

THE ROLE OF A PEDAGOGUE IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING IN A CONTEMPORARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

An expert associate pedagogue is a key carrier of the developmental-pedagogical activity in a school. The aim of this activity is to foresee, design, encourage, and guide the development of the educational activity of a school for the purpose of synchronizing the needs of students and their developmental potentials. A pedagogue's area of work is extremely large. It refers to attendance in all areas of the developmental-pedagogical process, starting with planning and programming and goes all the way to the evaluation of the achieved results. Also, the pedagogue has an important role in the advancement of the developmental-pedagogical process, from monitoring the educational process to organizing professional development and implementation and encouragement of active research. Monitoring the developmental-pedagogical process refers to monitoring the achievements of developmental and educational plans and programs and the quality of monitoring the same, monitoring of the actualization of extracurricular activities and the direct actualization of the developmental-pedagogical process. Professional development modernizes the knowledge of the teachers which they gained during the beginning of their education and perfects their professional skills. The role of the pedagogue is to encourage teachers and motivate them for active research with which teachers solve perceived problems and advance their practice towards the set goals. Using theoretical analysis, this paper will give an overview of certain areas of a pedagogue's methods in teaching and school with an emphasis on more contemporary context. The aim of this paper is to provide an insight into certain areas of action of an expert associate pedagogue, which are in service of improving the educational process of a contemporary school.

Key words: active research, teaching, pedagogue, reflexive practitioner, professional development

INTRODUCTION

In a contemporary school, the education of children and the young for future independent life is not possible and is incomplete without the competent and motivated expert associate pedagogues. The developmental-pedagogical activity (Staničić, 1989; Mušanović, 2001; Jurić, 2004) is the basic part of a work program of a school, the task of which is to advance all the elements of the educational process. Accordingly, this is also the aim of this paper, which provides an overview of areas where an expert associate pedagogue works in the view of advancing the educational work. The role and task of expert associate pedagogues is changing due to tackling the revolutionary social and technological changes. This is the reason for our motivation to shed light onto the purview of a pedagogue's work in today's circumstances and the challenges of a contemporary school. According to Sampson, Ifenthaler, Spector and Isaias (2018), the leadership of a school is considered to be a key aspect of a successful advancement of a school in the whole world, especially in light of the paradigms of increased autonomy and

responsibilities of a school. A pedagogue, as the expert associate in the school, has the widest scope of action. They take part in all the aspects of performing educational work, from programming and planning, right up to evaluating the achieved results. Also, they cooperate with all the members of the educational process. They track, study, and attempt to explore the educational process and make suggestions to improve and advance the educational work of the institution. They organize and introduce novelties, observe their realization and take care of the professional advancement of the educators and teachers. The weight of their work is on the pedagogical-didactic field of work. Vuković (2006) states that the basic task of each school pedagogue is to advance the education process by gathering data, observing and analyzing changes, realizing common programs and evaluating the work along with all the other subjects.

According to the Concept of Developmental Pedagogical Activity (2001), the results of tracking the work of pedagogues bear witness of the fact that the situation in the schools which have expert associates is immeasurably better than the one in those which do not. The work is better planned and modelled in those schools, the work of teachers is tracked and there is encouragement for contemporary didactic solutions, young teachers are given a chance to work and there is care about the professional training of teachers, talented children are discovered and their personal development is encouraged, the children with difficulties in learning are discovered and receive the attention and help they require, attention is given to consulting the young, and the teachers are trained to act in certain pedagogical situations. Staničić (2005) states that the diversity of functions and the richness of jobs that a pedagogue is supposed to do within their role in the contemporary school also assumes the diversity of competences. According to the Pedagogical portfolio (2014), it is said that the mentioned groups of jobs are imperative and a challenge of the time in which the expert associate pedagogues work as the widest educated profile of expert associates (graduated pedagogues/professors of pedagogy/mag. ped.), competent and trained to solve open questions in the process of education. This pertains to extremely motivated experts trained for curriculum planning and programming tasks, taking part in defining pedagogical standards and criteria connected to learning and teaching in school, performing internal and external evaluation of work, self-evaluation of own work, with skills developed for teamwork and cooperation with all the subjects of education and ready to permanently work on their personal, expert and professional development. Taking into consideration the aforementioned, this paper gives an overview of certain areas where a pedagogue acts by putting them into a contemporary context with an accent on new ways of working and advancing the job of a pedagogue in a contemporary school.

