

The Role of Formal Social Support to Students in the Context of the Social Dimension of Higher Education

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Abstract

This paper aims to present the development of the social dimension of higher education and the importance of developing social support through competent and professional counselling for students. The establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the social dimension of higher education dedicated to student support ensued from the acknowledged need to advance higher education in the European Union. Along with different measures of student support (such as financial aid, streamlined administrative requirements for admission, institutional support in housing, transportation, food, and health care), social support services, such as guidance and counselling, equally represent a significant aspect of the social dimension. Dedicated institutional structures provide formal social support such as student counselling centres, which offer individual or group counselling and support students in overcoming the challenges of the academic experience. Finally, the activities concerning the social dimension of higher education focus on vulnerable groups, as well as the role and the importance of further developing counselling support at higher education institutions in Croatia.

Keywords: *counselling; higher education system; students.*

Introduction

The knowledge society has become a leading concept in the world today, emerging in different areas and contexts, including sociology, economy and education. The European Union (EU) has also integrated the concept in its policy framework that

defines the goals for the future development of the community (Udovič & Bučar, 2008; Väliima & Hoffman, 2008; Europska komisija, 2010). According to Stehr (2018), the historical process of designating contemporary society as the knowledge society has gradually consolidated knowledge as one of the constituents of the social structure, next to labour and property (capital). This alliance of labour, capital and knowledge is also observed in the current policies of the European Union. The European community is highly involved in education policy today, with the knowledge society as the staple of European economic competitiveness in the global market (Račić, 2013). Higher education contributes to that end: as an intellectual contribution to the society and a stimulus for development, tertiary education graduates also have higher salaries and better employment prospects. They produce additional economic advantages, such as higher taxes and social contributions, as well as an increased potential for consumption. Moreover, a higher proportion of highly educated citizens spurs cultural and civic progress of the society, as well as civic engagement for the common good. Finally, it contributes to an improved overall health – most likely, due to greater attention to health, more available health care services, as well as healthier lifestyles (BFUG - WG, 2012). Therefore, the education policy has become a matter of common interest in the EU since the late 20th century, reflected in lifelong learning policies, the establishment of the European Higher Education Area, the adoption of numerous strategies and statements, as well as the fundamental interventions that involved all member states, such as the Bologna process. The introduction and further development of the Bologna process has in fact prompted many European education policies, such as the incorporation of the lifelong learning concept into higher education, the integration of postgraduate studies in the third cycle of higher education, the establishment of a common European Research Area (ERA), the introduction of national qualification frameworks comparable to the common qualification framework in the EHEA, the definition of learning outcomes and the quality assurance mechanisms in line with European quality standards. The social dimension of higher education originated in 2003, intending to open access to higher education to all, according to their abilities and regardless of their social status, and thus foster affordable and accessible education with particular attention to the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups. The social dimension has become a critical aspect of European higher education policy since 2007, particularly concerning the economic aspect of higher education. Further development of the social dimension should thus facilitate the enrolment in and the completion of higher education (Kooji, 2015) and notably promote the provision of guidance and counselling services to students. Colman (2001) defines counselling as a practice or a profession which applies theories in psychology and communication skills to address personal needs, problems and concerns of clients; a counsellor represents a person working with clients through individual or group therapy, in couples or family, in different institutions, organisations or within a private practice. The primary goal of counselling is to provide professional support to clients for coping with everyday

difficulties (related to personal issues or pressures from the environment). The counselling objectives also involve empowering individuals to assume a self-reliant command of circumstances in life by activating their personal potential, as well as psychosocial support. Counselling strives to stimulate growth and personal development. It may also involve education and training for new skills (Petz, 2005).

This paper aims to present the development of the social dimension of higher education and the importance of developing social support through competent and professional counselling for students. Accordingly, a particular focus is placed on the importance of developing counselling services at higher education institutions in Croatia.

Social dimension of higher education in European education policy

The social dimension of higher education has become a priority of the European higher education policy in the past years. The conference communiqués of the European ministers responsible for higher education, regularly issued as of 2001, document the evolution of the concept. In Berlin (2003) and Bergen (2005) communiqués, the social dimension received the shape it has largely maintained until today, with some nuances. The Berlin (2003) communiqué insisted on the importance of the social dimension and the removal of social and gender inequalities at national and European levels, affirming that the “Ministers stress the need for appropriate studying and living conditions for the students, so that they can successfully complete their studies within an appropriate period of time without obstacles related to their social and economic background” (Berlin communiqué, 2003, p. 7). Radin (2014) suggested that autonomy, privacy and professional success were crucial for the student population today. In a dedicated paragraph, the Bergen communiqué stated that the social dimension represented a constituent and a necessary condition for the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Moreover, it asserted that “the social dimension includes measures taken by governments to help students, especially from socially disadvantaged groups, in financial and economic aspects and to provide them with guidance and counselling services with a view to widening access” (Bergen communiqué, 2005, p. 6). Finally, the London communiqué (2007) formulated the most widely used definition of the social dimension today. As a new feature, it stated that the social dimension should encompass the entire duration of studies (admission, participation and completion) and that the student population should reflect the diversity of the general population: “the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations” (London communiqué, 2007, p. 7). This definition aimed to shift the attention to a new structure of students, including not only lower-income and socially excluded, but equally older students, student parents, working students, students with disabilities or students of different nationality, all of whom represented disadvantaged students. The disadvantaged group would thus also include the students whose parents had

lower levels of education. Namely, the children of parents with low qualification levels have been linked to lower achievement in primary and secondary education and an increased tendency to enrol in vocational schools, especially in three-year vocational programmes. The differences in additional course requirements for these students, as well as the State Matura exam, presented further barriers to their progression (Matković et al., 2014), along with insufficient educational counselling in secondary schools (Košutić et al. (2015). According to Doolan (2010), graduates from some vocational schools expressed their dissatisfaction with the extent to which their secondary school had prepared them for higher education studies in terms of knowledge and working habits. Furthermore, the disadvantaged group encompassed students from lower-income families, and studies notably linked lower income to student attrition at the higher education level (Košutić et al., 2015). Female students in STEM and male students in the humanities were also disadvantaged; namely, gender stereotypes concerning occupations represented a significant factor in the choice of study fields, while the preconception of a lower talent due to gender reduced the likelihood of choosing certain professions and study fields (Jugović, 2015). Older students also belonged to the disadvantaged group. Namely, students who enrolled in higher education programmes at 21 or older intended to continue onto graduate studies less frequently compared to younger students (31 % against 56 %) (Šćukanec et al., 2016). There is also an indication that student attrition in the first year was more common for older students (Mihaljević Kosor, 2010), as well as more pronounced challenges in social integration during college (Doolan et al., 2014). Students with children were equally disadvantaged. They bore the highest cost of studying, amounting to 33,204 Croatian kunas per semester on average (Šćukanec et al., 2016). Furthermore, students with disabilities belonged to the disadvantaged group. Due to different medical conditions or acute illnesses, these students encountered various obstacles: some attended physical therapy, for some it was difficult to sit in lectures all day, while others needed visual aids for text or had difficulties reaching dislocated university premises (Doolan et al., 2014). Moreover, working students encountered difficulties, such as the challenge of balancing professional and study responsibilities. According to Doolan et al. (2014), students who commuted to college from other counties were also disadvantaged, as they could not attend all lectures due to unaffordable cost of travel and irregular public transportation. Roma also represented disadvantaged students, particularly in terms of completing primary education, as well as in terms of the common choice of three-year vocational programmes for those who did enrol in secondary education, which limited their progression to higher education (Baranović, 2009). LGBT students were equally disadvantaged as they were more prone to relational and physical violence compared to heterosexual students. Finally, students without parental care were disadvantaged in view of insufficient financial means to pursue higher education studies.

