Croatian Journal of Education Vol.20; Sp.Ed.No.1/2018, pages: 11-23 Original research paper Paper submitted: 18<sup>th</sup> January 2018 Paper accepted: 7<sup>th</sup> February 2018 <u>https://doi.org/10.15516/cje.v20i0.3059</u>

# How to Introduce Change to Classroom Management and Discipline

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## Abstract

Classroom Management and Discipline (CMD) is an important area of teaching for which, according to teachers' assessment, they have not being adequately trained. Reflective practice is considered an effective approach to classroom management and discipline, and enables a critical reflection on educational practice. Instead of focusing exclusively on implementing a classroom management strategy, by adopting reflective practice the teacher raises awareness of different ways of thinking, behaving and acting. The teacher also identifies opportunities for introducing changes to educational practice and develops professionally. Taking into account that the process of (self-) reflection is demanding, that the knowledge and experience of Croatian teachers in how to implement reflective practice and introduce changes is insufficient, it is assumed that the Reflective Practice Guide can strongly support both its implementation and the teachers' professional development. The aim of this paper was to establish the correlation between the self-assessment of teachers' professional competence in classroom management and discipline on the one hand, and the self-assessment of the support provided by the Guide on the other. The purpose of the Guide is to introduce changes in practice in line with the stated level of awareness of reflective practice in the reflection-on-reflection stage. A total of 111 classroom and subject teachers participated in the study. A professional development seminar was organized for teachers (the agenda was announced on the official website of the Education and Teacher Training Agency). The teachers attended a plenary lecture on classroom management and discipline and a workshop on reflective practice, and implemented reflective practice in their classrooms for a month using the Guide as support. Research results indicate that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the self-assessment of professional competence in classroom management and discipline and the selfassessment of the support provided by the Reflective Practice Guide in the following

elements: support for reflective thinking, documenting practice and introducing improvements in practice among respondents who expressed a positive attitude towards applying reflective practice. It can be concluded that the Reflective Practice Guide is an appropriate and potentially important form of support for introducing change in classroom management and discipline in the educational practice and for raising teachers' awareness and understanding of the role they play in introducing change.

**Key words:** *Classroom Management and Discipline; reflection-on-reflection; Reflective Practice Guide.* 

## Introduction

Classroom Management and Discipline (CMD) is a key area of teacher education that enables "the creation of a positive learning environment" (Vizek Vidović et al., 2014, p. 305) and the development of good relationships between the participants in the educational process (Walters & Frei, 2013). However, studies show that inefficient classroom management and discipline develops into a chronic illness of the teaching profession and poses a potential danger of leaving the profession (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Koludrović et al., 2009; Rosenow, 2013; Walters & Frei, 2013). Additionally, teachers assess that they have not been sufficiently trained for CMD both during their regular education and during vocational training. The (in)effectiveness of the CMD training program is also stressed (Bilač, 2016; Ferraro, 2000; OECD, 2014; Vizek Vidović et al., 2005, 2011). One of the causes of inefficient classroom management are certainly global changes in the society, which have had a major impact on "a general crisis of education and values, and also on the crisis of the value of education within the school system" (Razum, 2008, p. 857), and the dynamic and complex classroom of the 21st century (Larrivee, 2000, p. 293). Despite significant changes, dynamics, dilemmas and challenges of today's classroom, teachers' approach to CMD in practice has not changed significantly in recent decades. Preparing, planning and thinking about CMD are largely neglected. Practice shows that the approach to CMD is largely based on implementing management strategies (taught at professional training seminars), but without understanding the classroom context, critical thinking about practice, their own beliefs and mistakes. The literature stresses the importance of reflection which is considered a neglected aspect of CMD (Hedberg, 2009; Walters & Frei, 2013). The contemporary approach to classroom management implies critical reflection, planning, reviewing, evaluating, and introducing positive changes in educational practice. In this context, the model of implementation in practice and the necessity of providing support in order to introduce changes are also being discussed. Therefore, a stimulus for the research is a search for answers to the question of how changes can be introduced to CMD. The overall results could also be an indicator of how to develop quality educational practice. Reflective Practice (RP) is one of the best-known concepts of teachers' professional development (Ferraro, 2000; Larrivee & Cooper, 2006; Singh, 2000; Thompson & Pascal, 2012; Vizek Vidović, 2011). Reflective Practice (RP) is defined in this paper as "a continuous process based on reflective thinking and

