
Knowledge and implementation of the guidelines of the holistic educational approach in the Republic of Slovenia

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Abstract

Introduction: The UNESCO Education Sector and the European Commission for decades emphasise the importance and necessity of introducing a holistic approach to education. The school policies emphasise only a cognitive or rationalist approach and the educational process is operating in a reductionist and deterministic manner. From a sustainable point of view, such consequences are various and multifaceted - on a personal and a social level.

Method: The aim of the research was to establish the level of knowledge of Delors Report, Incheon Declaration and holistic approach among educational professionals (N=525) in Slovenia. A causal non-experimental method of research was used to search the causes for use of international guidelines and knowledge of holistic approaches. The connections between knowledge of documents and demographics were determined with chi-square test, the importance of pillars by statements, compliance with international guidelines by self-assessment.

Results: The results show low familiarity with Delors Report (27%), Incheon Declaration (10.8%) and holistic approach (58.6%). The reasons given for a better knowledge of the Delors Report are older age, longer years of service, and the position of principal. Familiarity with that report influences the with holistic approach, but not on importance of certain pillar, or implementation of international guidelines. There is an inversely proportional correlation between familiarity with Incheon Declaration and holistic approach.

Conclusion: The awareness of documents and holistic educational approaches is perceived only on a formalistic, declarative level. A solution is in the introduction of logopedagogy/holistic approaches based on anthropological attitude (logotherapy/existential analysis) towards understanding man as a physical, mental and spiritual being.

Key words: holistic approach, logopedagogy, pillars of education, educational professionals, UNESCO, logotherapy / existential analysis

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1. Introduction

Humans are increasingly connected at the global communication level, a tendency that was further consolidated during the pandemic. The time that children spend in school is extremely important as that is the place where they form themselves as personalities. The role of teachers is important, as they teach, help and support children in building their personalities and they mature through the educational process with them.

Learning objectives are significantly predominant in the classroom, and educational activities are very limited by achievements, theoretical goals, assessments, competitions, instructions, regulations, bureaucratisation, complaints, etc. It is a broader international problem and UNESCO has issued a report named *Learning: Hidden Treasure* (hereinafter referred to as the Delors Report) (Delors, 1996). This document is extremely important in education, as it set out the basic guidelines that are valid on a global scale. It set four foundations for lifelong learning - the pillars of education: *learning to live* (understand people and respect interdependence), *learning to know* (broad general knowledge with the option of in-depth work on a small number of subjects), *learning to do* (not only professional skills, but competencies for solving many situations and teamwork) and *learning to be* (develop personality and be able to deal with growing autonomy, judgement and personal responsibility). It also builds on the idea that a learning society should be based on acquisition, renewal, and use of knowledge (Delors, 1996, p. 21) and that basic education is of paramount importance for the implementation of these guidelines. Literacy, the ability to express oneself, basic arithmetic and problem solving are built in childhood, which is important for the development and maintenance of society. In the social sense, the child also discovers and develops abilities in relation to others and acquires basic knowledge and skills (Delors, 1996, p. 23).

The Incheon Declaration (UNESCO, 2015), in its vision and principles states that the goals built into holistic and humanistic education contribute to a new model of development. A holistic approach embraces schools, local communities and other stakeholders working to improve quality (European Commission, 2017). For implementation of such an approach into the existing system as soon as possible, it is necessary to research and analyse the current situation,

knowledge, and attitude of teachers towards this approach.

The difference between holistic and traditional approaches is the goals that focus on experiential learning, and the importance that this approach gives to relationships and basic human values within the learning environment (Forbes & Martin, 2004). The holistic approach focuses on self-knowledge, developing healthy relationships, positive social behaviours, emotional development of children, resilience, the ability to see and enjoy beauty, to experience transcendence and truth (Forbes & Martin, 2004, p. 3; John 2017, p. 347). The authors also state that spirituality is an important component of holistic education, as it is based on the connection of all living beings, and it also emphasises the connection between the inner self and the outer world. The spiritual education includes all layers of human personality in all participants (Novak, 2006, p. 155) and educates for the moral values of European, Slovenian and global culture (Svetina, 1990, p. 59).

