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The Role of the Teacher in Personalized Education in the Opinion of Female Students of Preschool and Early Childhood Education Studies

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ABSTRACT

In compliance with the recommendations laid down in the *Poland 2030* report, one of the reforms to be introduced in the Polish education system is the individualization of the education process. Putting the education based on the personalized approach in the centre translates into a greater focus on the student, the recognition of their individual potential and bringing them to the forefront in the knowledge acquisition process, which means that the student is an active co-author of and participant in the process rather than assuming the role of a recipient. This paper presents the results of the research concerning teachers-to-be opinions on personalized education in the context of both the role of the school and the teacher. The applied research method was the diagnostic survey method. It was found that teachers-to-be have a high belief in personalized education. The role of the teacher assumed under this approach is mostly consistent with the role of the teacher as perceived by research participants. What is more, the majority of the research participants agreed with the statements concerning the role of the school itself in implementing the education process based on personalism. The presented research results provide an important rationale for increasing the personalized education component in preschool and early childhood education curricula. The rationale is coherent with the university students' vision of their future role as teachers. Given the challenges of the contemporary world and the clear direction of education which puts an increasing emphasis on an individual approach to each student, this task should be carried out with utmost care.

KEYWORDS: personalized education, personalism, teacher, school

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Introduction

Over the past decades, a variety of education models have been implemented. With the dynamic changes taking place all over the world, the perception of the basic functions of the school, the role of the teacher and the attitude towards the student has also been changing. For many years, one of the most common approaches in education was the behavioural approach. Until now, the majority of educational facilities in Poland have applied behaviorism. Under this concept, the main emphasis is put on human behaviour. The behavioural approach states that by recognizing the right stimuli, an individual's behaviour can be influenced by external factors. In this approach, it is the teacher that plays a central role. The teacher has the knowledge to share with their students. Therefore, the nature of knowledge is external. Hierarchy and the reinforcement (evaluation) system play a significant role. The task of the student is to acquire knowledge through perception and memorization. Then the result of their effort is evaluated by the teacher. The hierarchy of subjects and the content to be discussed are established in a top-down procedure.

Over the years, knowledge of the development of an individual and the patterns associated with education itself have evolved. Building on this knowledge, cognitive science has developed, which is another important approach applied in education. Learning is considered as an internal process of acquiring and processing information. Under this approach, it is believed that there are numerous processes involved in the processing of a given piece of information between the stimulus and the individual's behaviour. In order for educational interactions to be more effective, it is necessary to get to know the student better, including their type of intelligence and ways of learning effective for them. The role of the teacher, on the other hand, is to create the learning environment and influence it in such a way that it meets the needs of students. In the teaching process, the teacher must apply different forms of communication in order to achieve maximum effectiveness. The student is an active participant in the learning situation; yet, the teacher remains the one who sets the direction of the learning process (Master, 2019).

The process of upbringing and teaching can be defined as a path that leads the young generation towards reaching full maturity. Reflecting on the contemporary world, it can be concluded that the measure of future success may be the ability to adapt to its dynamic changes. The teacher, that is the person primarily accountable for the implementation of this process, facing new challenges, must be open to different possibilities, analyse them and look for new solutions. According to Esplot and Nubiola (2019), young people today are characterized by information overload, they constantly and instantly communicate with each other, yearn for creativity, and pursue progress. In particular, the individual's activity and their personal developmental apti-

tude should be emphasized here. A similar perspective emerges from the *Poland 2030* report commissioned by the Prime Minister, reading that

One of the directions of educational reforms must be the individualization of the learning process while maintaining high standards as to the expected learning outcomes. (...) One model of school, one way of teaching for everyone, results in a school that is good for no one. The days of 'mass' education of children in line with a single curriculum are coming to an end (...) (Boni, 2009, p. 223).

