

Professional Development of Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers for Collaboration with Parents

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Abstract

With initial education, practice and lifelong learning, educational staff develop knowledge, skills, abilities, as well as values and attitudes necessary for holistic approach to child development. Beliefs and attitudes can significantly determine how an individual will act. Therefore, in order to determine the differences in child-rearing beliefs and the image of the child between parents in teaching and non-teaching professions, a survey was conducted on a sample of 544 respondents with completed tertiary education. The sample consisted of 247 parents in teaching professions (kindergarten teachers, teachers, pedagogues) and 297 parents in non-teaching professions (economics, law, healthcare, engineering). The general hypothesis of this research was that there is no difference in child-rearing beliefs and the image of the child between parents in teaching and non-teaching professions. However, the results have revealed some differences. Kindergarten and elementary school teachers, more so than respondents in other professions, think that it is not necessary at all to use corporal punishment, but to be more actively involved instead and use induction in the upbringing of children. They also have a more contemporary view of the image of the child. Based on all the obtained results, it is possible to conclude that educational staff should be more engaged in the development of parental competence.

Key words: *collaboration with parents; educational competence; teaching professions; professionalism.*

Introduction

To perform a job of kindergarten, elementary, and high school teachers, it is necessary to obtain basic educational competences. In order to acquire these basic

educational competences, initial education of kindergarten, elementary, and high school teachers is based on the knowledge of the subject, children, curriculum and teaching methods in the fields of didactics, educational psychology, teaching methodology and information and communication technology. It also includes counselling, management, educational policies and other fields relevant to the effective and high-quality performance of the educational activities (Elementary and High School Education Act, 2014, Article 115, Par. 1 and 2, Official Gazette no. 152/14). By encouraging involvement of basic educational knowledge in these fields, teachers are trained to work with knowledge and information, as well as to work with people, both in society and for society (European Union, 2005, as cited in Vizek Vidović, 2009).

Since education is always a “creative act...” which can be influenced, besides intellect, by “irrational moments, knowledge and intuition... and feeling” (Bratanić, 1991, p. 7), it is necessary to prepare the teachers for planning, implementing and evaluating the educational process as well as for creating an encouraging environment which is significantly determined by the quality of the established relationships. In order for the teaching staff to maintain professionalism in their workplace, i.e. to apply unselfishly the acquired knowledge and scientific achievement for greater good, they also need to develop personal skills such as controlling their own emotions and avoiding subjectivity when making conclusions (Ledić, Staničić, & Turk, 2013). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that contemporary teacher education emphasises the needs of contemporary educational practice which includes the development of skills necessary for the implementation of educational content, as well as personal competences such as “understanding, acceptance, listening, inclusion, acting, taking initiative, recognition, negotiation and encouragement” (Kostović-Vranješ & Ljubetić, 2008, p. 150).

An important aspect of educational competences includes the values and attitudes to the desirable child-rearing practice. These values and attitudes determine the goal of acting, have a motivating role in the choice of behaviour and can significantly determine child-rearing (Hastings & Grusec, 1998). The values shape beliefs about desirable educational approach to children, and they are based on the knowledge and image of the child and its development. The image of the child can be explained as a construct or a concept that emerges from general knowledge of children (theoretical or lay), experiences from personal childhood, experience with children, and cultural interpretations of the nature of the child (Gittins, 2009, as cited in Maleš, Kušević, & Širanović, 2012). “Culturally shaped belief systems” (Harkness & Super, 1996, as cited in Pećnik, Radočaj, & Tokić, 2011, p. 638) are often closely connected with ethno theories about what is a desirable type of education and behaviour of adults toward children (Harkness & Super, 1996, as cited in Pećnik et al., 2011). Belief systems reflect on understanding of the child and its abilities, and often on creation of stereotypes about children and educational role of the adults. Those individuals who support a more contemporary view of the child and learn about new findings on child

development, show a much more desirable approach to guiding a child on the path of its development. On the other hand, individuals led by ethno theories (Harkness & Super, 1996, as cited in Pećnik et al., 2011) that are based on lay beliefs (Furnham & Weir, 1996), often set unrealistic child behaviour expectations (Fine & Fardle, 2001) or show more rigid and rejecting behaviour toward children (Hawk & Holden, 2006; Secer, Gülay Ogelman, Önder, & Berengel, 2012).

Understanding the scope of professional and personal competences that teachers use in their workplace largely coincides with the understanding of the competence of contemporary parenting. Even though parents are not expected to be professionals in their parental role, because parenting is primarily significantly determined by the emotional component and other factors (Belsky, 1984; Čudina-Obradović & Obradović, 2006), relevant contemporary literature often highlights the importance of positive guidance of the child or positive parenting (Maleš & Kušević, 2011; Sanders, 2008). Contemporary parents are expected to determine, guide and change the trajectory of their children's development (Holden, 2010), as well as to be authentic in their behaviour, respect their children's needs and develop the capability of recognition and interpretation of their children's signals in order to timely respond to them (Pećnik et al., 2011). Besides that, a parent should show predictability in behaviour and emotional warmth, acceptance, affection, and comfort the child from the early age (Pećnik et al., 2011). To develop these skills, continuous learning about child development, stimulating environment and educational skills is necessary (Dichtelmiller et al., 1992, as cited in Morawska, Winter, & Sanders, 2008). An important aspect of competent parental behaviour is also a personal experience of satisfaction and efficiency in a parental role (Johnston & Mash, 1989; Sabatelli & Waldron, 1995), as well as conducting self-evaluation and changing one's own behaviour that is aimed at positive guidance of child development (Hawk & Holden, 2006; Holden, 2010).

