

# Lifeworld Research of Teacher Leadership through Educational Interactions with Students in a Classroom: Three Levels

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**Abstract**—The concept of teacher leadership refers to professional actors (employees and leaders) who can exercise control over or influence their work and its environment. The particular interest of the current research is gaining an understanding of how teachers experience leadership through educational interactions with students in a classroom. The aim of the research is to identify how teachers experience leadership in their everyday professional life through educational interactions with students in a classroom. Research questions are focused on essences of teacher leadership what are experienced by school teachers. The lifeworld research was performed in the study. 24 teachers participated in qualitative research. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews and analysed by using phenomenological analysis. Findings highlight aspects of teacher leadership through educational interactions with students in a classroom through the contribution to learning and teaching, authenticity, influence, empowerment, respect, equality, acknowledgement, resentment.

**Keywords**—Classroom, educational interaction, lifeworld research, teacher leadership.

## I. INTRODUCTION

TEACHER leadership is a popular research phenomenon in the last few decades; there is a lack of clear answers to the questions about what teacher leadership is and what it is related to. In the scientific literature, descriptive statistical, descriptive literature reviews, factual ascertainment quantitative studies prevail. However, key unanswered questions still remain: what is teacher leadership and why it matters? In recent literature the first and the most significant aspect of its importance lays in teachers' capacity to make positive changes at school, develop curriculum, create more favorable conditions for student learning, and, thus, increase student achievement [11], [13]. Teachers are those who not only transfer the knowledge but create the learning environment for students and contribute to general school improvement [7], [8]. For more than 30 years in educational research there is a tendency to view teachers as change agents who are able to lead the process and bring the innovations into school curriculum [1], [14].

In teacher professional practice leadership is being realized through competencies, motivation, autonomy, acting, creativity and initiative, however, the notion of leadership is a political-social phenomenon, and the capacities of teachers are sometimes over-emphasized [10]. Accordingly, teacher

leadership may be seen as an individual phenomenon while over-emphasis on teacher qualities often omits another important condition for teacher leadership emergent – the surrounding environment and social structures, which frame teacher's work [6]. Teacher leadership exists in terms of interaction with others within the work conditions [9], where teachers collaborate with students and other members of school community. It implies that teacher leadership exists in relation to certain structures and within certain socio-cultural conditions, for instance, policy, institutional traditions, culture, norms, and others.

The aim of the current research is to identify how teachers experience leadership in their professional everyday life through educational interactions with students in a classroom. The research is not aimed at searching for new theory to explain teacher leadership, but to investigate teacher lived existential experiences phenomenologically. The main goal of the lifeworld research is to reveal and clarify the essential meaning, which is inherent to a certain phenomenon, disclosure the set of inherent features (essences), which distinguish it from other phenomena [4], [5].

Research questions are the following: What are the essences of teacher leadership? What does it mean for teachers to experience leadership through educational interactions with students in a classroom?

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### *Reflective Lifeworld Research*

The key question in lifeworld research is whether the reality exists independently of our minds, or is it determined by human's conception and interpretation, whether there is a shared social reality or multiple, specific ones [9], [12]. The ontological and epistemological foundations of lifeworld research hold notion that meanings are endless, continually expanding and extending themselves [5]. The research epistemology is based on Dahlberg & Dahlberg [3], [4] idea of consolidating both, phenomenological and hermeneutic perspectives, seeking to grasp a meaning of the phenomena. The author argues at the point that "life manifests itself in experience" [5, p.95]. Therefore, the lifeworld research is aimed at description and revealing the lived world in a way that broadens our insights about human being and human

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experience. In other words, the reflective lifeworld research is aimed at asking how the world, with its everyday phenomena, is lived, experienced and described by humans. The goal of the lifeworld research is to discover, describe, analyse and clarify the essential meaning which is inherent to a certain phenomenon of research interest [2], [5]. According to the author, every phenomenon possesses certain set of inherent features (essences), which distinguish it from other related phenomena, and the reflective lifeworld research is aimed at disclosing these essences. In other words, the lifeworld research is aimed at seeking for the essential meaning of the phenomenon, "to make that phenomenon that very phenomenon" [5, p.96].

