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# The Dimensions of Teacher's Professional Development

**Abstract:** The article examines the conceptions of the role of teachers in planning and conducting instruction. The thesis that teachers perform several roles in their work is generally established. However, an in-depth investigation reveals that different researchers have addressed this matter from different perspectives. The first part of the article presents the conceptions of the role of teachers in Slovenia and abroad. We conclude that answers to the question about the qualities of good teachers and the roles they (should) perform cannot be found in a simple set of desired qualities or competences expected of teachers. The issue should be approached through multiple layers and wider contexts (the environment, the school subject, years of service, etc.). The second part of the article presents the findings of a research study conducted in 16 Slovenian grammar schools in which the teachers confirmed our preliminary thesis that, in their work, they occupy several roles that are necessarily intertwined. The article also presents seven dimensions of the role of teachers that were identified by the participating teachers as crucial for their work.

**Keywords:** the role of teachers, didactic excellence, pedagogical excellence, subject excellence

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## **Introduction**

A consideration of education without a consideration for the teacher is inconceivable. Setting all the paradigms and scientific disciplines aside, the teacher plays a pivotal role in determining the quality of instruction and the success or failure of school reforms.

Teaching is described as an intentional act, the chief purpose of which is to stimulate students to learn (Qvortrup in Beck 2008, p. 467). Whatever our attitudes are towards what teaching is (or should be), the teacher always has a central role. More contemporary views on the role of teachers, however, suggest that it is very hard to conceive of a universal role. According to Biddle (in Beijaard 1995, p. 283), the role of teachers are often vaguely defined and used in multiple ways. Elsewhere, Pettersson (2004, p. 590) maintains that the role of teachers consists of a variety of culturally defined roles. This implies that cultural and social events and environments specify how the role of teachers is developed, and influence how it is understood in different cultures, societies and geographic environments. Thus, it is difficult to offer a comprehensive definition of the role of teachers without considering the diverse cultural, geographical and social environments. What is certain, however, is that a number of factors influence how the role is defined. The first part of this article presents how the role of teachers is understood by some Slovenian and foreign authors, and the second part presents the findings of an empirical research study into understandings of the role of teachers.

## **On the role of teachers**

An extensive review of the past literature reveals that there has always been a set of elements involved in defining the role of teachers. Fishburn (in Adams 1970, p. 122) has identified these six roles: (a) director of learning, (b) guide, (c) counsellor, (d) mediator of the culture, (e) school-community liaison, and (f) member of the profession. Havighurst and Neugarten (*ibid.*) have identified two roles. The first role relates to adults in the school system and sees the teacher playing the role

of an employee, subordinate to the principal, advisor to superiors, colleague, and follower. The second role relates to pupils and consists of roles such as mediator of learning, disciplinarian, surrogate parent, confidante, and representative of middle-class morality. Trow (*ibid.*) differentiates between three types of teacher roles. The teacher performs *extra class roles*, which include faculty member, community liaison officer, and learner. The teacher also plays the role of *an administrative and executive*, and it includes disciplinarian, measurer-record keeper (or clerk), learning-aids officer (or librarian), and programme director (or planner). The teacher's third role is an *instructional role*, which includes motivator, resource person, evaluator and adaptor. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in Slovenia, Gogala (1966) wrote about the teacher as a person who requires a charismatic personality, adequate expertise (in the area they teach) and methodology skills (Gogala 1966). Resman's (1990) well-known definition in Slovenia specifies that a teacher plays the three roles of employee, expert, and person and personality. The author states that "all the three levels are always present in a teacher's work; none can be excluded. Due to the demand for satisfying teachers' social and individual (personal) needs, the three levels should act more or less in unison" (Resman 1990, p. 31).

Given the contemporary discussions on the role of teachers in the context of professional development, we are unlikely to find a definition that considers teachers to play one role only. Nevertheless, there seems to be a general agreement that an important element that affords teachers a professional identity involves what teachers do to ascribe a role to themselves or the role that the environment ascribes to them (see Nias 1989; Goodson and Cole 1994; Volkmann and Anderson, 1998; Valenčič Zuljan 2001; Muršak et al. 2011). Beijaard (1995) suggests that the teacher's professional identity consists of three factors: the subject they teach; their relationship with the students; and their role or role conception (*ibid.*, p. 282). The final factor is closely connected with the first two factors—attitudes towards the subject and relationships with the students—and should not be regarded as being independent of them. According to Biddle, most interpretations of what teachers' roles are refer to teachers' tasks, social position, image, status or other people's expectations (particularly of students and parents) (Biddle in Beijaard 1995, p. 283).

