

# Teachers' Attitudes Towards Gifted Students and Differences in Attitudes Regarding the Years of Teaching

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## **Abstract**

*Attitudes help us understand teachers' relationship towards gifted students and they influence teachers' practice, which can eventually determine the development of the gifted. The aim of this study was to examine the teachers' attitudes towards gifted students and some forms of work with gifted children in school, such as acceleration and ability grouping; as well as to determine whether teachers differ in their attitudes depending on the years of experience. The study was conducted on a sample of 209 class teachers in the area of Brod-Posavina county. The results showed that primary school teachers have positive attitudes towards the needs, support and social value of gifted students but express ambivalent attitudes towards the acceleration, ability grouping and concern that the special treatment of the gifted could have negative consequences. Statistically significant differences were established for certain statements among teachers depending on their years of teaching.*

**Key words:** *ability grouping; acceleration; attitudes; gifted students; primary school teachers; years of teaching.*

## **Introduction**

School represents an important social environment that influences students' development and their self-image. Understanding different, individual needs of all its students is one of the main tasks of a school (Allodi & Rydelius, 2008). Teachers are key participants in that process, since they can directly influence those differences in their classrooms and in everyday communication with students. There are many factors that influence teachers' behavior in the classrooms, and attitudes are one of

them. Even though the relationship between attitudes and behavior is not always consistent, generally speaking, attitudes affect behavior (Bohner & Wänke, 2002). Therefore, knowing the teachers' attitudes provides us with the ability to understand their behavior and to predict their success in working with students with special needs, especially in working with the gifted (Posavec, 2008). Attitudes do not only influence the teachers' behavior, they also shape attitudes of other students towards the gifted. Teachers with positive attitudes help ensure positive and supporting environment for the gifted students, which contributes to the fulfillment of their needs (Al-Makhalid, 2012) whereas negative attitudes influence the negative environment in the classroom.

Teachers' attitudes towards the gifted have been an object of study for over 50 years (Peachman, 1942; Justman & Wrightstone, 1956; as cited in McCoach & Siegle, 2007), and there are many studies connected to this particular issue that are being conducted all over the world. However, there are still no clear conceptions of teachers' attitudes towards gifted students. Differences in research results are caused by the use of different methodologies, different cultural areas with different school systems and programs for gifted students (Al-Makhalid, 2012).

Studies that used the Gagné and Nadeau (1991) Questionnaire, which was also used in this study, show that positive attitudes towards gifted students mostly prevail among teachers, especially when it comes to recognizing their needs and support (Allodi & Rydelius, 2008; Chessman, 2010; Ćaro, 2009; Drain, 2008; Lassig, 2009; Lewis & Milton, 2005; McCoach & Siegle, 2007; Troxclair, 2013; Watts, 2006). Teachers mainly have negative attitudes towards acceleration (Allodi & Rydelius, 2008; Chessman, 2010; Ćaro, 2009; Drain, 2008; Lassig, 2009; Troxclair, 2013; Watts, 2006), while the results towards ability grouping vary. In some studies, most attitudes are ambivalent (Drain, 2008; Lassig, 2009), whereas others only report on negative attitudes (Allodi & Rydelius, 2008; Chessman, 2010; Ćaro, 2009; Troxclair, 2013; Watts, 2006). Considering the fact that none of the previously mentioned studies indicate positive attitudes towards acceleration and ability grouping, it is obvious that teachers do not consider these forms of education to be positive solutions for this issue. Furthermore, these attitudes can result from prejudice in the society due to lack of knowledge about such approaches to gifted education (Troxclair, 2013).

Apart from attempting to determine the direction of various attitudes among teachers, researchers often strive to find the connection between years of teaching experience or lack of experience and positivity of attitudes towards the gifted (Posavec, 2008). In the Bégin and Gagné (1994) analysis of twelve studies, five of them indicated the age of respondents as statistically significant, i.e. older teachers (with more years of teaching) had more positive attitudes towards the gifted, while some showed that there is no difference with regard to the length of teaching experience.

