



PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EMPOWERMENT OF REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER TEACHERS DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

Jelena Osmanović Zajić, Jelena Maksimović,

University of Niš, Republic of Serbia

E-mail: jelena.osmanovic.zajic@filfak.ni.ac.rs, jelena.maksimovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

Nedeljko M. Milanović

University in Kragujevac, Republic of Serbia

E-mail: nedeljko@pefja.kg.ac.rs

Abstract

Reflective practitioner teachers should critically review their own work and introduce innovations that should improve everyday educational practice. For this reason, the focus of the research is on the personal and professional empowerment of reflective practitioner teachers during the SARS-CoV2 pandemic. 355 teachers from the Republic of Serbia participated. The empirical research used descriptive methods and techniques of scaling and surveying with an instrument specially constructed for the needs of this research - Questionnaire with assessment scale (RP-COV-19). The results show that the most common form of empowerment is attending online seminars, while teachers rarely attended online classes of colleagues from the school where they work and colleagues from other schools. Teachers' perceptions on the use of the Internet in the aspect of personal and professional empowerment are very positive. Teachers generally rate their training and engagement during the pandemic with the highest marks (four and five), while there were no negative marks at all. Reflexivity accompanied by personal and professional empowerment must be given priority by teachers, because in today's process of education, reflective practitioners are considered successful teachers.

Keywords: *teacher reflective practitioner, professional empowerment, the Covid-19 pandemic, empirical research, improvement of educational practice.*

Introduction

Since the middle of March 2020 in the Republic of Serbia, due to the impact of the SARS-CoV2 pandemic, there have been significant changes in the system of education. This period of education during the pandemic is described by many studies (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Abuhammad, 2020; Franchi, 2020) concerning the quality of online teaching, student and teachers' productivity.

During the pandemic, not only did the students have difficulties in learning and adapting to new conditions, but the pandemic also affected the professional aspect and the strengthening of the teaching staff. Today, the focus is increasingly on reflective teaching in order to support and apply good models and examples in teaching (Shin, 2021). Starting from the fact that reflective practice is considered an indispensable component of modern educational work, this article will try to present reflexivity as an important prerequisite for personal and professional empowerment of teachers during a pandemic caused by the ferocious SARS-CoV2 virus.

It presents some of the definitions of the term reflective practice that are mentioned in contemporary literature. “Reflection can be seen as a catalyst for new and better ways of thinking, acting and acknowledging the complexity of teachers' work” (Tonna et al., 2017, p. 212), while reflective practice can be defined as “looking back on previous experience and finding meaning in it to identify the activities that need to be carried out in the future” (Drew & Bingham, 2001, p. 221). “Reflective practice in work is considered a continuous process based on reflective thinking and learning from experience based on which the teacher plans, implements, evaluates and introduces improvements in their own practice, and develops creativity and innovation with different ideas” (Bilač & Miljković, 2016, p. 358). Therefore, reflective practice seeks to uncover covert teacher questioning and turn certain assumptions into explicit statements (Bawaneh et al., 2020).

Reflexive competencies represent an extremely important segment in the development of professional competencies of teachers (Ivanova-Armejkova, 2020). One of the key features of a competent teacher is reflective practice, which requires him to rely on his own knowledge and skills in order to perform educational work effectively (Rosenberg et al., 2004). In order for teachers to become successful reflective practitioners, “they must continually challenge the underlying beliefs that drive their current behaviour” (Larrivee, 2000, p. 301).

Taking into account the presented, the success of a reflective practitioner teacher implies active re-examination of one's own work through a spectrum of different forms of improvement, nurturing and improvement of professional competencies. Thus, reflection is an indispensable aspect of professional empowerment of teachers and their teaching practice because it provides an opportunity to be original, innovative, dedicated, and responsible for their own work and the outcomes of their work (Zawadzka-Bartnik, 2014). Professional development implies intensive acquisition and improvement of knowledge and skills in order to provide students with quality learning opportunities (Gess-Newsome, 2001). Therefore, the aspect of professional empowerment of teachers is reflected in the creation of a stimulating environment for students, which is essential in improving the quality of learning.

