

Reflective Practice and Job Satisfaction in Classroom Management and Discipline

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Abstract

Classroom management and discipline (CMD) is most often mentioned as an area of educational work in which teachers experience the most difficulties and at the same time feel the least qualified for, both during their formal education and training for the profession of a teacher as well as in their later professional training. The aim of this paper was to determine the impact of Reflective Practice (RP) on the level of job satisfaction in the field of classroom management and discipline after a professional training. The research included lower elementary and subject teachers who wished to participate in the research, i.e. those who applied voluntarily for one of the two offered professional training programmes: Classroom management and discipline and / or How to introduce changes into practice. Before making their choice, the teachers were familiarized with the content and method of work: the former programme was based on lecturing and the latter, in addition to the lecture, included participation in the workshop on reflective practice and one-month implementation of reflective practice in their own classroom using the Reflective Practice Guide. After the training, the self-assessment scale of teachers' job satisfaction in terms of CMD was applied. Only the teachers who decided to apply for one-month implementation of reflective practice (N=111) made up the sample of this research. The results did not show that reflective practice (RP) has an impact on job satisfaction of lower elementary and subject teachers and the suitability parameters of the model are not acceptable. Nevertheless, this research provided a quality foundation for further research on the observed variables as some indications that there is relationship have been found.

Key words: *classroom management; discipline, reflective practice; teachers.*

Introduction

Classroom Management and Discipline (CMD) is one of the biggest challenges in the development of a teacher's professional career. It is emphasized that CMD is the key part of the overall teacher education (Hicks, 2012). At the same time, teachers face many difficulties in this field and often fail. International and national studies (Anderson & Kincaid, 2005; Brophy, 1983; Doolan et al., 2011; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Kaplan et al., 2002; Psunder, 2012; Rašković, 2014; Vizek Vidović, 2005, 2011) point out there is a growing problem of management and discipline in school practice. Research shows that teachers feel they have been insufficiently trained for classroom management and discipline both during their initial education and their professional development (Doolan et al., 2011; Ferraro, 2000; Vizek Vidović et al., 2005, 2011). In addition, research results reveal there are differences in classroom management and discipline between lower elementary and subject teachers. Kudek Mirošević (2013) points out that lower elementary students assess that their form masters are more competent in dealing with behavioural problems of students than their subject teachers. Munjiza and Lukaš (2006) stress that the pedagogical-psychological competence of subject teachers is insufficient. TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) reveals that the need for additional training in classroom management and discipline of Croatian subject teachers (20%) in comparison with the international average (13%) is bigger (OECD, 2014). Aldrup and Klusmann (2015) state that classroom management and discipline is one of the most common causes of stress, which can have negative implications on teachers' job satisfaction. Although job satisfaction is being intensively researched, there are very few studies into the job satisfaction in terms of classroom management and discipline (Aldrup & Klusmann, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

How to introduce positive changes in classroom management and discipline and to encourage teachers' job satisfaction in terms of CMD? An insight into the literature and research results (Larrive & Cooper, 2000; OECD, 2009; Tsui, 2009) suggests that the role of a teacher is essential for introducing change in practice. In addition to having theoretical knowledge, in order to change the practice it is important to change a person's thinking about oneself, one's behaviour and to think about practice from different perspectives, and on the basis of all that introduce change, i.e. to implement reflective practice (RP). Ahmed and Al-Khalili (2013) stress the effectiveness of reflective practice in the areas of planning, classroom management, and evaluation of teaching and learning processes. It has been confirmed that reflective practice is an important predictor of positive school practice, job satisfaction (Korthagen & Wubbels, 1995; Thoonen et al., 2011) and effective classroom management (Hrevnack, 2011). Diaz (2012) points out that teachers, after having implemented reflective practice, feel less stressed. In addition, in the recent and relevant literature in the world, reflective practice is considered a key paradigm in teachers' professional development (Ferraro, 2000; Marzano et al., 2012; Thompson & Pascal, 2012; Vizek Vidović, 2011).

