The Assessment of the Competences of Students at the Department of Teacher Education Studies and of the Teachers for Inclusive Practice

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to identify the differences in the opinions of students from the Department of Teacher Education Studies and the teachers in regular primary schools on the acquired competences for inclusive education. The study is based on their personal assessment of the degree of qualifications for the application of certain components of inclusive education of students with disabilities. The study included 212 third-year students and 127 fifth-year students from the Department of Teacher Education Studies and 151 teachers from regular primary schools. The scale of assessment of competences for inclusive education encompassed assessment components of their own abilities to identify the students with disabilities and their knowledge of the specifics of their individual problems, the knowledge of didactic and methodological approaches, the skill to provide the necessary individualized support, the knowledge of communication skills in partnership with parents and the readiness for teamwork and collaboration with other staff members in school. The analysis has shown that the students are more willing to initiate processes for providing the necessary support in accordance with the legal provisions, as well as to initiate activities for the affirmation of the students' rights placing an emphasis on the importance of teamwork, while the teachers are more competent in communication with parents and counselling and also in joint cooperation with other experts. The results also reveal a greater competence of the teachers and the third-year students in lesson planning and design of specific teaching material and individualized educational programmes, while the fifth-year students, along with the teachers, are

considered to be better qualified to apply a higher level of ethics and professionalism and for work with parents.

Key words: *competences; inclusive education; students at the Department of Teacher Education Studies; teachers.*

Introduction

Professional development of teachers in the field of inclusive pedagogy has been a topic of interest of numerous authors in the world in the last two decades (Corbett, 2001; Gale, 2001; Mullen, 2001; Lindsay, 2003; Agbenyega, 2007; Avalos, 2011). Among many definitions of inclusive education, a commonly accepted understanding is that inclusive education is a process of increasing participation and decreasing exclusion of children and students with disabilities[1], with participation implying recognition, acceptance and respect for all children in the regular educational system. Research generally emphasizes inclusive education as a process in which schools respond to individual needs of all students by allowing individualization of the teaching process, tools and resources for equal educational opportunities (Batarelo Kokić, Vukelić, & Ljubić, 2009). Research, however, confirms that this process requires quality planning and needs to be implemented through professionally managed interventions of teachers in order to achieve results according to the individual needs of students (Bouillet, 2008; 2009; 2011). Therefore, the importance of educational policy and practice of higher education institutions which educate future teachers, and then of schools and teachers is to create such educational programmes that will build the capacity for inclusive education and reduce all forms of exclusion on any grounds (Sebba & Sachdev, 1997; Booth & Ainscow, 1998; Batarelo Kokić et al., 2009).

Koster et al. (2005) believe that during the education of students at the Department of Teacher Education Studies it is important to provide guidelines and support for future teachers in acquiring specific competences for their future professional development. Agbenyega (2007) believes that teachers in regular schools often express fear and concern because their professional knowledge and skills are not adequate for effective teaching of students with disabilities. Positive attitudes and willingness of teachers for further training are affected by the availability of material and human resources (Avramidis, Buylis, & Burden, 2000; Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey, 2005). Therefore, researchers point out that inclusive education is a dynamic process which requires knowledge and expertise for the required level of quality of work in inclusive classrooms and collaboration with other experts (Corbett, 2001; Lindsay, 2003).

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[1] *Students with disabilities* as a terminological determination in education in The Republic of Croatia is contained in the Law on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (NN, Nos. 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12, 94/13 &152/14). The term *students with disabilities* includes students with developmental disabilities, students with learning disabilities, behavioral and emotional problems and students with disabilities conditioned by educational, social, economic, cultural and linguistic factors. This paper uses terms that can be found in literature as children/students/people with disabilities, children/ students/ people with developmental disabilities, children/ students/ people with special educational needs, children/ students/ people with difficulties in social integration.

Peterson and Beloin (1992) believe that teachers must be competent for various teaching styles, according to students' learning styles. Consequently, education for educational inclusion requires psychological and practical preparation of students for a dynamic role of an inclusive teacher (Mullen, 2001), as well as attitudes which result in removing the barriers for inclusion of students with disabilities into a regular education system (Beattie, Anderson, & Antonak, 1997).