Despite the fact that attitudes represent an important aspect of research on education of the gifted because they influence the teaching practice, there is still insufficient amount of research in this field in Croatia. In the research conducted by Koren (1996) on a representative sample of 342 respondents, it was established that teachers have

positive attitudes towards early identification of the gifted and organizing of social support for them. Nevertheless, there are greater discrepancies with respect to the issues that only gifted teachers are qualified to work with the gifted, that some teachers prevent their optimal development, as well as the issues pertaining to ability grouping of gifted students. Research conducted by Posavec in 2008 on a sample of 241 teachers of the Varaždin county showed that teachers mostly have positive attitudes towards gifted students and that they believe the gifted need to have financial support for activities that they want to pursue regardless of their families' financial situation. Most respondents agree to some extent or cannot decide whether gifted students should be selected or not. In addition, it was also established that teachers with more years of teaching had more positive attitudes, as well as the ones who are more satisfied and preoccupied with their work, and those having positive experience in working with the gifted students. Pleić (2010) reports in the research conducted on a sample of 68 teachers from Split and Solin that teachers have ambivalent attitudes towards gifted students, but positive towards various gifted education programs.

The aim of this study is to examine teachers' attitudes towards gifted students and some forms of their education, and to determine the differences between teachers regarding the years of teaching.

## **Methodology**

### ***Sample and Procedure***

This study was conducted on a sample of 209 class teachers in the Brod-Posavina county (female 93.3%, male 6.7%), which amounts to 50.48% of teachers from this area. A total of 34.4% of the respondents work in city schools, whereas 24.9% work in rural central schools, and 40.7% in rural branch schools. Their age ranged from 24 to 65, and their average age was 41.61 with a standard deviation of 12.36. Furthermore, the number of years of teaching experience varied from 0 to 44, while average number of years of teaching was 17.04 with a standard deviation of 12.35. With respect to their education, 44.5% of the respondents completed a two-year teacher training college, 46.4% attended four-year teacher education studies, and 9.1% five-year university teacher education studies. Of all the respondents involved in the study, 96.4% stated that the students they considered gifted had not been formally identified as gifted, and 3.6% said that they had. Data relevant for the study was gathered at several professional conferences of primary school teachers in the Brod-Posavina county during 2012/2013 school year. Approximately 15 minutes were needed to fill out the questionnaire. The respondents were introduced to the aim of the study and were guaranteed anonymity.

### ***Instruments***

Two instruments were used in this study:

1. *General information about the respondents* was used to obtain personal information, such as: age, gender, years of teaching, level of education (two-year or four-

year teacher education studies, five-year university teacher education studies, postgraduate studies), and whether the student they considered gifted had undergone some form of testing.

2. *Attitudes towards the gifted and their education* were obtained using the Gagné and Nadeau questionnaire (1991) from Canada. The questionnaire consists of 34 statements that the respondents are required to agree or disagree with by circling the numbers 1 – 5 on a Likert-type scale (1 – strongly disagree; 5 – strongly agree). The 34 statements were divided into six subscales: 1. *Needs and Support*, 2. *Resistance to Objectives*, 3. *Social Value*, 4. *Rejection*, 5. *Ability Grouping*, 6. *Acceleration*. High scores on the subscales *Needs and Support*, *Social Value*, *Ability Grouping* and *Acceleration* indicate positive attitudes towards the gifted, whereas high scores on the subscales *Resistance to Objectives* and *Rejection* indicate negative attitudes towards the gifted.

## Results

Table 1 shows means and standard deviations of the results for each individual statement in the questionnaire. The mean result for each individual statement was estimated using Gagné's (1991) interpretation of the scores, thus the score above 4.00 indicates a highly positive attitude, and the one from 3.26 to 4.00 a positive attitude. The score from 2.75 to 3.25 indicates an ambivalent attitude, whereas the score from 2.00 to 2.74 indicates a negative one. Highly negative attitude is the score below 2.00.

