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## Teachers' Folk Pedagogies

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### ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of the theoretical and comparative analysis of the importance and implications of folk pedagogies. Teachers' folk pedagogies are placed in the context of modern teacher professional development tendencies, within which the initial preparation, induction into the job and teacher professional development are analyzed as integrated parts of the whole. With the use of comparative analysis, we came to the following conclusions: a) that there is no single definition of folk pedagogies, but analyzing the existing conceptualizations of the term folk pedagogy, we identified six interweaving definitions: they all have specific content (teaching and learning), they are manifested in the form of implicit and tacit knowledge, they represent fairly stable beliefs that resist change, they are an integral attribute of all people, they directly influence the teaching practice and are subject to change and reflection; b) that few but differentiated methods of raising awareness, questioning and modifying teachers' folk pedagogies have been identified, which can help teacher professional development and the improvement of the teaching practice to a great extent; c) four perspectives from which the importance of folk pedagogies can be analyzed have been identified: from the aspect of culture, teachers, scientists and researchers, and educational policy makers. In accordance with the presented results, we defined three pedagogical implications in the conclusion: a) that teachers should be regarded as creators of their own coherent theories of teaching and learning; b) that changing and improving teaching practice is the result of teachers' willingness to reflect on their own folk pedagogies and to analyze the position of their teaching practice in relation to formal theories of teaching and learning, based on that "conscious knowledge"; c) teachers' folk pedagogies should be regarded as the starting point in the development of programs of teacher professional development (initial education, induction into the job and professional development programs).

**Keywords:** Educational practice, folk pedagogies, professional development, the pedagogical implications.

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### 1.0 Introduction

This paper discusses teachers' folk pedagogies, their importance and implications for the teaching practice. Teachers' folk pedagogies are placed in the context of modern teacher professional development tendencies. Professional development of teachers has become the priority of educational

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policies of many developing countries in the process of transition (Buchberger, Campos, Kallos, & Stephenson, 2000) and includes initial teacher development, the period of induction into the job and teacher professional development (Polovina & Pavlović, 2010). During their professional development, teachers are torn between two worlds of theories, assumptions and beliefs (Bruner 2000; Dow, 2004). The first world consists of formal, explicated and verified theories, assumptions and beliefs on students, teaching and learning that future teachers are expected to adopt, accept and incorporate in their subsequent professional career. In contrast to the first, there is another world of theories, beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning, which manifests in the form of implicit, subconscious and hidden assumptions of preservice teachers and inservice teachers, known in literature as folk pedagogies. Many authors (Barrett, 1997; Bruner, 2000; Dow, 2004; Olson & Bruner, 1996; Torff, 1999) point out the great influence of folk pedagogies on the teaching practice, and there is a growing acceptance of the attitude that teachers' folk pedagogies should be the base for designing teacher professional development programs. Previous papers analyzed the influence of teachers' folk pedagogies on curriculum design (Kang, 2014, 2015), understanding of education goals (Barrett, 1997; Bruner, 2000; Lynott & Woolfolk, 1994; Olson & Bruner, 1996; Torff, 1999), developing strategies for motivating students (Mickovska, 2009) and encouraging student creativity (Dow, 2004). Although existing papers provide important knowledge of folk pedagogies, the absence of more comprehensive overviews of theoretical knowledge and research results about folk pedagogies is noticeable, especially from the standpoint of their role in teacher professional development.

For these reasons, the main objective of this paper is to provide a critical overview of the importance of folk pedagogies and their implications for the theory and practice of teacher professional development, from a theoretical and comparative perspective. For the purpose of this analysis, we used three groups of data sources: a) existing definitions of folk pedagogies and related terms; b) existing knowledge on methods of raising awareness, questioning and modifying folk pedagogies; c) existing knowledge on the importance of folk pedagogies. With the use of comparative analysis, we came to the following conclusions: a) that there is no single definition of folk pedagogies, but analyzing the existing conceptualizations of the term folk pedagogy, we identified six interweaving definitions: they all have specific content (teaching and learning), they are manifested in the form of implicit and tacit knowledge, they represent fairly stable beliefs that resist change, they are an integral attribute of all people, they directly influence the teaching practice and are subject to change and reflection; b) that few but differentiated methods of raising awareness, questioning and modifying teachers' folk pedagogies have been identified, which can help teacher professional development and the improvement of the teaching practice to a great extent; c) four perspectives from which the importance of folk pedagogies can be analyzed have been identified: from the aspect of culture, teachers, scientists and researchers, and educational policy makers.

