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Methodical Competence of Teacher Trainees in Their Written Teacher Certification Examination

Izvirni znanstveni članek

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses methodical competence of teacher trainees in their written papers composed as part of their teacher certification examination. The aim of this discourse is to establish the existence of methodical competence of Croatian language teacher trainees in their written teacher certification examination. The paper focuses on the following categories: the application of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge, supporting theoretical knowledge and practical experience with examples, and finding references in literature on methodology. The research was conducted on 58 written papers of Croatian language teacher trainees in primary and secondary schools in the following counties: Istria, Primorje-Gorski Kotar, Lika-Senj, Zagreb, Međimurje, Varaždin, Osijek-Baranja, Brod-Posavina, Požega-Slavonia, and Virovitica-Podravina. Based on this research study it was established that Croatian language teacher trainees show methodical competence especially with regard to the application of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge and references in literature on methodology.

Key words: methodical competence, written teacher certification examination

Metodična kompetenca učiteljev pripravnikov v pisnem delu na strokovnem izpitu

POVZETEK

V prispevku govorimo o metodični kompetenci učiteljev pripravnikov v pisnem delu na strokovnem izpitu. Cilj dela je ugotoviti obstoj metodične kompetence učitelja pripravnika hrvaškega jezika v pisnem delu na strokovnem izpitu. Pri tem smo se usmerili na naslednje kategorije: uporaba teoretičnega metodičnega znanja temeljnih ved in posebnih teorijskih metodičnih znanj, povezovanje teoretičnega znanja in praktičnih spoznanj oziroma navajanje primerov ter sklicevanje na strokovno-metodično literaturo. Raziskovanje je bilo opravljeno na zbranem gradivu, ki obsega 58 pisnih del učiteljev pripravnikov hrvaškega jezika v osnovnih in srednjih šolah na področju Istrske, Primorsko-goranske, Ličko-senjske, Zagrebške, Medžimurske, Varaždinske, Osiješko-baranjske, Brodsko-posavske, Požeško-slavonske in Virovitiško-podravske županije. Na temelju opravljenega raziskovanja je bilo ugotovljeno, da učitelji pripravniki hrvaškega jezika metodično kompetenco kažejo zlasti pri uporabi teoretičnega metodičnega znanja temeljnih ved in posebnih teorijskih metodičnih znanj ter pri sklicevanju na strokovno-metodično literaturo.

Ključne besede: metodična kompetenca, pisno delo na strokovnem izpitu

1. Introduction

In the beginning of their educational work, teachers¹ have a special status – the status of a trainee – that according to Huberman's model of career development² represents "career entry: survival or discovery". According to Berliner's model of the development of teacher expertise³, the term "novice" was used (Vizek Vidović, 2011). "In the initial phase that usually lasts for three years, the orientations of survival and discovery mix. (...) In career entry stage during the initial education and training the theoretical terms and general rules for teaching, like "making higher order questions" or "giving positive feed back", start to be applied in the real classroom situation. This stage is also called cognitive stage in acquisition of

¹ In this paper, the term teacher will be used to refer to a person who teaches in primary or secondary school.

² Huberman's model of career development is a "five-stage model of professional development containing two dominant orientations in most of the stages. These stages are: 1. Career entry: survival or discovery, 2. Stabilization, 3. Stocktaking: harmony or crisis, 4. Maturity: serenity or conservatism, 5. Disengagement" (Vizek Vidović, 2011, p. 42).

³ "Berliner's model of the development of teacher expertise includes five stages of competence: 1. novice, 2. advanced beginner, 3. competent, 4. proficient, 5. expert" (Vizek Vidović, 2011, p. 44).

teaching skills because in this stage the verbal procedure is transferred into behaviour and practice according to the rules" (Vizek Vidović, 2011, pp. 42, 44). Hrvatić and Piršl (2007) point out that the acquisition of teaching competence is the basis and condition of professional development of teachers during all the stages of their career⁴. Talking about internship of teachers, Cindrić cites Vonk's division⁵, where this period belongs to the second phase in professional career of a teacher, which is called the threshold or entrance phase (Cindrić, 1998). The goal of internship is "to train teachers, teaching assistants and educators (...) with no previous experience for successful, professional and independent working in primary and secondary schools" (Regulations, 2003). During the internship, teachers are expected to gain professional adaptation, training, and independence to carry out their professional duties, to apply their knowledge creatively, and to develop their teaching skills (Cindrić, 1998). Internship finishes with the teacher certification examination, the purpose of which is to establish "professional, especially methodical-didactical, and pedagogical-psychological training of the interns for independent educational work" (Marušić, 2006, p. 8). The results of the research of an intern's professional confidence and competence after accomplishing their internship show that around 70% of school principals and 79% of teachers who have passed the respective examination believe that the level of acquired knowledge is sufficient for successful performance of the teaching profession (Cindrić, 1998). But, there is a certain number of teachers who do not possess sufficient competences, which means that 30% of incompetent teachers is a large number with worrying implications for the education of young generations. According to Cindrić, the causes of this situation are diverse, so they had to be professionally identified, and curriculum should contain (even in undergraduate education) suggestions and activities how to gain the desired competence level of teachers. Therefore, every phase of internship should be subjected to thorough analysis (p. 152). The stated facts raised our interest on this topic and directed us towards researching methodical competence of teacher trainees in their written teacher certification examination. One of four parts of the exam⁶ is the written paper that examines professional-methodological and language competences of teacher trainees. This research study on methodological competence has been conducted on the written papers of Croatian language teacher trainees.

⁴ "Process of Continuous Professional Development begins with the strengthening of the process of basic teacher education and consists of complementary components:

- initial (undergraduate/graduate) teacher education,
- introduction to work requirements,
- teacher training while working,
- lifelong learning" (Hrvatić & Piršl, 2007, p. 395).

⁵ "Thinking critically, the most acceptable is J.H.C. Vonk's (1989) division; according to this, a teacher goes through developmental phases during their professional career. The first one being *preprofessional phase*... The second one *the threshold or entrance phase* (...) The third phase is partially disputable, and Vonk called it *the phase of professional development*" (Cindrić, 1998, pp. 43, 44).

⁶ Teacher certification examination includes:

– for teachers – written paper, lesson plan, performed lesson, and oral exam (Article 19 from Regulations, 2003)

2. Teacher competence

As regards the term competence in education, Vlasta Vizek Vidović claims that the fundamental definition lies in the Review of the Turning project⁷ where competence is defined as a term that “lies in integrative approach that regards individual capabilities as a dynamic combination of features that enable a competent performance or are a part of the final outcome of the educational process. Competences include the following elements: knowledge and understanding (theoretical knowledge in academic field, capacity for comprehension and understanding), knowledge how to act (practical application of knowledge in specific situations), knowledge how to be (values as integral elements of observations and living with others in a social context). Competences represent a mixture of these features (taking into consideration knowledge and its application, attitudes, skills and responsibilities), and they describe the level or degree an individual is able to apply” (Tuning, 2006, p. 5 in Vizek Vidović, 2009, p. 34). It is also pointed out that “in this context, competence or set of competences mean that a person uses a certain ability or skill to do the task in such a way that allows an assessment of their level of achievement” (Tuning, 2006, p. 1 in Vizek Vidović, 2009, p. 34). It is also important to note that competences can be assessed only to a certain degree, but they can also be developed through exercise and education (Tuning, 2006 in Vizek Vidović, 2009).