The social dimension aims to expand and open access to higher education to all, and particularly to disadvantaged groups, to reflect the diversity of Europe in the student

population. This requires identifying the obstacles which should be removed. Farnell (2013) presents the barriers in a structured manner. For example, disadvantaged socioeconomic background may entail poor education or weak achievement in secondary education, and consequently difficulties in enrolling in higher education institutions. Moreover, such students are more likely to leave their studies. In this case, a lack of family support often accompanies a low personal motivation to continue studies. There are also structural barriers, such as difficult progression from some secondary schools, enrolment policies, financial difficulties, physical obstacles for students with disabilities, inadequate learning methods for inclusion, as well as ineffective academic and psychological support system. Interventions are necessary to attenuate and remove these obstacles, directed at *increasing access to education* and *completing studies*. The interventions for increasing access to education involve: a) financial support (scholarships and subventions for the cost of housing and tuition); b) tax breaks for students, and c) dedicated financial incentives for disadvantaged groups. The second category of interventions aims to increase the share of students who complete their studies. Relevant interventions involve: a) providing and ensuring guidance and counselling in schools and higher education institutions; b) providing services that contribute to the social well-being of students, including housing, health care, social and sporting events; c) introducing and advancing mentorship and personal study plans; d) alternative pathways for acquiring ECTS points, and e) providing information on different courses (BFUG-WG, 2007, pp. 41-42). In particular, the availability of counselling as a type of formal support is vital to advance student competences and contribute to successful studying. Research results by Jakovčić et al. (2015) in the psychological counselling service of the University of Rijeka indicated a significant average alleviation of difficulties (such as academic challenges, anxiety, interpersonal issues and depression) upon completion of the counselling therapy. Namely, depression and anxiety represented the prevalent form of psychological distress for students seeking counselling. Research by Monti et al. (2013) yielded similar results, observing significant amelioration for most research participants upon completion of the counselling process. This points to the vital role of social support, guidance and counselling services or training, which help students actively address and successfully overcome the challenges encountered during college studies.

Challenges of college studies

In his research study, Rückert (2015) indicated that student exposure to stressors had proliferated with the Bologna process in Europe as expectations had increased from the environment and the students themselves. Students enrolled in European universities with pre-existing mental conditions and adjustment difficulties in view of insufficient support at previous education levels. This also resulted in a higher incidence of psychological distress among students compared to the general population. Anxiety and depression are examples of the most common disorders. Students notably had a

significantly higher incidence of antidepressant prescriptions than their peers who did not attend college. Like their European counterparts, the U.S. students also had higher incidence of psychological disorders compared to their peers. Namely, 37 % of U.S. students experienced anxiety in the previous year, while 9 % claimed they had attempted suicide at some point in their lives (Cepukienė & Pakrosnis, 2018). Difficulties were also present at lower education levels. For example, India had one of the highest suicide rates in the world among young people aged 15-29. The principal causes of suicide comprised peer pressure, fear of failing exams, depression, unemployment, etc. Youth in India notably faced significant stress, trauma and anxiety. Students were trained to “be perfect” and well-disciplined in order to meet the expectations of teachers and parents. In this sort of environment, students also became less creative and innovative. According to a recent report in the Times of India, one student on average committed suicide every 55 minutes in India. In the past three years, over 26,000 students committed suicide, as a consequence of stress, anxiety and depression. As a form of psychosocial support, counselling helped students prevail difficulties and challenges encountered in the course of their studies. The proliferation of youth counselling services attested to the importance of available social support, as well as the increasing number of young people who reached out to counselling services (Nalanda International School, 2020). Likewise, research in Croatia has revealed that students mostly experienced depression and anxiety, substance abuse, eating disorders and learning difficulties, anxiety and dissatisfaction with the studies and low level of motivation, difficulties in social interaction, tension and frustration, personal dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction with their appearance, a sense of inadequacy, and concerns about relationships and sexuality (Bezinović et al., 1998; Jokić-Begić & Čuržik, 2014; Lenz et al., 2016). Jokić-Begić and Čuržik (2014) indicated that 75 % of students experienced temporary sensations of anxiety, insecurity and tension, whereas a considerable percentage (25 % of students) faced pronounced mental distress. Research by Lenz et al. (2016) involved 200 students of the School of Medicine and the School of Law at the University of Osijek. According to research results, the prevalence of anxiety, depression and social phobia was higher in the student than in the general population. Furthermore, anxiousness was more prevalent with students who repeated a year of their studies compared to those who regularly progressed in their studies. Moreover, anxiety and depression were more prevalent with students who repeated a year for the second or the third time.

The college period coincides with the period in life when students become aware of the positive and the negative aspects of different approaches to problems, expand their attitudes and values and shape their moral beliefs. The transformation is also interior – they develop a closer personal understanding, consolidate their self-respect and strengthen the perception of their identity (Berk, 2007). This process evolves in the context of challenges related to the college experience. In the first stage, it involves an adjustment to new groups of people; different approaches to learning, time management and assessing learning outcomes; meeting personal expectations, as well as the expectations of peers, family and friends. For some students, it also involves

leaving the family home and hometown, becoming independent and autonomous in managing time and finances, and establishing new social relationships. Although they generally occur in the first year of college, these changes may also occur in any of the subsequent years (for example, in case of transferring to a different programme or changing residence). In the final stage, near the end of studies, there are also feelings of uncertainty concerning future employment and a different form of independence, as well as a possible return to the family home (Jokić-Begić 2012; Živčić-Bećirević & Jakovčić, 2013). A study by Kovčo Vukadin (2016) presented the results of an assessment of student needs for support during their studies at the University of Zagreb. Another research study from 2012 involved a self-assessment of adverse factors that disrupted the college experience. Its results pointed to the following five categories of difficulties (Drusany et al., 2012): adjustment to academic requirements (e.g. anxiety over exams, presenting, significant study load, study backlog, insufficient time); psychosocial adjustment (e.g. dissatisfaction with social life, rejection by peers, difficulties adjusting to a new place); scepticism over the choice of profession (e.g. doubt over the right choice of study field, qualms over future career, realising a lack of interest in the chosen profession); apprehension over external demands/circumstances (e.g. financial issues, working while studying, family issues/circumstances, inadequate learning environment), as well as health conditions and disability (e.g. physical disability, visual impairment, dyslexia, chronic conditions, mental disorder or psychological difficulties). Life circumstances may also change in the course of studies (divorce of parents, the divorce of student's marriage or end of a love relationship; personal illness, illness of a family member or death; unexpected financial difficulties), as well as concerns over academic achievement (underachieving, struggling to complete a course, failing a year, losing motivation, fear of presenting linked to lower achievement in oral exams or seminars) (Jokić-Begić, 2012; Živčić-Bećirević et al., 2007; Drusany et al., 2012; Živčić-Bećirević & Jakovčić, 2013). An inappropriate choice of study field may notably represent a chronic stressor (Hudek-Kenžević & Kardum, 2006). Such stressors affect the quality of life and the academic achievement of students (Kurtović, 2013), requiring an individual adjustment from students. When adjustment is not successful and efficient, this can affect mental and physical health of students, lead to considering or, in fact, leaving studies, and impact academic achievement. Some young people leave college, not as a result of cognitive limitations, but due to adjustment difficulties – “insufficient motivation, ineffective learning techniques, financial difficulties or emotional dependence on parents” (Berk, 2007, p. 436). In this context, the *adjustment* “could, in a broader sense, be understood as harmony or balance between the demands and the needs of the individual and the environment” (Ivanov, 2008, p. 1), whereas the adjustment to studies would involve *academic, emotional and social adjustment*. The academic adjustment denotes adjustment to the demands of college studies (approach to learning and exams, time management, fulfilling additional academic requirements), the emotional adjustment implies mental processes occurring

in the course of college studies, while the social adjustment involves establishing and managing social networks at college and beyond (Živčić-Bećirević et al., 2007). This concept of adjustment to college can be easily put in operation and monitored (e.g. the academic adjustment through achievement, number of exams passed, continuity or discontinuity of progression in college). The emotional adjustment is reflected in satisfaction with the quality of life, satisfaction with the study programme, as well as in the incidence of mental disorders (depression, anxiety, stress, apprehension, as well as the presence of somatic distress). Social adjustment manifests itself through engagement in student associations, interaction with peers, as well as participation in extracurricular activities or socialising with other students. Several research studies assessed the effects of the overall adjustment to college, demonstrating that emotional and social adjustment influenced academic success, as well as student attrition linked to adjustment difficulties (Živčić-Bećirević et al., 2007). In particular, emotional and social adjustment has been directly linked to college success and/or leaving. The successful outcome of adjustment also depends on the opportunities to meet personal needs and the expectations of others. When the discrepancy between personal needs and external circumstances becomes overwhelming, a person generally tries to exit the situation or, when leaving or personal change and adjustment is not possible, the person suffers repercussions on his or her personal system or subsystems, along with different somatic effects. This sort of intensified or long-term stress can easily trigger depression or anxiety, which “interferes with cognitive and problem-solving processes and thus reduces self-efficacy in coping with the situation” (Ivanov, 2008, pp. 1-2).