The contemporary view on parenting largely coincides with the professional competences of teachers. Recommendation to parents to guide and change the direction of their children's development along with continuous reflection on their own behaviour is set as a professional duty of teachers (Bilač, 2015; Jurčević Lozančić, 2015). It is possible that the similarity between the teaching profession and parental role can contribute to better functioning in the family and parental role. Since there has not been sufficient research carried out that would explain how teachers perceive their parental role, the starting point of this research was the following assumption: if teachers have more desirable beliefs and attitudes about adults' approach to raising children, it could be expected that they will be able to motivate, counsel and support other parents in changing their beliefs and educational process. Another important fact is that in today's world, with quick and easy access to information, parents often gain knowledge about contemporary parenting without the help of others, regardless of their profession. Quick access to information and acceptance of contemporary beliefs about the desirable treatment of children is the feature of highly educated

parents (Morawska et al., 2008; Stevens, 1984), and such parents were the respondents in this research.

Since there is not enough research to confirm the set assumptions, we have started from the main hypothesis (**Hg**): there is no statistically significant difference in the attitudes about the child-rearing practices between the respondents in teaching and non-teaching professions. Subsequently, the following sub-hypotheses were also posed:

H1: there is no statistically significant difference in the beliefs about child-rearing practices between respondents in teaching and non-teaching professions and

H2: there is no statistically significant difference in the image of the child between respondents in teaching and non-teaching professions.

Methodology

Participants and Research Process

Research has been conducted on a sample of 544 respondents during spring 2016 in kindergartens in the cities of Split, Solin and Kaštela. The participants were 247 parents in teaching (kindergarten teachers, teachers, pedagogues) and 297 parents in other professions (healthcare professionals, construction professionals, lawyers, economists, engineers, technicians), with at least one child aged between three and seven, who were questioned in the process. Only the parents with undergraduate and graduate degrees were involved in the research. Surveys were conducted by kindergarten teachers or pedagogues when parents came to kindergarten or during parent-teacher meetings, after the consent of the principal had been obtained. Kindergarten teachers and pedagogues were thoroughly acquainted with the instrument, guidance and all the special features of the research process. Parents who agreed to participate in the research were assured of their privacy and anonymity.

Table 1

Distribution of respondents by profession

Respondents' Profession	f	%	total %
Kindergarten teacher	73	13.4	13.4
Elementary school teacher	48	8.8	22.2
Subject teacher	94	17.3	39.5
Vocational teacher	13	2.4	41.9
Pedagogue	8	1.5	43.4
Professional team (psychologist, special education teacher, speech therapist)	11	2.0	45.4
Non-teaching professions	297	54.6	100.0
Total	544	100.0	

In this research, most respondents were women (83.1%), and 16.9% were men. Age distribution showed that 44.5% of respondents were under the age of 36, while 52.6% were 36 and over. Most respondents have two children (56.8%), 24.3% have one child and only 18.9% of respondents have three or more children. There were 52.2% of respondents who stated they have between 1 and 3 hours per day for active participation in child-rearing, while 40.3% have over 3 hours per day. When it comes

to help from relatives with child-rearing, 42.8% of respondents said they have help several times per month, 25% have help almost every day, and 23.3% of respondents rarely have help (once per month). For the purpose of this research, an analysis of the professions of the respondents was carried out (Table 1).

Measuring Instrument

For the purpose of this research, a questionnaire consisting of three parts was used: general information about the respondent, scales of Parental beliefs regarding child-rearing practices (Pećnik et al., 2011) and scale of Image of the child as a semantic differential with 25 pairs of adjectives (Maleš et al., 2012). In this research, it was assumed that the beliefs and attitudes about the desirable education approach of adults toward children could be an indicator of the knowledge and skills in/of their educational procedures. The questionnaire about the correct parenting procedures toward youngest children (Pećnik et al., 2011), which will in further analysis be referred to as Beliefs regarding parental child-rearing practices, contains 21 statements. This questionnaire is composed as a Likert type scale where respondents, on a scale from 1 – “do not agree at all” to 5 – “completely agree”, state to what extent they agree with each statement. In the research by Pećnik et al. (2011), by implementing factor analysis, it was shown that the questionnaire consisted of 5 subscales of parental beliefs. That analysis was confirmed in this research, and the beliefs are: *f1 - importance of active involvement of adults (AU)*, *f2 - subordination of the child to adults (PD)*, *f3 - needlessness to use induction (NI)*, *f4 - needlessness to respond to child's cry (NOPL)* and *f5 - use of corporal punishment (TK)*. The values of reliability and scale validity are shown in Table 2.

