

## TEACHER TELEOLOGICAL COMPETENCIES

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### Abstract

Purposefulness is the basic determinant of human activities and the prerequisite for any successful result. It enables raising awareness, and any conscious action. The awareness, amongst others, implies recognition and successful rational activity based thereupon.

Analysis of numerous sources suggest that many pedagogues, teachers in particular, generally have no teleological competences, which negatively affects the successful realization of school curricula and the general efficiency of school systems, as well as the epistemology of pedagogy. This assertion has been the light motive for theoretical consideration of teleological competences, considered as one of the basic educational competences of teachers.

The paper considers teleological competencies' determinants, perceived as general intellectual competence, and its purpose in teacher's pedagogical activities. Through the concrete examples based on pedagogical theory and praxis, the thesis on inadequate teleological competence of teachers, is argued.

Pursuant to the analyses of relevant pedagogical and lexicographical sources, including and providing practical examples, both theoretic and colloquial conceptual confusion, is settled. The conclusion highlights the need to insert into the pedagogical modules curricula at teacher-training faculties, contents and activities that would train students for teleological competencies.

**Key words:** teleological competencies, goal (purpose), task, assignment, studying, teaching.

### Introductory notes

Rare are those who, upon finishing their education, especially when they find a job in their chosen profession, would not remark with disappointment: *how many things we learned that are relevant neither for our life nor for our job, yet how many things we didn't learn that are necessary both for our life and our job!* They say the school was good and the teachers were good as well, and they used to get positive grades for everything they had learned! How come? What are the causes?

The basic causes, we boldly claim, are two facts: a) lack of the teleological competencies of the majority of teachers and b) teachers' inadequate didactic-methodical qualifications. The latter fact is partially conditioned by the first one.

Teachers mainly believe that they have teleological competence, i.e. that they know on what basis and how the objectives and tasks of pedagogical processes are conducted, determined and formulated. However, many of them do not have a clear idea of the concepts of *goal* and *purpose*, *tasks* and *assignment*<sup>1</sup>, and if they do know how to differ these concepts, they do not base the differences on the cognitive level, but on the subjective feeling – on an abstract level which is inapplicable in practice. This is confirmed by the way teachers formulate these concepts

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<sup>1</sup> With respect to the source text, which is written in Croatian, the term *purpose* will be used here to refer to the Croatian term *svrha*, *goal* will be used for the term *cilj*, while the term *objectives* will refer to *ciljevi*. Furthermore, the Croatian term *zadaci* is translated as *tasks*, and *zadace* are presented as *assignments*. The Croatian term *izobrazba* is translated as *training* – development of motoric skills. (N/A)

in curricula or class record books. Instead of starting in their teaching from determining the goal and tasks, teachers mainly limit themselves to choosing the content, so that they check, evaluate and mark the contents they chose and taught! They do not think about whether something that they defined as a goal is in accordance with the real requirements of a school subject's curriculum and of the education as a whole. This was a motive to critically consider the problem of teacher teleological competence.

## 1. What is teleological competence

What do we mean by *teleological competence*? *Teleology*<sup>2</sup> is a study of exploring the problem of purposefulness<sup>3</sup> of human activities, and competence<sup>4</sup> is the ability of an individual to competently discuss (scientifically, professionally) specific problems, to make rational decisions, to implement the decisions rationally and to critically evaluate achievements in a particular area.<sup>5</sup> We can say that purposefulness is the basic determinant of human activities and a prerequisite for human conscious, coherent and successful acting. Consciousness implies, among other things, cognizance and the ability of successful rational acting (based on the cognizance). In other words, *competence is a functional combination, a synthesis of knowledges, skills, value judgements and talents that enable an individual to successfully meet the requirements which refer to a function, a role and jobs the individual deals with.* To be competent means *to know, to want, to know-how and to be able*, to be qualified to do something successfully, to solve problems in a particular area of activities. According to this: **common teleological competence** refers to the ability to choose rationally and to determine the objectives of the acting, to choose the most adequate means and activities in order to achieve the defined objectives, to choose rational methods and procedures of accomplishing the defined objectives as well as to evaluate the results and to estimate the successfulness of the accomplishment of the objectives.

This common teleological competence leads to **the teacher teleological competence** which denotes the qualifications of teachers for the successful implementation of the common teleological competence on the educational – teaching process, overall activities of the process of learning and teaching, starting from the development and elaboration of the school curriculum and subject syllabi to planning, organizing, conducting and evaluating teaching, from a concrete methodical (teaching) unit to the school curriculum.