The question is raised whether reflective practice may be a “trigger” that will encourage changes in teachers’ behaviour and practice, and affect job satisfaction in terms of classroom management and discipline. In view of the research results that imply differences in classroom management and discipline between lower elementary and subject teachers, it is assumed that the impact of reflective practice on teacher satisfaction with classroom management and discipline (CMD) could be stronger with lower elementary teachers in comparison to subject teachers. In line with the aforementioned, this research examines the influence of reflective practice on teachers’ job satisfaction in terms of classroom management and discipline. The problem area is particularly actualized for lower elementary and subject teachers. Based on an overview of available theoretical and empirical knowledge, the structural theoretical model of the influence of reflective practice on job satisfaction is defined. The aim of the research is to assess the validity of the model of the influence of reflective practice on job satisfaction in terms of classroom management and discipline for two groups of respondents: lower elementary and subject teachers in elementary school.

Structural Model of the Impact of Reflective Practice on Job Satisfaction in Terms of Classroom Management and Discipline

The structural model (Figure 1) consists of an independent variable (reflective practice, RP) and two dependent variables: self-assessment of classroom management and discipline (SACMD) and self-assessment of job satisfaction (SAJS). This paper examines the relationship between the independent variable reflective practice (RP) and the dependent variable self-assessment of job satisfaction (SAJS), which includes the related manifest variables that explain the independent and dependent latent variables. Manifest variables of reflective practice are: reflection-before-action (RbA), reflection-in-action (RiA), reflection-on-action (RoA) and reflection-on-reflection (RoR). Reflective practice in the model is based on the Cowan model of reflexive learning (1998) and Kolb’s cyclical model of experiential learning (1984), which have also been investigated by Croatian authors (Vizek Vidović & Vlahović Štetić, 2007). Manifest variables for job satisfaction are intrinsic (JSI) and extrinsic factors of job satisfaction (JSE) (Nadim et al., 2012). The intrinsic factors of job satisfaction (motivators) are associated with positive emotions about the job and the development of personal competences, and the extrinsic (hygiene) ones are associated with working conditions, school atmosphere, status, and salary. According to Herzberg (1964), people will be satisfied with the job only if intrinsic motives are met. If extrinsic motives are met, it will prevent dissatisfaction, but will not increase satisfaction.

On the basis of the defined theoretical model, i.e. the relationship between the independent *reflective practice* variable and the dependent *self-assessment of job satisfaction* variable in the context of differences in lower elementary and subject teaching, the hypothesis of this research is defined: the impact of reflective practice on teacher’s job satisfaction with classroom management and discipline is statistically

significant and positive, and this impact is more pronounced in lower elementary than subject teachers.