We would like to emphasise the works of two international authors on the role of teachers. Beijaard and colleagues (2004), as noted earlier, define teachers' roles in terms of the teacher as (a) a subject matter expert, (b) a pedagogical expert, and (c) a didactical expert. In the capacity as a subject matter expert, knowledge of the subject area features prominently, being scientific or theoretical. The teacher is seen as someone who has a profound grasp of their subject (Poom-Valickis et al. 2012, p. 235). Beijaard writes: Traditionally, knowledge of subject matter is a relevant part of a teacher's professional knowledge base. Until some decades ago, most people believed that knowledge of subject matter and some on-the-job training was sufficient for being a good teacher. Nowadays, it is widely accepted that such a conception of teaching takes insufficient account of the complexity of teaching, and new conceptions of the teacher as classroom manager, facilitator of learning, etc. are acknowledged (Beijaard et al. 2000, p. 751).

As a didactical expert, the teacher is expected to cultivate a supportive learning environment with optimal use of teaching and learning methods. The teacher is primarily seen as being responsible for designing and guiding students' learning processes (Poom-Valickis et al. 2012, p. 235). According to Beijaard and colleagues, traditional, teacher-centred methods of teaching have been replaced by more student-centred methods—methods that put greater emphasis on learning than on teaching (Beijaard et al. 2000, p. 752): 'This shift in conception of teaching has far-reaching consequences for the role of teachers in general, and for his or her knowledge and skills in particular' (ibid.). The emphasis on the role of teachers as a pedagogical expert is on relationships, values, and moral and emotional factors. The teacher is seen as someone who supports the child's development as a human being (Poom-Valickis et al. 2012, p. 235). Beijaard states that teaching cannot be reduced to a technical or instrumental action that results in learning gains with students. This didactic side of the teaching profession must be related to a pedagogic side with ethical and moral features (Beijaard et al. 2000, p. 751). The pedagogical aspect is important for teachers' personal and professional conceptions of their role (Beijaard 1995), and the author writes that 'in our postmodern societies, teachers increasingly face moral, social and emotional dilemmas, such as: [...] How can we educate students with multicultural and different social backgrounds? [...] How do we deal with 'deviant' student behaviour? [...] Apart from these dilemmas, teachers should be aware of many norms and values involved in their interaction and relationship with students (Beijaard et al. 2000, p. 752).

The GoodWork Project gives useful insights about the role of teachers. The project was led by Howard Gardner at Harvard University. The essence of GoodWork is summed up in the definition that 'good work' is 'high quality, socially responsible and personally meaningful' (Fischman et al. 2006, p. 385). 'Good work' is technically excellent, personally engaging and ethical (the GoodWork Project 2011, p. 5). Fischman and colleagues (2006, 2010) speak of three E's, emphasizing that good work is only possible when the individual reaches all the three E's. The project defines excellence, as the first E, as work 'that is high in quality and technically sound; it meets or exceeds standards by which other work is judged [within each specific area]' (Fischman et al. 2010, p. 31). Excellence in teacher mentoring can be defined as 'the pedagogic and classroom management skills required for good teaching and learning to occur' (Pang 2012, p. 8). The teachers participating in the project stressed that it is important they are experts in the subject they teach (ibid., p. 9). They also included 'skills in classroom management, teaching methods, strategies for supporting learning, collecting and analyzing data (quantitative and qualitative) and the ability to be a reflective practitioner' (ibid.). Ethics, as the second E, is defined as 'social responsibility—being responsible for the impact that work, behaviour, decisions and products can have on others' (Fischman et al. 2010, p. 67). Teachers think that ethical work 'rests on their understanding of the nature of their work and its boundaries' (Pang 2012, p. 14). During their work, teachers are faced with uncertainty about whom they are most responsible for; they often weigh the impact (or consequences) that their actions would have on the parties involved, especially when there are conflicting interests (ibid.). In

response to a relevant question, the majority of the teachers identified 'students' as their primary responsibility in work (Fischman et al. 2006, p. 386), followed by students' parents, school administrators and colleagues, and the larger community (ibid.). As opposed to some other professions, teachers rarely impute more responsibility for their work to themselves than to the opinions and evaluations of others. They are taking more responsibility for their students than in the past (both for the students' learning as well as social, developmental and emotional needs). This is mainly because of the social circumstances affecting families, emphases on material objects, and the increasing pace of society (ibid.). When carrying out their work, it is important that individuals find it personally engaging (the third E): 'In order to spend the time and energy it requires to produce work that is high quality and has a positive impact on others' (Fischman et al. 2010, p. 107). Personally engaging work is a precondition for excellence and ethics. In this respect, the teachers referred to the flow and the sense of fulfilment that they experienced through work (Pang 2012, p. 11). When working with students, many teachers discussed the challenge of meeting students' needs without compromising their own personal and professional values. Some teachers thought that focusing too much on students' personal problems may encroach on their professional values about their role as a teacher (Fischman et al. 2006, p. 392). Consequently, the teachers' personal commitment included two areas that they found very important: (a) personal relationships with students, (b) students' learning (academic achievement) (ibid., p. 393).

