

VII International Forum on Teacher Education

# Professional Portrait of a Modern Teacher as an Educator

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## Abstract

The educational policy of modern Russia demands a teacher as an educator. The purpose of this research is to determine the components of the personal and professional position of a modern teacher as an educator, to reveal significant professional qualities of his/her personality, the main characteristics of educational activity which are values, goals, priorities, content and functions. The analysis of the data is based on the theoretical foundations of pedagogical and psychological studies devoted to the teacher's professional activity which is determined by personal and professional position of a teacher as an educator. Sixty students (2nd-4th-year bachelor's majoring in Teacher Education) and twenty school teachers took part in the empirical research. We established that the starting point of modern education is the values of the professional activity of a teacher as an educator. The main value is the personality of a pupil and its development. It means that an educator is able to work with meanings, values, emotional and reflexive spheres of a pupil's personality, to cooperate with children in achieving common goals. At the same time teachers as educators improve their knowledge of children and youth subcultures and conduct self-analysis of the educational activity. They have individual responsibility and interest in colleagues' work. Interaction with social communities and institutions which stimulate the manifestation of their educational potential is also necessary.

*Keywords:* teacher as an educator, personal and professional position, professional and personal qualities, professional values.

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Published by Kazan federal university and peer-reviewed under responsibility of IFTE-2021 (VII International Forum on Teacher Education)

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## **Introduction**

In the modern educational situation, the issues of children's upbringing determine the significance of the figure of a teacher as an educator. Some researchers consider it inappropriate to use the very concept of "teacher as an educator", saying that any teacher is necessarily an educator. Ideally it is assumed that any teacher always performs the function of education. But in the real school's practice it is far from the case because educational work remains the most unattractive part of professional activity for many teachers. In most cases this state of affairs is due to the underestimation of the role of education by teachers in the system of their professional activity.

Many modern researchers (Karakovsky, 2008; Selivanova, 2010; Selivanova & Stepanov, 2018; Yakovleva, 2009) refer education to spiritual and practical activities. It means that the teacher deals with meanings, values, and relationships of a child. Therefore, the work of a modern educator is distinguished by the ability to professionally interact with values and attitudes, the system of relations, with emotional, volitional, reflexive and other areas of a pupil.

From the perspective of new social challenges an important task of the current stage of education development is to identify the key problems of education. In fact, it is required to rethink the professional and personal position of the teacher as an educator, to define professionally significant qualities of his/her personality, and to approve the characteristics of his/her educational activity.

## **Purpose and objectives of the study**

The present study aims to determine the components of the personal and professional position of a modern teacher as an educator, to reveal their professionally significant qualities and the main characteristics of educational activity which are values, goals, priorities, content and functions.

## **Literature review**

The study of the portrait of a modern teacher as an educator is presented in the works of many scientists. At present there are a variety of approaches in the study of this problem.

Demakova and Shustova (2017), Yakovleva (2010) consider a teacher in the context of values, priorities and principles of his/her professional activity as an educator. The basic value is the child and its development.

The development of the child as a value of educational activity requires the teacher to create conditions that ensure a holistic and successful process of child development, to help them overcome life's difficulties. It is very important to have the priorities of educational activity for the modern teacher as an educator. They are an optimistic view of the child and the facilitator's activity of the educator.

Pereslavl'tseva (2019) analyzes the teacher as an educator from the position of professional growth and identifies the types that influence the formation of educator's professional behavior. The research presents a large number of approaches to the identification of types of teachers both in foreign (USA, UK, Germany, etc.) and in Russian science. The researcher determines that the types presented in foreign psychology and pedagogy do not describe the "pure" type of educator but mainly proceed from the criterion of behavior in the classroom and the personal qualities of the teacher as an educator. In the analysis of approaches in the Russian pedagogical theory and practice Pereslavl'tseva (2019) notes that the typologies of teachers are based mainly on the teacher's attitude to work, the definition of the professional position of the teacher as an educator, the need for professional self-realization and self-development, the level of realization of creative potential, the definition of personal qualities, the level of professional pedagogical ethics, as well as a direct relationship to the pupil and interaction with participants in the educational process. A number of studies focus on the development of professional competence and professional skills of a teacher as an educator (Grosheva, 2014; Tratsevskaia, 2019; Shcherbakov, 2019). The publications note that the current problems of the development of the teacher's professional competence as an educator are associated with new tasks of children's education and socialization in modern conditions. In particular, the task is the introduction of educators and pupils to the values of humanism, spirituality and morality; the creation of conditions for the development of the child as a subject of the educational process and his/her own life creation; social and pedagogical support for children and adolescents with deviant behavior.

