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To be a teacher – it is so easy to say – how difficult it is to meet the expectations of the children’ modern education

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TO BE A TEACHER – IT IS SO EASY TO SAY – HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO MEET THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE CHILDREN’ MODERN EDUCATION

Nowadays “being a teacher” in a preschool is not so obvious as a few decades ago. Hurling the world, information available for the asking, pervasive excess of duties forbid teacher to make contact with his/her pupil. The first teacher at school as well as a preschool teacher are very meaningful persons in child’s education. Frequently, he is a role model who is remembered long after school education. To achieve it, such a person has to have “something special” – an outstanding personality, a creative approach on teaching. At early childhood a child is a teacher’s watchful observer and the first one who evaluates his work.

The important person in a child’s education is his/her teacher, first in preschool and then at school. According to *PWN Leksykon. Pedagogika* by B. Milerski and B. Śliwerski, a teacher is

a specialist prepared for didactical-educational work in educational institutions [...], taking on a job for which he/she has full qualifications, and who obeys the basic moral rules (Milerski & Śliwerski, 2000, p. 141).

Very often he or she is a role model remembered long after the end of school education. To fulfil those standards a person must have that “something” – a unique personality, a creative attitude towards work.

By to the dictionary, the term “personality” means

a group of permanent characteristics and inner mechanisms on which behavior, psyche and identity of a human being are based, the directions and means to adjust to changing reality and its transformation (Milerski & Śliwerski, 2000, p. 131).

According to R. Więckowski:

in the educational process the whole personality of a teacher is engaged, his/her personal experience, attitude towards reality, and most of all the level of his/her inner development (his/her own experiences in educational contact with a child) (Więckowski, 1997, p. 391).

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W. Okoń dedicates a whole book to the subject of a teacher's personality. He talks about the most crucial characteristics a teacher should possess. He stresses the fact that "perfect education can only be the work of a perfect teacher" (Okoń, 1962, p. 7). One can only require this kind of education of teachers, educators responsible for educating children. In a later part of this work S. Szuman states his opinion, saying about a teacher

"an educator, who like an artist has his/her own personal style of acting, moulding pupils, has his/her own pedagogical conduct; his/her own personal educational methods". He points out the desired characteristics: "the real educator must possess a rich personality – its richness coming from nature – but most of all a personality created by his/her own education, experiences that he/she has gathered and shaped" (Szuman, 1962, p. 120–122).

Long ago, M. Kreutz wrote about a teacher's personality, saying the term has multiple meanings and exists in many definitions. For him the most important are the empirical, metaphysical, and normative ones. The personality in the empirical sense means:

the body of mental and physical characteristics, the characteristics meaning the conditions already existing in a person, necessary for the occurrence of certain phenomena, both physical and mental, which are the actual creators of given predispositions (Kreutz, 1947, p. 3).

The author adds that physical characteristics can mean agility, physical strength, memory, etc. as one person has many of those characteristics, which are connected and intertwined. This is what causes differences among people. This meaning is used mostly by empirical psychologists.

In the metaphysical meaning the personality is

not the individual predispositions, characteristics, but something in a person that holds it together, something that they characterise, meaning ego, soul, substratum, or they are the attributes for the substance.

The understanding here is that the characteristics cannot exist on their own; they need a medium, which in this case is personality, ego. This is the meaning that philosophers use.

In the normative sense the personality is

not the whole body of predispositions of the person or their ego, but all of those characteristics that the person should possess according to a certain world view or ethics.

M. Kreutz stresses the fact that in this understanding only a few people possess personality as it has to be acquired through their own prolonged effort. Pedagogues use the term personality in the normative meaning. What is important, the author correctly stated:

that with the development of culture and social changes ideas change and with them the idea of a teacher is changed as well (Kreutz, 1947, p. 4).

