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Competences in Education –Brazilian and Serbian Perspective

Abstract: The goal of this paper is to compare the understanding of the concept of competences in Brazil and Serbia, together with reflecting on the different contexts under which these countries are developing. Theoretical framework provides reflection on the term, concept and approaches related to competences. Comparison is done through the analysis of the relevant scientific papers in both countries, together with the analysis of the educational policies and practice. The main findings reflect on changes in the meaning of the term competence over time, increase in the number of scientific papers that happened in both countries, special interest of authors regarding competences, approaches in defining competences and detecting influences on the concept of competences in Serbia and Brazil.

Keywords: competences, adult education, comparison, Serbia, Brazil.

Introduction

During the past few years, the term competence has gained an important place in the policy and practice of education. It is notable that the term and the concept of competences often occupy the attention of practitioners and researchers in the field of education and as Olesen (2013) said – there is “a competence regime emerging” (p. 153). What is significant for all those involved in education, is the fact that the

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concept of competence leaves a trail at all phases of the educational cycle: in the examination of educational needs, planning educational activities, programming educational content, implementation education and finally in its' evaluation. All these elements of education have experienced a transformation that places an obligation upon us to critically consider the concept of competence and its role.

Accordingly, this paper has two closely related and intertwined parts. The goal of the first part of this paper is in bringing better understanding of the term competence, its constituent elements and basic characteristics. This theoretical framework will be the foundation and the starting point in analyzing the results of the comparison between countries that follows in the second part. The goal of the second part is to compare the understanding of the place and concept of competences in two countries, Brazil and Serbia, together with reflecting on the different contexts under which these countries are developing. Comparison is done through the analysis of the scientific papers that are dealing with competences on the one hand, and on the other hand through the observation of the past and the current issues regarding educational policies and practice in both countries. Finally, we conclude with the most important findings that are deriving from the prior analysis.

Competences – term, components and approaches

In searching for a way to define the concept of competence that would be a good framework for comparison of Serbia and Brazil, we were guided by the opinion that in order to achieve this, we should primarily focus on the quest for its basic elements or its components. Considering the concept of competence, Hébrard (2013) in his discussion on the origin of the term competence argues that “it came from the legal field and was applied primarily to legal proceedings: one court would have jurisdiction over or was competent in judging certain types of conflicts, offences or crimes in a certain geographical area” (p. 112). Therefore, competence in this case is synonymous with jurisdiction (notice that the similar meaning can be found in Brazil and Serbia).

Greater similarity with modern understanding of the term competence occurs at the end of the 17th century. This is evident in the work of Reya, who speaks about competence as the ability which is gained based on our knowledge and experience (Hébrard, 2013, p. 112). Regarding this, three terms that are becoming significant in understanding of competences are: skills, knowledge and experience. Skills, knowledge and experience can also be viewed as the key elements of what we nowadays considering as competences. Remaining within the discussion about the sources of meanings of this term, that have changed over

time, “the meaning that gained ground from the 1990s combines functionalism and psychology, where the emphasis varies a little between the two and which has been applied in different ways” (Olesen, 2013, p. 155).

Defining of competence is accompanied by many difficulties. As it is expected, one can't agree on what competences are. However, for those involved in the field of education, a good guideline towards a better understanding of competences could be in using their relation to the already clearly established concepts in this area, or to use the explanations of the various components of the competence. In this sense, we agree with Hébrard (2013) who argues that “the concept of operationality appears to define competence” (p. 114). Through the analysis of different definitions of competence, the same author proposes “the key features of competence(s): the operationality (implementation in real-life situations), the contextualization (within a given context), the composite character (knowledge, skills, behaviors) and finally the need to prove” (Hébrard, 2013, p. 115). Discussing the constituents of the competence, Olesen (2013) says that it is a concept which presents “the combination of the following attributes: the ability to act successfully, in a complex context, through the mobilization of psychosocial prerequisites (cognitive and non-cognitive), and with results related to the requirements of a professional role or personal project” (p. 155).

