

THE TEACHER AS A STUDENTS' OVERLOAD FACTOR

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Abstract

The requirements posed to the teachers regarding their competence, professionalism and dedication, are bigger and bigger day by day, same as their responsibility. The teachers are especially responsible for the teaching process and for creating conditions where the students will know what they learn and the teachers what they teach. This means the teaching process should acquire interpersonal characteristics, thus avoiding the situation this process to be just a means for simple accumulation of facts.

The role of the teacher in the educational process is of a first-rate importance, above all because of the specific function the teacher has in this process.

In this respect, the issue as to whether and how much the students will be burdened in the educational process, in a great deal depends on the teacher's work. In his/her work with the students, the teacher, in didactic and pedagogical sense, can considerably influence the students' burden, either by increasing the tasks posed to the students thereby increasing the amount of work they should do and the time necessary for that, or vice versa – by reducing the tasks thereby reducing the students' burden to a level below the optimal limit. So, the teacher is the one who may shorten or expand the material presented to the students and this way he/she can be or not be a factor causing students' overload.

Key words: Teacher, teaching process, students' overload, educational process.

1. Introduction

The role of the teacher in the modern school and in the educational process in general, today is much different than in the past. Today the main role of the teacher in the development of educational systems and their implementation is more and more accentuated. For this reason the very process of teachers' training and education has been completely changed.

The development of the concept of primary school teachers' education in the Republic of Macedonia is based on the following tenets:

- both class and subject teachers¹ are engaged in the teaching practice in primary schools;
- in the 1st grade of primary school the teaching process is performed by teachers qualified for pre-school education who have graduated from university rank schools, as well as by class teachers;

¹ Class teachers are those who teach all the school subjects to only one class, and subject teachers are those who teach one school subject to many classes in different grades.

- in the schools where there are also students with special needs integrated with the other students, specially qualified teachers (defectologists) are also engaged in the teaching process. (The concept of nine-year primary education, 2007)

In the teaching process several principles of the science of education are employed, having influence on teachers' education as well:

- the new philosophy of education;
- open education;
- flexible educational policies and strategies;
- education oriented towards development of individuality and socialization;
- intercultural education and upbringing;
- alternative pedagogical ideas and schools;
- interdisciplinary dialogue. (Previšić, 2003)

If the teacher is creative, if he/she demands from the students creativity and understanding of the material, instead of only reproducing what he/she has taught them to, then the teacher shortens the time and the effort they have to invest in the schooling process, and vice versa. This means that the modern teacher must be trained for modern teaching work. On this also depends how much the students will be loaded, i.e. whether they will be overloaded or optimally loaded in the modern teaching process.

It is rightfully pointed out that teachers' work is in the centre of the factors burdening the students in different ways. Of the many elements determining the load upon students and being related to the teacher and his/her work, the authors dealing with this issue mainly quote the following ones:

- giving too many tasks to the students;
- unilateral and inadequate implementation of teaching forms;
- monovalent implementation of teaching methods;
- inadequate implementation of teaching aids;
- giving too big and too difficult homeworks to the students, and so on.

All these elements are in the domain of the methods and the organization of the teaching work, and are determined by:

- the professional and personal characteristics of the teacher;
- the emotional attitude of the teacher; and
- his/her motivation for work.

In the context of the methodological preparedness of the teachers lies also their capability of distinguishing the important from the unimportant in the material and, of course, the accent is put on what is the most important.

The good teacher must be able:

- to get to know each student completely;
- to adapt the teaching material to the abilities of each student; and
- to contribute for optimalization of the load on each student.

The teacher who brings down his/her work exclusively to the students' education neglects the upbringing work, this way neglecting the work on the students' complete development.

The teacher is also a factor of students' overload when he/she strives towards expanding the teaching material. (Bezinović, Ristić-Dedić, 2004)

2. Methodology

With the goal to give answers about the role of the teacher in the modern school and in the educational process in general, and especially as to whether the characteristics of the teacher contribute to a reduction or to an increase of the load upon students, we made an empirical research.

Namely, we made an enquiry of 405 students, 405 parents and 135 teachers from 9 primary schools, of which 3 from the western part of R. Macedonia (Tetovo, Gostivar, Kichevo), 3 from the eastern part (Shtip, Strumica, Kochani) and 3 from the capital, i.e. from Skopie.

