

COMPETENCES REQUIRED FOR PARTICIPATION IN SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS

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KOMPETENCE, KI SO POTREBNE ZA VODENJE IN
SODELOVANJE PRI SUPERVIZIJI ŠTUDENTOV

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents some results of qualitative research of the process of supervision of students. Ten supervisors with extensive experience in supervising social work students during field practice in undergraduate and graduate study conducted by the Study Centre for Social Work of the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, participated in the research. The research was conducted using the semi-structured interview method, and framework analysis was used for analysing data. The supervisors' responses about competences for conducting supervision were analyzed with regard to cognitive, relational, functional, personal, and specific competences. From among

the specific competences important for conducting supervision of students, the supervisors single out intensified care and support of students expressed through awareness of their life and professional experiences, sensitivity for the difficulties they are faced with during student life, and understanding for the turbulent period of their maturation. Additionally, provision of support and guiding students to find their own professional path and lifestyle, as well as teaching skills, proved to be important. From the perspective of supervisors, the competences students need to participate in supervision that are associated with thorough theoretical knowledge from certain areas (for example, a better understanding of laws on the graduate study level) and the importance of motivation of students for supervision are particularly emphasized. From the perspective of students, desirable characteristics for participation in supervision include personal characteristics in the sense of openness to new experiences, empathy for others, self-criticism, and respect for diversities, as well as experience in group processes and basic knowledge about interpersonal communication.

KEYWORDS: *supervision of students, social work, field practice, competences*

POVZETEK

Članek predstavi rezultate kvalitativne raziskave o superviziji študentov. V raziskavi je sodelovalo deset izkušenih supervizorjev, ki so izvajali supervizijo prakse študentov socialnega dela v sklopu do- in podiplomskega študija. Raziskavo je izvedel Študijski center za socialno delo Pravne fakultete Univerze v Zagrebu. Uporabljena je bila metoda polstruktuiranega intervjuja, pri analizi podatkov pa metoda logičnega okvira. Odgovori supervizorjev glede kompetenc za izvedbo supervizije so bili analizirani upoštevajoč kognitivne, relacijske, funkcionalne, osebne in specifične kompetence. Supervizorji so izmed specifičnih kompetenc, ki so pomembne pri izvajanju supervizije študentov, izpostavili skrb in podpora

študentom, ki se kažeta s poučenostjo o njihovem življenju in poklicnimi izkušnjami, občutljivostjo za težave, s katerimi se srečujejo med študijem, in razumevanjem razburkane obdobja odraščanja. Za pomembne so se izkazale tudi izkazovanje podpore in usmeritve študentom pri iskanju njihove poklicne in življenjske poti ter sposobnost poučevanja. Supervizorji so za sodelovanje študentov v superviziji kot najpomembnejši kompetenci izpostavili natančno teoretično poznavanje določenih področij (na primer boljše poznavanje zakonodaje na dodiplomskem študiju) in motivacijo študentov. Študentje so kot zelene lastnosti za sodelovanje v superviziji izpostavili osebne lastnosti v smislu odprtosti za nove izkušnje, empatijo do drugih ljudi, samokritičnost in spoštovanje raznolikosti, pa tudi izkušnje s skupinskim delom in osnovno znanje s področja medosebne komunikacije.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: *supervizija študentov, socialno delo, študijska praksa, kompetence*

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of formal education of social workers in Croatia (the establishment of the Professional College for Social Workers with a two-year study programme in 1952), supervision was not included in the curriculum, but various forms of consultation groups and other forms of professional support existed in social work practice. During the 1970s and 1980s, the profession of social work was developed, so that in 1985 the four-year study of social work was established, and the first book on supervision in the Croatian language entitled *Supervision in Social Work* by Professor Nada Smolić Krković¹ (1977) was published, and the need to introduce supervision in the social work area was recognized (Smolić

¹ Nada Smolić Krković worked as a professor of social work studies in Zagreb from 1959 until 1984, which proves that the need to create the conditions for professional growth and development of the profession and for support to social workers in their daily work was recognized (Ajduković, & Švenda Radeljak, 2017).

Krković, 1977; Ajduković, & Švenda Radeljak, 2017). During that period, supervision was partly recognized as a help to professionals, particularly to beginners in the area of psychosocial work, but it was still not included as an integral part of the professional development and support in social work. At that time professionals in different areas of psychosocial work gained experience in supervision through various psychotherapeutic training courses. In the university study of social work there was an informal initiative launched by one of the lecturers, Ksenija Napan (1994), within which the students volunteered with different groups of social services users and received group supervision during that work. The events of the Homeland War in Croatia (1991–1995) led to the need to provide psychosocial assistance to a large number of war victims, so that supervision was introduced within psychosocial projects implemented by international humanitarian organizations and afterwards by Croatian non-governmental organizations, but supervision was still not recognized by decision-makers in the areas of social work, education, etc (Pantić, 2022).

