

**MATERNAL RECONSTRUCTION
OF THE PERSONALITY OF A PORTUGUESE
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TEACHER
– THE EMERGENCE OF GROUNDED THEORY
(RÉSUMÉ FROM MY OWN RESEARCH)**

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Abstract. The aim of the exploratory research was developing a grounded theory that could outline the importance of the personality of an early childhood education teacher. The described research process was carried out in accordance with the concept of grounded theory. The empirical material consisted of transcriptions interviews held with mothers of children at an early school age in Portugal. As a result, it was possible to formulate a research hypothesis which led to the conclusions that mothers recognize the importance of the personality of an early childhood education teacher in the educational process, and their statements oscillate around four areas arranged according to the degree of intensity of their statements, namely: build positive relationships, motivate to learn and act, stimulate correct development and maintain the well-being of students.

**MATCZYNA REKONSTRUKCJA OSOBOWOŚCI PORTUGALSKIEGO
NAUCZYCIELA WCZESNEJ EDUKACJI – PROCES WYŁANIANIA
SIĘ TEORII UGRUNTOWANEJ (RÉSUMÉ BADAŃ WŁASNYCH)**

Słowa kluczowe: pedagogika wczesnoszkolna, badania jakościowe, nauczyciel wczesnej edukacji, osobowość, rekonstrukcja, teoria ugruntowana

Streszczenie. Celem opisywanych badań o charakterze eksploracyjnym było wypracowanie teorii ugruntowanej, która mogłaby nakreślić znaczenie osobowości nauczyciela wczesnej edukacji. Opisywany proces badawczy odbywał się zgodnie z ideą metody teorii ugruntowanej. Materiał empiryczny stanowiły transkrypcje wywiadów prowadzonych z matkami dzieci w młodszym wieku szkolnym w Portugalii. W efekcie prowadzonych prac możliwe było sformułowanie hipotezy badawczej, dzięki której wyprowadzono wnioski, że badane matki widzą istotną rolę osobowości nauczyciela wczesnej edukacji w procesie edukacyjnym, a ich wypowiedzi oscylują wokół czterech obszarów ułożonych według stopnia natężenia wypowiedzi, a mianowicie: w budowaniu pozytywnych relacji, motywowaniu do nauki i działania, stymulowaniu prawidłowego rozwoju i zachowaniu dobrego samopoczucia uczniów.

Introduction, or why qualitative research

The research process described has been carried out in accordance with the concept of qualitative research, the essential feature of which is based on a humanistic approach towards other people. Qualitative research methodology is built on the philosophical grounds of interactionism, hermeneutics and phenomenology. The phenomenological roots of qualitative research clearly underline the role of experience in learning about the world. The basics of hermeneutics stress the relevant issue of understanding the studied reality, which constitutes the aim of cognition. Symbolic interactionism, which is the basis of qualitative research, points out that stimuli induced by the researched situations depend on the interpretation of such situations, that is, how people perceive a given situation.

The use of a qualitative strategy allows us to examine issues related to assessments, values, and experience, thus, things that are individual for a person. 'Upon conducting her research, the researcher does not present research hypotheses but rather assumes a specific assumptionlessness in comprehending the phenomenon, which thus makes it easy to discover new aspects of the studied phenomenon' (Pilch, Bauman, 2010, p. 272).

This does not mean, however, that upon launching the research the investigator is void of their own preassumptions towards the topic of the research. That would be impossible. By adopting a certain attitude, detached from existing knowledge, the researcher will be able to explore the environment, that is the point of his or her interest, most thoroughly and most objectively.

Qualitative research provides valuable description and data in text form. In addition, it allows us to formulate regularities recognized in individual cases and the experiences of the research subjects. Qualitative research has been carried

out in the person's natural environment, wherein the researcher establishes direct contact with the person and thus becomes an equivalent entity within the cognitive process. The characteristic features of qualitative research include: 'qualitative data in the form of a valuable description filled with exemplifications and quotes, researcher's personal and direct contact with the respondent, dynamic, processual recognition, focus on a unique case, contextual sensitivity, empathic neutrality and flexibility of the research project' (Kubinowski, 2010, p. 68).

