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Perception of academics on content and realization of pedagogical study programmes for the implementation of inclusiveness: The cases of Slovenia and Croatia

Abstract: The article assumes that for inclusiveness to be effectively introduced into the school system, a reform of the school system is necessary; in this context, the education of (future) teachers must also be reviewed. After the introductory presentation of the concept of inclusiveness, a comparison of teacher education courses in Slovenia and Croatia is highlighted. In the empirical portion, based on a sample of academics from universities in Ljubljana, Maribor, and Primorska (Slovenia) and Rijeka (Croatia), a study on the quality of current courses and the main contents and methods of the study process is presented. Almost half of the academics are convinced that the current study programmes do not allow (future) teachers to acquire sufficient professional knowledge and skills to work with the marginalised. Most respondents consider content related to the teaching itself to be the most important, while broader educational aspects (e.g. a pleasant atmosphere, different ways of disciplining) are less often selected as relevant content for future teachers. The majority is convinced that the most effective means for future teachers to work in heterogeneous groups is to teach relevant theoretical concepts, experience direct pedagogical work with marginalised children, and include numerous current examples in lectures that illuminate the situation of marginalised children groups in society in general or in the context of school.

Keywords: teacher education, inclusiveness, content of study programme, implementation of study programme

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Introduction

Following the *Salamanca Statement*, inclusive education has become part of the educational policy discourse and is considered a fundamental dimension of education policy worldwide. The Salamanca statement and the *Framework for action on special needs education* articulates the idea that education plays an important role in eliminating discrimination and improving social justice (UNESCO 1994), which implies that broader educational goals are also important in this process. By broader educational goals, we understand that apart from the achievement of a high-quality education (qualification) and the creation of respectful members of a society (socialization), the promotion of the comprehensive development of the child and emancipation (subjectification) (Biesta 2010) is the goal or purpose of the aforementioned processes. However, discussions on inclusive education have led to different interpretations, definitions, and practices in transnational contexts (Hodkinson 2011; Opertti et al. 2014; Vrcelj and Čubra 2012). The existing differences are a result of a historical or socio-political context that influences attitudes towards the marginalised members of society and the concept of inclusive education and, consequently, the implementation of inclusive practices (Hardy and Woodcock 2015; Kozleski et al. 2007).

Inclusive education is often understood to focus only on learners with disabilities (Engelbrecht et al. 2015; Messiou 2017; Opertti et al. 2014), while neglecting other learners with different socio-cultural backgrounds. A possible reason for such a narrow understanding lies in the Salamanca Statement itself. Specifically, the Statement promotes a discourse of needs and an individual perspective on difficulties that excludes social conditionality, which is why the seeking of solutions remains at the individual level (e.g. individual help) and not at the level of the overall educational process (Lesar 2018). Due to this reductionist approach, there is a need to conceptualise inclusive education and equality in a multidimensional and interdisciplinary context (Kozleski et al. 2014), which is not focused only on all heterogeneous groups in the school system but requires a transformation of the school system itself (Lesar 2009; Opertti et al. 2014). This understanding implies the need and obligation to ensure quality education, acceptance, and respect for

diversity (Wapling 2016). Simultaneously, much attention must be paid to analysing the capacity of educational institutions to act, which often exacerbates social inequalities (Lesar 2019; Lynch and Lodge 2002; Kibria 2005).

The implementation of inclusive education appears to be one of the greatest challenges facing education systems worldwide, regardless of existing policy documents. Moreover, the implementation of inclusive education can be interpreted as a social microscope (Beebe 2014 in Vrcelj 2018) and has become a tool for critical analysis of the extent and manner in which global problems are contextualised in local conditions.

The Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia have accepted inclusive education with the aim of providing education for all (UNESCO 1994; Karamatić Brčić 2011; Martan 2018). Teacher education must also be part of such an education policy, as teachers are one of the most important agents of change (Dyson et al. 2002; Forlin and Chambers 2011; Dreyer 2017). For the purpose of this article, we compare the teacher education study programmes in Slovenia and Croatia; thereafter, we present the results of the survey conducted among a sample of academics from all three major universities in Slovenia and the University of Rijeka in Croatia who are involved in the implementation of the above-mentioned study programmes.

