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## **Reflection before action: Students' perceptions of selected aspects of the language teaching profession**

**ABSTRACT.** The study explores trainee teachers' opinions on selected aspects of the language teaching profession. Reflecting on the reasons for becoming a teacher, on a language teacher's professional qualities, and on the positive and negative aspects of the profession appears to be necessary at the starting point of professional training. A qualitative method was employed to collect the data. The students were asked to answer four survey questions pertaining to the issues mentioned above. Thirty-five undergraduate students completed the survey. Their answers were then analysed, which resulted in suggesting some procedures that could be implemented in the training programme. The findings revealed generally positive attitudes to the language teaching profession. However, some actions should be also taken to eliminate a few subjective theories that could negatively influence the students' approach, such as the feeling of having power over learners, or controversial ways of dealing with discipline problems in the classroom. The study emphasised the role of reflection in the initial stages of teacher training.

**KEYWORDS:** reflection, EPOSTL, teacher training, attitudes, teacher qualities, subjective theories.

### **1. REFLECTION AS AN INDISPENSABLE ELEMENT OF TEACHER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Even though there exist many definitions of reflection in the area of foreign language teaching, all of them focus on the same characteristic features of this process, namely on the intellectual effort to become aware of the quality of intended actions, on their subsequent analysis and evaluation. This

reflective effort may result in positive changes introduced into teachers' classroom procedures (Witkowska 2009). The general idea of reflection in professional development appeared in John Dewey's seminal work *How We Think* (Dewey 1933). That influential educationist proposed that reflective teachers should be identified by three characteristic features: open-mindedness, responsibility and personal engagement (Dewey 1933: 9). Open-mindedness pertains to the ability to accept diverse opinions on the same phenomenon or problem; responsibility, on the other hand, relates to understanding the consequences of our actions, and personal engagement allows one to develop self-confidence and critical thinking (Farrell 2007: 2).

After a long absence caused by the dominance of the behaviourist approach to learning in both psychology and pedagogy, the idea of reflection in education returned in the 1980s, mainly due to research carried out by Donald Schön (1983; 1987), who proposed his model of reflection based on three processes:

- reflection-on-action,
- reflection-in-action,
- reflection-for-action.

Reflection-on-action takes place after an activity is finished; reflection-in-action occurs when the activity is being done, and the last process concentrates on analysing the outcomes of the first two and formulating conclusions for future actions (Schön 1987).

Other scholars (e.g. Cruikshank & Applegate 1981: 533) distinguished two concepts related to reflection. The first may be referred to as reflection in the micro sense (Kic-Drgas 2010: 115), that is, pertaining exclusively to what is happening in the classroom and why, as well as what the consequences of this action are for the learning process. The other concept, reflection in the macro sense, may be referred to as general reflection, relevant to the overall context of learning (Kic-Drgas 2010: 115). For the purpose of this research, the concept of reflection in the macro sense seems to be more appropriate.

Subsequently, Day (1993) proposed three levels of applying reflection. On the first level, teachers take notice of their own and students' behaviour; on the second, they identify reasons behind that behaviour and try to relate it to available pedagogical theories. Finally, on the third level, teachers perceive classroom behaviour in the broader social, ethical and moral context, searching for explanations and solutions to potential problems.

The macro perspective approach to reflection dominates in a number of pedagogical studies in the new millennium. Two of them seem to be particularly significant because they offer a balanced approach to both the advantages and disadvantages of reflective teacher education. Yost, Sentner and Forlenza-Bailey (2000) report that trainee and novice teachers may

be either unable or unwilling to take up reflection for a number of reasons. First, they would expect ready-made solutions to various classroom problems. Second, they would more willingly follow their own subjective theories about teaching and learning because these seem to be secure and tested. Finally, they seem to be too overwhelmed by everyday challenges and routines to focus on potential innovations and improvements. Farrell (2007: 9) on the other hand, concentrates on the advantages of reflective teacher education. He maintains that reflection frees teachers from routine and inconsiderate decisions, boosts their self-esteem, makes them more critical of their actions, helps to develop intervention strategies, and arouses their professional confidence.