### 1. Terminological turmoil in the pedagogical theory

To our knowledge, the concepts of *goal* and *purpose, tasks* and *assignments* have not been unambiguously epistemologically determined in any of our pedagogical sources. This is also confirmed by the following explicit statement: “*when it comes to the goal and tasks of the*

<sup>2</sup> *Teleology*, from Greek . *télos* - purpose, end and *logos* – word, speech (Klaić, 2007)

*Teleology* (from Greek . *télos* - purpose, end and *logos* – word, speech) – the study of purposes, the study of purposefulness in the world, i.e. the study according to which everything that happens and exists has its own specific purpose (Filipović, ed. 1989)

<sup>3</sup> *Purposefulness* (Croat. *svrhovitost*) – reference to some final goal, purpose reflected in different activities that seek to the realization of a model or fulfill a purpose that has been determined in advance (Bujas, 1999)

<sup>4</sup> *Competence* (from Latin *competere* - to come together, to be convenient or fitting, Peterwagner, 2005) – to strive to be convenient for something, to be competent to solve or to do something, knowledge that enables someone to competently judge something, to be able to do something or to be convenient, fitting for something

*Competences* present a dynamic combination of cognitive and metacognitive skills, knowledges and understandings, interpersonal and practical skills as well as ethical values (Vizek-Vidović, 2003)

<sup>5</sup> *Competent* – capable, knowledgeable, skilful, who knows, who by his/her profession or authorization has the right to solve something, to do something, to judge something, who is expert, qualified (Klaić, 2007).

educational process, didactic theory provides much diversified and diametrically opposed understandings” (Bognar-Matijević, 2002:153). Unfortunately, this is not an issue of only our (Croatian) pedagogy. Teleological-methodological ambiguities are present also in the “homeland” of pedagogy in which “the concepts of goal, norm and value are often used as synonyms, but are also often used with differences in their meaning” (Gudjons, 1994:153).

If we take a look at the teleological determination of the official curricula, methodical manuals or methodical models of preparation for teaching on the web sites of particular textbook and workbook publishers, the following formulations can be found: *purpose* and *goal*, *purpose* and *objectives*, *objectives* and *tasks*, *purpose*, *objectives* and *assignments*, sometimes *common objective (objectives)* and *special objectives*, then *goal*, *general tasks* and *individual tasks*. Occasionally, only *objectives* are stated, or just *tasks*. In some texts, the terms *goal* and *purpose*, i.e. *purpose* and *assignments* are stated separately, whereas in some other texts they are stated as a whole: *objectives* and *tasks*, so that it is not possible to discern what the *objectives (goal)* and what the *tasks* are.

In order to corroborate the stated claims, the problem will be discussed by analysing concrete examples, first in theoretical sources, and then through examples from didactic-methodical documentation.

In Mijatović (1999), different authors express semantically, logically and hierarchically different, even diametrically opposed attitudes toward the concepts of *purpose*, *goal*, *tasks* and *assignments*.

In the chapter entitled *Purpose and tasks of education* Vukasović (ibid., 131-132) states: *In order to work and act, one (...) must see a goal, a purpose, a value; then Educational process is always organized according to a goal, which is strived for, and to particular assignments that are accomplished...* Teleology says that all the phenomena, events and activities refer to some **final goal or purpose** (bolded by J.M.). As is evident from the cited text (as is from the whole of it), the author determines the concepts of *goal* and *purpose* as synonyms.

In the chapter *The purpose of instruction/education* Pastuović (ibid., 159) claims: *is the purpose common, general, i.e. final goal of education. It can be achieved by unifying acting of different individual objectives that have been accomplished; then The relationship between the concepts of purpose and goal could be briefly defined as follows: purpose is the most general goal. As purpose is the most general goal, it can be derived from the individual objectives of instructional/education.*

Ambiguity is evident, because if *purpose, as a general goal, is derived from individual objectives*, it means that the individual objectives were determined before purpose. This suggests that we first determine the paths we want to walk, and only after that the place we want to reach. If we first determine the roads we will travel, this in no way guarantees a safe, let alone rational arrival at the place we would like to reach. In order to even start going somewhere, we must undoubtedly know two points: a point of departure and a point at which we need to arrive – final goal (purpose). Methodological procedure in the teleological determination of the activities must have a starting point in the final goal – purpose, and not vice versa. So, the first author states that the goal (purpose) is achieved by accomplishing the assignments, whereas the second author claims that the purpose is achieved by accomplishing individual objectives!

