

# Action Research – through the Eyes of Teachers

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**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** učitelj, akcijsko raziskovanje, izobraževalne dejavnosti učitelja, metodološki postopki, pomen za izobraževanje, raven akcijskega raziskovanja, pomoč učiteljem

**POVZETEK** – Akcijsko raziskovanje je ključni del izobraževalnega procesa. Za vključevanje novega znanja v izobraževanje je pomembno upoštevanje akcijskega raziskovanja učiteljev. Glavni cilj študije je ugotoviti percepcijo in odnos učiteljev do akcijskega raziskovanja, težave, s katerimi se srečujejo pri akcijskem raziskovanju, ter predlagati možne načine za izboljšanje obstoječega stanja. Uporabljena je bila deskriptivna kvantitativna in kvalitativna metoda. V letu 2021 je bila izvedena kvantitativna raziskava mnenj in stališč slovaških učiteljev 2. razreda osnovnih šol o akcijskem raziskovanju pri njihovi pedagoški in didaktični dejavnosti ( $N = 239$ ), intervjuvanih pa je bilo 87 učiteljev. Rezultati so pokazali številne šibke točke upoštevanja akcijskega raziskovanja, ki jih je treba odpraviti. Članek vključuje tudi priporočila.

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**KEYWORDS:** teacher, action research, teacher's educational activities, methodological procedures, importance for education, level of action research, help for teachers

**ABSTRACT** – Action research is an important part of the educational process. The introduction of action research by teachers is important for the integration of new knowledge into education. The main goal of the study is to find out the perceptions and attitudes of teachers towards action research, determine the problems they encounter in action research, and suggest possible ways to improve the existing situation. A descriptive quantitative and qualitative method was used. In 2021, a quantitative survey was conducted on the opinions and attitudes of Slovak primary school 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers towards action research in their pedagogical and didactic activities ( $N = 239$ ) and 87 teachers were interviewed. The results revealed many weaknesses in the introduction of action research that should be eliminated. The article also contains recommendations.

## 1 Introduction

The obvious, yet especially desirable, requirements associated with education include teacher action research. Kurt Lewin, who is considered the father of action research, apparently did not anticipate that action research would become a significant and taken-for-granted part of a teacher's job (Adelman, 1993). Nowadays, it is one of the commonplaces because science and technology are developing at a rapid pace, the content of education is being enriched enormously, etc. It has long since become apparent that the school with its classical methods and forms of work is unable to meet the new demands that are being placed on the results of education.

In recent years, new discoveries in neuroscience, for example, have been highlighted as having a significant impact on education. The application of neuropedagogy and neurodidactics has resulted in the emotionality of teaching, the possibilities of developing pupils' creativity, deep learning and teaching, etc. New demands can only be brought into education if attention is paid to action research in the work of the teacher.

The main goal of this study is to identify teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards action research, the problems they encounter in action research, and suggest possible ways to improve the existing situation.

## 2 Theoretical approach to the problem

### *Definition of action research*

The literature dealing with this area is very extensive. This also shows that action research is extremely important for real educational work. There is a direct relationship between action research and educational outcomes, as expressed in the definitions below.

Action research in the classroom focuses on educational activity and its development. The motive lies in the will to improve the quality of teaching and learning, as well as the conditions in which teachers and pupils work in schools. It helps teachers to manage the challenges and problems of innovation in practice in a reflexive way (Altrichter and Posch, 2005).

Action research is a method of systematic inquiry that teachers conduct as researchers of their own practice. They draw on the findings of other researchers to develop activities and interpret their implications (Spencer et al., 2020). Action research is a specific approach to research that directly relates to teaching and learning in the classroom and provides teachers with the means to improve their teaching and enhance student learning. It is far from an "extra something" that teachers have to squeeze into an already demanding work schedule. Action research can be linked to regular classroom activities, giving teachers the support that they need to improve student learning and their own professional practice. At the same time, the flexibility of action research enables other school stakeholders – administrators, students, parents, the world, etc. – to address many of the serious issues that are part of the complex life of a school (Stringer, 2008).

