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STUDENTS' SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THEIR COMPETENCE FOR MAINTAINING PEDAGOGICAL DOCUMENTATION IN PRIMARY TEACHING

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Abstract

Apart from dealing with pupils in class, teachers are required to have a good command of maintaining pedagogical documentation daily, throughout the school year. This way, they carry out all administrative activities that ensure a thoughtfully planned realization of the teaching process. Fundamental competencies needed to perform the job are initially acquired at university and further developed through professional pedagogical practice and work. This paper provides an insight into the self-evaluation of the competence of students, future teachers in primary education to maintain pedagogical documentation and its connection to taking the School Regulation and Documentation course at the Faculty of Teacher Education of the University of Zagreb. The research results indicate that this competence is greater in students who have taken the course, compared to the ones that have not. On the other hand, both groups of students blame the lack of the competence on the inability to apply theoretical knowledge in the teaching practice. All students, nevertheless, acknowledge the importance of enrolling in at least one course related to school administration. They believe such courses enable future teachers to acquire essential skills needed to competently maintain pedagogical documentation upon employment.

Keywords: competencies in maintaining pedagogical documentation, pedagogical documentation/records, primary education teachers, professional development of future teachers (teachers-to-be)

Sažetak

Učitelji su, uz neposredni rad s učenicima u nastavi, dužni poznavati i svakodnevno voditi pedagošku dokumentaciju tijekom školske godine. Time učitelji obavljaju i sve potrebne administrativne poslove kako bi što kvalitetnije planirali i realizirali odgojno-obrazovni proces. Temelji za ovladavanje kompetencijama potrebnim za vođenje pedagoške dokumentacije stječu se prvotno tijekom studija, a usavršavaju stručno-pedagoškom praksom i zaposlenjem. Ovim radom dobit ćemo uvid u samoprocjenu kompetentnosti studenata budućih učitelja primarnog obrazovanja za vođenje pedagoške dokumentacije ovisno o pohađanju kolegija Školski propisi i dokumentacija pri Učiteljskom fakultetu Sveučilišta u Zagrebu. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na veću kompetentnost studenata koji su pohađali kolegij Školski propisi i dokumentacija u odnosu na studente koji navedeni kolegij nisu pohađali. S druge strane, studenti obaju studijskih programa kao glavni razlog nedovoljne kompetentnosti vide nedostatak primjene teorijskog znanja u praksi. Važnost pohađanja barem jednog kolegija koji se odnosi na administrativne poslove škole prepoznali su svi ispitani studenti. Studenti su mišljenja kako takav kolegij omogućuje studentima nastavničkog usmjerenja stjecanje temeljnih znanja pomoću kojih bi kompetentnije pristupili pedagoškoj dokumentaciji pri zaposlenju.

Ključne riječi: kompetencije u vođenju pedagoške dokumentacije, pedagoška dokumentacija, profesionalni razvoj budućih učitelja, učitelji primarnog obrazovanja

INTRODUCTION¹

On a daily basis, teachers face ever greater demands brought on by social, economic, and cultural changes, which is why their competence, responsibility, and dedication throughout the teaching career are of vital importance. To acquire those skills, teachers must constantly strive towards professional development in every part of their work, one of which is maintaining pedagogical documentation and understanding enforced legislative frameworks, regulations, and ordinances related to formal education. It is important to understand that the latter enables a teacher to carry out teaching in a professional, safe, and efficient manner. In their everyday work, teachers face numerous dilemmas (how to make a proper assessment and record it) which is why they must be familiar with the said legislation and know where to find answers (Jurjević Jovanović, Rukljač, Smolković Cerovski, and Urek, 2017).

The importance of maintaining pedagogical documentation has been recognized throughout the world, as seen in numerous research. One such study, carried out in Finland among preschool teachers, aimed to highlight the importance of understanding the proper use of pedagogical documentation. The results showed that using pedagogical documentation advances the teachers' work and facilitates effective communication with parents and children (Rintako-

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rpi, 2016). Research in Serbia revealed contradictions between the perceptions of what pedagogical documentation refers to and the practical experience. The study points to the need for changes in related educational policies (Pavlović-Breneselović, Krnjaja, and Matović, 2012). Sharing experiences among teachers on how they keep pedagogical documentation can be seen as a tool of professional development and advancement of learning and teaching. At the same time, it develops the skills of observing, note-taking, analysis, demonstrating, and reacting to whatever teachers encounter in teaching. Soble and Hogue (2009) researched teachers of secondary education, emphasizing the importance of educational support for teacher beginners, to whom pedagogical documentation not only poses a challenge but a problem, as they simultaneously must rise to challenges of the teaching profession.

