

## Editorial

This is the first time in the MRER's fourteen-volume history that a supplement issue is being published. It adds to the rich heritage of general and special issues, published twice yearly, showcasing a wide repertoire of studies by academics and practitioners.

This issue features seven papers, authored by professionals who are located at the intersection of teacher formation, research and practice. The papers, produced by an international consortium of academics, researchers and practitioners from Serbia and Switzerland, coordinated by Francesco Arcidiacono, Aleksandar Baucal, Dragica Pavlović Babić, Nevena Budevac, and Sanja Blagdanić, who are also involved in the editing of this supplement issue, reflect the importance of urgently reconnecting theory with practice, and of reinventing research as an activity that truly serves the profession. In fact, the papers are practice-led and meant to highlight the notion that research is a collective activity, shared and owned by professional researchers and practitioners alike. Similar to the authors of this supplement issue, we contend that practice-based research should occupy a prominent place in teacher formation and should constitute a permanent fixture within communities of practice. Such an approach would render research more meaningful, relevant and accessible to a profession that seems to struggle to embrace research as a valid way of knowing.

The mood of this issue is set in the first paper, where the importance of practice-led research is explored through a partnership model which the authors - Francesco Arcidiacono, Aleksandar Baucal, Dragica Pavlović Babić, Nevena Budevac, and Sanja Blagdanić - refer to as Research-Education-Practice synergy (REP-synergy). Focusing on Serbia, a country transitioning from a content-driven approach to a greater emphasis on learning and development of competencies, the authors identify practice-led research as a potential solution to the practice-theory divide and to the absence of a culture of cooperation between researchers, policymakers and practitioners. Within

the aforementioned framework, and with two Serbian institutions in focus, the approach of the consortium is multifaceted, ranging from building capacity in qualitative methodologies and improving the relevance of future research projects for educational practice and school improvement to greater collaboration between researchers and pre-service and in-service teachers. The authors map out the outcomes and challenges in implementing aspects of the REP-synergy model.

Set against a constructivist backdrop, the paper authored by Tijana Jokić Zorkić and Vitomir Jovanović gauges teachers' beliefs, analyses educators' dominant practices, and looks into school climate and its effect on professional practice, including interprofessional cooperation. The main practice-focused message that emerges from the data, obtained through secondary analysis, is that systematic practices of cooperation with other teachers and a system of reciprocal feedback on various aspects of professional practices, in an enabling school climate, will positively reinforce effective teaching practices, irrespective of the teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning.

The paper by Smiljana Jošić and Sonja Banjac explores teaching practices in reading and their correlation with the performance of students in the PISA reading items. The quantitative analysis reveals that the best teaching strategies in the area of reading are those which allow for active engagement and deep understanding of texts, foregrounding analysis rather than mere description.

Dejana Mutavdžin's paper explores an aspect of the broader relationship between the visual-spatial dimension and reading skills. Asserting that students' characteristics can best be supported in the classroom if teachers are provided with empirically-grounded work guidelines, and if these guidelines inform the education policy, primarily in the domain of producing textbooks, the study suggests that students with different visual-spatial abilities, interact differently with reading texts. This study comes close to concluding that students with higher visual-spatial ability tend to read texts at a slower pace and, therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach with regard to the time allocated to reading a text could be detrimental to some students.

Višnja Mićić reports on research which was conducted with twenty-eight high school students, ages fourteen to fifteen, in Belgrade, Serbia, using a

qualitative methodology. Students were guided through the sequential reading of a story selected from the PISA items. After each paragraph, the students were invited to express their expectations about further story development. The study identified three types of expectations: a) expectations dictated by the author's intention, b) expectations that selectively follow the intent of the text, and c) expectations which are not based on the signals in the text. The foregoing study throws light on the difficulties that students experience while trying to understand and envision the literary texts they are reading.

Bojan Marković's study examines how elementary school students, aged nine years, perceive contemporary poetry. Informed by the reception theory, one important conclusion of the study is that students understand poetry to a higher degree than expected. An important pedagogical implication of the foregoing study is that students ought to be encouraged and provided with safe spaces to verbalise their thoughts.

Milana Dabić Boričić, Ivana Vulić and Marina Videnović focus on mathematical literacy. Using inductive thematic analysis, and comparing Serbian annual exams to PISA's numerical literacy test, this study aims to examine mathematics teachers' conceptions of mathematical literacy and the assessment of mathematical knowledge. In general, PISA tasks were described as both more interesting and complicated than their annual-exam counterparts, and include literacy tasks. In contrast, the tasks from the final exam were observed as more formal and purely mathematical. The results reveal broad differences between the underlying logic behind PISA testing and Serbian mathematics teachers' understanding of mathematical literacy and knowledge assessment. The study also observes that teachers would like to see PISA-like tasks introduced to mathematics practice, in addition to the traditional, solely mathematical tasks.

The supplement issue that we are introducing illustrates how research can feed directly into practice and how practitioners can combine theory with practice by engaging in ongoing reflection on research-informed practice. Collaboration is key to forming communities of practice that contribute to mutual professional growth and transformation.

**Carmel Borg and Milosh Raykov**  
University of Malta

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