

# The occurrence and prevalence of school failure

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**Summary:** We can find numerous studies and researches on school failure, and they mainly talk about academic failure, i.e. about school grades and the influence of various factors. We wish to point out in this work how school failure does not only concern bad school grades, but also failure in the social context in socializing with peers, and also numerous fears and unrest that school children feel. They are all interconnected, and it is not rare that academic achievement influences emotional and social life as well as the opposite. We, thereby, emphasize the role of the teacher as well as the parents who could play a preventive role in these consequently causal relationships of various manifestations of failure.

**Keywords:** school failure (academic, social, emotional), family, teachers and school context

## Introductory remarks

We most often talk about failure in school when a student does not achieve the grades that would correspond to his abilities, that is, when he does not achieve the success that the environment expects of him. Although most in most parts of the pedagogical research have tried to explain school failure, it has been insufficiently researched, but is also difficult to define. **Bad school grades (academic failure)** is one of the indicators of school failure but not the only one. Assessment is a reflection of students' abilities, motivation and knowledge, but it also affects their status in peer groups, teachers' affection, and parents' satisfaction. Students with lower grades may have difficulties in relationships with peers, but also emotional difficulties due to persistent feelings of failure and isolation, fear of teachers, fear of questioning, learning, school friends, general fear of school, known

in literature as school phobia. Therefore, when speaking of school failure, we cannot leave out other areas in which failures can be manifested whereby we can say that they are important for further schooling and success in general. Failure can be manifested in the **social area**, resulting in poor adjustment, isolation from peers, and show of aggression towards other students. Belonging to peer groups is one of the essential features of the social concept of the human community and encourages numerous positive educational and socialization processes that contribute to better social integration. Isolated children and students often behave antisocially, inappropriately to the situation and interfere with group activities. They are very clumsy in making friends and trying to fit into new company. In doing so, they usually use imposition which leads to completely opposite and undesired outcomes. The impossibility of being able to affirm themselves in socially acceptable ways of behavior (in learning, teaching and extracurricular activities) is often compensated with aggressiveness, and in early adolescence they already belong to delinquent groups. The most frequently manifested form of failure in the **emotional area** is the loss of self-confidence. Due to the frequent (almost daily) experience of failure, the positive image of oneself is disrupted and over time a belief in inferiority is built in relation to other students. Day by day, these students receive proof of their own incompetence in solving the set tasks. The evaluation of their work is often a continuous array of negative corroboration, and the final consequence is the feeling of inferiority. A student with the feeling of inferiority withdraws into himself, excludes himself from the life of the class and school, becomes distrustful and often these consequences are manifested in some predominantly active (externalized) forms of behavioral disorders such as aggression, indiscipline, defiance and opposition disorders, and the like. The most drastic consequence of school failure certainly is the loss of school interest, at first occasional and then more and more frequently until dropping out of school, this always being the result of helplessness and inefficient help that should be offered by the school together with the family. With time, fear of exams acquires

an increasing role, particularly in the final exams of elementary school. Students in such classes are particularly stressed because grades and school academic achievement are crucial for further education. Some students apparently seem to be completely calm in accepting poor grades and failure. Over time, they give up the desire for success, they stop trying because result is lacking.

Failure experienced in school is no way a harmless defeat in the game or something that just the next day can be changed into behavioral change. It is a fateful event that affects social promotion, deeply shakes family relationships, and attacks a positive image of oneself in affirming one's self-worth in the eyes of others. (Bognar and Matijević, 1993).

## How to define school failure?

The introductory part has explained areas where students have experienced failure and it also emphasizes that students do not experience failure only in the academic area but also in the social and emotional one. Even though a poor grade is the most evident indicator of failure, it must be pointed out that different criteria in determining the quantity of knowledge, different parameters of measuring the acquirement of knowledge, unprincipled estimates can be strong distractors on the road to success and significant reasons for the feeling of failure. In a great number of cases, the relativity of criteria whereby the student's knowledge is estimated depends on the teacher. The student's capacity in achieving results is also problematized by the issue of school failure, so that a student with more pronounced abilities and average results in school can also be considered unsuccessful since he is not maximally engaged (He could do better, the teacher and parents would say). The difficulty in defining school failure is also supported by the fact that there are different interpretations and understandings of school failure such as failure to adopt a minimum of teaching material. School failure is characterized

by two essential characteristics: cumulateness and stability. Cumulateness signifies gradual but permanent increase in failure. Participating in classes that are not adapted, some pupils characterized as unsuccessful, in fact, do not have the opportunity to engage in activities that encourage their development and engagement. A feature of stability is characteristic for accumulated failure, i.e. a failure that is created in several classes. Stability and resilience to failure are most pronounced in repeating the grade. Namely, when a student is instructed to repeat a grade, he is most often an unsuccessful student in the new class. As a rule, the educational deficit of students contains all the deficits of the previous grades, which makes the failure great, and causes numerous and harmful consequences, as well as numerous other manifestations of failure. Such a student is usually not accepted by others no matter how hard he tries, the prevailing fact is that he is unsuccessful and is labeled by the fact that he is repeating his grade. Students happily start with first grade and have a desire to learn, but failure changes their attitude toward school. Failure is perceived as a mismatch between expectation and reality whereby school becomes a place where discomfort is experienced, perceiving it as a negative experience. If we add to this the fact that a student is in school every day, we can say that students who are perceived as unsuccessful have a constant feeling of failure, inferiority, alienation, isolation and rejection from other students.

Estimates of school success are also common. Students do not have to have A's in all subjects to be successful. For many, success implies only excellent grades, and poor grades imply failure. Excellent grades in mathematics and the Croatian language often determine grades in art, music, etc. Wrong estimates of school success are also common. The talents of children who are extremely successful in only one of these areas are thus undermined. The differences that dominate the class community should be seen as a significant factor in the general behavior of students, encourage them in not having a lasting sense of failure in every class and in all areas. Also, the capabilities of students and the use of their potential should be taken into account, especially in areas in which they show special interest. In our school practice,

it has been shown that there are students with excellent grades, but with very weak interactions with peers, with additional emotional difficulties that can very often be the result of high expectations from their parents, which poses the question: Can we say that they are successful only due to their excellent grades?

**School success cannot be measured numerically, the student's sense of success, satisfaction with achievements, satisfaction in socializing with peers, acceptance by peers, engagement, interest, motivation, and finally satisfaction and happiness in the school and classroom community, and personal, not imposed, interest in further education and choice of occupation should also be taken into account.**

## Most often mentioned and researched risk factors of school failure

Risk factors are most often associated with all those factors that, by their presence, increase the probability of the occurrence of some phenomena, which in this case is school failure. The causes of school (non)failure of students are numerous and in literature are mainly associated with three broad groups of factors: family and peers (family relationships, (dis)functionality of the family, socioeconomic status and family structure, parent upbringing style, parental support and expectations, peer acceptance, communication, socializing and contacts, support, group membership); school (curriculum, teacher competencies for educational work, application of new teaching methods, student-teacher interactions, teacher expectations, assessment methods), and students' personal resources (intelligence, diligence, self-esteem, expectations, self-efficacy assessment), (Gutvajn, 2009; Slijepčević et al, 2017).

