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LIFELONG EDUCATION PROGRAMMES FOR THE ACQUISITION OF PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA – AN ANALYSIS WORKLOAD IN COMPULSORY SUBJECTS

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Abstract

Quality of teaching process requires from the teacher completion of a certain master study program and good content knowledge as well as the acquisition of pedagogical competencies. Most often, teacher education programs are offered at universities, but in the Republic of Croatia there are also programs that provide pedagogical-psychological-didactic-methodological education to all of those who did not acquire pedagogical competencies during their university education. Unlike most of the other European countries, the method of acquiring pedagogical competencies in the Republic of Croatia is regulated by law, which explicitly states mandatory areas and the total workload for those who want to acquire pedagogical competencies as a necessary condition for working in the educational system. The aim of this paper is a comparative analysis of the structure and content of programmes for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies of teachers in primary and secondary schools that are performed at higher education institutions in Croatia as additional programmes in lifelong learning. The aim of this paper is also to identify similarities and differences between programmes with regard to the workload of students expressed in ECTS credits in the compulsory part of the programme, and to determine whether there is a need for harmonization of these programs at a national level. The results showed differences between analysed programmes with regard to ECTS credits and raised the idea that training in acquiring pedagogical competencies should be uniformed.

Keywords: lifelong learning, competencies, teachers, teacher educational programs, teaching.

Sažetak

Kvalitetno odgojno-obrazovno djelovanje zahtijeva od učitelja osim završenog studija određenog predmeta, odnosno stručnog znanja, i stjecanje pedagoških kompetencija. Najčešće se programi stjecanja pedagoških kompetencija nude na matičnim visokim učilištima u okviru redovitog studija. Međutim, u Republici Hrvatskoj postoje i programi koji omogućavaju pedagoško-psihološko-didaktičko-metodičko obrazovanje svima onima koji pedagoške kompetencije nisu stekli tijekom svojeg fakultetskog obrazovanja. Za razliku od većine drugih europskih država način stjecanja pedagoških kompetencija u Republici Hrvatskoj reguliran je zakonom kojim se izrijekom navode obvezna područja i ukupno opterećenje za one koji pedagoške kompetencije žele steći kao nužan uvjet rada u odgojno-obrazovnom sustavu.

Cilj je ovoga rada usporednom analizom strukture i sadržaja programa stjecanja pedagoških kompetencija učitelja u osnovnoj i srednjoj školi, koji se izvode na visokim učilištima u Republici Hrvatskoj kao dodatni programi u okviru cjeloživotnog obrazovanja, utvrditi sličnosti i razlike među programima s obzirom na opterećenje polaznika izraženo u ECTS bodovima u obveznom dijelu programa te utvrditi postoji li potreba za ujednačavanjem tih programa na razini Republike Hrvatske.

Ključne riječi: cjeloživotno obrazovanje, kompetencije, programi stjecanja pedagoških kompetencija, učitelji

INTRODUCTION

The terms lifelong education and lifelong learning are often confused and misused. The reason for this is that often these two phrases are treated as synonyms. However, it is necessary to distinguish what constitutes and encompasses the syntagm of lifelong education and what of lifelong learning. Even though the terms education and learning are related, and we cannot talk about the process of education without the process of learning, these two concepts should be distinguished (Mijatović, 2000). The concept of lifelong education appears in the 70s when this idea was developed by UNESCO (*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*). Lifelong education is generally defined as a form of organized learning that begins with formal education and lasts a lifetime. In the 1990s, the European Commission, in its *White Paper on Education and Training - Teaching and Learning - Towards the Learning Society*, introduced the concept of lifelong education as a substitute for the phrase lifelong learning, starting from the fact that the concept of learning is much broader than the concept of education, and that unlike education, learning is a continuous process during which it is necessary for an individual to know, understand and master a large amount of new information and other changes brought about by the constant progress of science and technology.

Since the term learning in relation to the term education is a broader and more complex concept, lifelong learning is defined as a broader concept than lifelong education. Lifelong learning includes all forms of acquiring knowledge that go beyond the framework of the organized pro-

cess of teaching and learning in order to develop competencies that will enable the individual a better personal and professional life and work in the 21st century.

The term lifelong learning is used in numerous Croatian documents, recommendations and laws. Therefore, among other things, it can be found in the *Strategy of Education, Science and Technology*, it is a part of the *Recommendations for the development of the quality of the system of adult education and lifelong learning in the Republic of Croatia*, *Strategic framework for the promotion of lifelong learning in the Republic of Croatia from 2017 to 2021* and is an integral part of the *Adult Education Act* and the *Vocational Education and Training Act*. In all the mentioned documents, recommendations and laws of the Republic of Croatia, lifelong learning and education is presented and explained as one of the key elements and initiators of social and economic development of the country.