In trying to define the term competences in education, Cveta Razdevšek-Pučko states that it is a question of skills to apply certain knowledge. That means that the given term does not exclusively refer to something what an individual should know or the courses they finished during their studies (...), but it also refers to what has been studied in theory and what an individual will be able to do in practice (“has to offer on job market”) (Razdevšek-Pučko, 2005, p. 4). The same author notes that it was at the First Symposium of the Council of Europe that J. Coolahan suggested defining the competences as “general abilities of acting that are based on knowledge, experience, values and dispositions that the individual has developed while entering education practice” (Razdevšek-Pučko, 2005, p. 4). She further points out that Day⁸ (1999, p. 57) states that competence is “an ability of fulfilling tasks and roles that are necessary for achieving desired standards” (Razdevšek-Pučko, 2005, p. 5). As for the definition of the process of acquiring teaching competences and the term competence, Snježana Nevia Močinić emphasizes that the majority of authors thinks that “competence is a combination of knowledge, skills and abilities, together with attitudes suitable for a certain context” (Močinić, 2011, p. 166). Teaching competences have their characteristics that are reflected in the

⁷ “For the elaboration of a general model of a curriculum aimed to develop competences the expert teams, gathered in the so-called Turning project, are especially deserving, and their goal was to establish comparability, recognition and understandability of study programmes for various national and international stakeholders who are not a part of academic community” (Vizek Vidović, 2009, p. 34).

⁸ Day, Christopher (1999). *Developing Teachers, The Challenges of Lifelong Learning*. London: Falmer Press.

fact that “unlike many other professions, teachers must develop their competences as a specific connection of knowledge, skills and traits to teach their students” (Lončarić & Pejić, 2009, p. 3). Taking that into consideration, it is a demanding task to shape a beneficial teacher who knows how to encourage their students to study (Kyriacou, 2001), then a teacher of strong personality whose authority is based on their expertise, objectivity, honesty, and good conduct, and then a specialist who, besides good professional knowledge, possesses solid pedagogical, psychological, sociological, and didactic knowledge (Težak, 1996).

There are a lot of demands and expectations that teachers nowadays have to face, which regard “closer and wider social environment and teachers personally. It is expected that teachers think about themselves and their vocation, and that they set long-term goals for their pedagogical practice; to be well informed what their students think and feel and how they act; to possess skills that enhance the satisfaction and effectiveness of their teaching profession, and to own knowledge and skills that can develop student’s self-respect and self-assurance” (Kostović-Vranješ & Ljubetić, 2008, p. 150). Professional competence of every teacher implies “not only complete theoretical-practical mastery of the subject content, but also a wider understanding of culture, outstanding knowledge of other scientific and artistic fields...” (Težak, 1996, p. 83). Theoretical knowledge of basic sciences in its wider sense is complemented with theoretical knowledge of teaching practice, which Meyer calls scientific knowledge which “contains systematically derived, and partially or completely empirically validated information on (...) teaching” (Meyer, 2005, p. 134), and with experiential knowledge (practical or applied knowledge) that encompasses autonomous and rich form of knowledge established by the teachers themselves (Meyer, 2005). The core of experiential knowledge is ‘pictures’ of good and bad teaching. “Teachers constantly project themselves into their personal observation of teaching situation, and these observations are being more or less filtered, and this way, some kind of regulation circuit has been created where didactical-methodical view and feelings are connected with action” (Meyer, 2005, p. 134).

Apart from theoretical and experiential knowledge, Meyer highlights a competence for action that is necessary in order to use two previously mentioned and “it consists of the ability, thinking of a goal, tactically and respecting the institutional frameworks, to fulfill our teaching and educational tasks not only in expected situations, but also in new ones” (Meyer, 2005, p. 135). Discussing the term competence in teaching methodology, Bežen states that it is a kind of knowledge including various psychological, social, and experiential components where the knowledge is focused on cognition, and competence on the ability to perform a task, so we can in fact talk about methodical knowledge and methodical competences (Bežen, 2008).

3. Methodical knowledge

In educational process, there are two possible courses: studying and teaching. Methodical knowledge connects the knowledge on studying and the knowledge on teaching, which is what Bežen (2008) believes that makes it so special. We have already emphasized the importance of teachers' knowledge in their own disciplines, but they also need to possess a certain level of knowledge in pedagogy, psychology, didactics, methodology, and other fields that make them competent teachers. According to Bežen (p. 26), methodical knowledge is peculiar because it includes not only cognitive knowledge, but also specific teaching skills and ability to create new methodical forms (approaches, methods, procedures, etc.), and there, the affective potential and values of teachers and methodologists play an important role. Taking different criteria into account, Bežen makes a distinction between theoretical and practical methodical knowledge, as well as the psychological category of knowledge, abilities and skills, methodical competences and knowledge of vocation (specialisation). Theoretical methodical knowledge contains knowledge on methodology of basic science. In reference to Croatian language teachers, their basic sciences are, for example, linguistics, literary theory, film studies, etc. As Bežen notes, methodical knowledge includes also the knowledge of basic educational sciences (pedagogy, didactics, psychology, philosophy) and special theoretical methodical knowledge (methodical systems, approaches, methods, forms, procedures, etc.). On the other hand, practical methodical knowledge includes: lesson planning, performing lessons and other educational forms, skilful communication with students, correct usage of Croatian language (or foreign language), application of teaching aids, creating of methodical artifacts⁹, and establishing positive classroom atmosphere (Bežen, 2008).

4. Methodical competence

Methodical competence is a part of pedagogical-didactical-methodical competence "that includes knowledge and skills of mediation of scientific knowledge in teaching particular subject" (Spajić-Vrkaš, Kukoč, & Bašić, 2001, p. 251 in Hrvatić & Piršl, 2007, p. 297). According to Pastuović (1999, p. 491), the following elements are required for the acquisition of methodical competence: "1. Studying of teaching topics, i.e. basic science of the subject (educational field / academic discipline the topics are derived from), (...) 3. Studying of teaching profession (psychology and studying of the so-called pedagogical programme, which is a common term for teaching skills and curriculum knowledge) 4. Organised teaching practice." In educological approach to a teacher, methodical

⁹ Methodical artifacts are, according to Bežen, different kinds of simple and complex models and other subjects, handouts, toys, figures, posters, layouts, etc. Those are the means that teachers create and make themselves or with the help of some machines or gadgets. Those include also students' handmade creations when students do the tasks the teacher gives them (Bežen, 2008, p. 295).

competence is considered to be one of the most important components of skilful teaching, since practical work is crucial in the teaching profession (Bežen, 2008). The highlighted practical activity implicitly indicates that methodical competence focuses not “so much on cognition but on successful action” (Bežen, 2008, p. 391). Teaching skills can be called an art, and the stated term is used by Chris Kyriacou in his discussion on basic teaching skills¹⁰. Talking about studying competence of students, but referring to teachers at the same time, Meyer considers methodical competence as one of four competences, where he distinguishes between professional competence, methodical competence, social competence, and self-competence (Meyer, 2001). Defining methodical competence of students as an ability of conscious and creative activity in studying, Meyer introduces the term of methodical profoundness that means “the level of competence the teachers and students apply and reflect certain teaching method at” (Meyer, 2001, p. 169). Meyer names the theoretical model for determining methodical profoundness the “model of degree of teaching-methodical competence¹¹” where he points out the difference between the models of degrees and models of processes. The model of degrees shows “how the fully developed competence is structured”, while the model of process “describes the order of competences built and developed in the teaching process” (Meyer, 2001, p. 169). As regards teaching, or methodical competence in particular, we could argue that they are “partially the same, but the uniqueness of methodical competence is in the scientific dimension of the methodical knowledge” (Bežen, 2008, p. 276). Methodical competence of teachers is mostly seen in their ability to transfer successfully the content of studying. As regards the methodical competence of teachers in their written teacher certification examination, we can use the respective term in the sense of a trainee’s ability to use and apply theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge regarding the given topic of the written paper, the trainee’s ability of connecting theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge, and their usage of references to professional methodical literature in their written paper.

