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**Ph.D. Mirjana Radetić-Paić, associate
professor** Faculty of Educational Sciences Juraj
Dobrića University of Pula
miradet@unipu.hr

TEACHERS' SELF-ASSESSMENTS ABOUT PUPILS WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT / HYPERACTIVE DISORDER CONSIDERING THE NUMBER OF YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Abstract: *The basic characteristics of attention deficit / hyperactive disorder are usually an obstacle to proper adaptation, requirements and expectations related to learning as well as to pupils' behaviour. The aim of this research is to get an insight into the teachers' (N=212) personal evaluations of their knowledge about pupils with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder and determine the specific differences in their self-evaluation considering the number of years of professional experience with the purpose of understanding teachers' knowledge and recognising drawbacks. An instrument construed for the needs of this research has been used and a pilot-research on a smaller sample of respondents was conducted prior to it. The validation of instruments was done by factor analysis. Besides calculating the basic statistical values, the discriminant analysis and the univariate analysis of variance were used. Results show, taking into consideration the latent and manifest dimensions of variants, that teachers with less than twenty years of professional experience in this context have to a larger extent offered a correct evaluation of certain notions and knowledge about children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder. When it comes to children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder, the previously mentioned indicates the need of a continual lifelong training for teachers in regular schools.*

Key words: *attention deficit / hyperactive disorder, children with difficulties in their knowledge development, lifelong education, teacher*

INTRODUCTION

The primary education system includes recognition and respect, which represents a continual challenge for teachers due to the constant demand for a growth of knowledge. In working with children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder it is important for the teachers to be familiar with the basic symptoms during their development, the causes, prognosis, diagnostics and therapy for the disorder (Phelan 2005, Mrđen and Puhovski, 2006), as well as with adaptations in the educational work. The National Curriculum Framework for preschool education and general compulsory education in primary and secondary schools (MZOŠ, 2010) also emphasizes the need for professional development of, among others, teachers to secure the necessary train-

ing for the work with children with developmental difficulties. The training includes the recognition of children with developmental difficulties' characteristics and needs, the knowledge and application of methods and forms of work, and it emphasizes the knowledge of individualized and differentiated teaching.

The mere notion of attention deficit / hyperactive disorder is heterogeneous, and observing it along with the comorbidity factors, it makes setting the diagnosis and its control complex, but points out to the need of adjusting the evaluation and control of this multi-factor state. The importance of setting the correct diagnosis has led to the fact that in the evaluation and diagnosing procedures some changes have occurred in the course of years (DSM II, DSM III, DSM IV, Cooper and Hughes 2009, DSM V), and thus also to the implementation of new knowledge into curricula, before all, knowledge obtained by former teachers, and today's masters of primary education who thus attained many positive changes.

It is known that more serious difficulties for children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder begin when they start school. This disorder's basic characteristics are an obstacle to good adaptation, requirements and expectations linked to studying, but also behaviour. That is why children often experience a lack of success, they are exposed to criticism and punishments, their peers reject them, and consequently their relationship with parents becomes worse due to the fact that parents usually do not understand that their child has a serious problem (Sekušak-Galešev, 2005, Jurin and Sekušak-Galešev 2008).

On the other hand, the many years of practice and scientific research in the Republic of Croatia have shown that teachers do not feel enough prepared to work with children who have developmental difficulties in regular education. By completing the five-year integrated undergraduate and graduate university study, future teachers have a relatively small number of hours (30 hours) of training for their work with children with the hyperactive disorder. Although the number of hours is higher than, for example, twenty years ago, it is insufficient when considering the fact that the number of children with the aforementioned disorder is today higher, that integration is more common, and that developmental difficulties have become more varied and multiple. Research has shown (Gallagher and Malone, 2009, Milenović, 2009, Zrilić, 2013, Ivančić and Stančić 2013) that many teachers believe to be poorly prepared for the support of children with developmental difficulties in regular education. The authors Leutar and Frantal (2006) have come to results in their study which show mostly unfavourable teachers' attitudes toward the integration of pupils with developmental difficulties into the regular school system. Teachers point out that they do not have enough material means at their disposal to be able to work with those children properly, and the necessary professional support is also something they miss. In their opinion, they do not acquire the necessary professional knowledge during their graduate study, and so they do not feel sufficiently competent to work with children having developmental difficulties. Moreover, when it comes to the process of teaching, the share of examinees expressing their inclusive beliefs diminishes, i.e. the inclusive belief is more expressed by

students of the teacher education study who have recently attended the inclusive pedagogy course, and the least by already employed teachers (Bouillet, Domović and Ivančević, 2017).

