



Vlasta Zabukovec

THE SITUATION IN THE FIELD OF TRAINEESHIP FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS IN SLOVENIA

This chapter presents the traineeship situation in three fields of practice in psychology: health care, education, and social welfare. The article is based on three papers presented at the interim conference “What Kind of Mentoring Do We Need – Experiences and Transfer of Good Practices of Mentoring Psychologists,” within the framework of the SUPER PSIHOLOG project. The paper on traineeship in the field of health care was presented by Petra Bavčar (Bavčar, 2015); that on traineeship in the field of education was presented by Špela Ševerkar (Ševerkar, 2015); and the work on traineeship in the field of social welfare was presented by Valerija Bužan (Bužan, 2015).

Psychologists in the Field of Health Care

The Chamber of Clinical Psychologists of Slovenia has in recent years devoted a great deal of effort to the regulation of services performed by clinical psychologists and psychologists who are employed in health care. The traineeship programme for these is defined by the *Order on the programme of apprenticeship and the professional examination for the profession of psychologist in health care* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 71/2013). As set out in this document, the trainee should become acquainted with all levels and domains of health care services, and thus obtain, through training and examination, the knowledge and skills required for autonomous performance of services offered by psychologists who are employed in health care, regardless of their professional domain. The traineeship programme

defines the psychology field of practice and acquired competences, duration of traineeship, and takes into consideration the specific needs of each trainee.

The traineeship programme is implemented over a period of 12 months. The initial three months are spent in the workplace. The second part of traineeship, which lasts for a minimum of four months, is prepared individually and includes circulating among the various employers who perform psychological services within the health care framework. The programme helps develop the following competences:

1. Clinical-psychological evaluation: establishment of an effective working alliance with the patient, including the choice, application and basic explanation of methods for the psychological assessment of children, adolescents and adults (e.g., structured observations, clinical interviews, and standardized psychological tests), evaluation of social context (family, education and work environment) and cultural context, knowledge of workplace evaluation, i.e. estimation of workload and assessment of psychological load, and knowledge of how to assess work capability for different purposes.
2. Psychological formulation of a problem: definition of a treated problem and circumstances, inter-related connection of data obtained during the process of clinical psychological evaluation, and collaboration in multi-disciplinary teams of professionals for the treatment of patients.
3. Psychotherapy, psychological rehabilitation and other forms of psychological help: knowledge of the various forms for psychological help for children, adolescents and adults, which correspond to the focal problem and life circumstances of the patient, knowledge of indications and contra-indications of individual forms of psychological help, activities to promote health protection at work, and the implementation of measures to enhance humanization.
4. Psychological research: identification and critical evaluation of research outcomes, understanding of qualitative and quantitative approaches to clinical psychological research, sensitivity for the ethical aspects of research.
5. Other professional and personal knowledge and skills: knowledge and utilization of ethical principles in clinical psychological work, consideration of the power relation between the professional and patient, and understanding of the impact of diversity and social inequality on the individual, recognition and management of one's own value system, personal traits and emotional states with regard to experience and conduct in clinical-psychological work, performance at the level of qualification and consideration of one's own limitations, care for continuing professional development, mastering of project collaboration, mastering of educative methods applied in public health, knowledge of public related communication, participation in supervision and intervision processes.

After the traineeship has been concluded the candidate has to pass a *professional work assessment exam* which tests his/her knowledge and skill with regard to various professional contents from the domain of health care: clinical psychology,

psychopathology, health psychology, clinical-psychological evaluation, psychological formulation of a problem, psychotherapy, psychological rehabilitation and other forms of psychological help, and psychology research and ethical principles. Moreover, the candidate has to demonstrate knowledge and skills with regard to providing first aid, social medicine, and the legal basis of health services, health care, and health insurance.

In addition to the *Order on the programme of apprenticeship and the professional examination for the profession of psychologist in health care*, another document is important, i.e. the *Health Services Act* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 23/2005), which in Article 64 defines the requirements for work performance. Work in health care can be performed by those who have successfully concluded the traineeship and passed the professional work assessment exam. Important information is contained in the *Rules on traineeships and professional examination of health and allied health professionals in healthcare services* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 33/2004) which regulates the requirements for the traineeship of health professionals and associate professionals, while Article 7 determines the requirements for the performance of the mentor who must have achieved at least the same level of professional education as the trainee, and has a minimum of five years of professional experience in the field of practice the trainee is being trained for. Article 8 of the Rules defines the mentor's tasks, and as such sets out that they should: (i) ensure that the traineeship is implemented in compliance with the defined programme; (ii) introduce the trainee into work and train the trainee for independent work by providing instructions, advice and practical performance; (iii) assure the trainee's participation in professional consultation meetings; (iv) assign tasks which the trainee is supposed to master by the end of the traineeship in the mentor's professional division; (v) supervise whether or not the trainee has mastered the work to an extent that they can perform it independently; (vi) ensure that the trainee can individually or in a group of trainees analyse practical cases and questions; (vii) make sure that the trainee is not oriented toward a narrow specialist domain, but obtains information about and becomes acquainted with the work of others in the work process, although with a particular focus on training for independent practice in his/her own profession; (viii) ensure that the trainee learns how to properly use work equipment and is familiar with safety-at-work regulations; (ix) direct the trainee to follow the ethical codes in use at work; and (x) participate in the assessment of the trainee's practical performance.

