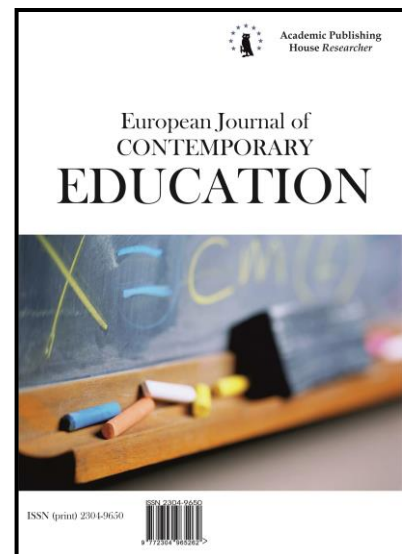




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## Professional and Personal Qualities of the Teacher in the Context of the Psychological Safety of Educational Environment

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### Abstract

The article deals with the phenomenon of psychological safety of the educational environment (PSEE) in the modern school. Indicators of the educational process participants' psychological safety are revealed. The notion of the teacher's preparedness for the designing activity is defined. The authors have conducted a case study revealing integrated professional and personal qualities of the future teacher, which promote successful designing of school PSEE. The obtained data correlation has been made to identify the interconnection of the level of the teacher' professional and personal qualities development and the PSEE coefficient.

Obtained results of the case study have shown that the main factors determining the successful designing psychologically safe educational environment by teachers is the level of professional and personal qualities development such as emotional stability, high-normative behaviour, sensitivity, low anxiety, creative thinking, reflection and introspection. The carried out correlation has shown that the higher the level of manifestation of these teacher's professional and personal qualities is, the higher the psychological security of the educational environment is.

**Keywords:** psychologically safe educational environment, the future teachers' preparedness for designing activity, professional and personal qualities.

### 1. Introduction

Contemporary sociocultural space contains many factors negatively influencing the development of the human personality. Safety of the environment in which a person exists becomes one of the most relevant and meaningful features. It comes to the safety in almost all spheres of modern life. The term "psychological security of the educational environment" has recently appeared.

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Psychological safety of the educational environment expressed in preserving and strengthening its members' health, creating safe working and training conditions in an educational institution, protecting from all forms of discrimination may serve as an alternative to aggressive social environment, psycho-emotional and cultural vacuum; the consequence of which is a growing number of sociogenic diseases. An important condition of reducing a number of stress situations is an effective training of future teachers to design psychologically safe educational environment, development of their necessary professional and personal qualities (Fedotenko et al., 2013).

The object of research is professional and personal qualities of the teacher.

The purpose of the study is to study the influence of personal qualities of the teacher on the process of designing a psychologically safe educational environment of the school.

To achieve the purpose, the following tasks have been set:

- to conduct a theoretical analysis of the Russian and foreign research on the issue of designing the psychological security of the educational environment of the school;
- to clarify the tool of concepts: psychological security; psychologically safe educational environment; designing activity; the future teachers' preparedness;
- to develop diagnostic program that lets explore the level of psychological security of the educational environment of the school;
- to identify the level of development of the teacher's professional and personal qualities determining the creation of the psychologically safe educational environment.

## 2. Materials and methods

The case study has been aimed at identifying the interconnection between the level of psychological security of the educational environment of the school and the level of the teacher's personal qualities. The total number of respondents participating in the study has consisted in 74 schoolteachers in Tula. The study has been conducted in two phases: the first phase has involved performing procedures directed to identify professional and personal qualities of teachers. The second phase has included the diagnosis of the educational environment in which teachers work in terms of its psychological security. The closing phase of the study revealed the relations between the level of professional and personal qualities of the teacher and the safety level of the educational environment. Developed psycho-pedagogical diagnostic program with diagnostic techniques and investigated criteria is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Psychological-pedagogical diagnostics of the development level of personal qualities of the teacher and the level of psychological safety of educational environment

