

Personality centered approach to education of children with emotional and behavioral disorders: intervention through the eyes of educational professionals from residential educational facilities

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Abstract: *This paper explores the role of personality-centered approach to education (Helus, 2009) in the intervention in children with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD). Selected findings of the author's qualitative research, the participants of which were educators from residential educational facilities, are also presented in the text. The author compares research findings concerning the so-called personality-holistic approach of educational professionals to these children with the personality centered approach to education defined by Helus. The research focused on their professional experience and their opinions regarding children with EBD.*

Keywords: *Emotional and behavioral disorders; special needs education; children with EBD; child centered approach; intervention; educational needs.*

1 Introduction

The aim of this paper is to find an answer to the question of what role can personality centered approach to education play in intervention in children with emotional and behavioral disorders.

Our main starting points will be the Helus' (2004, 2009) definition of personality centered approach and selected findings from qualitative research, which show personality focused tendencies in approaches of educational professionals from educational facilities. This text therefore follows loosely the conclusions of the research monograph (Červenka, 2016) in which these findings were analyzed and where the specific concept of intervention in children with emotional and behavioral disorders (hereinafter referred to as «EBD») described in the interviews by participants.

Helus' (2004, 2009) book *Child in Personality Centered Approach*¹ is far from addressing the issue of educating children with EBD. On the contrary, it is a general educational book oriented on education of *all* children. Students of special needs education focusing on children with EBD to whom we give the Helus' book to study keep asking what is the use or inspiration of his book in their field.

The answer can be very simple: simply because *they are primarily children* whose behavioral disorders hinder proper development. But even such a simple answer deserves a broader explanation, to which the following text is devoted.

2 Aim of children education and personality centered approach to education

Helus' (2004, 2009) personality centered approach to education applies to *all* children. If we wish to apply this concept to the situation of children with EBD, it is necessary to find areas of shared interest between the approaches of general education and special education. The common goal is undoubtedly the goal of education: maximizing the individual's development potential. However, there are differences in the means used.

According to the Salamanca declaration, education is the right of every child. Similarly, it is their right to have "the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning". The statement also takes into account that "every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs" and that education systems and programs should allow for "the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs" (UNESCO, 1994).

The *wide diversity of the characteristics and needs* of the child does not necessarily include only the characteristics typically associated with childhood (e.g. the identity crisis in adolescents²). It may also include special characteristics related to emotional and behavioral disorders (e.g. fixed behavioral patterns, disturbed relationships with peers and teachers)³. These characteristics carry specific educational needs with them.

The notion of education may relate not only to "knowledge and learning", but also to "acquiring social and other skills, spiritual, moral and aesthetic values and desirable relationships to other people and to society as a whole, to emotional and other development [...]". Thus, education focuses on both the personal level of development and integration of the individual into society (Bílá kniha, 2001, p. 14-15). Understanding education as "just teaching knowledge and listening to orders" is an oversimplification: "The teacher understands socialization issues and provides

¹ There are two editions of the same book, the latter has been extended and reworked.

² Cf. Erikson (1999).

³ Cf. Bower (1981).

education as a comprehensive integration into society and application to it.” (Helus, 2015, p. 107)

The means to this end should include, *inter alia*, “ensuring a fair access to educational opportunities” in the sense of free choice of path and institutions to education, and “the creation of adequate educational opportunities and forms for all by their capabilities, requirements and needs” (Bílá kniha, 2001, p. 17). General education and special needs education often differ in the ways and means of ensuring this equitable approach. Education of children with EBD in which “there is segregation (exclusion of an individual from his or her natural social environment and placement in a school facility for institutional or protective education⁴) using an intervention” would be an example. In other special needs education disciplines, intervention is directed primarily at mainstream schools. (Vojtová, 2008, p. 20)

The personality centered approach is one of the paths to the educational goal. Zdeněk Helus understands the concept of personality centered approach as an approach that treats the child “as a personality in its emergence and development”, while the “tendency to develop as a personality” is understood as natural and essential to every child (Helus, 2009, p. 259).

Advocates of the personality centered approach understand that all children have a tendency to develop; towards ever higher stages of development; to integrate into interpersonal relationships and to be (in various ways) in mutual trust with other people; to become a man or a woman; to realize and update their potentials; to shape their self-concept and to express their identity; to have control over their lives, to be who they want to be and to achieve the goals that give their life purpose and bring them joy (Helus, 2009, p. 259–260).

