

*Review paper*

Received: 26 June 2021

Accepted: 9 September 2021

**Katarina Vanek, mag. prim. educ.**

katarina.vanek@yahoo.com

**Andrej Maras, mag. prim. educ.**

Primary School "Lotrščak",

Donje Svetice 127, Zagreb

andrejmaras24@gmail.com

**Petra Karabin, mag. prim. educ.**

University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education

Savska cesta 77, Zagreb

petra.karabin@ufzg.hr

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD TEACHER?

**Abstract:** *Being a teacher in contemporary society is becoming more and more challenging. Social expectations of teachers are constantly growing. Therefore, teachers strive to improve their characteristics and competencies. In that respect, it is important to know which personality traits and competencies society expects from a good teacher. Guided by that, this paper aims to comprehensively present a good teacher, considering his or her desirable personality traits, professional competencies and perceptions of participants in the educational process. The results of the review of relevant literature and previous research indicate that a good teacher shows a combination of personality traits such as humanity, wisdom, prudence, perseverance, etc. and competencies such as achieving positive relationships with students, successful classroom management, recognizing the importance of motivation and others. Finally, a good teacher is a combination of desirable personality traits and permanent professional growth. Therefore, this research can contribute to the practice of creating professional development and teacher education programs.*

**Keywords:** *teacher competencies, teacher characteristics, perceptions of participants in the educational process*

*"A good teacher does not teach what he wants,  
he does not teach what he knows, a teacher teaches who he is."  
unknown author*

## INTRODUCTION

A teacher<sup>1</sup> – is one of the few people we remember all our lives. A teacher is a person who is often expected to replace a parent, psychologist, sociologist, special educator, actor, singer, dancer, painter, athlete and much more – if the situation requires it. The teacher represents the synergy of many personalities who have one common goal – the upbringing and education of a young person. It is an arduous and complex occupation that includes lots of ups and downs, pressures, frustration, resignation, but even the smallest student's achievement is a reward for a teacher. The phrase “being a teacher” has always meant something deeper, more noble and enlightening, something more than just the profession that an individual practices in society. We can often hear that the teaching profession is a vocation intended for those who want to work in the area of upbringing and education. The teacher represents a model of behavior that influences the choice of future occupations of his students. The teacher's communication style, his clothing style, his reactions and the way he views success and failure leave an indelible mark on the lives of his students.

Finally, the question arises as to who is truly a teacher? Teachers' interest points to the strengths of human personality, to the learning process determined by the International Standard Classification of Occupations, according to which teachers are those who teach at all three levels of education: primary, secondary and tertiary, those who work with preschool children and those who organize various forms of teaching activities (Cindrić, 1995).

Modern society and global changes have posed many challenges to educators. Today, more than ever before, it is challenging and demanding to be a teacher. Nowadays, teachers are expected to know and apply teaching strategies for learning and teaching, they are expected to participate in creating quality schools and educate students for the labour market. Furthermore, a modern teacher should be flexible, innovative and open to new teaching paradigms aimed at interdisciplinary planning of teaching units. In their educational activities, they should strive for lifelong learning; they should be excellent moderators, motivators and organizers; they should be able to research teaching practice within their teaching area and be competent to evaluate their work (Jensen, 2003).

Everyone has a theory of how a good teacher should behave and what qualities and professional competencies he should possess to do the job successfully. As the teaching profession has always been interesting to researchers because of its crucial influence on the quality of education, in the 1960s pedeutology began to develop, which should provide answers to the question “What makes a good teacher?”. Strugar (2014) states that pedeutology is a scientific discipline of systemic pedagogy that is aimed at researching and studying teachers'

---

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the word teacher refers to both male and female teachers and the pronoun 'he' will be used.

personality from a psychological, sociological, pedagogical and character aspect. The author sees pedeutology as very useful for teachers in terms of recognizing their pedagogical and psychological insights into their personality that they can use for personal growth and development, but also in relationships with others.

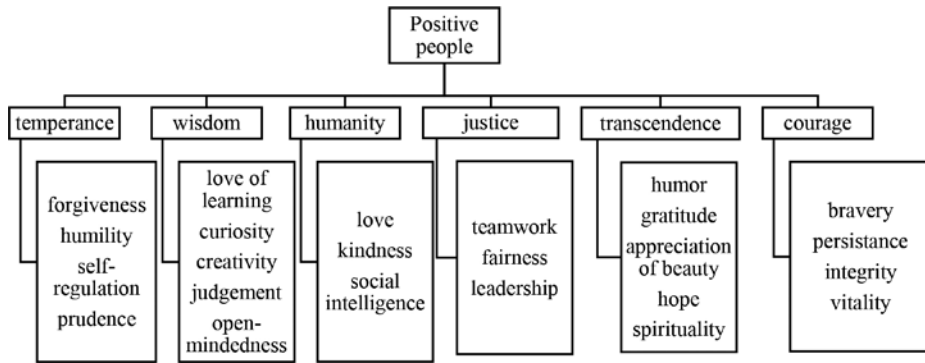
It is impossible to define teacher quality unambiguously terminologically. The phenomenon of teacher quality is used to define highly qualified teachers, effective teachers and good teachers (Liston et al., 2008). The term denoting a *highly qualified teacher* can most often be heard from ministries and committees focused on education, i.e. education policymakers. The term *effective teacher* indicates a teacher whose pedagogical competencies are focused on the development of student achievement, and nowadays these teachers are more oriented towards educational outcomes than qualifications. Alsup (2005) emphasizes that effective teachers are guided by the collective aspiration to develop a professional identity that includes their subjectivity and cultural beliefs about what it means to be a teacher. A *good teacher* represents a teacher who, with his behaviour, attitudes, desirable personality traits, professional competencies and value system, focuses on the systematic development of the learning process of his students (Hanushek, 2002). The term *good teacher* is common among members of the scientific community of educational sciences as well as among practitioners in the field of education. Being a good teacher presents a professional aspiration towards achieving harmony between the teacher's personality and competencies, attitudes and beliefs that successfully respond to the challenges of the environment (Korthagen, 2004).