Numerous authors have been researching for decades the effects of various elements from the school environment on school failure: the

organization of work in school institutions (Shaw, Caldwell and Kleiber, 1996), school atmosphere (Jurić, 1993; Domović, 2003; Jurčić, 2004, 2010), representation and competencies of professional associates in the school (Zloković, 1998), and pupil and teacher interaction (Teasley, 2004). Some authors believe that failure is a consequence of the parental upbringing style (Vazquez-Nuttal and Nuttal, 1976; Ajduković, 1990): Clark and Shields, 1997; Engels et al., 2001; Ben-Zur, 2003; Zrilić, 2005), poor family communication (Malagoli and Togliatti, 1996; Scabini, Donati, 1992), relationships without love and warmth (Caffray and Schneider, 2000).

Today we can add another significant factor that affects school success, and that is the media, mostly social networks, online games and virtual socializing. Although we will not additionally elaborate on these factors in this study, it is important to mention them. Prolonged use of the "screen" has a negative impact, fatigue and headache occurrence (Anđelić et al., 2014), and physical and mental health are certainly one of the preconditions for interest and motivation for effective learning, and thus achieving school success.

In the multidimensional mobile space of school failure, it is possible to monitor the reciprocity of cause and effect, but it is difficult to determine where and which factor has the decisive causal effect. The causes of failure, and thus poor grades in school, should be sought in the interaction of various factors: cognitive, conative, physical, affective characteristics of pupils, motivation, influence of peer groups, overloaded curricula, numerous exams, assignments, non-representation of professional services in school, school and classroom atmosphere, (non)competencies of teachers, family atmosphere, parental upbringing procedures, parental expectations, engagement in the child's education and readiness to cooperate with teachers.

In general, students are unsatisfied with their school status, they complain that teachers do not understand them, that they treat them inappropriately, do not establish quality communication, and they say that teachers are too authoritarian for today's new generations.

This can all result in an unacceptable behavior from the student, from a milder form of such behavior such as negligence, disobedience or absence from classes to different asocial and antisocial behavior with emphasis on aggressiveness and consummation tendencies (Zrilić, 2010). There are many dissatisfactions, fears and stresses at school. Students complain about unfair grading, poor attitude and the way teachers work. Teachers complain about non-cooperation, aggression and non-recognition, and parents complain about the inadequate knowledge that their children acquire, school closure and the like. The purpose of education is to teach, test knowledge and issue certificates of performance, and assessment is one of the main indicators of student performance.

Risk factors for school failure may also be related to some individual characteristics of students (adolescence, illness, emotional problems, poor self-control, low level of self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, anxiety and avoidance, aggressive behavior, etc.), peers and peer context (peers prone to inaction and avoidance of school obligations, idleness, non-involvement in extracurricular activities, peers prone to deviant behaviors, etc.), media (abundance of advertisements, promotion of short-lived, unusual and unacceptable elements as life values), distorted values and changes in modern society (hedonism, idleness, quick earnings), but the most frequently mentioned and researched risk factors for school failure are related to the school and classroom atmosphere, teacher competencies, and parental upbringing procedures, so we will further elaborate them in the next chapter.

## School atmosphere and school context

One of the essential conditions for understanding the atmosphere in the school is a separate observation of the school and classroom atmosphere, respecting possible mutual actions (Jurčić, 2004).

**The school atmosphere** is usually defined as a group of inner characteristics, whereby schools differ from one another and have an impact on the behavior of its members, and thus indirectly on the quality of school processes and effects (Domović, 2003). The atmosphere in schools is created by the principals, professional associates, teachers and all other school staff. Through their actions, they also influence the behavior of students in school as a social context, due to the daily presence, which is unusually important for children.

Besides the entire school atmosphere, **class atmosphere** also has a significant influence on lessons. We relate class atmosphere to the total state of relationships in one class during different lesson activities. This is determined by the interaction of pupils, teachers, parents and principals as well as professional associates in school. A pleasant classroom atmosphere largely depends on the teacher's personality, his/her views, attitudes, pedagogical orientation and, above all, on his/her emotional capacities. The teaching process is more effective if pupils are content rather than tense. If tensions in teaching are difficult to overcome, this produces anxieties and fears (Jurić, 1993). Among the most important characteristics of a pleasant classroom atmosphere is the absence of hostility between students and teachers, but also between the individual within the classroom. (Jurčić, 2004). Some authors define the communication classroom atmosphere as "a special type of social relations in the classroom, expressed through forms of communication between teachers and students, imbued with their emotional connections that lead to lasting good learning outcomes." (Ivanek et al 2012).

Atmosphere represents the sum of the common school life and work of each student in the class, homeroom teachers, other teachers and parents that arises from their individual interaction. Students, teachers and parents determine the quality of this atmosphere, but the atmosphere as such affects the behavior and success of each individual. It is pleasant to teach and learn in a good atmosphere, creating the greatest effect (Anđić et al, 2010).



The quality of the classroom atmosphere directly affects the experience and pupil behavior (learning outcomes and discipline), the achievement of teaching goals and objectives and learning motives. It is closely related to interpersonal relationships and the way teachers communicate with students. By establishing help and support in student development, based on a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere and good relationships through interactive communication and curricular approaches, the teacher deeply encourages the formation of the student's personal identity and self-awareness. The purpose of the teacher's help and support is not only for each student to develop his own ability to learn and achieve success, even if it is the highest, but also to develop responsible behavior at different stages of life towards himself, his classmates and adults. When the classroom atmosphere is established, so as to have the characteristics of comfort and mutual support, it thus reduces, directs, and mitigates numerous negative factors that could lead some students to irresponsible behavior towards others and towards school obligations (Bouillet and Bijedić, 2007).

The class atmosphere represents one of the essential factors that influence pupils' school achievement. It is a complex phenomenon including many elements, and the emphasis is on interaction-communication processes in teaching (Tomčić and Andreovski, 2020).

The teacher, together with student reactions, can provoke a specific class atmosphere that manifests in four dimensions. The first dimension is the *social atmosphere*, through relations of subordination, decision-making rights and initiative. The second dimension refers to the *degree of activity of students and teachers and initiative in the learning process*. The atmosphere of *competition or collaboration* manifests itself as the third dimension. *Emotional atmosphere, warmth and support* also play a significant role in developing a positive classroom atmosphere (Andrilović, Čudina-Obradović, 1996).

The problem related to the teacher-pupil interaction research is the direction towards different aspects of interaction (teaching, classroom

management, support for pupil autonomy, socio-emotional relationship), or the individual connection with student school achievement. (Šimić-Šašić and Sorić, 2011).