Recent studies indicate (Sekušak-Galešev, Frey Škrinjar, Masnjak, 2015) the worryingly small frequency of individualisation procedures which are extremely important for pupils with this developmental disorder because without their application, in conditions equal to the ones had by the other pupils, they would not be able to show their best knowledge even if the teaching materials were acquired to the best. It can be concluded that there is a need for the support of teachers applying instructions for the individualised approach. Teachers still need the support to apply them. In regard to that the authors Kudek Mirošević and Opić (2011) have conducted a research on the relationship / conduct / treatment of children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder in regular primary schools, and the results have shown, among other things, that children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder are not given the necessary educational support by their teachers.

Woolfolk (2016) points out that teachers should be professional, innovative, creative and, more importantly, pupil-oriented. They also have to have a large number of strategies at their disposal, create new ones, and, of course, be able to apply them correctly. It is important for them to have management skills for classes with heterogeneous pupils and to know each of them well. Furthermore, it is important that teachers adapt their teaching to pupils' needs, satisfy their emotional needs and develop their self-confidence.

When it comes to the teachers' professionalism, Velki (2012) states that some of them are more, some less professional in educating children with developmental difficulties. If there are teachers in a school who are professional in this area, children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder should be put in their classes so that they could be offered the best possible teacher's approach and the most considerable advancement in their education. Therefore, a child's school success often depends on his or her ability to complete tasks and on the teacher's expectations, with the least loss of concentration possible. Such skills enable children to acquire the necessary knowledge, solve demanding problem tasks and participate in class activities and discussions (Forness and Kavale, 2001).

The teacher's role is, first of all, to estimate each child and his or her individual needs. Teachers have to offer children a lot of patience, creativity and consistence. In this case, teachers can develop strategies which would improve pupils' education, maintain their attention and use the highest potentials during their development (Capano et al., 2008). The precondition for the development of such strategies is that teachers have the knowledge about this disorder.

AIMS, HYPOTHESIS AND PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the research is to gain an insight into the teachers' evaluation of their knowledge about children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder, as well as to determine the differences in their self-evaluations regarding years of professional

experience with the purpose of understanding teachers' knowledge and recognising deficiencies.

The set hypothesis states that teachers differently evaluate certain notions and knowledge about children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder with regard to the years of their own professional experience.

It is assumed that teachers with different professional experience will also express specific differences in self-evaluations. Namely, the integration of children with developmental difficulties into the regular school system is a process recently intensified, so it is expected that teachers with less professional experience will have better knowledge about working with children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder. In the last time, the curricula are richer in contents regarding this specific knowledge. The latest generations of teachers were more exposed to working with children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder, while the older generations had less chance to meet them, among other things, due to terminological inconsistencies and diagnostic difficulties. It can thus be concluded that younger generations of teachers have a higher responsibility and challenges in this area (Westwood and Graham, 2003) and are directly or indirectly more exposed to adaptations of teaching methods (Peterson and Beloin, 1992; Avramidis et al., 2000; McKinnon and Gordon, 1999; Paterson and Graham, 2000).

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE OF EXAMINEES

The appropriate sample of examinees consists of 212 teachers (masters of primary education).

Table 1. Examinees' sex

SEX	Aps.	%
M	5	2.4
F	207	97.6

There were 97.6 % of female examinees and 2.4 % of male examinees participating in the research, so there were more women than men (Table 1.).

Table 2. Examinees' age

DOB	Aps.	%
Up to 30 years of age	77	46
30 – 40 years of age	51	15.4
41 – 50 years of age	73	33
51 – 60 years of age	10	5
More than 60 years of age	1	0.6

Most examinees are up to 30 years old (46 %) and between 41 and 50 years old (33 %), while the least number of them are 60 and more years old (0.6 %) (Table 2.).

Table 3. Examinees' professional experience

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE	Aps.	%
Up to 20 years of experience	131	61.8
Over 20 years of experience	81	38.2

Regarding the number of professional experience years, there are 61.8 % of examinees with up to 20 years of professional experience, and 38.2 % of them with over 20 years of experience (Table 3).

SAMPLE OF ITEMS

The research uses an instrument designed for the needs of this research. A pilot research had been conducted prior to this one, on a smaller sample of examinees, based on an earlier application of an instrument (Božac, 2017) which had been validated (what preceded was the assessment of the adequacy of data for factor analysis: the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test $KMO = .88$ and the Bartlett test of sphericity (χ^2) (190) = 2071.9, $p < .001$). The confirmatory factor analysis of instruments (20 items) was applied with the aim of testing the hypothesis about latent processes, and its data indicated the five-factor solution explaining 65.10 % of the variance. The reliability of scales is satisfactory in the range from $\alpha = .62 - .71$. Descriptive data indicate a negative anti-symmetry of results distribution on all factors which could indicate a poor sensitivity of the instrument.

