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## **The Development of Teacher Competences in the Context of the Croatian Qualifications Framework and the Bologna process**

### **Introduction**

Today, the creation of *Europe of Knowledge* is a key factor in the development of individuals and the society, and it represents an important component of the strengthening of competitiveness and improving the economy, science and European citizenry of the new millenium. A further development of individuals' competences on all the levels of education is certainly crucial for the promotion of a knowledge society, which requires radical changes of the school system in general, and of the higher education system in particular. A learning society requires a new concept of school as a „learning community”. Schools and the entire education system are required to be capable of a quick and efficient adaptation in the changeable globalisation and informatisation conditions, as well as to be able to create mechanisms for a timely and high-quality response to the needs of the „learning society” [Kostović 2009: 314].

Due to the extreme social importance of the teaching profession, higher education institutions for initial education of teachers also work intensively on the changes in the education context, curriculum reforms and introduction of modern learning and teaching strategies. Such changes cannot occur without an adaptation of education, by means of which the institutions would be entirely prepared for sustainable changes and sustainable development, which implies more than just education for environmental protection (as a consequence of globalisation, climate changes and a lack of traditional energy sources, in the context of an intensive economic development), and includes both the social and cultural dimension and economic prosperity of the present and future generations as well. This in turn implies an increased motivation and interest in a responsible behaviour which would bring about changes in the society as a whole. In order to be able to respond to the changes in and the needs of the society and social environment, higher education institutions, in particular those which provide initial education for teachers, need to be modernised and structured as powerful, integrated, responsible institutions which can guarantee a combination of resources and expertise required to change the system. Therefore the quality of

education institutions is being constantly evaluated both internally and externally, i.e. an accreditation system for higher education institutions has been established. Systematic changes in Croatia have commenced with the introduction of the Bologna process into the higher education system in 2005, and with the development of the national qualifications system (CROQS) in 2008. The CROQS is based on the postulates of the European Qualifications System, whose aim is to create a recognisable system of European qualifications. Having signed the Lisbon Strategy (Lisbon Agenda, Lisbon Process) as the EU's action and development plan, Europe has started to achieve its aspirations of becoming the most competitive and the most dynamic world economy based on knowledge and capable of a self-sustainable development, environmental protection and social inclusiveness. Croatia is on its way of achieving full membership in the EU, and it therefore endorses recommendations, communiqués and plans of the European Commission, such as the following: *Towards a European Research Area, the European Charter for Researchers, Mobility Action Plan, Science and Society Action Plan, and the 3% Action Plan*, which is based on the Conclusions of the Barcelona European Council from 2001, according to which there should be a 3% increase of investment in science until 2010 [*Strategy for 2007–2013*, University of Rijeka: 17–21].

### **1. The Bologna Process and the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF)**

On the grounds of a well-established fact that higher education is the key to Europe's competitiveness, the European countries' education policies have focused on the reform of this particular education sector by implementing the Bologna process, whose priorities are the following: to review and harmonise their education systems, to develop common standards of quality in higher education, and to recognise diplomas and the duration of studies (implementation of national qualifications frameworks). The Bologna process indeed introduced some radical changes into the European higher education. From its commencement (the signing of the *Magna Charta* on September 18, 1988) until today, its main objective has been the establishment of a comparable, compatible and coherent higher education system within the European Higher Education Area. Formally, the *Magna Charta Universitatum* preceded the Bologna process documents, i.e. the *European Universities' Charter* signed by 388 university rectors [Pilić 2007: 248]. The Bologna reform of education, i.e. the *Joint Declaration of European Ministers of Education* (signed in Bologna in 1999) supports the strengthening of Europe's intellectual, cultural, social, scientific and technological dimension. The ministers have pointed out that, „as we approach the end of a millenium, the future of mankind is becoming ever more dependent on the cultural, scientific and technical development, which is generated in the centres of culture, knowledge and research, such as the universities” [Pilić 2007: 278]. The universities advocated a Europe of knowledge which „can provide the necessary compe-

tences for facing the challenges of a new millennium”, and attributed a universal value to education [Pilić 2007: 251, 368]. It becomes the key to the Euro-integration process, accepted by the academic community, political milieu and general public.

