

### 3 Status of the teacher and the teaching profession: views from within

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#### 3.1 Approaches to defining status

A large number of different conceptual definitions of status, which are used as a framework for analysing different professions, appear in the scientific literature, whereby it should be emphasised that there is no generally accepted, unambiguous definition or theoretical construct of status. For example, Haralambos (1994) defines reputation as the amount of respect or honour related to a person's social position, characteristics and way of life, while social status, as a determined position in society accompanied by certain roles, is defined as a series of norms that determine the behaviours expected from the member of a certain status.

A large number of definitions of status, which point to its complexity and multiple and indefinite nature, can be found when reviewing the available literature on professionalism and the status of teachers (Ball and Goodson, 1985; Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996; Hargreaves, Cunningham, Everton, Hansen, Hopper, McIntyre, Maddock, Mukherjee, Pell, Rouse, Turner, and Wilson, 2006; Hoyle, 1969, 2001; Monteiro, 2015; Sachs, 2003; and others). Monteiro (2015, p. 53–60), when considering some conceptual questions of teacher professionalism, i.e., their global profile, highlights four main factors in determining the level of professionalism: *value of service* (the importance for individuals and society of the scope of professional expertise), *identity content* (formed by knowledge, values, and qualities that distinguish a profession and should distinguish professionals), *professional autonomy* (i.e., the independence and responsibility with which the profession may be individually practiced and collectively governed), and *professional and social status* (which results from the previous factors and is reflected in the income, influence and prestige of the profession). In this regard, Monteiro (2015, p. 56) emphasises the following: “Professional status and social status are two faces of the same coin: the former consists in the identity content and the autonomy of a profession; and the other side means a profession's position within a hierarchy of occupational prestige in a society, resulting both from the value of the service provided and from its professional status.” Furthermore, he points out that the highest level of professionalism applies to those professions that have the highest social relevance, responsibility, and distinctiveness that correspond to the ideal type of professional model and have the following characteristics (Monteiro, 2015, p. 56):

- They provide services that are fundamental for the life, security, and general well-being of individuals and society, requiring from their professionals a sense of service that puts the interests of those they serve and the public interest in general over their (legitimate) interests.
- They contain certain know-how skills with a very specialised and systematised knowledge base, learned through a more or less lengthy theoretical and practical higher education, whose application demands great independence of judgment and decision.
- The power with which professionals are endowed, resulting from their expertise and independence, with the corresponding responsibility, implies compliance with high professional standards of competency, practice, and conduct in every professional circumstance.

Hoyle (2001) offers a three-component definition of *occupational status*, according to which the *prestige*, *status*, and *esteem* of a profession are three different aspects of professional status. Accordingly, he suggests that *occupational prestige* refers to the status which is defined by public opinion (public perception of the relative position of the profession within the hierarchy of professions); *occupational status*, which is defined by educational and comparable professions (the category in which educated groups classify a particular profession and to which they refer, e.g., to public servants, politicians, sociologists, educational professionals); and the *occupational esteem* of those who can observe the qualities which individuals show in their work (the perception of the profession by the general public due to personal qualities which individuals express during the performance of their core tasks, i.e., their concern, competency, and commitment to work). So, for example, as part of a four-year study on the status of teachers and the teaching profession in England (2003-2006), *The Teacher Status Project* (Hargreaves et al., 2006), the researchers implemented these differences in line with Hoyle's definition, but they also included teachers' personal attitudes regarding their status and the factors affecting it.

Taking into account different definitions of status, this project focuses on the *insider's* perspective, i.e., the teacher's perception of his/her status and reputation. This includes the teacher's perception with regard to the respect received from pupils and parents, satisfaction with work, salary and financial independence, media representation of the teaching profession, their reputation as compared to other professions, as well as other factors. Although we believe that public opinion, the press, and media contribute to our understanding of the general opinion regarding the reputation of the teaching profession, they are not considered in this research.

### 3.2 The problem of not recognising the teaching profession

In the last few decades, education experts and decision-makers have been focusing their attention on the teaching profession, professionalism, and the need for professionalisation in the context of the teacher's calling and development of quality education. A crucial factor in the quality of education is the quality of the teaching profession, which has been the conclusion of numerous international and national reports and research on the teaching profession and education systems.

The results of recent research undoubtedly show that the development of pupils' achievements greatly depends on the process of learning and teaching, and that the teacher's impact on the pupils' achievements is significant (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005; Day, 2013; Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, and Gu, 2007; Monteiro, 2015; Sanders and Rivers, 1996; Scheerens, Vermeulen, and Pelgrum, 1989; Tymms, 1993; Vizek Vidović, 2005; Vizek Vidović and Velkovski, 2013). For example, Čepić, Tatalović Vorkapić, Lončarić, Anđić, and Skočić Milić (2015) presented the theoretical framework of the complex relationships among the reputation, personalities, and transversal competencies of teachers in light of contemporary education contexts. Their findings are an important argument in support of rejecting the notion of the teaching vocation as only an occupation, one that should be replaced with the understanding of the teaching occupation as a profession. However, we should not neglect the important fact that the overall status of the teaching profession in most countries is low or very low.

