



Conceptualisation of the Child and Childhood by Future Pre-School Teachers

ADRIANA WIEGEROVÁ, PETER GAVORA

Abstract: *This study investigates how university students of pre-primary education conceptualise the child and childhood, as well as some associated concepts. Empirical data were gathered by thematic writing, a text-generating procedure used with 22 pre-primary education students who were enrolled in their last year of the bachelor's programme. The rich conceptualisations of the students were condensed into four topics: (a) the child's developmental progression; (b) specific capabilities of the child; (c) the decency of the child, and (d) the learning environment. The study demonstrated that investigation of the conceptualisations of key concepts is a useful analytical tool which leads us to a better understanding of the thinking and acting of our students. This, in turn, made it possible to suggest instructional strategies for working further with the students' conceptualisations in the undergraduate programme.*

Keywords: *the child, childhood, childhood theories, conceptualisations, the pre-school, student teachers.*

INTRODUCTION

What childhood is and how it is conceptualised have important consequences for future pre-school teachers' relationship to children and for their educational practices. Childhood is a robust concept that encompasses a number of aspects and attributes, so it is worth investigating how future pre-school teachers conceptualise it. The intention of this study is to shed some light on how a group of student pre-school teachers conceptualise the child and childhood and how these concepts relate to other concepts. We concentrated on prospective rather than on in-service

pre-school teachers because it is fruitful to learn about their conceptualisation before they leap into the reality of the educational institutions. Learning about these conceptualisations makes it possible for us to support the meaningful professional preparation of these students.

THEORISING ABOUT THE CHILD AND CHILDHOOD

Childhood is a frequent topic of theorising in the current pedagogical, psychological, and sociological literature. Theorising about childhood, of course, does not yield a single unified model. On the



contrary, alternative models and theories grow and coexist in parallel, both influencing each other and gaining distance from each other. In this section we present a brief, and thus very selective, account of educational, sociological, and psychological theories of the child and childhood which we consider influential.

In education, many theories have roots in the ideas of Locke, Comenius, Rousseau, or Dewey. According to Locke (2004), the child is considered a blank slate, an individual with an originally contentless mind, in which all knowledge is gradually stored through experience and learning. The task of the family and the school is to provide the knowledge in order to fill the empty mind. This model views the child as an **imperfect adult**, who has deficits in world knowledge, skills, and abilities. The aim of education is to reduce this deficit and fill in the empty places. This theory has been adopted, both explicitly and implicitly, in a number of educational frameworks which view the child as a passive being, an object of social institutionalisation in the family and schools. Dewey was the first theoretician who moved in a different direction and presented a model of education which attributed an active role to the child in learning and development. Since Dewey, “the active child” discourse has become dominant (Dewey, 2009).

A more contemporary concept of the child’s activity is embodied in the notion of **agency**. Children are active in their own learning. They take the initiative in learning situations and are involved in on-

going events. “Viewing children as having agency means viewing children as capable of reflecting upon and making decisions about things that concern them, and recognizing that their actions have consequences.” (Mayall, 2002).

In sociology, currently the most influential theoretical movement is the New Sociology of Childhood (James & Prout, 1990; James, 1993; Uprichard, 2008). Before the existence of this movement, children were considered to be something like immature adults. Immature status is based on contrasting “completeness” and “incompleteness” (Lee, 1998). The child is an “incomplete” being and the aim of education is to enhance the child’s development in order for her to become “completed”, i.e. to obtain mature qualities, in fact, the qualities of adults. This theory has a more modern parallel in the notions of “becoming” and “being”. The child as “being” is a completed object, whereas the child as “becoming” is on the way to “being”. She is the bearer of her own future (James & Prout, 1990). This issue is the point of departure from the older, more traditional sociology, in which the socialisation of the child is the key aspect, towards the new paradigm in which children are conceived as “mature” in their possession of agency. The New Sociology of Childhood (James & Prout, 1990; Jenks, 1996) maintains exactly this position. “Children must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children are not just passive subjects of social structures



and processes.” (James & Prout, 1990). Children are human “beings”, rather than human “becomings” (Qvortrup, 1994).