In the context of lifelong learning, adult education is often mentioned as one of its components. According to the *Adult Education Act* of 2007, adult education is defined as a part of the educational system of the Republic of Croatia which includes the learning process intended for the realization of the individual's right to free development of personality, training for better employability and for active citizenship. In a document such as *Balem Framework for Action*, which emerged in 2009 as a result of the UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education, adult education is defined as education that provides the necessary knowledge, skills, values to adults so that they can achieve greater rights and take control of their lives. In addition, 2018. European Commission in the document *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* of 2018 sets out key competences for lifelong learning and emphasizes the need for Member States to better prepare citizens for changes in the labour market and for active citizenship in more diverse, mobile, digital and global societies and to develop learning at all stages of life, thus emphasizing the importance and need for lifelong learning.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCIES OF TEACHERS

A quality teaching process is becoming extremely important in the modern world as it requires increasing knowledge and skills in order for an individual, as a citizen and as a worker, to cope more successfully with all the challenges of modern life (Darling-Hammond 2006: 1). Besides that, it is not a negligible fact that the quality of teaching affects the quality of learning, which has been confirmed by research indicating a strong link between the competencies of teachers¹ and a successful learning process (Bransford et al., 2005; Lončarić and Pejić Papak, 2009; Moreno Rubio, 2009).

1 In accordance with the definition in the *Strategy of Science, Education and Technology* (2014) in the National Curriculum Framework, all persons responsible for teaching and learning in primary and secondary education are collectively referred to as "teacher". (according to the Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers, UNESCO, Pariz, 1966.). It should be noted that the term "teacher" refers to persons of both sexes.

In trying to determine the key competencies of teachers that lead to a successful learning process, it is primarily important to define these competencies. Teacher competencies are often defined as a set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, but also personal characteristics of teachers that lead to a better teaching process and as those that require continuous improvement (European Commission, 2013; OECD, 2005). Similarly, for example, Nessipbayeva, in 2012, characterizes competencies as those that include knowledge, skills and values with which we can evaluate someone's work, or as statements of adequate qualification and ability of an individual to perform a certain role. In the most recent document of OECD² *The Future of Education and Skills: Education 2030* it is stated that competencies represent more than just the acquisition of knowledge and skills and imply the process of using these knowledge and skills as well as attitudes and values to prepare the individual to face the complex demands of unforeseen situations. Since the complexity of the teaching profession requires different knowledge and skills, determining the knowledge, skills and values that should make up pedagogical competencies is not an easy task. In principle, if we have in mind the process of education, teacher competencies could be divided into two categories – the first category consisting of professional competencies related to a particular scientific discipline, and the second category to which pedagogical competencies belong (Schulman, 1986, p. 9). Professional competencies represent professional knowledge and skills related to the scientific discipline/area to which a particular subject belongs. According to Shulman, pedagogical competencies are defined as those that lead to the formation and mediation of professional knowledge so that they are understandable to all to whom that knowledge is transferred and as an understanding of all factors influencing the learning process, especially respect for those who influence learners. (Shulman, 1986, p. 9-10).

Improving the system of initial teacher education, as a basis for acquiring teacher competencies, is one of the most important European and global educational strategic goals. (Strategy of Science, Education and Technology, 2014, p. 84) This is evidenced by the policy of the European Union, which at the beginning of the 21st century adopted a series of documents aimed at creating a framework for improving teacher competencies. Documents issued by the European Commission, the OECD and UNESCO predominate in the documents and projects that dealt with the definition of teacher competencies.³ Most of these documents were based on the idea that key competences of teachers may be common to different education systems despite social, cultural and political differences and circumstances in individual countries.

2 OECD is an abbreviated name for organizations for economic cooperation and development. This organization, among other things, is engaged in international research of the education system. One of such researches is the PISA research which was conducted in Croatia.