Slovenian authors studying the role of teachers also write that the teacher performs a number of roles for which sound knowledge is required. Marentič Požarnik sees the teacher as someone who always reacts in the classroom as 'a complete personality with their wishes, needs, emotions, vision' (Marentič Požarnik 2003, p. 6), whether they admit it or not. Their 'actions and technical professional competences are only the external side' (ibid.) of their complete personality, which should always be taken into account when trying to understand the role of teachers. In addition, the teacher's engagement with educating is carried out in accordance with their attitudes towards students, respect for them, expectations of them, and their mastery of the methods they use to inspire students cognitively and emotionally (Marentič Požarnik 2014, p. 118). Hence, the author gives equal prominence to the knowledge of the discipline and adequate pedagogical and psychological qualifications. Elsewhere, Muršak, Javrh and Kalin (2011) state that an important part of the teacher's professional identity is represented by the image of the perfect teacher, which is an abstraction of concrete individuals and their characteristics (Muršak et al. 2011, p. 72). The (beginner) teacher commences building their image based on the knowledge they acquire at the university and their own experiences gained throughout their own education with different teachers. In the classroom, the teacher has to take on a variety of roles, meaning that mastering the discipline alone may not be sufficient. The authors thus believe that, during their education and training, teachers should acquire both the knowledge of the subject matter and the so-called 'soft skills' (i.e. pedagogical and psychological qualifications): The issue of teachers' education refers primarily to the relationship between their

expert and pedagogic competences. [...] Doing away with the borders between the two may be risky, especially if we start from the assumption that teachers' preparation is entirely down to the discipline and expertise, without adequate pedagogic knowledge (ibid., pp. 27–28).

Peklaj et al.'s (2009) understanding of the role of teachers is similar, and she writes that the teacher is bound to execute (in equal measure) both information and formation tasks, which are prescribed by the syllabus goals. She maintains that 'separating information from formation goals is only possible theoretically, whereas in the classroom information and formation goals do not exclude each other at all—they usually intertwine (ibid. 2009, p. 29). The teacher's different roles intertwine accordingly. The authors also emphasise that, when considering the teacher's profession and the competences that they need in their work, we should always take account of the wider contexts in which they do their work. We should also enable teachers to do their job so as to make the process of learning the centre of their work (ibid., p. 13). She also asserts that to be a successful teacher, one needs the knowledge of the subject *and* pedagogical competences.

Although in Slovenia we come across of sets of knowledge, skills, also competences more often than concrete definitions of the teacher's roles that various research studies (e.g. Marentič Požarnik 2005; Peklaj 2006; Peklaj and Pečjak 2015) have recognized as required for the teacher's work, it is important to underline that the answer to what the qualities of good teachers are (or what their roles are) cannot be found simply in a set of the teacher's desired characteristics, which is stressed by Kovač Šebart (2002) and Peklaj (2009), or competences, which is emphasized by Korthagen (2004). The issue should be approached through more layers and the wider contexts (the environment, the school subject, years of service, etc.) taken into account, too. The teacher's role has an important impact on the teacher's everyday actions and their professional development; therefore, studying these issues should be given enough attention. Studying the issues is also important, mainly because 'teachers are among the adults with whom children and young people have the most interaction; they must dare to hold themselves clear, living and deliberate examples in relationship to the knowledge, skills and values which shall be shaped' (Pettersson et al. 2004, p. 591).

## Methodology

### *Defining the research problem*

The first part of this article looked at some of the definitions of the role of teachers, as understood by some Slovenian and international authors. Regardless of their different starting points or scientific disciplines, they all emphasise that teachers perform a variety of interconnected roles, collectively contributing to a self-image of teachers. Despite some similarities, there is no unanimous definition or agreement on elements that specify the role of teachers, indicating the complexities involved. The role of teachers is hardly static, but malleable as a result of profes-

sional development (see Day et al. 2006). The multilayered and multidimensional nature of the role of teachers is demonstrated by a number of research studies on the role of teachers (e.g. Beijaard 1995, 2004; Pang 2012; Poom-Valickis et al. 2012, 2013; Zlatković et al. 2012). Using the findings of other authors, we offer the following definitions of the role of teachers:

- a) The teacher's subject excellence presupposes that teachers' expertise is not superficial, but extensive, that they are proficient at the subject matter that they teach, that they follow the findings of the discipline and that they review and update their knowledge of the subject.
- b) The teacher's didactic excellence relates to how teachers transmit their knowledge to students. Mastering the knowledge of the discipline means that an individual is an expert in the field, whereas transmitting the knowledge to students in a way that helps them understand the knowledge makes the individual a 'good' teacher. Not everybody can reformulate the knowledge they possess into a form that is suitable and understandable for those who do not have that knowledge. The dimension is closely related to the use of different didactic methods. However, it does not only signify a wide range of methods and ways of teaching. As part of didactic excellence, the teacher takes account of class dynamics and of the students' age, prior knowledge, and attitudes towards the subject; she or he also factors in the individual characteristics of both the class and the learners.
- c) The teacher's pedagogical excellence is closely linked to the educational factors of instruction; interest in students' personal issues and dilemmas; solving educational and disciplinary problems in or outside the class; the teacher's respectful, moral, decisive and consistent actions both inside the class and among colleagues. Pedagogical excellence is a role that is equal to subject and didactic excellence roles. This is mainly because the school is, by definition, an educational institution and teachers, as its prominent representatives, always act educationally in it—even if they are not always very successful.