To present a good teacher as one coherent whole, in this paper teacher characteristics will not be studied in isolation because they build on and intertwine with each other. The main goal of this paper is to comprehensively present a good primary school teacher, considering his desirable personality traits and professional competencies and the perception of participants in the educational process.

## GOOD MAN – GOOD TEACHER

When considering which qualities a good teacher should have, it is important to consider which human qualities society perceives as virtues. A further review of the literature can be made with the assumption that, first, a good teacher should possess the qualities that society considers necessary to characterize an individual as a good person. Rijavec and Miljković (2006, p. 7) provide an overview of virtues based on previous research that highlights the six most valued virtues in the world regardless of cultural, religious or social affiliation: “wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, moderation and transcendence”. Wisdom and knowledge are virtues that include curiosity, desire to learn,

open-mindedness, creativity and prudence. Courage includes boldness, perseverance, integrity, and vitality (Rijavec & Miljković, 2006). Peterson and Seligman (2004, as cited in Rijavec & Miljković, 2006). classify boldness within the quality of courage. Furthermore, the quality of humanity includes generosity, willingness to give and receive love, and social and emotional intelligence. Such people consider other people equally important as themselves. A just person is socially responsible, honest and can lead. A moderate person has self-control, is prudent, modest, humble and knows how to forgive and give mercy. A transcendent person is a person that possesses gratitude, hope, optimism, a sense of humour and playfulness, respects beauty, excellence, spirituality, and religiosity. The above-mentioned division made by Peterson and Seligman (2004, as cited in Rijavec & Miljković, 2006). is graphically presented as six-character strengths, along with the schematic representation of the related virtues (Graph 1). It is emphasized that positive people possess these character strengths, i.e. virtues.



**Graph 1.** Character Strengths & Virtues (Miljković et al., 2019, p. 60)

As many people as possible should possess these highly appreciated human qualities, which can be called virtues. The school, as a place that encourages the development of students' personalities, should also encourage the development of these socially valued virtues. If we start from the assumption that a good teacher can encourage his students to develop desirable virtues, then it is possible to assume that this good teacher should possess at least some of them. Different authors perceive a good teacher differently and point out the different qualities that a good teacher should have. Thus, Miller (2012) expresses the desirable qualities of a good teacher from his perspective. The first is the teacher's enthusiasm for teaching, which means that he loves his work. It is also important that the teacher is creative, which includes the design of various games, songs, etc. Also, the teacher should add pace and humour into the classroom to keep students busy with work assignments, but in a pleasant classroom atmosphere supported by the teacher's sense of humour. It is important to point out that

humor in teaching should not be based on ridiculing students for their mistakes. It is also important that the teacher approaches each student in a personalized way, respecting their specific needs. In addition, teachers should leave their emotional problems outside the classroom. Furthermore, the teacher needs to be able to talk to students after class regarding questions and ambiguities they have (Miller, 2012). Therefore, the desirable characteristics of the teacher were highlighted as follows: “enthusiasm, encouragement, humor, interest in the student, availability and mental health.” (Miller, 2012, p. 38). Likewise, Azer (2005) lists twelve qualities he believes a good teacher should have. First, a good teacher should be committed to the work, that is, work-focused and enthusiastic. In addition, he should respect and encourage the differences among his students. He should communicate and interact with respect. Furthermore, he should be a good motivator who encourages critical thinking, group work, creativity, open and confidential learning environment and further progress in learning while giving constructive and positive feedback on students’ work and learning process. In addition, a good teacher should possess a wide range of undefined abilities that enable him to teach successfully, but he should also strive to constantly improve his teaching skills. Finally, a good teacher should show leadership in teaching. Similar to the views of various authors, the desirable personality traits of an effective teacher can be considered indicators of his quality: “care, fairness and respect, interaction with students, enthusiasm, motivation, commitment to teaching and reflective practice.” (Stronge & Hindman, 2006, p. 18) According to the above cited authors (Azer, 2005; Miller, 2012; Stronge & Hindman, 2006), it is clear that their concept of the desirable qualities of a good teacher largely agrees with the previously emphasized desirable virtues of a good man throughout the world (Miljković et al., 2019; Rijavec & Miljković, 2006). Consequently, it is noticeable that a good teacher is expected to possess the virtues characteristic of a good man throughout the world.

## **DESIRABLE COMPETENCIES OF TEACHERS**

Koster and Dengerink (2008) state that a competent person must be prepared to use his knowledge, skills, attitude, personal characteristics and values effectively and professionally, but with caution in a given situation. Papenkort (2014) points out that competencies help attain achievement when a particular requirement is met. It is evident that the notion of competence and a competent person is in common that a competent person must have certain knowledge and abilities to respond appropriately to a certain situation. According to the European recommendation of key competences for lifelong learning (European Commission, 2019), competencies change regarding period time and circumstances in which we live, and they differ among generations.

In the document about key competences for lifelong learning (European Commission, 2019, p. 5) it is defined eight key competencies that every individual needs to possess if he wants to achieve personal development and social inclusion and if he wants to be an employed active citizen. They are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes and are named as follows:

1. Communication in the mother tongue
2. Communication in foreign languages
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
4. Digital competence
5. Personal and social competences and learning to learn
6. Civic competences
7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
8. Cultural awareness and expression.

Similarly, the teacher competencies are specified. According to Jurčić (2014), teacher competencies imply a connection between knowledge, abilities, values and motivation that must be at a functional level. Jurčić (2014) divides the desirable teacher competencies into pedagogical and didactic ones. Pedagogical competencies include personal, communicative, analytical, social, emotional, intercultural and developmental teachers' competencies and problem-solving skills. On the other hand, didactic competencies include the ability to shape the classroom atmosphere, determine student achievement in school and develop an educational partnership between school and parents. Jukić (2010) points out that the teacher must be well acquainted with the teaching and learning process, teaching strategies and methods and procedures he uses in his work. What positively contributes to the competencies' development is the high level of knowledge in the field of didactics, general pedagogy, methodology, knowledge of the curriculum and the subject matter (Jurčić, 2014). Jukić (2010) further states that competencies differ from one person to another because they depend on personality and personal experiences.