3 Some of the more important documents that define teacher competencies are: *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications iz 2005.*; *Supporting Teacher Competence Development for Better Learning Outcomes*; *Improving the Quality of Teacher Education*; *Tuning_Educational_Structures in Europe: Universities' Contribution to the Bologna Process. Final Report*; *The Future of Education and Skills: Education 2030, The Future we Want itd.*

THE SYSTEM OF PEDAGOGICAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL-DIDACTIC-METHODOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

It is often stated in various documents, recommendations and laws that the ways of conducting adult education can be formal, nonformal, informal and self-directed (Adult Education Act, 2007; UNESCO, 2019; European Commission, 2018).⁴ The program of pedagogical-psychological-didactic-methodological education is intended for experts, who, by employment in educational primary and secondary schools, have a legal obligation to acquire pedagogical competencies, as well as those who intend to be employed in educational institutions, but did not acquire them during their initial education.⁵ The program of pedagogical-psychological-didactic-methodological education is a program that is performed as part-time within the lifelong education system. The right to enrol in additional pedagogical and psychological education in the Republic of Croatia have persons who, according to the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools of 2020 and the Vocational Education Act of 2018, acquired all prerequisites for employment in primary and secondary schools, except for pedagogical competencies. The program for acquiring pedagogical competencies can also be enrolled by persons who have completed the appropriate secondary education (Vocational Education Act, 2009, Art. 37), as well as persons who have passed the master's exam (Act on Crafts, 2013, Art. 56). Higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia offer various programs, from those for persons with completed undergraduate studies and acquired a minimum of 180 ECTS credits as well as those who earned 300 ECTS credits and did not complete the teaching course. Each individual subject envisaged by the plan and program of pedagogical-psychological-didactic-methodological training is expressed in ECTS credits, and at the end of the program, participants earn a total of 55 to 60 ECTS credits in the field of pedagogical-psychological-didactic-methodological competencies required for teaching work in primary and secondary schools. Participants successfully complete the program of pedagogical-psychological-didactic-methodological training (hereinafter PPDM) by passing the exam in all subjects provided by the curriculum, that is, by achieving the required ECTS credits. Some components that run the program offer a choice of class attendance: classroom instruction or distance learning through a distance learning system (online) as well as a hybrid form of classroom and distance learning, depending on the subject.

4 According to the *Adult Education Act* (OG 17/07, 107/07, 24/10), formal adult education is provided in institutional and publicly verified forms of education and as such results in a diploma or some form of certificate; nonformal education means organized learning processes aimed at training adults for work, for various social activities and for personal development; informal education refers to the acquisition of knowledge and skills from everyday experience and activities while self-directed adult learning refers to activities in which the individual independently establishes control over the learning process as well as responsibility for the outcomes of learning.

5 The legal framework for the implementation of this program within the concept of lifelong education consists of: *Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education* (OG/2003, Article 76), *Adult Education Act* (OG 17/2007, Article 5), *Primary and Secondary Education Act* (OG 87/08 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 94/13, 136/14 and 152/14, Article 105, Paragraph 6 and Paragraph 7).

With regard to the level of previously acquired education, upon completion of the PPDM program, participants are trained to perform the practical part of vocational teaching in the programs that were completed by the candidate, therefore as subject teachers in primary schools and subject teachers in secondary schools.

Higher education institutions that have accredited programs for acquiring pedagogical competencies in the Republic of Croatia offer education through two semesters (1 year). During the first semester, the acquisition of basic theoretical knowledge in the compulsory subjects of Pedagogy, Psychology, Didactics and Methodology and elective subjects is planned, while in the second semester, in addition to theoretical knowledge from elective subjects, the emphasis is on the acquisition of practical knowledge and experience through the compulsory subject School or Teaching Practice and Practical Teaching.

The goals of the program and learning outcomes in the acquisition of pedagogical competencies are: enable participants to acquire pedagogical competencies that include knowledge, abilities and skills in the field of Pedagogy, General Psychology and Psychology of Education, Didactics and Methodology as well as other scientific fields (such as Information Sciences, Communication Science, Croatiaology, Philosophy, Sociology and others) that contribute to the spread of general literacy, building and improving the individual and social competencies of program participants.

The choice of the institution at which pedagogical competencies will be acquired in the Republic of Croatia is possible between several higher education institutions spatially dispersed and with different structure and names of programs. In the Republic of Croatia, twelve higher education institutions offer lifelong education programs for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies. The programs are available on the official websites of the following higher education institutions: at Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Osijek as the Program of Pedagogical-Psychological-Didactic-Methodological Training and at the Faculty of Education in Osijek at the Department of Lifelong Education, at the University of Zagreb at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences within the Centre for Teacher Education, at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb at the Department of Educational Studies entitled Supplementary Pedagogical and Psychological Education and the Program for Acquisition of Pedagogical Competences for Vocational Teachers and Teaching Associates at the Faculty of Croatian Studies and the Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin, University of Zagreb under the name - Pedagogical-Psychological-Didactic-Methodological Education. The program for acquiring pedagogical competencies is also offered by Juraj Dobrila University in Pula, at the University of Zadar, the Department of Pedagogy, at the University of Rijeka at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences - Supplementary Pedagogical-Psychological Education for Teachers, at the University of Split at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Science and at the Catholic University of Croatia. There are certain similarities between these programs, but also differences, especially when it comes to the workload of

participants in the mandatory part of the program and the contents of the elective part of the program.