PHASE	Methodology of the study	Investigated criterion	Indicator of the development level (stems)		
			low	average	high
I	16 Personality Factors Questionnaire (R. Cattell)	Communicative properties (A, H, E, L, N, Q2)	1-3	4-7	8-10
		Intellectual properties (B, M, N, Q1)			
		Emotional properties (C, F, H, I, O, Q4)			
		Regulatory properties (Q3, G)			
	Creativity Checklist by D.L. Jonhson (modified by Ye. Tunik)	Creativity of thinking (Ct)	8-19	20-26	27-40
	Methods of diagnosing the level of reflexivity (A.V. Karpov)	Reflexivity and introspection (Ri)	≤113	114-147	≥148
II	The average coefficient of psychological security of the educational environment				

The questionnaire for the teachers and students 'Psychological diagnosis of the educational environment' (I.A. Baeva)	The safety factor according to the teacher ( <i>PsT</i> )	≤5	6-11	≥12
	The safety factor according to the student ( <i>PsS</i> )			

The questionnaire 'Psychological diagnosis of the educational environment' by I.A. Baeva includes worksheet for teachers and students consisted of nine questions each in answering which it is necessary to choose a priority or to assess the state of a phenomenon according to a given scale (Baeva et al., 2011). The following examples of survey questions can be given:

«Select only the five most important from your point of view of the following characteristics of the school environment and evaluate them on a 5-point system\*»:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Relationships with teachers</li> <li>2. Relationships with students</li> <li>3. Emotional comfort</li> <li>4. Ability to express their opinions</li> <li>5. Respectful attitude towards yourself</li> <li>6. Saving of personal dignity</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Ability to ask for help</li> <li>8. Ability to take initiative, to be active</li> <li>9. Consideration of personal problems and difficulties</li> <li>10. Attention to the requests and suggestions</li> <li>11. Assistance to choose their own solutions</li> </ol> |
|--|--|

\* 1 – to a very large extent; 2 – to a large extent; 3 – medium; 4 – to a lesser extent; 5 – not at all.

«How secure do you feel in school?»

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. From public humiliation</li> <li>2. From insults</li> <li>3. From derision</li> <li>4. From threats</li> <li>5. From offensive name-calling</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. From the situations when you are made to do anything against your will</li> <li>7. From ignoring</li> <li>8. From disrespect</li> <li>9. From unfriendly attitude</li> </ol> |
|--|--|

\* 1 – not fully protected; 2 – unprotected; 3 – difficult to answer; 4 – protected; 5 – quite protected.

As a theoretical and methodological basis of the study the following works are determined:

- scientific researches which study measures to protect its members and the prevention of violent methods: I.A. Firedman, J. Hathaway, E.G. Fell, M.A. Reeves, L.M. Kanan, A.E. Plog;
- scientific approaches to the study of education as a system of the designing of educational space: G.A. Kovalev, I.A. Kolesnikova, E.A. Kryukova, V.V. Rubtsov, V.I. Slobodchikov;
- theoretical and empirical research of the psychological safety of the school educational environment and interpersonal relationships of its members: I.A. Baeva, Ye.N. Volkova, Ye.B. Laktionova (Baeva et al., 2011).

### 3. Results and Discussion

In the first phase of the case study, diagnostics of professional and personal qualities of the teacher has been carried out (Maliy, Yugfeld, 2016). Using the technique "16 Personality Factors Questionnaire" by R. Cattell, we have determined the levels of development of teachers' professional and personal qualities. The Creativity Checklist by D.L. Jonhson (modified by Tunik) has revealed a level of teachers' creative thinking. To diagnose the level of reflectivity development, the method by A.V. Karpov has been used. The results are presented in Figure 1.