An important issue related to the education reform is the building of the „internal quality culture” and strong higher education institutions. The need to improve European cooperation on determining quality assurance and quality standards was emphasised at the meeting of European ministers in Prague in 2001, when the ministers encouraged universities and other higher education institutions to disseminate examples of the best practice and develop common assessment and accreditation/validation mechanisms [Pilić 2007: 359]. According to the slogan *Strong Universities for a Strong Europe* (conclusions of the Glasgow Declaration from 2005, i.e. the Third EUA Convention), it is precisely the universities who should make a strong contribution to the development of Europe as a „knowledge society”, emphasising the achievement of quality standards contained in the ENQUA's (European Network for Quality Assurance) guidelines and recommendations [Pilić 2007: 258–264]. The Graz Declaration (2003) identifies the following as fundamental values of any university: *equity and access; research and scientific work in all the disciplines as an integral part of higher education; high academic quality; cultural and linguistic diversity* [Pilić 2007: 368]. The importance of quality control has also been emphasised at the ministers' conference in Berlin in 2003, when the ministers invited ENQA to develop a series of standards, procedures and guidelines related to quality assurance, with the help of its members and in cooperation with the EUA (European University Association) organisations, EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) and ESIB (European Student Information Bureau), which was renamed into ESU (European Student's Union) in 1990.

As an upgrade of the already implemented activities of the Bologna process, a conference was held in Bergen in 2005, which was focused on the further achievement of the principles of transparency and quality of the said process with the aim of developing a knowledge-based society. During this conference, a special emphasis was put on the external dimension of the Bologna process, i.e. on cooperation with the other parts of the world in terms of the openness of the European Higher Education Area and achievement of the sustainable development principle. The emphasis was put on the importance of intercultural understanding and acknowledgement, as well as on the identification of partner regions aimed at an enhanced exchange of ideas. The same ideas were discussed at the London conference in 2007. Between 1999 and 2010, all the efforts of the participants in the Bologna process were focused on the establishment of the European Higher Education. In the course of preparations for 2010, the ministers committed themselves to adhering to the principle of social responsibility for higher education in the context of modern societies.

Croatia signed the Bologna Declaration in Prague in 2001, and the reform of the higher education system commenced in 2005, when all the study programmes were modified to meet the Bologna process requirements and ECTS was introduced. „Higher education in Croatia faced major or minor restructuring several times, but the reform had never reached as deeply into study programmes and organisation of universities as in the case of the Bologna process” (a statement which prof. dr. sc. Pavo Barišić, ex Assistant to the Minister of Education and Sport of the Republic of Croatia, made when the Bologna process was introduced in Croatia [Barišić, *Legal and Institutional Framework for the Bologna Process*, <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?art=6138&sec=2305>). The Bologna process is „the biggest change of the higher education in the world, an experiment with unfathomable consequences, a process of introducing common standards while at the same time preserving the best elements of one's own tradition” (...) and „an opportunity which Croatian education, and indirectly science as well, cannot miss if Croatia wants to become directly involved in the cooperation, i.e. exchange of people, ideas and goods with the European Union and the developed world. Furthermore, with the implementation of the Bologna process, higher education will become the first segment of the Croatian society to be integrated into Europe” [Flego, *The Bologna Process, an Opportunity for a Great Tidy-up*, <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?art=6143&sec=2305>].