In our study, we examined the extent to which each of the roles above featured prominently in the work of teachers at the selected grammar schools in Slovenia. We were also interested to find out which of the areas or statements in the questionnaire reliably and validly measured each of the defined roles. We also tried to understand whether any of the roles differed significantly from the others (i.e. the role that the teachers found more important to their work). Finally, we were also curious to establish, if possible at all, the interconnectedness and interdependence of the defined roles.

### *Sampling and data collection*

This research used convenience sampling. A total number of 345 teachers from 16 grammar schools<sup>1</sup> agreed to participate. In which the students from the Department of Educational Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, did practical work in the academic year 2014/2015. The sample was made up of 76.9% women and 23.1% men, teaching 23 different school subjects. Their length of service ranged from one to 36 years (the average length of service in the sample was 19 years). The majority of the teachers (277, i.e. 81.0%) had a university degree; more than half of the respondents (169, i.e. 52.8%) were also class teachers. The survey was conducted in November 2014. The questionnaires were left in the staffrooms for the teachers to complete and leave in the special boxes, ensuring participants' anonymity.

### *Data analysis*

We used the SPSS 22 software package and AMOS 22 for structural equation modelling to process the data. Due to the complexity of the studied phenomena and the existence of both exogenous and endogenous variables, we employed the SEM method (structural equation modelling) to analyse the teachers' roles, particularly in the areas pertinent to interconnectedness and interdependence.

### *Method*

We prepared a questionnaire for our study, which included 68 statements relating to the teachers' actual and concrete work. We asked the participating teachers to use the four-point scale to assess how true each of the statements was for them, with 1 meaning 'not true for me at all' and 4 meaning 'absolutely true for me'. The teachers' pedagogical excellence was referenced in 30 of the statements; 22 statements referred to the teachers' didactic excellence, and 16 statements addressed the teachers' subject excellence. To minimise bias, we refrained from giving any clues about the roles, and limited our role to distributing the questionnaires only. We formulated the dimensions after the basic analysis was complete, taking account of the content of the statements linked to each of the studied roles. The final model, which shows the interconnectedness dimension of the teachers' role, does not include all the statements. We took this decision because of the insufficient

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<sup>1</sup> The participating grammar schools were: Gimnazija Jurija Vege Idrija, Gimnazija Nova Gorica, Gimnazija Ptuj, Gimnazija Tolmin, Gimnazija Jesenice, Gimnazija Celje – Center, Gimnazija Kranj, Gimnazija Novo mesto, Zavod sv. Frančiška Saleškega; Gimnazija Želimlje, Gimnazija Škofja Loka, Gimnazija Ledina Ljubljana, Gimnazija Brežice, Srednja vzgojiteljska šola in gimnazija Ljubljana, Zavod sv. Stanislava, Škofijska klasična gimnazija, Gimnazija in srednja šola Rudolfa Maistra Kamnik and Gimnazija Franca Miklošiča Ljutomer.

variability of the variables (some variables demonstrated pronounced left skewness and in some places also pointedness), or because the relationships between the variables inside the construct were insignificant, compared to the variables that we assumed had measured a different construct. We excluded these variables from the analysis in order to ensure the content validity alongside other types of validity and reliability of the instrument.

First, we tested the adequacy of the collected data for the reduction of the variables to a smaller number of factors. The results of Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $c^2 = 3096.26$ ,  $df = 231$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) point to the existence of the variables' correlation, and the value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin statistics ( $KMO = 0.883$ ) indicates the adequacy of sampling, which means that a further reduction of variables is sensible and adequate. The first extracted factor explains 33.45% of the construct variability, which shows a sufficiently high level of explained variance. In the next step, confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs in the model, along with the validity of the measurement model with the statistical method of structural equation modelling (SEM). In the measurement model, we were interested in the relationships between the observed and the latent variables, but not the causal relationships among the latent variables. First, we had to achieve the goodness of fit of the model, which is tested with a number of indicators, that is, with the measures of absolute fit, incremental fit and parsimonious fit (Hair et al. 2010).