The characteristics of the classroom atmosphere are influenced by the teacher's personality, his/her knowledge and opinions on which behavior gives good educational results, and which educational goals he/she wishes to achieve in his/her work. The teaching practice has shown that there is an interconnection in these dimensions of the classroom atmosphere. A democratic atmosphere offers more mutual interactions and initiatives of pupils, with greater emotional warmth and support. In an autocratic atmosphere, where a one-way interaction (teacher-to-student) is more common, emotional support is weaker, whereas different combinations of dimensions are also possible: free interaction and a democratic structure accompanied by emotional indifference. The teacher in the class has the position and role of authority, meaning that he has the right to make decisions that relate to pupils. The way a class is led is actually a way of using authority in making decisions. There are three styles of class leadership: authoritarian style, democratic style and complete freedom style. In the **authoritarian style**, all decisions on activities and procedures in the classroom are made by the teacher, without any explanation, clarification and without any plan determination. In the **democratic style**, all decisions are made jointly, and based on conversation, assisted and encouraged by an adult leader, which is the teacher. The teacher clarifies the goals, suggests several alternatives for solving problems, and there is a division of responsibilities within the group. The **complete freedom style** describes the teacher as a passive person that gives full freedom to the group or individual. Information or assistance are given only when asked for. The teacher does not take any initiative, does not evaluate or criticize the members of the group. These three forms of leadership imply the types of social atmosphere.

- a) Aggressive autocracy – aggressive reaction in an autocratic style
- b) Apathetic autocracy – apathetic reaction in an apathetic style

- c) Democratic atmosphere
- d) Complete freedom atmosphere

The abovementioned types of social atmosphere differ significantly in the interrelationships between pupils and their emotional state. Most reactions of addiction, dissatisfaction and demand for attention were observed in an autocratic atmosphere.

Friendly relationships, task orientation and better results are most pronounced in the democratic atmosphere. Non-independence and lack of initiative are characteristic in the atmosphere of complete freedom. Supportive and warm interaction with the teacher has an impact on learning, social competences and adaptation to school. Also, a secure attachment to the teacher is associated with higher school achievement, a more positive attitude towards school, greater commitment and participation in class activities, and thus, less frequent repetition of classes (Krstić, 2015), but also less frequent manifestations of behavioral disorders.

This is of particular importance when it comes to children who manifest behavioral disorders due to unfavorable family circumstances, because it is to them that educational institutions can (and should) provide a sense of belonging and connection that they are unable to experience in their own families. (Bouillet, 2010).

Encouraging and maintaining a positive and pleasant classroom/teaching /school atmosphere is necessary if we want to create complex goals and tasks of upbringing and education. Mutual energy created in an optimal atmosphere inevitably contributes to the quality of the upbringing-educational process. (Anđić et al, 2010).

## Teacher participation in school (in) success

The teacher creates an adequate social context for learning being the leader and participant in the learning process. Most teachers, unfortunately, even today conduct classes by presenting facts that

students must learn and retell in class. Children show knowledge in exams, but it is not permanent, that is, after the assessment, very few facts remain in their memory. The teaching style of the teacher is an important factor on which the student's school experience depends and thus her/his success. Research (Shaw, Caldwell and Kleiber, 1996) showed that 30% of pupils were bored at school. Teacher motivation was poor, classes badly prepared or there were some other elements in their exposition that may have encouraged boredom (monologue, poor diction, voice tone, too slow or too fast presentation, indistinctiveness,...). The teachers' work does not represent the one-way transfer of knowledge. The teaching style must be adapted to the differences governed by the groups within the class. He/she must always give clear instructions and be sure that all pupils understood what he said. It concerns professionalism that cannot be performed outside the framework of necessary *knowledge, decision-making and behavior*. Those are three important elements of the teacher's pedagogical-didactic skill in teaching. They portray her/him as a professionally competent person in the field of upbringing and education. A competent teacher is one who, on a theoretical level, understands and applies in her/his practice the most important determinants of modern teaching, and who accomplishes the task of mediation in the acquisition of basic knowledge, abilities and skills for further education of children and youth. Interaction between the teacher and student will be of better quality if the teacher strives to reach higher levels of interaction connection. In the context of the teacher's influence on learning outcomes, the quality of the teacher's interaction realized with students is brought into the closest connection with learning. (Šimić-Šašić, 2011).

The elementary task, as well as the imperative of action success of the contemporary teacher, is her/his ability to make the school an environment where students are happy, where they experience positive experiences, and also a place where they learn in an acceptable, exploratory and collaborative manner. During teaching classes, students speak freely. They are not passive listeners and the teacher only helps them in realizing their assignments, creates

an encouraging environment and encourages social cooperation. The contemporary teacher is an educator, mediator and social integrator, and his activity must be directed towards assisting, negotiating, organizing, encouraging, counselling students. (Previšić, 2003). The quality of realized interaction with the teacher has a significant role in the child's satisfaction with school (Klarin, 2002). All are of equal importance in a team. The teacher does not place himself above the student. He just needs to make sure that classes are well run, planned and structured. It is necessary to start from the student's experiences and interests, and give them confirmation for independent thinking and expression. Their creativity, sensitivity and amazement is enough of a sign to let them learn as they wish.

Numerous studies on the effectiveness of the school in recent decades point to the need to develop collaborative learning within class groups, which is becoming an important alternative to the traditional model of teaching in which a competitive atmosphere prevails. Jensen (2003) defines cooperative learning as an active process of learning where academic and social skills are nurtured through direct pupil interaction, individual responsibility, and positive interdependence. Its components are positive interdependence, direct interaction, individual responsibility, collaborative skills and preparation. The participation of students in the creation of the teaching process gives them additional strong motivation for learning. They thus have a greater need to participate and act during teaching lessons, bring forward their ideas, be creative, responsible and effective in the activities they have undertaken and share the responsibility for the undertaken activities. By focusing on the development of humane teaching, which is characterized by cooperation, understanding, friendship, mutual respect, appreciation, communication, and similar, the teacher forms a premise for the development of student competencies, technical and technological culture, their moral and spiritual stability (Previšić, 2001). It is important to know that co-planning affects the student's curiosity, his emotional preoccupation with the work that follows. Emotions trigger the student's activity, make him work more intensively and express

her/his attitude towards teaching. The co-organization course of the lesson obliges the teacher and students to reach the expected effective outcome in teaching and learning. Students become co-responsible for the outcome of the lesson. Co-responsibility contributes to their activity, better realization of what is planned in the classroom and work class discipline. The process of co-planning and coorganization of teaching contributes to more efficient work in the phase of processing new contents. Students are better focused on the goals and objectives of the lesson, pay better attention to the transmission of information, especially with inserted phases of individual work, pair work or group work, are more willing to be active and put effort, are inspired to create a pleasant, positive and supportive classroom atmospheres and the like. The group characteristics of the class department and/or the upbringing group will also reflect on the dominant cooperative or competitive relations among the group members. Cooperative learning involves a lot of interaction, effective communication, enabling success for others, high acceptance and support for peers, strong emotional engagement and commitment to learning with everyone, and reducing the fear of failure. During competitive learning, there is little interaction, a lot of misunderstandings, threats or lack of communication, and obstruction of the achievements of others, peer influence is aimed at preventing success, children are oriented to a "winner-loser" model of conflict resolution, members of have little mutual trust, poor mutual acceptance and poor mutual support, while fear of failure increases (Bouillet, 2010).