The first supervisors from the psychosocial area completed their training in supervision and organizational development according to the European standards in 1998 (integrative approach, EAG/FPI), so that in 1998 the Croatian Association for Supervision and Organizational Development (HDSOR) was established with support from the European Association for National Organisations for Supervision in Europe (ANSE) (Ajduković & Cajvert, 2004; Ajduković & Urbanc, 2010; Pantić, 2022).

The first training for supervisors in Croatia was organized within the project *Introducing Supervision in the Social Welfare System in Croatia (2001–2004)* in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Study Centre for Social Work of the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, and Society for Psychological Assistance, with financial support from the Swedish Developmental Agency. The project manager was Marina Ajduković and on that occasion, ten coaches in supervision and 34 supervisors in psychosocial work were trained in accordance with the ANSE principles.

The first textbook, *Supervision in Psychosocial Work* was published (Ajduković, & Cajvert, 2004)²

Since then, supervision has increasingly been incorporated into the areas of social and psychosocial work, and in 2006 a specialist postgraduate course in the supervision of psychosocial work was launched at the Study Centre for Social Work at the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb. The study programme is open to professionals from different professions and areas of work. Also, supervision became an integral part of the curriculum of the undergraduate and graduate study of social work (Urbanc, 2004, Urbanc et al., 2016., Urbanc et al., 2018).

Today supervision in Croatia is conducted within the social welfare system, education system, justice system, health care system, education of social workers, civil society organizations (human rights), the voluntary sector, pastoral work, and organizational consultancy (Ajduković, 2018). Since 2011, a right to supervision has been embedded in the Social Welfare Act. The Croatian Association for Supervision and Organizational Development, which has been active for twenty-five years and which gathers 132 active members and is a full member of ANSE, has played a significant part in these developments.

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES AND SUPERVISION

Professional competences are perceived as a triangle of knowledge, skills, and values, which emphasizes the efficacy of work, but also the personal dimensions of a professional (Buljevac et al., 2020). Starting from the European Qualifications Framework, knowledge

² Ljilja Cajvert, a supervisor, psychotherapist, and social worker, professor at the Department of Social Work of the University of Gothenburg, educator and supervisor on the project Education in the Supervision of Social Welfare Employees which was conducted in collaboration between the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Study Centre for Social Work of the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, and the Society for Psychological Assistance with financial support from the Swedish Developmental Agency, author of numerous publications on supervision and together with M. Ajduković, the author of the first modern textbook on supervision in Croatia, *Supervision in Psychosocial Work*.

is understood as principles, theoretical concepts, and practical knowledge, which is the basis for supervisory work. Skills relate to cognitive and practical ability to implement that knowledge, while competences relate to the necessary, fundamental characteristics of supervision. Since the modern supervisory paradigm emphasizes the professional relationship as the most significant factor for the success of supervision, the competence framework of supervision should also encompass the personal skills of participants, but also those which are specific for relationships in supervision. According to Judy and Knopf (2018), these are the competences that act in the points of interaction between individuals, their work environment, and specific functions and roles they have in that environment. Buljevac et al. (2020) point out that in research practice competences are usually assessed through self-evaluation and assessment of self-efficacy, and assessment based on observation is less represented. Regardless of the manner of assessment, it is suggested that the competence framework and measuring instruments should be developed respecting the specific characteristics of a national context.

In that sense, it is important to state that the Croatian model of supervision is directed towards the members of helping professions, focusing on a professional or helper and their relationship with the user, as well as their personal and professional development, the method used is dialectical-reflective, and the common definition is as follows: "Supervision is a process of development of a professional as a reflective practitioner. It is a creative space in which a professional in co-operation with a supervisor learns from their experiences, seeks their own solutions to problems encountered in their work, including a more efficient coping with stress, considering the client's situation and resources, their thoughts, feelings and resources, as well as the relationship with a client from different perspectives. By integrating these different aspects of a professional situation, a supervisee creates preconditions to act as a professionally competent person. Thus supervision ensures quality work with the users of psychosocial work." (Ajduković, & Cajvert, 2004).

The theoretical framework which has been used in the development of the Croatian model of supervision conceptually and value-based complies with the ANSE (Association of National Organisations for Supervision in Europe) approach, as well as with paradigmatic changes in modern practice of helping professions, including social work.