At the Faculty of Teacher Education at the University of Zagreb, where this research was carried out, upon completion of a five-year study future primary teachers enter the educational system possessing vast theoretical knowledge which they are expected to demonstrate in practice. This paper aims to point to the importance of equipping future teachers with administrative skills in teaching, specifically, maintaining pedagogical documentation, which is taught as part of the School Regulation and Documentation course at the faculty. Our research examines the self-assessment of the competence for maintaining pedagogical documentation made by students of the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb. Similar research was carried out at the Faculty of Education in Osijek as part of a master's thesis (Kuruc, 2019).

PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE OF A MODERN TEACHER

Teachers' pedagogical competence

Teachers who do not possess adequate competencies in pedagogy simply cannot successfully meet the demands of being a teacher (Đuranović, Klasnić, and Lapat, 2013). To be successful, modern teachers must master pedagogical competence in five areas: the methodology of developing the teaching curriculum, class atmosphere management, assessment of pupil's school achievements, and devising a model of partnership with parents (Jurčić, 2012).

Mijatović (2000) believes that the teachers' pedagogical competence is a professional measure of the quality of their educational impact, founded upon pedagogical education and continuous professional development in pedagogy. Possessing knowledge, skills, and abilities is not enough for us to claim that a teacher is competent. What is essential is to combine said skills to make teachers' impact in education (planning, organization, management, assessment, cooperation, etc.) as efficient as possible (Coldron and Smith, 1999). It is extremely important for teachers to be aware of their competence so that they may – through their work – contribute to their class and school as much as possible.

Pedagogical documentation today

Maintaining pedagogical documentation is prescribed by law and teachers are required to make professional notes (Jurjević Jovanović et al., 2017). For most of the school year, apart from teaching, teachers maintain pedagogical, i.e., administrative documentation. According to Jurjević Jovanović et al. (2017), a form teacher is a teacher whose job is to manage a form/ class regarding the pedagogical, organizational, and administrative management. Pursuant to the Ordinance on Amendments to the Ordinance on Weekly and Work Requirements of Elementary School Teachers and Professional Associates (Official Gazette, No. 102/19), administrative and organizational activities of a form teacher include: holding parent-teacher conferences and other kinds of consultation, planning and carrying out form curriculum, entering pupil information into electronic records (e-Matica, e-Dnevnik, and others), maintaining pedagogical documentation, carrying out activities related to children's enrolment in the first form of elementary school and high school, and the transition from the fourth into the fifth form, managing sessions of the form teachers' council, and other activities related to the realization of school's annual plan and program, and the school curriculum.

Compulsory pedagogical documentation is prescribed by law and several acts (Rađenović and Smiljanić, 2007). Proper and continuous maintenance of pedagogical documentation is an important activity that ensures that every participant of the teaching process receives feedback about the work of teachers, students, and their development. Nowadays, pedagogical documentation is usually maintained electronically, in systems such as e-Dnevnik, e-Matica, and occasionally e-Spomenica. In line with the Ordinance on Pedagogical Documentation and Records and Public Documents in Educational Institutions (OG 76/19), records that must be maintained are: Registry book of pupils, Registry book of pupils entered into the Registry book (Admission register), Form register, Work/supervision Register, School Register, grade transcripts, certificates on bridging tests taken, as well as application, enrollment and release forms, and other records and minutes.

Furthermore, the ordinance prescribes the following pedagogical documentation to be used when needed: forms (a file on pupils enrolled in a religion module outside the school, a register on pupils taking mother tongue and culture classes, an award form, and other recognitions forms for pupil achievements), reports and certificates (end-of-semester report, attendance report, a report on the execution of teaching with a grade transcript for all subjects, an achievement report for the Croatian language exam after prep class). On the other hand, there is documentation related to planning the teaching process – teaching plans and programs by the Ministry of Science and Education, the school's annual plan and program, plans and programs of subjects, associates, principle, as well as the national and school curriculum.