Different personal and external factors affect adjustment. Personal factors mostly pertain to psychological attributes such as self-respect, self-confidence, causal attribution, mechanisms for coping with stress, etc. The external factors, on the other hand, encompass family relationships, previous life circumstances and personal history, as well as earlier instances of distress, social support from the family, friends and the academic community, as well as institutional attributes (Baker, 2004, according to Živčić-Bećirević et al., 2007). As corroborated by Ivanov (2008), the adjustment and its outcomes depend on the assessment of one's competences, social support and the available resources, as well as the attributes of the environment of interaction (i.e. fulfilling expected roles). Disappointment and insecurity over one's competences and knowledge frequently occur over the course of studies. Confronted with complex assignments, course demands and requests from the environment, students may perceive a loss of control over personal abilities. When a person fails to resolve difficulties independently, he or she relies on the help of others, notably close people. However, persons in distress cannot always seek help from people close to them. This may lead to difficulties with studies, leaving studies and, finally, to general dissatisfaction. Psychology studies recognise that the perceived control over behaviour, circumstances, thoughts and emotions contributes to successful adjustment. Namely, the predictability and the sense of control over life circumstances empower people to cope with challenges in life, stress, and to build healthy relationships and achieve personal satisfaction (Ivanov, 2008).

Although the adjustment is critical in the first year of college, distress and difficulties may nevertheless occur later in the course of studies, notwithstanding the adjustment in the first year. Although some are temporary, they may, however, become permanent in other cases, depending on the factors mentioned above. Mental disorders have been found to progress from the earlier stages of life into adulthood (Jokić-Begić & Čuržik, 2014). According to the same authors, students in Croatia contacted counselling services mostly in relation to learning and emotional difficulties. The two issues frequently interconnected: for example, learning difficulties might have ensued from deeper emotional trouble and, vice versa, low academic achievement could have caused emotional distress.

Along with the physical and mental health disorders described above, ineffective adjustment may also prompt student attrition. Statistical data indicate a considerable number of students who leave higher education (at Croatian and European levels), usually in the first year of college studies. Mihaljević Kosor (2010) distinguishes two theoretical approaches to understanding student attrition. The first approach relies on Tinto's model (1975) and the second on Bean and Metzner's theory (1985). Tinto's *Student Integration Model* (1975) attributes student attrition to ineffective social and academic integration. According to this approach, students enrol in higher education in line with their goals, beliefs and intentions. Sex, age, family attributes, as well as previous education and skills, influence the decision to pursue or leave college. During college studies, the initial goals and intentions are modified in line with continuous developments concerning the academic achievement and the relationships with peers and faculty. A higher degree of integration, academic achievement and relations with the community thus indicates a higher potential to complete studies. This theory, however, has been criticised for overemphasising social integration, as well as its inapplicability to unconventional categories of students who are generally less integrated in the academic community (such as older students, student parents, distance learning students, study abroad students). On the other hand, Bean and Metzner's theory from 1985 stressed the factors outside the academic community, such as family responsibilities, working hours, financial means and transportation. According to the latter approach, academic achievement, inclination to leaving college, personal characteristics of students, environment, and previous education governed the decision to pursue studies (Mihaljević Kosor, 2010). Therefore, higher education institutions should aim to create appropriate conditions for studying to foster student retention, with the possibility to pursue further education after graduation, and through available formal support and a high quality of education.

Other theoretical approaches to understanding student attrition relate to the theory of human capital. These approaches affirm that students continued their studies as long as the value of perceived benefits surpassed the expected expense. In this case, the expected benefits comprised financial gains such as higher salaries after graduation or other advantages, such as a higher social status or better working conditions in

the future. While the financial expense includes the cost of studying and forfeited remuneration in the world of work, other implications pertain to psychological difficulties (depression, frustration, loss of free time, stress, etc.) Finally, Mihaljević Kosor (2010) considers the two approaches similar at the level of operation, confirming that different aspects of personal interaction with the academic and the non-academic environment influence the level of adjustment to college. In correlation with the aim of this study, this points out to the importance of academic support and professional student counselling services at all academic levels.

Social support and its merits for students in higher education

There are several definitions of social support, depending on the aspect considered (sociological, psychological, anthropological, etc.) (Hudek-Kenžević & Kardum, 2006; Milić Babić, 2010). Hudek-Knežević and Kardum (2006) propose several definitions: “the number of social contacts or the size of the social network of a person” (Berkman & Syme, 1979), “resources provided by others” (Cohen & Syme, 1985), “support in coping with stress” (Thoits, 1986). Sarafino (2002, in Milić Babić, 2019) distinguishes five types of social support: emotional and instrumental support, information or respect as a form of support, and support network. Accordingly, emotional support refers to giving and receiving care, love and/or trust, as well as empathy. The instrumental support includes hands-on assistance with work, expression of care, payment of bills, etc. Support in the form of information comprises advice and guidance for coping with personal or external challenges. Furthermore, support in the form of respect involves a high consideration for the person, respect for beliefs and feelings of others, etc. Finally, a support network implies a sense of belonging to a group that shares common interests and activities. The most appropriate type of support depends on the circumstances and the attributes of people in interaction (Hudek-Knežević & Kardum, 2006; Ivanov, 2008). Social support could thus represent a construct that comprises physical and instrumental type of support, distribution of resources and sharing of information, mutual emotional and psychological support, as well as support to individuals or families from institutions or organisations (Milić Babić, 2010). Defining social support allows us to acknowledge the importance of support from peers, faculty, family, friends, as well as institutional forms of student support that indirectly influence the quality of student life. *Informal and formal types of support* are distinguished based on the sources of support mentioned above. The informal support could come from family members, friends and other close people, whereas groups or institutions provided formal, professional type of support (such as counselling services, support groups, specific training groups) (Milić Babić, 2010). Social support serves as protection from the adverse effects of stressful events. It acts to (1) reduce the occurrence of stressful events through empowering individuals, (2) regulate the perception of an event (under control or not, more or less stressful), and (3) alleviate stress through psychological

and emotional support that offers relief or a solution to a problem (Hudek-Knežević & Kardum, 2006). The impact may be direct or indirect: the direct effects entail cognitive modification of perceiving or coping with stressors, while the indirect impact involves the outcomes of emotional support such as increased self-respect or perceived self-efficacy (Ivanov, 2008). As such, social support assists in adjustment to different life circumstances, including the challenges of attending college. The effects of informal support are considerable for students, especially family support; on the other hand, formal type of support plays a more prominent role as students leave their families and become independent. Along with the actual social support received, the perceived social support is equally significant. The perception of available people to rely on and the assessment of satisfaction with the available support have been identified as more significant predictors of stress compared to the support provided by actual persons in the social network of an individual (Milić Babić, 2010).

Given the importance of perceived and actual social support, higher education institutions should establish formal student support structures – ranging from information, financial and counselling support, and representing different aspects of the social dimension of higher education described in the introduction. Students can gain a sense of security in new circumstances if they are offered information on their programme at enrolment, on student space, assessment methods, recommended study techniques, as well as clear rules, expectations and learning outcomes at the beginning of each course – i.e. social support in the form of information. Financial support could involve scholarships, college contribution to the cost of tuition, financial aid for lower-income students, employing teaching assistants for students with disabilities, etc. Finally, the emotional support would primarily come from the family, friends or sometimes partners in relationship. Professional counselling services generally provide formal social support in higher education, addressing difficulties in academic adjustment, psychological disorders or preparation for the labour market. Accordingly, academic, psychological and career counselling are distinguished. The academic counselling involves assistance with study requirements, particularly in the first year of the programme, such as learning to learn, writing and presenting papers, increasing motivation, as well as providing general information on the programme and the student life (e.g. using health care services or joining student associations). Psychological counselling can help with psychological difficulties which students experience (University of Zagreb, 2014; Eurydice, 2019 a, b). On the other hand, career counselling is directed at better understanding personal competences, interests and attributes for choosing the right study programmes and enrolling suitable students, acquiring job-seeking skills and preparing for the labour market (Đorđević, 2017). Counselling allows clients and counsellors to determine the goal and the plan for addressing difficulties. Practising counsellors undergo professional education and training to “assist individuals in gaining a greater personal insight, setting a direction

for their life and professional activity, understanding the opportunities for study and work, and managing learning, work and career change independently” (Government of Croatia, 2015, p. 5,6).

European countries offer different student services, including counselling, advising for student mental health, consultations and examination arrangements, mentorship and peer support. In December 2016, universities in Great Britain initiated a programme for mental health and well-being of both students and staff. It financed a project which resulted in a publication of the Institute for Public Policy Research in September 2017. Against the backdrop of an increasing demand for support and counselling services for students, the report issued recommendations to the higher education sector to unanimously adopt mental health and student well-being among its priorities. The possibility was foreseen for individual institutions to develop their own “university” approaches subject to review, as well as for the government to introduce a new student health care fund and a new digital student health care passport to improve the consistency of health care and treatment for students who travelled from home to university (European Commission, 2019). British universities also initiated the “Step to change” scheme as part of the programme. It intended to support senior teams in higher education institutions in adopting a comprehensive university approach to mental health. The universities were encouraged to cooperate with the National Health Service (NHS) in considering ways to establish and tailor mental health services for students. In June 2018, the university minister in the British government announced the upcoming Mental Health Charter, which would include new standards for the promotion of mental health and well-being of students and staff at universities in Great Britain. A working group was established under the Department of Education in England to assess student needs in the transition to and from universities and to ensure an adequate support (European Commission, 2019).