How, then, should we understand this degraded status and improve the quality of the teaching profession? How do we enable teachers to more frequently and more decisively influence their own position within the profession and society? How can teachers make their contribution to this issue? These and other related issues are discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

For example, an ILO/UNESCO report from 1997 provides an overview of the state of the teaching profession, with particular emphasis on the problems of lower status and salaries compared to other occupations, the unattractiveness of the teaching profession, and factors or causes of the decline/reduction and inadequate recognition of the teaching profession. The ILO/UNESCO report, published nearly twenty years ago, is still very topical. Among other things, it points out some of the general causes for the decline of teacher status, as follows (pp. 6–7):

- The perceived failure of effective government communication with teachers in order to establish appropriate education policies and provide funding for their implementation, with reduced public funding for education a particular issue.

- Teachers' neglecting to promote their own status and professionalism in an era of economic austerity. Almost without resistance, teachers have allowed the perception to develop within the community that their main concerns are their salaries and benefits, which account for up to 90% of the education budget in many countries.
- The emerging perception within the community that teachers fail to achieve satisfactory educational outcomes, thereby becoming a target of public criticism and the government at the expense of their professional status.
- In the context of government efforts to cut spending, teacher organisations resisting measures which seek to increase class sizes but reduce teacher qualifications, working conditions, and salaries have often been considered major obstacles to the development of education. Such a relationship dynamic tends to insult teachers and leads to a decline in the overall societal perception of the quality and value of public education. Schools and educational professionals have a significant share of the responsibility for the vast economic and social changes that are now taking place, including economic globalisation, social dislocation, slow-growing economic productivity, and rising unemployment.

Although the teaching vocation has changed significantly over the last few decades, it is still faced with having to define itself in relation to other professions. It is clear that, over time, the roles and tasks of teachers are increasing, yet their status, in comparison with that of other professions, is stagnating or decreasing, as evidenced by the results of various international and national reports and studies (UNESCO, 1998; ILO, 2012; OECD, 2005; OECD, 2011a; OECD, 2011b; EC, 2012; and others). MacBeath (2012) noticed that teachers, unlike most professionals, are burdened with the excessive expectations that society imposes on them; they are caught between high expectations and low professional respect. In their work, numerous authors (e.g., Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996; Hargreaves et al., 2006; Hoyle, 2001; Kadum, Vidović, and Vranković, 2007; MacBeath, 2012; Monteiro, 2015; Radeka and Sorić, 2006; Vrgoč, 2012; Whitty, 2006; and others) highlight the many factors that adversely affect the social position and status of the teacher's calling, which remain low in the relative hierarchy of occupations. Among these factors are the problems of low teacher salaries – which lag behind those seen in the private and public sectors – low living standards, understaffing, feminisation of the profession, insufficient autonomy and exclusion from the development of education policies, lack of control over access to the profession, misconceptions about teachers' working hours, i.e., the general perception that teachers work fewer hours than other professionals, and numerous other issues, which, in the authors' opinion, reflect the low position and status of the teaching profession.

Unlike places such as Scotland, Ireland, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland, where the teaching profession even nowadays enjoys a high social status, the social status of teachers in England, France, Germany, New Zealand, and Austria is not as favourable (Verin, 2004, according to Jukić and Reić-Ercegovac, 2008). The few studies conducted in Croatia (e.g. Maršić, 2007; Radeka, 2007) also point to the teachers' dissatisfaction with their social reputation and status. For example, the results of research conducted by Radek and Sorić (2006) show that teachers are not satisfied with their working conditions, and that they are particularly burdened by the low living standards and a weak social reputation of the profession. In addition, it was found that as many as one-third of teachers had at some point considered leaving their calling, and assess their living standards, the reputation of the teaching profession, and professional qualifications as worse than those who have not considered leaving. Such teachers feel less content in their work than those who have not considered leaving their profession. Radeka and Sorić (2006) pointed out that the existing status of the teaching profession is fatal for the modern school and society as a whole. The results of research conducted by Kadum et al. (2007) also point to the fact that the vast majority of employed teachers consider the status of the profession to be insufficient (86%), while only 14% considering it to be at a decent level.