**Table 1**

### *Traditional and Action Research*

	<i>Traditional Research</i>	<i>Action Research</i>
<i>Purpose</i>	To draw conclusions. The focus is on advancing knowledge in the field. Insights may be generalized to other settings.	To make decisions. The focus is on the improvement of educational practice. Limited generalizability.
<i>Context</i>	Theory: Hypotheses/research questions are derived from more general theoretical propositions.	Practice: Research questions are derived from practice. Theory plays a secondary role.
<i>Data Analysis</i>	Rigorous statistical analysis.	Focus on practical, not statistical significance.
<i>Sampling</i>	Random or representative sample.	Students with whom they work.

Source: McMillan, J. H. and Wergin, J. F. (2010). Understanding and evaluating educational research. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Action research is aptly described by Koshy (2010) as constructive inquiry, during which the researcher constructs his or her knowledge of specific issues through planning, acting, evaluating, refining and learning from experience. It is a continuous learning process in which the researcher learns and also shares the newly generated knowledge with those who may benefit from it. The difference between traditional and action research is shown in Table 1.

### *Action research and teachers*

For action research to be properly implemented, teachers need to know what it is all about. They need to be able to distinguish what action research is and what it is not. Many authors (Florjančič, 2014; Holcar Brunnauer et al., 2013; Janík, 2004; Kompolt and Timková, 2010; Mertler and Charles, 2011; Stanojević, 2013; Vogrinc and Krek, 2011) describe the essence of action research as follows – action research:

- Is a process that improves education in general by bringing about change;
- Is a process that involves educators working together to improve their own practices;
- Is not a routine activity for teachers when they think about teaching; it is more systematic and collaborative;
- Is not just problem solving; it involves problem specification, the development of something new (in most cases), and critical reflection on its effectiveness;
- Is not done “for” or “by” other people; it is research that specific educators do on their own work, with students and colleagues;
- Is not just implementing pre-determined answers to educational questions; it is exploring, discovering and working towards creative solutions to educational problems;
- Is not definitive; the results of action research are neither right nor wrong, rather they are tentative solutions based on observations and other forms of data collection that require monitoring and evaluation to identify strengths and limitations;
- Is not a “fad” because good teaching has always involved systematic investigation of the teaching process and its effects on student learning;
- Develops critical reflection on one’s own teaching;
- Is a planned, systematic approach to understanding the learning process;
- Is a process that requires us to “test” our ideas about education;
- Is a justification of its own teaching practices;
- Does not have a strictly scientific character; its task is not to discover regularities and explore theoretical aspects of education, but to investigate the essence of certain pedagogical and didactic phenomena that are related to the educational work of the teacher;
- Yields results that are immediately available and can be implemented in the teacher’s educational work.

The above is a brief selection of perspectives on the nature of action research. Their importance lies in the fact that they highlight the essence that teachers need to be aware of in order for their research to contribute to the improvement of their own educational activities.

Many teachers think they are doing action research by thinking about teaching and then changing some element of it. That is not action research. The following is typical of the latter – action research:

- Is not just ordinary thinking about teaching;
- Is characterized by the systematic work of a teacher or a team of teachers to improve the quality of their educational activities and thus increase the quality of education;
- Is not a random activity, e.g., just a solution to a pedagogical or didactic situation that has arisen in the classroom;
- Is based on the teacher's own self-reflection;
- Requires a degree of methodological knowledge from the teacher, despite being relatively simple;
- Is not and cannot be just a one-off event, because the teacher's findings lead him/her to further improve his/her educational activities.

In the interviews with teachers, the study found that they confuse systematic action research with randomly solving something, e.g., trying a different teaching method; influencing a pupil with a different educational method; changing the classroom seating chart; trying more motivational methods, etc. Of course, these efforts by teachers cannot be dismissed; what simply needs to be pointed out are the differences between action research and other, often accidental, trial and error in their work.

The literature provides many diagrams that illustrate the implementation of action research. The diagrams themselves already show the fundamental difference or the essence of the research. In terms of the focus of this paper, the following diagrams deserve mention:

**Figure 1**

*The Action Research Cycle*



Figure 1 is a model showing the process and course of action research. It is one of the simpler diagrams illustrating the action research cycle. The flowchart shows the process of research.

