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Integrative Pedagogy and Mentors' Learning at the Slovenian Third Age University

Abstract: The paper describes the findings of a study of the learning of mentors working in the field of the education of older adults at the Slovenian Third Age University. The aim of the research was to analyse the characteristics of learning in the work environment in the context of non-formal education of older adults. The theoretical framework is formed by two mental models: the model of dialogic mentoring, which focuses on testing and searching, and the model of integrative pedagogy. The empirical part of the study was performed according to the principles of qualitative research using the methods of observation and interview. The data was gathered between 2017 and 2019. The findings of this research suggest that an innovative model of mentoring is being developed at the Slovenian Third Age University, which includes all the elements characteristic of integrative pedagogy.

Keywords: workplace learning, mentor, older adults, Third Age University

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Introduction¹

The development of the network of older adult² education has resulted in an increasing number of educators for this particular group of education participants as well as a need for the education and training of new educators. There are no university programmes in Slovenia that train educators to work with older adults. Training for mentors working with older adults is provided as part of the activities of the Slovenian Third Age University (hereinafter: Slovenian U3A), where the University's own mentors have been trained since 1986, when the first educational programme was organised. Courses and other types of education take place every year and are intended for in-house training, which is often linked to various international projects (Bračun Sova et al. 2015a; Mažgon et al. 2015). Extensive training of mentors to work with older adults took place as part of a national project in various towns around Slovenia between 2010 and 2014 (Govekar Okoliš and Krajnčec 2012).³

In addition to training mentors for group work – which is the basic form of education in the Slovenian U3A – there are also various training programmes for individual mentors, animators⁴ and counsellors (Findeisen 2012). These organised forms are accompanied by a large amount of mentors' learning in the workplace, independent learning and experiential learning, which can be interpreted as workplace learning.

The aim of the research presented in this paper was to analyse how mentors experience the personal learning related to their mentoring work at the Slovenian

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² In 2019, the Slovenian U3A network consisted of 53 Third Age Universities (<http://www.utzo.si/en/>) with more than 12,000 students, over 1,000 mentors and animators.

³ Further information on organised training programmes for mentors and animators at Third Age Universities is available at <http://www.utzo.si/usposabljanje/>. Self-study materials are also available on this website.

⁴ In a study circle, the mentor is an expert in charge of education. The animator is an older student, a member of the study circle, who takes care of the administrative side of the study circle's work and the climate in the group, provides information, etc.

U3A, where they educate/lead groups of older adult students, and to identify the characteristics of the University's mentoring work and model. The assumption was that an innovative model of mentors' learning and training for the education of older adults is being developed at the Slovenian U3A.

Theoretical framework

Education has a different meaning for older adults than for the young and adults who are part of the active population. Instrumental knowledge is no longer so important, while dialogic⁵ knowledge is gaining in importance, as is developing new connections between different types of knowledge, wisdom and practical wisdom (see Ardeli 2019; 2011; Broadhead and Gregson 2018). For this reason, mentors working with older adults need to be trained differently than mentors who work with children, young adults or adult employees (see Kožar Rosulnik and Kermeč 2017). There are more than fifty definitions of mentoring found in literature (Garvey et al. 2017; Lancer et al. 2016; Dominques and Hager 2013; Kent et al. 2013; Fyn 2013; Aspfors et al. 2012), which shows that authors have yet to agree on a uniform definition of mentoring. At the Slovenian U3A, the term mentor is used for the following three types of mentoring:

- paired mentoring/dyadic mentoring; an example of such mentoring is pairs in the project *Each One, Teach One (Znaš, nauči drugega!)*;
- group mentoring which takes place in study circles where a selected expert (mentor) leads a group of students;
- peer group mentoring, which is most common in project groups with different participants interacting with one another (mostly in international projects).

There has been a great deal of research in the field of mentoring, in particular research on mentors in educational institutions and those in the workplace showing the ropes to new employees (Govekar Okoliš and Krajnc 2016; Govekar Okoliš 2018, Geeraerts et al. 2015; Felten et al. 2013, Garvey et al. 2017; Higgins and Kram 2001; Eraut 2008). Although some research has focused on older adults (Bračun Sova et al. 2015b), no attention has been devoted to mentors' workplace learning and the way they experienced leading groups of older adults. The research presented in this paper is based on two assumptions, i.e. mentoring is a dialogue, and mentoring is embedded in the social environment (Tynjälä 2009); hence, mentors' workplace learning is understood as dialogic learning and social learning. After reviewing the literature and in planning the empirical research, two theoretical frameworks were chosen for exploring mentors' workplace learning, both of which are briefly described below.