By synthesising the findings of international and national reports and studies, Monteiro (2015, p. 63-66) summarised the main features of the overall status of the teaching profession into four groups. These are: 1) *Professional and social status are not very prestigious* – a group of features related to undemanding selection criteria, education, and evaluation, low salaries compared to those of other professions with a similar academic background, limited teacher autonomy, lack of control over the main factors of their own success, frequent reductionist, unfair, and unmotivating assessments, deprofessionalisation and feminisation of the profession, and insufficient incentives for professional advancement, among others factors. 2) *Lack of or reduced working conditions*, which include features such as: often inadequate and unpleasant jobs, too large and very heterogeneous classes, the continuous increase and expansion of programs, an overwhelming number of tasks, and a lack of resources. 3) *Other factors diminishing the importance of the teaching profession in public eye*, among which he points out how the teaching profession is, possibly, among the professions that is most exposed to public opinion – and such visibility puts it in a position of greater exposure to criticism and increases social consequences in the event of failure and the average results of weak teachers. 4) *Other factors* – those factors related to pupils' dissatisfaction with the school, school reforms, aggressive pupils and at times even parents, understanding the teaching profession as a

second-class profession because of the lack of a strong “class consciousness” and opportunities to work part-time, and the loss of a traditional direct monopoly as a source of knowledge.

It should also be noted that the lack of teachers is a worrying trend in many countries, which has emerged due to a decreasing school population and the number of people leaving the profession. According to an OECD report (2005, p. 18), in countries with a lack of teachers this is most often because the profession is not considered respectable, attractive, or competitive. With regard to teachers’ job satisfaction, which is considerably lower today than it once was, and issues in terms of permanent teacher employment and retention, many government policies now aim to improve the status of teachers both inside and outside the profession.

What are the implications of the previous analysis for the improvement of teaching as a profession and in society? How can we contribute to the betterment of teachers’ position and status in this context?

The results of research conducted by Fuller, Goodwyn, and Francis-Brophy (2013) indicate that teaching grades (“The Advanced Skills Teacher” (AST), introduced as a tool for recognising and rewarding teacher expertise, were conceived as a way of raising the status of the teaching profession), which recognise and further develop teaching excellence, contributing in important ways to the professional identity of teachers through an increased sense of recognition, reward, and job satisfaction. The results of this research also suggest that recognising the skills and expertise of teachers is obviously important to their retention within the profession, as it allows successful teachers to stay where they want to be – inside the classroom.

Radeka and Sorić (2006) point to the fact that if we want to positively influence teachers’ motivation, and thus the development of modern schools, we need to increase their job satisfaction and improve their living standards (with a more elaborate financing system of funding and rewarding), build the social reputation of the teaching profession, improve the conditions of teaching, and continuously improve the teaching competencies of the related individuals.

Verhoeven, Aelterman, Rots, and Buvens (2006), while researching the public perception of teacher status, found that in Flanders teachers enjoy a positive image among most people, and that teachers can count on a high degree of respect. According to Verhoeven et al. (2006), a certain degree of responsibility for this situation lies in the hands of the teachers themselves, because teachers can contribute to this respect through their actions, and can also improve it. The same authors point out that satisfaction with education, pupils’ well-being, assumptions about

the role of a child-educator, parental participation and interest, are all things that the teacher can impact depending on the way in which he/she deals with pupils and their parents, and in this way teachers can also contribute to raising the social status of the profession.

We will end this review with the following statement from Monteiro (2015, p. 61): “The improvement of [the teaching profession’s] quality should begin at ... the beginning. The human quality of the candidates to exercising the profession should be taken into account when deciding on the criteria for entering professional education and evaluating professional performance. Besides selection, education, and evaluation, improving the quality of the teaching profession should also include other aspects of its professional and social status, such as working conditions, as well as pay and career perspectives without overlooking the relevance of school management.”

Teachers should become examples of professional excellence that, as Monteiro points out, should be perceived as an exceptional incarnation of a blend of qualities, values, and knowledge.

### 3.3 Purpose of empirical research

Many authors claim that the teaching profession no longer enjoys the reputation it once did. With this research we tried to discover the views of elementary school teachers about the reputation of the teaching profession in society, and how they rank this in terms of the reputations of other professions, such as that of a preschool teacher, high school teacher, university professor, doctor, nurse, lawyer, entrepreneur, journalist, and stage actor. We were also interested in the differences in the answers between Croatian and Slovenian teachers.

