

PERSONALISED EDUCATION STARTS WITH RELATIONSHIP: THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH INSIGHTS INTO THE TEACHER- STUDENT DYNAMIC

DAGMARA KOLASA, ANNA SAJDAK-BURSKA*

*Corresponding author: a.sajdak@uj.edu.pl

Abstract. Personalised education is a category probably widely known in academia, especially in the pedagogical community. However, there have been few publications dealing with this topic that focus on reflecting its origins and constitutive features. It therefore seemed necessary to gain a broader perspective and provide a more in-depth description of personalised academic education. This article explores the theoretical foundations of this approach to the educational process, drawing on a review of the relevant literature. It also presents the findings of a study conducted in 2024 at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (Poland). In this article, the authors decided to select and describe the characteristics of the relationship between academic teachers and students that emerged from empirical research. To gather perspectives on personalised academic education and how it is understood, individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted. The study involved six members of the university's management staff, 15 academic teachers, and 27 students, and was based on qualitative research methodology. Within the context of personalised academic education, several key categories emerged – most notably: attention to learners' individual needs, the personalised nature of teaching, and a specific, student-centred attitude among educators. The importance of the teacher-student relationship was emphasised as the most essential aspect of personalised education. The research highlighted the qualities that academic teachers should possess in order to effectively engage with students in the spirit of this approach. According to the findings, the quality of the teacher-student relationship plays a crucial role in creating an environment conducive to holistic and integral student development.

Keywords: personalised education, teacher-student relationship, academic didactics, student-centred learning, individualization.

1. INTRODUCTION

A closer look at teacher-student relationship seems particularly important today due to the different ways of understanding what personalised education is. The first type includes works on personalised education understood in a broader sense (Waldeck, 2006; Clarke, 2013; Ferguson et al., 2001; DiMartino & Clarke, 2008; Kettler & Taliaferro, 2022; Keefe & Jenkins, 2000; Ward, 2020) and that is the sense adopted in this article. They present an approach to working with learners in a way that takes into account their needs, interests, and active role in their own development process. This education is conducted by a facilitator, mentor, or teacher with whom the student establishes a relationship and supports them in the learning process. These publications also refer to teaching methods (including active learning methods), as well as to cooperation with other learners and (self-)reflection on the development process. In these types of articles personalised education is perceived as a holistic and

integral approach to the education process. However, most publications focus on individual learning tailored to the needs of the learner, using modern technologies – programs and platforms designed to enable every learner to achieve satisfactory learning outcomes (Tetzlaff et al., 2021; Reber et al., 2018; Lan, 2021; Mouritz et al., 2023; Fake et al., 2023; Schmid et al., 2020; Alamri et al., 2020; Bellarhmouch, 2023; Budnyk & Kotyk, 2024). The teaching materials presented are therefore “personalised” because they relate to the individual needs of learners, their preferences, existing knowledge, etc. This understanding of the concept of personalised education (often described in literature as *personalised learning*) undermines the idea of a personalised approach (based on teacher-student relationship), which was the subject of the research. Waldeck (2007) points out that “the most solid empirical/social scientific work on personalised education is focused on the learning medium that most consider to be the least personal – distance and online education” (p. 412), so away from peers and teachers. As indicated by research conducted by Liu (2024), positive relationships between teachers and students can increase students' academic engagement. Therefore, it seems necessary to draw attention to this probably most important pillar of personalised education when discussing the characteristics of this approach to the educational process – the teacher-student relationship.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

For at least two decades, there has been ongoing discussion about the need to change the way students are educated. Many European documents emphasise the importance of preparing academic staff for modern education, particularly in the use of new technologies. Debates on the future of academic teaching call for a paradigm shift – from a model focused on content, standards, the teacher, and directive instruction, to one centred on the student, the learning process, and learning outcomes (Budnyk, 2024). The roots of such postulates can be traced back to the works of Brown and Atkins (1988), as well as Barr and Tagg (1995, pp. 198–200). The latter authors, in particular, contributed significantly to the popularisation of the didactic revolution known as *the shift from teaching to learning*, which describes the transition from a teaching-oriented to a learning-oriented paradigm. A number of works have also appeared in Polish pedagogy, in which authors outline paradigmatic maps directly related to academic teaching (Sajdak, 2013, 2018). Among the most frequently identified paradigms are:

- normative paradigms (transmissive, behaviourist)
- interpretative paradigms (constructivist),
- the humanistic paradigm,
- the critical-emancipatory paradigm.