The answer to those needs may be personalized education. Personalized education is a model of education characterized by a highly individualized education system. This education style, flexibly adapting to the student, involves selection and adaptation of methods, techniques and ways of teaching and educating to the nature of the individual. The active role of the learner is of particular importance in this process (Skrzypek et al., 2016). The assumption of personalized education is the comprehensive development of a young person involving equally an array of aspects, i.e. emotional, spiritual, intellectual, physical and volitional. The basic assumption on which personalized education is based is the concept of personalism. Personalism means recognizing a human being as the highest good, and doing everything so that through self-activity the human being takes responsibility for their own development and directing it. Personalism puts an emphasis on the individual aspect of the person, but sets it in the context of social life (Nowak, 2009). Personalization is the creation of favourable conditions releasing the child's potential in such a way that their development is the result of the child's own efforts (Nowak, 2005). Hence, the idea is that a person should be active in a social group, which in turn prepares that person to consciously shape themselves (Śliwerski, 2010).

Putting the student at the centre is one of the main assumptions of personalism. Each student has their own personal educational plan. The development of an individual should be coherent with their own specific needs and abilities. The autonomy of the individual expressed in their awareness of learning and enabling them to act on their own is also a key assumption. The relationship between the student and the teacher should be based on effective communication and openness, thus stimulating creative thinking (Bansell, 2021). Another prerequisite for effective influence is to take into account individual differences among students in the didactic process, which gives the teacher the opportunity to directly influence each of them, taking into consideration their individual potential and aptitudes. This is confirmed by Więckowski (1975), who proved in his research that differentiated education and its personal nature translates into better effects of didactic and educational efforts, has a positive impact on the relations between classmates which become closer and more tight, and integrates the class members. Another result presented in the study was also the

improved learning outcomes obtained by individual students. This is also confirmed by studies conducted by Kujawiński (1978) and Lewowicki (1986), who claim that the use of individualized approach in the education process translates into better student performance and a higher integration level among the students. Christ (2015) came to similar conclusions in her studies, stating that students whose education process was extensively individualized, achieved the highest average scores in their respective areas of ability.

Master (2019), when describing personalized education, emphasizes the concept of independent learning. Master refers to Tough and claims that in order for students to gain knowledge independently, it is necessary to provide them with several important factors: (1) self-education—the student must believe that the subject they are learning is meaningful to them. They must feel that the time they devote to learning will fill a gap that is important to them; (2) autonomy—building a sense of shared responsibility for the learning process, expanding the sense of influence, the ability to choose and make decisions and face the consequences; (3) positioning of control—personalized education aims to expand the sense of internal control, i.e. self-discipline, instead of being controlled by third parties. Therefore, the objective of personalized education is to make students become proactive instead of being passive and reactive. It is about experiencing and finding solutions rather than teaching. Potentiation, that is the process of using an individual's personal potential more fully, is important (Master, 2019).

The teacher's main tasks, as seen by personalized education, involve enabling students to think independently, including being critical about the content they learn, teaching them to anticipate the consequences of their decisions and consider the reasons and arguments for different opinions and options. The teacher's attitude should demonstrate confidence in their students, the teacher should listen to their students carefully, putting an effort into understanding them and accepting their subjective perception of reality. The teacher should support the knowledge they share with relevant arguments, giving reasons why one should act in a certain way. The teacher should focus on the effort made by the student rather than on the achieved outcomes. Also, they should encourage their students to be courageous and to take risks while assuming responsibility (Bansell, 2021).

Remža (2019), writing about the contemporary teacher, states that they need to find a unique key to each child, student, learner, in order to trigger their potential. Therefore, a variety of methods of work should be applied, despite the fact of existing in education systems developed on a mass scale. Tutoring, which is a component of personalized education, can come to the rescue. It is one of the paths that leads us back to the core of what authentic education is, as it is based on a human-to-human, tutor-to-learner relationship. It is an individualized and complex approach, taking into consideration the fact that everyone is different and that our lives and development

take place simultaneously in a number of spheres. Thus, it is not about checking how much the student has memorized; rather, it is about assisting them in the development process—discovering their talents and developing the ability to think and create independently.

