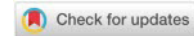


THE ROLE OF ACTION RESEARCH AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN ENHANCING THE WORK OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

Milanka Nikolić^{1*}

¹PU „Dečja radost“ Čuprija, e-mail: milanka.nikolic2023@gmail.com



Abstract: Action research represents a distinct approach to research that differs from traditional research methods. Instead of solely focusing on describing and explaining phenomena, action research aims to enhance practice in the real world. This means it focuses on identifying issues in practice, developing and testing interventions to address these issues, and ultimately evaluating the effects of these interventions. The research problem is the motivation of preschool teachers to engage in action research to improve educational practice. The aim of the research is directed towards determining the significance of action research that would contribute to the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities to improve the work of preschool institutions. The results have shown that preschool teachers have developed an awareness of the importance of action research and reflective practice, as the results obtained through the t-test indicate statistically significant changes in the respondents' attitudes at the level of $p=0.000$. Preschool teachers are motivated to enhance collaboration with cultural institutions through their own thinking and actions ($p=0.000$), and it is important to them that preschool institutions establish collaboration with cultural institutions ($p=0.000$).

Keywords: action research, reflective practice, preschool teacher, preschool institution, reflection, collaboration.

Field: Social science.

1. INTRODUCTION

The idea of action research originates from social sciences and psychology, and it is based on the theory of social constructivism. According to this theory, knowledge is constructed through the interaction between people and their environment, and consequently, practice is constantly changing and improving (Gergen & Gergen, 2008). Action research provides a means to apply this theory in practice by actively enhancing practice through the research process and generating knowledge that is directly applicable in the real world.

Key elements of action research include collaboration between researchers and practitioners, continuous evaluation and improvement of practice, and a focus on practical solutions. This approach to research can be valuable in various fields such as education, healthcare, business, and organizational development because it provides an opportunity for direct impact on practice and the creation of tangible changes.

Different authors define action research in various ways. Below are some of the definitions. Action research is a research method applied to enhance practice through a decision-making process directed at solving specific real-world problems (Lewin, 1946). According to another definition by Levin (Lewin, 1948, as cited in Bargal, 2006), action research can be viewed as a learning process in which the emphasis is on action leading to change, rather than being focused solely on research analysis. Action research represents a methodology with a focus on solving practical problems through decision-making based on empirical evidence (Altrichter et al., 2002). Action research represents an approach that combines theoretical knowledge with practice. The aim of action research is to identify real-world problems and develop practical and applicable solutions (Coghlan & Shani, 2014). Action research is a research process conducted with the aim of improving specific practices and processes in the real world, through the collaboration of researchers and practitioners (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Action research is a research approach that involves collaboration between researchers and practitioners to identify problems, develop plans for solving those problems, and apply them in practice (Dustman, Kohan & Stringer, 2014). Action research is a method that combines theoretical knowledge and practical actions with the aim of improving specific aspects of practice and processes (Dick, 2007). Action research represents a process of learning through action and reflection, emphasizing the practical application of theoretical knowledge in solving real-world problems (McNiff, 2016). Action research represents a systematic approach to planning and implementing changes that will improve the current state (McNiff & Whitehead, 2013). Action research is a methodology that involves action and reflection, applied in the real world to understand and solve complex problems (Reason & Torbert, 2001).

*Corresponding author: milanka.nikolic2023@gmail.com



Summing up the mentioned points, it can be concluded that action research represents a research method that combines theory and practice in the process of addressing specific issues within a particular context. This method aims to enhance the quality and efficiency of practice through the application of systematic research processes. Action research is focused on changing practice and addressing specific problems, not just acquiring new knowledge.

Action research is a process of systematic and critical examination of a problem or challenge in a real-world context with the aim of improving existing practice and achieving concrete results. This research method typically involves collaboration between researchers and participants to develop a deeper understanding of the problem and find solutions that are acceptable and applicable in practice (McNiff, 2016).

