamics but also by external social and institutional forces.

Overall, these findings portray a demanding leadership environment in which female directors and deputy directors are expected to perform complex managerial functions under conditions of constrained resources, limited autonomy and uneven support structures.

In addition to daily management challenges, many women in school leadership roles face systemic issues that limit their ability to prepare for and succeed in these positions. According to national regulations, candidates for director or deputy director must have at least three years of teaching experience, yet the survey suggests that most are appointed without prior formal training in educational leadership and often without intermediate management experience. Leadership trajectories tend to follow an informal path – teacher to deputy director to director – rather than a structured leadership pipeline supported by targeted training.

3.2 Enabling Conditions

Institutional support is a key factor in facilitating women's access to leadership positions, including in the field of education. A strength at the national level is the promotion of effective, equitable leadership through specific regulated procedures that include the assessment of professional and management competencies. A concrete example of support is maternity leave, which is granted for a period of 98 days, as well as paternity leave or family leave, which varies between 14 days in the first 56 days after the birth of the child or a longer period of 12 months. These institutional measures provide a favourable framework for work-life balance, allowing parents, especially women, to focus on family responsibilities without risking professional stagnation.

In the Republic of Moldova, there are professional training courses in the field of educational management, an opportunity to 'learn to be a leader'. There are also various continuing professional training programmes that support the advancement of women in their careers. For example, government and non-governmental organisations' (NGOs) support initiatives also play an important role. Projects implemented by authorities or NGOs that aim to support women in education and careers can create an environment that promotes female leadership. Promoting science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education

for girls is crucial, as encouraging girls' participation in STEM can help create leadership opportunities in traditionally male-dominated fields. Educational institutions that adopt active diversity policies in recruitment and promotion see a notable increase in the number of women in school management. These policies contribute not only to the diversification of leadership teams but also to the cultivation of a more inclusive environment in which women feel supported and motivated to contribute to the educational and managerial process.

In conclusion, although there are significant obstacles to the advancement of women in management, the set of institutional measures and support programmes, such as maternity and paternity leave, training programmes and diversity policies, offer favourable conditions to facilitate positive changes in educational management.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the need for women's empowerment in leadership positions in educational institutions, it is essential that policymakers implement a number of concrete measures, including adapting existing policies, introducing new initiatives and removing systemic barriers:

1. Review and adaptation of recruitment and promotion policies:
 - Completion of art. 14 of the Regulation on the Organisation and Conduct of the Competition for the Position of Director and Deputy Director in General Education Institutions, with a mandatory condition that candidates submitting a file to participate in the competition for a management position must hold a training certificate in the field of educational management in the competent institutions;
 - The amendment of item 3, art.14 of the Regulation on the Organisation and Conduct of the Competition for the Position of Director and Deputy Director in General Education Institutions, allowing teachers to apply with a seniority in teaching activity of at least five years according to the Education Code.
2. Periodic statistical analysis with reference to the situation of the management staff in schools, with free access to the results for the general public and especially for those from specialised institutions.
3. Implementation of work-life balance policies that support women in managing multiple responsibilities and that facilitate improvement in managerial competencies.
4. Implementation of bachelor's degree programmes in the field of educational management and leadership, as well as improving initial training so that junior managers are properly prepared to handle managerial work. Raising the bar for the implementation of initial professional training programmes ensures theoretical and practical training based on a curriculum centred on female management and leadership.
5. Providing preliminary training for newly appointed specialists prior to their assuming managerial roles to build confidence and reduce early-stage challenges, uncertainties and performance difficulties.
6. Continuous training: offering all teachers specific training courses and workshops for the development of leadership, management and communication skills, with a focus on women.
7. Creation and development of an integrative professional platform that facilitates the exchange of experience, internships, continuous professional development and consultations with experts. The platform should support peer-to-peer learning and collaborative problem-solving, especially during the implementation of new training methods, and include regular events with experienced school principals.
8. Mentorship initiatives: creating mentorship programmes that connect women aspiring to leadership positions with experienced leaders in the field. These programmes should include training sessions and workshops dedicated to developing leadership skills, providing them with valuable guidance and advice. Mentors help develop skills and overcome barriers that may arise throughout their careers, making it easier for women to overcome the challenges faced in a male-dominated leadership environment.
9. Creating an enabling environment for gender equality:
 - Promoting awareness campaigns on the importance of gender diversity in educational leadership.
 - Providing professional assistance and support by facilitating the exchange of experience and good practices with reference to female leadership in education.