It is relatively easy to succumb to the temptation of promoting a single paradigm – for example, constructivism – which, being the most diverse and comprehensive, encompasses both neurobiological explanations of human thinking and interpretative as well as socio-cultural themes. However, there is no single, universal path to education. The specific nature of various academic disciplines (e.g., the exact sciences, natural sciences, medical sciences, social sciences, and the humanities) means that while some students will learn in laboratories, using objectivist methods of cognition and describing the world, others – immersed in cultural texts – will engage in discussions of interpretation, possible reconstruction, and deconstruction. Thus, each paradigm finds its justification in student education. What, then, might they have in common? It seems that regardless of the educational strategies employed by academic teachers, or the subjects they teach, there is always an element of encounter and interaction with another human being.

The transformations of the modern world suggest that personal relationships are becoming an increasingly important – and simultaneously scarce – commodity. The rapid development of modern technologies and social media continues to permeate various spheres of our lives, including the educational process. The concept of *personalised education* is sometimes misunderstood as merely a form of digital adaptation – for example, the adjustment of teaching materials to individual learners. Nothing

could be further from the truth. In this article, the authors return to the theoretical foundations of personalised education, drawing on humanistic pedagogy, dialogical pedagogy, personalistic pedagogy, and positive pedagogy. These approaches belong to the broader humanistic and constructivist paradigms, as well as the *student-centred learning* perspective.

One of the key goals of academic education is to identify and nurture talent – and talent requires a different approach. The pursuit of this goal has naturally increased interest in forms of personalised education such as tutoring and academic mentoring, which by definition call for a different kind of relationship between teacher and student. Strong relationships between academic teachers and learners within higher education institutions are seen as one of the foundations of quality education. Jederlund and von Rosen highlight that “education is understood as a sense-making process that grows in mutual communication through participation in educational relationships” (2023, p. 529). These words emphasise that it is difficult to speak of an effective and fulfilling educational process without considering the teacher–student relationship and ensuring its quality. In the context of personalised education, this relationship becomes an intersubjective one – based on dialogue, support, and acceptance. Both sides of the educational process are engaged in its course, and both care about its quality. The student is a person, a subject of the educational process. Ablewicz (2003) highlights this subjectivity, emphasising that in a relationship with another person, it is necessary to adopt a personalistic attitude – one that enables us to recognise the individual in the full specificity of their personal being. The teacher becomes a facilitator of this process (Rogers, 1961, 1980; Kościelniak, 2004) – someone who creates the conditions for the student’s optimal development, fosters an atmosphere conducive to learning, and provides a space that supports the educational process. The teacher offers support – not in a directive way, but by discreetly guiding, while granting students ample freedom in their actions, space to develop responsibility for their own learning, and opportunities to co-design their educational path.

Hagenauer and Volet (2014, pp. 374–375) describe two dimensions of the teacher-student relationship, distinguishing between *the support dimension* and *the affective dimension*. *The affective dimension* refers to the emotional bond that develops between participants in academic education, serving as the basis for creating a sense of security. It is broadly understood as care for students and is regarded as a humanistic value. *The support dimension*, on the other hand, includes all actions undertaken within the teacher-student relationship that aim to provide learners with the assistance necessary for their development (e.g., email correspondence, clearly communicated expectations, etc.). Establishing a relationship between teacher and student is a dynamic process. Building such a relationship requires a belief that it is valuable – worth caring for, developing, and nurturing. It is also worth noting that both subjects involved in academic education share responsibility for its quality. Teachers can develop qualities that help support their relationships with learners. Among these, Karpouza and Emvalotis (2019, p. 123) list: passion for one’s subject, respect for others, accessibility, authenticity, and enthusiasm. An intersubjective, supportive relationship is an essential and fundamental element in discussions of personalised education in higher education. Cotten and Wilson (2006, p. 505) emphasise that students perceive both benefits and potential drawbacks in establishing relationships with academic teachers. Among the benefits, they highlight primarily the feeling of being important to someone and the awareness of belonging to the academic community. Among the risks associated with such relationships are issues related to taking responsibility for them, as well as the need for involvement, which requires time and other resources. When examining the relationships between participants in academic education within personalised education, it is also worth highlighting teacher characteristics identified by Cotten and Wilson as particularly valued by learners. These characteristics can play a significant role in building personalised relationships: a sense of humour, sharing personal information (such as referring to one’s own experiences during classes), an interactive teaching style, and actively engaging students during lessons. This suggests that, in order to establish satisfying relationships at university – not only in one-on-one meetings but also during group classes – teachers need to be open with learners and

willing to share their experiences and reflections. A sense of humour and authenticity can help build credibility in the eyes of students and positively influence the quality of these relationships.

