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CURRENT METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED STUDENTS IN SLOVENIA

Abstract: In Slovenia, gifted education (GE) at elementary education has become more systematically organised and nationally promoted in the last fifteen years, after the national document "Concept: Identification and Provision for Gifted Students in the Nine-year Elementary School" was approved by the National Council for General Education in 1999. The GE at elementary as well as at secondary education thus consist of two main parts, identification of the giftedness and the subsequent provision for the gifted students. The purpose of the paper is to present main empirical findings from the recent national survey on gifted education in Slovenia, in which 1451 teachers and 121 school coordinators for the GE participated. The results will focus on the professional perception of the current identification procedure; multiple criteria and different instruments for the identification will be presented by means of their strengths and shortcomings and some implications for the further optimisation of the identification procedure will be discussed.

Key words: gifted education, identification of gifted students, gifted identification instruments, criteria for the assessment of giftedness, Slovenian school.

Introduction

During the last fifteen years in Slovenia the problematic of identification of the gifted students and working with them has been more systematically approached on the legal basis than in the past (Juriševič, 2011), e.g., in elementary school the underlying document was Concept: Identification and Provision for Gifted Students in the Nine-year Elementary School (1999)[2], whereas a similar concept – Concept of Education of Gifted Secondary School Students (2007) has been developed at the secondary education level in 2007[3]. Both documents provide for the identification of giftedness procedure and work with gifted students.

Identification of giftedness in elementary school students from the fourth grade onwards according to the Koncept (1999) is carried out systematically, following a three-leveled model to detect gifted students[4], i.e. (1) nomination, (2) identification, and (3) interview with parents.

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[2] The Koncept was confirmed at the 25th meeting of the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education (1999).
[3]The Koncept was confirmed at the 100th meeting of the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education (2007).
[4] The procedure for the identification of the gifted students was adopted in 1999 by the Work group for creating the concept for work with the gifted students, chaired by Prof. Dr. Drago Žagar (Žagar, 2006).

Nomination of potentially gifted students is scheduled for the end of the third grade, because in the first three years teachers already get to know their students well (most students are taught by the same teacher from first to the third grade); nomination of students is based on the following criteria: academic achievement, outstanding achievements, teacher opinion, competitions, hobbies, opinions of school counselors. Records of nominated students are kept by the GE coordinator in the school. Students who are nominated as potentially gifted, with the prior consent of their parents at the beginning of the fourth grade, enter the process of identifying giftedness, which is performed on the basis of various sources and types of data: the intellectual ability test (usually the group test RPM or individual test WISC) and the creativity test (verbal or non-verbal form of TTCT is used), as well as teacher assessment scales (OLNAD07). Ability testing is carried out exclusively by a psychologist (if there is no psychologist at school, he is hired by the school), teachers, who know students, assess the potential giftedness of the student using the teacher assessment scales (OLNAD07), which cover general learning domains, as well as leadership, technical, musical, artistic, literary, drama, film and psychomotor or movement domains. If a student has reached the result of .90 percentile or more on at least one of the three measurements, he is identified as gifted. The third step in the identification process is always the acquaintance of parents with the findings of (potential) giftedness of the nominated and /or identified gifted pupil; in the first triad only nomination and an interview with parents is conducted, whereas in the second and third triad also identification of giftedness with the provided instruments is carried out (Koncept, 1999).

According to the Concept of Education of Gifted Secondary School Students (2007) there are three ways available to identify the gifted student: Firstly, in secondary school the identification procedure might be carried out in the same way if the student was not already identified as gifted in elementary school. It is specific that the teacher assessment scales are used in the nomination process and not in the process of identification as in elementary school: these scales assess students' giftedness in the following areas: Slovenian, foreign language, humanities and social sciences, mathematics, science, art and leadership domains, and different areas of expertise depending on the type of secondary school (Ekspertna skupina za delo z nadarjenimi v osnovni in srednji šoli, 2010). The second way is that the learner is identified as gifted also upon his submission of evidence of his outstanding achievement in any of the national or international competitions. The third way is that the secondary school student submits to the class teacher the appropriate certificate of his identified giftedness. Generally the identification procedure is conducted by the GE coordinator in the school (Koncept, 2007).