Teacher education in Slovenia and Croatia

Teacher education in both countries involves not only the acquisition of more in-depth, subject-specific knowledge but also the acquisition of teacher competences, particularly pedagogical, psychological, didactic, and special didactic competences. However, although there are similarities in teacher education in Croatia and Slovenia, as evidenced by the duration of the study programme and the similar number of ECTS credits acquired, there are a few visible differences. Following the introduction of the Bologna Process, which was initiated in Croatia in 2005 and Slovenia in 2006, a minimum number of ECTS credits was required for the acquisition of teacher competences. Specifically, in Croatia, a minimum number of 55 ECTS credits is required by law; however, at the same time, there are no prescribed subjects or learning outcomes to be included in study programmes. In Slovenia, the number of credits is not prescribed by law, but a minimum of 60 ECTS credits is recommended (Merila 2008).

Initial teacher education is conducted at universities in Slovenia and Croatia within the framework of several teacher education programmes according to the following envisaged models:

- The concurrent model, where students acquire specialist knowledge in a particular field during their undergraduate studies (BA), while teacher competences are acquired through graduate studies (MA).
- The integrated model, in which pedagogical-psychological-didactical-special didactical contents are offered as part of certain existing courses in undergraduate studies.

- The consecutive model, which represents a lifelong educational programme for the acquisition of teaching skills, offered to all those who have not completed teacher education. These programmes provide pedagogical-psychological-didactical-special didactical education and enable the acquisition of a partial qualification. Upon completion of such a programme, students receive a certificate that enables them to work in the school.

In Croatia, there is no national standard of competence for teachers that could serve as a basis for the development of (initial or lifelong) teacher education programmes. Consequently, there is a mismatch between the available programmes, as they differ significantly in terms of content, organisation, and faculty members involved, thereby resulting in each faculty offering a different programme (Domović et al. 2013). Moreover, in recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of lifelong education programmes for teachers in non-teaching faculties. The lack of a national standard of competence for teachers and the implementation of teacher education programmes at non-teaching faculties indicates the marginalisation and neglect of the teaching profession in the educational policy in Croatia. Although there is still no national standard of competences for teachers in Croatia, in 2016, the National Council for Education issued a recommendation in the Framework National Standard of Qualifications for Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools.¹ The document indicates the importance of teacher competences, which are closely linked to the concept of inclusiveness.

The research, the results of which are presented in this paper, was conducted on a sample of academics at the University of Rijeka (Croatia). Therefore, the framework structure of the teacher education programme (initial teacher education programme (MA)² and the lifelong learning programme³), which is implemented at the University of Rijeka is presented here. It must be emphasised that only those portions of the programmes that allow the acquisition of teacher competences are analysed. The programmes are divided into the following three modules:

- General education subjects comprise compulsory subjects for the acquisition of basic teacher competences in the scientific disciplines of psychology, pedagogy, and general didactics, which total to 31 ECTS credits.
- Professional education subjects comprise compulsory and optional subjects (special didactics and/or specific areas of pedagogy, psychology, philosophy, linguistics, and computer science) for the acquisition of specific teacher competences, which total to 15 ECTS credits.

¹ Nacionalno vijeće za odgoj i obrazovanje (2016). »Okvir nacionalnoga standarda kvalifikacija za učitelje u osnovnim i srednjim školama« can be found at <http://nvo.hr/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Okvir-standarda-kvalifikacije-final..pdf>

² The detailed structure of the initial teacher education programme (MA) »Curriculum of graduate university studies—Teacher module« can be found at https://www.ffri.uniri.hr/files/dokumentiodsjeka/CON/NM_program_2019_2020.pdf

³ The detailed structure of the lifelong learning programme for acquiring teaching competences »Supplementary teacher education programme (DPPO)« can be found at https://www.ffri.uniri.hr/files/dokumentiodsjeka/DPPO/DPPO_program_2019-2020.pdf

- Special didactics with teaching practice comprise compulsory subjects (special didactics and teaching practice) for the acquisition of professional competences through direct practical experience, which total to 14 ECTS credits.

On the other hand, in Slovenia, there is a content framework for study programmes (within 60 ECTS credits) (Merila 2008), but there are also a few differences among the three universities (in terms of content, organisation, and faculty members involved). Despite the differences, the following programmes for the acquisition of teacher competences in Slovenia must be included:

- social sciences and humanities, which enable students to acquire pedagogical and psychological knowledge, along with elements of developmental and educational psychology, pedagogy and general didactics (most programmes include andragogy, special pedagogy, research methodology, educational philosophy, and educational sociology as well);
- specialist didactics or subject didactics in connection with the study of the main discipline;
- pedagogical practice amounting to at least 15 ECTS credits (Merila 2008; Peček and Lesar 2011).