**Figure 2**

*Interpretation of the Action Research Model According to Macintyre (2000)*

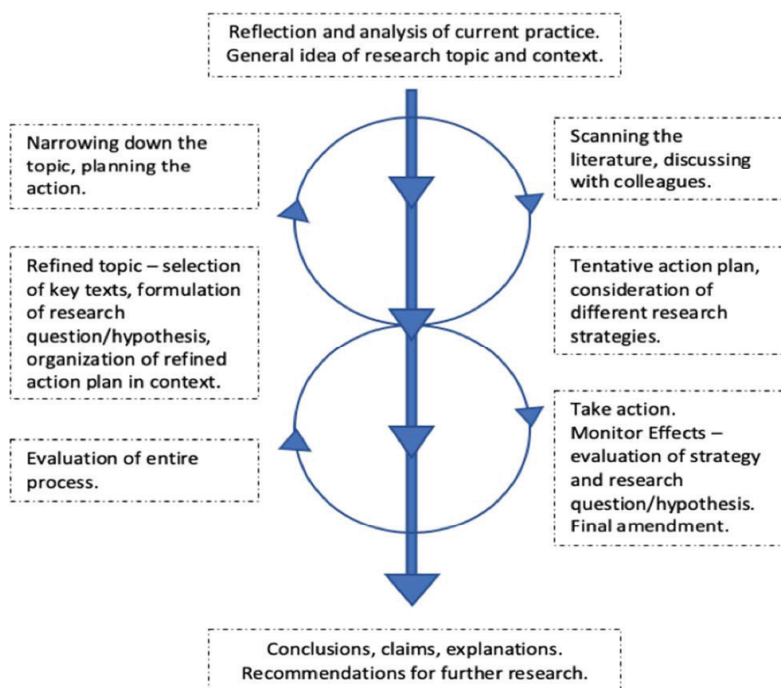


Figure 2 shows the MacIntyre model of action research (MacIntyre, 2000), which offers a different characterization of the action research process. MacIntyre emphasizes a messier process of research with the initial reflections and conclusions as the benchmarks for guiding the research process. MacIntyre emphasizes flexibility in the stages of planning, acting and observing to allow the process to be naturalistic (Spencer et al., 2020, p. 14).

Each step of action research is extremely important for the overall success. In terms of the focus of the paper, we pay particular attention to reflection. Reflection is the end of the cycle. During it, the teacher reviews what he/she has done and makes decisions about further activities based on this. These activities concern the application of what has been discovered to the next cycle, but also the introduction of something “new” into education. Of course, reflection is not just an outcome in the cycle, it is a part of all the phases of exploration. Only then is action research effective. Reflection is essentially ongoing monitoring in action research.

### *Teachers' attitudes and views on action research*

Action research began to develop in Europe, especially in England, in the 1960s–1970s thanks to Elliott, who saw it as a systematic reflection on professional situations carried out with the aim of developing them further (Koshy, 2010; Kohútová, 2018). We are witnessing an almost daily critique of education, especially in the search for more effective methods and forms of educational work. Hence the focus on the use of action research (Brown and Jones, 2001; Elliott, 1992, 2007; MacIntyre, 2000). Action research and its proper use is expected to contribute to increasing the effectiveness of education. An example of this is the study on action research published on the School Education Gateway platform (School Education Gateway, 2021). The survey involved 144 respondents from 25 countries. The research showed, for example, that teachers value action research as an opportunity to improve the quality of education; consider it an effective tool for teacher professional development; that it contributes to self-reflection and critical thinking, etc. At the same time, however, they pointed out their own lack of knowledge in the field of research methods, their lack of time for research, and the fact that the area should be given more attention by the school management.

The effectiveness of education is influenced by many other aspects, e.g., the social relations of pupils in the classroom, the classroom climate, the value orientation of pupils, the number of pupils in the classroom, their social background, etc. These and many other areas can also be the subject of action research by teachers.

This article describes several aspects of the use and implementation of action research by primary school 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers in Slovakia. The evaluation of educational outcomes (e.g., PISA) has shown that we are not achieving the desired results. That is why a fundamental change in education in Slovakia is being prepared for 2024. If we want to achieve better results in education, we must also pay more attention to the action research of teachers.

## **3 Method**

In 2021, we conducted research using the descriptive quantitative method, investigating the opinions and attitudes of primary school 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers on action research in their pedagogical and didactic activities. The quantitative method was supplemented by interviews with teachers to get a more comprehensive understanding of their views. The questionnaires were filled in by 239 teachers from all regions of Slovakia, and 87 teachers who filled in the questionnaire were interviewed. In constructing the questionnaire, we drew on a number of publications dealing with this field (Norton, 2019; Parsons and Brown, 2002; Somekh, 2006). The questionnaire contained more than 36 items. In this article, we selected some of the results from the survey that are directly relevant to action research. The overall results are quite comprehensive and total more than 70 pages.