ADVANCING THE TEACHING PROCESS

Racking the educational process and taking part in it

Considering that the educational work is thought of as a common activity of all its subjects, it is considered that the basic stages of the educational process are agreement, realization, and evaluation. Every common human activity based on mutual respect between its participants goes through these basic stages. The first stage is the agreement with which the process of education begins. What will transpire (content and activities) and the way in which it will transpire (methods, strategies, forms, and procedures) are agreed upon. The teacher, at the level of a class, plans and prepares the activities in cooperation with the students and, thus, we have daily, weekly, monthly and annual planning. The realization stage is the central stage of the educational process which differentiates two forms – performing and organization. Organization is realized with a daily, weekly, and annual articulation. The annual articulation is, most often, realized at the school level, with the so-called school calendar where the forms of

education which are not performed weekly are structured (courses, excursions, parades, greets and others). For the realization phase, it is important how the educational work transpires. This process is where the education and upbringing transpire at the same time. The educational process in which mathematics is learned will be different than the process in which another educational problem is solved. Therefore, in this phase, it is important to differentiate whether we are dealing with a primarily upbringing or an educational process. The third phase is evaluation. The word evaluation, according to Bognar and Matijević (2002), determines the defining of values, grading, and estimation. Considering that for education as a process we require the realization of set goals, it is necessary to grade i.e. evaluate. This requires grading i.e. the evaluation of performance. If we are dealing with how the subjects outside of the school value the type of school or an individual school, then we are dealing with an external evaluation. Internal evaluation refers to tracking, evaluation, and pedagogical guidance. Furthermore, there is also an influence on the class and teaching climate and is performed in various pedagogical situations (Bognar, Matijević, 2002).

According to the Pedagogical portfolio (2014), professional work and cooperation with teachers, beginner teachers and class teachers is the basis of the immediate work of an expert associate pedagogue in primary and secondary schools. Their cooperation is marked by various and important jobs connected with determining needs, planning and organizing work, as well as tracking and advancing educational work. All the activities contribute to professional development and improving the work of teachers and expert associates. Bjelan-Guska, Buzuk, Katavić, Klepić (2017) state that advancing the total educational work, especially teaching as a special space within which the educational process in schools goes on, is an extremely challenging area for an expert associate pedagogue and an especially demanding pedagogical and communicational job is the advisory work with teachers. Both areas include essential pedagogical competences and especially those connected to advisory work with teachers in the reflexive phase, as opposed to observed classes and the teaching process as a whole.

Jurić (2004) states that a global analysis can state that a pedagogue attends lessons taught according to specific ideas of a teacher, pedagogue or both, works with teachers in the processes of designing and realizing lessons, independently prepares and performs lessons and analyzes their results.

A lesson is, from a standpoint of a pedagogue and a teacher, the most valuable place in which various work options are tested. Knowing the profession and teaching methodology is a starting point for numerous and inexhaustible variations in lessons. The connection between a pedagogue and teaching enables them a more complex influence on the teaching. By noticing, tracking, and changing certain important factors, a pedagogue, in cooperation with a teacher, can immediately or mediately influence the success of students in class. What is more, Maglov (2015) states that successful and high quality communication is the basis for building partner and cooperative relations among all the subjects of the educational process. In that sense, "a pedagogue acts in accordance with personal and professional morals and his authority is based on the unity between moral values and moral action in his own positive example" (Relja, 2017, 34). An adequate relationship with a teacher enables him to track certain students in a teaching situation from different interest standpoints, explore the behaviour of students in dependence on the social and working climate in the class, determine the share of elements determining the class climate (social, psychological, and other), track students who have a specific pedagogical treatment prescribed to them or checks the need for that treatment (the maturity of a student for school, gifted students, students with concentration disorders, students with reading disorders, students who have a hard time establishing a relationship with other students and the teacher, frightened students, students who are slow in their work or not adapted for any reason, etc.). He also checks the successfulness of teaching, along with the teacher (choosing teaching methods, accessories and forms of work and their dynamic shifting), introduces the teacher to innovations of the teaching process, estimates and measures the efficiency of

