

Martina Kovačič Kuzmič*

University of Primorska, Faculty of Education

Matija Jenko*

University of Primorska, Faculty of Education

Jurka Lepičnik Vodopivec*

University of Primorska, Faculty of Education

CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY SCHOOL FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FUTURE TEACHERS

Abstract: Globalization, technological development, and migration are just some of the factors the modern society is facing, with its many challenges that inevitably affect the field of education. Many authors find that society, as we know it, is in the process of profound transformation which, firstly, brings about the need and necessity to reflect the knowledge and competencies needed to live and work in the future, and secondly, encourages new forms of education and teaching to enhance these competencies. In doing so, the question is whether schools are following these trends and if teaching methods are moving from conventional to more modern pedagogical approaches.

The aim of the article is to identify the views of the students of the Faculty of Education, University of Primorska on the knowledge and competencies that would be indispensable for teachers in the future and on contemporary forms of teaching that would promote their development.

Keywords: *modern society, globalization, knowledge and competences, modern teaching, modern teaching techniques.*

INTRODUCTION

In 1996, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) published the document *Learning: Publishing in the Economy*, i. e. Delors report, which defined learning in learning based on four pillars (*Learning, the*

* martina.kovacickuzmic@pef.upr.si

* matija.jenko@upr.si

* jurka.lepicnik@pef.upr.si

treasure within: Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, 1996):

Learning to know.

Learning to do.

Learning to be.

Learning to live together.

The Delors Report was a basis for reflection and debate about what choices should be made in formulating policies. “The report argued that choices about education were determined by choices about what kind of society we wished to live in” (*Rethinking education, 2015: 15*).

A concept that probably has an even deeper meaning today. We live in a time, defined by change. Our society is changing rapidly and fundamentally due to several factors such as globalization, EU integration, EU enlargement processes, technological progress, migrations and economic issues. All these factors and social transformations put us in front of many new challenges for the education sector as well, especially for education professionals (Ćurko et al., 2016).

Due to these global changes, all countries set as a priority to “generating high levels of knowledge and skills with attention increasingly to more demanding forms of ‘21st century competences’. The corollary concern is that traditional educational approaches are not adequately delivering on such demanding agendas” (Dumont et al., 2010: 3).

Barle Lakota and Trunk Širca (2010) also argue that in the future, the fields of education and research in society will play a decisive role in the development of the individual and consequently the whole society. Education is becoming an increasingly important political issue, focusing not only on individual but also on social development, which is reflected, among other things, in “promoting economic growth and reducing social inequalities, thereby leading to greater social well-being” (Dumont et al., 2010: 23). Postmodern society is a society of constant change (cultural, political, social), which requires adaptation to them by both individuals and organizations. And that is why the study, especially the quality of its implementation, strongly depends on broader social events.

Echazarra, Salinas, Méndez, Denis, Rech (2016) also agree that today's world and society are changing fundamentally, which means that it is necessary to master four basic areas for life and work (the 4 C's) – creativity, critical thinking, communication and cooperation, to which the authors add digital literacy, proactivity, adaptability and openness. However, the question arises as to whether educational institutions follow these trends and teaching methods have shifted from conventional approaches to more modern and interactive pedagogical approaches. As the authors conclude the modern classroom is an open space in which the teacher offers students opportunities to develop knowledge and competencies useful for the

real world through interdisciplinary and practice-oriented tasks. Dolenc Orbanic and Furlan (2015) note, that in order to achieve the goals of a modern school, teachers should choose between modern teaching strategies that are based on the active work of students and are aimed at achieving knowledge through understanding. However, the authors continue that future teachers will use active approaches if enough effort is put into teacher education, as, as the authors notes, it is often necessary to change their perceptions of teaching, from the traditional approach to which they were accustomed during their schooling, to modern approaches that lead to the achievement of the goals of the modern school.

From a brief introductory review, it is clear that we are in an important period of radical changes. These changes are taking place on a global level and will necessarily have to be followed by the field of education as well. In the present article, we focus on the challenges facing the contemporary school, from the point of view of students, future primary school teachers, who carry with them a relatively fresh experience of their own schooling, which is intertwined with the needs of the modern world and newly acquired theoretical pedagogical and didactic knowledge, acquired during their high educational studies.

METHODOLOGY

A combined quantitative and qualitative method approach was used in the research. We invited the participants to answer the pre-prepared questions.