In analysing the results obtained by the questionnaire, the aim was to find out how teachers perceive, appreciate and evaluate action research. In setting the objective, we

also assumed that in recent years this aspect has been given importance and is also one of the key tasks of teacher training.

The investigation focused on the following aspects:

- How do teachers rate the approach of education governing bodies to action research?
- What attention do teachers pay to action research?
- How often do teachers implement action research in their work?
- What do they focus on in action research in particular?

In the qualitative research, we used a random sample of 452 respondents – 410 women and 42 men – who were teachers of all the subjects taught. Due to the focus of the research, but especially due to the results obtained, the teachers were divided neither by age or gender, nor by the subject they teach.

No significant statistical differences between the different groups of teachers were observed. The main findings of the interviews are commented on in the text.

## **4 Results**

In this section of the paper, selected findings or teachers' self-reflection in relation to action research in their practice are analysed.

The results show that action research would deserve more attention from education management. We consider the 35 % of respondents who have little interest in the matter to be quite significant. The same holds true for the fact that 18 % of respondents cannot take a position on this. In the interviews, the teachers stated that action research is emphasized by teachers as an important means for improving the quality of education, but basically remains at the level of proclamations. In this context, we often noted the statements that school governing bodies are primarily interested in the specific knowledge of pupils as expressed by grades or in the results of monitoring pupils' knowledge through tests, etc. During the interviews, it was emphasized that the teachers involved in the study were also concerned with the methodology of research, its relevance for the work of the teacher, etc. However, the answers of the respondents did not convince us of the fact that this aspect of the study was among their priorities. Of the 87 interviewed teachers, about 75 % said that the only time they had dealt with research issues in depth was during the elaboration of their theses. This finding corresponds with the research findings described in the School Education Gateway (2021).

Another area of our investigation was to find out how teachers themselves go about examining their own work. Although the responses A, B and C (together comprising 75 %) say that teachers are conducting action research, we are nevertheless slightly dissatisfied. This stems from the fact that only 19 % of respondents said that research is, in principle, a permanent part of their work. This is considered a small percentage. It is partly corrected and improved by the B responses, which speak of 24 %. The interviews with teachers revealed that they examine their own work and search for ways to improve it mainly when they fail to achieve desirable results in a certain area, or when they detect the need to change their approaches to students based on their performance



in learning activities, etc. The fact that 35 % of respondents were unable to comment on or evaluate the work of their colleagues is also a testimony to the fact that action research is not a priority for many teachers. Of course, teachers discuss teaching among themselves, share experiences, etc., but this is not research.

The importance of action research lies in many aspects. The results show that the respondents express higher appreciation in items D, E and F. I believe that action research in the real practice of teachers focuses primarily on the direct teaching process; less appreciated are those aspects that do not directly affect teaching, but create conditions for more effective and creative work of the teacher.

Many publications and studies tell us that research is not the strong point of education. We wondered what the reasons are that teachers are not doing action research as well as they should.

The respondents' answers correlate with the above statements. Their poor knowledge is considered the biggest shortcoming – 33 % – already when preparing for the teaching profession. In the interviews, they expressed that their lack of knowledge did not motivate them to investigate. Many are aware of this deficiency and seek to remedy it through self-study – self-didactic action. Here, however, they encounter another problem – the lack of time (30 %). They say that the content of education is so demanding that they focus their attention primarily on the curriculum and less on the opportunities for exploration. In the interviews it became clear that they are aware of the direct relationship between learning and exploring their work. In doing so, they have in fact also shown some personal interest in their own improvement. For teacher inquiry to be beneficial to the teacher and to the school, it also needs more attention from the school leadership. Teachers rate it at 25 %, which is little. The responses of other teachers included class sizes, the composition of pupils in the class with respect to their environment, the school climate, etc. These are all factors acting on teacher action research.