#### Sample

The sample consisted of 24 school teachers. The sample consists of 8 male and 16 female teachers, aged from 27 to 64 having from 3 to 36 years of teaching experience. The majority of research participants were from urban area, from the biggest cities of Lithuania (n = 18), and several participants were representatives of the countryside (n = 6). The participants reported teaching different subjects at primary, secondary and general schools of Lithuania.

#### Data Collection

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews.

#### Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed in four steps. The first step involves reading the data, when researcher familiarizes him/herself with the materials of interviews by reading several times. The second step is dividing the data into meaningful units by distinguishing the points of meaning transition. Then the meaning units are re-examined, probed, and described and researcher organizes the data into parts. The last step implies expressing the structure of phenomenon combining the meaning units and forming a coherent structure.

### III. FINDINGS

Findings highlight aspects of teacher leadership through educational interactions with students in a classroom through the following themes: contributing, being authentic and demarcating, being influential, empowering, respecting, ensuring equality, contributing, being acknowledged, experiencing resentment and being condemned. Each theme represents different levels - macro-level with themes - contributing, being authentic and demarcating, being influential, empowering, respecting, ensuring equality, contributing; meso-level with themes - being influential, empowering, respecting, ensuring equality, contributing; micro-level with themes - being acknowledged, experiencing resentment and being condemned.

Each theme consists of specific sub-themes that construct the content of a specific topic.

#### Macro-Level

##### Theme: Contributing

Seeking for meaning: Teachers give a meaning to their leadership and direct their hopes to the future. They view themselves as mediators who take care about their students and aspire for future benefit of this effort.

Perhaps we, who are the intermediaries, who are now sacrificing their lives that other teachers, those young people sitting here in the classrooms, whom we love and care for so much, that when they come to power they can evaluate teachers differently than just within aspect of money. (N4)

The research participants associate mediation with stairs and single teacher with just one step in the life of his/her student. Teachers believe their contribution to students' understanding.

Being a starting point: Teachers view their own endeavour into professional prestige, and this is the way they perceive themselves influential. The influence is viewed through future perspective. Teachers put themselves in a centre, as a main cause of their professional prestige.

But I think that's the prestige that's and that's what those teachers are creating, because sometime that generation grows up and they keep going, whether they're managers or researchers. That's all here and it starts with the teacher, all that prestige. (N4)

Sacrificing: Everyday teaching activities require a strong sense of professional commitment and teachers "give themselves" in order to accomplish all objectives.

Every day we work sincerely and sacrifice really a lot, even at our family and health account. Every day we just try to work as well as we can. (N3)

##### Theme: Being Authentic

*Desiring to be treated as a human being:* Teachers recognise their social positions, although, they underline their desire to be treated as human beings first.

Teachers enact the way of behaviour that reflects their personal beliefs and identity. The research participants refer to the existential aspects of being a human, rather than social role of teacher: "I am a human being too, and at the same time a teacher, but I am also a human". Teachers believe that this kind of self-disclosure decreases a power distance between them and their students, weakens the image of unapproachable teacher: "I don't represent the position that I'm really a Mistress teacher." Teachers' self-disclosure by allowing themselves to make mistakes, fail to remember something, show certain weaknesses.

I am not afraid to admit that I don't know something, and I am also imperfect. I am exactly the same person, I have my weaknesses, but not necessarily all of them I have to tell about. And it doesn't look like I'm some Goddess here coming down from heaven and I know the sacred mysteries and now I'll show you some of them, but that I'm just human. I think the valuable thing is not to pretend to be who we are not. Why would I have a crown if I am not king? (N3)

*Sustaining own well-being:* Teachers admit that students feel their inner energy, attitudes, or well-being. They perceive teacher as a personality which “radiates” a positive energy and notice when teacher is exhausted or “blurred”.