One-way informing students about the curriculum without empathy and mutual influence, often results in disinterest and lack of motivation for school and education, which leads to school failure. Inappropriate teacher procedures such as non-empathy, not giving support, disrespect and authoritarianism cause fear and insecurity in pupils. Jurčić (2004) states that one of the factors that reduces exam anxiety is teacher support that is based on her/his culture and quality of communication, while significantly better results are achieved by pupils whose teachers are open to new experiences and new

communication relationships. Diverse daily contact with children, parents and professional associates require developed social competencies and the capability of quality communication (Previšić, 1999). Even more so because teacher communication competencies should be a stimulus for the development of communication competencies in students. Successful student – teacher communication (both verbal and non-verbal) reduces the pressure on students and thus has an indirect influence on their relationship towards the school, teacher, peers, and parents and also contributes to the development of social competencies that are the foundation for the development of social relationships in the class. The purpose of the teacher's help and support is not only that each student develops his own ability to learn and achieve success, even if it is the highest, but also to develop responsible behavior towards oneself, other students and adults at different stages of life.

When it comes to interaction between the teacher and student, we can speak of the significance of positive and negative interactions for student school achievement. A positive interaction is characterized by high support that the teacher offers students applying the strategy of active teaching. On the other hand, a teacher that realizes negative interaction with students offers low support and low challenge, applies an authoritarian style of management, has a negative attitude towards teaching and high expectations from students (Šimić-Šašić, 2011). The results of Šimić-Šašić i Sorić (2011) research indicate that quality teacher – student interaction has an indirect impact through individual pupil characteristics on pupil behavior and thus on school achievement.

The quality of the realized pupil –teacher communication enables the satisfaction of the need for security and attention, enables the creation of an atmosphere suitable for learning and the development of social relations. The question of quality of communication in the classroom is essentially related to the continuity, discontinuity in social relations respectively. In other words, when the student feels accepted by the teacher and classmates, at the level of mutual respect, then she/he

understands the value of respecting class rules, participates in the planned teaching activities, etc. Then the influences and interactions in the organization and implementation of the teaching process motivate students to make an additional commitment to learning and responsible behavior, and greatly contribute to preventing failure.

As we have earlier mentioned, the most frequent indicator of school failure are bad school grades. In order to follow educational achievement, traditional education systems use a numerical scale. A grade depends, for the most part, on the teacher's capacity to assess the pupil's knowledge correctly. Student assessment is a complex and very responsible factor in educational work, because school grades are the only criterion that is relevant for further education.

In his numerous researches on the role of the teacher in assessing school success shown by grades, Grgin (1999) measured an array of variables such as the gender of the assessor, strictness and gentleness of male and female assessor, strictness towards boys and gentleness towards girls, teacher profession satisfaction, objectiveness, and the age of the teacher. He came up with interesting results based on the gender of the teacher. Female teachers are stricter, especially towards boys during adolescence, because they are punished in a way with a bad grade for the behavior that the school does not accept or reward. Such assessment and grades for knowledge represent a significant error in assessment. The following table shows the relationship of the teacher towards pupils according to pupil opinion.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Results in tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 have been taken from the unissued Project Study of the Social Competencies Curriculum and relationships in school, Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, research conducted in 2012



**Table 1 T-test according to gender and related to the teacher's relationship with the pupil**

ASSERTION	Gender	N	M	SD	t
Most of my teachers – respect my opinion	M	1337	<b>3.28</b>	1.199	<b>2.66**</b>
	F	1324	<b>3.40</b>	1.110	
Most of my teachers – believe in me	M	1337	<b>3.33</b>	1.192	<b>2.97**</b>
	F	1324	<b>3.46</b>	1.135	
Most of my teachers – support and help me	M	1337	<b>3.53</b>	1.146	<b>2.41*</b>
	F	1324	<b>3.63</b>	1.060	
Most of my teachers - successfully maintain order and discipline in the classroom without excessive rigor	M	1337	3.01	1.281	.09
	F	1324	3.01	1.179	
Most of my teachers – successfully solve issues and conflicts that arise	M	1337	3.24	1.213	.46
	F	1324	3.26	1.168	
Most of my teachers – talk with me	M	1337	<b>3.70</b>	1.096	<b>2.30*</b>
	F	1324	<b>3.79</b>	1.021	
Most of my teachers – do not use corporal punishment of students	M	1337	<b>4.25</b>	1.255	<b>4.88***</b>
	F	1324	<b>4.47</b>	1.060	
Most of my teachers – treat us politely	M	1337	<b>3.64</b>	1.142	<b>4.59***</b>
	F	1324	<b>3.83</b>	1.001	
Most of my teachers - do not use ugly and obscene words when they are angry at our behavior	M	1337	3.76	1.306	1.68
	F	1324	3.84	1.164	

Note  $p < .01^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$ ,  $p < .001^{***}$

Research has shown that girls feel more comfortable in school than boys and, according to their opinion, the school context is generally more conducive to learning and developing positive interpersonal relationships than with boys.

Girls feel, significantly more than boys, that teachers respect and appreciate their opinion, believe in them, support and help them, talk to them, and do not use corporal punishment of students, treat them politely.

**Table 2 T-test according to pupil gender on the role of the school in encouraging social relationships among students**

ASSERTION	gender	N	M	SD	t
In my school – cooperation and assistance are encouraged	M	1337	<b>3,62</b>	1,114	<b>4,34***</b>
	F	1324	<b>3,80</b>	1,004	
In my school – friendship among pupils is encouraged	M	1337	<b>3,98</b>	1,114	<b>4,14***</b>
	F	1324	<b>4,14</b>	,965	
In my school - differences among pupils are taken into account	M	1337	<b>3,54</b>	1,246	<b>2,74**</b>
	F	1324	<b>3,67</b>	1,136	
In my school – taking responsibility and consequences for one’s actions is encouraged	M	1337	<b>3,56</b>	1,220	<b>3,78***</b>
	F	1324	<b>3,73</b>	1,104	
In my school – quarrels and disruptions to teaching are suppressed	M	1337	<b>3,40</b>	1,246	<b>2,64**</b>
	F	1324	<b>3,52</b>	1,096	
In my school – one learns how to express one’s feelings without anger and aggression	M	1337	<b>3,26</b>	1,308	<b>3,55***</b>
	F	1324	<b>3,43</b>	1,206	
In my school – resistance to negative pressure and suggestibility is strengthened	M	1337	3,30	1,191	1,15
	F	1324	3,35	1,107	
In my school - rejected and isolated students are provided with assistance	M	1337	3,47	1,347	1,14
	F	1324	3,52	1,312	

Note p<.01\*, p<.01\*\*, p<.001\*\*\*

Girls significantly more than boys consider that school encourages cooperation and assistance, friendship among students, respect for differences, taking responsibility and the consequences of one's own actions. they consider that disputes and disruptions to teaching are suppressed, and they are taught how to express their feelings without anger and aggression.

