

# Positive Attitude towards Teaching in Higher Education

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# Positive Attitude towards Teaching in Higher Education



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in Higher  
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# Preface

*Positive Attitude towards Teaching in Higher Education* is a publication that presents the results of work on the research project called: *Professional socialization of junior researchers in teaching*, which started in 2019 and is supported by the University of Rijeka. The content of this book dominantly reflects the doctoral dissertation: *Features of Professional Socialisation and their Contribution to the Development of a Positive Attitude amongst Junior Researchers towards the Teaching Process* authored by Ivana Miočić and defended at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in 2021 under the mentorship of Professor Jasminka Ledić, PhD. Work on the dissertation began within the project “Academic Profession Competencies Profile: Between new Requirements and Possibilities” (APROFRAME): 2014-2017, continued within the “Young researchers' career development project - training new doctoral students” (2016-2019), and was to a large extent carried out and finished within a three-year long project: “Professional socialization of junior researchers in teaching”. It is evident, therefore, that the book is a result of several years of work and research and our successful collaboration within the mentioned projects in the field of professional socialization and higher education.

The aim of the project “Professional socialization of junior researchers in teaching” was to explore the characteristics of professional socialization of junior researchers that contribute to the development of a positive attitude towards teaching. Namely, the results of previous research indicate that professional socialization in teaching is relatively challenging for junior researchers, with the most common challenges being an unfavourable professional (institutional) environment and insufficient (mentorship and collegial) support in teaching. However, it has also been found that junior researchers, regardless of the

difficulties they encounter, refer to teaching in a positive way. We have positioned our study in the above findings as well as in the context of recent requests to devote additional research interest to teaching in higher education (e.g., Yerevan Communiqué, 2015; Paris Communiqué, 2018). Research dealing with higher education is not uncommon, its focus is often on the relationship between teaching and research or analysing obstacles and challenges (junior) researchers face, while positive attitude towards teaching is discussed and explored to a lesser extent. Therefore, in undertaking this study, we made a kind of Copernican turn and focused the project towards the hitherto poorly researched positive practices of teaching in higher education.

The aim of the study was to identify, describe and understand the characteristics of the process of professional socialization that have a positive effect on the development of a positive attitude of junior researchers towards teaching in the higher education system in Croatia. Specifically, we explored the processes, mechanisms and events that contributed to the development of a positive attitude of junior researchers towards teaching in the course of their professional socialization into the academic profession. The questions that guided the study were: What leads to the development of a positive attitude towards teaching, especially if we keep in mind the challenges of the higher education system? What characterizes the process of professional socialization of junior researchers in the academic profession who develop a positive attitude towards teaching? What are their attitudes, experiences, and value system with which they enter the higher education system? What are the institutions where they are employed like? Do their institutions differ, or do they fit into the description of the challenges facing the higher education system in the Republic of Croatia? Is the institutional environment in which they find themselves supportive and stimulating for junior researchers at the beginning of their academic careers? Has and how their disciplinary community contributed to the development of a positive attitude towards teaching?

We used a qualitative research approach, i.e. the strategy of a case study which ensured the study of the phenomenon from multiple perspectives, which then allowed a better and deeper understanding of the process of junior researchers' professional socialization and the development of a positive attitude towards teaching.

We hope that we have piqued your interest with the key aspects of our study. We believe that it is important to outline them in order to understand our research work, but we note that this publication is primarily aimed at presenting and analysing the framework of a positive attitude towards teaching and the recommendations arising from the conducted study.

Therefore, the focus of this publication is a positive attitude towards teaching. In this book, we will not present detailed results of the (empirical) research, but only an illustration of insights from the empirical research. In this publication, our goal is to present and promote the framework of a positive attitude towards teaching, the concept, the elements that make up this attitude, and the recommendations arising from accepting the proposed concept. The concept we present emerged as a theoretical framework for empirical research of a positive attitude towards teaching in our academic community. With this goal in mind, this book does not address only the scientific public that shares our



research interests in higher education, but the wider context, higher education teachers of all disciplines, administrations of higher education institutions as well as the decision makers who can encourage a positive attitude towards teaching in higher education.

We hope that our insights into a positive attitude towards teaching and the development of this attitude will serve as a starting point for discussion and cooperation with key stakeholders, with the aim of proposing new guidelines for improving teaching in higher education in Croatia (and beyond).

We deem important to emphasize that we started exploring the topic of a positive attitude (of junior researchers) towards teaching before the epidemiological crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that dramatically affected many aspects of life, including higher education. Scientific and professional journals, portals and university websites report daily on the challenges faced by higher education teachers and students in the midst of the pandemic. As will be seen in more detail later in the book, emotional exertion and burnout are phenomena that are often associated with work in the academia, and these processes certainly came to the fore during the pandemic. In the context of the changes that have taken place in higher education, which demanded effort and time and learning and training, encouraging the development of a positive attitude towards teaching becomes an even more important topic. Research shows that positive emotions of higher education teachers which are considered important in the teaching process (for example, interest, satisfaction, pride, relief) increase the self-efficacy and resilience of teachers, but also have a beneficial effect on students by encouraging their cognitive and social growth.

The book is structured as follows: the introductory part is followed by the chapter *Teaching in higher education and professional socialization of junior researchers in the higher education system* whose goal is to put a positive attitude towards teaching in the modern context of higher education, but also to connect it with professional socialization of junior researchers. To this end, this chapter is divided into two subchapters: *Teaching in higher education* and *Professional socialization in the academic profession*. In the first subchapter, we provide an overview of the current policy documents in the field of teaching in higher education in the European and national context. The overview shows that regardless of the level of public policy, they all recognise the key role of educated and competent higher education teachers in the process of raising the quality of teaching in higher education. This chapter, we believe, will be of particular importance for developing institutional policies that refer to this area.

The overview of policy documents is followed by a chapter showing numerous and thematically diverse studies on teaching in higher education and the role of teachers put in the context of several broader topics: discussions on different teaching approaches and perspectives, teaching competencies and professional development of higher education teachers, teaching and research nexus and the emotional dimension of the work of higher education teachers. Apart from the fact that the results of this research are important for our context because they inform the central topic of this book (a positive attitude towards teaching) an overview of the broader topics can be important for defining institutional policies but is especially important for higher education teachers who can make use of this (short) overview and through self-reflection better understand the challenges they face. For

example, a review of research dealing with different teaching approaches and perspectives seeks to explain the different (personal) starting points based on which teachers create their teaching practices, pointing out – among other things – that the teaching approach has significant implications for students' learning approach. The topic related to teaching competencies and professional development of higher education teachers indicates that teaching in higher education is predominantly based on the assumption that the researchers know how to lecture / teach about the area of their research interest, which is not really confirmed in practice. It seems that higher education teachers most commonly learn about teaching through their own experience without adequate training, even though practice shows that training contributes to increasing awareness of teaching approaches and selection of teaching methods, increasing theoretical knowledge about teaching, strengthening motivation to teach, increasing self-confidence in teaching, and exchanging experiences with other colleagues.

The teaching and research nexus is one of the most frequent research topics in higher education, so it should be referred to in this book as well. These studies predominantly try to explain the position of teaching in relation to research. We believe that this part of the book will be especially important for the policy makers in higher education and higher education teachers, since understanding this relationship and taking a stance towards it is in practice directly reflected on career advancement. In other words – by analysing the criteria for higher education teachers' promotion and career advancement, we can indirectly see which model of the relationship between the (dis) connection of teaching and research is preferred by the policy makers.

The last common research topic in higher education is the emotional dimension of higher education teachers' work, a particularly important aspect in considering a positive attitude towards teaching. The research can be predominantly divided into studies that deal with the negative and positive emotional aspects of work, whereby it is important to emphasise that concerning the latter, research shows that positive emotions in higher education teachers have a positive effect on student achievement.

Professional socialization in the academic profession is discussed in the second subchapter under the title *Teaching in higher education and professional socialization of junior researchers in the higher education system*. Professional socialization is an indispensable aspect of our research on the positive attitude towards teaching, and this topic – although to a lesser extent – should also be addressed in this book. This subchapter presents the basic knowledge about professional socialization necessary to understand the starting point of our research, as well as the characteristics and challenges of professional socialization of junior researchers. Research indicates that the professional socialization of junior researchers is a period of formation of a (dual) professional identity that balances / integrates the identity of the scientific discipline and the identity of the higher education teacher. It is here that the previously mentioned challenges of the relationship between teaching and research meet and commonly represent a stumbling block in planning the professional development of junior researchers as well as their daily decisions on how to manage their career path. This chapter will be particularly important for junior researchers

and their mentors, as it highlights the importance of providing short-term and long-term career management mechanisms.

The key chapter for this book is entitled *Positive attitude towards teaching*. It presents a new conceptual framework entails aspects of a positive attitude towards teaching. The chapter describes the way in which the framework has been developed - by deducing from the topics that dominate in the previously described topics of discussions on teaching in higher education. The dimensions of a positive attitude towards teaching are the emotional dimension, the professional development dimension, the dimension of the constructivist approach to learning and teaching, and the dimension of the teaching and research nexus. In this chapter, we have included examples from the results of our empirical research, which should contribute to the understanding of our concept of a positive attitude towards teaching in the words of our research participants. We believe that the chapter will be interesting, partly even provocative for a whole range of readers of this book, from different aspects: researchers of higher education as those from whom we predominantly expect a critical approach and discussion on the validity of this concept, higher education teachers from whom we expect self-reflection as well as for them to test our concept, decision makers in higher education at all levels who we hope will encourage the activities needed to promote the proposed framework.

The last chapter in this monograph brings recommendations for improving the system of support for junior researchers in professional socialization in teaching, and it should be emphasized that the recommendations are proposed keeping in mind the junior researchers' development of positive attitude towards teaching. In addition to the insights from literature, the recommendations are based on the insights from the empirical part of the research, which are also illustrated. We believe that they will be especially important for decision makers at all levels of the higher education system in the Republic of Croatia. Although we believe that the recommendations are largely applicable to all systems, they are still focused on the specific situation in higher education in Croatia.

We hope and wish that the results of our work will contribute to the promotion and development of a positive attitude towards teaching in higher education as well as personal satisfaction of (junior) researchers involved in the teaching process.