### 3.4 Method

The Scale of Reputation was constructed based on a review of theory and previous research on teacher reputation. We created eight items that make up the Scale of Reputation, and included four positive and four negative statements about teacher reputation that were alternately listed in the questionnaire. The statements relate both to the general view of teacher reputation and the importance of a teacher’s work for society, as well as the respect from and relationships with the parents, pupils, and media, and the financial dimension of the profession. Teachers assessed their degree of agreement with the statements on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 - *I strongly disagree*, 2 - *I disagree*, 3 - *I partly agree*, 4 - *I agree*, 5 - *I strongly agree*). Not all teachers expressed their degree of agreement for each



of the statements, and the number of teachers who rated their agreement with individual statements varied between 1,837 and 1,813. The number of Croatian teachers who assessed individual statements ranged between 1,076 and 1,061 (58.6% to 58.5%), and with Slovenian teachers it ranged between 761 and 752 (41.1% to 41.5%). Both Croatian and Slovenian teachers most often skipped assessing their degree of agreement with the statement *The media usually portray teachers in a negative light*, while they most often responded to more general statements such as *A teacher's work is among the most important ones in society* and *The teaching occupation enjoys a low reputation in society*.

Exploratory factor analysis was performed using the main component method with oblimin rotation for the purpose of verifying the factor structure and measurement characteristics of the Scale of Reputation. According to the Guttman-Kaiser criterion (characteristic root is greater than 1) and the Scree-test criterion, the existence of two factors was determined, the first of which explains 28.33% and the other 17.15% of the total variance. The two-factor structure was obtained on both the Croatian and Slovenian subsamples. Table 3.1 shows the factor saturation from the matrix form and communalities. The first factor is saturated with four items that describe the factors associated with the negative perceptions of the teaching profession (lower wages, low social reputation, media presentation of teachers in a negative light, and lower work satisfaction) and the item *A teacher's work is among the most important ones in society*. The second factor is saturated with four items that content-wise most closely match the factors associated with the positive perception of the teaching profession (pupils' and parents' respect for teachers, regular income, and financial independence). The item *A teacher's work is among the most important ones in society* is included in the second factor, whereby the theoretical classification of the items is given an advantage over the empirical results. This factor shows low reliability: the internal reliability coefficient (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) is 0.42 on the total sample. Given the low reliability of the second factor, only the first factor was used in the second analysis, whose reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) is 0.59 on the total sample, 0.57 on the subsample of Croatian teachers and 0.61 on the subsample of Slovenian teachers. For the Scale of Low Reputation, the total result was calculated with the linear combination of these items.



Table 3.1. Results of factor analysis of the Scale of Reputation

	Total		CRO			SLO			
	Factor saturationst		Comunalities		Factor saturations		Comunalities		
	F1	F2	F1	F2	F1	F2	F1	F2	
In the teaching profession, salaries are lower than in other equally demanding jobs with an equal degree of education.	<b>0.72</b>	0.07	0.51	<b>0.72</b>	0.12	0.51	<b>0.72</b>	0.19	0.52
The teaching profession enjoys a low reputation in society.	<b>0.71</b>	-0.17	0.56	<b>0.72</b>	-0.15	0.57	<b>0.70</b>	-0.11	0.52
The media usually portray teachers in a negative light.	<b>0.52</b>	-0.10	0.30	<b>0.55</b>	-0.11	0.33	<b>0.59</b>	-0.09	0.37
The low reputation of the teaching profession impacts my job satisfaction.	<b>0.51</b>	-0.24	0.36	<b>0.48</b>	-0.25	0.33	<b>0.61</b>	-0.17	0.43
A teacher's work is among the most important ones in society.	<b>0.51</b>	<b>0.37</b>	0.34	<b>0.52</b>	<b>0.33</b>	0.34	<b>0.34</b>	<b>0.49</b>	0.31
Pupils respect teachers.	-0.02	<b>0.81</b>	0.66	-0.07	<b>0.79</b>	0.64	-0.11	<b>0.78</b>	0.64
Parents respect teachers.	-0.10	<b>0.79</b>	0.66	-0.10	<b>0.79</b>	0.66	-0.29	<b>0.71</b>	0.63
The teaching profession provides regular income and financial independence.	-0.05	<b>0.49</b>	0.25	0.03	<b>0.54</b>	0.29	-0.04	<b>0.44</b>	0.20
Eigen values	2.27	1.37		2.19	1.47		2.30	1.32	
% of the explained variance	28.33	17.15		27.34	18.42		28.76	16.43	

We also asked the teachers to classify ten professions (elementary school teacher, high school teacher, preschool teacher, university professor, physician, nurse, lawyer, entrepreneur, journalist, and stage actor) on a scale from 1 to 10 with regard to their degree of reputation, whereby 1 stands for the least respected profession in society and 10 for the most.

Our starting point was Hoyle's (2001) three-component definition of professional status, according to which *occupational prestige* refers to the status that is defined by public opinion – the public perception of the relative position of the profession in the hierarchy of professions. Some teachers did not classify all professions, so the number of the total sample ranges from 1,844 to 1,829. The number of teachers in the Croatian subsample who ranked individual professions ranges between 1,087 and 1,077 (59.0% to 58.9%) and the number of Slovenian teachers between 757 and 750 (41.1% to 41.0%). The majority of teachers in both the Croatian and

Slovenian subsamples ranked their profession – Croatian teachers most often skipped ranking the reputation of university professors, while the Slovenian teachers skipped ranking the reputation of nurses.