In countries like Great Britain, Ireland, Germany and Austria, psychological counselling is commonly available to young people. In countries where students tend to enrol in higher education at somewhat older age, they are generally considered adults and expected to manage on their own (Rückert, 2015). The modalities of counselling provision, the competence levels and the counsellor qualifications can vary significantly among sectors, institutions and countries (Rückert, 2015). While universities are required to provide counselling in some countries, different private or civil society associations may offer student counselling in countries with more demanding higher education. Germany and Austria have thus developed student association schemes that offer peer psychosocial support during studies. Given the lack of qualified and competent professionals, many counsellors provide psychosocial support on a volunteer basis. Ortenburger (2013) states that 74 % of German students recognise the benefits of student counselling and consider it useful.

Several research studies have addressed the need for social support to students in Croatia. The research within the IPA 4 project “Advancing the quality of studying for

disadvantaged groups of students through student counselling services” (2013-2015) involved 9,962 students in their first year of studies at 33 colleges and universities in Croatia. The results revealed that students considered the following to be very important: information on study programmes (85.2 % of students), the development of academic skills (80.5 %), the development of social and communication skills (78.4 %), coping with stress (70.0 %), time management skills (70.4 %), career development skills (78.8 %), counselling (72.9 %), support to students with difficulties (33.3 %), and other activities such as sports, creative expression and social contacts among students (62 %) (Divjak, 2015). Furthermore, the research study on the assessment of needs for support during studies (Drusany et al., 2012) involved 1,150 students of the University of Zagreb. The results demonstrated a pronounced need for assistance with academic challenges (53.3 %), managing time and responsibilities (51.5 %), as well as communication skills (55.3 %). As suitable modalities, students preferred: individual counselling, information on web portals, workshops and online courses. According to this study, the need for academic and career counselling was the most pronounced one. However, another research study on student attitudes concerning psychological support, on the sample of 1,614 students at 17 colleges of the University of Zagreb, showed 96.3% of students found that it was necessary to ensure psychological support free of charge, and further 50.8 % would use this kind of support if it were available (Ostović et al., 2012). Moreover, the availability emerged as an issue in the research on student satisfaction with study programmes and their readiness for the labour market (Mrnjavac & Pivac, 2015): namely, students assessed the availability of counselling services with grades from 1-3 (on the scale from 1-5).

Social support through counselling and counselling services at universities and professional colleges in Croatia

Aware of the importance of strengthening the social dimension, along with the corresponding social support for students and counselling services, all Croatian universities have established student counselling centres, which primarily provide psychological and career counselling, as well as some aspects of academic counselling. Besides universities, professional colleges have been equally organising student support through counselling centres. For example, the student counselling centre of the University of Applied Sciences Velika Gorica relies on human resources and pedagogy professionals, psychologists, professors and mentors at different years of study. Motivated students may also engage in the activities of the student counselling centre in the roles and under the conditions set by the college (Veleučilište Velika Gorica, 2020). The Polytechnic in Požega supports students through career counselling, coordinating and providing structured support services for developing career management skills. Furthermore, a counselling service for children and youth offers support in addressing difficulties

in learning and communication, addiction, behavioural disorders, etc. (Veleučilište u Požegi, 2020).

The external evaluation and reaccreditation of universities, performed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education in Croatia, also assesses the availability of counselling support, such as counselling services (centres) for psychological and career counselling. Accordingly, it issues recommendations for setting up or improving the organisation of counselling services (AZVO, 2017). Likewise, the Eurydice portal publishes national reports on European countries, monitoring the organisation and the activities of counselling centres in the section on *guidance and counselling*. The reports show that most countries organise academic, psychological and career counselling. According to the national Eurydice report from 2018, teaching assistants and mentors commonly provided academic counselling in Croatia, whereas specialised counselling services at the university or college level, as well as dedicated external organisations (such as student clinics), offered psychological counselling. Furthermore, different organisations also provided career counselling, such as training for writing CVs or job applications, as well as recruitment for employers (Eurydice c, 2018).

Different research studies and projects analysed the activities of counselling services in the past decade, assessing student needs and offering recommendations for improving counselling services and student centres. Some examples include: *E-quality (2013-2015)* (IRO a), *ECAS (2007-2009)* (IRO b), *CAREER (2005-2006)* (IRO c), *PLASD (2012-2015)* (IRO d), *WISE (2014-2016)* (Pilato, V., 2018), *Research study on the assessment of student needs for support in their studies* (Drusany et al. 2012), *Eduquality (2009-2012)*, *Unipsinet – development of university services network and advancement of mental health care for students* (2012) (Badovinac Škrinjar, 2013), *Tempus Ducas* (2008) (Živčić-Bećirević & Jakovčić, 2013), as well as several research projects of the University of Rijeka (Živčić-Bećirević & Jakovčić, 2013). The identified shortcomings of student support concerned an uneven distribution of psychological counselling services at the University of Zagreb. Although there were some exceptions at the level of university units, counselling was still not available at most colleges. Psychological support was, therefore, not evenly available to students, producing an inequality of access. In 2011/2012, counselling services registered 4,710 interventions, mostly concerning reproductive health, chronic conditions and mental health (University of Zagreb, 2014).

The National plan for advancing the social dimension of higher education in the Republic of Croatia for 2019-2021 provides crucial guidelines for developing social support for students (Croatian Government, 2019). The plan promotes the development of student counselling structures and recommends the establishment of career, financial and academic counselling, along with psychological counselling, as well as specialised and individual support to students with disabilities. The third aim of the plan – *Ensure equal opportunities for all students* – proposes the following activities: “establish counselling structures at higher education institutions including psychological counselling; career and financial counselling; academic counselling;

counselling and support to students with disabilities” (Croatian Government, 2019, p. 11). Moreover, the fourth aim – *Raise the graduation and the employment rates of disadvantaged groups upon completion of studies* – includes a goal to “organise the activities of student support centres (academic and psychological counselling, career development counselling, student internships) to assist students in building the necessary competences for programme completion and early career development” (Vlada RH, 2019). To meet this goal, the proposed activities include an “initial analysis of the state-of-affairs and the needs of higher education institutions, financial support to higher education institutions, which have already founded the centres and invested their funds, for further development and networking, and the establishment of a network of centres in Croatia for developing and exchanging good practice, training materials and consolidating virtual resources” (Croatian Government, 2019, p. 13). The sixth aim – *Include standards for advancing the social dimension of higher education in quality assurance* – encourages policy interventions for implementing the relevant measures, along with the establishment of the appropriate bodies for support (Croatian Government, 2019, pp. 20-21). In response to the measures of the National Plan, the project SIDERAL (*Social and international dimension of education and recognition of acquired learning*) started in 2019 (MZO, 2019). It financed the activities of the BFUG Advisory Group on Social Dimension that played a pivotal role in promoting the social dimension in education policies in Europe. It also signalled an occasion to advance the activities of higher education institutions and their social support mechanisms. This represented an opportunity to promptly set up counselling centres where they had not been present until then or expand the services and the activities of the existing centres. The expected beneficial effects of counselling services should reflect in the quality of higher education studies, more successful study experience, easier achievement of learning outcomes and higher student satisfaction with their studies and their personal lives. Finally, this would also contribute to a successful, highly educated and qualified workforce as the cornerstone of an advanced and progressive society.