teaching varied in the most different ways, shares their experiences with teachers, accepts those of teachers and studies them for the purpose of improving teaching (Jurić, 1989).

The subject of a pedagogue's interest when visiting a class can be the way in which students and teachers prepare for it, the planning of the goals and outcomes of a teaching unit, the interaction of students in a class, the communication between students and the teacher, the methodological concept of class, governing the class, student activity, the forms and the way of evaluating the achievements of students and other phenomena with the aim of raising the quality of educational work (Pedagogical portfolio, 2014).

According to Jurić (1989), one can approach monitoring teaching in two ways. The first way is the general one (general monitoring) and it refers to when we observe all the circumstances in regards to teaching (planning, programing, organization, analysis and others). The second way is clinical (class monitoring) and it means that we monitor the realization of teaching i.e. the teaching process. Therefore, when monitoring classes, pedagogues are interested in numerous activities tied into it, which go on outside of the class (general monitoring), i.e. the task of a pedagogue is to advance, along with the teacher, the conditions for classes to be held. In the other case (clinical tracking), the pedagogue is interested in activities in class which are controlled by the teacher and pedagogue based on common professional insight. Using such monitoring and cooperation, the pedagogue guides the teacher to improve the very work in class. In both these monitoring modes, the teacher will gather various pieces of data, generalize experiences and further apply them in specific situations.

For better understanding of the connection between the pedagogue and teaching, we have multiple transitional stages in the creation, realization, and maintenance of said relationship:

1. Determining the specific relationship between the teacher and pedagogue. This assumes the development of a new understanding of a teacher about the need to cooperate with the pedagogue outside of the traditional framework for which it was established that it has no positive influence on cooperation. In this phase, the pedagogue is preparing the teacher for a new role.
2. The pedagogue and the teacher plan and design the realization of lessons in a cooperative way. Apart from the expert and didactic guidelines of the lesson, this cooperation will specify the outcomes of the lesson, anticipate possible problems along with their solutions, and the evaluation of results. Both subjects equally take part in this phase. It is not excluded that, in this phase, there is a significant outburst of creativity, abandonment of the old framework and a freer entry into the new.
3. For further studying of the possibility to advance lessons, one must gather data on the lesson itself (during the teaching process). This phase is marked by the determination of the goals of observing and the ways and techniques of gathering data in class.
4. Teaching and monitoring lessons is a consequence of the phases realized before. In this phase, the ideas are realized, and the subjective (the abilities of perception of the teacher and pedagogue) and objective (the means to register the dynamic of teaching) potentials are engaged.
5. The (self)critical relationship with the events in class is an integral part of analysing it. It is recommended that, in the beginning, the teacher and pedagogue both perform the analysis separately. That is how they minimize their influence on each other. After separate analyses, a common analysis is performed in which particular analyses are filled out.
6. Planning a conversation is the following stage. This is preparation for a fruitful conversation where both the pedagogue and the teacher have to come prepared. Therefore, they anticipate key questions for the conversation, select the more significant or illustrative portions of the lesson, etc.

7. The conversation is the most dynamic stage. A skilled pedagogue and a teacher can, at times, have a conversation in front of other teachers as well. This acts instructively and reduces the possibility of misunderstanding with those teachers who consider a conversation to be a duel or a matter of prestige.