In the final version the instrument consisted of 20 items estimated by the five-point Lykert-type scale (1 = I completely disagree, 2 = I partially disagree, 3 = I neither disagree, nor agree, 4 = I partially agree and 5 = I completely agree). All items have been formulated to be true.

DATA PROCESSING METHODS

Besides calculating the basic statistical values, the discriminant analysis and the univariate analysis of the variance as constituent parts of the SPSS programme 24.0 Standard Campus Edition (SPSS ID: 729357 20.05.2016.) were used for data processing.

DATA COLLECTION

The research was conducted at the end of 2017 among teachers working in eight primary schools of the Istria County, through an online questionnaire. The examinees were informed with the aims and purpose of conducting the research, they were given guidelines on how to fill in the questionnaire, anonymity was guaranteed, and they were explained that the data will only be used for scientific purposes. The questionnaires were filled in willingly, and the examinees could give up further answering of questions at any time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 4 shows measures of the central tendency and dispersion of the twenty observed items. It can be noticed that the average values of items are different, with a special deviation of item 7. There are three ADHD types noticed among children (higher level of knowledge) and item 2. ADHD can be inherited (lower level of knowledge).

Table 4. Measures of the central tendency and dispersion

	N	Min	Max	Arithmetic mean	Std. deviation
1. ADHD is short for attention deficit / hyperactive disorder	212	1.00	5.00	4.4340	.9978
2. ADHD can be inherited.	212	1.00	5.00	2.8349	1.1948
3. There are three types of ADHD noticed among children.	212	1.00	5.00	3.4953	1.0687
4. Not all children with ADHD are hyperactive.	212	1.00	5.00	3.6651	1.2145
5. ADHD is more often found with boys.	212	1.00	5.00	3.8255	1.0498
6. Children with ADHD symptoms often seem not to be reacting to verbal instructions.	212	1.00	5.00	4.1415	.9281
7. It is desirable to use short and clear instructions in working with a pupil having ADHD.	212	1.00	5.00	4.5189	.8513
8. It is important to reduce noise in a class with an ADHD child.	212	1.00	5.00	4.1321	1.0627
9. It is good to ignore tiny disturbances of the ADHD child.	212	1.00	5.00	4.2311	.9381
10. A child with ADHD should be allowed to move around the classroom.	212	1.00	5.00	4.1368	1.0732
11. It is useful to avoid changes in routine of a child with ADHD.	212	1.00	5.00	3.6038	1.3433
12. In working with a child with ADHD it is advisable to avoid repetitive tasks.	212	1.00	5.00	3.5896	1.0738
13. Children with ADHD achieve better results in reading comprehension tasks if they are asked to read aloud.	212	1.00	5.00	3.6604	.9822
14. It is desirable to make tasks shorter for the child with ADHD than for the other children in the group.	212	1.00	5.00	3.8821	1.1438
15. Children with ADHD are able to complete tasks if they are given more time to solve them.	212	1.00	5.00	4.0283	.9925
16. Exchanging easier and more difficult tasks helps the child with ADHD to maintain concentration.	212	1.00	5.00	3.8868	.9912

17. The failure to succeed in reaching self-control is a characteristic of the impulsive type of ADHD.	212	1.00	5.00	3.9623	.9728
18. Children with the hyperactive ADHD type are usually fidgeting on the chair.	212	1.00	5.00	4.1462	.8882
19. Children with the inattentive ADHD type are characterized by their avoidance of tasks which require a lasting mental effort.	212	1.00	5.00	3.9387	.9034
20. The combined ADHD type implies the combination of hyperactive – impulsive and inattentive type.	212	1.00	5.00	3.8821	.9491

The differences in the estimation of certain specific knowledge with regard to years of their own professional experience were questioned with the discriminant analysis to gain an insight into the latent dimensions of these differences. The former testing of data distribution with the Kolmogorov – Smirnov test indicates a normal distribution of data (min. Sig.= .132 > .05). The discriminant analysis was done on a set of items describing certain notions and teachers' knowledge about children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder. Since the discriminant analysis was conducted on only two groups of examinees – teachers with up to twenty years of professional experience and teachers with more than twenty years of professional experience, one discriminant function was obtained which is, as derived from Table 5., statistically significant at the level $P = .01$ and discriminates the observed groups of examinees. The canonical correlation derived from the same table show a relatively good discriminant power of this function in the practical sense.