Zrilić and Marin (2019, pp. 391–392) summarized from different sources five areas of teacher competencies in the modern school:

1. teacher competencies in the field of curriculum construction methodology
2. teacher competencies in the field of organization and management of the educational process
3. teacher competencies in the field of determining student achievement in school
4. teacher competencies in the field of shaping the classroom atmosphere
5. teacher competencies in the field of an educational partnership with parents.

Yue and Ji (2020, p. 9) conducted a content analysis and concluded that a 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher should:

- collaborate with peers (work interactively and cooperate with colleagues and students)
- actively learn (learn about new methods and procedures in the educational process and apply them)
- apply learning sustainability models in practice (apply theories and concepts to actual classrooms and learn how to teach students the skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century)
- peer guidance (share knowledge with colleagues in different skills)
- give feedback and evaluation (ensure the quality and efficiency of teachers' professional development).

A good teacher is supposed to possess certain knowledge and skills. Carre (1995, as cited in Vizek Vidović et al., 2003) points out two types of knowledge that a good teacher should have. The first type of knowledge refers to the content knowledge and the knowledge of research methods within a particular teaching area. The second type of knowledge refers to the knowledge of cognitive and motivational processes and students' cognitive development. Furthermore, the authors emphasize which skills a good teacher should possess: "skills of planning and teaching, skills of determining outcomes and skills of managing classroom as a social community" (Vizek Vidović et al., 2003, p. 332). Also, Stronge and Hindman (2006) list the knowledge and skills that they consider indicators of teacher quality: verbal abilities, knowledge of teaching content, knowledge of learning and teaching, organization, classroom management, student discipline, time organization, response to student needs and abilities, etc. Furthermore, Miller (2012) says it is important that teachers can set sufficiently challenging expectations for their students, which should however be within the limits of students' abilities. In addition, it is important that teachers can explain the teaching content. The abilities considered desirable in a good teacher are also: "creativity and challenge" (Miller, 2012, p. 38).

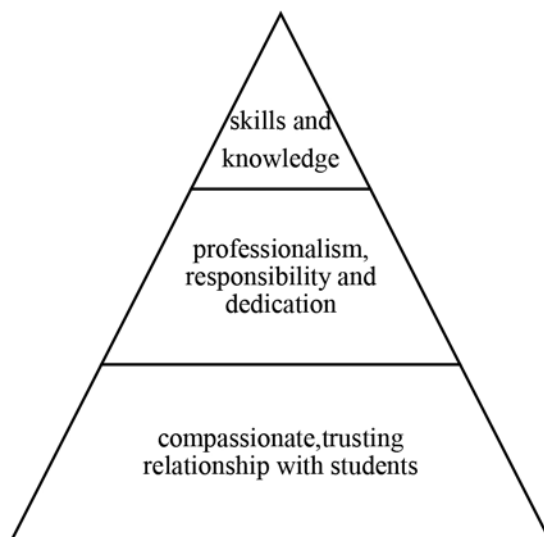
Teachers' pedagogical characteristics are a significant predictor of the quality of the teaching process. According to Strugar (2014), pedagogical characteristics can be divided into three groups:

1. general, didactic-methodical characteristics and psychological education of teachers
2. characteristics important for organizing the educational process
3. characteristics important for establishing interactive relationships between students and teachers.

Strugar (2014) further states that an effective teacher should present a synthesis of all three groups of pedagogical (teaching) characteristics that are intertwined in everyday teaching.

Teachers' knowledge and skills are reflected in the effectiveness of their teaching. Teachers' organizational skills are reflected in students' success in school, where the teacher's better organization of school time contributes to students' better school success. Also, the teacher's skill in planning the difficulty of teaching content is extremely important so that the teacher's expectations are set high enough to challenge the students, i.e. so that they are not beyond their abilities. For teachers to achieve this, it is important to take into account students' prior knowledge and abilities when planning. A teacher who possesses this skill contributes more to the development of students' self-confidence and their positive attitudes towards teaching and learning. In addition to that, teacher ability to create concrete and achievable teaching outcomes and goals also contribute to the effectiveness of teaching (Vizek Vidović et al., 2003). Also, Austin (2015) points out that good teachers can build trusting and stimulating relationships with their students and they possess pedagogical competencies and subject matter knowledge. McKnight et al. (2011) conducted a survey to recognize the qualities that participants in the English education system expect from their teachers. The participants in the research were students aged 15–19, parents of primary and secondary school students, teachers and principals of primary and secondary schools, education researchers and policymakers. The survey, which shows a hierarchy of valued qualities of an effective teacher where it is evident that the foundations for building competencies are personality traits, indicates that teachers' knowledge and skills are at the very top of the pyramid (Graph 2). However, neither competencies nor personality traits are the only things that define a good teacher, because a stimulating and supportive social environment is also required (Korthagen, 2004). Finally, a competent teacher should enjoy his work, have authority, be accepted by his students and colleagues and have pedagogical tact that will increase students' satisfaction with teaching (Jurčić, 2014). Considering the expected valued knowledge and skills that the authors (Austin, 2015; Jurčić, 2014; McKnight et al. 2011; Vizek Vidović et al., 2003) pointed out, it is noticeable that they can largely be placed within the European recommendation of key competences for lifelong learning (European Commission, 2019).





**Graph 2.** Hierarchy of valued qualities of an effective teacher  
(McKnight et al., 2011, p. 44)

## **INFLUENCE OF TEACHER ATTRIBUTES AND COMPETENCIES ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

Areas that affect student achievement were identified in an analysis (Corwin, 2019) conducted in a study that lasted for more than 25 years and included the results of more than 95,000 surveys, with about 300 million students worldwide. One of the areas that influence student achievement is the teacher, including areas of teacher attributes, teacher-student interactions, and teacher education (Table 1). Research has shown that teacher attributes, their education and interaction with students affect student achievement to varying degrees: potentially significant acceleration of student achievement, potential acceleration of student achievement, likely positive impact on student achievement, and likely small positive impact on student achievement. What can potentially significantly accelerate student achievement are teacher estimates of achievement, teacher credibility, teacher clarity and the implementation of micro-teaching, i.e. video review of lessons. Teacher expectations, teachers who do not “label” students, teacher-student relationships, and student rating of the quality of teaching have the potential to accelerate student achievement. Teacher verbal ability, personality, professional development programs, subject matter knowledge and average teacher effects have a probable positive impact on student achievement. A likely small positive impact on student achievement is the result of initial teacher training programs and teacher pay (Corwin, 2019).

