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Chapter XXX

BELIEFS OF STUDENT TEACHERS ABOUT THEIR COMPETENCIES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SLOVENIA AND SERBIA

Sunčica V. Macura* University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Education in Jagodina, Serbia

> Ivan Čuk Faculty of Sport, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Mojca Peček
Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Abstract: The inclusive education policy requires prospective teachers to develop competencies to promote learning in all pupils. Having in mind that teachers' beliefs are reflected in their practice, the present study aims to explore beliefs of fourth-year student teachers from Slovenia and Serbia about their own competencies relating to inclusive education. Specifically, the research questions are: 1) What are student teachers' beliefs about their own competencies related to inclusive education? 2) Are there any differences in student teachers' beliefs in relation to the country in which they are studying? The sample consisted of 135 student teachers enrolled at the University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Education in Jagodina and the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education in Ljubljana. The instrument (questionnaire) contained 26 statements relating to eight areas of teacher expertise: setting the 'learning to learn' goal for all pupils; taking responsibility for the learning of all pupils; personalized learning approaches that support autonomy in learning; identifying and addressing barriers to learning; differentiation of curriculum content, learning process and learning materials; positive classroom management; formative and summative assessment and cooperative learning. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 22.0. The frequencies of each of the responses were calculated for each group of students (Slovenia and Serbia). Differences between the two groups of students were analysed with the χ^2 test. The results of the study suggest that the majority of student teachers participating in the study feel competent in the abovementioned areas of teacher expertise. The self-confident perceptions of competencies of student teachers from both countries are interpreted in the lens of theories of professional development and implications for further development of teacher education for inclusive education are provided.

Keywords: student teachers, competencies, inclusive education, Slovenia, Serbia.

*E-mail: suncicamacura@gmail.com

Introduction

The inclusive education policy which has been adopted in numerous countries around the globe holds teacher education institutions responsible for developing future teachers' competencies for inclusive education. However, in order to discuss and formulate competencies, one first needs to discuss the meaning and concept of inclusive education. For example, if inclusive education is narrowly understood as overcoming the deficits of some pupils, i.e. including children with disabilities into the regular education system, teacher education for such a concept of inclusion would require specialist knowledge needed for teaching 'special' pupils. Nevertheless, even the most thorough coverage of 'special' issues is not likely to anticipate every type of difficulty teachers might experience in their heterogeneous classrooms (Pantić et al. 2010).

On the other hand, a wider concept of inclusive education would require quite different teacher competencies. This is related to the issues of ethnicity, class, social conditions, health and human rights, and universal access, participation and achievement of pupils (EADSNE 2010). A wider understanding of inclusive education is focused on diversity and how schools respond to the diversity of all pupils (Ainscow et al. 2006). Inclusion in education comprises minimizing barriers for learning and the participation of all pupils, not only those with disabilities (Booth, Ainscow 2002), i.e. it should become policy and practice that is not restricted to specific interventions related to any specific group of pupils. In the influential 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth, Ainscow 2002), inclusion is conceived as a process of promoting the presence, participation and achievement of all learners. Instead of a definition, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) proposes a vision of inclusive education system: The ultimate vision for inclusive education systems is to ensure that all learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers (EASNIE 2015).

Teacher competencies for inclusive education

What are competencies and which competencies are needed for teachers in order to successfully implement inclusive education defined in the broad sense? According to Jansma (2011, in EADSNE, 2011) professional competency is like an iceberg, where only the tip (representing teacher action) is visible. Beneath the surface lies the base of personal qualities, professional attitudes and beliefs, and professional repertoire based on knowledge and responsibility. According to Florian and Rouse (2009) teacher competencies for inclusive education should include broad knowledge and generic skills relevant to the improvement of teaching and learning for all. This may involve gaining an

understanding of the socio-cultural factors that produce individual differences, awareness of educational and social issues that can affect pupils' learning, as well as multifaceted pedagogy that recognizes how decisions informing teaching should take into account pupils' individual characteristics, the learning that takes place outside school, and learners' previous knowledge, individual and cultural experiences, and interests.