In the context of foreign language learning and teaching in Poland, the topic of reflection, its assets and its advantages in teacher education, have been discussed quite extensively for a few decades. One of the most recent events devoted to reflection was the conference organised jointly by the Polish Association of Modern Languages and the University of Wrocław in 2013, followed by extensive post-conference publications (e.g. *Neofilolog*, vol. 43, 1/2). The authors promote the reflective approach and present their own experiences and research results. Zawadzka-Bartnik (2014: 19) points out that the theoretical competence of future language teachers is as useful as their practical experience because it allows them to make better use of innovations in the teaching process. Marciniak (2014: 45) and Karpińska-Musiał and Orchowska (2014: 28) emphasise the need to refer to trainees' subjective theories on learning and teaching, which may trigger more personalised reflection.

All in all, foreign language teachers seem to face more challenges than teachers of other subjects because their responsibility concerns teaching both the subject matter and the language skills necessary for effective communication. According to Borg (2006), there exist five factors that distinguish a foreign language teacher from other teachers: (1) the nature of the subject matter itself; (2) the interaction patterns necessary to provide instructions – a language lesson (requires) interaction patterns, such as group work, which are not necessary for teaching other subjects; (3) the challenge for teachers to increase their knowledge of the subject – teachers of other subjects can easily learn from books, while foreign language teachers need regular contact with the language to improve their knowledge; (4) isolation – it is associated with a small number of foreign language teachers at work, compared to the number of teachers of other subjects; (5) the need for outside support for learning the subject – foreign language teachers, in order to create a natural learning environment, must seek out extra activities that are not required for teaching other subjects.

As the profession appears to be demanding, reflection should become an inherent part of students' education and training. A few models of reflective education of language teachers were proposed, to be discussed in the next section.

## 2. SELECTED MODELS OF REFLECTIVE TRAINING FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Wallace (1991) proposed a three-stage model of language teacher education. The first stage is a *craft model*. The novice teachers observe their mentors and imitate their actions in the classroom. This type of training is embedded in the students' block teaching practice; however, this approach does not seem to be adequate to face all challenges of the classroom environment. The second stage of training proposed by Wallace is referred to as an *applied science model*. Students receive theoretical knowledge in their educational institutions, which concerns approaches, methods and techniques of language instruction. This knowledge alone, even though it may be extremely useful, is again not sufficient to ensure effective teaching procedures. Only the last, the *reflective model*, which combines the first two with reflection, provides adequate training and development. Wallace suggests incorporating a reflective cycle: reflection on teachers' actions leads to improvements which then provoke the next stage of reflective thinking combined with evaluation of educational procedures.

The research by Richards and Lockhart (1994) resulted in advancing another language teacher training model comprising the following set of actions for prospective teachers: (1) collecting information on the nature of the language learning and teaching process; (2) analysing their own opinions, beliefs and attitudes (subjective theories); (3) observing their own teaching; and (4) using all gathered information to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching and to the extent to which their attitudes were modified by the reflective process.

Thomas (2005) proposed a model called STRIDE, which is intended to support the reflective process. The acronym stands for Strengths, Target, Reality, Ideas, Decision and Evaluation. Strengths refer to teachers recognising their own strong points, including their character traits and teaching styles, which may be helpful in solving problems. Then, the teachers establish goals to be achieved (targets) and analyse the problematic situations (reality). Finally, the teachers collect ideas to tackle the problem, reach a decision about which ideas seem to be the best, apply them, and evaluate the whole process.

The summary of models for reflective teacher training presented here is by no means exhaustive. A more comprehensive treatment of the role of reflection has been offered in the documents issued by the European Union and the Council of Europe.

### 3. REFLECTION IN EUROPEAN DOCUMENTS RELATED TO TEACHING AND LEARNING LANGUAGES

The idea of reflection was consistently promoted in all documents issued by the Council of Europe in the new millennium (Jedynak 2014: 99). Some of them will be referred to in this section.

In the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), published in 2001 (Council of Europe 2001), reflection becomes simultaneously the basis and the demand in the teaching and learning process (Janowska 2014: 144). Those learning the teaching procedures, according to the CEFR, are also encouraged to employ self-evaluation using the *can do* statements. This clearly shows that not only the teachers but also the learners are expected to make use of the reflective approach. It is worth noting that the CEFR is a descriptive, not a prescriptive document, and its main function is to present the components of foreign language competence in the four or even six language skills (Jedynak 2014: 99). The CEFR is also an open and non-dogmatic document which does not promote any specific teaching methods or techniques. The reflective character of the CEFR may be summarised as the opportunity given to teachers and learners from different countries and cultures to share and compare their pedagogical experience, using the same terminology. This possibility may enrich the teachers' professional involvement and help to develop mutual understanding (Janowska 2014: 155).