The authors

**1. Teaching in  
higher education  
and professional  
socialization  
of junior researchers  
in the higher  
education system**

The primary focus of our research are two phenomena: *teaching in higher education* (more precisely - a positive attitude towards teaching in higher education) and *professional socialization of junior researchers in the higher education system*. This book is conceived in such a way that its primary interest is a positive attitude towards teaching, but in the context of professional socialization of junior researchers. The aim of this chapter is to present relevant policy documents and results of international and national research relevant to our topic, and to present the challenges of professional socialization of junior researchers (in teaching).

## 1.1. Teaching in higher education

### 1.1.1. Overview of the current policy documents regarding teaching in higher education in the European and national context

The topicality of the discussions on higher education and the need for its constant research and improvement are evidenced by numerous European education policy documents that point to trends in higher education in Europe<sup>1</sup>. The European institutions are strongly committed to raising the quality and modernization of teaching in higher education, which will be able to meet the needs, above all, of individuals - students, and consequently the needs of the community and society in general.

For example, the publication of the European Commission: *Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions* (2013) contains recommendations and guidelines for raising the quality of teaching and learning in European higher education institutions. The recommendations state, among other things, that by 2020 it is important to ensure that every teacher in the higher education system obtains a certificate of pedagogical training for teaching.

The importance of the quality of teaching and teachers in higher education was very strongly emphasized in 2017 in the document of the European Commission on the so-

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<sup>1</sup>For example - the reports of the European University Association (EUA) - *Trends 2010: A decade of change in European Higher Education* i *Trends 2015: Learning and Teaching in European Universities*; OECD report from 2012. - *Fostering Quality Teaching in Higher Education: Policies and Practices*; reports of the European Commission - *Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions* (2013) and the report on conducting the Bologna Process (2015) - *The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process - Implementation Report*; publication of the association ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education); ESU (European Students' Union); EUA (European University Association) i EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) in cooperation with the EI (Education International); Business Europe te EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education) from 2015. - *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*.

called *Renewed EU Agenda for Higher Education*<sup>2</sup>. The European Union has faced a number of challenges in education in recent years, such as the mismatch between the skills Europe needs and those it has (for example, a shortage of manpower for occupations that require higher education); there are increasing social divisions (e.g. people in a disadvantaged socio-economic situation, the challenges of educating migrants, etc.); there is an innovation gap that implies large differences between regions whose universities contribute to economic innovation and those that fail to achieve this to a significant extent. It is also visible that different components of the higher education system do not always function well as a whole (e.g., funding, incentives and rewards mechanisms in higher education are not always set to reward effective teaching and research, innovation, social inclusion and engagement) (European Commission, 2017). In response to these challenges, the European Commission is committed to making efforts to help address them. In the context of the first challenge, which is to remove the mismatch between existing and required skills and to promote excellence in their development, the importance of the role of higher education teachers is highlighted as follows:

Designing, building and delivering good study programmes is not easy. Good teachers are crucial. Too many higher education teachers have received little or no pedagogical training and systematic investment in teachers' continuous professional development remains the exception. National and institutional strategies to improve career opportunities and rewards for good teachers are becoming more common but are far from standard.

(European Commission, 2017, pg. 5)

Beyond the competence and work of the European Commission, it is important to mention the initiative that brings together a much larger number of members (48 countries) than the EU member states (27 countries). It is an initiative through which the European Higher Education Area - EHEA was formed. Beginning in 1998, when the Sorbonne Declaration on the Harmonization of the Structure of Higher Education in Europe was adopted, until 2018, Ministers of Education from the countries of the European Higher Education Area meet regularly and issue press releases deciding on the central aspects of the EHEA's work and communicate trends and perspectives on higher education development<sup>3</sup>.

The 2015 conference in Yerevan highlighted the priorities of higher education that will be pursued in the next few years. Among other things, it was pointed out that the countries oblige to support higher education institutions and their staff in promoting pedagogical innovation and student-centred teaching, and that they will strengthen the link

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<sup>2</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a renewed EU agenda for higher education Bruxelles, 30 May 2017.

<sup>3</sup> *Sorbonne declaration* (1998); *Bologna Declaration* (1999); *Prague Communiqué* (2001); *Berlin Communiqué* (2003); *Bergen Communiqué* (2005); *London Communiqué* (2007); *Leuven Communiqué* (2009); *Budapest Communiqué* (2010); *Bucharest Communiqué* (2012); *Yerevan Communiqué* (2015); *Paris Communiqué* (2018), *Rome Communiqué* (2020).

between learning, teaching and research at all levels. Ensuring quality in teaching and providing opportunities for improving teaching competencies of higher education teachers was also highlighted as one of the priorities (Yerevan Communique, 2015).

The Ministerial Conference in Yerevan is also significant in that the new *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) were adopted at that time, which are in fact revised quality standards from 2005. A comparative analysis of these two documents showed that in the standards and guidelines published in 2015, in addition to changes in the higher education context related to greater internationalization, digitalization and transparency of higher education, much more emphasis is placed on the student-centred learning and teaching process, that is, the importance of study programs being designed in such a way that students take an active role in the learning process (EQUIP, 2016). The 2015 document, in contrast to the 2005 document, more clearly emphasizes the need for universities to provide opportunities for professional development for all teaching staff (not only for those with weaker or insufficient teaching competencies, as stated in the 2005 document). In addition, the role of teachers in the implementation of a student-centred teaching process is very clearly highlighted in the more recent document (EQUIP, 2016).

In 2018, the Conference of Ministers of Education from the European Higher Education Area was held in Paris, where the focus was once more on the importance of encouraging innovative practices in learning and teaching, the importance of student-centred learning and teaching, and digitalization in the context of the importance of preparing students and teachers for functioning in a digital environment. In addition, the importance of the research and teaching nexus was emphasized, as it was stated that career advancement needs to be based on successful research and effective teaching (Paris Communique, 2018).

The recent Ministerial Conference held in Rome in November 2020 also emphasizes the importance of learning and teaching in higher education, both in the text of the Communication (Rome Ministerial Communique, 2020) and in one of the 3 appendices to the Ministerial Communication (*Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA*, Rome Ministerial Communique, Annex III, 2020). The appendix emphasizes, among other things, the need to enhance teaching by taking measures to ensure equality in the evaluation of research and teaching in higher education, as well as in reviewing the course of academic careers with the aim to greater recognition of teaching.

Annual reports on the implementation of the Bologna Process and reports on trends in higher education published by the European University Association (EUA) also provide an insight into the state of higher education in the European educational area. The report from 2018 states that one of the key questions related to teaching in higher education is: “are and to what extent higher education teachers qualified for teaching?” (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2018). The report shows that only 11 of the 49 countries (for which data are available) already have regulations related to the teaching component at the level of doctoral study programmes (for example, the obligation to undergo teacher training or some other form of teaching practice). Outside the framework of doctoral study

programmes, practices are very different with the general conclusion that the development of teaching activities in the academic community basically consists of “learning on the job” (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2018). It is estimated that 77% of European higher education institutions offer some form of training to improve teaching skills that is optional for students, while the obligation to undergo courses / teacher training is visible in 37% of institutions, whereby countries such as Kazakhstan (93%), Sweden (88%), the United Kingdom (78%), the Netherlands (67%) and Russia (62%) are recognized as the countries with the highest percentage of institutions where there is a training obligation for teachers (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2018 ). The data suggests that the goals defined in 2013, which emphasize the need for all higher education teachers to acquire certified training in the field of higher education by 2020, are still largely unfulfilled.

Given that Croatia is a member of the EU and a member of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), it is expected to follow the guidelines and standards that seek to improve the quality of learning and teaching in higher education. In that context, it is worth mentioning the National Strategy for Education, Science and Technology (2014), which also strongly emphasizes the importance of improving the teaching activities and teaching competencies of higher education teachers. The Strategy states that a teacher in the higher education system must have appropriate teaching competencies regardless of the type of study programme he / she teaches (professional or university study programme) and that to be able to advance in their career teachers must have proper balance between teaching excellence, research and professional work. A special strategic goal is dedicated to the teaching (and research) quality, whereby it is emphasized that the quality of teachers is one of the most important prerequisites for quality in higher education. One of the challenges of teaching in higher education in Croatia is the lack of education and training for the acquisition of teaching competencies and it is therefore important to introduce continuing teacher training through specially designed courses that would be a prerequisite for taking on teaching obligations and a condition for further career advancement.

A visible contribution to achieving the aforementioned goals outlined in the Strategy is the project of the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia entitled *Emphasis on developing and upgrading of competences for academic teaching (Educa-T)* which was implemented in the period from 2016 to 2018<sup>4</sup>. The project resulted in defining competence areas in higher education teaching as well as the publication of the *Handbook for Teaching Competence Enhancement in Higher Education* (Domović, Ledić and Crnčić Sokol, 2018). The handbook proposes a draft framework curriculum for the acquisition of teacher competencies in higher education, which is designed as a basis for syllabus development at different universities or their constituents. It consists of 20 ECTS credits and three cycles within which teachers acquire competencies from the defined competence areas (some of them are, for example, professionalism and professional development in higher education, evaluation of learning outcomes, digital competencies in higher education, professional communication, etc.).

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<sup>4</sup> More information about the project is available at: <https://educa-t.hr/>. Retrieved on 15 September 2020.



## 1.1.2. Research on teaching in higher education

Research dealing with the topic of higher education and the role of teachers in higher education is numerous and thematically very diverse. The results of such research can be placed within several broad topics that are recognized as dominant and significant in the context of discussions on higher education. These topics deal with: 1) different teaching approaches and perspectives; 2) teaching competencies and professional development of higher education teachers; 3) the teaching and research nexus, and 4) the emotional dimension of the higher education teachers' work.

### Teaching approaches and perspectives in higher education

There are numerous studies conducted in the field of higher education that predominantly deal with different approaches and perspectives on teaching. They mainly try to explain the (personal) starting points on which teachers base their teaching practice, and in order to describe these “personal assumptions”, various terms are used, such as teaching approaches, perspectives, regimes, strategies or orientations. Some authors also use the terms personal epistemology or epistemological beliefs about teaching, which refer to the belief systems that teachers have about teaching and learning (Pajares, 1992; Brownlee, 2001; Samuelowicz and Bain, 2001; Brownlee, Walker, Lennox, Exley, and Pearce, 2009). However, the most commonly used term among authors is “teaching approaches” (Trigwell and Prosser, 1996, 2004; Kember, 1997; Kember and Kwan, 2002; Trigwell, Prosser and Ginns, 2005; Lindblom-Ylänne, Trigwell, Nevgi and Ashwin, 2006; Prosser and Trigwell, 2006; Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne and Nevgi, 2007; Stes, Gijbels and Van Petegem, 2008; Stes and Van Petegem, 2014).