Conclusion

Higher education studies are a period full of challenges of adjustment, perseverance in learning and overcoming various difficulties in the course of studies, as well as anxiety and insecurity about life after college. Although students may overcome many challenges on their own, formal social support structures at higher education institutions can provide significant relief. European higher education policies encourage the development of support structures, particularly in the context of the social dimension of higher education. Croatia follows this trend, setting up counselling centres at all universities and many professional colleges. The positive development trend is also reflected in policy making, i.e. in the National plan for advancing the social dimension of higher education in the Republic of Croatia for 2019-2021 (Vlada RH, 2019) and in the Strategy for lifelong professional guidance (LPG) and career development for

2016-2020 (Vlada RH, 2015). This places Croatia closer to other EU countries that promote best practices in the social dimension of higher education by strengthening formal support services. It would ensure a higher quality of life for students, greater personal satisfaction and satisfaction with the studies, as well as successful college completion. Proposals to advance the formal type of support for students include student association schemes for peer support. In this case, initial training and practice with qualified mentors are needed to equip students with knowledge and competences for peer counselling. Moreover, the existing online counselling should be advanced to allow access to all students, including disadvantaged groups (students with disabilities, working students, students in rural areas and other groups previously mentioned). Technical services, university administration and associations should ensure adequate space for counselling for students without Internet access at all (or at least most) universities and polytechnics, which would advance the formal type of support for all students in Croatia. Furthermore, faculties should be trained to provide counselling at universities and polytechnics that do not offer counselling as a form of psychosocial support. Moreover, formal type of support should be made visible through a structured provision of information on the available forms of counselling at the university or polytechnic, as well as individual university units. Finally, student counselling and social support structures should be observed from the broader perspective of care for the social well-being through capacity building for all students to contribute to the society by developing their potential and employing their human, social and economic capital. This could offset poor academic outcomes, as well as physical and mental health problems experienced by some students in the process of becoming adults and attending higher education. In conclusion, the investment in efficient psychosocial support for students (through access to individual and group counselling, online counselling, specialised academic and career counselling), as well as the investment in counsellor training, infrastructure and staff of the counselling centres at universities and polytechnics, are all essential in the context of the social dimension of higher education, to which Croatia has committed through the abovementioned regulatory framework and strategies for the development of higher education.

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Uloga formalne socijalne podrške studentima u kontekstu socijalne dimenzije visokoga obrazovanja

Sažetak

Cilj je rada prikazati razvoj socijalne dimenzije visokoga obrazovanja te važnost razvoja socijalne podrške kroz stručno i profesionalno savjetovanje namijenjeno studentima. Svijest o potrebi unaprjeđenja visokoga obrazovanja u Europskoj uniji vodila je utemeljenju jedinstvenoga područja europskoga obrazovanja tzv. EHEA (European High Education Area) i unutar njega, posebnoga područja koje se bavi podrškom studiranju kroz tzv. socijalnu dimenziju visokoga obrazovanja. Uz različite mjere pomoći studentima u vidu financijskih potpora, jednostavnijih i olakšanih administrativnih pravila upisa, institucijske podrške u vidu stanovanja, prijevoza, hrane i zdravstvene pomoći. Važan dio te socijalne dimenzije odnosi se na usluge pružanja socijalne podrške u smislu usmjeravanja i savjetovanja. Formalna socijalna podrška ostvaruje se preko specijaliziranih institucionalnih usluga kao što su studentska savjetovaništa koja nude usluge individualnoga ili grupnoga savjetovanja i pomaganja studentima u prevladavanju izazova na koje nailaze u akademskom životu. Zaključno rad kroz socijalnu dimenziju visokoga obrazovanja stavlja fokus na ranjive skupine te ulogu i važnost daljnjega razvoja savjetovanišne podrške na visokim učilištima u Hrvatskoj.

Ključne riječi: savjetovanje; studenti; sustav visokoga obrazovanja.

Uvod

Društvo znanja obilježje je društva u kojem živimo, a kao pojam javlja se u različitim područjima i kontekstima: sociološkom, ekonomskom, obrazovnom. Pojam je preuzela i Europska unija u svojim dokumentima u kojima se donose ciljevi budućega razvoja zajednice (Udovič i Bučar, 2008; Väliima i Hoffman, 2008; Europska komisija, 2010). Prema Stehru (2018), u povijesnom razvoju obilježavanja modernoga društva kao društva znanja, znanje se polako uključivalo kao konstitutivni element društvene strukture uz rad i vlasništvo (kapital), a takvu povezanost rada, kapitala i znanja možemo dobro pratiti i danas u politikama Europske unije. Naime, danas obrazovne politike postaju područje interesa cijele europske zajednice jer se društvo znanja vidi kao temelj

gospodarske konkurentnosti Europe na globalnom tržištu (Račić, 2013). Naravno da u tome može pridonijeti visoko obrazovanje, jer osim intelektualnoga doprinosa društvu i pokretačke razvojne snage, osobe sa završenim tercijskim obrazovanjem imaju veću plaću i lakše se zapošljavaju. Od toga i društvo ima ekonomsku korist jer uplaćuju više poreza i doprinosa i imaju veće ekonomske mogućnosti. Također, većim udjelom visokoobrazovanih, u društvu raste kulturna i građanska razina te je više građanskoga sudjelovanja za opće dobro. Na poslijetku, bilježi se i bolje zdravstveno stanje – vjerojatno zbog veće brige za zdravlje, dostupnosti usluga zdravstvenoga sustava, ali i stila života (BFUG - WG, 2012). Zato od kraja 20. stoljeća obrazovne politike postaju u EU područje zajedničkoga interesa i očituju se kroz oblikovanje politika cjeloživotnoga obrazovanja, stvaranja europskoga područja visokoga obrazovanja, donošenja mnogih strategija i dokumenata, ali i značajnih promjena koje zahvaćaju sve države članice - poput bolonjskoga procesa. Uvođenjem i razvojem bolonjskoga procesa razvijaju se ciljevi europskih obrazovnih politika, poput uvođenja koncepta cjeloživotnoga obrazovanja u visoko obrazovanje, uvođenja poslijediplomskoga studija kao trećega ciklusa visokoškolskoga obrazovanja, uspostave zajedničkoga europskog istraživačkoga prostora (*European research area-ERA*), uvođenja nacionalnih kvalifikacijskih okvira usporedivih s krovnim kvalifikacijskim okvirom EHEA-e (*A Framework for Qualifications in the EHEA*), definiranja ishoda učenja, osiguranja kvalitete u skladu s europskim standardima kvalitete. Godine 2003. uvedena je i socijalna dimenzija visokoga obrazovanja kojom se želi omogućiti visoko obrazovanje svima, u skladu sa sposobnostima, a neovisno o socijalnom statusu te se tako želi postići prilično i dostupno obrazovanje s naglaskom na socijalnu uključenost podzastupljenih skupina. Od 2007. godine socijalna dimenzija postaje važan dio europskih politika visokoga obrazovanja i to također u odnosu na ekonomsku ulogu visokoga obrazovanja. Ulazak u svijet studija kao i završetak treba pospješiti razvoj socijalne dimenzije visokoga obrazovanja (Kooji, 2015), unutar koje se potiče pružanje usluga savjetovanja i usmjeravanja studenata. Colman (2001) definira savjetovanje kao praksu ili profesiju koja primjenjuje psihološke teorije i komunikacijske vještine na korisnikove osobne potrebe, probleme i brige, a savjetnik je osoba koja radi s korisnicima kroz individualni ili grupni rad, rad u parovima ili obitelji, kroz razne institucije, organizacije ili privatne prakse. Osnovni cilj savjetovanja je pružanje profesionalne pomoći korisnicima u svakodnevnim životnim situacijama u kojima se otežano snalaze (zbog osobnih problema ili okolinskih pritisaka). Ciljevi savjetovanja su i osposobljavanje pojedinca za samostalno suočavanje sa životnim problemima uz korištenje osobnih potencijala, kao i psihosocijalna podrška. Usmjereni su na poticanje rasta i razvoja ličnosti. Mogu imati edukativnu funkciju i osposobljavanje za nove vještine (Petz, 2005).

Cilj je rada prikazati razvoj socijalne dimenzije visokoga obrazovanja te važnost razvoja socijalne podrške kroz stručno i profesionalno savjetovanje namijenjeno studentima. U skladu s time, predstaviti će se važnost razvoja savjetovanišne podrške na visokim učilištima s posebnim naglaskom na Republiku Hrvatsku.