Another document which followed the CEFR was the European Language Portfolio (ELP) which was developed by the Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe (<https://www.coe.int/portfolio>). The ELP has two essential aims: (1) to promote learner autonomy and support its development, and (2) to help learners collect their achievements in language learning and keep records of their language learning experience and intercultural contacts. More than a hundred national versions of the ELP were accredited and validated by the Council of Europe in the years 2000–2014. They were prepared for learners from different age groups and cultural backgrounds. A typical ELP consists of three parts: Language Biography, Language Passport and Dossier. Learners from age six onwards are encouraged by teachers to keep a record of their language progress and to collect their most significant certificates and other achievements in learning a foreign language.

In this way the ELP becomes a tool that stimulates learners' reflection. There is also a version of the European Portfolio designed for future teachers of foreign languages, which will be presented in the following section.

There is still another document which has not become as popular in Poland as the other two. This is the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (FREPA). It promotes openness towards multilingualism and intercultural competence (Jedynak 2014: 101), which would not be possible without the reflective approach. The target audience of the FREPA (Candelier et al. 2012) consists of teacher trainers, teachers, course book authors, syllabus designers and other stakeholders. Reflection concerns the ability to become aware of similarities and differences between native and target languages and cultures. Language teachers also have access to the FREPA Internet resources in which they can find materials to develop knowledge, attitudes and abilities inherent in the pluralistic approach (Jedynak 2014: 102)

#### **4. EUROPEAN PORTFOLIO FOR STUDENT TEACHERS OF LANGUAGES (EPOSTL)**

The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) is another version of the portfolio set of European documents. It deserves more thorough attention because it stimulated questions used in the research project reported in this paper. The EPOSTL has been designed for students who take part in the language teacher training programmes, and the document seems to be especially useful before and during their teaching practice in schools. The authors of the EPOSTL (Newby et al. 2007: 7) formulated five main aims of the portfolio:

1. To encourage reflection on competences to be developed by the teacher and on the knowledge which forms the basis of these competences and enables their growth.
2. To prepare students to teach foreign languages in different educational contexts.
3. To encourage professional discussion among students, their instructors and their mentor teachers.
4. To make self-evaluation more efficient.
5. To establish the EPOSTL as a supportive tool for making professional progress.

The most essential part of the EPOSTL are 193 descriptors of competences inherent in language teaching. The descriptors have a self-declarative format, such as "I can assess students' homework according to clear and

valid criteria" (Newby et al. 2007: 45), and are grouped in seven sets: (1) context of teaching (e.g. the syllabus, the school, learners' needs); (2) teaching methods and techniques; (3) teaching aids; (4) lesson planning; (5) the teaching process (e.g. forms of classroom interaction, classroom management); (6) independent learning (e.g. learner autonomy, project work, e-learning); (7) assessment (e.g. forms of assessment and types of feedback).

The descriptors are not only a list of self-evaluative items. Their aim is also to stimulate discussion between students, their instructors and their mentor teachers, which may contribute to the development of professional awareness. Unfortunately, as with almost all portfolio manuscripts, this version is hardly ever used in teacher education in Poland. Instructors and mentor teachers are usually not aware of the existence of this document, and those who are generally complain about its length and the high degree of specificity.

As mentioned at the beginning of this unit, the EPOSTL – especially its first part – became useful in this study project. The details of the study will be presented in the next section.

## 5. THE STUDY

### 5.1. Aim of the study and research questions

The aim of the study was to investigate undergraduate students' basic perceptions of selected aspects of the language teaching profession. These opinions were then collected for further analysis and conclusions, which might be helpful in establishing teacher training procedures, especially at the initial stages. The instructors could make use of them as a starting point for discussion on the benefits and the challenges of becoming a language teacher. Thus, the title of this paper introduces "reflection before action", understood as an addition to Schön's (1983; 1987) three-stage model of reflective teacher education (see section 1). This kind of reflection could take place even before the proper theoretical and practical introduction has started.

The study described in the present section sought to address the following research questions:

1. What are students' reasons for taking up the teaching specialisation at the Department of English Studies?
2. What qualities, according to students, seem to be the most important in a language teacher?

3. What would students like about being a language teacher?
4. What would students dislike about being a language teacher?

Qualitative categorisations and the analyses of answers were applied in investigating each of the above questions.

## 5.2. The instrument

Students were given questionnaires in English containing four open questions:

1. Why did you decide to take up the teaching specialisation at the university?
2. What qualities, in your opinion, seem to be the most important in a language teacher?
3. What do you think you would like about being a language teacher?
4. What do you think you would not like about being a language teacher?