In accordance with the presented results, we defined three pedagogical implications in the conclusion: a) that teachers should be regarded as creators of their own coherent theories of teaching and learning; b) that changing and improving teaching practice is the result of teachers' willingness to reflect on their own folk pedagogies and to analyze the position of their teaching practice in relation to formal theories of teaching and learning, based on that "conscious knowledge"; c) teachers' folk pedagogies should be regarded as the starting point in the development of programs of teacher professional development (initial education, induction into the job and professional development programs).

## **2.0 Folk pedagogies and related terms – Definitions and meanings**

The discussion on the conceptual and terminological definition of folk pedagogy is important for several reasons. First, clear conceptualization of folk pedagogies is important so we could better understand their importance for the teaching practice. Second, analyzing similarities and differences in the meaning of the term ensures a chance to single out important determinants of folk pedagogies and to reevaluate the validity of using different terms: folk pedagogy, folk psychology, folk theories,

theories of mind, implicit theories, implicit beliefs, lay beliefs. Most authors use the terms folk pedagogy and folk psychology, so we will begin with them.

Olson and Bruner (1996) define folk psychologies as intuitive, everyday, layperson, often implicit theories on the human mind which direct the actions and behaviors of people. In addition to this, folk psychologies are biologically and culturally based beliefs about the human mind (Bruner, 2000; Olson & Bruner, 1996). In their definition, Olson and Bruner point out to the characteristics of folk psychologies on the one hand, and to their origin and sources on the other. Namely, we have these theories that are not a result of rational cognition, they are inherent, implicit, not always expressed with words, and of different origin.

Strauss (2001) defines folk psychologies as ways in which laypersons represent the nature of the psychological world of people, meaning primarily beliefs about the human mind and learning. Strauss emphasizes that those are intuitive and implicit beliefs of laypersons who did not study the human psyche and related fields of psychology.

Wellman and Lagattuta (2004) use the terms theories of mind and folk psychology as synonyms. According to these authors, folk psychologies represent "our everyday understanding of persons in terms of their inner psychological states" (Wellman and Lagattuta, 2004, p. 479). These authors do not associate folk psychologies exclusively with cognition, but move the focus toward other psychological states of people, their beliefs, wishes, intentions, emotions.

Bruner (1996) define folk pedagogies as intuitive, everyday, often implicit theories on teaching and pedagogy.

"Watch any mother, even a baby-sitter with a child, and you will be struck at how much of what they do is guided by notions of what children's cognitive abilities are like and how one may help them learn, even though they may not be able to verbalize their pedagogical principles" (Bruner, 2000, p.58).

In situations when the teacher teaches, when we help children do their homework, or study, our hidden beliefs on the children's mind are revealed. This is why Olson and Bruner believe that folk pedagogies are a reflection of folk psychologies, in other words, teachers' beliefs and assumptions about the minds of students. On the other hand, teachers' folk pedagogies reflect their cultural beliefs on teaching and learning. Thus, teachers' folk pedagogies also reflect the dominant folk culture of the specific school and town they work in. The tacit knowledge of a certain culture will be integrated in teachers' personal folk pedagogies.

Antić (2007) uses the terms implicit theories, lay beliefs, folk psychology and folk pedagogy. These synonyms "refer to explicit and non-explicit knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, which can be of different origins (from personal, familial, cultural or general human experience), but possessed by each individual" (Antić, 2007, p. 50-51).

Pešikan (2010) uses the terms implicit theories and folk theories, meaning "everyday intuitive theories about how other people think, especially how children learn and what their success (folk psychology) depends on, and theories on how to help children learn (folk pedagogy)" (Pešikan, 2010, p. 176). They are personal, private, often unconscious theories, which are hard to verbalize and use as a basis for discussion, but which nonetheless affect our actions and behaviors.

Suzić (1997) uses the terms implicit theories and implicit beliefs and offers the following definition: "They are preconceptions and prejudices teachers and students have about teaching and learning. They are actually stereotypes and values, which normally act subconsciously" (Suzić, 1997, p. 408).