METHODOLOGY

The goal of the research was to determine whether there is uniformity of workload within the program of lifelong learning in the Republic of Croatia by a comparative analysis of the mandatory part of the program for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies (expressed in ECTS credits) in the subjects Pedagogy, Didactics, Methodology of subjects and Teaching (school) practice and subjects in the field of Psychology.

The research also sought to, based on the analysis of the document of the program for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies in the framework of lifelong education, determine whether teachers who complete different programs to acquire pedagogical competencies have the same basic pedagogical competencies.

The research was conducted on accredited programs for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies at twelve higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia, whose studies and implementation programs are available on their official websites. Specifically, on the programs of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Osijek and the Faculty of Education, J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek; program of the Centre for Teacher Education of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb; programs of the Department of Educational Studies of the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb; program of the Faculty of Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb; program of the Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin, University of Zagreb; program of Juraj Dobrila University in Pula; program of the Department of Pedagogy, University of Zadar; program of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka; programs of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Science, University of Split, and the program conducted at Catholic University of Croatia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the program for acquiring pedagogical competencies in programs offered by higher education institutions was conducted with regard to the workload of students in compulsory subjects which are performed in the compulsory part of the program under different names and the number of ECTS credits and hours. ECTS (*European Credit Transfer System*) is a European system for collecting and transferring points, which is based on the principle of comparability and transparency of the learning process and is focused on the academic achievements of the student. ECTS credits do not express the «importance and value of a course» but

the student's workload required for successful mastering of a certain study subject, more precisely the student's obligations in order to achieve the set goals of the study program, which are presented through learning outcomes.

The average planned workload in one academic year is 60 ECTS. Workload is an estimate of the time an individual needs to perform on average all activities related to learning (lectures, seminars, projects, exercises, professional practice and independent learning). One ECTS assumes a time of 25 to 30 hours of work, which means that, for example, a course of 5 ECTS credits requires 125 to 150 hours of work from a student in order to achieve the learning outcomes set by the course.

The obligatory part of the program for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies in all components that have a permit for the implementation of the program for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies is offered in three modules: compulsory, elective and methodological. Within these three modules, pedagogical competencies in the field of pedagogy, psychology and methodology are acquired. The tables show the subjects belonging to the mentioned areas and the workload in ECTS credits. Based on the workload of the participants in the lifelong education program for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies, we will conclude whether there are similarities and differences with regard to the obligations (workload) of the participants and whether there is a need for harmonization of ECTS-points of subjects that are part of the pedagogical-psychological-didactic-methodological area with regard to the qualification acquired by the participants of the program for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies.

*Table 1 Compulsory courses in the field of Psychology in twelve programs for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies at higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia*⁶

| Name of the subject | Higher Education Institution | Number of ECTS credits |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Psychology of Education | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Osijek | 8 ECTS |
| Psychology of Education | Faculty of Education, J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek | 7 ECTS |

⁶ Information on the name of the course and the corresponding ECTS credits are taken from the study and implementation plans of the program for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies of these higher education institutions published on their websites.

| Name of the subject | Higher Education Institution | Number of ECTS credits |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Fundamentals of General and Developmental Psychology | Faculty of Teacher Education University of Zagreb | 4 ECTS |
| Educational Psychology | | 6 ECTS |
| Positive Psychology in Education | | 4 ECTS |
| Psychology of Education I | Faculty of Science, University of Split | 3 ECTS |
| Psychology of Education II | | 3 ECTS |
| Developmental Psychology | Faculty of Croatian Studies University of Zagreb | 5 ECTS |
| Colloquium in Developmental Psychology | Faculty of Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb | 3 ECTS |
| Fundamentals of General and Developmental Psychology | Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin University of Zagreb | 5 ECTS |
| Psychology of Learning and Teaching | | 6 ECTS |
| Classroom Psychology | | 4 ECTS |
| Developmental Psychology | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Rijeka | 5 ECTS |
| Educational Psychology | | 9 ECTS |
| Developmental Psychology | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Split | 4 ECTS |
| Psychology of Education | | 4 ECTS |
| General Psychology | Juraj Dobrila University of Pula | 4 ECTS |
| Developmental Psychology | | 4 ECTS |
| Psychology of Learning and Teaching | | 4 ECTS |
| Psychology and Education | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb | 6 ECTS |
| Learning Psychology | University of Zadar | 5 ECTS |
| Cognitive Development and Learning | | 5 ECTS |
| Educational Psychology | | 5 ECTS |
| Introduction to Childhood and Adolescence Psychology | Catholic University of Croatia | 5 ECTS |
| Introduction to the Educational Psychology | | 5 ECTS |

