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J. Geogr. Inst. Cvijic. 2019, 69(1), pp. 67–74

Review paper

UDC: 911.3:371.126
https://doi.org/10.2298/IJGI1901067L

Received: November 6, 2018
Reviewed: January 9, 2019
Accepted: February 15, 2019

THE ROLE OF HOMEROOM- AND GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS IN THE OBLIGATORY ADMINISTRATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract: A geography teacher is a professional person who conducts the teaching process in accordance with the standards and procedures of the teacher's call. It is necessary for a teacher to possess knowledge in the psychological, pedagogical, and sociological domains because he/she often plays the role of a homeroom teacher as well. The role of teachers is to adapt the teaching content to students' intellectual abilities by applying diverse methods, didactic principles, and teaching resources. The aim of the paper is to provide ways, through research and analysis, how to manage school documentation and the role of a geography and homeroom teacher in elementary schools. The methods used in the preparation of the paper are: analytical, synthetic, descriptive, comparative, statistical, graphic, and critical. The work was written on the basis of the data obtained from the survey conducted among teachers. The research was conducted among teachers working in urban and rural areas, with different places of employment, and with different work experience. One of the aims of the research was to determine if there were similarities and differences between the answers of the homeroom teachers and geography teachers.

Keywords: education; geography teacher; geography; school administration

Introduction

A teacher conducts the teaching process in a way that enables students to acquire functional knowledge, which is determined by the program according to the order of geographical studies and in accordance with the students' age. Besides the educational role, a teacher simultaneously implements the pedagogical approach and thus contributes to the formation of a specialized and harmonious personality of a student.

It is necessary for teachers to possess the knowledge in psychological, pedagogical, and sociological domains because they often play the role of homeroom teachers as well. Until the 20th century, the role of a student was passive. Teachers' position changed depending on the education strategy and concept.

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The role of teachers is to adapt teaching content to students' intellectual abilities by applying diverse methods, didactic principles, and teaching resources. Some of the basic characteristics that a geography teacher, as well as a homeroom teacher should have are: organizational skills, patience with students, ability and desire to develop tolerance, consistency and perseverance, to be properly affectionate and witty, to have broad general knowledge, developed cultural habits, decent treatment, and proper dress code (Bakovljev, 1998; Branković, Ilić, Milijević, Suzić, & Gutović, 2002; Bratanić, 1990; Dragović, 2012, 2017; Romelić & Ivanović Bibić, 2015).

School documentation represents the common term for files, documents, and materials that are significant for the foundation, organization, and work of a school as an educational institution. Plans, programs, and teaching staff record books, as well as teacher's class registers and registers of extra-curricular activities of a class are very important documents (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005; Hackman, Russell, & Elliott, 1999; Kearney, 2010; Phillips, 2015; Williams & Wintringer, 2016). School administration represents the manner of keeping the school documentation (Pravilnik o sadržaju i načinu vođenja evidencije i izdavanja javnih isprava u osnovnoj školi, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018). Schools keep the following documentation: Registry book, Class register, exam records—minutes of retakes as well as of supplementary examinations of adults and other practical exams at the end of the school year, records of the issued certificates and the allocation of subjects to the teachers (Kostović, 2014; Vlada Republike Srbije, 2012; Zakon o osnovama sistema obrazovanja i vaspitanja, 2009).

A modern way of keeping the school documentation is the use of an electronic class register available to teachers, parents, and students 24 hours a day. Unlike the traditional approach to school documentation and its administration, the use of an electronic class register is much faster and for that reason it does not take much of teachers' time in class, so they have more time to commit to their work with the students. An electronic class register represents an easier way of communication between parents and teachers; parents can see the grades of their children as well as their engagement, commendation and punishments, lesson plans and their realization, predefined dates of tests and written schoolwork and also an insight into excused and unexcused absences (Lukić, 2017; Tot, 2010).