Regarding teaching competences required for inclusive education, many authors point out that in working with students with special educational needs, it is necessary to develop skills relevant for individualized teaching, including the ability to remove obstacles to inclusion of students with disabilities into regular education system (Florian & Rouse, 2009; Michailakis Reich, 2009; Bouillet, 2010). The emphasis is on changing the school organization, providing resources and building capacities in regular schools which will offer new opportunities for students with disabilities (Ocloo, Hayford, Agbeko, Gadagbui, Avoka, & Boison, 2002). This, above all, requires the understanding of socio-cultural factors which make individual differences and expert knowledge of the difficulties and didactic and methodological approaches. Accordingly, competences of teachers for inclusion should include teaching based on knowing the individual characteristics of students and their families.

According to Batarelo Kokić et al. (2009), the results of the study on social inclusion through education and training in South Eastern Europe (ETF), which was conducted in Croatia as a part of a regional project on social inclusion, indicate that legislative and educational policies in Croatia are quite advanced and positively oriented towards inclusive education. The same authors emphasize that competences and motivation of teachers to adopt new approaches to teaching students with educational needs are a key to encouraging change in practice, and thus learning outcomes as well. Furthermore, the authors point out that in the framework of education of students of the Department of Teacher Education Studies, future teachers mostly acquire basic knowledge and competences about developmental stages of children and methods for general teaching of certain subjects, but at the same time gain very little practical training that is focused on individualization.

According to Vizek Vidović (2009), specific competences of teachers for work with students are the competence for applying various strategies for teaching and learning and the competence for counselling (students and parents) on different educational issues and developmental problems. Crooks (2003) points out that the importance of standards in education and guidelines emphasize personal professional growth and development. The existing standards, however, do not emphasize enough the need for specific competences of teachers relevant for inclusive education and there are no sufficient incentives for teachers to participate in professional training programmes relevant for inclusive education. However, it is possible that this will change by introducing a system of licensing teachers (Batarelo Kokić et al., 2009). Smith (2003) believes that teachers are the ones who should have the most important

role in formulating standards for their profession, while Korthagen (2004) believes that standards normally do not take sufficiently into account the complexity and unpredictability of the teaching process and learning. In this regard, education of teachers for modern and inclusive school assumes the preparation of teachers not only for pedagogical and methodological components, but also acquiring specific competences for inclusion. Consequently, education and training of teachers should be based on improving professional knowledge, skills and attitudes for education of all children (Batarelo Kokić et al., 2009). Sučević et al. (2011, according to Hirvi, 1996) emphasize that teachers should be competent for a new role of a mentor, in planning new methods of teaching, introducing new teaching technologies and more intense inclusion of students with special education needs in different working methods. Teachers, however, lack cooperation with experts who could be theirs and their students' support in inclusive processes (Bouillet, 2013). The author points out that teachers need more advice, as well as specific help in working with students with disabilities and concludes that there is a need for better conceptualization of cooperation between schools and local communities in terms of higher levels of team work.

Considering that the competence model of educational system focuses on learning outcomes, Skočić Mihić et al. (2014) point to research results which indicate that there are students who are partially competent for working in inclusive teaching and emphasize that study programmes for future teachers should ensure acquisition of competences for inclusive education on a graduate level and also include more practice, so that students could come into direct work with children with special educational needs.

The Methodology of Scientific Research
Research Problem and Aim

The European concept of a new society, based on the needs of new users in the education system, presumes a change in educational services and new understanding of the role of education, which represents a new challenge for teachers. A redefined need for the teaching profession involves a high degree of professionalization of teachers. Teachers' freedom in designing the teaching process is expanding, which leads to a higher level of the required competences. The conclusions of the Barcelona Council on a strategic framework for European cooperation and in education and training, called the "ET 2020", claim that European cooperation in the field of education and training in the period up until 2020 should be established in the context of a strategic framework that encompasses entire systems of education and training from the perspective of lifelong learning. In accomplishing these objectives, particular attention is paid to improving relevant competences and ensuring high quality teaching through adequate education system and professional development of teachers. This is how teachers are put before new tasks and assume a new role. The

requirements of "new competences" put professionalism on the top of the scale, and this implies education directed to European concepts of quality (Sučević, Cvjetićanin, & Sakač, 2011).