In psychology, several developmental theories of the child have been elaborated and empirically supported. Psychologists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson, or Gessel produced complex theories of cognitive, moral, social, and psychomotor development. They all have one idea in common. The child’s development evolves from birth to adulthood through similar and predictable stages, the order of which is fixed and inevitable. In addition to creating a sophisticated system of developmental stages, Piaget (1999; Piaget & Inhelder, 2014) elaborated the idea of the construction of knowledge of the world by the individual. The concept of constructivism in the learning of the child has had a tremendous impact on instructional practices at all levels of schooling.

Vygotsky’s (1970, 1976, 2004) social-cultural theory stressed that higher forms of cognition come from social interaction. The more experienced partner (e.g. a teacher) assists the child by structuring the task so as to provide a bridge between the child’s current and potential development until the child is able to perform the task on her own. An important theoretical elaboration with huge educational implication is Vygotsky’s notion of the zone of proximal development.

Both Piaget and Vygotsky, though taking different attitudes to promoting the child’s development, accepted the stance of the universality of developmental norms. This stance is now criticised

by proponents of post-developmentalism. They argue that “a developmental body of knowledge regulates children, parents and teachers because it is regarded as a set of ‘scientific’ facts about the child which are considered (*universally*) true” (Edwards, Blaise & Hammer, 2009, p. 55). This creates an obstacle to taking a more flexible developmental position. The prescriptive character of the “usual” stages of development is criticised for having a negative effect on educational practices (Burman, 1994). However, post-developmentalism is not accepted without objections. It has been criticised for subjecting developmental theory to ideology and for distorting the idea of developmental stages.

SOURCES OF INDIVIDUALS’ CONCEPTUALISATIONS

Conceptualisation is a form of personal knowledge. It is heavily saturated with beliefs, though beliefs are more experience-based, and knowledge is more theory-based (Mansour, 2009). Beliefs are situated, while knowledge is more abstract and explicit (Pajares, 1996). Conceptualisations are not ready-made, but are rather individually constructed. However, this construction is not performed in isolation; it takes place within cultural and social contexts, which deeply influence the constructor. In our minds, the child is a social construct. It is the reflection of the child, the constructor, and the cultural and social contexts.

Rather than having been taken over mechanically from the professional litera-



ture, student teachers' conceptualisations arise through their personal and family experiences, through their "memories of childhood" (Jalongo, 2002). These are then screened through and shaped in their teaching practices within the university programme. In the course of their teaching practices students make sense of what they observe and what they do while being actively engaged with children.

Therefore, student teachers' conceptualisations of the child and childhood are important because they help us understand their thinking and its relationship to educational practices. Conceptualisations are not only filters through which experience is screened for meanings, but they also influence teachers' classroom decisions and practices (Smith & Croom, 2000). Student teachers' conceptualisations are relevant because they show us how the students think and what they believe in. This makes it possible for us both to make use of this thinking and believing and to shape it according to the educational principles we prefer.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study is focused on investigation of how the child and childhood are conceptualised by university students of pre-primary education. The conceptualisation of prospective teachers is a relevant intervening factor that may influence how they will behave towards children and interact with them and which educational strategies and practices they will use in the classroom.

In this study, the leading research question was how the research participants conceptualise the child and childhood. Associated questions concerned their conceptualisations of learning and developmental processes, play, the family, the pre-school, and the school. In this way we aimed to obtain a broader picture of the conceptualisations of students at the threshold of their entry to employment in the pre-school sphere.

The philosophical stance we based our research on is interpretivism. It asserts that individuals possess understandings of the world and make meaning of it. The methodology based on this philosophy concentrates on describing the meanings that the individuals make of their experiences of the world (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These meanings are not "discovered" by the researcher; rather, they appear or surface in the process of analysing the data.

The data collection method was thematic writing by the participants (Richardson, 1994; Elizabeth, 2007). It is a kind of free personal writing which is framed by several questions provided by the researchers. By "free" we mean that the process of the production of the text by the participants was uninterrupted and undisturbed (as much as possible) by the researchers.

The participants did thematic writing during a regular seminar, and completed or refined the writing at home. We urged the participants that the writing was not a kind of assessment of their knowledge but rather a window for the representation of their "ideas". We required anonymous submission of the papers.



In the data analysis we followed iterative steps of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At the beginning, we read and re-read the writings and made notes on the data. Then we segmented the data to identify thematically coherent “chunks” of meanings, which were then open coded. The codes were first assigned individually by both researchers, and then they were discussed in duo to harmonise the common analytical perspective. To follow the constant comparison method, coding evolved first within individual respondents’ writings, whose codes were then compared across the entire corpus of texts. During and after the coding process, support was sought in the professional literature to underpin important conclusions. Codes were collated to identify themes which created the thematic skeleton of the analysis.