5. Research scope and purpose

The aim of this paper is to establish the existence of methodical competence of Croatian language teacher trainees in their written paper as part of their teacher

¹⁰ According to Kyriacou (2001), the basic teaching skills are: lesson planning, conducting lessons, classroom atmosphere, discipline, evaluation of student’s progress, and evaluation of teacher’s own work.

¹¹ According to the criterion of improving the independence of methodical thinking and acting, Meyer (2001) lists five degrees of teaching-methodical competence, as follows:

- (1) performing the process by naively completed mimicking,
- (2) performing the process according to the given model,
- (3) performing the process after the insight,
- (4) independent conducting of the process,
- (5) didactical reflection on the process. (p. 169)

certification examination. That means that we focused our observations and analysis of written papers on the following:

- The application of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge;
- Supporting theoretical knowledge and practical insights with examples, and
- References to specialised literature on methodology.

We observed the application of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge in trainees' application of methodical terms connected to the given topic of their written paper, which means that we focused on key terms from basic sciences (literary theory and linguistics) and special theoretical methodical knowledge (methodical systems, methodical approaches, methodical procedures etc.) that are presented in the paper, and are connected with the topic, i.e. the title of the paper. In their written papers, it is important that teachers trainees show their understanding of the topic, which is achieved by means of combining theoretical and practical knowledge, i.e. through providing examples for a certain topic. That means that the next aspect of our focus, that is, supporting theoretical knowledge and practical insights with examples, was observed in the way that trainees managed to support the theoretical facts presented in the paper with practical insight on the stated facts. Trainees are expected to provide examples which they gained while working with students, though the examples do not need to be taken from their personal experience in the classroom. As regards literary theory, that means they are expected to give examples for theoretical statements concerning the topic of the written paper, while with regard to the Croatian language, they can list various language exercises and tasks, word games, methodical procedures, etc. In the written examination it is not possible to cite literature, but just paraphrase or mention such references by memory. For that reason, our third category was references to professional methodical literature, which showed trainees' knowledge of professional methodical literature and its authors in support of their statements given in the written paper. During the years 2011 and 2012 we collected materials which comprise 58 written papers of Croatian language teacher trainees in primary and secondary schools from the following counties: Istria, Primorje-Gorski Kotar, Lika-Senj, Zagreb, Međimurje, Varaždin, Osijek-Baranja, Brod-Posavina, Požega-Slavonia, and Virovitica-Podravina. In our research study we applied methodological procedure to the analysis of teacher trainees' written papers. The results were presented by means of descriptive and comparative methods. We interpreted all of them completely, and then compared them depending on whether they dealt with linguistics or literature. That means that we were interested to see the difference in methodical competence

of teacher trainees in written papers that dealt with linguistics and those that dealt with literature topics.

6. Research results and discussion – overall sample

6.1. Key terms of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge

Out of 58 written papers of Croatian language teacher trainees, which we have read and analysed, we found the key terms of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge in 55 of them or 94.83% (Figure 1).

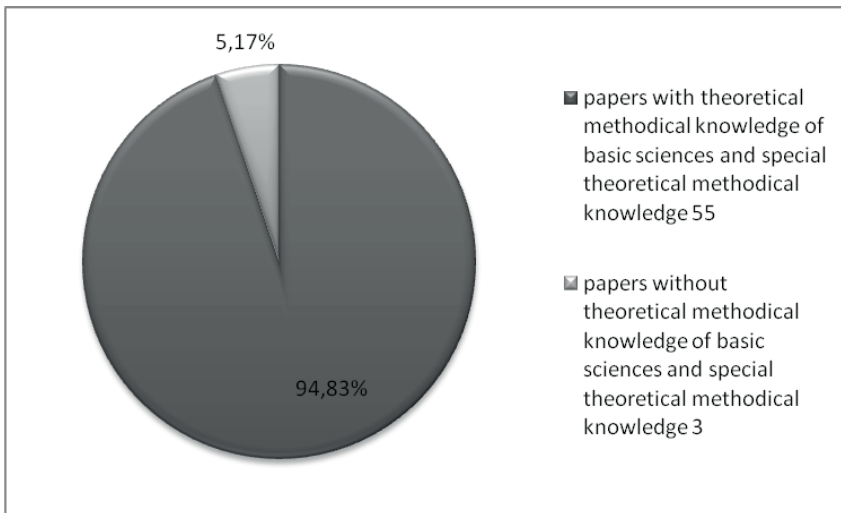


Figure 1. Key terms of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge

In those papers, the teacher trainees showed they possessed the knowledge of the topic and that they mastered professional (*stylistic periods, characters, plots, spelling exercises, voices, punctuation* etc.) and methodical terminology (*problem solving methods, problem situations, handouts* etc.) for the given topic. There are some examples below (1).

(1)

“When we analyse a novel methodically, there are some criteria that should be taken into consideration: stylistic periods (...), characters (...), plots (...) I will show the way how I organised the obligatory reading class on L.N.Tolstoj *Anna Karenina*

in the third grade. I have used a problem solving method taken from D. Rosandić, because his approach seemed the most suitable one (...)" (*Metodički pristup romanu u srednjoj školi – Methodical approach to novel in secondary school*¹²)

"Problem solving method puts the student in the role of a subject that explores, contemplates, judges, concludes. Independence of students is an important component of this teaching method. The teacher is an organizer, but not the main source of information. (...) Problem solving method has its phases. At the very beginning it is important to create the situation to define the problem. This situation could be a result of doing questionnaires, reading critiques, debating or discussing moderated by the teacher." (*Problemska nastava književnosti – Teaching literature through problem solving*)

"Spelling and pronunciation exercises are necessary from the very first grade of primary school to avoid irregularities in writing and speaking, and they need to be done in all the grades. (...) Spelling exercises – graphic, sound changes, punctuation, lexical – are to be done on all the levels of primary school. (...) These exercises can be organised through handouts with mistakes for students to find, filling in the gaps, finishing sentences, quizzes can be organised, but they also can be organised as a part of intrasubject correlation in planning and performing the lesson of some other subject. (...) Unlike spelling, pronunciation exercises are not that common in Croatian language teaching, although they are not less important. Linguist Stjepko Težak in his book *Teorija i praksa nastave hrvatskoga jezika* (Theory and practice of Croatian language) divided pronunciation exercises into:

1. articulation
2. accentuation
3. intonation. (...)" (*Pravopisne i pravogovorne vježbe u nastavi hrvatskoga jezika – Spelling and pronunciation exercises in Croatian language teaching*)

"The purpose of language teaching is to release and develop spoken and written expression of students, but also to encourage and develop cognitive processes. Therefore it is not only important to practice pronunciation, accentuation, enunciation, and spelling, but also to encourage cognitive and affective processes. (...) Zdenka Gudelj-Velaga believes that language teaching should follow some principles: the principle of motivation, creativity, development and regional identity. (...) Students will practise expression through a variety of exercises. These are: grammar-pronunciation, grammar-spelling, and stylistic-compositional. (...) In the first grade, students will practise writing descriptions. Since a portrait is a frequent theme of description, it is necessary to refresh this topic with new approaches, attitudes, and perspectives. Therefore, students could be given the

¹² The titles of the works this and the following paragraphs are taken from are provided in brackets.

task to describe a person who feels uncomfortable, alone, happy or unhappy. (...)” (*Nastava jezičnoga izražavanja u srednjoj školi – Teaching expression in secondary school*)

In three written papers which account for 5.17%, it was not obvious that Croatian language teacher trainees used the key terms of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge related to the given topic. That means that those papers did not follow the topic and their content was off the subject. The first paper was *Metodički instrumentarij u teatrološkoj obradi dramskog djela* (*Methodical instruments for theatrical processing of plays*) where there were obvious deviations from the given topic, in particular with regard to the teacher’s role in traditional teaching but also in the division of the Croatian language into specific fields, and in defining the curriculum, interdisciplinarity, lessons, classroom situation, etc. The example is provided below (2a).

(2a)

“The success of educational activities depends on good lesson preparation of teachers. In traditional teaching, a teacher is the source of knowledge that is based on experience. (...) Croatian language, as a subject, consists of three teaching areas: literature, language, and expression. It has its purpose, goal, and tasks structured in the curriculum. Curriculum is a state document that defines teaching areas. (...) The programmes alter, based on scientific grounds, evaluation of old programmes, and interdisciplinary principle. Interdisciplinarity is a collaborative relationship of two or more disciplines. (...) A lesson is a time-bounded unit of 45 minutes. (...) Classroom situation is the amount of content that is being taught at a given time.” (*Metodički instrumentarij u teatrološkoj obradi dramskog djela - Methodical instruments for theatrical processing of plays*)

The other paper where the key terms of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge related to the given topic were not obvious was also entitled *Metodički instrumentarij u teatrološkoj obradi dramskog djela* (*Methodical instruments for theatrical processing of plays*). In that paper, we could also see dispersion and deviation from the subject through mentioning the role of social networks and web sites in a student’s growth and education, and the explanation of the terms, such as motivation in psychology, methodology, etc. The example is provided below (2b).

(2b)

“Nowadays, when some other ‘arts’ are imposed to students and when the information system is, in a way, shaped for pure marketing activities that triggers different types of communication in society, with parents, schoolmates, and teachers, it is absolutely reasonable to state that books and literature have just

a passing role in the everyday life of students. Some facts speak in favour of this idea, namely, the number of students who daily spend hours surfing the Internet in search of 'lost' friends, and only few of them visit useful social network sites (except the one for obligatory reading), where they can find out more about a book or other source. Taking these facts into account, it is hard to make today's students, especially secondary school students, interested in reading. (...) The first step in accepting a literary work is motivation. The term motivation in psychology assumes... In methodology, the term motivation..." (*Metodički instrumentarij u teatrološkoj obradi dramskog djela - Methodical instruments for theatrical processing of plays*)

In the written paper *Tipovi vezanoga teksta u nastavi pismenoga izražavanja* (*Types of connected texts in teaching writing*) we can see that the types of connected texts in teaching writing are not stated. Instead, the author writes about literacy, oral and written expression, the role of a teacher in the classroom. The example is provided below (2c).

(2c)

"Literacy encompasses a very broad term. Primarily, it represents the use of writing as a means of understanding and communication. From the very beginning of their education, students use writing. Their literacy is enriched during their education. (...) The beginnings of their oral expression are mostly associated with the region students come from. Characteristic of such linguistic expression and feeling is the use of numerous dialecticisms and jargon language that do not belong to the standard language. (...) Writing skills in primary school are based on the principle of regional identity. (...) Teacher, as a facilitator of educational process, has to respect students' interests, and enable them to better their writing skills. (...) Teaching literacy has an extremely great and important role in education process." (*Tipovi vezanoga teksta u nastavi pismenoga izražavanja - Types of connected texts in teaching writing*)

Two written papers composed by two Croatian language teacher trainees during the written teacher certification examination, both entitled *Metodički pristup izabranoj nastavnoj jedinici iz morfologije* (*Methodical approach to lesson on morphology*), showed that the authors did use the key terms of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge related to the given subject, but not completely. The title required them to write about methodical approach to lesson on morphology, but instead, the two focused on methodical approaches to morphological contents, teaching topics related to morphology, and the principles of continuity and vertical-spiral sequence in the occurrence of teaching content with particular emphasis on morphological content. However, they failed to highlight concrete methodical approaches to certain morphological

content, which was explicitly suggested by the title. This omission in the two said papers is even more apparent with regard to the second category we observed, namely, supporting theoretical knowledge and practical insights with examples, because the two papers did not provide any examples, i.e. practical knowledge. Compared to the first category we observed and analysed in the written papers which were produced as part of teacher certification examinations, we can say that the majority of Croatian language teacher trainees showed methodical competence with respect to theoretical knowledge in the academic field, i.e. at the cognitive level, in the disciplines of literature and linguistics. Also, the majority of teacher trainees demonstrated the knowledge of special theoretical methodical knowledge, such as knowledge of methodical approaches and procedures, and also methods and work forms. Nevertheless, some of the analysed written papers showed that there was no methodical knowledge of the cognitive level and special theoretical methodical knowledge, which proves that it is necessary to pay special attention to developing methodical competence structurally, not only during the pre-professional education, but also in teacher trainee period. Apart from that, methodical competence of Croatian language teachers should be included in professional trainings and conferences.

6.2. Connecting theoretical knowledge and practical insights with examples

If we look at Figure 2, we can see that only 25 of the analysed written papers of Croatian language teacher trainees supported theoretical knowledge and practical insights with examples regarding the given subject.

