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## **CASE OF THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE IN THE SUPER PSIHOLOG PROJECT**

I participated in the SUPER PSIHOLOG project as a student. I decided to apply for an internship within the framework of SUPER PSIHOLOG to, among other things, avoid the tiresome search for a supervisor, and to ensure that I would learn as much as possible during this period. My decision was to conduct the internship in the field of education.

The first meeting with my supervisor was the introductory meeting at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. This was an interactive lecture, part of which was devoted to building rapport between supervisors and supervisees. This experience was very interesting, because a more equal relationship was established in the neutral area under the leadership of a third party. Building rapport was directed; supervisees and supervisors both answered the questions which enabled faster establishment of a relaxed and genuine relationship. We described to each other our experiences and expectations regarding the supervision relationship and internship. Based on my supervisor's expectations and requirements, as emphasized during this conversation, I was able to create a picture in my mind of how the internship would be carried out and what my supervisor expected of me. This created a sense of safety and certainty, as I had a feeling that I could influence the development of the supervisory relationship, and at the same time I could express my desires and expectations, and emphasize my strengths.

Establishment of the supervisory relationships continued in the second part of the obligatory Module 1 of training for supervisors, which I was unable to attend. My

supervisor and I thus agreed to meet in a supplementary meeting for which we thoroughly prepared. I intensely thought about my expectations for the internship and carefully read the descriptions of the related competences, which were extended by the supervisor with descriptions related to the requirements of kindergarten work. The meeting took place in the supervisor's office. The purpose of the meeting was to prepare the internship plan with the help of the materials intended for the training of supervisors within the framework of the project. As a supervisee, I more easily engaged in the conversation by answering the prepared questions because they demanded my active responses, despite possible discomfort in the new relationship. The supervisor presented the institution and her work by relying on texts known and accessible by me. The supervisor clarified the distinctions between the work of a kindergarten psychologist and a primary or secondary school psychologist, which I knew better. With the presentation of the institution and her work she made me feel safe in the position of supervisee; I trusted her, and knew what I could expect. During the conversation, I became aware of my own wrong beliefs and stereotypes about the work of a kindergarten psychologist. I realized that a kindergarten psychologist's work is very demanding and diverse, and broad professional knowledge is needed. It is essential to be knowledgeable of the older and more widely recognized fundamental theories, as well as new models and still developing methods. During my studies, I acquired great deal of knowledge about older theories, while the current findings and legislation were unfamiliar to me.

We agreed to meet once more before the outset of the internship. At that meeting we focused on preparing an accurate and concrete plan of internship. We agreed on the formal arrangement of the internship, created a time scheme, and agreed on the structure. We agreed on a flexible schedule which would be regularly adapted to the situations or needs that arose. We also made a decision to communicate via e-mail and by telephone. With regard to structure, we decided that each task performed by me would be followed by reflection and feedback. Longer reflection and new knowledge awareness would be communicated at the end of the week. I pledged to write down both immediate and weekly reflections, which was a great help in becoming more aware of the new knowledge I was being exposed to. At the meeting we specified the internship goals, which were linked to competences. This provided the basis for defining the progress and goals achieved within the internship upon its conclusion.

The already established supervisory relationship and clear agreement on the work method and goals enabled me to actively participate in work from the first day, when I was present and helped form the groups of children for the following school year. In the next days I listened to very sensitive and confidential conversations with kindergarten teachers and parents, and participated in the procedure of diagnosing the difficulties of some children. With my supervisor I carried out the first reflection, which was helpful in enabling me to face my own feelings and strengthen my

newly acquired knowledge. We discussed the events of the first week of the internship, and tried to find out which competence I was developing at each activity. The supervisor explained my experience and new knowledge by means of the *EuroPsy* model. After we had discussed a particular experience she directed my thinking to the competence which was being developed through the related activity. She helped me understand and become aware of the knowledge which was not encompassed by those competences.

Already in the second week of my internship I took over increasingly independent tasks and participated in various activities, all the time supported by my supervisor who allowed me to do my own activities, and thus expressed her trust in my skills and knowledge. On all levels I found the equal and respectful relationship which my supervisor established with other parties in the process to be the most important factor to successful outcomes. During my observation of her relationship with others and myself, I became aware of the importance of respectful communication and allowing equality in a relationship, which are two of the building blocks of a successful psychologist work. The supervisor asked questions to direct people with whom she started communicating, but she did it in a non-intrusive and respectful manner. At the same time she offered them support and assistance when needed. The supervisor devoted her attention to evaluating various projects and her role in them. We both found accurate evaluation and thorough examinations to be very important, although people often avoid them due to lack of time.