In addition to enumerating the children’s developmental tendencies, Helus (2009, p. 108) lists four personality qualities that are specific to the child and refer to what is “an important internal prerequisite for a child’s personal development”: a) open-minded experiencing (accompanied by the risk of vulnerability); b) reliance (accompanied by the risk of disappointment in others); c) developmental direction (accompanied by the risk of deformation), and d) a wealth of development opportunities (accompanied by the danger of them getting wasted).

With these prerequisites of personal development “the child turns to the educator” and the educators base their educational activities on them (Helus, 2009, p. 123). This, however, requires “an educator who understands this tendency, takes it seriously, helps it in a proper way, and provides support and counseling” – such an educator applies a personality centered approach to the child (Helus, 2009, p. 259–260). The

⁴ It may also be another facility (not only for the exercise of institutional or protective education) – for example, a center for counseling care, which is a preventive educational facility, and a two-month stay in its boarding department is based largely on formal volunteering of the child.(see Zákon 109/2002 Sb.)

role of the educator lies in helping the child to use his/her potential to grow to adulthood (Helus, 2004, p.80). As I will show later, similar attitudinal tendencies towards EBD children do exist among educators.

The child should be approached with the awareness of the importance of the development aspect. This is how we concentrate more on how personal “qualities originate and evolve – whether they are inhibited or deformed in their origin and development.” From this perspective, “the child is a personality in the dynamism of its constitution (origin)” (Helus 2004, p.86).

3 Emotional and behavioral disorders as a barrier in the child's life path

The issue of emotional and behavioral disorders is primarily addressed in terms of its manifestations (aggressive behavior, conflicts, etc.), which are perceived as a negative deviation from social, age-related and other norms (cf. Pokorná, 1993). Common trends in approaches to “problem” behavior are well documented by the statement that “teachers often respond to behavior rather than the need the child expresses in their behavior, which may lead to deterioration in case of problematic manifestations” (Ayers, Clarke & Murray, 2000, p. 63). These approaches to EBD help in basic orientation in the situation. However, in isolated form they do not say much about the child's educational needs (cf. Vojtová, 2008), and they do not even focus our attention on these needs. However, from the point of view of the educational effect on the child, it is not enough to base one's response only on the phenomenal aspect of the issue, from the description alone.

This is why we understand emotional and behavioral disorders as a specific barrier to the child's life path (see Vojtová, 2010; Kaufman & Landrum, 2013) – as a factor that *inhibits* or even *deforms* development of the personality qualities of the child.

This approach to EBD is taken into account, for example, in the definition of emotional and behavioral disorders of the American National Mental Health and Special Education Coalition (1992), which, in addition to normative comparison of the child's manifestations (differences) with external standards, takes into account the dimension of a perspective, i.e. the consequences of the situation for the child's life career:

- (i) The term “emotional or behavioral disorder” means a disability characterized by behavioral or emotional responses in school so different from appropriate age, cultural, or ethnic norms that they adversely affect educational performance. The educational performance includes academic, social, vocational, and personal skills. Such a disability

- (A) is more than a temporary, expected response to stressful events in the environment.
- (B) is consistently exhibited in two different settings, at least one of which is school-related; and
- (C) is unresponsive to direct intervention in general education or the child's condition is such that general education interventions would be insufficient.
- (ii) Emotional and behavioral disorders can co-exist with other disabilities.
- (iii) This category may include children or youth with schizophrenic disorders, affective disorders, anxiety disorders, or other sustained disorders of conduct or adjustment when they adversely affect educational performance in accordance with section (i).

For a deeper understanding of the situation of a child with emotional and behavioral disorders, we will use Goffman's (1986) theory of stigmatization. The author sees it as a special social process that can lead to the *exclusion* of a stigmatized person *from full social acceptance*. In this case, the stigmatized person is "reduced in our minds from a whole and a normal person to a tainted, discounted one" (Goffman 1986, p. 3). This has real consequences: for example, people are less friendly towards the stigmatized person, reluctant to help, or, in the extreme case, they seek to physically destroy him/her⁵.

A typical reaction to a stigmatized person is discrediting, but Goffman (1986) points to other types of reactions. One of them may be the reaction of *the wise*, which he divides into two basic groups: 1) persons who are related to the stigmatized person through social structures (relatives, friends); and 2) persons who come into contact with the stigmatized professionally (Goffman, 1986). Reactions to the stigmatized can be interpreted as understanding or supporting (Červenka, 2013).