Through curricular goals of inclusive education, teachers are directed to social sensitivity and individualized teaching and counselling. Given that the quality inclusion of children with disabilities into regular schools requires professional preparation of teachers for inclusion, on a university level it requires quality preparation of students. According to their acquired competences, they become experts for inclusion who will accept differences in individual needs of all students for their adequate involvement in the community. The emphasis is placed on educating students to become motivated and professional teachers who will be able to meet inclusive demands of students and the community, adopt new approaches to teaching, have knowledge of collaborative forms of working with parents and actively participate in developing new curricula, instruments and strategic documents. Batarelo Kokić et al. (2009) state that exactly this was one of the main goals of the project called the Regional Tuning of Teacher Education Curricula. However, it has been determined that there is mismatch in competences that teachers acquire during university education and those which they need for work. In connection with preparing teachers for inclusive education, it has been emphasized that teachers believe that commitment to equality, support provided for all students and promotion of tolerance are the most important competences. Yet, a review of teacher study programmes shows that content necessary for the acquisition of the needed competences of future teachers is insufficient.

In accordance with the above described situation, the aim of this study is to determine the differences in the opinions between the students of the Department of Teacher Education Studies and the teachers in regular primary schools on the acquired competences for inclusive education.

The research is based on the hypothesis that there is a statistically significant difference between the students of the Department of Teacher Education Studies and teachers in assessing the degree of proficiency in the implementation of inclusive education of students with disabilities.

Methods
Participants

The study was conducted on a sample of 490 respondents. The study included 212 third-year students and 127 fifth-year students enrolled at the Department of Teacher Education Studies, Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb (Croatia) and 151 teachers working with students in all eight grades of regular primary schools in the city of Zagreb. The names of the schools are not mentioned here in order to protect their privacy, but they are known to the author of this paper.

Third-year students at the Department of Teacher Education Studies are required to take *Inclusive pedagogy* course and acquire formal education and competences for

the process of inclusive education. Fifth-year students have more general practical and experiential knowledge in educational practice, but after the third year of study, they do not get further training for working with students with disabilities.

Instrument

The survey was conducted applying the *Scale of assessment of competences for inclusive education*, adjusted according to Dingle et al. (2004). This five-degree scale consists of 28 statements of competences necessary for inclusive education. The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach alpha) of the scale has been calculated as 0.950, which means that this kind of scale is a reliable measure of the tested construct and that, as such, it can be used for research.

The respondents were asked about the degree to which they consider themselves capable of implementing certain components of inclusive education of students with disabilities. The scale includes the components of assessment of their own ability to identify students with disabilities and their knowledge of the specifics of particular difficulties, knowledge of didactic and methodological approach and providing the necessary individual support, knowledge of communication skills in partnership with parents and readiness for team work and collaboration with other colleagues in the school.

The analysis of professional competences of students and teachers for inclusive practice is based on standards defined by the Council for Exceptional Children – CEC (2004). This is a document that contains a set of knowledge and skills needed for working with children with disabilities (Bouillet, 2011). CEC is applied at national and regional level to ensure that the curriculum includes the standards which are consistent with the need for licensing teachers for the purpose of their preparedness and capacity for inclusive practice. Therefore, the CEC has developed standards with ten areas that describe the minimum knowledge, skills and dispositions that inclusive teachers should have, and are related to (1) foundations in the system of inclusive education, (2) developmental characteristics of students with disabilities, (3) individual differences in learning, (4) teaching strategies, (5) learning environments and social interaction, (6) communication skills, (7) planning for teaching, (8) educational assessment, (9) performing professional practice according to ethical standards and (10) cooperation.