### 3.5 Results and discussion

#### 3.5.1 Attitudes of teachers about the reputation of their profession

We wanted to determine what views elementary school teachers share regarding the reputation of the teaching profession. It was revealed that Croatian teachers score higher on average on the Scale of Low Reputation than Slovenian teachers ( $M = 4.01$  :  $M = 3.83$ ), and that the differences are statistically significant. It follows that Croatian teachers have a lower perception of their reputation than Slovenian teachers.

*Table 3.2. Descriptive data of the Scale of Low Reputation in the total sample and the Croatian and Slovenian subsamples, and the differences between Croatia and Slovenia*

	Total	CRO	SLO	
n	1794	1050	744	
Min	1.50	1.50	2.00	
Max	5.00	5.00	5.00	t=6.31***
M	3.94	4.01	3.83	df=1563
SD	0.59	0.57	0.59	Cohen's d=0.32
$\alpha$	0.59	0.57	0.61	

\*\*\*p<0.001

The second factor, which is saturated with items associated with the positive perception of the teaching profession, resulted in a too low internal reliability to justify the calculation of a common result. However, we can check whether there are statistically significant differences in the estimates of the reputation for individual items, both positive and negative, between Croatian and Slovenian teachers, as shown in Table 3.3, in addition to descriptive data for assessments of the reputation in the total sample and in the Croatian and Slovenian subsamples.

With regard to the statements that form the Scale of Low Reputation, the differences between the Croatian and Slovenian teachers were statistically significant for all but one statement – *The low reputation of the teaching profession impacts my job satisfaction*. On average, teachers tend to agree with the statement (the average

*Table 3.3. Descriptive data for evaluations of reputation for the total sample and Croatian and Slovenian subsamples, and differences between evaluations of Croatian and Slovenian teachers*

	Total			Croatia			Slovenia			t	df	Cohen d
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD			
In the teaching profession, salaries are lower than in other equally demanding jobs with an equal degree of education.	1833	4.23	0.86	1073	4.42	0.82	760	3.97	0.84	11.59***	1831	0.54
The teaching profession enjoys a low reputation in society.	1836	4.28	0.86	1076	4.39	0.83	760	4.13	0.88	6.34***	1834	0.30
The media usually portray teachers in a negative light.	1813	3.49	0.86	1061	3.44	0.85	752	3.56	0.86	-2.96**	1811	0.14
The low reputation of the teaching profession impacts my job satisfaction.	1830	3.74	0.96	1073	3.77	0.98	757	3.69	0.92	1.64	1828	0.08
Teacher's work is among the most important ones in society.	1837	4.15	1.07	1076	4.25	1.06	761	4.01	1.07	4.80***	1835	0.22
Pupils respect teachers.	1830	2.91	0.74	1072	2.85	0.77	758	3.00	0.69	-4.19***	1726	0.20
Parents respect teachers.	1824	2.66	0.75	1070	2.62	0.80	754	2.71	0.67	-2.65**	1776	0.13
The teaching profession provides regular income and financial independence.	1830	3.32	0.94	1072	3.10	0.94	758	3.62	0.86	-12.18***	1828	0.57

\*\* p<0.01

\*\*\*p<0.001

rating for the total sample is 3.74). The teachers in the total sample agree to the greatest extent that the teaching occupation enjoys a low reputation in society ( $M = 4.28$ ), with the Croatian teachers having an even higher statistically significant average score than the Slovenian teachers ( $M = 4.39 : M = 4.13$ ). A total of 85.6% of Croatian and 77.2% of Slovenian teachers either agree or strongly agree with this. It is thus clear that the teachers agree with the statement that their profession is characterised by lower salaries than other equally demanding professions with the same degree of education ( $M = 4.23$ ). Croatian teachers achieved the highest average score on this statement, and showed a statistically significant difference from Slovenian teachers ( $M = 4.42 : M = 3.97$ ), which is probably the result of the worse economic situation in Croatia and factually lower average salaries of elementary school teachers. A total of 58.1% of Croatian teachers strongly agree and 30.2% agree with this statement. Even Slovenian teachers agree on average that they are paid less in comparison to other equally demanding professions: 29.6% of them fully agree and 41.4% agree with this statement. In this respect, it should be noted that the Republic of Croatia significantly lags behind the EU average and is not following EU recommendations or directives in terms of its GDP allocations for education and scientific research activities. Thus, the EU average for spending on education is around 4.5% of GDP, while in Croatia it is 3.5%. While the EU average for scientific research exceeds 2.5% of GDP, in Croatia it is only at about 0.7%. According to the data obtained from the Institute of Education Development (2015), Slovenia allocates 5.7% of its GDP for education, which places it among the top 15 EU countries. In this respect, it should be noted that the main requirements or recommendations of UNESCO (2015) address this issue. According to UNESCO, countries should allocate at least 6% of their GDP for education, which is yet to be achieved in many countries. Among the factors that adversely affect the social position and status of teachers are the particularly low salaries (e.g. Hargreaves and Goodson, 1996; Hoyle, 2001; Hargreaves et al., 2006; Radeka and Sorić, 2006; Vrgoč, 2012; Monteiro, 2015), and in this research it was found that elementary school teachers share this view.