According to Skibska,

only education that puts an individual in the centre rather than the curriculum has a chance of preparing students for adult life and creating a clever and developing society sharing such values as mutual respect, dignity and autonomy of an individual (2019, p. 143).

Methodology

The purpose of this article is to examine the opinions of female preschool and early childhood education students on the role of the teacher in personalized education and to define guidelines for the implementation of topics related to personalized education in the course of the university curriculum at the preschool and early childhood education profile.

The research sought answers to the following research problems:

1. How do the respondents understand the concept of personalism?
2. What do the respondents believe personalized education consists in?
3. What is the role of the teacher in the process of personalized education according to the respondents?
4. How do the respondents see the obligations of school in the context of personalized education?

A diagnostic survey method was applied in the research, with a questionnaire as the technique. The applied research tool was a survey questionnaire, which consisted mainly of statements to which the respondent had to express their attitude by choosing one of the following answers:

1–Totally disagree, 2–Disagree, 3–Rather disagree, 4–I have no opinion, 5–Rather agree, 6–Agree, 7–Totally agree. The survey questionnaire also included two open-ended questions.

The section checking the opinions on the role of the teacher consisted of 43 questions (31 questions were in line with the assumptions of personalized education and 12 opposed the idea of personalism). Questions in line with the assumptions of personalized education came from the book *Personalized and Differentiated Learning*, in which Bansell (2021) included a “Questions for teachers” section aimed at increas-

ing the teacher's self-knowledge of how much of their thinking is coherent with this trend (e.g. "The teacher should enable students to think independently," "The teacher should help students anticipate the consequences of their free decisions"). The claims on personalized education are consistent with the approach proposed by Waldeck (2007), who, when developing a tool to be applied in personalized education, distinguished three groups of factors related to teacher behaviour: Instructor Accessibility, Interpersonal Competence, and Course-Related Practices. All of the claims on teachers' behaviour used in this research can be classified into one of these three categories. The questions opposing the idea of personalism were asked by the authors of the research (e.g. "Students' independent pursuit of knowledge disrupts the educational process," "The teacher should keep students obedient"). The research analysed the average results obtained for each item. In the case of items supporting personalized education, a higher result indicates a more favourable attitude towards education consistent with the concept of personalism. In the case of opposing items, higher results mean greater support for the traditional model of education based on behaviourism.

The section regarding the obligations of school in the context of personalized education consisted of three questions, in which the emphasis is put on the fact that school should create opportunities for school tasks and relationships to facilitate the development of each student, to provide an opportunity to develop communicative skills by building a space for cooperation with the family and society alike. One of the statements also emphasized creating opportunities for students to participate not only in the implementation of classes but also in their arrangement, setting the curriculum, choosing and undertaking various initiatives.

For open-ended questions, a four-stage content analysis procedure was carried out:

- Stage 1: The researcher divided the raw data into 100 separate units describing personalism/personalized education.
- Stage 2: The research coder assigned each unit to conceptually similar categories.
- Stage 3: The research coder re-read all statements in each category to verify if they were internally consistent. Then each category was assigned an initial label.
- Stage 4: The research coder re-examined the descriptions in each category, making necessary corrections and adjustments.

As many as $N = 100$ preschool and early childhood education students participated in the research. The average age of the respondents was $M = 23$. 100% of the respondents were female. At the time the research was conducted, nine people were already employed in an educational institution, including five people in a preschool, two people in a post-secondary school, one person in a primary school, and one person

did not indicate where they worked. The research was conducted at the University of Białystok and the University of Silesia, the Faculty of Arts and Educational Science in Cieszyn. The process required the students to fill out the questionnaires on their own. The questionnaires were anonymous.

Given the limitations of the research group (female respondents only, purposive sampling, two institutions), the results are of preliminary nature.

Research results

How the female respondents define the term “personalism”

Preschool and early childhood education female students were asked how they understand the term “personalism”. Among a number of different responses given by the respondents, several categories could be identified, with emphasis on different aspects of personalism. The first category focused on the individual. The respondents defined personalism as follows: “Personalism is a focus on the person. A human being is at the centre. Adapting the content to the person”; “Personalism is about focusing on the individual, showing that the individual is important”; “Seeing a ‘human being’ in an individual and focusing on an approach dedicated to/focused on a specific person”; “Focusing on a specific individual, giving them the main attention, e.g. at the educational level”.