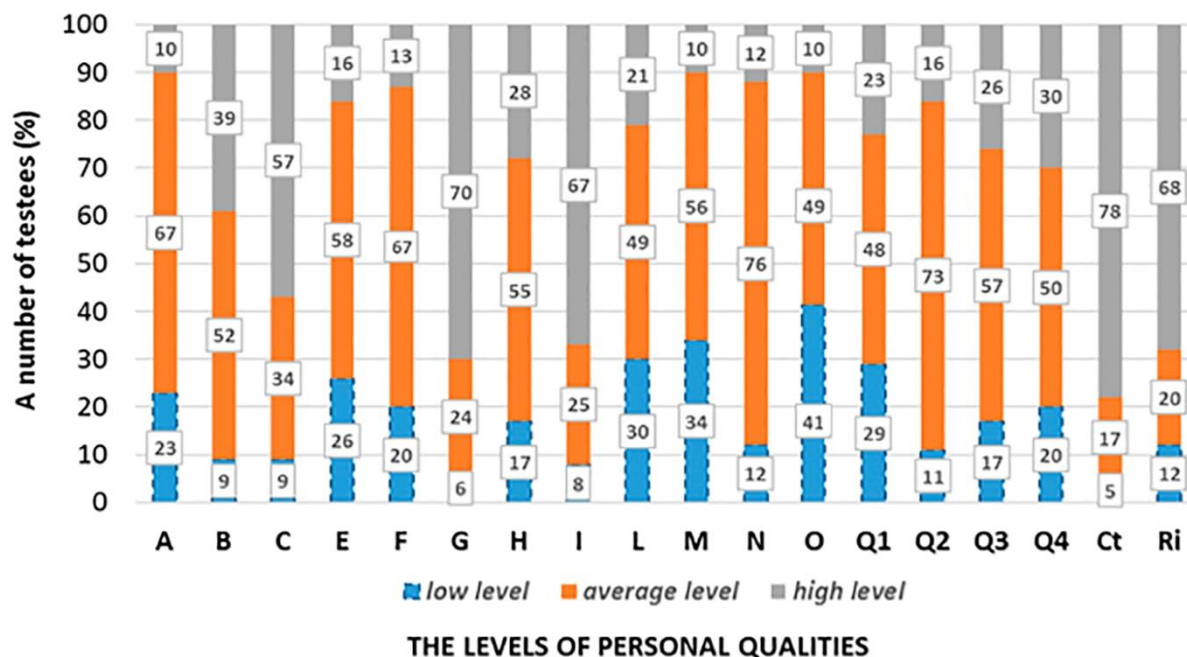


Fig. 1. Distribution of testees by the levels of personal qualities

According to the results of techniques, it can be observed the accentuation of the following vocational and personal traits: emotional stability (C); high-normative behaviour (G); sensitivity (I); anxiety (O); creative thinking (Ct); reflection and introspection (Ri).

According to the factor «C» – 57% of testees are characterized by high level of emotional stability that describes them as sensitive, emotionally mature personalities oriented to the reality; able to comply social moral norms.

According to the factor «G» – 70% of testees are typical of high-normative behaviour that defines them as honest, responsible, balanced personalities. These teachers are characterized by a developed sense of duty and responsibility, the conscious adherence to generally accepted moral rules and norms, persistence in achieving goals.

According to the factor «I» – 67% of testees are inherent in high sensibility. The teachers are characterized by sensual perception of the world, developed aesthetic interests, artistry, a penchant for empathy, sympathy, and understanding of other people.

According to the factor «O» – almost a half of testees (41%) has shown low level of anxiety. This group of teachers is distinguished by cheerfulness, confidence, and adequate behaviour with students, calmness, and no tendency to the hypochondriacality. Low levels, according to the given factor, characterize personalities who cope with their failures, that determines their successful leadership in complex situations and the personality's desire for the self-actualization.

According to the criterion «Ct» – most testees (78%) are typical of creative thinking. Creative teachers are able to observe the creative potential of children and create conditions for its development. They build special capacity including organization of particular creative atmosphere aimed at the emancipation of the personality; training to special methods and techniques of creating original products; development of psychological culture and creative thinking. The creative thinking is an indicator of highly organized and proper human kind of activity.

According to the criterion «Ri» – for 68% of teachers it is characteristic high level of reflection development expressed in the ability of teachers to analyze what is happening, to correlate their own actions with situations and to coordinate in accordance with changing conditions and own state. This group of teachers is typical of the analysis of future activity, behaviour; planning and forecasting of the likely outcomes.

In the second phase of the case study a survey of teachers and students was conducted by questionnaire 'Psychological diagnosis of the educational environment' by I.A. Baeva that let us identify the coefficient of psychological security of the educational environment (Baeva, Bordovskaya, 2015).