learning from experience on the basis of which the teacher plans, performs, evaluates, changes and documents his own practice; using new ideas he develops creativity, and by applying them, he introduces innovation" (Bilač, 2016, p. 3). The importance of RP is also confirmed by the fact that the goal of most teacher education programs around the world is to train them for assuming the role of a reflective practitioner (Larrivee, 2008). Relevant and recent theoretical knowledge and research confirm the importance of RP for introducing positive changes in CMD's educational practice (Hrevnack, 2011; Larrivee, 2000, 2005; Vizek Vidović, 2011; Walters & Frei, 2013). Applying RP enables teachers to learn from a deeper understanding of their own professional experience (Ferraro, 2000; Jones, 2009; Larrivee, 2000, 2008; Loughran, 2002; Schön 1983; Thompson & Pascal, 2012) which paves the way for changing their own practice, beliefs, the way they usually work, correcting their faults and introducing improvements in their practice. It is assumed in this paper that RP can be the key support for introducing changes to CMD. Taking into account the fact that the process of (self-)reflection is demanding and that the knowledge of Croatian teachers on RP is insufficient, it is assumed that the RP Guide could be an important factor in its implementation and additionally correlated to the self-assessment of professional competence in CMD. In line with the aforementioned, the research problem was defined. The research aimed to establish whether there is a correlation between the self-assessment of professional competence in CMD and the self-assessment of the support provided by the RP Guide after implementing RP (stage: reflection-on-reflection). Finally, the aim of the research is: to establish the correlation between the self-assessment of the teacher's professional competence in CMD and the self-assessment of satisfaction with the support provided by the RP Guide in accordance with the stated level of respondents' awareness of the RP in the reflection-on-reflection stage.

## Methodology

## Hypotheses

To address the defined research problem, one main and four auxiliary hypotheses were formulated and investigated.

H1. There is a positive correlation between the self-assessment of professional competence in classroom management and discipline and the elements of satisfaction with the Reflective Practice Guide after the reflection-on-reflection stage with changes identified in:

1.1. the way of looking at one's own practice,

- 1.2. beliefs in one's work,
- 1.3. the usual way of doing things,

1.4. the ways of discovering faults in one's own work.

## **Research Participants and Procedure**

The research was conducted on a non-probabilistic sample of classroom and subject teachers (N = 111) who were motivated to introduce change in practice (who applied at

their own initiative for professional development which was advertised on the Education and Teacher Training Agency website and who opted for the implementation of RP in their classrooms). The participants attended a plenary lecture on CMD and a workshop on the RP Guide and how to use it. After the training, the participants implemented RP in their classrooms with the support of the RP Guide. After implementing the RP, in the reflection-on-reflection stage, they filled out a questionnaire self-assessing their professional competence in CMD with the support provided by the RP Guide.

### **Research Instruments**

The research participants completed a questionnaire to self-assess professional competence in classroom management and discipline and the implementation of RP (Kember et al., 2000, adapted by Bilač, 2016) and the satisfaction with the RP Guide (Bilač, 2016). The statements were assessed on a five-point Likert type scale. After a one-month RP implementation period, the participants self-assessed RP in the reflection-on-reflection (ROR) stage.

#### Table 1

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	SELF-ASSESSMENT OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE Questions for reflection-on-reflection (ROR)
ROR 1	After training and implementation of reflective practice, I have changed the way I look at my own practice.
ROR 2	As a result of training and implementation of reflective practice, <b>I have changed my own</b> beliefs in my work.
ROR 3	As a result of training and implementation of reflective practice, <b>I have changed my usual</b> way of doing things.
ROR 4	During training and implementation of reflective practice, I have <b>discovered faults</b> in my own work which I had previously believed to be right.

Self-assessment of implementing reflective practice

Source: Kember et al., 2000 (adapted by Bilač, 2016, p. 60).