Logopedagogy derived from Frankl's logotherapy (Frankl, 2014, 2015) deals with upbringing and education as something personal and holistic, as the relationship between the person who is the teacher and the person who is the child is mutual, reciprocal and respectful. The child is accepted as a person and taken seriously as a thinking and feeling being. This requires a personalised approach. Teachers show respect to the child, they set boundaries and lead them to their own independence (Waibel & Wurzrainer, 2016, p. 21). Frankl (2014, p. 80) states that teachers give their students a personal example of their own devotion and loyalty to research, truth and science, and this is how learning values starts (Waibel & Wurzrainer, 2016, pp. 194-196). The teaching process is not just a cognitively learned activity but requires the holistic involvement of the teacher and the student in the whole learning process. It means being with others and at the same time with oneself; moving away and returning to oneself at the same time (Waibel, 2017, pp. 15-16). These dimensions are also found in the pillar *learning to be*, stating that upbringing and education are an inner journey, the stages of which correspond to periods of constant maturation of personality, and that this is an extremely individualised process and at the same time a process of building mutual cooperation (Delors, 1996, p. 88). The building of the value system of children and the teacher is mutual.

The teacher knows what is good for the children and takes care of them as they are ignorant and do not know, and such a belief is still valid today (Rutar, 2012, p. 88), but the child's expression does not only represent the answers to the teacher's questions. It also represents openness and vagueness, risk and agreement, consideration of the child's interests; it is a process of involving all participants in the learning process (Badjanova & Ilisko, 2015, p. 140).

Teachers are often faced with challenges that they cannot handle. Research shows that the teaching profession is the most prone to burnout (Maslach et al., 2001; Mojsa-Kaja et al., 2015). Children are also increasingly experiencing stress at school, learning less, becoming increasingly dissatisfied with life, individualism and competitiveness is increasing, and they are unwilling to share things. They acknowledge selfish behaviour and conscious exploitation of others. The number of children who experience stress most days of the week and the number of those who experience inner emptiness and meaninglessness of life is noticeably increasing (Naterer et al., 2019).

Given such statements and research data, an in-depth reflection on a holistic approach is needed. Ron Miller (n.d.) says the goal of this approach is to evoke an inner respect for life and a passionate love of learning. In our schools, the teaching profession is changing into clerical work with extensive curricula, chasing results in competitions and national tests. Teachers are burdened on a daily basis with meeting the needs and desires of overly demanding parents and formalistic compliance with too many regulations, instructions, ordinances and guidelines. The guidelines of the holistic approach are based on integrity and well-being, wisdom and compassion, awe and wonder, and a sense of purpose (J. P. Miller 2019, pp. 7-9).

The purpose of the research is to determine the extent to which educators in Slovenia follow, understand, and take into account the UNESCO and European documents and guidelines regarding the holistic approach and apply them in their work.

We set the following hypotheses:

H1: Education professionals' knowledge of the Delors report is statistically significantly influenced by age, length of service, education, and work position.

H2: Familiarity with the Delors report, statistically significant influences on awareness of the importance of the pillar *learning to be*.

H3: Those familiar with the Delors report are better acquainted with the holistic approach than those unfamiliar with it.

H4: Those familiar with the Incheon Declaration are better acquainted with the holistic approach than those unfamiliar with it.

H5: The differences between familiar/unfamiliar with the Delors Report and implementing international guidelines are statistically significant.

2. Method

2.1. Research plan

We used a descriptive and causal non-experimental method of pedagogical research. We used a non-standardised survey questionnaire to survey education professionals. Using the causal method, we searched for the causes of the current situation (understanding and implementation) in holistic education in Slovenia and knowledge of some international documents in this field.

2.2. Sampling

From the Register of Educational Institutions and Programs (Ministrstvo za izobraževanje znanost in šport, 2021), we sent questionnaires to all kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. We wanted to include as many respondents as possible in the research. A letter with a presentation and an invitation to participate in the research was sent to the e-mail addresses of institutions and principals.

2.3. Data collecting

The questionnaire was designed in the open source application 1KA (*Version 20.12.03*, 2017), which provides an online survey service. The application also allows us to save the data.

The survey was conducted from April to June 2020.

2.4. Instrument

We designed a questionnaire that included demographic data (gender, age, years of service in education, formal education and employment) and nine questions (knowledge of the Delors Report; the importance of pillars in the future; notions that define each pillar; knowledge of the Incheon Declaration, knowledge of the holistic approach, concepts that describe the holistic educational process, the level of compliance with the written concepts in own work, and the level of implementation of EU/UNESCO

guidelines in education).