The participants in the study were twenty-two students of the bachelor’s programme in pre-primary education at a middle-sized university in the Czech Republic. At the time of writing the students were in their last semester of the three-year programme. In the course of the programme they attended lectures and seminars in educational, psychological, and social disciplines and had practices in pre-schools. They all were female, single, and childless. They had all indicated an interest in teaching after graduation.

FINDINGS

The findings of this investigation will be presented in two modes. First they will be organised into the thematic areas which appeared in the participants’ writings, then they will be presented in a condensed form representing the “kernel” of the participants’ conceptualisations.

Childhood as a life interval

In the participants’ writings childhood was conceptualised as an **inevitable phenomenon**. Childhood is a part of life that “*everyone must pass through*” (P6; P18),¹ or “*which should not be somehow jumped over or be unnoticed*” (P21). The view of childhood as an unavoidable fate, however, had no spiritual connotation in the participants’ writings. Childhood is biologically inevitable after birth. It is not the choice of the child to be a child; childhood is given to her, and it is beyond her will or option. Childhood is a unique period in the life of people: “*it cannot be replaced with other stages of life*” (P22).

Almost all participants defined childhood as a **stage** in the course of life which has a beginning and an end. It ranges from birth to some period of time in the future. The particular point of time in the future was anchored either **biologically**, i.e. the beginning of puberty (13 years), or later (15 years), or was determined by **legislation** (18 years, which is adulthood under Czech law). Other participants re-

¹ The letter P followed by a number is the code of the participant.



fused to delineate a particular interval of childhood and claimed that it varies with every child (P12; P19). “Some people remain children even in adulthood.” (P19)

Another conceptualisation of childhood which was described by the participants was connected with the **school institutionalisation** of the child. Childhood encompasses a period from birth to the beginning or the end of schooling. A child’s scholarisation is based on several criteria, i.e. cognitive, emotional, and social readiness, as well as on the legislative criteria (the structure of schooling). The participants expressed several age points of scholarisation:

- from birth to the beginning of pre-school attendance (P2; P9), which is mostly at the age of three in the Czech Republic;
- from birth to entry to first grade (P7), which is at the age of six in the Czech Republic;
- from birth to the end of primary school attendance (P16), which is at the age of 11 in the Czech Republic.²

In the opinion of one participant, the end of childhood is **obligatory**: “Nobody allows the child to continue being a child” (P7). The beginning of scholarisation is the end of childhood.

Really, school attendance – whether it is pre-primary or primary – is an important milestone in the life of the child. En-

tering the pre-school is also important as it is the first area of socialisation outside the family. The child begins to be shaped by institutionalised patterns of behaviour. The norms, principles, and aims of the pre-school are imposed on her as institutional cultural practices. The tools of the pre-school are curricula, the school timetable, codes of pre-school behaviour, and rules of communication. These are “programmed” according to institutional expectations of how the child will be developed in the pre-school learning environment while using its resources. Though pre-school education may be characterised as play-pedagogy (Fleer, 2006), it is pedagogical play, not the child’s play, and is not initiated and managed by the child herself.

All the participants described childhood as a **progression** from one stage of development to another one. It seems that they recognised a general developmental law of passing through these stages in order to grow from smaller to larger, from less developed to more developed. To put it in the words of theorisation, growth is a process of “becoming”.

The child’s unique capabilities

If all children were considered identical in terms of their personal traits and intellectual and physical characteristics, then the educational practices of teachers

² The conceptualisation of childhood as a stage in the course of life from a certain point to another point of age, or *ageism*, is a traditional construction based on several dispersed characteristics. Though the concept of ageism is frequently used to denote senior age, albeit stereotyped, it has also been used to describe younger ages, particularly in critical disputes on strictly chronologically-based groupings in the schooling of children (Edwards, Blaise & Hammer, 2009).



would be much simpler and easier. They would basically teach every child in the same way, they would use the same resources, need the same amount of time for each child, and could expect the same results in a group of children. So how do the participants conceptualise unity versus variability among children?