Key characteristics of that paradigm can be summarized through the following shifts:

- from the positivist towards a relativist paradigm, which means: giving up on neutrality in supervision, strengthening the importance of relationships and the idea of reciprocity, to which the development of neuroscience contributes significantly,
- abandoning the didactic, hierarchical model and the development of a relational model in supervision,
- application of attachment theory in supervision, strengthening the motivation for maintaining connection and communication in spite of obstacles, and encouraging research of attachment styles of supervisees with the aim of recognizing supervision as a safe place, and recognizing supervisory relationship as a relationship of attachment between two adults (Rožič, 2018).

The post-modern concept of help demands different ways of teaching students as future professional helpers whereby multiperspectivity of reality, the significance of language as a means of change, and the importance of participation in the process of co-creation become basic characteristics of the processes and relationships (Urbanc, & Kletečki Radović, 2007).

The theory of social constructivism led to a change in the manner of learning that is based on the idea that knowledge about the world develops in the everyday interaction of people through their interaction with the environment. In that context, learning is an inseparable part of supervisory process. Therefore, the experiential model of learning is significant for providing support to

students in direct professional action with users, encouraging students in further development of their competences, training for observation and reflection, as well as application of critical thinking that has similar characteristics to the process of experiential learning in the supervision of psychosocial work of professionals.

Such paradigmatic changes influenced a change of the supervisor's competences in the sense that a supervisor does not know the outcome of an interaction with a supervisee, assuming the so-called position of 'ignorance' in such a way that questions are asked on the basis of a supervisee's answers, rather than his/her own cognitive map (Socratic method). This approach enables putting the quality of relationship in the foreground instead of knowledge and emphasizes the supervisee's resources instead of the concept of help, and strengthens the capacity for co-operation. It can be concluded that, according to the principle of systemic action, changes in the helping relationship follow the trends in social relations through the development of democratization, civil society, and values of the relationship per se.

ORGANIZATION OF FIELD PRACTICE AND SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS AT THE STUDY CENTRE FOR SOCIAL WORK

At the Study Centre for Social Work of the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, the educational process is designed according to the '4+1' principle, which stands for four years of undergraduate study and one year of graduate study. The curriculum includes field practice in every year of the study programme (Studijski centar socijalnog rada PFZ, 2022 https://www.pravo.unizg.hr/scsr/diplomski_studij/diplomski_studij_iz_socijalnog_rada).

Field practice is conducted in co-operation with 171 institutions/associations within the social welfare system, health care, the judiciary, the educational system, civil society organizations, and other non-governmental organizations. General aims of this part of curriculum are as follows:

- to enable students an insight into specific characteristics of social work practice so that they can, in accordance with their level of knowledge and competences, get involved in the work with clients with a support and guidance from teachers,
- to make the situations for learning available to students in accordance with the learning outcomes of respective years of the study programme,
- to enable students to reflect on gained experience in the sense of analyzing the application of theories, skills, and professional values, critically examining the experience gained and their own professional development,
- to help students widen their understanding of professional roles and professional identity,
- to enable students to expand their understanding of the mission and vision of social work as a profession.

In the first year of study, students are acquainted with the operation of social welfare centres through a one-day visit, while in higher years of the study programme practice is organized in blocks or continuously during the term on the principle of weekly visits of students to social welfare institutions, social welfare centres, or civil society organizations. Practice begins with orientation meetings during which students meet their field practice teachers who are in charge of the organization of practice and who introduce students to the operation of institutions and organizations and to the users with whom students will meet on a weekly basis. Students are obliged to meet with the users, keep a practice diary with their observations related to the needs, difficulties, and social functioning of the users, prepare a final report, and attend supervisory meetings that are conducted in order to provide support to students in direct social work practice in the second and fifth year of the study. In the third and fourth year, support to students during practice is provided through group consultations.

Teaching outcomes are consistent with the Global Standards for in Social Work Education and Training, Croatian Qualification Framework, and Faculty Programme, and the same applies to the case management, preparation of a case plan, assessment of the

client's life situation, planning interventions directed towards the process of change, acting in accordance with professional ethics and the concept of lifelong learning and other activities adapted to the conditions and possibilities with social welfare centres (Urbanc et al., 2016).

The Study Centre for Social Work distinguishes the supervisor's role from the role of field practice teacher in the field practice of students, unlike some other study programmes within which these two roles are combined. The field practice teacher is an employee of the organization in which students are placed for their field practice and he or she assigns tasks to students and monitors their work, so that the role of the field practice teacher can be grouped as organizational, educational, and evaluational. That means that a field practice teacher is an experienced professional familiar with teaching outcomes and curriculum, and that he/she is responsible for students during their practical work.

Supervisors have multiple roles which include fulfilment of obligations towards the faculty, the institution in which students do their practical work, and the expectations and needs of students. This role is performed by a professional who is an external collaborator of the faculty, a licensed supervisor, and is not employed by the organization in which students do their practical work. Supervision is a place where, in a safe and confidential environment, students have an opportunity to share their experiences from field practice, discuss them, reflect upon them, and gain knowledge and skills in direct work with clients. Additionally, students of the graduate study programme learn about the meaning of supervision and its purpose more systematically within the Methods of Supervision course, where they also learn about the importance of supervision as a necessary support in their future professional path.