With regard to teacher education to implement inclusiveness, academics in Slovenia are autonomous in deciding on the contents of courses and thereby determining future teachers' conceptualisation of inclusiveness (Lesar and Žveglič Mihelič 2018).

Inclusive education addresses issues of social justice; thus, future teachers must know how to promote respect, fairness, and justice in their classrooms and schools (Ballard 2004). The results of certain studies (Skočič Mihić 2011; Skočič Mihić et al. 2014) suggest that preschool teachers and primary and secondary school teachers express uncertainty regarding their competences for working in an inclusive environment. M. Peček and I. Lesar (2006) found similar results in a representative sample of Slovenian primary school teachers.

Moreover, according to the *European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education* (2011), it is necessary to pay attention to pedagogical education, which enables teachers to acquire competences for implementing inclusive practice, support, preparation, and time and skills necessary to achieve broader educational goals.

The presentation of that portion of the study programmes which enables the acquisition of teaching skills has shown that they are very similar in content and ECTS at all the universities involved in this study. In contrast to Croatia, most teacher education programmes in Slovenia contain not only pedagogical, psychological, didactic, and special didactical content but also subjects from the field of andragogy (Peček and Lesar 2011), which prepare future teachers for working with adults, who can often be marginalised.

Further, when it comes to content related to inclusiveness, students at Slovenian universities as well as at the University of Rijeka have subjects for teaching learners with special needs (usually compulsory subjects, but also optional subjects

at a few universities) (Peček and Lesar 2011). However, an analysis of teacher education curricula at all universities (Ljubljana, Maribor, Primorska, and Rijeka) suggests that the understanding of inclusiveness is usually linked to the inclusion of learners with disabilities and special needs, while a more complex understanding of inclusiveness is neglected. It must be noted that it is possible that the broader understanding of inclusiveness mentioned above has been incorporated into other subjects; thus, a more comprehensive qualitative analysis of all educational programmes may be a good idea for future research.

Research problem

As we have seen in the previous analysis of the education of future teachers in Slovenia and Croatia, there are no standards for teacher qualification at the national level; thus, it may be concluded that at the university level, the professional autonomy of the subjects is rather high. This implies that the majority of the academics can independently decide the relevant content of their subjects and the manner in which the pedagogical process is conducted. Therefore, we reviewed their beliefs regarding the adequacy of the implementation of the pedagogical process at the tertiary level and the key contents that provide (future) teachers with skills for qualitative pedagogical work with different groups of children and adolescents.

Specifically, we formulated the following research questions:

- How do academics assess the suitability and efficiency of the current study programme in terms of providing quality knowledge and skills for working with marginalised learners?
- In what manner must a high-quality study process be implemented according to the academics of pedagogical study programmes?
- In the opinion of the academics, what are the most important contents in relation to inclusiveness of the study programmes for future teachers?

We analysed the data to identify statistically significant differences in relation to the country, the years of work experience at the faculty, and the subject they teach.

Methodology

Sample

The sample comprised 219 academics, 70.6% of whom were female and 28.9% male; one academic (0.5%) chose not to indicate gender. The majority were employed at the University of Ljubljana (44.1%), one-third at the University of Rijeka (36.2%), and one-tenth at the University of Maribor (10.8%) and the University of Primorska (9.9%).

On average, the participants had 14.57 years of professional experience at the university ($SD = 10.08$). Over two-thirds (71.5 %) had a PhD, 20.2% had a first degree or a master's degree (first and second Bologna cycles), and 8.3 % had a master's of science or other type of specialisation. In terms of university titles, 27.1% were assistant professors, 25.2% assistants, 21.0% associate professors, 16.2% full professors, 4.3% (senior) lecturers, 2.4% professional support staff, 1.9% external staff, and 1.0% research fellows. A majority of the participants (67.1%) had previously worked for at least six months in kindergartens, schools, or other educational institutions.

With regard to the subjects, most of them are professors, assistants, etc. of social sciences and humanities subjects (37.7 %); professors, assistants, etc. of discipline areas subjects (33.7 %); professors, assistants, etc. of special didactics (20.1 %); and others (8.5 %) involved in special pedagogues etc.

Over half of the participants (59.1%) were found to devote very little or no time to the topic of marginalised groups in their lectures and other pedagogical work, while 40.1% were found to devote at least some time to these topics.