Identification of and Work with Gifted Elementary School Students according to the Concept: Identification and Provision for Gifted Students in the Nine-year Elementary School (1999)

<table>
<tr><td colspan="9">Elementary school grade</td></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="9">*MONITORING* of students – characteristic traits, needs, interests – *INDIVIDUALIZATION*</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td colspan="7">• NOMINATION
Criteria: school performance, outstanding achievements, competitions, hobbies, opinions delivered by the teacher or school counseling service</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"></td><td colspan="6">• IDENTIFICATION
Criteria: teacher assessment, ability test, creativity test
• NOTIFICATION OF PARENTS AND THEIR OPINIONS</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"></td><td colspan="6">INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMMES</td></tr>
</table>

Identification of and Work with Gifted Secondary School Students according to the Concept of Education of Gifted Secondary School Students (2007)

Modes:	Grade:	1	2	3	4
1. The Student has already been identified as gifted in elementary school and has submitted the identification certificate.	INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMMES				
2. Identification of the gifted students according to the Koncept (2007).	NOMINATION → IDENTIFICATION → NOTIFICATION OF PARENTS AND THEIR OPINIONS → INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMMES				
3. Identification on the basis of an outstanding achievement at the national or international level.	NOMINATION → NOTIFICATION OF PARENTS AND THEIR OPINIONS → INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMMES				

Findings of the supporting analyses conducted by the National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia in the period of introducing and implementing the Koncept (1999) in elementary school (2001/2002, 2004/2005, 2007/2008, 2009/2010) (Bezić in Deutsch, 2011; Juriševič, 2009, 2012) showed that by developing and introducing the GE following the Koncept (1999) in Slovenia a new era of approaching the gifted students in elementary school began: the gifted identification procedure was conceptually harmonized, work with the gifted students was included in the yearly work plan of elementary school, individual programmes for the identified gifted students are carried out, and there is legal provision for organization and funding the activities for gifted students (Juriševič, 2011). The concept was gradually being adopted in elementary school, simultaneously with the introduction of a nine-year elementary school (75% of elementary schools started introducing the compulsory nine-year programme in 2003/2004). The majority of schools (26%) kept records of their third graders already in the school year 2005/2006, followed by the fourth graders after one year (13% of schools); most

seventh graders were recorded in the school years 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 (20% and 22% of schools) The identification procedure was applied in timely sequence, in the majority of schools from 2004 onwards (Bezić and Deutsch, 2008). According to the report delivered by the Elementary and Secondary Education Expert Group[5] thirteen gimnazija schools and nine secondary technical schools are participating in the project of introducing and monitoring the Concept at the secondary school level (Bezić, 2011).

At this point it should be pointed out that in Slovenia the empirical data have not been collected yet, on the basis of which the context and dynamics of work with gifted students could be better understood and explained, so this remains one of the priority areas to deal with at the national level in the future. The objective of the supporting analyses undertaken by the National Institute of Education of the Republic of Slovenia was to monitor the introduction and implementation of the Koncept (1999) in elementary school (its organizational level mainly), so the state of affairs in the education of the gifted elementary school students as per content and methodology, extending beyond this scope, is only partly reported on. The findings of the mentioned analyses and the practice taking into account the favorable impacts of implementing the Koncept (1999) in the last years also reveal some technical and professional drawbacks at identification and work with gifted elementary school students, that will have to be done away with in the future; the suitability of assessment instruments for giftedness is of prime concern, especially the validity and objectivity of the teacher assessment scales (OLNAD07). Further, the competence of teachers to assess giftedness is also questionable, individualized work with gifted students, and the lengthy and administratively demanding identification procedures at the expense of actual pedagogical work are to be paid attention to, as well (Juriševič 2009, 2010, 2012). There is a high percentage of identified gifted students, which is most surprising; on average, app. 25 % of students are identified as gifted per generation in elementary school (Bezić, 2009; Juriševič, 2012) and app. 50 % in gimnazija (Juriševič, 2012), indicating the problem of developing and understanding the concept of giftedness, of realistic options and reasonableness of creation and implementation of such a large number of individualized programmes. The need for improving the teacher assessment scales (OLNAD07) and for raising the criteria for the definition and identification of the gifted students, respectively, has been recognized considering the mentioned current status.