Action research differs from other research methods in that it is focused on practical applications and is applied in the real world, rather than dealing with abstract concepts and theoretical questions (McNiff & Whitehead, 2013). In the context of education, action research is most commonly associated with improving the quality of educational practice, where researchers and practitioners start from their specific problems encountered in practice (Maksimović & Bandur, 2013). The primary function of action research is reflected in changing the educational situation during the research. The secondary function is to test hypotheses, which are modified and enhanced based on the participants' conclusions during the research process. The educator, or researcher, gradually introduces changes to the educational process in accordance with collective decisions during the action research process. Subsequently, monitoring changes that occur takes place. The data collected serve as feedback, and based on this, there is the possibility of adapting and changing planned activities. It involves the transfer of theoretical knowledge into practice, transforming the professional practice of educational work into a theoretically reflective practice (Maksimović, 2010).

Reflective practice is an approach that involves continuous reflection on one's own practice, goals, procedures, and impacts with the aim of improving one's own performance (Ripamonti et al., 2016). The goal of reflective practice is to develop awareness of one's own actions, recognize and analyze one's own attitudes and values, as well as develop the ability for critical thinking, self-examination, and improvement of one's own practice (McMahon, 1999). Reflective practice is considered an important means for professional development and improvement, as well as for the continuous enhancement of the quality of work and achieving better results (McNiff, 2016).

Some examples of action research in a preschool setting can include: researching the impact of different math learning methods on preschoolers' understanding of the subject matter; investigating the effect of various activities on the development of speech skills in preschool-aged children; exploring the influence of interactive technology on the learning process and creativity development in preschool-aged children; studying the effectiveness of different methods of assessing and evaluating the progress of children in preschool; researching the impact of cultural activities on children's socialization and cognitive development; examining the effectiveness of early English language learning programs for preschool-aged children; studying the effects of physical activities on the development of motor skills and children's health in preschool; investigating the effects of group play and cooperation on children's social development and bonding; researching the influence of technology on the creativity and creative abilities of children in preschool; exploring different forms of collaboration between parents and preschool teachers to enhance the quality of preschool education.

The terminological definition of action research varies depending on the author and the field of application, but it is typically defined as a systematic and critical approach to the problems and challenges that arise in a real context, relying on the interaction between researchers and participants, with the aim of improving practice through the application of new knowledge and techniques.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

Action research is most commonly associated with improving the quality of educational practice, where researchers and practitioners start from their specific problems encountered in practice (Maksimović & Bandur, 2013). To conduct the research, it was necessary to establish a solid foundation that encompassed a series of activities. This involved the identification and definition of the problem and research subject, determining the initial state, assessing the existing practice in the preschool, formulating research questions, organizing the research, assigning roles, creating a timeline, reaching necessary agreements with research participants, designing and describing planned activities, devising data collection procedures, and evaluation.

The problem of action research stems from the desire to enhance the educational process by highlighting the importance of action research to preschool teachers – reflective practitioners. It can be summarized as: the motivation of preschool teachers to conduct action research in improving educational practice. The research objective is focused on determining the significance of action research that would contribute to the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities to improve the work of preschool institutions. The objectives of this research are as follows: how to motivate preschool teachers to improve reflective practice; to what extent participation in action research has contributed to changes in the areas of knowledge, skills, and abilities to enhance collaboration and to create a shared vision for improving collaboration between preschool institutions and surrounding institutions; what needs to be implemented in practice to plan and execute more successful and meaningful collaboration between preschool institutions and surrounding institutions? The hypotheses were formulated based on the reviewed literature, and the first hypothesis is as follows: that preschool teachers, after becoming aware of the significance of conducting action research and the importance of reflective practice in kindergarten work, are highly motivated to participate in various action research projects. The second hypothesis indicates that preschool teachers are motivated to enhance collaboration between preschool institutions and cultural institutions through their own thinking and actions. The third hypothesis suggests that collaboration between preschool institutions and cultural institutions can be of great significance through joint programs and projects.

The research used a Likert-type assessment scale titled: “Motivation of Preschool Teacher-Reflective Practitioners for Conducting Action Research and Improving Their Own Practice”, which included 18 statements. The sample for this research included 40 preschool teachers employed in the Preschool Institution “Dečja radost” in Čuprija. The research was conducted during March and April 2023.