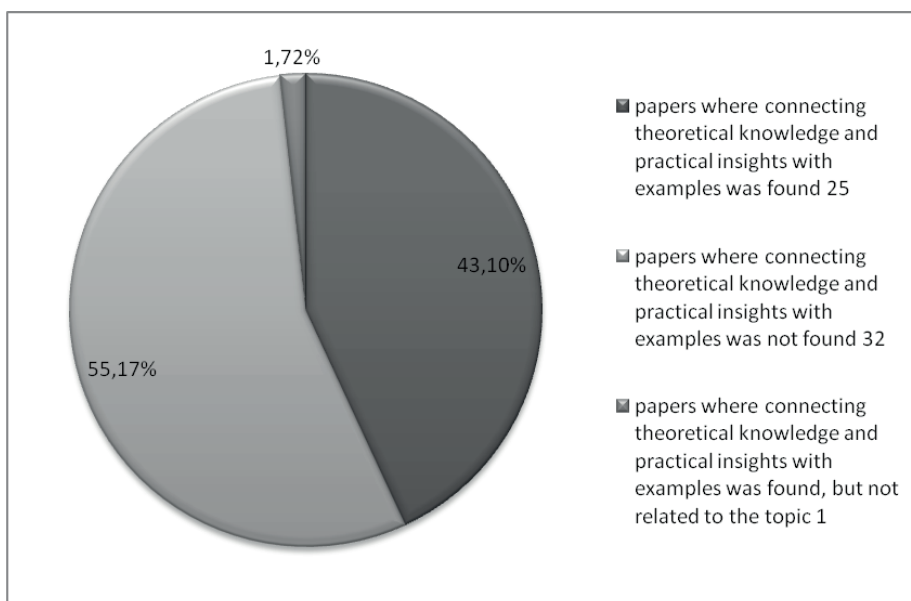


Figure 2. Supporting theoretical knowledge and practical insights with examples

This means that only slightly over two fifths or under a half of all written papers, or 43.10% to be exact, did support theoretical knowledge and practical insights with examples. Below (3), there are few examples of supporting theoretical knowledge and practical insights with examples in the written papers composed by Croatian language teacher trainees.

(3)

“In the fifth grade, Roald Dahl’s *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is a very popular book. (...) In the sixth grade August Šenoa’s *Povijestice* is among other obligatory literature. (...)” (*Sat obrade školske lektire - Obligatory reading classes*)

“For example, a problem situation for Novak’s *Posljednji Stipančići* can be created by directed discussion with the students on modern family and traditional family, and their internal relations. (...)” (*Problem solving literature classes - Problemska nastava književnosti*)

“The same themes we find in Molnar’s novel *Junaci Pavlove ulice* which students love to read as they feel close to the characters. Its ethical message is very specific and a young reader cannot stay indifferent. (...) Children’s adventure novel is full of action and constant interweaving of events around the main character while fulfilling his secret task, such as in the sixth grade novel by Pavao Pavličić’s *Trojica u Trnju*. (...)” (*Roman u osnovnoj školi – Novel in primary school*)

“During the lessons students often open some problems themselves. Especially some stimulating topics on lexicology, such as the issue of English loan words in the Croatian language, the use of foreign words, such as e-mail, rock-band, etc. (...)” (*Poučavanje i učenje jezičnih sadržaja s ciljem ostvarivanja funkcionalne pismenosti u srednjoj školi – Teaching and learning language in order to achieve functional literacy in high school*)

In over a half (32) of the analysed written papers of Croatian language teacher trainees (55.17%), no examples from practice were provided, which means that the theory was not supported by any examples from various literary works, or by examples of language tasks, exercises, problem solving tasks, etc. One of the written papers, for example, was rather unusual. The topic of the paper was related to language (*Problemski pristup u poučavanju gramatike u srednjoj školi – Problem solving approach to teaching grammar in secondary school*), and the author had identified the stages of problem teaching, such as creating a problem situation, defining the problem and methods of research, independent work of students, analysis and correction of the research results, and different kinds of problem teaching, such as observing grammar facts and solving grammar tasks. However, the examples were completely inappropriate, as the author illustrated the ideas

with examples from literature instead of those from linguistics or the Croatian language, as we show in (4).

(4)

“Let me show two examples: The first lesson consists of explaining impressions and finding questions for analysis: Why does Onegin reject love of provincial noblewoman and does he fall passionately in love with Tatyana from St. Petersburg? The second lesson: When does Pushkin sympathise with the hero? Does Onegin’s approach to life differ in the beginning and in the end? (...)” (*Problemski pristup u poučavanju gramatike u srednjoj školi – Problem solving approach to teaching grammar in secondary school*)

The results of the second category we observed are not satisfying at all. If the methodical competence involves the usage of knowledge, abilities or skills to perform the job of a teacher, we can hardly talk of capacity for comprehension and understanding, i.e. practical application of knowledge, in the majority of the analysed written papers composed by Croatian language teacher trainees as part of their written teacher certification examination. Furthermore, if competence includes the ability to act which is not based only on knowledge, but also on experience, then we can say that in most of the analysed written papers the experiential part was missing. Let us underline once again that the development of teacher competences is extremely important for those who are taught, i.e. for students, and therefore it is imperative for teacher trainees to demonstrate in their written examination that they can apply their theoretical knowledge to teaching practice.

6.3. References to specialised literature on methodology

The third category of the written teacher certification exams by Croatian language teacher trainees regarded specialised literature on methodology. Figure 3 shows that 25 teacher trainees or 43.10% referred to specialised literature on methodology, stating the author and the title.

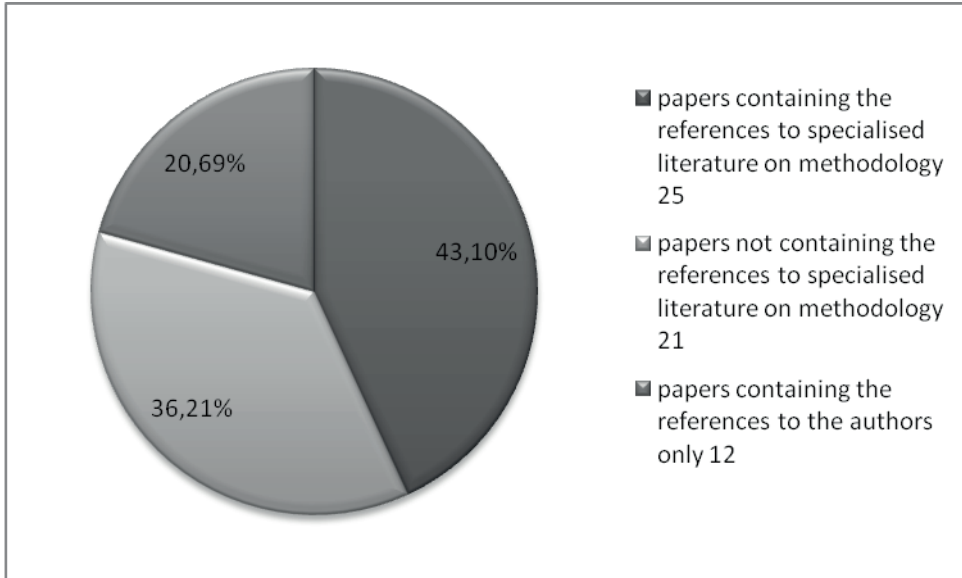


Figure 3. References to specialised literature on methodology

The teacher trainers most commonly referred to Dragutin Rosandić and his book *Metodika književnoga odgoja i obrazovanja* (*Methodology of Literary Education*), and Stjepko Težak and his book *Teorija i praksa nastave hrvatskoga jezika* (*Theory and Practice of Teaching Croatian*), as indicated below (5).