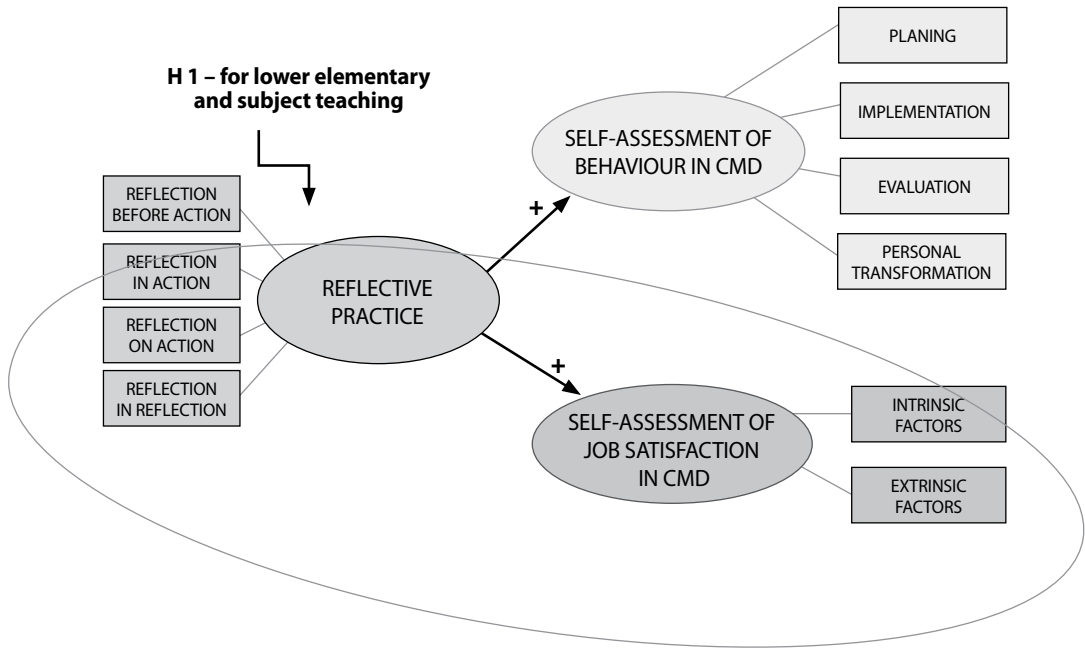


Figure 1. The model of impact of reflective practice on job satisfaction (adapted from Bilač, 2016, p. 56)

Methodology

Participants and Research Procedure

The research participants were teachers (N = 111), i.e. – lower elementary teachers (N = 64) and subject teachers (N = 47), who attended a professional training programme on classroom management and discipline. The information on the programme was posted on the website of the Education and Teacher Training Agency. The participants could choose between a plenary lecture *Classroom management and discipline* and/or *How to introduce changes in classroom management and discipline practice*, which also included participation in the reflective practice workshop, a one-month reflective practice implementation in the classroom and the use of the “Reflective Practice Guide” as an aid for research participants in implementing RP and achieving more credible results. Before they chose their programme, all teachers had been familiarized with the content, the methods of work and the expectations during professional training. The groups were not of the same size because of a poor response rate from teachers (especially the subject ones) ready to introduce change in practice. In addition, the response rate of subject teachers (35%) was smaller than the response rate of lower elementary teachers (61%), which extended the research period, and professional training had to be held several times in order to obtain the

planned sample of teachers in the experimental group. It should be emphasized that the research does not examine the impact of training on the observed outcomes but it serves as support for teachers in the implementation of reflective practice, in standardizing terminology and uniforming activities during the RP implementation. Since professional training included a one-month application of the reflective practice in the classroom, a final sample of respondents consists of lower elementary and subject teachers motivated to introduce change in their CMD practice. Professional training programme began with a plenary lecture on classroom management and discipline. After the plenary lecture, the participants attended the Reflective Practice workshop and then spent a month applying RP in their classroom using the RP Guide. After a month, the respondents completed a survey questionnaire.

Research Tools and Methods of Data Processing

The survey was conducted using a questionnaire that consisted of: general questions (8 items); reflective practice (RP) questions, which included 30 items for four stages of reflective practice: RbA – reflection-before-action, RiA – reflection-in-action, RoA – reflection-on-action, RoR – reflection-on-reflection (modified from Kember et al., 2000; Larrivee, 2008; Odeh et al., 2010) and job satisfaction (JS) in terms of CMD (12 items for intrinsic (JSI) and extrinsic element (JSE) of job satisfaction). The measurement scale was based on the theory in the field of classroom management and discipline (Herzberg, 1964; Nadim et al., 2012; Šimić Šašić, 2011). The statements were evaluated on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 completely disagree/never/completely dissatisfied) to 5 (completely agree/always/completely satisfied).

The used measurement scales showed acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient: RbA = 0.77, RiA = 0.88, RoA = 0.82, RoR = 0.88, SAJSI = 0.77, SAJSE = 0.81), and unidimensionality, so further data processing was performed by modelling structural equations. When the necessary prerequisites for the chosen approach to modelling structural equations required were fulfilled, the manifest variables were created using the method of total aggregation of the corresponding items. An additional rationale for the chosen approach is reflected in a broad analysis of the research field without deeper analysis of individual relationships within the elements of the same variable. Finally, the intention is to examine the relationship of latent variables *reflective practice* and *job satisfaction* in terms of classroom and subject teaching, which also justifies this approach when creating manifest variables. In addition to modelling structural equations, the correlation analysis of observed variables was also used.