All the participants accepted the universality of differences among people – both among adults and children. “(*The differences*) simply existed in the past; they exist now and will exist in the future. People have always been different.” (P19)

According to the participants, children vary in a wide range of characteristics: communication skills, fine motor skills, intelligence, mathematical ability, behavioural style (e.g. shyness – very typical of young children), temperament, speed of developmental processes, etc. As people vary in so many characteristics, the consequences are logical: every human being is unique. The **uniqueness** of children was the dominant quality which was conceptualised by the participants. However, though every child is unique, not all her characteristics are peculiar to her. “*Every child is unique in something*” (P9). Uniqueness is thus limited. There are qualities which are specific to one child and not another. This proposition claims both inter-personal and intra-personal variability among children. Respecting the uniqueness of the child has consequences that are relevant to educational practices in the pre-school. Education should respect the individual child and support the development of her particular attributes.

If children vary, what are the causes of the differences? In their answers, the participants joined, though unintentionally, the controversial debate on nature versus nurture causality in human characteristics, which is saturated with both scientific and popular theories, as well as myths and prejudices. Many participants surrendered to the position of inborn qualities of children, which are “*rooted in every person*” and which already “*appear at birth*”. Genetic dispositions affect the child’s personal traits such as temperament and agility, which are extremely resistant to change. However, the influence of the family on the child’s qualities is enormous, and the child is “*the mirror of the family*”.

The innocent child

In the writings of the participants clear references were made to children’s **pure qualities**. There was a long list of adjectives the participants used. The child is “*pure*”, “*natural*”, “*unadulterated*”, “*curious*”, “*charming*”, “*candid*”, “*honest*”, “*decent*”, “*spontaneous*”, “*creative*”, “*playful*”, and “*innocent*”. All these adjectives have positive connotations; that is, the conceptualisation of the child by the participants is highly favourable and optimistic. There was no indication that a child can be mischievous, naughty, or disobedient in pre-school and home situations. This is, however, a surprising position as the participants had witnessed many scenes of misbehaviour by children during their practices in pre-schools and had had to deal with children who were



troublesome. Their positive conceptualisation of children is presumably so strong that it suppressed the reality of everyday institutional life in the pre-school.

The construction of the innocent child has an indubitable resemblance to the Rousseauian conception of inborn goodness – the idea that man is good by nature (Kehily, 2009). It recognises the child as a valuable person and cheers the cult of emotion. This optimistic viewpoint may lead to rearing practices based on excessive child-centeredness. Therefore, other conceptualisations of the child are worth considering in order to compare the alternatives. The contemporary sociological discourse reflects the innocent child in a different light. If the child is weak, adults have to control her. In this discourse, innocence is an excuse for adults exercising power over the child. This, in turn, deprives the child of her agency. “To construct a general image of innocent childhood may give adults the power to dismiss the individual child’s agencies and justify the imposition of adults’ will and purposes at the cost of said child’s interests. In framing children as pure and innocent, we allow ourselves great power to insert supervision and intervention into their lives.” (Zhao, 2011, p. 245).

Paradoxically, viewing the child as a pure little being may result in two completely different educational practices: one that provides a relatively unstructured and uncontrolled learning environment, and another that exercises a restraining influence over the child’s learning. Reconciliation of these two positions is difficult but

necessary in order to provide reasonable educational practices.

The optimistic landscape of innocent and carefree childhood, however, fades away as the child grows. The period of innocence and life without problems is provisional because it will be lost during the next phases of life and will never be restored.

“The advantage of this period is a problem-free life. It will, however, be lost in the course of life... The main benefit of childhood is the availability of free time. This will be greatly reduced with increasing age. The spontaneity which dominates childhood will be lost as well, and therefore children should not waste it in childhood... The children should enjoy this period because they will not experience it any more in the future.” (P21)

The feeling of the **extinction of children’s potential** is an important component of the conceptualisation of children by the participants. They stated two reasons for this extinction. First, potential is lost because **other developmental processes** come to the forefront: other abilities and skills and other manners of learning will dominate in the next phases of development. Second, some potential is lost because the children enter the pre-school and began to be **scholarised**. As already mentioned, after the child enters the pre-school she must adapt to the institutional system of rules, schedules, and principles. This institutional learning has a profound and long-lasting influence upon the child. The most frequent observation of the participants concerned the worries the children feel about the responsibilities they have while attending school.