Grandić (2001) highlighted that a homeroom teacher is the administrative manager of one class who keeps the pedagogical documentation and administration of the class that, among other things, includes keeping and reviewing the class register. A homeroom teacher is a teacher with broad pedagogical experience, good organizational skills, and the capability of establishing the interaction with all the students in the process of education. The aim of this paper is to provide ways how to manage school documentation and the role of a geography teacher and a homeroom teacher in elementary school. The work was written on the basis of the data obtained from the survey conducted among teachers.

Research Methodology

A field research method was used for this research. A three-part survey comprising 21 statements/questions was used to obtain data. The research was conducted personally, and each respondent was given a questionnaire. The first part (4 statements) collected demographic data. The second part (3 statements) contained statements/questions about the subject the respondents teach, then the questions related to their role of a homeroom teacher and whether their school uses an electronic class register. The third part of the survey used Likert scale—a scale of attitudes

consisting of five statements. It was given to respondents with the aim to express the level of their agreement or disagreement with each statement, using the five-level scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) (Likert, 1932). The content of the survey is genuine and was not designed according to the model of any previous research survey on the role of a homeroom teacher in school administration. The research was conducted during school year 2017/2018. The sample was random. After the completion of the field survey, there was a total number of 111 properly filled in surveys. It was assumed that teachers of different gender, places of employment (elementary and high school), and places of work (urban/rural areas) have different experiences in managing the school administration, and thus have different attitudes toward the issue. The respondents voluntarily participated in the research.

The hypotheses set in the survey are that there are statistically significant differences in the attitudes of the respondents of different gender, place of employment, and working place toward keeping the obligatory school documentation. One of the hypotheses is that teachers with longer work experience had more experience in dealing with the administration, as well as that there are statistically significant differences in the opinions of teachers with different work experience in keeping the required records of school documents. It was also supposed that a great number of schools still do not have an electronic class register and that homeroom teachers (junior and senior grades) have difficulties with extensive administration. Teaching staff should be educated to maintain school documentation during studies.

The obtained data were analyzed in the statistical program SPSS, which was used in similar researches (Alghazo & Gaad, 2004; Altınkök, 2017; Sharma, Moore, & Sonawane, 2009; Višnić, Ivanović Bibić, Đukičin Vučković, Ivkov-Džigurski, & Konečnik Kotnik, 2017). The most common statistical analyses used in this research are: initial descriptive statistical analysis, t-test analysis for independent samples and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). To determine if there is a statistically significant difference between individual groups, post-hoc Scheffe test was used as one of the strictest and most commonly used tests. T-test of independent samples was applied in order to compare the arithmetic mean of two respondent groups: male and female, teachers working in elementary and high school, teachers working in urban and rural areas. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between dependent variables (statements related to respondents' attitudes) and independent variables (respondents' social characteristics).

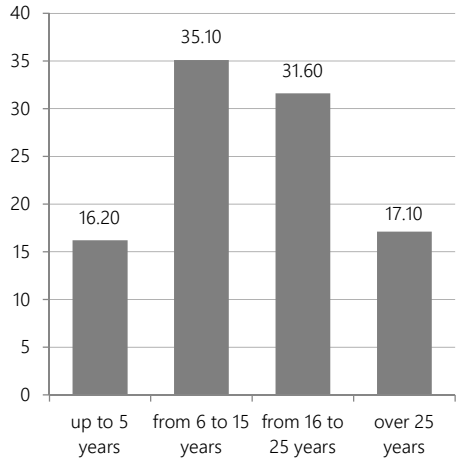

Figure 1. *Structure of respondents according to their work experience (%)*

Most of the respondents had between 6 and 15 years of work experience (35.1%), followed by those with 16 to 25 years of experience (31.6%). There were a bit fewer respondents with over 25 years of work experience (17.1%), and the smallest number of respondents was in the group with less than 5 years of work experience (16.2%).

According to the place of employment—elementary or high school—53.1% of the respondents

work in elementary schools and 46.9% work in high schools. The share of teachers working in high schools is larger because some of them also work in elementary schools, but they have more lessons in high schools. Depending on the place of work, the result was the following: the total of 91.9% of respondents work in schools in urban areas while only 8.1% work in rural areas. According to the gender structure, the vast majority are female teachers, 77.5%, as it was expected, since more women are involved in this profession. Male respondents are present in 22.5%.