2.5. Data analysis

For the questions in which the respondents decided on their level of knowledge of the documents, the discrimination of the scales was ensured by a four-level Likert scale to prevent median responses indicating the answers *I do not know*, or *I cannot decide*. We also used this at the level of adherence to guidelines in their work.

The data were processed with a computer program for statistical analysis of SPSS, (IBM Corp., 2019). We first encrypted them, and then performed descriptive statistics for which we calculated parameter estimates (structural percentages) by frequency analysis (Sagadin 2003, pp. 16-19).

Correlations between descriptive or ordinal variables were checked with the chi-square (χ^2) test.

The risk level of 0.05 was taken into account in statistical inference.

3. Results

3.1. Description of the sample

The sample covers professionals in education ($N=525$) in Slovenia. It includes 10.4% men and 89.6% women, which is appropriate for the population of education professionals.

The age distribution is 31.5% between 51-60 years, 30.8% between 41-50 years, 24.2% between 31-40 years, 8.3% under 30 years and 5.2% over 61 years.

The majority, 28.7% of respondents, have 11-20 years of service, followed by 26.2% with 31 or more years,

22.6% up to 10 years and 22.4% with 21-30 years of service.

The structural educational sample is expected. Half (51.9%) of respondents achieved university education or 2nd Bologna degree, followed by respondents with higher education (19.3%), short-cycle higher education or 1st Bologna degree was reached by 16.2%. 7.5% of respondents have a secondary degree and 5% a master's or doctoral degree.

Slightly more than half of respondents (50.4%) are primary school teachers, 18.4% are other professionals (pedagogue, psychologist, etc.), 11.8% preschool teachers, 7.9% their assistants, 6.6% secondary school teachers and 4.8% principals.

3.2. Descriptive statistics

When asked how they would rate their knowledge of the Delors Report, almost half (40.6%) of the respondents answered that they are not familiar with this document, and 32.3% are slightly familiar, 22.1% somewhat familiar and 4.9% very familiar. For further statistical processing, we have combined the items *not at all familiar* and *slightly familiar* to use the phrase *not familiar*, and items *somewhat familiar* and *very familiar* to use the phrase *familiar*.

Given that more than two-thirds of respondents are in the age group over 41 (67.5%), and that the Delors Report was issued during their studies or early years of teaching, we expected that more than 27% of respondents would be familiar with that document.

We calculated the chi-square for both variables. The values are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Percentages and chi-squares - differences in knowledge of the Delors Report and the age of the respondents

	Knowledge of the document
Up to 30 years	15%
31 - 40 years	18.5%
41 - 50 years	23.6%
51 - 60 years	37.7%
61 years or older	37%

$$\chi^2 = 18.959, p = 0.001$$

The data show a statistically significant association between the age of the respondents and knowledge of the Delors Report in favour of older respondents. Among those aged 51-60 there are 37.7%, and 37%

among 61 years or older familiar with the document. Only 15% of respondents up to 30 years are familiar, and 18.5% from the age group 31-40. Older educational professionals are more widely acquainted

with documents in this field, but the best informed and professionally trained should be those who have just finished their studies or started their job. Our data show that this is not the case.

We were also interested in how knowledge of the document is related to the length of service of respondents in education. The data are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Percentages and chi-squares - differences in knowledge of the Delors Report and years of service

	Knowledge of the document
Up to 10 years	18.6%
11 - 20 years	16%
21 - 30 years	34.8%
31 years or more	38.8%

$\chi^2 = 26.026, p = 0.000$

The chi-square values confirm the statistically significant relationship between length of service and knowledge of the document. The differences between up to 20 years of service and those with more than 21 years of service are statistically significant. The smallest number of respondents familiar with the document are in the group with 11 to 20 years of

service. The causes can be burnout, self-sufficiency, apathy, etc. Perhaps the reasons for the data obtained can be found in the acquired formal education, so we calculated the chi-square for the knowledge of the document and the highest achieved formal education (Table 3).