Instrument

The data for the study were collected by a survey using the questionnaire entitled »University Employees about Inclusion of Marginalised Students« (Lesar 2017). The questionnaire was translated into Croatian for the respondents from the University of Rijeka. To answer the three research questions, closed questions were also included. The perceived importance of different contents in the pedagogical study programmes was measured in greater detail on a five-point Likert scale (where 1 indicates strongly disagree and 5 indicates strongly agree) consisting of 14 statements. In addition, questions regarding the personal characteristics of the participants (country, years of work experience at the faculty, and subject field) were also included in the questionnaire.

Data collection and analysis

The questionnaires were initially piloted with 30 academics of the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Ljubljana. Thereafter, the online survey was conducted via e-mail invitations to the Slovenian participants from January to February and to the Croatian participants from November to December 2017.

The data were used for an exploratory factor analysis to determine the structural validity and reliability of the scales and to form aggregated variables. Principal component analysis (PCA) was performed on the group of items from the scale with oblique rotation (oblimin). The Keiser-Meyer-Olkin measure (KMO) verified the adequacy of the sample for the analysis, $KMO = .79$ (KMO values for

individual items = .5). Bartlett's sphericity test [$\chi^2(78) = 771.93, p < .001$] revealed that the correlations between the items were sufficiently large for PCA. The PCA resulted in a four-component solution, with 13 items that explained 80.79% of the variance. One item (Assumption of (shared) responsibility by the teachers for the learning and personal progress of each child) was excluded from the original item set due to its high exposure to two factors. According to the percentage of the total variance explained by the first component (44.26%), the scale has an acceptable validity, while the value of Cronbach's alpha suggests an acceptable reliability of the total scale ($\alpha = .88$).

In addition, Pearson's Chi-square test was performed to ascertain the relationship between two categorical variables, along with Cramer's contingency coefficient as a measure of the strength of the relationship between two variables. Mann-Whitney Kruskal-Wallis tests were also performed on the scale data to identify statistically significant differences in the subscale scores for respondent characteristics. The Mann-Whitney test also served as a post-hoc test for the Kruskal-Wallis test; in this case a Bonferroni correction was applied (the effect is reported at a significance level of .003). The data for categorical variables are presented as percentages for individual categories.

Results

Assessment of the academics regarding the quality of the study programmes

We asked the participants whether the study programme provides future teachers with the high-quality knowledge and skills necessary to work with marginalised learners. The results are presented in Table 1 below.

The study programme I contribute to for the most part...	Frequency	Percent
a) enables the acquisition of sufficiently high-quality knowledge and skills.	64	33.0
b) requires a partial revision in order to obtain high quality and relevant knowledge and skills.	89	45.9
c) does not enable the acquisition of high quality knowledge and skills and should be substantially revised.	23	11.9
d) does not enable the acquisition of high-quality knowledge and skills, but I believe that such knowledge and skills can be acquired in in-service education and, therefore, there is no need to include them in study programmes.	18	9.2
Total	194	100.0

Table 1: Responses from academics regarding the level of provision of quality knowledge and skills to future teachers for their work with marginalised learners

Similar to the analysis presented for the Slovenian sample only (Lesar and Žveglič Mihelič 2018), we found that the most common answer selected by respondents was that the study programme to which they contribute most often requires a partial revision (45.9%). Some were more critical and felt that the study programme did not enable the acquisition of high-quality knowledge and skills, requiring either a significant revision (11.9%) or a wider range of programmes in in-service education (9.2%). One-third (33.0%) of the participants believe that the study programme, enables obtaining sufficient quality knowledge and skills for work with marginalised children.

Further analysis revealed a weak but statistically significant correlation between the country and the responses of academics regarding the level of provision of quality knowledge and skills for future teachers for their work with marginalised learners [$\chi^2(3) = 8.753$, $p < .03$, $V = .21$]. The majority of Croatian academics working at the University of Rijeka is convinced that the study programme does not allow for the acquisition of quality knowledge and skills, which requires a wider range of programmes in in-service education (Croatia 15.6% vs Slovenia 5.1%).

Academics on the quality of the study process

When asked how a high-quality study process must be conducted so that well-educated teachers can work with different groups of children, respondents were able to select up to three of the answers given (see Table 2).