In the chapter entitled *The purpose of education* Peko (ibid., 208) states: “*the purpose of education has been determined in such a way that it remains open so that it will never be fully realized, to determine a purpose means to determine general guidelines*”. Very problematic! Can we imagine successfulness of education, of training for a concrete profession in a vocational

school according to the curriculum in which the *purpose* of education is *open* and, besides that, we claim in advance that *it will never be realized*? At the same time it has also been claimed that *there is no compatibility with respect to the instructional objectives and that they are usually divided into general and individual (personal) objectives*.

In the chapter *Objectives and assignments of training* Petričević (ibid.:240) states “*training objectives are usually divided into general and specific...*” The author further states: “*in order to (...) accomplish a goal, it is necessary to accomplish specific **objectives or assignments as well***” (bolded by J.M.). The author states *general and specific assignments*, and yet at the same time equates the meaning of the concepts of *specific objectives and assignments*!

The statement author, Antić (ibid.:642), who has a note “*objectives of education and/or instruction*” in *Pedagogical glossary* (Pedagoški pojmovnik), adds to the theoretical-methodological confusion. As the author does not even state the concept of *purpose* as a separate note but only as a supplement to the concept of *goal* “... *goal (purpose) of education...goal (purpose) of instruction*”, it is obvious that these concepts are treated as synonyms and equivalents.

How can a reader of this publication gain a clear idea of the scientific-teleological determination of pedagogical processes when in the very same publication a few authors’ attitudes toward the same basic teleological terms differ so much?

Let us consider the problem by analysing the attitudes of one of the more prominent linguists (Težak, 1996). In the chapter *Purpose, goal, task* the author states: “*Purpose and goal are indeed synonyms, but they are not equivalents, they just mean nearly the same* (Croat. *sličnoznačnice*). As the author further states: “*Our word purpose* (Croat. *svrha*) *quite corresponds to the Ancient Greek word telos for which dictionaries offer a number of possible equivalents: end, borderline, ultimate, goal, aim, purpose, top, success, perfection*”, the author’s statement that the concepts of *goal* and *purpose* are different is really confusing.

In another publication (Težak, 1990), in the chapter *On purposeful terminology*, the same author considers these concepts through a hierarchically structured scale: *purpose - goal - tasks - assignment*. The author claims: “*The purpose of teaching each single subject is derived from the essence of the very subject and from the general purpose of instruction end education, and the latter is derived from the uppermost, ideological one which is called telos in teleology.*”

It is confusing because if we set objectives for each school subject (according to grades 1., 2., 3...), and the purpose of teaching each subject (again according to grades) is derived from the essence of the very subject and from the general purpose of education, it means that each single school subject has both a purpose and a goal. So, a school subject has a goal, and teaching the subject has a purpose! Can a goal of a particular school subject be one thing, and a purpose of teaching that same subject (of learning and teaching) another?

If we compare the two authors’ (Težak, 1991, 1996, and Pastuović, in Mijatović /ed./, 1999) teleological considerations of the relationship of the stated concepts, we will see that they have diametrically opposed attitudes. While one claims: “*the purpose of teaching each single subject is derived from...the general purpose of education and instruction*”, the other says the opposite: “*as the purpose is the most general goal, it can be derived from the individual educational objectives*” – it means from the objectives of school subjects!

Therefore, as much as it may seem that there are no terminological dilemmas, when reading the texts of the authors mentioned above, it is easy to conclude that there undoubtedly exists confusion which is not only conceptual, semantic but also teleological-methodological.

If we analyse the determination of these concepts in the lexicographical sources, we will see that there is always the concept of *purpose* (Croat. *svrha*) in the elaboration of the term *goal* (Croat. *cilj*), and the explanations of the concept of *purpose* (Croat. *svrha*) always contain the term *goal* (Croat. *cilj*). Almost identical formulations are stated for both concepts. As a matter of fact, the concept of *goal* (Croat. *cilj*) (from German *Ziel*), which has become common in the Croatian language, *denotes the very same thing that has been denoted in the original Croatian by the concept of purpose* (Croat. *svrha*): the final range, “a place which has to be reached” – “the end of journey” (Lat. *finis*), something that is strived for, something that one wants to achieve... Furthermore, *if our word purpose (Croat. svrha) corresponds to the Ancient Greek word telos, which means both goal and purpose, regardless of whether purpose was once wider, and today is narrower than goal*, it follows that the concepts of purpose and goal are synonyms and equivalents! Therefore, it is wrong to use them in the scientific and colloquial communication as two hierarchically and semantically different concepts.