⁵ For more on knowledge classifications see Mikulec (2019, pp. 11–23).

Mentoring as a dialogue

In the traditional sense, a mentor is viewed as an experienced authority that has knowledge, is older than the person being mentored, and is someone who guides, directs, and controls younger, less experienced individuals. The concept of supervising a mentee is more common in models based on a behavioural understanding of learning and the positivist understandings of knowledge. In the humanist, critical-constructivist and practice models, the role of mentors is less focused on control and supervision (Dominques and Hager 2013). Basic models (sometimes referred to as 'traditional' models) emphasise the mentors' experience and social reputation. The mentor guides a mentee in a process that is focused on clear goals towards which the mentor steers the mentee (in a linear, verifiable and measurable way). The mentoring process is built on the premise of predictability of results, rationality, and positivist epistemology (Bokeno and Gantt 2000, p. 248). Bokeno and Gantt refer to this model as 'monologic mentoring'. Govekar Okoliš writes about so-called 'formal mentoring', which is characterised by a hierarchy of relationships that makes the mentor-mentee relationship less genuine, sometimes less respectful, and also one that involves less mutual trust. Research has shown that formal mentoring can be unsuccessful. In fact, mentoring that is non-formal and characterised by less pronounced hierarchical relationships between the mentor and the mentee have proven to be more effective (Govekar Okoliš 2018, p. 187).

Contemporary views on mentoring, however, place greater emphasis on cooperativeness, relationality and dialogue, as well as experimentation and inclusivity (Findeisen 2012; Bokeno and Gantt 2000, Mažgon et al. 2018), which leads to a shared construction of meanings, knowledge, skills and values. According to Govekar Okoliš (2018, p. 188), mentoring – as a dyadic relationship – promotes the development of a critical, independent and creative mentee, while also encouraging professional development of the mentor, the development of mentoring competencies, professionalism and integration into the environment. Mentoring is a dynamic interpersonal process as part of which both the mentor and the mentee gain knowledge and experience, and develop various personality traits.

Mentoring can also be interpreted as a phenomenon of multiple relationships and not merely as a mentor-mentee relationship. Findeisen (2012) defines mentoring as a relationship between the mentor, the mentee and an 'absent third element' – according to her, this is an institution or a University of the Third Age. Instead of an institution as the third element, some other studies (e.g. Bokeno and Gantt 2000) use the concept of the place as the third element, i.e. a complete sociocultural (micro) environment to which the mentor and the mentees attach cultural meanings and also create (construct) it through their practice. Both appear as the 'third element', although their respective roles differ. With its own reputation, the institution supports the development of a mentoring relationship, purposefully structuring it, while also performing all parallel support activities, e.g. public campaigns to promote mentoring.

If a mentor and the mentees are in a dialogue, this means they are in a personal relationship. None of them are in an instrumental relationship, hence,

affective, relational and embodied practices are important in addition to knowledge and skills (Broadhead and Gregson 2018, Kinsella and Pitman 2012, Šindić and Pribišev Beleslin 2018).

Mentoring as part of integrative pedagogy

The second element relevant to the framework of the research on mentors' workplace learning presented in this paper is a holistic understanding of education and knowledge. Heikkinen, Jokinen and Tynjälä (2008) have explored the reconceptualisation of mentoring from the perspective of integrative pedagogy, which emphasises different forms of intelligence and work experience. The development of professional abilities (in the presented research this refers to the mentors' ability to work with older adults) is based on an integrative model that combines various elements (logical, social and emotional, practical and theoretical knowledge) by emphasising the ability to relate subjective experience to theoretical/academic knowledge (e.g. practical and theoretical knowledge, tacit and explicit knowledge). In the next stages of research, Tynjälä et al. (2016) present a model of integrative pedagogy based on the idea of integrating the four basic components of expertise. The first element is theoretical knowledge (conceptual, explicit, formal knowledge) and the second element is practical knowledge (experiential knowledge, implicit knowledge, embodied knowledge). When it comes to mentors' work, combining the two types of knowledge is crucial. Mentors gain conceptual (theoretical) knowledge in formal education and through various non-formal education programmes for mentors. As for practical experiential knowledge, they gain it while working with groups of older adults. The third and fourth elements are self-regulative knowledge and skills, and sociocultural knowledge. Self-regulative knowledge and skills includes metacognitive and reflexive skills, which are important for knowing and regulating oneself. This component also includes emotional elements. The model's authors place the emotional level as the foundation of self-regulative knowledge and skills. Sociocultural knowledge is part of social practices, such as unspoken rules and ways of using tools. This form of knowledge develops in communities of practice and impacts all other types of knowledge.