(5)

“Dragutin Rosandić explores the novel in his book *Metodika književnoga odgoja i obrazovanja* (*Methodology of Literary Education*) and states a few concepts of novel interpretation: (...)” (*Roman u osnovnoj školi – Novel in primary school*)

“Dragutin Rosandić in his book *Metodika književnoga odgoja i obrazovanja* (*Methodology of Literary Education*) states the following structure of the lesson on literature: (...)” (*Motivacija u nastavi književnosti – Motivation in teaching literature*)

“In Stjepko Težak’s book *Teorija i praksa nastave hrvatskoga jezika* (*Theory and Practice of Teaching Croatian*) there are the following written and spoken mistakes: (...)” (*Pravopisne i pravogovorne vježbe u nastavi hrvatskoga jezika – Spelling and pronunciation exercises in Croatian language teaching*)

Apart from the two said authors, some other authors and books were mentioned in the written papers by Croatian language teacher trainees. Those were Karol Visinko and his *Dječja priča – povijest, teorija, recepcija i interpretacija* (*Children’s Stories - the history, theory, reception and interpretation*), Ana Gabrijele Šabić and

her *Razvijanje literarnih sposobnosti učenika u komunikaciji s lirskom poezijom* (*Developing Literary Abilities in Communication with Lyrical Poetry*), Rasima Kajić and her *Roman u sustavu problemske nastave* (*Novel in Problem Teaching System*), and Stjepan Hranjec and his *Hrvatski dječji roman* (*Croatian Children's Novel*). In one fifth of the analysed papers, or 20.69%, to be more exact, teacher trainees mentioned only the author but not a specific book, as can be observed below (6).

(6)

“A lesson, according to D. Rosandić, is a teaching unit encompassing content, psychology, methodology, and time.” (*Ustrojstvo nastavnoga sata književnosti – Organization of a Literature Lesson*)

“Dragutin Rosandić points out that the term motivation is a part of psychology, and defines the mental process that encourages people to certain action and demeanour. (...) Rosandić states the following conditions for choosing motivation: (...)” (*Motivacija u nastavi književnosti – Motivation in Teaching Literature*)

“Pronunciation exercises, according to Stjepko Težak, are divided into properly pronounced and stylistic-compositional ones. (...)” (*Pravopisne i pravogovorne vježbe u nastavi hrvatskoga jezika – Proper writing and speaking exercises in the Croatian language teaching*)

“The famous linguist Noam Chomsky also deals with this problem, him being a representative of the so-called transformational-generative grammar which is very formal in its approach to language. (...)” (*Nastava sintakse Hrvatskoga jezika u osnovnoj školi – Teaching syntax of the Croatian language in primary school*)

In 21 of the 58 analysed papers written by Croatian language teacher trainees as part of their teacher certification examination (Figure 3) we did not find any references to specialised literature on methodology, which means that 36.21% of the teachers in question had not cited authors and literature to support their assertions.

As regards the last category of our focus, i.e. references to specialised literature on methodology in the written examination papers, we can claim that methodical competences of Croatian language teacher trainees are evident in the majority of analysed papers, as a large portion of teacher trainees did refer to various authors and/or their work. This proves that some trainees are familiar with specialised literature on methodology dealing with the subject of the paper. However, most of them referred to basic literature dealing with methodical linguistic and literary theory topics, and there were no references to professional and scientific journals, anthologies and monographs, which should be the strongholds for written papers produced at teacher certification examination, primarily because of their topicality

in reporting on the latest developments in the field. Furthermore, we should also point out that the results of the analysis in regard to the respective category showed that a great deal of written papers did not refer to specialised literature on methodology. Marušić, Pavin Ivanec, and Dolan (2011) conducted a research study on mentorship in Croatia in which they tried to shed some light on respective problems from different perspectives. An interesting piece of advice mentors gave to their trainees is that of the necessity of continuous improvement, professional as well as personal. "In this context, several participants stressed the importance of consulting professional literature" (Marušić, Pavin Ivanec, and Dolan, 2011, p. 188).

7. Results and discussion – comparison of written papers on literary and linguistic topics

7.1. Key terms of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge

Of the 58 collected and analysed papers composed by Croatian language teacher trainees as part of their written teacher certification examination, 35 of them deal with literary subjects topics and 23 with linguistic subjects. In almost all (33 papers or 94.29%) papers dealing with literary topics, the key terms of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge were evident, and only in two of them (5.71%) they were not. The results are graphically illustrated in Figure 4. As for the papers on linguistic topics (Figure 5), it was again established that almost all of the papers contained the key terms of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge (22 papers or 95.65%), while only one did not contain any key terms related to the topic.

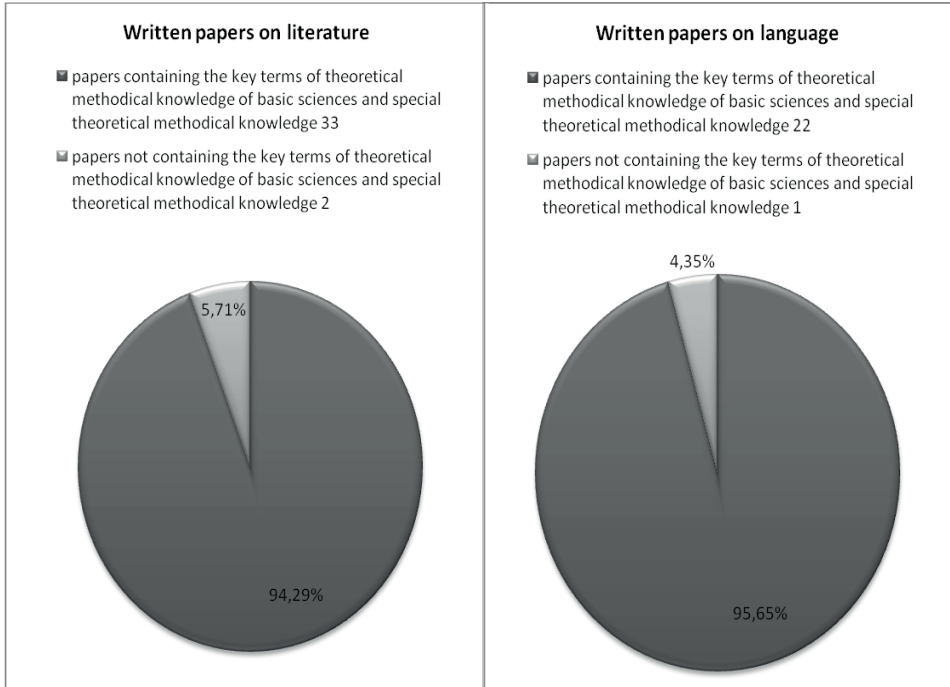


Figure 4. The key terms of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge – papers on literature

Figure 5. The key terms of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge – papers on language

Overall, we can be satisfied with the stated indicators. They indicate that Croatian language teacher trainees do possess methodical competence with regard to the theoretical knowledge in the academic field of literature and language. But since methodical competence represents the ability to transfer the contents of studying, there should be no cases of teacher trainees not showing, in their written papers, theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge as well as some key terms from literature or linguistics related to the topic of the paper. Undoubtedly, the reason for that can be found in the initial (pre-professional) education of teachers, because the mastery of the subject matter, and the basic sciences as well as the scientific dimension of methodical knowledge present the basis of teaching competences.