Furthermore, the results of numerous other studies show similar factors that affect student achievement: teacher competencies, teacher self-efficacy, teacher knowledge of teaching content, years of school experience, student-teacher relationships, use of educational computer programs, and use of information and communication technology in the teaching process, etc. (Bakar, 2018; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Kosgei et al., 2013; Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012; Odadžić et al., 2017; Rowan et al., 1997; Solakovic et al., 2017). The importance of these factors is reflected in the aspiration of institutions that educate future teachers to focus on initial teacher education programs to encourage and develop teacher competencies (Vizek Vidović & Domović, 2013). Considering these influences that teacher attributes and competencies have on student achievement, their exceptional importance in the educational process can be seen.

**Table 1.** Teacher influence on student achievement. (Corwin, 2019, p. 2)

Teacher attributes	Teacher-student interactions	Teacher education
average teacher effects		
teacher clarity		initial teacher training
teacher credibility		programs
teacher estimates of achievement	student rating of quality of teaching	micro-teaching / video review of lessons
teacher expectations	teachers not labelling students	professional development programs
teacher personality attributes	teacher-student relationships	teacher subject matter knowledge
teacher performance pay		
teacher verbal ability		

## WHAT DO THE BEST TEACHERS DO AND HOW THEY DO IT?

Teachers differ significantly in the quality of their work. Personality traits, skills, attitudes, level of education and attitude towards work are just some of the predictors that affect the quality of educational work of teachers. While visiting a multitude of schools, Whitaker (2004; 2012) aimed to determine what sets the best teachers apart from the rest. He has found that the set of different teacher personality traits, his desire for professional growth and his focus on student achievement, is what sets him apart from other teachers.

As a result of his research, Whitaker (2004; 2012) provides a summary of what best teacher do and how they do it:

- they strive for continuous professional development
- they are aware that the quality of the school depends on school employees, not on a school program
- they are consistent and thoughtful in classroom management

- their students always come first
- they place high demands on students, but also on themselves
- they continuously work on eliminating unacceptable behaviour
- they show empathy towards others and they know how their students perceive them
- they show respect to each student and develop a positive classroom atmosphere
- they have a clearly defined goal and they do not give up, but they can also be flexible if something does not go according to the plan
- they are focused on the personal progress of each student with clearly set expectations
- they have a positive relationship with their students and share positivity with others
- they are guided by student progress, not by checking their achievement
- they show care for their students
- they have a developed strategy on how to deal with and respond to unacceptable behaviour
- they try to be fair to everyone.

Furthermore, we want to emphasize the importance of classroom management when it comes to a good teacher. Stronge and Hindman (2006) created a list of teacher quality indicators, and one of the six categories is classroom management. It is clear that it has been singled out as one of the categories that reflect the desirable characteristics and competencies of a good teacher. Classroom management should ensure “establishing and maintaining a safe, orderly, and productive learning environment” (Stronge & Hindman, 2006, p. 13). For Miller (2012) classroom management is also extremely important and he emphasizes the importance of teacher’s fairness and their ability to establish a pace of work in the classroom. There are three different styles of classroom management: authoritarian, democratic or authoritative, and laissez-faire. An authoritarian teacher sets rules in the classroom that he considers important but leaves no room for students to question them or negotiate those rules. According to Barnas (2000), authoritarian teachers generally do not talk to students, do not lead discussions, and are characterised by one-way communication. These are teachers who do not encourage students or provide them with any kind of support. Authoritarian teachers have high expectations of their students, reward high achievements with high grades, and punish any failure and weakness with low grades. Unlike the authoritarian, the authoritative teacher sets the class rules in cooperation with his students who can negotiate and influence the rules (Vizek Vidović et al., 2003). Research shows that teachers who have an authoritative classroom management style encourage critical thinking, learning, and personal development of students (Bernstein, 2013). Quite the opposite of these two styles, a laissez-faire teacher does not set any rules

(Vizek Vidović et al., 2003). Each of these classroom management styles can be associated with specific characteristics of teachers who use them in their classrooms. Thus, authoritarian teachers are potentially more persistent and that is why they insist on rules, but they are not very open-minded. Teachers with an authoritarian style potentially have higher social and emotional intelligence and social responsibility, while their persistence is less pronounced because they do not insist uncompromisingly on the set rules. Finally, teachers with a laissez-faire approach have low persistence, integrity, social responsibility, and leadership ability. Research suggests that, in a class led by a teacher with an authoritative style, better results are generally achieved, which is why it can potentially be characteristic of good teachers. Successful classroom management, among other things, should have a positive impact on the development of students' self-control and social responsibility (Rijavec & Miljković, 2006; Vizek Vidović et al., 2003).

Classroom management also includes school discipline and cooperation with parents. Teachers' traits and skills are manifested in achieving discipline, i.e. solving classroom problems. One of the examples of achieving school discipline is the principle of least intervention, which will be explained in more detail below. Guided by this principle, it is possible to solve everyday problems in the classroom environment. Table 2 shows an example of the implementation of the least intervention principle in the classroom (Wolfgang, 1995, as cited in Vizek Vidović et al., 2003). For example, the teacher's courage, which includes his enthusiasm, is very important in the prevention process (Rijavec & Miljković, 2006; Vizek Vidović et al., 2003). By further observing the procedures in Table 2, it is possible to relate them to the results of research conducted by McKnight et al. (2011), who highlighted the characteristics of a good teacher that can be a kind of prerequisite for implementing the procedures of the principle of least intervention: confidential relationship with students, kindness, understanding, calmness, and patience. It is precisely these qualities of a good teacher that are necessary to establish interactive relationships with students (Strugar, 2014).

