

INDIVIDUALITY OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

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Abstract. *This article focuses on the problem of individuality. The theoretical basis is O. Grebenyuk's individuality concept. In it, the individuality is defined as the unity of intellectual, motivational, volitional, emotional, practical and object-oriented, existential and self-regulative spheres which characterise the originality and uniqueness of a person. The term 'individuality of a teacher' refers to an integrated and holistic system of seven interconnected spheres, including professionally important components which differentiate it from the individuality of other subject of a professional activity. This study addresses three key issues. First, it looks at the problem of preschool teacher's individuality and identifies the system of professionally important components. Second, it turns to examine the professional deformations of teachers. Finally, the paper considers the relationships between the individuality system and types of professional deformations in the groups of preschool teachers of different age and with different professional experience. The data for this study were collected using the questionnaires: "The Technique of Teacher's Individuality" by T.B. Grebenyuk and "The Method for Studying Professional Teacher's Deformations" by E.F. Zeer. Fifty-two teachers were recruited for this study. The participants work at various kindergartens in the Kaliningrad region. The results suggest that the motivational and existential spheres are developed most strongly. The most expressed professional deformation is demonstrativeness. Statistical analyses revealed two types of correlations: 1) a positive correlation between the intellectual, motivational, and practical and object-oriented spheres with demonstrativeness; 2) a negative correlation between the emotional sphere and dogmatism.*

Keywords: *individuality, spheres of individuality, professional deformations, preschool teachers*

Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the problem of individuality. Some factors cause this tendency to change. On the one hand, the development of individuality has been considered as an important cultural value in the twenty-first century and an indicator of social progress. On the other hand, the support for the individuality development has become a central issue in the new global society. In this novel digital world, we are witnessing the increasing dominance of the various technologies. Therefore, although many researches have been carried out in the field, the issues of individuality continues to be one of the eternal scientific problems. This problem has played an essential role in

education. Teachers can develop the individuality of a child only if they understand what individuality means and if they try to develop their own individuality. A profession of preschool teacher is significantly more related to stress, high responsibility and expectations from parents in comparison to other professions with a similar educational level (Surtukova & Filippova, 2012). It is important to notice that in Russia, the system of preschool education is changing now, and it is a factor of emotional tension increase (Bagadaeva, 2016; Belocerkovec & Chupaha, 2016). The main aim of this study is to examine the individuality spheres and the professional deformations of preschool teachers.

Theoretical framework for research

A considerable amount of literature has focused on individuality. Philosophy considers individuality as the uniqueness of any phenomenon, person, and quality. Individuality is characterised as a system of qualities that makes phenomenon different from others, distinguishes one phenomenon from other. In this meaning, the individual is opposed to the typical as common, inherent in all the elements of a given class or in a significant part of them. Human individuality is a special form of the being of a person in the world (including society), in which a human lives and acts as an autonomous and unique system, while maintaining his or her integrity and identity. It happens in the context of continuous internal and external changes (Rezvitskiy, 1973; Neskryabina, 2001). Consciousness and Ego are the essential factors of human individuality.

A large and growing body of literature has investigated the individuality problem in psychology. The international personology has provided a comprehensive and deep analysis of individuality. The three model groups can be identified in a wide variety of theoretical constructs: research, diagnostic and psychotherapeutic (Abulkhanova, 2009). The first group proposes the hypothetical parameters of personality through which individual-typological mechanisms are identified (G.W. Allport's and E.H. Erikson's concept). The second group identifies certain personality traits and describes the real personality in terms of a strict set of characteristics (H.T. Eysenk's theory and R. Cattell's model). The psychotherapeutic models have revealed the ideal in personal development and helped to overcome passivity (A. Adler, K. Rodger, C.G. Jung) (Khyell & Zigler, 2008). In the field of individuality there are various definitions. First of all, the term 'individuality' is used to refer to a peculiar combination of the personal aspects. 'Individual', in this sense, makes a person different from the 'typical' and reflects a unique combination of qualities. According to the view, every person has individuality (Ananyev, 2001, p. 276). Another approach focuses on the mechanism that a person can use to