Teachers' self-initiative in the aspect of personal and professional empowerment is reflected through successful classroom work, personal satisfaction of teachers and the presence of a higher level of student motivation in the learning process. Therefore, in the Republic of Serbia, one of the indispensable obligations of teaching staff is to attend certain seminars and other forms of professional empowerment and training of teachers (Radić-Bojanić & Radisavljević, 2017). The mentioned forms of empowerment could not be realized by teachers in contact due to the presence of the pandemic, so the possibility of online training and empowerment was only achievable. During the pandemic, teachers had to move to a different system of teaching, grading, and evaluating both their own and students' work. The fact is that even those teachers who had insufficiently developed digital competencies must follow the dynamics and ways required by the current situation. In the Republic of Serbia, tribunes, educations, and seminars are very current ways of training in order to better achieve the educational process. In addition to primary and secondary school teachers, university teachers also had to adjust their way of working to the conditions of education during the pandemic. The dominant way of working is combined teaching and a complete online system of work. All of the above requires adaptation skills, professional development and the readiness of teachers to work and learn new skills, which is a key feature of a reflective practitioner teacher.

Research Problem

During the pandemic period, the forms of training received a new, changed form by being realized online. The good sides of this way of empowering teachers are saving time, money, strengthening digital competencies, as well as coping and adapting to the new situation.

As personal and professional empowerment of teachers is an inevitable factor in creating a successful educational process, with this paper we sought to examine the commitment to personal and professional empowerment of reflective practitioner teachers during the SARS-CoV2 pandemic. The focus of interest in this issue is based on the perceptions of teachers, how they coped with situations of sudden transition to online teaching, as well as whether they needed support, empowerment in terms of professional development in this area. So, the problem with this research is: *did teachers pay attention to personal and professional empowerment during the SARS-CoV2 pandemic?* This research is considered necessary because the teaching in the conditions of the pandemic in Serbia has changed a lot, which could have affected the quality of teaching, but also the professional aspect of the teaching profession. The reflective practitioner teacher is characterized by coping in challenging situations as well as the need to reconsider their own work. In this sense, these two current topics, teaching in the conditions of the SARS-CoV2 pandemic and the teacher reflective practitioner are related and in synergy represent the problem of this research.

Research Aim and Research Questions

The aim of research was to look at the personal and professional empowerment of reflective practitioner teachers during the SARS-CoV2 pandemic. The following research questions were asked: what qualities should a reflective practitioner teacher possess; whether there is a statistically significant difference in professional empowerment and training during the pandemic in relation to gender, length of service and education; what are the most common ways of personal and professional empowerment of teachers during a pandemic; whether the use of the Internet is represented in the personal and professional empowerment of reflective practitioner teachers; whether teachers cooperate with colleagues in order to improve reflective practice; how do they assess personal and professional empowerment and engagement? These research questions are very important in conventional, regular conditions, and the basic tendency of this research is to examine this issue in pandemic conditions.

Research Methodology

General Background

As professional empowerment is an important predictor of a high-quality teacher, it was explored and examined the commitment to personal and professional empowerment of reflective practitioner teachers during the SARS-CoV2 pandemic. Due to the known unfavourable epidemiological situation due to the SARS-CoV2 virus, the research was conducted by filling out an online questionnaire with an assessment scale. This is empirical research, and a quantitative method has been used. The research was conducted in April and May 2021 via the Google questionnaire.