These phases are not to be switched. Their order and complete fulfilment are connected with the development of cooperation between a teacher and a pedagogue, their mutual understanding, the understanding of expert and pedagogical problems (Jurić, 1989). For a quality monitoring of the teaching process, an expert associate pedagogue creates and suggests various forms of lesson preparation, protocols to analyse the educational process, designs and prepares minutes of monitoring a lesson, the protocol of observing a class interaction, the activity of students in class when learning new matter etc. It is very important that an expert associate pedagogue constantly tracks the needs of the teaching process and keeps up with all the innovations, with the aim of advancing educational work.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF AN EXPERT ASSOCIATE PEDAGOGUE AND A TEACHER

For the work of a pedagogue in class and in relation to classes, a certain system of self-education is required. It consists of special programs to advance lessons. The profession of a teacher and an expert associate is a very complex and a demanding profession. Therefore, permanent professional advancement is required, especially in areas related to the educational process. Apart from the organized mandatory forms of professional development, advancement in the narrow field of expertise, a continued pedagogical-psychological and didactic-methodological education is required, along with tracking the advancement of the teaching technique and technology (Pedagoški portfolio, 2014). Today, a teacher is required to creatively apply contemporary methods and set up new relationships with students by switching their roles. Even though this requires appropriate knowledge from a teacher, expert-pedagogical programs are also necessary to help him/her to apply their newly found cognitions in specific school conditions. Such a program requires focus of both a teacher and a pedagogue on the matters of teaching. A teacher's needs for such a cooperation also point to this. The application of various methods in searching for high efficiency in teaching requires a teacher to put in extra effort, but also to take risks (Jurić, 1989). According to the Pedagogical portfolio (2014), a pedagogue, with the purpose of developing professional competences, plans and prepares pedagogical workshops, expert lessons and other forms of professional development of a teacher in school. Furthermore, Tot and Klapan (2008) consider that preparation for working in a world which is constantly changing is the idea of constant professional development. The aim of this education is to advance a teacher's knowledge, which they acquired during their initial education, and to perfect their professional skills. The part of a teacher's training for dealing with contemporary changes is also very important, as well as achieving professional autonomy, as well as the satisfaction of professional and personal needs. If we look at older references, even Vuković (1994) states that professional development of a teacher is an important element in the system of education. Every teacher must adhere to a series of requests in order to successfully achieve the aims and tasks of the teaching process. These demands are of general educational, cultural, professional, and pedagogical-methodological nature. In order to successfully fulfil the mentioned demands, the school organizes professional development for teachers through professional associations. Fajdetić and Šnidarić (2014) say that one of the competences of a pedagogue encompasses the susceptibility to welcome changes themselves i.e. to accept, support and adapt to innovations and new circumstances. Also, this also assumes acceptance, of a positive and a negative responsibility for one's own actions, but also the motivation for further development of vision, forming aims, and their realization. Therefore, they

state that an expert associate pedagogue must know his/her possibilities in order to adequately act in personal, professional, and business activities. In other words, a pedagogue must develop and possess the competences to analyse, plan, organize, report, track, and rate phenomena, as well as the skills of project implementation. It is precisely this competence that contains a positive attitude towards change, but also taking initiative. Vuković (2006) stresses that a school pedagogue is a leader of innovation and, considering this role, their development on a professional level needs to be invested in. Apart from the individual professional development, the common professional development of school pedagogues needs to be worked on. The ability of team and network activities belongs to the organizational domain related to using contemporary technologies, the ability to act in a working environment, lead teams and implement projects. Also, it includes familiarity with a system of quality i.e. the knowledge, skills, and abilities to create visions of education for the future (Fajdetić, Šnidarić, 2014). Vujičić (2007) states that, for the advancement of the quality and culture of an educational institution, a key segment is the professional development of a teacher. Then the role of the institution is to ensure an environment which will benefit permanent learning in which the needs of learning can be satisfied. An expert team, in which a pedagogue operates, must create an encouraging and positive environment among teachers where they will learn, like students, thinking about their practice, pointing to their errors, but also encourage them to independently see the faults and correct them. Furthermore, Bezinović, Marušić and Ristić-Dedić (2012) stress that the professional development of teachers and the development of their competences is the primary goal which needs to be constantly realized with the aim of advancing the quality of education, considering that the quality of lessons has a great influence on learning outcomes. A teacher must encourage the motivation for life-long learning in students, but also must be ready him/herself and motivated for it and for professional development in a pedagogical-psychological and academic area (Vizek-Vidović, 2005).