To determine the image the respondents have of a child, we used the Questionnaire about the image of the child (Maleš et al., 2012), which was used within the project “New paradigms of early childhood education”. The questionnaire was constructed as a form of semantic differential with 25 pairs of adjectives which describe the ways children can behave, where respondents marked the degree to which they agreed with the adjective from the pair they have chosen on a scale from one to three. Number 1 marked the lowest degree, and 3 the highest degree of agreement with the offered adjectives. The respondents also had the option to choose 0 (zero) if they could not decide which adjective best describes their child. In data analysis, the marking system was adapted to a 7-degree scale, where 1 marked a more contemporary, and 7 a more traditional image of the child. In data analysis, the construct validity of this scale was also checked as a factor. The values of reliability and validity demonstrated all its construct validity. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 2

Explained variance and saturation of the components of the scale of Beliefs regarding child-rearing practices

Subscale	Items	f1	f2	f3	f4	f5
<i>importance of active involvement of adults (AU)</i>	2. It is important to talk with the child from the first day of their life.	.752				
	1. Child learns and develops faster if someone plays and talks to them.	.723				
	4. It is important to explain to the child why they cannot do something.	.646				
	5. It is good practice to calm small children by reading to them.	.645				
	3. Child should be prepared for unpleasant experiences such as vaccination, injections, etc.	.526				
<i>subordination of the child to adults (PD)</i>	7. Small children should be calm and polite in public places and waiting rooms.		.806			
	6. When adults are talking, children should not interrupt.		.732			
	9. Children should be taught to be obedient and respect their elders.		.681			
	8. It is important to break the child's spite and stubbornness on time, because the tree bends while it is young.		.657			
<i>needlessness of induction (NI)</i>	11. If the child is about to experience something unpleasant, it is best not to say anything in advance; that way it will pass faster.			.747		
	10. Child under the age of three should not be told why they cannot do something.			.731		
	12. Child under the age of one does not understand anything, so there is no need to explain anything to them.			.627		
<i>needlessness to respond to child's cry (NOPL)</i>	13. Small children usually cry for no reason, so it is best not to react.				.756	
	14. If mom responds every time her child cries, she will spoil the child.				.753	
	15. Sometimes it is good to let the child cry for a long time because that strengthens the child's lungs.				.714	

Subscale	Items	f1	f2	f3	f4	f5
<i>use of corporal punishment (TK)</i>	18. It is justified to hit the child so they will remember what they are not allowed to do.					.860
	17. In order to properly raise a child, you sometimes have to hit them.					.841
	19. It is justified to hit a child when they are wild and making a scene for no reason.					.838
	20. Sometimes it is ok to hit a child if they are endangering their own life, for example, climbing through a window or running out on the street.					.772
	21. It is justified to hit a child if they have hit someone else, to show them how it hurts.					.649
	16. A child should sometimes get a good beating to remember a lesson.					.647
	<i>Cronbach a</i>	.715	.731	.706	.766	.887
	<i>total % explained variance</i>			61.64 %		

Table 3

Explained variance, reliability of the type of internal consistency and saturation on the obtained component of the Image of the child scale

Adjectives	f1
1. active/passive	.43
2. demanding/not demanding	.17
3. able/unable	.63
4. good/bad	.58
5. resistant/non-resistant	.41
6. responsible/irresponsible	.62
7. independent/dependent	.58
8. obedient/disobedient	.60
9. warm/cold	.60
10. gain/loss	.39
11. simple/complicated	.19
12. equal to adults/subordinated to adults	.47
13. beings that are developing naturally/beings that need encouragement	.37
14. collaborative/defiant	.60
15. unique/average	.51
16. independent in decision making/dependent in decision making	.49
17. curious/disinterested	.55
18. able to express an opinion/unable to express an opinion	.60
19. satisfied/demanding	.55
20. peaceful/rebellious	.55
21. determined/hesitant	.63
22. patient/impatient	.47
23. know what they want/do not know what they want	.52
24. need guidance/do not need guidance	.17
25. beings we can learn a lot from/beings we cannot learn from at all	.53
	<i>Cronbach a</i>
	.843
	<i>total % explained variance</i>
	25.6

Results

Difference in Beliefs Regarding Parental Child-Rearing Practices Between Respondents in Teaching and Non-Teaching Professions

In the research on the beliefs regarding parental child-rearing practices the first hypothesis (H1) was tested: there is no statistically significant difference in the beliefs regarding child-rearing practices between respondents in teaching and non-teaching professions. According to the method of basic components with Varimax rotation, the following subscales were formed: *f1 - importance of active involvement of adults (AU)*, *f2 - subordination of the child to adults (PD)*, *f3 - needlessness to use induction (NI)*, *f4 - needlessness to respond to child's cry (NOPL)* and *f5 - use of corporal punishment (TK)*. The obtained values ranged from 1 to 5, where value (1) indicated lower level of agreement, while value (5) indicated a level of greater agreement with the belief. The mean value (3) indicated uncertainty in agreement, meaning neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement.