Today, the Croatian higher education policy is up-to-date with the changes in the society and in the European Higher Education Area. All the students who are completing the Bologna studies in the Republic of Croatia are entitled to a diploma supplement, and their diplomas can be recognised within the EU. Croatia is an active participant in the process whose practical application sometimes provokes harsh criticism from students and the academia, while on the other hand it is greeted with approval. The implementation of the Bologna process in Croatia (from its introduction to the present day) has been monitored by the *Committee for the Monitoring of Implementation of the Bologna Declaration*, whose members were appointed by the Rectors' Conference in August 2004. In 2006, *Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF)* was introduced, as the instrument for the establishment and harmonisation of higher education qualifications acquired in the European countries.

## **2. Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF)**

The aim of the Croatian Qualifications Framework is to promote and ensure access to education for all in terms of social equality, in the interest of the society and the individual. It is a continuation of the Croatian education tradition, as well as a development of the existing education system on the basis of guidelines and experiences from other European countries. The process of the development of CROQF should prepare the Croatian society and economy for European inte-

gration, i.e. for adopting European countries' positive experiences [*Croatian Qualification...* 2009].

The development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) commenced when the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia formed a *Committee for the Implementation of the CROQF* chaired by the Minister, and sent the *Baseline for the Development of the Croatian Qualifications Framework* to the Government of the Republic of Croatia, which was adopted in 2007. A year later, in 2008, the *Operative Team* in support to the CROQF Committee was appointed, consisting of representatives of various institutions involved in all levels of education, starting from primary school to higher education level. Relevant agencies, ministries and representatives of the business sector also participate in the development of the CROQF [*Croatian Qualification...* 2009: 33].

The introduction of the CROQF is a process which envisages three stages. The first stage has been referred to as the orientation stage, during which Croatia decided to enter such a highly complex process of development of the CROQF, while the subsequent stages are: conceptual understanding, design, assessment, implementation, revision and development. These stages are mutually overlapping, and the process itself should reach the institutional CROQF coordination and development stage and be completed by 2012. It remains open for further upgrading and represents an important basis for Croatia's European integration as well as a path towards the interest linking between Croatia and other EU countries, with an emphasis on the principle of respect for the specific features of the Croatian legacy and the existing education system [*Croatian Qualification...* 2009: 33–36].

The recognition and validation of foreign qualifications (diplomas) in Croatia, as well as of Croatian qualifications abroad, will lead to the creation of a uniform quality assurance and improvement system for the existing and new qualifications (transparency of qualifications). A particularly significant fact is that this system will facilitate readability of various types of qualifications in Croatia and Europe, and will therefore also lead to a faster and simpler employment through the creation of a commonly accepted and understandable system for presentation of education achievements. This is of extreme importance for both the individual and the employer, and is crucial in terms of employment promotion and improvement of cooperation between various stakeholders in education.

As the national qualifications framework, the CROQF has the task of connecting learning outcomes, i.e. of allowing comparison between qualifications (diplomas) acquired not only in the Republic of Croatia, but at the international level as well. In order for this to be possible, a group of measurable competences which are demonstrated by means of a certificate or a diploma issued by a competent awarding institution needs to be assessed and validated, because they

represent a qualification acquired through education in concrete institutions (in the country or abroad) and in verifiable conditions [*Croatian Qualification...* 2009: 34]. Thus recognised, the competences are characterised by transparency (i.e. visibility and readability of the content of a qualification), which contributes to progression in the education system, access to education, as well as to reliability and quality of the qualification. Recognition of the acquired learning outcomes is therefore aimed at the acquisition of new competences through the lifelong learning process [*Croatian Qualification...* 2009: 36]. This is the safe path towards building a knowledge society and referencing with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) [*Croatian Qualification...* 2009:14].