Since the basic question was about how mentors connect (workplace) learning and work, an additional framework consisting of two concepts was used. The two concepts were connectivity and transformation used by Tynjälä (2009) in the aforementioned model of integrative pedagogy. Connectivity is a process that contributes to close relationships between different elements of learning situations, the environment and the education system. Transformation refers to the changes and developmental processes that result from the connection of different elements. There is a transformation process taking place between conceptual and practical knowledge (according to this model, conceptual knowledge allows practical knowledge to be clarified or explicated).

If mentoring is understood according to the model of dialogue and integrative pedagogy, mentors' workplace learning is viewed as a composite practice. Therefore, the aim will be to explore how mentors experience their learning in relation to the mentoring practice.

Empirical Part

Research problem

The research problem addressed in the empirical part is focused on an analysis of the experience of personal learning that takes place in connection with the work and role of mentors at the Slovenian U3A. In order to identify the characteristics of mentoring work and the model, as well as the personal learning related to it at the Slovenian U3A, qualitative research was conducted. Since previous research into mentoring in the field of older adult education is scarce, the research was based on that of mentoring in adult education settings, in particular the model of integrative pedagogy developed by a research team headed by the Finnish researcher Tynjälä (Tynjälä 2009, Tynjälä et al. 2016; Geeraerts et al. 2015; Heikkinen et al. 2011). Likewise, it was based on a number of studies on mentoring at the Slovenian U3A (Lampret 2019; Furlan 2018, Govekar Okoliš and Krajnc 2013; 2018; Čeh 2016; Bračun Sova et al. 2015a; Findeisen 2012). The research problem was defined with several research questions.

Research questions

Key research questions were:

- How do mentors describe their work and personal learning related to their work in a study circle at the Slovenian U3A? Do they experience their work as a source of professional development?
- How do mentors describe mutual learning (group learning) and their mentoring role in the study circle?
- Do mentors perceive mentoring and related learning as a relational and affective encounter?
- Can congruity with the model of integrated pedagogy developed by Tynjälä et al. (2016) be noticed in the patterns of mentoring work at the Slovenian U3A?
- How do mentors connect different types of knowledge (based on the model of integrative pedagogy), action and learning?

Methodology

Research method description

The research was designed and conducted as qualitative research. The paradigm of phenomenological narrative research (Creswell 2013; Czarniawska 2014; Mertova and Webster 2019) was taken into account, as was the methodology of studies on mentoring and professional education (Hackel and Klebl 2014).

Units included in the research

Two study circles in which observation was conducted can be considered as the units included in the research. Study Circle A consisted of 14 participants, one mentor and one animator. Study Circle B consisted of 30 participants, one mentor and one animator.

As part of participant observation, 44 participants worked with mentors in the 2017/2018 academic year.

The (second stage of) research involved 14 mentors working in different fields in study circles from different Slovenian towns. All the participating mentors have a university degree, two of them a doctoral degree.

As part of the study circles, three of the mentors work in the field of languages, two in ICT, three in the arts, three in history and three in other, individual fields. A more detailed breakdown is included in the table below (Table 1).

Interview Number	Mentors' Field of Work in the Study Circle	Age (Years)
1	ICT skills	30
2	Painting	45
3	French language	68
4	Italian language	36
5	ICT skills	38
6	Art history	72
7	Art history	65
8	Architecture	37
9	Communication	69
10	English language	74
11	Geography	62
12	Local history	60
13	Music	71
14	Painting	58

Table 1: Interviewee-Related Data

Data collection process

Preparations prior to the collection of data, which were later recorded and analysed in more detail, included reviewing previous interviews with mentors at the Slovenian U3A (Cizelj 2011; Findeisen 2005; 2007; 2013) and listening to the radio broadcasts about the U3A mentors found on the Slovenian U3A's website Library/Multimedia subpage (<http://www.utzo.si/knjiznica/multimedija/>).

Data were then collected by means of participant observation and interviews. Planned participant observation took place in the 2017/2018 academic year and the interviews were conducted in 2018. The interview participants were from several Slovenian towns (Ljubljana, Domžale, Trebnje, Nova Gorica, Slovenj Gradec, Maribor, Ajdovščina). The interviews were conducted at locations chosen by the interviewees and transcribed. In relation to data collection, it should be also pointed out that one of the authors used to be (from 2010 to 2018) involved in organised mentor training at the Slovenian U3A. Her experience influenced the selection of interviewees and the conduct of interviews.