Before the differences were investigated, the average response value had been determined on the total sample of respondents. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Average values on subscales of beliefs regarding child-rearing practices on the total sample of respondents

f	Subscales	N	Min	Max	M	SD
1	<i>importance of active involvement of adults</i>	544	1.00	5.00	4.59	0.44
2	<i>subordination of the child to adults</i>	544	1.00	5.00	3.26	0.74
3	<i>needlessness of induction</i>	544	1.00	5.00	1.61	0.69
4	<i>needlessness to respond to child's cry</i>	544	1.00	5.00	1.62	0.72
5	<i>use of corporal punishment</i>	544	1.00	5.00	1.96	0.82

The results showed that respondents have desirable beliefs regarding child-rearing practices. Most of the respondents think that it is necessary to be actively involved in child rearing ($M=4.49$, $SD=0.44$), use induction ($M=1.61$, $SD=0.69$), timely respond to child's cry ($M=1.62$, $SD=0.72$), and that it is not necessary to use corporal punishment as a child-rearing method ($M=1.96$, $SD=0.82$). The majority of the respondents did not express a clear stance, meaning they neither agree nor disagree with the belief that child should be subordinated to adults ($M=3.26$, $SD=0.74$).

A further analysis sought to determine whether there was any difference in the respondents' beliefs with regard to their professions. By analysing the differences in beliefs between respondents in teaching and non-teaching professions, T-test showed there is a difference, but not on all subscales. The results are shown in Table 5.

The results show that on the subscale of belief regarding active involvement of adults in child rearing (t-test, $M_{\text{teach}}=4.64$, $SD=0.34$; $M_{\text{non-teach}}=4.55$, $SD=0.50$, $t=2.413$, $df=542$, $p<0.05$), there is a difference in beliefs. On this subscale, the respondents in teaching professions have more appropriate beliefs regarding active involvement

Table 5
Average values on subscales with regard to respondents' (non)teaching profession

Subscales	Respondents' professions	N	M	SD	t	df	p
<i>importance of active involvement of adults (AUR)</i>	teaching profession	247	4.64*	0.34	2.413	542	.016
	non-teaching profession	297	4.55	0.50			
<i>subordination of the child to adults (PD)</i>	teaching profession	247	3.24	0.69	-0.345	542	.730
	non-teaching profession	297	3.27	0.78			
<i>needlessness of induction (NI)</i>	teaching profession	247	1.54*	0.65	-2.165	542	.031
	non-teaching profession	297	1.67	0.73			
<i>needlessness to respond to child's cry (NOPL)</i>	teaching profession	247	1.56	0.65	-1.795	542	.073
	non-teaching profession	297	1.67	0.78			
<i>use of corporal punishment (TK)</i>	teaching profession	247	1.86*	0.78	-2.571	542	.010
	non-teaching profession	297	2.04	0.85			

*p<0.05

of adults in child rearing than the respondents in non-teaching professions. On the subscale of beliefs regarding subordination of children to adults, there is no statistically significant difference with respect to parents' professions. Both groups of respondents neither agree, nor disagree with this belief. Statistically significant difference was found in the belief regarding needlessness to use induction in child rearing between parents in teaching and non-teaching professions (t-test, $M_{\text{teach}}=1.54$, $SD=0.65$; $M_{\text{non-teach}}=1.67$, $SD=0.73$, $t=-2.165$, $df=542$, $p<0.05$). Respondents in teaching professions think it is important to explain to a child if they are not allowed to do something or that something unpleasant could happen to them, more so than respondents in non-teaching professions. On a subscale of beliefs regarding the needlessness to respond to the child's cry, no statistically significant difference was found between respondents in teaching and non-teaching professions. In beliefs regarding the use of corporal punishment, statistically significant difference was found, where respondents in teaching professions, more so than respondents in non-teaching professions, think it is not necessary to use corporal punishment as a child-rearing method (t-test, $M_{\text{teach}}=1.86$, $SD=0.78$; $M_{\text{non-teach}}=2.04$, $SD=0.85$, $t=-2.571$, $df=542$, $p<0.05$).

Given that the hypothesis (H1) was only partially confirmed, since differences in beliefs between respondents were found to be partial, a further data analysis was carried out. The respondents in teaching professions were divided into two subgroups

(a subgroup of kindergarten and classroom teachers, and a subgroup of elementary and high school subject teachers), while the third group was composed of respondents in other and non-teaching professions. In the research on statistically significant differences in the results about the beliefs of the respondents in teaching professions (kindergarten and classroom teachers), other teaching professions (elementary and high school subject teachers), and respondents in non-teaching professions, a difference in responses was found, and the results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Assessment of the respondents' beliefs regarding parental child-rearing practices with regard to professions divided into three subsamples

Subscales	Respondents' professions		N	M	SD	F (df)	p
<i>importance of active involvement of adults (AUR)</i>	kindergarten and classroom teachers	elementary and high school subject teachers, non-teaching professions	140	4.73	0.26**	10.669 (2.541)	.000
	elementary and high school subject teachers	kindergarten and classroom teachers, non-teaching professions	107	4.52	0.39		
	non-teaching professions	kindergarten and classroom teachers, elementary and high school subject teachers	297	4.55	0.50		
	total		544	4.59	0.44		
<i>subordination of the child to adults (PD)</i>	kindergarten and classroom teachers	elementary and high school subject teachers, non-teaching professions	140	3.24	0.71	.063 (2.541)	.939
	elementary and high school subject teachers	kindergarten and classroom teachers, non-teaching professions	107	3.25	0.67		
	non-teaching professions	kindergarten and classroom teachers, elementary and high school subject teachers	297	3.27	0.78		
	total		544	3.26	0.74		