As the skills for individualized teaching are at the centre of inclusive education, inclusive teachers should always know how to recognize the students' individual needs and learning styles. This is confirmed by the National Curriculum Framework for Preschool Education and General Compulsory and Secondary Education (Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 2011), which emphasizes the importance of teachers' competences in implementing inclusive education. A necessary presumption in planning the curriculum for working with students with disabilities is permanent and quality professional development of teachers. Thus, with early recognition and providing support to students with disabilities, it is important to establish and maintain collaboration with parents who need to be provided with necessary advice and support. Based on these guidelines of the National Curriculum, systematic undergraduate and

graduate teacher studies and afterwards a continuous professional development of teachers should ensure necessary skills for working with students with disabilities and their parents, as well as the capacity for team work in inclusive practice.

Method of Collecting and Processing Data

The data were collected in 2014. The students filled in the assessment scale in groups, according to their years of study. The teachers filled in the assessment scale in schools where the research was being conducted in consultation with the principals and professional associates who had scheduled the dates for research implementation. Before completing the scale of assessment, the process of scale completion was explained to the participants. The task was to read each statement and then circle the appropriate number on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 meant "not qualified at all" and 5 "fully qualified".

The data obtained through the assessment scale were analysed on a descriptive and latent level. The assessment scale was subjected to factor analysis of manifesting different competences of students and teachers, where the method used was the principal component analysis with varimax rotation.

The obtained results were used to calculate the basic descriptive parameters: the minimum and maximum (Min and Max), arithmetic mean and standard deviation. Table 1 shows the descriptive values for the main factors/components: identifying students with disabilities and providing adequate support, planning and implementation of individualized didactic and methodological approach, communication skills and knowledge of the role of peer relationships and skills for partnership with parents and team work.

Statistical analysis of data was performed with SPSS, version 17 statistical software.

Table 1

Descriptive values of the factors/components

Factors/components	Min	Max	Arithmetic mean	Std. Dev.
Identifying students with disabilities and providing adequate support	1.17	5.00	3.8902	.65739
Planning and implementation of individualized didactic and methodological approach	1.33	5.00	3.7010	.71494
Communication skills and knowledge of the role of peer relationships	2.00	5.00	4.1885	.52692
Skills for partnership with parents and team work	1.00	5.00	4.2301	.62619

Results and Discussion

The goal of the research required a factor structure of the scale obtained by using the principal component analysis with varimax rotation. To estimate the level of proficiency of students and teachers for the implementation of inclusive education of students with disabilities, four factors were extracted, i.e. main components, which together account for 59.247% of the variance. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Matrix of rotated factors/coefficients

	F1	F2	F3	F4
Apply a high level of ethics and professionalism in everyday work.			.570	
Encourage development of self-esteem in students with disabilities.			.601	
Facilitate active participation of students with disabilities in the educational process.			.528	
In relationships with students, use encouraging communication.			.744	
Develop relationships with students that are based on mutual respect and appreciation, without judgment, and with respect for diversity.			.545	
Plan the lessons so that all students can participate in them.		.690		
Respect and appreciation for parents of different cultural, communication and value orientations.				.755
Practice encouraging communication in relationships with parents.				.735
Encourage parents to adapt upbringing styles, methods and techniques to the needs of their children.				.542
Prepare customized training materials, including the preparation of content, instructions and tasks.		.775		
Apply knowledge on common characteristics of different difficulties and their impact on the education process.		.652		
Apply behavioural techniques for behaviour change.		.614		
Create an inclusive environment in the classroom.			.487	
Apply a leadership (restitution) approach.		.461		
Encourage team work which allows the best development of students with disabilities.	.588			
Participate in the development of an individualized educational programme.		.602		
Evaluate the progress of students with disabilities.	.576			
Encourage parents to cooperate with various professionals (teachers, psychologists, therapists, etc.).				.415
Initiate activities directed towards affirmation of the rights of students with disabilities in school.	.723			
Initiate processes of evaluation of special educational needs of students with disabilities.	.748			
Facilitate socialization of students with disabilities.	.735			
Use peer support.	.717			
Cooperate with support staff (teaching assistants, sign language interpreters, etc.).	.698			
Identify students with disabilities.	.601			
According to legislation, participate in the protection of students from all forms of violence and abuse.	.620			
Physically adapt the classroom and learning conditions to students with disabilities (including the use of additional and ICT technology).	.593			
Implement legal solutions to protect the rights of students with disabilities.	.710			
Motivate students to change unacceptable behaviour.	.603			
Explained variance (%): 59.247%	43.120%	7.025%	5.192%	3.910%