Socijalna dimenzija visokoga obrazovanja u europskim obrazovnim politikama

Zadnjih godina socijalna dimenzija visokoog obrazovanja postaje jedan od prioriteta europskih politika visokoga obrazovanja. Definiranje te socijalne dimenzije možemo iščitati iz priopćenja s konferencija europskih ministara zaduženih za visoko obrazovanje koje se redovito održavaju od 2001. godine. U priopćenjima iz Berlina (2003) i Bergena (2005) socijalna dimenzija dobiva svoj sadržaj koji će se u većoj mjeri, uz neke nove naglaske, zadržati do danas. Tako se u Berlinskom priopćenju (2003) potvrđuje važnost socijalne dimenzije i uklanjanja socijalnih i spolnih nejednakosti na nacionalnoj i europskoj razini te navodi da „ministri naglašavaju potrebu za odgovarajućim uvjetima učenja i stanovanja studenata kako bi oni mogli uspješno završiti studij u predviđenom roku bez prepreka vezanih uz njihov društveni ili ekonomski položaj” (Berlinsko priopćenje, 2003, str. 7). Radin (2014) ističe da je unutar studentske populacije danas ključno samosvojnost, privatnost i profesionalni uspjeh. Bergensko priopćenje u zasebnom odlomku navodi da je socijalna dimenzija konstitutivni dio i nužan uvjet za privlačnost područja europskoga visokog obrazovanja, odnosno EHEA-e te da „socijalna dimenzija uključuje mjere koje poduzimaju vlade kako bi pomogle studentima, osobito onima iz podzastupljenih skupina, financijski i ekonomski, te im omogućile usluge savjetovanja sa ciljem proširenja pristupa visokom obrazovanju” (Bergensko priopćenje, 2005, str. 6). Definiranje socijalne dimenzije nastavlja se u Londonskom priopćenju (2007) i ova je definicija i sada najkorištenija. U njoj je donesena nova značajka socijalne dimenzije koja govori da ona treba obuhvaćati cjelokupno vrijeme studija (početak, sudjelovanje i završetak) i da studentska populacija treba obuhvaćati različitost populacije („socijalni profil studentskog tijela koje ulazi u visoko obrazovanje, u njemu sudjeluje i uspješno ga završava odgovara heterogenom socijalnom profilu šireg stanovništva” (Londonsko priopćenje, 2007, str. 7). Ovom se definicijom želi naglasiti skrb o novoj strukturi studenata – ne samo siromašnima i socijalno isključenima nego i npr. starijima, studentima koji su roditelji, studentima koji rade, studentima s teškoćama i studentima drugih nacionalnosti, svi oni predstavljaju podzastupljene skupine studenata. Opisujući podzastupljene skupine navode se studenti čiji roditelji imaju niže razine obrazovanja (učenici iz obitelji slabije obrazovanih roditelja u prosjeku imaju slabija obrazovna postignuća na osnovnoškolskoj i srednjoškolskoj razini, češće upisuju strukovne škole, posebice trogodišnje strukovne škole pri čemu razlike u predmetima koje ti učenici moraju polagati te državna matura otežavaju nastavak školovanja (Matković, Buković, Lukić i Doolan, 2014), a identificirano je i nedostatno obrazovno savjetovanje u srednjim školama (Košutić, Puzić i Doolan (2015). Prema Doolan (2010) studenti koji su završili određene strukovne škole iskazuju nezadovoljstvo s načinom na koji ih je srednja škola pripremila za studij, sadržajno i u pogledu radnih navika. Zatim u podzastupljenim skupinama slijede studenti iz obitelji nižega ekonomskog statusa (dostupna istraživanja pokazuju da niži ekonomski status

utječe na odluku o prestanku školovanja na visokoškolskoj razini (Košutić i sur., 2015), studentice u tehničkom području, studenti u humanističkom području (rodni stereotipi o zanimanjima i područjima studija važan su čimbenik odabira različitih područja studija: uvjerenje o slabijem talentu vlastite rodne skupine za određeno zanimanje i područje studija povezano je s manjom vjerojatnošću odabira tog područja studija (Jugović, 2015)). Stariji studenti također pripadaju podzastupljenoj skupini studenata. Studenti koji upisuju studij s 21 ili više godina rjeđe planiraju nastavak na diplomskoj razini od mlađih kolega (31 % nasuprot 56 %) (Šćukanec, Sinković, Bilić, Doolan i Cvitan, 2016), a postoje indikacije da je nezavršavanje prve godine studija učestalije kod starijih studenata (Mihaljević Kosor, 2010) te da je za tu skupinu teža i socijalna integracija na studiju (Doolan, Košutić i Barada, 2014). Nadalje, u podzastupljenu skupinu pripadaju i studenti s djecom. Navedena skupina spada među skupine studenata koje imaju najviše troškove i njihov prosječni ukupni semestralni trošak iznosi 33 204 kn (Šćukanec i sur., 2016). U podzastupljenu skupinu pripadaju i studenti s invaliditetom. Zbog različitih zdravstvenih stanja ili akutnih bolesti studenti se susreću s različitim preprekama: neki moraju na fizikalnu terapiju, nekima je otežano sjediti cijeli dan na predavanjima, nekima su potrebna vizualna povećala za tekstualne materijale, dok je nekima otežano doći do dislociranih fakultetskih zgrada (Doolan i sur., 2014). Također je potrebno i spomenuti studente koji rade uz studij (izazov usklađivanja radnih i studijskih obveza). Prema Doolan i sur. (2014), studenti koji putuju na studij iz druge županije podzastupljena su skupina jer ne mogu biti prisutni na svim predavanjima zbog troškova puta, ali i neredovitih linija javnoga prijevoza. Studenti pripadnici romske manjine (podzastupljena su skupina u pogledu završetka osnovnoškolskoga obrazovanja, a oni koji upišu srednjoškolsko obrazovanje češće upisuju trogodišnje strukovno obrazovanje što čini prepreku nastavku školovanja na visokoškolskoj razini (Baranović, 2009), studenti LGBT orijentacije (češće su izloženi od studenata heteroseksualne orijentacije relacijskom i fizičkom nasilju). U posljednju podzastupljenu skupinu pripadaju studenti bez odgovarajuće roditeljske skrbi pri čemu im je studiranje onemogućeno zbog financijskih poteškoća.

S obzirom da je cilj socijalne dimenzije proširiti i omogućiti pristup studiranju svima, a osobito onima iz podzastupljenih skupina i da temeljem toga studentska populacija održava različitost europske populacije, važno je definirati koje su to prepreke koje treba ukloniti kako bi se taj cilj postigao. Prepreke strukturirano iznosi Farnell (2013). Tako npr. pripadnost nižem socioekonomskom sloju može rezultirati lošim obrazovanjem ili lošim uspjehom u srednjoškolskom obrazovanju, što dovodi do teškoća pri upisu u institucije visokoga obrazovanja, a potom kod pripadnika takvih skupina ljudi veća je mogućnost donošenja odluka o odustajanju od daljnega obrazovanja. Takva odsutnost motivacije za nastavak daljnega obrazovanja često prati i odsutnost podrške obitelji za nastavak obrazovanja. Druge prepreke obilježene su strukturnim preprekama: otežanim prijelazom iz nekih srednjih škola, upisnim politikama, financijskim poteškoćama, postojanju fizičkih barijera za studente s invaliditetom, nedostatku inkluzivnih metoda

za učenje te nedostatka akademskoga sustava podrške i dodatno, psihološke podrške. Kako bi se te prepreke ublažile ili riješile, potrebno je poduzimati mjere za povećanje pristupa obrazovanju i mjere koje se provode kako bi se završio studij. Mjere za povećanje pristupa obrazovanju odnose se na: a) financijsku podršku (stipendije i subvencije kojima se pokrивaju troškovi stanovanja ili školarina), b) porezne olakšice vezane uz studiranje, c) posebna financijska davanja za podzastupljene skupine. Druga grupa mjera odnosi se na mjere koje se provode kako bi se povećao broj onih koji upisani studij i završe. Ova grupa mjera uključuje: a) pružanje i osiguranje savjetovanja i usmjeravanja u školama i institucijama visokoga obrazovanja, b) pružanje usluga za društvenu dobrobit studenata: stanovanje, zdravstvene usluge, društvene i sportske aktivnosti, c) uvođenje i razvoj mentorstva, uvođenja osobnoga plana studiranja, d) alternativni načini stjecanja ECTS bodova, e) informiranje o različitim tečajevima (BFUG-WG, 2007, str. 41-42). Važno je studentima osigurati dostupno savjetovanje kao oblik formalne podrške kojim se jačaju kompetencije studenta i doprinosi uspješnom studiranju. Jakovčić, Živčić-Bećirević i Birovljević (2015) provele su istraživanje u okviru Psihološkog savjetovaništa Sveučilišta u Rijeci u kojem rezultati upućuju na značajno prosječno smanjenje teškoća (akademski problemi, anksiozna stanja, interpersonalni problemi i depresivnost) nakon provedenih tretmana u okviru savjetovanja. Depresivnosti i anksioznosti najčešći su simptomi psihološke nelagode studenata koji traže pomoć u Savjetovaništu. Slični rezultati proizlaze i iz istraživanja koje su proveli Monti, Tonetti & Bitti (2013) pri čemu su značajna poboljšanja primijećena kod većine sudionika istraživanja nakon provedenoga procesa savjetovanja. Iz opisanoga je vidljivo da se naglašava uloga pružanja socijalne podrške i različitih usluga savjetovanja, usmjeravanja, treninga jer navedena podrška može pomoći aktivnom suočavanju studenta s izazovima koji se javljaju za vrijeme studiranja i njihovom uspješnijem prevladavanju.