The above mentioned in the text and tables resulted also in the differences in school achievement, expressed in grades. Namely, a statistically significant difference in school achievement was found between boys and girls, whereby girls achieved significantly higher school results than boys.

**Table 3: T-test of school achievement according to gender**

ASSERTION	Gender	N	M	SD	t
School achievement in the last school year	M	1337	<b>4.06</b>	.820	9.091***
	F	1324	<b>4.34</b>	.737	9.096***

Note p<.01\*, p<.01\*\*, p<.001\*\*\*

**Table 4: School achievement, differences in gender**

School achievement in the last school year							
		School success					
		Insuffici ent	Sufficien t	Good	Very good	Excellen t	Total
Gen der	M N	7	19	310	547	454	1337
	% within gender	.5	1.4	23.2	40.9	34.0	100
Ž	N	4	8	163	510	639	1324
	% within gender	.3	.6	12.3	38.5	48.3	100
Total	N	11	27	473	1057	1093	2661
	%TOTAL	.4	1.0	17.8	39.7	41.1	100

As can be seen from Table 4, school achievement deviates significantly from the normal distribution. In other words, most pupils achieve grades 4 and 5, while only a small proportion of pupils complete a school year with a grade of less than 4. It would be expected that school achievement is distributed “normally”, i. e. described by the Gaussian (normal) distribution.

However, almost all researches show that this is not a normally distributed variable, especially when it comes to school achievement in primary school. This examination also confirmed such findings

in the expected direction. Upon explaining the negatively asymmetric distribution of school achievement, it is certainly worth mentioning, in addition to the demographic and social characteristics of the environment in which the school is located<sup>2</sup>, the *personal equations* of teachers in the school.

There are many factors that depend on the teacher as a measuring tool and emphasize the importance of the teacher's role, and objectivity, consistency and fairness during grading. Grgin (1999) also states the following as relevant factors: *personal equation*, *halo-effect*, logical error, error of the environment, error of contrast, tendency to adapt the grading criterion to the quality of student group. Nominally, the same grades cover a different range of knowledge, depending on the assessor.

School grades on a numerical scale from 1 to 5 in our school system are the only ones, but not always the true indicator of knowledge. The teacher's ability is especially evident during assessment, as it can cause a variety of effects: from additional motivation and improvement to demotivation and running away from class. The teacher's responsibility for her/his development and professional responsibility for the successful accomplishment of upbringing and education tasks, but also vice versa. That responsibility is, therefore, the quality that is achieved by expertise but it is a kind of criterion of her/his independence, and, to some extent, the autonomy in the conception and realization of the pedagogical process (Pivac, 2000).

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A certain number of recent researches has shown that a lower average school success in rural environments but a „normal“ distribution is connected to them. On the other hand, it is precisely the characteristics of urban areas, which are usually associated with a higher level of education of parents, that have significant effects on school success, and in this sample of examinees (mainly urban population) a negatively asymmetric distribution could be expected..

## New teacher competencies

The tasks set before the contemporary teacher are: contemporary way of teaching; research teaching, less frontal, extracurricular and field teaching; student-tailored school”; relief by removing unnecessary educational contents; independent work; strengthening the educational function of the school; teaching and training students to live according to individual and collective rights and responsibilities, civic morality, general cultural and civilizational values, fundamental human rights and children's rights, freedom of moral judgment and freedom of thought, consciousness by respecting the principles of respect for diversity and intercultural understanding.

Personalities to be strived for in upbringing and education: independence, initiative, communication, honesty, justice, self-confidence, respect for others and care for others, tolerance and understanding, peace, sense of equality and equality for all people, solidarity....

The question is posed: What knowledge and competences must teachers have in *knowledge society*?

According to the European Commission for the Advancement of Education and Professional Development, teacher education should be interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, which means that teachers should have:

- Knowledge in the subjects they are teaching but in similar ones also – interdisciplinary knowledge of their profession;
- Pedagogical-psychological knowledge – understanding the developmental characteristics of students, learning styles, student cultures;
- Teaching skills –knowledge of strategy, methods and techniques of teaching, and
- Understanding the social and cultural context of education and the school.

It is all the more being emphasized that school reforms prepared by many EU countries find great difficulties in their implementation due to insufficient participation of teachers in innovative procedures, so that today the priority is the issue of teachers and not the structure of education institutions. Moreover, it is foreseen that traditional knowledge and appropriate didactic methodology are needed, but are no longer sufficient. It is sufficient to quote the following facts as elements that change the characteristics demanded from a good teacher:

- the school is not the sole source of information;
- internet and multimedia means are new and potential substitute sources for exams;
- new ideas, developing all the more on an interdisciplinary basis;
- motivation for studying is becoming the central issue.

The competencies that a good teacher should possess do not refer exclusively to knowledge because it was acquired during studies, but to the power and ability of transferring it in particular. This means that the teacher should be able to connect with the student, to seek, when possible, what it looks like to be in his place, in other words to take an empathic stance. Perrenoud (2002) suggests the model that includes ten competencies divided into three areas: the area of learning, extracurricular work and professional formation, and the meaning of the profession. **The learning area** includes the realization of tasks

*Organization and animation of the learning animation:* to know, in a particular subject, the content for teaching and apply learning objectives; involve all students in the activity; develop collaboration among students.

*Learning progress management:* devise and manage the situations – issues that correspond to the level of knowledge and possibilities of students;

*Devising and developing a decision on differentiation:* manage heterogeneity within the group in the classroom; break down barriers,



expand class management to a wider space; practice integral support, work with students who have great difficulty;

*Involve students in their learning and work:* arouse the desire to learn, clarify the relationship of knowledge, the meaning of schoolwork and develop the ability of self-assessment in students; promote the creation of students' personal projects.

*Group work:* develop a group project with joint presentation; animate the working group, lead meetings; analyze jointly complex situations; manage crises or interpersonal conflicts.

## Extracurricular work of the teacher:

*Participation in school management:* coordinate, animate the school with all interlocutors (extracurricular, regional, parents' associations, teachers of languages and native cultures); organize and develop the participation of students within the school.