Purpose

The purpose of the research was to identify the views of the students that participated in the research on the knowledge and competencies that would be indispensable for teachers in the future and on contemporary forms of teaching that would promote their development.

Goals

According to the aim of the research, we set the following empirical goals:

- *To determine how students evaluate the importance of competencies for the profession of primary school teacher.*
- *To determine how students evaluate the importance of including modern teaching methods in the teaching of the first and second educational period of primary school.*

- *To determine the opinion of students to what extent today's school follows modern teaching methods.*
- *To determine the opinion of students on the promotion and introduction of new teaching methods in teaching in the first and second educational period of primary school.*
- *To determine the opinion of students about which knowledge in the field of modern teaching methods they would most like to acquire during their studies.*

Sample

The research included 102 students of the first (university) and second (master's) level of the Primary School Teaching study program at the Faculty of Education, University of Primorska. Of the 102 participating students, 88 were from the first (university) level, namely 23 first-year students, 30 second-year students, 14 third-year students and 21 fourth-year students. There were 14 first-year students of the second (master's) level.

DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE AND PROCEDURE

Data were collected using a questionnaire designed for the purposes of the present research. We invited the participants to complete the questionnaire and at the same time we presented the purpose and goals of the research and provided them with anonymity. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended and open-ended questions. In the first part, the questionnaire contained two questions intended for the collection of demographic data, namely data on gender of the respondents and the study year or level in the Primary School Teaching study program. The second part of the questionnaire was intended to obtain data on the perception of modern school by students of Primary School Teaching study program, in order to get their opinions on the extent to which contemporary school follows modern teaching methods as well as to find out their opinions on promoting and introducing modern teaching methods in the first and second educational period of a nine-year primary school. The last question was an open-ended one, where we were interested in what knowledge in the field of modern teaching methods students would most like to obtain during their studies. Data collection took place via the web application www.1ka.si in April 2020.

Data processing methods

We analyzed and compared the answers according to the year of study in the Primary School Teaching undergraduate study program and in postgraduate study program, which comprises of only one study year. The answers were therefore first grouped by study years. Afterwards we quantified the qualitative data and calculated the arithmetic mean of the obtained results for later mutual comparison by study years.

The answers to the open question were processed according to the principles of qualitative data analysis. The records were edited and coded, after which concepts and categories were assigned to the codes. In the further analysis, we used a thematic network as an analytical tool. With the help of a thematic network, we researched and explained the understanding of the topic and content of the research (Roblek, 2009: 56–57). With the help of a thematic network, we researched and explained the answers given by the students involved in the research.

The obtained data were then descriptively processed further. Our interpretation of the results was based on five formulated research questions which are shown below as chapter titles.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evaluating the importance of competencies for the profession of primary school teacher

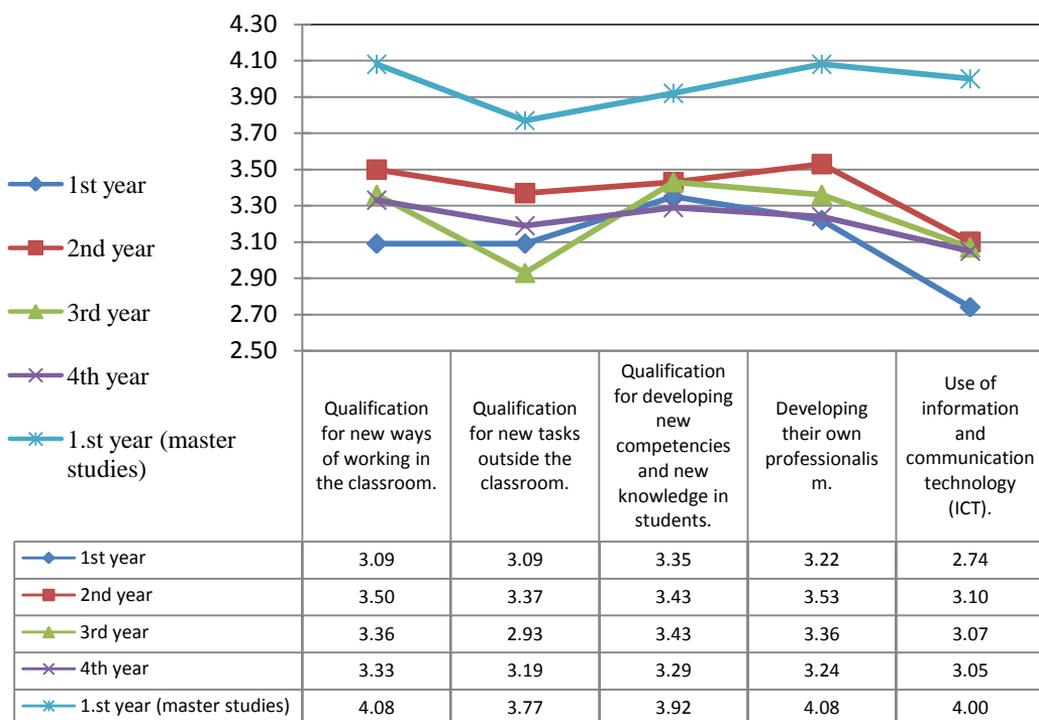
Through the research, we generally found that students during their studies valued competencies for performing the profession of primary school teacher as increasingly important. Thus, those at the beginning of their study path marked as less important all measured competencies in comparison with older students, of whom those who attend the second, third and fourth year of the first-cycle (university) study program perceived stagnation in the growth of importance which is significantly greater in students enrolled in the second-cycle (master's) study program.