When it comes to teaching approaches, the authors Trigwell and Prosser (1996, 2004) have given significant contribution as they developed *Approaches to Teaching Inventory - ATI* which has been relatively often used in different research on this topic. The first approach (A) is teacher-centred teaching with the intention of conveying information to students, without taking into account students' previous knowledge, and the second (B) is a teacher-centred approach to teaching with the intention of students acquiring basic terms and concepts from the discipline and understand the relationships between them. Approaches A and B do not imply active engagement of students but receiving ready-made information provided by the teacher. Approach (C) refers to teaching that is based on the interaction of teachers and students also with the intention that students acquire basic terms and concepts from the discipline and understand the relationships between them. As in approaches A and B, students are not expected to construct their own knowledge, but in this approach, students are expected to acquire knowledge from the discipline by actively participating in the teaching and learning process. Approach (D) is student-centred and aims at students developing new concepts and worldviews. The role of teachers is to help students develop their own concepts, i.e. to construct new knowledge. Approach (E) is student-centred and aimed at students to change their conceptions and worldviews. In this approach, progress is expected compared to the previous approach in the sense that

students are able to construct, but also reconstruct their knowledge in order to “produce” new knowledge. Teachers who apply this approach are aware that they cannot convey their conceptions and worldviews to students (Trigwell and Prosser, 1996).

These approaches can actually be classified within two basic categories - teacher-centred teaching approaches, with the primary intention of transferring information, and student-centred teaching approaches, with the intention that the learning and teaching process results in conceptual changes in student knowledge. Postareff et al. (2007) point out that these two approaches are not separate categories, but part of a continuum whereby on the one hand the focus of the teaching process is on the content of teaching, and on the other hand on the students and their needs. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that, although numerous studies have been conducted and instruments have been developed that can successfully measure approaches to teaching (Lea and Challagan, 2008), criticism of such research is that they often ignore the wider teaching context and the fact that teachers can adapt and change their teaching approach depending on the situation in which the teaching takes place (Prosser and Trigwell, 1999).

Motivated by the results of previous research suggesting that the choice of teaching approach may have significant implications for the students' approach to learning, the authors Stes, Gijbels and Van Petegem (2008) conducted a study to establish a link between teaching approach and teacher characteristics. However, the inability to capture many elements that describe the wider teaching context (e.g. teacher's perception of their teaching load, perception of student abilities, motivation or obligation of students to participate in class, etc.) contributed to the fact that the results of their research are unexpected. Namely, research has shown that a student-centred approach to teaching is not related to the context in which teachers teach (number of students, study programme and discipline) or to their personal characteristics (gender, age, length of teaching experience and participation in programs for professional development) (Stes, Gijbels and Van Petegem, 2008). Furthermore, in their recent research, Kálmán, Tynjälä and Skaniakos (2020) emphasize the need to reinterpret the division of teaching approaches that are teacher- and student-centred due to the ever-widening tasks and more complex practices of teaching in higher education. Therefore, they propose a new research tool for exploring teaching approaches that takes into account the characteristics of the teacher-centred approach to teaching and the teaching content, while the student-centred approach to teaching is further developed and consists of three teaching approaches. The first is more focused on developing thinking skills, the second one practical skills, while the third is focused on achieving the learning outcomes (Kálmán, Tynjälä and Skaniakos, 2020). Their study, conducted on a sample of teachers from Finnish and Hungarian universities, showed, among other things, that teachers in the field of social sciences, humanities and educational sciences (soft sciences) are more involved in professional development programs and are more focused on the remaining three approaches arising from the student-centred approach as opposed to teachers coming from technical and natural sciences such as mathematics and engineering (hard sciences) who prefer a content-oriented approach to teaching. The results of this study encourage reopening the debate on the differences between the natural and technical sciences and humanities and social sciences and their different, presumably - disciplinary - differences in perceiving teaching in higher education.

In addition to the topic of teaching approaches, research dealing with perspectives on teaching is also visible in literature. These studies are often based on the perspectives proposed by Pratt (1998) who, like Trigwell and Prosser (1996, 2004), developed the Teaching Perspectives Inventory - TPI. Teaching perspectives encompass different behaviours, beliefs, and methods of teaching evaluation. The author distinguishes between teachers who are mostly focused on the content of teaching and the transfer of knowledge to the end users (transmission perspective); teachers who are focused on understanding the way of thinking and cognitive processes that occur during learning (developmental perspective); teachers who base their teaching on the belief that learning depends on the motivation and perception of personal effectiveness of the student (nurturing perspective); teachers who believe that in order for the teaching process to be effective, it needs to be situated in an authentic social environment (the perspective of apprenticeship) and teachers who, in addition to personal development, seek to influence different social problems (social reform perspective) (Pratt, 1998).

One recent study using the above mentioned approach to teacher perspectives was conducted by Rotidi, Collins, Karalis, and Lavidas (2017), and aimed to examine the relationships between different teaching perspectives (five perspectives proposed by Pratt, 1998) and academic disciplines (a three-dimensional classification of academic disciplines proposed by Biglan, 1973)<sup>5</sup>. Among other things, the study showed that in terms of teaching perspectives, the most differences exist between the disciplines that are divided into “life” and “non-life”. Specifically, the results showed that teachers in “life” disciplines are more oriented towards a nurturing perspective and a social reform perspective, while teachers in “non-life” disciplines achieve statistically significantly higher scores on assessment scales related to the transmission perspective (Rotidi, Collins, Karalis and Lavidas, 2017). The results suggest a somewhat expected assumption that the teaching subject may be a significant indicator of the dominating teaching perspective in a particular discipline.

## **Teaching competencies and professional development of higher education teachers**

The next group of studies consists of those dealing with *teaching competencies* and *professional development*, i.e. initial and additional education of higher education teachers for teaching (Brown, 1993; Kovač, 2001; Trowler and Cooper, 2002; Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne and Nevgi, 2007; Rački, Peko and Varga, 2010; Marentič Požarnik and Lavrič, 2015; Turk and Ledić, 2016). Research shows that teaching in universities is predominantly taking place by working under the assumption that a person who is qualified to work in a certain research field is also “automatically” qualified to teach about this field (Adams and

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<sup>5</sup> Biglan's classification categorizes disciplines first with respect to the paradigmatic framework whereby it divides them into so-called “soft” and “hard” disciplines, and then divides within these two categories, with respect to application - the so-called “applied” and “pure” and with regard to focus - the so-called life and non-life (in other words, disciplines dealing with the study of life (e.g. sociology, kinesiology) and non-life (e.g. geology, mathematics)).

Rytmeister, 2000; Miočić and Turk, 2017). However, practice shows that knowledge of the teaching content does not also imply successful teaching. Competent higher education teachers, in addition to their sound knowledge of the subject matter, should be able to clarify and simplify complex topics, encourage students to think, create a natural and critical learning environment that is safe but at the same time challenging and intriguing for students in order to enhance their intellectual activity (Marentič Požarnik and Lavrič, 2015). Unfortunately, in the process of acquiring teaching competencies, higher education teachers most often learn through their own experience, given that they often do not have adequate teacher training (Ćulum, Miočić, Rončević, 2017; Miočić and Turk, 2017).

Stewart (2014) points to an increasing number of studies over the last fifteen years that deal with assessing the impact of professional development programmes for higher education teachers and points out that this is a consequence of numerous initiatives in northern Europe, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and the U.S. and Australia, through which various formal programmes are introduced for teachers in higher education. He believes that the research results provide a mixed picture of the impact of such programmes on learning outcomes and teaching quality, which is a consequence of the paradigmatic approach and methodological decisions, that is, the way and the time frame in which the impact of such programmes is measured. In general, the author points out that the results of previous research recognize the positive effects of these programmes, such as increasing self-confidence and teachers' knowledge and skills as well as applying a teaching approach based on planning learning outcomes and putting students at the centre of the teaching process. However, at the same time, there are studies which indicate a small or even insignificant impact of such programmes (Stewart, 2014).

One of the more significant studies on the influence of the training programmes for junior university teachers was conducted by Gibbs and Coffey (2004), and the results of this study showed their positive effects. The study dealt with the identification of changes in teacher behaviour, changes in their teaching approach and their students' learning approach (which can be attributed to the teacher training programme). Twenty universities from eight countries participated in the study, and each university included in the sample had pedagogical training programs for teachers lasting a minimum of sixty hours and a maximum of three hundred hours (test group). The research also included a control group consisting of teachers from two universities where no training or other forms of support for new teachers were organized. The results showed that the teachers in the test group became more focused on students towards the end of the pedagogical training. The control group did not differ significantly from the test group at first, while the change occurred after one year. Negative changes were observed in teachers in the control group, in that they applied a teacher-centred approach more than the student-centred approach. Teacher competencies also increased in the test group while they did not increase significantly in the control group. In the test group, the results on scales that measure enthusiasm, organizational skills and giving feedback significantly increased, while the control group remained unchanged. A significantly less superficial approach to learning was observed in students after their teachers underwent pedagogical training, although the in-depth approach to learning did not increase significantly (Gibbs and Coffey, 2004).

Further research confirmed some of the previous findings. Research by Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne and Nevgi (2007) shows that teaching experience, as well as training programmes, help increase awareness about the teaching approach and the selection of appropriate teaching methods, increase the theoretical knowledge about teaching, dissemination of ideas and motivation for teaching, increase self-confidence in teaching and exchanging experiences with other colleagues. One of the few studies that deals with the issue of the influence of the teacher training programmes in the national context was conducted by a group of authors from the University of Osijek. The study conducted with the participants of the teacher training programme has shown positive effects, and participants particularly emphasized the contribution of the programme to the development of communication skills and encouraging creativity and motivation in students (Rački, Peko, Varga, 2010).

## **Teaching and research nexus**

Although the idea on universities' contribution to the community development - third mission of the university has recently been growing, teaching and research are still considered fundamental academic activities and are deemed the most important in the system of academic advancement (Turk, Ledić and Miočić, 2017). In this context, we find research dealing with the teaching and research nexus (Brew, 2003; Hattie and Marsh, 1996, 2004; Arimoto, 2014; Teichler, 2014; Turk, Ledić, and Miočić, 2017). Most often, the aim of such research is to explain the position of teaching in relation to research at universities or to explore issues of professional identity of higher education teachers that include their researcher and teacher role. Malcolm (2014) concludes, based on a comprehensive literature review whereby she discusses the research results on the processes of establishing and strengthening the link between teaching and research in academic practice, that it is still almost impossible to answer the question of causal links between research and teaching in higher education, although recent studies in this area have contributed to the understanding of this relationship. Nevertheless, it is worth referring to some of the more significant authors who have discussed different models of the teaching and research nexus in the academic profession.