Torff (1999) and Antić (2007) suggest the need to distinguish between folk pedagogy and folk psychology on the one hand, and groups of terms that denote intuitive and naive understanding of subject-matter from various fields on the other. Both groups of terms signify partly personal, partly

collective beliefs about the world around us (Антић, 2007), they are manifested in various situations, they are often hidden, in the form of assumptions, they represent simplified notions and exhibit a tendency to survive (Torff, 1999). The key difference between these terms is in their subject-matter, i.e. the area in which they manifest (Антић, 2007; Torff, 1999). Naive theories of children and adults are associated with the phenomena from the natural and social reality, which are parts of the curriculum, whereas folk pedagogy is associated with education and teaching (Антић, 2007; Torff, 1999). Another key difference between these two groups of terms is the existence of an organized and institutionalized activity against the naive theories about nature and society. Namely, "every culture embodied in the school system actively works on opposing students' private beliefs about the world around them and on establishing a system of coherent and systematized scientific knowledge in place of these personal beliefs" (Антић, 2007, p. 51). Indeed, there is no such organized and institutionalized activity that works against teachers' folk pedagogies with the objective of establishing a single coherent teachers' theory about teaching and learning. There are attempts to introduce future teachers to the importance of teachers' folk pedagogies during their formal education, to face them with their folk pedagogies during practical classes in schools, as well as attempts of teachers to change folk pedagogies that shape their teaching practice and raise their consciousness regarding them. However, the strength and presence of these attempts, although mostly foreign experiences, cannot even come close to the campaign led against the naive children theories about the content of the curriculum. It is justified to ask – Is the campaign against naive and intuitive children theories a result of unconscious folk pedagogies educational practice is based on? Why is there no such campaign against folk pedagogies of teachers, if they are also intuitive and naive beliefs about teaching and learning? It appears that in actual educational practice, there are attempts to change intuitive beliefs of one group on behalf of another group. It appears we are more bothered by the intuitive belief about pressure, than the intuitive belief about teaching and learning.

The previous review indicates that the choice of the term implicates the author's attitude toward such an important phenomenon. We will take another look at terms some authors use as synonyms to consider the adequacy of their use. The term »lay belief« does not include all that folk pedagogies represent, because it insists only on one of their determinants, although an important one. In addition, there is no clear difference between lay beliefs that occur in various fields: physics, biology, psychology. The term »implicit theories« emphasizes that the theories in question are teachers' theories that can be verbalized with difficulty. Some authors speak about folk pedagogies as personal theories. This is acceptable in the sense that everyone has a personal folk pedagogy. Different folk pedagogies of laypersons and teachers originate from their different assumptions about the child's mind, teaching and learning (Olson & Bruner, 1996). Folk pedagogies of teachers are personal theories, beliefs and assumptions, but first they had to be a social relationship, whether between two persons, or between an individual and a culture he or she belongs to. So, there is a justified need to question the use of certain terms, such as »implicit beliefs« and »lay beliefs«, due to insufficient distinction from related terms, present in various areas of natural and social reality.

An insight into the existing conceptualizations of the term folk pedagogy points out to the following six overlapping features and important determinants: a) they have a distinctive content; b) they occur in the form of implicit and tacit knowledge which is hard to explicate; c) they represent stable intuitive beliefs that resist change; d) they are characteristic of all people (children and adults, laypersons and professionals); e) they have a direct impact on the teaching practice (behavior, actions, choice of teaching strategies, interactions, student and teacher activities), and f) they are subject to reflection and change.

First, authors agree that folk pedagogies are implicit, intuitive, hidden beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning.

Second, regardless of whether folk pedagogies are viewed as a set of theories, beliefs, concepts or assumptions, numerous authors underline that folk pedagogies have a form of implicit and tacit knowledge. We display a special kind of knowledge during activities in the teaching practice. Namely,

we are often unable to verbalize and find appropriate words to describe teaching, the way we teach others and help them learn. Therefore, we say such knowledge in our actions is hidden, implicit, tacit. The third important determinant of teachers' folk pedagogies indicates that they are stable beliefs about teaching, resistant to change. Despite formal education, teacher professional development programs and teaching experience, teachers' folk pedagogies tend to remain unchanged. It can happen, for example, that a teacher, encouraged by knowledge on active methods of teaching acquired in a seminar, decides not to use his or her common methods of teaching to hold a lecture about a certain historical event, but to let students do the research on their own, about different perspectives of the participants in the event. However, on a test, the teacher will often simply ask the student for a conventional view of that event, which can be found in the official textbook. This and similar situations reveal the undeniable fact, that folk pedagogies are very durable and resistant to changes, even in circumstances when the teacher shows initiative to improve his or her teaching practice.