“A teacher must be ready and able for life-long learning and continuing education if they want to efficiently respond to the demands set in front of them by the commitment to actualize knowledge and skills in the academic area and the area of learning/teaching” (Lapat, Rajić, 2010, 58).

According to the Concept of developmental pedagogical activity (2001), the employees of an educational institution, especially educators and teachers, must be professionally educated in order for their educational institution to be able to provide service of the highest quality. Developmental pedagogical activity of expert associates has one of its basic areas of work precisely in the professional development of educators and teachers. It is precisely their job to aid the development of a multi-year program of professional development, provide individual aid to educators and teachers when realizing plans of professional development, monitor work and provide help to trainees, work on training outside associates, synchronize group education in the institution and outside of it, hold lectures, organize and lead expert discussions, organize and present contemporary forms and working methods, lead expert-methodological practice, demonstrate contemporary teaching equipment, etc.

The forms of professional development are divided into individual professional development, collective education in the institution and collective education outside the institution. Individual professional development includes studying and monitoring professional pedagogical and psychological literature, written processing of individual topics and other forms as needed. Collective education in an institution includes the content realized at the teacher's council, class council, expert councils or purposefully formed groups, for instance in the implementation of projects and similar activities, and collective education outside of the institution relates to the mandatory forms of professional development performed by institutions and organizations in charge of the system of education, expert county councils, professional seminars and forums. Possible participation outside of the institution is also done by taking part in

symposiums and congresses in the Republic of Croatia and outside of it (Pedagoški portfolio, 2014).

A PEDAGOGUE AS A REFLEXIVE PRACTITIONER AND ACTION RESEARCH

In accordance with changes going on in the needs of the contemporary society, a pedagogue is affirmed also through the role of a reflexive practitioner. McCarthy (1994, according to McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 1996) believes that a reflexive practitioner critically questions their own practice and considers their work, why they do something that way and how to advance their work. They gain a more wholesome image of themselves and the characteristics of their work through constant questioning of it. Schön (1987, according to Waks, 1999) says that the training of future practitioners, including pedagogues, should also contain preparing for research which is important for a reflexive practitioner. This is action research which a practitioner performs in order to respond to certain questions, find solutions and, in the end, advance their practice. According to Cohen (2007), this is a methodology of simultaneous research and changing of the educational practice, which substitutes the standardized, fragmented, mechanical interventions focused on “repairing” practice with the development of research and reflexive abilities of a teacher needed for a holistic approach to advancing the educational practice. Also, action research supports the cooperation between a researcher and an examinee (Warrican, 2006), and are therefore important for students, teachers, pedagogues, and other practitioners. Jukić (2010) says that, with the aim of realizing a greater efficiency of employees and achievements of students, the realization of action research at the level of educational institutions has been shown useful. In that sense, “one of the basic reasons of starting and developing the idea of action research was to enable people who are not professional scientists to systematically advance their practice. The systematic nature of it, among other things, assumes a constant gathering of data and modification of planned changes in accordance with the results received” (Bognar, 2006, 186).