As Table 1 illustrates, all the required indicators of the goodness of fit (absolute fit ( $\chi^2 = 2,030$ ;  $df = 188$ ;  $RMSEA = 0,055$ ), parsimonious fit ( $PNFI = 0.716$ ), and incremental fit ( $NNFI = 0.919$ ,  $CFI = 0.934$ ) demonstrate a good fitness of the model, which also reveal a good reliability and validity of the results. The measurement model is statistically significant at the level of  $p < 0.001$  ( $c^2 = 381.6$ ;  $df = 188$ ).

	Valid values	Measurement model
$c^2$	/	381.614
df	/	188
p	/	0.000
$c^2/df$	< 3.00	2.030
RMSEA	< 0.05 or 0.08	0.055
NNFI	> 0.90 or 0.95	0.919
CFI	> 0.90 or 0.95	0.934
PNFI	> 0.60	0.716

Table 1: Indicators of the goodness of fit of the measurement model

We used the factor analysis results to prepare a model that suited the indicators of the goodness of fit that was valid and theoretically adequate (with suitable content validity). We tested the validity of the measurement model with convergent and discriminant validity; we used the measure of the share of average explained variance among the observed variables, which define the construct of the average variance extracted (AVE) and squared inter-construct correlation (SIC). Convergent validity occurs when the AVE values for each individual construct reach or exceed 0.5, while the SIC values among the constructs must be lower than AVE to conclude there is discriminant validity (ibid. 2010). We concluded that the composite reliability of the constructs was high enough (see Table 1), and, based on the AVE values, we concluded that the constructs were sufficiently distinct from one another. We used Cronbach's coefficient alpha to test the internal consistency of the constructs. The values of Cronbach's coefficient alpha exceeded the threshold values (0.700) for all the constructs with the exception of construct DID 2, which was a little below the threshold. We assume that the slightly lower value of the Cronbach's coefficient alpha in this case was due to the small number of indicators (2) making up this construct. The value of standardised regression loadings were between 0.6 and 0.827, which indicates a sufficiently high saturation of constructs.

## Results

Based on confirmatory factor analysis, we established that the originally assumed three dimensions of the role of teachers were multidimensional constructs made up of different variables. Table 2 shows all three dimensions, together with the values of the indicators of the validity and reliability of individual constructs. The teacher's excellence appears to be a seven-dimension construct; this does not confirm the original assumption about the three dimensions of the teacher's excellence. It appears that each of the assumed dimensions of the teacher's excellence consists of at least two more dimensions that represent an independent, complete entity. The term 'dimension' in the table denotes individual parts of the three central constructs of the role of teachers. The dimensions were named in accordance with the content definition of the variables that were included in each dimension from all the variables that measured the role of teachers. The variables included in each dimension are given in the column 'measured variable'.

	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Measured variable</b>	<b>Standardised regression loadings (<math>\lambda</math>)</b>	<b>Internal consistency (Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>Composite reliability (CR)</b>	<b>Convergent validity (AVE)</b>
<b>Pedagogical excellence</b>	Educational and disciplinary actions in the classroom  (PED 1)	My students take part in creating classroom rules.	0.801	0.795	0.868	0.500
		I make decisions on solving disciplinary offences together with the students.	0.793			
		I talk to the students whom I assume have personal problems.	0.600			
		I take responsibility for solving educational and disciplinary conflicts.	0.608			
	The teacher's personality orientation  (PED 2)	My rules about discipline and behaviour in the classroom are clear.	0.683	0.783	0.870	0.564
		I am consistent.	0.807			
		I am decisive.	0.757			
	The teacher's value orientation  (PED 3)	When planning a lesson, I consider the educational effect that the content could achieve.	0.647	0.752	0.849	0.527
		I encourage my students' sensitivity for art and artistic expression.	0.699			
		I emphasise the value dimension of the learning content.	0.821			
<b>Didactic excellence</b>	Detailed lesson planning  (DID 1)	I plan lessons in detail.	0.759	0.798	0.875	0.508
		I structure lessons clearly following the established sequence of didactic phases (e.g. introduction, presentation, practice, revision, testing, assessment).	0.666			
		I prepare lesson plans for each individual lesson.	0.685			
		I define operational learning goals for each lesson.	0.736			
	Taking account of each class's specific characteristics  (DID 2)	I adapt lessons to my students' individual characteristics (their interests, prior knowledge, learning styles).	0.748	0.698	0.803	0.540
		When planning work in the classroom, I take account of the characteristics of the class I teach.	0.721			
<b>Subject excellence</b>	Continuing education and training and inclusion of the discipline's development in instruction  (STR 1)	I participate in continuing education and training.	0.652	0.811	0.88	0.520
		I read professional literature.	0.672			
		I follow development in my subject of expertise.	0.827			
		I include new developments meaningfully in my teaching.	0.722			
	The legal and formal aspects of the teacher's work  (STR 2)	I am fully acquainted with the legal and other formal rules that affect my pedagogical work.	0.721	0.711	0.815	0.559
In my professional pedagogical work, I consistently follow the formal framework of rules defined by legislative and other documents.		0.773				