“The older the child, the more worries she feels. No longer can she spend days playing. She must learn to take care of herself. Also, the older the child, the less dependent on her parents she is.” (P19)

“On entering the primary school the child loses freedom from care because of school attendance responsibilities, as well as because of first worries.” (P6)

Joy in learning is replaced by learning as a duty (P19). The knowledge the child learns is now referred to as *“information”* (P11), and is accompanied by a loss of spontaneity.

“At school the child mostly has to sit and listen, which kills her spontaneity.” (P16)

This portrayal of primary school has two related consequences. First, it conceptualises primary school practices as developmentally less appropriate. The manner of interaction and styles of learning are based on subordination rather than on the utilisation of children’s potential. Second, the responsibilities and the school environment that the participants described indicate the strict social control over the child by the institution. Its principle is that the child be obedient and disciplined, as required by the institution’s style and rules.

Learning in the family and in the pre-school

The epistemological beliefs of the participants were expressed by describing the nature of children’s knowing and knowledge. Pre-school children learn by experience in the social environment (home,

the pre-school). By this they shift from incompetence to competence.

The primary learning is focused on **skills**. In the early phases of life the child learns to eat, sit, walk, eat, and play in order to manage herself in everyday life. Skill learning is strongly promoted by adults who guide the child and model the activity. The predominant manner of skill learning is by *imitation*. In her early developmental stages, the child imitates her parents and siblings. She observes the motor behaviour of the adult, then she copies the movements and tries to coordinate her motions.

“Learning by imitation is predominant; it starts as early as at opening the little mouth (for the first time) and ranges up to learning to walk.” (P21)

“Children imitate adults because they like the world of adults.” (P20)

In contrast to skill learning, the **knowledge orientation** draws on the child’s innate capacities. It stems from the internal potential of the child. The participants used apt metaphors to catch the ability of the child to remember information easily. It must be noticed that they wrote about remembering, not about reasoning.

“The child’s brain is like a sponge which soaks up everything which is ‘offered’ to the child.” (P22)

“Little children learn swiftly; they absorb knowledge spontaneously...” (P15)

“Children are able to absorb information; the brain functions like a sponge.” (P9)

The metaphor of **sponge learning** has two meanings. First, it reflects the way



the children learn – easily and intensely. Second, it says that learning is extensive. A sponge is porous; it has abundant vacant spaces in its body to accumulate moisture – in this case the vacant space is the capacity to store immense knowledge. It is worth noting that empty space in the brain resembles the image of a *tabula rasa*, the Rousseauian concept.

Advancement in learning is motivated by the child's **curiosity**. Curiosity is an appetite that draws the child to discovering things, events, and situations. At the same time, curiosity brings joy, which is a relevant component of learning.

“The child is constantly curious and is eager to learn new knowledge... Some children are extremely inquisitive; they are in fact self-taught... Children are hungry for knowledge.” (P14)

However, the predominant learning in the early years is **latent**. The children are mostly unaware of the processes of learning. Learning is not accompanied by explicit intentional motives.

“The child is spontaneous while learning and in fact she is not aware that she is learning.” (P14)

“Children learn without knowing that they are learning.” (P19)

As the child grows, **social learning** becomes more extensive. The child imitates adults who serve as models of behaviour, attitudes, and values. Inter-generational learning supports the transmission of values, beliefs, and traditions from adults to children (Granville & Ellis, 1999) and has a profound and long-lasting formative influence on the child.

In addition, inter-generational learning contributes to building cohesion in families. This is very important nowadays as the traditional family pattern is changing with the rate of divorce and the number of unmarried mothers increasing. As a result, on many occasions grandparents take up the tasks of inter-generational learning (Jessel, 2009).

The authority of adulthood is a guarantee of truth and the trust in learning of children. The respected elder is not only a role model but also a repository of trust.

“Children copy the behaviour of adults because they think that what we adults do is a right thing.” (P18)

“Frequently, the child cannot discern whether what she saw was an appropriate or a wrong thing.” (P17)

The participants were unanimous in considering **the family** the strongest and the most influential of all environmental factors in the upbringing of the child. The family's influence “prevails”, “is greatest”, or “is essential”.

“Anything that happens, and how it happens, in the family influences her behaviour, actions, attitudes, emotions – and the child uses this (acquired) behaviour outside the family.” (P4)

“The first relationships, opinions, and later also attitudes, originate in the family. The family shapes the child's personality.” (P12)

Why is the influence of the family so strong? Four reasons emerged in the writings of the participants: primacy, duration, intensity, and quality of learning. **Primacy** means that the family's influ-



ence took place before any other external influences; it started at the child's birth, or even – as one participant expressed it – at the prenatal stage of development. Its **duration** is extensive, so its impact is longer than the impact of the pre-school. The family's influence is **intensive** because it takes place at any time of the day or night. The **quality** of the family's impact is guaranteed by emotional involvement and through providing a favourable climate.