Individualization was another category repeatedly mentioned in the students’ statements. The respondents stated as follows:

“Personalism is about paying attention to the person as an individual human being. Being aware that everyone is different, and accepting and taking this fact into account”; “In my opinion, personalism is about something individual, about what is the most important to us”; “The individual trait of each of us that sets us apart from the rest, makes us different than others, something of our own, something personal that cannot be repeated”; “An individual approach to a person, taking into account their individual capabilities”; “Having our own personality incomparable to other people”.

Another category was determined by autonomy. The following quotes can be cited in this group:

“Personalism consists in paying special attention to the concept of the person and considering the autonomy of the child”; “Personalism is the freedoms of the individual, i.e. the ability to make your own judgment on a given subject”; “What matters is the person, their personality, values. It is about an autonomous nature”; “Personal, individual, subjective approach, opinion”.

Some of the statements made by the respondents focused on human needs. They stated that:

"Personalism is about adapting the teaching methods to the needs of the student"; "It is about focusing on individual needs and preferences"; "It means adapting to the needs of the other person".

Among the descriptions proposed by the female students for the term "personalism", there were also more elaborate definitions that combined several aspects. These definitions were included in the following statements:

"In my opinion, personalism is about treating each child or person individually, finding their strengths and weaknesses, developing their interests"; "Personalism is about creating conditions for each child conducive to development, taking into account their needs and resources"; "An individual approach to the student. This idea brings together freedom in the development of the individual and the ability to make their own independent decisions"; "An individual approach to the child, noticing their needs and talents and helping the child to develop them"; "Personalism is about adjusting something to someone, taking into account all the details, preferences, likes and dislikes, abilities, interests, goals, skills, etc."; "Personalism is about an individual approach, various activities that are tailored to/appropriate for a particular person taking into consideration their individual needs, supports, abilities, conditions, etc."; "Personalism—everyone is different, has different interests, a different level of knowledge. Everyone is good at one thing, and bad at other things. Everyone has their own distinctive qualities".

Some of the statements made by the respondents are difficult to categorize, for instance,

"Personalism means looking at the other person with an open mind"; "It is about adapting certain mechanisms/ways to a specific individual with a view to improving them as much as possible in specific domains"; or "Personalism is doing something specifically for someone, adapting oneself".

Personalized education in the opinion of the research participants

When analysing the statements made by female students regarding the main idea of personalized education, it is the individual approach that comes to the fore. The research participants, when asked "What is personalized education?", often answered as follows:

"It consists in an individual approach in the work with each student in such a way that each of them can work at their own pace that is tailored to their abilities"; "It consists in an individual approach to each student and in developing particularly their interests"; "Personalized education consists in an individual approach to the student,

providing them with opportunities to pursue their passions, interests, showing them that everyone has the right to be different, to like something different, but different is not something inferior"; "It involves an individual approach to the student, matching forms and methods to the student's abilities, skills, knowledge, interests"; "It involves the teacher focusing on the individual nature of the student, on their strengths and weaknesses, and arranging the teaching schedule to fit the individual, not the whole group"; "It consists in taking into account the individual needs and abilities of the child and teaching the child in a way that has been individually designed for them". There are statements which suggest that the understanding of personalized education was narrowed down to the principle of individualization applied in pedagogy: "It involves getting to know your student best and selecting the right teaching method for a particular student"; "It is an individualized education system, tailored to the needs of the child"; "It is a manner of education suitable for each student"; "Personalized education involves adapting the requirements, methods and measures to each student"; "Personalized education involves tailoring the different parts of the lesson, material, methods and forms to the students, their learning mode and skills".