Sample

The sample consists of 355 in-service teachers from the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The research was conducted by means of the Google questionnaire and the participation in the research was voluntary. The cross-section was made for 355 respondents because no completed ballots arrived for a long time after the last respondent. The sample has random selection features. The list of schools was created, and the school e-mails were collected from schools' official sites. The research instruments were distributed to teachers by school principals and professional associates. The Google questionnaire was anonymous and voluntary, filled

exclusively by those teachers willing to do it. The structure of the sample by gender, length of service, education, type of school in which teachers work and areas of the subject taught by the teacher is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Sample Structure

Variables	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Male	85	23.9
Female	270	76.1
Years of service		
Up to 8 years	39	11
From 9 to 16 years	102	28.7
From 17 to 25 years	125	35.2
More than 25 years	89	25.1
Education		
College	55	15.5
University	178	50.1
Masters	122	34.4
The type of school the teacher works at		
Elementary school	171	48.2
High school	74	20.8
Vocational high school	110	31
The subject area that the teacher teaches		
Science	103	29
Social Sciences and Humanities	252	71

Instrument and Procedures

Scaling and surveys were used in the research, while the instrument was a questionnaire with an assessment scale. The instrument contained questions on demographic characteristics (gender, length of service, teacher education, type of school in which teachers work and the area of the subject taught by the teacher) and five questions that were specifically aimed at personal and professional empowerment of reflective practitioners. The questions in the questionnaire were open and closed, while the Likert-type assessment scale with answer modalities 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree 3 – Neither agree nor disagree; 4 - Agree and 5 - Strongly agree (RP-COV-19). Items in the Likert-type assessment scale were divided into four subscales: teachers' perceptions about the importance of personal and professional empowerment; teachers' perceptions on ways of personal and professional empowerment of teachers during a pandemic; teachers' views on the application of the Internet in the personal and professional empowerment of reflective practitioner teachers during a pandemic; the frequency of cooperation with colleagues in order to improve reflective practice during a pandemic. The

measuring instrument consisted of a total of 35 items. Scale consistency and reliability were performed by the Cronbach Alpha test and were .67. The measuring instrument was used and constructed only for the purposes of this research and there is no tendency to generalize data to the entire population of teachers.

Data Analysis

A descriptive method was used in the research. In accordance with the set subject and the goal of the research, quantitative research was conducted. Data of the research were analysed through the following statistical parameters: chi-square test (χ^2), correlations (r) and arithmetic mean (M) and standard deviation (SD). Statistical processing was performed in the package SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Science).

Research Results

As professional empowerment is an important predictor of a high-quality teacher, the results provided information on the commitment to personal and professional empowerment of reflective practitioner teachers during the SARS-CoV2 pandemic.

In order to make sure that the respondents are familiar with the phrase *teacher reflective practitioner*, it was examined which characteristics, from their perspective, should be possessed, namely, by a teacher reflective practitioner.

Table 2
Answers on the Description of a Reflective Practitioner Teacher

	Description of a reflective practitioner teacher			
	A teacher who continuously monitors, innovates, and improves his work	A teacher who reviews his own work and introduces innovations	A teacher who evaluates and revises his own work	Σ
Frequencies (<i>f</i>)	116	100	139	355
Percentages (%)	32.7	28.2	39.2	100

It is explored whether teachers are satisfied with commitment in terms of personal and professional empowerment and whether there is a statistically significant difference between teacher satisfaction with personal commitment and engagement in professional empowerment and training during the pandemic, in terms of gender, length of service and education.

Out of a total of 355 respondents, 158 (44.5%) teachers stated that they were satisfied with their own engagement in the aspect of personal and professional empowerment during the pandemic, 107 (30.1%) were partially satisfied and 90 (25.4%) were dissatisfied with the commitment to empowerment during the pandemic.

Based on the calculated chi-squares, it was shown that there is no statistically significant difference between gender, work experience, education and teacher satisfaction with personal commitment and engagement in professional empowerment and training during the pandemic (Table 3).

Table 3
Differences in Teachers' Perceptions with Personal and Professional Empowerment During the Pandemic in Relation to Gender, Length of Service and Education

		Gender	Length of service	Education
	χ^2	3.553	11.700	3.677
Teacher satisfaction with personal commitment and engagement in professional empowerment and training during the pandemic	<i>df</i>	2	6	4
	<i>p</i>	.169	.069	.451

Table 4 shows teachers' responses to dissatisfaction with personal and professional empowerment during the pandemic. Teachers critically stated that they were overburdened with the obligations required by online education, lack of motivation for empowerment and improvement, and very poor quality of online webinars and other forms of personal and professional empowerment of educators.