Results and discussion

Teachers of 20 different subjects in elementary, high, and vocational schools took part in this research. Teachers of foreign languages were in the majority, followed by Serbian language and Mathematics teachers. Such a result was expected, since subjects such as Mathematics and Serbian language have the highest number of lessons a week and for this reason teachers of these subjects are present in a higher percentage. Teachers of foreign languages (German, English, Russian, French, and Italian) were placed in one group, for easier analysis. Junior-grade elementary school teachers were also included in the sample since they work in elementary schools as well. Other teachers, present in a smaller number, are the teachers of Geography, Biology, History, Music, Sociology, Psychology, Religious education, Art, Chemistry, Physics, and vocational subjects. From the total number of the respondents, 84.7% declared they were homeroom teachers. Very important question for respondents was to declare whether their schools keep an electronic class register. Only 23.4% of the teachers marked this statement with a positive answer, while the percentage of teachers working in schools which do not use the electronic class register is much higher (76.6%).

T-test results

A t-test is a statistical analysis which is used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the means of two groups. The following tables show the results of the T-test for the statements with statistically significant differences in the respondents' answers.

Table 1
T-test results for the respondents of different gender

Statement	School	*F*	*p*
Teachers with more than 10 years of work experience should not write new lesson preparations (if the course program has not been changed).	male female	10.889	.001

Note. **p* < .05.

Statistically significant difference in the respondents' answers is seen in one out of fourteen statements (Table 1). Statistically significant difference is present in the answer to the following statement: *Teachers with more than 10 years of work experience should not write new lesson preparations (if the course program has not been changed).* Male respondents marked this statement with a higher grade than female respondents. All other statements had more or less similar answers among both male and female respondents and so, there is no statistically significant difference. Such results clearly indicate that the hypothesis that there are significant differences in the attitudes of teachers of different gender has not been confirmed.

Table 2
T-test results for the respondents working in elementary and high schools

Statement	School	*F*	*p*
Teachers are paid enough for the work they do additionally by completing the school administration.	elementary high	10.008	.002

Note. **p* < .05.

Statistically significant difference in the answers of the respondents working in elementary and high schools (on the level of significance of $p < .05$) is seen in one out of fourteen tested statements (Table 2). The difference is noticed for the statement *Teachers are paid enough for the work they do additionally by completing the school administration.* These differences point out that the hypothesis that there are significant differences in the answers among respondents working in elementary and high schools is not confirmed. If we look back at the answers of geography teachers for the same statement, a high level of disagreement with the mentioned statement can be noticed.

Table 3
T-test results for respondents working in urban and rural areas

Statement	Place of work	*F*	*p*
Administration in schools is too extensive.	town/city village	18.814	.000
Keeping of school records is time-consuming for teachers.	town/city village	11.131	.001

Note. **p* < .05.

Statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents working in urban and rural areas (on the level of significance of $p < .05$) is seen in two out of fourteen statements (Table 3). The biggest difference is present for the statement *Administration in schools is too extensive.* Statistically significant difference is also seen in the statement *Keeping of school records is time-consuming for teacher*s. Teachers working in rural areas have fewer students than teachers in urban areas, and therefore teachers in urban areas have more work with the school documentation since it is specific for each student and that is the reason for the difference in opinions for these two statements out of fourteen given. These results point out that the hypothesis on statistically significant differences in the answers among respondents working in different places (urban/rural areas) is not confirmed. It was already mentioned that geography teachers took part in the research and their answers were also compared. On the basis of the answers of geography teachers and other teachers, it can be concluded that geography teachers rated the statement *Keeping of school records is time-consuming for teacher*s with the highest average grade 4.2 and other teachers also rated this statement with 4.4 out of 5. It can be noticed that geography teachers expressed a high level of agreement with the statement *Properly kept school documentation shows the quality of the school and the quality of a teacher* and rated that statement with 4.00 while other teachers rated it with 3.00.