Students answered questions in English as well, in the written form. They were given as much time as they wanted to complete their answers; however, most returned the questionnaires after 15 minutes. Questions 2, 3 and 4 were based on the Polish version of the EPOSTL. Students did not sign their names on the answer sheets and their gender was not relevant for the results of this study.

## 5.3. Participants

There were 20 second-year undergraduate students in the Institute of English Studies at the University of Wrocław who completed the survey described in section 5.2. In the institute, the students may choose either translation studies or the language teaching programme as a specialisation. The choice is made after the first semester of undergraduate studies because the general pedagogical preparation starts in the second semester, with lectures and workshops in psychology and pedagogy. In the B.A. programme, students are trained to work with primary school children. They take part in a course called Introduction to English Language Teaching (ELT) Methodology in the third semester, which was when the research study took place, in January 2018.

The other group that took part in the research comprised 15 second-year undergraduate students specialising in English language teaching at the Karkonosze State School in Jelenia Góra (KPSW). For this group, the language teaching specialisation was mandatory, so they did not have to an-



swer the first survey question. The survey was administered to this group in March 2018 during the same lecture/workshop, Introduction to ELT Methodology. There was no random sampling of participants as both were intact groups, homogeneous in their language proficiency.

At the time of the research study, neither group had any teaching or classroom observation experience in primary schools. The choice of the academic course for introducing the survey was deliberate: Introduction to ELT Methodology created a series of opportunities to stimulate reflection on foreign language learning and teaching. The language level of both groups could be estimated as B2 or even B2+, if the criteria proposed by the CEFR were applied. Therefore, students did not have any problems answering the survey questions in English.

#### 5.4. Data analysis: Presentation of students' opinions

As mentioned in the previous section, the first question was answered only by the university students because they consciously chose the language teaching option of the programme. In answer to the question "Why did you decide to take up the teaching specialisation?" students most frequently wrote that it was treated as a back-up plan if other career options failed. Altogether, 30 different reasons were given and nine of them referred to language teaching as a reserve possibility, for example, *I'm not really sure what I want to do in life, and while I think that I'd like to become a translator, teaching at school is still an option* (while quoting students' opinions the original syntax and lexis were preserved). Five different students stated that they liked the idea of teaching in a primary school, for instance *I love to work with children, it makes me happy*. Three students were honest enough to say that they took this opportunity because it was offered at the university free of charge. Four students admitted that they liked the very idea of teaching and passing knowledge to others. For example:

- *I would like to be a teacher because I think I am very good at explaining things in a simple and clear way.*
- *Since I remember, I liked teaching, whether it was helping my younger brother in his homework or teaching my granny basic sentences in English, I really enjoyed doing it.*
- *It is an amazing feeling when you can teach somebody something you like and really know well.*

Two students wanted to join the teaching profession because their mothers were teachers and provided good examples, such as *Having a mother who is a teacher, I have always been fascinated by this profession*. One student claimed

that *I also like to challenge myself so being a teacher would never be boring (I hope so) and every day would be a way to test myself and my problem-solving abilities.* Two students stated that their interest in teaching was stimulated by their fascination with psychology. A few other various reasons were as follows:

- *I try to understand school from teacher's perspective and learn about my own mistakes in studying languages.*
- *I'd like to work in a private language school.*
- *I'd like to learn how to organise lessons and how to handle troublesome kids and work with those who want to learn.*

One student admitted that she would definitely like to work in a private language school, not in a public one.

In answer to the second question ("What qualities, in your opinion, seem to be the most important in a language teacher?"), students from both teacher training programmes mentioned very similar characteristics: patience, perseverance, ability to deal with stress on a daily basis, creativity, charisma, flexibility, being supportive, being empathic, being well-organised, caring for all students, being able to control one's emotions, self-confidence, enjoying teaching, being strict but reliable, being open-minded, being tolerant of learners' mistakes, demanding respect, and not being afraid of students. Interestingly, only the university group concentrated on language skills as important qualities in a language teacher: having good pronunciation in English, having an extensive vocabulary, being grammatically correct and being fluent in English.