A teacher working in the spirit of personalised education becomes a facilitator of the learning process. One of their most important tasks is to create an environment conducive to learners' development – an educational space. Arnett (1993, pp. 117–119) distinguishes between two types of environments in which teacher-student relationships are formed. The first is a defensive environment. In a space where the atmosphere is marked by defensiveness and fear, categories such as superiority, control, and judgement are more likely to emerge. The second is a supportive environment, which promotes the growth and development of learners. Activities in this climate focus on problem-solving, empathy, and equality. As Arnett emphasises: “A relationship is invited when a teacher is able to call out the personhood of a student. The most important resource in dialogic education is the quality of teachers. Faculty need to be able to call students into a commitment to excellence by recognising what those students are capable of accomplishing in the future” (1993, pp. 124–125). These words highlight how essential the teacher's role is in helping learners move toward realising their full potential.

The teacher invites students to participate in the learning process, facilitates this process, and presents themselves as someone accessible to them. This accessibility enables the moment of “selection” described by Ablewicz (2003, pp. 167–169) – a crucial point in the context of the educational situation, which serves as a confirmation of the student's subjectivity. Both parties in the educational process have the right to be heard. A learning environment characterised by a supportive atmosphere encourages students to take intellectual risks and to speak openly about issues important to them, without fear of negative consequences (Vasianovych et al., 2023). This is made possible through dialogue-based education.

The teacher-student relationship, one of the pillars of personalised education, is becoming not only a fundamental element but also a prerequisite for its very existence – a constitutive feature. The teacher's facilitative attitude allows the student to be placed at the centre of academic education. This is made possible by acceptance, authenticity, and empathic understanding – the three core qualities of such an attitude (Rogers, 1961, 1980; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). Through the intersubjective relationship that is established, the student can receive the support they need in the learning process – support which they themselves actively indicate a need for.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND DATA

In 2024, research was conducted at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow with the aim of examining the functioning of personalised academic education at the institution. The main research question was: *How does personalised academic education function at the Jagiellonian University?* This overarching question was then operationalised into a broad set of specific research questions:

1. How is personalised education described by those responsible for shaping academic education (management staff, academic staff trainers), academic teachers, and students?
 - 1.1. How is personalised education understood in the respondents' narratives?
 - 1.2. What are the goals of personalised education, according to the respondents?
 - 1.3. What requirements are placed on teachers working in the spirit of personalised education, according to management staff and academic teachers?
2. What measures are proposed and implemented in academic teaching within the framework of personalised education, according to the respondents?
 - 2.1. What forms of personalised education are proposed for working with students?
 - 2.2. What forms of personalised education are proposed for academic staff?
3. How is personalised education assessed by managers, academic teachers, and students?
 - 3.1. What opportunities do the respondents perceive in the implementation of personalized education?

3.2. What threats do the respondents perceive in the implementation of personalised education?

3.3. What obstacles are identified by managers and academic teachers in implementing various forms of personalised education?

4. How do the respondents view the implementation of personalised education at the Jagiellonian University?

4.1. What are the reasons for implementing personalised education, according to the management, and what outcomes are expected from this process?

4.2. How do the respondents assess the current state of personalised education implementation at the Jagiellonian University?

4.3. How important do the respondents consider the implementation of personalised education at the Jagiellonian University to be?

4.4. What measures, according to the management and academic staff, could support the implementation of personalised education at the Jagiellonian University?

The research was designed and conducted within the interpretative research paradigm. Individual methodological decisions are illustrated using the research onion model proposed by M. Saunders et al. (2023), which clearly presents the six successive layers of a research project. The first and outermost layer represents the paradigm in which the research is embedded. The subsequent layers address categories such as the approach to theory building (explanatory approach), the type of research, research strategy, time horizon, and methods of data collection and analysis. Given the nature of the study, it was situated within the constructivist (interpretative) paradigm. Its ontological assumptions are based on the belief that there is no single objective reality, but rather multiple realities constructed by individuals. Knowledge, likewise, is not objective but is co-created by subjects who assign meaning to the phenomena and experiences they encounter. In research grounded in the interpretative paradigm, both participants and researchers are viewed as constructors of reality. This makes true objectivity on the part of the researcher difficult to achieve, and maintaining distance from the phenomenon under study becomes nearly impossible (Hatch, 2002, pp. 13–16).

