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TRANSFER OF THE EXPERIENCES OF THE NORWEGIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION TO SLOVENIA

The Importance of Supervision for Early Career Psychologists

When psychologists have completed their university education and are then titled “psychologist” they face many expectations, from themselves and others. They face challenges that require both theoretical knowledge and the ability to implement this in a practical context. This can lead to uncertainty and doubt, and supervision is thus particularly important in this first stage of a psychologist’s career.

The Importance of Supervision for the Patients and Other Users

Supervision early in the career is important for a psychologist’s patients and other users of his/her services. Supervision provides a quality check from a more experienced psychologist, who monitors whether the psychologist works in compliance with evidence-based practice in psychology. This means that the three elements constituting evidence-based practice are assessed continuously: the user’s needs, clinical expertise, and best available evidence.

The supervision will include thorough discussions and reflections on whether the measures applied are working in the manner they are intended, and if and how the desired effects are attained.

User involvement and focus on the users’ families and social context is an important part of the supervision.

The Importance of Supervision for the Psychologist

Supervision early in one's career is often based on a "master – apprentice" relationship. The novice psychologist must find his/her new identity, and a safe relationship is critical for developing professional and personal maturity.

Supervision is an important prerequisite for psychologists' competence building. Through supervision, novice psychologists get the opportunity, working together with their supervisor, to reflect on their own practice. As part of this, the supervisor can challenge the supervisee on his/her professional choices and decisions. Supervision thus provides a necessary opportunity for younger psychologists to process and integrate theoretical knowledge with practical experience in their work context.

Supervision of new psychologists is one of the most important measures for developing quality outcomes in the profession. By working with their supervisors, new psychologists can reflect on their own work and professional identity, and so better deal with any challenges that arise in this context. Moreover, employers who provide supervision for psychologists early in their career are more likely to recruit and retain skilled psychologists. Supervision thus provides an assurance that new psychologists will be able to provide services that are safe to the public.

Situation in the Field of Supervised Practice in Norway

As in many other states, supervision and supervised practice in Norway were originally associated with psychotherapy and psychotherapy education. When the psychologist education and degree (Cand. Psychol.) was established at Norwegian universities in the late 1950's, it was decided that supervision should be a part of the education of all psychologists, regardless of the domain. This means that the concept of supervised practice was from the very beginning recognized as providing an important arena to further the learning of new psychologists.

In 1974 the Norwegian authorities decided to protect the title "psychologist" by legislation, and thus the "The Psychologist Act" came into force. The title can only be given to and used by those that have qualified for the Cand. Psychol. degree (or its equivalent). The authorities, together with universities, also established a standard for Norwegian psychologist education, which states that one year of supervised practice is included in the six years of education.

The supervised practice in psychologists' education is integrated throughout most parts of the six years, but to a larger degree in the later period of the education. This practice is typically organized within two different arenas:

- In university clinics. Students work with clients once or twice per week and receive education and supervision in groups;
- In institutions (primarily mental health institutions) external to the university. This practice takes place for shorter and longer periods at several institutions.

The universities support the supervisors, but they are employed at the institution where the students practice their internship. An agreement between the universities and the external institution regulates the practice and the supervision given.

Supervisors' Qualification

Specialist education has been provided to supervisors by the Norwegian Psychological Association since the 1950's. This currently consists of a five-year period of supervised practice, 256 hours of courses, 240 hours of supervision, and a thesis. A candidate for this qualification must already be a specialist in the relevant field of specialization. Since supervision has gradually come to be recognized as a competence in its own right, in 1996 the Norwegian Psychological Association started a two-year education programme for supervisors (part-time). To date, about 260 supervisors have been educated through this programme.

Exchange of Positive Experiences with Supervised Practice: The Motives of the Norwegian Psychological Association to Participate in the SUPER PSYHOLOG Project

A *EuroPsy* meeting in Brussels in 2012 provided information that the Slovenian Psychologists' Association together with the University of Ljubljana had established a model for supervised practice based on the *EuroPsy* standards, implemented education for supervisors, and published a book about their experiences. At the same time, the EEA/Norway grants programme was preparing to make a call for projects in many EU states, Slovenia included. The Slovenian and Norwegian participants thus found that it would be beneficial to partner in a project to provide a plan for educating supervisors in Slovenia and establishing a supervised practice model.

There were many reasons and motives for the Norwegian Psychological Association to participate in this project, with the most important being as follows.

First, supervision and the supervised practice of psychologists have had a long tradition in Norway, with this being recognized as a central form of learning when it comes to integrating psychologists' knowledge into the practical skills and competences necessary for providing high quality services to the public. The Norwegian Psychological Association established a two-year programme of supervisor education in 1996. Due to the support of the experts who are the teachers in this programme, we were willing and confident to share our experiences and knowledge with regard to planning and implementing education for supervisors.

Second, as a supporter of EFPA's *EuroPsy* standards the Norwegian Psychological Association wants to assist associations, universities and states that want to educate supervisors and establish supervised practice as a key part of psychologist education.

This may help raise psychologists' competences throughout Europe, and, as the European labour market has become more open, the competences of psychologists working within the EU are no longer only a national issue.

Finally, in the Norwegian tradition the developmental side of supervision has been the most emphasized. In contrast, our colleagues in Slovenia primarily focused on building and assessing competences, based on the *EuroPsy* competence model. In the Norwegian context, the supervisor's role and responsibility as a gatekeeper to the profession has been more emphasized in recent years. With our Slovenian project partners we thus agreed that an integration of a developmental model and a competence model for supervision should be one aim of the project. As such, the experiences and outcomes of the project could be highly relevant for how supervision is practiced in Norway, and also for Norwegian supervisor education.