Although action research is not a strong point in the teachers' work, we were nevertheless interested in how they evaluate its importance. It is clear that teachers perceive the importance primarily in terms of knowing and diagnosing current classroom situations (29 %), and, last but not least, in revealing various contexts that remain hidden to them without action research (25 %). We consider their awareness of this importance to be very valuable, as it can have a considerable motivational value for teachers in the use of action research. We also relate the same to the availability of research opportunities (20 %). The above results are very telling, especially in relation to the wider use of action research in teachers' work. However, this requires greater motivation of teachers, e.g., in their further education.

We have already suggested that more attention should be paid to action research by education governing bodies and schools, by methodological centres for teacher support and, last but not least, by universities.

Most respondents felt that action research should receive more attention from school management (59 %). This finding also corresponds with several studies in the field. 8 % of the respondents are of the opinion that teachers should cooperate more in action research. We take this to be self-evident. To some extent, however, this is also a result of school managers not motivating teachers to engage in such collaboration. Some of the respondents (15 %) state that publications focusing on the specific work



of teachers would help them in their action research. In the interviews, we noted statements such as “*Books on research are written for scientists, not for teachers.*” This is definitely an incentive for all those who want to help teachers. The same applies to the 8 % of statements that see informal training of teachers by experts who are familiar with educational work in schools as a means to improve action research in schools.

## 5 Discussion

Based on the results, one can conclude that action research is appreciated by teachers in theory but is not used as much as would be desired in real educational practice. Based on the findings, we can reflect and address what the reasons for this state of affairs are. Starting from the teachers’ perspective, we must admit that the education governing bodies also have a role to play. This is documented by the teachers’ statements (35 %) which mention that this is not given due attention by the education management, that is, the macro-management. This is then carried over and manifested by the micro-management – the head teacher and school management – with as many as 59 % of respondents stating that the school management does not provide support to teachers. They do not consider research a priority, etc. The above findings are very telling and suggest that the causes lie not only with the teachers but also with the management.

It has become apparent that even in the training of future teachers this aspect is not given as much attention as would be desirable. This was most frequently discussed in the interviews, with respondents stating that they had only dealt with research in a more professional way when writing their final theses, and so had not formed a relationship with research.

Our research has confirmed that teachers do not perform systematic reviews. Only 19 % say that they systematically review their work, while the rest do it occasionally, especially when the classroom situation requires it. The fact that teachers cannot assess their colleagues’ approaches to inquiry suggests that inquiry does not belong in the ‘portfolio’ of discussions about how to improve the quality of education.

Teachers associate action research only with direct instruction. They are less aware or appreciative of the fact that their own research reveals weaknesses in their teaching (only 12 %), contributes to improving self-reflection (10 %), and to collaboration with colleagues (4 %). These are indeed low percentages and are a direct challenge, especially for school managers, to address this and improve the situation. Research is not only the immediate examination of teaching, but also the examination and subsequent improvement of many related aspects. Teachers understand inquiry primarily as utilitarian.

Summarizing the perspectives on research we ask why teachers are not doing it. In addition to what has already been written (lack of preparation during studies, lack of interest on the part of the education authorities), we would like to mention the teachers’ statements relating to lack of time (30 %), personal interest (6 %), other (6 %). A number of teachers do not realize that if action research leads to better progressive and affective methods of teaching, then they will teach more effectively – in a shorter time, with less effort from the teacher and the pupil, while achieving a better result. Therein lies the essence and impor-

tance of inquiry. The low percentages regarding personal interest and other factors (6%), which act on scrutiny, are somewhat satisfying in that they are low numbers.

Teachers are broadly aware of several strengths of action research. In particular, the results concerning support for teachers in research should be a certain challenge for us to improve the existing situation. What we mean by this is support for school management (59%), but also support for teachers by offering them a greater number of studies on conducting action research in education – 15% asked for this, and by organizing such training and seminars for teachers that will be understandable to them (8%). The above is a challenge for many authors who want to contribute to improving the existing situation in action research in schools.

## 6 Conclusion

The choice to explore and discuss this topic is not random. It is based on the demands placed on education, which must constantly improve. Teacher action research deserves sustained attention because it contributes significantly to the effectiveness and improvement of the quality of education. The investigation found that teachers are aware of the importance and need for action research. On the other hand, it revealed that teachers want more attention to be paid to this area. Some of this is subjective in nature – it lies in the need for a more consistent involvement of teachers in inquiry, while some of it is objective in nature – it lies in the management processes of the education authorities and the school. Another thing that was discovered during the research, particularly through the interviews, is that teachers have a vested interest in teaching well and effectively. They see action research as an important means of their professional development. They are of the opinion that it needs to be talked about more and promoted in teacher collectives. If we are preparing a fundamental reform of education in Slovakia, then we must also pay considerable attention to this aspect of teachers' activities. The paper gives many suggestions on what to focus on.