More specifically, the list of competencies for inclusion provided in *Teachers for the Future* (Pantić et al. 2006) comprise three broad areas: a personalized approach to learning; understanding and respect for diversity; and commitment to values of social inclusion. *Tuning Teacher Education Curricula in the Western Balkans* (Pantić 2008) lists the following areas of teachers' expertise for inclusion: self-evaluation and professional development, subject knowledge, pedagogy and curricula, understanding of the education system and contribution to its development and values and child rearing.

EADSNE, an independent organization that acts as a collaboration platform for ministries of education in EU countries and focuses on improving all learners' achievement at all levels, produced a *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* (EADSNE 2012). The profile is the result of research on teacher education carried out in 24 countries in the EU and it presents information on what essential values and areas of competence should be developed within all teacher education programs for inclusive education. The *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* adopts an approach based on broad 'areas of competence', which are seen as developmental and as spanning both initial [undergraduate] teacher education and early career development.

The four core values proposed in the *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* are: valuing learner diversity (learner difference is a resource and an asset to education), supporting all learners (high expectations for all learners' achievements), working with others (collaboration and teamwork), and personal professional development (teaching is a learning activity and teachers taking responsibility for their lifelong learning). The areas of competence within core value *supporting all learners* relate to: Promoting the academic, practical, social and emotional learning of all learners and Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes. These areas of competence (as all others) are set out in terms of attitudes or beliefs, which rely on certain knowledge or levels of understanding, and require particular skills or abilities to be developed in order to be implemented in practice.

It is important to note that the *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* is a valuable source for developing teacher education programs for at least two reasons. The first reason is related to its broad approach to inclusive education that encompasses diverse learners and is not restricted to those with identified special educational needs. The values and areas of competency send the vital message that inclusive education is an approach for all learners, not just an approach

for a particular group with particular needs (EADSNE 2012). The second one is related to the key objective of the *Profile of Inclusive Teachers*, which is to reinforce the argument that inclusive education is the responsibility of all teachers and that preparing all teachers for work in inclusive settings is the responsibility of all teacher educators working across initial [undergraduate] teacher education programs (EADSNE 2012)

Research questions

The present study is part of a wider longitudinal comparative research which aims to explore the beliefs of students from Slovenia and Serbia about inclusive education. Having in mind that teachers' beliefs are reflected in their practice and their pupils' achievements, the present study aims to explore beliefs of fourth-year student teachers (STs) from Slovenia and Serbia about their own competencies related to inclusive education. Specifically, the research questions are: 1) What are STs' beliefs about their own competencies related to inclusive education? 2) Are there any differences in STs' beliefs in relation to the country in which they are studying?

Method

The context

In the last decade, the field of education in Serbia has been marked by the process of implementing inclusive education. In 2009, the new education legislation (NARS, 2009) established inclusion as a principle and introduced the right to education and access to education without discrimination or segregation for pupils from marginalized social groups and those with developmental disabilities. Pupils with disabilities have the right to individual educational plans, which may include arrangements for lower learning outcomes and the lowering of knowledge standards.

In Slovenia, major systematic changes in this area occurred in 2000 with the *Placement of Children with Special Needs Act* (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 2000). Particular educational criteria are applied for shaping individualized programs of assistance, support and interventions for vulnerable pupils. However, support in regular school may be provided only if the child can achieve educational program standards with regard to the type and rate of the deficiency, deficit or disorder. Thus, the key criterion for inclusion is meeting educational standards. The academic achievements of pupils are measured in terms of the knowledge retained by pupils, which highlights the cognitive dimension of pupils' development and rules out other dimensions as insignificant (Kobolt et al. 2010).