In our opinion, from the components that are given by mentioned authors, we can identify certain similarities. First, it is the contextualization and the need to define it as one of the main elements in defining competences. Thus, in the definitions of competence, it happens that often the context in which the competences are applied is given, or the context in which they can be acquired (the emphasis here is on the fact that they must be put in the function). The question of contextualization in determining of competence is finely illustrated by the words of Hébrard (2013) who highlights that “this assumes that the context and the situation where the know-how is put into action are clearly defined” (p. 114). Furthermore, we can underline the following characteristic of competences – it is often seen as a composition consisting of multiple things (most often the knowledge, skills and behavior, or cognitive and non-cognitive prerequisites) and mostly definitions of competence in its *genus proximum* contain words such as set of, integrated set of, complex of, composite and similarly.

Adding to the complexity of the term competence is also the fact that there are different approaches to its definition. Despotović (2010) provides a classification of different approaches to defining competence, which allows us to complement our list of elements that build competences. Despotović discusses the following approaches: 1) personal approach, 2) technical-professional approach, 3) generic approach, 4) educational approach and 5) socio-technical approach.

Starting from the first, personal approach, “competences are often treated as a completely personal (psychological) characteristics that an individual should possess in order to effectively perform certain types of work ...” and “the notion of competence is then, according to its meaning, equalized with the concept of professionalism“ (Despotović, 2010, p. 134). The key elements of competences from the perspective of this approach are the personal characteristics and skills. When it comes to the second or technical-professional approach, as stated “professional competence is often defined as the ability to perform certain activities within a given job or occupation” (Despotović, 2010, p. 134). Unlike the previous approach, which emphasizes personal characteristics, in this approach to determining competences, the importance is given to the already mentioned context or environment in which the competence is performed. The second element here is the ability.

In the third, generic approach, competences are seen as “attributes or multifunctional circuits of knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for all individuals for their self-realization, development and further learning” (Despotović, 2010, p. 133). Contrary to the previous approach, generic competences are independent of a certain profession or occupation; they are common to different occupations. As important components in this definition we can underline the knowledge, skills and attitudes. This is closely related to Hébrards’ definition: “Competences combine and integrate a set of cognitive resources (declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge), socio-affective (attitudes) and sometimes sensory-motor skills, which allow the individual to face certain situations or handle defined tasks” (2013, p. 115).

In the fourth, educational approach, competences are seen as a “composition consisting of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that an individual should develop and adopt, which qualifies person to perform a particular job or occupation” (Despotović, 2010, p. 131). It is notable that besides attitudes, he mentions here behavior and values, which contribute to educational goals and outcomes. Finally, in the fifth or socio-technical approach, competences are defined by means of professional roles. Competences are described as more general, in the terms of the outcomes, rather than in the terms of skills and knowledge, and are common to all professionals (which is a characteristic similar to generic approach).

We can conclude that there are various ways in defining competence that determine if some of the elements or constituents will be added or excluded from the definition. Nevertheless, there are often core elements in understanding competences, and these core elements are knowledge and skills, which are occasionally joined by: attitudes, readiness, skills, values, personality traits or behaviors. In addition, competence is often determined by the objective; it should always lead

to certain results, products, performance of tasks in different roles in which we find ourselves (although it seems to be predominantly linked to the professional/work aspect of human life). Furthermore, not only possession, but also the proof of possession is an important feature of competence (in both cases – regardless of whether it is proved by the certificate, or through a demonstration). Therefore, only when one has the knowledge about something, demonstrates mastery, shows skills to do something, is willing to do it and has an adequate attitude towards doing it, only then can we talk about competence.

This discussion has only provided the basic arguments that can and that should be considered when analyzing competences. For example, we did not reflect on the relationship between the certain elements of competences and the competences themselves, although this could certainly be an interesting research problem. Bearing in mind the fact that the nature of this study does not give the opportunity to consider in detail the different aspects from which we can speak about competence (or specified issues), we have shown the current perceptions of competences which provide a solid foundation for the following comparison.