In answer to question three ("What do you think you would like about being a teacher?"), the most frequent answer given by university students was *explaining things I know well, share knowledge.* In the Karkonosze School, the most frequent answer was *because teaching seems to be fun.* Students from both schools also considered other advantages of being a teacher, such as the feeling of power and the importance of decision-making: *seeing people interested in my teaching, being respected, being satisfied with learners' progress, and being proud because of providing knowledge.* There were also a few comments concerning the social nature of teaching. Some students liked the idea of teaching because it provided interaction with people, involved bringing up a new generation of learners and secured a pleasant work environment. Some others liked the idea of teaching for practical reasons, such as *holidays and relatively short working hours.*

There was one quite outstanding comment from a university student: *I know that it may sound strange but I love paperwork. So the most interesting aspect of being a teacher would be for me preparing the tests, quizzes, tasks, and of course – giving grades, a lot of them. I used to have many strict and demanding teachers during my life, so I am going to be the same.* On the basis of this com-

ment, it may be observed how strongly former learning experiences can influence students' views on language teaching.

Question four referred to the perceived negative aspects of the teaching profession. One would expect students to list low salary as the most important factor they would not appreciate about being a teacher. It was not true. The university students rather dislike paperwork and being forced to change their teaching methods and techniques under the influence of a school authority. The Karkonosze School students would not like having to deal with discipline problems. Low salaries appear quite high on the list of negative factors in both groups of students, but not at the top positions. The future teachers enumerated many other aspects of the profession they would dislike. For example, the university students mentioned *unmotivated learners, not being understood properly, bringing up somebody else's children, noisy learners, having to deal with special needs children, checking tests, bad relations with the principal, exhaustion, being limited by a syllabus, and monotonous and tedious work*. The Karkonosze School students, apart from having to deal with discipline problems, also mentioned *having to prepare lessons at home, taking on a huge responsibility, making children safe at school, having to deal with parents of misbehaving children, constant stress, having to deal with unexpected situations, and being controlled and assessed by everybody*.

The following are a few of the students' comments:

- *Sometimes learners are very difficult to cooperate with.*
- *This is a very responsible profession and demands a lot of work and discipline.*
- *I wouldn't like bringing strangers' problems into my home and family, no free time from constant thinking about students.*
- *I am afraid I won't have time for my personal life and my hobbies.*
- *Teacher's job is not well-paid and teachers do not have respect among students and even other people not connected with education.*
- *I wouldn't like the constant contact with people, however, maybe I would grow to like it more than currently.*

## 5.5. Discussion

In both teacher training schools, the survey was completed by second-year undergraduate students. No striking differences between the groups have been observed. Students gave honest and sincere answers, stating their opinions without restraint.

The decision to take up the language teaching specialisation at the university was mostly determined by the fact that it is offered free of charge and provides a valid teaching certification for primary language education. Some

students followed the programme of both translation studies and language teaching to feel, as they explained, more secure in making decisions about their future career after graduation. On the other hand, quite a few students appeared to be genuinely interested in teaching, and they confirmed that they liked working with primary school children in particular. They found it fascinating to have a chance to observe how children really learn and discover what the teacher can do to motivate and encourage them to take up still another challenge. Some students believed that they were good at explaining things to others because they already had some basic teaching experience and appeared to be quite successful. Others believed that language teaching is a challenging occupation and that is why it is never boring. On the other hand, it may be quite stressful and one needs to be prepared to work under conditions of constant stress. Two students were inspired by their mothers to choose the teaching profession, which means that there seems to be a positive attitude to education in their families. Quite a few students were inspired to become teachers by their interest in psychology. It may be assumed that the psychological courses, which precede the ELT methods in the programme, play a significant role in language teacher training.

When it comes to discussing students' opinions on the qualities of good teachers, mostly personal characteristics were enumerated. Most students emphasised the essential role of patience and perseverance, which seem to be indispensable in educating young learners. The university students, however, also concentrated on the teachers' language skills, especially their pronunciation. The Karkonosze State School students omitted these characteristics in their questionnaires. On the basis of the analysis of both teacher preparation courses, it seems justifiable to presume that the state school programme does not devote enough time to language skill development. Hence, their students make significantly slower progress and, consequently, do not appreciate the importance of having advanced language skills for teaching at the primary level. It is essential to point out that teachers' good pronunciation plays an important role in teaching primary school learners because the students should have a reliable model to imitate. The university students, with their more thorough and extensive language training, have a much better chance to develop good pronunciation, broader vocabulary and better grammar accuracy.

Students also expressed their opinions on what they probably would and would not like about being a language teacher. It was quite surprising that the feeling of having power over learners was mentioned at least four times as a factor students would appreciate in the teaching profession. This may be due to the relatively young age of the students (21/22), that they could feel

insecure without some kind of power demonstration in the classroom. One of the students quoted in section 5.4 wrote that she had mostly strict and demanding teachers and she was planning to be exactly the same. It is, as it appears, a particularly strong subjective theory and this student should be encouraged to adopt a more reflective approach in her training, to analyse classroom interaction patterns and teachers' attitude to learners.