**Table 2.** The principle of least intervention with an example of its implementation in the classroom. (Vizek Vidović et al., 2003, p. 295)

Step	Procedure	Implementation
0	prevention	teacher enthusiasm, the dynamism of teaching, encouraging and maintaining interest
1	nonverbal cues	Bojan is late with the task; the teacher leans towards him
2	praising appropriate behaviour	<i>Bojan, I heard that you were the first to finish your plaster sculpture work.</i>
3	praising other students	<i>Most of you have almost finished; great!</i>
4	direct request	<i>Bojan, please, hurry up!</i>
5	repeating the request	<i>Bojan, it is important that you finish on time.</i>
6	consequences	after class Bojan stays for 15 minutes and starts a new task to have more time tomorrow

## COOPERATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND SCHOOLS

Furthermore, parent-school cooperation is extremely important for student success. An important basis for successful communication between teachers and parents are teachers' appropriate competencies and personality traits. Although teachers and parents of a particular student have the same goal, they often disagree and a conflict might arise in their communication. The sources of their conflicts can be different, and to avoid them it is important to educate teachers to work with parents. Such education can be divided into methodological contents that include the acquisition of skills on the organization and implementation of cooperation and educational contents that are "related to the immediate, practical improvement of parental role and pedagogical culture in general." (Vizek Vidović et al., 2003, p. 312) According to this division, it is clear that teachers should have a lot of knowledge and skills to successfully communicate with parents, such as knowledge of various forms of cooperation with parents, organization of parent-teacher meetings, communication culture, appropriate behaviour in conflict situations, etc. (Vizek Vidović et al., 2003). The results of a 2009 survey (Pahić et al., 2010), which included 1,122 parents from all over the Republic of Croatia, have shown that the relationship between schools and parents in Croatia in most cases belong to the traditional partnership orientation. Kosić (2009) describes the partnership as a voluntary relationship between parents and teachers whose interest is to improve children's educational environment through cooperation so that the child could develop

adequately. There are two types of school-family relationship: the already mentioned traditional orientation and the partner orientation (Pahić et al., 2010). In the traditional orientation (Pahić et al., 2010), parents are not directly involved in the operation of the school. In addition, they are not responsible for the education of their children and they leave it to the system, i.e. the school. In this form of partnership, communication between school and parents is rare, often initiated by the school, and is based on individual problems that may arise. In contrast, there is a partnership orientation (Škutor, 2014) in which both school and parents equally contribute to the education of children, maintaining a positive climate and mutual respect of all participants in the educational system. This form of the partnership involves frequent communication, respect for cultural differences and acceptance of the roles of all members of the system.

Although the traditional form of partnership prevails in the Republic of Croatia, according to the results of Kolak's research (2006), the attitude of parents ( $N = 237$ ) of lower primary school students towards cooperation with teachers and the school is mostly positive. The results also showed that the relationship between parents and school was conditioned by three factors, namely the factor of cooperation, the factor of action and help and the factor of evaluation. But the results also showed that parents' attitudes differed depending on their engagement in school. Kolak (2006) points out that there is no proportion of parents' attitudes to cooperation with the school and their involvement in the implementation of that cooperation. The reason for this may be the traditional form of partnership between parents and the school, according to which parents rarely communicate with school staff, while expecting a lot from them. 1,052 parents from 30 primary schools participated ( $N$  of schools from urban areas = 16,  $N$  of schools from rural areas = 14) in the research conducted by Miljević-Ridički et al. (2011). The results of this research (Miljević-Ridički et al., 2011, p. 181) have also shown that parents have a traditional form of partnership with the school. Parents believe that the school's responsibility is to ensure the quality of teaching and safety of children, but they believe that parents and the school have a mutual responsibility for the upbringing of the child and the child's satisfaction with the school. The authors further state that parents feel respected by the school and are satisfied with the amount and type of information they receive and the different ways in which they can be involved in the child's educational process. The results of the research have shown that parents whose children attend schools in rural areas are more connected with the participants of the educational process and are more satisfied with communication and impact on the school. Finally, successful classroom management reflects teacher's competences: social competence, the competence of cultural awareness and expression, organization and management of the educational process, an educational partnership with parents, shaping the classroom atmosphere and cooperation with students (European Commission, 2019; Yue & Ji, 2020; Zrilić

& Marin, 2019). Teachers' competencies, continuous development, and acquisition of the new skills would lead to a quality partnership among teachers and parents (Kosić, 2009). Consequently, such a partnership can bring parents closer to the school, more precisely, make them the co-constructors of the educational process.

#### FROM A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

The results of a study conducted by McKnight et al. (2011) have shown that teachers think that the most important competence of a good teacher is the ability to develop trusting and productive relationships with their students. As prerequisites for establishing a good relationship with students, the participants stated that the teacher should be kind, encouraging, patient and caring and that he should have understanding and help students solve their problems. The second most important quality was the teacher's professionalism, which meant that the teacher was calm, well-mannered, respectful, responsible, etc. In the third place, teachers mentioned patience and care, which include tolerance, patience, kindness, a sense of humour, empathy, understanding, etc.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Arthur et al. (2015) pointed out five-character strengths of an "ideal" teacher listed by more than 40% of surveyed teachers: fairness, love of learning, creativity, humour, and perseverance. It is interesting to point out that the male participants emphasized teachers' humour more significantly than the female ones. Also, the research conducted by Plavšić and Diković (2016) highlighted the five most important characteristics of a good teacher based on teachers' opinions: fairness, patience, control of discipline, ability to teach, creativity and sensitivity towards students. It is evident that some of the prominent qualities of good teachers are their personality traits and their knowledge and competencies.