According to results of the questionnaire, the average coefficient **Ps** of the level of psychological security of the educational environment is calculated which is made up of figures obtained from the survey of teachers (**PsT**) and students (**PsS**). After analyzing the results, we can state the following: 62% of respondents have identified educational environment in which they fulfil the professional and educational activities, as a relatively psychologically safe; 34% have assessed the coefficient of psychologically safe environment at a high level; and only 4% – at a low level.

In order to establish the relationship between the teacher’s accented personality traits identified in the first phase of the experiment and the coefficient of psychological security of the educational environment (the second stage), R-Pearson correlation has been conducted; given calculation is made using the program *Statistica* (Table 2). According to statistical processing, it can be stated as follows:

First, there are identified directly proportional relations between the criterion **Ps** and criteria **C** ( $r = 0.67$ ); **G** ( $r = 0.79$ ); **I** ( $r = 0.82$ ); **Ct** ( $r = 0.72$ ); **Ri** ( $r = 0.78$ ). These relations are expressed in the following statement: the higher the level of development of the mentioned qualities of the teacher’s personality, the higher the psychological security of the educational environment in which there are the subjects. The correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) by all criteria is more than 0.65, at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , which indicates a strong correlation.

Secondly, there is an inversely proportional relation between the criterion **Ps** and criterion **O** ( $r = -0.67$ ), i.e., the higher the coefficient of the psychological security of the educational environment of the school, the lower the anxiety level of subjects of the educational process. The correlation coefficients in this case is  $r = 0.86$ , at  $\alpha = 0.05$ , which indicates a strong correlation (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Correlation of development levels between personal qualities of the teacher and psychological safety of educational environment

The level of psychology safety educational environment ( <b>Ps</b> )	Personal qualities / the correlation coefficient ( $r$ )					
	<b>C</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>Ct</b>	<b>Ri</b>
	0.67	0.79	0.82	-0.67	0.72	0.78

The question of the responsibility of the teacher for the development and well-being of the child in the educational process is becoming increasingly important; it gets a new meaning. Modern educational environment contains many examples of the negative behaviours of teacher and student in relation to each other: school harassment, psychological pressure, violence, bullying, and murder (Fedotenko, Maliy, 2013). Reducing the level of psychological and physical violence becomes the focus in creating a comfortable, psychologically safe educational environment. Providing by the teacher the necessary conditions for the child’s personality development contributes to getting the experience of positive emotions, updating their reserve capacity; it increases self-esteem and self-confidence.

Considering the particularities of the teacher’s activity in designing school PSEE, it is necessary to clarify its leading characteristics. The conceptual essence of the approaches to define the psychological security of the educational environment is reflected in the following terms:

- degree of the national educational system’s security from adverse external and internal influences for the comprehensive development of individual, family, society and the state;
- interaction environment, free from acts of psychological violence, which has a referential significance for the included subjects (in terms of a positive attitude towards it) and is characterized by a predominance of the humanistic centration of participants (i.e. centration on the interest (manifestations) of its essence and the essence of the others), and is reflected in emotional-personal and communicative characteristics of its subjects;
- security system for subjects from the threats to positive development, physical and mental health in the process of pedagogical interaction;



– result of a comprehensive, systematic, long-term, specially organized psychological and pedagogical process, the result of which is recorded in the presence of: humanistic educational orientation; involvement of the individual in the educational process on a subject position; presence of significant communities for students ensuring the satisfaction of its needs in interpersonal communication; existence of the relationships based on mutual respect.

Thus, designing of a psychologically safe educational environment is a complex process that, on the one hand, involves modelling of the pedagogical process, its objectives, principles, contents, forms and methods chosen by taking into account the main purposes of the PSEE conception and, on the other hand, creating a safe psychological and pedagogical conditions which promote the development of skills and individual-personal characteristics of students.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Views of foreign researchers about the content and structure of a safe learning environment can be divided into two main groups. The first group whose views are within the dichotomous model, considering physical and social parameters of the educational environment. The second group proposes a model that reflects a complex structure with many different elements. One example of a successful model for the safe environment offered by the American experts Robers, S., Zhang, J., Truman J. (Robers et al., 2010) They include two indicators in the discussion of the safety of the educational environment: objective indicators, facts that can be documented by school administration and local authorities; indicators based on opinions and estimations of participants of the educational environment