A change in the paradigm of helping professions, including social work, focusing on the process instead of the task in the professional environment, can lead to contradictory and paradoxical messages for professional helpers, which represents a challenge for modern social work practice (Urbanc, 2007, Everett et al., 2011). In such circumstances, the transition from the education system into the area of practical work for the first time during field practice

can have different effects, outcomes, experiences, and emotions for social work students, which could be related to the difficulties related to the integration of theory and practice, expanding experience in trying to find their own solutions in professional situations and reporting about different experiences from field practice.

AIM OF THE RESEARCH

Starting from the long-term experience in organizing and conducting field practice and supervision of social work students, the authors wanted to gain through conducting qualitative research an insight into specific characteristics of the supervision of students regarding competences of participants – supervisors and supervisees – needed for participation in the supervision of students. This paper presents part of results of research conducted in 2020 which are related to the supervisory competences. The research questions were formulated as follows:

1. Which competences do students need for participation in group supervision?
2. Which competences do supervisors need for conducting supervision of students?

The hypothesis of this research is that there are differences between supervision of professionals and supervision of students regarding the specific needs of students and the level of competences they come with. Accordingly, we assumed that within that context, some specific competences are expected from supervisors.

In line with the aim of the research, research questions, and participants, a qualitative approach to the collection and analysis of data was used. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is focused on personal experience and in this research the personal experience of supervisors in work with students is important as it enables a deeper and more detailed understanding of that specific topic (Milas, 2005).

PARTICIPANTS OF THE RESEARCH

Ten supervisors with extensive experience in social work student supervision, of whom five are teachers at the Study Centre for Social Work of the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, and five are external collaborators. Two of the external collaborators are employees of social welfare centres, and three are employed in the private sector of providers of counselling and psychotherapy services. All participants are female social workers from 31 to 60 years of age. Apart from a licence for supervision, all participants have some additional therapeutic or professional training, such as reality therapy, Gestalt therapy, psychodrama, Family mediation, and others. The participants have abundant and varied experience in managing supervisory groups and experience in conducting supervision for students in groups ranging from 5 to 15 participants. The sample is intentional and comprises all supervisors of supervisory groups for students at that time, except authors of the article.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Data was collected by a method of a semi-structured interview at times and in places suitable for the participants, and most interviews were conducted at the premises of the Study Centre for Social Work. Before the interview the participants were sent a request to participate in the research by e-mail, describing the purpose and aim of the research and stating the estimated duration of an interview, and the list of supervisors was available to the authors on the basis of co-operation in organizing and conducting field practice of students. The written consent of all participants was obtained, confirming their informed consent for voluntary participation in research. Confidentiality was guaranteed and the participants were informed that their data would be rendered anonymous during data analysis and their presentation in research results. With the consent of all participants, interviews were recorded by Dictaphone. On average, interviews lasted an hour. Transcripts were handwritten without using PC software for data analysis and management. There were no objections to submitted transcripts, except in one

case when a change of the text was requested related to clarification of content, which was consequently done. No notes were taken during interviews. At the end of their interviews, the participants had an opportunity to give suggestions for improving the paper, and these suggestions were entered into the text of the report.

DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

Analysis of the textual items was conducted by performing framework analysis according to Ritchie and Spencer (1994), which was in line with the aim of the research and the data collection procedure, since the interviews yielded a lot of data, and based on previous findings it was possible to select the topics which would constitute ‘a framework’ of the analysis of the textual items in advance. The data obtained through interviews did not significantly change the structure of the initial framework. A key statement was used as a data unit. Textual-numerical codes were used (S1, S2...) where S stands for a supervisor, and the number marks the order of the conducted interview, which is a coded mark for an individual participant.

Limitations of this research are primarily concerned with the specific characteristics of the student population from just one perspective—that of a supervisor, while the perspective of students is lacking.

Furthermore, it is important to note that, due to their genuine interest in the topic and due to their multiple roles during the research process, the authors of this paper were by no means impartial, and therefore this was taken into account in drawing justifiable conclusions, data analysis, reporting statements in the text, accurate interpretation of stated/observed, and continuous consultations and reflection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the thematic area of Competences of Participants, two topics were distinguished: “Competences of supervisors for conducting student supervision” and “Competences of students for

participation in supervision”, both of which will be presented in detail in the continuation of the text.

The first topic: Competences of supervisors for conducting student supervision

Answers to the question of which competences a supervisor should have for conducting student supervision revealed the following six categories: cognitive competences, relational competences, functional competences, personal competences, ethical competences, and specific competences.