To research the satisfaction with using the RP guide, the measurement scale consisted of six questions on the use, usefulness and evaluation of the proposed RP Guide.<sup>1</sup>

#### Table 2

Self-assessment of satisfaction with the Reflective practice (RP) guide
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		SELF-ASSESSMENT OF SATISFACTION WITH THE RP GUIDE
		Questions on satisfaction with the RP Guide (SG)
SC	G 1	I used the Reflective Practice Guide when I was implementing Reflective Practice.
SC	G 2	The Reflective Practice Guide helped me to implement the reflective practice.
SC	G 3	Questions in the Guide helped me in <b>reflective thinking</b> .
SC	G 4	The Reflective Practice Guide helped me to <b>document</b> my own practice.
SC	G 5	The Reflective Practice Guide helped me to <b>introduce improvements</b> in my own practice.
SC	G 6	I would recommend RP Guide to others.

Source: Bilač, 2016, p. 61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The first question (SG1) was excluded from the analysis since all the participants used the Reflective Practice Guide when implementing the reflective practice.

## Methods of Data Processing

The analysis of collected data was performed using descriptive statistical analysis and correlation analysis (Spearman's correlation coefficient) for the observed variables in relation to reflection-on-reflection (ROR).

## **Results and Discussion**

The answers to the questions on the effects of ROR on the observed aspects of reflective practice implementation (3), and accompanying support and satisfaction with the implementation of the RP Guide in the process (4) are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

#### Table 3

Responses to the questions for reflection-on-reflection (ROR) (N = 111)

		ROR1 (way of looking at practice)	ROR2 (changed beliefs in work)	ROR3 (changes in the usual way of doing things)	ROR4 (discovering faults)
N	Valid	111	111	111	111
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.84	3.85	3.80	3.72
Std. D	eviation	.626	.741	.711	.788
Minim	um	2	2	2	2
Maximum		5	5	5	5

Source: Adapted from Bilač, 2016.

After the training and implementation of the RP and with the support of the RP Guide, teachers assessed the changes to their own beliefs in their work the highest (3.85), followed by changes to the way they look at their own practice (3.84), the usual way of doing things (3.80), and discovering faults in their own work previously believed to be right (3.72). It can be concluded that the implementation of RP is assessed as being positive both in the sense of improving one's own practice and in the sense of professional development.

#### Table 4

Responses to the questions on the satisfaction with the RP Guide (SG)<sup>2</sup> (N = 111)

		SG2 (support for implementing RP)	SG3 (support for reflective thinking)	SG4 (support for documenting practice)	SG5 (support for introducing improvements into practice)	SG6 (recommending the Guide to others)
	Valid	111	111	111	111	111
Ν	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.86	4.02	3.65	3.96	4.29
Std. D	eviation	.883	.894	.921	.914	.802
Minimum		1	1	1	1	1
Maxin	num	5	5	5	5	5

Source: Adapted from Bilač, 2016.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The first question SG1 (using the Guide to implement Reflective Practice) was excluded from the analysis since all the participants used the Guide when implementing the reflective practice.

The highest mean value (4.29) refers to recommending the RP Guide to other teachers, and the lowest (3.65) to the support provided by the RP Guide in documenting the practice. Relatively high grades and homogeneous mean values show the respondents' satisfaction with the RP Guide in the implementation of RP and the importance of providing support for teachers during the implementation of reflection. In order to determine the significance of the relationship between the selfassessment of professional competence in CMD and the satisfaction with the RP Guide with respect to reflection-on-reflection (ROR), the correlation analysis (Spearman's correlation coefficient) was performed for the observed variables. Given a relatively small number of respondents and the fact that as many as 65% of them agree (4) and completely agree (5) with statements regarding reflection-on-reflection (ROR), frequency response is used to group the respondents. The first group (disagreement category) included respondents who, on the Likert scale, rated their attitude with 1 (I completely disagree) and 2 (I disagree), the second group (*indifference category*) included respondents who rated their attitude with 3 (I neither agree nor disagree) and the third group (agreement category) includes respondents who rated their attitude with 4 (I agree) and 5 (I completely agree). The attitudes of the three groups of respondents were analyzed in terms of the ROR elements (changed way of looking at practice (ROR1), changed beliefs in work (ROR2), changes in the usual way of doing things (ROR3), and discovering faults in their own work (ROR 4)) and the agreement category.