...the child views teacher’s personality, the energy that comes from it. The child feels whether teacher is energetic, positive and versatile, or the teacher is already blurred. We need to invest in our happiness. (N3)

Theme: Demarcating

*Dividing personal and professional:* Teachers emphasize that division of personal and professional selves is important when they think about their work.

But as a teacher, you cannot be a teacher for 24 hours a day, because you also have a personal life, and you don’t have to invest in them [students] all day. You are here just for some time. (N5)

Teachers stress on the perception of teaching profession in terms of any other working duty, similar to work at fabric (“You also have to understand that this is your job, just like in any factory”). Again, they emphasize the demarcation of time for work and for leisure. Interestingly, teachers distinguish personal and professional behaviours (“...you end up your work, close the door and that’s it, you can be another person”). They explain that at school, teacher must obey to the rules of professional conduct and “close the door” mean the teacher’s right to set the boundary between work and personal life (“you allow yourself to live your own life, not just the lives of students”). Teachers underline the importance of making personal decisions in their private lives (“in my personal life I can choose my personal decisions”).

*Confronting personal and professional selves:* The areas of personal and professional are seen as opposite and overlapping. Teachers express their concern about the future of their personalities, experience lack of time for private life and, thus, view their job as a threat for identity and source of depersonalization:

I have been working at school for two years, and I am still coming here as a person. And I think how I am going to look like in ten years, because I have a little time for leisure, everything is dedicated for work, I cannot afford to go to the theatre or cinema. (N3)

Teacher stress on drawbacks of their profession, financial and temporal aspects. On one hand, they recognize professional growth and development (“perhaps, you feel that you are improving”), however, on the other hand, the work is seen as a direct opposite to personal well-being.

Another aspect relates to confrontation of personal opinions and requirements of professional conduct: “Perhaps, you, as a person, would react in one way or another, but we must be understandable, remain dignified, and then all these things confront.” Teachers admit that often their personal attitudes and values differ from the prescribed rules and requirements accepted at school (“because you have a different position, different values”).

*Meso-Level*

Theme: Being Influential

*Being trustworthy:* Students demonstrate their trust initiating conversations or asking for help or advice in specific difficult life situations they face. As a result, teachers believe they are trustworthy and serve as an instance for students. Teachers view their role in leading without imposing a certain type of behaviour or decisions. In contrast, teacher is viewed as a person, who stays around being suggestive, evoking thoughts and encouraging students to make decisions on one’s own.

You don’t go for that person, but you go next, to be nearby. Maybe only a listening is needed, and a person comes to certain decisions by oneself. (N3)

Moreover, teachers view this process as a participative listening and understanding, when students can talk about their situation and come to the solution by themselves. In other words, active listening, but not a superficial hearing of what students say.

*Approving achievement:* Teacher is an important actor who is seen as a resource of approval. Students expect teacher to notice their achievements, admire or compliment them.

And yet the child does not have the mature intrinsic motivation to learn that "I need it". Anyway, the child often thinks that the teacher will praise him[her], notice how he[she] is doing well, strives for this. (N3)

Teachers feel being validated and recognized by experiencing students’ acknowledgement. They admit that teacher’s judgement on students’ efficiency and recognition of student’s success is very crucial: “...it is important what you think about them [students], and it is important for teacher to know how you [student] are trying, what you have achieved, what you are doing”. Students desire teacher’s appraisal and encouragement; thus, teacher becomes a significant person, whose opinion and judgement are important for students.

*Assimilating attributes:* Reflecting on influence, teachers mention assimilation of attributes by children. Teachers view their impact on students through retrospective view “then and now”. In other words, they compare how children reacted to the teacher’s instructions at the beginning of learning and after students spent some time with teacher.

I feel a difference, for example, when children come in September, you teach and say, "This letter is written like this ..." and it often happens to me that children say: "And my mother taught me in another way." And that [parents'] authority is against you. But after some time, the parents start saying that children contradict them using my words. Well, such a change. (N5)

Teachers recognize that they appear to be an example of appropriate behaviour, an example of adult that children encounter during all school day. Despite teachers try to control the information they provide to students, still, they never know what exactly the child will absorb.