The sample

In both countries, primary teachers are studying education at a university that offers four years of undergraduate studies, followed by one year of Master's studies within the Bologna programs. The survey took place at the end of the fourth year of STs' studying. The sample consisted of STs enrolled at the University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Education in Jagodina (Serbia) and the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education in Ljubljana (Slovenia) in the full-time education program. These STs are studying to be teachers in grades 1-4 in primary schools in Serbia and grades 1-6 in primary schools in Slovenia. In Slovenia, the questionnaire was completed by 84 STs (representing 91.30% of the total number of fourth-year STs), while in Serbia 51 STs completed the questionnaire (representing 60.1% of the total number of fourth-year STs). Since these programs are strongly dominated by female STs, gender differences in their beliefs could not be analyzed.

The Serbian teacher education program includes the compulsory Inclusion in Education course (60 hours of instruction during one semester, four ECTS) in the third year of studies. The course aims to prepare STs to teach all pupils in classes and to accept pupils' diversity as a challenge that contributes to the development and richness of instruction. In terms of internships, unfortunately, it is not clear whether all STs have an opportunity to observe quality inclusive practices in schools. There is a large gap between lectures, which are intended to shape positive attitudes towards inclusion, and school practices, in which teachers with negative attitudes towards inclusive education and vulnerable pupils might be encountered. This situation further intensifies some STs' prejudices and results in adverse attitudes towards inclusion (Macura-Milovanović et al. 2010).

The teacher education program at the Faculty of Education in Ljubljana includes one compulsory Inclusive Education course in the fourth year of study (60 hours of lectures and 30 of tutorials during one semester, six ECTS). Topics such as theories dealing with diversity, the current situation of educationally disadvantaged pupils in schools, and teaching vulnerable pupils are also included in some other obligatory and optional courses. The content of the courses is based on a broad understanding of inclusive education; however, the focus on teaching children with SEN prevails. Emphasis is placed more on providing knowledge, less on dealing with fears, prejudice and stereotypes, which could be addressed in smaller groups with more active teaching methods (Peček, Lesar 2011). Furthermore, it is not clear whether all STs have internships in classes with quality inclusive practices because some of them become more convinced of the infeasibility of inclusion after their internships (Mlinar, Peček 2014).

Data Collection

We prepared a pilot version of the questionnaire and tested it on a sample of STs from both universities. The final version of the questionnaire was based on their responses and comments.

Instrument

The instrument (questionnaire) contained 26 statements (provided in Table 1) regarding the abovementioned areas of teacher expertise specified in the core value *supporting learning* and related teacher competences within *Effective teaching approaches in heterogeneous classes* (EADSNE 2012). Below we are listing eight competencies from the *Profile of Inclusive Teachers* and related statements (the number in the brackets refers to the number of the statement in the questionnaire):

- 1. setting the 'learning to learn' goal for all pupils (S2),
- 2. taking responsibility for learning of all pupils (S1, S7),
- 3. personalized learning approaches that support autonomy in learning (S3, S4, S6, S8, S9, S10, S11, S25, S26),
- 4. identifying and addressing barriers to learning (S5, S23),
- 5. differentiation of curriculum content, learning process and learning materials (S22, S24),
- 6. positive classroom management (S18, S19, S20, S21),
- 7. formative and summative assessment (S16, S17) and
- 8. cooperative learning (S12, S13, S14, S15).

The STs were asked to respond to the following question: Assess the level of your competencies related to the successful realization of the following aspects of teaching in the class. STs provided their responses to each statement by using a five-level Likert scale: I don't have this competence (1), I have slightly developed this competence (2), I have partially developed this competence (3), I developed this competence very well (4), and I developed this competence extremely well (5).

Table 1: Student teachers' beliefs about their own competencies related to inclusive education and differences in relation to the country