The wise professionals are key to this paper, because, for example, educational professionals from educational facilities (special educators, educators) can play such a role. Their professional position and experience is an opportunity to get acquainted with the situation of EBD children and to adopt a personality centered approach to the intervention process. Their actions may provide a counterbalance to depersonalizing effects⁶ that emotional and behavioral disorders bring to the child.

⁵ Cf. Z. Bauman (2003) writing about holocaust this context.

⁶ Helus (2004, pp. 153–158) presents several *depersonalizing attitudes towards the child*: a) the child as a material, an object of manipulation; b) the child as a threat, a burden; c) the child as a compensation for own educational deficiencies; and d) being blinded by the child – protectionist reductionism. In the context of emotional and behavioral disorders, it is essential to emphasize the second of the depersonalizing attitudes – the child as a threat and burden.

4 Methodology

Qualitative research, the findings of which I rely upon in this paper, was focused on the experience of educational professionals from residential educational facilities and their approach to children with EBD. The research was conducted in 2012-2015. The process of intervention in children with EBD constituted my framework of interest.

The main thematic areas were represented by the following questions: a) What importance do the educational professionals attribute to their relationships with the children with whom they work? b) What are the essential circumstances of the intervention relationship (sources, barriers)? c) What educational needs of children with EBD are considered by education professionals to be essential?

In view of the research objectives, a qualitative method was chosen and the dominant technique of collecting data material was a deep semi-structured interview with a total of 15 participants – educational professionals. In order to address the ethical dimension of the research, informed consent was required before the interviews. Participants were selected through a deliberate selection, its main criteria included diversity of their professional experience. The choice took into account the criterion of “generalizability of cases to theoretical assertions rather than to populations or universes” (Bryman by Silverman, 2005, p. 118). Diversity of the data was ensured by the variety of facilities in which the participants were active (facilities for institutional or protective education: diagnostic institutions, children’s homes with schools, educational institutions, counseling care centers). In addition, this variety was ensured by a variety of professional positions and roles (facility managers, special education teachers – ethopedists, teachers, educators). In addition to the interview technique, the data was collected through three pre-research group interviews and field notes.

The collected data material was analyzed on an ongoing basis from the position of an ethnographic approach (cf. with Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995) and was conducted at two levels – at the level of *open coding* and *focused coding*. Most of the topics and findings that emerged from the analysis were published in two research monographs (Červenka, 2014, 2016).

5 Personality-holistic approach of educational professionals

I formulated the concept of *personality-holistic approach*⁷ while analyzing the data (see Červenka 2016), when I noticed in many participants’ (educational profession-

⁷ Using this very concept rather than an established concept (person centered approach – Rogers, the personality developing education – Jedlička) was an effort to emphasize that I refer to the tendency towards a certain interventional concept that were captured in qualitative research and which may not exactly correspond to various established theoretical concepts. The notion of personality-holistic approach should also underline those of its features that can be counterbalanced by the effects of stigmatization and labeling, or be a counterbalance to the tendency

als) testimonies their attitudes towards children as *persons who have problems* rather than *problem person*. It was a manifestation of the approach that we could refer to as a *holistic view of the personality*.

These attitudes did not appear to be of explicit nature in the data material. Similarly, the personality-holistic approach cannot be considered as an approach in the true sense of the word, but rather as attitudes or attitudinal tendencies, which were to a large extent common to many research participants. The research findings are not generalizable for the entire population of educational professionals from residential educational facilities. They show, however, that these attitudes tend to occur and that they attributed importance to them in the intervention process (Červenka, 2016).

I shall begin with two excerpts from interviews in which the participants expressed their attitude beyond the narrow view of children being perceived only *through* their problem:

One participant (P7) characterized children with EBD as follows: “**they are not any different**, it is just that they had a little different ... they had a different regimen, different rules... They need to be treated a little differently...” (P7). Similarly, another participant (P6) characterized the children with whom she works (i.e. children with EBD) as follows: “What kind of children do we have here? Well, I’d rather say **we have kids here**. [...] They are not inmates to me, **they are just children**. To me, they’re like everybody else. ... I think they’re not much different from ordinary children. ... It’s just kids undergoing puberty.” (P6)

One of the key topics that emerged from the analysis of the data material was the relationship and the role it may play in the intervention process in children with EBD. For example, the role of a relationship as an instrument and prerequisite for a successful intervention lies in personal relationships between teachers and children. The relationships must be frequent, long-lasting, and often intense (“*It is almost like we live here with the kids.*” P6), while experiences from stressful situations are often shared. These relationships are opportunities for the educators to get acquainted with the child in different contexts, with the child’s situation and perspective. This is in itself an opportunity for educators to become *the wise* (cf. Goffman, 1986) and to approach the child as a personality with a variety of characteristics, including those associated with “problem” behavior (“*They are little rascals, but we are still quite fond of them.*”⁸). (Červenka, 2016)