Subscales	Respondents' professions		N	M	SD	F (df)	p
<i>needlessness of induction (NI)</i>	kindergarten and classroom teachers	elementary and high school subject teachers, non-teaching professions	140	1.42	0.59**	7.110 (2.541)	.001
	elementary and high school subject teachers	kindergarten and classroom teachers, non-teaching professions	107	1.70	0.68		
	non-teaching professions	kindergarten and classroom teachers, elementary and high school subject teachers	297	1.67	0.73		
	total		544	1.61	0.69		
<i>needlessness to respond to child's cry (NOPL)</i>	kindergarten and classroom teachers	elementary and high school subject teachers, non-teaching professions	140	1.51	0.62	2.521 (2.541)	.081
	elementary and high school subject teachers	kindergarten and classroom teachers, non-teaching professions	107	1.63	0.68		
	non-teaching professions	kindergarten and classroom teachers, elementary and high school subject teachers	297	1.67	0.78		
	total		544	1.62	0.72		
<i>use of corporal punishment (TK)</i>	kindergarten and classroom teachers	elementary and high school subject teachers, non-teaching professions	140	1.68	0.73**	10.894 (2.541)	.000
	elementary and high school subject teachers	kindergarten and classroom teachers, non-teaching professions	107	2.08	0.79		
	non-teaching professions	kindergarten and classroom teachers, elementary and high school subject teachers	297	2.04	0.85		
	total		544	1.96	0.82		

*p<0.01; **p<0.001

By analysing variance for independent samples with Tukey's Post Hoc Test, a statistically significant difference in the beliefs regarding parental child-rearing behaviour among respondents was confirmed. Based on the beliefs regarding active participation of adults in child rearing, the respondents who are kindergarten and classroom teachers, more than the respondents in other professions, completely agree that it is important to be actively involved in child rearing (ANOVA, $F_{2,541}=10.669$, $p<0.001$). In assessing the belief regarding subordination of the child to adults, no statistically significant difference in beliefs was found between the respondents who are kindergarten, classroom, elementary and high school subject teachers and the respondents of other, non-teaching professions ($M_{k/ct}=3.24$, $SD=0.71$; $M_{e/hst}=3.25$, $SD=0.67$; $M_{non-teach}=3.27$, $SD=0.78$). In assessing the use of induction, the respondents who are kindergarten and classroom teachers, more so than the respondents who are elementary and high school subject teachers and respondents in non-teaching professions, think it is necessary to use induction (ANOVA, $F_{2,541}=7.110$, $p<0.001$). When examining the beliefs regarding the importance of responding to child's cry, respondents equally consider it is important to respond to child's cry ($M_{k/ct}=1.51$, $SD=0.62$; $M_{e/hst}=1.63$, $SD=0.68$; $M_{non-teach}=1.67$, $SD=0.78$). In testing the differences in beliefs regarding the use of corporal punishment of children, the respondents who are kindergarten and classroom teachers, more so than the respondents in other teaching and non-teaching professions, completely agree that corporal punishment should not be used as a child-rearing method (ANOVA, $F_{2,541}=10.894$, $p<0.001$).

Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that the first hypothesis (H1) was partially confirmed. The difference in beliefs regarding child-rearing practice exists, but not in all subscales. The respondents, in most cases, have desirable beliefs regarding child-rearing practices, but there is a difference in their beliefs, depending on the type of their profession. The respondents in teaching professions have more desirable beliefs regarding the importance of active involvement in child rearing, the need of explaining adults' actions to children and needlessness of corporal punishment. The difference becomes even more obvious when the sample of teachers is divided into the respondents who are kindergarten and classroom teachers and those who are elementary and high school subject teachers. Then the difference in the respondents' responses shows that kindergarten and classroom teachers have generally more desirable beliefs regarding child-rearing practices than all other respondents.

Difference in the Image of the Child Between Respondents in Teaching and Non-Teaching Professions

In the research on the difference regarding the image of the child, the second hypothesis (H2) states: there is no statistically significant difference in the image of the child between the respondents in teaching and non-teaching professions.