#### FROM A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Parents perceive teachers in different ways. Lowery (1969) used a word association test to examine parents' perceptions of teachers at the time. The study involved 216 parents in a middle socio-economic area. Regarding teachers' gender, the most common word used by the participants was "female" (N = 109). The most common words expressing the negative qualities of a teacher were: "disciplinarian" (N = 52), "strict" (N = 51) and "unfair" (N = 40). In both cases, the key stimulus word for the word association test was the word "teacher". Almost half a century later, parents consider teachers' personal qualities and the teaching process organization to be the most important, followed by teachers' educational competencies. Dozza and Cavrini's study (2012) included parents (N = 3669) of pre-school, elementary, middle and high school children from three different national groups (Italian, German and Ladin) from the

province of Bozen-Bolzano, South Tyrol, Italy. On a 10-item Likert-type scale, parents indicated the importance of the competences a teacher should possess. The results showed the following: disciplinary competences ( $M = 8.37$ ;  $SD = 1.24$ ), teaching competences ( $M = 8.29$ ;  $SD = 1.17$ ), managerial and organizational competences ( $M = 8.05$ ;  $SD = 1.23$ ), communicative and relational aspects in the classroom ( $M = 8.30$ ;  $SD = 1.14$ ), communicative and relational aspects with students' families ( $M = 7.96$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) and personal aspects ( $M = 8.40$ ;  $SD = 1.40$ ). According to the results of the questionnaire, what is also important to parents are teachers' knowledge, enthusiastic teaching, motivating students, involving families in the educational process, respecting diversity and effective classroom management. It is important to note that parents' perceptions differed regarding ethnicity. The authors believe that the reasons for this are different parents' beliefs and their expectations of teachers. The results of the research conducted by Tatar and Horenczyk (2000) partially coincide with the aforementioned results. Namely, in their study, Tatar and Horenczyk (2000) included parents ( $N = 765$ ) of primary and secondary school students in the broad central Israel area. The results of the questionnaire showed that the most important aspect for parents was that the teacher helped their child. After that, the teacher's competence is important to them, while the least important aspect is the one of fairness. The authors have also found that mothers have higher expectations of teachers than fathers. In addition, the authors state that parents have higher expectations in terms of help and competence when it comes to girls.

#### FROM A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Teacher-student relationships are very dynamic and complex, especially in primary school when students are in the most intense phase of cognitive, psychological, social, and emotional development (O'Connor et al., 2011). According to Glasser (1994), students respect those teachers who care about them and the subject matter, teachers who conduct two-way communication with them, and teachers who listen to their students and strive to be entertaining. Furthermore, he points out that students believe that the essential qualities of a good teacher are kindness, care and tolerance.

Beishuizen et al. (2001) wanted to find out how students ( $N = 198$ ) of different age perceived a good teacher. According to the results, they concluded that primary school students believed that the best teachers were the ones with teaching knowledge and skills, while high school students emphasize that a good teacher strives to establish a pleasant and friendly relationship with students. It is interesting to note that girls and boys differ in assessing the desirable traits and competencies of teachers (Basow et al., 2006). Girls highly value teachers who have good subject matter knowledge, while boys consider teaching methods to be the most important in the teaching process (Basow, 2000).



Thompson et al. (2004) conducted a study aimed at examining students' opinions about which qualities and competencies a good teacher should have. The research results showed that a good teacher must be fair, have a positive attitude, be prepared for teaching, possess creativity and a sense of humour, admit mistakes, respect students, maintain high expectations for achievement, show compassion and develop a sense of belonging. In their research, which included first-year ( $N = 90$ ) and fifth-year students ( $N = 90$ ) at the Faculty of Teacher Education, the University of Zagreb, Drvodelić and Rajić (2011) wanted to examine future primary school teachers' opinions on the desirable qualities of a good teacher. In the research, they obtained similar results as the previously mentioned authors. Namely, the participants highly position teachers' fairness, competencies and respect. The students' answers about the desirable qualities of a good teacher are divided into two categories: personal and professional (Table 3).

**Table 3.** List of desirable teacher qualities (Drvodelić & Rajić, 2011)

<b>Personal traits</b>	<b>Professional traits</b>
patient	fair
creative	professional
tolerant	reliable
outgoing	objective
communicative	diligent
positive	authoritative
a good speaker	motivator
resourceful	open to new ideas
loving	organiser
reasonable	persistent
interesting	determined
honest	expert in his field
altruist	has a broad general knowledge
empathic	
fair	

Recent research by Labak et al. (2017) aimed to examine some of the characteristics (learning style, communication, personality) of favourite teachers of primary and secondary school students ( $N = 1035$ ). The results of the research indicate that favourite teachers are those who explain new concepts based on existing knowledge, who establish collaborative relationships with their students, those with developed organizational skills and those who continuously

monitor student progress. The research emphasized that students' perceptions of favourite teachers are influenced by their gender and age. Younger students rated all the variables significantly higher than older students.

Recent empirical research shows that a cheerful, warm and friendly performance of teachers who build a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere is equally important to younger and older students. They also point out that it is important for a teacher to be an expert in his field and to be fair, consistent, objective and empathic.

## CONCLUSION

Who are good teachers? It is always a current topic and everyone can express their opinion, their attitude and their prediction. The teacher as a public person is subject to constant assessment, but also to self-assessment: what he is like and which personal and professional qualities need to be improved (Antić, 2000). Today, more than ever before, it is impossible to unambiguously define a good teacher. By reviewing the relevant literature and empirical research, we tried to answer this question and describe who a good teacher is, starting from his desirable professional competencies and personality traits. To arrive at the most relevant and precise findings, we were also interested in the perception of other participants in the educational system, which is their opinion about what makes a good teacher.

The teacher as a coherent combination of personal and professional characteristics has a significant role in the process of upbringing and education, in building a value system and preparing students for modern times. Previšić (1999) calls the teacher "Prometheus of the New Age" who took on the role of intercultural mediator with the aim of personal progress of the young person in the socio-cultural environment. A review of recent literature and previous research tells us that a good teacher is characterised by: developed speaking skills, knowledge of a wide range of teaching strategies and teaching methods, confidence in his field of teaching, and focus on systematically developing positive relationships with students. Furthermore, a good teacher has the following qualities: he is skilful in classroom management, recognizes the importance of motivation and emotions in the learning process, clearly presents his ideas and plans, cares for each student's pace of learning and tries to develop a positive school environment with colleagues (Looney, 2011, pp. 441–442). Strugar (2014) points out that teachers' personality can be seen in their empathy and understanding of students' problems and their interpersonal relationships with students, parents and other participants in the educational process.