At the beginning of their study path, students assessed the *Ability to develop new competencies and new knowledge in students* as the most important competence for performing the profession of primary school teacher, and the *Use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the classroom* as the least important. The importance of this competence also grew most in students during their progression through the study years, as the students of the second-cycle (master's) study program regarded it as the most important, together with the competence of qualification for new ways of working in the classroom. During their studies, students changed their opinion the least about the importance of the ability to

develop new competencies and new knowledge in students. Their opinion on the importance of developing their own professionalism and competence for new tasks outside the classroom (at school and with the social partners) grew slightly over the years of study.

Students regarded all five measured competencies (qualification for new ways of working in the classroom, qualification for new tasks outside the classroom, qualification for developing new competencies and new knowledge in students, developing their own professionalism, and use of information and communication technology) as important already in the beginning, which, as we concluded, comes from their own experience with schooling, while later, by deepening pedagogical and didactic knowledge, they attached even greater importance to all competences.

Diagram 1. Results of students' evaluation of the importance of certain competencies (0 meaning the lowest and 5 the greatest importance)



Evaluating the importance of including modern teaching methods in the teaching of the first and second educational period of primary school

According to the opinion of the students who participated in the research the importance of including modern teaching methods in the teaching of the first and second educational period of primary school increased during their study. Once again, two major leaps in the evaluation of importance could be detected, namely the first in second-year students of the first (university) level of the Primary School Teaching study program, who had a much higher opinion on the importance of integrating modern teaching methods into teaching. This opinion remained almost the same until the transition to the second (master's) level of study, where the leap in evaluating the importance of integrating modern teaching methods into teaching was even greater. This transition at the beginning and end of the study path was attributed to greater theoretical knowledge of pedagogical and didactic areas important for the work of primary school teachers and even more to practical experience that students gained through concise and integrated pedagogical practice during their studies. Thus, at the end of their educational path, students assessed the including of modern teaching methods in teaching as very important.

