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Teachers for the future – key messages and issues from the first and second round table held within preparations for the Presidency of the Republic of Croatia of the Council of the European Union



Zagreb, July 11 2019

Within preparations for the Presidency of the Republic of Croatia of the Council of the European Union, two round tables were held on the topic 'Teachers for the Future' at the Ministry of Science and Education.

Ministry of Science and Education
29 May 2019
3 July 2019

Moderator for the first round table: prof. dr. sc. Blaženka Divjak, Minister of Science and Education

Moderator for the second round table: prof. dr. sc. Branka Ramljak, State Secretary

Panelists at the first round table:

prof. dr. sc. Jasminka Ledić, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka
prof. dr. sc. Lidija Vujičić, Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka
dr. sc. Matija Bašić, Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb
doc. dr. sc. Maja Cindrić, Department for Teacher and Pre-school Teacher Education, University of Zadar
Davora Osmak-Franjić, prof., Office of the Ombudsman for Children of the Republic of Croatia

Panelists at the second round table:

dr. sc. Suzana Tomaš, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split
doc. dr. sc. Višnja Rajić, Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb
doc. dr. sc. Aleksandra Huić, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb
dr. sc. Slavomir Stankov, tenured full professor in retirement, Faculty of Science, University of Split
doc. dr. sc. Josipa Mihić, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb

Introduction:

Two round tables were held with the aim of stimulating discussion of Croatian experts on the topic 'Teachers for the Future', one of priority topics of the Programme of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (HR PRES) in the field of education. The conclusions will contribute to further discussions on this topic at the EU level during HR PRES, as well as to elaborating the Draft Council Conclusions on European teachers for the future. The main focus of the topic are teachers of the future, in all parts of the system and at all education levels, who have a key role and responsibility in preparing individuals for performing and creating jobs of the future. In performing this role, teachers of the future face numerous challenges brought about by contemporary societal, scientific and technological changes, which both foster and demand changes in the concept of learning and teaching, the development of innovative pedagogies, digital transformation in schools, the development of learning and teaching analytics, along with many other novelties. Therefore, as one of the first steps in elaborating the topic of teachers of the future, a roundtable discussion began on key challenges and priorities in developing the teaching profession. The discussion included multiple perspectives, as a basis for further activities and debate.

Key messages (including answers to questions and comments from the audience):

Although the education system should respond to labour market needs, it should also play a central role in **creating new labour market needs**. Substantial changes are needed: teachers need to focus on exploring their educational practice and be **autonomous in designing teaching strategies and processes**.

The best outcomes are achieved by working directly with students. **The distribution of responsibilities of teachers (didactic contract)** needs to be reexamined, and good ideas should be embedded in both initial teacher education and teacher training.

It is important to consider the needed changes in initial teacher education, as well as the needs for teachers' **professional development**.

Responsibility towards children is crucial when it comes to motivation for generating the process of change (the teaching profession as harmony between the most beautiful and the most difficult profession). Teachers' **intrinsic motivation** is essential – a desire to work with children and to change society through education.

It is also necessary to work on the status of the teaching profession and its perception as a **valuable** vocation. In addition to empowering teachers with the necessary knowledge and competences, it is essential to **reward teachers** who make the largest contribution to the quality of teaching. A shortage of teachers in certain subjects (mathematics, physics, chemistry) points out numerous challenges resulting from work with children and parents and the need to adapt to the demands of contemporary education and reforms, which indicates the need to pose **high demands on teacher education**.

Considering the dynamics of the system and in order to foster creation, continuous **research and networking** are needed at the national and international level (networks of practitioners), as well as recognising the preparedness of individuals to embark on the processes of change. An individual cannot carry out reforms on their own. The collective action of the learning community is therefore vital.

A **culture of co-operation, mutual respect and networking** is needed to broaden horizons. It is important to reexamine the manner in which small teacher communities can improve their work.

From the national perspective, it is requisite to become more strongly involved in European processes and **strengthen the European dimension, European co-operation, European values and a sense of European identity**.