Table 3

Percentages and chi-squares - differences in knowledge of the Delors Report and the highest formal education

	Knowledge of the document
Secondary	23.7%
Short-cycle higher education or 1st Bologna deg.	21%
Higher education professional	29%
University education or 2nd Bologna deg.	26.1%
Master of Science or PhD	50%

$\chi^2 = 9.019, p = 0.061$

The connections between education and knowledge of the document are not statistically significant, which means that the distribution of knowledge of the document is quite consistent with the levels of education. We assume that the differences that have emerged between age groups, years of service, and

knowledge of the document are not related to formal education. We also calculated the chi-square for document knowledge and the current work position of the respondents. The data are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Percentages and chi-squares - differences in knowledge of the Delors Report and the position of the respondents

	Knowledge of the document
Assistant preschool teacher	15%
Preschool teacher	31.7%
Primary school teacher	23.4%
Secondary school teacher	12.1%
Principal	68%
Other professional	31.9%

$$\chi^2 = 31.536, p = 0.000$$

Chi-square values indicate a statistically significant correlation between workplace and document knowledge, with 68% of principals being familiar with the document, while only 12.1% of secondary school teachers are familiar with the document, and only 15% of assistant preschool teachers. Principals probably encountered these documents during their training. The number of respondents unfamiliar with the documents among the assistant preschool teachers could be attributed to a shorter period of education which does not emphasise the legislative level. The data indicate a very low level of knowledge among secondary school teachers who have completed the same educational path as primary school teachers, suggesting that the reasons must be sought elsewhere. Education professionals' knowledge of the Delors report is relatively poor. Age, years of service and position (except education) have statistically significant influence on that. Hypothesis H1 was partially confirmed.

The Delors Report highlights four educational pillars. For 51.6% *learning to live* will be the most important in future, for 29.5% *learning to be*, for 15.1% *learning to do*, and for 3.8% *learning to know*. Regarding those who decided that they are familiar/not familiar with Delors Report, we used the chi-square to calculate the differences between the choice of the pillar ($\chi^2 = 5.687, p = 0.128$). More than half of both groups decided that the pillar *learning to live* would be the most important in the future. The differences are not statistically significant, and the importance of *learning to be*, was not recognised, therefore hypothesis H2 was rejected.

The Incheon Declaration dictates current guidelines in education. Respondents assessed familiarity with it in only 0.8%. 62.4% are not at all familiar, 26.7% slightly familiar, and 10% are somewhat familiar. A holistic approach is highlighted in both documents.

High familiarity with it stated 48.5% of respondents. 10.1% stated they are somewhat and, 33.8% slightly familiar. 7.6% are not familiar with holistic approach. We observed a group of teachers unfamiliar with the Delors Report and found that half of those were familiar with the holistic approach. Among those familiar with the Delors Report, 85.2% are also familiar with the holistic approach. Differences between familiar and not familiar respondents are statistically significant in favour of familiar with that document ($\chi^2 = 38.92, p = 0.000$). Hypothesis H3 is therefore confirmed.

There are 10.7% teachers who know the Incheon Declaration and the holistic approach, while 41.1% of the respondents do not know either the declaration or the holistic approach. 2.6% of respondents familiar with the declaration do not know the holistic approach. 46.2% of respondents within the unfamiliar group with the Incheon Declaration do not know the holistic approach. The differences between familiar/not familiar respondents with the Incheon Declaration are statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 66.38, p = 0.000$). Hypothesis H4 is rejected as it transpired that it is the opposite - more respondents who are not familiar with the Incheon Declaration are familiar with the holistic approach.

The UNESCO guidelines, which were supplemented with European guidelines, are intended to be a guide in education. They are based on competencies and values that will be important in the future and should be developed and strengthened in children. Respondents defined the extent to which they consider them in their work. They chose between *not consider at all*, *rarely consider*, *sometimes consider* and *always consider*. Most of the answers gravitate towards *always consider*, as in almost all items at least half of the respondents opted for this answer (Figure 1).