Among the main ways to create a safe educational environment at school foreign researchers M. A. Reeves, L. M. Kanan, and A. E. Plog (Reeves et al., 2010) note the following:

– from the perspective of an integrated approach the interaction of different social structures should be fulfilled: providing of psychological-pedagogical and academic support to students, together with briefings on security;

– application of multi-level system of support, including preventive measures, improvement of psychological state, providing of efficient and intensive services based on children's needs and ensuring closer cooperation of the school with various organizations;

– increase in the availability of school support for the mental health through the recruitment of highly qualified staff – appropriate professionals who are able to implement preventive and efficient services in the educational process, and to integrate services provided by the school partners into the existing school system;

– constant maintenance of a favorable environment and compliance with safety regulations for the prevention of crisis situations;

– achievement of a balance of physical and psychological security to avoid excessive restrictive measures (for example, armed guards and metal detectors, which can then disrupt the educational environment).

We regard the psychological safety of educational environment as the most important condition, which allows giving it developmental nature, affecting the psychosocial well-being of all subjects (Fedotenko, Maliy, 2013). The indicators of the psychological safety of schoolchildren are (Kulikova et al., 2017):

– lack of fear of the teachers, free cooperation with them;

– questions of the child, their number and nature;

– autonomy and independence of the child from the opinions of others;

– successful establishment of relationships with peers;

– satisfaction of the school environment conditions;

– low level of anxiety, frustration and stress;

– positive feeling of subjects of educational process.

At the same time, the environment is not limited to relationships; it also includes the physical space of the educational institution (its state, colour, design, and organization). Unified educational space is created due to educational policies aimed at preserving and strengthening the physical, mental and social health of all subjects of the education system (Kulikova, 2012).

Most educational psychologists consider the preparedness of the future teacher to the planning activity as the ability for the selection and distribution of assignments-tasks aimed at the forming of the necessary qualities of the students' personality, knowledge, skills and abilities

needed in their future activity. A.K. Markova (Markova, 1993) emphasizes the ability of the teacher to design and form students' missing levels of activity, the ability to expand the field of self-work both with weak and gifted children building individual programs for them. We are closer to the position of L.V. Blinova (Blinova, 2015), emphasizing the importance of the teacher's ability to overcome barriers and to develop ways to eliminate the emotional discomfort resulting from the stereotypical perception of the situation, which involves a routine, uniformity and monotony in the teacher's organization of the education process.

Thus, we understand the future teacher's preparedness (Maliy, Medvedev, 2014) to design a psychologically safe educational environment as an integrative formation of teacher's personality, including a system of significant professional and personal qualities and the ability to model the pedagogical process with the main purposes of the PSEE conception.

By results of our case study it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

1. It has been clarified the concept of 'designing psychologically safe educational environment' which we consider as a complex process involving modelling of the pedagogical process taking into account the main purposes of the PSEE conception and creation of safe psychological and pedagogical conditions that encourage the development of skills and individual personality characteristics of students.

2. The main indicators of the psychologically safe educational environment have been allocated as follows: lack of fear of the teachers, free cooperation with them; questions of the child, their number and nature; autonomy and independence of the child from the opinions of others; successful establishment of relationships with peers; satisfaction of the school environment conditions; low level of anxiety, frustration and stress; positive feeling of subjects of educational process.

3. Under the preparedness of the future teacher to design a psychologically safe educational environment, we understand integrative formation of teacher's personality, including a system of significant professional and personal qualities and the ability to model the pedagogical process with the main purposes of the PSEE conception.

4. According to the results of the pilot study, it can be stated that the main factors determining the successful designing of psychologically safe educational environment by teachers is the development level of professional and personal qualities of emotional stability; creative thinking; capacity for reflection; humanistic orientation of the personality; empathy; tolerance. The carried out correlation has shown that the higher the level of manifestation of these teacher's professional and personal qualities is, the higher the psychological security of the educational environment is. Regularity has been also revealed: the lower the level of anxiety of educational process is, the higher the psychological security of the educational environment is.

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