Action research is defined as every systematic query done by teachers, administrators, councillors, or other parties interested in the process of teaching and learning or the environment due to a gathering of data on how their schools work, how they teach, and how their students learn. Action research enables teachers to study their own classrooms i.e. their own teaching methods, their own students and their own estimations – in order to understand them better and be able to improve their quality or efficiency (Mertel, 2008). Bognar (2006) states that, through action research, teachers solve the problems they discover and advance their own practice in accordance with the aims they set. The centre of action research is action, and the feedback is presented by the data gathered, based on which the planned activities are adapted and changed. In schools it is important that there be a positive environment in order to fulfil a demanding professional role, regardless of the fact that action research assumes intrinsic motivation. Jukić (2010) states that pedagogues assume the roles of initiators, co-researchers and co-evaluators in action research, and that they believe the research to be extremely important for the professional development of every pedagogue. Also, he states that it is very useful to realize action research at the level of an educational institution and that it is important to encourage teachers to a more frequent implementation in order to better perform the quality of the educational process. Youngwanichsetha, Chatchawet, Kritcharoen, Kala and Thitimapong (2019) state that action research is suitable for further learning due to the improvement of teaching and learning. “More importantly, action research is characterized as research the teachers do for themselves. This is truly a systematic investigation of their own practice” (Mertel, 2008, 23).

If we review action research and critical reflection of a practitioner in relations to the basic elements of the educational process, we can see that they fulfil the contemporary chal-

allenges of education, and the application of action research enables the equality of all subjects. The work on setting up new programs and innovations, according to the Concept of developmental pedagogical activity of expert associates (2001) is related to stimulating, encouraging, cooperation, and monitoring of pedagogical-didactic innovations which teachers introduce in their work by way of action research. Bogнар (2006) elaborates that, when performing action research, a critical friend has an important role to play. According to Stenhouse (1975), critical friends are people who give advice and who cooperate with teachers in action research. A critical friend, unlike an advisor, is primarily a friend of a teacher who encourages their advancement, and only then the advancement of research. Critical friends, through cooperation, attempt to aid teachers to develop their reflexive skills and learning or, as Bogнар (2006, 183) claims: "In our conditions, expert associates, especially pedagogues, may assume the role of a critical friend for teachers in the realization of their action research". A pedagogue, as a critical friend, has the task of tracking and evaluating the teaching process, but also to advise the teacher on how to advance their work. Furthermore, apart from the advantages of action research with the aim of improving their own practice, they also contribute to a higher quality of relations in the collective in the professional sense, but also in interpersonal relations. The quality of relations and a healthy communication between employees contributes to a better school climate and significantly affects the work of an educational institution.

THE ROLE OF A PEDAGOGUE IN THE CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

A contemporary school is characterized by many changes conditioned by global and civilizational changes. Some of them are also tied into post-modernization, informatization and democracy. The vision of work done by an expert associate pedagogue is found in their development and changing of the primary tasks with the aim of preserving their own identity as an expert associate in the school and acting in accordance with the contemporary changes in which the school is found. That way, the school changes and develops with the aim of preserving its identity, which it has had throughout its history. Under the influence of the development of science, the content of the educational process, which is permanently being restructured, is also changed. In order for a human to be able to deal with the changes surrounding him, his preparation for the future that is expecting him is necessary (Vuković, 2011). Silov (2017) states that the contemporary age brings new challenges for expert associates in school. One of those is in the view of a strong breach of conservatism as a social-political doctrine, which sets new questions in front of expert associates and demands new and quick responses. Also, the new forms and methods of reducing the autonomy of subjects in school, the cult of standardization and analysis of student achievements, the achievements of teachers and the school in the processes of external validation all present a challenge for expert associates in our schools. Staničić (2017) concludes that pedagogues will be able to advance their engagement in school practice and the reputation of their own profession if: "They have strong foundations i.e. clear theoretical starting points, a legalized conception and an appropriate legal regulation; they know who they are: (a) they are professionally well-oriented (they have a clear goal, a defined working area and appropriate competences), (b) they wield the appropriate instruments and documents in their work, (c) they have valuable associates who are experts and are ready to give their contribution to the realization of their common goal, d) they ethically realize their role, having the well-being of the students in mind, e) they have professional and material prerequisites needed to be more efficient in their work; they come to their workplace prepared because: (a) their education is synchronized with the expectations of the practice, (b) they raise the level of their competences for the contemporary realization of their role using professional development; they are recognizable in the work market and are appre-

ciated as professionals sorely needed for the internal development and advancement of the quality of education in school practice; they encourage their own development i.e. take care of the production of new knowledge, research, specializations, publishing literature, presenting and popularizing their contributions and, alongside all that, they have the support of the appropriate institutions of the system” (Staničić, 2017, 73-74).