Results and Discussion

When constructing a structural model, the analysis of homogeneity of variance, analysis of the univariate normality of distribution and analysis of bivariate and multivariate multicollinearity of manifold variables were performed and the results

were acceptable for the modelling of structural equations. The initial structural model with standardized values is shown in Figure 2.

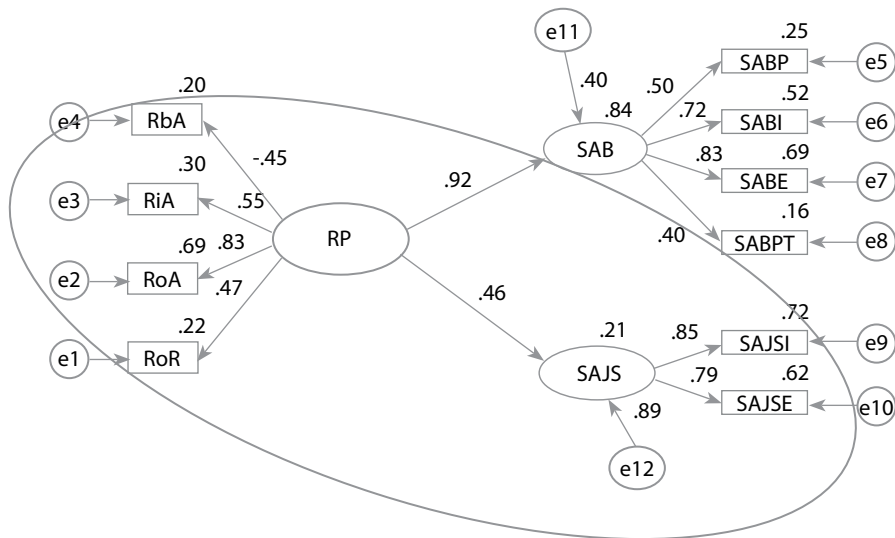


Figure 2. Initial structural model of the impact of reflective practice on self-assessment of the behaviour and job satisfaction in classroom management and discipline of lower elementary teachers (adapted from Bilač, 2016, p. 104)

Initial model suitability indicators are not acceptable (Number of parameters 55, Chi-square 72.559, degrees of freedom 33, p-value 0.000, with unacceptable values of other suitability indicators: RMSEA, GFI, CFI, IFI, and TLI). In line with the results of the model, but also the existing theoretical knowledge on correlation between these two concepts, i.e. the relationship between the variables, recommendations for model modifications were considered. Only those recommendations that can be explained in theory and practice were accepted (Byrne, 2010). The first included modification refers to the correlation of residual errors e11 (self-assessment of the behaviour (SAB)) and e12 (self-assessment of job satisfaction (SAJS)). To be more specific, Klassen and Chi (2010) and Moè et al. (2010) found a statistically significant correlation between self-assessment of the behaviour and job satisfaction. Caprara et al. (2006) confirmed the impact of teachers' beliefs on their job satisfaction. As variables are considered in the field of classroom management and discipline, their correlation can be considered justified. The second included modification refers to the correlation of measurement errors e6 (self-assessment of the behaviour-implementation (SABI)) and e9 (self-assessment of intrinsic job satisfaction factors (SAJSI)). Gkolia et al. (2014) point out the importance of implementation on the level of self-efficacy and, consequently, the job satisfaction. The third modification refers to the independent variable and implies the regression relationship between reflection-before-action (RbA) and reflection-in-action (RiA). The theoretical starting point for accepting this modification is found in Cowan's Reflective Model (1998), according to which reflection-before-action is

the learning loop which precedes reflection-in-action. This approach is supported by Bubnys and Žydžiūnaitė (2010), who emphasize the importance of reflection-before-action for the implementation of the planned action. In addition, this correlation arises from the context of the job of a teacher in which planning is a starting point for teaching, integrating theory and practice. Given that they are both theoretically and practically justified, these modifications are accepted and a new model is created, whose suitability, in accordance with the hypothesis set, is tested separately for lower elementary teachers and subject teachers.