7.2. Supporting theoretical knowledge and practical insights with examples

With regard to the second category analysed, namely, supporting theoretical knowledge and practical insights with examples, the analysis showed that examples were provided in 21 papers on literature, which makes two thirds or 60% (Figure

60%). In 14 or 40% of the papers on literature, however, there were no examples for the theoretical knowledge presented. If we look at Figure 7 which shows to what extent theoretical knowledge and practical insights were supported with examples in the 58 analysed written papers on language, we see that the ratio is completely different. Only in four papers or 17.39%, we did find examples to support theoretical statements, whereas in as much as 78.26% or the majority of the papers on language (18) there were no examples to support the statements in the written papers. In one of the papers on language, there was a connection of theoretical knowledge and practical insights, but the examples used were related to literature and not language as it should have (Figure 7).

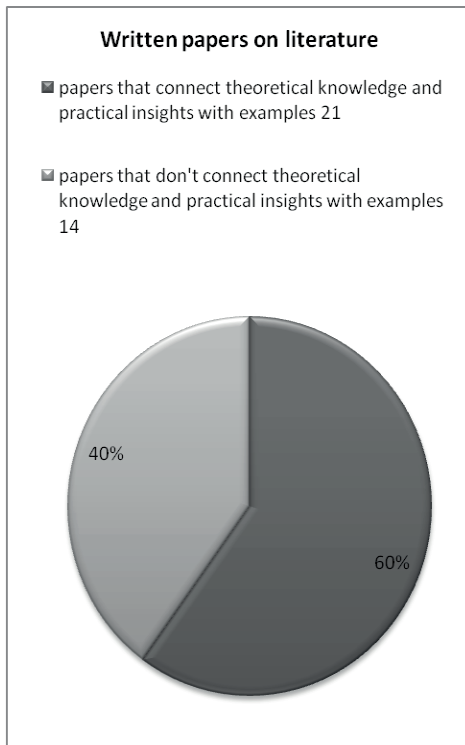


Figure 6. Supporting theoretical knowledge and practical insights with examples – papers on literature

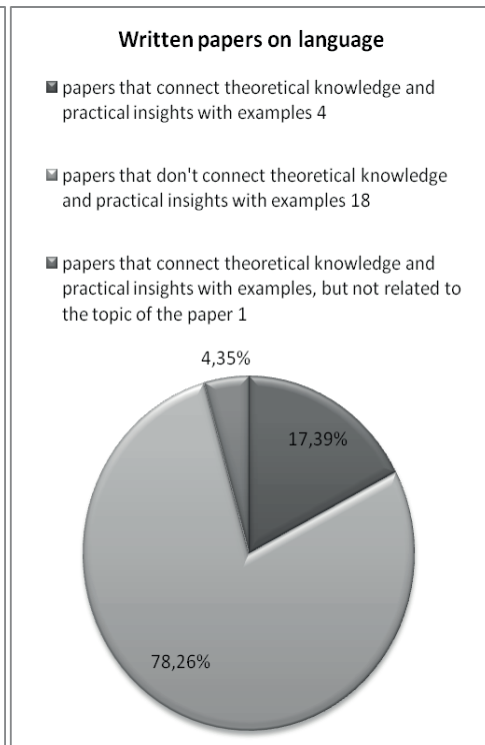


Figure 7. Supporting theoretical knowledge and practical insights with examples – papers on language

Although the majority of Croatian language teacher trainees showed methodical competence in supporting theory with examples in literature, we cannot be fully satisfied with the outcome, as there is still a large number of teacher trainees whose papers do not prove this competence. We were particularly dissatisfied with the papers on language, as the respective competence had not been proven in as much as 80% of the papers, which is really worrying. The reasons why Croatian language teacher trainees failed to provide examples in their written papers can

be various. On the one hand, teacher trainees may have been ignorant of the fact that they should have demonstrated their understanding of the given topic through giving practical examples which should have been derived mostly from their own personal experience (working with students), but also those that were not part of the trainee's personal experience. The other reason for the absence of examples supporting theoretical knowledge in the written papers in question could simply be insufficient practical insights or a lack of teaching practice on the given topic, with various underlying reasons¹³. All in all, the methodical competence of Croatian language teacher trainees related to practical examples of theoretical knowledge application should be supported and developed, especially with regard to language teaching. That can be achieved through a systematic and thorough monitoring of the trainee's teaching activities during their internship and through continuous professional development, either organised¹⁴ or individual.

7.3. References to specialised literature on methodology

The results regarding references to specialised literature on methodology in the written papers on literature and on language are shown in Figures 8 and 9. Figure 8 clearly indicates that the references were found in 15 of the analysed papers on literature, which makes 42.86%, whereas in the two fifths of the papers (40.00%) no such references were made. In addition, six papers (17.14%) on literature include the names of authors, but without the titles of their books. As for the analysis of the written papers on language (Figure 9), we see that references to specialised literature on methodology was found in some of the papers (10 papers or 43.48%), while in seven of them, there were no references to support the statements in the paper (30.43%). In one fourth of the written papers on language or 26.09%, only authors were mentioned without respective work.

¹³ For example, some Croatian language teacher trainees complete their internship working as class teachers, art teachers, foreign language teachers, librarians, etc. and they do not teach the topics related to Croatian language at all. Furthermore, there is a special category of teacher trainees, namely, volunteers, who are not employed during their internship, but are obliged to attend a certain number of mentor's lessons and perform a certain number of lesson on their own, and that time limit is an obstacle for the trainees to gain experience with different topics in that subject.

¹⁴ For example, it could be a local professional organization (Županijsko stručno vijeće).

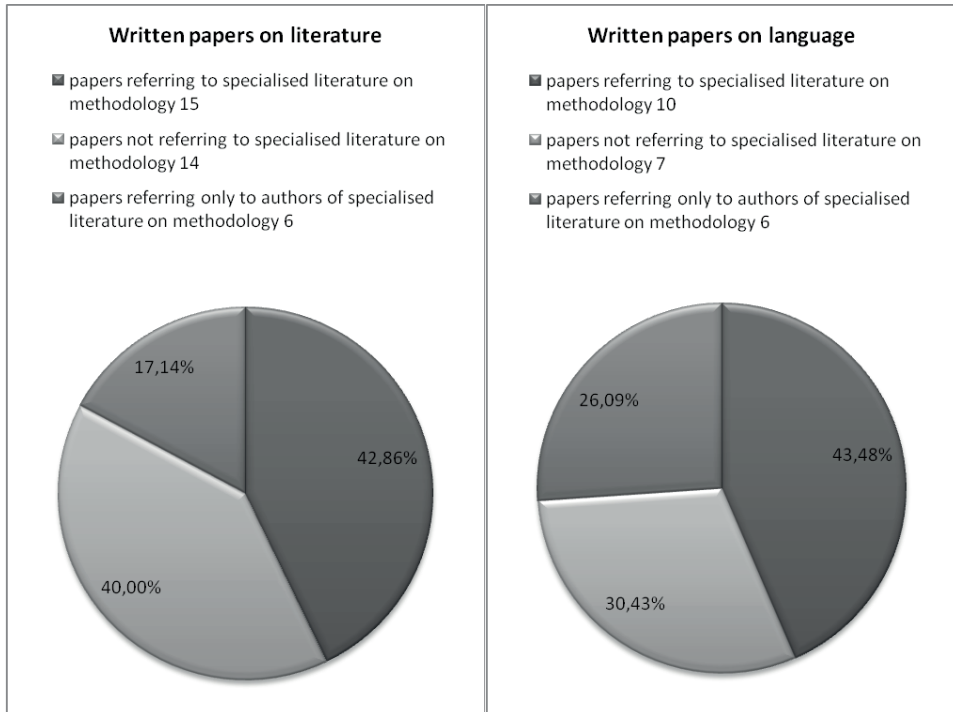


Figure 8. References to specialised literature on methodology – papers on literature

