Marina Đuranović, PhD, Associate Professor
University of Zagreb
Faculty of Teacher Education
marina.duranovic@ufzg.hr
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7199-5488

Tomislava Vidić, PhD, Assistant Professor
University of Zagreb
Faculty of Teacher Education
tomislava.vidic@zg.t-com.hr
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2040-2667

Irena Klasnić, PhD, Associate Professor
University of Zagreb
Faculty of Teacher Education
irena.klasnic@ufzg.hr
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0315-3104

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL SUPPORT

Abstract: Principal, as the manager and expert leader of a school, performs out numerous tasks to ensure quality and harmonious operations within the school. The principal has the leading role in creating a positive and encouraging environment for the implementation of the teaching process. One of the conditions needed to create such an environment is providing support to teachers.
The aim of this research was to examine how teachers perceive principal support according to their workplace (classroom teaching or subject teaching), age, years of work experience and the size of their school. The research was conducted online. The participants were 761 teachers from various parts of the Republic of Croatia. Research has shown that primary school teachers perceive a high level of principal support and that there are no differences in their perceptions in terms of their workplace, age, years of work experience or the size of their school. The concluding part of the paper presents guidelines for potential future research on principal support.

Keywords: quantitative approach, primary school, principals, teachers

INTRODUCTION

The principal is the manager and expert head of a school and is responsible for its activities (Sekulić Erić, 2023). If a school is to function successfully, the principal needs to achieve various short-term and long-term goals. The role of the principal is to create the vision and mission of the school, to set up the learning community and ensure the creation of a quality school curriculum and the teaching and assessment process in it (Stronge & Xu, 2021). To perform such complex tasks, the principal needs support from and collaboration with teachers and other school employees, students, parents and the local community. In addition, the principal is the key person who inspires authentic permanent changes and constant improvement in work quality by creating a learning community in which all stakeholders (students, teachers, and parents) have certain responsibilities (Delgado, 2014). The quality of a school depends on the principal, their competence in organizing school activities, their professional and pedagogical leadership, their personality traits, and other potential (Peko et al., 2009). Staničić (2000) perceives schools as developing and autonomous institutions whose educational activities can be successfully led only by a competent principal. He illustrates optimal leadership via the principal competency profile model, integrating theoretical knowledge about leadership and knowledge gained via empirical research. The model contains five key competencies: personal, developmental, professional, interpersonal and action competencies, all of which are crucial to successful school management.

Over the years, studies on school leadership and school management have had various starting points. Some studies are based on principal qualities (Engels et al., 2008; Francis & Oluwatoyin, 2019; Gümüş et al., 2024; Lazaridou & Beka, 2015; Lee & Mao, 2023; Nuswantoro et al., 2023; Schulte et al., 2010), whereas others are based on principals' strategies and approaches (Cahyono et al., 2023; Cistone & Stevenson, 2000; Goldring & Pasternack, 1994; Grinshtain & Gibton, 2018; Mulford et al., 2008). The third focus of studies has been on the competencies of effective principals (Mustamin, 2012; Bafadal, 2019; Şemin, 2019; Bouchamma et al., 2024; Chen, 2024).

The principal has a key role in creating a positive and encouraging working environment for teachers. Communication is the most efficient tool that principals can use to provide support to teachers and to create a positive school culture. Numerous challenges can be solved and obstacles can be overcome through proper communication in which both parties appreciate each other. Cosner (2009; 2011) noted that principals should nurture a culture of trust within the school, as it paves the way for introducing innovation and reforms into the school, which in turn leads to cooperative learning and a positive working environment. Within the educational context, Blažević (2014, p. 9) states that "most studies and theoretical considerations point out some key determinants of management, such

as the ability to motivate others, encourage appropriate communication patterns and develop communication skills; the ability to build positive interpersonal relationships and encourage team work; the ability to create a common vision, introduce changes and innovation, encourage and create the conditions for personal and professional development of school employees, and create the conditions which will help build better school reputation in the community."

If the principal is perceived as benevolent, honest, open, competent and consistent, the teachers will have trust in him/her (Handford & Leithwood, 2013). Hughes et al. (2015) noted the importance of collaboration between the principal and teachers. They also state that this collaboration should include open forums, discussions, and meetings to assess the needs of the school, teachers and students. According to research results, the principal's behaviour, that is, the support they provide to teachers, is positively related to teacher self-efficacy (Çoban et al., 2023; Gkolia et al., 2021; Li & Liu, 2020; Mehdinezhad & Mansouri, 2016), collective efficacy (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018; Çalik et al., 2012; Đuranović et al., 2024) and job satisfaction (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Olsen & Huang, 2019), whereas it is negatively related to burnout (Slišković et al., 2016; Villarreal, 2023) and abandonment of the teaching profession (Becker & Grob, 2021; Hughes et al., 2015; Rothmann & Fouché, 2018).

Support can generally be defined as a positive working interaction between the superior and employees (Slišković et al., 2016). More thorough research on the relationships among social support, health and stress began in the 1970s, as it was determined that a lack of positive social relationships could result in negative psychological states, such as anxiety and depression (Cohen and Wills, 1985). Therefore, there was an emerging need for and interest in creating a positive working environment which would reduce stress levels in employees and increase their job satisfaction. House (1981) claimed that support provided by superiors not only reduces stress levels, but also increases organizational efficacy. He conceptualized social support through four potential dimensions: emotional, instrumental, informational and appraisal support. Emotional support includes love, empathy, care, and trust; instrumental support implies providing help in task execution; informational support implies providing information, and appraisal support includes feedback on job performance which would be useful in self-assessment. House reported that all four dimensions of social support significantly influence job satisfaction.