In the context of this study, among the available explanatory approaches, adopting an inductive approach seems appropriate, as it involves the collection of qualitative data. This approach also allows for in-depth research, enabling a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under study, which was particularly important in this research. The inductive approach often accompanies research embedded within the interpretative (constructivist) paradigm, as is the case here. The next layer concerns the type of research. Due to the subject matter, qualitative research was chosen. This approach enables capturing the meaning of phenomena relevant to the researcher, allowing for a deeper understanding and, importantly for this study, gaining insight into respondents' experiences, assessments, and opinions (Flick, 2018). It facilitates individual constructions of reality and the extraction of the world as it is experienced, created, and interpreted by people in their everyday lives and interactions with others (Cropley, 2022, p. 11). The fourth layer of the model is the research strategy. Due to the nature of the study and its subject area, it was decided to adopt the narrative analysis strategy. The fifth layer of the research onion model concerns the research time horizon. Research can be either longitudinal or cross-sectional. Cross-sectional research involves studying a specific phenomenon at a particular point in time. While this type of research is typically associated with quantitative methods, it is also employed in qualitative research (e.g., interviews conducted within a specific time frame). The research described in this text falls into this category. The final and innermost layer of the research onion model consists of data collection procedures and methods of analysis. For this purpose, the following methods were used: document analysis (of documentation prepared by Polish research universities participating in the IDUB competition), individual in-depth interviews, and focus group interviews. The interviews were conducted as open oral interviews, consisting of free-flowing conversations. The research involved 21 individual, unstructured, and partially standardized in-depth interviews (Guest et al., 2006). Fifteen academic teachers participated, including tutors and those not officially associated with this form of

education but who implement the principles of a personalised approach in their teaching practice. Additionally, six members of the management staff were interviewed, four of whom also worked as teachers with students; thus, both roles were highlighted during the interviews when discussing specific topics¹. Three focus group interviews were also conducted, involving a total of 27 students, including one doctoral student. Participants in the first focus group were students engaged in tutoring at a faculty where this form of personalised education is included in the study programme. Participation in this tutoring is voluntary, but there is a limited number of places available for students wishing to benefit from it. The participants in the second and third focus groups studied at a different faculty and took part in a compulsory course involving personalised teaching. Thanks to the data collected using the research methods described above, it was possible to identify and explore the approach to personalised education. Individual methodological decisions are presented below (Figure 1).

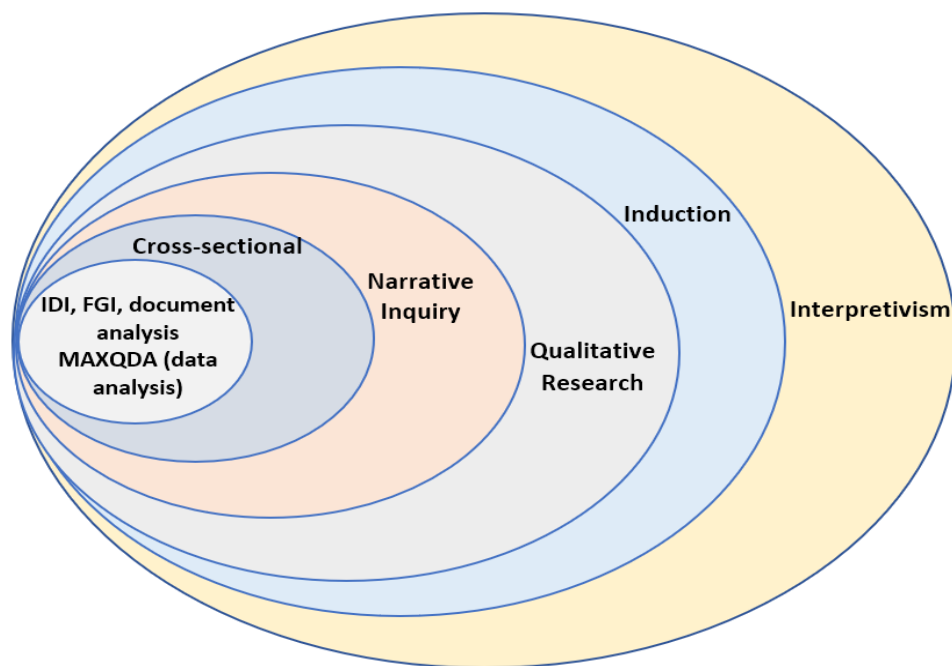


Fig. 1. Research onion showing layers of the research

Source: M. N. K. Saunders, P. Lewis, A. Thornhill (2023) & J. A. Hatch (2002) (adapted)

The research conducted covered a broad spectrum of the functioning of personalised education at the Jagiellonian University and serves as the basis for a comprehensive report. This article presents only a selected portion of the research findings. The authors decided to focus on and **describe the characteristics of the relationship between academic teachers and students** that emerged from the empirical research. This focus is justified because personalised education based on interpersonal relationships is a fundamental foundation of the academic education process.