Statements	Countrie	1	2	2	A		2.2	C;~
Statements	Country	1	2	3	4	5	χ²	Sig
1. I know how to plan instruction so that all children in the class can learn.	Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 0.0 0.0	6.0 2.0 4.4	26.2 33.3 28.9	61.9 54.9 59.3	6.0 9.8 7.4	2.596	.458
2. I know how to plan instruction which is the support for learning, not just transmission of the curriculum.	Slovenia Serbia Total	0.0 2.0 0.7	0.0 2.0 0.7	20.2 27.5 23.0	65.5 51.0 60.0	14.3 17.6 15.6	5.355	.253
3. I know how to organise contents in such a way that background, experiences and interests of every pupil are taken into account.	Slovenia Serbia Total	0.0 2.0 0.7	6.0 4.0 5.2	35.7 36.0 35.8	48.8 42.0 46.3	9.5 16.0 11.9	3.324	.505
4. I know how to organise instruction so that it encourages independent learning.	Slovenia Serbia Total	0.0 0.0 0.0	4.8 2.0 3.7	29.8 11.8 23.0	56.0 51.0 54.1	9.5 35.3 19.3	16.236	.001
5. While planning instruction, I pay attention to and I know how to diminish difficulties in learning of particular pupils.	Slovenia Serbia Total	0.0 2.0 0.7	4.8 3.9 4.4	36.9 21.6 31.1	53.6 47.1 51.1	4.8 25.5 12.6	15.187	.004
6. I know how to motivate all pupils during instruction.	Slovenia Serbia Total	0.0 0.0 0.0	3.6 0.0 2.2	35.7 10.0 26.1	45.2 54.0 48.5	15.5 36.0 23.1	15.923	.001
7. I can take personal responsibility for learning of every pupil.	Slovenia Serbia Total	1.2 2.0 1.5	15.7 2.0 10.4	57.8 29.4 47.0	21.7 47.1 31.3	3.6 19.6 9.7	26.041	.000
8. I can imagine how each of my pupils experiences instruction.	Slovenia Serbia total	1.2 2.0 1.5	16.7 11.8 14.8	56.0 17.6 41.5	17.9 52.9 31.1	8.3 15.7 11.1	25.966	.000
9. I plan my lessons taking into consideration differences in experience and knowledge of my pupils.	Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 2.1 0.8	3.6 2.1 3.0	35.7 12.5 27.3	47.6 54.2 50.0	13.1 29.2 18.9	12.437	.014
10. I pay attention to the emotional aspects of learning, i.e. I recognize confusion, shame or fear of my pupils.	Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 0.0 0.0	0.0 3.9 1.5	13.1 11.8 12.6	69.0 39.2 57.8	17.9 45.1 28.1	16.592	.001
11. I can recognize physical or cognitive effort that some of the pupils with special needs make in accomplishing assignments and tiredness that it may provoke.	Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 4.0 1.5	4.8 6.0 5.2	27.4 16.0 23.1	53.6 36.0 47.0	14.3 38.0 23.1	14.884	.005
12. I know how to develop pupils 'understanding of diversity during instruction.	Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 0.0 0.0	6.0 4.0 5.2	25.0 28.0 26.1	58.3 32.0 48.5	10.7 36.0 20.1	14.763	.002

Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 0.0 0.0	9.5 4.0 7.5	26.2 20.0 23.9	50.0 32.0 43.3	14.3 44.0 25.4	15.038	.002
Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 0.0 0.0	1.2 0.0 0.7	8.3 10.0 9.0	60.7 46.0 55.2	29.8 44.0 35.1	3.733	.292
Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 0.0 0.0	3.6 2.0 3.0	13.1 19.6 15.6	66.7 41.2 57.0	16.7 37.3 24.4	10.261	.016
Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 0.0 0.0	9.5 4.0 7.5	64.3 40.0 55.2	22.6 34.0 26.9	3.6 22.0 10.4	16.329	.001
Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 3.9 1.5	19.0 7.8 14.8	53.6 19.6 40.7	25.0 43.1 31.9	2.4 25.5 11.1	33.498	.000
Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 2.0 0.7	3.6 3.9 3.7	34.5 5.9 23.7	41.7 47.1 43.7	20.2 41.2 28.1	17.793	.001
Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 3.9 1.5	9.5 2.0 6.7	47.6 21.6 37.8	33.3 49.0 39.3	9.5 23.5 14.8	17.908	.001
Slovenia Serbia total	1.2 2.0 1.5	10.8 5.9 9.0	30.1 33.3 31.3	47.0 39.2 44.0	10.8 19.6 14.2	3.238	.519
Slovenia Serbia total	1.2 2.0 1.5	3.6 3.9 3.7	13.1 11.8 12.6	54.8 45.1 51.1	27.4 37.3 31.1	1.756	.780
Slovenia Serbia total	1.2 0.0 0.7	3.6 6.0 4.5	26.2 30.0 27.6	52.4 34.0 45.5	16.7 30.0 21.6	6.074	.194
Slovenia Serbia total	3.6 0.0 2.2	13.3 3.9 9.7	26.5 13.7 21.6	44.6 54.9 48.5	12.0 27.5 17.9	11.941	.018
Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 2.0 0.7	7.1 5.9 6.7	20.2 17.6 19.3	52.4 45.1 49.6	20.2 29.4 23.7	3.299	.509
Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 0.0 0.0	6.0 3.9 5.2	22.6 7.8 17.0	48.8 52.9 50.4	22.6 35.3 27.4	6.287	.098
Slovenia Serbia total	0.0 2.0 0.7	7.1 3.9 5.9	44.0 15.7 33.3	38.1 49.0 42.2	10.7 29.4 17.8	16.998	.002
	Serbia total Slovenia Serbia total	Serbia de la constitución de la	Serbia total 0.0 4.0 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 0.0 Serbia total 0.0 0.0 Serbia total 0.0 3.6 Serbia total 0.0 2.0 Serbia total 0.0 9.5 Serbia total 0.0 7.5 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 3.6 Serbia total 0.0 3.6 Serbia total 0.0 3.6 Serbia total 0.0 3.6 Serbia 2.0 3.9 3.9 7.8 Total 1.5 6.7 Slovenia Serbia 2.0 3.9 2.0 5.9 total 1.5 6.7 Slovenia Serbia 2.0 3.9 3.9 1.2 total 1.5 3.7 Slovenia Serbia 0.0 6.0 6.0 6.0 total 0.7 4.5 Slovenia Serbia 0.0 6.0 3.9 5.9 total 0.0 5.9 Slovenia Serbia 0.0 6.0 3.9 5.9	Serbia total 0.0 4.0 20.0 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 0.0 1.2 8.3 Serbia total 0.0 0.0 10.0 10.0 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 2.0 19.6 19.6 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 9.5 64.3 64.7 64.3 64.3 64.7 64.6 64.7 64.3 64.5 64.0	Serbia total 0.0 4.0 20.0 32.0 Stotal 0.0 7.5 23.9 43.3 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 0.0 10.0 46.0 Serbia total 0.0 3.6 13.1 66.7 Serbia total 0.0 3.6 13.1 66.7 Serbia total 0.0 9.5 64.3 22.6 Serbia total 0.0 9.5 64.3 22.6 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 19.0 53.6 25.0 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 19.0 53.6 25.0 Slovenia Serbia 2.0 3.9 5.9 47.1 Slovenia Serbia 3.9 2.0 21.6 49.0 total 1.5 6.7 37.8 39.3 Slovenia Serbia 2.0 2.0 21.6 49.0 total 1.5 5.9 33.3 39.2 total 1.5 3.7 12.6 51.1 Slovenia Serbia 2.0 3.9 1.8 45.1	Serbia total 0.0 4.0 20.0 32.0 44.0 Slovenia Serbia 0.0 1.2 8.3 60.7 29.8 Serbia O.0 0.0 10.0 46.0 44.0 Slovenia Serbia O.0 0.0 13.6 13.1 66.7 16.7 Slovenia Serbia O.0 2.0 19.6 41.2 37.3 37.3 Slovenia Serbia O.0 4.0 40.0 34.0 22.0 19.6 41.2 37.3 Slovenia Serbia O.0 0.0 7.5 55.2 26.9 10.4 Slovenia Serbia O.0 19.0 53.6 25.0 2.4 Serbia O.0 3.6 34.5 41.7 20.2 Serbia O.0 3.6 34.5 41.7 20.2 20.4 Serbia O.0 3.6 34.5 41.7 20.2 24.4 Slovenia O.0 3.6 34.5 41.7 20.2 24.4 Slovenia O.0 3.6 34.5 41.7 20.2 25.5 </td <td>Serbia total 0.0 4.0 20.0 32.0 44.0 25.4 Slovenia Serbia O.0 0.0 1.2 8.3 60.7 29.8 3.733 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 0.0 10.0 46.0 44.0 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 3.6 13.1 66.7 16.7 10.261 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 2.0 19.6 41.2 37.3 10.261 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 4.0 40.0 34.0 22.6 3.6 16.329 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 7.5 55.2 26.9 10.4 33.498 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 3.6 34.5 41.7 20.2 17.793 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 3.6 34.5 41.7 20.2 17.793 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 9.5 47.6 33.3 9.5 17.9 17.908 Slovenia Serbia total 1.2 10.8 30.1 47.0</td>	Serbia total 0.0 4.0 20.0 32.0 44.0 25.4 Slovenia Serbia O.0 0.0 1.2 8.3 60.7 29.8 3.733 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 0.0 10.0 46.0 44.0 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 3.6 13.1 66.7 16.7 10.261 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 2.0 19.6 41.2 37.3 10.261 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 4.0 40.0 34.0 22.6 3.6 16.329 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 7.5 55.2 26.9 10.4 33.498 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 3.6 34.5 41.7 20.2 17.793 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 3.6 34.5 41.7 20.2 17.793 Slovenia Serbia total 0.0 9.5 47.6 33.3 9.5 17.9 17.908 Slovenia Serbia total 1.2 10.8 30.1 47.0