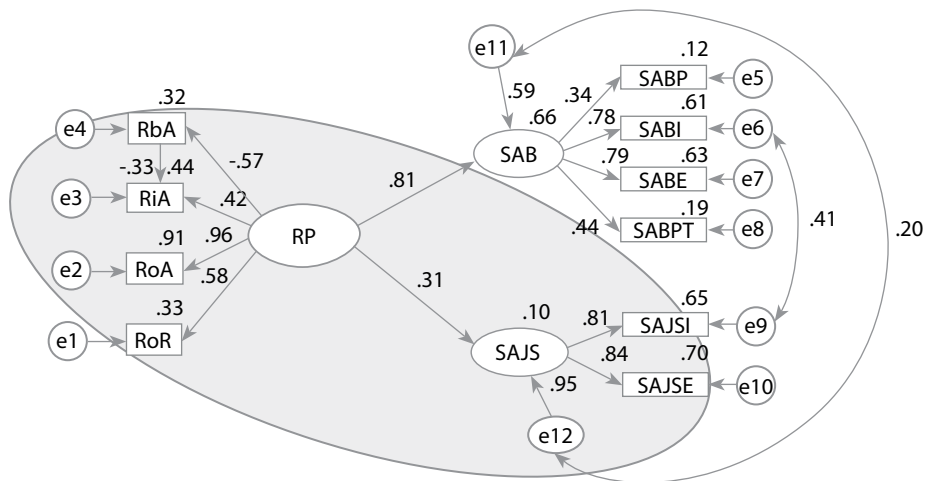


Figure 3. Structural model of the impact of reflective practice on self-assessment of the behaviour and job satisfaction in classroom management and discipline of lower elementary teachers (adapted from Bilač, 2016, p. 127)

Model suitability indicators are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Indicators of the suitability of the model of the impact of reflective practice on self-assessment of the behaviour and job satisfaction in classroom management and discipline of lower elementary teachers

	No of parameters	Chi-square	df	p-value	Chi-square/df	RMSEA	GFI	CFI	IFI	TLI
H3										
Lower elementary classes	55	48.172	30	0.019	1.606	0.100	0.861	0.957	0.914	0.870

Source: adapted from Bilač, 2016, p. 128.

The chi-square value of the test is 48.172 with 30 degrees of freedom, while P-value does not ensure the model's acceptability. Since further modifications are not possible,

it can be concluded that the proposed model from the aspect of the lower elementary teacher does not show good model suitability and the assumed correlation of the observed variables cannot be confirmed regardless of the value of standardized total effects (0.31) in the impact of reflective practice (RP) on the self-assessment of job satisfaction (SAJS).

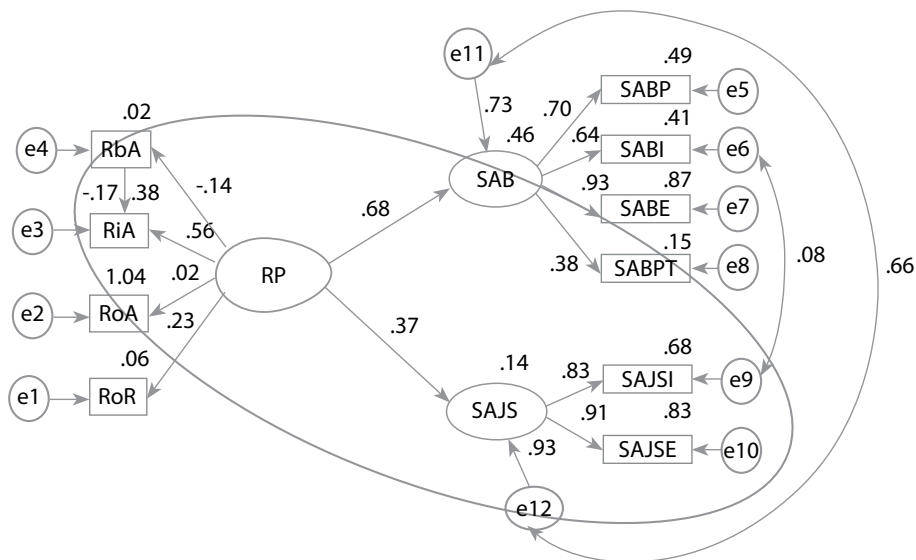


Figure 4. Structural model of the impact of reflective practice on self-assessment of the behaviour and job satisfaction in classroom management and discipline of subject teachers (adapted from Bilač, 2016, p. 133)