The desirable professional knowledge and skills cannot be achieved and developed without permanent professional training in the fields of general knowledge and culture, didactic-pedagogical competencies, communication

styles and ways of acting and personal quality (Previšić, 2003). Social changes, modern society demands and globalization have changed the teaching profession, but not its impact and responsibility for the quality of the whole education system. Domović (2011) emphasizes that these complex requirements can be successfully and appropriately met only by a person of great professional ethics, who does not view his profession exclusively through the prism of subject matter knowledge, but through autonomy regarding work, setting criteria and making decisions.

The results of this research can contribute to practice, primarily in terms of the professional development of teachers and teacher training in colleges. Based on the literature, this paper highlights the characteristics and competencies that a social community expects of a good teacher. Teachers, as well as creators of curriculum at faculties, should strive for this idealistic social expectation when planning their professional development to encourage the development or improvement of exactly those characteristics and competencies that modern society expects from them.

Finally, the question of who a good teacher is should be answered. A good teacher is a person who possesses virtues such as enthusiasm, commitment to students and teaching, a sense of humour and care for others. In addition to the eight competences proposed by the European Commission (2019), a good teacher is a person who is particularly competent in the areas of didactics, general pedagogy, methodology, curriculum knowledge and subject teaching. A good teacher is a person who is ready to help, who has a broad general knowledge, who is open and communicative, fair, patient and polite in communication with all participants of the educational process. In conclusion, a good teacher is anyone who, with their excellent professional competencies and positive personal characteristics, contributes a lot to the process of upbringing and education.

## REFERENCES

- Antić, S. (2000). *Rječnik suvremenog obrazovanja*. Hrvatski pedagoški književni zbor.
- Arthur, J., Kristjánsson, K., Cooke, S., Brown, E., & Carr, D. (2015). *The good teacher: Understanding virtues in practice*. University of Birmingham Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. [http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/1970/1/The\\_Good\\_Teacher\\_Understanding\\_Virtues\\_in\\_Practice.pdf](http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/1970/1/The_Good_Teacher_Understanding_Virtues_in_Practice.pdf)
- Austin, V. L. (2015). Elements of Good Teaching and Good Teachers: A Theoretical Framework and Effective Strategies for Special Educators. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 7, 7–20. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1134246>
- Azer, S. A. (2005). The qualities of a good teacher: how can they be acquired and sustained?. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 98(2), 67–69. <https://www>.

researchgate.net/publication/8048719\_The\_qualities\_of\_a\_good\_teacher\_How\_can\_they\_be\_acquired\_and\_sustained

- Bakar, R. (2018). The influence of professional teachers on Padang vocational school students' achievement. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, 39(1), 67–72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2017.12.017>
- Barnas, M. (2000). "Parenting" students: Applying developmental psychology to the college classroom. *Teaching of Psychology*, 27(4), 276–277.
- Basow, S. A. (2000). Best and worst professors: Gender patterns in students' choices. *Sex roles*, 43(5), 407–417.
- Basow, S. A., Phelan, J. E., & Capotosto, L. (2006). Gender patterns in college students' choices of their best and worst professors. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 30(1), 25–35.
- Beishuizen, J. J., Hof, E., Van Putten, C. M., Bouwmeester, S., & Asscher, J. J. (2001). Students' and teachers' cognitions about good teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 71(2), 185–201.
- Bernstein, D. A. (2013). Parenting and teaching: What's the connection in the classroom? *Psychology teacher Network*, 23(2), 1–6.
- Cindrić, M. (1995). *Profesija učitelj u svijetu i u Hrvatskoj*. Persona.
- Corwin. (2019). *Visible Learning 250+ Influences on Student Achievement*. [https://us.corwin.com/sites/default/files/250\\_influences\\_chart\\_june\\_2019.pdf](https://us.corwin.com/sites/default/files/250_influences_chart_june_2019.pdf)
- Domović, V. (2011). Učiteljska profesija i profesionalni identitet učitelja. In V. Vizek Vidović (Ed.), *Učitelji i njihovi mentori* (pp.11–37). Institut za društvena istraživanja.
- Dozza, L., & Cavrini, G. (2012). Perceptions of Competence: How Parents View Teachers. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 46, 4050–4055. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.195>
- Drvodelić, M., & Rajić, V. (2011). Prospective primary school teacher views on personal and professional qualities. *Practice and Theory in Systems of Education*, 6(1), 47–56.
- European Commission. (2019). *Key competences for lifelong learning*. Publications Office of the European Union. <http://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/297a33c8-a1f3-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>
- Glasser, W. (1994). *Kvalitetna škola: škola bez prisile*. Educa.
- Hanushek, E. (2002). Teacher quality. In L. Izumi, & W. Evers (Eds.), *Teacher Quality* (pp.1–12). Hoover Institution.
- Hughes, J., & Kwok, O. M. (2007). Influence of student-teacher and parent-teacher relationships on lower achieving readers' engagement and achievement in the primary grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99(1), 39–51. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.99.1.39>
- Jensen, E. (2003). *Super-nastava: nastavne strategije za kvalitetnu školu i uspješno učenje*. Educa.