- Implementing projects to connect young women with women leaders in various fields who can facilitate professional development and the inspiration needed to develop in their careers.
- Collaborating with NGOs working in the field of gender equality to develop and implement specific initiatives to support women in education.

The implementation of these recommendations will require the commitment and collaboration of all parties involved, including educational authorities, teachers, the community and organisations. Promoting female leadership in the Republic of Moldova requires an integrated approach that can address existing challenges and capitalise on educational

characteristics so as to create an environment conducive to the development of women in leadership positions. Manager's level of competence, motivation and performance directly influences the performance of the educational system, and recruitment, quality professional training, motivation and ongoing development of leaders' performance are key strategies for promoting quality education. In this context, if the human resources problem is not solved through systemic, intersectoral actions encompassing all processes (recruitment, selection, integration, motivation, initial and ongoing training, evaluation, and payroll), the education system may enter a deep crisis. These actions are key to increasing the number of qualified women in leadership roles, yielding a positive impact on the education system and society as a whole.

5. AREAS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

To understand and more effectively address the issue of women's empowerment in school leadership in Moldova, it is essential to focus on a few areas for further exploration. These include research, awareness-raising and stakeholder engagement.

1. International benchmarking: comparing data on women's representation in school leadership across different countries to identify best practices and successful models that could be implemented locally.
2. Investigating teachers', students' and parents' perceptions of women in leadership in order to understand stereotypes and promote cultural change. The study should focus on identifying priority directions towards which continuous and complementary professional training programmes must be oriented with the objective of providing the educational system with human resources capable of fulfilling specific managerial tasks. It should highlight teachers' perceptions of the practices, attitudes and behaviours of the managers of the educational institutions in which they are integrated based on the following dimensions:
 - Conceptual-definitional, including associations, such as coordinator, strategist, leader and organiser;

- The manner of approaching interpersonal relationships and the style of interaction, such as trustworthy person, good communicator, tolerance, positive attitude in interpersonal relationships;
 - Skills, competencies, motivation and attitudes, such as integrity and ethics, responsibility, ability to influence, orientation towards efficiency, motivation for success, ability to listen actively and resistance to stress.
3. Collaboration with universities: involvement of higher education institutions in the development of training and research programmes dedicated to women in school management.
 4. Dialogue between authorities and the community: organising forums and meetings between policymakers, teachers, parents and students to discuss challenges and solutions related to school leadership.

In conclusion, exploring these areas will contribute not only to a better understanding of the problems faced by women in school leadership but also to the development of effective and sustainable solutions. Through research, awareness and collaboration, we can promote a more equitable and inclusive educational environment, thus benefiting the entire community.

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APPENDIX: NATIONAL SURVEY OF FEMALE SCHOOL LEADERS

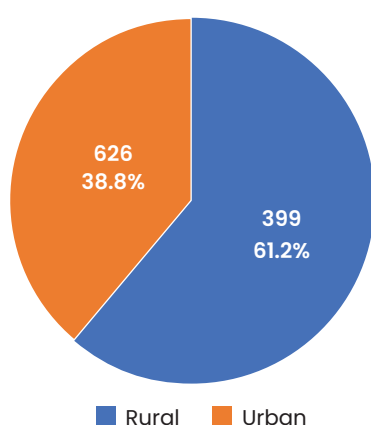
Geographic and Professional Backgrounds

The survey respondents represented 17 of 35 districts of Moldova, with the largest share from Chişinău (27.5%), followed by Rîşcani (8.6%) and Căuşeni (7.4%) (Table A1). Most leaders oversee schools in rural areas (61.2%), whereas 38.8% were from urban settings (Figure A1).

Table A1. Distribution of School Leaders by Region

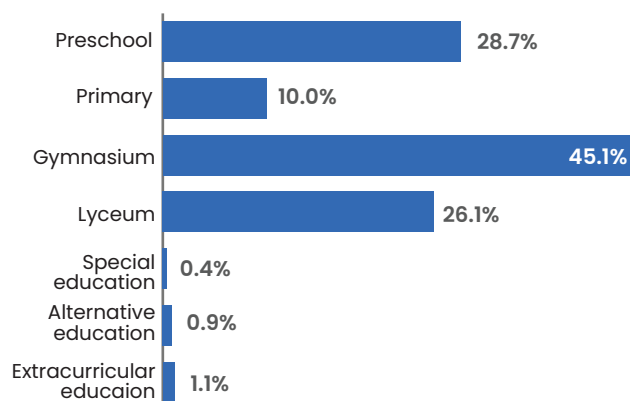
	n	%
Anenii Noi	33	3.2%
Călăraşi	53	5.2%
Căuşeni	76	7.4%
Chişinău	282	27.5%
Edineţ	61	6.0%
Floreşti	38	3.7%
Glodeni	5	0.5%
Hînceşti	44	4.3%
Leova	29	2.8%
Nisporeni	41	4.0%
Ocniţa	71	6.9%
Orhei	62	6.0%
Rîşcani	88	8.6%
Sîngerei	49	4.8%
Ştefan Vodă	34	3.3%
Ungheni	34	3.3%
Unitatea Teritorială Autonomă Găgăuzia	25	2.4%