The tendency to personality centered approach was also apparent from the partner-like and child-respecting approach, which was illustrated in a statement by

to reduce the personality of a child with EBD to those attributes associated with the “problem”. (Červenka, 2016)

⁸ This is a reconstruction of the sentence used during an informal interview that concerned education of children with ADHD.

participant P2a, when he perceived the following situation as a success: «*when the child becomes our client*», defining as a client a person “*who actively enters into [intervention, counseling] relationship*”.

Participant P12 spoke about **relationship**, the essence of which he defined as a partnership, not between an educational professional and a client, but rather **between human beings**. He also described this form of relationship explicitly as a need of children with EBD: “... *although we do not really allow the children to call us by our first names, we actually do have that kind of relationship. [...] . that there is no institutional barrier, what I represent, I am simply a human being. Yes, I think this is what they need a lot. Being accepted perhaps as a partner, as an adult to adult, because I’m there for them, rather than they for me.*” (P12)

The statements of the participants that I interpreted as a tendency towards a personality-holistic approach, suggested the existence of an informal, although not clearly articulated, shared norm, which I termed *imperative to respect the child and help him/her* (Červenka, 2014).

6 Personality centered approach to education through the eyes of educational professionals

Now I will interpret excerpts from research interviews through the optics of four prerequisites for the personality development of the child (open-minded experiencing, reliance, developmental direction, wealth of developmental possibilities) as defined by Helus (2009). With their help (Červenka, 2016) I described the basic parameters of the aforementioned personality and holistic approach.⁹

6.1. Open-minded experiencing

Open-minded experiencing is “linked to the desire to have something common with other people, to be interested, to explore, to ask and answer, to look forward to what comes, to learn new things and to show it” while “the disposition of the child to open-minded experiencing is essential and the priority task in early care is to bring about, empower and exploited this open-minded experiencing”. The child should experience kindness, beauty, truth, order and human interactions (Helus, 2009, p. 108).

Although the child tends towards open-minded experiencing, circumstances that will present obstacles may occur. An example may be flooding the child with “perceptions and experiences that he/she cannot process psychologically.” (Helus, 2009,

⁹ We should keep in mind that the four assumptions formulated by Helus (2009) have characteristics of analytical categories that do not exist in the reality, at least not in such an ideal, pure form, but are rather mixed and intertwined in different ways. Similarly, the needs of the child will interweave, as each of them can also respond to multiple developmental prerequisites.

p. 108-109). There is an apparent overlap to the field of emotional and behavioral disorders here.

If something prevents the child from experiencing open-mindedness, he/she should have close relatives who he/she trusts unreservedly, providing him/her with protection and support and preventing his/her traumatization (Helus, 2009, p. 108-109).

Let us summarize the above by asking what needs of the child can be associated with the prerequisite of open-minded experiencing? What *needs to be done* if the natural tendency of the child to an open experiencing is blocked? What does the child need for an open-minded experiencing?

From how Helus (2009) defines the assumption of open-minded experiencing, we can deduce for example the following needs: the need for a secure and trustworthy space; the experience of goodness; the need to have a sense of belonging with others, to experience social acceptance and the feeling of being important to others, etc.

For open-minded experiencing, the child needs a **secure and trustworthy space** and **unreserved trust** (at least in some) other people, it needs **to experience interest of another person in him/her**.

A common topic in the interviews was trust in the lives of children with EBD, especially when the child lost trust in other people after a bad experience of disappointment. The participants then spoke of the **need to restore the child's trust in other people** and, since trust in others is linked with self-confidence, to teach the child to trust others and self. A relationship between the teacher and the child built on trust can be a means to restore the trust of the child in others: "... *that the child will start perceiving, experiencing, believing and trusting that the care he/she receives can be fair.*" (P8a)

Trust was also seen by the participants as a prerequisite for the intervention relationship between the teacher and the child and the open communication in it:

"The trust allows me to play a clean game, so to speak. [...].. we really can be straightforward with each other.[...] I believe it is essential in life, because as long as I trust myself, I trust others." (P12)

The participants spoke of opportunities that they provide to the children **to let them express their emotions safely**: "As soon as they engage in the life of the facility where they form relationships with the teachers and the wardens, and vice versa, this is when they start receiving emotional support, too." (P4)

Participant P6 considered emotional needs and described the opportunities for the child to express their emotions in the relationship between the teacher and the child: "Many children [...] are emotionally deprived [...] Some kids come back from school and want to be fondled. [...] Some bigger kids come to shake hands. [...] Some just need to talk. Some nod to greet us. [...] This is what they miss. And what they need.