3. RESULTS

Attitudes of preschool teachers about action research and reflective practice are presented in Table 1. Out of the total number of preschool teachers, 31 (77.5%) preschool teachers stated that they do not agree or completely disagree with the statement “reflective practice is characterized by multiple uses in the educational process”; for the statement “preschool practice is best improved through action research”; 37 (90%) preschool teachers; for the statement “teachers in preschool institutions should prepare themselves for reflective practice through seminars”, 28 (70%) preschool teachers; for the statement “I would like to conduct action research in the coming period”, 38 (95%) preschool teachers; for the statement “I would like to participate in seminars on action research in the future”, 38 (95%) preschool teachers; and for the statement “I have a desire to attend seminars on action research because I consider it very important for the creative change of my practice”, 36 (90%) preschool teachers. The lowest mean ($M=1.4000$) was recorded for the statement “preschool practice is best improved through action research”, while the highest standard deviation was recorded for the statement “reflective practice is characterized by multiple uses for the educational process” ($sd=.69752$).

Table 1. Action Research and Reflective Practice

| Statements | f(1) | f(2) | f(3) | f(4) | f(5) | N | M | sd |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|----|--------|--------|
| Reflective practice is characterized by multiple uses in the educational process. | 10 | 21 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 1.9750 | .69752 |
| Preschool practice is best improved through action research. | 27 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 1.4000 | .63246 |
| Teachers in preschool institutions should prepare themselves for reflective practice through seminars. | 2 | 24 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 2.3000 | .56387 |
| I would like to conduct action research in the coming period. | 16 | 22 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 1.6500 | .57957 |
| I would like to participate in seminars on action research in the future. | 19 | 19 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 1.5750 | .59431 |
| I have a desire to attend seminars on action research because I consider it very important for the creative change of my practice. | 11 | 25 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 1.8250 | .59431 |

The results obtained by the ANOVA F-test show that in the attitudes of preschool teachers expressed for statements: “reflective practice is characterized by multiple uses in the educational process” ($F=0.030$;

df=2, p=0.971); “preschool practice is best improved through action research” (F=0.192; df=2, p=0.826); “teachers in preschool institutions should prepare themselves for reflective practice through seminars” (F=3.265; df=2; p=0.049); “I would like to conduct action research in the coming period” (F=0.797; df=2; p=0.458); “I would like to participate in seminars on action research in the future” (F=0.067; df=2; p=0.935); “I have a desire to attend seminars on action research because I consider it very important for the creative change of my practice” (F=0.229; df=2; p=0.796); there are no statistically significant differences depending on the length of work experience. The results obtained by the independent samples t-test show that in the attitudes of preschool teachers expressed for statements: “reflective practice is characterized by multiple uses in the educational process” (t=0.006; df=38, p=0.911); “preschool practice is best improved through action research” (t=1.002; df=38, p=0.266); “teachers in preschool institutions should prepare themselves for reflective practice through seminars” (t=5.882; df=38; p=0.093); “I would like to conduct action research in the coming period” (t=0.025; df=38; p=0.420); “I would like to participate in seminars on action research in the future” (t=0.725 df=38; p=0.293); “I have a desire to attend seminars on action research because I consider it very important for the creative change of my practice” (t=0.043; df=38; p=0.293); there are no statistically significant differences depending on the environment in which they are employed.