Table 5 shows that there is a weak positive correlation between the self-assessment of satisfaction with professional competence in CMD and the self-assessment of satisfaction with the RP Guide in the category *changing the way of looking at practice* for respondents in category 3 for the following elements of the Guide: support for reflective thinking (SG3), support for documenting practice (SG4), introducing improvements into practice (SG5) and recommending the Guide to others (SG6).

There is no correlation for the item support of the RP Guide for implementing RP (SG2). In categories 1 and 2 (disagreement and indifference) there is no correlation. Given the results, the hypothesis H1.1. on the existence of correlation between the self-assessment of professional competence in CMD and the elements of satisfaction with the RP Guide in CMD with the confirmed change of looking at one's own practice (ROR1) can be accepted.

Table 6 shows there is a weak positive correlation between the self-assessment of satisfaction with professional competence in CMD and the self-assessment of satisfaction with the RP Guide in the category *changing one's own beliefs* in the category 3 respondents (agreement) for the following elements of the Guide: support for reflective thinking (SG3); support for documenting practice (SG4); support for introducing improvements into practice (SG5) and recommending the Guide to other teachers (SG6). There is no correlation with the support of the RP Guide in implementing RP (SG2).

#### Table 5

Correlation between the self-assessment of satisfaction with professional competence in CMD (SPC) and satisfaction with the RP Guide<sup>3</sup> in "the way I look at my own practice" category (Values of Spearman's Coefficient of Correlation)

ROR 1 (changing the way c at practice) 1. disagreement (N=	:5),	<b>SPC</b> 1.	<b>SPC</b> 2.	SPC 3. agreement
2. indifference (N=1 3. agreement (N=8		disagreement	indifference	5. agreement
SG2		.361	.142	.188
Support of the Guide for	р	.550	.586	.077
mplementing RP	Ň	5	17	89
5G3		.412	.274	.297**
Support for reflective	р	.490	.287	.005
hinking	N	5	17	89
5G4		.351	006	.351**
Support for documenting	р	.562	.983	.001
practice	N	5	17	89
5G5		.361	.309	.247*
Support for introducing	р	.550	.228	.019
improvements	N	5	17	89
5G6		.361	.270	.237*
Recommending the	р	.550	.295	.025
Guide	N	5	17	89

\* p< .05 \*\* p< .01

Source: adapted from Bilač, 2016.

#### Table 6

Correlation between the self-assessment of satisfaction with professional competence in CMD and the self-assessment of satisfaction with the RP Guide in the category changes in one's own beliefs in one's work

ROR 2 (changes in beliefs 1. disagreement	,	SPC	SPC	SPC
2. indifference ( l 3. agreement (N	N=25),	1. disagreement	2. indifference	3. agreement
SG2		296	.227	.215
Support of the Guide for	р	.628	.275	.054
implementing RP	N	5	25	81
SG3		181	.367	.307**
Support for reflective	р	.770	.071	.005
thinking	N	5	25	81
SG4		.135	.265	.324**
Support for	Р	.828	.201	.003
documenting practice	Ν	5	25	81
SG5		.296	.285	.277 <sup>*</sup>
Support for introducing	р	.628	.167	.012
improvements	N	5	25	81
SG6		296	.342	.273 <sup>*</sup>
Recommending the	р	.628	.095	.014
Guide	N	5	25	81

\* p< .05 \*\* p< .01

Source: adapted from Bilač, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Complete questions on the RP Guide are given in Table 2.

In categories 1 and 2 (disagreement and indifference), there is no correlation. Hence, the hypothesis H 1.2. on the existence of a positive correlation between the self-assessment of professional competence in CMD and the elements of satisfaction with the RP Guide in CMD with the established changes in beliefs (ROR2) can be accepted.

#### Table 7

Correlation between the self-assessment of satisfaction with professional competence in CMD and the self-assessment of satisfaction with the RP Guide in the category established changes in the usual way of doing things

ROR 3 (changes in the usual w doing things) 1. disagreement (N=5), 2. indifference (N=26), 3. agreement (N=80)	vay of	<b>SPC</b> 1. disagreement	<b>SPC</b> 2. indifference	<b>SPC</b> 3. agreement
SG2		.152	028	.204
Support of the Guide for	р	.807	.894	.070
implementing RP	Ν	5	26	80
SG3		186	.138	.299**
Support for reflective	р	.764	.503	.007
thinking	Ν	5	26	80
SG4		.028	.056	.351**
Support for documenting	р	.965	.786	.001
practice	Ν	5	26	80
SG5		304	060	.325**
Support for introducing	р	.619	.772	.003
improvements	N	5	26	80
		304	.116	.246 <sup>*</sup>
SG6	р	.619	.571	.028
Recommending the Guide	N	5	26	80

\* p< .05 \*\* p< .01

Source: adapted from Bilač, 2016.