Each person who participated in the research (in an in-depth interview or a focus group interview) signed a consent form to participate. The consent form did not contain any personal data of the interviewee; it was signed with the initials of the participant. The form included the most important information about the study (purpose, use of results), notification of the start and end of the recording, the possibility of interrupting the interview, and receiving a copy of the recording upon request. It also

¹ Selecting the number of interviews to be conducted was not an easy stage in the research process. Referring to the work of G. Guest, A. Bunce, and L. Johnson, who point out that 12 interviews in qualitative research are usually sufficient to obtain a clear picture of the perception of a given phenomenon and to examine respondents' experiences, it seems that in this case, 21 interviews are sufficient (see: Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, J. (2006). How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X0527990>)

contained an assurance that any information enabling the identification of the interviewee would be anonymized. Thus, when referring to specific fragments or entire statements, the persons uttering the words were assigned individual codes. For members of the management staff, the code is “K” followed by a number (assigned according to the order of the interviews); for academic teachers, the code begins with the letter “N”; and for students, the codes take the form “S” followed by a number.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned earlier, the research was conducted among management staff, academic teachers and students of the Jagiellonian University. These individuals were asked, during individual and focus group interviews, what personalised education is and how they understand it. Analysis of the collected research material allowed us to identify several important elements that appeared in their definitions. These include:

- taking into account the needs of the learner;
- individual nature of teaching work (which does not always mean one-on-one interaction)
- specific attitude towards students, meaning a willingness to get to know them, recognise their needs, and care about their development.

The respondents most often attempted to define and describe personalised education by taking into account the needs of the learner. These needs can vary greatly because, as was pointed out, students come to university with different backgrounds and different prior knowledge (knowledge they already possess upon entering higher education). These needs can relate to many issues. During the research, those related to students’ cognitive development, the need to adapt teaching methods to learners’ preferences, and the need to achieve specific goals set by students emerged. The importance of this aspect in defining personalised education is illustrated by the following statements.

*(...) an individual approach to a given student, **focusing on their needs** and on what they want to do at a particular point in their life. (K1)*

*Personalised education should simply, from my perspective and understanding, **focus on the individual needs of the student** – the person who is studying. (K2)*

*For me, personalised education means **tailoring education to the needs of each student** – that is, taking into account their aptitudes, prior knowledge, and the goals they want to achieve at university or college. (N4)*

There have also been numerous statements emphasising the aforementioned individual nature of work characteristic of personalised education.

*(...) personalised education is education that is **definitely more individual** in nature. It is certainly more focused on the needs of our students, whether they are university students or school pupils. (K1)*

*(...) **the opportunity to meet with students face-to-face** – either one-on-one or in smaller groups that allow for direct contact – to learn about the expectations of the people I am interacting with, how they perceive my work, and what their feedback is on what I teach. (N14)*

The interviews also revealed opinions suggesting that the format of classes conducted by the teacher is not decisive in determining whether personalised education is taking place. It was emphasised that the principles of personalised education can be implemented during exercises, workshops, seminars, and lectures – because what matters most is the teacher's approach to students. Once again, the point was made that individual contact does not necessarily imply personalisation and is not a prerequisite for it.

*(...) **even in lectures** – even large ones – there is still room to at least partially try to find ways to listen to what students have to say, to give them a platform not only to absorb the content I’m conveying, but also to reflect on it, talk about it, or at least exchange some observations in some way. (N14)*

Thus, individual contact is not a prerequisite for the implementation of personalised education (although it can undoubtedly facilitate the establishment of a personalised relationship). What matters more is the teacher’s approach to the educational process: their attitude towards students, their

willingness to recognise students' needs, and their readiness to support their development – even during lectures, for example, by engaging with students who ask questions and are willing to participate in discussions. In the eyes of the respondents, personalised education is a form of education in which the above-mentioned relationship between the participants in academic education plays a crucial role. During the interviews, references were made to concepts such as *persona* and *personalism*, and the interviewees emphasised the importance of this relational aspect of a personalised approach.