Programs on different components provide for a different number of ECTS credits for subjects of the same or slightly different name, content and workload. Table 1 shows that subjects in the field of psychology appear under various names: at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Osijek, the subject Psychology of Education carries 8 ECTS credits, at the Faculty of Croatian Studies entitled Developmental Psychology and the Colloquium in Developmental Psychology carries 5 + 3 ECTS credits. At the University of Pula (PAPC) the field of psychology is divided into 3 subjects: General Psychology, Developmental Psychology and Psychology of Learning and Teaching, each of which carries 4 ECTS credits, while at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, Psychology of Education carries 6 ECTS credits. At the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split, psychology is taught through two subjects: Developmental Psychology (4 ECTS) and Educational Psychology (4 ECTS). At the Catholic University of Croatia, the acquisition of competencies in the field of psychology is offered in two subjects: Introduction to the Psychology of childhood and Adolescence with 5 ECTS and Introduction to the Psychology of Education with the same credit workload (5 ECTS). The Faculty of Teacher Education of the University of Zagreb also offers three subjects in the field of psychology. They are: Fundamentals of General and Developmental Psychology - 4 ECTS, Educational Psychology of 6 ECTS and Positive Psychology in Education of 4 ECTS. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka has courses in the part of compulsory educational subjects in the field of psychology: Developmental Psychology of 5 ECTS and Educational Psychology of 9 ECTS. The University of Zadar offers courses in psychology each worth 5 ECTS: Psychology of Learning, Cognitive Development and Learning and Psychology of Teaching, while at the Faculty of Education in Osijek this subject is called Psychology of Education and has a value of 7 ECTS credits. The Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin studies the field of psychology through three subjects: Fundamentals of General and Developmental Psychology (5 ECTS), Psychology of Learning and Teaching (6 ECTS) and Classroom Psychology (4 ECTS). The Faculty of Science in Split provides competencies in psychology with the subjects Psychology of Education I and Psychology of Education II, each of which has a value of 3 ECTS credits.

Therefore, in the field of psychology in the programs of acquiring pedagogical competencies, one or more subjects of the compulsory part are offered under different names and with different number of ECTS-points in the range from 5 to 9 ECTS. After completing the PPDM program in the field of psychology, given the courses offered and their credit value, it can be concluded that students who complete the program in different components will acquire different competencies in the field of psychology. Participants of the program in which only one subject is offered in the field of psychology have the opportunity to enroll in an elective part in psychology from the elective part of the program, but whether they choose it depends solely on their interest. In case they do not use this opportunity, they are left to permanently improve their employment through lifelong learning programs.

Table 2 The subject Pedagogy (which is also performed under other names) in the programs of acquiring pedagogical competencies at twelve higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia

| Name of the subject | Higher Education Institution | Number of ECTS credits |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Pedagogy | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Osijek | 8 ECTS |
| Lifelong Education Pedagogy | Faculty of Education, J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek | 7 ECTS |
| Pedagogy | Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb | 4 ECTS |
| Pedagogy | Faculty of Science, University of Split | 3 ECTS |
| General Pedagogy | Faculty of Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb | 5 ECTS |
| Colloquium in General Pedagogy | Faculty of Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb | 3 ECTS |
| General Pedagogy | Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin, University of Zagreb | 4 ECTS |
| General Pedagogy | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka | 5 ECTS |
| General Pedagogy | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split | 4 ECTS |
| Pedagogy | Juraj Dobrila University of Pula | 5 ECTS |
| Systematic Pedagogy | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb | 6 ECTS |
| General Knowledge Education | University of Zadar | 5 ECTS |
| General Knowledge Education | Catholic University of Croatia | 5 ECTS |
| Theory of Education in Practice | Catholic University of Croatia | 5 ECTS |