Some female respondents believed that the essence of personalized education was the individual/person in the centre of interactions:

"Personalized education puts emphasis on the development of the student as a person, supports the spiritual and emotional spheres"; "It is education that recognizes the student as an individual. [The aim of personalized education] is to conduct classes in such a way as to indicate the potential of an individual/person"; "It involves an individual approach, paying attention to each student as a separate individual having different values, needs and personal traits".

Another dimension highlighted in the attempts to define the essence of personalized education was needs. Needs were reflected in the following quotes by the research participants:

"Personalized education, that is education oriented towards the needs of a particular student"; "It is education that focuses on the individual capabilities and needs of certain individuals"; "The student and their needs are in the centre of attention, the teacher has a personalized approach"; "It involves adapting work methods, techniques, approaches and ways of teaching to the individual needs and capabilities of the student"; "It involves adapting to the needs of the student/class in order to focus as much as possible on satisfying the needs of the student/class".

Definitions of personalized education given by some of the preschool and early childhood education female students were more comprehensive, for instance:

"It is about focusing on the abilities and difficulties that a particular student/child has and taking advantage of their capabilities and taking into account the difficulties when selecting the learning content in order to achieve optimized development of the child/student"; "It is education that is highly influenced by the learners,

education in this sense is tailored to their abilities, interests, the knowledge they have and family or social situation they are in"; "It is about an individual approach to each student, listening to their needs and allowing each student to develop in line with their abilities, it is not about comparing students"; "Focusing on a person's individual traits, noticing their strengths, weaknesses and interests, and developing them"; "It is about an individual teaching approach, deepening a student's passions and abilities, matching their needs"; "I believe that personalized education is about taking an individual approach to a student or a group, supporting and helping them to pursue goals or certain beliefs"; "Personalized education is about respecting the individual personality traits and views of the students and taking them into account in the teaching process".

Some statements, though, were not clear enough, and sometimes inconclusive:

"The child is in the centre, it is the child that decides what they want to do, without any imposed will of the teacher". When analysing the statements of the research participants, it can be claimed that the idea of personalized education was misunderstood: "Selecting methods, forms and content for a particular student in order to support their intellectual development in the most effective way". Some quotes can be interpreted as the attempt to define personalized education in the respondent's own words: "It is education oriented towards respecting differences" or "It is education open to students". In addition, there were statements clearly indicating that the respondents had no acquaintance with the subject: "I don't know" or "I have no opinion".

The role of the teacher in the context of personalized education

The research demonstrated that in the opinion of female students of preschool and early childhood education, there is a strong belief in the assumptions of education implemented in accordance with the idea of personalism. The analysis of their attitudes towards the role of the teacher in education shows significantly higher results for statements that agree with the personalized education approach ($M=5.82$) than for statements in opposition ($M=4.02$). (Table 1).

Table 1. Mean values and standard deviations of the claims described

Items consistent with the concept of personalized education			Items inconsistent with the concept of personalized education		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I.1 The teacher should allow students to think independently	6.75	0.500	I.2 Independent discovery of knowledge disrupts the educational process	1.75	1.029
I.3 The teacher should teach children not to critically accept everything that others offer to them	5.75	1.086	I.5 The teacher should expect obedience from students	4.68	1.370
I.4 The teacher should be sensitive to subjective perception of reality by their students	5.85	1.132	I.8 The fundamental task of the teacher is to provide students with knowledge of the field	4.00	1.602