### 3. Recognition of Teacher Diplomas in Croatia

In 2007, a 5-year integrated teacher studies course (university degree) has been introduced in Croatia, and it is harmonised with the Bologna process (300 ECTS, EQF level 7 learning outcomes) [*Croatian Qualifications...* 2009: 26]. Upon completion of the said course, the individual acquires the *Master's Degree in Teaching* qualification. Before 2007, teacher education was provided in the form of a 4-year professional study course (with a possibility of studying an additional „intensified” course (approximately 1200 learning hours in the intensified course), provided by teacher colleges which were a part of the university. Although the *Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers* ([www.google.hr/search?q=učiteljske+diplome+priznavanje&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a](http://www.google.hr/search?q=učiteljske+diplome+priznavanje&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a)) was adopted back in 2006 at a Special Intergovernmental Conference of the *International Conference on the Status of Teachers* sponsored by UNESCO, which states that „measures need to be taken for the international recognition of teacher qualifications whose professional status is verified according to internationally accepted standards” [*Recommendation...* 2006: 5], the status and the recognition of teacher qualifications acquired upon completion of a 4-year study programme (i.e. before the introduction of the Bologna process) have not yet been defined in Croatia so as to allow the teachers who have completed four years of teacher education studies to continue their studies on the doctoral level (without having to sit for additional exams), and to be involved in scientific projects as junior researchers (that is, to work on teacher training faculties as assistants). With regard to professional advancement and promotion, the *Recommendation* states that „teachers should have the opportunity to progress from one type or level of education to another within the educational profession depending on their qualifications”.

The said progression opportunities through studies are available only to those teachers who have completed their studies according to the Bologna process, and not to those who have completed the former 4-year professional studies, although there is no significant difference between them with regard to learning outcomes, and although both possess the necessary competences to

work in Croatian primary schools. This is a major shortcoming of the teacher diploma and qualification recognition system on the national level. It is expected that the new *Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Croatia* (which is currently in the process of being adopted) and the establishment of the CROQF will solve this problem and define this issue more clearly by „recognising the crucial role of teachers in the improvement of upbringing and education and in the development of the individual and the modern society” [*Recommendation...* 2006: 1].

#### **4. Changes of the Upbringing-Education System (School) and the Development of Teacher Competences**

The underlying structure of the modern school system as the fundamental agent of social reproduction is characterised by „self-organisation for the purpose of self-renewal and self-surpassing” [Pivac 2000: 7], which is why upbringing-education process must necessarily be based on the development of learning-to-learn skills, i.e. on „acquiring, earning, discovering, creating, innovating and producing knowledge, instead of simply transferring it” [Pivac 2000: 9]. These changes in education represent the most demanding task that the modern school system needs to face (on all the levels of education), and are reflected in the need to affirm an innovative and anticipative learning which is value-oriented. The adaptation of the school (and the education system in general) to the new changes in the modern society is carried out through two aspects of change: an „external reform” of the education system, which refers to the re-organisation and re-design of parts of the system or of the school system in its entirety (the so called „top-down” reform or an administrative-organisational reform – such as the Bologna reform), and a pedagogical or so called „internal reform”, which primarily refers to the changes in the quality of the upbringing-education process [Kostović 2009: 314–315].

In the above described context of social occurrences, the institutions which are involved with the higher education are required to adjust to the changes and develop competence-based curricula [Previšić 2007], while the actors of the upbringing-education process (students, pupils and teachers/professors in higher education) need to assume a demanding role of agents of change in the process of building a new perspective on education in general. On that path they will face new possibilities and challenges, as well as contradictions „with the aim of overcoming the crisis and stagnant positions of schools in the world characterised by intensive change” [Pivac 2000: 11]. In the process of changing the higher education system, regardless of whether the modifications stem from internal changes of quality or are induced by external reforms, the reform of the existing curricula for teacher education is particularly emphasised, because it has a significant influence on the outcomes of the education process, the position of the student in the education process, and the level of the student's education

achievements. A key factor in the change of education quality is the development of teacher competences, which can be achieved not only through initial teacher education, but by means of a teacher's professional improvement as well, i.e. through a continuous professional development [Vizek-Vidović 2005]. Essential changes of the education context are reflected in the change of the value system, globalisation of economy and life in general, organisation of work and new information and communication technologies, and as such they have an influence on the professional roles and responsibilities of the teaching profession (which primarily refers to the primary education teachers). In this regard, there are two aspects of the radical reform which are being carried out: (1) *curricular reform* – education and further training in general and (2) *positioning of the teacher* in that process (roles and functions of teachers, initial education and professional development and improvement programmes)” [Kostović 2009: 314–315].