Subjects in the field of pedagogy are a mandatory part of the program for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies and are performed under the names: Pedagogy at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Osijek with 8 ECTS, with 3 ECTS at the Faculty of Science in Split and at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb with a workload of 4 ECTS. The subject Lifelong Education Pedagogy with a workload of 7 ECTS credits is in the program of the Faculty of Education in Osijek. Entitled General Pedagogy, the course is in the program

of the University of Juraj Dobrila in Pula, where it has a workload of 5 ECTS credits. The subject General Pedagogy can be found in the program at the Faculty of Croatian Studies with 5 ECTS (and with it the subject Colloquium in General Pedagogy worth 3 ECTS). The course of the same name is also offered at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka with 5 ECTS, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split with 4 ECTS and at the Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin (4 ECTS). Under the name Systematic Pedagogy, the course appears at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb and carries 6 ECTS. At the University of Zadar and the Catholic University of Croatia, the course is taught under the title General Knowledge of Education with 5 ECTS. The Catholic University of Croatia offers another subject in the field of pedagogy called Theory of Education in Practice, which has a value of 5 ECTS credits.

In the analysed programs, under the field of pedagogy, in addition to the subject entitled Pedagogy, General Pedagogy, Theory of Education, Systematic Pedagogy and General Knowledge of Education, which, with the stated outcomes, presuppose equal competencies of teachers in the field of Pedagogy, in the obligatory part there are also subjects whose content belongs to the field of Pedagogy, but they envisage a more detailed study of certain pedagogical contents that should develop specific competencies. Thus, for example, at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb, under the compulsory part in the field of pedagogy, we find subjects called Inclusive Pedagogy with 4 ECTS and Leading Classes and Disciplines with a value of 4 ECTS. At Juraj Dobrila University in Pula, the field of pedagogy includes the subject Social Pedagogy and Educational Rehabilitation (4 ECTS). At the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, as part of the compulsory part of the program for acquiring pedagogical competencies, there are subjects Teaching Students with Special Needs (4 ECTS), Application of Computers in Teaching (4 ECTS) and Research Methodology in Education (4 ECTS). In the obligatory part of the program, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split offers, in addition to the subject of Pedagogy, three subjects related to the same field: Sociology of Education (4 ECTS), Modern Technologies in Teaching (4 ECTS) and Curriculum of Modern School (4 ECTS), Self-Evaluation and Evaluation in Teaching (4 ECTS), Pedagogy of Children with Special Needs (4 ECTS), Social Pedagogy (4 ECTS). From the mentioned we can conclude that different components that implement lifelong learning programs for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies in the compulsory part of the program offer a different number of subjects that complement knowledge and offer the opportunity to improve the necessary competencies in the field of pedagogy.

Table 3 The subject of Didactics in the programs of acquiring pedagogical competencies at twelve higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia

| Name of the subject | Higher Education Institution | Number of ECTS credits |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Didactics | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Osijek | 8 ECTS |
| Didactics | Faculty of Education, J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek | 7 ECTS |
| Didactics | Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb | 6 ECTS |
| Didactics | Faculty of Science, University of Split | 3 ECTS |
| Didactics Colloquium in Didactics | Faculty of Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb | 5 ECTS 3 ECTS |
| Didactics | Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin, University of Zagreb | 8 ECTS |
| Didactics | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka | 9 ECTS |
| Didactics | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split | 4 ECTS |
| Didactics | Juraj Dobrila University of Pula | 6 ECTS |
| Didactics | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb | 6 ECTS |
| Didactics | University of Zadar | 5 ECTS |
| Didactics | Catholic University of Croatia | 5 ECTS |

Didactics is performed as a compulsory part of the program in the field of pedagogy and it carries from 3 to 9 ECTS credits, depending on the component, for example, at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Osijek, Faculty of Croatian Studies (with the Colloquium in Didactics) and at the Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin, it has the workload of 8 ECTS. At the Faculty of Education in Osijek Didactics has a value of 7 ECTS, at J. Dobrila University in Pula and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb it carries 6 ECTS, at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split it carries 4

ECTS, at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb it carries 6 ECTS, at the Catholic University of Croatia and the University of Zadar, it carries 5 ECTS. At the Faculty of Science, University of Split, the workload of Didactics is 3 ECTS. At the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, the subject Didactics is carrying 9 ECTS credits.

The lowest workload in the subject Didactics is in the program of acquiring pedagogical competencies at the Faculty of Science in Split - 3 ECTS, and the highest at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka, where it amounts to 9 ECTS. The difference in workload of 6 ECTS in two programs is not negligible, because it means less, or more, 180 hours of workload in the same subject, i.e., a subject that should acquire equal pedagogical competencies.