Table 5.Characteristic root and Wilks' Lambda

Discriminant function	% of variance	Cumulative variance in %	Canonical correlation	Wilks' lambda Λ	χ^2	df	p
1	100	100	.415	.828	37.866	20	.009

Table 6.Standardized canonical discriminant function coefficient (C) and the matrix structure (S)

ITEMS	C	S
1. ADHD is short for attention deficit / hyperactive disorder	.431	.218
2. ADHD can be inherited.	.406	.263
3. There are three types of ADHD noticed among children.	-.726	-.097
4. Not all children with ADHD are hyperactive.	.583	.317*
5. ADHD is more often found with boys.	-.234	.018
6. Children with ADHD symptoms often seem not to be reacting to verbal instructions.	.151	.149
7. It is desirable to use short and clear instructions in working with a pupil having ADHD.	-.337	.227

8. It is important to reduce noise in a class with an ADHD child.	.736	.297*
9. It is good to ignore tiny disturbances of the ADHD child.	-.128	.085
10. A child with ADHD should be allowed to move around the classroom.	-.384	-.058
11. It is useful to avoid changes in routine of a child with ADHD.	-.152	.078
12. In working with a child with ADHD it is advisable to avoid repetitive tasks.	.508	.316*
13. Children with ADHD achieve better results in reading comprehension tasks if they are asked to read aloud.	-.219	.076
14. It is desirable to make tasks shorter for the child with ADHD than for the other children in the group.	.107	.177
15. Children with ADHD are able to complete tasks if they are given more time to solve them.	.328	.157
16. Exchanging easier and more difficult tasks helps the child with ADHD to maintain concentration.	-.041	.104
17. The failure to succeed in reaching self-control is a characteristic of the impulsive type of ADHD.	-.222	-.023
18. Children with the hyperactive ADHD type are usually fidgeting on the chair.	.126	.189
19. Children with the inattentive ADHD type are characterized by their avoidance of tasks which require a lasting mental effort.	.274	.143
20. The combined ADHD type implies the combination of hyperactive – impulsive and inattentive type.	-.619	-.170

*DF

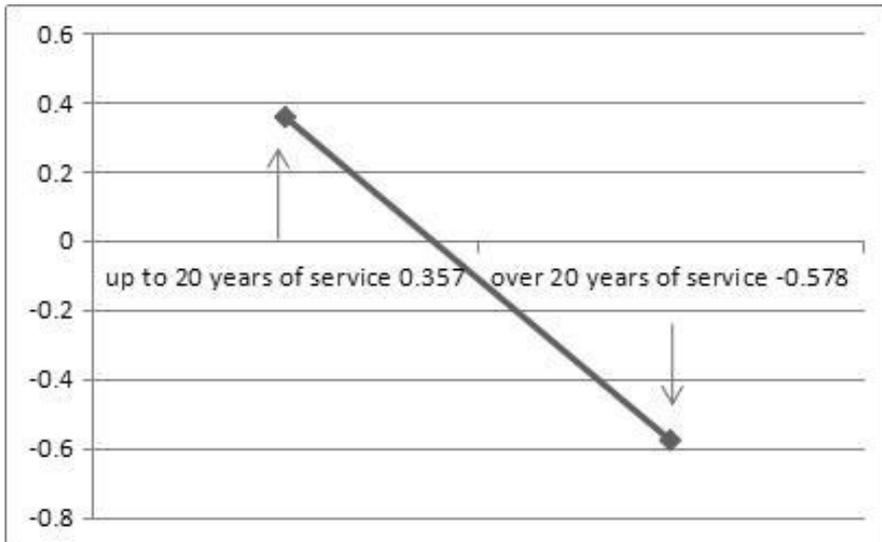


Chart 1. Groups' centroids

From the data shown in Table 6. and Chart 1. it is derived that the examinees, with regard to years of professional experience, are most different in item 4. Not all children with ADHD are hyperactive, 12. In working with a child with ADHD it is advisable to avoid repetitive tasks, and 8. It is important to reduce noise in a class with an ADHD child, so that teachers with less than twenty years of working experience estimate their knowledge to a larger extent.

In relation to this, considering the connection / relationship of professional experience years and teachers' attitude toward the integration of pupils with developmental difficulties in general, the author Kiš-Glavaš (2000) has reached the data that younger teachers and teachers with less than 20 years of professional experience show more positive attitudes than older teachers. The author also states that those teachers who are satisfied with their own knowledge about children with difficulties and working with them, and those who do not work in larger schools show more positive attitudes than older teachers.