In the views of the participants, while the family provides the child with an emotional background and observational opportunities, the pre-school supports social interaction within a larger group of peers with whom the child shares both play and learning, starts new friendships, and learns to cooperate and respect others. In addition, she meets adults who are not members of her family (teachers) who offer models of behaviour that are different from those of her parents. This is an important feature of social learning.

The participants consider pre-school education to be a **complement** rather than a substitute for upbringing in the family. The educational potential of the pre-school is limited when compared with that of the family – both because of the shorter time available and the large child-adult ratio in the pre-school in comparison to that at home.

“The pre-school can inhibit the misbehaviour of the child but it can never influence the child to the same extent as the family.” (P11)

Interestingly, nothing was expressed by the participants about family-pre-

school relationships. The coordination of practices or sharing experiences between them was absent from the writing of the participants – probably because of the students' lack of experience of this important area of early childhood education during their practices.

CONCLUSIONS

In their writings, the participants produced rich data that leads us to understand their conceptualisations of the child and childhood. The first finding is that the participants did have particular conceptions of these notions. In this section we shall condense them into four major topics: (a) progression in the course of childhood, (b) the child's capabilities, (c) the child's decency, and (d) environmental influences on the child. Furthermore, we will attempt to suggest how the pre-service education of future pre-school teachers should respond to such conceptualisations.

Progression. Childhood was delineated as an inevitable, as well as a distinct period in the life of humans, and, as such, it has no parallel with other periods. The child advances through the period of childhood, during which her properties change. They progress from simple to more complex and from lower levels to higher levels. Both the beginning of childhood and its end are beyond the powers of children. The beginning is birth, the end is the beginning of obligatory school attendance.



Capabilities. The participants support the position of *capable children*. Children are keen observers of their environment and their ability to “absorb” new information is enormous. The capability model of children is the opposite of the deficiency model, according to which the child is an imperfect being. There was no hint in the participants’ writings that children are incomplete adults. Generally, the stance taken by the participants is that the child is “being” rather than “becoming”. In tandem with this position, they inclined to the concept of children’s *agency* (though they did not use this term).

Decency. Children were described as *pure*, *innocent*, and *decent* beings, which, however, makes them vulnerable to the threats posed by the world. The school was portrayed as a factor that abruptly changes the style of the child’s life: the paradise of childhood is lost here.

Environment. There were two external factors to which the participants attributed power in moulding the child’s personality, i.e. the family and the school. The former is the primary factor and exerts the leading influence; the latter is complementary to it. The home is also the guarantee of stability and security for the child (as the child is vulnerable). The school is a necessity because it teaches the child to take responsibility, which is a property needed for “real” life. Scholarisation leads to the extinction of much of

the child’s original potential, which is, however, replaced by developmentally more advanced ones.

The study demonstrated that the investigation of the conceptualisations of key concepts is a useful analytical tool which leads us to a better understanding of the thinking and acting of pre-service teachers. This understanding allows us to implement instructional strategies for working further with the students’ conceptualisations. The aim should be to convert the students’ conceptualisations, which are more or less implicit, into an overt form. This can be done through students’ verbalisations. After the conceptualisations are made explicit, they can be shared in a group of students as well as confronted with the professional literature. This makes the students look at their conceptualisations in a more abstract way, which, in turn, opens the way to knowledge generalisation. In parallel with these strategies, reflective observation of pre-school classrooms should take place, later followed by practical teaching of students, which is guided by university instructors. Discussions should be organised on how the students interpret the classroom events and how they make sense of their own interaction with children. As is obvious, this mode of utilising students’ conceptualisations has several phases and levels which overlap and support each other in order to result in the students’ best instructional performance.



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doc. PaedDr. Adriana Wiegerová, PhD.,

Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Faculty of Humanities, Department of School Education, Czech Republic;
e-mail: wiegerova@fhs.utb.cz

prof. PhDr. Peter Gavora, CSc.,

Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Faculty of Humanities, Research Centre of the Faculty of Humanities,
Czech Republic; e-mail: gavora@fhs.utb.cz