Table 4
Teachers' Responses to Dissatisfaction with Personal and Professional Empowerment during the Pandemic

Teachers' dissatisfaction with personal and professional empowerment during the pandemic					
	Online webinars and other forms of empowerment are of poor quality	Lack of motivation for empowerment	Overburdened with online teaching obligations	They answered in the affirmative	Σ
Frequencies (<i>f</i>)	53	57	87	158	355
Percentages (%)	14.9	16.1	24.5	44.5	100

Table 5 shows the average answers of the respondents obtained by calculating the arithmetic mean (*M*). Teachers were the least in agreement with the item that they had a wide range of opportunities for professional development during the pandemic (*M* = 3.54), and the highest agreement is present in the first two statements in Table 5 which generally speak of the relevance of professional empowerment for the teaching profession.

Table 5
Personal and Professional Empowerment from a Teacher's Perspective

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Personal and professional empowerment and improvement is an important factor in creating a successful reflective practitioner teacher.	4.19	1.01
Without personal and professional empowerment, there is no quality teaching work.	4.11	1.06
I believe that teachers had a wide range of opportunities for professional development during the pandemic.	3.54	1.22
The school where I work initiates and encourages professional development of staff.	3.62	1.31
I see the realization of online teaching during the pandemic as personal and professional empowerment.	3.68	1.30

The most common ways of personal and professional empowerment of teachers during the SARS-CoV2 pandemic was identified. Respondents' agreement was generally mediocre in all allegations of engagement, personal and professional empowerment during a pandemic. According to the item, most of the respondents agreed with the I regularly attended online seminars during the pandemic ($M = 3.83$) and during the pandemic I improved my digital competencies ($M = 3.90$).

Table 6
Forms and Ways of Professional Empowerment from the Teacher's Perspective

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I regularly attended online seminars during the pandemic.	3.83	1.27
I regularly attended forums and round tables whose topics were aimed at improving teaching.	3.08	1.25
I have participated in online conferences and professional gatherings.	3.53	1.24
I conducted action research to improve work with students.	2.55	1.40
I was doing research work.	2.51	1.46
I have published articles in scientific and other journals.	2.17	1.42
I regularly read the results of domestic and foreign scientific research.	3.01	1.41
I organized online trainings during the pandemic.	2.63	1.41
I used all the online opportunities for professional empowerment during the pandemic.	3.60	1.38
During the pandemic, I improved my digital competencies.	3.90	1.34

Starting from the fact that the Internet is indispensable in the work of teachers today, with this research task we tried to examine the extent to which the use of the Internet is represented in personal and professional empowerment of reflective practitioners during the pandemic (Table 7). The response rate of respondents is generally very positive and high, the only slightly lower agreement with the items is *I searched domestic and foreign portals that show examples of good practice in the implementation of online teaching* ($M = 4.09$).

Table 7
Application of the Internet in Personal and Professional Empowerment from the Teacher's Perspective during a Pandemic

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I regularly use the Internet as one of the sources of professional empowerment.	4.42	0.81
I am willing to use the Internet and expand my personal and professional competencies through it.	4.46	0.80
The Internet was suitable as a training opportunity during the pandemic.	4.40	0.79
I used the Internet before the pandemic as a way of professional empowerment.	4.41	0.84
I used the benefits of the Internet and online education.	4.40	0.83
On my own initiative, I searched the Internet for trainings where I can improve my teaching work.	4.20	1.01
I searched domestic and foreign portals that show examples of good practice in the implementation of online teaching.	4.09	1.11
I use the Internet as a source of ideas to improve online teaching during a pandemic.	4.32	0.90
I use the Internet to search for literature related to educational work.	4.17	1.03

Guided by the fact that cooperation with colleagues is very important in terms of professional empowerment and improvement of reflective teaching, it was examined the frequency of cooperation with colleagues in order to improve reflective practice during the pandemic. Very low consent of the respondents is present in the items *I attended online classes of colleagues from the school where I work* ($M = 2.04$) and *I attended online classes of colleagues from other schools* ($M = 2.13$), while the highest agreement is in the spectrum of these claims represented in the item, *I exchange experiences with colleagues from the school where I work* ($M = 4.03$).