The data presented in the model for subject teachers show that the value of the variance of the manifest variable reflection-on-action (RoA) is 1.04 and the measurement error value e2 is negative (-0.010). Although the negative variance estimates are not rare in social research, such a situation cannot actually happen in real life (Kolenikov & Bollen, 2012). In line with the stated, the model is considered inadequate and the hypothesis: *The impact of reflective practice on teacher's satisfaction with classroom management and discipline is statistically significant and positive, whereas this impact is stronger for lower elementary teachers than subject teachers* is rejected. In order to further clarify the results, i.e. the inadequacy of the presented model, a correlation analysis of the self-assessment of job satisfaction (participants' self-assessment on the Likert scale where 1 was highly dissatisfied and 5 highly satisfied) and manifest job satisfaction variables (JSI and JSE) was performed for both lower elementary and subject teaching.

The results are shown in Table 2.

The results related to lower elementary teaching show that the relationship between self-assessment of job satisfaction in terms of CMD and the extrinsic factors (JSE) of job satisfaction is statistically significant, positive and of medium intensity (JSI=

Table 2

Spearman's coefficient of correlation of self-assessment of the overall job satisfaction in terms of CMD and elements of manifest workplace satisfaction variables (JSI and JSE) from the aspect of classroom and subject teaching

Group		Job satisfaction		
Spearman's rho	Lower elementary teaching	Overall job satisfaction	Correlation coefficient	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.
			N	64
		JSI	Correlation coefficient	.393**
		Intrinsic factors	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
			N	64
	Subject teaching	JSE	Correlation coefficient	.237
		Extrinsic factors	Sig. (2-tailed)	.060
			N	64
		Overall job satisfaction	Correlation coefficient	1.000
			Sig. (2-tailed)	
			N	47
Subject teaching	JSI	Correlation coefficient	.622**	
	Intrinsic factors	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	47	
	JSE	Correlation coefficient	.575**	
	Extrinsic factors	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	47	

Source: Bilač, 2016, p. 144.

0.393, $p = 0.001$). For intrinsic job satisfaction factors (JSI), no statistically significant correlation with job satisfaction was found. For subject teaching, a statistically significant positive correlation of medium intensity between general job satisfaction and intrinsic and extrinsic factors was determined ($JSI = 0.622$, $p = 0.000$; $JSE = 0.575$, $p = 0.000$). These results indicate that the correlation between the observed variables is still more pronounced in subject teaching. The analysis of results implies that subject teachers, after applying reflective practice, have actually become more aware of their role in changing practice as compared to lower elementary teachers. In addition, the results of the correlation analysis indicate that a possible reason for the negative variance in the measurement error in the structural model for the subject teaching is a relatively small sample due to time and financial limitations of the research.

Final Remarks

Implementation of reflective practice in classroom management and discipline is important in the context of introducing positive changes in school practice and developing teachers' job satisfaction. Research results suggest that the implementation of reflective practice in classroom management and discipline has a positive impact on self-assessment of job satisfaction of lower elementary and subject teachers, but this impact cannot be statistically confirmed by the methods used in this paper.

Interestingly, despite the fact that lower elementary teachers were more motivated to educate themselves in classroom management and discipline and to introduce this change in practice (reflective practice implementation) in comparison to subject teachers, having applied reflective practice, subject teachers became more aware of their role in changing practice in classroom management and discipline.