The curricular reform encompasses amendments and changes to the curriculum, whereby the curriculum is a series of planned processes aimed at the acquisition of competences by the individual (including the objectives, learning outcomes, subject matter, working methods, forms of learning, validation, and quality assurance system [Croatian Qualifications... 2009: 31]. Today, the *integrated curriculum* is believed to be the starting point for development (sustainable development in particular) and lifelong learning, whose realisation depends on a number of factors, and is achieved in a free and creative way in the course of the upbringing-education process through a maximum involvement of the pupil/student [Previšić 2007]. Such a modern curriculum facilitates „active learning and understanding of the subject matter through meaningful and mutually related activities within a homogeneous, logical and integrated context which encourages students’ autonomy, critical thinking and problem solving abilities and develops communication, argumentation and decision-making skills. It ensures long-term upbringing-education effects and increases the probability of success of each child/student and teacher” [Buljubašić-Kuzmanović 2008: 328].

Teacher positioning according to Kostović [2009] refers to the initial education and professional improvement programmes for teachers (new competences and functions of teachers), as well as to the perception of his/her future activities. These are the important aspects of change in a dynamic and complex society in which „rate at which individuals and organisations learn is considered to be the only sustainable competitive advantage and a necessary response to overall changes” [Čepić, Krstović 2008: 139].

Comparative research conducted both on a global level and in our country suggests that new, open, dynamic and well-balanced teacher education models are required, which will give teachers a high degree of autonomy in the creation of the education process and allow them an autonomous and proactive planning



and delivery of teaching, reflection on their own work, as well as personal development. The EU documents state that the quality of teacher education can be improved by basing the education on the insights of the educational, psychological and information sciences as well as on the psychology of learning and teaching. A special emphasis is put on the practical work and apprenticeship in schools and on mentorship during the first year of employment, which was highlighted in the *Improving the Quality of Teacher Education (2007)* EC document. The traditional approach, which is still dominant in the development of curriculum and the education practice, is considered to be a limiting factor with regard to an aspiration to establish a culture of knowledge and learning which is characteristic of the developed countries [Vizek-Vidović 2005: 9]. The EU *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications* document, within the *Education and Training 2010* programme, identifies three key teacher competences: (1) work with information, technology and knowledge, (2) work with people – students, associates and other partners in education, and (3) work in the society and with the society on a local, regional, national, European and broader global level. „EU Member States and the European Commission strengthened cooperation in 2009 with the *Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training ("ET 2020")*, a follow-up to the earlier Education and Training 2010 work programme launched in 2001” ([http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc28\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc28_en.htm)).

In Europe, teacher education tends to be provided at a university level, ECTS is implemented, mobility of students and teachers is ensured, and teaching approach is focused on the student and the development of competences, i.e. on learning outcomes with the aim of harmonising the education system. Already the first EU documents, i.e. the European Commission documents from 2003 identify the following as the fundamental professional responsibilities of teachers: „to transfer cultural values and insights; to encourage the acquisition of multiple competences and self-regulated learning by students; to model communication and social skills which are necessary for an effective integration into the civil society and life in a multicultural environment; to provide support to children and parents in dealing with developmental crises” [*Expert Group – First Report* 2003, from: Vizek-Vidović, 2005: 17].