Attitudes of preschool teachers about motivation for improving collaboration between preschool institutions and cultural institutions through individual thinking and action are shown in table 2. Out of the total number of preschool teachers, 27 (67.5%) preschool teachers stated that they do not agree or completely disagree with the statement “I am motivated to improve the cooperation of preschool institutions with the museum through their own thinking and action”; for the statement “I am motivated to enhance the collaboration between preschool institutions and the cultural institution through my own thinking and actions” 36 (40%) preschool teachers; for the statement “I am motivated to improve the collaboration between preschool institutions and the cinema through my own thinking and actions” 21 (52.5%) preschool teachers; for the statement “I am motivated to improve the collaboration between preschool institutions and the theater through my own thinking and actions” 34 (85%) preschool teachers; for the statement “I am motivated to improve the collaboration between preschool institutions and the concert hall through my own thinking and actions” 37 (92.5%) preschool teachers; and for statement “I am motivated to improve the collaboration between preschool institutions and the library through my own thinking and actions” 15 (37.5%) preschool teachers. The lowest arithmetic mean (M=1.8000) was recorded for the statement “I am motivated to improve the cooperation of preschool institutions with the concert hall by my own thinking and action, while the highest standard deviation is recorded by the determinant”, while the highest standard deviation was recorded for the statement “I am motivated to improve the collaboration between preschool institutions and the museum through my own thinking and actions” (sd=.85896).

Table 2. Motivation for improving collaboration between preschool institutions and cultural institutions through individual thinking and action

| Statements | f(1) | f(2) | f(3) | f(4) | f(5) | N | M | sd |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|----|--------|--------|
| I am motivated to improve the collaboration between preschool institutions and the museum through my own thinking and actions. | 5 | 22 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 40 | 2.3250 | .85896 |
| I am motivated to enhance the collaboration between preschool institutions and the cultural institution through my own thinking and actions. | 11 | 21 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 40 | 1.9750 | .80024 |
| I am motivated to improve the collaboration between preschool institutions and the cinema through my own thinking and actions. | 3 | 18 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 1.9000 | .74421 |
| I am motivated to improve the collaboration between preschool institutions and the theater through my own thinking and actions. | 6 | 28 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 2.0000 | .55470 |
| I am motivated to improve the collaboration between preschool institutions and the concert hall through my own thinking and actions. | 11 | 26 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 1.8000 | .56387 |
| I am motivated to improve the collaboration between preschool institutions and the library through my own thinking and actions. | 0 | 15 | 15 | 10 | 0 | 40 | 2.8750 | .79057 |

The results obtained by the ANOVA F-test show that, in the attitudes of preschool teachers expressed in the statements: "I am motivated to improve the cooperation of preschool institutions with museums through my own thinking and actions" ($F=2.664$; $df=2$; $p=.023$); "I am motivated to improve the cooperation of preschool institutions with cultural institutions through my own thinking and actions" ($F=2.962$; $df=2$; $p=.064$); "I am motivated to improve the cooperation of preschool institutions with cinemas through my own thinking and actions" ($F=.772$; $df=2$; $p=.469$); "I am motivated to improve the cooperation of preschool institutions with theaters through my own thinking and actions" ($F=4.644$; $df=2$; $p=.016$); "I am motivated to improve the cooperation of preschool institutions with concert halls through my own thinking and actions" ($F=.546$; $df=2$; $p=.584$); "I am motivated to improve the cooperation of preschool institutions with libraries through my own thinking and actions" ($F=.992$; $df=4$; $p=.381$), there are no statistically significant differences concerning years of work experience. The results obtained from the independent samples t-test show that in the attitudes of preschool teachers, as expressed in the statements: "I am motivated to improve collaboration between preschool institutions and museums through my thinking and actions" ($F=2.376$; $df=38$; $p=.041$); "I am motivated to improve collaboration between preschool institutions and cultural institutions through my thinking and actions" ($F=1.324$; $df=38$; $p=.923$); "I am motivated to improve collaboration between preschool institutions and cinemas through my thinking and actions" ($F=.249$; $df=38$; $p=.917$); "I am motivated to improve collaboration between preschool institutions and theaters through my thinking and actions" ($F=.599$; $df=38$; $p=.483$); "I am motivated to improve collaboration between preschool institutions and concert halls through my thinking and actions" ($F=3.455$; $df=38$; $p=.333$); "I am motivated to improve collaboration between preschool institutions and libraries through my thinking and actions" ($F=1.865$; $df=38$; $p=.010$), there are no statistically significant differences depending on the environment in which they are employed.