Table 2: The values of standardised regression loadings for individual measured variables and the measures of validity and reliability for dimensions by individual constructs

One of the study's assumptions was that all the three central teacher roles are intertwined. 'Understanding the teacher's role' was thus examined as 'a phenomenon', defined by the interconnectedness of the three roles (the teacher's didactic excellence, pedagogical excellence, the subject excellence). As Table 2 demonstrates, our statistical analysis revealed that not three, but *seven* dimensions are intertwined. The role of teachers, as defined throughout this article, consists of all the seven dimensions that are interconnected and interdependent.

The following diagram illustrates the model of the role of teachers, including all the three central constructs, each with its associated dimensions. The connections indicated by the arrows represent their correlations.

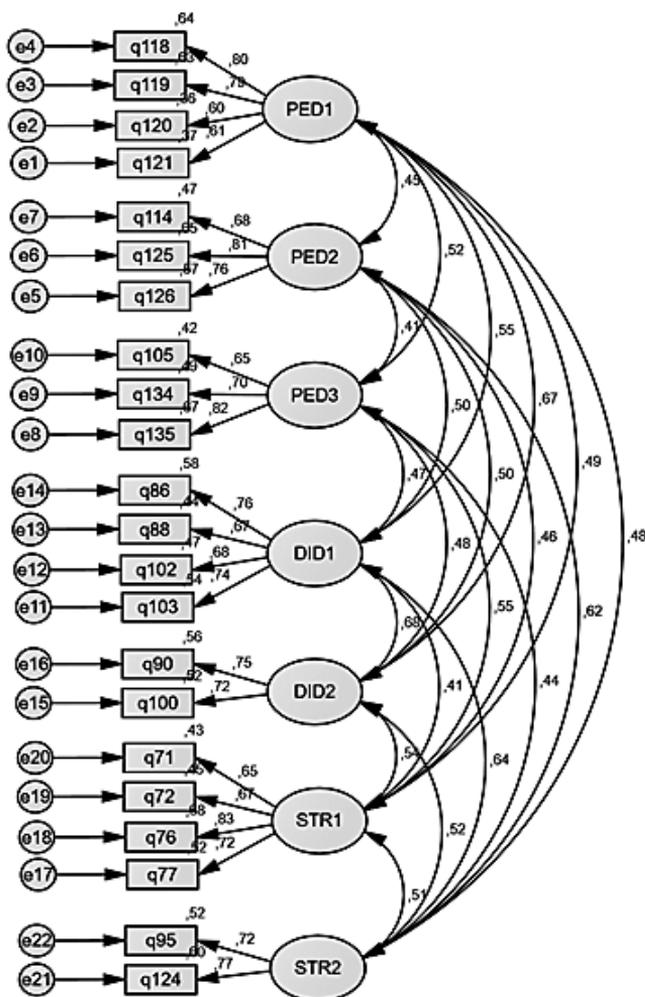


Figure 1: The measurement model (the correlation between measurement and latent variables)

## Discussion

Using confirmatory factor analysis, we demonstrated that, in the teachers' work, all the three outlined roles occur. However, our analysis established that the role is not just a three-dimensional construct as we had first assumed; this is because each of the three roles consists of two or three further roles (we called them dimensions) that are interrelated. Thus, we no longer speak about a three-dimensional construct of the role of teachers but about a seven-dimensional construct (see Figure 1), which we will elaborate below.

A number of studies illustrate the multidimensional nature of the role of teachers (e.g. Yung 2001; Pang 2012; Poom-Valickis et al. 2012; Zlatković et al. 2012). Having studied teachers in medical schools and identified twelve teacher's roles, which they divided into the roles that require more content knowledge and into those that require more pedagogic knowledge, Harden and Crosby (2000) write that the teacher is doubtlessly more than a lecturer, and that teaching is a demanding and complex task (ibid., p. 334), requiring the teacher to have several roles. Beijaard and colleagues (2000, 2004) offer some definitions of the three teacher roles, which are very similar to ours, although their methodology significantly differs from ours.

In our study, we found that the teacher's pedagogical excellence consists of three dimensions: (a) educational and disciplinary actions in the classroom, (b) the teacher's personality orientation, and (c) the teacher's value orientation. The first dimension includes the statements<sup>2</sup> that refer to setting classroom rules and solving educational and disciplinary problems in the class. The strongest influence in the first dimension is exerted by the statement that the teacher allows students to take part in creating classroom rules. According to Pšunder (2004), involving students in organising, managing and leading the class is a preventative action, which involves planning preventative discipline. Other authors agree with this remark and stress the importance of co-creating the rules of behaviour and consequences for the lawbreakers. They claim that students' active participation in such activities (when possible) encourages their responsibility for their own behaviour (Kroflič et al. 2009). It is important to bear in mind that there are always rules in the school that are non-negotiable. These rules concern prohibitions in accordance with Article 4 of the *Rules on the School Order in the Secondary Schools* (2010): the prohibition of psychological and physical violence in the school, of smoking, drinking alcohol and taking other drugs in the school, of possessing these substances and trading them, etc. Other school rules may be subject to agreement between teachers and students. Research shows that students' participation in constructing school rules leads to fewer offences, mainly because students take ownership of the rules and learn to take responsibility for them (see Kroflič et al. 2009, 2011).