On the basis of House's social support conceptual framework, Littrell et al. (1994) created constituent and operative measures of social support in school, that is, the principal's support for teachers. According to these authors, emotional support implies all principal behaviours by which they show teachers that they are valued professionals. The principal tries to establish and maintain open communication with teachers, appreciates and considers their ideas, shows gratitude for and interest in their work. Instrumental support implies direct help

the principal provides to teachers and their work. This form of support implies ensuring the necessary materials, space, and time to perform the teaching and administrative tasks. Informational support implies that the principal provides teachers with relevant information that they can use to improve their teaching and educational activities (for example, enabling teachers to take part in workshops which will provide them with information useful in their teaching practice). Appraisal support includes the continuous assessment and evaluation of teachers' work, the provision of frequent and constructive feedback on their work, the provision of information about effective teaching processes, and the provision of clear guidelines about work responsibilities.

DiPaola (2012) renamed the informational dimension of social support proposed by House (1981) and Littrell (1992) professional (expert) support, feeling that this dimension was better suited to the measurement of support in the school context. He merged the four existing dimensions of social support (emotional, instrumental, informational and appraisal support) into two basic school dimensions: expressive support and instrumental support. In this way, he reduced the initial four dimensions to two dimensions. Expressive support consists of professional and emotional support, whereas instrumental support consists of appraisal support and instrumental support.

Berkovich and Eyal (2017) noted that principal support can also be provided through communication strategies such as empathic listening, empowering, and normalizing. *Empathic listening* is a type of listening that is not limited only to information, but also involves understanding the feelings, thoughts, and attitudes of the collocutors, significantly contributing to a better understanding of a person (Matijević et al., 2016). This type of listening encourages a positive emotional transformation within a person being listened to (Fosha, 2005). *Empowering messages* imply showing confidence in employees' (teachers') competencies with the aim of inspiring them to take initiative (Choi, 2006). The principal's empowering messages are related to the positive emotions of employees (teachers), such as happiness, satisfaction, comfort, calmness, excitement, and enthusiasm (Dasborough, 2006). *Normalizing* is described as a process in which *extraordinary* events and their negative effects are shaped into *ordinary* events (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2002). Normalizing messages are those that imply that similar events happen to others as well, and that some events and situations are integral parts of a job.

Anderson and West (1998) stress the importance of support for innovation. This form of support offers numerous opportunities, such as being open to new and various opinions, and it encourages an exchange of experiences and knowledge (Friend & Cook, 2013). It is also associated with an increased teacher participation in various educational activities and activities directed at developing school policy (Castro Silva et al., 2017). In the literature, increasing attention has been given to the importance of principal support for

the professional growth and development of teachers (Bredeson & Johansson, 2000; Bush & Glover, 2014; Karacabey, 2021; Leithwood, 2014; Zepeda, 2012). Leithwood et al. (2010) claim that principals play a key role in creating the opportunities for teachers' professional development and acquisition of new experiences. Teacher professional development includes all learning opportunities that enable teachers to adjust to the changes taking place in the education system and that increase their work performance (Smith and Gillespie, 2007). Principals can support teacher professional development in various ways, such as creating a network of collegial support that encourages cooperation between teachers, inviting experts in various fields to school, etc. (Youngs & King, 2002).

There is a tendency at the international level to determine the efficacy of primary schools on standardized tests on the basis of their students' scores (Moller, 2009). Buchanan (2012) noted that the success of an education system is assessed by the achievements of its students, and that teachers play a key role in that process. This finding is supported by the results of a study carried out by Duffield et al. (2013) which indicated that the professional development of teachers indirectly increases student achievement. Therefore, as a result of responsibility policy, there is an increasing pressure on schools and principals to improve the outcomes of their students (Liu et al., 2016). From the aspect of student achievement and the results they achieve in external evaluation, schools are categorized into successful, average, and less successful schools, and principals are also assessed according to the same criteria.

To ensure a quality teaching process in their schools, principals need to create and support a school environment in which teachers should develop their knowledge and teaching practice (Duffield et al., 2013). This can lead to a lot of pressure put on teachers and students by their principals. Teachers who perceive a higher level of principal support are more likely to have more positive attitudes toward work and be committed to it, whereas teachers who do not feel that they have principal support report higher stress levels, tend to be more absent from work and are less motivated to work (Singh & Billingsley, 1998).

Kovač and Pažur (2021) highlight the importance of a principal's ability to manage the relationships among the principal, teachers, and expert associates. On the basis of qualitative research carried out on a sample of 30 primary school principals in the Republic of Croatia, the authors noticed that those principals who perceive more support from their associates tend to transfer or delegate the instructions to more motivated teachers and expert associates, while in the situations where they perceive a lower level of support or do not perceive it at all, the principals are more likely to adjust their activities according to the characteristics, preferences and interests of teachers. This requires a significantly higher level of engagement from the principals themselves. Importantly, the

support that principals perceive is extremely important for creating stimulating conditions for the efficient functioning of schools as institutions.