Serbian and Brazilian perspective on competences – comparative analysis

This paper aims to compare and to discuss the notion of competences in scientific terms in Brazil and Serbia, especially from the perspective of the educational sciences. In order to reach the defined goal, we looked for the collection of papers gathered in Serbian and Brazilian academic databases. Analysis that followed has enabled us to gain insight into the timeline of appearance of competences in scientific circles, to get insights into the term itself and into what is in the center of attention when considering competences in scientific terms. The second question, which is not so much independent of the previous, is concerning legal and political framework. What is it that defines the context in which different questions on competences appear in scientific papers? Accordingly, this raises the question of the place of competences in the Serbian and Brazilian educational systems and policy.

For the purpose of this comparison we analyzed two databases:

- 1) *Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services (COBISS.RS)*, which represents the mutual bibliographic catalogue database and contains nearly three million records of a variety of scientific material (for Serbia);

- 2) *Scientific Electronic Library Online* (SciELO.org), which is an open access online platform of search of indexed and peer reviewed scientific and academic journals (for Brazil).

The term competence was a key word for looking into the scientific papers. A data collection was conducted and after this phase, we separated the results on the following basis: 1) by the year of publishing, 2) the number of papers published in each year or a decade (in the case when there was a significantly small number of papers we sorted them by the decade), 3) by the fields and 4) by the topics and issues discussed within the different fields and with the favoring of those topics that come from the field of education. Only the small number of papers on competence (sorted by years) could be shown in details (Table 1), so we chose the most indicative and the most relevant data for our comparison.

Table 1: Review of scientific papers in Brazil and Serbia regarding competences

Year	Number of papers		Fields		Competences	
	Serbia	Brazil	Serbia	Brazil	Serbiaa.	Brazilb.
2015	35	25	Educational sciences, linguistic	Health, human sciences, applied social sciences, linguistics	Teacher competences, vocational competences, didactic competences, intercultural competences	Vocational competences, career competences, linguistic competences
2014	45	22	Educational sciences, linguistic, HR	Applied social sciences, human sciences, health, biology, engineering	Teacher competences, competences in selection process, social competences, key and vocational competences, research competences, intercultural competences, music competences, ethical competences	Teacher competences, linguistic competences, key competences, critical thinking, social competences
2013	65	28	Educational sciences, linguistic	Health, human sciences, applied social sciences, biology	Social competences, teacher competences, intercultural competences, managerial competences	Key competences, vocational competences, language competences

Year	Number of papers		Fields		Competences	
	Serbia	Brazil	Serbia	Brazil	Serbiaa.	Brazilb.
2012	45	39	Educational sciences, linguistic	Health, social sciences, human sciences, engineering, biology	Teacher competences, social competences, interpersonal competences, civic competences, entrepreneurial competences, key competences	Organizational competences, managerial competences, scientific and technological proficiency, vocational competences
2011	41	27	Educational sciences, linguistic, HR	Nursing, psychology, education, information, communication	Key competences, social competences, teacher competences	Language competence, organizational competence, managerial competence
2010	30	27	Educational sciences, linguistic	Psychology, health, education, history	Teacher competences, didactical competences, methodical competences, career competences, vocational competences	Teacher competences, interpersonal and personal competences, ethical competences, vocational competences
2009	25	15	Educational sciences, linguistic, HR	Nursing, psychology, education	Teacher competences, academic competences, key competences	Key competences, vocational competences
2008	20	13	Educational sciences, linguistic	Education, health, sociology, economy, nursing, nutrition	Social competences, teacher competences	Teacher competences, technological proficiency, vocational competences
2007	23	17	Educational sciences, linguistic	Education, sociology, psychology, health	Key competences, teacher competences, intercultural and social competences	Teacher competences, vocational competences
2006	13	9	Educational sciences, linguistic	Health, sociology, nursing	Teacher competences, managerial competences, vocational competences	Social competences, informational and technological proficiency
2005	14	14	Educational sciences, linguistic	Social sciences, health, engineering	Teacher competences, social competences, didactical competences	Vocational competences, technological proficiency