It is important to emphasise that the teaching profession is characterised by a special dimension which a number of other professions do not have, which is the fact that a teacher needs to be competent to encourage the development of students' competences, and that he/she is one of the main actors affecting the level of students' education achievements [Lončarić, Pejić-Papak 2009: 481; according to Jurić 2007]. This was also highlighted in the EC document *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe: Summary of Outcomes – Education [Tuning 2: 2005]* ([http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/stories/template/Template\\_Education.pdf](http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/stories/template/Template_Education.pdf)), where the following specific teacher competences were identified: (1) dedication

to encouraging students' achievements and progress; (2) ability to develop and encourage learning strategies; (3) ability to counsel students and parents; (4) knowledge of the subject area he/she teaches; (5) ability to effectively communicate with individuals and groups; (6) ability to create a learning-friendly environment; (7) ability to apply the acquired knowledge; (8) effective time management skills; (9) ability to analyse and self-evaluate one's work; (10) awareness of the need for a continuous professional development; (11) ability to assess learning outcomes and students' achievements; (12) cooperative problem-solving skills; (13) ability to respond to diverse needs of students; (14) ability to improve the teaching and learning environment; (15) ability to adapt curricula to the specific education context [Lončarić, Pejić-Papak 2009: 485].

There are various attempts and proposals for profiling teacher competences in Croatia, such as the *Proposed Framework Competency Profile* for teacher education study programmes [authors: Lončarić, Pejić-Papak 2009: 479–495], which classifies competences according to areas of professional activities and development, and whose aim is to present the elements of content and structure of subject-specific competences which are important for the development of new or harmonisation of the existing teacher education study programmes with the Bologna process.

The acquisition of new knowledge in terms of lifelong learning is no longer sufficient for achieving qualitative change. An important role is given to the new aspects of education, such as *education for sustainable development*, which allows acquisition of new competences for life in the present as well as in the future of both the present and future generations [Tatković 2011; Tatković N., Tatković S. 2008]. Creativity, productivity, inquisitiveness, cooperation and compassion are considered to be essential teacher competences for lifelong learning [Buljubašić-Kuzmanović 2008, according to Walsh 1997], but apart from them the following are being mentioned as well: experimenting with ideas, interest in research, focus, initiative, productivity, originality and ability to analyse and synthesise [Buljubašić-Kuzmanović 2008: 330–332]. International organisations see education for sustainable development as the acquisition of competences necessary for environmental protection, economic prosperity and creation of a responsible global citizenry [Chic 2000, according to Miljević-Rižički et al. 2001], the concepts of upbringing and education for sustainable development include the following: 1. interdependence, 2. knowing others and respect for diversity, 3. social justice, 4. conflicts and conflict management, 5. changes and the future. The authors claim that the first concept – *interdependence* – implies learning that the world is a system in which all the elements are interrelated: people, events, trends, phenomena..., and therefore even the local decisions and actions can result in global consequences. This concept substantiates the approaches according to which preservation of life on Earth is becoming ever more dependent on the integrity of nature in general [Legrand 1995]. The

second concept – *knowing others and respect for diversity* – refers to knowledge of and insights into characteristics, culture and history of one's own people and its position within a broader global community, familiarity with other cultures in one's own community and in different parts of the world, and familiarity with the stereotypes about other cultures, the source of those stereotypes and their groundlessness. The third concept – *social justice* – refers to familiarity with human rights and with the possibility of a positive influence on the realisation of human rights and freedoms. The fourth concept – *conflicts and conflict management* – refers to familiarity with various types of conflicts, their causes and possible outcomes, and understanding that there is a number of ways in which conflicts can end, with violence being only one of them. The fifth concept – *change and the future* – refers to the understanding of the main issues of development and the present and future development trends [Miljević-Rižički et al. 2001]. The realisation of the above mentioned concepts presents challenges for the education system and teacher education, which the schools cannot overcome on their own. It requires support from a broader social community and all the social institutions, especially teacher education institutions. According to the recommendations made by the world organisations (especially UNESCO), sustainable development concepts should be incorporated into teacher education curriculum, thus enabling the realisation of the idea of upbringing and education for sustainable development. The development of teacher competences for sustainable development and lifelong learning reflects the upbringing-educational philosophy according to which the school assumes the role of a pro-social community. It is the place in which new skills and ways of doing things are acquired in the spirit of sustainability ethics. Students, teachers, parents and the local community develop general and specific competences (skills, abilities and autonomy) for lifelong learning and sustainable development in an open, dynamic and continuous process [Hrvatić, Piršl 2007].