Data collection was conducted in two stages and using two different methods. In doing so, the aim was to follow the principle of triangulation⁶ (see Denzin 2012). Participation observation took place in two study circles. Observation was conducted as unstructured participation in four meetings, during which observation notes were prepared. The notes were then analysed and used in the preparation of the interviews.

The second stage consisted of the actual interviews. The first interview was conducted as an unstructured interview and was used to frame the interview questions in greater detail. Subsequent interviews were semi-structured and problem-centred in order to identify subjective perceptions. Each interview, which lasted about 45 minutes, was followed by a 15-minute talk with the interviewee for the purposes of concept mapping. The aim of these talks was to learn about the interviewees' subjective theories and to provide them with an opportunity to participate in interpretation. This was followed by an analysis of the interviews (transcripts), coding and formulation of themes, preparation of findings and comprehensive data feedback. Not all the mentors were able to attend the final stage as they were from different towns; hence, four of them had been selected.

Data processing

Observation notes were analysed by means of a textual analysis with inductive coding. An excerpt is presented in the table below (Table 2).

Field Notes Text	Codes
<i>October 2017</i>	
The U3A students have welcomed foreign visitors (four of them). They are now taking them around Ljubljana, following a route that was mapped out in the study circle. They are communicating in English and Croatian. At the National and University Library, architect D is explaining about architecture and Plečnik, impressing all the visitors.	Activity, knowledge, transfer of theoretical knowledge to practice Interculturality (knowledge of the language from one's former country), enthusiasm, willingness, emotional competencies
<i>November 2017</i>	
Some University of Ljubljana students are in the study circle for in-class observation. They are very quiet.	Intergenerationality
The older students are having a lively discussion on photography. The mentor is listening to the discussion, before joining in.	Older students have their opinions, Dialogue (the mentor is in a dialogue)

Table 2: Excerpt from the observation notes analysis.

⁶ Triangulation is a post-positivist strategy that refers to the application of different methods, sources, and theories to study the same phenomenon.

Coding tables were prepared for the interviews. The process was two-stage: first, the interviews were read and all the most important units were highlighted, which was followed by deductive coding based on the themes developed according to the theoretical frameworks (dialogical and integrative mentoring models). An excerpt from the category and coding table is presented in the table below (3).

Themes	Categories	Codes
Work, learning, development	Professional development	The need to develop knowledge Recognising your professional abilities
	Reflection	Theoretical knowledge Expert
Mutual learning	Partnership	Leading a group
	Collaborative learning	Selecting content and methods Promoting a positive climate
	Group	Viewing something from different perspectives Projects
Relationality and affectiveness/emotionality of the encounter	Friendship	Experiencing joy/happiness/ flow
	Belonging	Recognising ethical dilemmas
	Identification	Socialising outside of the educational setting Empathy Trust Enthusiasm
Connectivity of different types of knowledge	Integrative pedagogy	Self-reflection on the concepts of learning
	Holistic learning	Integrating experience Learning environment All types of knowledge

Table 3: Excerpt from the interview notes coding table

Results

The results are presented by individual areas designed on the basis of the research questions and the themes created by means of field-note and interview coding, and by taking into account the theoretical frameworks.

Work, personal learning and personal development: mentoring as professional development

All the interviewed mentors are satisfied with their work with older adults and the responses reflect their enthusiasm and occasional experience of flow⁷.

⁷ Flow is a mental state that one experiences when engaged in an activity. It is characterised by full involvement, focus and enjoyment in the activity. The person is fully immersed in what they are doing. The concept was introduced by M. Csikszentmihaly.

They forget all about time and hard work. For the most part, they feel basic education (university studies) is not as important as enthusiasm for learning. Such (subjective) opinions and statements are understandable as their university education has become part of their subjective knowledge, and they act upon it much like acquired knowledge to which they no longer pay any attention. What they do consider important is having a feel for people or socio-emotional knowledge and cultural knowledge (knowledge of the environment's cultural characteristics, in particular prejudices about older adults). In their study circle, each mentor has an animator, who is one of the study circle participants taking care of the connection within the group, which is a special feature of study circles. Mentors are connected with the animators' work.