TABLE 1
Competences of supervisors

topic 1: competences of supervisors of students categories
1. cognitive competences
2. relational competences
3. functional competences
4. personal competences
5. ethical competences
6. specific competences

Answers to the questions of which knowledge, skills, and attitudes a supervisor should have and what role of experience plays in conducting student supervision can be divided into six categories: cognitive competences, relational competences, functional competences, personal competences, ethical competences, and competences adapted to a specific context, i.e. the type of supervision, such as supervision of students.

According to Vizek Vidović and Vlahović Štetić (2007), competences represent a dynamic combination of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, knowledge, and understanding, interpersonal and practical skills, and ethical values. The aforementioned author defines learning outcomes from the same source as statements prepared by an educator of what a learner is expected to know,

understand, and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning, accompanied by appropriate evaluation criteria according to which it can be determined whether outcomes were achieved.

Within cognitive competences supervisors recognize four important areas: general knowledge about supervision (“I certainly must have knowledge about supervision...” (S7); “...a completed education in supervision...” (S9)), specific knowledge about theoretical models of supervision (“It is more of an educational supervision than supervision of professionals, so one should possess knowledge about different theoretical models...” (S2), knowledge about the area of field practice (“...So it is not a prerequisite, I do not have to know what students are doing, but in this situation it proved to be highly useful, because I can transfer to them that piece of knowledge and experience, and that is valuable to them, therefore I would recommend it...” (S7), “...knowledge about field practices...” (S9); “...supervisor’s knowledge from concrete social work practice is exceptionally important because it ensures a safe work context as the supervisor also knows the issues that she is supervising in the role of a professional...” (S10), and knowledge about group work (“...knowledge about group work, group processes...” (S9); “...managing the group process...” (S10), and one of the participants believes that the knowledge about some therapy directions (“...at least minimum knowledge about therapy direction...” (S9). Addressing the experience of supervision in Sweden, Bernler and Johnsson (1993) recommends in their paper that a supervisor should be an expert in the following areas: psychosocial work in the sense of the supervisor’s personal experience and theoretical knowledge and understanding of the technique and theory of supervision, as well as what is called ‘cultural competence’ in terms of understanding of daily aspects of work. On the other hand, Tuda Družinec (2011) considers that the influence of their own professional experience within the same system that employs the supervisees as well may prove to be a disadvantage for the supervisor due to their professional concerns and inability to take a different perspective or position in relations to supervisees.

One of the supervisors attached great importance to relational competences in the creation and maintenance of collaborative relationship with students (“...Very openly, very fairly, with a lot of approval, a lot of honesty and then you get their collaboration and that is very important, get them to collaborate because if you don’t, the effect will not be good...” (S7), connecting her functional competences through communication skills, providing efficient feedback, empowerment of students, and conducting dialogues (“...As far as skills go, communication skills are in first place, because in the end it all boils down to words and the relationship we establish. If I am not skilful in that, if I cannot give information, if I cannot support them, if I cannot conduct a dialogue, then supervision falters...” (S7), and related to that, one of the supervisors also mentions active listening “...must know how to listen...” (S3). One of the supervisors mentions the importance of the skills of using supervision as a place and manner of interconnecting knowledge and experience (“I would say that this is the missing part, connecting knowledge and experience and the manner of analyzing their experience and connecting that understanding, and that would make supervision a place where they will recognize what they know and what was useful to students, what they do not know, what was missing, and what must they learn, so that it becomes developmental, what they must do and what must they learn...” (S4), as well as creating an environment in which a balance between challenges and support is present (“...and we have to work on raising the professional competences of young persons and in accordance with that that set of techniques and methods of work, to make supervision challenging and empowering.” (S4)).

Davys and Beddoe (2000, 2009) state that it is necessary to balance support (facilitation) and didactic interventions (instruction) in student supervision, and that a supervisor cannot only use reflection, because students need clear parameters, guidelines, and information in order to start to create their own sense of mastery of skills which are necessary in practice.

Empowering students is one of the key characteristics of student supervision (“...To be open towards them, to be positive, to be supportive, these are all values that are very important to

students. That invites them to be free. If they see someone rigid in the supervisory role, someone who does not allow laughter, then they do not open up, then they use the supervisory process poorly.” (S7)), as well as creation of a relaxed atmosphere, which one of the supervisors recognizes as part of establishing a relationship with them, but also as preparation for supervision (“... a supervisor should also be relaxed with them as part of establishing a relationship with them and as preparation for supervision, at any rate it takes more than relaxation on the part of a supervisor.” (S1), and several supervisors mention that humour is one of important elements in creating a relaxed atmosphere (“...A supervisor should have a certain sense of humour, be funny in some way, because they are reserved, they don’t know what supervision is, as a rule they are faced with a challenging situation...” (S1); “...Well, I think some humour is welcome...” (S3); “...Laughter is important to everyone, it is important to talk about some things which are perhaps not directly connected to their work...” (S7); “...some humour certainly contributes to relaxation...” (S4), which is in accordance with the personal characteristics of supervisors that are desirable for working with students, as well as some other ones (“...must be empathetic...” (S3); “...tolerance...” (S10); “...one needs to be creative, flexible...” (S5)).