While testing the difference in the image of the child among the respondents in teaching and non-teaching professions, a t-test of differences in the arithmetic mean

of two groups of respondents on each pair of adjectives was performed. The results ranged from 1 to 7, where the lower number showed a more contemporary view of the image of the child, while the higher number showed compliance with a more traditional view of the image of the child. In the process of testing the differences regarding the image of the child with a t-test, the differences in the total result were not found between the respondents in teaching and non-teaching professions (t-test, $M_{\text{teach}}=2.32$, $SD=0.67$; $M_{\text{non-teach}}=2.39$, $SD=0.60$, $t=-1.247$, $df=542$, $p=0.213$). However, the differences were detected in several adjectives that describe children. The respondents in teaching professions have a greater tendency than the respondents in non-teaching professions to see children as *independent* beings (t-test, $M_{\text{teach}}=2.91$, $SD=1.47$; $M_{\text{non-teach}}=3.30$, $SD=1.78$, $t=-2.770$, $df=542$, $p<0.006$), beings who are *cooperative* (t-test, $M_{\text{teach}}=2.33$, $SD=1.38$; $M_{\text{non-teach}}=2.65$, $SD=1.45$, $t=-2.659$, $df=542$, $p<0.008$), *independent in decision making* (t-test, $M_{\text{teach}}=3.27$, $SD=1.45$; $M_{\text{non-teach}}=3.58$, $SD=1.66$, $t=-2.32$, $df=541$, $p<0.021$) and as *beings we can learn a lot from* (t-test, $M_{\text{teach}}=1.41$, $SD=0.81$; $M_{\text{non-teach}}=1.56$, $SD=0.93$, $t=-2.090$, $df=542$, $p<0.037$).

Given that a difference in the respondents' responses in testing the differences was found, a further data analysis was carried out. In testing the difference between the respondents divided into three subgroups, an independent sample variance analysis with Tukey's Post Hoc Test was performed. When the analysis includes the division of respondents into kindergarten and classroom teachers, elementary and high school subject teachers, and non-teaching professions on the total result of the image of the child scale, the results show a statistically significant difference (Table 7).

Table 7

Results of variance analysis on the total score of the image of the child scale with regard to three subgroups of respondents

Scale	Respondents' professions	N	M	SD	F	p
<i>image of the child</i>	kindergarten and classroom teachers	140		0.65	3.843 (2.541)	.022
	elementary and high school subject teachers	107	2.23*	0.68		
	non-teaching professions	544	2.39	0.64		
	total		2.36			

* $p<0.05$

A statistically significant difference in the assessment of adjectives which describe what children can be like was detected in several adjectives. The results showed that the respondents who are *kindergarten and classroom teachers* have a greater tendency than the respondents who are *elementary and high school subject teachers* to see children as *independent beings* (ANOVA, $F_{2,541}=6.738$, $p<0.001$), *equal to adults* (ANOVA, $F_{2,541}=4.901$, $p<0.01$) and as beings who *know what they want* (ANOVA, $F_{2,541}=4.083$, $p<0.05$). Contrary to the respondents in non-teaching professions, *kindergarten and classroom teachers* see children as *independent beings* (ANOVA, $F_{2,541}=6.738$, $p<0.001$),

collaborative (ANOVA, $F_{2,541}=4.715, p<0.01$), *independent in decision making* (ANOVA, $F_{2,541}=3.395, p<0.05$), and *beings we can learn a lot from* (ANOVA, $F_{2,541}=4.225, p<0.05$). Particularly interesting are the results that show that the respondents in non-teaching professions, more so than the respondents who are elementary and high school subject teachers, see children as beings *able to express their own opinion* (ANOVA, $F_{2,541}=2.895, p<0.05$) and beings who *know what they want* (ANOVA, $F_{2,541}=4.083, p<0.05$).

Consequently, it is possible to conclude that the set hypothesis (H2), which states that there is no statistically significant difference in the image of the child between the parents in teaching and non-teaching professions, has been only partially confirmed.

Discussion

The aim of this research was to compare the beliefs regarding child-rearing practices and image of the child among the respondents in teaching and non-teaching professions. Both groups of respondents have similar beliefs regarding child rearing and the image of the child, although some statistically significant differences were found. The similarity in their attitudes was that their beliefs regarding child-rearing practices and the image of the child are largely in line with contemporary theoretical and scientific child development literature (Gopnik, Meltzoff, & Kuhl, 2003; Protzko, Aronson, & Blair, 2013). Contemporary scientific findings highlight the importance of active, assertive, positive and supporting child-rearing behaviour (Holden, 2010; Maleš & Kušević, 2011; Pećnik et al., 2011; Sanders, 2008). Such approach is closely related to understanding the child as a competent being who develops through his/her own experience in interaction with the environment and other people (Bašić, 2011; Miljak, 2007). The responsibility of adults who are in charge of child rearing, whether they have a parental or a teaching role, is to create a safe environment and an encouraging experience for their development, and there is a growing emphasis on the need to start with this approach from the child's early age (Ljubetić, 2012).

One of the beliefs which the respondents equally agree on is the need to *respond to child's cry*. Regardless of the type of profession, respondents have desirable beliefs, which are in line with the statement that parent is a person whom the child needs from their earliest age. By crying, a child secures their survival, because by receiving a response to their cry, all of their basic physiological needs for feeding or having their diapers changed, as well as their emotional and social needs are fulfilled, since care and physical contact have a positive effect on their development. Responding to a child's cry helps children acquire a feeling of basic security and connection with other most important individuals in their life (Lalière et al., 2005, as cited in Pećnik et al., 2011). Some research shows that there are still ambivalent beliefs in the social environment as to whether it is always necessary to respond to a child's cry (St James-Roberts, 2007, as cited in Pećnik et al., 2011). These include the belief that this process can spoil the child and allow them to control and manipulate their parents. However, the results of this research show that the respondents think it is appropriate