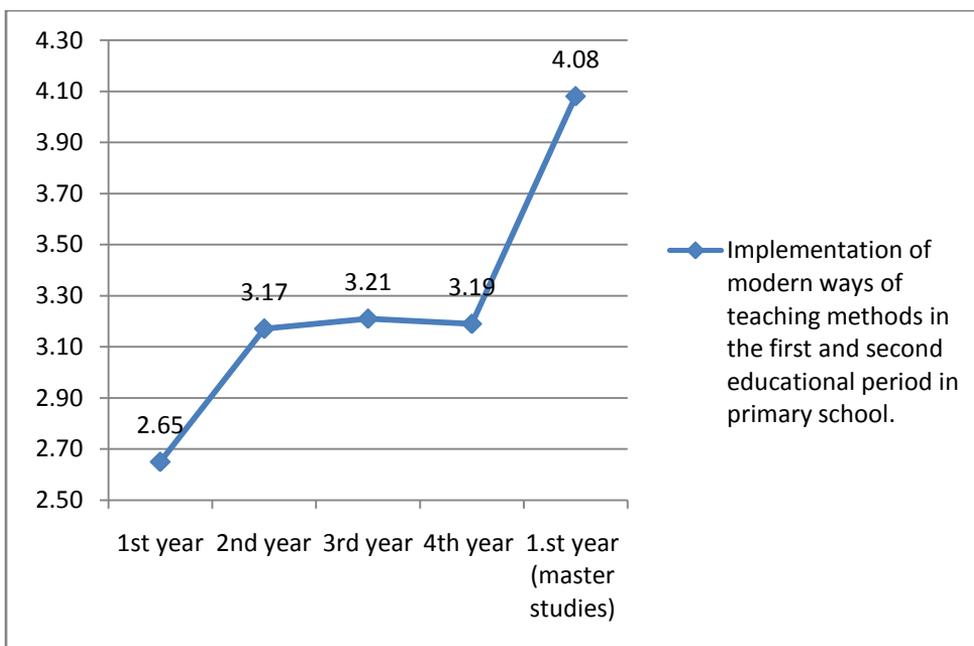


Diagram 2. Evaluation of the importance of including modern teaching methods in the teaching of the first and second educational period of primary school (0 meaning the least and 5 the most importance)

Students' opinion on the extent to which contemporary school follows modern teaching methods

Throughout their studies, students believed that contemporary school follows modern teaching methods at a medium level. Their opinion on the importance of the topic increased slightly in the transition from the first to the second study year of the first-cycle (university) study program, but then fell below the initial value in the third and fourth study years. In the first year of the second-cycle (master's) study program, the opinion of students rose again, but it was still not too high, as it reached only the middle value (on a scale from 1 (does not follow at all) to 5 (completely follows), it reached a value of 3.08). Students were likely to judge contemporary school from their experience as pupils and as students in the Primary School Teaching study program who are in constant contact with practice in contemporary schools.

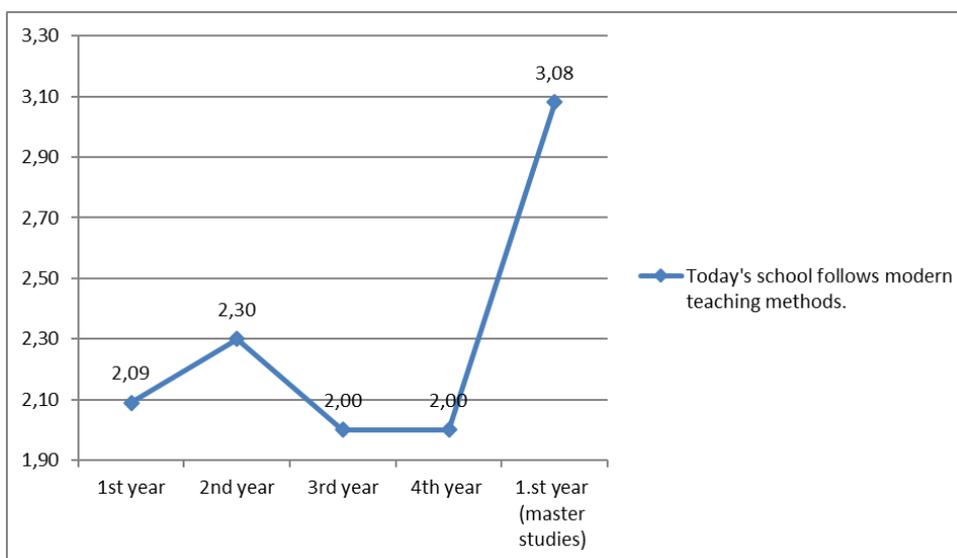


Diagram 3. Opinion of students on the extent to which contemporary school follows modern teaching methods (0 meaning the lowest level of following and 5 the greatest level)

Students' opinion on the promotion and introduction of new teaching methods in the first and second educational period of primary school

When asked what their opinion is on the importance of promotion and introduction of new teaching methods in the first and second educational period of primary school, at the beginning of the study path, students moderately held the view that the promotion and introduction of new teaching methods should be

encouraged, while in the second study year their opinion on the importance rose and then dropped slightly by the end of their undergraduate studies. A steep rise in the opinion on the promotion and introduction of new teaching methods occurred in second (master's) level students, who assessed them as good. This, as well as the previously described parameters, was attributed to the greater knowledge of the actual school practice by the students of the Primary School Teaching study program.