Personal competences might include personal and professional maturity through the ability to contemplate one’s own work which is developed through experience (“...Yes, experience is actually very valuable everywhere...It is a very special experience, educational supervision, and it created some initial uncertainty in me in the first year... Experience is very important, because I have to be certain that with me as I am I can do the job that awaits me... The more experience you have, the more you are certain of yourself and the more methods you have tried, the more concrete situations you have experienced. It seems to me that perhaps young supervisors who have little experience in supervision are generally not the best solution for students, because although they are close in age, they lack life and professional experience, so I don’t think they are the best choice...” (S7)).

According to Cicak (2011, 2015), personal competence is manifested in work, so that personal characteristics which are expressed through opinion, feelings, motivation, and behaviour are an important part of the supervisor's competence and an indicator of professional identity. Awareness about the relationship of power is even more pronounced in student supervision, which also raises ethical competences ("...These qualities of the persons from supervision are even more highlighted, it seems to me, because they do not know how to protect themselves, they cannot defend themselves in a situation that might be difficult to them. Of course, I teach them: you need to self-determine yourselves, say anything you feel comfortable saying in supervision, but if something is difficult for you, tell me not to do it..." (S7)).

According to Cicak (2015), ethical competence of a supervisor integrates value perceptions, reflections, and actions. It also includes ethical awareness and sensitivity, knowledge about theory of ethics, ability to identify ethical issues in a concrete situation, understanding and reflection about an ethical dilemma, application of ethical rules in practice, and assuming responsibility (Ketner et al., 2017.; Kaiser, 1996; Bogo et al., 2007).

Other desirable specific competences for supervisors of students might include intensified care and support for students expressed through awareness of their life and professional challenges, sensitivity for the difficulties they are faced with in the student way of life, and understanding for the turbulent period of their maturation through the provision of stability and support, but also guidance in finding their own professional path and life style ("...they are neither children, nor adults, but something in between...and I know how to communicate with them. Which means it is only necessary to have skills in communicating with young persons who are generally not yet independent, who mostly live with support from their parents, but are still not employed, do not have families, and are therefore still childish in some aspect due to all that..." (S1); "...not on the same level with them, but not to seem like an authority figure, I am already an authority figure to them because of the age difference..." (S3); "...So I think that a supervisor of students should possess another dimension that

makes him or her capable of working with a young person who is still full of anxiety. They are fighting with life, with maturing, with the system that does not understand them. I think that this additional dimension of understanding their concrete position in life is very important and that it means you do not have to worry when you are working with professionals. A professional can take care of himself, a student normally does not know how to take care of himself, therefore it is the supervisor's task is to take care of him..." (S7); "...You should be open the whole time and bear in mind how old they are and what life experience they have, what their background is, sometimes I have a feeling they are in extended adolescence, we also have to understand the fact that our education system is as it is and that secondary school students and the first or second year students are such children compared to past times when persons of their age were already independent and this has to be kept in mind" (S8); "...I think that a supervisor should have competences of working with young persons, that they understand the development of young persons, they need to be approached in a slightly different way than adults. Apart from that, they are students, and consequently used to a certain way of work... It is important to love these young people..." (S5); "...The most important thing is accessibility to students, I think it is important to them that they can call me when things heat up and when things are difficult for them." (S6)). According to the statements made by supervisors about competences, teaching skills are also something that could be emphasized as a specific characteristic: ("...A supervisor should be able to simplify common methods and techniques that are used in supervision..." (S1); "...teaching skills..." (S2); "...I think that it is not enough to have expertise in some area, but the manner in which that knowledge would be transferred to students also matters a lot..." (S5)).

One of the specific competences is the integration of all aforementioned competences since supervision is within the curriculum and sometimes it is its determinant, so that supervisors should possess competences to make it as it would be if it were voluntary ("...maybe more focus on the content that is delivered, to take into account the outcomes, to have awareness of the context regarding

which course should supervision take, supervision is voluntary but also obligatory, and in my opinion it would be better if there was no such conflict and if supervisors were external collaborators...” (S2)).