This paper presents some results of comprehensive research on how teachers perceive principal support, their own and collective efficacy, and loyalty to their school. The aim of the research was to examine how teachers perceive principal support depending on their workplace (classroom teaching or subject teaching), age, years of work experience and the size of their school.

METHODOLOGY

The following research tasks were set:
1. Examine whether there are differences in the assessed items about principal support in the total sample.
2. Examine whether there are differences in teacher perceptions of principal support in terms of their workplace.
3. Examine whether there are differences in teacher perceptions of principal support in terms of teacher age.
4. Examine whether there are differences in teacher perceptions of principal support in terms of the years of the teachers' work experience.
5. Examine whether there are differences in teacher perceptions of principal support in terms of school size.

PARTICIPANT SAMPLE

The research was conducted online in a closed teacher group on a social network, from April to May 2022. The participants were 761 teachers from all parts of the Republic of Croatia. There was a significantly greater number of female participants ($n = 710$, 93.3%) than male participants ($n = 51$; 6.7%). In terms of the workplace, there were 268 classroom teachers (35.2%) and 493 subject teachers (64.8%). The age of the participants ranged between 24 and 65 years. In terms of the years of their work experience, the participants were divided into four categories: 0 – 10 years of work experience ($n = 250$; 32.9%), 11 – 20 years of work experience ($n = 274$; 36.0%), 21 – 30 years of work experience ($n = 167$; 21.9%) and more than 30 years of work experience ($n = 70$; 9.2%). To meet the needs of the research, the teachers were divided into five categories, depending on the size of their school: schools with less than 150 students ($n = 109$; 14.3%), schools with 151 – 300 students ($n = 165$; 21.7%), schools with 301 – 500 students ($n = 205$; 26.9%), schools with 501 – 750 students ($n = 186$; 24.4%), and schools with more than 751 students ($n = 96$; 12.6%).

INSTRUMENT

The introductory part of the survey was used to collect demographic data from the participants, whereas in the second part of the survey, the *Principal*

Support Scale was used to assess principal support (DiPaola, 2012). The original scale contains 16 items which measure two dimensions: expressive support and instrumental support. After the exploratory factor analysis was performed via the principal component method with orthogonal (varimax) rotation (*KMO =* .961; Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2_{df120} = 14767.70; *p* = .000), a single-factor questionnaire structure was obtained, accounting for 72.15% of the principal support variance. The obtained Cronbach alpha coefficient of α = .974 indicates very high reliability.

On a Likert-type five-point scale, teachers had to express their agreement with each item (from 1 – *I strongly disagree*, to 5 – *I strongly agree*).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Descriptive values of the results on principal support items (N = 761)

	Items	1 f %	2 f %	3 f %	4 f %	5 f %	*M*	*SD*
1	Gives me undivided attention when I am talking.	45 5.9	67 8.8	133 17.5	211 27.7	305 40.1	3.87	1.21
2	Is honest and straightforward with the staff.	109 14.3	105 13.8	125 16.4	180 23.7	242 31.8	3.45	1.42
3	Gives me a sense of importance – I make a difference.	110 14.5	121 15.9	116 15.2	177 23.3	237 31.3	3.41	1.44
4	Supports my decisions.	60 7.9	83 10.9	173 22.7	205 26.9	240 31.5	3.63	1.25
5	Provides data for me to reflect on following classroom observations of my teaching.	86 11.3	54 7.1	131 17.2	202 26.5	288 37.8	3.73	1.34
6	Provides frequent feedback about my performance.	123 16,2	121 15.9	204 26.8	152 20.0	161 21.2	3.14	1.36
7	Helps me evaluate my needs.	144 18.9	123 16.2	174 22.9	164 21.6	156 20.5	3.09	1.40
8	Trusts my judgment in making classroom decisions.	65 8.5	60 7.9	148 19.4	211 27.7	277 36.4	3.76	1.26
9	Shows confidence in my actions.	66 8.7	69 9.1	132 17.3	187 24.6	307 40.3	3.79	1.30

Table 1 *(continued)*

							M	SD
10	Provides opportunities for me to grow professionally.	59 7.8	49 6.4	128 16.8	192 25.2	333 43.8	3.91	1.25
11	Encourages professional growth.	75 9.9	67 8.8	168 22.1	150 19.7	301 39.6	3.70	1.33
12	Provides suggestions for me to improve my instruction.	150 19.7	118 15.5	198 26.0	142 18.7	153 20.1	3.04	1.39
13	Provides time for various nonteaching responsibilities.	79 10.4	65 8.5	155 20.4	197 25.9	265 34.8	3.66	1.32
14	Provides adequate planning time.	35 4.6	47 6.2	121 15.9	227 29.8	331 43.5	4.01	1.13
15	Provides extra assistance when I become overloaded.	174 22.9	128 16.8	167 21.9	132 17.3	160 21.0	2.97	1.45
16	Equally distributes resources and unpopular chores.	204 26.8	121 15.9	132 17.3	142 18.7	162 21.3	2.92	1.50

Legend: 1= *I strongly disagree*; 2 = *I disagree*; 3 = *I neither agree nor disagree*; 4 = *I agree*; 5 = *I strongly agree;* M = *arithmetic mean*