For these reasons, the basic purpose of the research, presented below, was to establish the manner in which the teachers participating in the process of identifying gifted students in elementary schools and gimnazija schools and GE coordinators in schools that manage these processes, evaluate individual aspects of the identification procedure, including the nomination of gifted students, which in Slovenian schools is performed in accordance with both programming documents, Concept: Identification of and Work with Gifted Students in a nine-year Elementary

[5]The main goal of Elementary and Secondary Education Expert Group under the umbrella of National Institute of Education of the Republic of Slovenia is to monitor and regulate GE in elementary and secondary school following the Koncept (1999) and Koncept (2007), respectively.

School (1999) and the Concept of Education of Gifted Secondary School Students (2007). We were more specifically interested in exploring how teachers and GE coordinators evaluate (1) the regulation of specific aspects of the gifted students provision in school, particularly in the identification of gifted students, (2) the appropriateness of the time period of the first nomination of potentially gifted students, and the reasonableness of identifying giftedness in secondary school, (3) the appropriateness of the criteria for the nomination of potentially gifted students, (4) professional confidence in a variety of instruments for identifying gifted students in elementary school, (5) the usefulness and accuracy of identification of giftedness with teacher assessment scales (OLNAD07) in elementary school, (6) the usefulness of teacher assessment scales in the process of nominating potentially gifted students in gimnazija schools, (7) the role of parents in the process of nominating potentially gifted students in elementary school, and (8) proposals of teachers and GE coordinators to improve the process of identifying gifted students in elementary schools and in high schools, gimnazija, respectively.

Method

Participants

Altogether 1451 teachers and 121 school coordinators for GE from the national representative sample of 123 elementary schools (27% of the population) and 30 general and technical gimnazija schools (42% of the population) participated in the study, which was part of a recent national study on gifted education in Slovenia (Juriševič, 2012).

Table 1
Structure of the sample according to the number of participants, their gender and age

	f	Female (*f* %)	Male (*f* %)	M_{age}	SD_{age}
Elementary school teachers	1224	89	11	42,7	8,7
Gimnazija school teachers	227	77	23	43,7	8,6
GE coordinators in elementary school	105	95	5	43,5	9,3
GE coordinators in gimnazija	16	81	19	41,9	9,8

Instrument

For the purpose of this study a questionnaire which establishes the status in the identification of gifted students in elementary and secondary school was used (Juriševič, 2012). The questionnaire comprises 10 questions (4 evaluation questions based on the five-point rating scale, 4 closed questions with an optional type of response, 2 open questions with the possibility of free response), which cover various domains of the process of the identification of gifted students (nomination of potentially gifted students and identification of giftedness). The questions were composed on the basis of some experience derived from professional practice and on the analysis of monitoring the Concept: The Concept for identification and provision

for gifted students in the nine-year elementary school as well as on relevant literature in gifted education (cf. Juriševič, 2009, 2011, 2012).

The process of data collection and analysis

The respondents filled in the questionnaire following the prescribed procedure, in the context of a recent national survey on gifted education in Slovenia (Juriševič, 2012); they received the questionnaires via mail, which they completed individually and returned within the specified time period to the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, who led the study. The collected data were analyzed in the SPSS programme (version 18) in line with the aim of the research, whereby proper procedures of the descriptive statistical analysis were used (arithmetic mean, median, standard deviation, frequencies, and (valid) percent); descriptive answers were analyzed qualitatively, and the content analysis was conducted.

Results

1 Overall assessment of the regulation of the provision for gifted students in Slovenian schools

Teachers and GE coordinators assessed the regulation of the provision for gifted students as regards the procedure of identification of gifted students, their provision and communication with parents of gifted students in elementary school or gimnazija school in the five-point evaluation scale, ranging from 5 (excellent regulated) to 1 (not at all regulated) quite similar (Table 2), from medium to well-ordered (Me = 3.36); in their estimation, the identification process of gifted students is organized a bit better (Me = 3.40) than the following provision for gifted students (Me = 3.36) and communication with their parents (Me = 3.36). It is worth mentioning that the estimates of gimnazija school teachers and GE coordinators are slightly lower than those of elementary school teachers and GE coordinators, which is probably mainly due to the current general ignorance of and failure to carry out the Concept at the level of secondary school compared to elementary school.