You never know what you put in and what the child takes from you, and you can’t measure that. But anyway, manners or understanding of how to behave properly comes from the example of an adult. Students see the

teachers during a greater part of the day, it affects a lot. (N3)

Teachers admit that students admire their certain qualities and recognize their authority. The qualities include physical appearance (“you are beautiful”), traits of character (“you are nice”), knowledge-ability (“you are able to do everything”) and expertise (“you know everything”). Teachers notice when students express their desire to assimilate with him/her.

*Being positively disposed:* Teachers admit that positive disposition in executing professional activities is an advantageous strategy to impact students’ behaviour, establish relationship with colleagues or create atmosphere in the classroom.

Positivity in creating a class atmosphere, in relationships with colleagues, in self-motivation. For example: There was a situation where student’s mother and grandmother in the dressing room were trying very hard to get the child to tie the shoes on his own. And the child behaved very harsh against that anger and didn’t want to do it. And I told him: “Yesterday I saw you tied those shoes just in three seconds.” He says: “Really?” And immediately tied his shoes. Mom and grandma were obviously shocked, but well, the positivity did its job. (N2)

Theme: Empowering

*Dignifying student:* Teachers believe that students may feel hurt when at the end of a day their parents receive a negative feedback and associate this feeling with being a “rag”, a worthless piece of cloth. Thus, to avoid this harm, teachers tend to support a student, elevating them in the eyes of their parents.

This is not about financial well-being for families. There are children who are disadvantaged and socially neglected. They come here and are treated with attention. We speak to them, demonstrate interest and they understand that they are important ...This is our attempt to lift them. (N4)

Teachers acknowledge students' social background which impacts their emotional well-being. Students from disadvantaged social background need additional attention and care. “They come here and receive that goodness”, and “goodness” is seen as an additional attention and interest. Students are encouraged to believe in their importance and learning capabilities, believe they are as much valued as their peers (“believe that they are important too”). Teachers believe they lift students’ dignity with such kind of treatment. The research participants view the rules not only in terms of established norms of behaviour, but a mean to insure students’ dignity.

The rules are one of the ways of maintaining dignity... Because rules help both the child and the teacher stay dignified. When we tell children to follow the rules, and do not follow them ourselves – that undermines students’ dignity... or let’s say, the child doesn’t know how to behave - it’s hard for him to stay dignified... (N4)

Teachers admit that sometimes students do not think about other students’ comfort when break the rule. For this reason, teachers try to make the student place him/herself in the other

child’s situation. Teachers believe that empowering students to make self-sustained decisions is the way to increase their dignity.

We enable children who really have behavioural difficulties to solve problems themselves through demonstration of appropriate behaviour. It dignifies them, because sometimes it seems obvious to us that kicking a friend is not right, but unfortunately, this is not a norm for everybody, and some children do not know that it is a misbehaviour. Especially for the younger students - we show the way, allowing them to search for ways to fix their misbehaviour, or think how they could behave next time. We empower the child to feel dignified next time, because he knows the solution on how to behave in such a situation one way or another. I think that the ability to make decisions on one’s own, empowerment to correct child’s behaviour incredibly boosts their dignity. (N4)

Teachers recognize that students might not be aware of “appropriate” norms of behaviour, and therefore, enable them with this “tool”. Students are being shown the ways of appropriate behaviour and later they get a possibility to apply this behaviour in a certain situation. Teachers believe that their students become more dignified when they are empowered to make decisions on their own.

Teachers underline that reminding the rules and making students think about others is a constant work.

First, children need to feel good. This is very important, so the child not to feel any fear. [Teacher] is by no means a punisher, not an autocrat, but s/he is a person who sets the boundaries. Children want to feel safe in this age. Thus, the teacher is an authority because students feel safe with boundaries that were drawn by the teacher. (N4)

*Discovering positive features:* The research participants agree that language is a very powerful tool used by teacher, “You may notice a good thing and say something minimally good to child, and then you see what miracles happen...”.