Authors agree that folk pedagogies and folk psychologies are characteristic of all people (children and adults, laypersons and professionals), which represents their fourth determinant. Laypersons, who were not prepared for the teaching profession through their initial education also have their beliefs about the mind, teaching and learning. Strauss (2001) believed in the difference between folk psychologies of laypersons and folk psychologies of cognitive psychologists. He abandoned the assumption about the difference between folk psychologies of laypersons and scientists during a meeting dedicated to establishing the Center for Research on Teaching and Learning in Tel Aviv. In that meeting, scientists from different fields presented their models of learning. Despite the differences among them regarding their models of choice, Strauss noticed a common characteristic. Namely, all of them taught in the same way, that the cause of learning is in another, in other words, they had the same folk psychologies about the mind and learning. That folk theories are also characteristic of children was confirmed by the study conducted by Tikva (Tikva, 2010). It was proved students support the folk belief that teaching occurs only when there is a direct transmission of knowledge, and explanations and demonstrations as teaching strategies occur independently of the teacher's intention to teach and whether their actions cause learning in their students or not.

The fifth important determinant refers to the viewpoint that folk pedagogies have a direct influence on teachers' actions, behavior and practice. It points out that teachers' assumptions on the child's mind, learning and teaching form the teaching practice, whether the teacher is aware of the fact, or not.

The sixth overlapping feature of teachers' folk pedagogies is the possibility of raising one's consciousness regarding them, reassessing and changing them, despite their tendency to survive and remain unchanged. Authors agree that there is a need to raise one's consciousness about folk pedagogical beliefs and to explicate them, although they suggest different methods of changing them.

### **3.0 Potential ways to raise one's consciousness about teachers' folk pedagogies, to question and change them**

In an attempt to find ways to raise consciousness about teachers' folk pedagogies, to question and change them, based on the available scientific literature, we noticed only few theoretical discussions and practical efforts on this topic. The first initiatives come from authors such as Barrett (1997), Minstrell (1999), Reninger (1996; as cited in: Torff 1999), Strauss (1993; as cited in: Torff, 1999) and Torff (1999). In our scientific literature, we can single out the ideas of Marinković (2011), Pešić (1998a, 1998b), and Pešikan (2010). Some of these initiatives were not designed on the basis of the reference framework of folk pedagogies, and are not always focused on teachers-practitioners. Given that we have recognized the potential for changing teachers' folk pedagogies in them, we decided to present them first, and then analyze them from the aspect of possibilities they offer to teachers to change their folk pedagogical beliefs. In addition, we will attempt to view the action research as a potential way of raising consciousness about and changing teachers' folk pedagogies.

Analyzing professional literature, we identified three perspectives from which methods of raising awareness, questioning and modifying teachers' folk pedagogies are analyzed: standpoint of preservice teachers (Dow, 2004; Reninger, 1996; as cited in Torff 1999; Strauss 1993; as cited in: Torff, 1999; Torff, 1999); b) standpoint of inservice teachers (Barrett, 1997; Minstrell, 1999); and c) standpoint of teacher professional development (Marinković, 2011; Pešikan, 2010).

Dow (2004) suggests a biographical methodology as the method of explicating folk pedagogical teaching theories of future teachers which includes in-depth studies of past personal experience of future teachers during their initial educational, through the support of the teacher mentor and discussions with him. This methodology implies encouraging future teachers to awake the effects and outcomes of learning in traditional teaching, primarily based on the demonstration and transfer of knowledge, without the ability to choose or actively participate in their future practice.

Reninger (1996: as cited in: Torff, 1999) wrote about tasks that encourage students' reflection on the principles that govern their conception of teaching. Strauss and his associates (1993: as cited in: Torff, 1999) developed a method to encourage future teachers to analyze their own ideas about children minds and teaching.