Year	Number of papers		Fields		Competences	
	Serbia	Brazil	Serbia	Brazil	Serbiaa.	Brazilb.
2004	7	7	Educational sciences, linguistic	Social sciences, health	Teacher competences	Interpersonal competences
2003	6	3	Educational sciences, linguistic	Social and human sciences, health	Curriculum and competences	Social competences
2002	2	7	Educational sciences, linguistic	Health, human sciences	Learning to learn and interpersonal competences	Teacher competences, key competences
2001	1	3	Legal field	Education, health	Spatial planning – Local government	Teacher competences, organizational competences
2000–1991	29	4	Educational sciences, linguistic, legal field	Health, human sciences, biology	Teacher competences, didactic competences, communication competences	Teacher competences, professional competences
1990–1981	17	6	Linguistic, state	Health	Linguistic competences, competence c.of states	Competences for the improvement of the quality of life
1980–1971	4	0	Church, state, linguistic	/	Competences c. of municipality, linguistic competence	/
1970–1961	/	1	(no data)	Health	/	State competence c. for public health
1960–1931	3	/	Legal field, psychology, church, state	/	Colonist competence c., competence c. of state, church, concordat	/

- Data for Serbia are obtained from: COBISS.SR
- Data for Brazil are obtained from: SciELO.org
- Competence = in the earliest papers the term “competence” denoted “jurisdiction” and it should be understood in that context.

In addition, Table 1 presents the main areas from which papers on competences are coming from and the main topics related to competences from the perspective of education and adult education. The results of the comparison are given according to the two problems that were in the focus of our analysis: 1) the first appearance of the term competence in the scientific fields of Brazil and Serbia and its changes over time, 2) the main issues or problems regarding competences, together with the current and the future tendencies in the development of competences in Serbia and Brazil, 3) reflecting the influences of transnational organizations on the concept of competences found in two countries.

Competences in Brazil and Serbia – entering into the scientific field

Our comparative analysis (Table 1) shows that, in Serbia, the earliest scientific publications on competences occur within the legal framework in 1931. In this area, the term competences denotes jurisdiction. In parallel, with this notion of competences, a significant number of papers on competences are coming from the field of linguistics and the term indicates the specific issues related to the structure of language and grammar. As for Brazil, the word competence emerged in academic papers a little bit later, from the 1960s and it was also related with the jurisdiction, but with the accent on the public health services.

A good part of the twentieth century for both countries was marked by the domination of the publications on competences that do not have much to do with education. The first scientific papers from the educational sciences dealing with competence occur at the end of the 20th and early 21st century. From the year 2000 one can see an increase in the number of papers dealing with competences that are coming from the heart of the educational sciences. In this sense, it seems that Serbia and Brazil are following the trend that Hébrard (2013) pointed out: “It has only been recently in the past 20 years, that the use of the term “competence” has become widespread in the area of education and training” (p. 112). According to our analysis a significant number of articles is noticeable since 2005 and we can say that the number of papers dealing with the competences, or papers that as one of their keywords include competences, increases from that year (with the exception a few years). The number of papers that have dealt with competences was the highest in the year 2012 in Brazil and in the year 2013 in Serbia.

In our opinion the reasons for the increase in number of papers, for both Brazil and Serbia, cannot be considered without an understanding of the overall political, economic and educational context of these countries. Further analysis show the tendency of increased use of the term competences in educational poli-

cies during these years, Slight indications of new waves regarding the concept of competences in Brazil can be found in the 1990s with the establishment of the Ten-Year Education Plan by the Ministry of Education. Also, Brazil conducted political reforms in educational laws which were pointed towards universality of education and the individual preparation for a life in changing society.