[...] Every child has someone, be it a teacher, a warden, no matter who, assistant teacher, who is a little closer to them.” (P6)

To experience the desire to *have something in common with other people*, the child needs to feel part of the community, which refers to the need for experienced solidarity, they need an opportunity to feel being a member of the community, to receive social acceptance (in contrast to the effects of stigmatization) and the experience of positive self-perception in relationships (cf. Vojtová, 2010)¹⁰, which is closely related to the interest shown by others in the child.

Participant P6 has spoken about **accepting the child for who he/she is**: *“I am interested in you and ... I am not condemning you.”* (P6) Participant P1 stressed the need to **be sensible and empathetic towards the child** in the interview: *“It requires huge attention, huge empathy, to make the little person trust you. ...”* (P1)

Helus (2009, p. 109) writes about the five experiences (goodness, beauty, truth, order, human-to-human interactions) that the child needs to be provided. For example, the need to **experience goodness** through the importance of a good deed should strengthen the child, “no matter what happens” (ibid.)

In this context, it is worth mentioning two concepts that explicitly appeared in the interviews: **“a trace of a good man”** and **“a positive flash of light”**.

The first one was used by the participant P3 in considering the effectiveness and visibility of the results of interventions in children with EBD: *“... if we give it to the child ... just that life can be different, [...] only a trace of a good person, just a trace of someone respecting them that exists in this world.”* (P3)

The other concept appeared in the statement of the participant P2a: *“You know, we are still using such a starting point – that there was some kind of a positive flash ... of them meeting people and being in an environment where they feel good. And we think that children can carry it on in their lives going forward.”* (P2a)

6.2 Reliance

In the positive sense of the word, reliance is “based on the ability of a child to commit to another person, to rely, to trust.” The other person does not abuse “the child’s reliance, but on the contrary, meets it halfway, lovingly.” The child then has the chance to draw “stimuli and strength to develop personally” from the other person (Helus, 2009, p. 110).

Reliance loses its positive meaning when the child loses its respect to and trust in the other person, and when disappointment sets in. For the child’s reliance, the risk

¹⁰ Věra Vojtová (2010) focuses on several dimensions of school life in her questionnaire, aimed at preventing problem student’s behavior. One of these dimensions is the student’s position in school (school status) and the associated issue of self-perception of the child in relationships, which is an important factor for the resilience to or development of the problem behavior of the student.

of disappointment in others is one of the “serious life losses of childhood and youth, with serious, lasting consequences”. (ibid. p. 108-110)

The assumption of reliance relates to issues of relationship, trust and safety, but also to the need to feel solidarity with others and from others, the need to rely on someone, with which trust in others is closely related to, so that the child can rely on them (see the *resting in trust* above). Here, the area of open experiencing mingles with the area of reliance – the participants’ actions can often influence both.

More importantly, there is a need to *be able to draw from the personality of the other person*, which affects the research topic of the relationship between the child and the teacher as a means of intervention. This topic was mentioned by the participant P2a: **“The only educational ... and effective educational method is the personality of the educator. [...] And we need [...] to convince them that the person, the educator or the personality they met with, somehow addressed them, enriched them, has given them some impulse to their future life.”** (P2a)

Participant P12 considered mutual reliance with the child (the ability of the teacher to reveal his/her own vulnerability) as a way to show the child his/her good intentions and offer the child an opportunity for open communication. At the same time, this attitude points to the teacher’s desire to define the relationship as a partner, and the willingness to risk refers to the teacher’s sense of professional responsibility: *“... that you believe [the child-client] and he can hurt you ... but on the other hand, I let him hurt me rather than his parents later. Let him try it, see what it results in in this institution, when I can teach him, because I’m less emotionally involved, rather than letting him do it, with all consequences, in the world outside. Yeah, if he needs to go through it, it better ... happen in this environment.”* (P12)

6.3 Developmental direction

The child’s demands *direction*, which is evident in the fact that “it always wants something, strives for something, evolves, goes somewhere with his whole life”, and which is “a basis of [...] everything.” They head towards adolescence and adulthood – towards biological, psychological and social maturity; to self-concept and authentic self-expression; to independence – looking for ways to cope with reliance and how to get rid of it, they learn to take responsibility and to live an autonomous life (self-discipline, education) (Helus, 2009, p. 112).

