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## Research-Based Teacher Education and Practices: Learning how Researcher and Teacher Communities Can Collaborate

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### Session Information

#### **10 SES 11 E, Collaboration, Messiness and Hybrid Learning Space**

Paper Session

Time: 2017-08-24  
17:15-18:45

Room: K5.02

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### Contribution

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The main goal of this paper is to review activities and their outcomes in the second year of the implementation of the project "REP-Synergy: Towards Improvement of Research Capacities Essential for Teacher Education and Practices in Serbia and Estonia", (grant no. IZ74Z0\_160511, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation within the SCOPES programme). The project is based on the idea of the integration of research and teacher education (McNamara, 2002; Pollard et al., 2008; Brew, 2010) in order to improve teaching practice. This integration should be of special interest within Eastern European countries currently going through a process of comprehensive social transition in changing education systems, policies and practices of research education, which is the case both in Serbia and Estonia. In the case of Serbia, the education system is in the process of a comprehensive reform struggling with a transition from an education system mainly focused on the transmission of general knowledge and with strong academic orientation to an education system focused on the learning and development of key educational and professional competencies (Pantić, 2009; Pavlović Babić & Baucal, 2013) which enable young people to successfully participate in the education and to plan professional career. From the teacher perspective, they need to be trained in order to build capacities for practice-led research and to use research results to improve their professional practices (Brookfield, 1995; Loughran, Mitchell & Mitchell, 2002; McNamara, 2002; Korthagen, 2004; Pollard et al., 2008). The analysis of pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes in Serbia has shown that existing research evidences are not relevant enough, or not at all, to education practice and practitioners, as well as to educators of future teachers. The challenge is even bigger in the context of the ongoing wider education reform which is

oriented to support the evidence based policy making and the development of reflective practitioners. For this reason, our project support direct collaboration between young researchers, mainly educated in the field of psychology, and (future) teachers from the Teacher Education faculty on the realization of a series of small-scale research studies. Specific goals of the project are: to improve understanding of their needs for research evidences and their capacities to design and pilot research study that will correspond better with needs of educational practice and practitioners, as well as to establish network between younger PhD and post-doc researchers and teacher educators and practitioners. As a long-term goal we see the empowerment of their professional capacities, balancing theoretical and practical components of education, as well as encouragement of the autonomous engagement in working with colleagues in other institutions and countries (and with members of the wider research community).

The goal of this paper is to report experiences and findings from the second year of the project implementation. The main purpose is to reflect experiences from the first stage of a project implementation, to identify participants' beliefs, meanings and identities that might support or prevent the process of building a productive collaboration among them and to identify external factors that might support or prevent process of building a productive collaboration.

## **Method**

This paper is based on one year of mentoring work with a group of 32 participants (university students, young researchers, teachers) from the Faculty of Philosophy (Institute of Psychology, University of Belgrade) and the Teacher Education Faculty at the University of Belgrade, Serbia. For those of them who are current or future practitioners (teachers and school psychologists) we tried to foster their knowledge and understanding in the following domains: the role of practice-based research in teaching and learning; the types and logic of practice-based research; different data collection techniques and analyses; dissemination of research. In order to gain this goal, they were trained to apply software for video analysis of educational practices (Atlas), analysis of narratives (MaxQDA) and basic quantitative statistics (SPSS). The main aim for the second group (young researchers, mainly PhD students in educational sciences) to reinforce their capacities to do research as well as to use research evidences to support teachers, school leaders and policy makers. It included workshops on the following topics: the role and logic of scientific research; different types of research design; different data collection techniques and analyses; academic writing and oral skills, as well as the preparation of them to conduct workshops with practitioners. In addition, formal (during workshops and sessions) and informal discussion with participants were conducted in order to identify relevant research topics and questions. Process of defining research topic, selecting the appropriate method, planning sample and writing project proposal were mentoring, and feedback was provided. Finally, the Questionnaire for project participants was provided, in order to identify their experience and expectations. Also, the collected data include the observation of workshops and activities' discussions involving the participants in Belgrade, as well as interviews with them. Those data were analyzed using qualitative methods (Arcidiacono, Baucal & Buđevac, 2011), by the identification of elements of reflexivity, beliefs and meaning-making processes about the implication of teachers and young researchers in the designed project.

## **Expected Outcomes**

So far, the main result of the project is 13 collaborative research studies, currently in the phase of field trial. Some of the chosen topics are: collaborative testing in teaching languages, efficiency of supplementary classes in high schools, compatibility between preschool and primary school curricula, improvement of children's discussion about art productions, game-based teaching versus traditional teaching, literacy and collaborative testing knowledge, efficiency in teaching natural sciences, professional identity and conceptual mapping in learning about the human body. In the next stage, the research findings would be presented in different forms, such as articles for scientific journals, policy papers, oral presentation in national and international conferences. This means that the outcomes of the REP-Synergy project will be externally evaluate by peer reviewers and discussants from relevant professional communities. Analysis of data collecting by questionnaires for participants has shown very strong belief that current education researches are not applicable and applied enough, as well as the wish to be part of the ongoing reform processes in education system and to build the identity of good researchers with strong methodological competencies. The findings indicated that existing practices and orientations made researchers and teachers different. They have different interests - while researchers are more interested in psychological process (interest, motivation, process of learning etc.), practitioners are interested in content (disciplinary knowledge and teaching). For first group the focus is on relatively general models and testing current models developed within psychology of education, for the second the focus is on transmission of academic knowledge from certain discipline. Finally, they do not share the same identity, since they belong to different and divided communities. We believe that the possibility to strengthen a culture of practice-led research and to build networks to exchange professional knowledge will contribute to improve the collaboration at the institutional level.

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