According to Shcherbakov (2019), a network pedagogical community can influence on the development of the educator's professional and personal position. The study emphasizes that network professional communities of teachers are a factor in the development of the educator's position taking into account a number of features in the organization of their activities. The author describes the following features: the result of the professional development of the teacher are professional competencies and the professional position as an educator; the nature of the relationship is formed as a co-existence community of participants united by common ideas about the values, principles and goals of education, etc. One of the examples of such a co-existential community in educational activity is the pedagogical team of the class as a voluntary association of teachers working in the same class and jointly solving the tasks of educational activity. Thus, teachers improve their pedagogical skills as educators.

There are several works in which the problem of the success of the teacher as an educator and the conditions for its development are posed (Sarbalaeva & Kupetskova, 2018; Chernikova, 2018). The authors solve this problem through the analysis of the essence of the professional success of a teacher as an educator and the success of professional activity. Professional success is defined as the personal quality of a teacher as an educator manifested in the field of pedagogical experience. The development of professional success is the activity of a personality to build up professional potential methodically presented in various forms of generalization of educational experience. The professional potential of the teacher as an educator combines all the unmanifested resources of development, such as past experience, actualization of motivation for development in the present, aspiration for professional results in the future.

Chernikova (2018) defines that the development of professional success of teachers as educators requires methodological support for the possibility to model the development of their professional success and the success of their pupils in the logic of the pedagogical model “from goal to result”. The management of group dynamics, the management of the process of professional development of teachers as educators according to the introduced criteria for assessing the development of professional success are necessary conditions for solving these issues. It gives the most productive change in the cognitive, evaluative and activity plans of professional development of teachers as educators.

The concept of professional activity’s success is defined as a set of psychological and psychophysiological features necessary for a person to achieve efficiency and productivity of work in the presence of the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities. In general, significant criteria for success are social significance and a contribution to culture – subjective satisfaction with work. Currently the most important condition for the success of the teacher is the ability to implement a creative approach in professional activities (Baranov, 2014; Sarbalaeva & Kupetskova, 2018).

At the same time, we state the fact that most studies of a successful modern teacher as an educator recognize the priority of developing the personal and professional position of an educator (Selivanova, Shakurova & Dyuzhakova, 2018; Stepanov, 2018; Stepanov, Grigoriev, & Kuleshov, 2003). It is the personal and professional position of the teacher as an educator that determines the actions of the teacher in each specific situation, since it is a way to implement his/her own basic values in the activity of creating conditions for the development of the child’s personality.

## **Methodology**

This work is based on the research by Grigorieva (1999) showing that professional development of the teacher as the educator needs support and assistance, the study by Selivanova, Stepanov and Stepanova (2018) and the works on the qualities of a modern teacher (Yakovleva, 2010).

The analysis of data is based on the theoretical foundations of axiological approach which includes the transformation of objective values of the human community into personal meanings. From the position of the axiological approach the essence of personality-oriented education consists in presenting children with a certain system of values and creating conditions for their free choice since only in this way values get personal meanings (Slastenin & Chizhakova 2003).

In the humanistic pedagogy values define goals. In this regard it is not enough for a teacher to perform their professional functions or fulfill a professional role. The position of the teacher is necessary because only the position represents the unity of consciousness and human activity where activity is one of the ways to realize its basic values.

According to Slobodchikov and Ignatieva (2016), the pedagogical position is unique in its kind. It is both pedagogical and personal, pedagogical and professional (it is revealed when creating conditions for achieving professional, pedagogical goals). There are two main sub-positions in the personal and professional position of the teacher. The first one is the sub-position of a teacher and the second is the sub-position of an educator. In the educator's position the teacher works with the conditions of the child's development as a person, while in the teacher's position the teacher meets the child mainly as a subject of educational activity. Based on this explanation we understand the personal and professional position of the teacher as an educator as a way for the teacher to implement the basic values in the activity of creating conditions for the development of the child's personality.