*(...) if it is to be truly personalised education, it must take into account the well-being of those involved, because I think **it's also very relational**. Since it is personalised education, **it's about two people meeting** – at least two – or a person who plays the role of a teacher and people who play the role of students or learners, and a person who plays the role of a lecturer. (N13)*

*Because, it must be emphasised, **the most important element is building relationships**. When we build relationships, education looks completely different. And so, there are still such ideas, but they are all very individual – they depend on people who simply want to work differently, to act differently. (N5)*

The respondents also clearly pointed to the need to increase the availability of personalised education, which involves “stripping it of its elitism”. This is illustrated by the following excerpts from their statements:

***It's not just about educating the elite**. It's about adapting to each individual, each person, regardless of their abilities. (K6)*

*I will emphasise once again that **it is absolutely not true that personalised education is only for the outstanding**, because the outstanding have the advantage of being outstanding – which means they will cope in any circumstances. These are not the people we reach out to first. (K4)*

It was emphasised that currently, for example, tutoring is often available only to students with the highest grade point average – and this should not be the case. According to the respondents, academic education should be based on a deeper relationship, as the teacher–student relationship becomes a unique form of cooperation between individuals. The need to move away from understanding personalised education exclusively as a form of tutoring was also highlighted. This point seems particularly important in the context of how this approach is described within the reality of Polish academic teaching, where it is often reduced to tutoring alone – thereby limiting the broader educational concept of personalised education to just one of its forms. An illustration of this position can be seen in the excerpts from the statements quoted below.

However, I would not limit personalised education solely to traditional methods such as tutoring, mentoring, or the classic master-apprentice relationship. I see it in a broader context. (N14)

***(...) I understand personalised education much more broadly than just tutoring**. Tutoring is more related to leadership, management sciences, being a leader in a group, or, for example, Anglo-Saxon culture and academic tutoring, but not necessarily immersed in personalised education. (...) It is a much broader category (...). (N1)*

An analysis of students' statements clearly reveals their expectations regarding the personalization of education. Individual and personalized contact with teachers is what they desire and need during their time at university. This interaction enables them to acquire knowledge more effectively and, consequently, to develop optimally. Many of the respondents explicitly outlined the goal of personalized education as building relationships and recognizing the student as a person.

*Because I got stuck on the word **'relationship'**, and I'm wondering if it isn't an indispensable element of **personalised education** (...) I think that **the greatest impact of this form of education is, after all, on the relationship** with the person imparting the knowledge. (S3, Focus Group Interview #3)*

*I would also like to add that personalised education allows you to **build this relationship between the teacher and the student**, and I think that building a relationship with someone and talking on this level is very valuable for every student. It doesn't have to be with everyone, but when it happens, it's really meaningful. (S14, Focus Group Interview #2)*

Thanks to personalised education – and especially, as emphasised by students, thanks to

participation in tutoring – students have the opportunity to be noticed; they do not feel that by seeking help and support in the development process they are imposing on the teacher. Instead, they feel that they are an important part of this process, a person who can receive the help they need. This fact is highlighted in the following excerpt from a statement by a student participating in tutoring.

(...) Actually, this is the first time I've had someone who teaches me, someone I can talk to more – first of all, for longer, about deeper topics, I would say – and I don't feel like I'm imposing or taking up their time, because that's what tutoring is all about. I haven't had such an opportunity before to talk about educational topics in a way that suits me... (S3, Focus interview #1)

Relationships between teachers and students are primarily built and shaped by academic teachers as initiators and managers of the educational process. During the analysis of the collected research material, 60 statements were identified and coded as 'characteristics of an academic teacher in personalised education.' To organise this large number of fragments, four categories were established, representing sets of features/characteristics:

- general features most frequently mentioned,
- relational competences,
- categories of skills,
- features related to the performance of a professional role.

According to the respondents, an academic teacher who establishes a relationship with a student should be characterised by a constant desire to develop, learn, and discover new teaching and learning methods in order to work effectively within the spirit of a personalised approach. They should also be willing to share their experience with other teachers. Additionally, it is necessary for them to be reflective and aware of their own knowledge and limitations. An academic teacher possesses communication and interpersonal skills, is able to 'spot talent,' and can adapt the content of education to the needs and interests of students. In establishing relationships with students, they can be aided by treating learners with kindness, showing genuine interest in them, and being willing to provide support. Below are excerpts from statements highlighting the most frequently mentioned characteristics of an academic teacher in personalised education during the interviews.