The first subscale, *Needs and Support*, was used to determine the attitudes toward the needs of the gifted in general and the need for special support. The obtained results show that teachers have positive attitudes on this subscale and that they recognize different educational needs of the gifted in relation to other students in class, but that both schools and the society need to ensure professional support for the gifted. Teachers particularly agree that schools need to have special professional service for gifted students, and that it is important to develop various talents of gifted individuals in order to improve the society itself. Moreover, they believe that there should be equal investments in programs for gifted students as well as in programs for students with special needs (Table 1). In the second subscale, *Resistance to Objectives*, resistant attitudes towards special treatment of the gifted were analyzed, since it could have negative consequences. The results show that teachers have ambivalent attitudes: they mostly agree with the statements claiming that special professional services in schools are more important for students with special needs, and that parents have a major responsibility in helping their children develop their talents (Table 1). The third subscale, *Social Value*, refers to the attitudes towards the value of the gifted in the society. According to the values set for this subscale, teachers have positive attitudes, i.e. they understand the importance of gifted individuals for the society, but they do not think that future society leaders will come from this group (Table 1). The fourth subscale, *Rejection*, measures the perception of the isolation of gifted individuals in the society, the results of which have shown that teachers have negative attitudes toward these statements. However,

negative attitudes on this scale indicate positive attitudes towards the gifted (Table 1). The fifth subscale, *Ability Grouping*, analyzes attitudes towards homogenous grouping of gifted students in school. Teachers have ambivalent attitudes here, i.e. their attitudes are not clearly expressed when it comes to homogenous grouping (Table 1). Finally, the sixth subscale, *Acceleration*, aims to measure the respondents' attitudes towards school acceleration. According to the results from this subscale, teachers are also ambivalent, i.e. they have no clearly expressed attitudes (Table 1).

Table 1

*Descriptive statistics for Gagné and Nadeau subscales of the Attitudes Towards the Gifted and Their Education Questionnaire.*

	N	Range	M	SD	Attitude
NEEDS AND SUPPORT		2.6 – 5	3.67	0.51	P
1. Our schools should offer special education services for the gifted.	208	2 – 5	4.02	0.85	VP
9. Gifted children are often bored in school.	209	1 – 5	3.51	0.98	P
11. The gifted waste their time in regular classes.	208	1 – 5	2.83	0.90	A
15. The gifted need special attention in order to fully develop their talents.	209	1 – 5	3.85	0.75	P
14. The specific educational needs of the gifted are too often ignored in our schools.	208	1 – 5	3.53	0.93	P
24. In order to progress, a society must develop the talents of gifted individuals to a maximum.	208	1 – 5	4.10	0.75	VP
30. Since we invest supplementary funds for funds for children with difficulties, we should do the same for the gifted.	208	2 – 5	4.14	0.66	VP
32. The regular school program stifles the intellectual curiosity of gifted children.	207	1 – 5	3.36	0.99	P
RESISTANCE TO OBJECTIONS		1.5 – 4.1	2.84	0.47	A
3. Children with difficulties have the most need of special education services.	207	1 – 5	3.70	1.15	P
4. Special programs for gifted children have the drawback of creating elitism.	209	1 – 5	2.71	0.98	A
5. Special educational services for the gifted children are a mark of privilege.	203	1 – 5	2.59	0.95	N
12. We have a greater moral responsibility to give special help to children with difficulties than to gifted children.	208	1 – 5	2.95	1.08	A
16. Our schools are already adequate in meeting the needs of the gifted.	209	1 – 5	2.53	0.90	N
18. It is parents who have the major responsibility for helping gifted children develop their talents.	209	1 – 5	3.42	0.99	P
23. The gifted are already favored in our schools	208	1 – 5	2.31	0.81	N
26. Tax-payers should not have to pay for special education for the minority of children who are gifted.	208	1 – 5	2.62	0.95	N