*Informing and including parents:* animate information meetings and discussions; lead interviews; include parents in the assessment of creating knowledge.

*Use of technology:* use software to issue documents; use the didactic potentials of the software in relation to the goals of the field of learning; use multimedia tools in teaching.

## Building a profession and the meaning of the profession:

*Face the obligations and dilemma of the profession:* prevent school violence; fight against prejudice and sexual, ethnic and social discrimination; participate in the creation of rules of coexistence regarding school discipline, sanctions and behavioral assessment;

analyze pedagogical relationships, authority, and communication in class; develop a sense of responsibility and a sense of justice.

*Continue with one's own learning*: know how to explain one's didactic practices; develop one's own competency assessment and continuing training program; negotiate with colleagues in a joint training project (groups, school, network).

Certain authors emphasize three basic teacher competencies: managerial, cognitive and pedagogical – professional competency.

*Managerial* (Costa, 1999) includes: influence, development of others, mutual sensitivity, self-confidence, self-control, desire for good relations, disciplinary abilities, orientation towards co-workers, group work and cooperation, analytical and conceptual thinking, initiative, flexibility. The model reflects semi-source access and the institutional culture of the school and the collective dimension of the profession are taken very little into account.

Speaking of *cognitive* competency Ajello and Ghione (2000) emphasize that competency is generated in practice and not in the given roles. Teacher expertise is a mixture of cognitive, affective, social and purposeful competency. It represents higher contextuality and the joint capacity of adaption to diversity. It is created in local communities. This model is of particular interest considering that it connects the theme of professional practice with learning procedures.

The *pedagogical* competencies of the teacher are: specific (referring to the pedagogical-didactic nucleus of professionalism) and non-specific ones that play the important function of completing the profession (Milani, 2000). They are the capacity of **team action** in creating programs, at the level of institution-designing, upbringing and didactics, inter-systematically and inter-institutionally; **animation** including and seeking socialization, and clearly expressing in a playful way; **communication** effectively sharing experiences and creating connections; **researching, organizing, listening, managing** human resources of schools and areas, using timeliness, space, appropriate disciplinary methodologies, allocating work

responsibilities among students, defining evaluation criteria; **designing and managing** defining the goals, individual and groups, managing human resources of the school and area using timeliness, space, appropriate disciplinary methodologies, allocating work responsibilities among students, defining evaluation criteria; **managing the class** paying special attention to the dynamics of the group and directing students towards overcoming their own autonomy; **managing relationships with parents** by emphasizing the unique goal of educating the subject being trained; creating connections and interactions with the area by playing the role of project promoters and interpreting the signs and needs of specific training to promote and support the interests of the local community.

## Parents and school failure

Researches have shown that school achievement is under the strong influence of the parental style of upbringing (Vazquez-Nuttal, Nuttal, 1976; Hefty, 1999; Klarin, 2000; Ben-Zur 2003). The characteristics of various styles of parental upbringing can determine motivation and commitment for school achievement. Numerous authors have been dealing for years with the definition of parental upbringing styles and their influence on children (Lacković-Grgin, 1982; Ajduković, 1990; Clark and Shields, 1997; Deković, Raboteg-Šarić, 1997; Engels et al, 2001). The style of upbringing as a multi-dimensional variable (Lacković-Grgin, 1982) represents the unity of individual characteristics of parents and children, and differs in rules set by parents, how they enforce them, and how much support they offer to their children.

It has been established that parent aspirations, goals and values, as well as parent behaviors, are connected to the academic achievement of students (Okagaki and Feensch, 1998; Spera et al, 2009; Spera, 2005; Wentzel, 1998, according to: Šimić-Šašić, Klarin,

Proroković, 2011), and that the active inclusion of parents in children's lives correlates highly with positive academic and behavioral outcomes (Fisher et al, 2003, according to: Šimić-Šašić, Klarin, Proroković, 2011).

A child who grew in a family environment that encouraged his intellectual development has a predisposition to achieve better school achievement (Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta, 2000; Hart and Risley, 2003; Önder i Uyar, 2017).

Although actual behavior is much more complicated than implied in describing the basic types of parental behavior (Ajduković, 1990), with the combination of the mentioned dimensions of parenting, we can define several basic styles of upbringing: the democratic style, authoritarian style, protective behavior and spontaneous parental behavior.

**The democratic style** of upbringing is the most effective and based on the combination of a high level of warmth and understanding and a high level of parental demand. The characteristics of this distinctively authoritative style are great parental concern and care for the child, and clearly set boundaries as a result of control and supervision. It includes parental behavior that is restrictive and responsible but full of warmth and understanding. If parents talk to their children every day, respect them in the conversation as equals, then quality interaction will be realized with peers and there will be better adaption in the class as a whole, as well as better school achievement. It has also been shown that democratic parents cooperate more with teachers in the school and are more engaged.

It turns out that parents who make it clear to their child what they expect from him in the field of his schooling and success in the highest percentage achieve this through open conversation (68%), then focusing on certain activities (16%), teaching by personal example (11%). ), while strict posing of demands is least present (5%) (Slijepčević et al, 2017).

**Authoritative** parents are at a low level in the dimension of love and warmth and at a high level in the dimension of surveillance. Their upbringing is founded on forcibly imposing their authority, demanding and restrictive behavior, high evaluation of discipline and conforming their values. They often use corporal punishment.

Authoritarian parents demand the impossible from the child, disregarding individuality. In their excessive desire to make their children the best of people, parents set unattainable goals and tasks in front of them, often insulting them if their wishes are not fulfilled. (Previšić, 2003).

The actions of overly strict parents that insist on absolute obedience cause uncomfortable experiences. Communication in the family is very poor and consists mainly in parent monologue, which is full of criticism on laziness and licentiousness while poor in arguments. Authoritarian parents set strict rules and standards, but, unlike democratic parents, they never discuss with their children the reasons for setting such rules. Children of authoritarian parents adapt less socially and with lower empathy towards other students. They regularly have a more pronounced school phobia, because they are afraid of their parents' reactions due to poor grades. Children of authoritarian parents do not develop prosocial behavior, but instead develop aggression that entails a number of negative consequences (academic failure, poor social connections and low self-esteem). Too dominant parents can cause two extremes in children: a submissive child who strives for conformism (adapts his own behavior to other people's opinions and behavior, despite his own different attitude) or an overly rebellious child (always dissatisfied, rebellious and difficult in establishing contacts and cooperation with the environment). Submissive children are afraid of their parents, they are afraid of their reaction to school grades, which makes it even more difficult for them to manage with school. One of the most significant factors of school and lesson dissatisfaction is fear from parent reaction to bad grades. Going to school and learning are their daily activities, and we can say that children of authoritarian parents who react harshly

to bad grades live under constant stress. Authoritarian parents are, mostly parents of high expectations, and success to them means only excellent grades, for they neglect the health, happiness, self-confidence and satisfaction of the child. The results have shown that most parents believe that their high expectations have a positive effect on the child's school achievement, emphasizing the need to monitor the child's affinities and abilities in building expectations. Statistically significant differences have been found between parents of different education level in the manner in which they show their expectations, and also in the way they evaluate the reality of their expectations and the reaction on the (non)realization of the expected student achievement (Slijepčević et al, 2017).