The concepts of *task* (Croat. *zadatak*) and *assignments* (Croat. *zadaca*) are semantically different and it is incorrect to use them in the scientific and colloquial communication as synonyms<sup>6</sup>. The concept of *assignment* (Croat. *zadaca*) is of Old Slavic origin and it was introduced into the Croatian pedagogy from the Russian language in the middle of the last century. Both terms, *goal* (Croat *cilj*) and *assignment* (Croat *zadaca*) have become common in the Croatian language. *Cilj* (goal) correctly, as a synonym of the concept of *svrha* (purpose), and *zadaca* (*assignment*) incorrectly as a synonym of the concept of *taks*. At best, task and assignment can have a similar meaning.

## 2. Terminological turmoil in the pedagogical and didactic-methodical practice

If the definitions of the basic teleological concepts were clear, then the teleological determination would be identical, if not terminologically, then at least methodologically, in all the subjects in a particular school. But, it's not like that. Because, while all the authors mostly agree that defining objectives is an important part of planning, *some research on lesson planning reveal that many teachers do not start writing their lesson plan in such a way that they first define educational objectives, and then develop a teaching unit...instead, they begin the activities of planning. This proves that many teachers can plan their teaching without having clearly defined the outcomes of learning* (Kyriacou, 2001:38-39).

Examples from teaching documentation used in schools will corroborate the stated attitude. First, three tables present the terminological turmoil which will then be corroborated by stating the formulations used in the syllabi for naming the concepts of goal, objectives, purpose, task, and assignment.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 present the determinations of the purposefulness of the particular school subjects.

<sup>6</sup> The concept of *zadaca* (*zadačnica*) is also used as an equivalent of the concept of *bilježnica* (Engl. *notebook*), a student's working tool for writing notes and assignments in. *Školska, domaća zadaca* (Engl. *school/homework*) – for homework students have to write – to solve a task...

## CURRICULA FOR GRAMMAR SCHOOLS (an excerpt)

Table 1.

	Goal / formulation	Objectives / formulation	Purpose / formulation	Tasks / formulation	Assignments / formulation
Croatian			+ (6)		+ (7)
English	+ (6) ←	●	+ (0)		+ (17)
Latin language	+ (0)				+ ( 26) (assignment)
<i>Ancient Greek</i>	+ (0)		+ (0)		+ (10)
Music	+ (0) ←	●	+ (0)		+ (11)
Art					+ (9)
Psychology	+ (0) ←	●	+ (0)		+ (0)
Logic	+ (0) ←	●	+ (0)		+ (0)
Philosophy	+ (0) ←	●	+ (0)		+ (0)
Sociology	+ (0) ←	●	+ (0)		+ (0)
History	+ (0) ←	●	+ (0)		
Geography	+ (1) ←	●	+ (0)		+ (7)
Mathematics	+ (0) ←	+ (5) ●	+ (0) →	+ (0)	+ (9)
Physics	+ (0) ←	●	+ (0)		+ (0)
Chemistry			+ (0)		+
Biology			+ (0)		+ (7)
Informatics		+ (0) ●		→	+
Politics and Economy	+ (0) ←	●	+ (0)		+ (0) (assignment)
Physical Education	+ (0) ←	●	+ (0)		

Source: <http://www.ncvvo.hr/nastavni-planovi-programi-za-gimnazije-i-strukovne-skole>, July 14, 2015 – Basis for drafting the table.

● → the terms in the tables are stated as a single title (e.g. purpose and goal or objectives and tasks), and the arrows denote which of the terms has been stated as first

(0) the formulations that refer to the titles have not been stated, they are stated as general descriptions (e.g. the importance of a subject...)

(x) denotes the number of formulations which are, as a rule, very general and have multiple meanings - teleologically useless (e.g. the goal is extending of the knowledge...)

+ subjects without arrows are stated as individual titles

CURRICULA FOR GRAMMAR SCHOOLS OF SCIENCE (an excerpt)

Table 2.

	Goal / formulation	Objectives / formulation	Purpose / formulation	Tasks / formulation	Assignments / formulation
Biology		+ (0)			+ (4)
Chemistry	(+1)	+ (0)			+ (0)
Physics		+ (0)		+ (0)	
Geography	(+1)	+ (0)			+ (0)
Geology	+ (1)		+ (0)		+ (9)
Informatics		+ (2)			+ (0)
Ethics	+ (1)				
Religion	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)

Source: ibid.

