

## THE TEACHER FACTOR FOR STUDENT OVERLOAD

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UDK: 37.011.3-051:005.962.131

### Abstract

Teacher's role in the process of education is of paramount importance, primarily due to the distinctive function that teachers carry out. In this regard, the question whether and to what extent the students will be overburdened in the teaching process, in large scale, depends on the work of the teacher. From didactic and pedagogical point of view, the teacher in his work with students can significantly influence student overload; by increasing the requirements set to students, he increases students' work and time needed to meet these requirements; or vice versa, by reducing these demands, he reduces this overload to a level below the optimal limit.

Therefore, the teacher is the one being able to shorten or lengthen the subject material that he teaches, and in this manner, he may or may not become a factor that leads up to student overload. If the teacher is creative, if he does not ask for the exact repetition of what was taught, but he pursues creative thinking and comprehension, then he shortens the time and effort that students devote to studying and vice versa. This means that a contemporary teacher should be qualified for a contemporary teaching practice. Accordingly, the extent to which students become overloaded or optimally overloaded in the contemporary teaching depends precisely on that.

**Keywords:** *teacher, process of education, contemporary teaching, student overload, contemporary teaching practice, creative, pedagogical and didactic view, teaching process.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

'A free soul ought not to pursue any study slavishly; for while bodily labors performed under constraint do not harm the body, nothing that is learned under compulsion stays with the mind. '(Plato, 1970)

As rightly noted, teacher's work is a central factor among factors which increases student overload in different ways. In terms of teacher and his work, amongst numerous elements that determine this overload, the authors examining this problem state the following ones: putting up too many requirements for students, one-sided and inappropriate usage of teaching styles, monovalent use of teaching methods, assigning extensive and difficult homework and similar.

At the core of teachers' methodical readiness lies their ability to separate the relevant subject material from the irrelevant, so that the accent is certainly put on the

most important things. A good teacher is someone who is able to: know the students in their wholeness, adapt the subject material to the individual skills of the student, and contribute to the optimization of each student's overload. There are several benchmarks in the field of education that affect teachers' education as well: the new philosophy of education, open education, flexible educational policies and strategies, individuality and socialization in education, intercultural education and schooling, interdisciplinary dialogue. (Previsic, 2003, p. 106)

The teacher also becomes a factor for student overload because of the tendency to extend the teaching material in his work. Based on the results obtained in several studies regarding this issue, Ivan Furlan concludes that the teacher intensifies his work to the maximum rather than to the minimum both in scope and depth. (Furlan, 1976, p.108)

Today, almost in every country in Europe and worldwide, student overload theme is prevailing. Concerning this kind of research problem, studies in South-East European countries are especially significant. These studies show that despite the fundamental educational reforms that are rapidly being implemented, the unequal relation between educational opportunities and outcomes is still proceeding in most countries in South-East Europe. (Curriculum Overload in Primary Schools, 2010, p. 12)

Student overload matter draws its attention alongside the constant implementation of new subjects in new teaching curricula within schools initiated by the development of Science, Information Technology; points out Marija Kostova in her work 'Student Overload' (Kostova, M. 1995, p. 85)

Petar Bezinovic and Zrinka Ristic - Dedic conducted a research in 2004 by which, among other things, they tend to ascertain the amount of student overload with school responsibilities in students' daily schedule. The results, acquired throughout the research, indicate that there are statistically significant differences regarding student workload in different schools. According to the results from the research, despite the fact that students have a very busy class schedule, they also need to prepare more in order to attend lessons and do homework. (Bezinovic & Ristic - Dedic, 2004, p. 18) The teachers received a 'Teacher's Guide' containing tips for high-quality lesson planning and lesson delivery, and instructions for the teaching design process during the school year. As an addition, the guide is complemented by: lesson plan preparation and delivery, success criteria formation with students, effective questioning. (Bureau for Development of Education, 2017) The innovative approaches can provide a brand new perspective to problems linked to students' learning process and health, and to the role that teachers and parents play in preserving students' well-being. In this sense, Suhoveeva discusses the particular system of harmony 'Man-Society-Nature-Technology', especially in times of intensive changes in the field of education. (Suhoveeva, 2003, p. 36, 37)

It is necessary to develop scientific and methodological support (curricula, training, guides and monographs) and academic staff activities to prevent students' exhaustion and preserve students' health in the learning process. (Zotova, 2005, p. 52)

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS OF RESEARCH**

The research whose subject was related to temporal student overload with school responsibilities in the primary, nine-year education, was conceived as quantitative-qualitative research. The quantitative aspect of the research measured the temporal student overload with school duties, and examined students, teachers and parents'

believes about that. The results obtained in the study were compared, so to ascertain the extent to which students were overloaded with school duties in primary education. For that reason, we randomly selected 405 students among the three cycles of the nine-year primary education, 405 parents and 135 teachers from nine primary schools in the western, central and eastern part of the Republic of North Macedonia, and through specially designed questionnaires, students, teachers and parents expressed their views and opinions about temporal student overload with school duties, their responsibilities in the teaching process, their extra-curricular activities and activities they do at home. The qualitative aspect of the research was associated to the collected information about teachers' working conditions in schools, teachers' work and the application of innovations in education, teachers' style of teaching, their motivation for teaching, whether they teach in a dynamic or monotonic way, whether they require or do not require students to simply repeat what was said or was written in the student's book, whether they look for creative learners and similar.