Another ability is to see the best qualities of child. It’s not a secret, it’s hard to say something good about certain students, you just overstep yourself emotionally. But at some point, you may notice a good thing and say something minimally good to child, and then you see what miracles happen, how that child changes and how much of that minimal thing means. And when you discover something, not necessarily about learning, to say loud and then such big things happen that may surprise you. And then you approach that child differently. (N3)

Teachers discover certain positive features of students, even though, research participants confess it may be difficult (“It’s not a secret, it’s hard to say something good about certain students”). For that teacher need to find strength and “overstep oneself emotionally”, meaning that teacher needs to overcome own negative prejudice and emotions. The research participants associate the impact on students’ behaviour with “miracle” and change “that may surprise you”. At the same time, discovering positive features of students enable teachers to change their point of view and attitude towards certain student (“And then

you approach that child differently”).

Theme: Respecting

*Communicating carefully:* Teachers expressed their awareness about being an instance for their students, especially it refers to linguistic expression. The teachers agree that teachers may express their approval or disapproval of students' behaviour in different ways. As a result, students learn through these examples of communication and absorb certain ways of linguistic expression. Teachers believe that respectful tone of their speech and avoiding of negative ways of emotional expression contribute to establishment of trustful and respectful relationship with their students.

We try to convey the same emotion, but in a respectful way. For this we use examples based on life. (N3)

*Nurturing personality:* Teachers view the equality between teacher and student in terms of acceptance of students' personality, recognition of his/her interests, abilities, inclinations, and the right to choose a vocation.

You respect the personality of the child, because, for example, sometimes it happens to me that you teach, you teach, and they still don't follow, they still don't succeed, and I ask inside "Why?!" But then you think that the person's choice of a profession depends not only on abilities, but also on inability to do something, because we choose what we know best and do not go where we don't not know something and thus, choose our vocation. It seems, well, you try to accept and respect this too, well the student can't do this. "Maybe s/he is able to do something else?" It goes to individual things when you accept that child as a personality, as absolutely equal. (N4)

Teachers try to put themselves on the student's place and recognize that they choose what they know best. Thus, the teacher who recognizes the student as a person ensures equal relations and communication.

We nurture values, nurture children as personalities, not humiliate them solely because of their misbehaviour, we do not compare each other, we distinguish certain essential strengths and nurture them. This is what the teacher does. (N3)

Theme: Ensuring Equality

*Acknowledging students' contribution:* The research participants admit that students' involvement into knowledge sharing puts them in the centre of learning process.

When planning a lesson, you can stand up, transfer all the information, submit assignments and that's it. Or you can start asking the students - and what do you know, what can you tell me about it? And they immediately expand, they are very happy with possibility to share their knowledge. (N4)

Recognition of students' expertise and ability to generate knowledge brings change into the learning process, making it less teacher-centred. Empowered students bring more knowledge and observations, feel engaged, having a possibility to express their opinion or share certain experiences in the classroom. Moreover, student empowerment increases positive

emotions and a sense of learning satisfaction ("they are very happy with possibility to share their knowledge").

Teachers recognize the contribution of students in learning process. They confess that sometimes teachers make mistakes or might not know something.

We maintain equality, that we are together and learn from each other, that teachers may also make mistakes and consider children's opinions, observations and suggestions. And in general, we do a lot together. And you show that even being a teacher and older person, you can also learn together. You ask, you listen, may be the wrong answer, but you must be able to ask, listen and hear. For example, a student comes to me and says: "You know, the brain consists of 83 percent of water?" I knew that fact, but there are some you don't know and say, "Seriously?! And will you show me?" And for student the sense that he can teach and transfer his knowledge. And it benefits me at the same time because I learn from it. (N4)

Thus, enabling students with a possibility to share their knowledge elevates them, and, at the same time, ensures a greater equality between teacher and students, "demonopolizes" knowledge, making it a common property. Mutual sharing of knowledge changes the role of student from passive receiver to active participant, provides a "sense that he can teach".