It is also clear that in the category of established changes in work there is a weak positive correlation between the satisfaction with the professional competence and all the elements of the RP Guide except in the element of the RP Guide which refers to its support in implementing RP. Hence, the hypothesis H 1.3. on the existence of a positive correlation between the self-assessment of professional competence in CMD and the elements of satisfaction with the RP Guide in CMD with the established changes in the usual way of work (ROR3) can be accepted.

Finally, the results of the correlation analysis of the self-assessment of satisfaction with professional competence in classroom management and discipline (SPC) and the self-assessment of satisfaction with the RP Guide in the category of discovering faults in one's own work show very interesting results. As in previous categories, in the third category there is a statistically significant correlation between the satisfaction with professional competence and all the elements of the RP Guide (except for SG2);

however, it is interesting to note that in this category a statistically significant difference has also been confirmed in the second category of respondents (indifference) in the area of changing beliefs, i.e. developing reflective thinking and documenting one's own practice. These results show that even the participants who were not clear on their attitude to their satisfaction with their professional competence in CMD have made a positive shift. Thus, the hypothesis H 1.4., stating there is a positive correlation between the self-assessment of professional competence in classroom management and discipline and the elements of satisfaction with the RP Guide in discovering faults in one's own work (ROR 4), can be accepted.

#### Table 8

Correlation between the self-assessment of satisfaction with professional competence in CMD (SPC) and the selfassessment of satisfaction with the RP Guide in the category of "discovering faults in one's own work"

ROR 4 (discovering faults in one work)	e's own			
1. disagreement (N=8), 2. indifference ( N=30), 3. agreement (N=73)		<b>SPC</b> 1. disagreement	<b>SPC</b> 2. indifference	<b>SPC</b> 3. agreement
SG2		.088	.284	.207
Support of the Guide for	р	.835	.129	.079
mplementing RP	Ν	8	30	73
5G3		.234	.417	.292 <sup>*</sup>
Support for reflective thinking	р	.577	.022	.012
	Ν	8	30	73
5G4		.272	.381	.304**
Support for documenting	р	.515	.038	.009
practice	Ν	8	30	73
5G5		.385	.270	.344**
Support for introducing	р	.347	.149	.003
mprovements	Ν	8	30	73
5G6		.151	.177	.348**
Recommending the Guide	р	.722	.350	.003
	N	8	30	73

\* p< .05 \*\* p< .01

Source: adapted from Bilač, 2016.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that the RP Guide is an appropriate and potentially important form of support for the implementation of RP in CMD, as confirmed by the respondents, which was expressed by the relatively high grades. The highest average rating (4.29) refers to the statement on the recommendation of the RP Guide to other teachers when implementing the RP. The participants confirmed that the RP Guide is an important form of support for teachers in terms of improving their own practice and professional development. A positive correlation between the self-assessment of professional competence in classroom management and discipline and satisfaction with the RP Guide was established in the categories: introducing change in the way of looking at one's own practice, in the beliefs in work, in the usual way of doing things and discovering faults in one's own work. The research results also imply that teachers have raised awareness of an effective model of changing practice (reflective practice), an area which is important for introducing changes (way of looking at one's own practice, beliefs in work, the usual way of doing things and discovering faults in one's own work) and, in the end, the importance of their role in changing the practice of CMD. In this regard, research results can be an excellent starting point for developing quality in CMD and point to the importance of investing in professional development of teachers as a key factor for introducing change.<sup>4</sup>