Definitely openness. Openness in the sense of... openness to new methods and new tools. I think that's very important. Openness to innovation, creativity, and flexibility. What I mean is that it's not like I have one key, and that's the only way to do something. I am open to the possibility that a student may have a different idea, other solutions, and that these may also be good and interesting. (N5)

It is well known that the basic characteristics of a teacher are, one might say, commitment and empathy. (N9)

(...) flexibility, the ability to adapt a plan prepared in advance – for example, for a series of classes – to the individual needs of a student; to notice that a given person may not be as interested in what the teacher himself is interested in. (N15)

(...) when it comes to characteristics, every academic teacher should like their students. They should like their job. (N4)

These would rather be qualities such as a particular way of thinking about education, a perspective on one's professional role, an approach to students, and genuine consistency and willingness to support. Not everyone is willing to support; not everyone is able to provide support. (N1)

I mean, they should definitely be open and genuinely interested in other people, and they certainly shouldn't create artificial barriers, because we know that some kind of barrier will always exist, but artificial barriers resulting from hierarchy should be avoided. (N12)

The word cloud below (Figure 2) provides a graphical summary of statements made by management staff and academic teachers regarding the characteristics that a teacher working in the spirit of personalised education should possess – characteristics that can help teachers implement the principles of this approach. The characteristics of academic teachers most frequently mentioned by the respondents are highlighted in purple.



Fig. 2. Word cloud showing the characteristics of an academic teacher working in the spirit of personalised education

Source: authors' work

It is worth noting that the interviewees' statements suggest that the characteristics, skills, and competences of an academic teacher working in the spirit of personalised education are, in fact, generally applicable to all academic teachers. The interview setting thus provided an opportunity to reflect on the qualities that every university teacher should possess.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the research was to identify how the academic community perceives personalised education, and in particular, **how the relationship between teacher and student is shaped and what significance it holds** – a characteristic selected by the authors and explored in this article. This discussion enabled a comparison of the obtained results with previous research and pedagogical theories, as well as the identification of challenges and practical implications for the functioning of higher education. The findings indicate that **personalised education is perceived within the academic community primarily as an approach** that emphasises the needs of the learner, the individual nature of teaching (though not necessarily in a one-on-one format), a specific attitude towards students, a desire to get to know them, and a concern for their development. Research has revealed that there are certain qualities that an academic teacher who wants to work in the spirit of personalized education should possess. The most prominent among them were empathy, openness, flexibility, willingness to provide support, sympathy for students (liking students), and interest in the other person (what they are like, what they like, what their strengths are etc.).

Particular importance was attached to the quality of teacher-student relationships, which are crucial for creating an environment conducive to both personal and academic development. In light of the results, this relationship is becoming increasingly partnership-based and dialogue-oriented, although elements of the traditional hierarchical model remain present. The respondents' statements confirm that effective personalisation requires not only the adaptation of teaching methods but also **a redefinition of the teacher's role** – from a knowledge-imparting expert to a mentor and guide supporting each student's individual learning path. Data analysis reveals that **the teacher-student relationship is a key element in the implementation of personalised education**. Both academic teachers and students repeatedly highlighted that it is the quality of interaction that influences the effectiveness of the educational process. A positive relationship, based on mutual respect, trust, and openness, was seen as a prerequisite for personalisation to occur in practice. From the students' perspective, the teacher is not only a source of knowledge but also a guide, mentor, and at times a partner in the academic journey.

The importance of individual feedback, emotional support, and the teacher's willingness to adjust teaching methods to the group's needs was emphasised. At the same time, some teachers noted the challenge of balancing the role of subject-matter expert with that of companion in the learning process.

The research also revealed several challenges associated with the implementation of personalised education in a university setting. The most frequently mentioned difficulties included large class sizes, limited time available to teachers, a lack of systemic support for individualisation, and unclear expectations regarding the role of the lecturer. Some respondents also expressed concerns about excessive teaching workloads. The findings highlight the need for comprehensive, systemic solutions to support the development and sustainability of personalised education at the university level. These could include:

- development of tutoring and mentoring programmes – initiatives providing individual support for students by academic staff,
- training for academic teachers – in areas such as interpersonal communication, providing feedback, and teaching methods that support personalisation,
- use of digital tools – for example, adaptive learning platforms that tailor content and pacing to individual student needs,
- organisational changes – such as reducing the size of seminar/exercise groups or increasing the number of hours allocated to individual consultations.