The second dimension of the teacher's pedagogical excellence relates to the teacher's personality orientation. It consists of three statements: the teacher's consistency, followed by her or his decisiveness, and then the statement about classroom rules being clear. The teacher's consistency is a trait that is considered

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<sup>2</sup> The statements that were included in each of the dimensions are presented in Table 2.

vital by a number of authors (including Quintilian, Beccaria (2002) introduces it as central within disciplinary actions, since the consistency of implementing a measure can have an impact on its effectiveness (ibid., p. 96). Although Beccaria's discussion concentrates on the criminal system, his ideas can extend to schools (cf. Kroflič et al. 2009).

The third dimension within the teacher's pedagogical excellence is the teacher's values orientation. It consists of three statements, which refer to the teacher being led, when planning and conducting lessons, by the consideration of the educational goals and their effects that teachers can achieve in students with the content they select. This dimension relates to the second role of teachers, which is also evident from the relationship between this dimension and the other two within the teacher's didactic excellence. That lessons should be educative is something that was already underlined by Herbart (1995), who understood instruction as being one of the two aspects of true formation. During instruction, formation happens indirectly, through educational content (also see Javornik and Šebart 1992). Hence, it is vital that teachers select content that has sufficient educational value. Taking account of education as 'the state that is essentially a by-product' (Elster in Salecl 1988, p. 119), 'educational goals can only ever be by-products of education' (ibid., p. 122), and can never be achieved in a straightforward manner. Medveš (1991) writes that educational effect originates in teachers' knowledge, and the ways in which they transmit the knowledge. It is therefore necessary for teachers to consider the educational effect of their lessons during the planning stage, selecting the content that they think will facilitate achieving the intended goals, and taking account of the specific characteristics of the classes and students they teach.

The second role of teachers that we analysed was the teacher's didactic excellence, comprising two dimensions: detailed lesson planning, and taking account of each class's specific characteristics. Although lesson goals are normally specified in the syllabus, it is the teachers who 'make the necessary and crucial, final decisions of specifically what and how to teach' (Reid 2014, p. 75). Consequently, their preparation for teaching is essential. Teaching does not start when teachers enter the classroom; it starts when they plan the lesson; define and operationalise the goals; specify the content; and structure the lesson according to the didactic phases. Makovec Radovan's (2017) study demonstrates that good planning is crucial. In the present study, the participating teachers emphasised the significance of planning, both in terms of content and form. After all, lesson planning is teachers' everyday task and part of their formal obligation, which is evident from the links between this dimension and the dimension of the legal and formal aspects of the teacher's work. In e-learning, lesson planning is also important, since it has a powerful impact on the quality of learning and social interactions among the participants (Radovan and Kristl 2017). Teachers write their lesson plans in a great variety of ways. Beginner teachers usually structure their lessons in more detail, whereas more experienced teachers define the goals and structure of the lesson in less detail. Nonetheless, what really matters is that teachers prepare for their classes because this is an important path to ensure quality lessons. Harjunen states that didactic interaction – whose characteristics are related to the teacher's profes-

sionalism and which is directed towards the teacher's most important task, that is, the goals of their work (Harjunen 2010, p. 27) – is the necessary precondition for pedagogic authority. It is also the essence of the teacher's work (*ibid.*, p. 25). Didactic excellence is an important area that defines the role of teachers in two ways. It holds that the primary task of teachers is teaching, and the obligation of each teacher is to do their work professionally and to be well prepared for their lessons. The time that teachers have to achieve educational goals is limited, and students deserve to have educational content presented in a way that enables them to learn as much as possible. Teachers participating in our study were well aware of this; this claim is supported by the strong link between detailed lesson planning dimension and that of taking account of each class's specific characteristics ( $r = 0.68$ ).