For all the items, the range of responses is maximal, which indicates that these items adequately cover the responses across all degrees of agreement (Table 1). The items with the highest assessment score were: *14. Provides adequate planning time.* (*e.g., time to do curricular planning, etc.*) (*M* = 4.01, *SD* = 1.13) and 10. *Provides opportunities for me to grow professionally.* (*M* = 3.91, *SD* = 1.25). Planning is an obligatory part of the work of every teacher and is implemented at several levels: annual, monthly, weekly, micro and daily. Teachers have autonomy in that part of their work obligations, and they can design their own teaching process and adjust it to the needs and abilities of their classes and the specific needs of individual students. Principals are clearly aware of the fact that planning is extremely important and that teachers should be given sufficient time for it, so they do not put time pressure on them. In addition, owing to high assessments by teachers, principals provide them with sufficient opportunities for professional development. Continuous improvement and development of competencies is crucial to any profession, including the teaching profession. The rapid development of science, arts, and technology requires teacher participation in organized forms of professional development, as well as individual professional development, depending on teachers' preferences, needs, and possibilities. For them to do so, principals need to offer them support in organizing these activities, which they do. In line with what has been said, Faith (2020) maintains that teachers themselves are responsible for their own professional development, whereas school principals are leaders who provide opportunities to support teachers' professional development.

The item with lowest assessment was *16. Equally distributes resources and unpopular chores.* (*M* = 2.92, *SD* = 1.50). More than a quarter of the teachers (26.8%) *strongly disagreed* with this item, while 15.9% *disagreed*, which indicates a high level of dissatisfaction with the distribution of resources and chores. The perception of fairness is extremely important to employees. Zlatić et al. (2021) reported that the perception of fairness shapes the positive perceptions of an organization, satisfies the need to create a positive self-image and leads to identification with the organization, and, as a result, a greater engagement at work. In line with this, ensuring an equal distribution of resources and chores is necessary for both schools and teachers to function efficiently. Another item with a low score was item *15. Provides extra assistance when I become overloaded. (M = 2.97, SD = 1.45)*. A significant number of teachers feel that they are not given assistance from the principal when they need it. Indeed, principals have many obligations, tasks, and activities they need to complete, but teachers expect them, as managers, to notice when they are overloaded and to react and provide appropriate assistance.

It should be noted that the two items with low scores have the highest standard deviations, which indicates a high level of dispersion. This means that a certain number of teachers expressed disagreement, whereas a significant number of teachers expressed agreement with these items. This could indicate that not all teachers receive equal treatment by principals, and that some of them are in a more favourable position.

Table 2

Descriptive values of the Principal Support Scale (N = 761)

	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	min	max	Kolmogorov-Smirnov d index
Principal support	3.50	1.13	−.383	−.932	1.00	5.00	.093

The average result for the Principal Support Scale was calculated on the basis of the items it is composed of. As shown in Table 2, there is a slight left skewed distribution, which, in line with the direction of the scale, indicates positive teacher perceptions of principal support. In addition, in line with the variability coefficient, there is a platykurtic distribution, which indicates a lower level of homogeneity in the characteristics of the subject measured. According to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, there is a significant deviation of the results from normal distribution. Nevertheless, the scale has satisfactory skewness and kurtosis indices (Kline, 2011), and the size is large. Marusteri and Bacarea (2010) noted that *t-tests* and ANOVA tests yield correct results even in cases where distribution is near a Gaussian

distribution, especially for large samples (e.g., $N > 100$) such as this one. This is why parametric statistics were applied in further data analyses.

Table 3

Differences in T-test values for principal support in terms of workplace (N = 761)

	RN (n = 268)		PN (n = 493)				
	M	SD	M	SD	t	p	Cohen d
Principal support	3.50	1.10	3.51	1.15	–.057	.954	0.004

$p < 0.05$

T-test was applied (Table 3) to examine the differences in teacher perceptions of principal support in terms of the workplace. According to the obtained results, there is no statistically significant difference in the perceived principal support between classroom teachers and subject teachers.

Despite the expectation that subject teachers would perceive a lower level of principal support, this was not the case. Teacher education study programmes for subject teachers include more courses designed to develop professional competencies instead of pedagogical competencies. On the other hand, during their initial education, classroom teachers take more pedagogical courses and acquire broader pedagogical competencies, so it was expected that they would not need as much principal support as subject teachers would need. In addition, developmental characteristics of younger students are less challenging for teachers than are the characteristics of students in higher grades of primary school, with whom subject teachers work. In Grades 5–8, students often go through puberty in a very intense way, and they find it difficult to accept authority, thus, it was expected that subject teachers would report an insufficient level of perceived principal support. Nevertheless, there were no differences in their perceptions. A reason for that might be that principals balance well the needs of the classroom and the needs of subject teachers, providing them with the exact amount and kind of support they expect.

Table 4

Differences in principal support in terms of teachers' age – ANOVA

	≤ 30 (n = 77)		31 – 40 (n = 270)		41 – 50 (n = 236)		51 – 60 (n = 160)		≥ 60 (n = 18)		F	p	eta²
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Principal support	3.66	1.16	3.52	1.11	3.39	1.89	3.55	1.01	3.58	1.39	1.133	.340	.006

$p < 0.05$

To address the third research problem, the sample was divided into five groups, according to the participants' age. The first group consisted of participants up to 30 years of age, the second group consisted of the participants aged 31 – 40 years, the third group consisted of participants aged 41 – 50 years, the fourth group consisted of participants aged 51 – 60 years, and the fifth group consisted of participants aged 60 years and over.