The results of the teachers' attitudes regarding the benefits that preschool institutions achieve through collaboration with cultural institutions are presented in the table 3. Out of the total number of preschool teachers, 26 (65%) preschool teachers stated that they do not agree or completely disagree with the statement "through collaboration with experts working in cultural institutions, preschool institutions have the opportunity to improve the work program and the quality of work on artistic subjects, making them more interesting and attractive"; for the statement "quality cooperation contributes to the development of the educational workforce - they experiment with new techniques and work methods and acquire new pedagogical knowledge and skills.", 33 (82.5%) preschool teachers; for the statement "working with children in a different environment can allow preschool teachers to see children in a different context and better understand their behavior and thinking", 23 (57.5%) preschool teachers; for the statement "it can be of great importance for a preschool institution to connect with cultural institutions that are part of the broader community and, through collaborative programs and projects, enhance its reputation", 35 preschool teachers; for the statement "children perceive the exposure to employees in cultural institutions as more vivid and passionate compared to the preschool teachers they are accustomed to. They also perceive the space of cultural institutions as more real than preschool facilities, which they might view as isolated spaces", 33 (87.5%) preschool teachers; for the statement "differences in approaching certain topics can have positive effects. Consequently, some children who are not interested in art in preschool might become interested in a museum or find certain subjects that were uninteresting in a regular classroom engaging when in a library.", 20 (50%) preschool teachers. The smallest mean ($M=1.9000$) was observed for the statement "it can be of great importance for a preschool institution to connect with cultural institutions that are part of the broader community and, through collaborative programs and projects, enhance its reputation", while the largest standard deviation was recorded for the statement "through collaboration with experts working in cultural institutions, preschool institutions have the opportunity to improve their work programs and the quality of work on artistic subjects, which become more interesting and attractive there" ($sd=.84391$).

Table 3. Benefits Achieved by Preschool Institutions Through Collaboration with Institutions

| Statements | f(1) | f(2) | f(3) | f(4) | f(5) | N | M | sd |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|----|--------|--------|
| Through collaboration with experts working in cultural institutions, preschool institutions have the opportunity to improve their work programs and the quality of work on artistic subjects, which become more interesting and attractive there. | 3 | 23 | 8 | 6 | 0 | 40 | 2.4250 | .84391 |
| Quality cooperation contributes to the development of the educational workforce - they experiment with new techniques and work methods and acquire new pedagogical knowledge and skills. | 6 | 27 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 2.0250 | .57679 |
| Working with children in a different environment can allow preschool teachers to see children in a different context and better understand their behavior and thinking. | 0 | 23 | 11 | 6 | 0 | 40 | 2.5750 | .74722 |
| It can be of great importance for a preschool institution to connect with cultural institutions that are part of the broader community and, through collaborative programs and projects, enhance its reputation. | 9 | 26 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 1.9000 | .59052 |
| Children perceive the exposure to employees in cultural institutions as more vivid and passionate compared to the preschool teachers they are accustomed to. They also perceive the space of cultural institutions as more real than preschool facilities, which they might view as isolated spaces. | 6 | 27 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 2.0250 | .57679 |
| Differences in approaching certain topics can have positive effects. Consequently, some children who are not interested in art in preschool might become interested in a museum or find certain subjects that were uninteresting in a regular classroom engaging when in a library. | 0 | 20 | 16 | 4 | 0 | 40 | 2.6000 | .67178 |