*Dr. Erich Petlák*

### **Akcijsko raziskovanje – vidik učiteljev**

*Akcijsko raziskovanje je ključni del izobraževalnega procesa. Za vključevanje novega znanja v izobraževanje je pomembno uvajanje akcijskega raziskovanja učiteljev. Motiv uvajanja akcijskega raziskovanja je izboljšanje kakovosti poučevanja in učenja ter pogojev, v katerih delajo učitelji in se učijo učenci v šolah. Učiteljem pomaga reflektivno obvladovati izzive in težave inovativnosti v praksi (Altrichter in Posch, 2005). Akcijsko raziskovanje je metoda sistematičnega raziskovanja, ki ga učitelji izvajajo kot raziskovalci lastne prakse. Na podlagi ugotovitev drugih raziskovalcev razvijajo dejavnosti in razlagajo njihove posledice (Spencer idr., 2020). Akcijsko raziskovanje je poseben pristop k raziskovanju, ki je neposredno povezan s poučevanjem*

in učenjem v razredu ter učiteljem nudi sredstva za izboljšanje poučevanja in učenja učencev. Akcijsko raziskovanje je mogoče povezati z rednimi dejavnostmi v razredu, da tako pridobijo podporo, ki jo potrebujejo za izboljšanje učenja učencev in njihove lastne poklicne prakse. Hkrati prilagodljivost akcijskega raziskovanja omogoča drugim zainteresiranim stranem v šoli – upraviteljem, študentom, staršem in drugim deležnikom, da obravnavajo številna resna vprašanja, ki so del kompleksnega življenja šole (Stringer, 2018). Akcijsko raziskovanje je konstruktivno raziskovanje, med katerim raziskovalec konstruira svoje znanje o specifičnih vprašanjih z načrtovanjem, ukrepanjem, ocenjevanjem, izpopolnjevanjem in učenjem iz izkušenj. Je stalen učni proces, v katerem se raziskovalec uči in deli novo ustvarjeno znanje s tistimi, ki bi jim to lahko koristilo.

Da bi se akcijska raziskava pravilno izvajala, jo morajo učitelji poznati. Številni avtorji (Florjančič, 2014; Holcar Brunnauer idr., 2013; Janík, 2004; Kompolt in Timková, 2010; Mertler in Charles, 2011; Stanojević, 2013; Vogrinc in Krek, 2011) bistvo akcijskega raziskovanja opisujejo na način, kot je predstavljeno v nadaljevanju. Akcijsko raziskovanje:

- je proces, ki s spreminjanjem izboljšuje izobraževanje na splošno;
- je proces, ki vključuje učitelje, ki sodelujejo pri izboljšanju lastne prakse;
- za učitelje ni rutinska dejavnost, ko razmišljajo o poučevanju, saj je bolj sistematično in sodelovalno v primerjavi s tradicionalnim učenjem;
- ni le reševanje problemov, ampak vključuje specifikacijo problema, razvoj nečesa novega (v večini primerov) in kritičen razmislek o njegovi učinkovitosti;
- ni narejeno “za” ali s strani “drugih ljudi”, saj je raziskava, ki jo izvajajo specifični pedagogi pri svojem delu s študenti in sodelavci;
- ni samo izvajanje vnaprej določenih odgovorov na izobraževalna vprašanja;
- ni dokončno, saj rezultati akcijskih raziskav niso niti pravilni niti napačni, temveč so okvirne rešitve, ki temeljijo na opazovanjih in drugih zbirkah podatkov, ki zahtevajo spremljanje in vrednotenje za prepoznavanje prednosti in omejitev;
- ni “modna muha”, ker dobro poučevanje vedno vključuje sistematično raziskovanje učnega procesa in njegovih učinkov na učenje učencev;
- razvija kritično refleksijo lastnega poučevanja;
- je načrten, sistematičen pristop k razumevanju učnega procesa;
- je proces, ki od učiteljev zahteva, da “testirajo” svoje predstave o izobraževanju;
- je utemeljitev lastne pedagoške prakse;
- nima strogo znanstvenega značaja, njegova naloga ni odkrivanje zakonitosti in raziskovanje teoretičnih vidikov izobraževanja, temveč raziskovanje bistva določenih pedagoških in didaktičnih pojavov, ki so povezani z vzgojno-izobraževalnim delom učitelja;
- rezultati raziskave so takoj dostopni in jih je mogoče implementirati v vzgojno-izobraževalno delo učitelja.