27. Average children are the major resource of our society, so they should be the focus of our attention.	209	1 – 5	2.88	0.88	A
28. Gifted children might become vain or egotistical if they are given special attention.	209	1 – 5	2.84	0.97	A
SOCIAL VALUE		2 – 4.8	3.25	0.50	P
13. Gifted persons are a valuable resource for our society.	209	1 – 5	4.27	0.77	VP
17. I would very much like to be considered a gifted person	208	1 – 5	3.24	0.98	A
25. By offering special educational services to the gifted, we prepare the future members of a dominant class	209	1 – 5	2.86	0.91	A
33. The leaders of tomorrow's society will come mostly from the gifted of today.	208	1 – 5	2.63	0.85	N
REJECTION		1.3 – 4.3	2.68	0.67	N
19. A child who has been identified as gifted has more difficulty in making friends.	209	1 – 5	2.66	0.96	N
22. Some teachers feel their authority threatened by gifted children	206	1 – 4	2.32	0.93	N
31. Often, gifted children are rejected because people are envious of them	207	1 – 5	3.07	0.99	A
ABILITY GROUPING		1.2 – 4.6	2.85	0.68	A
2. The best way to meet the needs of the gifted is to put them in special classes	209	1 – 5	3.03	1.15	A
6. When the gifted are put in special classes, the other children feel devalued*	209	1 – 5	3.12	1.07	A
8. It is more damaging for a gifted child to waste time in class than to adapt to skipping a grade	208	1 – 5	3.13	0.95	A
20. Gifted children should be left in regular classes since they serve as an intellectual stimulant for the other children*	209	1 – 5	3.56	0.85	P
21. By separating students into gifted and other groups, we increase the labeling of children as strong-weak, good-less good*	208	1 – 5	3.24	0.93	A
ACCELERATION		1 – 4.3	2.89	0.56	A
7. Most gifted children who skip a grade have difficulties in their social adjustment to a group of older students*	208	1 – 5	2.93	0.96	A
10. Children who skip a grade are usually pressured to do so by their parents*	208	1 – 5	3.22	0.85	A
29. When skipping a grade, gifted students miss important ideas (They have holes in their knowledge.).*	207	1 – 5	2.74	0.87	A
34. A greater number of gifted children should be allowed to skip a grade.	209	2 – 5	3.37	0.82	P

Note: \*original statements with accompanying descriptive indicators. For the purpose of obtaining descriptive values of subscales the statements indicated with \* have been recoded. VP – highly positive, P – positive, A – ambivalent, N – negative, VN – highly negative

Considering that not all statements have been normally distributed (from K-S test=2.731 with  $p=0.000$  for the statement 2 to K-S test=5.5035 with  $p=0.000$  for the statement 15), further analyses make use of the non-parametric statistics.

Table 2 shows the differences in teachers' attitudes regarding the respondents' years of teaching in four respective categories. The results showed that there are certain differences in relation to some statements from the questionnaire. Significant differences were established in the first subscale, regarding the statement *special educational needs of gifted students in our schools are too often ignored*. The youngest teachers, with 0 to 4 years of teaching, have significantly different attitudes in comparison with the oldest teachers who have 30–44 years of teaching experience, i.e. teachers beginners tend to highly agree with the proposed statement (Table 2). On the second subscale there was a significant difference between the teachers with the longest teaching experience, who mostly claim *our schools are already adequate in meeting the needs of the gifted*, as opposed to their youngest colleagues (Table 2). There were also differences in attitude statements that belong to the third subscale, one of them being *gifted students are a valuable resource of our society* and the other one being *the leaders of tomorrow's society will come mostly from the gifted of today*, where the youngest teachers mostly agree with the previously mentioned statements in contrast to the oldest colleagues (Table 2). In the fourth subscale there was a significant difference between the youngest teachers (0–4 years of teaching) and their older colleagues (5–15 years of teaching), which showed that the youngest teachers were more aware of the fact that the gifted have more difficulty in making friends (Table 2). There were no significant differences in attitude statements of the fifth and sixth subscale regarding the respondents' years of teaching (Table 2).

Table 2

Testing the significance of differences, using the Kruskal Wallis test, in attitudes towards the gifted regarding the years of teaching

	Years of teaching	N	Median	Mean Rank	X <sup>2</sup>	p
NEEDS AND SUPPORT						
1. Our schools should offer special education services for the gifted.	0-4	41	4.0	97.16	3.024	.388
	5-15	58	4.0	101.24		
	16-29	63	4.0	111.09		
	30-44	41	4.0	93.95		
9. Gifted children are often bored in school.	0-4	41	4.0	122.34	7.697	.053
	5-15	58	4.0	103.30		
	16-29	64	4.0	95.62		
	30-44	41	4.0	92.27		
11. The gifted waste their time in regular classes.	0-4	41	3.0	106.79	.556	.906
	5-15	58	3.0	101.80		
	16-29	63	3.0	101.90		
	30-44	41	3.0	97.65		