Besides the personality, a contemporary teacher is not only a role model, always improving himself/herself, but most of all a person aware of his/her own competence. D. Sipińska presents an interesting way of looking into the kind of competence a teacher should have in order to fullfil educational tasks. The author postulates which competences could ensure the teacher's success. They are as follows:

- autocreative – meaning undertaking and introducing changes in one's own personality;
- praxeological – meaning skills for planning, organizing, controlling and evaluating educational processes;
- communicative – this is effective language behavior (verbal and nonverbal) in different educational situations;
- cooperation – it can be seen in pro-social, integrative kinds of behavior in contact with pupils;
- creative – it depends on innovative and non-standard teachers;
- informative – which is using the most modern sources of information;
- moral – the capacity for deep moral reflection during the evaluation of an ethical deed;
- evaluative – enabling forming of assessments, passing judgments, making choices;
- exploratory (reflective) – the ability to investigate one's own practice, to analyze it reflectively in order to improve (Sipińska, 2005, p. 272–274).

At the end of her work, D. Sipińska states that competence means more than anything the ability to use the theory in practice. It means that theoretical knowledge is crucial for teachers as it allows them to implement educational tasks.

R. Kwaśnica has a different point of view. He separates two groups of competence: practical-moral and technical. In the practical-moral competence group he puts the following:

- interpretive competence – this is the capacity of an understanding approach towards the world, thanks to which one can see the world as reality; it requires ongoing interpretation, asking questions, thanks to which the understanding of the world is a never ending task;
- moral competence – the capacity for moral reflection, self-reflection, asking questions (what kind of a person should I be, and how should I act?);
- communicative competence – the ability to participate in a dialogue with others and yourself, where dialogue is a conversation leading to breaking anonymity, an attempt to understand yourself and the surroundings.

In the technical competence group there are the following kinds of competence:

- normative competence – the ability to stand behind certain notions, goals and the ability to identify with them;
- methodical competence – the ability to work according to the rules that establish the best order of actions, where the actions' rules are the core, determining what should be done and when (called otherwise methods);
- realizing competence – the ability to select the right means and create conditions to achieve goals (Kwaśnica, 2003, p. 300–301).

These kinds of changes can be observed today in the ever changing world. Contemporary teachers wanting to keep up with those changes have to keep up with them in terms of their ability, knowledge and ideas in order to fulfil the expectations the milieu has of them. A child is the greatest and the most sensitive observer of a teacher's actions. A child is capable of seeing the smallest mistakes, hesitation and uncertainty of a teacher during his/her work in the educational field. Only a fully engaged competent teacher will allow a child to feel his/her subjectivity. M. Jozek writes about this when he claims that only the

effective leadership of a teacher in pupils' educational activity (especially during the learning process at school) has a crucial role in contemporary education (Jozek, 2010, p. 32).

Only a pupil who feels that he/she is the subject of educational activities will have a chance to feel responsible for the knowledge received from a teacher. The knowledge received this way will be treated as useful, necessary in future education, because it will be perceived as the child's own, needed to open the "door" to an unknown but interesting world. Aware of this ongoing process and responsibility that rests on his/her shoulders, a teacher will try to fulfil the pupil's expectations.

All things, circumstances, apparitions which condition interaction between a pupil and a teacher are important and take a place in a school.

All of the above elements of dialogue between a pupil and a teacher take place in one place, school. According to *Leksykon* by B. Milerski and B. Śliwerski, school is:

a type of social institution and a unit of the educational system with the goal of educating and raising children and youth, [...] a community of teachers and pupils (Milerski & Śliwerski, 2000, p. 227).

H. Sowińska underlines the meaning of school, which is

organized as the environment, the place where a pupil's life goes on, the environment that creates conditions for that life and the models it implements. From the point of view of a pupil as a developing subject the quality of life is the most important factor (Sowińska, 2004, p. 23–24).

The author adds that the pupil's life at school takes place on two levels: the first one is the organized, official one emerging from school designated functions and goals,

implemented by teachers and pupils; the second level is represented by the unofficial, hidden life, the one the pupil participates in naturally and every day in different situations. H. Sowińska distinguishes the elements that create school's reality. They are as follows:

- defined programmes, official and hidden ones;
- certain systems of values, norms and symbols – which is what is generally called the school culture;
- people, groups of people and relationships among them;
- certain organizational patterns embracing people and their actions;
- the inner reality of a person, when he/she perceives himself/herself as an element of reality (Sowińska, 2004, p. 24).