To avoid the risk of Type 1 error due to a range of ANOVA tests, the Bonferroni correction was applied. For each dependent variable 10 differences between all pairs of groups were calculated, so the minimum p values of at least 0.005 for 5% risk and 0.001 for 1% risk should be considered significant. As shown in Table 4, there is no statistically significant difference in the perceived principal support in terms of the teachers' age.

Notably, the results of some previous studies confirmed the differences in principal support in terms of teachers' age. For example, Sanches et al. (2022) carried out research in the United States to examine, among other things, teacher perceptions of principal leadership. The research was carried out on a sample of 334 participants. In general, the participants were satisfied with the principal support. However, certain differences were detected in perceptions of principal support in terms of some demographic variables of teachers – teachers who were older than 41 years and who had more years of work experience perceived a lower level of principal support and engagement than their younger colleagues did. Additionally, teachers with a lower level of education (those with bachelor's degree) perceived more positive principal support than did teachers with a higher level of education.

Table 5

Differences in principal support in terms of teachers' years of work experience– ANOVA

	0 – 10 ($n = 250$)		11 – 20 ($n = 274$)		21 – 30 ($n = 167$)		> 30 ($n = 70$)				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	eta²
Principal support	3.63	1.10	3.40	1.18	3.51	1.11	3.46	1.06	1.750	.155	.007

p < 0.05

To determine the differences in principal support in terms of their years of work experience, teachers were divided into four groups: up to 10 years of work experience, 11 – 20 years of work experience, 21 – 30 years of work experience, and more than 30 years of work experience.

To avoid the risk of Type 1 error due to a range of ANOVA tests, the Bonferroni correction was applied. For each dependent variable 6 differences

between all pairs of groups were calculated, so *p* values of at least 0.008 for 5% risk and 0.002 for 1% risk should be considered significant. The results presented in Table 5 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceived principal support in terms of the teachers' years of work experience. Nevertheless, teachers with fewer years of work experience perceive a somewhat higher level of principal support, but this difference is not statistically significant. A possible explanation is that principals offer more or less the same amount of support to all teachers, but they still offer more support to novice teachers and those with fewer years of work experience. Another possible explanation is that younger teachers ask for more support as they feel insecure. These findings are not in line with those of the study carried out by Caspersen and Raaen (2014). Through quantitative and qualitative research they obtained surprising results indicating that novice teachers tend to receive less support than their more experienced colleagues do. Unfortunately, the findings obtained in other studies (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007) also highlight a lack of support for novice teachers. In future studies carried out in the Croatian educational context, it would be important to pay more attention to this topic.

Table 6

Differences in principal support in terms of the school size – ANOVA

	≤ 150 (n = 109)		151 – 300 (n = 165)		301 – 500 (n = 205)		501 – 750 (n = 186)		≥ 751 (n = 96)		F	p	eta²
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
Principal support	3.73	1.15	3.52	1.13	3.44	1.09	3.56	1.12	3.24	1.16	2.712	.029	.014

p < 0.05

The schools were divided into 5 categories according to their size (number of students). Table 6 shows that the smallest number of teachers in the participant sample are employed in large schools, with more than 751 students. To avoid the risk of Type 1 error due to a range of ANOVA tests, the Bonferroni correction was applied. For each dependent variable 10 differences between the pairs of all groups were calculated, so *p* values of at least 0.005 for 5% risk and 0.001 for 1% risk were considered significant (Table 6). The obtained results indicate no statistically significant difference in the perceived principal support in terms of the size of the school in which teachers work. Every school has its own specificities, so it can be assumed that principals take them into consideration and that they provide the necessary support. In addition, the local community could play a significant role in providing support to school

principals and helping them perform their work at a high quality level and in accordance with the expectations of their employees.

Nevertheless, the results of the research carried out in the Republic of Croatia are different. The analysis of how teachers perceive the flexibility and authority of principals was carried out on a stratified representative sample of primary schools in Split-Dalmatia County and revealed that teachers from smaller schools (< 400 students) perceive lower levels of both variables, than do teachers from larger schools (> 800 students) (Blažević, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The research has shown that primary school teachers perceive a relatively high level of principal support and that there are no differences in perceptions in terms of workplace, teachers' age and years of work experience, the size of the school in which they work. According to the obtained results, teachers perceive the same level of principal support regardless of the variables included in this research. This could be explained by the developed competencies of principals for their function of the school leaders. All principals must have at least 5 years of previous work experience in educational institutions, which is a good starting point for understanding the necessity of providing support to teachers.

The obtained results could be used to empower the competencies of principals, as some items received lower assessments, creating room for improvement. This is related primarily to a more just distribution of resources and chores, and to providing assistance to teachers when they feel overloaded. Principals should be able to detect these situations and act accordingly, as soon as possible, to minimize potential negative effects.

While interpreting the results, it is important to consider several limitations. First, the sample size was convenient, so the results cannot be generalized. Another limitation is that principal qualities were not taken into consideration. Delgado (2014, as cited in Pažur et al., 2020) noted that certain principal qualities, such as years of work experience as the principal, can have an impact on their ability to run the school. In addition, other variables, such as the principal's gender, age, years of work experience, and professional development were not taken into consideration. Principal support and support for the principal could be reversible processes, so future studies could focus on a deeper examination of their mutual relationship. Therefore, this research could provide an incentive for new, more comprehensive research which would result in new knowledge.