Data Processing

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 22.0. The frequencies of each of the responses were calculated for each group of students (Slovenia and Serbia). Differences between two groups of students were analyzed using the χ^2 test. Differences with p < 0.05 were considered to be statistically significant.

Results

Student teachers' beliefs about their own competencies related to inclusive education

According to the results, STs believe that they have developed most of the stated competences very well or extremely well. Let us mention those competencies believed to be developed the most. More than three quarters of STs stated they have developed the following competencies very well or extremely well: how to organize learning in group work (S14), how to take into account the emotional aspect of learning (S10), how to involve children in shaping the rules of behaviour in the classroom (S21), how to teach children solidarity (S15), how to offer a child an appropriate learning aid on the basis of the mistakes they observe in completed homework, (S25), how to plan instruction which is supports learning (S2).

For 22 out of 26 stated competencies, more than half of all STs answered they have developed their competences very well or extremely well. We would like to point out four most extreme exceptions. For competences related to assessment, it has been shown that more than half of STs believe they have only partially developed competency for formative assessment (S16) and 40.7% of STs believe the same related to summative assessment (S17). Nearly half of STs answered they have only partly developed competency on taking responsibility for learning of all students (S7) and that they can imagine how children experience the educational process (S8). Only a few STs answered that they do not have the stated competency or that they have slightly developed the stated competency.

Differences in student teachers' beliefs in relation to the country in which they are studying

There were statistically significant differences between the beliefs of STs from Serbia and Slovenia concerning 17 statements. Significantly more STs from Serbia than from Slovenia believe that they have developed very well or extremely well competencies related to: the responsibility for learning of all pupils (S7); personalized learning approaches that support autonomy in

learning (S4, 6, 8-11, 26); identifying and addressing barriers to learning (S5, 23); and positive classroom management (S18, 19).

The lowest number of STs stated that they have developed competencies related to formative and summative assessment very well or extremely well; however, among those who stated such a belief, STs from Serbia were more frequent.

Statistically significant differences were also found with three out of four statements connected with cooperative learning (S 12, 13, 15). In two statements (S12, 15) more STs from Slovenia stated they have very well or extremely well developed competency and in one (S13) more Serbian STs stated that they have very well or extremely well developed competency.