Entering the school reality, children are “forced” to accept, to subordinate to the rules and principles existing at school. They gain different kinds of experience, acquire knowledge and skills, have contacts with peers, but also with the older participants of school reality. All of these encounters result in collective experience that will influence a child's emotional life. Among many aspects of the teacher-educator profession, besides the didactic issues, one has to remember about the respect for human (child's) dignity, rules of just behavior towards the pupils, taking child's freedom into consideration, rules of cooperation with parents and careers, common sense and trust in own abilities. J. Szempruch emphasizes that:

[...] the aim of teacher's job, early school education teacher included, is the development of an “upright man,” a person affectionate to good and beauty, sensitive to human and world threatening, a person caring for proper self-development (Szempruch, 2011, p. 218).

The main task of a teacher, the author is discussing, is to ensure that the pupil can develop and function as an independent person. It somehow points out the ethic postulate understood in pedagogy as the need to provide with such conditions as to enable pupils' development whereas they themselves would create the atmosphere of freedom, which could enable mutual development (Szempruch, 2011, p. 219).

Any person being an educator should personally care for this development, not only extending the knowledge but also paying attention to the reality changing around him and the child. It helps the teacher not to get into routine and just follow the same patterns when educating. This is true for different aspects of teacher and pupils' behavior during lessons, e.g. way of starting the lesson, checking homework, asking questions. Many of these routine behaviors are so small and automatic that they escape our notice. However, they constitute a necessary component of teacher's behavior during lessons because – if they are effective – they allow the reduction of the burden connected with cognitive information processing. An efficient teacher knows how to use effective routine connected with disciplinary issues which will have a positive impact on his teaching.

The teachers have to meet multiple expectations: as from creating at school some possibilities for the development of a pupil who becomes autonomous, free, open, creative, tolerant and self-dependent, who is going to be clever and innovative not only in private life but in public one as well. One of the very important aspects of teacher's profession is his care and efforts to develop the pupil's self-dependence in acquiring knowledge, which may be achieved by including the pupil in planning, organizing individual and team work, as well as control and evaluation (Szempruch, 2014, p. 271).

Clear communication is a very important issue because teachers use it to contact with his pupil. It is a peculiar kind of educational contact which allows mutual understanding, both by the teacher and child as well as between children. Teacher's statements should be brief and concise. He should use the language of literacy, understandable and properly interpreted by pupils participating in lessons. The teacher should avoid lowering the level of his speaking to the level children sometimes use as it may lead to infantilism and lowering of the contents value of what he is communicating.

In such subjective teacher-pupil relation the natural curiosity concerning the surrounding world is developed in all spheres: intellectual, physical, mental and spiritual. After all it is the teacher who is the most important and significant person in child's early school years. Thus, if the teacher is friendly and authentic in his good contact with the child, he will definitely leave a permanent trace in his personality. It will later on influence the child's contacts with other people (Laska & Piątek, 2005, p. 23). The teacher will become a creator of a specific humanistic educational climate and working with his total being, including his own experience, dilemmas or everyday conflicts, he will facilitate the child's development. Feeling respect towards the child the teacher will be happy of his pupil's success, will inspire his astonishment of the surrounding world, will sensitize him onto the beauty and good. In this way he will help the child become a person ready to face the future challenges. The teacher's support stimulates self-development, self-realization and helps to follow the life vocation the pupil has chosen for himself (Laska & Piątek, 2005, p. 181).

A good teacher should realize the necessity of cooperation with parents as partners in the discussion for the good of the child-pupil. There is no doubt that this kind of cooperation is beneficial for both sides, both of them gaining a great deal, supporting the child's development at the same time. This fact can be supported by the following:

- there is a common goal: both parents and teachers want the child's development;
- parents are responsible for caring for and bringing up a child and they are not released from that responsibility when a child goes to school;
- school educates and raises children, for whom uniform rules of conduct for all adults in matters of upbringing are extremely important;

- parents have enormous influence on the way children acquire values, beliefs and behavior – school supplements it;
- without cooperation with parents, school is not able to cope with such problems as aggression, or other dysfunctional behavior;
- school can help parents in their educational problems;
- parents can help school in its organizational problems;
- what parents expect is important information for a school planning its tasks;
- parents' opinion can be useful information and lead to improving school work;
- parents have the right to honest information about a child;
- parents have the right to voice their opinion on the school (Dzierzgowska, 1999, p. 11–12).