The second dimension in the construct was made up of two statements relating to teachers' lesson planning. Both confirm the thesis that teachers cannot plan their lessons in a uniform manner (the same plan for all the classes of a specific year). Rather, they have to take account of the specifics of each class during the planning and delivery stages. Generally, only small modifications are required for each class; however, they can have a significant influence on the lesson quality, the end results, and the teacher-student relationship. This latter effect plays an important role in defining the role of teachers. According to Harjunen (2010), teacher-student relationships that develop at different levels are also established through teaching, motivation, and the development of students' basic skills. Teachers' first step towards a quality relationship with students is certainly good preparation for classes, letting students know that they do their work professionally without underestimating their worth. Moreover, developing content that takes account of students' interests will strengthen the relationship between teachers and students. These are simple ways that teachers can convey respect for their students—an expression that they care and that they approach students in a serious and responsible manner. With such attitudes, teachers can expect (and demand) serious and responsible actions from their students (also see Bingham and Sidorkin 2004; Kroflič 2010).

The third role we studied was about the teacher's subject excellence. It consists of two dimensions: (a) continuing education and training and inclusion of the discipline's development in instruction, and (b) the legal and formal aspects of the teacher's work. The first dimension forms the basis for teachers' professional activity. In the classroom, teachers are representatives of the discipline they teach. Therefore, it seems logical that they should know the discipline, follow its development, and include new findings in their instruction. The professionalism of those who teach others has been required since antiquity, and the expectation that teachers be well acquainted with the subject they teach has always been emphasised by all the leading historical figures (e.g. Aristotle, Quintilian, Comenius, etc.). Kovač Šebart (2009) relates teacher professionalism to the nexus at which knowledge resides and her or his authority stems from. Šteh and Kalin (2006) write that (future) teachers do not need 'only content knowledge of their discipline, but they require good knowledge of pedagogy and psychology, qualification to plan the curriculum, the knowledge of the didactic procedures of the subject, [and] the knowledge of students' (Šteh and

Kalin 2006, p. 80). These requirements also point to how teacher professionalism is understood as a precondition for their work.

Nevertheless, we should not assume that teacher professionalism acts independently of the other two dimensions (didactic and pedagogical excellence). A successful teacher is someone who can impart their knowledge to their students in a way that is comprehensible. This is a challenge facing future teachers, participants in additional teacher training programmes and those who work with them. Being an expert in a field means having considerable expert knowledge. However, to successfully impart knowledge to students requires that teachers know how to deliver it in a way that is easily understandable by students—a task that is easy to conceive but hard to accomplish.

To sum up, the measurement model (Figure 1) enabled us to corroborate what Slovenian and international experts have been writing about the role of teachers. In their work, teachers have several roles, as confirmed by the participating teachers in this study. This is seen in the seven-dimensional construct (three central roles divided into two or three dimensions). They also confirmed that the roles they have are intertwined, which is a significant finding because it illustrates that teachers are aware of the multidimensionality of their work. Grammar school teachers are expert and qualified educators in the subjects they teach; they are able to impart the knowledge of their discipline in a manner that students will understand. Grammar school teachers have an educational role, too. This is obvious when they set rules and solve educational and disciplinary issues; it is also evident from the professional and educational values that they espouse and intend to see achieved through a specific content. The findings of the study indicate that the participating grammar school teachers think out educational outcomes when they plan their lessons; this implies that they attach equal importance to goal formulation and aspects of instruction that provide key information and are functional. In spite of the pressures regarding *matura* examination results, grammar schools remain first and foremost educational institutions that, in addition to providing students with quality knowledge, also commit themselves to educating them.

## Conclusion

We started this article presupposing that the role of teachers has never been limited to teaching; rather, the teacher has been responsible for her or his students in a number of ways. Based on the definitions by Slovenian and foreign authors, we specified three central roles: the teacher's didactic excellence, pedagogical excellence, and subject excellence. We examined understandings of these dimensions at several selected grammar schools in Slovenia.

We concluded that the teacher's excellence is not a three-dimensional construct but a seven-dimensional one, and that each of the theoretically presupposed dimensions of the teacher's excellence consists of at least two subsets that are independent, complete entities. Our findings confirm the complexity and multiple aspects of the role of teachers. Our findings show that teacher training programmes should pay

attention to all the aspects of the role of teachers, and that gaining subject, didactic and pedagogical knowledge and skills is equally important to (future) teachers. This was also demonstrated by the research conducted by Marentič Požarnik (2014) and Peklaj (2006).

By using the measurement model, we succeeded in suggesting strongly that teachers occupy several roles that need to be enacted somewhat simultaneously. This means that if one of the roles is missing, the conceptions of the role of teachers will then collapse. With a role missing, the teacher's educational work scope is reduced to either information or formation, thus no longer fitting the definition of the teacher's function within the school as an educational institution. We believe this is an important contribution to be heeded by the academia.

Finally, our research findings indicate that teachers are aware of the responsibilities that the identified roles present them with. This means, primarily, that teachers take on responsibilities for performing all the roles professionally, ethically, and to the best of their ability.

It is vital that students, parents, school managers and other interested parties appreciate teachers' different roles. Only when teachers are recognised as experts who possess subject, didactic and pedagogical excellence, will we be able to speak about schools as *complete* educational institutions.

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