	0-4	41	4.0	111.60		
15. The gifted need special attention in order to fully develop their talents.	5-15	58	4.0	100.32	1.978	.577
	16-29	64	4.0	102.58		
	30-44	41	4.0	96.37		
	0-4	40	4.0 <sub>4</sub>	118.86		
14. The specific educational needs of the gifted are too often ignored in our schools.	5-15	58	4.0	101.37	<b>8.611</b>	<b>.035</b>
	16-29	64	4.0	104.02		
	30-44	41	3.0 <sub>1</sub>	83.29		
	0-4	41	4.0	113.02		
24. In order to progress, a society must develop the talents of gifted individuals to a maximum.	5-15	58	4.0	97.20	3.030	.387
	16-29	64	4.0	104.59		
	30-44	41	4.0	96.21		
	0-4	41	4.0	106.28		
30. Since we invest supplementary funds for funds for children with difficulties, we should do the same for the gifted.	5-15	58	4.0	101.09	.346	.951
	16-29	64	4.0	102.63		
	30-44	41	4.0	100.51		
	0-4	41	4.0	121.95		
32. The regular school program stifles the intellectual curiosity of gifted children.	5-15	58	3.0	93.91	7.380	.061
	16-29	63	3.0	102.06		
	30-44	41	3.0	93.39		
	RESISTANCE TO OBJECTIONS					
3. Children with difficulties have the most need of special education services.	0-4	41	4.0	100.51	1.580	.664
	5-15	58	4.0	95.04		
	16-29	64	4.0	105.97		
	30-44	40	4.0	107.26		
4. Special programs for gifted children have the drawback of creating elitism.	0-4	41	3.0	110.88	1.769	.622
	5-15	58	3.0	100.50		
	16-29	64	2.0	96.88		
	30-44	41	3.0	105.72		
5. Special educational services for the gifted children are a mark of privilege.	0-4	39	3.0	112.92	3.131	.372
	5-15	56	2.0	96.91		
	16-29	63	2.0	94.74		
	30-44	40	2.0	97.54		
12. We have a greater moral responsibility to give special help to children with difficulties than to gifted children.	0-4	41	3.0	109.04	2.780	.427
	5-15	58	3.0	91.99		
	16-29	63	3.0	103.59		
	30-44	41	3.0	106.68		
16. Our schools are already adequate in meeting the needs of the gifted.	0-4	41	2.0 <sub>4</sub>	95.16	<b>9.869</b>	<b>.020</b>
	5-15	58	2.0	94.72		
	16-29	64	2.0	98.84		
	30-44	41	3.0 <sub>1</sub>	126.57		