Torff (1999) suggested three steps that should be taken in order to encourage future teachers to engage in the reflection about folk pedagogies and they are: a) facing future teachers with folk pedagogies and raising their consciousness about the nature and omnipresence of folk pedagogies; b) encouraging future teachers to use alternative models of teaching in order to perceive their advantages, and c) helping future teachers to develop different teaching styles that correspond to the aims of the curriculum. Within the first step, teachers should be enabled to face and critically evaluate their folk pedagogies as the foundation on which their decisions in the classroom are made. Torff proposes two methods for the realization of the first step. First, Torff suggests teachers' practical involvement (e.g. they should be allowed to teach), because that way, they get used to solving issues caused by their personal folk pedagogies. "Procedures such as these", Torff believes, "work to put the teachers into direct contact with the shortcoming of transmission style teaching" (Torff, 1999, p. 207). Second, future teachers should keep diaries where they will analyze their intuitive assumptions about teaching. The second step suggested by Torff starts from the requirement that future teachers should become aware of the need to focus on the thoughts and intentions of their students. Namely, the objective here is that future teachers should use reflexive thinking and metacognition, as well as develop skills necessary to encourage reflexive thinking in their students. The final step involves the creation of classroom activities that encourage future teachers to analyze the aims of the curriculum and ways to realize them (e.g. choice of teaching methods in relation to the established objectives and content).

Minstrell (1999), a teacher with years of teaching experience in a secondary school, did not develop steps and methods for raising consciousness about teachers' folk pedagogies. His view of his own teaching practice represents a special kind of reflection on the teaching practice in an attempt to build a coherent theory about teaching and learning. This author proposed three steps necessary for the development of professional expertise: a) observation and reflection on one's own teaching experience; b) relationship with one's mentor, and c) active participation/involvement in professional networks. Minstrell emphasizes he relied on traditional teaching, and although others viewed him as a good teacher, he knew his teaching products were below his expectations. In that gap between what he *achieved* and what he *wanted*, he started researching other approaches to teaching with the intention of discovering an approach that respects students' attitudes most and encourages learning. On the way to developing his personal coherent view on teaching and learning, Minstrell had the support of his mentor. As he observed him showing students what to do, the mentor told him: "Keep your hands in your pockets and the students will show you how they would answer the question" (Minstrell, 1999, p. 227). When he would see what Minstrell was telling his students to do, or how to think, he would tell him: "You have two ears and one mouth, use them in that proportion" (Minstrell, 1999, p. 227). In addition to his mentor, Minstrell also had the support of other physics teachers,

because he actively participated in professional networks for physicists. With his reflection on teaching, Minstrell demonstrates that, in order to change and improve one's practice, one needs to continuously monitor and observe it, so as to comprehend it better, and one also needs others who will support him and represent a kind of mirror for what he really does, without being sufficiently aware of it.

Barrett (1997) explored his own folk pedagogies simultaneously with the moral dimensions of folk pedagogies of university professors. Barrett's work on discovering and analyzing his own folk pedagogies suggests the following key moments: a) awareness about the flaws of one's own practice encourages reflection and the need to change one's folk pedagogies; b) narratives are an important form of recognizing one's own folk pedagogies; and c) studying folk pedagogies of others contributes to a better understanding of one's own folk pedagogies. A feeling of dissatisfaction stemming from the teaching practice motivated Barrett to reflect on his own teaching practice and articulate his conception of good teaching. Narratives represented the best way for him to present his teaching experiences and his own conceptions of teaching and learning. Studying university professors' implicit folk beliefs, based on their narratives about teaching and learning, and observing their actual practice enabled Barrett to review and reflect once again on his personal folk beliefs about teaching. His entire body of work is permeated with a discourse on the essence of education and the transformation of the attitude that teaching is "teaching subjects" into the attitude that teaching is "teaching people" (Barrett 1997, p. v). He argues the attitude that teaching is a moral act rather than transferring content to students with the following words: "Because it involves making decisions and taking actions on behalf of others, it is inherently moral. Because it involves helping people to develop a particular view of the world, it is inherently moral" (Barrett 1997, p. v).

Pešikan (2010) and Marinković (2011) indicate the need to raise consciousness and explicate implicit teachers' theories, by comparing them with the existing official theories about teaching and learning, both during initial teacher education and during further professional development.