Figure 9. References to specialised literature on methodology – papers on language

The results of the research study with regard to the category of referencing specialised literature on methodology, indicate that some written papers on literature or language, composed by Croatian language teacher trainees prove methodical competence of the latter, though they also show that a significant number of authors included no references of specialised literature on methodology in their written papers. That might indicate that only a portion of Croatian language teacher trainees were aware of the fact that they were expected to support their statements in the written teacher certification examination with references from relevant literature on methodology. Furthermore, the results could suggest that after finishing their regular academic education, teacher trainees do not pay enough attention to recently published literature on methodology, although that is one of their obligations as teachers. Nevertheless, the attitude of teacher trainees towards specialised literature on methodology should be changed, above all in their papers composed as part of their written teacher certification examination. That involves in the first place their active participation in being updated on the latest publications in their professional field and the awareness of the need to include references (titles and authors) in their written papers to support their own thoughts and ideas.

8. Conclusion

Methodical competence is part of pedagogical-didactical-methodical competence that includes the knowledge and skills of transferring scientific findings into teaching. It is considered to be one of the most important components of teacher training regarding the priority of practical work in teacher's profession. The term methodical competence of teacher trainees in their written papers as part of teacher certification examination includes a trainee's ability to use, i.e. apply theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge on the topic of the written paper, the ability to support theoretical knowledge and practical insights with examples, and trainee's references to specialised literature on methodology. Based on a research study analysis of the written papers of Croatian language teacher trainees composed as part of their teacher certification examination, it was established that Croatian language teacher trainees did show methodical competence which was indicated through their application of theoretical methodical knowledge of basic sciences and special theoretical methodical knowledge as well as through providing reference to specialised literature on methodology. As regards methodical competence in those written papers that dealt with literary and linguistic topics, the difference could be observed between the two, as in the majority of the analysed written papers on language, theoretical knowledge and practical insights were hardly supported with examples. The development of methodical competence of teachers is extremely important because teachers are expected to develop such knowledge, skills, and traits in the people they teach, that is, their students. That process is normally carried out during all the stages of their professional career; whereas during the internship period, the professional adaptation of teachers, training, and independence happen in order to enable them to teach, to apply their knowledge, and to develop teaching skills.

DAJŠI POVZETEK

Na začetku svojega vzgojno-izobraževalnega dela imajo učitelji status pripravnika, ki po Hubermanovem modelu razvoja kariere predstavlja »začetek: preživetje ali odkrivanje«, po Berlinerovem modelu razvoja ekspertnosti pa »popolno začetništvo«. Cilj pripravništva je usposabljanje učitelja brez delovnih izkušenj za uspešno, strokovno in samostojno opravljanje dela v osnovni oziroma srednji šoli. Med pripravništvom se od učitelja pripravnika pričakuje profesionalno prilagajanje, usposabljanje in osamosvajanje za opravljanje učiteljskega poklica, za ustvarjalno uporabo znanja ter izgradnjo učnih veščin. Pripravništvo se konča z opravljanjem strokovnega izpita. Eden od štirih delov strokovnega izpita je pisni del, s katerim se preverjata strokovno-metodična in jezikovna kompetenca učitelja

pripravnika. V članku izhajamo iz definiranja kompetence v izobraževanju kot integrativnega pristopa s sestavnimi deli: znanje in razumevanje (teoretično znanje na akademskem področju, zmožnost spoznavanja in razumevanja), znanje o tem, kako delovati (praktična uporaba znanja v določenih situacijah), znanje o tem, kako biti (vrednosti kot integralni elementi načina opažanja in življenja z drugimi v družbenem kontekstu). Metodična kompetenca je del pedagoško-didaktično-metodične kompetence, ki obsega znanje in veščine posredovanja znanstvenih spoznanj pri pouku določenega predmeta. Imamo jo za enega od najpomembnejših sestavnih delov usposobljenosti za poučevanje glede na primarnost praktičnega dela v učiteljskem poklicu. V članku se pojem metodične kompetence učitelja pripravnika v pisnem delu na strokovnem izpitu uporablja v pomenu pripravnikove sposobnosti uporabe oziroma uporabe teoretičnega metodičnega znanja temeljnih ved in posebnih teorijskih metodičnih znanj glede na zadano temo pisnega dela, zatem pripravnikove sposobnosti povezovanja teoretičnega znanja in praktičnih spoznanj ter uporabo oziroma pripravnikovo sklicevanje na strokovno-metodično literaturo.

V članku smo se osredotočili na pisna dela učiteljev pripravnikov hrvaškega jezika, pri čemer je bil naš namen ugotoviti obstoj metodične kompetence. Pri opazovanju in analizi pisnih del smo se usmerili k raziskovanju naslednjih kategorij:

- uporaba teoretičnega metodičnega znanja temeljnih ved in posebnih teorijskih metodičnih znanj,
- povezovanje teoretičnega znanja in praktičnih spoznanj oziroma navajanje primerov,
- sklicevanje na strokovno-metodično literaturo.

Raziskava je bila opravljena na zbranem gradivu 58 pisnih del učiteljev pripravnikov hrvaškega jezika v osnovnih in srednjih šolah na področju naslednjih županij: Istrske, Primorsko-goranske, Ličko-senjske, Zagrebške, Medžimurske, Varaždinske, Osiješko-baranjske, Brodsko-posavske, Požeško-slavonske in Virovitiško-podravske županije. Rezultate raziskave smo prikazali z deskriptivno in komparativno metodo. Interpretirali smo jih v celoti, potem pa jih primerjali glede na to, ali se pisna dela ukvarjajo z jezikovno ali s književno tematiko. Zanimalo nas je, ali obstaja razlika v metodični kompetenci učiteljev pripravnikov v pisnih delih, v katerih se obravnava jezikovna tema, in v delih, v katerih se obravnava tema iz književnosti. Na temelju opravljenega raziskovanja pisnih del na strokovnem izpitu učiteljev pripravnikov hrvaškega jezika je bilo ugotovljeno, da učitelji pripravniki hrvaškega jezika kažejo metodično kompetenco, ki je najbolj razvidna pri uporabi teoretičnega metodičnega znanja temeljnih ved in posebnih teorijskih metodičnih znanj ter pri sklicevanju na strokovno-metodično literaturo. Kadar gre za metodično kompetenco v pisnih delih učiteljev pripravnikov hrvaškega jezika na

strokovnem izpitu, ki se ukvarjajo s temo iz književnosti, in v delih, ki se ukvarjajo s hrvaškim jezikom, se lahko govori o razlikah, ki se opažajo predvsem v tem, da se v večjem delu analiziranih pisnih del, ki se ukvarjajo z jezikovno tematiko, ne opaža povezovanje teoretičnega znanja in praktičnih spoznanj oziroma navajanje primera.

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