Figure A1. Urban vs Rural Distribution



Female school leaders of diverse types of schools were represented. Gymnasiums accounted for the largest share (45.1%), followed by preschools (28.7%) and lyceums (26.1%). A small percentage of leaders came from primary schools, special education, extracurricular education or alternative education programmes (see Table A2). In terms of role, 66.7% identified as school directors, and 33.3% were deputy directors (Table A3).

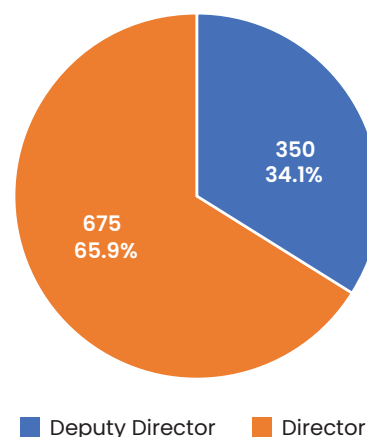
Figure A2. School Leaders by Institution Type



Total may be more than 100% if individuals indicated there are leaders of more than one school level.

The age profile of the sample of female school leaders indicates a generally experienced leadership cohort. Most

Figure A3. Leadership Roles



leaders were 46–55 years old (37.0%) or 56–65 years old (31.6%) (Figure A5). Leadership experience also skewed slightly low, with 56.3% reporting 10 or fewer years of experience in the deputy or director leadership roles (Figure A6).

Figure A4. Female School Leaders' Age Distribution

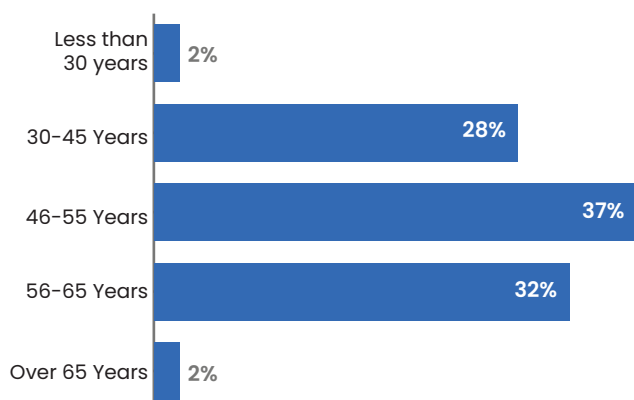
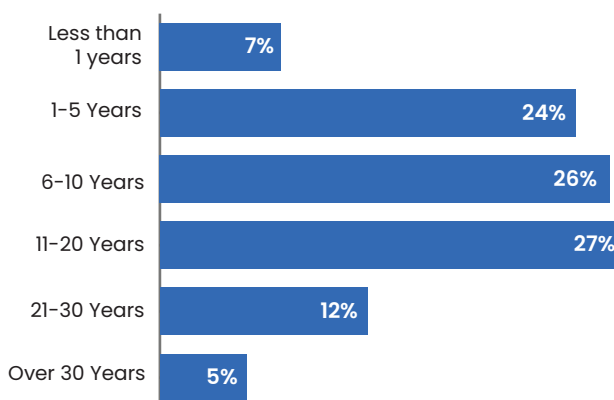


Figure A5. Female School Leaders' Years of Leadership Experience



Challenges Faced by Women in School Leadership Roles

Table A2. Challenges Faced by Female School Leaders

	Deputy Director	Director	Total
Developing projects to improve the institution's infrastructure	17%	35%	29%
Being overwhelmed by both managerial and personal responsibilities	33%	25%	28%
Preparation of the institution's internal documents	12%	8%	9%
Participation in in-person educational management professional development courses for the full duration	10%	6%	7%
Human resources management	6%	6%	6%
Insufficient support from the family	6%	4%	5%
Collaboration with local authorities (APL I, APL II)	1%	5%	4%
Promoting the institution's image	4%	3%	3%
Limited access to information	2%	1%	1%
Gender-related constraints	1%	0%	1%

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