Such solutions would enable more effective implementation of the idea of personalisation within a mass university setting, without the risk of overburdening academic teachers.

In the future, it would be worthwhile to develop research in several directions: comparing the perception of teacher-student relationships across different fields and levels of study; analysing cultural differences in approaches to personalised education; and assessing the long-term impact of personalisation on graduates' competences and their future careers. When considering directions for further research, one can refer to the words of one of the student participants: "Let's promote personalised education and encourage its development". Reflections on potential risks and challenges associated with its implementation can be aptly summarised by another student's statement: "There are always risks, but let's not be afraid of them. Let's give it a chance, let's just try it out, and if it doesn't work, it doesn't work – but let's give it a chance"

Author Contributions:

Conceptualization: A. Sajdak-Burska.

Data curation: D. Kolasa.

Formal analysis: A. Sajdak-Burska, D. Kolasa.

Investigation: D. Kolasa.

Methodology: A. Sajdak-Burska, D. Kolasa.

Project administration: A. Sajdak-Burska.

Supervision: A. Sajdak-Burska.

Validation: A. Sajdak-Burska.

Visualization: D. Kolasa.

Writing – original draft: D. Kolasa.

Writing – review & editing: A. Sajdak-Burska, D. Kolasa.

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Dagmara Kolasa, Mgr, PhD candidate in Education, Teaching Fellow, Institute of Education, Faculty of Philosophy, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland;

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6379-7991

Address: Institute of Education, Faculty of Philosophy, Jagiellonian University, 12 Batorego, 31-315 Krakow, Poland.

E-mail: dagmara.kolasa@uj.edu.pl

Anna Sajdak-Burska, Dr hab., Prof., Head of the Department of School Pedagogy and Academic Didactics, Institute of Education, Faculty of Philosophy, Director of the Ars Docendi Center for Teaching Development, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland;

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0156-3986

Address: Institute of Education, Faculty of Philosophy, Jagiellonian University, 12 Batorego, 31-315 Krakow, Poland.

E-mail: a.sajdak@uj.edu.pl

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Коласа Дагмара, Сайдак-Бурська Анна. «Персоналізована освіта починається зі стосунків: теоретичні та дослідницькі аспекти динаміки вчитель–учень». *Журнал Прикарпатського університету імені Василя Стефаника*, **12** (3) (2025), 23-36.

Персоналізована освіта – це категорія, ймовірно, широко відома в академічних колах, особливо в педагогічній спільноті. Однак публікацій, присвячених цій темі, які зосереджені на відображенні її витоків і конститутивних рис, було недостатньо. Тому виявилось необхідним отримати ширшу перспективу та надати більш глибокий опис персоналізованої академічної освіти. У цій статті досліджуються теоретичні основи цього підходу до освітнього процесу, спираючись на огляд відповідної наукової літератури. Також представлені результати дослідження персоналізованої академічної освіти, проведеного у 2024 році в Ягеллонському університеті в Кракові (Польща). У цій статті автори обґрунтували характеристики взаємовідносин між викладачами та студентами, що виникли у результаті емпіричного дослідження. З метою зібрання та систематизації поглядів на персоналізовану академічну освіту та її розуміння, було проведено індивідуальні глибинні інтерв'ю та фокус-групові дискусії. У дослідженні взяли участь шість членів управлінського персоналу університету, п'ятнадцять викладачів і двадцять сім студентів, і воно базувалося на методології якісного дослідження. У контексті персоналізованої академічної освіти виокремлено кілька ключових категорій, найпомітніші з яких: увага до індивідуальних потреб учнів, персоналізований характер навчання і специфічне, студентоцентричне ставлення серед викладачів. Важливість взаємодії між педагогом і студентом представлено як ключовий аспект персоналізованої академічної освіти. Нарешті, дослідження засвідчило якості, якими повинні володіти викладачі, щоб ефективно взаємодіяти зі студентами у дусі цього освітнього підходу. Згідно з результатами дослідження, якість взаємин між педагогом і здобувачем освіти відіграє вирішальну роль у створенні середовища, сприятливого для цілісного та інтегрального розвитку студентів.

Ключові слова: персоналізована освіта, взаємовідносини між вчителем і учнем, академічна дидактика, особистісно орієнтоване навчання, індивідуалізація.