to respond to a child's cry timely. This can be explained by the fact that the respondents in this research are highly educated people and such respondents are more likely to have positive attitudes toward the belief that it is important to start communicating with the child as early as possible (LeVine et al., 1988, as cited in Pećnik et al., 2011). They believe that responding to a child's cry, along with calming and comforting the child, can be a form of communication. Likewise, in the research we focused on the respondents who have at least one child between the ages of three and seven. That is the age at which a greater autonomy of the child and control of their own emotions is developed (Boyatzis et al., 1993; Vicari et al., 2000, as cited in Zrinščak, Šimleša, & Kuterovac Jagodić, 2014). Therefore, responding to child's cry does not require as much exertion, doubt or frustration among parents, which is why parents might have more desirable beliefs about it.

Another similarity in the beliefs of the respondents in teaching and non-teaching professions is that both groups neither agree nor disagree with the belief that a child should be *subordinated to adults*. On the one hand, this may indicate their insecurity in expressing how they actually feel about this belief. Such results may be related to the results of other research that showed that the majority of population in the Republic of Croatia still consider obedience and subordination of the child to adults (Pećnik et al., 2011) as highly important, and that in the smallest number of cases an adult lets a child make a decision (Delale & Pećnik, 2010). On the other hand, their beliefs can also indicate a change that has occurred in contemporary societies, where individuals are required to be equal with each other, and that equality must also be respected in relation to children (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). Certainly, this issue provides an incentive for further research of the knowledge and understanding of the child's participatory rights, as well as control of the child's behaviour.

Differences in beliefs regarding child rearing between the respondents in teaching and non-teaching professions are also observed in the importance of active involvement of adults in child rearing, use of explanation of educational procedures and the needlessness of corporal punishment. The difference becomes even more obvious when we separate kindergarten and classroom teachers from the group of respondents in teaching professions. On all of the above mentioned subscales, the respondents who are kindergarten and classroom teachers have better beliefs than other respondents. This difference can also be related to the specificities of initial education and practice of kindergarten and classroom teachers, who are trained to actively guide children through the educational process. By developing their own professional competences, they also develop personal competences because in organizing an encouraging and positive environment they represent leaders who

¹ Scaffolding – in Croatian “skela” (Miljak, 2007, p. 238) explains the process of interaction and dialogue of children and adults in which adults support the attempts of the child to cross over to the next phase.

support child's development as a "scaffold"¹ (Miljak, 2007; Slunjski, 2011). Although classroom teachers are also expected to teach, the teaching content must always be adapted to the developmental characteristics of the children of that age from the aspect of teaching methodology. Both groups of teachers have several subjects in their training through which they acquire and develop educational competences (Primary and Secondary School Education Act, 2014; National Pedagogical Standard, 2008), as well as the knowledge and beliefs about how to *actively approach guiding the child* on the path of their development.

Closely related to the understanding of the importance of active involvement of adults in child rearing is also the use of *induction*. The respondents who are kindergarten and classroom teachers have a greater tendency than the respondents in other professions to think it is necessary to explain to the child that they are about to experience something unpleasant or explain what is happening in their close surroundings. Such approach can also be explained with the development of professional skills necessary in educational practice of kindergarten and classroom teachers. To successfully motivate children and control the dynamics, they first must develop pedagogical tact and insist on seeking alternatives in the use of repressive and traditional methods of punishing child disobedience (Jukić, 2010).

Although beliefs regarding the justification of *corporal punishment* may vary from total rejection to partial acceptance (Delale & Pećnik, 2010), in this research the respondents state that they disagree with the use of this form of child disciplining. Such results can be related to sociodemographic characteristics of respondents, such as the level of education, but also the frequency of receiving support from the wider family in the upbringing of their children. Parents who have a higher level of education have beliefs more similar to the contemporary approach to child rearing, probably due to the increased information availability (Bronfenbrenner, 1958, as cited in Bennett & Grimley, 2001; Pećnik et al., 2011). This is also due to the fact that respondents in this research report that they have frequent support in upbringing of their children from the wider family (67.8%), which can be an important factor in child rearing (Rajter, 2013). In line with the previous beliefs, it also seems understandable to express the beliefs of kindergarten and classroom teachers who, more than other respondents, believe that corporal punishment should not be used in child rearing. Professional execution of their work requires politeness, but above all control of their own emotions and avoidance of expressing superiority over the child through the use of any kind of physical force.

By analysing the respondents' responses to the *image of the child*, it was found that they mostly have a contemporary image of the child, but by analysing each pair of adjectives that describe what children might be like, differences are found. The respondents who are kindergarten and classroom teachers, more so than the respondents who are subject teachers or respondents in non-teaching professions, see children as independent beings, equal to adults, who know what they want and are cooperative, independent in decision making and are beings we can learn a lot

from. Such descriptions of children are in line with contemporary interpretations that children are competent and need to be encouraged to acquire knowledge and develop their own experiences in cooperation with other children and adults (Jurčević Lozančić, 2011; Ljubetić, 2012; Miljak, 2007; Slunjski, 2011). This result can be related to the role of kindergarten and classroom teachers, in which they, on a daily basis, meet a large number of children of that age, know their characteristics and particularities. Their everyday work is based on organizing experiences that encourage the development of their competences with necessary respect to child's fundamental rights to expression and participation (Bašić, 2009, 2011).

