Chapter 14

The Comparison of Parents' Perceptions of Early Educators' Real and Ideal Personality and Optimism:
What Personality and Optimism Educators Should Have?

Sanja Tatalović Vorkapić

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9170-8455
University of Rijeka, Croatia

Korana Lisjak
Kindergarten "Rijeka", Croatia

ABSTRACT

Given the importance of personality traits and optimism of early childhood educators in their work with children, this research was aimed at comparing their actual and ideal personality traits and optimism from the perspective of the parents. The study involved 295 parents from three counties of the Republic of Croatia. Parents evaluated the real and ideal personality traits and the optimism of 41 early childhood educators from the six kindergartens their children were enrolled. Two questionnaires were applied: TIPI for measuring the personality traits and the LOT-R for measuring optimism. Parents have rated the real and ideal educators' personality traits and optimism at very high levels. Testing the significance of differences, the results revealed that there are significant differences between the realistic and ideal image of educators' personality and optimism. In other words, ideal educators are considerably more extroverted, agreeable, conscientious, more emotionally stable, more open and more optimistic than their profiles based on realistic ratings.

INTRODUCTION

More than ever before, a great deal of demands and expectations is put in front of the modern educators by the society, i.e. children and their parents, professional associates, local communities, etc. The educators are expected to do high-quality and professional work with children – preparing a diverse stimulating environment, appreciate children's individual needs and interests, supporting their development, upbringing and learning, as well as developing their competencies. During that process, it is implied that the educator provides the children with a desirable role model for their behavior and actions. These requirements are not easily fulfilled, they require the educator's continuous work on themselves, both in personal and professional terms, especially since these two dimensions are particularly connected and intertwined in the area of early and preschool education.

Because of this, along with the necessity of having basic knowledge about children's early childhood education at the age of their most sensitive growth and development, the educator should also have certain personality traits, which enable him to do a quality pedagogical practice, have a positive influence on the child and help with the realization of all the child's potentials. Many studies have shown that the educator's personality traits have the greatest influence on the quality of programs and educational outcomes (Tatalović Vorkapić, 2012, 2015, 2017; Tatalović Vorkapić, Vujičić & Čepić, 2014), which represent the basis in the educator's implicit pedagogy (Jančec, Tatalović Vorkapić & Lepičnik Vodopivec, 2015). Personality can be defined as a set of attributes that determine the individual's specific way of responding to the environment (Pervin, Cervone & John, 2008). In the context of an educational profession, which implies a great deal of complex interpersonal relations and unpredictable situations, the importance of the educator's personality traits required for quality work with children of preschool age is well anticipated.

In addition to working with children, the educator's job also includes co-operation with the children's parents. Educators and parents share a common goal – the child's well-being, so it is extremely important for them to have a quality partnership (Vlah & Tatalović Vorkapić, 2011). As some of the most important elements of the partnership, an open two-way communication, equality and active listening are emphasized, and in this context educator's personality traits are of great importance as well. Open, optimistic, warm, trustworthy educators full of understanding will certainly provide a good behavioral identification model for children and provide support and help for parents in the development and upbringing of their child (Tatalović Vorkapić, 2017).

But what do parents think? What characteristics does their child's educator have, and how do they imagine an ideal educator? Although most would probably agree with the above-mentioned desirable educators' personality traits, the question raises about to what extent are they present within the educators' personality. Are there any differences, or to what extent do personality traits of a real and an ideal educator differ from the perception of parents?

The answer to those differences is interesting to analyze from the perspective of the children's parents, also one of the key participants in quality educational work with preschool children. How do they perceive educators with whom they collaborate and who work with their children in institutions for early and preschool education, and what personality traits should, in their opinion, an ideal educator have? In this paper, the answer to this question is tried to be determined from the perspective of the parents whose children are attending kindergarten in the following three counties in the Republic of Croatia:

26 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-comparison-of-parents-perceptions-of-early-educators-real-and-ideal-personality-and-optimism/228008

Related Content

Student Perceptions and Experiences of Note-Taking
Helen M. Brethauerand Felecia A. Dix-Richardson (2022). *Experiences and Research on Enhanced Professional Development Through Faculty Learning Communities (pp. 116-140).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/student-perceptions-and-experiences-of-note-taking/310567

To Look Burnout in the Eye: Addressing Vocational Awe in Stories From Helping Professions
George Boggsand Matthew T. Standridge (2022). *Teacher Reflections on Transitioning From K-12 to Higher Education Classrooms (pp. 1-9).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/to-look-burnout-in-the-eye/301936

An Algebra Teacher's Instructional Decision-Making Process With GeoGebra: Thinking With a TPACK Mindset
Jacob Felgerand Kathryn G. Shafer (2018). *Teacher Training and Professional Development: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 863-888).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/an-algebra-teachers-instructional-decision-making-process-with-geogebra/203208

Using edTPA Data to Improve Programs
Kristen C. Cuthrell, Diana B. Lys, Elizabeth A. Fogartyand Ellen E. Dobson (2019). *Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Education: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 357-370).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/using-edtpa-data-to-improve-programs/215574

The 21st Century Library and Information Services for the Enhancement of Teacher Education
Jerome Idiegbeyan-ose, Promise Iloand Chidi Isiakpona (2019). *Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Education: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 1899-1913).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-21st-century-library-and-information-services-for-the-enhancement-of-teacher-education/215648