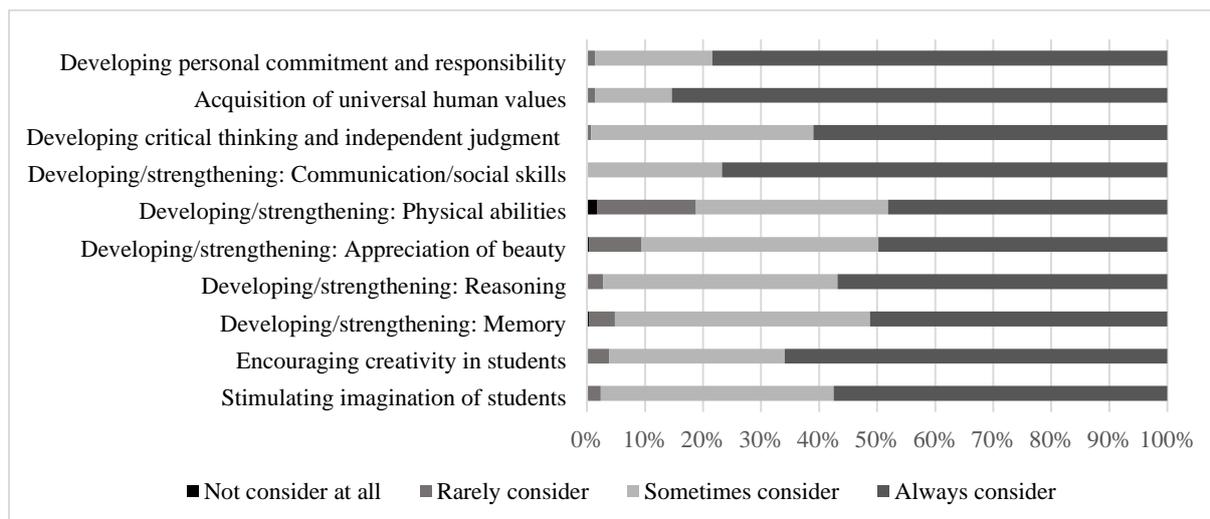


Figure 1: Percentage values of self-assessment of compliance with individual guidelines

As many as 85.4% of respondents always consider the guideline *Acquisition of general human values*, and *Development and strengthening of physical abilities* is least represented (48.1%). The implementation of all guidelines is according to education professionals already happening, regardless

of knowing the documents. We anticipated that those familiar with the Delors Report would follow these guidelines to a greater extent. Table 5 shows the value of the chi-squares of the differences between familiar/not familiar.

Table 5

Chi-square values and statistical characteristics for each guideline

Guidelines:	χ^2	df	p
Stimulating imagination of students	1,290	2	0.525
Encouraging creativity in students	4,008	2	0.135
Developing and strengthening of: Memory	3,251	3	0.354
Reasoning	1,043	2	0.594
Appreciation of beauty	7,227	3	0.065
Physical abilities	5,257	3	0.154
Communication/social skills	1,179	1	0.278
Developing critical thinking and independent judgment	1,945	2	0.378
Acquisition of universal human values	0,012	2	0.994
Developing personal commitment and responsibility	0,540	2	0.763

Table 5 shows that there are no statistically significant differences between education professionals who are familiar/not familiar in any of the items, therefore hypothesis H5 was rejected.

4. Discussion

There is an extremely small number of education professionals in who are familiar with the holistic approach and international documents.

Delors (1996, p. 86) says that education must enable each person to solve their own problems, shape their decisions, and bear their responsibilities. The goals and contents of the curricula are no longer organised

on the basis of individual disciplines, but in an interdisciplinary or holistic manner. Learning outcomes are not only reflected in the results of tests, but also in terms of knowledge, skills, values or competences built into the pillars of learning (Nan-Zhao, 2004).

The first hypothesis was partially confirmed, as only 27% of educational professionals are familiar with the

Delors Report. Older age, longer years of service and the principal position are statistically significant characteristics that correlate with a higher level of knowledge of this document.

Hypothesis H2 was rejected as we assumed that the teachers would identify *learn to be* as the most important pillar for the future. The survival of man will depend on overcoming the tension between the spiritual and the material in the direction of transcending oneself (Šulak 1996, p. 409). This affects all other pillars. Teachers pointed out *learning to live* in just under 52% of the responses. All four pillars are extremely important and equivalent, both today and in the future, when the aforementioned pillars will be joined by the pillar *learning to become* (UNESCO, 2021). As the population grows, it is important that we know how to live together, but the tension between the spiritual and the material, which Šulak (1996) talks about, is deepening. We need to know how to live with ourselves and we need to know how to be. This means that we can exist without all material things, smartphones, computers, etc. and we feel fulfilled, happy, complete, satisfied. This is hard to imagine if we know that 52% of children aged 3–4 years spend an average of 9 hours on devices, and the amount of use is increasing over the years (Burns & Gottschalk, 2019). Studies show that 42% of children aged five use digital devices every day (OECD, 2020) and that the ownership of these devices by children under the age of nine in the EU has increased significantly in just one year (Chaudron et al., 2017, p. 60). In that way a child moves away from himself, as he is constantly *busy* with multimedia content that causes distraction from his inner voice. To truly *be*, children must experience boredom, loneliness, silence, so they can hear their thoughts, develop, and shape them, and get closer to self-realisation and self-transcendence. This will be important for the individual and for the community in the future.

