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## ***Self-assessment of primary school teachers' competences in different areas: the influence of initial education and professional development***

### **Extended summary**

The paper analyses the self-assessment of primary school teachers' competences in educational areas (natural sciences, social sciences, arts, and sports) by using the following dimensions: Learning Environment and Effective Communication, Assessment of One's Own Work, Strategies and Lesson Planning, and Knowledge of the School Subject. The professional competences of today's primary school teachers encompass a diverse set of knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes, which poses numerous challenges for them. Taking into account that each subject has its own characteristics, it is assumed that primary school teachers need a specific combination of competences for their successful implementation and fulfillment of various roles in the classroom. The acquisition of these competences does not stop with the completion of initial education at the faculty, but continues through a process of professional development that aims not only to upgrade the existing knowledge, but also to develop new skills and broaden professional perspectives of teachers. The conducted research sought to determine whether the self-assessment of the primary school teachers in different areas (natural sciences, social sciences, arts, and sports) differs from the area in which the teacher acquired more competences during initial education or professional development. The research is based on the hypotheses that there are statistically significant differences in the self-assessment of the primary school teachers' competences in different areas, and that these differences relate to the initial education and professional development that teachers have previously acquired. Data was collected from 180 primary school teachers from the territory of the Republic of Serbia in the period

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October-December 2023. Two instruments were used: a general data questionnaire compiled for the purposes of the research to obtain basic socio-demographic data, and a modified SITE II instrument (Akram & Zepeda, 2016), validated for the territory of the Republic of Serbia by Marić, Jurišin and Malčić (2022). The results show statistically significant differences between the assessment areas in relation to the dimensions of Assessment of one's own work and Subject Knowledge, which are reflected in the lower values when assessing these dimensions in the fields of art and sports. By comparing teachers' achievement in three areas depending on the area in which they acquired the most knowledge during their initial education, a statistically significant difference was observed in two dimensions: Learning environment and effective communication and Knowledge of the subject taught in the domain of natural sciences. Regarding professional development and self-evaluation of achievements, it was proven that there is a statistically significant difference in the dimension Knowledge of the subject taught by the teacher, especially in the assessment of this dimension in the field of arts and sports: respondents who have more training in the field of social or natural sciences achieve lower results than respondents who have had more extensive professional training in the field of sports and arts. The obtained results indicate that primary school teachers, depending on a field (natural sciences, social sciences, arts, and sports), evaluate their competences in different ways, which indicates the following: current theoretical frameworks on competences based on universal standardized lists require adjustment in terms of reflecting subject specificities, but also taking into account the challenges that primary school teachers face in the classroom and different personal strategies used during professional training. Based on the results, certain recommendations can be made for the improvement of educational practices and professional development policies: it is important to provide teachers with continuity in acquiring a specific competence and build a system of permanent support of mentors/facilitators after the completion of initial education; it is desirable to form a national team composed of experts and advisors who would provide teachers with specific professional support in the process of professional development; primary school teachers must be encouraged to adopt a reflective practitioner approach that develops in accordance with their own professional identity.

**Keywords:** primary school teacher, professional competences, initial education, professional development

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