In my opinion, a high-quality study programme that helps well-educated teachers to work with different groups of children is one that...	Frequency	Percent of n
a) provides students with relevant theoretical concepts that are important for designing quality teaching practices in heterogeneous groups of children.	121	62.7
b) includes numerous current examples in the lectures that shed light on the situation of marginalised groups of children in society in general or in school contexts.	117	60.6
c) encourages students to follow current social events and to work voluntarily with the marginalised.	103	53.4
d) gives the students numerous experiences in direct pedagogical work with marginalised individuals or groups.	119	61.7
e) gives the students first-hand experience in teaching with the regular population of children and then experiences with the marginalised.	58	30.1

Table 2: Responses from academics on implementing quality study programmes

Almost two-thirds of the respondents (62.7%) were convinced that students must be offered relevant theoretical concepts that are important for designing quality-teaching practices in heterogeneous groups of children. Slightly fewer (61.7%) selected the answer that a high-quality study programme enables students to gain varied experience in direct pedagogical work with marginalised individuals or

groups. A similar proportion of respondents (60.6%) believe that the study process is of high quality if numerous current cases are included in the lectures that shed light on the situation of marginalised children's groups in society in general or in school contexts. Half of the respondents selected the answer »encourage students to follow current social events and to work voluntarily with the marginalised«, and less than one-third selected the answer »give the students first-hand experience in teaching with the regular population of children and then experiences with the marginalised.«

With regard to years of work experience at a university, statistically significant differences were found in answer (b): »It includes many current examples in the lectures that shed light on the situation of marginalised groups of children in society in general or in school contexts.« [$2\hat{I}(4) = 15.43$, $p < .01$, $V = .28$]. As many as four-fifths (81.5%) of the respondents with 1–3 years of experience and over two-thirds (71.4%) of the respondents with 19–30 years of experience selected this answer, while a significantly lower proportion (48.7%) of the respondents with 7–18 years of experience agree with this method of pedagogical work.

With regard to the subject areas, we found two statistically significant differences, with the first (a) [$2\hat{I}(4) = 24.63$, $p < .00$, $V = .36$] and the last (e) answer [$2\hat{I}(4) = 26.43$, $p < .00$, $V = .36$]. As many as four-fifths (80.0%) of the participants who teach social sciences and humanities subjects believe that a high-quality study programme is one that »provides students with relevant theoretical concepts that are important for designing quality teaching practices in heterogeneous groups of children.« A significantly lower proportion of respondents who teach discipline areas subjects (47.7%) and special didactics (42.9%) selected this answer. However, in the last answer (e), a significantly higher proportion of respondents who teach special didactics (54.3%) and discipline areas subjects (41.5%) and a significantly lower proportion of respondents who teach social sciences and humanities subjects (15.7%) selected the answer that study programmes enable students to experience teaching with the regular population of children and then to have experience with the marginalised.

Academics on the most important contents in the education of future teachers

We asked the participants which contents for implementation of inclusiveness do they consider to be the most important in the study programmes for future teachers. They could choose three answers (see Table 3). Similar to the analysis of only the Slovenian sample (Lesar and Žvegljč Mihelič 2018), a majority of academics were convinced that »different teaching methods and forms of differentiation and individualisation« must be guaranteed in the education of future teachers (73.1%).

The most important contents in the study courses for the education of future teachers are...	Frequency	Percent of n
a) high-quality special-needs education	92	47.7
b) possibilities to create a pleasant atmosphere in a group or an educational institution	68	35.2
c) the knowledge of as many psycho-physical characteristics of individual marginalised groups (poor, immigrants, SEN, etc.) as possible	85	44.0
d) recognising and transforming own prejudices towards marginalised groups	106	54.9
e) different teaching methods, forms of differentiation, and individualisation	141	73.1
f) different educational methods, possibilities of disciplining, and punishment	24	12.4
g) others	11	5.7

Table 3: Responses from academics on the main content of the courses of study that educate future teachers

In this sample as well we found that only half of the academics (54.9%) emphasised that attention must be paid to recognising and transforming students' prejudices towards marginalised groups and only a third of them (35.2%) consider it important to familiarise future teachers with a variety of ways to create an inviting atmosphere in a group or an educational institution, even though they are one of the most important factors in implementing inclusiveness (Dyson et al. 2002; Forlin and Nguyet 2010). Further, over two-fifths of the respondents (44.0%) believe that the study programme must provide knowledge of as many psycho-physical characteristics of individual marginalised groups as possible as well as high-quality special-needs education for future teachers (47.7%). Both can be placed within the concept of integration, since the psychomedical paradigm and the individualistic perspective or the professional discourse and the focus on facilitating learning are in the foreground (Lesar and Žvegljč Mihelič 2018). Slightly over one-tenth (12.4%) of the academics consider «different educational methods, possibilities of disciplining and punishment» to be relevant.