### Research techniques

Throughout the research we used the descriptive method, survey and recording data. For that purpose, we prepared a structured diary which students used for recording the time spent on different activities in and out of school, shown in hours and minutes; questionnaires which examined students, teachers and parents' views and opinions on student overload; and structured interview with teachers from the first cycle of nine-year primary education to examine the temporal student overload with school responsibilities. The statistical analysis of the results is quantitative and qualitative, data is shown in tables and graphs, we calculated frequencies and percentages, and we also did a qualitative analysis of data obtained in the structured interview.

### Results

The results from respondents' answers presented in Figure 1 require analysis and commenting in terms of whether teachers' work determines student overload.

**Figure 1:** Teacher's work determines student overload

Respondent answers	Students		Teachers		Parents		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Strongly agree	268	66,17	15	11,11	235	58,02	518	54,81
Partly agree	133	32,84	85	62,96	135	33,33	353	37,35
Strongly disagree	4	0,99	35	25,93	35	8,64	74	7,83
<b>TOTAL</b>	405	100	135	100	405	100	945	100
					$\chi^2=1661$	$df=4$	$P<0,01$	$C=0,39$

As shown in Figure 1, it can be noticed that most of the students (66,17%) strongly agree with the statement that the work of the teacher determines student overload. 32,84 % of the students partly agree with the above statement, and only 0,99 % of

them strongly disagree. Most teachers partly agree with the declaration that teachers' work determines student overload (62,96%). Only 11,11 % of the teachers strongly agree with the statement and almost 25,93 % strongly disagree, which drastically differs from students and parents' views. In a higher percentage (58,02 %), parents similar to students, answered that they strongly agree with the statement. 33,33 % of the parents partly agree with it and only 8,64 % of them strongly disagree. The analysis of these results shows that more than half of the students and parents strongly agree with the statement. The theoretical frameworks, which we processed in our research during the theoretical review of the problem, demonstrate the great role the teacher plays in increasing or reducing student overload. Contemporary views of education put the teacher on a pedestal as a factor on which the educational work rests. A contemporary teacher is no longer someone that only asks for a simple repetition of what was taught. Today's teacher uses creativity in his work and leads students towards creativity, independence, taking initiative and similar. Such a teacher reduces the effort that students need to put during the process of studying, and by doing so, he minimizes the student overload. Based on the results acquired, we can clearly realize that larger percentage of the respondents (54,81%) strongly agree that the work of the teacher determines student overload. Among all three groups of respondents, 37,35 % partly agree with the statement, and only 7,83 % strongly disagree with it.

The obtained Chi-square value of 166,01 confirms the existence of statistically significant differences in respondents' answers regarding this question at a significance level of 0,01. The contingency coefficient ( $C=0,39$ ) shows that there is a weak correlation between the variables at a significance level of 0,01. Based on these results, we can conclude that the previously set hypothesis: *The characteristics of the teacher increase or reduce student overload*, is confirmed. Also, according to the results acquired by Chi-square, we can conclude that: There is a difference among teachers, parents and students' view on whether teacher's characteristics increase or reduce the student overload.

## Conclusion

As to teacher's characteristics and work, among several elements that increase student overload, the following are mainly mentioned: assigning extensive tasks for students, one-sided and inappropriate usage of teaching styles, monovalent use of teaching methods, inappropriate use of teaching tools, assigning extensive and difficult homework and similar.

We can overcome these challenges by changing the demands placed on new teachers, i.e. with emphasis on increasing their competences, their professional behaviour and devotion to work, likewise their responsibility. The teachers are especially responsible for the process of teaching and creating circumstances in which students know what they learn and teachers know what they teach; i.e. the teaching process should take up interpersonal characteristics so to avoid the notion that this process is a simple accumulation of facts. This means that a teacher who accomplishes such a request becomes a contemporary teacher, trained to use the contemporary teaching practice. Student overload put in a contemporary context, in large amount, will depend on teacher's work, teachers' competences, professionalism, devotion to work and responsibility. The achievement of these demands will inevitably lead to reducing student overload and the position of optimal overload will be considered as an ideal (over)load.

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