Psychologists in the Field of Education

The legal foundations for the services of psychologists in the field of education and care are the *Organization and Financing of Education Act* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 16/2007), and the *Rules on traineeship for professionals in*

education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 23/06) and the related amendments. Article 3 of the Rules defines the various forms of traineeship, such as that based on an employment contract, or on a contract for the provision of a voluntary traineeship. Since 2006 there have been around 2,600 volunteers in schools and kindergartens. In the 2014/2015 academic year, there were 51 paid traineeships and 762 voluntary traineeships. Article 5 of the Rules determines the duration of a traineeship to be 10 months for a person with higher education. Schools and kindergartens have to keep the documentation related to traineeship, with the content of this stipulated in Article 23 of the Rules.

The traineeship programme encompasses the following contents and develops the following competences of a trainee (*Rules amending the Rules on traineeship for professionals in education*, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 38/2014):

1. Knowledge and comprehension: knowledge of the subject field and curriculum or of another professional field; comprehension and application of the methodology and subject of special didactics, as well as the basis of educational science, educational processes, knowledge of developmental psychology, group dynamics, inclusiveness and diversity; knowledge of approaches and methods of evaluation and assessment.
2. Skills of effective teaching: mastering the principles and methods of planning, implementation and evaluation of the educational process; proper use of educational equipment, classroom application of information and communications technology and development of the information literacy of children, pupils and students (hereafter: students); creating a safe and encouraging learning climate by means of various teaching methods and strategies, goal specification, monitoring and evaluation of student progress with regard to the set goals, taking into consideration both the developmental characteristics and diversity of students.
3. Collaboration with work environment and society: collaboration with other school employees, parents, providers of counselling services, other schools and institutions, and professionals in the field of education and other fields of practice.
4. Beliefs, values and attitudes: awareness of the evolution of the focal subject and its relation to other domains; ability to carry out self-reflection; being responsible for the direction of one's own professional development in lifelong learning; qualified to take part in constructive collaborations in developmental research projects; providing encouragement for better learning and democracy to all students, including respect for diversity and multicultural awareness; and having a sense of one's own effectiveness.
5. Organization and leadership: knowledge of the profession and regulations which manage school operations; successful planning and time management; mastery of organizational and administrative tasks in relation to planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the learning process; effective guidance of students, student groups and coordination of a teacher assembly; good teamwork capabilities and effective problem-solving abilities.

In adherence to the *Rules on traineeship for professionals in education* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 23/06) the mentor prepares the traineeship programme; advises the trainee on the implementation of programme-related tasks; collaborates with the kindergarten and school principals, school counselling service, professional boards and other professional kindergarten and school bodies, with regard to organization and implementation of traineeship programme tasks; counsels the trainee with regard to planning, organizing, and implementing practical presentations and other forms of direct educational work, which is monitored and analysed by the mentor who gives feedback to the trainee; monitors the trainee's preparation and the Trainee Diary in the course of other parts of the traineeship programme; prepares the report on the trainee's qualification for independent work performance and assesses practical presentations which are prepared for registration for the professional assessment exam; after the traineeship has been concluded, the mentor in cooperation with the principal reports about the traineeship; and performs other traineeship-programme-related tasks.

In compliance with the *Rules on traineeship for professionals in education* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 23/06) the trainee has to, under the leadership of the mentor and the principal, carry out tasks which enable him/her to become knowledgeable in planning and implementation of educational work in kindergartens and schools. Such tasks start to be assigned in the first quarter of the traineeship programme. The tasks performed by the trainee are: (i) Preparation and implementation of the minimum of 30 practical presentations in a group, class or other modalities in the mentor's workplace. (ii) Inclusion into direct educational work, which encompasses autonomous work under the guidance of the mentor, substituting, participating in excursions, mentoring students on research tasks, and tutorship of individual students for the minimum of two hours per week. The total scope of the described tasks should not exceed half of the traineeship period. (iii) Preparation and implementation of knowledge evaluation and assessment. These tasks are partly performed in the first quarter of the programme, and continue throughout the traineeship. During this period, and with increased intensity in the second half of the programme and in agreement with the kindergarten or school principal, the trainee is educated and trained in the areas of special didactics, psychology and pedagogy, organization and educational activities, interpersonal communication in the Slovenian language, the constitutional order of the Republic of Slovenia, organization of the European Union institutions and its legal system and regulations which manage human and children rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rules which manage the field of education, i.e. the *Rules amending the Rules on traineeship for professionals in education* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 72/2007). The contents of these domains are included in the professional work assessment exam, with which the traineeship comes to its conclusion. Other trainee tasks enable the mentor and principal to take into consideration the trainee's individual characteristics and training dynamics, and correspondingly adjust the

