Developing adaptive professional decision making in preservice primary school teachers through dynamic conflict scenarios

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Abstract: This conceptual article examines how preservice primary school teachers can be prepared to make and revise professional decisions in changing conflicts involving pupils and parents. A focused narrative synthesis of research on adaptive expertise, practice-based teacher education, classroom simulation, feedback, and teacher social and emotional competence informs the proposed framework. Adaptive professional decision making is defined as the reasoned modification or retention of an action in response to relevant new evidence while maintaining educational and ethical commitments. The article proposes a training cycle comprising initial interpretation, a provisional decision, disclosure of new information, justified revision, feedback, and transfer to an unfamiliar scenario. An illustrative case demonstrates how this cycle can be implemented through staged role play or a simple digital environment. Five assessment dimensions are specified: evidence interpretation, alternative generation, proportionality and ethical adequacy, justified updating, and transfer. The contribution is a theoretically grounded design for a planned study in primary teacher education in Uzbekistan. The framework has not yet been empirically validated; its effectiveness requires controlled evaluation and delayed assessment.

Keywords: preservice teachers, primary teacher education, adaptive expertise, professional decision making, dynamic conflict scenarios, feedback, transfer of learning, digital training

Introduction. A disagreement in a primary classroom may change substantially as information becomes available. A pupil initially described as refusing to participate may have misunderstood an instruction; a parent initially perceived as confrontational may be responding to incomplete information. The teacher must act before all relevant facts are known, yet remain prepared to reconsider that action. Preparing future teachers for this responsibility requires learning tasks that make both the initial judgment and its subsequent revision visible.

For the planned dissertation, the central educational problem is how to develop flexible professional decision making when the conditions of a conflict change. Knowing a list of conflict-resolution strategies does not establish whether a student can recognize that a previously reasonable response has become inappropriate. The present article therefore focuses on the relationship between new evidence, revised interpretation, and a defensible next action. Its aim is to develop a conceptual and methodological framework for teaching and assessing this relationship among preservice primary school teachers.

Adaptive expertise research provides a relevant foundation. Bohle Carbonell and colleagues distinguish adaptation to changing tasks from proficient performance under familiar conditions and emphasize the contribution of knowledge, experience, and supportive learning environments [1]. Applied to conflict preparation, this perspective suggests that successful performance should include recognizing the limits of a familiar response. This application is a design inference, rather than an empirical finding about the proposed intervention.

The article uses a focused narrative synthesis and conceptual design approach. Sources were selected for their relevance to adaptive expertise, approximations of professional practice, simulation, feedback, and relational competence. Six peer-reviewed publications provide the theoretical basis. This is not an exhaustive or systematic review, and it cannot establish that the proposed combination is unprecedented internationally or absent in Uzbekistan. No participants were recruited, no intervention was administered, and no primary data were collected. The results presented below are conceptual outputs: an operational definition, an instructional cycle, an illustrative case, and an assessment proposal.

Discussion. Adaptive professional decision making is understood here as the ability to select, explain, and appropriately update an action when credible information changes the interpretation of a pedagogical conflict. Adaptation does not mean changing a decision whenever another person disagrees. Retaining an initial decision can also be adaptive when the learner examines the new information and explains why the decision remains proportionate. The defining feature is evidence-sensitive reasoning within stable educational and ethical boundaries.

Three related constructs should be distinguished. Conflict-resolution knowledge concerns concepts and possible strategies. Communicative skill concerns how the teacher listens, asks questions, and explains a response. Adaptive decision making concerns whether the strategy remains appropriate as the situation develops. A student may demonstrate courteous communication while retaining an unsupported assumption. Conversely, a student may identify the right change in strategy but communicate it poorly. Training should connect these capabilities, while assessment should retain the distinction.

Practice-based teacher education offers a way to make this reasoning teachable. Grossman and colleagues describe representations, decomposition, and approximations of practice [3]. A conflict scenario can represent an interaction, while decomposition separates noticing, interpretation, response selection, and explanation. Rehearsal then allows the student to attempt these actions with instructional support. The proposed framework applies these ideas specifically to decision points created by a change in information.