### **Research Limitations and Guidelines for Future Research**

The results of this research are indicative and point to improvements that can be introduced into practice but, as with other research, there are certain limitations. The research focuses on self-assessment of professional competence in CMD while other aspects of CMD have not been investigated. In addition, the respondents' selfassessment cannot be considered a fully objective indicator, because, given the fact that the teachers were motivated to participate in the research, there is a possibility they were subjective. The number of respondents (N = 111) who participated in the research is relatively small. According to the research results, but also considering the above-mentioned limitations, certain guidelines for future research can be suggested. For example, future research should focus on researching the connection between professional competence in classroom management and discipline and the RP Guide after using the Guide for a longer period of time, e.g. one year. It would be particularly useful to conduct the research on a larger sample of teachers and to investigate the connection between different educational professionals (educators, elementary school teachers, high school teachers). One of the guidelines for future research is certainly researching the observed variables with additional education, but only after applying it in practice for one month during which the respondents would deepen their reflections and questions on the observed problem. The relationship between the self-assessment of professional competence and the RP Guide should also be researched in other areas of teaching (e.g. teaching strategies, monitoring and evaluation, co-operation with parents, classroom activities, inclusion). Finally, future research needs to identify the levels of reflection in practice and include students' selfassessment of change and improvement.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Note: This paper (*How to introduce change to classroom management and discipline*) is based on data collected in research conducted for a PhD thesis: Bilač, S. (2016). Utjecaj refleksivne prakse na samoprocjenu ponašanja i zadovoljstvo poslom učitelja u upravljanju razredom i disciplinom (*The Influence of Reflective Practice on the Behaviour Self-Assessment and Job Satisfaction of Teachers in Classroom Management and Discipline*). (Doctoral dissertation). Zagreb: University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education.

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# Kako uvoditi promjene u upravljanje razredom i disciplinom

## Sažetak

Upravljanje razredom i disciplinom važno je područje poučavanja za koje se učitelji procjenjuju nedovoljno stručno osposobljenima. Refleksivna se praksa smatra djelotovornim pristupom u upravljanju razredom i disciplinom te omogućuje kritičko promišljanje odgojno-obrazovne prakse. Umjesto isključivog fokusiranja na primjenu strategija upravljanja razredom, provođenjem refleksivne prakse učitelj osvještava različite načine razmišljanja, ponašanja i akcija u upravljanju razredom *i disciplinom; identificira mogućnosti za uvođenje promjena u odgojno-obrazovnu* praksu i profesionalno se razvija. Uzimajući u obzir zahtjevan proces (samo)refleksije; nedovoljno spoznaja i iskustava hrvatskih učitelja o tome kako provoditi refleksivnu praksu i uvoditi promjene, pretpostavljamo kako Vodič za refleksivnu praksu može biti važna potpora njezinoj implementaciji i profesionalnom razvoju učitelja. Cilj ovoga rada bio je utvrditi povezanost samoprocjene stručne osposobljenosti učitelja za upravljanje razredom i disciplinom i samoprocjene potpore Vodiča uvođenju promjena u praksi, u skladu s iskazanom razinom osviještenosti ispitanika o refleksivnoj praksi u etapi refleksija o refleksiji. U istraživanju je sudjelovalo ukupno 111 učitelja razredne i predmetne nastave. Za učitelje je organizirana edukacija (sadržaj koji je objavljen na službenim stranicama Agencije za odgoj i obrazovanje): sudjelovali su u plenarnom predavanju o upravljanju razredom i disciplinom i radionici o refleksivnoj praksi, a zatim mjesec dana u svome razredu provodili refleksivnu praksu uz potporu Vodiča. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju statistički značajnu pozitivnu korelaciju samoprocjene stručne osposobljenosti za upravljanje razredom i disciplinom i samoprocjene potpore Vodiča za refleksivnu praksu u sljedećim elementima: potpora refleksivnom razmišljanju, dokumentiranje prakse i uvođenje poboljšanja u praksu kod ispitanika koji su iskazali pozitivan stav prema primjeni refleksivne prakse. Može se zaključiti kako je Vodič za refleksivnu praksu primjeren i potencijalno važan oblik potpore uvođenju promjena u upravljanje razredom i disciplinom u odgojno-obrazovnoj praksi te u osvještavanju učitelja u razumijevanju vlastite uloge u uvođenju promjena.

Ključne riječi: refleksija o refleksiji; upravljanje razredom i disciplinom; Vodič za refleksivnu praksu.