To gain an insight into the existence of possible differences between groups in manifest items, Table 7. gives data on arithmetic means, groups' standard deviations, F-test and significance (p). Manifest items 4. Not all children with ADHD are hyperactive, 12. In working with a child with ADHD it is advisable to avoid repetitive tasks, and 8. It is important to reduce noise in a class with an ADHD child are statistically significant.

Table 7. Results of the univariate analysis of variance

	Ar. mean		Std. D.		F	P
	Up to 20 y.	Over 20 y.	Up to 20 y.	Over 20 y.		
1. ADHD is short for attention deficit / hyperactive disorder	4.5115	4.3086	.9637	1.0445	2.078	.151
2. ADHD can be inherited.	2.9466	2.6543	1.1253	1.2861	3.023	.084
3. There are three types of ADHD noticed among children.	3.4580	3.5556	1.0397	1.1180	.416	.520
4. Not all children with ADHD are hyperactive.	3.8015	3.4444	1.2052	1,2042	4.396	.037*
5. ADHD is more often found with boys.	3.8321	3.8148	1.0164	1,1081	.013	.908
6. Children with ADHD symptoms often seem not to be reacting to verbal instructions.	4.1908	4.0617	.8049	1,0994	.968	.326
7. It is desirable to use short and clear instructions in working with a pupil having ADHD.	4.5878	4.4074	.7111	1,0341	2.260	.134
8. It is important to reduce noise in a class with an ADHD child.	4.2443	3.9506	.9206	1,2440	3.874	.045*
9. It is good to ignore tiny disturbances of the ADHD child.	4.2595	4.1852	.8909	1,0138	.313	.576
10. A child with ADHD should be allowed to move around the classroom.	4.1145	4.1728	1.0716	1,0816	.147	.702
11. It is useful to avoid changes in routine of a child with ADHD.	3.6412	3.5432	1.3478	1,3421	.266	.607
12. In working with a child with ADHD it is advisable to avoid repetitive tasks.	3.7099	3.3951	.9961	1,1692	4.372	.038*

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13. Children with ADHD achieve better results in reading comprehension tasks if they are asked to read aloud.	3.6870	3.6173	.9037	1,1019	.251	.617
14. It is desirable to make tasks shorter for the child with ADHD than for the other children in the group.	3.9542	3.7654	1.0732	1,2477	1.366	.244
15. Children with ADHD are able to complete tasks if they are given more time to solve them.	4.0840	3.9383	.9690	1.0289	1.079	.300
16. Exchanging easier and more difficult tasks helps the child with ADHD to maintain concentration.	3.9237	3.8272	1.0275	9326	.473	.492
17. The failure to succeed in reaching self-control is a characteristic of the impulsive type of ADHD.	3.9542	3.9753	.8932	1.0952	.023	.878
18. Children with the hyperactive ADHD type are usually fidgeting on the chair.	4.2061	4.0494	.8294	.9734	1.562	.213
19. Children with the inattentive ADHD type are characterized by their avoidance of tasks which require a lasting mental effort.	3.9847	3.8642	.8502	.9843	.891	.346
20. The combined ADHD type implies the combination of hyperactive – impulsive and inattentive type.	3.8244	3.9753	.8272	1.1178	1.267	.262

*p<0.05

CONCLUSION

Considering the possible limitations in the interpretation of results which are linked to the sample of examinees, the relatively uneven distribution of samples regarding the examinees' years of professional experience, the combination of the method paper-pencil and computer study, and the possibly relatively poor sensitivity of the instrument, the obtained data indicate differences in the estimation of certain notions and knowledge about children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder with regard to teachers' years of professional experience, which makes possible the acceptance of the set hypothesis. In general, when the latent and manifest dimension of differences are considered, teachers with less than twenty years of professional experience estimate certain notions and the knowledge about children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder correctly to a larger extent. Moreover, on the descriptive level, teachers generally show poorer knowledge when it comes to the fact that attention deficit / hyperactive disorder can be inherited.

The obtained results lead to the conclusion that the systematization of learning is of great importance in all periods of life and in all forms it is achieved. It is thus important to grant teachers supportive programmes, from education to practical help in their everyday work (Bouillet and Bijedić, 2007; Bouillet, 2010). This means that, among other things, teachers should be granted additional education to work with children with attention deficit / hyperactive disorder. All other forms of continuous lifelong training to work in regular schools are also extremely important, which reflects the scientific contribution of this work about the field of initial and other forms of teacher education in the context of developing the necessary specific knowledge.

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