Mentors ensure their knowledge is up-to-date by constantly self-educating through reading, travelling, watching YouTube tutorials, attending workshops and consulting experts. They consult their colleagues who are either still employed at the university or are researchers. Experience plays an important part in it. One of the interviewees (5) said: *»At first you teach with what you know and then you slowly develop. It is important to listen to others and yourself, and to pay attention. Then you also develop the ability to motivate people.«*

By mentoring older adults, mentors develop within their professional role. Mentoring also results in a changed perspective on problems. An interviewee (14) said that during the previous year, she had given a lot of thought to the connection between painting and spiritual life. *»You see, I don't mean religious life, but what's beyond. Maybe through painting you can... [pause]. I don't know, well, maybe you turn to Eastern philosophy. This is what I feel I'm missing. It's what I'd look into some more.«* The interviewees feel that they need additional knowledge about the mentoring role on their professional path. They attend training sessions at the Slovenian U3A and also workshops organised by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education.

Another special challenge is the expertise in their respective fields (languages, architecture, history etc.). For instance, mentors who are retired feel that it is up to them to move forward, that they need to push themselves. In the words of an interviewee (4): *»There [in the older adult group, authors' note] we keep doing the same vocabulary. And a language needs to be worked on. I can see my own knowledge is getting worse if I don't force myself to learn new things.«*

The mentors are motivated to receive further education in terms of adult education knowledge and their respective professions. Those who are still in employment transfer their professional knowledge between the two places, while those who are retired also learn independently in the field of their profession and connect with colleagues who are still employed. They prepare for their meetings with a group of older adults before the start of the academic year as well as during the year. Although mentors' professional development is similar to that of other teachers, what sets them apart is that many of them are already retired and their mentoring work represents a new career path for which they are being trained.

Mutual learning: partnership with others in the group

Learning in study circles is characterised by dialogue, i.e. an open relationship in both directions and a two-way flow of knowledge and skills. Even more experienced experts (experts with more professional knowledge) gain new insights into their work through mentoring – learning is mutual. Some of the mentors at the Slovenian U3A are university professors who have many years of experience in mentoring young students. However, according to the interviewees, working with older adults differs from that with young people.

Peer learning is very important. It is becoming increasingly important in professional circles and is promoted by companies in different ways, e.g. through communities of practice and communities of interest (see Radovan et al. 2019), as well as peer counselling. The Slovenian U3A is among those institutions that foster peer learning. An example of this is the transfer of knowledge from more successful mentors to other groups of mentors (e.g. through educational meetings and symposiums, monthly meetings).

Efficient mentoring work (despite seeming freedom, possibly even anarchy) requires clear structure, good process management, as well as coordination with animators and other groups. It is essential to maintain a stable mentoring network. At the Slovenian U3A, they are well aware that if a mentor leaves, they take all their knowledge with them, so the U3A makes sure it organises monthly meetings and annual symposiums, thus striving to develop the mentoring community. Mentors learn a great deal while planning their work and preparing programmes. Each programme is prepared by mentors, who then discuss what the programme will be like with the participants, and how it will be tailored to the group and individuals. Mentors invest a lot of time in preparing the programme and sometimes even involve their family members in the process. *»Sometimes it takes me the whole week to prepare for a single study circle meeting. I collect a lot of material and give a lot of thought to what I could use. If I have no photos, I go and take them myself. We'll be done with Kralj this coming autumn, so I'm going to Lokev tomorrow with my husband [Tone Kralj is a Slovenian painter. A church with frescoes painted by him is located in Lokev; authors' note]. I've made arrangements – they'll open the church and we're going to have a look around.»* (6)

Mutual learning takes place between the mentor and group members, and also between individual mentors. They learn from their mutual relationships. Mentors feel they have learned a lot from the stories of the older adults in their groups. They mention the older adults' wisdom and information about the professions these adults used to follow, as well as the development of patience and teaching skills. *»When people start sharing their stories, you learn a lot. You listen. I always learn something new: some things from the extra research I do, and others from the participants. There are two architects in my group. They often know more than I do and fill in the blanks.»* (8) Younger mentors say that working with older adults contributes to their personality development. One of the interviewees (4) said: *»I have learned perseverance. A student of mine is ill, but he comes anyway. It's really hard for him to come, but he makes it. It's people like him who inspire me.»*

Older adults in a study circle group typically feel connected with one another and have a sense of belonging to the group. They like their respective mentors and feel they are part of their group if they are experts and good at what they do. New forms of collaboration are developed (mentees get emotionally attached to the mentor), as it is an (intense) relationship, one that is unlike other relationships known in adult or formal education. If older adults are not happy with their mentor, they can ask for the mentor to be replaced. They are dissatisfied if the mentor does not take into account their need to structure time, if they feel the mentor neglects them or does not respect them, and if the mentor does not have enough energy or does not link theoretical knowledge with their lives and the events in their environment. They love getting new information through learning, developing and changing views, and are satisfied if their knowledge also has a social value.