Table 8
Cooperation with Colleagues in Order to Improve Reflective Practice - Perspective of Teachers

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I attended online classes of colleagues from the school where I work.	2.04	1.30
I attended online classes of colleagues from other schools.	2.13	1.41
I applied the ideas of colleagues that proved to be examples of good practice.	3.65	1.07
I share experiences with colleagues from the school where I work.	4.03	0.84
I exchange ideas and experiences with colleagues from other schools.	3.50	1.16
I talk to colleagues and professional associates about how to improve work during a pandemic.	3.86	1.07

With the last research task, we wanted to investigate how teachers would assess their personal and professional empowerment and engagement during a pandemic. Teachers were offered 5-point Likert scale intervals on which they could do their own work and engage grades with grades 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

None of the respondents rated their own work with a grade of one, 46 (13%) with a grade of two, 88 (24.8%) with a grade of three, a grade of three four 126 (35.5%) teachers and 95 (26.8%) teachers with a grade of five.

The results presented in Table 9 show that there is a positive and weak correlation between the gender of teachers and the assessment of their own work and engagement during the pandemic ($r = .14$; $p = .008$). Female teachers assessed the more frequent personal and professional empowerment during the pandemic with a score of four and five. There is a positive correlation between education and teacher assessment ($r = .31$; $p = .0001$). There is a weak and negative correlation between the type of school in which teachers work and teachers' assessments of personal and professional empowerment ($r = -.13$; $p = .018$).

Table 9

Correlation in Terms of Teachers' Grades during the Pandemic and Gender, Education, and Type of School in which Teachers Work

	Variables	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Teachers' assessment of personal and professional empowerment and engagement during the pandemic	Gender	.14	.008
	Education	.31	.0001
	The type of school the teachers work at	-.13	.018

Discussion

For many teachers, education during the pandemic was a real challenge. The crisis caused by the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV2 virus also affected teacher education (Spagnolo et al., 2021). In addition to the many difficulties of conducting online teaching and distance learning, teachers were expected to continually review their work and improve their teaching practice. As this is not effective without personal and professional empowerment, with this research we wanted to contribute to the personal and professional empowerment of reflective practitioner teachers.

The question arises as to what qualities a reflective practitioner should possess and represent? "A teacher who thinks about his practice is characterized by: a tendency towards continuous self-analysis and self-monitoring; sensitivity to perceive the situation from different angles; searching for elements of good practice; openness to try different ways of working than usual; openness to share experiences with colleagues; willingness to change the previously set plan on the spot depending on the way students react during class; readiness to analyse the beliefs on which his daily actions are based" (Radišić et al., 2015, p. 9). According to the above, the reflective practitioner teacher critically reviews and interprets his/her own work, analyses and introduces novelties that improve everyday teaching practice.

The results of the research show that all teachers described the reflective practitioner teacher well, which tells us that teachers are familiar with this phrase, which is increasingly present in the pedagogical literature. The fact that more than half of the teachers pointed out that they were partially or not at all satisfied with personal and professional empowerment during the pandemic is worrying. The results show that there is no statistically significant difference between gender variability, length of service, education and teacher satisfaction with personal commitment and engagement in professional empowerment and training during the pandemic. Their reasons for dissatisfaction are the high workload based on organization and conducting online classes, the lack of motivation to dedicate to personal and professional empowerment and the poor quality of online webinars, seminars and other forms of empowerment were of poor quality. It was noticed that the dissatisfaction of teachers is accompanied by great difficulties

that they faced every day in their professional work and strengthening their competencies. Respondents generally agree with the items that concerned general personal and professional empowerment, while the average agreement with the items on the possibilities of professional empowerment during the pandemic, support, and initiation of a school for professional empowerment of staff and to perceive the realization of online teaching as professional and personal empowerment, strengthening and improving their work.