It is important to mention that some of the supervisors were external collaborators of the Study Centre, while some were teachers (with a supervisor licence), so they would assume the role of supervisors during field practice. These multiple roles occur in cases when there are not enough resources to engage external supervisors for all supervisory groups of students during field practice, so in such cases ‘internal resources’ also play the part of supervisors of students.

A possible advantage of supervisors who are teachers at the same time is a better knowledge of theory, as well as better understanding of students and their educational needs and awareness of their problems, while their possible shortcoming, according to some of them, lies in the conflict between their roles. An advantage of engaging external collaborators as supervisors, particularly professionals from direct casework practice, is their better knowledge about practice, while a shortcoming is connected with the lack of sound knowledge of theoretical concepts, educational processes, and learning outcomes.

The second topic: Competences of students for participation in supervision

Answers to the question of which competences students should possess for participation in supervision as supervisees and members of a supervisory group, according to the supervisors' experience, yielded five categories: basic knowledge of interpersonal communication theory and communication skills, knowledge of social work theory and law, understanding characteristics of group work, personal characteristics of students for group work, and motivation for supervision.

The statements made by supervisors demonstrate that there are significant differences between expected competences depending on whether they are students of undergraduate or graduate study programmes. While some supervisors for the undergraduate study programme consider that the competences of students are not

TABLE 2

Competences of students

topic 2: competences of students categories
1. basic knowledge of interpersonal communication theory
2. knowledge of social work theory and law
3. understanding characteristics of group work
4. personal characteristics of students
5. motivation for supervision

necessary for participation in supervision, because competences are created through supervision (“Students are fully incompetent as supervisees when they come to supervision...” (S7); “I think that students do not need to have competences, because supervision and university study are some of the tools by which they create competences...” (S6), others believe that it is sufficient that students are familiar with basic communication skills (“I think that the most important is what they learn in the first and second year of study, and that is quality communication, I think that is a basis...” (S8); “...A competence for participation in supervision as a supervisee is active listening...” (S10); “...basic interpersonal communication...” (S9)).

One of the supervisors considers that it would be good if students learnt about group work through the experience of group work (“I certainly believe that the supervisees who have some experience in group work are more receptive and there is no need for additional teaching and modelling of some group processes, it could be a bonus of a kind. On the other hand, all these processes and opportunities can be examined in supervision so that students can learn from them...” (S2)), although how to use group processes is learnt within supervision. Another supervisor states that students are skilful in using group processes (“...I am happy here because they start working in some groups from the beginning of the first year, so that they learn about group dynamics, group process...” (S7)).

As many as seven supervisors mention the importance of personal characteristics of students for group work, such as openness, self-criticism, respect for diversities, and empathy for others (“When it is central that they are open to bringing as many details as possible...” (S3); “...that they are open to new things, that they are flexible...” (S5); “At least some openness to analyze their own experience and work on themselves and some self-criticism...” (S4); “...to allow themselves to hear others, to show respect for diverse colleagues and then for diverse clients...” (S8); “...that they are willing to hear...” (S5); “...empathy...” (S10)).

The statements from two supervisors for the graduate study programme show that, with regard to openness to expressing their opinion and experience of younger students, more emphasis is placed on the supervisor’s skills in conducting supervision and progression in learning about the supervisory process, during which students are given more time to acquire the skills of speaking in front of a group, so the expectations are lower (“...I see a difference between the first and sixth meeting in supervision of the second year students. It comes as a shock that six or seven of them are in a group so they feel much more exposed and then it is important for me to contribute so that the quieter ones express themselves, but I think it is something that they develop.” (S6); “I do not put students into focus unless it happens spontaneously. A student asks a question, and then I work with the group on that question where that student is more exposed, more open, gives more of himself, but this is never done for too long a time or in a way that would make the student feel attacked, as one might say, never. Students cannot take that, it is too difficult for them.” (S7)).

Motivation of students for supervision is very important, as it is stated by two supervisors in the graduate study programme (“It is important to me that they are motivated...” (S5); “That motivation to participate in the supervision process, to get something out of it, that is something they should come with.” (S4)). Two supervisors perceive the importance of participating in supervision through getting to know about the purpose and manner of using supervision in professional future (“Then I try to give them some examples that were successful and good so that they can see what

supervision can serve for...” (S5); “...They learn how supervision can be used so that they could benefit from it...” (S7)).

One supervisor considers that it would be good if supervisees had some basic knowledge about supervision (“...Minimum knowledge of theory of what supervision is, how it is conducted, basic principles, hence understanding the content of supervision...” (S9)).

With regard to the topic of competences of the supervision participants, the results show that supervisors pay a lot more attention to reflecting on their own competences than about the competences of students, especially lower-year students. This can be explained through the fact that the undergraduate students are just learning about basic interpersonal communication, group work principles, and are acquiring basic knowledge about direct work with the client, and there are differences between the students of the two levels of study with regard to their emotional maturity. It is only at the graduate study level that the students encounter the Methods of Supervision course, in which they acquire more theoretical and practical knowledge about supervision, so therefore the expectations of supervisors about their competences are somewhat higher.