Presented ideas, which we marked as significant ways of changing teachers' folk pedagogies, can be largely promising or at least useful as markers for developing steps and taking specific measures toward changing teachers' folk pedagogies. Almost all authors point out that the combat against teachers' folk pedagogies should start from the beginning, from teacher initial education. However, there is a disagreement among them regarding the specific steps and actions necessary to change teachers' folk pedagogies. The differences primarily stem from the approach to analyzing the issue of raising consciousness about teachers' folk pedagogies and changing them. One is changing folk pedagogies from the perspective of teachers-practitioners, and the other is from the perspective of those who deal with the education of future teachers. Bearing in mind the displayed ways to change folk pedagogies, we particularly recommend the following steps: a) the initiative has to come from the teacher; b) the existence of adequate support in comprehending the practice derived from folk pedagogies; and c) reflection on one's personal folk pedagogies is essential in order to change them. To raise consciousness about folk pedagogies, we need some perceived noncorrespondence the teacher himself arrived at. The need to raise consciousness about teachers' folk pedagogies begins with a feeling of dissatisfaction or inadequacy, as was the case with Minstrell and Barrett. Another key issue refers to the existence of adequate support of other direct participants in educational work (teachers, mentors). Their role is reflected in the fact that various feedback mirrors what the teacher actually does in practice. Such feedback from teachers primarily offers a description of what they observed in somebody else's teaching practice, as a result of action of different beliefs about teaching and learning, not as criticism. After that, their mutual discussion and analysis of what they saw happening in actual teaching practice are useful. Folk pedagogies are not available for direct observation, we draw conclusions about them indirectly, with respect to perceived actions of the teacher, ways he organizes activities and classroom relationships. Therefore, learning about a practice that has both an implicit and an intuitive basis with the help of others includes both one's own interpretations and the interpretations of others. An insight into the intentions and actual actions of others requires a discourse between all participants in a specific social situation (Pešić, 1998a). In consequence, a key role in the process of changing teachers' folk pedagogies belongs to reflection. Through the process of reflection,

we reevaluate beliefs implicit in teachers' actions. After that, teachers can arrive at a different theory about teaching and learning, created in a practice they can reassess. Based on what we said earlier, it appears that action research encourages the processes of raising consciousness, reevaluating and changing teachers' folk pedagogies the most, because it is "simultaneously an action and a research, a process of changing the practice and the construction of knowledge" (Pešić, 1998a, 23). From the aspect of teachers' folk pedagogies, it is important to be consciousness of them and learn which folk pedagogies shape the teaching practice, what situations are favorable for the preservation of folk pedagogies, in other words, are there any other elements within the school context that obstruct the processes of raising consciousness about folk pedagogies and changing them.

#### 4.0 The importance of teachers' folk pedagogies for educational practice and pedagogical implications

Why are teachers' folk pedagogies important for educational practice? What pedagogical implications can be drawn from teachers' folk pedagogies as the reference framework? An insight into the professional literature, and especially the question of important determinants of folk pedagogies suggests it is a phenomenon with a predominantly negative sign. Analysis of professional literature revealed four perspectives from which the importance of folk pedagogies is observed: a) from the standpoint of culture; b) from the standpoint of teachers; c) from the aspect of scientists and researchers; c) from the standpoint of educational policy makers.

Through folk pedagogies (explication and making them conscious), we reach intuitive and implicit beliefs about education, characteristic of every culture. This culturally rooted knowledge is carried by each member of a certain culture and acquired in earliest childhood. Analyzing proverbs, Marinković (2013) discovered folk pedagogies of education, ingrained in the traditional Serbian culture. Her analysis has shown that it attached a lot of importance to education, especially education of younger children, that upbringing was primarily focused on discipline and the development of obedience in children, and that corporal punishment was regarded as the most important educational method.

From the teacher's perspective, folk pedagogies are a foundation for the development of coherent teachers' theories about education and teaching. Educational practice is based on a set of folk pedagogical and psychological beliefs of its direct participants, some of which may contribute to, and some of which may damage student development (Bruner, 2000; Olson & Bruner 1996). Every time students ask for teacher's help in solving a task, and the teacher just tells them the correct answer, he or she denies the students the opportunity to actually learn. Bruner (1996) emphasizes that the choice of the pedagogical model always contains an implicit message about the student's mind. Thus, the didactic teaching is based on the teachers' belief that students are empty vessels that should be filled with knowledge, and imitation on the assumption that students lack the skills that can be developed by imitating a model. If choices and decision making in the classroom are based on teachers' implicit and intuitive beliefs about students, teaching and learning, then the process of making these implicit beliefs conscious and exploring them would provide an insight into the actual practice derived from the appropriate folk pedagogy and folk psychology. Only on the basis of those findings would it be possible to build one's own coherent theory of learning and teaching, simultaneously questioning if it is focused on student wellbeing.