Qualitative studies are regulated by neither operationalised variables nor indicators. They are controlled by triangulation and analysis of evidence, amongst others. According to Tadeusz Pilch and Teresa Bauman (2010), triangulation is 'a way of collecting and handling data through listening to many people elaborating on a phenomenon in which the researcher is interested, observing an abundance of situations' (p. 354). Ensuring such plurality of views on a single phenomenon allows the researcher to eliminate questionable data along with overinterpretations unconfirmed by other sources. Analysis of evidence, as a controller of the research procedure in the qualitative strategy, is a process based on careful assessment of the obtained data and extracting information indicating strengths and weaknesses. Such studies yield an essential value which can not be obtained in any other manner of research.

Grounded theory methodology

'Reflection on the method is a result of scientific progress, and this progress in methodological procedures leads to improved reliability of theories, thus revealing more truth about the world' (Sáez, 2017, p. 240).

Grounded theory is a coherent system of qualitative methods developed and described by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 in their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Grounded theory assumes that social reality can be understood best by the actors involved in it. Hence, it negates the functionalist approach in which the researcher, upon launching their works, refers to the previously developed theoretical model, since this only leads to the self-confirmation of the concept. The grounded theory method assumes that in the course of collecting further research material the theory *emerges* from the data on its own and is thus *grounded* in the field. Therefore, it ought to be treated primarily as a theory related to a particular community, a specific issue – preferably matching it.

Qualitative research is suspected of leading towards empathy and underlining its unstructured and informal character. Reluctance towards the use of qualitative research and its depreciation also results from the fact that data are *de facto* everywhere, occur naturally around us, which causes the danger of a 'romantic impulse to identify experience with authenticity' (Silverman, 2009, p. 23).

An alternative to the classical grounded theory methodology introduced by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967), as well as the subsequent modifications of this concept introduced by Strauss and Juliet M. Corbin (1990), is the approach presented by Kathy Charmaz, where one can recognize a move towards verificationist rhetoric criticised by classical grounded theory (Charmaz, 2009). This shows a clear departure from the positivist narrative found in the classical grounded theory of Glaser and Strauss (1967) in favour of the constructivist perspective. It asserts that the theory is not discovered on the basis of empirical data, but constructed in the course of the analysis process. Constructivism in the methodology assumes that empirical data are created by the researcher, and not collected as that which reflects a certain objective reality. The significance of objects as such does not exist in themselves, but is produced. Thus, there are no objective data, independent from the researcher, but only constructed data. Describing the procedures and the context constructing the data is therefore the responsibility of the researcher. The research is thus neither passive nor neutral. In its original version, grounded theory is *de facto* grounded in the concept of *retro* and does not capture the essence of qualitative research, which is based on constructing explanations and analysing the construction of data and meanings contained therein (Charmaz, 2009).

The aim of the brief characteristics of the three approaches towards grounded theory according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Charmaz (2009) is not their evaluation, but the prospect of directing the research by supplying them with originality and importance for pedagogy as a branch of social science. Namely, the use of this method is carried out with the intention of faithful adherence to its guidelines; however, it assumes a pioneering and flexible use of its instruments, which have been used properly in the classical perspective of Glaser and Strauss (1967) - in order to develop a major conceptual framework for the scientific work; and in the modified perspective of Strauss and Corbin (1990) - in order to outline the basic methodological assumptions for their own research and procedure, and in the constructivist perspective of Charmaz (2009) - in order to discuss the method of data collection and analysis. Reference to the grounded theory method in the conducted research ought

to be associated primarily with the possibilities that it introduces in case of studies in which quantitative methods do not apply.

The conceptual level of making one's own research assumptions

Amongst the two dominant ways of viewing social reality - mechanistic and humanistic - the researcher, *upon exploring the grounded theory*, selects the humanistic approach. This focuses mainly on 'symbolically shaped human cognitive processes and recognizes in these processes the key for explaining and understanding human reality' (Konecki, 2000, p. 34).

The school of symbolic interactionism can be certainly put within the framework of interpretative paradigm, which drives the research effort of the article.

Individual research is of an exploratory nature. The goal is to develop a grounded theory: to propose a new concept which, upon emerging from empirical data collected by the researcher and therefore constructed during interviews with mothers of younger school age students, could outline the importance of personality of an early childhood education teacher. As a result, it was possible to formulate a research hypothesis which constitutes an approximation of a grounded theory, which is embedded in the context and serves as an interpretation of a particular process.