*Being impartial:* The research participants admit that ensuring of equality is an important rule at their school. For this reason, they never discuss imperfections or failure of other students publicly, never compare students.

The important rule is not to discuss with each other about others' progress or some imperfections. We try not to compare children with each other. We all have uniforms. It doesn't matter to us what kind of sweaters or shoes we have, what is inside of you is important to us. (N3)

Teachers underline that application of power or force in relationship with students is not possible. Instead, teachers make sure that the decisions are clear and acceptable for students: "...we make decisions, but we always argue why." The explanation of decisions ensures a greater equality between teacher and students.

Theme: Contributing

*Persevering:* Perseverance is accompanied by persistence in pursuing the result ("teacher strives to teach the student to read"), devoting more time and evoking student's desire to achieve particular learning goals (encourage the student's perseverance). The teacher shared a story from her practice, when she demonstrated perseverance and did not give up in teaching a student to read.

I had a student who had difficulties with reading, so I suggested a help and offered solutions, but his parents refused the help. Regardless, I dedicated my personal time for the student. Regardless of anything, I and the student pursued a common goal - to learn to read well. We did not give in to pessimism, boredom. For this, I sacrificed my free time after school or even on the weekend. (N3)

Teachers associate their patience with tolerating an uncertainty when facing students' behaviour: "when communicating with children, sometimes there are situations that you would not even think about when you are adult". Speaking about teaching profession in general, the research participants admit the admiration of other people from their social surrounding, in particular teacher's ability to cope with own emotions and be patient: "Wow! What kind of patience do you have to have?". When explaining this ability, teacher refers to their inner qualities: "Your heart just has to be big and hard enough, so you don't break".

Teacher's patience is related to persistence, as there is a need to remind the students about different rules and codes of conduct, which they constantly forget.

It is a constant work. We repeat, repeat, and repeat again. Because they know the rules and restrictions perfectly. (N2)

Patience requires a constant work, which is embedded into teacher's duties and daily routine. At the same time the research participants did not express any sense of negative because of the need to remind and repeat the rules to students.

*Evoking Interest:* Teachers admit that sometimes they face difficulties when they explain certain concepts to their students. Therefore, there is a need to seek for alternative ways of explanation. One of the teachers provided an example: she described a situation when her students faced difficulty to memorize names of months and days of the week in English.

[Creativity] is a certain process when you can't explain in one way, so you try to show, use your fingers, classmates ... I knew that students face difficulties when learn about months and days of the week [in English], so I created short songs and every morning with a guitar I used to play and sing for them. I think it is an effective way to remember. (N2)

She found a solution by involving singing into language learning process. The teacher used her ability to play the guitar and managed to make her subject content more attractive and satisfying to learn. The criteria of success relate to the increased performativity of students, effectiveness for memorizing the content and inducement of positive emotions.

We read the book, but the students were not very engaged. Then I included students' names into the story. When they are personally involved into that story, they are more interested and more involved. They made creative drawings, illustrating where they are here, what someone is doing, imagine themselves and then get involved. (N1)

In order to involve students and motivate them to participate in some activities, teachers need to evoke their interest. In the current situation, the teacher increased student involvement by including students' names into the plot and making the story personally significant for every student.

*Avoiding Routine:* Teachers recognize that creativity is an important feature of their teaching in terms of dealing with students, planning, and organizing activities and avoiding routines.

A creativity in planning, teaching, approaching

students, organizing events, trips, avoiding routines, etc. At each step, you need to think creatively to avoid that routine, so it would be fun for you and for the students. (N1)

When working creatively, teachers also think about their own interest, working not only to respond to students' interest or curiosity, but ensure own involvement.

#### *Micro-Level*

Theme: Being Acknowledged

*Experiencing Recognition:* students' parents directly influence teacher's perception of own professional identity and sense of accomplishment. Teachers experience an impact through direct communication with students' parents.