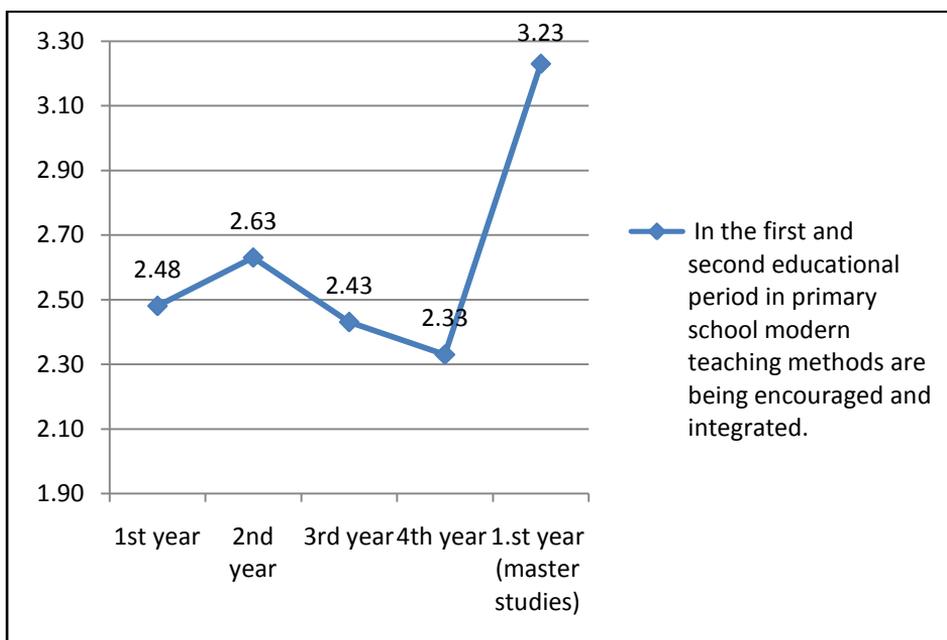


Diagram 4. Students' opinion on the promotion and introduction of modern teaching methods in the first and second educational period of nine-year primary school (0 means the weakest and 5 the strongest promotion)

What knowledge in the field of modern teaching methods would students most like to acquire during their studies

In addition to having formed opinions on the importance of certain competencies for teaching in the primary and secondary educational period, students also knew which knowledge in the field of modern teaching methods they would most like to acquire during their studies. Their wishes changed during their studies, but in all grades, both in undergraduate (university) and in postgraduate (master's) studies, the desire to receive more knowledge in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT) came to the fore. Younger students also wanted

to receive more knowledge in the field of project work at school, but this desire was lower in later study periods, from which we can conclude that this knowledge was actually acquired at the faculty during their studies. The students from first grades did not show a desire to receive more knowledge from practice or knowledge of cross-curricular integration but both desires later grew, while in the first study year of postgraduate (master's) study they decreased again, as the desire for knowledge of cross-curricular integration was no longer perceptible. This can be attributed to the fact that first-year students do not yet have clearly formed views on what knowledge a primary school teacher needs to have and receive as a student of this profession. Nevertheless, in the second, third and fourth study year of the undergraduate (university) study they then expressed this desire and obviously the faculty, given that in the first year of the postgraduate study this desire was greatly reduced, in fact gave them this knowledge.

Table 1. Presentation of acquired data on which knowledge in the field of modern teaching methods students would most like to acquire during their studies

		1 st year of undergraduate study	2 st year of undergraduate study	3 st year of undergraduate study	4 st year of undergraduate study	1 st year of master's study
More ICT	f	8	6	3	8	8
	%	53	30	33	50	62
More integration of modern teaching methods	f	1	2	1	3	0
	%	7	10	11	19	0
More project work	f	4	5	0	2	2
	%	27	25	0	13	15
More problem-oriented lessons	f	2	2	2	1	2
	%	13	10	22	6	15
More practice	f	0	3	2	1	1
	%	0	15	22	6	8
More cross-curricular integration	f	0	2	1	1	0
	%	0	10	11	6	0