What is special and could be pointed out about this research are the results that show that the respondents in non-teaching professions, more so than the parents who are subject teachers, see children as beings able to express their own opinion and know what they want. Such results can be linked to the education and practice of subject teachers who are more focused on the content, methodology and work with older children. Although contemporary approach to school is based on curricular approach and socio-constructivism (Miljak, 2007; Previšić, 2007), the aspect of educational work that is based on contemporary knowledge of encouraging children's development should not be neglected neither in higher grades of elementary school nor in high school. The results that show that subject teachers are less able to see children as beings capable of expressing their own opinion may indicate the need to introduce more content that would include understanding of education in a broader sense into their initial education and continuing professional development (Horvat & Lapat, 2012; Lepičnik Vodopivec, 2012; Selinger, 2013; Skočić Mihić, Blanuša Trošelj, & Katić, 2015), as well as content that would help them understand the importance of contemporary approach to child rearing, either in educational institutions or in the family context. Such content may be directed to learning about the specifics of child development, but also the importance of creating a democratic atmosphere that is necessary for the realization of children's participatory rights. It is important that teachers and parents have similar views on children and child rearing, as different attitudes about that might be an obstacle in creating mutual understanding and cooperation between teachers and parents (McDermott, 2008), and can turn parents away from accepting advice and support in their parenting.

On the other hand, the fact that kindergarten and classroom teachers have a more desirable view on the child and involvement of adults in child rearing can encourage them to further develop their educational competences which are necessary to work with parents (Maleš, Stričević, & Ljubetić, 2010; Skočić Mihić et al., 2015) in order to competently cooperate, advise and encourage them to develop parental competences.

Conclusion

The difference in beliefs regarding child-rearing practices and the image of the child shows that respondents in teaching professions have slightly more desirable beliefs regarding child-rearing practices and a more contemporary view on the child and

their abilities. When the results are subdivided into three subgroups of respondents, it appears that kindergarten and classroom teachers, more so than the respondents in other professions, have more desirable beliefs. Such beliefs may reflect on the quality of the educational process, but we cannot claim that all teachers behave in this way in their pedagogical or parental role. Pedagogical role is always more than the sum of knowledge, skills and values about how to educate a child, but knowledge about what is appropriate education is a good starting point to try and change the child-rearing reality.

The results of this research show that the professional development of teachers, especially kindergarten and classroom teachers, is closely related to the contemporary pedagogical literature. This could mean that pedagogical competences (both professional and personal that develop in that profession) are related with raising the level of parental competence and that kindergarten and classroom teachers acquire enough knowledge that helps them to work with parents. In the end, it may be concluded that the professional development of kindergarten and classroom teachers is aimed toward adopting those competences needed to raise children and establish relationships with them, which can be a good basis for creating expectations that kindergarten and classroom teachers will be able to communicate to other parents.

On the one hand, this may mean that they themselves have to believe that they can help parents and try to further develop their competences in the field of counselling and support parents in their parenting. On the other, it is necessary to provide greater support to kindergarten and classroom teachers in public in order to restore the respect for this profession and provide support in developing collaboration and possible partnership with parents.¹

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Profesionalni razvoj odgajatelja i učitelja za rad s roditeljima

Sažetak

Pedagoški djelatnici inicijalnim obrazovanjem, praksom i trajnim usavršavanjem osim znanja, vještina i sposobnosti, razvijaju vrijednosti i stavove potrebne za poticanje cjelovitog razvoja djeteta. Uvjerenja i stavovi mogu znatno odrediti djelovanje pojedinaca. Stoga je s ciljem utvrđivanja razlike u uvjerenjima o odgoju djece i slici djeteta između roditelja pedagoških i nepedagoških zanimanja provedeno istraživanje na uzorku od 544 visokoobrazovana ispitanika. Uzorak je činilo 247 roditelja pedagoških zanimanja (odgojitelji, učitelji, nastavnici, pedagozi) i 297 roditelja nepedagoških zanimanja (ekonomisti, pravnici, zdravstveni djelatnici, inženjeri). Iako se u istraživanju krenulo od generalne hipoteze da ne postoji razlika u uvjerenjima o odgoju djece i slici djeteta između roditelja pedagoških i nepedagoških zanimanja, rezultati su pokazali postojanje razlike. Ispitanici koji su po zanimanju odgojitelji i učitelji više nego ispitanici drugih zanimanja smatraju da u odgoju djece nije potrebno tjelesno kažnjavanje, već da treba biti više aktivno uključen i koristiti se indukcijom. Također, imaju suvremeniji pogled na sliku djeteta. Na temelju svih rezultata moguće je zaključiti da postoji potreba većeg angažmana pedagoških djelatnika u poticanju razvoja pedagoške kompetencije roditelja.

Ključne riječi: *pedagoške kompetencije; pedagoško zanimanje; profesionalnost; suradnja s roditeljima.*