Items consistent with the concept of personalized education			Items inconsistent with the concept of personalized education		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I.6 The teacher should provide reasoned explanations for what they say	5.79	0.946	I.11 Students' personal knowledge hinders the learning process	1.77	1.013
I.7 The teacher should distinguish objective truth from their own opinion and clearly present it to their students	6.17	0.888	I.16 The teacher should show their students the correct ways of doing things/acting and require students to apply them	4.35	1.534
I.9 The teacher should foster students' capacity to act rationally rather than solely under the influence of temporary emotional states	5.21	1.328	I.19 First and foremost, the teacher should build their position in the eyes of the students to be able to maintain authority in the classroom	5.70	1.299
I.10 The teacher should instruct students not to make superficial judgments	6.15	0.957	I.23 The teacher should maintain order both in the classroom and at school	5.56	1.076
I.12 The teacher should show students the reasons why they should act in a specific manner	5.51	1.133	I.24 The teacher should independently set the curriculum and gradually implement it	4.82	1.459
I.13 The teacher should help students anticipate the consequences of their independent decisions	5.70	0.927	I.29 The teacher should accept children's autonomy and initiative in learning to a limited extent	4.73	1.701
I.14 The teacher should preserve a suitable degree of distance and avoid undue involvement in students' decision-making processes.	4.89	1.163	I.31 A good teacher is one who knows how to maintain discipline	4.16	1.644
I.15 The teacher should highlight the need for students to evaluate the reasoning and arguments underpinning different perspectives and choices	5.79	0.844	I.35 External motivation for learning is most effective	3.50	1.840
I.17 The teacher should try to adopt the students' perspective	5.80	0.899	I.39 The student does not need to be aware of participating in a learning process	3.29	1.848
I.18 The teacher should intervene with students only when necessary, ensuring that students are not embarrassed	5.49	1.467			
I.20 The teacher should place trust in students, both individually and collectively	6.33	0.857			
I.21 The teacher should listen attentively to students, making an effort to understand them	6.66	0.517			
I.22 The student should be the centre of attention	5.55	1.258			
I.25 The teacher should be open to the positive aspects of any new cultural manifestation of the students and their lifestyle	5.66	1.171			

Items consistent with the concept of personalized education	Items inconsistent with the concept of personalized education			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I.26 The teacher should communicate with their students in a clear, yet non-authoritarian manner	6.22	0.894		
I.27 The teacher should help students understand that doing the right thing almost always requires a lot of effort	5.02	1.309		
I.28 The teacher should value effort over achievement	6.16	0.997		
I.30 The teacher should value a job well done rather than valuing effort alone	4.01	1.755		
I.32 The teacher should encourage students to take risks	5.22	1.011		
I.33 The teacher should encourage students to take responsibility for their actions, rather than remaining anonymous	5.92	1.032		
I.34 The teacher should help students start again and again, without letting discouragement overcome them	6.22	0.773		
I.36 The teacher should assist students in improving their work habits (maintaining order, demonstrating perseverance, etc. . .)	6.17	0.792		
I.37 The teacher should give students opportunities to take responsibility (according to their capacities) in family and school life	6.10	0.772		
I.38 The teacher should avoid doing things that students could do themselves	5.02	1.964		
I.40 Effective communication is an important aspect in the educational process	6.15	1.019		
I.41 The teacher should respect decisions made by students even if they do not personally agree with them	6.09	1.055		
I.42 The teacher should avoid relying on stereotypes in their professional setting	6.40	0.899		
I.43 The teacher should reflect on their practice on a regular basis (the way they conduct lessons, relationships they have with students, and the classroom atmosphere they create)	6.52	0.717		

M – mean value, *SD* – standard deviation

The respondents believe that the teacher should allow students to think independently ($M=6.75$) and listen carefully to them, make an effort to understand them ($M=6.66$), while avoiding the reliance on stereotypes in their work ($M=6.40$). Statements regarding the teacher reflecting on their work on a regular basis (in particular, the way the teacher conducts lessons, their relationship with the students and the atmosphere they create) also achieved high results ($M=6.52$). According to the female students, it is also important that the teacher trusts their students ($M=6.33$) and addresses them in a clear manner, but not authoritatively ($M=6.22$). The teacher should also help students start again and again ($M=6.22$), allow them to take responsibility according to their abilities ($M=6.10$), support them in improving their habits ($M=6.17$), appreciate their effort rather than success ($M=6.16$). What matters in the educational process is effective communication ($M=6.15$) and respect for student decisions even when the teacher disagrees with their decisions ($M=6.09$). The teacher should also distinguish between objective truth and their own opinion ($M=6.15$) and teach students not to make superficial judgments ($M=6.15$). The statements which were lowest rated claimed that the teacher in personalized education should appreciate good work as an outcome rather than the mere act of working ($M=4.01$).