Furthermore, Ledić, Staničić and Turk (2013) stress that it is necessary to advance professional development and guidance help and synchronize study programs with the competences required. They add that the programs should stop adjusting to the profiles of employed people and start with the practice of hiring scientists and lecturers in accordance with the contemporary programs and those synchronized with practice. A similar viewpoint is shared by Anđelković and Popović (2017) who stress the necessity of focusing professional developments of school pedagogues on certain areas with the aim of improving the work of a school, but also that it is necessary to change the curriculum of the primary education of a pedagogue. Miočić and Turk (2017) state that, in today’s time, school pedagogues are considered to be the followers of the changes they observe and support, instead of being thought of as innovators and encouragers. They highlight that this state is concerning because school pedagogues are considered to be creators of an innovation surrounding and encouragers of development in an educational environment. In that sense, the aforementioned can serve to the creators of national education policies as an important indicator, but also to the starters of programs for initial education of pedagogues when reorganizing policies and study programs. Staničić (2017) stresses that pedagogues need to be the first trained to apply changes in school practice. It is still the practice that school pedagogues are, as the starters of change, insufficiently trained in the way and purpose of introducing changes, which contributes to the destructiveness of their profession. In searching and determining the new roles of all the participants of the contemporary school curriculum, the involvement of a pedagogue is extremely important, with his recognizable developmental-innovative, but also immediate, work when supporting a student’s development by respecting the curriculum spirit of integration and partnership (Pažin-Ilakovac, 2012).

Despite the fact that all forms of work are determined and set by laws, school practice constantly sets the need for pedagogues to acquire and manage new competences and arts. With the growing complexity of life conditions and the difficulties that children and their parents have to deal with, a school pedagogue is focused on the constant professional development and education. On the other hand, such complexity of the society focuses school pedagogues on a growing diversity of work activities, sets numerous tasks and difficulties which disable the appropriate dedication to the achievement of all tasks. Therefore, pedagogues are forced to act according to what demands a higher level of attention i.e. according to priority, and are forced to abandon some areas (Anđelković, Popović, 2017).

The results of numerous pieces of research emphasize the engagement of a pedagogue in the area of work with students and teachers, but also monitoring and evaluating educational work. Therefore, according to the research done by Anđelković and Popović (2015), in which 51 school pedagogues from Serbia took part, school pedagogues are most dedicated to working with students, working with teachers and monitoring and evaluating educational work. However, there is a concerning fact that pedagogues the least chose the area with parents and the area of cooperation with the competent institutions, associations, organizations, and local authorities. Namely, even though one of the primary tasks of a school pedagogue is to monitor the entire development of a child and student, he can achieve this without cooperating with the child’s surrounding. The results of this research show that it would be useful to research the reasons of inadequate communication and cooperation with the other participants who influence the educational system, primarily the units of local authorities, associations and competent institutions. Furthermore, according to the results of a research done in 2013 (Ledić, Staničić, Turk, 2013) in which 508 pedagogues from all over Croatia took part, making up more