A significant contribution to the discussion on the teaching and research nexus was made by Hattie and Marsh (1996), who, based on a review of various theoretical and empirical findings, detected three different ways of (dis) connection between teaching and research. First, the authors point to different models of negative association, more precisely, the negative relationship between teaching and research. This means that teaching and research are two completely separate categories in the academic profession that negatively affect each other. For example, dedicating and investing time in one of these aspects of the job simultaneously means diminishing the chances of achieving successful results in the other aspect of the job. In addition, personal preferences and motivation differ in individuals who are more research-oriented as opposed to those teaching-oriented. Furthermore, the authors refer to the research results that support the idea that teaching and research are in a positive and reciprocal relationship in a way that teaching and research enrich one another. This would mean that active research engagement is a prerequisite for teaching quality and

vice versa. In addition, the values and characteristics of good teachers and good researchers are similar, and entail a high level of dedication, creativity, critical thinking, etc. The third relationship between teaching and research could be most simply described as a relationship in which there is no connection between the two since they are two completely different activities. In contrast to the negative relationship between teaching and research, in this model teaching and research are perceived as two unrelated academic activities that can coexist in one person without negatively affecting each other. By testing these models, the authors refuted the belief about the unbreakable positive relationship between teaching and research since their research results showed the largest number of negatively and neutrally correlated relationships between teaching and research. These results had a significant impact on further research on this topic. (Hattie and Marsh, 1996).

Furthermore, Angela Brew (2003) is also considered significant in the context of the discussions about the teaching and research nexus. She advocates the idea of a stronger convergence and connection of teaching and research and presents two conceptual models that contribute to understanding the relationship between these two academic activities. The first is the so-called “old” model based on the assumption that teaching and research can take place completely independently of each other, even in separate institutions, with the teacher focusing on conveying information to students, while his/her research does not have to be linked to teaching. The second or “new” model does not view research and teaching as separate activities, but as activities in which individuals and groups negotiate meanings by building knowledge in a social context. The new model requires a reconceptualization of higher education, which means that, among other things, there is an increasing need to insist on skills such as creativity, dedication, curiosity, critical thinking and analysis, which should also be criteria for rewarding successful teachers and researchers (Brew, 2003).

In addition to authors who deal with models of the teaching and research nexus, there are also authors who question in more detail the teaching and research orientation of academics and universities. For example, Arimoto (2014) points to the results of a recent study on changes in higher education that indicate the ever-present debates about a stronger research orientation of universities at the global level, thus rendering teaching less important. There is a tendency of the universities in Europe and the world to increasingly focus on research productivity, which is an important criterion for academic advancement (Arimoto, 2014), which would mean that the value and importance of teaching in relation to research is diminished. The increased pressure for research productivity is also visible in the new, hitherto poorly researched practice at universities in the USA, Europe and Australia, which shows that university teachers are converting money intended for research into short-term employment of lecturers (the so-called *buying-out teaching*) (Smith and Smith, 2012). While the (short-term) employed lecturers hold classes, university teachers are fully committed to working on large research projects (Smith and Smith, 2012). Although in the Croatian national context this practice has not yet been (publicly) recorded or researched, in order to understand the teaching and research nexus it is important to mention the results of a recent study which also partly indicates an orientation towards research productivity at the expense of teaching. Namely, the study analysed the way in which the criteria related to teaching and research are represented in the criteria for academic advancement. The

research results show that universities are predominantly focused on assessing the quality of research as a criterion for career advancement, while the criteria assessing the quality of teaching is underrepresented (Turk and Ledić, 2016).

## **The emotional dimension of higher education teachers' work**

The last group of studies consists of those dealing with the emotional dimension of higher education teaching (e.g. Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Hagenauer and Volet, 2014; Postareff, Mattsson, Lindblom-Ylänne, & Hailikari, 2017). If the emotional aspect of university teachers' work is viewed in a broader context (e.g. different emotional experiences, moods, feelings), then it is visible that the studies can be predominantly divided into those dealing with the negative emotional aspect of academic work (e.g. work (dis) satisfaction, burnout, stress coping strategies and frustration in the workplace), and on the other hand those dealing with the positive emotional aspect of academic work (e.g., satisfaction, enthusiasm, passion, etc.). Research that deals with the emotional aspect of work in higher education is important because it is linked to student achievement as it is visible that positive emotions in higher education teachers (e.g., passion, emotional support directed at students) positively affect student achievement and reduce their frustrations, while negative ones, such as anger and pity, as can be expected, cause undesirable effects (Mendzheritskaya and Hansen, 2019). Teacher satisfaction and feeling enjoyment when teaching can improve student progress, while lack of concentration and other undesirable student behaviours can cause teachers to get angry and frustrated (Hargreaves, 2000). Recognizing emotions can help higher education teachers better understand their own reactions to different situations in class and thus develop ways to deal with the situations (and feelings) that are problematic, difficult, and inappropriate (Löfström and Nevgi, 2014).

When it comes to teaching, some studies (Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne, 2011) show that higher education teachers more often describe teaching in terms of positive emotions (enthusiasm in teaching, satisfaction in the ability to monitor student progress, empathy for students), and less often in a negative context (pressure, fear, frustration). Authors Löfström and Nevgi (2014) have for many years collected drawings made by higher education teachers showing how they experience their own teaching. Analysis of these drawings (metaphors and symbols on them) also showed that most teachers associate teaching with positive emotions, with teachers and students portrayed close to each other. Negative and neutral emotions, on the other hand, point to a content-oriented approach to teaching, whereby there is greater distance between students and teachers, and students are most often portrayed as an expressionless mass (Löfström and Nevgi, 2014). Authors Rowe, Fitness, and Wood (2015) explored how students and higher education teachers perceive positive emotions in the teaching context. Their research has shown that positive emotions that have proven to be key in the teaching process, namely satisfaction / happiness, interest / excitement, love, pride and relief, have a beneficial effect on students by stimulating cognitive and social functioning, increasing motivation as well as self-efficacy, coping mechanism, and resilience (Rowe, Fitness, & Wood, 2015). Moore and Kuol (2007) also dealt with the positive teaching environment, detecting an emotional dimension in the descriptions of excellent teachers, with good teachers being described as

those who make classes interesting, whose work is filled with love, passion and enthusiasm that is transferred to students, as well as humour, enjoyment, compassion and care for students. There is also significant research that puts humour in special focus in higher education. Humour can be considered one of the mechanisms of expressing positive emotions and is a desirable feature of the teaching process. Proper / justified use of humour encourages understanding and retaining information, contributes to creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom, affects student attention, and reduces disruptive behaviours and anxiety in students (Powell and Andresen, 1985; Torok, McMorris and Lin, 2004).

Research that deals with the negative aspects of emotional functioning in the academic community most commonly refers to academic profession in the context of emotional labour, emphasizing that for successful work in the academic community it is important for academics to be good at concealing, controlling and managing their emotions (Constanti and Gibbs, 2004; Ogbonna and Harris, 2004; Berry and Cassidy, 2013). Emotional labour is recognized when there is a mismatch between the emotional behaviour an individual exhibits and the emotions they feel but would be inappropriate to show in a given situation (Mann, 1999; according to Berry and Cassidy, 2013). Research shows that higher education teachers experience a high degree of emotional exertion, similar to (and according to some estimates even more than), for example, the employees in the health sector, who are estimated to be extremely exposed to emotional exertion (Berry and Cassidy, 2013). Additionally, it should be noted that academics at the beginning of their academic careers show a statistically significantly higher level of emotional labour compared to their older and more experienced colleagues (Berry and Cassidy, 2013).

Furthermore, a significant amount of research in the academic community addresses the problems of stress and burnout (e.g. Watts and Robertson, 2011), with studies suggesting that emotional exhaustion and negative perception of the work environment (depersonalization) are common causes of burnout (Ghorpade, Lackritz and Singh, 2007), while the recognized causes of stress are, for example, job insecurity, lack of control and not being involved in the decision-making processes, inability to successfully balance private and professional life, general work and income dissatisfaction (Tytherleigh, Webb, Cooper and Ricketts, 2005). Some studies suggest that higher education teachers experience significantly higher levels of anxiety, depression and other stress-related illnesses compared to general population samples, with the causes of anxiety and depression being identified in personal characteristics such as self-blame, problem avoidance, setting goals that are impossible to achieve, attribution of negative events, etc. (Mark and Smith, 2012).



## 1.2. About professional socialization in the academic profession

What does an individual have to do to survive and thrive in a particular organization? By answering this question Tierney (1988) tries to define professional socialization. The question thus posed implies that professional socialization is also marked by the processes of adaptation to a certain professional environment. When considering professional socialization into the academic profession, we relied mostly on the work of Edgar and Warren (1969) who defined three factors on which each theory of professional socialization should be based: the influences of socializing agents or significant others from the professional environment; organizational conditions that contribute to change / socialization and motivational factors that an individual needs in order to work in the way the organization expects. We also found the work of Edgar H. Schein to be especially relevant for the theoretical foundation of professional socialization. He defines occupational socialization in the professions in terms of events that affect the development of professionals in a way that an individual draws motivation and knowledge of values, ethical standards and norms from these events (Schein, 1971). Additionally, our work was inspired by the idea that the perception of organizational culture is not constant (Tierney, 1997), and that the culture of the organization is shaped by individuals' interpretations whereby the success of socialization is not only conditioned by the social environment and the extent to which an individual is successfully included in that environment, but also by the choices one makes on their professional path (Trowler and Knight, 1999).

In the context of the higher education system, we are talking about the process of professional socialization into the academic profession. Through this process, academics acquire norms and standards, values and attitudes, as well as knowledge, skills, and patterns of behaviour related to their status in the academia (Hakala, 2009). The length of the maturation process in the academic profession, as one of its basic features - along with selectivity and academic freedom, is much greater than in other professional fields (Höhle and Teichler, 2013), so the processes of professional socialization in this profession are an interesting research phenomenon. However, Tierney (1997) highlights the lack of empirical research on professional socialization in higher education and emphasizes that the study of professional socialization should not only look at intensive and isolated socialization processes through which an individual fits into an institution or discipline (e.g. obtaining a doctorate or academic advancement), which represent major transitional events and the transition from one social status to another. On the contrary, what should be explored are the less intense events, "ordinary", everyday jobs and situations that take place in a normal work environment, and the study of which allows us to gain a comprehensive picture of professional socialization (Tierney, 1997).