The humanistic nature of this position is determined by the degree to which the values of humanism are basic for the teacher, as well as by the degree to which the forms, methods and means of educational activity chosen by the teacher are adequate to the values. This is what we tried to find out using the diagnostic method proposed by Stepanov et al. (2003). It is based on the activity model of the teacher's personal and professional position as an educator developed by Grigorieva (1999, cited in Stepanov et al., 2003).

This model presents the possible actions of the educator which are divided into four blocks. The first one includes actions of the teacher as a subject of educational influence on the child and the children's community. The second block has actions of the teacher as a subject of personal and professional self-development as an educator.

There are actions of the teacher as a subject of the formation and development of the teaching staff as a team of educators in the third block. The fourth one has the actions of the teacher as a subject of interaction with the social communities and institutions that affect the child stimulating the manifestation of their educational potential.

The research methods included: analysis of scientific publications on the problem of professional position of a teacher as an educator; questionnaires of students as future primary school teachers and practicing primary school teachers to identify their professional position, to determine the values of professional activity as educators. When processing the obtained results, a descriptive and comparative methods were used to identify common and individual positions of respondents on the issues of educating the younger generation.

The research was conducted in Cherepovets (Vologda region, Russia). The study involved sixty bachelor's students (2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> year) majoring in Teacher Education and twenty teachers of general education schools. This study employed random sampling. Participation in the present research was voluntary.

The empirical research included two steps. A teacher (group of teachers) or a student (group of students) was consistently presented with two questionnaires developed by Stepanov et al. (2003). The main thing was to observe the interval between the presentation of these questionnaires in three or more days. This was done in order to reduce the possible conformity of the answers, to neutralize possible attempts to "guess" the "correct" answer.

The first step involved filling out the questionnaire No. 1. Its aim was to identify the attitude of students – future primary school teachers and teachers of general education schools to actions of a teacher as an educator. The second step included filling out the questionnaire No. 2. The aim of this questionnaire was to identify implementation of actions of a teacher as an educator in everyday work.

## **Results**

We gathered the data on the participants' attitude to actions of a teacher as an educator and their implementation of actions of a teacher as an educator in everyday work in summary tables. Two questionnaires correspond to the idea of the position as a unity of consciousness and activity.

The results of the survey are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Personal and professional position of the teacher as an educator

| The actions of the teacher as an educator   | Personal and professional position of students as future teachers (%) |                          |                        |             | Personal and professional position of school teachers, (%) |                          |                        |             |
|---|---|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------|--|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------|
|   | <i>Strong</i>   | <i>Relatively strong</i> | <i>Relatively weak</i> | <i>Weak</i> | <i>Strong</i>  | <i>Relatively strong</i> | <i>Relatively weak</i> | <i>Weak</i> |
| as a subject of educational influence on the child and the children's community   | 40  | 43.3                     | 11.7                   | 5           | 30   | 55                       | 10                     | 5           |
| as a subject of personal and professional self-development as an educator   | 53.4  | 41.6                     | 5                      | -           | 50   | 50                       | -                      | -           |
| as a subject of the formation and development of the teaching staff as a team of educators  | 26.6  | 53.4                     | 18.3                   | 1.7         | 10   | 70                       | 20                     | -           |
| as a subject of interaction with the social communities and institutions that affect the child stimulating the manifestation of their educational potential | 41.6  | 45                       | 10                     | 3.4         | 30   | 55                       | 15                     | -           |

Let us consider in more detail the actions of the teacher as a subject of educational influence on the child and the children's community with the help of the values of professional activity. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Actions of the teacher as a subject of educational influence on the child and the children's community

|                                  |  |                                       |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| The actions of the teacher as an |  | Personal and professional position, % |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|