According to Jankovac, Petelin, and Možgon Kauzlarić (2014), school records are maintained at the school level and harmonized with instructions prescribed by law, ordinances, and recom-

mendations by the Ministry of Science and Education, Education and Teacher Training Agency, and professional recommendations.

Legal acts on maintaining pedagogical documentation and records

Teachers' obligation to maintain pedagogical documentation is regulated by the Act on Primary and Secondary Education (OG 87/08) and its amendments (OG 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12, 94/13, 152/14, 07/17, 68/18, 98/19), Ordinance on the Methods, Procedures, and Elements of Assessing Students in Primary and Secondary Education (OG 112/10) and its latest amendments (OG 82/19), and the Ordinance on Pedagogical Documentation and Records and Public Documents in Educational Institutions (OG 47/17) and its latest amendments (OG 76/19).

METHODOLOGY

Research objective

This research aims to examine the difference in the self-assessment of the competence of students – future teachers of primary education – for maintaining pedagogical documentation based on whether they have or have not taken the School Regulations and Documentation course at the Faculty of Teacher Education of the University of Zagreb. The hypothesis is put forward in line with said research aim.

H1: Students, future teachers in primary education, who have enrolled in the School Regulations and Documentations course, assess themselves to be more competent to maintain pedagogical documentation compared to the students who have not taken the course.

Instrument

An existing albeit adjusted questionnaire was used to carry out the research (Kuruc, 2019, 63-65). It comprised 13 questions, 2 of which were open-ended, so the results also included qualitative data. Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the original questionnaires were excluded and replaced by questions on sex and enrolled study program (Questions 1 and 2 in the adjusted questionnaire). Question 6 remained unchanged (Question 3 in the new questionnaire), while in Question 7 (Question 4), "I am not sure" was eliminated from the list of possible responses. Question 8 (5) was modified in line with the enrolled study. Questions 9–13 (6-10) were not altered. Question 14 was excluded. Questions 15 and 16 (11 and 12) were not changed. In Question 17 (13), the School enrollment form was excluded, as was the Work report for PE, extra-curricular activities, additional and remedial classes, Certificate and Grade Transcript, since the way in which these records are maintained has been altered compared to the time when the original questionnaire was devised. Compared to the original questionnaire, e-Dnevnik

documents were divided into e-Imenik, e-Pregled rada, and e-Dnevnik rada. Question 17 (13) examines the command of some documents that excluded the School's annual plan and program, the Monthly program of some subjects, while the Annual plan and program of some subjects and Provisional subject examination timeline were added. Documents that are no longer used in teaching have been excluded from the questions or replaced by documents that are more commonly used by teachers.

Sample

The research included a convenience sample of fifth-year students at the Faculty of Teacher Education at the University of Zagreb, enrolled in study 835 – integrated undergraduate and graduate study of teacher education with English or German (hereinafter: study 835) and study 903 – integrated undergraduate and graduate study of teacher education with modules: Croatian, Computer Science, Art, and Education Science (hereinafter: study 903). Research participants of study 903 enroll in the School Regulation and Documentation course, while in study 835, students are not offered the course. Both study programs include courses in pedagogy, psychology, and didactics, fundamental courses from the field, courses in methodology, and additional modules. Upon completion of both studies, students acquire competencies needed for a comprehensive education of pupils in forms 1–4 (see References: Integrated undergraduate and graduate teacher study with English or German, 2021; Integrated undergraduate and graduate teacher study with modules, 2021). The convenience sample was selected based on the same faculty and correspondence in syllabi of both study programs. There were 75 research participants – 30 (40 %) enrolled in study 835 and 45 (60%) in 903. Of the total number of respondents, 73 were female, and 2 were male.

Procedure

The research was conducted in the 2019-20 academic year, in April. Respondents completed a digital questionnaire, and participation was voluntary and anonymous. General instructions included the research objective and purpose.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The first two survey questions were related to sex and the enrolled study program. The remaining questions examined to what extent the future teachers were familiar and ready to work with pedagogical documentation.