In terms of years of experience, statistically significant differences were found in the answers (b) [$2\hat{I}(4) = 9.92$, $p < .05$, $V = .23$] and (f) [$2\hat{I}(4) = 13.42$, $p < .01$, $V = .27$]. A significantly higher proportion (58.8%) of the respondents with 4–6 years of experience and a significantly lower proportion (23.8%) of the respondents with 19–30 years of experience consider the possibilities of creating a pleasant atmosphere in a group or an educational institution to be more or less important content in the education of future teachers. A significantly higher percentage (33.3%) of the respondents with 1–3 years of experience consider different educational methods and possibilities of disciplining and punishment as important content in the education of future teachers.

Further, there was a difference with regard to the subject area, namely in answer (d) [$2\hat{I}(4) = 22.35$, $p < .00$, $V = .34$]. A significantly higher proportion (72.9%) of respondents who teach social science and humanities subjects consider the recognition and transformation of own prejudices towards marginalised groups to be relevant and a significantly lower proportion of respondents who teach special didactics (28.6%) consider this to be relevant content in the study process.

Specifically, we requested relevant content from those respondents who at least occasionally include topics on the marginalised in their work ($n = 74$). Table 4 presents the statements with mean value, standard deviation, and saturation value within a certain factor.

Factor	In the educational programmes of (future) teachers, the most important role should be that of content:	M (SD)	Saturation value of variables
F1: The Social status of the marginalised	9) Social position of the SEN children.	4.00 (.95)	,960
	11) Social position of children in poverty.	4.16 (.89)	,930
	13) Social position of children of immigrants.	4.14 (.86)	,933
<i>Eigenvalue = 5.75; % of variance = 44.26; $\alpha = .96$</i>			
F2: Process of integration	1) Preparation of documentation of the individual child for external experts who can decide most objectively and professionally on the adjustments to a pedagogical process.	2.46 (1.09)	,856
	3) Possibilities of providing individualised (learning) support for individual groups of marginalised children.	4.12 (.85)	,556
	5) Early detection of developmental deviations in children for the purpose of initiating a process of placement.	3.58 (1.03)	,730
	7) Efficient ways of working with parents to become aware and accept the key role in promoting their child's learning and helping with homework.	3.76 (1.30)	,914
<i>Eigenvalue = 2.52; % of variance = 19.37; $\alpha = .84$</i>			
F3: Inclusive atmosphere	2) Adjustments in the everyday educational process for each child.	4.26 (.83)	-,660
	4) Ways to create a better social atmosphere in a group of children.	4.62 (.63)	-,913
	8) Possibilities of creating a pleasant atmosphere in an educational institution.	4.33 (.64)	-,754
<i>Eigenvalue = 1.21; % of variance = 9.32; $\alpha = .79$</i>			
F4: Teaching adjustments for the marginalised	10) Teaching adjustments for individual groups of SEN children.	4.28 (.73)	-,569
	12) Teaching adjustments for children in poverty.	3.82 (1.06)	-,999
	14) Teaching adjustments for children of immigrants.	3.98 (.96)	-,916
<i>Eigenvalue = 1.02; % of variance = 7.85; $\alpha = .88$</i>			

Table 4: Academics who at least occasionally include topics related to the marginalised on the most important contents in the courses of study for future teachers: Factor analysis

The first component, »The social status of the marginalised«, is represented by items that highlight knowledge of the social status of the marginalised. The second component, »Integration process«, is represented by the items dealing with practises that are important for the concept of integration. The third component, »Inclusive atmosphere« comprises items that emphasise the importance of the social atmosphere either in a group of children or in an educational institution as well as everyday adjustments of the educational process. The fourth component, »Teaching adjustments for the marginalised«, includes three items that highlight the adaptation of the teaching to either the poor, immigrants, or special educational needs SEN population.

The academics in our study, similar to the survey in the Slovenian sample (Lesar and Žvegič Mihelič 2018), expressed a high degree of agreement with the importance of providing content on all content groups offered in the study programmes for future teachers: an inclusive atmosphere (subscale mean = 4.41, SD = .63), the social status of the marginalised (subscale mean = 4.16, SD = .88), teaching adjustments for the marginalised (subscale mean = 4.06, SD = .85), and the integration process (subscale mean = 3.65, SD = .87). It is evident from the results that academics who devote at least some time to the issues of the marginalised consider a more inclusive atmosphere and an understanding of the social status of the marginalised to be more important than adjustments in teaching. Therefore, they prioritise opportunities for social participation over academic success.