Compared to the Croatian teachers, the Slovenian teachers achieved a statistically significant higher degree of agreement with another statement in the Scale of Low Reputation, as they mostly agree with the statement that the media usually portray teachers in a negative light ( $M = 3.56 : M = 3.44$ ). Half of the Slovenian teachers (49.8%) agree or strongly agree with this statement, compared to 41% of Croatian teachers. This raises the question of what teachers can do to improve their reputation in society in terms of promoting their own status and professionalism.

Among the positive statements about teacher reputation, the teachers in the total-sample strongly agree that their work is among the most important in society ( $M = 4.15$ ), which is in line with our expectations. Significantly more Croatian than Slovenian teachers ( $M = 4.25 : M = 4.01$ ) agree with this statement. As many as 53.9% of Croatian teachers and only 38.2% of Slovenian teachers strongly agree with it. Slightly fewer teachers agree with the statement that the teaching profession provides regular income and financial independence ( $M = 3.32$ ), although most teachers in the sample have permanent employment. The share of teachers with temporary employment who completed the survey is only between 12 and 13%. There are also statistically significant differences between Croatian and Slovenian teachers, which we can probably attribute to the weaker economic situation in Croatia. According to the results of the survey, the Croatian teachers believe to a lesser extent that the teaching profession provides a regular income ( $M = 3.10 : M = 3.62$ ). The biggest group of Slovenian teachers (44.9%) agree with this statement, while that of the Croatian teachers (47.2%) partially agree with it.

In the total sample, teachers overall least agree with the statement that parents respect teachers ( $M = 2.66$ ) and that pupils respect teachers ( $M = 2.91$ ). Once again, significant differences appear between Croatian and Slovenian teachers. In both cases, Slovenian teachers generally agree more with the statement that parents ( $M = 2.71 : M = 2.62$ ) and pupils ( $M = 3.00 : M = 2.85$ ) respect teachers. As many as 35.9% of the Croatian teachers strongly disagree or disagree with the statement that parents respect teachers, while 30.4% of the Slovenian teachers share this view. A total of 24.4% of Croatian teachers strongly disagree or disagree with the statement that pupils respect teachers, as opposed to 17.7% of Slovenian teachers. In this context we mention Verhoeven et al. (2006), who point out that the responsibility for the reputation of the profession in society is in the hands of the teachers themselves, and that their professionalism can certainly contribute to the pupils' and parents' greater respect for them and their work, and thus contribute to improving the status of teachers.

The Croatian teachers agree to a greater extent than the Slovenian teachers that their work is one of the most important in society, while, on the other hand, they also agree even more strongly that a teacher's work has a low reputation in society and that it is paid less than other equally demanding professions. Moreover, the Croatian teachers agree to a lesser extent than Slovenian teachers that their occupation is a source of regular income and financial independence and that parents and pupils respect them. In this sense, it is possible to conclude that Croatian elementary school teachers believe that the teaching profession enjoys a lower reputation in society than is the case with Slovenian elementary school teachers. This

goes somewhat against the statistically significant higher estimates provided by Croatian teachers regarding their own competencies in the four areas of teachers' professional work: cooperation with parents, establishing a constructive dialogue with colleagues, analysing the pros and cons of their educational work, and establishing partnerships with schools, institutions, and experts.

At the same time, the Croatian teachers assessed themselves to be well qualified for their professional performance, but also expressed that others insufficiently acknowledge them as opposed to how they think they should be acknowledged. This disparity is evident also among the Slovenian teachers, but is less pronounced.

### 3.5.2 Reputation of the teaching profession compared to other professions

We were interested to know how elementary school teachers rank the reputation of their profession compared to that of other professions. Table 3.4 shows the descriptive data on ranking professions depending on the degree of reputation on the total Croatian and Slovenian sample and the results of the t-test for independent samples, which we used to verify the statistical significance of differences between the average scores of Croatian and Slovenian teachers.