The results indicate that implementing reflective practice can be a positive step for understanding one's own role (teacher's) in changing practice. In addition, they point to the necessity of changing the concept of teacher training in terms of providing a model for implementing change in practice. There are several key factors that have influenced the concept of professional development that was applied in this research. The literature emphasizes the importance of professional training for practitioners to experience the benefits of reflective practice (Russell, 2005). The concept of professional training and the course of research that consisted of a theoretical part and the implementation of reflective practice, which is similarly understood in the literature (Amornrat & Suwimon, 2014), proved to be well thought out and justified given that research participants had limited experience in implementing reflective practice and that there is a need for standardizing and understanding concepts and knowledge bases of classroom management and discipline and reflective practice.

Although the size of the sample may be considered a limitation of the research, it is clear from the literature that more and more research studies with a relatively small sample yield relevant results (Airi et al., 2012; Husu & Tirri, 2003; Kubanyiova, 2006). In addition, studies involving modelling structural equations (SEM) use a smaller sample - from 30 (Wolf et al., 2013) to 70 participants (Sideridis et al., 2014), and research practice shows that it is often difficult and impossible to obtain large samples (Chumney, 2013). In view of the results of a previous study that included a purposeful sample of teachers and showed that reflection was an unpleasant experience for participants (Wongwanich et al., 2014) and bearing in mind that Croatian teachers were not educated for reflective practice, it was considered that the choice of purposeful sample of motivated teachers (who voluntarily chose to develop professionally for reflective practice in classroom management and discipline) would be a good prerequisite for a one-month implementation of reflective practice.

There are also specific limitations in the research. The research focused on job satisfaction in classroom management and discipline, and other aspects of classroom management and discipline were not researched. The data collected are based on respondents' self-assessment and cannot be considered a fully objective indicator. In the part related to the application of reflective practice, the levels of reflective practice development have not been investigated separately. Quantitative research methods were used in the research, and it is assumed that qualitative research would significantly contribute to the results.

Key guidelines for future studies relate to the possibility of testing the proposed model on a larger sample of teachers in the Republic of Croatia, even in the EU

countries, to determine the level of reflection in lower elementary and subject teaching practices, as well as to guide students to assess and evaluate their contribution to effective classroom management and discipline.

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Refleksivna praksa i zadovoljstvo poslom u upravljanju razredom

Sažetak

Upravljanje razredom i disciplina najčešće se spominje kao područje odgojno-obrazovnog rada u kojem učitelji doživljavaju najviše teškoća, a ujedno se za to osjećaju i najmanje osposobljenima: kako za vrijeme redovnog obrazovanja i osposobljavanja za poziv učitelja tako i u kasnijem stručnom osposobljavanju. Cilj ovoga rada bio je utvrditi utjecaj edukacije o refleksivnoj praksi (RP) na razinu zadovoljstva poslom u području upravljanja razredom i disciplinom (URID). U istraživanju su sudjelovali učitelji razredne i predmetne nastave koji su pristali sudjelovati, tj. oni koji su se prijavili za jednu od dvije ponuđene edukacije stručnoga usavršavanja: Upravljanje razredom i disciplina i/ili Kako uvesti promjene u praksi. Prije odluke o izboru, učitelji su bili upoznati sa sadržajem i načinom rada, tj. da se prva edukacija temelji na predavanju, a druga edukacija osim predavanja uključuje i sudjelovanje u radionici o refleksivnoj praksi, kao i njezino jednomjesečno provođenje u vlastitome razredu uz korištenje Vodiča za refleksivnu praksu. U uzorak za ovo istraživanje uključeni su samo učitelji koji su se odlučili za jednomjesečnu primjenu refleksivne prakse (N=111). Rezultati nisu pokazali da RP ima značajnog utjecaja na zadovoljstvo poslom učitelja, odnosno, nije se potvrdila prikladnost parametara pretpostavljenog modela. Međutim, budući da postoje indicije kako određena povezanost među promatranim varijablama ipak postoji, ovo može biti dobar temelj za naredna istraživanja.

Ključne riječi: disciplina; refleksivna praksa; učitelji; upravljanje razredom.