The statements of supervisors show that they recognize their role and responsibility in the interconnection between their own competences for conducting supervision and the development of the students’ competences. As competence integrates the professional, ethical, and personal dimension, some statements demonstrate the stratification and span of examining one’s own competence, a high level of motivation to improve the quality of supervision through the development of competences, continuous self-assessment about one’s efficacy, and the development of a work model that would be as adapted to the needs of students as possible.

It can be concluded that the supervisors are in different developmental stages of their work with regard to their experience in conducting supervision, so a report higher or lower balance between their needs and the needs of supervisees, as well as the perception of safety and confidence in their own competences. However, most of them already are or are becoming mature and competent supervisors, which makes them more focused on the

needs of students and the supervisory process, and less focused on themselves and their role in supervision and mastering techniques and methods of work (Alschuler et al., 2015). It is also identifiable that some supervisors are more willing to take risks, to deal with uncertainty in supervision, and to rely on their own knowledge consistent with their theoretical orientation, the level of experience in psychosocial counselling, or experience in long-term and frequent work with students within any form of their teaching.

CONCLUSION

In the area of competences there are some open-ended questions concerning the competences of supervisors and students which could serve as criteria in the selection of future supervisors, but also as an incentive to further assist the existing supervisors in the realization of the mission they are committed to in their work with students. The answers given by supervisors concerning competences for conducting supervision of students were analyzed with regard to cognitive, relational, functional, personal, and specific competences. The supervisors singled out intensified care and support of students expressed through awareness of their life and professional experiences, sensitivity for the difficulties they are faced with during student life, and understanding for the turbulent period of their maturation as desirable specific competences for supervisors of students. Additionally, provision of support and guiding students to find their own professional path and lifestyle, as well as teaching skills, proved to be important. One of the specific competences is the integration of all of the aforementioned competences into the awareness of the context of the student supervision, the fact that supervision is prescribed by the curriculum, and that it is sometimes its determinant, so that supervisors need to have competences to make it as it would be if it were voluntary.

From the perspective of supervisors, competences students need to participate in supervision that are associated with thorough theoretical knowledge from certain areas (for example, a better understanding of laws on the graduate study level) and the

importance of motivation of students for supervision are particularly emphasized. For the perspective of students, desirable characteristics for participation in supervision include personal characteristics in the sense of openness to new experiences, empathy for others, self-criticism, and respect for diversities, as well as experience in the group process and basic knowledge about interpersonal communication. We emphasize that the characteristics in question are desirable ones, and not the characteristics the lack of which would represent an obstacle to supervisory work, and that the role of supervision, especially for lower-year students, is to encourage the development of competences so that the students can learn how to use supervision as a resource and support in their future professional work.

The authors approached the research because of their own personal and professional interests in the topic, but also because of the under-representation the topic, at least in the domestic professional and scientific literature. The authors have frequently witnessed attempts to reduce the student supervision to some “less important form” of supervision which can be conducted by almost anyone who has any experience in the profession, as well as statements that a supervisor’s licence or some special preparation is not necessary for this role, as it only requires “commitment to work” and experience from practice.

With this paper, we would like to draw attention to the need for further research on what enables, facilitates, and hinders participation in student supervision and how it is done, and how supervisors can contribute to making students experience supervision as a safe place and a resource for obtaining support, developing professional competences, and the prophylaxis of their own mental health. We conclude that there are at least several reasons for writing and conducting research about student supervision. Firstly, students need support, not only in direct work with clients during practice, but also in the process of developing their own professional identity, whereas different roles are played by their university teachers, field practice teachers who guide them through practical work, and supervisors who in fact have “a royal position” to integrate all these outcomes and help students to “take them away” from study in

the form of usable, i.e. actionable knowledge (according to Trevi-thick, 2008). It is therefore even more important that the role of a supervisor is as independent as possible in relation to the role of the teacher, assessor, and evaluator so that a student can truly experience supervision as “a safe place”. Additionally, in that way a student gets the opportunity to examine and question his or her relationship towards practice, clients, professional situations and challenges they bring, with a possibility to reflect upon it in a safe way. Secondly, as was already mentioned, this is an under-represented topic, and thirdly, it is important to recognize differences and specific characteristics between supervision of students and some other terms and concepts that are sometimes used as synonyms, such as mentorship, monitoring, moderating, etc. In this respect, we conclude that specific preparation is also needed for the role of a supervisor of students, as well as support for supervisors, and that the responsibility for recognizing and promoting this role primarily lies with university studies, but also with the professional community.

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