Within the quantitative research were investigated the attitudes and the opinions of the students, the teachers and the parents on whether the characteristics of the teacher contribute for reduction or increase of students' load.

For the purpose of the enquiry, we chose the method of formulating the questions in the form of claims, and giving the examinees the option to choose one of the ready-made answers, namely: "I completely agree", "I partially agree" and "I completely disagree".

3. Results from the research and their interpretation

The work of the teacher and the load upon the students

The first question we gave to the examinees was as to whether the work of the teacher has influence on the load placed upon the students. The answers are given in the following table.

Table 1. The work of the teacher determines the load upon the students

Examinees' answers	students		teachers		parents		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I completely agree	268	66,17	15	11,11	235	58,02	518	54,81
I partially agree	133	32,84	85	62,96	135	33,33	353	37,35
I completely disagree	4	0,99	35	25,93	35	8,64	74	7,83
TOTAL	405	100	135	100	405	100	945	100
					$\chi^2=166,01$	df=4	P<0,01	C=0,39

The analysis of the results shows that more than a half of the students and the parents completely agree with the claim stated.

The theoretical theses we have elaborated in the theoretical consideration of the issue of our investigation, show the big role of the teacher in increasing or reducing the students' load. Based on the results obtained, we can see that most of the examinees (54.81%) completely agree with the claim that the work of the teacher determines the students' load. With this claim partially agree 37.35% of all the three groups of examinees, and only 7.83% completely disagree with the claim.

The obtained χ -square value of 166.01, for a degree of freedom of 4, shows that there are statistically significant differences between the examinees' answers to this question, namely with a significance level of 0.01.

The contingency coefficient (C=0.39) shows that there is a medial correlation between the variables, also at a significance level of 0.01.

The characteristics of the teacher and the students' load

In order to give more accurate answer to the initial question, i.e. to find out whether the characteristics of the teacher contribute for increasing or reducing the students' load, we took into consideration several characteristics of the teachers.

First we polled the attitudes and the opinions of the examinees about those teachers whose main characteristic is that they cling to long lectures in their work.

In Table 2 we have analyzed the opinions of the examinees on the question whether this type of teachers substantially burden their students.

Table 2. The teacher who uses long lectures substantially aggravates the load upon the students

Examinees' answers	students		teachers		parents		TOTAL		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
I completely agree	275	67,90	16	11,85	261	64,44	552	58,41	
I partially agree	120	29,63	31	22,96	119	29,38	270	28,57	
I completely disagree	10	2,47	88	65,19	25	6,17	123	13,02	
TOTAL	405	100	135	100	405	100	945	100	
					$\chi^2=392,07$	df=4	P<0,01	C=0,54	

More than a half of the students and the parents (67.90% and 66.44%, respectively) chose the answer "I completely agree". The positive attitude towards the claim is reinforced by the fact that 29.63% of the students and 22.96% of the parents chose the answer "I partially agree".

Contrary to them, only 11.85% of the teachers completely agreed, partially agreed 22.69%, whereas 65.19% completely disagreed.

So, a very large number of the students and the parents completely agree with the thesis that the teachers who base their work on using long lectures increase the load on the students.

The calculated χ -square test value of 392.07 for a degree of freedom of 4, showed that there are statistically significant differences between the answers given to this question, with a significance level of 0.01.

The coefficient of contingency (C=0.54) shows that there is a medial correlation between the variables at the significance level of 0.01.

As the next characteristic of the teacher which might influence the load placed upon the students, we chose the teacher's creativity.

Table 3 gives the opinions of the examinees about the claim that the creative teacher reduces the load placed on the students.

With this claim completely agreed the largest number of all the three groups of examinees. Namely, this way answered 70.37% of the students, 76.30% of the teachers and 69.38% of the parents.

The attitude of agreement with this claim in all the three groups of examinees is reinforced by the large number of answers "I partially agree", namely – such way answered 27.41% of the students, 21.48% of the teachers and 27.90% of the parents. With this claim completely disagree 2.22% of the students, same percentage of the teachers (2.22%) and 2.72% of the parents.