Mnogi učitelji mislijo, da izvajajo akcijsko raziskavo tako, da razmišljajo o poučevanju in nato spremenijo nekatere elemente le-tega. To ni akcijska raziskava. Za akcijsko raziskovanje je značilno naslednje:

- ni le običajno razmišljanje o poučevanju;
- zanj je značilno sistematično delo učitelja ali učiteljskega tima za izboljšanje kakovosti vzgojno-izobraževalnega delovanja in s tem večjo kakovost izobraževanja;
- ni naključna dejavnost, npr. samo rešitev pedagoške ali didaktične situacije, ki je nastala v razredu;
- temelji na učiteljevi lastni samorefleksiji;
- kljub nekoliko preprostosti zahteva nekaj metodološkega znanja učitelja;
- ni in ne more biti le enkraten dogodek, saj učiteljeva spoznanja vodijo k nadaljnjemu izboljšanju njegove vzgojno-izobraževalne dejavnosti.

Vsak korak akcijskega raziskovanja je izjemno pomemben za splošni uspeh. V smislu fokusa prispevka namenjamo posebno pozornost refleksiji. Razmislek je konec cikla raziskovanja. V njem učitelj pregleda, kaj je naredil, in se na podlagi tega odloči za nadaljnje korake. Ti vključujejo uporabo odkritega v naslednjem ciklu, pa tudi vnos nečesa "novega" v izobraževanje. Vendar refleksija ni le rezultat v ciklu, je del vseh faz raziskovanja. Šele potem je akcija raziskovalno učinkovita. Refleksija je v bistvu stalno spremljanje v akcijskem raziskovanju.

Akcijsko raziskovanje se je v Evropi, zlasti v Veliki Britaniji, začelo razvijati v šestdesetih in sedemdesetih letih 20. stoletja po zaslugi Elliotta, ki ga je videl kot sistematičen premislek o poklicnih situacijah, ki se izvaja z namenom njihovega nadaljnjega razvoja (Koshy, 2010; Kohútová, 2018). Akcijsko raziskovanje in njegova ustrezna uporaba naj bi prispevala k večji učinkovitosti izobraževanja. Primer tega je izvajanje raziskav o akcijskih raziskavah, objavljenih na platformi School Education Gateway (2021). V raziskavi je sodelovalo 144 anketirancev iz 25 držav. Raziskava je na primer pokazala, da učitelji cenijo akcijsko raziskovanje kot priložnost za izboljšanje kakovosti izobraževanja, ga imajo za učinkovito orodje za profesionalni razvoj učiteljev, prispeva k samorefleksiji in kritičnemu razmišljanju itd., a so učitelji izpostavili lastno neznanje na področju raziskovalnih metod, pomanjkanje časa za raziskovanje in dejstvo, da bi temu področju morala vodstva šol posvetiti več pozornosti.

Glavni cilj naše študije je bil ugotoviti percepcijo in odnos učiteljev do akcijskega raziskovanja, težave, s katerimi se srečujejo pri akcijskem raziskovanju, ter predlagati možne načine za izboljšanje obstoječega stanja.

Uporabljena je bila deskriptivna kvantitativna in kvalitativna metoda. V letu 2021 je bila izvedena kvantitativna raziskava mnenj in stališč slovaških učiteljev 2. razreda osnovnih šol o akcijskem raziskovanju pri njihovi pedagoški in didaktični dejavnosti ( $N = 239$ ), intervjuvanih pa je bilo 87 učiteljev.