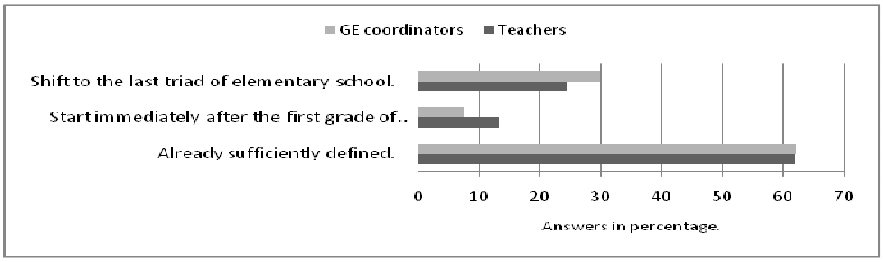
Table 2
Assessment of elementary and gimnazija school teachers and GE coordinators of the different aspects of the provision for gifted students in school

	Identification procedure		Provision of the gifted students		Communication with parents	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Elementary school teachers	3.66	0.76	3.43	0.74	3.51	0.79
Gimnazija school teachers	3.12	0.95	2.98	0.91	2.76	0.94
GE coordinators in elementary school	3.75	0.73	3.30	0.71	3.49	0.68
GE coordinators in gimnazija	3.13	0.92	3.44	0.63	3.12	0.96

2 Suitability of the selected nomination time period of potentially gifted students

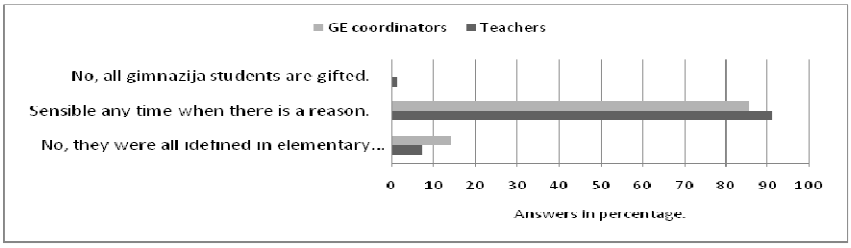
Elementary school teachers and GE coordinators are mostly of the opinion that the time of the first nomination of potentially gifted students is already adequately defined at the end of the third grade of elementary school (Figure 1) as provided for by the Koncept (1999); a few more GE coordinators than teachers believe that the nomination should be shifted in the last three years of elementary school due to the particular developmental reasons and better knowledge of students through several school years; on the contrary, some more teachers plead for the nomination to start earlier, immediately after the first grade of elementary school in order to enable the provision for the identified gifted students with the planned adapted education earlier.

Figure 1
Evaluation of the appropriateness of the time period of the first nomination of potentially gifted students in elementary school by elementary school teachers and GE coordinators in elementary school



Gimnazija teachers and GE coordinators in gimnazija school are generally confident that the nomination of potentially gifted students is meaningful any time if there is a good reason for it, i.e. in terms of process diagnostics and consideration of developmental characteristics; only three teachers on the other hand believe that there is no particular reason for the nomination in the secondary school because all gifted students were already identified in elementary school (Figure 2).