summarize and synthesize his or her qualities, characteristics, etc. into a whole. The idea of integrality was pioneered by S.L. Rubinstein (Rubinshteyn, 2003) and later developed by V.S. Merlin (Merlin, 1986). B.G. Ananiev has suggested that individuality is a unique polysystem that includes total integrity of biological and biopsychological structures, personality (social and psychosocial elements), and the subject (psychobiosocial elements) (Ananyev, 2001). The third approach allows us to identify the individuality as the highest level in development of personality, that a person can achieve (Ananyev, 2001; Rubinshteyn, 2003).

In the field of pedagogy, one of the first studies of individuality has been undertaken by O.S. Grebenyuk. He argues that the term ‘individuality’ refers to the characteristics of the seven psychological spheres that make it possible to distinguish the uniqueness of a person. Individuality is a unity of the intellectual, motivational, volitional, emotional, practical and object-oriented, existential and self-regulative spheres (Grebenyuk & Grebenyuk, 2000). T.B. Grebenyuk has proposed the term ‘individuality of the future teacher’. The individuality of a teacher is characterized by the development of the professionally relevant components of the psychological spheres, which differentiate it from the individuality of any other subject (Grebenyuk, 2017). The professional components of the teachers’ individuality spheres are described in Table 1.

Table 1 The content of the teachers’ individuality spheres

Spheres of individuality	Examples of professional components
Intellectual	Pedagogical thinking (analyzing, creating, to solving educational situations) Creativity as the ability to act in situations of uncertainty and information deficit Pedagogical erudition, etc.
Motivational	Motivation for achievement Pedagogical goal-setting Striving for cooperation, etc.
Volitional	Determination Ability to overcome external and internal obstacles Perseverance, etc.
Emotional	Healthy pedagogical self-esteem Pedagogical empathy Emotional flexibility, etc.
Practical and object-oriented	Didactic skills Communication skills Pedagogical diagnostic skills, etc.

Existential	Pedagogical reflection (analyzing one's position in the educational situation) Pedagogical 'self-conception' Professional values, etc.
Self-regulative	Self-control skills Ability to control mental states (emotional, intellectual, volitional) Ability to manage interaction with other people, etc.

This study has made a major contribution to research of individuality by demonstrating a viable approach to measure. Later, the school of pedagogical research formed in the Kaliningrad region. The school is known for systematic research into the concept of individuality (Pedagogika, 2017).

Generally, the professional development of a teacher can be positive or negative. When professional activity influences personal development negatively, we can speak of "professional deformations". According to S.P. Beznosov, A.K. Markova, E.F. Zeer, the term "professional deformations" are a group of mental and behavioral changes that negatively affect both professional activity and interactions with other participants in education (Beznosov, 2004; Markova, 1996). E.F. Zeer and E.E. Symanuk have identified 11 types of teachers' professional deformations. 1) *Authoritarianism* manifests itself in predominant use of commands, guidelines, orders and as intolerance to criticism. 2) *Demonstrativeness* is intensive self-presentation, the desire to be in the spotlight. 3) *Professional dogmatism* is tendency to simplify professional tasks and educational situations, and to ignore socio-psychological factors. 4) *Domination* means satisfying one's need for power, and self-assertion, especially in the situation of evaluation and control. 5) *Professional indifference* is characterised by ignoring individual peculiarities in interaction and the negative perception of the ethical norms and the rules of behavior. 6) *Conservatism* deals with prejudice towards innovations. 7) *Professional aggression* is observed when a teacher ignores the feelings and interests of others, uses ridicule, jokes, labeling. 8) *Role expansionism* means the teacher's fixation on her/his own personal and professional problems and difficulties, the exaggeration her/his own professional role. 9) *Social hypocrisy* is the propensity to moralize and the belief in her/his own moral infallibility. 10) *Behavioral transfer* is part of role transfer - the teacher develops the personal qualities and behavior that is characteristic of other people. 11) *Overcontrol* manifests itself in the suppression of spontaneity, self-realization containment, orientation to rules and instructions, and avoid of responsibility (Zeer & Symanyuk, 2005).