REFERENCES

Anderson, N. R., & West, M. A. (1998). Measuring climate for work group innovation: development and validation of the team climate inventory. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *19*(3), 235–258. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1379(199805)19:3<235::AID-JOB837>3.0.CO;2-C

Ashforth, B. E., & Kreiner, G. E. (2002). Normalizing emotion in organizations: Making the extraordinary seem ordinary. *Human Resource Management Review*, *12*(2), 215–235. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1053-4822(02)00047-5

Bafadal, I., Nurabadi, A., Sobri, A. Y., & Gunawan, I. (2019). The Competence of beginner principals as instructional leaders in primary schools. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, *5*(4), 625–639. https://www.ijicc.net/images/vol5iss4/Pt_2/54217_Bafadal_2019_E_R.pdf

Becker, J., & Grob, L. (2021). *The School Principal and Teacher Retention*. Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium. https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1125&context=merc_pubs

Berkovich, I., & Eyal, O. (2018). Principals' emotional support and teachers' emotional reframing: The mediating role of principals' supportive communication strategies. *Psychology in the Schools*, *55*(7), 867–879. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22130

Blažević, I. (2014). Rukovodeća uloga ravnatelja u školi [Principal's Leading Role in the School]. *Školski vjesnik*, *63*(1–2), 7–21. https://hrcak.srce.hr/123227

Bouchamma, Y., Basque, M., & Marcotte, C. (2014.) School management competencies: Perceptions and self-efficacy beliefs of school principals. *Creative Education*, *5*(8)*, 580–589. http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ce.2014.58069

Bredeson, P. V., & Johansson, O. (2000). The school principal's role in teacher professional development. *Journal of In-Service Education, 26*(2), 385–401. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13674580000200114

Brown, K. M., & Wynn, S. R. (2009). Finding, supporting, and keeping: The role of the principal in teacher retention issues. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, *8*(1), 27–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/15700760701817371

Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2014). School leadership models: what do we know? *School Leadership & Management*, *34*(5), 553–571. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2014.928680

Buchanan, J. (2012). Improving the quality of teaching and learning: A teacher-as-learner centred approach. *International Journal of Learning*, *18*(10), 345–356. https://doi.org/10.18848/1447-9494/CGP/v18i10/47764

Cahyono, A., Tuhuteru, L., Julina, S., Suherlan, S., & Ausat, A. (2023). Building a generation of qualified leaders: Leadership education strategies in schools. *Journal on Education*, *5*(4), 12974–12979. https://www.jonedu.org/index.php/joe/article/view/2289

Çalik, T., Sezgin, F., Kavgacı, H., & Kılınç, A.Ç. (2012). Examination of relationships between instructional leadership of school principals and self-efficacy of teachers

and collective teacher efficacy. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, *12*(4), 2498–2504. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1002859

Cansoy, R., & Parlar, H. (2018). Examining the relationship between school principals' instructional leadership behaviors, teacher self-efficacy, and collective teacher efficacy. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *32*(4), 550–567. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14040431

Caspersen, J., & Raaen, F. D. (2014). Novice teachers and how they cope. *Teachers and Teaching, 20(*2), 189-211. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2013.848570

Castro Silva, J., Amante, L., & Morgado, J. (2017). School climate, principal support and collaboration among Portuguese teachers. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *40*(4), 505–520. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2017.1295445

Chen, C. C. (2024). Practice of leadership competencies by a principal: Case study of a public experimental school in Taiwan. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, *25,* 159–170. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-022-09813-1

Choi, J. (2006). A motivational theory of charismatic leadership: Envisioning, empathy, and empowerment. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, *13*(1), 24–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/10717919070130010501

Cistone, P. J., & Stevenson, J. M. (2000). Perspectives on the urban school principalship. *Education and Urban Society*, *32*(4), 435–442. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124500324001

Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, *98*(2), 310–357. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.98.2.310

Cosner, S. (2009). Building organizational capacity through trust. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 45*(2), 248–291. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08330502

Cosner S. (2011). Teacher learning, instructional considerations and principal communication: Lessons from a longitudinal study of collaborative data use by teachers. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 39*(5), 568–589. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143211408453

Çoban, Ö., Özdemir, N., & Bellibaş, M. Ş. (2023). Trust in principals, leaders' focus on instruction, teacher collaboration, and teacher self-efficacy: Testing a multilevel mediation model. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *51*(1), 95–115. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220968170

Dasborough, M. T. (2006). Cognitive asymmetry in employee emotional reactions to leadership behaviors. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *17*(2), 163–178. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.12.004

Delgado, M. L. (2014). Democratic leadership in middle schools of Chihuahua Mexico: Improving middle schools through democracy. *Journal of International Education and Leadership*, *4*(1), 1–11. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1136046.pdf

DiPaola, M. F. (2012). Conceptualizing and validating a measure of principal support. In M. F. DiPaola & P. B. Forsyth (Eds.), *Contemporary Challenges Confronting School Leaders* (pp. 111–120). Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Duffield, S., Wageman, J., & Hodge, A. (2013). Examining how professional development impacted teachers and students of U.S. history courses. *The Journal of Social Studies Research*, *37*(2), 85-96. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jssr.2013.03.002