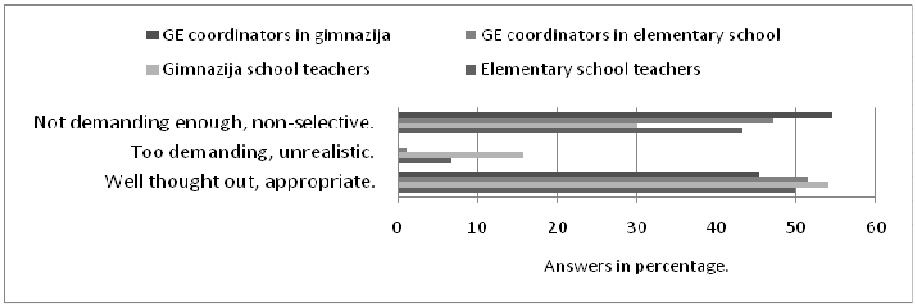
Figure 2
Rationale for the nomination of potentially gifted students in gimnazija school by gimnazija school teachers and GE coordinators in gimnazija school



3 Suitability of criteria for the nomination of potentially gifted students

As regards the suitability of the criteria for the nomination of the potentially gifted students in school (academic performance or academic grades, outstanding achievements. competitions, hobbies, opinions of the teacher or school counseling service, and in high school also the assessment of the student potential giftedness on the basis of teacher assessment scales) all respondents tend to agree (Me = 50.8%). that these criteria are well thought out and perfectly fit for the purpose of nomination (Figure 3); slightly less but still on average a large number of teachers and GE coordinators (Me = 45.3%) consider these criteria to be not demanding enough and therefore non-selective. Only a small number of respondents consider the given nomination criteria to be too demanding and therefore unrealistic which perhaps especially among gimnazija school teachers is due to the fact that they nominate the gifted students also on the basis of their evaluation of students according to the teacher assessment scales which is a quite demanding task.

Figure 3
Suitability of criteria for the nomination of potentially gifted students at the discretion of elementary and gimnazija school teachers and GE coordinators in gimnazija school



The majority of teachers add outstanding achievements of students and their competition results (73.59% free replies) as a key criterion for the nomination of potentially gifted students while identifying giftedness in the form of free responses based on their own experience; in addition to these GE coordinators (47.56% free replies) perceive testing with a variety of psychological tests to be outweighing all other criteria (26.83% free replies).

4 Professional confidence in the various instruments for identifying gifted students in elementary school

Given the fact that the process of identification using the Koncept (1999) is practically carried out in all elementary schools in Slovenia we were further interested to what degree elementary school teachers and GE coordinators in elementary school have professional confidence in various instruments involved in the identification process. Grades and outstanding achievements in competitions

were added to other instruments for the evaluation of professional confidence although the Koncept (1999) does not provide them but are both stated as criteria in the process of nomination. Table 3 shows that respondents in the five-point evaluation scale ranging from 5 (I trust completely) to 1 (I do not trust at all) on average confidence outstanding achievements in competitions (Me = 4.26) most, which in the current Koncept (1999) are not stated among the statutory instruments, and the least to the teacher assessment scales (OLNAD07) although this confidence is still at the level of middle-confidence (M = 3.01). Teachers and GE coordinators trust in ability tests (intelligence and creativity) from a medium degree to most, while confidence in school grades as a possible identification instrument is "only" medium.

Table 3
Evaluation of professional trust in various instruments for identifying gifted students in elementary school by elementary school teachers and GE coordinators in elementary school

	Assessment scales (OLNAD07)		IQ tests		Creativity tests		School grades		Competitions	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Teachers	3.12	0.83	3.74	0.74	3.77	0.70	3.25	0.82	4.14	0.72
GE coordinators	2.90	0.89	4.21	0.64	3.96	0.87	3.29	0.83	4.38	0.63

5. Usefulness and accuracy of identification of giftedness using teacher assessment scales (OLNAD07) in elementary school

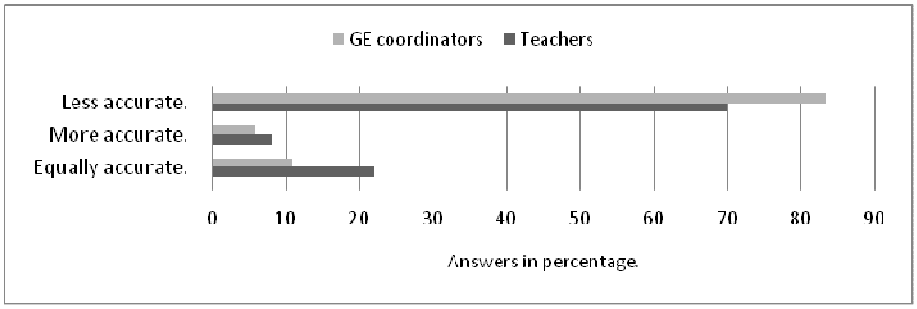
Elementary school teachers and GE coordinators at the five-point scale ranging from 5 (a very useful tool) to 1 (a completely useless tool) estimate that the OLNAD07 are a medium useful tool for the identification of giftedness (M = 3.73). Just under a fifth of respondents believe that the OLNAD07 are a very useful instrument while the other less positive assessments are represented in a lower percentage, to 14.4% (Table 4).