$p \leq 0.05$

F1 – Identifying students with disabilities and providing adequate support, F2 – Planning and implementation of individualized didactic and methodological approach, F3 – Communication skills and knowledge of the role of peer relationships, F4 – Skills for partnership with parents and team work

As it can be interpreted from the data presented in Table 2, the first factor/component explains 43.120% of the variance. The first factor/component predominantly consists of competences that are based on the proficiency of students and teachers in identifying students with disabilities and providing adequate support concerning the initiation of the process of evaluating their educational needs and activities which are directed towards affirmation of the rights of students with disabilities in the school. Accordingly, having these competences implies knowing legal provisions and participating in protecting students from all forms of violence and abuse. In order to provide adequate support, the required competences are those that allow evaluating progress of students with disabilities, as well as competences which refer to encouraging and organizing team work among students, which leads to the optimum development of students with disabilities. Consequently, the required competences are those which help students and teachers facilitate socialization of students with disabilities by using peer support. Together with competences for using peer support and providing adequate support, necessary competences are those that allow active collaboration with supporting staff (teaching assistants, sign language interpreters, etc.), with the aim of effectively motivating students to change unacceptable behaviour. Taking into account abilities and possibilities of each student to be successful, it is also necessary to train students and teachers for adapting the classroom for appropriate learning conditions for students with disabilities (including the use of additional and ICT technology). According to these competences, the first factor/component is named *Identifying students with disabilities and providing adequate support.*

The second factor/component explains 7.025% of the variance and it grouped professional competences that are mainly related to planning lessons which would include all students who require special individualized educational programmes and customized class materials, like content, instructions and tasks. Competences of students and teachers refer to application of knowledge to common characteristics of different difficulties and their impact on the educational process, where the application of restitution approach and behavioural techniques for changing the students' behaviour must be of most importance. According to these competences, the second factor/component is named *Planning and implementation of individualized didactic and methodological approach.*

As shown in data presented in Table 2, the third factor/component explains 5.192% of the variance and is mostly made up of competences for applying a high level of ethics and professionalism in everyday work, in order to encourage the development of self-esteem of students with disabilities. Accordingly, the emphasis is on communication skills of students and teachers in facilitating active participation of students with disabilities in the educational process, as well as using encouraging communication with students. Competences refer to the ability of students and teachers in creating such inclusive environment in the classroom that would enable developing relationships with students which are based on mutual respect and appreciation of diversity, without

judgment. Accordingly, the third factor/component is named *Communication skills and knowledge of the role of peer relationships.*

The final, fourth factor/component which is extracted by factor analysis of the *Scale of competences for inclusive education* is made up of grouped competences related to the skills necessary for creating partnerships with parents by using encouraging communication in mutual relationships and in encouraging parents to adapt their upbringing styles, methods and techniques to different needs of their children. The emphasis is placed on respect and appreciation of parents of different cultural, communication and value orientations. These are also the competences that refer to encouraging parents to cooperate with different experts (teachers, psychologists, therapists, etc.), or in other words, competences that make students and teachers qualified for team work. Accordingly, the fourth factor/component is named *Skills for partnership with parents and team work.* It explains 3.910% of the variance.