Evidence on simulation supports this general direction, while setting limits on the claims that can be made. Theelen and colleagues reviewed fifteen studies of classroom simulations in teacher education and found that reported benefits concerned classroom management and teaching skills more often than specifically defined interpersonal competence [6]. Their review supports attention to authenticity, feedback, and peer discussion. It does not demonstrate that simulation alone develops adaptive responses to changing conflicts with parents or young children.

Chernikova and colleagues synthesized 145 empirical studies of simulation-based learning across higher education and reported positive effects on complex skills, with outcomes varying according to instructional support and prior knowledge [2]. For the present design, this supports combining scenario practice with guidance. Beginners may need examples of evidence-based reasoning, whereas more experienced students can be asked to explain alternative interpretations independently. These findings justify testing a supported simulation design; they do not establish its effectiveness in the intended local population.

Emotional and relational conditions also matter. Jennings and Greenberg connect teacher social and emotional competence with supportive relationships and classroom management in their prosocial classroom model [5]. Accordingly, the proposed training incorporates pausing, non-accusatory language, and attention to the pupil's perspective. These practices serve a specific function: they create an opportunity to gather information before an interpretation hardens into a

disciplinary response. Emotional regulation and decision quality should nevertheless be assessed separately.

Results and Analysis. The conceptual analysis yields a training cycle in which change is deliberately introduced after the learner records an initial decision. The proposed sequence is initial interpretation, provisional action, new information, justified updating, explanatory feedback, and transfer. The cycle is an instructional proposal derived from the selected literature, not a validated intervention or a claim that every component is new. Its intended contribution is to integrate the components around an observable change in professional reasoning.

At the first stage, the learner receives a short account of a conflict, identifies the available facts, and separates these from assumptions. The student records what remains unknown and selects one immediate action. The response includes a rationale and the information needed before any stronger intervention. Recording this answer is essential: without it, later explanations may reconstruct the initial judgment and obscure whether meaningful revision occurred.

At the second stage, a credible update changes a relevant aspect of the situation. Updates may concern an instruction, a participant's account, the sequence of events, or a consequence of the teacher's response. They should be plausible and consequential, without making every initial decision automatically wrong. Across a set of cases, some updates should require a substantial change, others a limited adjustment, and others a justified decision to retain the original response.

At the third stage, the student identifies exactly which assumption the new evidence supports or challenges, generates feasible alternatives, and selects a revised or retained action. The explanation must connect the evidence with that action. Merely choosing a different response is insufficient. For example, replacing a public warning with a private conversation is defensible when a disclosure creates a confidentiality concern; the same change requires a different justification if the original response was already private.

At the fourth stage, feedback addresses the reasoning process and its consequences. Hattie and Timperley show that feedback effectiveness depends on its form and delivery [4]. In this proposal, feedback identifies the relevant cue, examines the learner's inference, and explains the likely implications of the proposed action. It should acknowledge defensible alternatives rather than present one universal script. Students then state a conditional principle that could guide a future decision.

At the final stage, the learner encounters an unfamiliar case without the earlier prompts. This is necessary because correcting an answer immediately after feedback can reflect local compliance or recall. A transfer task changes the participants, setting, and surface details while preserving a relevant reasoning demand. A later assessment should additionally examine whether the student retains the ability after the immediate training context has passed.

An illustrative scenario concerns a second-grade pupil who pushes aside a worksheet and says, "I will not do it." Other pupils are watching. The student teacher must respond while keeping the class engaged. A reasonable provisional action could be a calm boundary against disruption followed by a brief, private question about the difficulty. An unsupported initial response would label the pupil as deliberately disrespectful without seeking clarification. The scenario is fictional and is provided solely to demonstrate the proposed method.

The first update states that the worksheet instructions were given rapidly and the pupil had entered the classroom late. The learner must reconsider whether nonparticipation reflects refusal, uncertainty, or another difficulty. One defensible action is to restate the instruction privately, check understanding, and offer a manageable starting step. The behavioural boundary may remain, but the

explanation and learning support change. Assessment should reward the connection between the new information and the revised response.