Table 4
Rating the usefulness of teacher assessment scales (OLNAD07) as an instrument for identifying giftedness in elementary school by elementary school teachers and GE coordinators in elementary school

	How useful is OLNAD07 for identifying giftedness according to your assessment?						
	Very useful	Medium useful	I cannot decide	Less useful	Totally useless	*M*	*SD*
Teachers	19%	41.8%	10.8%	13.5%	5.3%	3.75	1.16
GE coordinators	28.8%	43.3%	5.8%	14.4%	7.7%	3.71	1.24

However, further analysis shows that elementary school teachers and GE coordinators believe that ability tests are a more accurate instrument for identifying giftedness than the teacher assessment scales for teachers (OLNAD07) (Figure 4).

Figure 4
Rating accuracy of the teacher assessment scales (OLNAD07) compared with ability tests to identify giftedness by elementary school teachers and GE coordinators in elementary school



6. Usefulness of teacher assessment scales in the process of nominating potentially gifted students in gimnazija school

At the level of secondary school teacher assessment scales currently are used as an instrument in the process of nominating gifted students and not in the process of identifying gifted students, so we were interested to know how gimnazija school teachers and GE coordinators evaluate their usefulness for the nomination of potentially gifted students. Table 5 shows that both teachers and GE coordinators estimate they are quite useful instrument in the nomination process (Me = 3.63).

Table 5
Rating the usefulness of teacher assessment scales as an instrument for nomination of the potentially gifted students in gimnazija school by gimnazija teachers and GE coordinators in gimnazija school

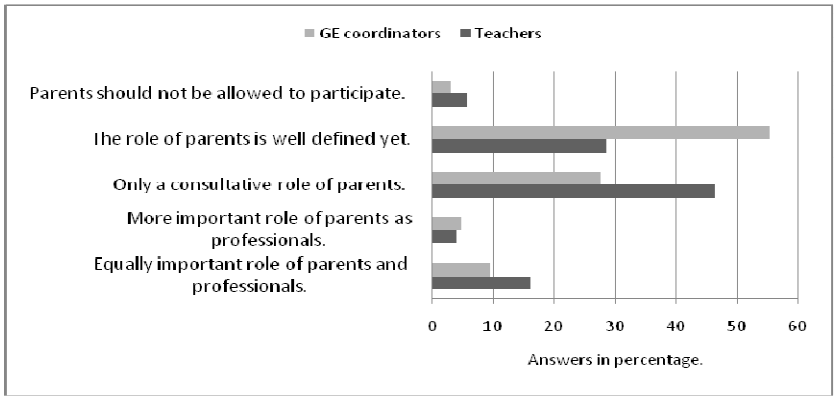
	How useful are teacher assessment scales for nominating potentially gifted students?						
	Very useful	Medium useful	I cannot decide	Less useful	Totally useless	*M*	*SD*
Teachers*	30.9%	36%	13.2%	14%	5.9%	3.72	1.21
GE coordinators	27.3%	36.4%	18.2%	18.2%	0	3.54	1.44

Note: * 33% of gimnazija school teachers did not answer this question as they stated that they have not had the opportunity to use the assessment scales and they do not know them.