Thus, the subject of the research undertaken are the expectations of Portuguese mothers of students at an early school age towards the role of personality of the teacher during the education process. The source of the interest from the researcher is the depth of this phenomenon, and at the same time, its variety.

The main research problem took the form of the following question: What is the importance of personality of an early childhood education teacher in view of social needs (with regard to the example of interviews with mothers of students at an early school age in Portugal)?

As mentioned before, the flexible and insightful approach towards the grounded theory method introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was, after some time, confronted with the rigorous and mechanistic approach adopted by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Strauss and Corbin (1990) propose a set of steps - specific guidelines - that, when used *de facto*, force the articulation of a specific theory; therefore, they postulate a systematic *line by line* procedure leading towards certain pre-programmed conclusions.

Due to the specificity of the research, referring to a more structured version of the grounded theory method, and therefore the use of proposals indicated by Strauss and Corbin (1990) seemed more reasonable (see table 1).

Table 1. *The process for unveiling/constructing the grounded theory based on qualitative research interviews with mothers of students at an early school age*

Step/Research stage	Activity	Justification
Research commencement	Defining the research topic, proposing the research concept while avoiding formulation of hypotheses.	Determining the purpose and object of the research as well as the research issue as precisely as possible (although the primary idea might change or be subject to modifications along with the progress of work).
Selection (of the research participants)	Group selection, the application of purposeful selection, which is homogeneous (in practice, the possibility of seeing objective difficulties in obtaining adequate numbers of groups due to a lack of time amongst participants, or their unwillingness to cooperate)	Finding an adequate research population demonstrating a positive attitude towards the researcher and commitment to participate in the research.
Empirical research	A flexible method of gathering information, collecting repeatable data, writing notes during the research, modifying, clarifying, and improving the interview scenario.	Streamlining the analysis so as to enable valuable adjustments in data interpretation and ensure the ability to respond to the emerging issues.
Data analysis	Transcribing. An analysis of statements received from individual participants. The coding process. Searching for regularities, comparisons, and differences amongst the statements.	Becoming familiar with the data and the initial creation of a theory.
Achieving theoretical saturation or <i>sufficiency</i>	This means that the cognitive benefits from subsequent interviews are negligible, the information is redundant.	There is no point in analysing new statements or contrasting data with existing empirical research.
Formulation of a hypothesis	Iterative filling of the issue with evidence – its clarification or empowerment with data. Seeking a certain logic between the statements, causes, and interdependences as well as elements either confirming or negative the concept of the research.	Empowering the research issue with data and its measurability. Highlighting research assumptions. Specifying the grounded theory.

Contrasting literature	Comparison with the existing literature.	Strengthening the universal nature of the theory, improving the quality of the definition.
Final dilemmas	Attempt to answer the question: what function did the applied grounded theory serve?	End of thesis.

Source: personal work.

Analytical procedure

The interview is a specific form of conversation, during which knowledge is created in the course of interaction between the interviewer and the participant.

The research used partly structured interviews (Kvale, 2010) or, in other words, interviews based on a semi-structured guide (Widera-Wysoczańska, 2002). In this interview, the interviewer has a framework of previously prepared themes which result from the research and ensure that all relevant issues will be taken into account. Its goal is to obtain a description of the life experiences of respondents and learn the manner in which they interpret the phenomenon. Thus, it usually focuses on a few major issues and proposed questions. At the same time, these interviews have an open formula, which allows us to change the topic blocks or the order of questions as well as follow the specific topics that appear in participants' statements. The interview, designed for qualitative empirical research, explores the importance of the personality of an early childhood education teacher through the eyes of the mothers of children at an early school age. Its purpose was to obtain a profound and, at the same time, complete and detailed understanding of the abovementioned theme by the researcher and the participant.

The launch of the procedure of collecting empirical material required the researcher to contact the interlocutors – mothers of children at an early school age. During the author's stay at the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança in Portugal within the framework of Erasmus + programme in May 2018, the goal of which was to conduct teaching classes for students at the Faculty of the School of Education, the female students were asked to help find potential research participants among their friends. Therefore, women who have expressed a desire to participate in the research identified further interlocutors and usually served as intermediaries in establishing contact with them. The interviews were carried out in the period from 14th to 18th May 2018, in the presence of an interpreter.