CURRICULA FOR VOKATIONAL SCHOOLS (an excerpt)

Table 3.

	Goal / formulation	Objectives / formulation	Purpose / formulation	Tasks / formulation	Assignments / formulation
Biology	+		+		
Chemistry	+ (0)				+ (0)
Physics	+ (0)		+ (0)		
Geography	+ (1)			+ (7)	
Politics and Economy	+ (1)			+ (0)	

Source: ibid.

Discrepancy is even more evident in Table 2. and 3. While, for example, in the grammar school of science biology has *objectives*, and *assignments*, in the rest of the grammar schools it has got a *purpose* and *assignments*, in the vocational schools *purpose* and *goal*. In the grammar school of science, physics has only *objectives* and *tasks*, while in other grammar schools physics has a *purpose* a *goal*, and a *assignments*, in and vocational schools has *purpose* and *goal*. The same is with chemistry which does not have a *goal* or *objectives* in the grammar school. Unlike chemistry which has *objectives* (goal) and *assignments* an in the grammar school of science, in vocational schools it has a *goal* and *assignments*. In one of the grammar schools geography has a *purpose* and a *goal* as well as *assignments*, while in vocational school it has *goal* and *tasks*. Art has only *assignments*, Physical Education has a *purpose* and a *goal*, but it has neither *tasks* nor *assignments*. Mathematics in grammar schools has a *purpose*, a *goal*, *assignments* and *tasks*, etc. No comment needed.

It is already the content of the tables that undoubtedly points not only to the terminological turmoil but also to all the tragedy of the lack of the teleological competence of the majority of pedagogical workers.

Let us conclude. Presentation of the terminological turmoil found both in theoretical sources and didactic-methodical practice, undoubtedly shows that many (the majority) pedagogical theorists and practitioners do not have teleological competence. This is the cause, before anything else, of ineffectiveness of teaching and students' inadequate qualifications, inadequacy of outcomes at all the levels of the school system.

## Conclusion

On the basis of the analysis of different bibliographic sources on pedagogy and didactics as well as the presentation and analysis of the recent school – teaching programmes we have shown, in a well-argued manner, that the vast majority of pedagogues – theoreticians, and especially practitioners do not have necessary teleological competences. This fact has negative impacts on the quality of the curriculum development and elaboration, the quality of macro and micro planning, the development and elaboration of implementation and operational plans and programmes of teaching work, conducting, organization, realization and evaluation of pedagogical procedures, and especially, of teaching processes. From this it undoubtedly follows that this fact has multiple negative consequences not only on the evaluation of the quality of school outcomes (competences) but also on the successfulness of educational system. Without a clearly and unambiguously determined goal and tasks of the pedagogical work it is not possible to have either high-quality or objective evaluation, because an objective evaluation of the efficiency of the outcomes can be conducted only on the basis of the accomplishments that were previously determined according to the objectives and tasks – competencies.

By means of a critical presentation and the analysis of the current practice we have unambiguously confirmed the starting attitude that the majority of pedagogues, educational workers, especially teacher-practitioners do not have necessary teleological competencies. That was necessary in order to bring the importance of the implementation of teleological-methodological approaches to the attention of pedagogues-theoreticians and practitioners, especially to those who develop and elaborate curricula, particularly school subject syllabi, as well as to teachers involved in teaching itself.

Epistemologically clear teleological terminology has been established on the basis of a theoretical analysis. We have resolved dilemmas on the concepts of *goal*, *purpose*, *task* and *assignment*, their hierarchical relationships and the methodological procedure of their determination, elaboration and formulation. In doing so, we have helped, hopefully, those who do not have or think they do not have teleological competence. Maybe some will not agree with the attitudes stated in this paper, but they have to be aware of the fact that the current level of cognizance and, consequently, the practice is professionally and scientifically unsustainable. They can suggest another or different terminology, even a different hierarchy, but it must be linguistically precise, semantically unambiguous and epistemologically consistent. This is due to the following. Firstly, to determine and to elaborate a goal and *task* of a teaching process means to provide a starting point for successful conducting of teaching – learning and teaching – making fit/competent students according to the defined competencies that were determined by the type, form, level and function of schooling. Secondly, teleological competence is a prerequisite for efficient methodical preparation, organization, realization and evaluation of teaching processes and school outcomes. In short, teleological competence is a prerequisite for a success both in pedagogical science and in pedagogical practice.

It is high time that study programmes at teacher education faculties include contents and activities that provide training students for teleological competence.



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