Mentoring as a relational and affective encounter: friendships in the group

The interviewees highlighted their personal development and enthusiasm for work. They feel the being in contact with older adults has changed them personality-wise. They experience mentoring as a relational and affective (emotional) encounter. The term used is 'affective' – in the collocations 'affective society'⁸ or 'affective turn', it is understood as a term that includes all forms of emotional life (see Slaby and Scheve 2019).

According to the mentors, the relationships in the groups are good and friendly. This has also been confirmed by the findings of observations in both study circles. The mentors' statements reveal that they believe good relationships are the cornerstone of effective work in study circles. Mentors must be able to recognise negative cognitive and emotional patterns. If a student says, "I won't be able to do this« or "I'm afraid of this«, mentors need to recognise the negative thinking patterns that may impede older adults' learning. Mentors detect obstacles and steer students towards solving them.

How good the relationships in study circle groups are is also indicated by the fact that members of some study circles go on a summer holiday together with their mentor (13). In some groups, nurturing relationships is particularly important and, when it comes to this, it is very useful to use humour, and include group-specific stories, expressions and students' examples into the group's internal vocabulary. »*Sometimes students have to be reminded that someone needs extra care and attention. They need to be told that being friendly is the way to go. When the first man joined our group, I told them, 'now be careful not to scare him off'.*« (14)

There are several different elements to consider when researching relationality and affectiveness. When it comes to the work of the study group and its mentor, different feelings are important: the feeling of (mutual) respect on the one hand

⁸ The affective society is a term and theoretical concept central to the research in the social sciences and also an analytical tool, guiding the practice (formation of feeling). The affective turn is a turn that has a lot in common with feminist/new materialism. Relational ontologies are highlighted. (see Slaby, Scheve 2019, pp. 27–41, 61–72).

and the fears of not being accepted on the other. Older adults are afraid of others finding them stupid and of being judged by the group, so mentors need to be alert to the emotional climate. Mentoring is a dialogic practice that includes both relational and embodied elements, affective and ethical elements.

Every practice happens in a place where there are ageisms of various kinds. Older adults do not want to be judged or unsuccessful. As different emotions are processed within a group's mentoring relationship, it is necessary to understand the impact of ageisms and the adoption of ageisms that generate negative feelings about old age or (primitive) idealisation of old age.

Well-functioning groups also meet outside their education events, e.g. they meet for coffee, visit one another at home, and go out for dinner together. Study circle groups usually stay together for a very long time, so the group becomes extremely important to its members. Relationships extend into their everyday lives and mentors are usually part of this network. When a mentor is replaced, the new mentor must tread carefully for some time while continuing the previous mentor's work, as revealed by the experience of Tatjana Bradeško, a history study circle mentor (Findeisen 2013), and Miran Erič, a painting study circle mentor. The groups are very tight-knit, and therefore find it difficult to accept a new mentor or new members without the help of the new members themselves or the U3A's management. Mentors are well aware that, for at least three group meetings, new group members need to do nothing other than observe the interaction. Mentoring is proving to be a mutually affective relationship that is just as important for the lives of mentors and students as the friendships in other life settings.

Emotions and affects in the context of mentoring are understood as phenomena that are socially-relational, embedded in a concrete place, dynamic and 'transpersonal' and occurring among education actors, to which mentors need to pay attention. In groups, affective connections are created as a result of a complex affective arrangement, in which affective power and affective relationality among the actors, the material environment/conditions and the current arrangement are observed. All these elements are an important part of mentors' workplace learning and imply the importance of different types of knowledge in their professional development.

Integration of different types of knowledge: the integrative model

Mentors experience their work in older adult groups as a way of (part of) life and emphasise shared knowledge creation. All the mentors interviewed experience mentoring in a very positive way. According to the model of integrative pedagogy, different types of knowledge are integrated during teaching: theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge, sociocultural knowledge and self-regulative knowledge. All these four types of knowledge are also part of the learning of mentors who work with older adults.