For theorists and researchers, teachers' folk pedagogies can be a useful framework for the implementation of scientific theories about learning and teaching, whether they study existing theories or create new ones. There is a noticeable increase in empirical papers that examine teachers' folk pedagogies, as well different approaches to studying them (e.g. Barrett, 1997; Strauss, 2001). In a series of researches, Strauss and his associates (2001) studied implicit adopted mental models of teachers and mental models in action. Based on teachers' statements about teaching and education (folk pedagogy), these authors drew conclusions about their adopted mental models of children's minds and learning. When it came to mental models in action, teachers taught to make learning happen, and researchers



interpreted ways in which the teachers taught (folk pedagogy) so as to discover their mental models of learning (folk psychology). The general conclusion of these studies is that adopted mental models and mental models in action reflect teachers' assumptions that knowledge is external, outside of students, and that the teacher's task is to infuse the knowledge into students' minds. In other words, the dominant teacher's folk pedagogy is the transmission model of learning. Barrett (1997) studied moral dimensions of university professors' folk pedagogies. The study only included three university professors. The general objective of his study was to describe how professors' folk pedagogies affect their moral actions in teaching, and the extent to which professors can tell their own story about moral discourse through narratives. His study has shown there are four discourses that strongly shape university professors' folk pedagogies, and they are: personal, institutional, professional and academic. Thus, it turned out that insisting on achievement in Jill's practice was a reflection of experience from a family with deep appreciation for education and success at school (personal discourse). The emphasis on professional and specialized knowledge in Monroe's practice was a reflection of working in the field of culture, where expert knowledge surpasses all other knowledge (professional discourse). In Keller's practice, academic discourse prevailed, due to her focus on students and their learning. However, it should be acknowledged that, regardless of how significant the findings from the existing empirical studies are, they are still only findings of the researchers on the phenomenon, not the practitioners/participants in those studies.

For those who carry out education reforms, teachers' folk pedagogies may represent a barrier in their realization, but also a foundation on which to build. Improving teaching involves changing teacher's folk psychologies and folk pedagogies (Bruner, 2000). "For example, if you as a pedagogical theorist are confident that the best way to learn is when the teacher guides the student to arrive at general conclusions, you will probably be confronted with the prevailing opinion that the teacher is the authority expected to tell the child a general rule, and the child is expected to have fun memorizing the details" (Bruner, 2000, p. 59). There are two problems at the root of this information. Can the introduction of innovations in the teaching practice rely on recommendations derived from formal theories? Can researchers and education policy makers encourage teachers to change their folk pedagogical beliefs, and if they can, to what extent? Teaching and learning are too complex to be predefined, ignoring the context of their implementation. The problem also occurs because teachers are often unaware of their folk pedagogies, because they are in the form of tacit and implicit knowledge. Decisions and actions in teaching often assume knowledge that can become accessible only through practice (Bruner 2000). Another problem occurs when teachers' unconscious folk pedagogies begin interfering with formal theories they adopted during initial education and in-service training (Torff, 1999). Then we have a gap between what teachers think they do, and what they actually do in practice (Pešić, 1998b). For these reasons, teachers principally need support to identify and solve practical problems stemming from their folk pedagogies. At any rate, the change cannot be solved outside the school, and then implemented in it. Changing teachers' folk beliefs does not imply a change of explicit (formal) theories, but a change of implicit theories their teaching practice is based on, and understanding their relationship toward the official theories.

From the most recent findings about teachers' folk pedagogies, we can derive the following implications: a) teachers should be viewed as creators of their own coherent theories about learning and teaching; b) changing and improving one's teaching practice is a result of one's willingness to reflect on his or her folk pedagogies, and perceive the relationship of their practice with formal theories of learning and teaching based on that "conscious knowledge"; c) teachers' folk pedagogies should be analyzed as the starting point for the development of initial education programs, in-service training programs and teacher professional development programs.