Table 4 Methodology and Teaching (School) Practice in the programs of acquiring pedagogical competencies at twelve higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia.

| Name of the subject | Higher Education Institution | Number of ECTS credits |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teaching Methodology School Practice | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences University of Osijek | 10 ECTS 6 ECTS |
| Methodical Approach to Teaching Reflexive Practice | Faculty of Education, J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek | 7 ECTS 3 ECTS |
| Teaching Methods in the field of Natural, Biotechnological and Biomedical Sciences, in the field of Social Sciences and Humanities and in the field of Technical Sciences (depending on the profession) | Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb | 22 ECTS |
| Methodical courses in the field of Biology Biology Teaching Methodology I Biology Teaching Methodology II Practicum in Biology Teaching Methodology I Methodical Practice of Teaching Biology with a Seminar Practicum in Biology Teaching Methodology II Professional Seminar in the field of Biology *** | Faculty of Science, University of Split | 22 ECTS in total 5 ECTS 5 ECTS 2 ECTS 3 ECTS 3 ECTS 4 ECTS |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Teaching Methodology Practical Exercises and Hospitalization | Faculty of Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb | 16 ECTS |
| Informatics Teaching Methodology 1* | Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin, | 6 ECTS |
| Informatics Teaching Methodology 2* | University of Zagreb | 4 ECTS |
| Methodical Teaching Settings ** | | 10 ECTS |
| Course Methodology School-Teaching Practice | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka | 6 ECTS 4 ECTS |
| Field Methodology Teaching Practice | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split | 8 ECTS 6 ECTS |
| Profession Methodology School Practice | Juraj Dobrila University of Pula | 7 ECTS 4 ECTS |
| Course Methodology School Practice | Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb | 8 ECTS 10 ECTS |
| Methodology of Teaching the Social- Humanistic field or the Natural- Mathematical and Technical field | University of Zadar | 5 ECTS |
| Methodology of the Educational Field or Subject Methodical Practice: from the of Social-Humanistic field, Natural- Mathematical field, Bio-Medical field and Art and Music | Catholic University of Croatia | 5 ECTS 5 ECTS |

* for Computer Science teachers

** for teachers of other subjects

***In the methodological module, the Faculty of Science of the University of Split offers a methodological course in 6 areas - biology - 22 ECTS, physics - 26 ECTS, informatics - 22 ECTS, chemistry - 22 ECTS, mathematics - 26 ECTS- and engineering - 22 ECTS.

Methodology as well as Teaching (School) Practice, is the third part of the mandatory part of all programs for acquiring pedagogical competencies. In some programs, Methodology is conducted under the compulsory-elective part of the program. In the methodological part, depending on the profession, applicants attend the Methodology of a particular subject: Teaching methodology, Foreign language teaching methodology or Higher education teaching methodology or methodology of a certain field.

In Osijek, at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Teaching Methodology carries 10 ECTS-points, and School Practice 6 ECTS-points, at the Faculty of Croatian Studies Teaching

Methodology and Practical Exercises and Hospitalization were awarded 16 ECTS, at the University of Pula - Profession Methodology and School Practice carry 7 and 4 ECTS, at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb the subject Methodology has 8 ECTS credits and the Teaching Practice 10, at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split the Field Methodology carries 8 and the Teaching Practice carries 6 ECTS, at the Faculty of Education in Osijek the methodological approach to Teaching has a workload of 7 ECTS and with it the subject Reflexive Practice 3 ECTS credits, at the Catholic University of Croatia Methodology of the Field of Education or Subject carries 5 and Methodical Exercises in the field of Social Sciences and Humanities, Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Bio-Medicine and Art and Music also carry 5 ECTS, Methodical module at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka organizes the Methodology of subjects with 6 ECTS and School-Teaching Practice with 4 ECTS-points, while at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb, in the obligatory part of the program, the Teaching Methodology in the field of Natural, Biotechnological and Biomedical, Social and Humanistic and Technical Sciences is performed with a workload of 22 ECTS credits. At the University of Zadar, students can choose the Methodology of teaching the Social-Humanistic field or the Natural-Mathematical and Technical field with a workload of 5 ECTS. The Faculty of Science in Split offers participants a methodological module from 6 areas with a range of ECTS from 22 to 26 ECTS in each module. In the methodological part, the Faculty of Organization and Informatics has special courses for Informatics Teachers, Informatics Teaching Methodology 1 (6 ECTS) and Informatics Teaching Methodology 2 (4 ECTS), and Methodological Teaching Settings (10 ECTS) for teachers of other subjects.

