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**Original
research paper**

Why Should We (Not) Research Our Own Practice: The Perspective of Practitioners in Education[2]

Extended summary

In this paper practitioner research is recognized as a response to the need for a continuous professional development, the need for diversifying the forms of professional development, but also for overcoming the disadvantages of traditional professional development activities (for example trainings). Practitioner research is organized around a problem that the practitioner observes in the context of his/her practice, and that is relevant to him/her, and implies that the practitioner-researcher actively examines such a problem through the integration of theoretical and experiential knowledge and by constructing his/her own theories. Starting from the fact that practitioner research is increasingly becoming recognized as a form of professional development that truly contributes to the development of educational practice, but that research performed by practitioners are still scarce in Serbia, the goal of our study is to investigate the practitioners' perspective on the reasons for an insufficient representation of practitioner research and to explore their ideas on how to overcome this problem.

The data were collected during an online conference dedicated to professional development in the field of education which gathered 157 teachers and professional associates. The corpus of the data for the analysis consists of participants' posts on the Padlet platform: 156 posts related to the question on the shortcomings of practitioner research in relation to other forms of professional development, and 106 posts regarding the ways of supporting colleagues to overcome the aforementioned shortcomings. The data were analyzed by applying induc-

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tive qualitative content analysis, supported by the use ofthe MAXQDA 2020 software. The unit of analysis was the statement as the smallest unit that carries meaning, regardless of the fact whether it is a part of a sentence, a sentence, or a post as a whole. The manifest meanings of the statements were coded, and the process of open coding was first carried out independently by two researchers (authors of the paper). In the next phase, through dialogue and reflection, the researchers selected, reorganized and named the codes, and later on grouped them into categories.

The results of the survey show that practitioners recognize the importance and the role of research for their own professional development and for the improvement of practice, but at the same time they perceive numerous and diverse obstacles to the realization of these researches. They see the reasons for the low representation of research in a low motivation for this type of professional development among the practitioners, as well as in the obstacles that exist at the institutional level (lack of cooperation and support in the school or preschool), at the educational system level (high competitiveness of teaching roles, teachers being overloaded with administrative tasks, lack of opportunities for presentation of research and lack of visibility of this research), and at the level of society (insufficient social recognition of value of practitioner research, insufficient external incentives). The paths to overcome these obstacles are recognized by the participants in highlighting the benefits of practitioner research, taking responsibility for the development of their own practice and developing themselves as researchers, as well as in building a community of practitioners-researchers. It can be noted that the responses of the participants indicate that the practitioner research is recognized primarily as a collaborative practice, which is in line with the contemporary theoretical understandings.

Based on the obtained data, it can be concluded that, if we want practitioners to do more research, a systemic support to improving the position of practitioner research and improving practitioners as researchers is necessary in the educational system of Serbia. The aforementioned findings indicate that if we want to develop practitioner research, it is necessary to reposition practitioner research in relation to other forms of professional development, reposition roles of a researcher in relation to other professional roles, as well as to reposition the position of practitioners in the education system.

Keywords: teacher as researcher, reflective practitioner, improvement of educational practice, professional development

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