Recently, researchers have shown an increased interest in the problem of professional deformations (Polyakova, 2014; Gudimenko, 2014; Virna, 2015; Fedosova, 2016; Mikhailova, 2017), but no previous study has investigated correlation between the types of professional deformations and the individuality

spheres of teachers. Previous studies of preschool teachers have identified the personal traits (Zholudeva et al., 2015; Molchanova & Sokolova, 2016) or professional activity style (Roslyakova, 2017), not individuality as an integrated system of spheres.

Methods

A variety of methods is used to assess individuality. Each has its advantages and drawbacks. The data come from the questionnaires: “The Technique of Teacher’s Individuality” by T.B. Grebenyuk (Grebenyuk, 2011) and “The Method for Studying Professional Teacher’s Deformations” by E.F. Zeer (Zeer & Symanyuk, 2005). The first self-report allowed us to measure the 80 professional components of the individuality spheres (the intellectual, motivational, volitional, emotional, practical and object-oriented, existential and self-regulative ones) on a scale from one to seven (for example in the intellectual sphere: pedagogical thinking (analyzing, creating, to solving educational situations), pedagogical erudition, etc.). The second questionnaire that included 42 statements about different educational situations and the respondents expressed their opinion by choosing one of the variant. This procedure made it possible to reveal the following types of professional deformations: authoritarianism, demonstrativeness, professional dogmatism, domination, professional indifference, conservatism, professional aggression, role expansionism, social hypocrisy, behavioral transfer, and overcontrol.

Fifty-two teachers were recruited for this study. The participants worked at various kindergartens in the Kaliningrad region. The survey was anonymous. All the participants were female. They were aged between 25 and 70 years ($M=39.02$ years, $SD=8.89$). Their professional experience ranged from 1 to 47 years ($M=11.27$ years, $SD=0.16$). First, the sample was divided into two groups: 17 participants were in the first group (their professional experience was from one to five years), and 35 participants were in the second group (their professional experience was over five years). Then the second group was divided into two groups: 23 participants with experience between six and twenty years were in the second group, 12 more experienced teachers were in the third group. Statistical analysis included Chi-Square Test (χ^2), Spearman correlation (r_s), and F-test (φ^* Fisher).

Results

The overview of preschool teachers’ spheres of individuality. Each of the spheres of individuality was assigned a total rating. The highest rated were the components of the motivational sphere (especially, striving for cooperation,

striving for individuality development of preschoolers, and pursuit of satisfaction from professional activity), followed by the existential and volitional spheres. In the existential sphere, the highest rated were the following components: optimism and confidence in preschoolers, awareness of preschoolers as a value and their individuality development as an important educational goal. In the volitional sphere, the ability to combine all the resources to deal with problems and persistence in achieving goals were rated the highest. Lower ratings were given to the components of the practical and object-oriented, and self-regulative spheres and the lowest to those of the emotional and intellectual spheres. The lowest rated were: stress resistance and absence of anxiety and fears in the emotional sphere and pedagogical erudition and creativity in the intellectual sphere (Table 2).

Table 2 Ratings given to preschool teachers' individuality spheres

№	Individuality spheres	M±SD (n=52)
1	Motivational	5.72±0.76
2	Existential	5.45±0.95
3	Volitional	5.39±0.98
4	Practical and object-oriented	5.36±0.86
5	Self-regulative	5.30±0.90
6	Emotional	5.28±0.82
7	Intellectual	5.25±0.78

The correlation analysis demonstrates a positive correlation between the ratings given to the seven spheres (r_s from 0.648 to 0.824, $p \leq 0.01$).