traineeship programme. Here the trainee consults professionally with the mentor and other knowledge-holders with regard to the tasks defined in the traineeship programme, and studies the literature recommended by the mentor.

Psychologists in the Field of Social Welfare

The psychology tasks in the field of social welfare include services and measures intended for the prevention and elimination of social distress, and are carried out in relation to individuals, families and social groups.

The Social Security Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 3/2007) states that the implementation of the professional work assessment exam in the field of social welfare can only take place once the traineeship has been concluded. The professional work assessment exams are carried out by the Social Chamber of Slovenia. Since 1999 a total of 1,477 exams have been carried out, out of which 588 were in the domain of public work, 486 in that of European social funding, and 403 in that of the employers. In the period of 2014/15 the professional work assessment exams for the field of social welfare were taken by 15 psychologists, i.e. 3.5% of all profiles. The professional work assessment exams are carried out before a three-member committee. The Social Chamber works to continuously upgrade the professional literature which is the basis for the exams, monitors the exam results and the performance of committee members. Besides the implementation of preparatory seminars for the professional work assessment, the Chamber also performs the training for the members of the committees.

In compliance with Indent 4 Paragraph 2 Article 77 of the *Social Security Act*, the Social Chamber of Slovenia within the framework of public authorization defines the requirements and process for the traineeship implementation, and monitors the traineeship operation. It adheres to the *Rules on the traineeship in the field of social assistance* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 128/04), the *Act Amending and Supplementing the Social Security Act* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 39/2016), the *Collective agreement on health and social care* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 15/94, with amendments), and the *Act on Employment Relations* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 21/2013). The aim of such a traineeship is education and training for work and professional development. The trainee should thus complete the training programme and acquire general knowledge of the field of social welfare; integrate theoretical knowledge into practice at the professional level; reinforce the knowledge, skills and techniques required for the implementation of independent professional work in the field of social welfare; and prepare for the professional work assessment exam.

A trainee in the field of social welfare is a person who starts his/her first employment in a social welfare institution, with an employer who performs social welfare

services on the basis of an acquired concession or work permit, or other providers of social welfare services and programmes, with the intention of being trained for independent action in an employment context. The trainee has to hold a college, higher or university education degree in social work or other professions, as defined by the *Social Security Act* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 3/2007, with amendments). An employee who during the employment relationship obtains a higher level of professional education in the same orientation and starts carrying out the corresponding work tasks is not considered a trainee if he/she has been performing the same or similar work for the minimum duration of the traineeship period set out for the acquired degree of professional education.

During the traineeship the trainee keeps a Trainee Diary as evidence of problem analysis with regard to the work performed, and submits this once a month along with a report to the mentor. A Trainee Diary can be more than a report, as the trainee can describe and make notes about anything that happens or is observed, such as: the characteristics of the service users he/she works with, contacts with individual users, descriptions of the workplace and its influence on the personnel and users mood, explicit work-related factors (interventions, conversations, individual tasks, assignments, treatments), everyday routine events and extraordinary events, personnel meetings, team meetings, supervisory discussions with the mentor, and so on.

The training of trainees in the field of social welfare is defined by the programme, which includes both general and specific parts, with the later containing optional elements. The general part is the same for all the trainees, and includes the introduction of a broader scope of social welfare and conceptualization and implementation of social policy, the network of social welfare providers, the types and fundamental contents of individual social welfare services and operations of public authorizations in the field of social welfare; the rights, roles and positions of users in service assurance and provision; the definition and role of a particular profession, and the rights, responsibilities, and authorities of a professional worker in the field of social welfare; and significant professional approaches and methods applied in the field of social welfare. The specific part of the training tasks is assigned to the trainee by the employer in relation to the work and/or profession which the candidate is being trained for (i.e., in relation to work requirements or an individual's interest in a particular line of work. This can be done in agreement with the candidate and/or (co)mentor, and post-graduate education can be considered). The specific part of training can be completed in relation to different issues, which are optional. For example: issues related to economic risk (unemployment, social exclusion and strategies for reducing this, along with poverty, and homelessness); issues tied to partner relationships (marriage, partnership, other forms of community); issues of child protection (youth programmes, behavioural difficulties, violence against children, the family and parenting in general); issues of family relationships (foster care, adoption, custody); issues of social care (target