Discussion

If we look at the answers to the whole questionnaire, we can say that STs in both countries feel quite competent to teach inclusive classes. On the one hand, this is, certainly, a very good result and an optimistic outlook for the further development of the school system towards inclusion in both countries. On the other hand, those results are somewhat surprising, since research in the world, as well as in Slovenia and Serbia, shows that teachers often feel incompetent and fear teaching in inclusive classes, that they believe SEN children hinder instruction and would be better off in special schools; that they transfer the responsibility for inclusion and achieving curricular objectives to the pupils' parents, the pupils themselves and/or experts etc. (see for example de Boera et al. 2011; Florian 2008; Kobolt et al. 2010). Similar attitudes might be found amongst STs too (see for example Jovanović et al. 2013; Macura et al. 2019; O'Toole, Burke 2013; Peček et al. 2015).

That the beliefs of STs might be too optimistic could also be deduced from the models of teachers' professional development. Some models explain that teachers' experience gradually transits from an unrealistic fantasy of teaching to a more realistic perception of the profession. For example, Ryan (Ryan in Razdevšek Pučko 1990; Bullough 1987) divides professional development of teachers into three basic periods. He calls the first stage the fantasy stage. This period is typical for STs and means the transition from a student's role into a teacher's role. It begins when an individual first arrives to an idea of becoming a teacher and usually lasts until his/her first employment in this field. During this time, the individual represents himself/herself as a teacher in the much-idealized image, he/she is very receptive to progressive ideas, which are often under-criticized, he/she represents himself/herself in the best light, as the real opposition to his/her own teachers. This might even be maintained upon the first experiences with teaching (internship) that can bring about any failure and disappointment. Ryan designates the next phase of professional

development as the survival stage. These are the first months (or years) after the first employment in school. Teachers are heavily burdened with work at school and at the same time feel the gap between the beliefs they formed during the fantasy stage and the 'cruel' reality. The idealized idea of teaching is soon blown up (Javrh, Kalin 2011) This period often results in a reduction in the progress of teachers' progressive attitudes, which is strongly dependent on the working environment in which teachers find themselves. Given the fact that this environment might often not be inclusive, optimistic attitudes, developed during the period of study, are in great danger of change.

Our research shows that the fantasy stage is even more strongly represented among STs in Serbia than among STs in Slovenia. This might be explained by differences in teacher education programs and education systems in both countries. For example, as analyzed in our previous research with the same sample of STs (Macura et al. 2019), optimism of Serbian STs might be explained by their belief that supporting vulnerable pupils means offering protection and permissiveness with little effort to actually teach. In contrast to them, Slovenian teachers tend to be more demanding and similar to their older colleagues in schools, they tend to transfer the responsibility for teaching vulnerable pupils to pupils' parents. Besides that, this could be related to the fact that the teaching process and classrooms in western Balkan countries are infrequently observed and are largely unmonitored. Teachers have little incentive to achieve high-quality results in their teaching practices, making their professional duties less demanding (Pantić et al. 2010). In contrast, Slovenian teachers often complain that they are controlled not only by their superiors but also by pupils' parents.

Conclusion

As already mentioned, we can be very satisfied with the results of the research, as the STs state that they have developed most of the stated competencies very well or extremely well. From the sets of competencies we have analyzed, we could highlight those that are related to assessment as the worst developed competencies, which should be given greater emphasis during teacher education. A less developed competency is taking responsibility for the learning of each pupil (S7), which is not surprising for Slovenian STs since similar results might be found with other research on STs and teachers as well (Peček et al. 2012). Another less developed competency is to imagine how children experience the educational process (S8), which might be tackled by giving STs more experience with teaching marginalized students.

Undoubtedly, our research shows that it would be necessary to pay special attention to teachers during their induction, as this is precisely the period when the idealized image created during the course of studying may collapse. Thus,

the induction phase is important for the future professional development of teachers. In this phase, quality support of a novice teacher in his/her efforts to work in school in accordance with his/her own competencies expressed in the questionnaire, especially in schools which are not inclined towards inclusive practices, would be necessary. On the one hand, making the idealized image of STs more realistic could be ensured by giving more attention to the internship STs have during their studies. Internship should necessarily be accompanied by a clear reflection in which STs analyze their own strong and weak points, as well as what works and what does not work with inclusion, and what the discrepancy is between their ideals and reality.

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