Table 3. The creative teacher with his work reduces the load upon the students

Examinees' answers	students		teachers		parents		TOTAL		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
I completely agree	285	70,37	103	76,30	281	69,38	669	70,79	
I partially agree	111	27,41	29	21,48	113	27,90	253	26,77	
I completely disagree	9	2,22	3	2,22	11	2,72	23	2,43	
TOTAL	405	100	135	100	405	100	945	100	
						$\chi^2=2,60$	df=4	P>0,05	

The answers we received to the claim that the creative teacher with his/her work reduces the load on the students, are very satisfactory.

The students, the teachers and the parents agree that the efforts in our schools ought to be directed towards supporting teachers' creativity. Among else, this characteristic of the teacher reduces the load placed on the students.

The χ -square test had a value of 2.60 for a degree of freedom of 4. It shows that there is no statistically significant difference between the answers given by any of the three groups of examinees.

The next question we gave to the examinees, was whether the joyful and humorous teacher reduces the students' load. The answers are given in Table 4.

More than half of the examinees of all the three groups completely agreed with the claim that the joyful and humorous teacher reduces the load upon the students, namely – 67.46% of the students, 55.56% of the teachers and 64.44% of the parents chose this answer.

Table 4. The joyful and humorous teacher reduces the load upon the students

Examinees' answers	students		teachers		parents		TOTAL		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
I completely agree	273	67,41	75	55,56	261	64,44	609	64,44	
I partially agree	128	31,60	47	34,81	123	30,37	298	31,53	
I completely disagree	4	0,99	13	9,63	21	5,19	38	4,02	
БКВИННО	405	100	135	100	405	100	945	100	
						$\chi^2=24,03$	df=4	P<0,01	C=0,16

Partially agreed 31.60% of the students, 34.81% of the teachers and 30.37% of the parents.

Convincingly the smallest number of the examinees from all the three groups chose the answer "I completely disagree", namely – only 0.99% of the students, 9.63% of the teachers and 5.19% of the parents.

So, the answers we got to this question were again very satisfactory.

The students prefer such teachers. Also, almost same percentage of the parents and more than 50% of the teachers think that such teachers are more preferred by the students.

The value of the calculated χ -square test is 24.03 for the freedom degree of 4, and shows a statistically significant difference with a significance level of 0.01.

The coefficient of contingency having the value of C=0.16 shows a very weak correlation between the variables.

Based on all the results obtained in the enquiry, we came to the conclusion that the claim: "The characteristics of the teacher contribute to reducing or increasing the load placed upon the students" has been confirmed.

Also, according to the results obtained from the χ -square tests, we made the conclusion that there is difference between the opinions of the teachers, parents and students regarding this issue.

4. Conclusion

The modern views put the teacher on the pedestal of a factor on which depends the success of the educational work in schools. The modern teacher is no more a subject that only does the teaching and wants from the students only to reproduce the material taught. He/she must strive to implement creativity in his/her work and encourage the students to be creative, independent, initiative and so on. Such a teacher reduces the amount of effort the students must invest in the educational process, thus reducing their load.

The traditional teaching method based on long lectures substantially increases the load upon the students. This way they are bedevilled with a large amount of material and spend a lot of time memorizing it, and are only required to reproduce it mechanically later.

Implementing modern forms and new means for work, the modern teacher shortens the time needed for his/her work, thereby reducing the load upon the students.

The question we can ask ourselves now, is: Does the modern teacher change the style of his/her work, and, if so, in what amount?

We can conclude that the traditional teaching method is being changed, though not so fast. The institutions involved invest big efforts in training the teachers to be able of adopting the new ways of work, through holding various seminars, workshops etc..

It seems that in the modern pedagogical practice, creativity is in the central spot within the educational work.

The creative teacher is the main factor in the function of such teaching process. With his/her work, such a teacher decreases the boredom which arises in the students in the teaching process, reduces the time the students need for learning the material taught and consequently lessens the load placed on them.

In the theoretical tenets are also highly valued the teachers who are joyful and add humour in the teaching process. Such a positive emotional atmosphere lessens the efforts the students must invest in the curriculum, this way reducing the load upon them.

Having in mind all these conclusions we drew from our research, we can say that the role of the teacher in the educational process is of a first-rate importance, and the question on whether and how much the students will be burdened in the educational process in a great deal depends on the characteristics of the teacher himself/herself.

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