The second update states that a parent has received a message claiming that the child was publicly humiliated and has complained in a class messaging group. The student now needs to distinguish the child's learning difficulty from the parent's interpretation of the incident. A defensible response would acknowledge the concern, propose a private conversation, clarify the sequence of events, and avoid discussing identifiable details in the group. The learner should explain how the communication channel affects the available options.

The transfer scenario could concern disagreement about a pupil's assessment rather than classroom participation. The parent attributes a low mark to unfair treatment; a later update reveals a mismatch between the announced task and the pupil's understanding of the criteria. Repeating the earlier wording would not demonstrate transfer. The learner must independently check the evidence, explain whether reassessment is warranted, and propose a proportionate next step.

A simple digital implementation can present each stage sequentially and retain time-stamped written responses. A form-based platform or a Telegram bot could be used, subject to the functions and access conditions available at implementation. Staged paper cards and facilitated role play can implement the same learning sequence. The pedagogical mechanism is the requirement to commit, reconsider, justify, and transfer; a digital interface mainly supports consistent delivery and recording.

For use in Uzbekistan, scenarios should be developed with local primary teachers and teacher educators. Review should examine linguistic clarity, realistic parent communication, school procedures, and the feasibility of the proposed actions. Uzbek and Russian versions, if used, require checks for equivalent meaning and difficulty. Cultural relevance should be established through consultation and piloting rather than assumed from broad claims about national values.

Five assessment dimensions are proposed. Evidence interpretation concerns distinguishing observations from assumptions. Alternative generation concerns identifying feasible responses. Proportionality and ethical adequacy concern dignity, confidentiality, and fit between the action and the situation. Justified updating concerns explaining why the new evidence requires change or supports retention. Transfer concerns applying the underlying reasoning independently in an unfamiliar case. These dimensions are provisional and require expert review and pilot testing.

An initial rubric could score each dimension from zero to three: absent or unsupported reasoning; partial recognition without a coherent action; a defensible action with an incomplete explanation; and a coherent explanation linking evidence, alternatives, and consequences. Dimension-specific descriptors and scored examples must be developed before research use. Critical problems such as public disclosure of confidential information should be recorded separately rather than concealed by an acceptable total score. No validated cut-off scores are proposed.

A planned evaluation should compare dynamic scenario training with static case discussion while matching learning time, topic coverage, and instructor attention. Both groups would complete parallel assessments before and after training and a delayed transfer task. Whenever feasible, allocation should be randomized; otherwise, baseline differences and the limitations of group assignment must be addressed. Sample size should follow an explicit power analysis informed by the design, rather than an arbitrary target.

Independent raters should score anonymized responses without knowing group membership or assessment occasion. Rater training, agreement checks, and documented scoring decisions are necessary. Analysis should distinguish initial decision quality from justified revision and transfer,

with uncertainty intervals and effect sizes reported alongside any significance tests. A practicum observation could provide additional evidence of application, although simulation scores alone cannot demonstrate effective conduct in real school conflicts.

The principal limitation is the distance between a reasoned written response and action under social pressure. Further limitations include the selected rather than comprehensive literature base, the absence of local validation, and possible effects of writing proficiency on scores. Time pressure, realistic dialogue, and observed role play may improve assessment coverage, but they also introduce additional demands. These should be introduced deliberately and examined rather than treated as automatic improvements.

Conclusion. Preparing future primary school teachers for changing conflicts requires attention to the relationship between evidence and action. This article proposes a framework that makes an initial judgment visible, introduces consequential information, requires justified updating, and assesses transfer beyond the practiced case. Its contribution lies in translating established ideas about adaptive expertise, professional practice, simulation, feedback, and relational competence into a testable instructional design.

The framework can guide the development of a digital or facilitated training programme for the planned dissertation. Its effectiveness remains an empirical question. The next research steps are local scenario review, rubric development, piloting, and a controlled evaluation with delayed transfer assessment. Improvement should be demonstrated through better reasoning and appropriate action across unfamiliar situations, rather than through more frequent changes of answer or favourable student reactions alone.

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