From the above, various needs can be deduced, such as the need to have the opportunity to learn autonomy, to develop autonomy, independence and accountability.

For example, the participant P8a spoke of the fact that the personality and experience of the child are at the center of the intervention process and the development of the child is perceived as a success: *“For me, the first priority is how they feel here [...] for me, the success is that the child begins to experience, to perceive and begins to appreciate self. [...] To me, the stage when the child begins to flourish, become*

self-confident and listen and work on self-development, is the significant phase, a priority.” (P8a)

Implicit targeting for development has also been mentioned by the participant P3 when she talked about trying to **toughen up the child**, instead of trying to adapt the child to his environment, break them: *“And we do not want to break anyone at this age, right? These are immature children. [...] We want to toughen them up. And we can only toughen them up positively.”* (P3)

6.4 Wealth of development opportunities

The wealth of the child’s potentialities means the following personality qualities: “to be happy; to feel the love and sympathy of others and to respond to them with own manifestations of affection and sympathy; to emancipate oneself from the narrowed view of things and to try to see wider and deeper connections; to make an effort to cultivate one’s own self-esteem and to be oneself in a nobler way; to accept the challenges of open future and to pursue one’s goals; to take responsibility and to cope with difficulties.” (Helus, 2009, p. 113)

In terms of the wealth of the child’s potential to develop, there is always a risk of it being wasted (Helus, 2009). This developmental premise is associated primarily with the need of the child to have an open perspective of the future and a quality of life in adulthood (cf. Vojtová, 2008). Many children with EBD are not trying to change their life situation, although they would want it (the *will to change*) because they have no idea of an open future and do not believe in change (*belief in change*) (Červenka, 2017).

The need for open perspectives was one of the resulting topics of the research I referenced here. In addition to the need for (positive) setting of boundaries, the need for open perspectives and identities was identified in the data material as a need that the participants – education professionals – perceived as essential. The need to set boundaries and open up perspectives is related to the need to have a role model. It can be the role model who gives the child a conception of boundaries (what should or should not be done) and also suggests the direction for the future (Červenka, 2016).

An example of thinking about future perspectives is a snippet of an interview with the participant P6 who spoke about making a clean break, turning over a new leaf as a way to help the child out of past problems and as an opportunity for a new beginning: *“I will punish him and that’s the end of the story. [...] And I mean I do not just punish [...] we speak about it, we discuss it to take some lessons from it, but **then we make a clean break and we start all over again.** I cannot tell him in two months ... something like: I do not want to talk to you, I don’t trust you because two months ago you disappointed me. Bang on about it and throw it back in his face, what was ... and what actually is no more. **Because our children have a lot of problems here and they would never get rid of them.**”* (P6)

7 Conclusion

In the very conclusion to this paper, we should answer the introductory question – *What can be the role of personality centered approach to children with emotional and behavioral disorders?*

The educational process relies on the characteristics of the child, it derives from them the educational needs of the child, and the educator plans the child's education accordingly.¹¹ For example, needs such as open-minded experiencing, emancipation to adulthood, opportunity to develop towards adulthood or the fulfillment of individual potentials stem from developmental characteristics (cognitive, emotional, social) (cf. Helus, 2009). In addition, children with EBD should also take into account the characteristics associated with behavioral disorders that act as a barrier to their personality development (Vojtová & Červenka, 2015). This is related to the specific educational needs of the child which the educator should respect and aim to fulfil in the intervention in children with EBD.

The concept of the personality centered approach to education is a beneficial stimulus not only for the theory, but also for the practice of educating children with EBD. This is an approach that highlights factors essential to the development of the personality of the child and shows the directions going forward. At the same time, however, it prevents us (not only special-education) educators (and it is essential in the context of emotional and behavioral disorders) from forgetting that children with emotional and behavioral disorders are mainly children. Children, whose behavior is also subject to problematic manifestations with complicated consequences for them and people around them. While Helus' concept of personality centered approach puts the child at the focus of interest, the individual development assumptions are always defined in the context of the child's environment – therefore so much emphasis is put on socialization, relationships with others, the role of trust in others, reciprocity and other needs. Perhaps this is because, in many cases, these children are no different from other children other than they have not been given opportunities and support for proper personality development in their lives.

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¹¹ Cf. the three steps of the concept of informed intervention in children with EBD (Vojtová & Červenka, 2011).

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(reviewed twice)

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