When it comes to forms of teacher empowerment during the pandemic, the following forms are least present: publishing articles in scientific journals, conducting research work, conducting action research, and organizing online education during the pandemic. The most common form of empowerment is attending online seminars during a pandemic. The results of research (Pavlović-Breneselović & Krnjaja, 2012) whose sample was composed of educators, shows that the most dominant form of professional development are seminars.

Teachers had positive perceptions with items about the use of the Internet in personal and professional empowerment. Therefore, the use of the Internet in the development of competencies and the aspect of professional empowerment of reflective practitioner teachers during the pandemic proved to be an important element. Visiting colleagues' online classes was not a common activity among teachers during the pandemic, while sharing experiences with colleagues was more common. Also, the results of the research (Džinović et al., 2013) show that the attendance of other colleagues' classes measures a very low score. As no tangent research has been found that deals with the empowerment of reflective practitioner teachers during a pandemic, efforts have been made to look at and show how reflective practitioner teachers are personally and professionally empowered in pandemic conditions.

Conclusions and Implications

Reconsideration and revision of practice, as well as the desire to prove one's own success through outcomes in student achievement, characterizes the teacher as a reflective practitioner. Loyalty to the profession includes the inevitable form of personal and professional empowerment of teachers. The results of research show divided perceptions of teachers about personal and professional empowerment during a pandemic. Therefore, although all teachers positively described and recognized the characteristics of reflective practitioners, it can't be said that all of them in the part of professional empowerment during the pandemic acted in accordance with reflective principles.

This research was conducted with the aim of reviewing the personal and professional empowerment of reflective practitioner teachers during the SARS-CoV2 virus pandemic. Taking into account the pandemic crisis and the inexperience of teachers in the concept of distance learning, it is concluded that the new situation, accompanied by concern and patience, has affected teachers' commitment to personal and professional empowerment and strengthening their own competencies. Perceptions of the importance of professional development and empowerment are positive in terms of the importance of training and empowerment, attending online seminars and improving digital competencies, using the Internet, and exchanging experiences with colleagues at the school where they work. Most teachers rated their personal and professional empowerment and engagement during the pandemic with the highest marks (four and five), while there were no negative marks at all.

In order to meet the requirements of education, teachers must give great personal and professional empowerment and include self-reflection in their work because today high-quality teachers are considered to be reflective practitioners. The presented research with its findings indicates possible research limitations in terms of research findings because they cannot be generalized to the perceptions of all teachers in the Republic of Serbia and other countries. However, this research can certainly encourage teachers to think in order to improve educational

practice, because that is the quality of every reflective practitioner. On the other hand, it can be a good incentive for all researchers who want to deal with this issue, further improve it and repeat this study in some other conditions in order to see a more complete picture of a reflective practitioner teacher during a pandemic. Certainly, the findings can be postulates for some future futurological and comparative research.

Declaration of Interest

Authors declare no competing interest.