The first meeting with a potential research participant served to present the topic of the research, arrange the place of conducting the interview and obtain consent to record the interview. Interviews were mostly carried out in the participants' place of residence or in their workplace, but several meetings took place in a coffee shop. In any case, the studies were carried out in an interview-like environment so as to eliminate factors that might distort the course of the interview. Each interview lasted approximately one hour, on average. All conversations were recorded on a voice recorder after obtaining consent from the participants. The research participants also expressed their consent to include selected fragments of their statements in the final report, on an anonymous basis. In total, the empirical material consisted of transcriptions of 11 thematic, semi-structured interviews. Material from the interviews was prepared for the analytical procedure through transcription of the statements into written text taking into account both verbal and non-verbal aspects of mothers' statements arranged according to the order of interviews and marked with names. Names have been changed in order to preserve anonymity.

The analysis was initiated by reading the text repeatedly, with an attempt to do it void of any special attitudes and expectations towards it. Afterwards, the researcher *immersed* herself more profoundly in the participant's statement so to experience her beliefs *from the inside*, and achieve the deepest understanding of the content describing a fragment of the participant's reality. During the repeated reading of the text, bearing in mind the research question, the researcher used colourful markers to indicate the *topics* recognized as specific and subsequently recorded the emerging ideas with regard to the meaning revealed. Non-verbal aspects of the speech have been recorded and noted. The researcher used modified Jefferson transcription symbols (2004), which allowed her to register a variety of non-verbal communicative actions of the interlocutor - intonation, voice suspension, pauses, pace of speaking.

Upon reading the text anew, the researcher searched for keywords that are relevant for the understanding of the studied phenomenon. Repeating keywords that established a meaningful whole and contained the same idea were extracted from the original place in the text and placed together. Tesch (1990) calls this process re-contextualization, i.e. locating semantic units within a new context.

While preparing the transcription, the researcher made a thorough description and meticulous interpretation of the meanings that correspond to the precision of calculations in quantitative research.

The first analytical choice on the journey through grounded theory leads to coding. 'Coding is based on categorisation of data segments with the use of short titles that summarize and include each data item. Codes show how the researcher selected, separated, and sorted the data' (Charmaz, 2009, p. 61).

While carrying out the initial coding, the researcher aimed at remaining open towards examining any theoretical possibilities of the observed data. This initial stage of coding helped later on in defining the basic conceptual (theoretical) categories. Initial coding was based on line-by-line analysis of statements from each of the mothers surveyed.

The following strategies were used during line-by-line coding: converting data into component parts or according to their attributes, searching for hidden assumptions, clarifying the hidden actions and meanings, clarifying the meaning of individual points, comparing data with one another, identifying gaps in the data.

The researcher adhered to the coding code, according to which one ought to: maintain an open attitude, stick close to the data, create simple and precise codes, construct short codes, take actions into account, compare data, quickly analyse data (Charmaz, 2009).

While defining and refining the codes, the researcher sought to understand the participants' views and actions from their own perspective. In order to interpret the hidden meanings of statements, the researcher meticulously examined the collected data, i.e. the so-called careful coding which arises from the first principle of grounded theory: *You should examine the emerging data* (Glaser, 1978).

By making continuous comparisons within the same interview and statements from various interviews, the researcher attempted to discover what issues the participants recognized as problematic. The findings were treated in an analytical way. Each new look at the data, different from the views of other participants, was noted down.

Concentrated coding allowed us to group data into categories (theoretical, conceptual codes), which crystallized the participants' experiences. They became the so-called analytical frame which enabled the interpretation of statements and the building of the hypothesis.

The described process of working with the empirical material allowed us to conduct a multilateral analysis as well as both discover and understand the world created by the interlocutors. This process is flexible, as at every phase there is a possibility to come back to an earlier phase and move between

the analysis levels from specific data to their theoretical synthesis, from sorting to category building.