Professional socialization in higher education can be studied from two perspectives - modernist and postmodernist - whose fundamental difference stems from the understanding and definition of (organizational) culture (Tierney, 1997; Trowler and Knight, 1999). The modernist perspective finds its foundation in structural functionalism,

and according to it, the behaviour of an individual is largely determined by the social context (Tierney, 1997; Trowler and Knight, 1999). The modernist view of organizational culture sees socialization as a series of planned social activities that take place in an unchanging context. The process of professional socialization entails adopting behaviours acceptable to a constant culture that can be understood. In other words, professional socialization is perceived as a one-way process in which an individual learns and adapts to the organization, with some individuals being more competent than others (Tierney, 1997), i.e. some manage to fit into the existing social environment while others do not (Trowler et al. Knight, 1999). In this context, Gardner (2008) describes professional socialization through the metaphor of “fitting into a mould” based on Merton's (1957) definition of socialization which states that individuals through the culture of an organization learn how to behave, what to hope for and what are the paths to success and failure, with some individuals being more competent than others. Therefore, the goal of professional socialization is to learn the cultural processes in the organization and understand how to use them (Merton, 1957; according to Gardner, 2008). In this sense, “fitting into a mould” entails a situation in which an individual is affiliated with a particular group or organization in which he/she must learn to follow guidelines, rules and culture in order to fit in, while individuals who fail to do so, do not fit the “mould” of a particular group or organization (Gardner, 2008).

The described understanding of organizational culture has its many limitations. Trowler and Knight (1999) state that although the organizational environment is important and points to a relative permanence of some social practices, the ability of people, individuals, or groups, to change that practice consciously or unconsciously should not be overlooked. Furthermore, the specific contexts, backgrounds and histories from which individuals come are ignored, and only the final outcome is taken into account - the (un) successful adaptation of the individual into the organizational culture. Culture is understood as it is, and the task of an individual is to adapt to that culture. If, by the standards of the individual, that culture is unacceptable or undesirable, he/she cannot fit into it. Another issue is that within this perspective, the so-called transitions or radical events that characterize an organizational culture (ceremonies, rituals) are observed, which create a distraction from the routine, barely noticeable socialization processes. The focus is on the organizational culture, which includes the study of organizational interests, regulations, missions, strategic plans, and formal forms of learning and teaching. Although all these elements are important for understanding socialization, they are not sufficient. Social interactions and professional practice in the everyday work environment should be considered (Trowler and Knight, 1999).

Given the limitations of the modernist understanding of professional socialization, an alternative or postmodernist perspective has been proposed, which starts from the assumption that the understanding of culture is not constant (Tierney, 1997). The culture of an organization is shaped by the interpretations of individuals, not just work tasks that an individual must learn and master (Tierney, 1997). Culture is not a finished product that can be “discovered” or “acquired” but depends on the contribution of each person involved in the socialization process (Tierney, 1997). Individuals - junior researchers - who start working at institutions, are seen as active actors who in the process of professional socialization form their professional identity. The success of socialization is not conditioned

by the social environment and the ability to include the individual into that environment but depends on the choices that individual makes in his or her professional path, for which he or she is responsible (Trowler and Knight, 1999). Culture at universities is not viewed in one dimension but is marked by a set of cultures at different levels that manifest in different ways - at the level of department, institution, and discipline (Trowler and Knight, 1999).

### **1.2.1. Characteristics and challenges of professional socialization of junior researchers (into teaching)**

Junior researchers are at the heart of the process of professional socialization in the academic profession. They are at the beginning of their professional path and need to adapt to the work environment in the academic community as well as to the specifics of their own discipline. Professional socialization of junior researchers should not be viewed as a linear, but as a fluid, dynamic and evolving process that takes place in an interactive work environment (Weidman and Stein, 2003).

In the national context, Brajdić Vuković (2012) dealt with professional socialization of junior researchers in the academic profession. The author starts from a conceptual framework that studies professional socialization at the macro, meso and micro level, i.e. points out that the process of professional socialization of researchers includes three parallel processes. The first being the *process of socialization into academic life and profession* whereby junior researchers as newcomers to the institution gradually adopt the identity of the profession. Specifically, they socialize into their professional roles by going through developmental stages to become “insiders” from “outsiders”. The most important result of this dimension of the socialization process is identification and commitment to their professional role (Brajdić Vuković, 2012). The author then emphasizes *the process of socialization in the work environment, or organization*. Organizational socialization takes place in the institution or organization where junior researchers work, whereby the strategies of institutions and individual departments towards learning, mentoring and involving junior researchers in work and everyday life are a source of important differences, even within the same disciplines and specialization. Within the organizational socialization, Brajdić Vuković (2012) distinguishes between two types of socialization - *anticipatory* - which enables the acquisition of knowledge about the attitudes, behaviours and norms of the group to which new members want or should belong and - *organizational* - in which through formal and informal relationships with the members of the group, junior researchers come into contact with the culture of the institution, and personal change begins. In addition, there is a third parallel process - *the process of socialization into discipline and subdiscipline and subspecialisation*. The author sees disciplinary socialization as the core of any professional research socialization, and it is extremely important for successful production and reproduction of knowledge at the doctoral level and for independent research work and advancement in science (Brajdić Vuković, 2012).

Although the period of postgraduate study is considered a key socialization period, the overall professional socialization of junior researchers lasts much longer than the

process of writing and obtaining a doctorate (Brajdić Vuković, 2012). This phase of professional development is important for the formation of (dual) professional identity of a junior researcher, which implies the identity of the scientific discipline to which they belong (e.g. physicists, architects, biologists, lawyers) and the identity of higher education teacher whose role is to educate students - future professionals (Kovač, 2001). Experiences at the beginning of their academic career have a great impact on the development of learning and teaching concepts, values and professional identity (Remmik, Karm, Haamer and Lepp, 2011). It is very complex to unambiguously answer the question of how professional identity is developed in the process of professional socialization in the academic profession (Vignjević, 2017). However, one of the common interpretations starts from the assumption that academic identity is formed within strong and stable communities and the social processes that take place in them. These core communities are primarily the discipline and higher education institution in which junior researchers work (Henkel, 2005).

Numerous studies show that in the early stages of academic careers, junior researchers often face feelings of isolation and anxiety, lack of support, teaching and administrative work overload, insecurity caused by inexperience in teaching and research, fear caused by job insecurity, and the consequence of all this can be a low level of job satisfaction (Reynolds, 1992, Adams and Rytmeister, 2000; Adcroft and Taylor, 2010; Hakala, 2009; Petersen, 2011; Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne, 2011; Remmik et al., 2011; Brajdić Vuković, 2013; McLeod and Badenhorst, 2014; Misiaszek, 2015; Miočić and Turk, 2017). Due to these reasons, the process of adaptation into the academic environment is difficult and the population of junior researchers is therefore in a specific position in relation to other members of the academic community.

The challenges faced by junior researchers at the beginning of their career in the academic community were summarized by the author Reynolds (1992), who points out that junior researchers often have difficulties in understanding academic culture due to different norms, expectations and specific practices in the academic community. They often feel unprepared for the different roles assigned to them (e.g. the role of teacher, colleague or independent researcher) and go through a critical period in which they learn the rules of their work and form attitudes about it and adapt to the academic way of life. Furthermore, they can change and redirect their actions from liberal and idealistic perspectives to the more conventional and bureaucratic ones. They are strongly influenced by significant others (colleagues at the same or higher academic level / superiors) and greatly appreciate the feedback they receive from them. Both women and men at the beginning of their academic career can have different experiences, such as other people's expectations of how they should set aside time for work and family life (Reynolds, 1992).

Similar challenges have been detected by Adcroft and Taylor (2010) who state that for many junior researchers the motivation to enter the higher education system is intrinsic, and work in the academia is perceived as an intellectual challenge, so there is a gap between what junior researchers expect and what they actually do. Then, there are challenges in combining teaching and research and setting priorities. There is a gap between personal priorities in the career development and those set by the institution for junior researchers, so it is important to ensure short-term and long-term career management mechanisms. The

authors further point out that mentors are a key element or prerequisite for successful career development of junior researchers (Adcroft and Taylor, 2010). The role of the mentor and the guided and well-organized mentoring process have a strong influence in overcoming the initial challenges (e.g. in cases of lack of collegiality, feelings of isolation), but also later in the career. Professional development mechanisms are also important, which is especially true for the institutional requirements related to obtaining the postgraduate qualification (Adcroft and Taylor, 2010).

If we assume that in the period of professional socialization junior researchers adopt important rules, norms, standards, values, attitudes and competencies related to their professional role (Hakala, 2009), it can be concluded that the period of professional socialization is important for forming attitudes towards teaching and research.

If we take into account the complexity of teaching, which implies a high level of the required teaching competencies, meeting high standards and expectations of the European and national educational policies related to teaching as well as personal challenges, fears, insecurities and unsupportive institutional environment, it is evident that junior researchers, in terms of teaching at the beginning of their professional path, find themselves in a specific position in relation to older and more experienced colleagues. Professional socialization in teaching is a narrowly focused concept, i.e. it represents a particular part of the wider process of socialization into academic life and profession. Viewed as a process in which individuals “learn the rules of their work”, professional socialization in teaching involves the adoption of the rules, norms, standards, values, attitudes and competencies that are necessary to teach in a particular work environment. In doing so, the work environment is not understood as immutable, but as a dynamic context in which junior researchers have an active role.

Kugel (1993) attempted to answer the question of the specifics of the junior researcher's teaching role. He defined five key stages that academics go through at the beginning of their teaching experience. The first phase is characteristic of junior researchers who have no teaching experience and most often rely on the knowledge of teaching they have gained by observing their own teachers. Beginner teachers are mostly oriented towards themselves and their role in teaching, are insecure in their teaching skills, face fears related to students and teaching, and question their abilities. Given the initial uncertainty and lack of experience, it is partly expected that junior researchers at this stage face a number of challenges in teaching. In the second phase, junior researchers stop being exclusively focused on thinking about their own role and focus more on the teaching content. They are aware of their deep and extensive knowledge of the teaching content and try to transfer it to students, while their self-confidence in teaching and communicating with students grows. In the third phase, which Kugel (1993) calls the student-centred phase, teachers notice the individual needs and interests of students. It is then that teachers begin to increasingly understand individual learning differences and use different teaching styles to transfer content in a way that suits the needs of their students. In the fourth phase, teachers are also focused on the students, but begin to perceive them as active participants in the teaching process, while in the fifth phase, students' independence is encouraged and

the teacher guides them in the process of developing personal strategies “learn how to learn” (Kugel, 1993).