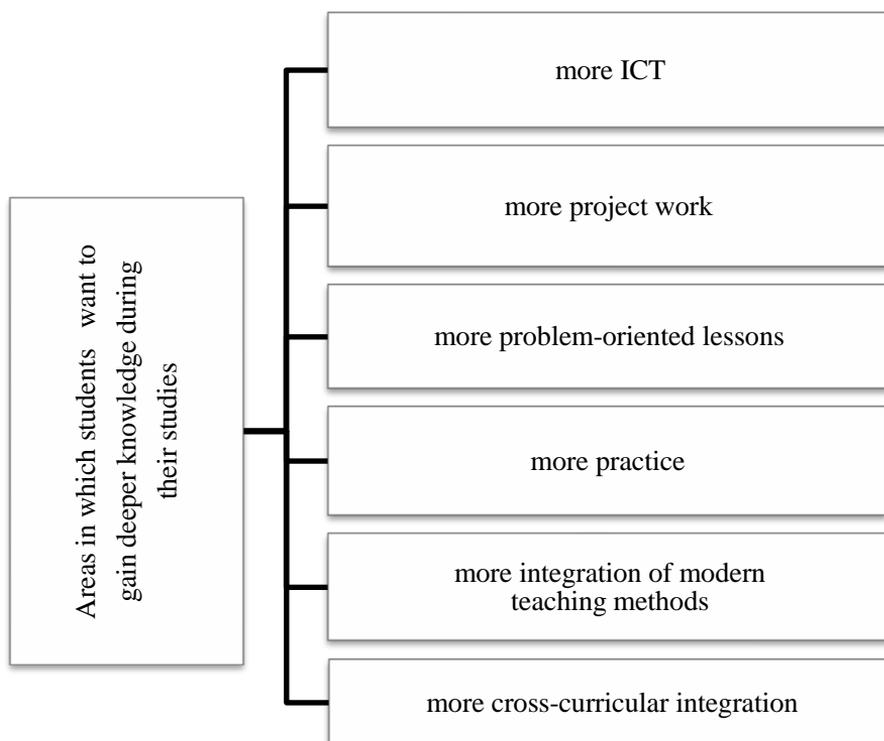


Figure 1. Demonstration of areas in which students want to gain additional knowledge in the Primary School Teaching study program

CONCLUSION

In the article, we analyzed the views of Primary school teaching study program students on the necessary knowledge and competencies that would be indispensable in the future for the profession of a primary school teacher, and on the role and importance of modern teaching methods that would encourage their development. The obtained results show that students attribute to all the measured competencies (qualification for new ways of working in the classroom, qualification for new tasks outside the classroom, qualification for developing new competencies and new knowledge in students, developing their own professionalism, and use of information and communication technology) a high level of importance already at the beginning of their studies, with values rising further in the coming years. We find possible reasons in two assumptions. The first is that students enter the study path with some experience of their own schooling, during which they encountered

these competencies as students. The other assumption, that explains the growth of the importance of measured competencies with the year of study, is on the other hand that students acquire and deepen new pedagogical and didactic knowledge during their studies, which is why they attribute even more importance to the measured competencies. The results also show that students highly value the importance of including modern teaching methods during classes in the first and second educational period of primary school. In the analysis of the results, we notice two major leaps, namely the first leap in the second year of the first (university) level of the study program Primary school teaching, which have a much higher opinion on the importance of including modern teaching methods. This opinion remains almost the same until the transition to the second (master's) level of study, where we witness a second leap in the evaluation on the importance of integrating modern teaching methods into teaching. We attribute such results to a greater theoretical knowledge of pedagogical-didactic areas important for the work of primary school teachers, that students acquired in the previous years of study, and even more to practical experience that students gain through concise and integrated pedagogical practice during their studies.

The results of students' opinions on the extent to which today's school follows modern teaching methods and on the promotion and introduction of new teaching methods in the first and second educational period of primary school are slightly different. The opinion of students about how today's school follow modern teaching methods increases slightly in the transition from the first to the second year of the first-cycle (university) study program, but then falls below the initial value in the third and fourth year. In the first year of the second-cycle (master's) study program, the opinion of students rises again, but it reaches only the middle value. Similarly, we observe in the opinion of students regarding the promotion and introduction of new teaching methods in school. In the second year, their opinion rises, and then falls slightly by the end of their undergraduate studies. A sharp rise in opinion about the promotion and introduction of new teaching methods in teaching occurs in second (master's) level students. The reasons for the initial higher values are attributed mainly to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and bases in the initial studying years, but later, when they gain more experience from practice (compulsory pedagogical practice, hospitations,...), their opinion is more in line with the actual situation in schools.