Quite a number of students expressed satisfaction with being able to share their knowledge, to observe how other people learn different things after the teacher's explanations. These are the attitudes which should be encouraged in teacher training.

A few students liked the idea of working with groups of people, whereas others did not feel comfortable in such socially challenging environments. It requires some training to overcome the feelings of inhibition and anxiety; not all students immediately feel confident and secure in front of a large group of children. At the same time, the feeling of responsibility for children's well-being and safety may be more overwhelming than the need to teach and explain, which may result in chaotic lessons and poor group management.

The aim of the study, as stated in section 5.1, was to analyse student data and to make suggestions for reflection at the early stages of teacher training courses. These will be formulated in the last part of this paper.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

On the basis of students' answers and comments, some observations were made on the significance of introducing reflection at the beginning phase of training foreign language teachers. Students' opinions are valuable in establishing the focus of reflection.

The analysis of students' answers to the first research question indicates there are a number of reasons for taking up the language teaching specialisation at the university. However, for as many as twelve students, it is just a back-up plan if everything else fails. In addition, as students claimed, it is useful to have a teaching certificate for free. Thus, the instructors' task seems to be to motivate such students to become professionally involved teacher candidates who would not treat the training as a mundane and tedious task. Some students claimed that they wanted to become teachers because they expected to obtain satisfaction from being able to pass on their knowledge to learners. This feeling should be encouraged in teacher preparation; however, students should be made aware that passing on knowledge occurs only when learners are motivated and interested. Reflection on how to motivate

primary school learners appears to be one of the most important elements of training.

The second research question concerned the most important qualities necessary for a language teacher. As noted above in section 5.4, students concentrated mostly on personal characteristics, of which patience, perseverance, creativity and charisma were the most frequently mentioned. Not all students, however, were aware of how significant teachers' language skills are, especially when teaching beginners. Teachers' intelligible pronunciation, broad vocabulary and grammatical awareness provide an indispensable model for younger and older learners. Future teachers need to be aware of the necessity of constant training and improvement of their own language skills. Unfortunately, however, it is very difficult to train somebody to be charismatic. Charismatic teachers are born, not bred.

Question three concerned students' opinions on what they would probably like about being a language teacher. Quite a few of them mentioned satisfaction from sharing knowledge with their learners. Consequently, it would seem essential to make students sensitive to the importance of good explanations and appropriate level of instruction. Time should be devoted to teaching students how to produce simple, brief and focused instructions for activities, and how to provide proper examples. It seems that microteaching sessions could be helpful in this respect. Obviously, the role of a mentor teacher during the school internship is irreplaceable. Still another issue is a good balance between the native and foreign languages in issuing instructions and explanations, which depends on the age and proficiency level of the students.

A few students mentioned satisfaction from the feeling of having power over their learners. This seems to be one of the subjective theories that need to be modified. Students need to be made aware during their training that teachers do not get respect by executing power. They cannot demand respect but earn it through their behaviour and attitude to students. Trainee teachers should understand that in order to be authoritative one does not have to be authoritarian.

Question four referred to students' comments on what they probably would not like about being a teacher. It is important to make students aware that discipline problems can be dealt with provided one gets to know her students as quickly as possible. There are ways of anticipating problems, and this kind of training must be provided for future teachers by specialists in pedagogy and psychology. One thing is certain: if the group makes noise, teachers should not make the classroom more noisy by shouting to and at their learners. Future teachers must be trained to show enthusiasm, enjoy teaching and treat it as fun. Young learners (indeed, those of all ages) appre-

ciate that. Training should also include dealing with stress and with the fact of being under constant observation. Again, the microteaching sessions may make students more familiar with stressful situations. Instructors must frequently emphasise that stable personality, deep background knowledge, good language skills, creativity, and the ability to deal with unpredictable situations are necessary to make good teachers – and those who are respected and liked by their learners.

This having been said, it may be argued that there is clearly a need for implementing elements of reflection in groups of beginning teacher trainees. The reflection might be stimulated by interviews or questionnaires which focus on students' personal attitudes, beliefs and subjective theories concerning the teaching profession. The findings of this research study offer an important lesson for teacher instructors as well: Students' opinions may become an excellent stimulus for in-depth discussions on the value of the teaching profession.

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