According to Åkerlind (2007), development and advancement in the teaching role depends on several important developmental outcomes. First of all, it depends on a better knowledge of the teaching content, which would mean that improvement in the development of teaching competencies progressively grows with the in-depth knowledge of the teaching content, because it instigates self-confidence in teaching. Furthermore, the basic development strategy necessary to improve one's teaching is learning by doing, which would mean that only practice makes an experienced teacher, while confidence is additionally gained by knowing and practicing different teaching strategies. In this context, it should be noted that the development of teaching competencies depends on the ability to recognise and apply good teaching strategies and reject the bad and less effective ones. Improvement in teaching can only be achieved if the understanding of students' learning processes increases and if one determines what works or does not work well with them (Åkerlind, 2007).

However, many young teachers and researchers find it more difficult to make progress in the development of their teaching competencies precisely because of the lack of support and opportunities to improve their teacher competencies. At the same time, research shows that programmes of pedagogical training are useful for junior academics due to the fact that they offer formal education which aims at developing teaching skills, but also because they enable them to connect, create networks and share information, all of which contributes to easier adaptation to the academic community (Remmik et al., 2011).

At the end of this chapter, it should be noted that the literature review in the field of teaching in higher education and professional socialization in the academic profession, points to several main conclusions. Whether it is public policies that include the European Higher Education Area, the higher education context at the European Union level or just the Croatian national higher education context, it can be concluded that the *key role of educated and competent higher education teachers in the process of raising the quality of teaching in higher education is recognized at all levels*. Research suggests that the role of higher education teachers is complex, that their career paths are subject to various challenges of balancing the demands placed before them by the profession, whether in terms of institutional or disciplinary particularities. As far as teaching is concerned, it is evident that they encounter numerous unknowns and challenges in their professional path (for example, attitude towards teaching in the context of basic academic activities, lack of teacher training, emotional labour, work overload, etc.). Additionally, it is visible that professional socialization of junior researchers in teaching is a particularly challenging aspect of their development.

## **2. Positive attitude towards teaching in higher education**

By analysing relevant literature and the research results of recent studies, a new conceptual framework has been designed that allows us to consider aspects of a positive attitude towards teaching. The idea for this conceptual framework began with a literature review in the field of higher education whereby four earlier described, most commonly represented broader topics were identified. First, there are topics / authors that deal with different teaching approaches and perspectives (e.g. *teaching approaches, perspectives, regimes, strategies or orientations* and their implications in practice). Then, topics related to teaching competencies and teacher training in higher education (e.g. the importance of teaching competencies; the impact of training programmes on the improvement of teaching competencies / teaching in a broader sense). The next group consists of topics that discuss the teaching and research nexus (e.g. how teaching and research are valued in higher education) and topics related to different emotional experiences that teachers in higher education have (e.g. stress, overload, enthusiasm, passion, etc.).

In order to develop a conceptual framework that enables observing the aspects of a positive attitude towards teaching, within each of these detected broader topics a special focus was placed on theoretical and empirical knowledge that points to positive outcomes / positive teaching practices. In other words, within the four thematic areas detected, the focus is on concepts that are assumed to serve as lenses through which the teacher's personal (positive) attitude towards teaching can be viewed (Figure 1). For example, the literature analysis within the thematic area that includes the research results on different emotional experiences of working in higher education resulted in the identification of those authors / research results that indicate that positive emotional experiences (e.g. enthusiasm, passion, etc.) favourably affect the teaching process. Similarly, within the thematic area dealing with different teaching approaches and perspectives, the benefits of a constructivist approach to teaching have been recognized. In this way, a four-dimensional conceptual framework of a positive attitude towards teaching was created, which was conceived as holistic and not limited to the specifics of teaching in a particular discipline<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Within the project “Professional socialization of junior researchers in teaching” co-funded by the University of Rijeka, a qualitative research was conducted which, among other things, aimed to subject this conceptual framework to critical evaluation by experienced experts in the field of higher education (educational developers) dealing with improving the quality of teaching in higher education. Research participants were briefly introduced to the four-dimensional concept of a positive attitude towards teaching, after which they were asked to comment on it and assess how similar or different the proposed framework is to their personal perceptions of what a positive attitude towards teaching means. The comments suggest that experts believe that the presented dimensions describe the essence of a positive attitude towards teaching well and that the dimensions fit into their ideas about what constitutes a positive attitude towards teaching (Miočić, Brajdić Vuković and Ledić, 2020).





Figure 1: Illustration of the conceptual framework design of a positive attitude towards teaching

All the dimensions of a positive attitude towards teaching<sup>7</sup> are equally important, however, we will start our presentation with the emotional dimension. This dimension is related to personal positive emotional experiences (love, passion, elation, enthusiasm) that teachers experience while teaching. Hagenauer and Volet (2014) suggest that the research interest on the importance of the emotional dimension of teaching in higher education is still limited, as opposed to research of emotional functioning of teachers at lower levels of education. Research among the population of teachers at lower levels of education shows that teachers who feel passion for teaching have positive attitudes towards teaching, seek and accept changes in teaching through professional development, are strongly connected and cooperate with other teachers who have similar attitudes about teaching and create strong bonds with both students and their parents (Phelps and Benson, 2012).

Researchers in the field of higher education are trying to explore what drives passion, motivation and enthusiasm in higher education teachers. Some research shows that higher education teachers more often describe teaching in terms of positive emotions (enthusiasm in teaching, satisfaction in the ability to monitor student progress, empathy for students), and less often in a negative context (pressure, fear, frustration). (Postareff and Lindblom-Ylänne, 2011). Furthermore, the research results suggest that the emotional experience of teaching depends on the perceived intrinsic value that teachers attach to the teaching profession (Hagenauer and Volet, 2014). In other words, teachers who are intrinsically motivated to teach, show feelings of passion and enthusiasm when teaching. Teachers' emotional experiences play a significant role in the teaching process and not only affect their individual reality (how they perceive themselves as teachers) but are also reflected in their social interactions (interactions with students and colleagues), which shapes the wider cultural and social context at a particular institution (Trigwell, 2011). Teachers' emotions depend on their attitude towards students, but also on their expectations of students (Hagenauer and Volet, 2014), and research shows that teachers' enthusiasm has a positive effect on students' motivation and success (Patrick, Hisley and Kempler, 2000; Hagenauer and Volet, 2014). Accordingly, this study assumes that the positive emotional experiences of junior researchers which manifest in the form of feelings of comfort, satisfaction and enthusiasm in teaching, are one of the components of a positive attitude towards teaching.

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<sup>7</sup> With the aim of contributing to the understanding of the concept of a positive attitude towards teaching, the description of the dimensions of this concept is supported by examples from the results of empirical research. The research was approached from a qualitative paradigm by applying a case study strategy that included five women - junior researchers / assistant professors - employed at various institutions / disciplines in the Croatian higher education system. What these young researchers, who were given pseudonyms for the purpose of this study - Matea, Dora, Tena, Irena and Klara, have in common is that in their professional experience the dimensions of a positive attitude towards teaching have been recognized (the emotional dimension, the dimension of professional development, the dimension of the constructivist approach in teaching and the dimension of teaching and research nexus). Research participants' quotes illustrate each of these dimensions and should contribute to understanding the concept of a positive attitude towards teaching and the way in which it manifests itself in the everyday experience of higher education teachers.

## Emotional dimension

Emotional dimension in teaching can be seen from junior researchers' experiences in the following examples whereby they describe feelings of satisfaction, pleasure and happiness they experience in teaching and other aspects of their work in the academic profession:

Matea loves her job in the academic community, both research and teaching, and describes it in the following manner: "I really love my job and I think that everything you have to struggle with, sacrifice - is worth it, really worth it." She further points out: "No one can make me do something on Saturday or Sunday without me loving it." (...) "Well, the good side of my profession is that I really love what I do. That is the most important thing for me. I don't know how I would do something I don't like, this is great for me and I like being a professor, a teacher. I like being a researcher, and that is very important to me."

Dora similarly considers herself "lucky" because she got a job in the higher education system and some of the key words she uses to describe her job satisfaction are "passion" and "pleasure". She expresses her personal satisfaction with teaching in the following way: "Teaching has always been a pleasure for me and it has never been a problem for me". (...) "It is a passion, it's simply a passion you feel." She considers teaching to be her personal sanctuary and claims that she would never be as good in some other job. Because of the feeling of comfort, satisfaction and relaxation she experiences, she compares working in class with going to a wellness and points out that she enjoys it very much.

Tena is a young researcher who left a well-paid job in the private sector and got a job in the higher education system because it seemed more attractive and interesting to her, a job that she loves and that makes sense to her. She perceives her job as follows: "I love my job, it's wonderful to me, I do what I think makes sense, I love to pass on some of my knowledge to students." She considers herself motivated and feels "total passion" for passing on her knowledge to the students.

When talking about teaching, Irena often points out that teaching fulfils her, as illustrated by her next statement: "It fulfils me. And the preparation for the classes also fulfils me and I feel pleased after classes and then you see that it actually fulfils you. (...) It primarily fulfils me because that's what I love and what I want to do. I feel useful." She says that she loves her job and that it makes her happy: "I like my job and I love to be able to pass on my knowledge. That really makes me happy." The teacher's role drives her, activates her and recharges her batteries.

Klara says that she is pleased with the fact that she is employed in the higher education system because she considers it an opportunity to pass on her knowledge to others. She describes her inclination towards teaching in the following way: "I have always felt good in that role (as a teacher). So, from the first day, I felt comfortable in the lecture hall."