In accordance with the constructivist approach towards grounded theory introduced by Charmaz (2009), it is not discovered and does not emerge from empirical data, but is constructed. The approach proposed by Charmaz is therefore in opposition to the concept of *unveiling the knowledge* which ignores the role of the researcher. Such an approach challenges the *positivist withdrawal* – the objectivism and realism in the description and analysis of the reality – all the features found in the earlier approaches introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as well as Strauss and Corbin (1990). Charmaz (2009) stresses that grounded theory allows us to examine processes. While Glaser and Strauss (1967) talk about a theory emerging from the data regardless of the researcher, Charmaz (2009) asserts that neither the data nor the theory are revealed. ‘We develop our grounded theories through our past and future involvement and interactions with people, perspectives and research practices. Therefore, no theory is able to provide a full interpretative portrait of the world or even its exact image’ (Charmaz, 2009, p. XII).

In accordance with the guidelines from O’Reill, Paper, and Marx (2012), the process of generating data theory – unveiling/constructing the grounded theory – was carried out in phases. The first is the constant comparison of different elements in further phases in a variety of layouts while assuming that *nothing is finished until the whole thing is complete*. Such a process ‘is based on the comparison of different cases, events, phenomena; referring more conceptualised notions to new empirical cases and comparing concepts’ (Konecki, 2000, p. 31) and theoretical coding, and thus labelling processes, creating categories and subcategories and specifying their attributes. The permanent analysis method is the basis for theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling refers to a controlled data sampling process subordinated to the generated theory, whereby the researcher decides which data will be collected and how; they analyse, code and determine what information must be acquired so as to unveil a theory (Konecki, 2000). According to Charmaz (2009), theoretical sampling connects induction with deduction. Grounded theory becomes abductive reasoning. This suggests a type of reasoning, in which the researcher ‘starts with data analysis and then takes into account all likely explanations of the observed data and creates hypotheses to confirm them until reaching the most persuasive interpretation’ (Charmaz, 2009, p. 239). Abduction allows us to modify existing elements of knowledge;

it allows us to reconstruct existing knowledge in a new way along with adding new observations.

Theoretical notes were drawn up in the course of the research. Writing theoretical notes is an important step in building a grounded theory. A given category is referred to and connected with other categories, provided that there are empirical reasons and evidence for this. Theoretical notes are the thoughts of the researcher written down in a theoretical language concerning the coded categories and their mutual relationships, thus the hypotheses that emerge during theoretical coding. The theory emerges from the description of the category, its attributes and hypotheses contained in the theoretical notes. These allow us to obtain a 'conceptual level of abstraction, which is a higher level of integration than their generation alone' (Konecki, 2000, p. 55-56). Therefore, theoretical notes describe and explain the links between categories in certain conditions and contexts, and, above all, their relation to the central category.

Analytical (theoretical) notes form the basis for drafting the first version of the report. They include the already developed categories, which are named by using the most concrete, specific and analytical terms that need to be categorized.

The last step of the process of generating the grounded theory is theoretical sensitisation, which serves as a type of filter with which the researcher begins the analysis (O'Reilly, Paper, Marx, 2012).

The importance of the teacher's personality in the educational process

Issues related to the different understanding of teachers' tasks are the subject of numerous and continuous discussions that require a critical approach and reflection on expectations addressed to people dealing in professional way of education (Rudnicki, 2016).

In his or her work, an early education teacher has to deal with *small* children, thus personalities of exceptional plasticity and susceptibility to all educational and didactic treatments. Such children indicate willingness to identify with the teacher, which is unprecedented in senior classes, along with absolute confidence in the tutor.

Teachers 'leave a mark, then, in the mind, soul and body of people' (Bertagna, 2015, p. 248).

There is a plethora of definitions of personality recognized in different points of view, for example: philosophical, psychological, legal, and sociological. According

to literature on the subject, ‘personality consists of temperament (innate, biological traits) and character (acquired, environmental traits)’ (Kozak, 2012, p. 163).

According to Iwona Czaja-Chudyba and Bożena Muchacka (2016), the components of a personality include ‘various traits of *I* – in terms of mentality, emotionality, motivation, and attitude towards the world’ (p. 42). On the basis of statements given by the interlocutors, it was possible to conclude that mothers value the teachers with specific personality traits and determine why such traits are so important in the educational process. This allowed us to describe the initial codes as *the role of the personality of a teacher in building positive relations, motivating students to learn and act, maintaining the well-being of students in the classroom and stimulating proper development*.

Most statements were arranged around the initial code – *building proper relationships*. This was mentioned by Ms. Adélia: *thanks to the teacher, who can spread his or her positive personality, children are willing to go to school, learn and gain greater new knowledge and skills. A teacher’s personality also influences the child’s contact with parents, because each of us knows that a good teacher translates into a happy child and thus a happy parent*.