The majority of respondents disagree with the statement that if students acquire knowledge on their own, then it interferes with the educational process ($M=1.75$), and that students' own knowledge hinders the educational process ($M=1.77$). The respondents were also sceptical about the statements that external motivation is the most effective in the learning process ($M=3.50$) and that the student does not need to be aware of learning ($M=3.29$). Most of them, however, believe that the teacher's role is to maintain order and discipline in the classroom ($M=5.56$) and that at the beginning of their work, the teacher should establish their position to be able to exercise control over the students ($M=5.70$).

Responsibilities of the school in the context of personalized education

In terms of the responsibilities of the school, all the statements included in the survey were highly rated ($M=6.39$). The research participants mostly believed in the statement that the school should give students an opportunity to develop communication skills by creating space for cooperation with families and society ($M=6.57$). Similarly, the statement claiming that the school, by means of certain tasks and relationships, should create such opportunities as to allow each student to develop according to their abilities, interests, learning rhythm, and family and social circumstances was also highly rated ($M=6.64$). On the other hand, female students rated slightly lower the statement claiming that the school should create such opportunities for students as to allow them to participate not only in the implementation of classes but also in setting their schedule, curriculum, choosing and undertaking various initiatives ($M=5.98$).

Conclusion and summary

The research found that female students of preschool and early childhood education define the term “personalism” differently. None of the respondents provided the comprehensive definition of this term. The research participants most often emphasized one of the aspects of personalism, i.e. focusing on the individual, individualization, autonomy or needs. Among the descriptions that they provided, there were also statements that were different from the proper understanding of the concept in question.

The situation was similar when it came to defining personalized education. The definitions provided by the respondents most often recognized one of the aspects relating to the term concerned. In most cases, responses referred to an individual approach, followed by putting emphasis on the subjectivity of the individual/person, and only then on their needs. None of the definitions was exhaustive. Some of the provided definitions raised doubts about the essence of the defined term. What is more, the research found that female teachers-to-be have a high belief in the way the teacher’s role is perceived as presented in the personalized education stream. They recognize the need to allow students to think independently, create space allowing them to express their own opinions, the need to listen to students and respect their decisions.

The obtained results are in line with research conducted by Skibska (2019), which proved that early childhood education teachers, regardless of their professional advancement levels, understand and define personalized education as the individualization of the teaching process and focusing on the student, their needs and abilities, by adapting the education process to the student and respecting their dignity (Skibska, 2019). Courcier (2007) came to similar conclusions in his research, indicating that perceptions of personalized education vary depending on teachers’ experience and school context. Teachers often associated personalized education with an individualized approach to students, taking into account their interests, learning pace and educational needs. At the same time, the fact that it was often confused with individualized teaching indicated a partial misunderstanding of the concept.

The research showed the co-occurrence of high support for personalized education with a relatively high level of acceptance of education based on discipline and control. Under personalized education, structure and consistent classroom norms can be seen as framework supporting autonomy and self-regulation, distinguishing authoritative structure (supportive, fostering autonomy) from authoritarian control (obedience-oriented), and pointing out that effective classroom management is a condition for equal personalization in the Polish school context and for the teacher’s double role as facilitator and guardian of a safe learning environment.

The presented research results showed that the content related to personalized education should be an important component of the university curriculum preparing students for their future role of a teacher. The results are consistent with the way students perceive education. It becomes clear that this approach is not fully understood and is all too often identified as merely individualization of the learning process. It is advisable, therefore, to give the research participants the opportunity to experience this education stream on their own as part of the classes carried out during their university studies.

A proper understanding of personalized education and the application of best practices in this area is a prerequisite for the reliable preparation of teachers to educate the young generation in compliance with modern pedagogy. Below, there are suggestions to help implement the personalized education content in the course of studying pedagogy at the university.