Methodology of courses, or areas, is an integral part of the mandatory part of the program for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies in all components. The difference in the programs in the field of methodology and teaching practice can be found in the number of ECTS, which ranges from 5 to 26 ECTS. According to the number of ECTS credits in the field of methodology, the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb and the Faculty of Science in Split are issued separately, where the teaching methodology of a certain field with a workload of 22 to 26 ECTS can be chosen. Such differences in workload among subjects related to the field of methodology and teaching practice, in fact, emphasize even more the concerns when it comes to the output competencies of the participants in certain programs and additionally emphasize the need to harmonize the programs for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies within the framework of lifelong learning.

Programs for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies in the compulsory part of the program also contain other compulsory subjects in the field of pedagogy and didactics under various names and provide them with the acquisition of additional professional knowledge that varies greatly from program to program, so that in the mandatory part there are subjects that provide professional competencies in school pedagogy, media pedagogy, ethics of the profession, philosophy of education, language-communication exercises, etc., but the number

of subjects that supplement a particular area, whether pedagogy or psychology, varies greatly from program to program.

Therefore, it can be seen that in the programs of higher education institutions, in addition to being offered an uneven number of courses from different fields, general pedagogical subjects also have a very different number of ECTS credits, i.e., the workload of students per subject, so in one program a student can achieve 12 ECTS-credits in the field of psychology (Juraj Dobrila University in Pula), while in another program of the same field a student can achieve 6 ECTS-credits (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb), and the certificate obtained at the end of the educational cycles on both components have equal value.

This inequality in ECTS credits in compulsory subjects in programs for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies within lifelong learning indicates the need to determine the workload framework for compulsory subjects, whereas ECTS credits also indicate the complexity of the set goals and academic achievements of a particular subject, on the basis of which the acquired competencies are ultimately determined. The fact that basic pedagogical knowledge in the field of psychology in different programs is acquired through the workload of students from 150 hours in one and to 450 hours in another program raises the question of whether the competencies of students in psychology who complete two different programs of pedagogical competencies differ.

CONCLUSION

The possibility of choosing to acquire pedagogical competencies in the Republic of Croatia is offered at twelve higher education institutions with different program concepts. Apart from the fact that the program can be chosen in several cities, the one that best suits individual interests can also be chosen, especially whether the elective part of the program is taken into account.

The difference in programs that offer the acquisition of pedagogical competencies within lifelong learning is visible in the names of compulsory subjects and the ECTS credits awarded to them. The conducted comparative analysis of assigned ECTS credits to the general subjects of the program of acquiring pedagogical competencies indicates that subjects of the same field, sometimes of the same name, are not uniform in the analysed programs, i.e., they have been awarded the same or different number of ECTS credits depending on the higher education program.⁷ Therefore, for example, in some of the analysed programs for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies, course methodology and teaching practice carry 10 ECTS credits, while in another program the same carry 16 ECTS credits. This may indicate the problem of

7 According to the ECTS User Guide, ECTS credits express the volume of learning based on defined learning outcomes and the associated workload.

arbitrary distribution of ECTS credits in order to achieve and harmonize the number of ECTS credits of individual courses with the required number of ECTS credits that need to be acquired for the successful completion of the program.

The program of acquiring pedagogical competencies does not cover all professional areas and acquire all competencies for schoolwork, so it is important to highlight the basic competencies that will be acquired in such programs and to harmonize the workload of students or ECTS scoring of compulsory subjects. Since primary and secondary school teachers need to have clearly defined professional and generic competencies, their training in acquiring pedagogical competencies should be uniform. Namely, from the way the learning outcomes are set in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework and the National Qualifications Framework when describing the level of a particular qualification⁸, it can be concluded that applicants who complete these programs for acquiring pedagogical competencies in lifelong learning in the Republic of Croatia do not acquire equal competencies. As in 2017, when the Ministry of Science and Education passed the *Program for the Acquisition of Pedagogical Competencies for Vocational Teachers and Teaching Associates*,⁹ a uniform program for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies for teachers in primary and secondary schools should also be adopted. This way, all teachers would be provided with the same starting competencies.

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⁸ ECTS User Guide, p.10

⁹ Namely, in 2013, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports recommended a program for the acquisition of pedagogical competencies for vocational teachers, teaching assistants and mentors, which was accepted in January 2016 and redefined by the *Decision on the adoption of the Program for the Acquisition of Pedagogical Competences for Vocational Teachers and Teaching Associates* (OG 49/2017, 24.5.2017.). This program consists of subjects from three areas: Pedagogy, Psychology and Methodology. Compulsory courses carry 50 ECTS credits, while participants from 6 offered elective courses should choose courses worth 10 ECTS. 205 hours of direct teaching over 10 months are planned for the realization of the program. Methodical practice is 30 hours in school.

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