Statistically significant difference between the answers of the respondents (on the level of significance of $p < .05$) who are homeroom teachers and those who are not is present in three out of fourteen statements (Table 4). The difference is seen in the answers for the following statement: *Keeping of Registry books should be conducted by other professional staff member (secretary, guidance counselor, psychologist, etc.)*. In this case, teachers who had a role of a homeroom teacher before the research was conducted think that this statement is true, while teachers who were not homeroom teachers rated it with a lower grade. There is also statistically significant difference for

the statement *Every individual conversation with a parent should be recorded*, where the teachers who were not homeroom teachers as well, rated it with a lower grade in comparison to those who were.

The reversed situation from the previous two occurs with the statement *Writing annual plans before each school year is unnecessary*, where teachers who were not homeroom teachers rated this statement with a higher grade than the teachers who were homeroom teachers. In all other statements, there is no statistically significant difference and the answers are approximately the same (Lukić, 2017).

Table 4
Mean of respondents' answers and T-test results on the basis of whether they were homeroom teachers or not

Statement	Homeroom teacher	*N*	*M*	*F*	*p*
Every individual conversation with a parent should be recorded.	yes	94	3.49	5.752	.018
	no	17	3.24		
Writing annual plans before each school year is unnecessary.	yes	94	3.23	4.819	.030
	no	17	3.47		
Keeping of Registry books should be conducted by other professional staff member (secretary, guidance counselor, psychologist, etc.).	yes	94	3.31	6.469	.012
	no	17	3.12		

Note. *N* = number; *M* = mean; **p* < .05.

Results of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for determining whether there is a statistically significant difference between dependent variables (statements related to the respondents' attitudes) and independent variables (the respondents' social characteristics).

The analysis of variance ANOVA shows that statistically significant difference is not present among the respondents of different work experience. Fourteen statements were tested and no statistically significant difference was established for any. Therefore, this hypothesis has not been confirmed.

Table 5
Results of analysis of variance, ANOVA for the respondents according to the subject they teach

Statement	*F*	*p*
Planning of tests and written schoolwork additionally requires unnecessary documentation work.	2.106	.010

Note. **p* < .05.

Analysis of variance ANOVA points out that there is a statistically significant difference in only one answer of the respondents teaching different subjects. Fourteen statements were tested, and a statistically significant difference was established for only one answer, on the level of significance $p < .05$. The difference is seen only for the statement *Planning of tests and written schoolwork additionally require unnecessary documentation work* (Table 5).

Conclusion

In a survey conducted among elementary and high school teachers with a different place of work, the surveyed teachers believe that school documentation is too extensive and time-consuming. Reducing the scope of school documentation would improve the work of teachers with students

who would have much more time to devote to lesson preparation. All the surveyed teachers rated the following statement with the lowest grade: *Teachers are paid enough for the work they do additionally by completing the school administration.*

The financial compensation for keeping school documentation is very small, which also represents repulsion to the same mandatory job. Increasing the financial compensation for keeping school documents would be an additional motive for that part of teachers' work. By filling out additional documentation such as the "Support plan for students with negative grades", teachers are more burdened, and it is not uncommon for students to have better grades due to the excess of documentation, with which part of the interviewed teachers agrees. Students, future teachers, should be educated to maintain school documentation during their studies, which would also facilitate the work of teachers who are beginners. School documentation is the most important legal act of education and should be managed but to a lesser degree, because it is not a rare case that teachers write one same grade for each student several times.

By reducing the scope of school documentation, the scope of a teacher's possibilities for innovation and teaching modernization is increasing, and, most importantly, it leads to a better relationship with students. On one hand, the introduction of an electronic class register in schools represents the modernization of schools, which keeps pace with time, enables parents to have an insight into the work of their child and, on the other hand, the electronic class register will solve the obligation of parents to come to school, which will negatively affect students' attitude towards the teaching process.

Acknowledgments

This research was supported by Project 114-451-2465/2018-02 of the Provincial Secretariat for Science and Technological Development, ECAP Vojvodina (Serbia).

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