user groups, nursing care in institutions and at home); issues of social inclusion (programmes to enhance the independence of people with special needs, the integration of individuals after imprisonment, the inclusion of those after other forms of treatment); issues of mental health (addiction and intoxication, mental health difficulties, deviant behaviours); and issues of non-discrimination (the user as a subject; marginal groups, such as children, disabled persons, and the Roma people; standards of good practice in relation to non-discrimination). In the optional part of the programme the candidate has to obtain, build up and apply knowledge of the target group characteristics; level and type of social insecurity; legislation regulating the field of practice; the related professional network, and types of social providers and services addressing population issues (institutions, organizations, agencies, programmes and services); the use of an integrated approach to treatment; collaboration between providers and other social activities; prevention activities; professional approaches and methods which the trainee should master and then be able to apply when working with the target group.

The employer appoints the mentor for the trainee. The mentor is a professional worker who exhibits professionalism (as evidenced by the same or higher level of education than the trainee, awarded title, or by the consensus and confirmation of the Social Chamber of Slovenia), and explicitly gives his/her consent to mentorship. Besides adhering to the requirements stipulated by the *Rules on the traineeship in the field of social assistance* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 128/04), the employer should pay attention to the mentor's ability to methodically transfer knowledge to the trainee. The mentor will be a professional in the social welfare field who ensures that the trainee's training follows the defined programme. The mentor formulates the training programme based on the contents of both the general and specific parts, as outlined above. The trainee can be guided in the period of traineeship, in collaboration with the mentor, as well as by the co-mentor who is appointed by the employer. A co-mentor is a professional worker who participates in the traineeship as a mentor to the trainee for a specific work area or professional tasks, or who provides guidance when the trainee performs the traineeship at another employer. The employer usually appoints one mentor to the trainee. When training is performed in different organizations, the mentor is assigned one or more co-mentors who are responsible for particular areas and/or periods of training. Both the mentor and co-mentor are accountable for the implementation of the entire traineeship programme. The mentor is thus obliged to cooperate with the co-mentor when the trainee is being trained in the optional areas of work or in a different organization.

The mentor in cooperation with the co-mentor evaluates the trainee with regard to his/her ability to precisely define a work problem, the appropriateness of the chosen work method, the applicability of theoretical knowledge in task performance, and accuracy of task solution. In a report on the trainee's training, the mentor

evaluates the following issues: (i) the scope of the performed work in relation to the trainee's programme of training; (ii) the quality of performance, in which the mentor takes into consideration assessment of specifically assigned tasks, as well as the assessment carried out by the co-mentor; and (iii) a specific field the trainee has been most successful in, and an area the trainee has shown the highest interest in. The mentor and trainee work together to prepare the documentation regarding the concluded traineeship, and this is a prerequisite for registration for the professional work assessment exam (Social Chamber of Slovenia, 2016).

Within the framework of public authorization the Social Chamber implements professional tasks of monitoring, implementing and controlling the training in compliance with the legislation. This includes: (i) monitoring, implementing and supervising the traineeship training in compliance with the regulations on traineeship in the field of social welfare; (ii) advising and providing guidelines for the preparation of traineeship programmes for individual trainees; (iii) giving consent to the traineeship training and mentorship; (iv) keeping documentation on the training; (v) keeping records of registered mentors; (vi) monitoring the planning of requirements for trainees in social welfare institutions, and finding out the annual demand for trainees with particular profiles in accord with Article 69 of the *Social Security Act*; (vii) organization of additional and adjusted forms of training for trainees and mentors; and (viii) collaboration with the competent Ministry in relation to the implementation of the traineeship training in the field of social welfare.

The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Slovenia will in its announced revision of the *Social Security Act* cancel the mandatory traineeship in the field of social welfare. The postulated amendments to the Act will keep the professional work assessment exam, while the mandatory traineeship will be replaced by a non-obligatory traineeship or direct introduction of the trainee into work by the mentor. The *Act Amending and Supplementing the Social Security Act* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 39/2016) stipulates that social welfare services can be performed by professional workers who have been educated in social work and have completed a six-month traineeship training, or when they have had six months of work experience, and have passed the professional work assessment exam in the field of social welfare; and by those who have completed psychological, pedagogical, sociological, healthcare education and have had nine months of work experience/traineeship, and have passed the professional work assessment exam.