In the third question: "Do you know what pedagogical documentation includes?", 30 students (40%) responded that they did, 41 (55%) said they were not certain, and four (5%) claimed they did not know. Overall, the results indicated that students are largely unaware of what pedagogical documentation entails. On the other hand, of the 30 students who responded

in the affirmative to Question 1, 24 have taken the School Regulations and Documentation course. The percentage of students who did not know what pedagogical documentation includes was the lowest.

In Question 4, students needed to state whether they have been familiarized with pedagogical documentation during their study. The results showed that 61 students (81%) have encountered the documentation, while 14 students (19%) claimed that they have not. Of the total number of the former, 44 students have taken the School Regulations and Documentation course.

In the fifth question, students revealed where they have learned about pedagogical documentation. Most of them (57 students) said they were introduced to documentation while on their professional-pedagogical practice and as part of their core course work (45 responses). A smaller number of students had enrolled in the methodology of a teaching subject (10 students), and an elective course (2). Three students had not had a chance to learn about pedagogical documentation at university. Clearly, students of both study programs were mostly introduced to pedagogical documentation at their placement, as they visited schools. School Practice is a core course offered every year and students are required to actively engage in forms they are assigned to and become familiar with mandatory pedagogical documentation/records.

In Question 6, students were given the possibility to enter the type of documentation they have encountered at whichever course. Accordingly, they were familiarized at their pedagogical practice mostly with e-Dnevnik, pupils' registry book, annual, monthly, and weekly plans and programs, subject teaching plans, and the teaching plan and program. Furthermore, students claimed that the core course School Regulations and Documentation, which is offered as part of the 903 study, was where they were introduced to numerous ordinances, laws, the Collective Agreement, mandatory school documentation (Registry book, Register of Pupils in the Registry Book, Form register, Work register, Name register, School register), school statutes, and the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. In various courses on methodology, students were familiarized with syllabi, as well as with annual and monthly plans and programs. The students also listed electives Choir Singing and Language Games as instances where they had a chance to work with pedagogical documentation, albeit they did not specify which ones. However, 3 respondents claimed they had not encountered any form of pedagogical documentation whatsoever.

Question 7 – "Have you, during your studies, had a chance to take part in exercises on how to maintain pedagogical documentation" – departs from theory and provides insight into the practical application of the competence of maintaining pedagogical documentation. As many as 69 respondents (92%) claimed they had not participated in pedagogical documentation workshops, while 6 respondents had. These results indicate that the practical part of the study has been neglected, regardless of the enrolled study program.

In the eighth question, students could voice their opinion about the need for a core course for all students to prepare them for administrative tasks. All 75 respondents stated that at least one such course is needed.

In the ninth question – "Do you think your professional-pedagogical practice supervisors have adequately familiarized you with pedagogical documentation?" – 57 respondents (76%) answered in the negative, while 18 (24%) responded in the affirmative. Given that the practice is carried out differently across the country, clearly, supervisors' approaches vary.

Question 10 examined whether students were familiar with the Ordinance on Pedagogical Documentation and Records and Public Documents in Educational Institutions (2019). Most students – 48 (64%) have not been familiarized with the 2019 version of said ordinance. On the other hand, 27 respondents (36%) responded that they are aware of the amendments to the ordinance, 23 of whom had attended the School Regulations and Documentation course.

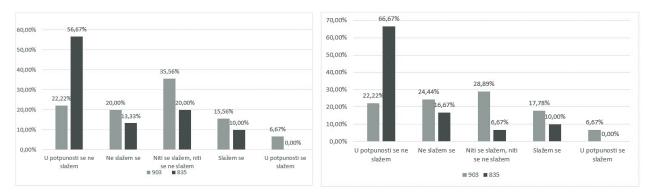
The eleventh question referred to the self-assessment of competence for managing pedagogical documentation/records. According to the obtained results, 69 students (92%) do not believe they are competent enough to independently maintain pedagogical documentation, while 6 (8%) feel they are sufficiently competent to do so.

The students of both study programs demonstrated uncertainty and claimed they lacked the competence needed to independently maintain pedagogical documentation.