7. Role of parents in the process of nominating the potentially gifted students in elementary school

As some of the initiatives are being launched from different areas of expertise we were also interested in the manner in which elementary school teachers and GE coordinators perceive the role of parents in the current system of identification of gifted students and wanted to establish their potential recommendations for changing this role. Figure 6 shows that the majority of GE coordinators (55.2%) believe that the role of parents in the current Koncept (1999) is well defined (i.e., should remain the same) while the majority of teachers (46.15%) believe that parents should have only a consultative role in this procedure (i.e., defined well, as currently the parents role in the nomination process depends much on the school internal rules regarding GE and parents' communication style with school). The minimum number of teachers and GE coordinators think that parents should not be allowed to participate in the process (M = 4.3%), or that the parents should have a more significant role in the process of nomination than the role adopted by teachers and other professionals (Me = 4.3%).

Figure 6
Opinion of elementary school teachers and GE coordinators in elementary school about the role of parents in the process of nominating potentially gifted students



8. Proposals to improve the process of identifying gifted students in elementary and secondary schools

30% of responding elementary school teachers, 31.6% of gimnazija school teachers, 74% of elementary and 81.25% gimnazija school GE coordinators provided various recommendations to the posed question regarding the improvement of the procedure for identifying giftedness, including the nomination of potentially gifted students. Following ones prevail:
- tightening the criteria for the identification of giftedness,

- multiple testing (in terms of process diagnostics),
- generational ability testing,
- adding additional areas in which giftedness can be detected,
- greater consideration of motivational characteristics of students in the nomination and identification process,
- adding to and optimization of the instruments for the identification of giftedness,
- training of teachers to identify gifted students,
- raising the quality of teaching and through this process enabling teachers to better recognize and understand students' potential giftedness,
- finding more appropriate time period for the introduction of the identification process, either sooner or later than it is currently provided under the Koncept (1999), and
- adding financial support for the implementation of the identification process following Koncept (1999).

Discussion

The contemporary paradigm of gifted students' education, which exposes the development and contextual conditionality of the realized giftedness, sets the criteria for the identification as well as the level of inclusion of gifted students (Kaufman in Sternberg 2008). Although in the world there is no unified methodology for the identification of gifted students (Žagar, 2006), practice in the international arena shows that in most countries several different sources and instruments, from intelligence tests to students' self-assessments, are used (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 2009; Gojkov, Sturza–Milić, Gojkov–Rajić, and Stojanović, 2002; Monks and Pfluger, 2005); among them diagnostic instruments prevail, more often in combination with other measurements, e.g. with the teachers' or the parents' opinions. Similar findings regarding the identification process of the gifted are also reported by Freeman, Raffan, and Warwick, (2010); the authors establish the combination of various identification process in worldwide (more than half of them use six or more different process), of which the teacher evaluation is most commonly applied (80%), followed by academic performance and knowledge tests (62%), the data provided by parents and the community (62%), tests of intellectual abilities (54%), other tests (51%), assessments produced by the school psychologists (48%), students' class work (45%), and creativity tests (23%).

The aim of the research presented in this paper was to determine how elementary and secondary (i.e., gimnazija) school teachers and GE coordinators who are involved in the identification of gifted students in schools, assess particular aspects of the identification process of gifted students; these data, drawing directly on professional experience, are therefore of most importance to optimize the existing process of identification, which besides its strengths shows also deficiencies and weaknesses.

The responding professionals evaluated the general GE provision in their schools to be good, with greater satisfaction therewith in elementary schools than in

gimnazija schools, which is understandable, since the Koncept (1999) has already been applied in elementary schools for a number of years, while in secondary schools it is still in the beginnings (in experimental form, from 2007 onwards). The interesting part is that between the three basic elements of the gifted students' provision, i.e., identification, work with the gifted, and communication with parents, the identification process was ranked a little higher than the first two elements; this is probably due mainly to the fact that in the past there were many professional trainings conducted in this domain; in addition, this is a rather complex element, but compared with the other two elements the most structured part of the general GE provision in schools according to the GE concept in elementary as well as in secondary school.

The beginning of the first nomination is already adequately defined at the end of the first three years of elementary school according to the assessment of the majority of elementary school education professionals; however, there are also different views on it - some teachers argue in favor of the shift of nomination, even in the earlier period, so as to enable work adaptations and the provision of appropriate adjustments to the gifted students as early as possible, whereas others propose the shift of nomination to the last three years or to the end of elementary school for developmental reasons, e.g., due to the development of potentials and motivational characteristics of (potentially) gifted students.