However, there are a few statistically significant differences in the support for the provision of this content with regard to different characteristics of academics. Depending on the country, we found differences in the second factor [$z = -2.48$, $p < .05$]. The level of agreement with integration-related content was significantly higher among respondents from Croatia ($M = 3.96$) than among respondents from Slovenia ($M = 3.50$).

With regard to the subject field, we only found a statistically significant difference in the fourth factor [$H(2) = 6.17$, $p < .05$]. Additional pair-wise comparisons revealed that respondents who teach subjects in the social sciences and humanities agreed significantly less with the involvement of the teaching adjustment to the marginalised in the education of future teachers ($M = 3.88$) than respondents who conduct special didactics ($M = 4.52$).

Discussion

Most of the academics in our study are convinced that current study programmes do not enable (future) teachers to acquire sufficient professional knowledge and skills to work with the marginalised. However, it must be emphasised that Croatian respondents expressed greater criticism of the study programmes. In the opinion of all respondents and with regard to the content of the study programmes that must be offered to future teachers, the results reveal a similar pattern as that in the previously published article on the Slovenian sample (Lesar and Žvegič Mihelič 2018). Indeed, academics are ambivalent between basic educational content and

content that is important for the implementation of inclusiveness or integration (*ibid.*). Most of the respondents (73.1%) consider the content related to teaching itself to be the most important, while broader educational aspects (e.g. a pleasant atmosphere, various possibilities of disciplining) are less frequently selected as relevant content for future teachers. Further analysis reveals that younger academics are more aware of the importance of knowledge and skills that enable future teachers to create a constructive social climate and resolve conflicts, thereby contributing to a pleasant atmosphere, which is also confirmed by foreign researchers as a more important factor in achieving inclusiveness (e.g. Dyson et al. 2002). One of the most important factors influencing pedagogical practise is the prejudice against the marginalised (*ibid.*), which has been recognised by academics teaching social sciences and humanities subjects as an important factor in the study process of future teachers.

The analysis of the data of those respondents who deal with at least a few topics related to the marginalised in their subjects reveals that this group of academics is more aware of the importance of creating an inclusive climate, of being aware of the social position of the marginalised, and of (special) didactical adaptations to marginalised children as processes relevant for the implementation of the concept of inclusiveness. However, we also identified a few differences between them. In particular, respondents from Croatia are more in favour of involving content that is relevant to the integration process. Moreover, academics who teach special didactics agree more strongly with the involvement of teaching adaptation for the marginalised in the education of future teachers, while significantly fewer of those who teach social sciences and humanities subjects agree with this aspect.

When asked about the study process, a majority of the academics are convinced that the most important aspect is the teaching of theoretical concepts that are relevant for the design of high-quality teaching practise in heterogeneous groups (62.7%), the experience of direct pedagogical work with marginalised children (61.7%), and the inclusion of numerous current examples in lectures that shed light on the situation of marginalised children's groups in society in general or in school contexts (60.6%). The academics of social sciences and humanities subjects are somehow more aware that a high quality implementation of inclusiveness does not require special pedagogical knowledge and specific methods for working with certain groups of marginalised learners, but particularly the recognition and reduction of prejudices against marginalised groups.

Conclusions

The results of this study have revealed that most academics evaluate the special didactics adjustment of the teaching process as a key feature of the education of future teachers with regard to working with marginalised learners. Such a narrow understanding of the adaptation of the teaching process to marginalised learners continues to promote a narrow understanding of inclusiveness, while a broader understanding (including the element of subjectification and other marginalised

groups of learners not only children with disabilities) is neglected. In this manner, the educational process and, thus, the education of future teachers is approached in a technical manner, thereby focusing mainly on teaching methods and techniques and simultaneously on important pedagogical practices in working with marginalised learners groups that are largely neglected. The teacher education courses in most study programmes have a dichotomy of content, with a sharp distinction between the general pedagogical and psychological subjects and the narrower subject-specific content that students are likely to teach in their future work as teachers. Because of this sharp distinction in content, very little attention is paid to the general pedagogical and psychological subjects. In contrast, in teacher education in connection with the study of the main discipline, the study of the main discipline is emphasized. In this context, there is an interesting thought expressed in Medveš (2011): »Uf, what about the Slovenian construction of the pedagogical module 2011! Which amounts to 60 ECTS, including only one fifth of the pedagogical subjects (and even this is to be lost in the broader field of 'humanities', where pedagogy could become a mere optional subject for students of pedagogical studies) and more than two-thirds of the subject didactics and practice?« (p. 153).