The results obtained by the ANOVA F-test show that in the attitudes of preschool teachers regarding the statements: “through collaboration with experts working in cultural institutions, preschool institutions have the opportunity to improve their work programs and the quality of work on artistic subjects, which become more interesting and attractive there” ($F=.668$; $df=2$; $p=.519$); “quality cooperation contributes to the development of the educational workforce - they experiment with new techniques and work methods and acquire new pedagogical knowledge and skills” ($F=.044$; $df=2$; $p=.947$); “working with children in a different environment can allow preschool teachers to see children in a different context and better understand their behavior and thinking” ($F=1.597$; $df=2$; $p=.216$); “it can be of great importance for a preschool institution to connect with cultural institutions that are part of the broader community and, through collaborative programs and projects, enhance its reputation” ($F=.336$; $df=2$; $p=.717$); “children perceive the exposure to employees in cultural institutions as more vivid and passionate compared to the preschool teachers they are accustomed to. They also perceive the space of cultural institutions as more real than preschool facilities, which they might view as isolated spaces” ($F=.349$; $df=42$ $p=.708$), there is no statistically significant difference in relation to years of work experience. However, for the statement “differences in approaching certain topics can have positive effects. Consequently, some children who are not interested in art in preschool might become interested in a museum or find certain subjects that were uninteresting in a regular classroom engaging when in a library” ($F=6.803$; $df=0$; $p=.003$), there is a statistically significant difference. The results obtained by the independent samples t-test show that in the attitudes of preschool teachers regarding the statements: “through collaboration with experts working in cultural institutions, preschool institutions have the opportunity to improve their work programs and the quality of work on artistic subjects, which become more interesting and attractive there” ($F=5.361$; $df=38$; $p=.519$); “quality cooperation contributes to the development of the educational workforce - they experiment with new techniques and work methods and acquire new pedagogical knowledge and skills” ($F=.005$; $df=35$; $p=.222$); “working with children in a different environment can allow preschool teachers to see children in a different context and better understand their behavior and thinking” ($F=6.258$; $df=38$; $p=.172$); “it can be of great importance for a preschool institution to connect with cultural institutions that are part of the broader community and, through collaborative programs and projects, enhance its reputation” ($F=.358$; $df=38$; $p=.060$); “children perceive the exposure to employees in cultural institutions as more vivid and passionate compared to the preschool teachers they are accustomed to. They also

perceive the space of cultural institutions as more real than preschool facilities, which they might view as isolated spaces" ($F=5.402$; $df=38$; $p=.590$); "differences in approaching certain topics can have positive effects. Consequently, some children who are not interested in art in preschool might become interested in a museum or find certain subjects that were uninteresting in a regular classroom engaging when in a library" ($F=1.267$; $df=38$; $p=.644$), there is no statistically significant difference regarding the environment in which they work.

4. CONCLUSION

Today, action research is widely accepted and applied in various fields such as organizational sciences, management, education, public health, social work, architecture, urban planning, and others. Preschool education is certainly one of the fields where action research can be applied. The goal of action research in preschools is to enhance the quality of early childhood education programs and improve the efficiency of the pedagogical process. Preschool teachers can play a key role in implementing action research in the preschool. They are in direct contact with children and have the opportunity to apply action research to improve processes and achieve better results. As action researchers, preschool teachers should monitor the developmental needs of children and identify areas where improvement is necessary. For example, preschool teachers can apply action research to enhance children's engagement in activities or to improve collaboration among children. In the process of action research, preschool teachers should monitor and evaluate their interventions to ensure that desired results are achieved. They should also take into account feedback from children, parents, and colleagues to adapt their approaches and strategies. By using action research, preschool teachers can enhance the quality of the educational process in the preschool, improve children's outcomes, and contribute to a better working environment for themselves and their colleagues.

In this paper, we have focused on just one fragment of children's cultural participation. This fragment has become more common and visible in recent times and is increasingly advocated, researched, and interpreted – children's participation in cultural life achieved through the collaboration of educational institutions (preschools, later schools) and cultural institutions. The popularity of this topic underscores its political and social significance. The difference lies in whether children, during their museum visit, quietly listen to a curator or preschool teacher, observe great works of national culture, learn good manners, and acquire a national segment, or whether they compete in small teams to see who can assemble a puzzle first and receive a reward. It's not the same whether preschools – based on the letter from the ministry – receive a year-long plan for guiding children, or if preschool teachers choose with whom and how to establish collaboration with cultural institutions. These choices are not merely random decisions of an individual preschool teacher, pedagogue, or another professional collaborator. They inform us about what society communicates to children as desirable behavior and knowledge.