As for the Serbia, the year 2000 is also important for the system, legislative issues in education and place of competences in Serbia. Competences get their place in the changed role of education, and after year 2000 newer legislative framework regarding education and adult education puts emphasis on the role of education in helping economical growth. Accordingly, there has been a notable shift from the content oriented curriculum, to a competency-based curriculum in all stages of education.

Competences in Brazil and Serbia – the main issues and tendencies

Looking at the main themes, issues, or problems in the papers from Brazil and Serbia, as one of the key words include the term competences, one can notice a wide range of researchers and scientists that come from a different fields and discuss the role of competences in education regarding their professional field. The overall quality of education, in the relation to competences, is discussed separately depending on the level of education and the characteristics of participants. However, currently topical questions which persist over the years and which have received substantial attention, concern: 1) teacher competences, 2) key competences and 3) vocational competences. Because of the frequency of these issues in analyzed papers, we need to have a closer look at the similarities and differences in Serbia and Brazil regarding these competences.

In both countries competences of teachers are considered regarding almost all levels of education, with a slightly higher number of articles dealing with the competence of teachers in the primary and the secondary education. Also, some papers are dealing with competences of teachers who teach a particular subject (for example, nature and society, health, engineering, biology, music education etc.). A certain number of papers deal with the issue of teachers' competences for inclusive education. So even in this specific area of interest, we can see the diversity of issues covered through the prism of competence.

Moving deeper into the analysis of these papers for each country, one can see that in Serbia, a work on competences is often linked directly to insurance, provision and improvement of quality, namely improving the various elements of the quality of education – teachers, textbooks, teaching methods etc. While in

Serbia the focus of analyzed papers is on particular aspects or elements of education, authors from Brazil (Ramos, Di Giorgi 2011; Fartes, 2008; Moraes, Lopes Neto, 2005; Freitas, 2002; Pacheco et al., 2001) are more oriented towards the need for improvement of the process itself. Accordingly, the issues concerning the teacher competences are organized around entering teaching profession and further professional development. Continuing improvement of teaching practice both countries is ensured by development of competences that will enable teachers to cope with everyday challenges in their professional work.

Further, one of the issues that often occur in analyzed papers from Serbia and Brazil concerns key competences. In Table 1, under the term key competences we gathered competences in analyzed papers that are dealing with basic skills, such as reading and/or writing in mother tongue, understanding of spoken or written text and basic numeracy. For the purpose of our comparison, other competences, such as communication, critical thinking, competences for the improvement of the quality of life, social competences, civic competences, entrepreneurial competences and informational and technological proficiency, are given separately in the Table 1. The reason for this can be found in the main theme of papers and the fact that they deal only with these particular competences, while at the same time other competences are not being considered in these papers.

Nevertheless, when viewed together, they undoubtedly show the great interest of authors in Serbia and Brazil for the problem of key competences, especially for the problem of increasing the basic literacy. In our opinion, this is not a surprise when bearing in mind that Brazil and Serbia have in the past put in a great effort in solving the problem of illiteracy and both countries have in this achieved a great success. Even nowadays we are witnessing that the government, in both countries analyzed, invests in activities and projects that are aiming to increase the literacy rate and this is where adult education plays a very important role.

From our comparison it can be seen that, besides key competences, numerous other competences in vocational education and training occupy the attention of researchers from Brazil and Serbia from one year to the next. While key competences are more discussed within the context of formal education, vocational competences are frequently mentioned regarding formal, non-formal and informal education and learning.

When talking about vocational competences, we can notice that Brazilian authors are reflecting on the following: educational policies, policies on the curriculum development, the relationship between the concept of competences and the changes in the world of work, competences and job related trainings for entering a profession, competences for the improvement of work, relations between theoretical and practical knowledge and the problem of the certification of the acquired competences. For authors coming from Serbia, the following issues are

significant: the competence based education, the European qualification framework (EQF), competences in the process of selection, different discourses on competences, competences in relation to a career, quality of education and training, evaluation of competences, curriculum development in vocational education and training (VET), outcomes in VET, standardization of competences. For both Serbia and Brazil there are issues concerning competences that are specific to a certain professions or occupations and there is also a notable number of articles dealing with competences in the context of different job related trainings for employees.