The first derived implication points out to the need for creating a new view of teachers and their competences. According to the previously dominant paradigm, the teacher was seen almost exclusively as a practitioner, who was expected to implement the knowledge of explicit (formal) theories (Pešić, 1998b). Unfortunately, the fact is that teachers in our country learn almost nothing about teachers' folk pedagogies, their significance and implications for teaching and learning during their initial education.

The situation is somewhat better when it comes to study programs for pedagogists and psychologists. If study programs for teacher training were to be based on the findings about folk pedagogies, they would involve major changes in the organization of teaching at universities and professional practice at schools. Not only are teachers and university personnel expected to introduce students to the newest findings about folk pedagogies, but also to question their own teaching practice, its intuitive and implicit foundation. Torff (1999) in particular points out to the need of all those involved in the education of teachers to direct their activities toward discovering the causes of implicit beliefs of future teachers. From that perspective, professional practice should represent a space where students should be directly faced with their pedagogical folk beliefs, where they should question their declarative beliefs about learning and teaching and test models of teaching they learned about. This further implies appropriate changes in the design of internships and the introduction of teachers to their job. Only at this stage will teachers get more opportunities to discover not only their own, but folk pedagogies of other participants in educational work as well. Teaching experience enables hidden folk pedagogies to emerge, and the experience of mentors in making them conscious can be invaluable for the teacher-trainee. In addition to this, a teacher-trainee is more likely to view his own and folk pedagogies of others as obstacles or helping factors that stand in the way of building one's own theory about learning and teaching. In general, similar changes should also be made in the design of teacher professional development programs. They would refer to the content and forms, methods of work and evaluation procedures.

## 5.0 Conclusion

There is no universally accepted definition of teachers' folk pedagogies. An insight into the existing conceptualization of the term folk pedagogy indicates the following overlapping features: they have a unique content, they manifest in the form of implicit and tacit knowledge, they represent fairly stable beliefs resistant to changes, they are imminent to all people, they directly affect teaching practice and they are subject to reflection and change.

Raising consciousness about teachers' folk pedagogies, reviewing and changing them is not an easy process. It implies that the teacher recognizes the weaknesses of his or her practice, to give up something that ensured his or her dominance in the classroom and discover implicit beliefs he or she may be often unaware of. There are different opinions regarding the methods of raising consciousness about folk pedagogies and methods of changing them. Barrett, Minstrell and Torff gave promising initiatives in that sense. Keeping in mind important determinants of folk pedagogies, we believe action research provides most opportunities for teachers to become aware of their folk beliefs and change them.

Folk pedagogies are not a phenomenon that is good or bad in itself. Although folk pedagogies often prevent teachers from acting in the best interest of the overall student development, they still have a multiple importance and implications for educational practice. Starting from the existing findings about folk pedagogies, we have separated three most important implications for educational practice: a) teachers should be viewed as creators of their own coherent theories about learning and teaching; b) changing and improving one's teaching practice is a result of the teacher's willingness to reflect on his or her own folk pedagogies, and perceive the relationship between their practice and the formal theories about learning and teaching on the basis of that "conscious knowledge"; and c) teachers' folk pedagogies should be seen as the starting point for the development of initial teacher education programs, in-service training programs and teacher professional development programs, with respect to the characteristics of the socio-cultural context in which these folk pedagogies exist.

All aforementioned implications obligate not only teachers as direct facilitators of teaching, but university professors who prepare future teaching staff, representatives of educational policies and researchers as well to find a platform for changing the existing theory and practice of teacher professional development through joint discourse. In this case, it would mean redefining and improving existing legislation on teacher professional development which would explicate the importance of folk

pedagogies, revision and modification of the curriculum and practical training at teacher training faculties, improving professional development programs the objective of which would be to introduce teachers to the meaning of folk pedagogies and possibilities for their awakening and modifications in the teaching practice, as well as finding competent mentors at school level who would provide support and assistance to teachers in the process of explicating and modifying folk pedagogical theories that shape their practice. Modeling teacher professional development on the knowledge of folk pedagogies enables a realistic introduction to and improvement of the existing educational practice, both in schools and at universities, in order to utilize individual capacities to the maximum and analyze and remove barriers in a constructive way.

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