	0-4	41	4.0	112.45		
18. It is parents who have the major responsibility for helping gifted children develop their talents.	5-15	58	4.0	110.45	4.764	.190
	16-29	64	4.0	94.09		
	30-44	41	4.0	94.44		
	0-4	41	2.0	104.66		
23. The gifted are already favored in our schools	5-15	57	2.0	97.04	1.626	.653
	16-29	64	2.0	99.84		
	30-44	41	2.0	109.61		
	0-4	41	3.0	111.33		
26. Tax-payers should not have to pay for special education for the minority of children who are gifted.	5-15	58	3.0	106.03	6.828	.078
	16-29	64	2.0	87.68		
	30-44	41	3.0	111.82		
	0-4	41	3.0	90.43		
27. Average children are the major resource of our society, so they should be the focus of our attention.	5-15	58	3.0	106.91	6.006	.111
	16-29	64	3.0	96.52		
	30-44	41	3.0	117.67		
	0-4	41	3.0	106.85		
28. Gifted children might become vain or egotistical if they are given special attention.	5-15	58	3.0	99.28	.553	.907
	16-29	64	3.0	104.09		
	30-44	41	3.0	100.23		
	SOCIAL VALUE					
13. Gifted persons are a valuable resource for our society.	0-4	41	5.0 <sub>2,3,4</sub>	124.46	<b>8.738</b>	<b>.033</b>
	5-15	58	4.0 <sub>1</sub>	98.18		
	16-29	64	4.0 <sub>1</sub>	95.14		
	30-44	41	4.0 <sub>1</sub>	98.13		
17. I would very much like to be considered a gifted person	0-4	41	3.0	101.27	5.335	.149
	5-15	57	3.0	98.94		
	16-29	64	3.0	94.16		
	30-44	41	4.0	119.22		
25. By offering special educational services to the gifted, we prepare the future members of a dominant class	0-4	41	3.0	104.48	2.648	.449
	5-15	58	3.0	111.19		
	16-29	64	3.0	95.38		
	30-44	41	3.0	99.35		
33. The leaders of tomorrow's society will come mostly from the gifted of today.	0-4	41	3.0 <sub>3,4</sub>	124.50	<b>9.953</b>	<b>.019</b>
	5-15	58	3.0	104.03		
	16-29	64	2.0 <sub>1</sub>	90.90		
	30-44	41	2.0 <sub>1</sub>	96.45		
REJECTION						
19. A child who has been identified as gifted has more difficulty in making friends.	0-4	41	3.0 <sub>2</sub>	109.16	<b>8.024</b>	<b>.046</b>
	5-15	58	2.0 <sub>1</sub>	85.38		
	16-29	64	2.0	107.05		
	30-44	41	3.0	112.95		

	0-4	41	2.0	111.99		
22. Some teachers feel their authority threatened by gifted children	5-15	57	2.0	102.04	2.827	.419
	16-29	64	2.0	93.83		
	30-44	40	2.0	102.26		
	0-4	41	3.0	117.93		
31. Often, gifted children are rejected because people are envious of them	5-15	57	3.0	98.58	4.206	.240
	16-29	64	3.0	98.66		
	30-44	41	3.0	96.05		
	ABILITY GROUPING					
2. The best way to meet the needs of the gifted is to put them in special classes	0-4	41	3.0	88.76	7.411	.060
	5-15	58	3.0	107.56		
	16-29	64	3.0	114.40		
	30-44	41	2.0	90.51		
6. When the gifted are put in special classes, the other children feel devalued	0-4	41	3.0	104.45	2.717	.437
	5-15	58	3.0	99.34		
	16-29	64	3.0	96.53		
	30-44	41	4.0	114.33		
8. It is more damaging for a gifted child to waste time in class than to adapt to skipping a grade	0-4	41	3.0	103.82	2.339	.505
	5-15	58	3.0	109.93		
	16-29	64	3.0	99.07		
	30-44	40	3.0	93.33		
20. Gifted children should be left in regular classes since they serve as an intellectual stimulant for the other children	0-4	41	4.0	115.80	4.050	.256
	5-15	58	4.0	97.00		
	16-29	64	4.0	96.60		
	30-44	41	4.0	106.18		
21. By separating students into gifted and other groups, we increase the labeling of children as strong-weak, good-less good	0-4	41	3.0	110.28	2.142	.543
	5-15	58	3.0	94.45		
	16-29	64	3.0	105.03		
	30-44	41	3.0	102.16		
ACCELERATION						
7. Most gifted children who skip a grade have difficulties in their social adjustment to a group of older students	0-4	41	3.0	106.50	1.281	.734
	5-15	58	3.0	95.24		
	16-29	63	3.0	103.12		
	30-44	41	3.0	105.34		
10. Children who skip a grade are usually pressured to do so by their parents	0-4	41	3.0	91.12	4.006	.261
	5-15	58	3.0	98.22		
	16-29	63	3.0	104.62		
	30-44	41	4.0	114.21		
29. When skipping a grade, gifted students miss important ideas (They have holes in their knowledge.).	0-4	41	3.0	111.55	3.095	.377
	5-15	57	2.0	94.96		
	16-29	64	2.5	97.91		
	30-44	41	3.0	108.61		

	0-4	41	3.0	104.88		
34. A greater number of gifted children should be allowed to skip a grade.	5-15	58	3.0	100.84	2.160	.540
	16-29	64	3.0	108.64		
	30-44	41	3.0	92.88		

Note: The indices next to the values of the median signify between which groups a significant difference was determined by Mann-Whitney's *post hoc* U test (1- from 0 to 4 years, 2- from 5 to 15 years, 3- from 16 to 29 years, 4- from 30 to 44 years).