Đuranović, M., Klasnić, I., & Vidić, T. (2024). Principal support and teacher self-efficacy as predictors of collective teacher efficacy. *European Journal of Educational Research*, *13*(2), 693–703. https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.13.2.693

Engels, N., Hotton, G., Devos, G., Bouckenooghe, D., & Aelterman, A. (2008). Principals in schools with a positive school culture. *Educational Studies*, *34*(3), 159–174. https://doi.org/10.1080/03055690701811263

Fatih, M. (2020). School Principal Support in Teacher Professional Development. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, *9*(1), 54–75. http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/ijelm.2020.5158

Fosha, D. (2005). Emotion, true self, true other, core state: Toward a clinical theory of affective change process. *Psychoanalytic Review*, *92*(4), 513–551. https://doi.org/10.1521/prev.2005.92.4.513

Francis, O. B., & Oluwatoyin, F. C. (2019). Principals' personnel characteristic skills: A predictor of teachers' classroom management in ekiti state secondary school. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management, 7*(1), 72-103. http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/ijelm.2019.3573

Friend, M. P., & Cook, L. (2013). *Interactions: collaboration skills for school professionals*. Pearson.

Gkolia, A. K, Charalampaki, C., & Belias, D. (2021). Principal's individualized support and teacher's self-efficacy: An empirical research. *Journal of Educational Research and Reviews, 9*(3), 53-60. https://doi.org/10.33495/jerr_v9i3.21.103

Goldring, E. B., & Pasternack, R. (1994). Principals' coordinating strategies and school effectiveness. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *5*(3), 239–253. https://doi.org/10.1080/0924345940050303

Grinshtain, Y., & Gibton, D. (2018). Responsibility, authority, and accountability in school-based and non-school-based management: Principals' coping strategies. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *56*(1), 2–17. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-01-2017-0005

Gümüş, S., Şükrü Bellibaş, M., Şen, S., & Hallinger, P. (2024). Finding the missing link: Do principal qualifications make a difference in student achievement? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *52*(1), 28–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432211051909

Handford, V., & Leithwood, K. (2013). Why teachers trust school leaders. *Journal of Educational Administration, 51*(2), 194–212. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231311304706

House, J. S. (1981). *Work stress and social support.* Addison-Wesley.

Hughes, A. L., Matt, J. J., & O'Reilly, F. L. (2015). Principal support is imperative to the retention of teachers in hard-to-staff schools. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, *3*(1), 129–134. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1054905.pdf

Karacabey, M. F. (2021). School principal support in teacher professional development. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, *9*(1), 54–75. https://hipatiapress.com/hpjournals/index.php/ijelm/article/view/5158

Kline, R. (2011). *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling* (3rd Ed.) The Guilford Press.

Kovač, V., & Pažur, M. (2021). Aktivnosti i obilježja instrukcijskog školskog vođenja iz perspektive ravnatelja osnovnih škola [Activities and characteristics of instructional school leadership from the perspective of elementary school principals]. *Školski vjesnik*, *70* (2), 5–29. https://doi.org/10.38003/sv.70.2.1

Lazaridou, A., & Beka, A. (2015). Personality and resilience characteristics of Greek primary school principals. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *43*(5), 772–791. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143214535746

Lee, S. W., & Mao, X. (2023). Recruitment and selection of principals: A systematic review. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *51*(1), 6-29. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220969694

Leithwood, K. A. (2014). The principal's role in teacher development. In M. Fullan (Ed.) *Teacher development and educational change* (1st Ed., pp. 86–103). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315870700

Leithwood, K., Patten, S., & Jantzi, D. (2010). Testing a conception of how school leadership influences student learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *46*(5), 671–706. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X10377347

Li, L., & Liu, Y. (2020). An integrated model of principal transformational leadership and teacher leadership that is related to teacher self-efficacy and student academic performance. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, *42*(4), 661–678. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2020.1806036

Littrell, P. C. (1992). *The effects of principal support on general and special educators' stress, job satisfaction, health, school commitment, and intent on staying in teaching* [doctoral dissertation]. Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/db8498e7-a8ba-4f6f-b69d-db9d35545fe2/content

Littrell, P. C., Billingsley, B. S., & Cross, L. H. (1994). The effects of principal support on special and general educators' stress, job satisfaction, school commitment, health, and intent to stay in teaching. *Remedial and Special Education, 15*(5), 297–310. https://doi.org/10.1177/074193259401500505

Liu, S., Hallinger, P., & Feng, D. (2016). Supporting the professional learning of teachers in China: Does principal leadership make a difference? *Teaching and Teacher Education, 59*, 79–91. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.05.023

Matijević, M., Bilić, V., & Opić, S. (2016). *Pedagogija za učitelje i nastavnike [Pedagogy for teachers]*. Školska knjiga.