*Table 3.4. Descriptive data on ranking professions depending on the degree of reputation for the total sample and Croatian and Slovenian subsample, and differences between the average ranks of Croatian and Slovenian teachers*

	Total			Croatia			Slovenia			t	df	Cohen d
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD			
Elementary school teacher	1844	3.75	2.51	1087	3.61	2.60	757	3.94	2.36	-2.90**	1717	0.14
High school teacher	1837	4.69	1.87	1083	4.55	1.95	754	4.89	1.73	-3.95***	1731	0.19
Preschool teacher	1833	3.44	2.74	1080	3.41	2.71	753	3.47	2.79	-0.42	1831	
University professor	1829	6.32	1.96	1077	6.32	1.99	752	6.45	1.92	-2.45*	1827	0.11
Physician	1837	<b>7.97</b>	2.80	1082	<b>7.85</b>	2.73	755	<b>8.14</b>	2.88	-2.22*	1835	0.10
Nurse	1831	4.45	2.46	1081	4.76	2.28	750	4.00	2.63	6.40***	1460	0.33
Lawyer	1839	<b>7.68</b>	2.73	1084	<b>7.70</b>	2.63	755	<b>7.64</b>	2.87	0.45	1532	
Entrepreneur	1838	<b>6.88</b>	2.60	1084	<b>7.07</b>	2.68	754	<b>6.62</b>	2.47	3.64**	1836	0.17
Journalist	1837	5.11	2.12	1083	5.01	2.26	754	5.26	1.91	-2.56*	1765	0.12
Stage actor	1836	5.17	2.37	1082	5.23	2.35	754	5.08	2.40	1.37	1834	

\* p<0.05

\*\* p<0.01

\*\*\* p<0.001

In terms of the reputation enjoyed in society, Croatian and Slovenian teachers rank, on average, the profession of physician as the highest, with this being significantly much higher in the Slovenian subsample compared to the Croatian one ( $M = 8.14 : M = 7.85$ ). The profession of lawyers takes the second place among both Slovenian and Croatian teachers, and there are no major differences between them. The profession of entrepreneurs is ranked third in both the Croatian and Slovenian subsamples of teachers, although it enjoys a considerably higher average rank in the former ( $M = 7.07 : M = 6.62$ ). These results might not be surprising due to the increasingly consumer-oriented societies in both Slovenia and Croatia, in which good economic status and plenty of material goods rank high on the scale of values. In contrast, the profession of university professor is ranked only fourth, although with a slightly better position among Slovenian than Croatian teachers ( $M = 6.45 : M = 6.23$ ).

Both Croatian and Slovenian teachers rank the profession of stage actor and journalist in the middle of the Scale of Reputation. However, the profession of journalists enjoys a slightly better position among Slovenian teachers ( $M = 5.26 : M = 5.01$ ), which may be surprising given that this same group to a greater extent agrees with the statement that the media usually portrays teachers in a negative light.

As expected, the following professions found themselves at the low end of the Scale of Reputation: high school teacher, nurse, elementary school teacher, and, at the very bottom, preschool teacher. It is interesting to note that the Croatian teachers assess nurses as having a higher reputation than high school teachers ( $M = 4.76 : M = 4.55$ ), while the Slovenian group ranks high school teachers higher than nurses ( $M = 4.89 : M = 4.00$ ). In view of this, statistically significant differences revealed themselves between these two subsamples. On average, the Croatian and Slovenian teachers rank the lowest the reputation of preschool teachers, while they rank as second lowest their own profession, whereby the profession of elementary school teachers has a somewhat higher average rank in the Slovenian subsample compared to the Croatian subsample ( $M = 3.94 : M = 3.61$ ).

In line with our expectations, both Croatian and Slovenian teachers ranked the reputation of physicians the highest, which is then followed by those of lawyers and entrepreneurs. The profession of university professors is ranked only fourth. Both Croatian and Slovenian teachers place the reputations of preschool teachers and elementary school teachers in the lower part of the Scale of Reputation. Among Croatian teachers, high school teachers occupy the third place in the lower part of the Scale of Reputation, while nurses take up this position in the Slovenian subsample. Monteiro (2015) argues that the position of a profession within the



hierarchy of professional reputation in society is the result of the value of the service offered and professional status. The highest level of professionalism is related to those professions that have the highest social significance, accountability, and recognisability. In our research, elementary school teachers attribute these features to physicians, lawyers, and entrepreneurs rather than themselves or the other professions included in the scale.

### 3.6 Conclusion

The issue of teacher reputation has attracted the attention of many researchers around the world. Looking at research from different countries, it can be observed that this issue has been explored from several perspectives: how teachers view their own profession and how others view it. In the current study we were interested in how teachers experience their own status – they thus assessed their agreement with some views associated with the reputation of the teaching profession in society and how, in their opinion, they view the pupils and parents who most often come into contact with their work. As such, we could not omit evaluations of the role of the media, which in a certain way co-create the reputation of the teaching profession in society.