The respondents could elaborate on their answer in the twelfth question. The most common negative response related to the lack of practice and experience as an objective reason for insufficient competence. Such responses tell us that students face the fear of the unknown and are subjectively right to consider themselves to be inadequately prepared. On the other hand, the same issue can be traced to core courses, for instance, School Regulations and Documentation, which is run in the 903 study but not in the 835. Students who had taken the course complained about receiving only theoretical knowledge and not gaining practical experience where they could apply the acquired knowledge. Students of the 835 study expressed their hesitance against administrative activities since they had not been able to take the course that would have introduced them to said activities.

Students who said they feel confident enough to independently maintain pedagogical documentation explained that the beginnings are hard, but with time and experience and with the help of more experienced colleagues, they were able to learn a lot. Negative responses and fear of the unknown can be linked to the need for a core course in both study programs (903 and 835) so as to provide students with full support in mastering the administration-related content. On the other hand, future teachers must be familiarized with the rights and obligations entailed in ordinances and laws so that they could know what to do in specific situations and how to respond in an adequate and timely manner.

The final question responses showed to what extent students are competent. They completed a pedagogical record by opting for an answer on a 5-point Likert scale.



Figures 1 and 2 Competence to complete the Registry book of pupils, Registry book of pupils entered into the Registry book (Admission register)

Results shown in Figure 1 indicate that a large percentage of students of study program 835 completely disagree with the statement compared to the students of study program 903. On the other hand, most students that have taken the School Regulations and Documentation course agree and completely agree with the claim, compared to students that have not taken the course.

The obtained results in Figure 2 show that more study programs 835 students completely disagree with the claim compared to students from the other study program. A greater percentage of study 903 students also agree and completely agree.

Figure 3 illustrates that a larger percentage of students who have not taken the School Regulations and Documentation course completely disagree with the claim compared to students who have attended the course. A greater percentage of students of the study program 903 agree with the claim, while a slightly higher percentage of students of study program 835 completely agree. The data in Figure 4 does not indicate a substantial difference between students of various study programs.

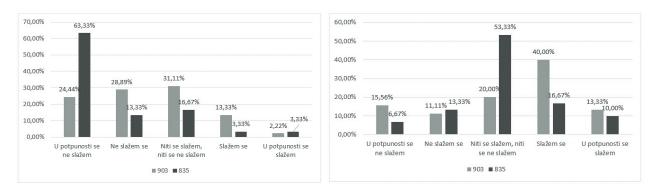
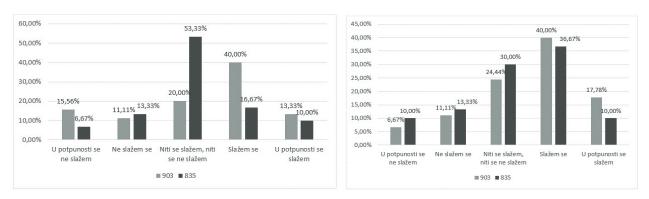


Figure 3 and 4 Competence to complete e-Matica and the Name Register of pupils

The result analysis based on study programs involved reveals that students of study 835 demonstrated greater uncertainty by opting for "I neither agree nor disagree". Compared to them, a larger share of 903 students agrees and completely agree with the claim.



Figures 5 and 6 Competence to complete the Work outline and Work Register

Figure 6 does not point to a substantial difference between 835 and 903 students.

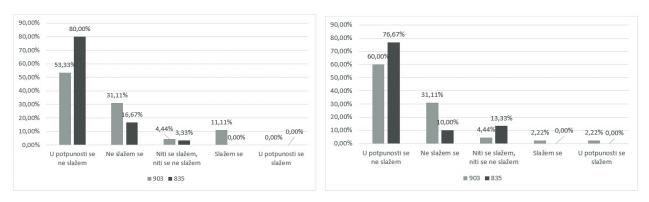
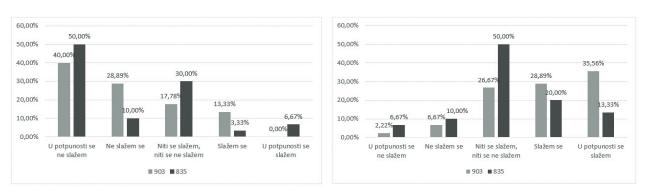


Figure 7 and 8 Competence to complete a School release form / Application form and Minute form for taking a form/subject/bridging program test.