Those who are familiar with the education process based on the sustainability ethics believe that education institutions in Croatia, including those which provide teacher education, still have not developed clear strategies and models for lifelong learning and education for sustainable development [Uzelac 2007; Uzelac, Pejčić 2007; Uzelac 2008], and these values are insufficiently represented in teacher education curricula, as well as in education of teachers of other subjects. Vare and Scott [2007, according to Romstein and Balić 2008: 334] presented an interesting idea about the need to distinguish between education „*for*” sustainable development and education „*as*” sustainable development. Such a perspective on sustainable development contains a definition of learning as a collaborative and reflexive process which implies the inter-generational dimension and the idea of limited resources of our environment [Romstein, Balić 2008: 334].

The new paradigm of teacher education mentioned above can be found in international documents which represent the focal point and foundation for the EU education policy. The most significant documents related to the right to and need for lifelong education for teachers and the possibility of their continuous professional development are the following: Declaration by OECD on *Lifelong Learning for All*, (1998); *Lisbon Declaration* (2000); *EU Memorandum of Lifelong Learning* (2000); European Commission Communiqué entitled *Making a European Lifelong Learning a Reality* (2001); *European Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning* (2002); *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework, 2006* (by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union); and a very significant document entitled *The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*, 2008 (European Commission: Education and Culture).

The documents which place an emphasis on teacher competences are the following: *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications* (2005; European Commission); *Improving the Quality of Teacher Education* (2007; Commission of the European Communities); *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe: Summary of Outcomes – Education* (2005); *Teacher Education in Europe: An ETUCE Policy Paper* (2008; European Trade Union Committee for Education) and the document entitled: *Improving Competences for the 21st Century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools* (2008; Commission of the European Communities) [Lončarić, Pejić-Papak 2009: 480–481].

Education for sustainable development is discussed in a series of UNESCO's international documents, with the special emphasis on the one which refers to the international implementation of education for sustainable development in the decade between 2005 and 2014 (*UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005–2014*). Croatia adopted all the international documents and produced a series of its own documents, among which the *Sustainable Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia* (2009) ([http://narodne-ovine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2009\\_03\\_30\\_658.html](http://narodne-ovine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2009_03_30_658.html)) is of special importance, and the strategy of education for sustainable development is also being developed, which will provide guidelines for the development of teacher education curriculum.

In the course of the development and profiling of teacher competences and the development of curriculum, it is particularly important on the national level to consult the *National Framework Curriculum for Preschool Education, General Compulsory Education in Primary and Secondary School* (Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia, 2008) and all the other documents related to the introduction of CROQF, as well as the research results of a significant project run by the National Foundation for Science (authors Vizek Vidović et al., who were members of the working group for the development of a European document entitled *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe – Sum-*

mary of Outcomes – Education (published in the book entitled *Learning Outcomes in Teacher and Trainers Education*, 2005).

## 5. Instead of a Conclusion

Governments of the European countries, including Croatia, should enforce concrete and effective measures to encourage: (1) innovative approaches to the organisation and content (curriculum) of teacher studies focused on education quality improvement and development of teacher competences, (2) support initiatives towards a stronger link between higher education institutions and the education practice (for both schools and mentors), as well as the quality monitoring institutions, (3) encourage and support modernisation of study programmes and higher education teaching in general, by investing more resources into higher education and science.