## Discussion and Conclusion

Positive attitudes towards the needs and support, as well as towards social value of the gifted are in accordance with other relevant studies which have shown that teachers do recognize the needs and support for gifted students, along with their social value (Ćaro, 2009; Lassig, 2009; Watts, 2006). Ambivalent attitudes towards acceleration are not in accordance with other studies which have shown that mostly negative attitudes prevail among teachers concerning this possibility of their education (Allodi & Rydelius, 2008; Chessman, 2010; Ćaro, 2009; Drain, 2008; Lassig, 2009; Troxclair, 2013; Watts, 2006). Ambivalent attitudes towards ability grouping correspond with some studies (Drain, 2008; Lassig, 2009), while some show prevailing negative attitudes. There are several explanations for such results. Teachers come across gifted students in their everyday work and they recognize their potential and different needs. Nevertheless, schools do not have a consistent policy for working with the gifted, which does not provide teachers with the opportunity to perceive the advantages or disadvantages of acceleration and ability grouping, and are therefore unable to express their opinion on that issue. In support of that thesis, only 3.6% of teachers stated that the student from their class they considered gifted has been tested in order to determine the level and type of giftedness, which should certainly precede any form of systematic work with the gifted students in school. This study showed statistically significant difference in certain attitude statements regarding the length of teaching experience (years of teaching and age are highly correlated,  $r = .967^{**}$ ). Younger teachers expressed more positive attitudes towards the gifted than their older colleagues, which corresponds to the results of the study conducted by Tomlinson et al. (2004), whereas the results of the study conducted by Posavec (2008) indicate more positive attitudes of teachers with more years of teaching. There are also studies that showed no difference in attitudes regarding teachers' work experience (Allodi & Rydelius, 2008; Chessman, 2010; Cramond & Martin, 1987; Drain, 2008; Koren, 1996; Lassig, 2009). Positive attitudes of younger teachers can be explained with their enthusiasm and willingness to meet the challenges of working with the gifted, whereas older teachers are more aware of personal engagement that working with the gifted brings, as well as of insufficient professional support from schools.

In their everyday work, teachers come across individuals who show giftedness in various areas of human interest. The conducted research indicates that gifted students will have a teacher who is positively oriented towards their needs, support and social

value. At the same time, ambivalent attitudes towards acceleration and ability grouping warn about the lack of possibility to participate in these educational approaches. Established differences in certain statements regarding the years of teaching support the idea that teachers beginners have more positive attitudes towards the gifted in relation to their older colleagues.

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# Stavovi učitelja prema darovitim učenicima i razlike u stavovima s obzirom na staž

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## **Sažetak**

*Stavovi nam pomažu u razumijevanju odnosa učitelja prema darovitim učenicima te utječu na njihovu nastavnu praksu, što u konačnici može odrediti njihov razvoj. Cilj je ovog istraživanja bio ispitati stavove učitelja razredne nastave prema darovitim učenicima i nekim oblicima rada s darovitima u školi poput akceleracije i grupiranja prema sposobnostima, te utvrditi razlikuju li se učitelji u svojim stavovima s obzirom na godine radnog staža. Istraživanje je provedeno na uzorku od 209 učitelja razredne nastave s područja Brodsko-posavske županije. Rezultati su pokazali da učitelji imaju pozitivne stavove prema potrebama, podršci i društvenoj vrijednosti darovitih, no iskazuju neutralne stavove prema akceleraciji, grupiranju prema sposobnostima i bojazni da bi poseban tretman darovitih mogao imati negativne posljedice. Utvrđene su statistički značajne razlike na pojedinim tvrdnjama između učitelja s najmanje radnog staža u odnosu na starije kolege.*

**Ključne riječi:** akceleracija; daroviti učenici; grupiranje prema sposobnostima; stavovi; staž; učitelji razredne nastave.