Statistically significant differences were found between the Croatian and Slovenian subsamples for all the statements used to assess the reputation of teachers, except for the statement *The low reputation of the teaching profession impacts my job satisfaction*. The Croatian teachers largely agree with the statement that teacher salaries are lower than in other similar professions, while Slovenian teachers agree the most with the statement that the teaching profession enjoys a low reputation in society; however, their average degree of agreement is still statistically significantly lower than the average assessments of the Croatian teachers.

Of all the offered statements, the Croatian teachers ranked *The teaching profession enjoys a low reputation in society* second. This subsample also expressed their partial agreement with the fact that the teaching profession provides regular income and financial independence to an even lesser extent than the Slovenian teachers, and that parents and pupils respect them. In this regard, it can be concluded that, when compared to Slovenian elementary school teachers, Croatian teachers believe that the teaching profession enjoys a lower reputation in society. It should also be emphasised that Croatian teachers assess their competences in different areas of professional activity significantly higher than Slovenian teachers, and also believe that others insufficiently acknowledge them as compared to how acknowledged

they believe they should be. A similar tendency also occurs with the Slovenian teachers, but it is less pronounced.

In addition to the results outlined above, we were also interested in how teachers assess their occupation compared to other occupations – those which require a similar degree of education and those which require a lower level, in relation to some professions that are more widely recognised in society (e.g., stage actor) or in relation to those professions which we encounter in important situations when it comes to our health. In other words, we were curious to know how teachers view the importance of professions that require a higher degree of education, such as university professor or physician. In line with our expectations, the results show that both Croatian as well as Slovenian teachers rank the reputation of physicians the highest, followed by lawyers and entrepreneurs, while university professors are only ranked fourth (the highest among the given pedagogical occupations). The Croatian and Slovenian teachers ranked the occupations of preschool and elementary school teachers at the lower end of the Scale of Reputation. Among the Croatian subsample, the occupation of high school teachers is third from the bottom, while this place is taken up by that of nurses in the Slovenian subsample.

The results obtained in our research have also been confirmed by the results of another study (e.g., Symeonidis, 2015), according to which the status of teachers varies depending on the education sector. The general perception of teachers' professional status is "average" in all sectors, except in higher education. A lower status is perceived more often in the fields of early childhood education, vocational education and the training of assistant teaching staff. Preschool teachers, teachers in vocational education, and assistant staff thus have lower professional status than other sectors, especially higher education. It is well known that women dominate in preschool and primary education, and research has established a link between professional status and salary as well as a link between the feminisation of the teaching profession, low status, and lower salaries.

It would also be interesting to determine how others assess teachers' work and reputation. Imamović (2014) found on a sample of Slovenian teachers that they assess themselves lower on the Scale of Professional Importance than the parents of their pupils do. It is worth reflecting how teachers perceive their position in society and how much importance they attach to it. It is perhaps a worrying fact that both the Croatian and Slovenian teachers in our research agree the least with the statement that their pupils, as the first "users" of their knowledge, respect them.

One of the central and open questions raised in relation to all the previously considered findings is the question of how to improve the status of teachers in society. There is also the question of to what extent teachers respect their profession and whether the results would be different if we asked them about their personal ranking scales, and where they would place the teaching profession.

A recent report by Education International (Symeonidis, 2015, p. 12-13) on the improvement of the status of teachers and the teaching profession emphasised the following priorities in creating education policies: 1) improving salaries and working conditions have proven to be the most critical factors affecting the professional status and personal self-esteem of teachers; 2) ensuring high quality teacher education, opportunities for personal development, and promising careers; 3) ensuring academic freedom, autonomy, and participation in decision-making; 4) advocating a strong public education system in local communities; and 5) maintaining regular dialogue between educational associations and governments, and encouraging the participation of teachers in policy development.

Finally, let us briefly mention what education analysts emphasise when explaining the extraordinary educational achievement seen in Finland, with most (e.g., Sahlberg, 2010, 2012) noting that excellent teachers play a key role in this. The following factors should also be emphasised among the successful Finnish practices:

- The development of robust research-based teacher education programs, which prepare teachers for content, pedagogy, and education theory, but also the capacity to carry out personal research work, which includes expert work overseen by experts.
- Significant financial support for teacher education, professional development, reasonable and fair salaries, and stimulating working conditions.
- Creating a valued profession in which teachers have considerable authority and autonomy, including the responsibility for curriculum and pupil evaluations, which leads them to continuous analysis and practical improvement.

It is to be expected that the dynamic changes that occur in our environment will impose the need to act in these directions.

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