A univariate variance analysis (ANOVA) method was used to examine the differences between students in the third and fifth year at the Department of Teacher Education Studies regarding the degree to which they consider themselves qualified for the implementation of certain components of inclusive education of students with disabilities on previously isolated factors. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Values and statistical significance of f-ratio and arithmetic means of groups of respondents - students (third- and fifth-year) and teachers

Factor	F- ratio	Sig. (p)	Students' level of study and teachers	M	SD
Identifying students with disabilities and providing adequate support	3.42	.03	third-year students	3.95	.58
			fifth-year students	3.76	.69
			teachers	3.92	.72
Planning and implementation of individualized didactic and methodological approach	3.35	.04	third-year students	3.61	.68
			fifth-year students	3.74	.66
			teachers	3.78	.79
Communication skills and knowledge of the role of peer relationships	3.90	.02	third-year students	4.18	.47
			fifth-year students	4.10	.51
			teachers	4.28	.61
Skills for partnership with parents and team work	4.43	.01	third-year students	4.19	.55
			fifth-year students	4.15	.67
			teachers	4.35	.67

According to the data shown in Table 3, there is a statistically significant difference between students (in the third and fifth year at the Department of Teacher Education Studies and teachers) in all four factors/components, so the hypothesis that there is a statistically significant difference between students of the teacher education studies and teachers in assessing the degree of proficiency in the implementation of inclusive education of students with disabilities has been confirmed. A *post hoc Scheffe* was used

for a detailed look, to see among which subsamples there is a statistically significant difference in the major components. The difference in arithmetic means is statistically significant at the confidence interval p≤0.05.

The data show that students generally considered themselves more qualified than teachers in identifying students with disabilities, initiating activities for affirmation of their rights, as well as initiating processes for providing them with adequate support in accordance with legal provisions. They consider themselves more competent in following the existing legislation in order to protect students with disabilities as well as encouraging socialization of students with disabilities. Students also consider themselves more qualified in using peer support, as well as evaluating the progress of students with disabilities. They are also considered to be more ready for encouraging team work and collaboration with other experts who provide additional support for students with disabilities (such as teaching assistants) and in adapting their lessons and using new technologies for creating the most favourable learning conditions for students with disabilities.

The results also indicate a greater sense of competence of teachers and third-year students in planning lessons and creating custom class materials and individualized educational programmes. They are considered to be more competent in leadership approach. Such results are caused by the fact that third-year students are, in classes of *Inclusive pedagogy*, introduced to the importance of the process of restitution as well as application of behavioural techniques for changes in the behaviour of students with disabilities. Consequently, and in accordance with the expected outcomes of the course, they feel more competent in applying the knowledge of common characteristics of different disabilities. Another possible reason, as indicated by the results, is that teachers, according to their experience in education, have more practical knowledge of common characteristics of different difficulties of students and their impact on the educational process, as well as knowledge of the leadership approach.

Teachers and fifth-year students at the Department of Teacher Education Studies consider themselves more competent than third-year students in communication skills, they feel more qualified for using encouraging communication, as well as applying a higher level of ethics and professionalism. They consider themselves more competent in encouraging development of self-esteem in students with disabilities and in enabling their active participation in the educational process. They also consider themselves more competent, in comparison to third-year students, when it comes to creating an inclusive environment for respecting differences and relationships between students based on mutual respect and appreciation.

The results also indicate that teachers and fifth-year students at the Department of Teacher Education Studies consider themselves more competent in practicing encouraging communication with parents that should be directed towards appreciation and respect for the parents and their families' cultural, communication and value orientation. Teachers and fifth-year students believe themselves to be more

qualified, in comparison with third-year students, in encouraging parents to adjust their upbringing styles, methods and techniques according to their children's needs, as well as in encouraging parents to cooperate with a variety of experts.

Conclusion

Inclusive educational practice implies inclusive teachers who are competent in meeting educational needs of students with disabilities (Vizek Vidović, 2009; Bouillet, 2010; Kudek Mirošević, 2012; Skočić Mihić, Lončarić, Colombo, Perger, Nastić, & Trgovčić, 2014). Teachers do not have enough competences for inclusive education (Skočić Mihić et al., 2014), as indicated by similar results of this research, the goal of which was to determine differences in opinions between students at the Department of Teacher Education Studies and teachers in regular primary schools on the acquired competences for inclusive education. The value of this paper is in the self-reported level of proficiency of the third- and fifth-year students at the Department of Teacher Education Studies and teachers in the implementation of certain components of inclusive education of students with disabilities. The research is based on the hypothesis that there is a statistically significant difference between students at the Department of Teacher Education Studies and teachers in assessing the degree of competences in implementing inclusive education of students with disabilities. The key components of professional competences for inclusive practice include identifying students with disabilities and providing adequate support, planning and implementation of individualized didactic and methodological approaches, communication skills and knowing the role of peer support and skills for partnerships with parents and team work.