| educator  |          | Strong | Relatively strong | Relatively weak | Weak |
|---|----------|--------|-------------------|-----------------|------|
| Equal communication with children   | Students | 43.4   | 48.3              | 3.3             | 5    |
|   | Teachers | 15     | 45                | 25              | 15   |
| Showing empathy towards a child   | Students | 35     | 46.6              | 5               | 13.4 |
|   | Teachers | 30     | 70                | -               | -    |
| The manifestation of an indispensable trust in the capabilities and abilities of the child      | Students | 50     | 45                | 3.3             | 1,7  |
|   | Teachers | 70     | 30                | -               | -    |
| Acceptance of the child as a person regardless of the ratio of its advantages and disadvantages | Students | 66.6   | 33.4              | -               | -    |
|   | Teachers | 55     | 45                | -               | -    |
| Evaluating not the child's personality, but his/her actions                                     | Students | 23.3   | 61.7              | 13.3            | 1.7  |
|   | Teachers | 55     | 45                | -               | -    |
| Presentation of their moral beliefs, values, and interests to children in an open way           | Students | 3.3    | 16.7              | 56.7            | 23.3 |
|   | Teachers | -      | 45                | 55              | -    |
| Cooperation with children in achieving common goals   | Students | 65     | 31.7              | 3.3             | -    |
|   | Teachers | 25     | 75                | -               | -    |
| Creating educational situations in various activities   | Students | 61.6   | 31.7              | 6.7             | -    |
|   | Teachers | 85     | 15                | -               | -    |
| Creating a situation of success for   | Students | 55     | 45                | -               | -    |

|  |          |      |      |      |     |
|--|----------|------|------|------|-----|
| every child  | Teachers | 55   | 45   | -    | -   |
| Organization of constructive conflict for the development of the individual and the collective | Students | 6.7  | 58.3 | 30   | 5   |
|  | Teachers | -    | 55   | 30   | 15  |
| Activation of the educational potential of the lesson  | Students | 36.6 | 55   | 8.4  | -   |
|  | Teachers | 30   | 70   | -    | -   |
| Support for pupils as subjects of self-government  | Students | 30   | 56.6 | 13.4 | -   |
|  | Teachers | 15   | 55   | 15   | 15  |
| Refusal to interfere with what children prefer to do themselves                                | Students | 13.3 | 43.3 | 40   | 3.4 |
|  | Teachers | 15   | 40   | 30   | 15  |
| Support for the child's self-discovery process   | Students | 65   | 31.6 | 3.4  | -   |
|  | Teachers | 30   | 70   | -    | -   |
| Providing real opportunities for self-realization and self-determination of the child          | Students | 71.6 | 28.4 | -    | -   |
|  | Teachers | 15   | 85   | -    | -   |
| Acceptance of the educative influence of children on the teacher                               | Students | 11.7 | 53.3 | 30   | 5   |
|  | Teachers | 15   | 85   | -    | -   |

The obtained results indicate that students as future teachers and working teachers have formed a fairly strong position of the teacher's actions as a subject of educational influence on the child and the children's community. Thus, the majority of respondents are sure in necessity to accept the child as a person, regardless of the ratio of its advantages and disadvantages; to cooperate with children in achieving common goals; to show confidence in the child's capabilities and abilities; to support the process of self-knowledge of the child; to provide real opportunities for self-realization and self-determination.

The second component of the personal and professional position is the actions of the teacher as a subject of personal and professional self-development as an educator. The results of the study on this component are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The actions of the teacher as a subject of personal and professional self-development as an educator

| The actions of the teacher as an educator   |          | Personal and professional position, % |                   |                 |      |
|---|----------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------|
|   |          | Strong                                | Relatively strong | Relatively weak | Weak |
| Honest and self-critical attitude to their successes and failures                         | Students | 43.3                                  | 48.3              | 8.4             | -    |
|   | Teachers | 15                                    | 70                | -               | 15   |
| Taking care of their personal growth, the development of spirituality                     | Students | 48.3                                  | 45                | 6.7             | -    |
|   | Teachers | 55                                    | 45                | -               | -    |
| Taking care of their physical and mental health   | Students | 60                                    | 40                | -               | -    |
|   | Teachers | 85                                    | 15                | -               | -    |
| Expanding and deepening their professional knowledge and skills in the field of education | Students | 66.7                                  | 33.3              | -               | -    |
|   | Teachers | 70                                    | 30                | -               | -    |
| Constant introspection of their educational activities                                    | Students | 48.3                                  | 46.7              | 5               | -    |
|   | Teachers | 55                                    | 45                | -               | -    |
| Improving their knowledge of children's, adolescent and youth subcultures                 | Students | 55                                    | 40                | 5               | -    |
|   | Teachers | 15                                    | 85                | -               | -    |

The table data indicate that both future teachers and in-service teachers have a strong and relatively strong personal and professional position as a subject of personal and professional self-development as an educator. Teachers take care of their physical and mental health. They are interested in personal growth and in spiritual development. They are ready to deepen their professional knowledge and skills in the field of education, to improve their knowledge of children, adolescents, and youth subcultures. Teachers conduct self-analysis of their educational activities.