No significant correlations were revealed between the spheres of individuality, on the one hand, and age and professional experience, on the other. Comparisons between the three groups with different professional experiences (from one to five years in the first group, from six to twenty years in the second group, and over twenty-one years in the third group) were made using F-test. The comparative analysis of the ratings given by these groups showed the following. Among the teachers of the third group, there were significantly more respondents giving a higher rating to the intellectual sphere (50.0% in the first group, 42.1% in the second group, 87.5% in the third one; $\varphi^*(\text{group 1 and 3})=1.94$ $p \leq 0.05$; $\varphi^*(\text{group 2 and 3})=2.42$ $p \leq 0.01$). Among the participants of the third group, there were significantly fewer respondents giving a higher rating to the motivational sphere (78.6% in the first group, 74.13% in the second group, 37.5% in the third one; $\varphi^*(\text{group 1 and 3})=1.80$ $p \leq 0.05$; $\varphi^*(\text{group 1 and 3})=1.94$ $p \leq 0.05$). Among the more experienced preschool teachers, there were significantly fewer respondents giving high ratings to the

emotional sphere (68.4% in the second group, 25.0% in the third group; $\varphi^*=2.14$ $p\leq 0.05$), and the volitional sphere (78.9% in the second group, 25.0% in the third group; $\varphi^*=2.71$ $p\leq 0.01$).

The overview of preschool teachers' professional deformations. Demonstrativeness, role expansionism, and overcontrol obtained the highest average rating in the sample. The other professional deformations types had low average rating (Table 3). According to the data, only demonstrativeness, role expansionism, overcontrol, professional dogmatism, and conservatism begin to manifest themselves in the professional activity but they were not identified completely.

Table 3 The preschool teachers' professional deformations

№	Professional deformations types	M±SD (n=52)
1	Demonstrativeness	6.73±3.60
2	Role expansionism	5.33±2.40
3	Overcontrol	4.08±2.14
4	Social hypocrisy	3.76±2.25
5	Domination	3.64±2.38
6	Professional dogmatism	3.49±2.30
7	Professional aggression	3.43±2.55
8	Conservatism	3.31±1.90
9	Professional indifference	2.78±1.25
10	Behavioral transfer	2.59±1.71
11	Authoritarianism	2.27±1.61

The results of certain participants indicated that some preschool teachers had developed (completely formed) professional deformations: overcontrol (11.4%), role expansionism (9.0%), professional dogmatism (6.8%), demonstrativeness (4.5%), conservatism (4.5%), and domination (4.5%).

According to correlation analysis, one negative correlation was found between age of participants and behavioral transfer ($r_s=-0.314$ $p\leq 0.05$). There were no significant correlations between professional experience and the types of teachers' professional deformations. Significant difference of the type 'overcontrol' was obtained between the teacher group of experience from one to five years and the group of the more experienced teachers ($\chi^2=5.122$ $p\leq 0.05$). Among the experienced teachers, there were significantly more respondents having a higher rating to the type 'professional aggression' (5.6% in the first group, 31.3% in the second group; $\varphi^*=2.30$ $p\leq 0.05$).

Preschool teachers' spheres of individuality and professional deformations. Significant correlations were found between three spheres of individuality, and two types of professional deformations: the positive

correlations between the intellectual, practical and object-oriented, and motivational spheres with the demonstrativeness ($r_s=0.388$, $r_s=0.312$, $r_s=0.329$ $p\leq 0.05$); the negative correlation between the emotional sphere and the professional dogmatism ($r_s = - 0.317$ $p\leq 0.05$). Comparative analyses showed that among the teachers giving a higher rating to the intellectual sphere, there were significantly more respondents having a higher rating to the professional aggression and social hypocrisy ($\varphi^*=2.56$ $p\leq 0.01$, $\varphi^*=1.82$ $p\leq 0.05$). Among the teachers giving a higher rating to the existential sphere, there were significantly more participants having a higher rating to the social hypocrisy ($\varphi^*=2.06$ $p\leq 0.05$).