In their workplace learning, mentors develop and integrate different types of knowledge, as evidenced by the following mentors' statements: »*Most of our time is spent on professional knowledge that is part of our programme.*« (8) »*I was surprised*

by how much you get from them, all sorts of life experiences. And it's totally different from school, they respect you. [The mentor is employed at a school, authors' note]« (1) »It's the best feeling to know after a lesson that people have learned something new.« (2) »Yes, I like teaching older adults. And what I like most is when I make them enthusiastic about learning.« (3) »And sometimes you help people overcome their fears.« (6) »We often talk about stereotypes. I tell them that ageisms are a serious problem because they often internalise them.« (8)

The mentors have emphasised that their number one task is to acquire new knowledge with the group, be it knowledge of languages, communication or ICT skills. According to the interviewees, the mentors' most important task is to teach, i.e. transfer knowledge, and to help students receive and maintain knowledge, which consists of theoretical or formal knowledge and experiential knowledge. In addition to conceptual, academic and experiential knowledge, other types of knowledge are created in the learning process, as noted by the interviewed mentors, with particular reference to the development of socio-emotional capacities. In their mentoring groups, mentors encounter different life stories and various influences on the trajectories of life. A gentleman [the husband of an older adult student, authors' note] told me: *»I'm grateful my wife attends your lectures. She goes there, listens, writes it all down... It's good for our whole family. I got a bit worried when she started to be depressed. It's really useful that she goes to these lectures.« (6)*

Since study circles are also related to activities in the local environment, they are embedded in their respective local knowledge networks, local narratives, intangible cultural heritage etc. The group in the study circle 'The Squares, Streets and Buildings Around Us' prepared guided tours of Ljubljana. They researched people's individual experience of buildings and public urban space, lifestyles, etc. They wrote, designed and published a guidebook, and organised presentations for the experts in the field and the people in the local environment. They also published and presented a brochure (Kutin et al. 2018). The work of study circles generates sociocultural knowledge and thus engages with local culture. Mentors' training and work includes activities that are guided by action-oriented goals in study circles.

Previous research (Govekar Okoliš and Kranjčec 2013, pp. 87–88; Findeisen 2012) has confirmed that for a mentoring relationship to be successful, mentors have to be able to organise the work, keep track of individual mentees' progress and guide them. Not only do mentors teach or guide individual students in the group and the whole group in their work (if this is important for the first two types of knowledge), but mentors' actions also influence the students' personal development and change their views and beliefs, while also expanding the social network and strengthening interpersonal relationships and activities in the environment. Different types of knowledge are created through various actions. Mentors advise, guide, excite, support, and encourage (see Findeisen 2012, p. 32). Research has also revealed that mentoring in groups of older adults is formed as an integrative pedagogy and that it contains all the elements of the model developed by Tynjälä et al. (2009).

Findings

The research findings are explained with respect to fundamental questions about personal workplace learning and professional development, mutual learning in a group, mentoring as a relational and affective practice, and the development of mentoring according to the model of integrative pedagogy.

The key finding is that in the field of educational gerontology a special mentoring model is being developed at the Slovenian U3A, which is in line with the research on mentoring in other fields, for instance gerontological psychology (e.g. Whitfield, Edwards 2011) and professional education (Tynjälä 2008; Tynjälä et al. 2016, Hackel and Klebl 2014). There are three factors characteristic of this new model: (1) mentors' personal learning and professional development, (2) group or collaborative learning and affective connectivity, (3) integrative pedagogy.

Since previous studies were for the most part focused on dyadic mentoring, most insights were into the learning of mentors who are in one-on-one mentoring relationships. The research presented here was focused on the learning of mentors who work with older adults in groups that also have an animator, which is a special feature of group mentoring. At the Slovenian U3A, mentors perform the role of teachers: they are experts in their respective fields (languages, history, astronomy etc.), they plan programmes, as well as teach and guide the participants. In addition to the teacher's role, they also occupy developmental, sociocultural and affective roles. In all these roles, they learn a lot independently. According to the mentors' own statements and group observations, it is clear that the mentoring role at the Slovenian U3A is characterised by a high level of continuous independent professional learning and enthusiasm for work; mentors develop their programmes, introducing new methods and content. They feel accepted by the participants and develop various characteristics while working with them, such as tolerance of differences and a critical attitude towards prejudice, while also being impressed with their groups. All the interviewed mentors experience their mentoring work as a source of both professional and personal development.

Mentors learn a lot in their groups/study circles, which are characterised by a friendly relationship among the participants, and they also socialise with participants outside of educational meetings. Social relationships and affective elements are important, however, good relationships are not the only element on which mentors build the educational process in the group. Older adults' motivation for education is focused on new knowledge (and community action), however, good relationships are just as important to them, since they view the study circle as a community to which they belong. The same is true of mentors and some groups have been with the same mentor for twenty years.