References

- Abuhammad, S. (2020). Barriers to distance learning during the COVID-19 outbreak: A qualitative review from parents' perspective. *Heliyon*, 6(11), 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e05482>
- Adnan, M., & Anwar, K. (2020). Online learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic: Students' perspectives. *Online Submission*, 2(1), 45-51. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606496.pdf>
- Bawaneh, A. K., Moumene, A. B. H., & Aldalalah, O. (2020). Gauging the level of reflective teaching practices among science teachers. *International Journal of Instruction*, 13(1), 695-712. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1239304.pdf>
- Bilač, S. & Miljković, D. (2016). Utjecaj refleksivne prakse na samoprocjenu ponašanja i zadovoljstvo poslom učitelja u upravljaju razredom i disciplinom [Influence of reflective practice on self-assessment of behavior and job satisfaction of teachers in classroom management and discipline]. *Školski vjesnik*, 65(3), 357-377. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/178097>
- Shin J. (2021). Preservice music teachers in Korea and their collaborative reflection with peers. *International Journal of Music Education*, 39(4), 371-382. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761420986237>
- Tonna, M. A., Bjerkholt, E. & Holland, E. (2017). Teacher mentoring and the reflective practitioner approach. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 6(3), 210-227. doi:10.1108/IJMCE-04-2017-0032
- Drew, S. & Bingham, R. (2001). *The student skills guide*. Gower.
- Klingner, J. K. (2004). The science of professional development. *Journal of learning disabilities*, 37(3), 248-255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222194040370031001>
- Larrivee, B. (2000). Transforming Teaching Practice: becoming the critically reflective teacher. *Reflective Practice*, 1(3), 293-307. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713693162>
- Radić-Bojanić, B., & Ranisavljević, B. (2017). Onlajn obučavanje nastavnika – stavovi i evaluacija [Online teacher training - attitudes and evaluation]. In: D. Pralica, N. Šinković. (Eds.) *Zbornik Digitalne medijske tehnologije i društveno-obrazovne promene* (pp. 287-299). Univerzitet u Novom Sadu, Filozofski fakultet.
- Radišić, J., Buđevac, N., Jošić, S., Baucal, A. (2015). *Nastavnik kao refleksivni praktičar primeri dobre prakse* [Teacher as a reflective practitioner examples of good practice]. Beograd: Ministarstvo prosvete, nauke i tehnološkog razvoja Republika Srbija. <http://www.trgovackaskola.edu.rs/files/vesti/nastavnik%20prakticar%20primeri%20dobre%20prakse.pdf>
- Rosenberg, M., Sindelar, P., & Hardman, M. (2004). Preparing highly qualified teachers for students with emotional or behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders*, 29(3), 266-278. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019874290402900308>
- Ivanova-Armejkova Rositsa Ms (2020). On reflexive skills and competencies of the teachers. *Education Journal*, 9(4), 99-104. doi: 10.11648/j.edu.20200904.12
- Zawadzka-Bartnik E. (2014). Refleksja w zawodzie nauczyciela - założenia a re-alne możliwości realizacji (Reflections in the institution of learning - the principles and real possibilities of realization). *Neofilolog*, 43(1), 7-23. <https://doi.org/10.14746/n.2014.43.1.2>
- Spagnolo, C., Giglio, R., Tiralongo, S., & Bolondi, G. (2021). Formative Assessment in LDL: A Teacher-training Experiment. *CSEDU*, 1(1), 657-664. <https://www.scitepress.org/Papers/2021/104960/104960.pdf>

- Gess-Newsome, J. (2001). The professional development of science teachers for science education reform: A review of the research. In J. Rhoton, & P. Bowers (Eds.), *Professional development: Planning and design* (pp. 91-100). NSTA Press.
- Marušić, M., & Pejatović, A. (2013). Činioci participacije nastavnika u profesionalnom usavršavanju [Factors of teacher participation in professional development]. *Andragoške studije* 1(1), 117-130. https://cris.vub.be/ws/portalfiles/portal/22050137/AS_13_01_v03.pdf#page=118
- Franchi, T. (2020). The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on current anatomy education and future careers: A student's perspective. *Anatomical Sciences Education*, 13(3), 312-315. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ase.1966>
- Pavlović-Breneselović, D., & Krnjaja, Ž. (2012). Perspektiva vaspitača o profesionalnom usavršavanju sa stanovišta sistemske koncepcije profesionalnog razvoja [Pre-school teacher perspective on professional development from the viewpoint of systemic professional development concept]. *Andragoške studije*, 1(12), 145-162. <http://ref.f.bg.ac.rs/handle/123456789/1482>
- Džinović, V., Đević, R., & Đerić, I. (2013). Percepcije nastavnika o sopstvenoj inicijativnosti: kolektivna inicijativa spram lične inicijative [Teachers' perceptions of self-initiative: collective initiative versus personal initiative]. *Zbornik Instituta za pedagoška istraživanja*, 45(2), 282-297. <https://doi.org/10.2298/ZIPI1302282D>

Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE WITH ASSESSMENT SCALE ON PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EMPOWERMENT OF REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER TEACHERS DURING THE PANDEMIC (RP-COV-19)

Respected teachers,

The questionnaire in front of you collects information on commitment to personal and professional empowerment as an important factor in improving the work of reflective practitioner teachers. In order to achieve the goal of the research, your opinion is of special importance. Please answer each question honestly.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Gender: a) male; b) female.