Izazovi studiranja

Rückert (2015) u svojem istraživanju navodi kako nakon bolonjske reforme u Europi, postoji veća izloženost stresorima studenata jer su očekivanja od strane okoline, ali i studenata sve veća. Zabilježeno je da studenti na europska sveučilišta dolaze s već postojećim mentalnim teškoćama i problemima prilagodbe zbog manjka podrške na prethodnim razinama obrazovanja što dovodi do veće učestalosti psihičkih tegoba među studentima u usporedbi s općom populacijom. Najučestalije teškoće su anksioznost i depresivnost. Zanimljivo je da se primjećuje i znatno viša stopa propisivanja antidepresivnih lijekova za studente u usporedbi s mladima iste dobi koji ne studiraju. Osim studenata u Europi, studenti u SAD-u također prednjače u pojavi psihičkih teškoća u odnosu na vršnjake koji ne studiraju. 37 % studenata u SAD-u u posljednjih godinu dana imalo je osjećaje anksioznosti, dok je 9 % izjavilo da je pokušalo samoubojstvo u nekom trenutku svojega života (Cepukiene i Pakrošnis, 2018). Poteškoće u obrazovanju mogu se pojaviti i na prethodnim razinama obrazovanja. Kao primjer može se navesti Indija koja ima jednu od najvećih svjetskih stopa samoubojstava među mladima koji pripadaju starosnoj

skupini od 15 do 29 godina. Glavni razlozi samoubojstva su: pritisak vršnjaka, strah od neuspjeha na ispitu, depresija, nezaposlenost i slično. Osobito u Indiji, mladi su pod velikim stresom, traumom i anksioznošću. Studenti se uče „biti savršeni“ i dobro disciplinirani, a od njih to žele i učitelji i roditelji. S ovom vrstom sustava studenti postaju manje kreativni i inovativni. Prema nedavnom izvještaju u časopisu *The Times of India*, u prosjeku 1 student počinu samoubojstvo svakih 55 minuta u Indiji. U posljednje tri godine više od 26 000 studenata počinilo je samoubojstva zbog stresa, tjeskobe i depresije. Savjetovanje kao psihosocijalna pomoć pomaže u savladavanju teškoća i izazova s kojima se studenti susreću tijekom obrazovanja. Kao važnost dostupnosti socijalne podrške, govori sve veći broj savjetovališta za mlade, a samim time i sve veći broj mladih koji se javljaju za pomoć u savjetovališta (Nalanda International School, 2020). Istraživanja u Hrvatskoj pokazuju da studenti najviše iskazuju smetnje depresije i anksioznosti, zlorporabe sredstava ovisnosti i poremećaje hranjenja i smetnje učenja, tjeskoba vezana uz studij, nezadovoljstvo studijem i nedostatak motivacije, problemi u socijalnim odnosima, napetost i opće nezadovoljstvo, nezadovoljstvo sobom i vlastitim izgledom, osjećaj neprimjerenosti, ljubavni i seksualni problemi (Bezinović, Pokrajac-Bulian, Smojver-Ažić i Živčić-Bećirević, 1998.; Jokić-Begić i Čuržik, 2014; Lenz, Vinković i Degmečić, 2016). Jokić-Begić i Čuržik (2014) također navode da se 75 % studenata suočava s prolaznim tegobama tjeskobe, nesigurnosti i napetosti, a ne baš zanemariv broj njih, 25 % s težim psihičkim poteškoćama. Istraživanje Lenza i sur. (2016) provedeno je na uzorku od 200 studenata Medicinskog fakulteta i Pravnog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Osijeku. Rezultati su pokazali da je prevalencija anksioznosti i depresije veća od opće populacije, da je socijalna fobija u studentskoj populaciji učestalija nego li u općoj populaciji, da studenti ponavljači imaju veću prevalenciju anksioznosti od neponavljača te da je kod studenata koji ponavljaju godinu dva ili tri puta učestalija prevalencija anksioznosti i depresije.

Razdoblje studiranja je i razdoblje u kojem studenti uviđaju pozitivne i negativne strane pristupa nekom problemu, proširuju svoje stavove i vrijednosti te stječu moralna uvjerenja. Promjena se događa i unutar njih samih – razvijaju bolje poimanje sebe, jačaju samopoštovanje i stječu čvršći osjećaj identiteta (Berk, 2007). Međutim to se zbiva u kontekstu životnoga izazova koje donosi studiranje. U prvoj fazi studiranja to je prilagodba na nove grupe ljudi, drugačiji način učenja, rasporeda vremena, provjeravanja ishoda naučenoga, ispunjavanja osobnih očekivanja, ali i očekivanja vršnjaka, obitelji i prijatelja. Kod nekih studenata prilagodba se odnosi i na odlazak iz obiteljskoga doma i rodnoga mjesta i stjecanje neovisnosti i samostalnoga upravljanja vremenom i novcem, stvaranja novih socijalnih veza. Iako su ovi procesi karakteristični za prvu godinu studija, oni se mogu dogoditi i u bilo kojoj kasnijoj godini studija (npr. promjenom studija, preseljenjem). U završnoj fazi, na kraju studija, kreću osjećaji neizvjesnosti oko zaposlenja i novoga vida samostalnosti, eventualnoga povratka u obiteljski dom (Jokić-Begić 2012; Živčić-Bećirević i Jakovčić, 2013) U studiji Kovčo Vukadin (2016) navedeni su rezultati istraživanja procjene potreba studenata za

podrškom tijekom studija na Sveučilištu u Zagrebu. Istraživanje je provedeno 2012. godine i rezultati pokazuju kako je, u smislu samoprocjene ometajućih čimbenika tijekom studiranja, utvrđeno sljedećih pet skupina poteškoća (Drusany, Ajduković, Divjak, Jokić-Begić, Kranželić i Rimac, 2012): poteškoće prilagodbe na akademske zahtjeve (npr. tjeskoba vezana uz polaganje ispita, javna izlaganja, velika količina gradiva za učenje, zaostaci na studiju, nedostatak vremena...), poteškoće psihosocijalne prilagodbe (npr. nezadovoljstvo socijalnim životom, neprihvatanje od strane kolega, poteškoće prilagodbe mjestu studiranja...), preispitivanje izbora struke (npr. sumnja u pravilan izbor studija, nesigurnost u vezi s budućom karijerom, uvid da ga ta struka ne zanima...), opterećenost vanjskim obvezama/okolnostima (npr. financijski problemi, posao koji radim uz studij, obiteljski problemi/okolnosti, loši uvjeti za učenje...) i zdravstvene teškoće i invaliditet (npr. tjelesni invaliditet, oštećenje vida, disleksija, kronična bolest, psihička bolest ili smetnja). Tijekom studiranja dolazi do različitih životnih promjena (razvod roditelja ili vlastitoga braka ili prekid ljubavne veze; osobne bolesti, bolesti člana obitelji ili čak smrti; neočekivanih financijskih poteškoća), kao i problema u akademskim postignućima: slabiji uspjeh od očekivanoga, nemogućnost savladavanja nekog kolegija, pad godine, pad motivacije i sl., strah od javnoga nastupa povezan sa slabijim rezultatom na usmenom ispitu ili seminaru (Jokić-Begić, 2012; Živčić-Bećirević, Smojver-Ažić, Kukić i Jasprica, 2007; Drusany, Ajduković, Divjak, Jokić-Begić, Kranželić i Rimac, 2012; Živčić-Bećirević i Jakovčić, 2013). Ponekad je problem i u samom pogrešnom odabiru studija što može predstavljati kronični stresor (Hudek-Kenžević i Kardum, 2006). Sve ovo predstavlja stresore za studenta koji utječu na kvalitetu života i akademska postignuća (Kurtović, 2013) te zahtijeva individualnu prilagodbu studenata. Kad prilagodba nije uspješna i efikasna, može prouzročiti negativne posljedice na psihičko i fizičko zdravlje studenta te dovesti do razmišljanja o odustajanju, ili u konačnici, do odustajanja od studija, a isto tako utjecati na akademska postignuća. Jedan postotak mladih odustaje od studija i to ne zbog kognitivnih mogućnosti, već zbog poteškoća u prilagodbi – „nedostatka motivacije, loših vještina studiranja, financijskih pritisaka ili emocionalne ovisnosti o roditeljima” (Berk, 2007, str. 436). Pri tome, *prilagodbu* bi „u njenom širem smislu mogli shvatiti kao sklad ili ravnotežu između zahtjeva i potreba pojedinca i okoline” (Ivanov, 2008, str. 1), a govoreći o prilagodbi na studij, možemo govoriti o *akademskoj, emocionalnoj i socijalnoj prilagodbi*. Pri tome se akademska prilagodba odnosi na prilagodbu zahtjevima studija (pristup učenju, ispitima, organizacija vremena, izvršavanje drugih akademskih obveza), emocionalna prilagodba na psihičke procese koje prate vrijeme studiranja, dok se socijalna odnosi na uspostavljanje i održavanje socijalne mreže na fakultetu i izvan njega (Živčić-Bećirević i sur., 2007). Ovako strukturirana prilagodba na studij može se lako operacionalizirati i pratiti (npr. akademska kroz akademski uspjeh, broj položenih ispita, kontinuitet ili diskontinuitet u napredovanju kroz studij). Emocionalna prilagodba može se pratiti kroz osjećaje zadovoljstva kvalitetom života, zadovoljstva studijem te prisutnosti psihičkih poteškoća (depresivnosti, anksioznosti, stresa, zabrinutosti kao i