Mentors' workplace learning combines different types of knowledge and can be interpreted through the model of integrative pedagogy. Mentors learn through structuring their practice, which involves the integration of and transition between theoretical professional knowledge and experiential knowledge, and the connection between self-regulative and sociocultural knowledge. Both professional competence in the field they teach and the social/collaborative activity in which mutual affective

support and equal (friendly) relationships are developed are important for the mentors' workplace learning. When it comes to sociocultural knowledge, mentors are actors in the formation of their knowledge and also in the development of new knowledge in the local environment, where 'their' study circle operates. Mentors also learn and develop professionally by creating change in their respective groups (study circles) and alongside their students in the local environment. Examples of this are an art history research study circle which explored the work of Mara Kralj,⁹ and a research study circle that researched which streets in Ljubljana are named after women.¹⁰

The limitations of the research should also be pointed out. The interviews were conducted with mentors who are enthusiastic about their work, and therefore the information received was mostly about the positive aspects of mentoring and about encouraging relationships. Further research would need to include interviews with mentors who left the study circle groups because they had been dissatisfied with the work and relationships in the groups. The research conducted so far included no examples of 'difficult mentoring' that develops in groups where students are not sufficiently motivated to work, where group members want to assume the role of mentor, etc. Another limitation is the chosen theoretical framework (the dialogical and integrative models) that guided the interpretation of the data.

Conclusion

Mentoring at the Slovenian U3A takes the form of contemporary mentoring, which is transitioning from a traditional form of mentoring – where a more experienced individual leads a less experienced one – to the development of new approaches that relate to both conceptual changes in the understanding of knowledge and the practice in the U3A's groups and projects. The shift to the so-called dialogic mentoring is reflected in the statements of the interviewed mentors. Mentoring that is being developed at the Slovenian U3A is a source of workplace learning for all the mentors involved, who, through their work, develop diverse knowledge and integrate it into common practices according to the model of integrative pedagogy. The mentors were interviewed about their learning and training in order to identify some of the characteristics of the mentoring model at the Slovenian U3A. Their answers have confirmed that dialogic mentoring with characteristics of integrative pedagogy is being developed. Further research would need to be focused on gaining an in-depth understanding of mentoring in individual study circles, such as research study circles. Special features of the mentoring, which was analysed according to the Finnish model of integrative pedagogy (Tynjälä et al. 2016), are consistent with

⁹ The art history study circle 'Let's Get to Know Our City and Country' led by Olga Paulič, MA, published a miscellany titled 'On the 100th Anniversary of the Birth of Mara Kralj, Painter, Sculptor, Illustrator, Movie Makeup Artist, Ceramicist and Puppet Maker' (Ob stodesetletnici rojstva Mare Kralj, slikarke, kiparke, ilustratorke, filmske maskerke, oblikovalke keramike in lutk) (2019).

¹⁰ The study circle is led by the architect Meta Kutin, who worked with her students on mapping out routes around Ljubljana and explored the streets. See Kutin, Agrež, Bizilj, Vilhar Pobegajlo, Zalar (2018).

wider changes in adult and older adult education (Barnett 2012) and the related teacher education at all levels of the education system.

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INTEGRATIVNO IZOBRAŽEVANJE IN UČENJE MENTORJEV NA SLOVENSKEI UNIVERZI ZA TRETJE ŽIVLJENJSKO OBDOBJE

Povzetek: Prispevek prinaša ugotovitve raziskave o učenju mentorjev, ki delujejo na področju izobraževanja starejših na Slovenski univerzi za tretje življenjsko obdobje (SUTŽO). Namen raziskave je bil analizirati značilnosti učenja v delovnem okolju v kontekstu neformalnega izobraževanja starejših. Teoretski okvir tvorita dva miselna modela: model dialoškega mentorstva, ki poudarja preizkušanje in iskanje, ter model integrativnega izobraževanja. Empirični del raziskave je potekal po načelih kvalitativnega raziskovanja z uporabo metod opazovanja in intervjuja. Podatki so bili zbrani v obdobju 2017–2019. Raziskava ugotavlja, da se na SUTŽO razvija inovativen model mentorstva, ki vključuje vse elemente, značilne za integrativno izobraževanje.

Ključne besede: učenje na delu, mentor, starejši odrasli, univerza za tretje življenjsko obdobje

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