The third component of the personal and professional position of the teacher as an educator is their actions as a subject of the formation and development of the teaching staff as a team of educators. The results of the research are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The actions of the teacher as a subject of the formation and development of the teaching staff as a team of educators

| The actions of the teacher as an educator  |          | Personal and professional position, % |                   |                 |      |
|--|----------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------|
|  |          | Strong                                | Relatively strong | Relatively weak | Weak |
| Understanding their activities in the context of the educational process of an educational institution | Students | 51.6                                  | 38.4              | 6.6             | 3.4  |
|  | Teachers | 15                                    | 85                | -               | -    |
| Active participation in pedagogical self-government  | Students | 21.6                                  | 60                | 15              | 3.4  |
|  | Teachers | -                                     | 15                | 85              | -    |
| Showing interest in the professional activities of colleagues  | Students | 16.6                                  | 46.6              | 33.4            | 3.4  |
|  | Teachers | 15                                    | 85                | -               | -    |
| Ensuring moral atmosphere in the teaching staff  | Students | 26.6                                  | 65                | 8.4             | -    |
|  | Teachers | -                                     | 100               | -               | -    |

|   |          |      |      |      |     |
|---|----------|------|------|------|-----|
| Discussion of professional problems with colleagues in an open way        | Students | 21.6 | 46.6 | 28.4 | 3.4 |
|   | Teachers | -    | 55   | 30   | 15  |
| Providing opportunities for other teachers to learn from their experience | Students | 16.6 | 60   | 23.4 | -   |
|   | Teachers | 15   | 85   | -    | -   |

The survey showed that in most cases teachers demonstrate interest in the professional activities of their colleagues, advocate for ensuring a moral atmosphere in the teaching staff and try to understand their activities in the context of the educational process of an educational institution.

The fourth component of the teacher's personal and professional position is the actions of the teacher as a subject of interaction with the social communities and institutions that affect the child, stimulating the manifestation of their educational potential. Detailed data are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The actions of the teacher as a subject of interaction with the social communities and institutions that affect the child, stimulating the manifestation of their educational potential of the formation and development of the teaching staff as a team of educators

| The actions of the teacher as an educator                             |          | Personal and professional position, % |                   |                 |      |
|---|----------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------|
|   |          | Strong                                | Relatively strong | Relatively weak | Weak |
| Help for young teachers and beginners                                 | Students | 58.3                                  | 38.3              | 3.4             | -    |
|   | Teachers | 30                                    | 55                | 15              | -    |
| Showing interest in the child's life in the family                    | Students | 28.3                                  | 63.3              | 8.4             | -    |
|   | Teachers | -                                     | 100               | -               | -    |
| Showing a constant interest in the child's extracurricular activities | Students | 18.4                                  | 30                | 46.6            | 5    |
|   | Teachers | -                                     | 30                | 70              | -    |

|   |          |      |      |     |     |
|---|----------|------|------|-----|-----|
| Support for the positive orientation of the child's family upbringing               | Students | 26.6 | 68.4 | 5   | -   |
|   | Teachers | 45   | 45   | 10  | -   |
| Protection of the rights and interests of a child in conflict with their parents    | Students | 51.6 | 43.4 | 1.6 | 3.4 |
|   | Teachers | 30   | 70   | -   | -   |
| Improving the pedagogical culture of parents of their pupils                        | Students | 36.6 | 48.4 | 15  | -   |
|   | Teachers | 30   | 70   | -   | -   |
| Interaction with social educators, psychologists, etc. in solving educational tasks | Students | 41.6 | 53.4 | 5   | -   |
|   | Teachers | 45   | 55   | -   | -   |
| Protection and support of a child in an unfavourable social situation               | Students | 75   | 25   | -   | -   |
|   | Teachers | 55   | 45   | -   | -   |

These results indicate that the majority of students as future teachers and already working teachers show interest in the child's life in the family. They try to support the positive orientation of the child's family upbringing with their professional activities. The respondents stand for the protection of the rights and interests of the child in the event of a conflict with parents. They are rather interested in improving the pedagogical culture of their pupils' parents. Teachers are ready to interact with a social pedagogue, psychologist and other specialists in solving complex educational tasks. Besides this they are ready to protect and support a child who finds him/herself in difficult social situations.