Discussion

The results show that the individuality of a kindergarten teacher is a complicated combination of various spheres, which are integrated. Positive correlations between the spheres of individuality proves this idea. The motivational and the existential spheres are pivotal to the complicated system of individuality. These spheres were ranked the highest. It seems that striving for cooperation, pursuit of individuality development for preschoolers, and pursuit of satisfaction from professional activity, optimism and confidence in preschoolers, awareness of preschoolers as a value and their individuality development as an important educational goal, etc. are essential to the structure of a kindergarten teacher's individuality. The findings of the current study support the previous research for the individuality of a health professional (Nesyňa & Nesyn, 2018): the motivational and the existential spheres are the most important for professional development. However, the more experienced teachers tend to give lower ratings to the development of the motivational, emotional, volitional spheres. These findings support the idea about sign of occupational fatigue and, perhaps, professional burnout of teachers (Zeer & Symanyuk, 2005). It is interesting to note that the more experienced kindergarten teachers give higher ratings to the development of the intellectual sphere. A possible explanation for this result might be related to the idea of crystallized intelligence (Salthouse, 2004).

Gudimenko (2014) used the method of expert assessment and identified authoritarianism, domination, dogmatism, conservatism, and aggression in behavior of kindergarten teachers. Surprisingly, among various types of professional deformations, demonstrativeness was the most expressed in our study. This result may be explained by the fact that a kindergarten teacher always is in the spotlight of preschoolers, parents, colleagues. So, professional activity helps teachers to satisfy the desire for intensive self-presentation and supports teachers's self-esteem. The negative correlation was found between age

of participants and behavioral transfer. There are several possible explanations for this result: the pursuit of independence and the professional identity development, maturity of adulthood, self-confidence increase. The findings suggest that the more experienced kindergarten teachers tend to develop such types of professional deformations as overcontrol, and professional aggression: they more often can ignore feelings and interests of others, use ridicule, jokes, labeling, and they have orientation to rules and instructions, and avoid of responsibility (Markova, 1996).

Obtained correlations confirm the association between preschool teachers' spheres of individuality and the types of professional deformations. Demonstrativeness is associated with the intellectual, practical and object-oriented, and motivational spheres (positive correlations); and professional dogmatism is associated with the emotional sphere (negative correlation). The results of this study indicate that among teachers having the developed intellectual sphere, there are significantly more respondents with professional aggression, and social hypocrisy. Social hypocrisy more often meets in the group of teachers having the developed existential sphere. These findings further support the idea about the individuality factors for professional deformations (Markova, 1996; Zeer & Symanyuk, 2005; Mikhailova, 2017).

Conclusions

First, the individuality of a kindergarten teacher is a complicated combination of various spheres, which are integrated. A preschool teacher's individuality is characterised by the development of professionally relevant components of psychological spheres (intellectual, motivational, emotional, volitional, practical and object-oriented, self-regulative, and existential), which distinguish it from the individuality of other subject of a professional activity. The motivational and the existential spheres are pivotal to the complicated system of individuality. It seems that the striving for cooperation and individuality development of preschoolers, and the pursuit of satisfaction from professional activity, optimism and confidence in preschoolers, awareness of preschoolers as the value and their individuality development as the important educational goal, etc. are essential to the structure of a kindergarten teacher's individuality.

Second, the findings suggest that in general kindergarten teachers tend to have demonstrativeness as the type of professional deformations: they often try to be in the spotlight, and it can have negative influence on professional activity. Professional experience affects development of such types of teachers' professional deformations as overcontrol, and professional aggression. This

investigation confirms that behavioral transfer is associated with age of teachers (negative correlation).

Finally, significant correlations were found between three spheres of individuality and two types of professional deformations: the positive correlations between the intellectual, practical and object-oriented, and motivational spheres with the demonstrativeness; the negative correlation between the emotional sphere and the professional dogmatism. The developed intellectual and existential spheres tend to affect social hypocrisy, and the developed intellectual sphere is a factor of professional aggression.

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