Lastly, we were also interested in which knowledge in the field of modern teaching methods students would most like to acquire during their studies. The desire to provide more knowledge in the field of information and communication technologies strongly prevails in all years of study. Students in lower years also want to receive more knowledge in the field of project work at school, which gradually decrease in higher years of study. The result is attributed to the assumption that students also acquire this knowledge during their studies. Regarding the acquisition of knowledge from practice and knowledge of interdisciplinary connections, the results show that the latter grow in the higher years of

undergraduate study and then in the first year of postgraduate (master's) study decrease again or the desire for knowledge of cross-curricular integration is no longer perceptible. Again, we attribute such results to the fact that students acquire this knowledge in the meantime and do not recognize it more necessary at the end of their studies (postgraduate studies).

From the overall results, it is evident that the study at the faculty offers content that enable students of undergraduate first level and postgraduate second level of the study program Primary school teaching to acquire knowledge and competencies that are increasingly dictated by changes in the field of education. At the same time, students also acquire theoretical knowledge of modern methods and forms of teaching, although through forms of practical work, such as pedagogical practice, they also learn about the gap between the theoretical, study basis, and the actual use of these methods in practice. Students also largely express the desire to acquire more knowledge in the field of information and communication technologies.

References

- Barle Lakota, A. in Trunk Širca, N. (2010). Pomen izobraževanja v družbi prihodnosti. In N. Trunk Širca (ur.): *Model učinkovitega managementa visokošolskega zavoda* (23–35). Koper: Fakulteta za management.
- Ćurko, B., Feiner, F., Gerjolj, S., Juhant, J., Kress, K., Pokorny, S. & Schlenk, E. In V. Strahovnik (2016). *Vzgoja za etiko in vrednote – Priročnik za učitelje in vzgojitelje*. Retrieved April 27, 2020 from the World Wide Web http://www.ethicseducation.eu/resources/ManualTeachers_SI.pdf.
- Dolenc Orbanić, N. & Furlan, P. (2015). Pogledi bodočih učiteljev na poučevanje naravoslovja. In D. Hozjan (ur.): *Aktivnosti učencev v učnem procesu* (343–356). Koper: Univerzitetna založba Annales.
- Dumont, H., Istance, D. & Benavides, F., Centre for Educational Research and Innovation & Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010). *Nature of learning: Using research to inspire practice*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- Echazarra, A., Salinas, D., Méndez, I., Denis, V. & Rech, G. (2016). *How teachers teach and students learn: Successful strategies for school*. OECD Education Working Papers, No. 130, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, Delors, J. & Unesco (1996). *Learning, the treasure within: Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*. Paris: Unesco Pub.

Roblek, V. (2009). Primer izpeljave analize besedila v kvalitativni raziskavi. *Management*, 4(1), 53–69. Koper: Univerza na Primorskem: Fakulteta za management. Retrieved August 27, 2017 from the World Wide Web http://www.fm-kp.si/zalozba/ISSN/1854-4231/4_053-069.pdf.

UNESCO (2015). *Rethinking Education. Towards a global common good?*. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved March 3, 2020 from the World Wide Web <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002325/232555e.pdf>.

Мартина Ковачић Кузмић

Универзитет Приморска, Педагошки факултет

Матија Јенко

Универзитет Приморска, Педагошки факултет

Јурка Лепичник Водопivec

Универзитет Приморска, Педагошки факултет

**ИЗАЗОВИ САВРЕМЕНЕ ШКОЛЕ ИЗ ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ
БУДУЋИХ УЧИТЕЉА**

Резиме

Глобализација, технолошки развој, и миграције су само неки од фактора са којима се модерно друштво суочава, као и са много својих изазова који неизбежно утичу на поље образовања. Многи аутори сматрају да је друштво, каквим га ми знамо, у току дубоке трансформације, која, прво, доводи до потребе и неопходности да се изразе знање и компетенције потребне да би се живело и радило у будућности, а друго, подстиче нове облике образовања и подучавања који треба да повећају ове компетенције. Питање је да ли школе прате ове трендове и да ли се методе подучавања крећу од традиционалних до модерних педагошких приступа.

Циљ рада је да идентификује погледе студената Педагошког факултета Универзитета Приморска, о знању и компетенцијама које би биле неопходне за наставнике у будућности и о савременим облицима наставе који би унапредили њихов развој.

Кључне речи: *модерно друштво, глобализација, знање и компетенције, савремена настава, савремене наставне технике.*