According to the results of this study, younger academics are more aware of the broader educational dimension of pedagogical work (which includes the element of subjectification). In this context, they believe that more content must be included in the programme, in the context of ensuring an inclusive atmosphere and the use of different educational methods while ensuring discipline. These educational aspects have been confirmed in both national and international research as important factors for achieving inclusiveness.

On the other hand, almost half of the academics considered characteristics related to the psycho-physical characteristics of individual groups of marginalised learners to be very important, which implies that specific treatments must be designed for marginalised learners. Accordingly, we can conclude that almost half of the academics advocate a narrower understanding of the concept of inclusiveness. These academics do not appear to be aware of the broader social impact of marginalisation and only (un)directly support the existing school system and the integration of marginalised learners if they can be integrated into the majority system with maximum support. Therefore, these views of academics tend to support the concept of integration rather than inclusiveness in the broader sense.

The results also reveal that academics who teach social sciences and humanities subjects are more aware of the complexity of various influences on the inclusion of marginalised learners, particularly the importance of prejudice. They include topics in their subjects that relate to a broader understanding of the concept of inclusiveness and are not limited to the special didactic adaptation of the teaching process to marginalised learners. This approach in the education of future teachers promotes a more constructive teacher education in which teachers are not considered exclusively as experts in subject didactics.

In view of the existing teacher education programmes in Slovenia and Croatia, the question that arises is how to respond appropriately to the increasing need for teachers to work with marginalised groups. Should teacher education pro-

grammes be thoroughly redesigned or should the approach of the entire faculty be changed to reflect curricular cooperation and inclusive philosophy? (Forlin 2010) It is obvious that a broader understanding of inclusiveness remains at the level of mere rhetoric and is not recognised as an important part of everyday life, as it is insufficiently represented in the education of future teachers in terms of content. In the future, attention must be paid to marginalised groups and individuals when designing the curriculum for teacher education, since inclusiveness has emerged as an expression of the actual needs of society and, thus, also of teacher education. In addition, inclusiveness must be understood as a philosophy of life and not be reduced to people with disabilities.

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VISOKOŠOLSKI UČITELJI O VSEBINI IN IZVEDBI PEDAGOŠKIH ŠTUDIJSKIH PROGRAMOV ZA IMPLEMENTACIJO INKLUZIVNOSTI: PRIMERA SLOVENIJE IN HRVAŠKE

Povzetek: Članek je grajen na predpostavki, da je za učinkovito implementacijo inkluzivnosti potrebna reforma šolskega sistema in v tem kontekstu bi bilo treba kritično analizirati tudi izobraževanje (bodočih) učiteljev. Po uvodni predstavitvi koncepta inkluzivnosti je narejena primerjava programov izobraževanja (bodočih) učiteljev v Sloveniji in na Hrvaškem. V empiričnem delu, ki temelji na vzorcu visokošolskih učiteljev z univerz v Ljubljani, Mariboru, na Primorskem in na Reki, je predstavljena študija o kakovosti aktualnih študijskih programov, glavnih vsebinah in načinih izvajanja študijskega procesa. Skoraj polovica visokošolskih učiteljev je prepričana, da sedanji študijski programi (bodočim) učiteljem ne omogočajo pridobitev zadosti strokovnih znanj in veščin za delo z marginaliziranimi. Večina anketirancev ocenjuje, da so vsebine, povezane s samim poučevanjem, najpomembnejše, medtem ko so širši pedagoški vidiki (npr. prijetno vzdušje, različni načini discipliniranja) manj pogosto izbrani kot pomembne vsebine za (bodoče) učitelje. Prepričanje večine visokošolskih učiteljev je, da je najučinkovitejši način izobraževanja za delo (bodočih) učiteljev v heterogenih skupinah, da študente seznani z ustreznimi teoretičnimi koncepti, pa tudi da študentom omogočijo izkušnje neposrednega pedagoškega dela z marginaliziranimi in da v predavanja vključijo številne aktualne primere, ki osvetlijo položaj marginaliziranih v družbi na sploh ali v šolskem kontekstu.

Ključne besede: izobraževanje učiteljev, inkluzivnost, vsebina študijskega programa, izvajanje študijskega programa

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