It will certainly be necessary to delve into the aspect of the first nomination in the future. It is also important to mention that most gimnazija school professionals understand and consequently mention the principle of a diagnosis process, i.e., that it is reasonable to record the potentially gifted students at any time in case of a valid reason. However, the information obtained from the second set of the same substantive research, attest to a slightly different view; namely, it was established that more than 40% of students are identified as gifted in the fourth grade, whereas in higher grades their number significantly drops (between 4% and 11%); in secondary school, only about 2% of the gifted students are identified (Juriševič, 2012); at present we also do not dispose of the important information as to the provision of those gifted students who have been identified in the fourth grade, but have not excelled in any field in higher grades.

When inquiring about the adequacy of the existing criteria for the nomination of potentially gifted students, we got a bimodal distribution of results; on the one hand, more than half of the respondents believe that the criteria are well thought out and perfectly adequate, but less than half of them considers the criteria not to be demanding enough and therefore non-selective. It seems that the conceptual representation of more criteria is relevant, but according to the experience of "the final" (too) high number of identified students (Bezić, 2009; Juriševič, 2012) in the future it should be considered, whether to investigate the criteria for nomination or for identifying the giftedness in detail (i.e., to use the optimized filter already in the nomination or in the identification). It is also interesting that most of the participating teachers and GE coordinators highlight outstanding achievements of students, mainly in the competitions of the highest ranks, which is also an important criterion in the international arena (Freeman,

Raffan, and Warwick, 2010), as the key identification criterion and at the same the instrument, which the respondents trust most.

Otherwise all three instruments that are part of the existing set of instruments for the identification according to the Koncept (1999) are well received among elementary education professionals. Confidence in the validity of measurement was slightly higher for ability tests than for the teacher assessment scales (OLNAD07), the fact, which in the future will probably be worth delving into (i.e., whether the problem is the evaluation of teachers in general, or perhaps a specific area or assessment method of the giftedness). The latter may be speculated upon the result that the teacher assessment scales to identify giftedness OLNAD07 are medium useful and less accurate in identifying than tests of intellectual and creative abilities. Similarly, in case of secondary schools, where the teacher assessment scales are used only in the process of nomination, gimnazija education professionals also believe that these scales are medium useful to suit their purpose.

Most of the elementary school GE coordinators believe that the role of parents in the process of nominating potentially gifted students may remain the same as currently is, but teachers are more inclined to a more consultative role of parents. The finding most likely leads one to conclude that the elementary school educators do not assume the parents in a more active role than they already have in the nomination process (i.e., parents are not formally included in the assessment of an individual student according to the nomination criteria, but once the process has been completed they are provided with the information whether their child has been identified as potentially gifted and asked for their consent for the student to be included in the identification process).

Further, the results show that GE coordinators provided significantly more proposals than teachers with regard to improving the identification process. On the one hand, of course, this is understandable, since GE coordinators due to the nature of their work have a broader and more accurate insight into the identification process, as well as into various problems that accompany these processes. On the other hand, one would expect from teachers due to abundance in their professional experience in identifying the gifted students to be more actively involved in the consideration of the optimization of the identification process, including the nomination of potentially gifted students. It seems that in this field they have adopted the role of "contractors" rather than that of "creators" of these processes.

However, among those proposals for improvements that will need to be carefully considered in the future, the improvement criteria and instruments for identification, as well as proposals to change the very concept of identification (e.g., generational ability testing, adherence to the principle of "and-and" instead of the current "either-or" for each identified gifted student who reaches the .90 percentile or more on at least one of the instruments; identification shift in the last three years of elementary school ...) are most often proposed; finally, respondents also often stated further education and training for all who participate in this process as a valuable contribution to the improvement of the identification procedure.

On the basis of the presented findings of this research the conclusion can be made that the identification of gifted students is a complex and laborious process

that requires skilled operators, thoughtful, contextual and appropriate methodology and supportive background (regulated conceptual and system solutions); experiences and opinions of the responding teachers and GE coordinators show that we are on the right track, provided that we can continuously learn from our experiences and use them wisely for the improvement and development reasons.

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