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***Teacher-Student Relationship from the
Perspective of Pupils – Andragogical
and Didactic Dilemmas regarding
Primary School Teachers’ Communicative
Competences²***

Extended summary

The results of a critical theoretical analysis and quantitative empirical research of andragogical and didactic aspects of primary school teachers’ communicative competences, with a focus on their communicative competences, are presented in this paper. According to the results of the research (Pianta et al., 2003; Koomen et al., 2012; Fraire et al., 2013; Eryilmaz, 2017) exploring the issue of positive teacher-student relationships, a positive teacher-student relationship is the indicator of the existence of teachers’ communicative competences, while the most important communicative competences, such as kindness, cordiality, creativity, flexibility, openness, are directly linked to teachers’ personality traits. The starting point in the research was our assumption that, apart from a direct communication, teacher-student communication involves teaching approaches and methods (didactic aspect) and teachers’ overall commitment to their profession and school (organisation) where they work (andragogical aspect).

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The goal of the research was to examine and analyse the perceptions of primary school pupils of some communicative competences of their teachers. The data were collected on a sample of 3097 pupils of primary schools on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The instrument used in the research was inspired by the Student Questionnaire (SO-MB) (Potkonjak, Trnavac, 1998), and the STRS Scale (Koomen et al., 2012). The instrument consists of 31 items measuring the following on the Moken-type scale: (1) *important characteristics of teachers* – six items, (2) the elements important for *establishing positive teacher-student relationship* – six items, (3) the elements of *misunderstanding between teachers and students* – five items, (4) elements of *teacher behaviour in class perceived as the most pleasant by the pupils* – six items and (5) *pupils' feelings towards their teachers* – eight items. The validity of the instrument in terms of its content was tested by using the Delphi technique.

According to the obtained results, the characteristics of primary school teachers that pupils appreciate the most are a warm and cordial relationship with pupils, understanding pupils' needs, as well as a fair and objective assessment. In pupils' view, the willingness of teachers to help them is crucial for establishing a positive teacher-pupil relationship. While the pupils' defiant attitude towards their teachers and the teachers' inappropriate response to these situations have been stated as the most common causes of misunderstandings between teachers and pupils. One of the dilemmas that need to be resolved in the future is what steps should be taken in the initial pedagogic training of the primary school teachers and their permanent professional development that would enable the candidates/teachers to develop their "willingness to help their pupils". In pupils' opinion, a clear, systematic and interesting teaching approach is also an important teacher competence, but they still value teachers' cordiality and kindness above anything else. The significance of teachers' traits for pupils statistically varies considerably with regard to the gender, school achievement and the type of environment (urban, rural) in which pupils live. For instance, boys tend to be more sensitive with regard to an objective assessment. Pupils from urban areas particularly cherish their teachers' sense of humour. The under-achieving pupils stated that their teachers' willingness to help them was the most important component of the teacher-pupil interaction. On the other hand, these pupils expressed the highest level of self-criticism regarding the defiant attitude towards teachers as the source of mutual misunderstanding. The fear of teachers is a very common emotion expressed by this category of pupils. The above-mentioned differences are important guidelines in the development of teachers' competences in terms of developing a greater sensitivity in working with the specific categories of pupils.

The pupils' defiant attitude towards their teachers was stated as the most common cause of misunderstandings between teachers and pupils. A dilemma which arises from this fact, and calls for a more in-depth research, is what elements of teacher behaviour arouse a defiant response of their pupils, as well as to what extent it is possible to prepare teachers to respond adequately in such situations by encouraging mutual respect and understanding. The fact that the respect towards their teachers is considered as the most important emotion by the majority of pupils should definitely be taken into account. From the andragogical perspective, one of the significant dilemmas is how to formulate and include teachers' communicative competences

not only in their initial professional training, but also in the activities pertaining to their life-long learning and education.

Keywords: pupils, primary school teachers, communicative competences, andragogical aspects, didactic aspects.

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