However, teachers are less willing to interfere in a conflict situation between parents and a child. They show little interest in extracurricular activities of pupils.

This empirical research has shown the priority of the humane professional and personal position of students as future teachers and school teachers. We have established that children and their personality is the main value of professional activity of the teacher as an educator. But at the same time there are some features of the professional and personal position of students as future teachers and school teachers as educators which require discussion.

## **Discussion**

In the process of investigation, we paid attention to both students' and school teachers' conservative opinion about openness of the teacher to children. For example, regarding the actions of the teacher as a subject of educational influence on the child and the children's community we established that some teachers were cautious about presenting openly their moral beliefs, values, and interests to children; communicating with children on an equal footing; showing empathy towards the child; and supporting students as subjects of self-government. On these aspects students and teachers have weak and relatively weak personal and professional positions.

The research has shown that some respondents have a passive position as members of teaching teams. We found out that not everyone is ready to be an active participator in the pedagogical self-government and openly discuss professional problems with colleagues.

The analysis of the actions of the teacher as a subject of personal and professional self-development as an educator also allows us to conclude that teachers who have more significant values and the need for personal growth, they have a more positive orientation towards self-realization. Therefore, it is important to create a space of experiencing oneself in the training of a teacher as an educator at university. That is to create conditions for awareness of thoughts and feelings. It is also important not only to provide external conditions for the implementation of the activities of in-service teachers but also to organize internal conditions when their knowledge and abilities are seen by colleagues, approved by the head of the school.

In our study we also considered the teachers' understanding of the concept of "successful teacher-educator". The answers of the respondents allowed us to identify some features of such a teacher.

In the model representations of students, the teacher as an educator should be a fully developed person, possess modern educational technologies, engage in self-education and self-development, research activities and take part in various competitions. Among the most important personal qualities for the teacher as an educator students identified the following ones: benevolence, sociability, resourcefulness, creativity, flexibility, organization and patience. According to the students' opinions, the teacher as an educator should combine the traits of a psychologist and an artist, a friend and a mentor when working with children. The main task of the teacher as an educator is to create conditions for developing the abilities of each child.

From the point of view of school teachers, a modern teacher as an educator should have the following list of personal and professional qualities.

They must see and understand modern tasks of education, as well as have a value attitude to the child, culture and creativity. The modern teacher as an educator should be able to support the process of self-development of children and to show a humane pedagogical position. They should carry out pedagogical activities for the introduction of modern technologies of education. At the same time the teacher must have the ability to self-education, as well as personal and professional growth.

## **Conclusion**

The professional and personal position of teachers as educators expresses the system of their relations to their place and role in the educational process, to pupils and colleagues as subjects of common activity.

The conducted research suggests that the society and the education system are interested in a teacher as an educator who has a high culture, emotional sensitivity, empathy and tolerance, humanism and goodwill. Such educator is able to build relationships with pupils on the basis of cooperation and respect. However, in practice teachers do not yet have these qualities in full and do not show them in the real interaction with children.

The research allows us to conclude that at the present stage the starting point of education is the values of professional activity of the teacher as an educator. The main value of such activities is the personality of the pupil and his/her development. The goals of educational activity are determined on the basis of values. The main goals of education in an educational institution are to create conditions for the moral and physical development of children, the formation of an educational team that develops on the principles of cooperation, trust, and children's self-government. The priorities of the educational activity of the teacher as an educator are the manifestation of a combination of respect, understanding, support and assistance in communicating and interacting with children. The educational activity is a conceptual basis of the system of all pedagogical activity of a teacher at school.

## **Funding**

The authors have no funding to report.

## **Competing interests**

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

## **Acknowledgements**

The authors have no support to report.

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