**Elemental or passive parents** do not show any interest in activities related to their children. They rarely or almost never ask the child about school or homework, rarely know where their child is or in whose company he is and do not spend much time with their child. A child with such parents is very insecure, has no support from his parents. The communication among family members is mainly poor and without joint problem solving. Passive parents are at a low level of demands set to their children and at a low level of surveillance of their children. Children with such parents do not show adequate behavior in social interaction. They are demanding and disobedient with difficulties in adopting the norms of the wider social community. Motivation for work and learning is poor with such children. Passive parents do not show emotions or warmth. Children from such parents behave inadequately in social interaction, they are demanding and disobedient and achieve poor results at school.

**Parents protectors** hold a high place in the dimensions of warmth and acceptance. They tend to protect their child from any obligations other than school. They excuse them even at school for inaction or disobedience, and they seek reasons for failure in strict teachers, bad textbooks or too extensive programs. Non-work and non-responsibility are the basis of school failure, and regularly blamed on teachers, their high criteria and excessive curricula. Their expectations

are low, and they are lenient and prone to excessive giving of material goods. Great care and indulgence are extremes that rarely have good consequences. Children become dependent on such parents. They are used to their help, and find it difficult to solve tasks without them. Guided by this style of upbringing, parents do not have a positive effect on their children's school success (McNeal 1999). Too caring parents live in eternal fear for their children and show it to them on a daily basis. They pass on their tensions and anxiety to children. Protective parents nurture a compliant parenting style, without strict rules (Nadimpalli, 2018). Three are the dominant characteristics of compliant parents whose child is out of control: insecurity in their own beliefs and actions which causes resistance and contempt in the child; unreliability and inconsistency in decision making and blaming oneself (Shaw and Wood, 2009). A child that can do anything he wants does not have sufficiently developed motivation for school success. He fills his time with bad habits, such as watching television often, playing video games, etc., which ultimately has a negative effect on the field of school success. Research (Zahedani et al 2016) has shown a significant influence between the style of parenting and academic achievement. Children with lenient parents have been academically unsuccessful compared to children brought up in other parenting styles. Parents have an important role to play in recognizing a child's abilities, capabilities, motivation, direction and guidance. Joint understanding and building a quality bond between parents and children is one of the major components of academic achievement.

An unavoidable factor that can cause failure in children is the lack of parental interest, their poor involvement in the child's schooling, and lack of support and encouragement. Engaged and interested parents contribute greatly to student success in school (Stoll, Fink, 2000). The connection between the teacher and parents has a similar influence. In his research on the connection between parent engagement and school success, McNeal (1999) acquired results that indicated this had a higher influence on behavior than cognitive skills and academic achievement. He analyzed four dimensions of parental involvement in

children's education: the first dimension is **conversation** between parents and children about school in general, school activities, school subjects and school curriculum planning. Active discussion about school point out the importance of education to children. Parental interest in the child's education increases the chances for academic success. The second element of including parents is **cooperation with teachers**<sup>52</sup>. Attendance at parent meetings and active collaboration have been shown to reduce the likelihood of truancy. School failure is a mosaic made up of elements that a student encounters and put together by parents and teachers. Overcoming failure, and even its prevention from the very beginning, is successful only with a competent teacher and a responsible parent, and their frequent cooperation. It is a misconception that children do not want parental help. They seek active listeners, understanding and support from their parents. The third measure is **surveillance**, which again has a greater effect on behavior than on the academic success of a child. For example, giving assignments for work at home and around the home, checking homework and limiting watching TV are good measures of surveillance, but are not a promise for academic success. It is possible that surveillance and enforcing rules is a reaction to a lack of academic success. Researches conducted in our country have shown that weaker parental supervision and lower parental support are associated with poorer school performance, problematic behavior at school, and alcohol and tobacco consumption. (Raboteg-Šarić and Brajša-Žganec, 2000). The final element of parent inclusion is **direct inclusion in the education process**. McNeal (1999) states that

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<sup>52</sup> In our research (Curriculum of social competencies and relationships in school, listed in footnote 1), a statistically significant difference was established between teachers according to the length of service and work experience with regard to the attitude of fostering cooperation with parents, between teachers with the least work experience (0 -10 years) and teachers with the most work experience (33-43 years), and between teachers with 11-21 yrs of work experience and those with the most work experience (33-43 years). In doing so, teachers with 11-21 yrs of work experience report the least cooperation, while teachers with the most work experience (33-43 years) report the greatest nurturing of cooperation with parents [F (3.427) = 4.67; p <0.01].



there is also a negative influence in parent inclusion. We are talking about protective parents who, with their excessive care, prevent the healthy development of the child and hinder his abilities. Parental involvement has an impact on work at home, but not on grades and test results. If children receive too much help, they are unable to put in the same effort without parental help.

Failure in school can distort the created image a parent has of his child, leading to many changes in the parent-child relationship. Failure is experienced by the child, but also by his whole family. Parents find it difficult to accept their children's failure. They even perceive it as a personal failure. One of the issues they come across related to school failure is how to react to it. Parents with a higher education expect a lot from their children. They find it harder to accept failure, both emotionally and socially, and in terms of grades. Faced with failure, parents of high aspirations try in every way to help their child; they also seek the help of a professional, but they are by no means satisfied with bad achievement and try to convince children by talking, bribing or punishing them that a good education is imperative for their future life and a place in society. Penalties and prohibitions often apply to being grounded, not watching TV, telephoning, and lately their mobile phones are taken from them, and access to the Internet being prohibited. This can often cause a negative effect. Children begin to defy, dress bizarrely, dye their hair, in general, and behave the way parents least expect. This can cause even greater dissatisfaction in parents, whereby the atmosphere in the house and relationships within family members become very uncomfortable, children feel rejected and lose self-confidence. Only from an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding can changes for the better occur. Parents discover the true cause for the child's school issues only by talking openly with them. Many parents blame the failure of their children on too strict or too tolerant teachers, too extensive material, their being preoccupied, and warn of the need to change the Croatian school from within. It is true that some teachers still use *ex cathedra* teaching and do not introduce any innovation. But the cause of school failure, which includes emotional problems, loss of self-confidence

and willpower, can often be poor parental care or an inadequate attitude towards the child. One of the most significant factors of school and teaching dissatisfaction is fear of parental reaction to poor grades. The style of upbringing is very important in acquiring self-confidence. Adolescents want parents who talk with them as with an adult and cannot accept an authoritative style of upbringing. Going to school and learning are their daily activities, and we can say that children of authoritarian parents who react harshly to poor grades live under continuous stress.