Figure 7 results indicate that most students are not familiar with said documents, regardless of the study program. Only 11 percent of 903 students agreed with the statement.

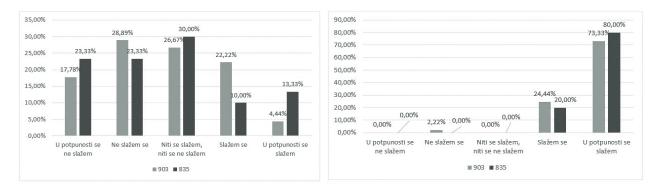
Based on study programs (Figure 8), students of both study programs largely completely disagreed with the statement.



Figures 9 and 10 Competence to complete Individual plan and program of professional teacher development and the competence to draw up an Annual plan and program for teaching subjects

Figure 9 illustrates an even uncertainty concerning said documents. A small percentage of students agreed and completely agreed with the statement.

Figure 10 results show that a large share of positive responses came from students that have taken the School Regulations and Documentation course.



Figures 11 and 12 Competence to draw up the School curriculum and competence to devise lesson plans

The results point to an equal percentage of complete disagreement and disagreement in both study programs. There is no significant difference between the two groups of students. A larger percentage of 903 students agreed with the statement, while 835 students, for the most part, completely agreed. Figure 12 does not reveal greater differences between students of the two studies.

DISCUSSION

The research has attempted to see if students believe they are competent enough – upon completion of their study – to carry out administrative activities related to teaching. The difference among students of the Faculty of Teacher Education who participated in the research lies in their participation, or lack thereof, in the School Regulations and Documentation course. A hypothesis was put forward – students who have taken the said course are more competent than the ones who have not. The results showed that study program 903 students possess a greater scope of fundamental understanding of pedagogical documentation, most of which they have acquired at the aforementioned core course. Qualitative research data point to a lack of practice in completing and maintaining pedagogical documentation, in both studies. In other words, most students, regardless of their study program, do not have a chance to complete pedagogical documentation during their studies, which they also list as being one of the main reasons for lacking confidence competence. Furthermore, all respondents agree that there is a need for at least one core course which would introduce students to maintaining pedagogical documentation. Question 13 responses indicate that students who have taken the School Regulations and Documentation course for the most part believe themselves to be more competent than students who have not had the course.

Based on the research results, the hypothesis is hereby confirmed.

CONCLUSION

The research results obtained in this paper show a greater competence for maintaining pedagogical documentation in students that have previously received training as part of the School Regulations and Documentation course at the Faculty of Teacher Education at the University of Zagreb. This confirms the hypothesis put forward for this research. Most future teachers claim that it is essential for them to apply what they have learned about pedagogical documentation in a practical exercise as part of the course or during their teaching placement. Having at least one course that deals with the teachers' administration is what all the respondents deemed necessary, which is in line with current literature in the field (Coldron and Smith, 1999; Jurjević Jovanović, Rukljač, Smolković Cerovski and Urek, 2017; Soble and Hogue, 2009). Future teachers estimated that this kind of study organization might result in a more positive self-assessment of competence and a successful approach to future employment tasks. Contemporary research supports and supplements our research results, claiming that such competencies will have an impact on better relations among all participants of the teaching process (Rintakorpi, 2016). Given et. al (2009) stated that practical exercises in such courses would ensure future teachers develop by exchanging experiences amongst themselves and professors, regardless of whether this takes place at university or schools.

Given the results obtained in the research, the authors of this paper suggest that similar studies be made to determine the quality of study programs for future teachers. The authors wish to place special emphasis on the importance of providing one or several courses such as School Regulations and Documentation, at which students can acquire fundamental teaching competencies, the competencies needed to handle teaching administration. Research conducted by Pavlović-Breneselović, Krnjaja, and Matović (2012) showed that sometimes changes within the entire educational policy must be considered. In any case, teacher education studies must focus on enabling future teachers' optimal achievement of learning outcomes, which in large part refers to the competence to maintain pedagogical documentation. Said competence is further developed during practical activities related to the theory provided in the aforementioned and similar courses.

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