The research results confirm the hypothesis and suggest that teachers in schools lack the "new" specific competences, which, as the research results show, students believe they have and are therefore more qualified for work in inclusive practice. These new competences include initiating activities for the affirmation of the rights of students with disabilities as well as initiating the process for providing the necessary support according to legal provisions. Students consider themselves to be more qualified for using peer support, as well as evaluating the progress of students with disabilities. They also consider themselves more competent in team work and adapting the lessons by using modern technologies for creating the most favourable learning conditions for students with disabilities. Therefore, this study included students at the Department of Teacher Education Studies in order for them to self-assess their competences for inclusive education. These results indicate the need to introduce additional study programmes after the third year, at the graduate level. Such courses should necessarily include more practice for students in order for them to study more about students with disabilities and learn about inclusive education through practice. Accordingly, there is a need for additional activities at the Department of Teacher Education Studies in order to reform the university education of students for inclusive education.

Furthermore, these results indicate that a crucial role in the development of teacher competences for inclusive education is found in greater involvement of teachers in further professional training in order to enhance inclusive practice. Based on this, teachers need to develop competences which include knowledge, skills and characteristics for equal teaching and promoting the right to education for all students. Consequently, teachers need to be able to seek help from other valuable resources, support staff-teaching assistants, sign language interpreters, etc. in inclusive education, as well as other experts, parents, community, school administrators and others. Therefore, the processes of education and professional development of teachers should be in line with approaches to inclusive education in order to enable teachers to build the capacity for a variety of educational processes. Namely, the existing problems related to development of teachers' competences for educational practice are a result of inflexible and unclear regulations, lack of funds, lack of sufficient modern didactic materials for individualized lessons and omissions in education of teachers.

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Procjene kompetentnosti studenata Učiteljskog studija i učitelja za inkluzivnu praksu

Sažetak

Cilj istraživanja ovoga rada je utvrditi razlike između studenata Učiteljskog studija i učitelja u redovitim osnovnim školama u mišljenjima o stečenim kompetencijama za odgojno-obrazovnu inkluziju. Istraživanje se temelji na njihovoj osobnoj procjeni stupnja osposobljenosti za primjenu pojedinih komponenti odgojno-obrazovne inkluzije učenika s teškoćama. U ispitivanju je sudjelovalo 212 studenata treće godine i 127 studenta pete godine Učiteljskog studija i 151 učitelj redovitih osnovnih škola. Skalom procjene kompetencija za odgojno-obrazovnu inkluziju obuhvaćene su komponente: procjena o vlastitoj sposobnosti identifikacije učenika s teškoćama i poznavanju specifičnosti pojedinih teškoća, poznavanje didaktičko-metodičkog pristupa i pružanja potrebne individualizirane podrške, poznavanje komunikacijskih vještina u partnerskim odnosima s roditeljima, spremnost na timski rad i suradnju s ostalim sudionicima u školi. Analizom je utvrđeno da su studenti spremniji inicirati procese za pružanje potrebne podrške u skladu sa zakonskim odredbama kao i inicirati aktivnosti za afirmaciju prava učenika naglašavajući važnost timskog rada, a da su učitelji kompetentniji u komunikaciji i savjetodavnom radu s roditeljima, kao i u suradnji s ostalim stručnjacima. Rezultati također ukazuju na veći osjećaj kompetentnosti učitelja i studenata treće godine u planiranju nastave i izrade prilagođenih nastavnih materijala i individualiziranih odgojno-obrazovnih programa, a da se studenti pete godine smatraju osposobljenijima za primjenu više razine etičnosti i profesionalnosti, kao i u radu s roditeljima.

Ključne riječi: *kompetencije; odgojno-obrazovna inkluzija; studenti učiteljskog studija; učitelji.*