Disturbed relationships in the family, poor communication among its members can also have a bad effect on school success (Malagoli et al 1993; Scabini, Donati, 1992), and relationships lacking love and warmth (Caffray and Schneider, 2000). Through family relationships, a child learns standards and forms of behavior, and cooperation with others. He forms the types of social behavior similar to those of his parents. Speaking of family interaction, we can distinguish and measure the quantity and quality of interaction. Quantity refers to the level of family reunification, while quality would indicate the nature of these relationships. The family is considered as a self-regulating system, which, in case it becomes dysfunctional, problematic or multi-problematic (Scabini, Donati, 1992; Malagoli and Togliatti, 1996), it can create trouble and suffering for itself indirectly influencing the deviating courses in the children's life, and thus influence the school success.

It should be said, in the end, that the adjustment of children in the class group is best determined by the quality of family interaction, parental expectations and upbringing style. The democratic style and quality marriage, unlike the authoritative style and great expectation of parents, help children to adapt better to school opportunities (Zrilić, 2005).

## Conclusion

As failure is the result of the relationship between different factors and their dynamic permeation, it is not possible to fully explain all the cause-and-effect relationships and relationships that may result in school failure. Some authors are of the opinion that different categories of causative factor should be solved individually: work organization in school institutions, poor motivation, teacher – student interaction, economic and political opportunities (law amendments related to schools) specific social issues (drugs, alcohol, violence, negative influence of the media). Others, on the contrary, see the difficulties as a result of complex changes in society, addictions to computer games, social networks, as well as the negative impact of increased divorce rates and the fact that parents spend little time with their children. They find fundamental problems in the family, in general, in the socio-cultural and socio-economic environment in which the child lives. In foreseeing various types of school failure, an important factor is the family. Negative family relationships are one of the most questioned factors that contribute to failure and unacceptable behavior. Results show that negative feelings in relationships with parents, emotional detachment, poor communication and weak social support are a prediction to risky behavior (Caffray and Schneider, 2000). The start of such behavior in early childhood shows dissatisfaction and non- acceptance of discipline while in the middle childhood period academic failure is acquired with the rejection of peers and adherence to deviant groups. Contemporary society asks parents for tolerance and indulgence towards children. Parental authority is built on different values than it was several decades ago. Children who have grown up with too strict or too lenient parents often show emotional difficulties or behavioral problems. If too many rigid rules and too many unrealistic expectations are imposed by uncompromising parents, children can become angry, depressed and lacking self-confidence. On the other hand, in families where there are too few rules and parents give in to

every whim, children become intimidated by their own power. (Shapiro, E. L., 2002.).

However, it must be pointed out that family variables are not the only causes for school failure. School failure cause should, therefore, be sought in the interaction of different factors such as family atmosphere, parental upbringing procedures, parental readiness to cooperate with teachers, parental inclusion in the child's education, etc., as well as the influence of peer groups and elements related to the school: the workload of the curriculum, underrepresentation of professional services in the school, school and classroom atmosphere and the teacher's (in) competence, etc.

Ensuring quality education that would effectively respond to the new needs and interests of the individual and society, in recent years inevitably includes the issue of education and professional development of teachers. Teacher preparation is understood as an integral part of the entire education system, whereby reforms in this area are designed and implemented within this framework. As the goal of the curriculum is to emphasize the basic competencies defined within the European educational area, and one of them is to know how to learn, it is necessary to organize classes in a way where students will be active participants, equally participate in the upbringing-educational process where they will learn to act, and not just acquire knowledge for assessment. In other words, instead of a mere accumulation of short-term knowledge and skills, the skill of focus should be on the adoption of a systematic approach to problem solving, analysis and application of knowledge in various situations, especially situations related to their future occupation. Teachers will thus transfer their competencies onto students who will be their partners in learning. Adapting to changes in the contemporary school imposes the need for new forms of learning through the direct interaction of students, their individual responsibility and also the positive interdependence through respect and team work. Training for such learning and action requires training for lifelong learning without which competence in the teaching profession is unthinkable.

The set theoretical framework points to a number of factors that may be the reason for failure in school. Problems that preoccupy children are becoming even more common. They achieve failure with bad school grades even though standardized intelligence tests show that children are achieving a higher level of intelligence. Behaviors in social milieus are increasingly unacceptable and full of aggression, and emotional difficulties are more noticeable. As we have already mentioned, along with an array of factors that make it more difficult to achieve school success, parents can also contribute to failure. Most parents are unfamiliar with the complexity of educational work with children. They leave all problems to experts and have no need for cooperation. They most often blame the school for all failures (teachers, principals, school atmosphere, other classmates,...) or adolescent age. Therefore, the initiative for cooperation must begin with the teacher. Rare are those children who will confide themselves to the teacher on the problems in the family. Through the behavior of students, the teacher can recognize that there are interaction difficulties among family members, but the real situation can be determined in a conversation with the parents. They need to be motivated to have an open conversation at joint parent-teacher meetings, counseling and various workshops, and be reminded of the importance of expert advice. The school is not a place where parents are invoked on their responsibility due to their children's bad grades. The tasks of the school are focused on the well-being of students and development in all areas of their personality, in accordance with a more democratic and humane style of educational work that strives to respect their identity and individuality, creative independent learning and thus greater motivation to learn, and their positive interrelationships. Parents and teachers contribute to success in joint planning and cooperation. Non-cooperation closes the door to success and leave the students to fight with failure all by himself. However, cooperation can be superficial and simplified, which is usually based on a model of formal cooperation, without clearly stated goals, so the general picture of the school is often unclear to parents, leaving an only apparent interest in participating in class and school

activities. (Jurčić, 2004). Therefore, it is necessary to change the model of formal cooperation into a model of partnership. The quality of the partnership changes the quality of education in the school and creates the preconditions for innovating the work of the school. Finally, it should be emphasized once again that poor school grades also result in poorer social adjustment, difficulties in relationships with peers, and a whole range of emotional difficulties. This area is, therefore, very complex and needs, first of all, the creation of an encouraging school atmosphere where students would not avoid school and school obligations so as not to have unpleasant experiences. Attention should be paid to the competencies of teachers whose primary task is to make the school an environment in which students learn and live in a way that is acceptable to them. Thus the cooperation of parents and teachers will be one of partnership, while the student who socializes intensely with peers, who is not under stress due to exams and who is not absent from lessons due to fear of teacher and her/his assessment criteria, freely expresses her/his opinion. Even if he does not have all the best grades in all subjects, he will not be considered less successful or unsuccessful. The school is not an institution whose goal is only to transfer knowledge, but also to nurture critical and creative thinking, innovation and creativity, the development of social competence and a culture of behavior. The school must be a place for learning, as well as a place for living and growing up.

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