Rezultati kažejo, da učitelji sicer cenijo akcijsko raziskovanje, v realni izobraževalni praksi pa ga ne uporabljajo toliko, kot bi si želeli. Kateri so razlogi za slabšo uporabo akcijskega raziskovanja v vsakdanji praksi? Učitelji menijo, da ključno vlogo igrajo organi upravljanja na področju šolstva, saj je 35 % učiteljev poročalo, da izobraževalni menedžment na makro ravni temu ne posveča ustrežne pozornosti, kar se manifestira na ravni vodstva šole. Kar 59 % anketirancev je izrazilo, da vodstvo šole učiteljem ne nudi

podpore na tem področju. Navedene ugotovitve so zelo zgovorne in kažejo, da vzroki niso le pri učiteljih, temveč tudi pri vodstvu. Izkazalo se je, da se temu vidiku niti pri usposabljanju bodočih učiteljev ne posveča toliko pozornosti, kot bi si želeli. To je bilo največkrat omenjeno v intervjujih, pri čemer so anketiranci navajali, da so se z raziskovanjem bolj strokovno ukvarjali šele pri izdelavi zaključne naloge študija in tako niso vzpostavili odnosa do raziskovanja.

Raziskave so potrdile, da učitelji ne delajo sistematičnih pregledov. Le 19 % jih pravi, da svoje delo sistematično pregledujejo, ostali to počnejo občasno, zlasti ko to zahtevajo razmere v razredu. Dejstvo, da učitelji ne morejo oceniti pristopov svojih kolegov do raziskovanja, nakazuje, da raziskovanje ne sodi v "portfelj" razprav o tem, kako izboljšati kakovost izobraževanja.

Učitelji akcijsko raziskovanje povezujejo le z neposrednim poukom. Manj se zavedajo oz. cenijo, da lastno raziskovanje lahko razkrije slabosti pri poučevanju (le 12 %), prispeva k izboljšanju samorefleksije (10 %) in k sodelovanju s sodelavci (4 %). To so nizki odstotki in so neposreden izziv za izboljšanje področja predvsem za vodstva šol. Raziskovanje ni samo takojšnje preverjanje poučevanja, ampak tudi preverjanje številnih povezanih vidikov, ki jih lahko izboljšajo. Učitelji povpraševanje razumejo predvsem kot utilitarizem.

Če povzamemo poglede na raziskovanje, se sprašujemo, zakaj učitelji tega ne delajo. Poleg že zisanega (nepripravljenost med študijem, nezainteresiranost izobraževalnih organov) bi našli navedbe učiteljev: pomanjkanje časa (30 %), osebni interes (6 %), ostalo (6 %). Številni učitelji se ne zavedajo, da akcijsko raziskovanje lahko vodi do boljših progresivnih in afektivnih metod poučevanja in da bodo posledično poučevali bolj učinkovito v smislu dokazanega – v kratkem času, z manj truda tako z njihove strani kot s strani učenca, bodo dosegli boljše rezultate. V tem je bistvo in pomen poizvedovanja.

Učitelji se na splošno zavedajo prednosti akcijskega raziskovanja. Predvsem rezultati glede podpore učiteljem pri raziskovanju bi nam morali predstavljati določen izziv za izboljšanje obstoječega stanja, pri čemer imamo v mislih predvsem podporo vodstvu šole (59 %), pa tudi podporo učiteljem, tako da jim ponudimo več dostopnih študijev za izvajanje akcijske raziskave v izobraževanju, saj jih za to prosi kar 15 %, ter organiziranje takih izobraževanj in seminarjev za učitelje, ki jim bodo razumljivi (8 %). Navedeno je izziv za številne avtorje, ki želijo prispevati k izboljšanju obstoječega stanja akcijskega raziskovanja v šolah.

Raziskava je pokazala, da se učitelji zavedajo pomena in potrebe po akcijskem raziskovanju. Po drugi strani pa se je tudi pokazalo, da morajo učitelji temu področju posvetiti več pozornosti. Nekaj tega je subjektivne narave – gre za potrebo po doslednejšem vključevanju samih učiteljev v raziskovanje, nekaj je objektivne narave – gre za procese upravljanja izobraževalnih organov in šole. Raziskava je tudi pokazala, da so učitelji zainteresirani za dobro in učinkovito poučevanje. Akcijsko raziskovanje vidijo kot pomembno sredstvo svojega poklicnega razvoja. Menijo, da je treba o tem več govoriti in ga promovirati v učiteljskih kolektivih. Če pripravljamo temeljno reformo izobraževanja na Slovaškem, moramo tudi temu vidiku dejavnosti učiteljev nameniti veliko pozornosti. Študija ponuja veliko predlogov, na kaj se je potrebno osredotočiti.

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