Indicate the total length of service in the teaching profession: _____

Professional qualifications: a) College; b) University; c) Master.

The type of school I work at: a) elementary school; b) high school; c) vocational high school.

The subject area that I teach: _____

1. How would you describe a reflective practitioner teacher?

2. Are you satisfied with your personal commitment and engagement in professional empowerment and training during the pandemic?
a) I'm satisfied. b) I'm partially satisfied; c) I'm not satisfied.

3. If you are not satisfied with your personal commitment and engagement in professional empowerment and training during the pandemic, give reasons:

4. How would you rate (1 to 5) your personal and professional empowerment and training during the pandemic??

a) one; b) two; c) three; d) four; e) five.

5. In front of you is a series of offered claims about the personal and professional empowerment of a reflective practitioner teacher. Your task is to state the degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement, i.e., to mark with X an answer for each statement in the appropriate column.

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Personal and professional empowerment and improvement is an important factor in creating a successful reflective practitioner teacher.					
Without personal and professional empowerment, there is no quality teaching work.					
I believe that teachers had a wide range of opportunities for professional development during the pandemic.					
The school where I work initiates and encourages professional development of staff.					
I see the realization of online teaching during the pandemic as personal and professional empowerment.					
I regularly attended online seminars during the pandemic.					
I regularly attended forums and round tables whose topics were aimed at improving teaching.					
I have participated in online conferences and professional gatherings.					
I conducted action research to improve work with students.					

I was doing research work.					
I have published articles in scientific and other journals.					
I regularly read the results of domestic and foreign scientific research.					
I organized online trainings during the pandemic.					
I used all the online opportunities for professional empowerment during the pandemic.					
During the pandemic, I improved my digital competencies.					
I regularly use the Internet as one of the sources of professional empowerment.					
I am willing to use the Internet and expand my personal and professional competencies through it.					
The Internet was suitable as a training opportunity during the pandemic.					
I used the Internet before the pandemic as a way of professional empowerment.					
I used the benefits of the Internet and online education.					
On my own initiative, I searched the Internet for trainings where I can improve my teaching work.					
I searched domestic and foreign portals that show examples of good practice in the implementation of online teaching.					
I use the Internet as a source of ideas to improve online teaching during a pandemic.					

I use the Internet to search for literature related to educational work.					
I attended online classes of colleagues from the school where I work.					
I attended online classes of colleagues from other schools.					
I applied the ideas of colleagues that proved to be examples of good practice.					
I share experiences with colleagues from the school where I work.					
I exchange ideas and experiences with colleagues from other schools.					
I talk to colleagues and professional associates about how to improve work during a pandemic.					

Received: January 29, 2022

Revised: March 21, 2022

Accepted: April 09, 2022

Cite as: Osmanović Zajić, J., Maksimović, J. Ž., & Milanović, N. M. (2022). Personal and professional empowerment of reflective practitioner teachers during the Covid 19 pandemic. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 80(2), 371-385. <https://doi.org/10.33225/pec/22.80.371>

Jelena Osmanović Zajić (Corresponding author)	PhD, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Ćirila i Metodija 2, 18105, Niš, Republic of Serbia. E-mail: jelena.osmanovic.zajic@filfak.ni.ac.rs ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2289-9438
Jelena Ž. Maksimović	PhD, Professor, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Ćirila i Metodija 2, 18105 Niš, Republic of Serbia. E-mail: jelena.maksimovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8356-0211
Nedeljko M. Milanović	Teaching Assistant, Faculty of Education University in Kragujevac, Jagodina, Milana Mijalkovića 14, 35000 Jagodina, Republic of Serbia. E-mail: nedeljko@pefja.kg.ac.rs ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4563-3544