It is interesting to reflect once more on the previous discussion. On the one side, we have the key competences that represents the ability to develop, to live with others, to learn, to work and to fulfil one's potential; on the other side, we have the vocational competences which are usually described as the ability to perform different job tasks and generally to perform well in a professional context. In our opinion, the best way to make a distinction between them is to place them in function of personal development (for key competences) and professional development (for vocational competences), although this distinction should be taken with caution and is made only for the purpose of this analysis. In practice, it is difficult to make a precise cut between them, because they are often intertwined and affect each other.

In our opinion, an important indicator of the direction of further development of the concept of competences in adult education in Serbia and Brazil is the fact that in both countries there is a legislative framework and a practice of merging elementary and vocational adult education. The Brazilian Ministry of Education created a *Decree* that integrates elementary adult education to a vocational adult education, and in Serbia this can be seen through a project *Second Chance – Systemic Development of Elementary Practice Based Adult Education*, which led to the establishment of a new system of elementary adult education with integrated training for a simple occupation. This is important because it shows that the question of key competences and vocational competences nowadays needs to be considered together, as the first is prerequisite for the second to happen.

Competences in Brazil and Serbia – influences of the transnational organizations

In order to provide a better understanding of overall influences that have affected the increase in using the term competence in educational policies and practice in Serbia and Brazil, we should refer to the concept of competences developed by European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP),

the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). These are the institutions with the significant influence on the educational policies on the global level. Discussion about their discourses on competences, in our opinion, can contribute to our analysis because of the great impact that these transnational organizations have on the policies of Serbia and Brazil.

It is interesting to mention that besides already mentioned transnational bodies of influence, Serbia is following recommendations from the EU educational policies. As stated, "Policy development in adult and vocational education in the EU has tended to support the use of generic skills, competence-based standards and learning outcome approaches to education and training" (Canning, 2013, p. 135). Although in the political sense this does not apply to Brazil, if we take a closer look to a philosophy that lays the foundation for these policies and the practice of education that emerges from it, it is clear that they all follow the same trends.

For UNESCO (1990), the concept of competences emerged from the need to meet the challenges of a modern society, where the person confronts the everyday changes in the sphere of family, work, education and leisure. About a decade later, we can notice that there is an increase in Brazilian and Serbian scientific papers that deal with key competences and, starting from there, their number has grown from one year to the next (Table 1). Although UNESCO's documents still refer to competences as a broad spectrum of activities in modern life, in our view the concept of competences is often connected to the world of work as the primary goal. This view is supported by the National Conference on Adult Education (UNESCO, 2014), where the main goal was in promoting life-long education, but while highlighting the need that individuals gain necessary competences that will strengthen their position in the labor market.

We can notice that although UNESCO was oriented towards humanistic goals, such as fulfilling the potentials of individuals, it seems that individual's potentials are nowadays more often described in terms of work. Greater emphasis on the economy and the world of work on the global level also put vocational competences in the first place in discussions on competences in the policies and practice of adult education in Serbia and Brazil, and in the scientific papers regarding competences and education (Table 1).

Orientation towards the labor market is the leading idea of the OECD (2012) view of competences, as they aim to help countries to boost their economy growth, and competences are seen as a means to achieve this goal. In this context, OECD (2005) defined competence in terms of knowledge, attributes, and capabilities that can be learned and which enable individuals to successfully

perform their job and engage in continuous learning. Competence is usually used to refer to a level of performance, which is all close or even similar to definitions given by Serbian and Brazilian authors. Besides the already mentioned, CEDEFOP (2006) offers alternative, interpretative approaches, derived from phenomenology, that see competence not as duality between the work and the worker, but rather as the union in which the worker and the work form one entity through the experience of work.