- Emphasis should be put on a proper understanding of personalized education in order for the future teachers to be able to perceive the broad context of this process, and, consequently, multidimensional activities that develop not only the cognitive sphere, but also the social, emotional, or motor aspects.
- An individual should be in the centre from the very beginning of implementing personalized education. To underline its importance, it is worth emphasizing the role of the first meeting, greeting students in person, taking the time to get to know them and showing openness to whatever they bring to class, and to their expectations towards the classes. Getting to know each other should be a two-way process in which the teacher also introduces themselves.
- The core of personalized education is to see the person as a constant source of action. The use of active methods in the educational process will increase the personal experience of female students, providing them with a wider range of its application. Such methods definitely include the project method, or the method of designing educational opportunities. Translating such a mode of work into later education of children will contribute to the awakening of the child's cognitive independence, the development of their interests and creativity.
- Familiarizing students with tutoring, including peer tutoring as an effective form of educating others, will raise the awareness of teachers-to-be about the available teaching methods. Meeting the tutor in person may prove to be beneficial, as it will translate, on the one hand, into a better understanding of the role of the tutor, and, on the other hand, demonstrate the deep meaning of such training from the point of view of the participant of the process.
- Focusing on getting to know oneself better—a self-conscious teacher is an effective teacher. If teachers-to-be are self-conscious, they will better understand the

needs of their students. Such consciousness will also indicate the pressing need to diagnose the child's strengths and weaknesses in order to fully develop their potential or implement possible corrective and compensatory measures.

- A good relationship with the child provides the grounds for coexistence and effective education. Thus, it is crucial to make teachers-to-be aware of the necessity to establish a relationship based on trust, safety and mutual affection, and teach them how to achieve it.
- One of the important tasks of the school is to build self-esteem in students. Teachers-to-be can prepare for this role by participating (on their own initiative) in activities directed at building self-knowledge, identifying their talents, and learning to arrange relevant lesson plans.
- Teachers-to-be should know alternative assessment methods. Relying on formative assessment, while abandoning the traditional method of assessment, will allow teachers to draw constructive conclusions about their performance, which will in turn translate into more effective and efficient education.
- The role of internal motivation must be emphasized by developing a belief in students that they can influence their own motivation, as well as developing students' competencies and a sense of purpose.
- One of the principal components of personalized education is the ability to influence the subject matter of the content studied in the classroom and to make one's own decisions. Teachers-to-be, therefore, should become active co-authors of the classes they conduct by co-determining the choice of content and actively seeking solutions to the encountered problems. Taking some time at the end of each class to reflect on the group's activity may prove to be helpful in this regard. During such reflection time, students can share their opinions on the content covered, say what was of interest to them, and what they would like to learn more about. This will translate into greater involvement of students and the sense of responsibility for the educational process.

To sum up, the research demonstrated that the global trend of personalized education gaining popularity is also reflected in the perspectives of teachers-to-be. They have a positive opinion on the content based on the idea of personalism, and appreciate the role of the teacher as seen by this concept. However, they do not fully understand this form of education. When conducting the training of teachers-to-be, it is necessary to include personalized education content in the course of studies. In order for such content to be best internalized by teachers-to-be, it should be experienced by the students themselves. Therefore, classes should be conducted in accordance with the idea of personalism, putting the student in the centre, listening to the student's thoughts, and encouraging them to share their opinions. During classes students

should feel respected and should be allowed to co-decide on the content, thus building internal motivation to pursue knowledge. The teacher should also become more self-conscious, learn about their own strengths and weaknesses, and look for ways to use this knowledge to plan their future career.

The research described above was of exploratory nature. The objective of the research was to better understand the opinions of teachers-to-be on personalized education. A limitation of the presented research is the relatively narrow group of respondents and a specific geographical area. Expanding the research sample and conducting corresponding analyses in a larger number of facilities would provide a broader and more representative perspective of the research subject, which would improve the potential for generalising the results. It is advisable to continue the research in this area. Conducting research among preschool and early childhood education teachers who are already professionally active could provide some interesting results. It is because they already have their own experience of contact with students, which can significantly influence the perception of the teacher's role in the educational process.

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