I asked students graduating from their undergraduate full-time studies of early school education about their observations from practical trainings they participated in and connected with different attitudes towards pupils. The 70 students (2 men included) aged 22–23 were very willing to describe their reflections connected with their practical trainings and different activities of teachers during lessons, after-school activities and meetings with parents. Having analyzed some texts (essays, reports) and reflected upon them, it is not possible to generalize or generate some phenomena, but they can serve as further afterthoughts about the quality of teachers job, and which follows, can be used for a closer look at the quality of communication. The results of the text analysis made it possible to form a few theme groups which were pointed out by the students. These are:

- teachers' activity towards their pupils;
- teachers' activity towards the student during his/her practical training;
- teachers' activity towards parents, carers (observations from parents meetings, events).

Table 1. Kinds of dominating activities of teachers – own study

Teacher – pupil	Teacher – student	Teacher – parent, carer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher’s presentation as a method of new topic introduction used too often • Limiting pupils’ activity while preparing or searching for new information • Helping out in search for new information in textbooks • Answering questions for the pupil • Directing the pupil to the “correct” answer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pointing out “the only proper way” of conducting lessons • Presenting “The Guide for teachers” as the only source to prepare lesson scenario • Limiting the student’s possibilities of conducting lessons according to their own ideas • Attitude of “the omniscient” • “Moralizing” upon new student’s ideas for lessons • Limiting the possibilities of student’s own activity initiation • No summing up of lessons (observed or conducted by students) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing educational problems which do not take place within the class • Attitude of being better, higher, more important than parents • “Service of a client” and not a parent of an individual pupil • Pigeonholing parents when talking to other people • Talking about educational problems of individual parents in the staff room • Fear to talk to parents about problems with discipline in class

Source: study of author.

Describing their observations of lessons students mainly (89%) pointed out that activity of teachers had a negative impact on pupils’ work. Many a time did it disturb the natural activity of pupils and neither supported their creative attitudes nor encouraged asking questions. The students noticed that very often (up to 70%) lessons seemed to be like a “Copy/Paste” activity, no emotional engagement. Pupils listened to orders and followed them with no own emotions. The teacher stated: “Work card, number, page, stick in, underline, leave your pencil, close your book;” “it’s no time for questions now, write, complete the gap in the sentence.” The students notice that non-verbal communication is not used (60%) which they thought was the reason for problems with discipline in class. Symptoms of transferring activity towards pupils appeared in just few of the classes being observed (30%), and pupils got engaged in search for information by themselves as well as asked to recall of their previous knowledge as an important issue for the introduction of new information during the given lesson. Unfortunately, results of my previous research on limiting children’s activity, as well as the possibility of choosing by themselves and giving them the chance to suffer the consequences (Grabowska, 2014, p. 406) as the postulated aspects of child subjectivity in early school education are confirmed. An alarmingly big

percent of students' statements (80%) prove their being limited by teachers to *The Guide for Teacher* when preparing lesson scenarios as well as being negatively assessed when trying to prepare their lessons according to their own ideas. Unfortunately, in contacts with parents or carers teachers' attitude was not therapeutic at all (45%), conversations with parents were often conducted by teachers showing off to be "the wiser ones" (35%) and parents or carers were not given a chance to ask questions.

A positive conclusion following the discussed analysis is the fact that the students can also notice some good attitudes, worth copying, of teachers who despite unfriendly work conditions (the atmosphere of a "contest" between young teachers – up to 5 years probation period, fear of losing their jobs) they share their knowledge (60%), they are able to accompany their pupils on the educational road, they search for new solutions to work with their pupils. These are teachers who are fully aware of the important role they play in the processes of pupils development and acquiring some new, useful in their further education experience. These are also teachers who organize many situations allowing their pupils experience different kinds of activities as well as having a positive impact on their perception of the world, situations which reinforce the will to discover or observe. They also let their pupils perform the thinking process by themselves with no limits to their child fantasy, e.g. when looking for some new, innovative usage for salt or autumn rain drops.

