

Chapter 3

Guiding Psycho– Pedagogical Landmarks in Preschooler Understanding and Assessment: Theoretical and Practical Frameworks

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ABSTRACT

The foundational premise that a preschooler represents a universe to discover underscores the profound significance of comprehending the young child. This chapter, recognizing the manifold benefits derived from understanding the very young child, presents a varied inventory of psychopedagogical methods intended to guide educators in the discovery and evaluation of the children with whom they engage. The methods highlighted include observation, conversation, medical history, analysis of preschoolers' activity products, sociometric tests, with a particular emphasis on children's drawings, and projective tests (such as the human figure test, the tree test, the house test, and the family test). Each method is delineated to provide an overarching image through a description that encompasses multiple dimensions, including specificity, advantages and limitations, and examples of application in working with preschoolers.

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INTRODUCTION

It poses a significant challenge for schools to fully comprehend their students, to discover and connect with them in a manner that avoids the homogenization of children and the provision of “prefabricated,” “variegated personalities with deficient identities” to society (E. Stan, 2014, 76). Simultaneously, we align with C. A. Popa (2021), asserting that an effective teacher-student relationship “flourishes” only when the teacher (primarily) is willing to see “beyond oneself,” to perceive the other accurately, as “The relationship begins only after each party has invested time and effort to know the other, and it has the potential to transform into a healthy relationship only when both parties show respect, care, and understanding for each other” (229). In this context, questions such as “Who is my student, and what methods do I have at my disposal to get to know them?” and “How does my knowledge of my students influence my teaching practices?” become perpetually necessary for every educator. Why?

Because, according to the European Commission (2018), the majority of European countries have developed profiles and competence standards for teachers to guide their careers, and understanding the student emerges as a foremost competence that must be continually shaped and refined for educational activities. This recognition is also acknowledged in Romania through the establishment of professional standards for continuous training for teaching positions in pre-university education, across educational levels—preschool, primary, secondary, and high school—and professional development stages in the teaching career—teaching degree II, teaching degree I, continuous training every five years (see Order of the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research 4476/2016). The professional standard concerning progression in the teaching career includes and describes professional competencies such as designing educational activities, leading and monitoring the educational process, evaluating educational activities, integrating and using ICT in education, understanding, counseling, and differentially treating students, and managing the class/group of students/children. Defined by this document as the “proven capacity to select, combine, and appropriately use knowledge, skills, and other acquisitions consisting of values and attitudes to successfully solve a certain category of work or learning situations” (Annex 1 to Order 4476/2016, 3), the competence related to understanding, counseling, and differentially treating students requires the preschool teacher to be capable of conducting “effectively and efficiently” a series of actions related, among other things, to “using appropriate models, methods, techniques for understanding preschoolers” and “utilizing data (information) obtained” through their application, “planning the understanding of students,” “evaluating the effects of knowledge activities” for preschool children “to improve it,” “completing psycho-pedagogical files for preschoolers,” etc. (ibid, 20-21). It recognizes, thus, the role of

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