Both teachers and school pedagogists, as drivers of development, need to be made aware of the **relationship between national and European policies**, as well as of common goals and values. At the same time, critical reflection needs to be encouraged. The European dimension should be included not only at the level of informing, but also at the level of value (e.g., in textbooks). The European and national dimensions do not contradict each other. The work on **operationalizing European education policies is essential**. Significant initiatives are underway (e.g. schools are creating the European Development Plan, the European dimension is included in study programmes). It is important to collect data systematically on these initiatives and **disseminate them**.

It is requisite to link learning and teaching with the needs of the local community and more strongly promote **service-learning**.

It is essential to reflect **systematically** on the issues of values and multicultural competences: there is a need for a national framework containing a list of core values that are important both at the national and European level.

While **changing the paradigm** – students at the centre of the educational process – the structure needs to be adapted as well. With a view to achieving progress, changes should be ongoing, with **co-creation** as a key principle.

It is important for children to receive the support of adults in exercising their participation rights: to be able to express their opinion, to take their opinion into account and to provide them with feedback. For this reason, it is necessary to work on the understanding of children's rights and to develop **teachers' competences for building relationships based on equal dignity and authority based on students' respect**. The school is much more than a place of learning.

The culture of the education institution, created by all participants, is important: children should be **creators**, have a sense of belonging, and perceive school as a place of living.

Early childhood and pre-school education is the foundation for building the future of an individual. It is therefore crucial to invest in its development and cater to the needs of **professionals in early childhood and pre-school education**. Scientific literacy is developed from the kindergarten.

It is especially important to develop teaching competences at the **higher education level**. Teaching at higher education institutions should be student-centered, thus strengthening the autonomy and responsibility of students, so that students would be able to apply the acquired skills and competences in their future teaching.

Teachers should be given support in **orchestrating learning** where each student works independently.

Integrated team teaching for students within teaching practice should be organised with teacher colleagues. The culture of co-operation should be strengthened.

It is essential to train teachers not only for organising regular classes, but also for organising extra-curricular activities as they constitute the basis for student creativity.

Reading literacy and the development of intellectual vocabulary of youth should have an important place in lifelong learning of teachers of the future. **Multilingualism** or mastering at least two foreign languages is a recommendation of the Council of Ministers.

Like Europe, our society is becoming increasingly **multicultural**. The national curriculum envisages the development of intercultural competences of students. The intercultural competence of today's teachers should be strengthened at all education levels.

In Croatia, STEM should become STEAM. The hierarchy of subjects is an outdated concept.

A lack of functional integration of universities has negative consequences on teacher education – teacher education study programmes are university programmes in name only, however, in reality they are faculty-based to a large degree. Emphasis should be placed on the **interdisciplinarity of the teaching profession**.

Reform must never stop, since if it stops, we will be lagging behind. The teacher of the future is the driver of changes and reforms.

Work-based learning should be strengthened, and the experience gained should be also used when designing digital didactic materials.

The notion of a good teacher has changed since more than 20 years ago. Today, a good teacher is no longer a person who is well acquainted with the subject content, but a person with good teaching competences, a person whose teaching is in line with their competences, identity, and their vision of teaching.

Teachers need to be properly trained for stepping into the classroom and they should be given autonomy and systematic support in their further development.

The role of the teacher in overcoming **stereotypes**, especially when it comes to gender roles, is important as teachers have the potential to build students' self-confidence, to foster the development of their values and attitudes, as well as to assist students in the choice of their professional pathway and career and their role in society.

Interdisciplinarity is a feature of the teacher of the future, starting from initial teacher education through continuing professional training and the use of the acquired knowledge and skills in teaching.

Psychological, health and mental welfare, as well as the **social-emotional development of teachers** is a pre-condition for the acquisition of new skills and for performing the new role of teachers in contemporary society.

There should be a balance between the STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) and SEL (socio-emotional learning) revolution. Without SEL there is no STEM.

The teaching profession is a **vocation**. Every teacher wishes to be a good teacher, and the system should support them in this. Not everything is about financial resources. Sometimes it is necessary to carry out quality reorganisation and to place the right people in the right place at the right time.

An important dimension of **inclusion** is student engagement in designing education materials and in assessing knowledge and skills.