It is important to emphasize that when the students undertook the task of writing down their reflections arising from their practical trainings, they examined closely the attitudes of teachers and were able to point the proper ones and those which limit pupils activity in a remarkable way. Having the possibility of participation in parents meetings and other events, the students had the chance to observe teachers in different roles which often included taking up difficult educational topics in discussions with parents or carers, cooperation for the good of pupils, sharing their psychological knowledge. The students understood the importance of taking part in practical trainings before they start the future professional career and they emphasized the significance of theoretical knowledge serving practical work, as well as the necessity of starting work with children as soon as possible.

In consideration of the above students' opinions, attitudes of teachers are really different and, unfortunately, many of them prove bigger activity of teachers than pupils. This phenomenon accompanied with the teacher's "omniscience" discourages pupils from undertaking their own tasks and kills their will to independent work or even team cooperation. Therefore, can we claim that early school education requires from the teacher the attitude of a guide or cooperator and not a manager or supervisor of pupil's work? The proof for such a question is the peculiarity, reflectiveness and mentorship teachers working at the early school level should present. To let the educational process run smoothly and allow good, explored understanding of child's mentality as well as deep observation of his behavior, its interpretation included, some kind of unity has to appear between the teacher – the mediator, the guide and the child.

Being a teacher, but carries a lot of satisfaction, fulfillment as a kind of guide to the children's world is not an easy profession. Among the many responsibilities they have to fulfill the teacher from teaching and education are also those of a moral nature. Becoming a teacher must be aware of the fact that you should be a role model for children, the source of moral conduct for parents in educational matters. Completion of teacher education, even with the best score of not guaranteed to become at once professional and authority to others. The responsibilities of a teacher is enormous and must be aware that not only teaches but also educates.

A teacher is comprehensively educated, he/she works on his/her abilities, uses every possibilities to improve own methods of work. A teacher courts for trust and help for his/her pupils. It is important for him/her to be entity and to have sens of fullfil an obligation.

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Keywords: early childhood teacher, expertise, occupational expectations, personal relations, personality

Abstract: The first teacher at school as well as a preschool teacher are very meaningful persons in child’s education. Frequently, he is a role model who is remembered long after school education. To achieve it, such a person has to have “something special” – an outstanding personality, a creative approach on teaching. At early childhood a child is a teacher’s watchful observer and the first one who evaluates his work. A teacher’s task is to create conditions for comprehensive growth and save research. The expectations placed on a teacher determine the way in strengthening occupational skills in order to personal treatment of a pupil and himself.

BYĆ NAUCZYCIELEM... JAK TO ŁATWO POWIEDZIEĆ, CZYLI O TYM, JAK TRUDNO SPROSTAĆ OCZEKIWIANIOM WSPÓŁCZESNEJ EDUKACJI DZIECI

Słowa kluczowe: nauczyciel wczesnoszkolny, kompetencje, oczekiwania zawodowe, podmiotowe relacje, osobowość

Streszczenie: Osobą znaczącą w edukacji dziecka jest m.in. pierwszy nauczyciel w szkole, wcześniej nauczyciel w przedszkolu. Niejednokrotnie jest wzorem, który wspomina się jeszcze długo po zakończeniu edukacji szkolnej. Aby jednak mogło tak być, osoba taka musi mieć to „coś” – osobowość, nietuzinkową, podejście twórcze do swojej pracy. Dziecko w wieku wczesnoszkolnym jest baczny obserwator poczyną nauczyciela i pierwszym oceniającym jego pracę. Zadaniem nauczyciela jest stworzenie warunków do wszechstronnego rozwoju i bezpiecznej eksploracji. Oczekiwania, jakie stoją przed nauczycielem, wyznaczają dla niego drogę ciągłego doskonalenia się w duchu podmiotowego traktowania ucznia i samego siebie.