Marusteri, M., & Bacarea, V. (2010). Kako odabrati pravi test za procjenu statističke značajnosti razlike između skupina? [Comparing groups for statistical differences: how to choose the right statistical test?]. *Biochemia Medica*, *20*(1), 15–32. https://hrcak.srce.hr/47847

Mehdinezhad, V., & Mansouri, M. (2016). School principals' leadership behaviours and its relation with teachers' sense of self-efficacy. *International Journal of Instruction*, *9*(2), 51–60. https://www.e-iji.net/dosyalar/iji_2016_2_4.pdf

Moller, J. (2009). School leadership in an age of accountability: Tension between managerial and professional accountability. *Journal of Educational Change*, *10*(1), 37–46. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10833-008-9078-6

Mulford, B., Edmunds, B., Kendall, L., Kendall, D., & Bishop, P. (2008). Successful school principalship, evaluation and accountability. *Leading and Managing*, *14*(2), 19–44. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.777901637615961

Mustamin, Y. M. (2012). The competence of school principals: What kind of need competence for school success? *Journal of Education and Learning*, *6*(1), 33–42. https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v6i1.188

Nuswantoro, P., Marsinah, M., Iqbal, M., Rahmi, E., & Purwanto, M. B. (2023). School principal leadership style in improving teacher professionalism. *International Journal of Technology and Education Research*, *1*(02), 19–27. https://e-journal.citakonsultindo.or.id/index.php/IJETER/article/view/305

Olsen, A. A., & Huang, F. L. (2018). Teacher job satisfaction by principal support and teacher cooperation: Results from the Schools and Staffing Survey. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 27*(11), 1-31. https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.27.4174

Pažur, M., Domović, V., & Kovač, V. (2020). Demokratska školska kultura i demokratsko školsko vođenje [Democratic school culture and democratic school leadership]. *Hrvatski* časopis *za odgoj i obrazovanje*, *22*(4), 1137-1164. https://doi.org/10.15516/cje.v22i4.4022

Peko, A., Mlinarević, V., & Gajger, V. (2009). Učinkovitost vođenja u osnovnim školama [Leadership effectiveness in primary schools]. *Odgojne znanosti*, *11* (2 (18)), 67–84. https://hrcak.srce.hr/48442

Rothmann, S., & Fouché, E. (2018). School principal support, and teachers' work engagement and intention to leave: The role of psychological need satisfaction. In M. Coetzee, I. Potgieter & N. Ferreira (Eds.), *Psychology of Retention* (pp. 137–156). Springer: Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-98920-4_7

Sanchez, J. E., Paul, J. M., & Thornton, B. W. (2022). Relationships among teachers' perceptions of principal leadership and teachers' perceptions of school climate in the high school setting. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *25*(6), 855–875. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2019.1708471

Schulte, D. P., Slate, J. R., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2010). Characteristics of effective school principals: A mixed-research study. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 56*(2). https://doi.org/10.11575/ajer.v56i2.55397

Sekulić Erić, I. (2023). *Priručnik za polaganje stručnog ispita pripravnika u osnovnim i srednjim* školama *[Handbook for professional examination for novice teachers in primary and secondary schools]*. Zadružna štampa.

Şemin F. K. (2019). Competencies of principals in ensuring sustainable education: Teachers' views. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, *8*(2), 201–212. https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v8i2.18273

Singh, K., & Billingsley, B. (1998). Professional support and its effects on teachers' commitment. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *91*(4), 229–239. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27542159

Slišković, A., Burić, I., & Knežević, I. (2016). Zadovoljstvo poslom i sagorijevanje na poslu kod učitelja: važnost podrške ravnatelja i radne motivacije [Job Satisfaction and Burnout in Teachers: The Importance of Perceived Support from Principal and Work Motivation]. *Društvena istraživanja*, *25*(3), 371–392. https://doi.org/10.5559/di.25.3.05

Smith, C., & Gillespie, M. (2007). Research on Professional Development and Teacher Change: Implications for Adult Basic Education. In J. Comings, B. Garner, & C. Smith, (Eds.), *Review of Adult Learning and Literacy* (pp. 205–244). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Stronge, J. H., & Xu, X. (2021). *Qualities of effective principals* (2nd Ed.). ASCD. Qualities-of-Effective-Principals-2ed-sample-chapters.pdf (ascd.org)

Staničić, S. (2000). *Vođenje odgojno – obrazovne djelatnosti u* školi *[Leadership in the School]* [doctoral dissertation, University of Rijeka]. Repozitorij Filozofskog fakulteta u Rijeci. https://libraries.uniri.hr/cgi-bin/unilib.cgi?form=D1100325061

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2007). The differential antecedents of self-efficacy beliefs of novice and experienced teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *23*, 944–956. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.05.003

Villarreal, E. (2023). Analyzing teacher burnout through principal leadership behaviors. In E. A. Singer, M. J. Etchells & C. J. Craig (Eds.), *Drawn to the Flame* (Advances in Research on Teaching, Vol. 45, pp. 149–168). Emerald Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-368720230000045010

Youngs, P. & King, M. B. (2002). Principal leadership for professional development to build school capacity. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *38*(5), 643–670. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X02239642

Zepeda, S. J. (2012). *Professional Development: What Works* (3rd Ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315386744

Zlatić, L., Sušanj, Z., & Jakopec, A. (2021). Uloga doživljaja pravednosti, ugleda organizacije i identifikacije s organizacijom u objašnjenju angažiranosti zaposlenika [The Role of Perceived Justice, External Prestige and Organizational Identification in Explaining Employee Engagement]. *Društvena istraživanja*, *30*(3), 571–592. https://doi.org/10.5559/di.30.3.06