We need to look to the other side, where our dignity is greatly emphasized: there are certain parents who write very wonderful, respectful letters, ask: "How do you think, we don't know how to behave here ... ". And there is a feeling that you are a very dignified person in their eyes – that the teacher will behave the best way, the most honorable, be "the mother of all the values". If there are parents who communicate, so do the children. (N3)

Teachers feel recognized as professionals when they receive polite requests for some advice, where parents recognize the importance of teacher's opinion in matters of child's education. Teachers feel dignified when they are listened ("you are a very dignified person in their eyes"), involved into child's education in cooperation with parents. At the same time, they feel trust and high expectations to own moral qualities ("the most honourable, be "the mother of all the values") and behaviour ("teacher will behave the best way"). Recognition of teacher's expertise and relying on teacher's professional knowledge by students' parents strengthens a sense of teachers' dignity and inclusion.

*Being trustworthy:* Therefore, realization of teacher advice demonstrates trust and recognition of teacher authority.

Parents come and ask: "How to teach my child? Because I teach one way and {the child} says "No, the teacher said it was necessary to do differently." And parents come, ask and clarify. And this also shows that the teacher is still an authority for the child. (N4)

On the other hand, acknowledgement of teachers happens through students' commitment to teachers' authority, the way of teaching. It is especially noticeable through certain kind of resistance of students towards their parents' attempts to teach them in their own way. The students say, "No, the teacher said it was necessary to do differently," and parents search for a common approach with teacher, asking for advice and assimilate teacher's way of teaching.

Theme: Experiencing Resentment

*Dividing personal and professional:* During conflict situations, teachers expressed their desire to be treated as human beings, rather than teacher with prescribed codes of conduct.

When we talk to [students'] parents ... well, they have all those emotions and so on, but we say, Wait, I'm a

human and I feel uncomfortable when you are talking to me like that. And no matter what the situation is, I am a human in the first place and a teacher in the second. (N3)

Teachers experience unpleasant emotions when dealing with students' parents in conflict situations, when parents talk emotionally or even rude. Teachers emphasize the need to be treated as humans first, and only after that to be treated as a teacher.

*Blaming*: Another aspect which teachers noticed is parents' unwillingness to take responsibility for child's learning.

It is a traditional view when we provide responsibility to others regarding our lives, for example, doctors are responsible for our health, teachers are responsible for our education, politicians are responsible for our good salaries. In that sense, everyone is responsible for something. (N3)

Teachers believe that parents must involve into their child's learning process, be active contributors.

Parents do not say: "Please, provide us some easier tasks, it'll be enough for me that my child will have lower [level of] skills, but a calmer emotional background. It is ok if he gains about thirty percent of [learning] material. No. Parents require from you one hundred percent, but they don't want to do anything extra, and still require easier tasks for their children, without challenges. To be honest, such situations are not very rare. And it really decreases child's personal dignity, when the parents communicate in this way and have such an attitude towards the child. (N2)

However, parents are reluctant to help their children, instead, they ask teacher to decrease amount and difficulty of tasks and still, achieve the highest level of knowledge. Teachers argue that these situations happen quite often, and such view of parents diminishes students' dignity.

Theme: Being Condemned

*Being involved into commerce-based relationships*: Teachers claim that they often are subjected to client-customer relationship with parents, which diminishes sense of teachers' dignity.

There are people [parents] who are engaged into a buy-sell relationship. I dropped [the child for] you - you must take care of him [her]. I have been told several times, "What am I paying for?" (N5)

From another hand, teachers claim that this is the way for parents to avoid responsibility for child's education. Instead, they reproach teacher and accuse in students' failure.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Teacher leadership is a phenomenon linked to surrounding social environment, which has the strongest impact, enables or constraints the action. Teachers, especially during early stages of career, engage into collective participative action by acting differently, initiating change, breaking stereotypes, and, thus, transforming school culture. At the same time, the strongest stimulus of action is grounded in relationship with others. Teachers engage into innovative practices and lead change in

order to influence their students, build better learning environment and sustain stronger relationship.

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