We confirmed the H3 hypothesis - more respondents are familiar with the holistic approach among those familiar with the Delors Report and rejected hypothesis H4 that those familiar with the holistic approach are also familiar with the Incheon Declaration. The trend is going in the negative direction of knowing the holistic approach, which currently indicates an alarming situation in education. Hypothesis H5 sought differences in the observance of European and UNESCO guidelines in the work of teachers among familiar/not familiar with the Delors

Report. Both implement these guidelines to a large extent, but we could not confirm the statistical characteristic and therefore we rejected this hypothesis. Future research should explore how well they understand individual guidelines and the ways in which these are being implemented.

Education systems that are currently most widely used in most European countries are not so openly oriented to allow the free development of imagination, creativity, or a sense of beauty. Some authors criticise existing education systems, arguing that they favour the mind, competitiveness, and achievement of the individual (Dahlberg et al., 20013). Jickling (2009) also states that we have static and rigid education systems that push emotional, aesthetic, and research learning to the margins, and that teachers who are able to transcend the existing system are labelled dreamers or accused of being naive. A child's thought, however, is extremely rich in its imagination and creativity. The stage in which the child has not yet fully internalised speech offers a great opportunity for such development. If we can manage not to judge children as inferior, we can manage to maintain and develop the creativity, imagination and a sense of beauty in children, which they will only develop and internalise in themselves.

The belief behind the idea of a holistic approach is that the student will truly experience the art of being fully human, rather than learning it only as an idea or ideal. Teachers require a considerable amount of sensitivity, responsibility and reflection on learning approaches. They must understand and master the dynamics involved in the value development process (UNESCO, 2002, p. 12).

5. Conclusion

A quarter of a century has passed since the publication of the Delors Report, and it is realistic to expect that in such a long period of time all the key orientations and recommendations covered in the condensed form in the four pillars should have been applied to the educational paradigm. In the research, we found that most educational professionals are not familiar with them. We found that older age, more years of service, and a principal position are statistically significantly associated with knowledge of this document. The newer document from 2015, the Incheon Declaration, is known to only a third of the respondents, and the holistic approach to more than half of the respondents. Teachers are not aware of the importance of the

educational pillar *learning to be*, which is focused on the holistic development of personality through a holistic approach. This clearly indicates extremely low awareness of the deeper importance of this approach. Given this, it would be difficult to say that responses about knowledge of the holistic approach are relevant. We also found statistically significant differences between those familiar with the documents and the holistic approach. Those who are familiar with international documents more often estimate that they also know the holistic approach. Respondents indicated a high level of compliance with international guidelines in their work and there are no statistically significant differences between those familiar/not familiar with the Delors Report.

Delors (1996) recommends the emphasis on the stimulation and development of lateral, creative, critical, independent, and original thinking, but the main activity of teaching is still the transfer of information and data. The pillar *to be* is supposed to strengthen life skills for the 21st century, and balance the mind, spirit, and body.

In accordance with the holistic approach and logopedagogy, that should be implemented in work and not just teaching, educational professionals can give children the most beautiful journey for a lifetime. First, we need to educate them, so they can equip children with the tools that will enable them to coexist in quality, realise their own potential, self-actualise, consider, and treat their fellow human beings equally and make a rich contribution to society, and they will be able to appreciate and respect all of this. By doing so, we make them responsible for themselves and the community in which they live and encourage them to strive to be everything they can be in life.

6. Limitations of Study

The first limitation was the structure of the sample. In the research plan, we wanted to capture all educational roles, but the respondents in our study are mostly teachers, so the sample structure of all respondents is not evenly distributed. Secondly, there could be a larger sample size, although it was not planned in the research plan. With more respondents of each structure group, we could do more precise analysis. Thirdly, there were no existing studies that had been made among educational professionals about the application of and their statements towards holistic or logopedagogic approaches in Slovenia.

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Conflict of interests

Authors declare no conflict of interests.

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