The teacher’s personality says Ms. Beatriz, and their actions affect the results of their work as well as their co-operation with both children and parents. A teacher with the desired personality will be liked and respected by students and parents, and as a result children will take example from him or her, they will respect, listen to and perform the teacher’s commands. The teacher will be their authority, he or she will not be ignored. The woman, who works as a school principal, gives her judgement based on her own professional experience and numerous conversations with parents.

Ms. Ivete, an early childhood education teacher and single mother of an 8-year-old son, also bases her statement on her own professional experience. *A teacher, if equipped with the right personality for this profession, such as: being easy-going, smiling and amiable, should attract students and thus contact between them would become less formal, the distance would shrink and there would be a growing sense of confidence in the teacher amongst the students, and vice versa. This is beneficial for both parties, since the students learn a lot during classes run by such a teacher, because they simply like and respect him or her, and the teacher draws joy from their profession and does not incur such high mental costs due to his or her work. A teacher with the right personality will give a lot from him or herself during lessons, he or she will be not only a teacher but also a friend of the child and he or she*

will see sense in what he does as well as draw a great deal of joy and energy in the following years.

Both Ms. Leticia and Ms. Maria have a high regard for teachers who, thanks to their interesting personality, can serve as guides for their pupils. *The fact whether the teacher has a sense of humour, is cheerful and funny, reflects in the way he or she is perceived by students and affects their mutual co-operation and contact* [Ms. Leticia]. *I really did appreciate people with an interesting personality, I admired them. This included several traits for sure, but also this “thing” which I am not able to name. The teacher should be able to win students to his or her side, be with them but also be able to “lead” them, be a guide for them and not only in aspects related to education but also in issues related to relationships and emotions* [Ms. Maria]. It can be assumed that the narrator recognises the importance of the nature of a teacher in building good relations with educational bodies due to the fact that she herself has a son with behavioural difficulties. The woman asserts that a teacher who would show understanding and help her in upbringing her son would be priceless.

It is important that children sense the warmth, friendliness and joy of the profession in the teacher and, as we know, children always sense everything. The teacher’s behaviour is, in a way, a model to follow for the children. I know that when a teacher is quiet and placid, the class is usually more balanced and calm as well [Ms. Natália].

Ms. Aneta expects from *the teacher to have a thing that attracts children, that makes them listen to him or her and make them want to be the best for the teacher, show respect, take his or her opinions into account, love to be with and listen to him or her tirelessly, the teacher should be a model that they can follow, an authority, and be able to encourage them to want to be the same as him or her in the future. Thanks to the teacher children want to learn about the world as well as wish to become better people. A born teacher not only teaches, but also nurtures the children.*

A teacher must have good contact with children and be a role model [Mr. Donata]. Her statement is fairly short and concise, but it is the essence of the role of personality in building positive teacher-student relations.

When working with a child, a teacher should be *the guardian*, who sets the boundaries of co-operation and a partner who accompanies the students in discovering their talents and stimulating their development. The traits that a teacher should have include mainly authenticity, acceptance and empathy. The teacher has to be natural at what he or she does, the way he or she behaves. ‘The teacher should be an expert in interpersonal contacts who ensures safety

and shows understanding, gives confidence and allows the child to do its own thing' (Nowak, 2009, p.163).

Further statements were given an initial code: *motivating students to learn and act*. Ms. Iva refers to this topic in a quite meticulous manner. She is involved in the educational process of her daughter, an exemplary student: *I recognize a certain regularity – namely – the more interesting (open, smiling, resourceful, empathetic, charismatic) the teacher appears to the student, the more the student becomes involved in the didactic-educational process. More often than not I witnessed situations when a child did not want to participate in the classes and wept when it was time to go to school, because the child did not like the teacher. Alas, you can still meet people working as teachers who suffer from professional burnout or show behaviour that can be interpreted as if working with children was a penalty for them. However – fortunately – I more often witness situations when a child (even highly resistant to knowledge) goes to school with great joy, even if only for the teacher – the child is in awe of the tutor.*

A charismatic teacher will rouse the class and push the children to learn and act. Such a person will get to the children more – if he or she is interesting, intriguing. Such personalities intrigue children and this element of the teacher's personality will surely inspire them to further learning – suggests Ms. Adélia, mother of three.