The proposal of this conceptual framework of a positive attitude towards teaching starts from the assumption that “loving teaching” and “feeling enthusiastic in the role of a teacher” are not strong enough arguments that fully describe the complexity of a positive attitude towards teaching. In addition to enthusiasm for teaching, a higher education teacher should have basic didactic and docimological knowledge (e.g. planning and conducting a lesson and developing curricula, defining clear goals and outcomes in the learning and teaching process, applying different teaching methods, encouraging students to active learning through inclusion and application of active learning techniques in the teaching process, as well as application of various procedures for evaluating and assessing student achievement) and general knowledge of theories on which the learning and teaching process is based (Turk and Ledić, 2016). In order to acquire all this necessary knowledge, it is important that the teacher is aware that teaching is a process that requires self-reflection and continuous professional development. Therefore, the second dimension of a positive attitude towards teaching starts from the assumption that teachers should be engaged in continuous improvement of their teaching and their own teaching competencies. That means that they should have an awareness of the importance of professional development, and that the time and effort they invest in self-reflexion and continuing professional development point to a positive attitude towards teaching, especially in situations (and such is the majority) when continuous professional development in teaching is not mandatory. Professional development is one of the ways to contribute to raising the excellence and quality of teaching, as shown by the research results. Research conducted among the population of teachers at lower levels of education also confirms that teachers can improve their teaching skills by participating in effective professional development programmes (Antoniou, Kyriakides and Creemers, 2011; King, 2014), and the same findings were confirmed by research conducted among higher education teachers which have shown that initial and additional teacher training programmes have a significant impact on the development of teaching competencies (Gibbs and Coffey, 2004). Teacher training programmes contribute to increasing awareness of the teaching approach and choosing appropriate teaching methods, increasing theoretical knowledge about teaching, spreading ideas and motivation in teaching, increasing self-confidence in teaching and sharing experiences with other colleagues (Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, Nevgi, 2007).

## Professional development dimension

Even though it is possible to conclude from the experiences of junior researchers that they have prepared for their teaching role mostly with the help of informal peer support, the following examples show how they feel about the importance of professional development and how they criticize the lack of possibilities for professional development in teaching:

Irena believes that junior researchers and teachers in the higher education system are “thrown into the fire” or in other words, that they are introduced into teaching according to the underlying principle “just figure it out.” She is dissatisfied with the fact that “... there is no training in terms of communication with students, interactions, perhaps relationships with students with special needs, there is no training in terms of diction, speech or anything” and she believes that such forms of education should be available. Irena believes that teachers receive very little training, and if they do, then it is on their own initiative and at their own expense, so she thinks that they should be provided with adequate education and systematic support in teaching.

Dora also notices that in the higher education system there is no formal and structured manner of introducing young people into their job and the path of a new person entering the teaching process usually depends on the mentor. However, it is not defined how the mentor should introduce a junior researcher to the job. She concludes: “Obviously, everything is left to the person who starts working, at least this is the case where I work.” She expresses her dissatisfaction due to the fact that there are no continuous teacher training programmes because she is more than willing to participate in such programmes to see “how it’s done today” and which are “some other methods that can enrich teaching.”

In her professional environment, Tena sometimes notices inappropriate behaviours in the relationship between teachers and students and criticizes the lack of systematic education for teaching, which would contribute to the prevention and change of such patterns of behaviour. Tena is of the opinion that teachers are mostly “left to their own devices” and do not have any structured education that would prepare them for teaching. She considers this a major failure of the system. She states that she has never listened to any pedagogical subjects and that no one has taught her how to teach, how to deal with students, what is appropriate, what is inappropriate, but she considers it an extremely important aspect of work in the academic community.

Matea also states that after being employed in the higher education system, she did not have any additional teacher training. She describes her first experiences as follows: “You get a subject and you teach. Colleagues who had the subject before you and the professor explain a little about what you need to do and how, they give you some materials and advice and then you just try to keep your head above water.” She noticed the importance of professional development in teaching during a mobility to a European university where she realized the importance of investing in the teaching quality.

At her institution, Klara notices the growing interest of her colleagues in participating in workshops for learning and teaching in higher education, and she is

personally interested in participating in such training. Nevertheless, Klara points out that at the beginning of her professional career she was “left to her own devices” and that she “intuitively developed”, and she thinks that it would be very useful to ensure that young teachers go through courses or trainings that will prepare them for teaching. She explains her position as follows: “Just because someone is a great researcher does not mean that they are a great teacher, that is, someone can be really great in science, but then has problems with conveying the content in a simple way, interesting to students, clear, and is not able to speak to them at their level, a level of knowledge that is not abstract and then, over time, rise expectations.”

The third dimension of this concept stems from discussions about recent knowledge on the learning and teaching process that point to the importance of applying constructivist principles / teaching approaches, which are most often in the focus of teacher training in higher education. Constructivism is based on the idea that learning takes place in a way that new knowledge fits into the existing knowledge by expanding and complementing it, which presupposes that teachers should know how to achieve the changes in their students' existing knowledge (Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall, 2008). The concept of student-centred learning is also based on the constructivist teaching principles. This implies applying innovative teaching methods aimed at promoting learning that takes place in communication between teachers and students, whereby teachers take students seriously, as active participants in the learning process and encourage the development of transferable skills such as problem solving, critical and reflective thinking (ESU, 2015). The role of the modern teacher in higher education is to lead, guide and assist students in the learning process, whereby the student is not a passive recipient of knowledge and information, but an active participant who shares responsibility with the teacher in achieving the learning outcomes (Sursock, Smidt and Davies, 2010). In other words, teachers perceive their role and the role of students as active participants in the teaching process and partners in the formation, construction and reconstruction of knowledge. Some research shows that teachers who are student-centred not only see students as active creators of their own knowledge, but also believe that the learning outcomes achieved by students can go beyond the course and influence students' developmental changes and understanding of themselves and others around them (Åkerlind, 2004). In addition, there is research that suggests that teachers perceive student-centred learning as a process that enables students to take a holistic approach, empowers them, and contributes to building their self-confidence (Tangney, 2014). Research also shows that teachers who experience positive emotions in class are more likely to apply student-centred learning (Trigwell, 2011), which further suggests that the proposed dimensions of a positive attitude towards teaching complement each other.

## Dimension of a constructivist approach to teaching and learning

The experiences of junior researchers suggest the importance of applying constructivist principles in teaching and learning. This is evident in examples of perceiving students as active participants of the teaching and learning process, as well as in encouraging them to solve problems and think critically and reflexively:

Klara tries to encourage students in her class to think and motivates them to connect new knowledge with what they already know from other subjects. When describing her students, she points out that she does not expect them to be “obedient”, but “active”, “wide-eyed”, and “curious”. She believes that they should be encouraged to “think for themselves”, “to compare” and “to read”. It is very important for Klara to encourage students to express and argue their own opinion, and she tries to activate and interest them to “think for themselves” and not to “blindly learn what is written in a textbook or on a presentation, but to ask questions themselves”. She tries to make them be active, not passive listeners by using various methods learned in different teacher training courses she attended.

It is important for Irena that students feel free to ask questions and express their opinion on a topic they may not know much about, and strongly encourages them to discuss. Irena noticed that students show interest in activities that go beyond the framework of regular classes and engages to provide them with new opportunities for learning and practical work in accordance with their interests. In class, she often asks them questions such as “what else would you like to know, what else could you do, are you interested in anything else?”. After finding out what interests them, she tries to include it in her classes and thus meet their expectations and needs. She begins each lesson by encouraging students to recall the topics from the previous lesson and then tries to highlight how the new lesson builds on that. She wants to prepare students for the job market, and she would like for students to become “self-aware experts in their field.”

Tena aims to encourage her students to additionally engage (for example through student associations) because she considers it important for students to learn to fight for their rights and improve institutional practices, and she is especially committed to engaging students to participate in different research projects carried out at the faculty. Tena is a great opponent of learning “bare facts” and “learning facts by heart” as she explains: “I try to put a lot more emphasis on applicability than on learning the facts.” It is important for students to understand the subject matter and to be able to think logically and critically, solve problems and come up with solutions on their own. In addition, she believes that students should learn about life, behaviour in the society and value system. Therefore, in her work with students she seeks to encourage discussions that contribute to the fulfilment of these goals.

It is important for Dora to encourage students to love their discipline, develop higher levels of knowledge and critical thinking. She wants her students to be emotionally engaged in the learning process and believes that through her teaching she can “help them be better people and understand a little bit more about the world, the culture they study.” She respects the fact that students, in their early twenties are already mature and “formed”

enough to be able to discuss and interpret the content covered in class actively and argumentatively. She considers them “capable”, “young” and “fresh” and thinks that they have a different view of reality, so she is interested in how they experience the subject matter they deal with in class and asks them to express their “feelings, insights and reflections”. She also encourages them to question authority and value system that surrounds them and aims to encourage them to stand up for themselves and their rights and to build a value system based on critical reflection.

However, even if the previous three assumptions are met, the concept of a positive attitude towards teaching in higher education is not complete without taking into account the teachers’ research engagement. In other words, the fourth dimension of this concept assumes that a positive attitude towards teaching implies equal evaluation of the importance of teaching and research, i.e. the teaching and research role. This dimension emphasizes the importance of the intertwining of teachers’ research and teaching, whereby it is important that teaching is not perceived as a less important academic activity in relation to research, but as a mechanism for disseminating research results that contribute to understanding a specific discipline. Additionally, the research results contribute to understanding a particular discipline which is explored and taught at the same time, whereby the content and the teaching approach are continuously revised and updated by the research results. This dimension makes the proposed concept specific to the field of higher education, since at the lower levels of education (primary and secondary school) the role of teachers is not so much determined by the need for research. In higher education due to the increased pressure for research production, there is a tendency of the European and global universities to establish research work as the most important criterion for academic promotion and advancement (Arimoto, 2014). Unfortunately, this indicates a decrease in the value and importance of teaching in relation to research. However, reference should be made to authors who emphasize the importance of integrating teaching and research since successful teachers are most often characterized by the successful interweaving of both aspects of academic work (Mayson and Schapper, 2012; Kinchin and Hay, 2007).



## The dimension of the teaching and research nexus

The following examples represent the dimension of teaching and research nexus, as junior researchers express the view that it is important to nurture both aspects of work and not to neglect one or the other, regardless of whether one of these two aspects of work gives them a greater sense of personal satisfaction and pleasure or has a greater (or lesser) importance in the process of advancement in the academic profession:

Tena points out that she is aware that her job consists of teaching and research, as she states: “I somehow had the attitude that my job here is to teach and do research, that I got paid for it, to produce some research papers, to write something.” She further explains: “We are employed here to work with students and that is ... that is our main role and our main job.” She also emphasizes in numerous statements the importance of teaching and the desire to transfer her knowledge to students and points out that she is aware of the importance of connecting teaching and research: “Through research, you constantly develop and learn new things, new skills that you then need to transfer to students. That’s how I see that relationship.”

Matea perceives herself as follows: “Today I love research terribly, it motivates and attracts me and this is visible in my classes.” When she describes the relationship between teaching and research, she points out that: “there should be a good balance between the two” and that “there is no one without the other”. She believes that her institution successfully balances this relationship, whereby research work is important because, as she states: “without research and scientific achievements, especially today, without different research projects, we are nothing.”, but on the other hand the classes should be done appropriately and effectively.