- Jukić, R. (2010). Metodički stil i takt nastavnika kao poticaj kreativnosti učenika. *Pedagogijska istraživanja*, 7(2), 291–305. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/118093>
- Jurčić, M. (2014). Kompetentnost nastavnika – pedagoške i didaktičke dimenzije. *Pedagogijska istraživanja*, 11(1), 77–93. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/139572>
- Kolak, A. (2006). Suradnja roditelja i škole. *Pedagogijska istraživanja*, 3(2), 123–138. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/139245>
- Korthagen, F. A. (2004). In search of the essence of a good teacher: Towards a more holistic approach in teacher education. *Teaching and teacher education*, 20(1), 77–97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2003.10.002>
- Kosgei, A., Mise, J. K., Odera, O., & Ayugi, M. E. (2013). Influence of teacher characteristics on students' academic achievement among secondary schools. *Journal of Education and practice*, 4(3), 76–82.
- Kosić, A. (2009). Roditelji i nastavnici – partneri u unapređivanju odgojno-obrazovnog procesa u osnovnoj školi. *Život i škola: časopis za teoriju i praksu odgoja i obrazovanja*, 55(22), 227–334. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/47705>
- Koster, B., & Dengerink, J. (2008). Professional standards for teacher educators: how to deal with complexity ownership and function. Experiences from the Netherlands. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 31(2), 135–149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619760802000115>
- Labak, I., Babić Čikeš, A., & Pale, P. (2017). Students perception: how does a favorite teacher behave. *Život i škola*, 63(2), 35–48. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/195149>
- Liston, D., Borko, H., & Whitcomb, J. (2008). The teacher educator's role in enhancing teacher quality. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(2), 111–116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002248710831558>
- Looney, J. (2011). Developing High-Quality Teachers: teacher evaluation for improvement. *European Journal of Education*, 46(4), 440–455. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-3435.2011.01492.x>
- Lowery, L. F. (1969). A Study of the Attitudes of Parents toward Teachers. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 62(5), 227–230. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27532195>
- McKnight, K., Graybeal, L., Yarbrough, J., & Graybeal, J. (2011). *England: What makes an effective teacher*. [https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/corporate/global/pearson-dot-com/files/innovation/global-survey/reports/RINVN9283\\_UK\\_July\\_090516.pdf](https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/corporate/global/pearson-dot-com/files/innovation/global-survey/reports/RINVN9283_UK_July_090516.pdf)
- Miller, P. (2012). Ten Characteristics of a Good Teacher. *English Teaching Forum*, 50(1), 36–38. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ971241>
- Miljević-Ridički, R., Pahić, T., & Vizek Vidović, V. (2011). Suradnja roditelja i škole u Hrvatskoj: sličnosti i razlike urbanih i ruralnih sredina. *Sociologija i prostor: časopis za istraživanje prostornoga i sociokulturnog razvoja*, 49(2 (190)), 165–184. <https://doi.org/10.5673/sip.49.2.3>
- Miljković, D., Đuranović, M., & Vidić, T. (2019). *Odgoj i obrazovanje - iz teorije u praksu*. D. Miljković (Ed.). IEP-D2 & Učiteljski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu.

- Mojavezi, A., & Tamiz, M. P. (2012). The Impact of Teacher Self-efficacy on the Students' Motivation and Achievement. *Theory & Practice in Language Studies*, 2(3), 483–491.
- O'Connor, E. E., Dearing, E., & Collins, B. A. (2011). Teacher-child relationship and behavior problem trajectories in elementary school. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(1), 120–162.
- Odadžić, V., Miljanović, T., Mandić, D., Pribičević, T., & Županec, V. (2017). Effectiveness of the Use of Educational Software in Teaching Biology. *Croatian Journal of Education*, 19(1), 11–43. <https://doi.org/10.15516/cje.v19i1.2313>
- Pahić, T., Miljević-Ridički, R., & Vizek Vidović, V. (2010). Uključenost roditelja u život škole: percepcija roditelja opće populacije i predstavnika roditelja u školskim tijelima. *Odgojne znanosti*, 12(2), 329–346. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/68276>
- Papenkort, U. (2014). Kompetencija. Konceptijsko razjašnjenje novog vodećeg pojma. *Pedagoška istraživanja*, 11(1), 27–43. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/139587>
- Plavšić, M., & Diković, M. (2016). Do Teachers, Students and Parents Agree about the Top Five Good Teacher's Characteristics?. *Bulgarian Comparative Education Society*. 14(1), 120–126. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED568113>
- Previšić, V. (1999). Učitelj – interkulturalni medijator. In V. Rosić (Ed.), *Nastavnik – čimbenik kvalitete u odgoju i obrazovanju* (pp.78–84). Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci.
- Previšić, V. (2003). Suvremeni učitelj: odgojitelj-medijator-socijalni integrator. In L. Prskalo & S. Vučak (Eds.), *Učitelj-učenik-škola*. (pp.8–15). VUŠ, HPKZ.
- Rijavec, M., & Miljković, D. (2006). *Psihologija pozitivne osobe Tko su dobri ljudi?* IEP – D2.
- Rowan, B., Chiang, F.-S., & Miller, R. J. (1997). Using Research on Employees' Performance to Study the Effects of Teachers on Students' Achievement. *Sociology of Education*, 70(4), 256–284. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2673267>
- Solakovic, I., Pećanac, R., & Janković, A. (2017). Influence of the Electronic Classroom as an Interactive Model of Organizing Teaching on the Achievements of Students in Classroom Teaching. *Croatian Journal of Education*, 19(1), 209–236. <https://doi.org/10.15516/cje.v19i1.2046>
- Stronge, J. H., & Hindman, J. L. (2006). *The teacher quality index: A protocol for teacher selection*. ASCD.
- Strugar, V. (2014). *Učitelj između stvarnosti i nade*. Alfa.
- Škutor, M. (2014). Partnerstvo škole i obitelji – temelj dječjeg uspjeha. *Napredak* (155), 209–222. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/138844>
- Tatar, M., & Horenczyk, G. (2000). Parental expectations of their adolescents' teachers. *Journal of Adolescence*, 23, 487–495. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.2000.0333>
- Thompson, S., Greer, J. G., & Greer, B. B. (2004). Highly qualified for successful teaching: Characteristics every teacher should possess. *Essays in Education*, 10(1), 5. 1–8.
- Vizek Vidović, V., & Domović, V. (2013). Teachers in Europe - Main Trends, Issues and Challenges. *Croatian Journal of Education*, 15(Sp.Ed.3), 219–250.

- Vizek Vidović, V., Rijavec, M., Vlahović-Štetić, V., & Miljković, D. (2003). *Psihologija obrazovanja*. IEP-VERN.
- Whitaker, T. (2004). *What great teachers do differently: 14 things that matter most*. Eye on Education.
- Whitaker, T. (2012). *What great teachers do differently: 17 things that matter most*. Routledge.
- Yue, X., & Ji, R. (2020). Teacher Professional Competencies in Education for Sustainable Development. *Sustainable Organizations - Models, Applications, and New Perspectives*. 1–14 <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.94991>
- Zrilić, S., & Marin, K. (2019). Kompetencije u suvremenoj školi – potrebe prakse iz perspektive učitelja. *Školski vjesnik: časopis za pedagojsku teoriju i praksu*, 68(2), 389–400. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/234953>