A teacher with an interesting personality will certainly be “something” in the eyes of the student, he or she may become an authority, or at least it seems to me that the teacher's personality can contribute to the way he or she is perceived by the students, I believe that such a teacher contributes significantly to students' motivation, adds Ms. Maria.

On the other hand, Ms. Leticia claims that *the teacher's personality often motivates pupils to act and work during classes.*

According to Zimny (2007), the teacher of the future – a creator of human personalities, must learn to replace traditional, boring, talked-through classes in favour of special, momentous, peculiarly important meetings. An educator should encourage children to learn on their own with classes that are moving, sometimes sad, exciting, but experienced as unusual, beautiful. The teacher should be able to conjure up interesting and fun classes which should be an adventure for the students served in a more digestible, easier form.

The narrators also told us about the importance of the teacher's personality for *maintaining the well-being of the student in the class.*

According to Ms. Aneta, the teacher *should be characterized by a subjective approach towards the student so as to ensure a sense of safety and acceptance.*

A similar statement was given by Ms. Natália: *if the teacher is a positive person he or she will have a good influence on the child. The child feels safe, is stress-free and thus has the courage to undertake activities in the classroom, or express statements in a free manner.*

The teacher's personality, according to Mrs. Adéla: to a large extent affects the course of the classes and the atmosphere that prevails in the classroom, but it primarily affects the children themselves who, thanks to a teacher that can spread his or her positive personality, want to go to school, learn and gain further new knowledge and skills.

For Ms. Patrícia it is important that *an early childhood education teacher shows care for the students, in case of failure he or she should alleviate their sense of danger and shame in the eyes of peers.*

The teacher must be a person who likes people, is open, bold and treats others with both respect and kindness. A person who can create a friendly and kind atmosphere in the classroom says Ms. Mariana.

Some elements of the received statements were given the code *stimulating proper development* arising from the role of an appropriate teacher personality.

In order for the teacher to help in the student's development, he or she must be able to approach the pupil as a sentient, thinking person who has the right to be respected, feel free and learn, which also includes making mistakes [Ms. Maria].

According to Ms. Ivete, *the teacher to some extent is responsible for shaping the student's personality and, in some cases, affects the choice of their life path. Teachers who shape the personality of their pupils demonstrate distinctive professional and general personality themselves.*

Personality is what attracts children to the teacher, not his or her expertise. Knowledge without personality will achieve nothing. So what if teacher has knowledge in abundance if the children will not listen to them, if he or she will not be able to interest the pupils with his or her personality, the way of being and the way of speaking. The teacher's personality allows to be remembered by their students and make them come back to the teacher even after graduating from classes I-III [Ms. Aneta].

Because I really do think, summarizes Ms. Iva, that the main factor that affects the education and shaping of a child's development early school age is the teacher's personality and his or her knowledge of the child's psychosocial development.

Research hypothesis project – approximation of grounded theory

The grounded theory methodology applied in the empirical research allows us to initialise the analytical process and control the validity of theoretical conclusions resulting thereof. One should keep in mind that the grounded theory methodology stirs up a lot of controversy from the very beginning and, furthermore, occurs in different varieties. Thus, it is often accused of overly flexible application of principles depending on the needs.

As a result of the work, collecting samples, writing notes, transcribing and coding carried out as part of the process of unveiling/constructing the grounded theory based on qualitative research interviews with the mothers of students at an early school age, a certain hypothesis has emerged in the empirical data. It assumes that the interviewed mothers recognize the important role of personality of an early childhood education teacher in the educational process, and their statements vary around four areas arranged according to the degree of intensity of statements, namely: in building positive relationships, motivating children to learn and act, stimulating proper development and maintaining the well-being of the students.

Therefore, ‘one of the most important functions of university education is to train professionals capable of responding to the demands that society imposes’ (Durán-Aponte, Durán-García, 2012, p. 61).

Conclusion

The presented conclusions constitute a theoretical interpretation of data on the social expectations towards early childhood education teachers. They are not the only possible conclusion on this issue. They may only serve as a research proposal and inspiration for further studies in this area.

Ethical Standards

Ethical approval: All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed consent: Informed consent was obtained from all the individual participants included in the study.

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