According to our opinion, the analysis of the discourses on competences provided by the mentioned transnational organizations on the one side, and the comparative analysis of the scientific papers and the practice and politics of education in Serbia and Brazil on the other, offer an insight into their common ground. Such analysis offers one more benefit, and it is in providing an explanation of the observed trends in the concept of competences. We saw that there has been increase in interest of Brazilian and Serbian authors for the issues on teacher competences, key and vocational competences and the themes that are connected with these topics – developing, standardization and evaluation of competences etc. As the interest in these topics follows the similar global tendencies that are observed in the papers and documents published by the transnational organizations, we can argue that it is not just educational policies but also the educational sciences that experience the same influences.

Conclusion

From the comparative analysis on Brazilian and Serbian perspective on competences, together with the previous discussion on the term, concept and approaches to competences, we can conclude the following:

1. *The term competence* in Brazil and Serbia has changed over time; it originally denoted jurisdiction, and a few decades later it started to be mentioned in the sense that is more common to its modern meaning; contemporary view on the concept of competences usually involves a core element such as skills, knowledge and ability, with variations (e.g. values, readiness, personality traits);
2. *Increase in the frequencies of scientific papers on competences* in relation to education has occurred about two decades ago, and this is the case in both countries observed; regarding this, Serbia and Brazil are following the global trends in which “the use of a concept of competence (...) was connected with the operational development of tools meeting

political and economic desires to measure and compare educational performance” (Olesen, 2013, p. 154) in the international context; an overall view shows that change in number of papers is related to changes in educational policies and politics;

3. *Main issues of analyzed papers around competences* from the educational perspective concern teacher competences, key competences (with the accent on the basic literacy) and vocational competences; recent developments in policies and practice of elementary adult education in both countries show that key competences and vocational competences need to be discussed as one entity, rather than exclusively separate issues;
4. *Approaches in defining competences* that can be identified in Brazil and Serbia are predominantly technical-professional approach (Despotović, 2010), as they are oriented towards gaining professional skills, knowledge and attitudes (i.e. vocational competences) and generic approach, or approach that discusses generic competences that are common to persons from different occupations (i.e. key competences); besides this, an educational approach is present, because competences are considered in terms of support to education and training programs, especially in the phase of curriculum design.
5. *Concept of competences is influenced by global trends* and this is also a case in Brazil and Serbia, as “the competence discourse, born in a field of major political interests and tensions, has established itself as a new dominant framework for thinking about education and learning” (Nicoll, Olesen, 2013, p. 107); this is evident in many publications and documents relevant to education, as we saw previously in analyzing OECD, CEDEFOP and UNESCO discourses on competences.

At the end of our analysis, we can notice that there are issues that require further research on this topic and there are even more questions arising from these findings, in comparison to all the questions that we tried to answer. In our comparison of perspectives on competences in Serbia and Brazil, we were more oriented towards finding similarities between them, seeking to discover common ground and origin of the term competences in two countries from very different regions. Although we were also referring to the observed differences, in our opinion, the further comparison should pay more attention to these differences, as it is here that the key to understanding the transformation of the concept of competences on the national and on the global level may lie.

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Kompetencije u obrazovanju – iz brazilske i srpske perspektive

Apstrakt: Cilj ovog rada je da se uporedi razumevanje pojma kompetencija u Brazilu i Srbiji, kao i da se osvrne na različite kontekste razvoja tih dveju zemalja. Teoretski okvir će pružiti osvrt na prirodu termina 'kompetencije', na sam pojam i razne pristupe kompetencijama. Komparacija se vrši uporednom analizom relevantnih naučnih radova iz dveju zemalja, zajedno sa analizom obrazovnih politika i praksi. U glavnim nalazima se osvrćemo na promenu značenja termina 'kompetencije' u proteklom periodu, na porast broja naučnih radova u obe zemlje, na naročito interesovanje autora za pojam kompetencija, te pristupe definisanju kompetencija i uticajima na taj pojam u Srbiji i Brazilu.

Ključne reči: kompetencije, obrazovanje odraslih, komparacija, Srbija, Brazil

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