Even though she “enjoys” teaching more, Dora respects research work, and tries to use it to improve her classes, which can be seen in the following statement: “I think it should coexist. Given what I teach these students, it is important that I also research it. That I am familiar with recent literature which I can acquire through research and then present it, say, in class. But I use research more to improve my teaching.” In addition to using her research to enrich her teaching, she points out that she is trying to meet the research criteria she needs to advance in her profession.

Klara is critical of the fact that in her discipline research is more valued than teaching and points out that this fact sometimes “hurts.” She states the following: “Nobody ever asks you about your classes, how much you prepare, how much effort you put into it and whether your students are happy with you... Unfortunately, this has no effect, the only thing that counts are the research papers.” Although research productivity is the main criterion for career advancement, Klara believes that the criteria related to teaching should also be considered in career advancement. Irena agrees with Klara. She sees herself primarily as a teacher but states the following: “But I can’t say that it’s more important, that I would say... let’s put research aside.” However, Irena thinks that teachers are generally more focused on the activity that proves to be more useful, that is, “what gets you the necessary points at a certain time”. She further explains it as follows: “This is going to sound awful, but I think

what's more important is what currently carries more points for career advancement. (...) What gets you more points is more relevant." She is dissatisfied with the fact that in the system of science and higher education there is an unequal treatment of teaching and research within the criteria for advancement because she considers both activities equally important.

In conclusion, thusly defined conceptual framework of a positive attitude towards teaching provides a possible answer to the question of which dimensions of experience characterize a teacher who is considered to have a positive attitude towards teaching in higher education. Based on this proposed conceptual framework, it is the teachers who approach their teaching with passion, enthusiasm, satisfaction (*emotional dimension*); who do not neglect the importance of their own professional development in the field of higher education teaching (*professional development dimension*); who strive to apply the principles of the constructivist approach in their teaching (*dimension of the constructivist approach to learning and teaching*) and who find their teaching and research role equally important, regardless of whether either of these roles gives them a greater sense of personal satisfaction (*dimension of teaching and research nexus*).

Although the previously described research results indicate that each of the dimensions of this framework is more or less related to the characteristics of a competent / quality teacher / teaching (which implicitly indicates that teachers who have a positive attitude towards teaching are successful and competent and that their teaching is of high quality), it should be noted that the research and the conclusion on the connection between the proposed framework of a positive attitude towards teaching and the quality of teaching remains to be further researched.

**3. Recommendations  
for improving  
the support system for  
junior researchers  
in the professional  
socialization  
in teaching**

One of the goals of understanding the characteristics of professional socialization that contribute to the development of a positive attitude of junior researchers towards teaching should also be a kind of practical / social contribution, in the form of recommendations for improving the support system for junior researchers in their professional socialization into teaching<sup>8</sup>. We believe that the implementation of these recommendations in practice could contribute to building a support system for junior researchers at the beginning of their professional path into the role of higher education teachers:

## **I. Profiling junior researchers as an employment strategy at higher education institutions**

Given that communicativeness, professionalism and self-criticism (the so-called "soft skills") are recognized as personal characteristics of junior researchers who have a positive attitude towards teaching, it is recommended that higher education institutions profile junior researchers as an employment strategy. It would be advisable that higher education institutions through their employment mechanisms give preference to candidates who possess the above-mentioned characteristics, that is, that the selection process provides insight into these characteristics. This can be done through testing, motivational interviews, probationary period at the institution or in some other ways. It can be assumed that junior researchers who possess these characteristics will find it easier to adapt to the challenges of teaching, but also to work in higher education in general, and this then contributes to the development of a positive attitude towards teaching.

## **II. Encouraging junior researchers to undergo teacher training programmes**

Creating (considerable, continuous, carefully planned) opportunities for teacher training of junior researchers is certainly not a new recommendation. Moreover, this has been continuously emphasized over the years. The nature of the higher education system (in the Republic of Croatia) has led to the fact that providing support to teachers at the beginning of their career in the form of teacher training and development depends on the internal policies of the institution (which means that not all institutions have this practice). Therefore, there are great differences between institutions in the ways they approach this problem. On the one hand there are institutions that make efforts to organize various forms of support for teachers (education, workshops, courses, etc.) and even introduce the obligation to attend such programmes and hence encourage participation by using it as a criterion for career advancement. On the other hand, in some institutions such practices are

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<sup>8</sup>The proposed recommendations are a result of literature analysis as well as our research results.

sporadic and involve only a few interested (enthusiastic) teachers. This is visible in various reports on the quality of teaching at different institutions.

Junior researchers at the beginning of their academic career are aware of the fact that being educated, i.e. being an expert in a discipline, does not also mean that a person has the necessary competencies to transfer their knowledge to others. They recognize the need for teacher training through which they can acquire knowledge, for example about the methods of speech delivery, working with students with special needs, the impact that teachers have on their students, etc. In other words, junior researchers in the Croatian system of higher education who start teaching should be educated for it and not “left to their own devices.” Likewise, the introduction of junior researchers into teaching should not depend on whether these young people who are employed in the academic community will wind up in a stimulating micro-environment and have role models from whom they can learn how to teach. On the contrary, institutions should insist as much as possible on the introduction of formal / structured mechanisms through which teaching can be improved and teachers can get the necessary support to train and develop. Additionally, it is important to introduce mechanisms that value teaching and research equally when it comes to career advancement.

### **III. Improving the process of conducting and implementing the results of teacher evaluations**

Higher education institutions differ in the importance they attach to the overall teaching evaluation process, e.g. they differ in how much effort they put into reporting the results of surveys, in the ways they “respond” to the results of the “most successful” and “most unsuccessful” teachers as well as conducting other forms of teacher evaluation (e.g. informal) or encouraging teachers to conduct self-evaluations. At the same time, junior researchers at the beginning of their careers rely heavily on the results of student evaluations. Based on the feedback they receive from students, they improve their work in terms of content as well as in terms of communication and attitude towards students. They try to correct their own mistakes and introduce innovations.

At the institutional level, there is room to improve the practices of student evaluations, teacher self-evaluation as well as peer assessment and to bring these processes to the level to which the outcome (namely raising the quality of teaching) will be achieved as much as possible. When it comes to student evaluations, problems such as poor student turnout and students' distrust in the anonymity of the evaluation process need to be addressed. Additionally, there is room for improving student evaluations in the context of their purpose as a measuring instrument that should measure the quality of teaching. This applies equally to formal (institutional / university) evaluations, as well as informal evaluations that teachers often decide to conduct on their own initiative and in parallel with the formal ones. Furthermore, the mechanisms (protocols) that can help teachers make self-analysis of their own teaching should also be taken into account. Teaching can be successfully evaluated by associates – colleagues, other teachers from the institution (or

even different institutions) where there are also possibilities for the institution through its quality policies to encourage such activities.

The recommendation aims at developing institutional manuals / guides that could clearly and comprehensively present teachers with various forms of teaching evaluation and the advantages of the teaching evaluation process, the results of which provide a basis for further improvement of teaching. Although many institutions have already implemented some of these recommendations (mostly in the mid-2010s, when more intensive planning of the quality assurance process began at Croatian universities), it should be noted that teaching evaluation processes should be continuously considered, especially if all the challenges are taken into account, which year after year, have an increasing influence on the teaching process and are changing it (e.g. increased need for the development of hybrid and e-teaching, increased mobility of students and teachers, increased diversification of the student population, etc.).

#### **IV. Improving the process of rewarding successful teachers in higher education**

In higher education in the Republic of Croatia, there is no systematic way of rewarding successful and good teachers. At some institutions there are regulations that define the ways of rewarding successful teachers, while others do not have such an institutional mechanism but are guided by university policies and practice. Even if there are mechanisms for rewarding successful teachers (either at the institutional or university level), the criteria by which awards are given are usually poorly defined and dominantly evaluate the results achieved by teachers through student evaluations. In addition, the awards themselves are also diverse, some being in the form of public recognition, and some, less often, in the form of financial awards. On the other hand, some institutions have clearly defined processes only for rewarding scientific excellence.

Higher education institutions should pay special attention to developing models for rewarding outstanding teachers. The model should contain clearly defined criteria that are assessed in order for a teacher to be considered successful, and his/her teaching effective (teaching methods, relationship with students, etc.) and thus accordingly be rewarded for his / her contribution to teaching. In addition, the model should be particularly sensitive to different levels of career advancement and teaching experience and allow for a fair reward system within different categories. The proposed conceptual framework of a positive attitude towards teaching could serve as a basis for the development of such a model.

## **V. Clearly communicate institutional policies and expectations towards junior researchers**

Higher education institutions very rarely clearly define their expectations of junior researchers, especially when it comes to their teaching. Although junior researchers are often deemed an important driving force of the institution, they are most often mentioned only in the context of their obligations within doctoral studies. However, it should be noted that being a doctoral student and an employee of an institution sometimes implies two completely different roles, with different expectations and job descriptions, which means that the status of junior researchers often exceeds the expectations set within doctoral study programmes or their relationship with mentors.

Junior researchers are a very specific group of academics who differ greatly from the rest of the academics in their professional experience and aspirations. The beginning of their career, the process of professional socialization, is a period in which they need to adopt all the important rules and norms of the institution where they are employed and the discipline they belong to, so their role is demanding and marked by many challenges. Given their age, this professional period often occurs in parallel with the changes in their private lives, such as starting a family and taking on parental roles. In this context, institutions should communicate their expectations more clearly and deal with junior researchers in their strategic documents (and then, as expected, actively approach junior researchers through various initiatives and activities). By “deal” we mean to clearly define systematic support mechanisms for junior researchers that go beyond the usual informal / collegial forms of support and / or self-management, not only in teaching, but also in research and administrative functions they are expected to perform well.

## **VI. Encouraging the development of a positive attitude towards teaching on a personal, institutional and disciplinary level**

Finally, it is especially important to encourage the development of a positive attitude towards teaching at the personal, institutional and disciplinary level, and to involve higher education stakeholders at all levels in this process. Junior researchers who have a positive attitude towards teaching are pleased to be pursuing an academic career, they nurture good interpersonal relationships in institutional microcultures as well as relationships with students. In this context, encouraging and nurturing a “culture” of a positive attitude towards teaching brings numerous benefits that could ultimately be the drivers of the support system for junior researchers in their professional socialization in teaching.

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