It is expected that the status and recognition of teacher qualifications (former diplomas) and the right to continue education at the doctoral studies level in Croatia will be defined by the new National Qualifications Framework and new Law on Higher Education to the satisfaction of all the teachers who have opted for this noble and demanding profession before the introduction of the Bologna process. The extent to which the envisaged changes will actually be achieved will depend on the willingness to amend the encountered shortcomings, and especially on the openness of all towards novelty and towards the introduction of a uniform set of criteria for teacher education as well as for recognition of the achieved qualifications and learning outcomes.

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### **Abstract**

Croatian higher education policy is in line with the changes which will occur after Croatia joins the EU. The country has been harmonising its policy with the Lisbon objectives, the Bologna Declaration and the other EU documents, and has been developing its national qualifications framework (NQF), which is modelled after the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as an instrument which will facilitate validation, harmonisation, comparison and measurability of learning outcomes, and is aimed at personal development, development of social inclusiveness, facilitation of lifelong learning, and recognition of acquired qualifications (diplomas) on both the national and the European level. In this context, significant changes have taken place in the higher education sector, especially in the education and training of teachers who are entrusted with a responsible task of reconceptualising upbringing and education towards sustainable development. Therefore, from both the global and the national perspective, there is an effort to raise awareness about the importance of teacher competences development, curriculum modifications and adaptations in the context of the Bologna process, and the development of a national qualifications framework. The development of teacher competences through initial education and their professional development, as well as the need for pupils/students to assume the central position in the education process, are being identified as the determinants of a qualitative change of schools in general. The importance of acquiring additional qualifications through post-graduate studies is being highlighted with the purpose of teachers' continuous professional development.

**Key words:** teacher competences, Bologna process, Croatian Qualifications Framework, curricular reform.

## **Rozwój kompetencji nauczycieli w kontekście chorwackich ram kwalifikacji oraz procesu bolońskiego**

### **Streszczenie**

Chorwacka polityka edukacyjna kształcenia na poziomie wyższym jest zgodna ze zmianami, które nastąpią po przystąpieniu Chorwacji do UE. Kraj ten dostosowuje politykę oświatową do celów Strategii Lizbońskiej, Deklaracji Bolońskiej oraz innych dokumentów UE i rozwija krajowe ramy kwalifikacji (KRRK), które są wzorowane na europejskich ramach kwalifikacji (ERK) jako narzędziach, które ułatwią walidację, harmonizację, porównanie i zapewnią mierzalność efektów uczenia się, a jego celem jest rozwój osobowy człowieka, rozwój społecznej integracji, ułatwienia kształcenia ustawicznego i uznawanie nabytych kwalifikacji (dyplomów) zarówno na szczeblu krajowym, jak i europejskim. W tym kontekście istotne zmiany miały miejsce w sektorze szkolnictwa wyższego, zwłaszcza w dziedzinie edukacji i doskonalenia zawodowego nauczycieli, którym powierzono odpowiedzialne zadanie, przekształcenie wychowania i edukacji na rzecz zrównoważonego rozwoju. Dlatego też, zarówno z perspektywy globalnej, jak i krajowej, działania te mają na celu podniesienie świadomości na temat znaczenia rozwoju kompetencji nauczyciela, zmian programów nauczania i dostosowania systemu kształcenia w kontekście procesu bolońskiego i rozwój krajowych ram kwalifikacji. Rozwój kompetencji nauczycieli w ich kształceniu i rozwoju zawodowym, jak również potrzeby uczniów/studentów powinny przyjąć centralną pozycję w procesie edukacji. Kompetencje te są określane jako wyznaczniki jakościowej zmiany szkół w ogólności. Znaczenie nabywania przez nauczycieli dodatkowych kwalifikacji poprzez studia podyplomowe jest podstawą ich ciągłego rozwoju zawodowego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** kompetencje nauczycieli, proces boloński, chorwackie ramy kwalifikacji zawodowych, reforma programowa.