The number of tasks and amount of independent work I did increased in the third week. I was present at most meetings with parents and kindergarten teachers, I often observed children in their everyday activities as part of the diagnostic procedure, and I was bringing my independent project – designing a leaflet about the toilet training of children – to a close. In my reflections on activities I became more independent and needed fewer questions from the supervisor to lead and direct me. During reflection my supervisor directed my attention to different explanations and perspectives which I did not notice myself, e.g. the defence mechanisms of parents or a kindergarten teacher's behaviour, which affect subjective assessments of their competency by parents or co-workers. My supervisor focused on me during reflection so she noticed my need for feedback on the quality of my work. This is why she found time at the end of reflection and praised my independence and my increasingly active participation. It meant a lot to me that she noticed my distress on certain issues and responded appropriately.

In the last week of my internship the supervisor showed a great deal of trust as I independently led the conversation with two kindergarten teachers, where we prepared the kindergarten's opinion regarding a child, and participated in the signing of contracts on children's enrolment into the kindergarten. At that point I encountered a very unpleasant situation, namely very upset and dissatisfied parents. I had opportunity to discuss the situation with my supervisor, who was able to help me overcome

my unpleasant feelings and emotional distress. I actively participated in the process of evaluation of the project implemented by the kindergarten, and my supervisor prepared me very well for this. Initially, she directed my attention to the purpose of the evaluation and its goals. After we had determined the goals we formed questions to assess their achievement. The supervisor then directed my thinking to the most appropriate implementation of the entire evaluation and a method I would choose for a particular section. Independently, I prepared various materials for the implementation of the evaluation and carried it out. During the course of the evaluation my supervisor participated as the leader of the project. After the meeting the supervisor and I evaluated it and discovered that we had managed to obtain answers to all the key questions and thus accomplished the set goals. That was one of the last activities I performed in the internship. The performance of that task clearly showed my progress from initial dependence to final independence. My progress also was assessed by means of the plan prepared at the beginning of the internship, and this was the basis for regular and final evaluations of my development.

The internship within the framework of the SUPER PSYCHOLOG project distinguished itself from traditional internships. In the next section of my report I present several of the benefits which I, as a supervisee, cherished the most.

1. **Feeling of safety:** The internship was organized in such a way that I always knew what others expected of me and what I could expect from them. I experienced the feeling of safety during the introductory meeting when both my supervisor and I clearly expressed our expectations. The questions and materials prepared for us within the project directed us through entire process and made it possible for us to cover all the important points.
2. **The supervisory relationship:** Throughout the internship an emphasis was also kept on the relationship between the supervisee and supervisor. The relationship was slowly established and strengthened in the meetings held before the internship began. The quality of the supervisory relationship was defined by clear and respectful communication, the action plan that was prepared in advance, and clear requirements. Because the most important points of the relationship had been defined, the possibility of dissatisfaction and conflicts was minimized.
3. **The internship plan:** The internship plan determined the work requirements and activities for me to participate in, and offered possibilities for the evaluation of my progress. The plan was a starting point, as it had been prepared based on the level of my competences prior to the internship, and as such it enabled the measurement of my progress.
4. **Reflection:** During the regular and final reflections my supervisor devoted her time to me, and enhanced my expression of positive and negative emotions and thoughts. During the time of reflection I remembered my work, reactions and responses, and became aware of the new knowledge I had acquired. This served as the bridge between theory and practice. Reflections enabled the time

and space for professional discussions regarding the activities, which contributed to my personal and professional development. Personally, I found it important for me to write down these reflections, as in this way I articulated all my feelings and thoughts and strengthened my knowledge. Additional evaluations and encouragement to think strengthened the important experiences which I encountered during the internship.

The supervisor offered a safe environment for me to explore my already accomplished competences, and support in acquiring new competences. The internship came to its conclusion with the final evaluation, which was very important to me. During the internship I progressed professionally and personally. My supervisor advised me at the beginning to try and learn something from every situation, and I accepted her advice and think that I learned a lot during the internship. I trust myself more and I am better prepared to become a professional psychologist.