The research posed three highly significant research tasks. The first research task was as follows: Have preschool teachers developed an awareness of the significance of action research and reflective practice? The answer to this question is affirmative, as the results obtained by the paired sample t-test indicate statistically significant changes in the respondents' attitudes compared to the initial assessment at the level of $p=.000$ for all six determinants. The second research task was as follows: To what extent are preschool teachers motivated to improve collaboration with cultural institutions through their own thinking and actions? The research results obtained through the paired sample t-test indicate statistically significant changes in the respondents' attitudes compared to the initial assessment at the level of $p=.000$ for all six determinants, indicating an increase in preschool teacher's motivation. The third research task was as follows: What needs to be implemented in practice to plan and execute a more successful and meaningful collaboration between preschool institutions and surrounding institutions? Preschool teachers identified as the two most important benefits the fact that working with children in a different environment can allow preschool teachers to perceive the child/children in a different context and gain a better understanding of their behavior and thinking. They also recognized that differences in approaching a particular topic can yield positive effects, enabling some children who aren't interested in art in kindergarten to become interested in a museum or other topics that may not be engaging in the classroom but become so in the library.

Action research can play a significant role in enhancing collaboration between preschool institutions and cultural institutions in the surroundings. Such research can help in understanding the needs and interests of preschool-age children regarding cultural activities and identifying barriers that hinder collaboration between preschool institutions and cultural institutions. For example, action research

can focus on topics such as: How do preschool institutions currently collaborate with cultural institutions in the surroundings? What are the most common forms of collaboration between preschool institutions and cultural institutions? What challenges arise in the collaboration between preschool institutions and cultural institutions? What are the interests of preschool-age children when it comes to culture? How can preschool institutions and cultural institutions collaborate to meet the needs and interests of preschool-age children?

Based on the results of action research, preschool institutions and cultural institutions can design programs and activities that best cater to the needs and interests of preschool-age children. Additionally, it allows the recognition of barriers in collaboration and the design of solutions to overcome them. Overall, action research can play a crucial role in enhancing collaboration between preschool institutions and cultural institutions in the surroundings and in promoting culture, art, and identity in early childhood.

REFERENCES

- Altrichter, H., Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R., & Zuber-Skerritt, O. (2002). The concept of action research. *The Learning Organization*, 9(3), 125-131. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09696470210428840>
- Bargal, D. (2006). Personal and intellectual influences leading to Lewin's paradigm of action research: Towards the 60th anniversary of Lewin's 'Action research and minority problems'(1946). *Action research*, 4(4), 367-388. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046496407313407>
- Coghlan, D., & Shani, A. B. (2014). Creating action research quality in organization development: Rigorous, reflective and relevant. *Systemic practice and action research*, 27, 523-536.
- Dick, B. (2007). Action research as an enhancement of natural problem solving. *International Journal of Action Research*, 3(1+2), 149-167. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-371793>
- Dustman, E. L., Kohan, M. B., & Stringer, E. T. (2014). Starting small and building out with Ernie Stringer: Personal insights into action research and educational change. *Action Research*, 12(4), 426-443. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750314546573>
- Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. M. (2008). Social construction and research as action. *The Sage handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*, 159-171.
- Lewin, K. (1946). Action research and minority problems. *Journal of Social Issues*, 2, 4, 34-46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1946.tb02295>
- Maksimović, J. (2010). Elementi i postupati akcionih istraživanja u pedagogiji. *Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta*, 12, knjiga 2, 189-198. Pale: Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Istočnom Sarajevu.
- Maksimović, J. i Bandur, V. (2013). Savremena akciona istraživanja i metodološka obrazovanost nastavnika refleksivnog praktičara. *Teme*, 37(2), 595-610. <http://teme2.junis.ni.ac.rs/public/journals/1/previousissues/teme2-2013/teme%202-2013-06.pdf>
- McMahon, T. (1999). Is reflective practice synonymous with action research?. *Educational action research*, 7(1), 163-169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650799900200080>
- McNiff, J. & Whitehead, J. (2013). *Action research: Principles and practice*. London: Routledge.
- McNiff, J. (2016). *You and your action research project*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Reason, P., & Torbert, W. R. (2001). Toward a transformational science: A further look at the scientific merits of action research. *Concepts and Transformation*, 6(1), 1-37.