than 50% of the population of pedagogues employed in the Republic of Croatia, examinees stated the ability to enforce guidance talk with students as the most important competence in their work. This is followed by the ability to be communicatively open and empathic, knowing planning and programing of the school's work, knowing pedagogical documentation and, in the end, the ability to work with parents. Considering the aforementioned results of research, it would also be extremely important to find out the reasons of insufficient cooperation with the parents. We stress that it is of great significance to find out the later in the reasons of insufficient partnership between the school and the parents, just as Henderson and Mapp (2002) stressed a good connection between the school and family seen in better results of a student in tests, regular attendance of classes, the development of a student's positive self-image, the development of interpersonal skills and the acceptable attitudes towards school and the more appropriate behaviour in school and at home. According to research by Pažin-Ilakovac (2016), the forms of cooperation between a school and a family are different and are bound by tradition. We differentiate between formal forms of cooperation i.e. parent-teacher conferences, individual talks, counselling, the council of parents and school boards. On the other hand, there are also informal forms of cooperation such as free talks, discussions, manifestations, actions, and others. The cooperation between the parents and the school i.e. the intensity of this cooperation is reduced when children go into higher grades and, therefore, the communication of a parent and the experts is more frequent in the institutions of early education, and the cooperation of parents and the pedagogical workers in a high school is reduced only to parent-teacher conferences and the occasional talks with the aim of informing the parent on the school success of a student or the existence of a certain problem, which also goes to show the inadequate cooperation and partnership between the pedagogue and a parent.

Professional education of a pedagogue and all the subjects of the educational process is necessary in order to realize the educational process along with the contemporary theories of pedagogical science, with the aim of removing the mistakes noticed, but also in order to improve personal skills and personal development. Also, professional education of expert associates and teachers is the characteristic of contemporary schools that attempt to constantly advance educational work in their institution.

CONCLUSION

Despite traditional views on the educational institutions which have changes forced onto them from the outside, today the school is considered to be the center of changes because it is made and improved only by its members, who know it. During the process of advancing the quality of educational work, the pedagogue has an insurmountable role as the most widely profiled expert constantly working on their personal and professional development, but also on the progress of the educational institution where they work. A pedagogue spends more time working in the area of advancing teaching than anticipated by the division of weekly working hours. Today, the society sets high criteria to a school, teachers, and pedagogues and there needs to be regular work done on the advancement of educational work and school teaching. It can be said that a pedagogue needs to possess those traits possessed also by the teacher. Apart from that, there are also some specific traits which need to be more developed in them due to the specific nature of a school pedagogue's role. A pedagogue needs to develop the personality traits necessary to work and cooperate with adults (teachers, principal, parents and others) due to the mediatory influence on working with students (Jurić, 2004). The main task of every pedagogue is also critical thinking and evaluation of their own work for the purpose of its constant advancement when working with teachers and adapting to the needs of students. This is precisely how the achievement of educational demands in the context of contemporary changes is enabled and the child is positioned at the center of this process, which is

ultimately the aim of the contemporary educational process. Considering the analysis and an overview of literature, we see that the contemporary nature of today's society, which is one of its most important characteristics, sets high criteria and challenges to the work of the expert associate pedagogue. If we go back a few decades and see the reasons why they were hired in schools, we can see that the primary reasons were the successful pedagogical guidance and focus of a school (Staničić, 1999, according to Fajdetić and Šnidarić, 2014). If we compare this to today's pedagogical activity i.e. the determination of innovative action in the work of a school, we can conclude that one part of the job is turned to tracking the technological changes of contemporary society, but also the introduction of these changes into educational work. Apart from the technological changes, an expert associate pedagogue is also faced with changes in the immediate work with students and parents. According to this, we suggest a creation of a network of pedagogues in sight of the appropriate "online platform" where pedagogues would exchange ideas and where, at any time, they could look for advice from their colleagues. That way, cooperation would be enabled, as well as a higher level of quality in communication between pedagogues, the making of solutions in certain situations would be easier due to the advice of other pedagogues, who would always have a "sanctuary" where they could find support, but also where they could give it to their colleagues. The consequence of better interpersonal relations i.e. the synergy of expert associate pedagogues would greatly influence the quality of the educational process, as well as the work of a contemporary school. Changes are constant and it is necessary to constantly advance and evaluate your own work. Lastly, we stress that a contemporary school must adhere to the demands and challenges of the contemporary society, and this can be achieved with motivation, quality communication and cooperation and a warm word of support and encouragement by expert associate pedagogues as significant subjects of the educational process.

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