prisutnosti somatskih poteškoća). Socijalna se prilagodba manifestira kroz uključenost u aktivnosti u studentskim udrugama, ostvarenju interakcije s kolegama na godini, kao i sudjelovanju u izvannastavnim aktivnostima i druženjima u studentskim krugovima. O ulozi cjelokupne prilagodbe na studij provedeno je više istraživanja koja pokazuju da emocionalna i socijalna prilagodba utječu na uspjeh u studiju, kao i eventualno odustajanje od studija u slučaju poteškoća s prilagodbom (Živčić-Bećirević i sur., 2007). Iz navedenoga proizlazi kako je emocionalna, odnosno socijalna prilagodba neposredno povezana s uspjehom na fakultetu i/ili odustajanjem od studija. Ishod dobre prilagodbe ovisit će i o mogućnosti zadovoljenja osobnih potreba i očekivanja drugih od osobe. Kada diskrepanca između potreba pojedinca i situacijskih uvjeta postane prevelika za osobu, pojedinac će, ako je to moguće, napustiti takav sustav, a ako nije u mogućnosti napustiti taj sustav ili djelovati na osobnu promjenu prilagodbom, vjerojatno je da će ostati posljedice na njegovom osobnom sustavu ili podsustavima i s određenim biološkim posljedicama. Takav povećani ili dugotrajni stres lako uzrokuje depresiju ili anksioznost koji „interferira s procesima mišljenja i rješavanja problema i na taj se način smanjuje efikasnost osobe za nošenje sa situacijom.” (Ivanov, 2008, str. 1-2).

Faktore koji utječu na prilagodbu možemo pratiti kao osobne i okolinske. Osobni se vežu ponajviše uz psihološke osobine poput samopoštovanja, samopouzdanja, atribucije uzročnosti, vještine nošenja sa stresom i sl., a okolinski se odnose na obiteljske odnose, dotadašnje uvjete života i povijest osobe te stresove s kojima se osoba putem suočila, socijalnu podršku obitelji, prijatelja, akademske zajednice te značajke institucije (Baker, 2004 prema Živčić-Bećirević i sur., 2007). Slično navodi i Ivanov (2008), prilagodba i ishodi prilagodbe ovise o evaluaciji vlastitih kompetencija, socijalnoj podršci i materijalnim uvjetima koji su osobi na raspolaganju te karakteru okoline s kojom je u interakciji (ispunjavanje očekivanih uloga). Tijekom studiranja, nerijetko se dogodi razočaranje i sumnja u vlastite kompetencije i znanja. Suočavanje s težim zadacima, zahtjevima studija i okoline mogu dovesti pojedinca do gubitka kontrole nad vlastitim sposobnostima. Kada pojedinac nije u mogućnosti sam razriješiti teškoće, oslanja se na pomoć drugih, njemu bliskih osoba. Međutim, događa se da osobe koje imaju teškoće nisu u mogućnosti potražiti pomoć od strane bliskih osoba. Takve situacije mogu dovesti do teškoća u studiju, odustajanja od studija te na kraju općega nezadovoljstva samim sobom. U psihologiji je poznato da osjećaj kontrole nad ponašanjem, okolinom, mislima i osjećajima doprinose dobroj prilagodbi. Naime, predvidljivost i mogućnost kontroliranja životnih situacija daju ljudima mogućnost da budu sposobniji nositi se sa životnim izazovima, stresom, izgrađivati zdrave odnose i postići osobno zadovoljstvo (Ivanov, 2008).

Iako je važnost prilagodbe najveća u prvoj godini studija, treba upozoriti da se smetnje i poteškoće mogu javiti i kasnije tijekom studija, neovisno o prilagodbi u prvoj godini studija. One mogu biti prolazne, ali u nekim slučajevima, ovisno o više faktora o kojima je do sada već bilo riječi, mogu postati i trajne. Također je poznato da se psihički poremećaji stečeni u ranijoj životnoj fazi prenose u odraslu dob (Jokić-

Begić i Čuržik, 2014). Isti autori navode da se studenti u Hrvatskoj u savjetovališta najčešće javljaju zbog poteškoća s učenjem i emocionalnim problemima. Često su ta dva problema povezana, npr. poteškoće u učenju zapravo su posljedica dubljih emocionalnih problema ili pak loš akademski uspjeh uzrokuje emotivne poteškoće.

Uz opisane psihofizičke poteškoće koje se mogu javiti kao posljedica neuspješne prilagodbe, moguć je i odustanak od studija. Statistika govori da nije mali broj studenata koji ispadaju iz visokoškolskoga sustava (na hrvatskoj i europskoj razini), a najčešće se to događa u prvoj godini studija. Mihaljević Kosor (2010) prikazuje dvije grupe teorija obrazloženja odustajanja od studija. Prvoj grupi pripada Tintov model (1975) i teorija Beana i Metznera (1985). Tintov model *Student Integration Model* (1975) govori o odustajanju zbog neuspješne socijalne i akademske integracije. Prema toj teoriji, studenti upisuju studij u skladu sa svojim ciljevima, uvjerenjima i namjerama. Spol, dob, obiteljske karakteristike i prethodno obrazovanje i vještine važne su za razvoj odluke ostanka ili odustajanja od studija. Tijekom studiranja, početni ciljevi i namjere mijenjaju se ovisno o sustavnim procesima koji se odnose na postizanje akademskoga uspjeha te odnosa s kolegama i akademskim osobljem. Što je veća integracija, bolja akademska postignuća i odnosi sa zajednicom, veća je mogućnost završetka studija. Ovoj je teoriji upućena kritika da stavlja preveliki naglasak na socijalnu integraciju i da nije prikladna za nove kategorije studenata koji nisu toliko uklopljeni u akademsku zajednicu (starije studente; studente roditelje; studente koji uče na daljinu; studente koji studiraju u inozemstvu), pa je vrijedno spomenuti i teoriju Beana i Metznera iz 1985. koja više stavlja naglasak na okolinske faktore izvan akademske zajednice, kao što su obiteljske obveze, radno vrijeme, financijske mogućnosti i prijevoz. Prema njima, na odluku o ostanku na studiju utječu akademska postignuća, namjera odustajanja, osobne karakteristike studenta, okolina, prethodno obrazovanje (Mihaljević Kosor, 2010). Ciljevi visokoobrazovnih ustanova trebali bi prije svega omogućiti adekvatne uvjete za studiranje, ali i zadržavanje na studiju uz mogućnost nastavka školovanja i nakon završetka studija uz pružanje formalne podrške i kvalitetan sadržaj.

Drugi tip teorija koje objašnjavaju odustajanje od studija odnose se na pogled iz teorija humanoga kapitala. Prema tim teorijama, student će ostati na studiju dok god vrijednosti očekivanih koristi nadmašuju vrijednost očekivanih troškova. Pri tome, očekivana korist može biti materijalnoga tipa poput bolje plaće nakon završetka studija ili nematerijalna kao bolji društveni status ili bolji radni uvjeti. Materijalni troškovi odnose se na troškove studija ili izgubljene plaće koje bi se ostvarile da se ušlo u svijet rada, a nematerijalni su npr. psihičkoga tipa (depresija, nezadovoljstvo, gubitak slobodnoga vremena, stres i sl.). Prema Mihaljević Kosor (2010), u konačnici ovi se modeli ne razlikuju previše u operacionalizaciji, no to upravo potvrđuje da je za prilagodbu studiju vrlo važan cjelokupan odnos osobe i njezine okoline (akademske i neakademske). Navedeno nas vraća na cilj rada i promatranje važnosti akademske socijalne podrške i usluge stručnoga savjetovanja za studente na svim akademskim razinama.

Socijalna podrška i njezina uloga za studente tijekom studiranja

Postoji više definicija socijalne podrške i konteksta u kojem se promatra (sociološki, psihološki, antropološki i sl.) (Hudek-Knežević i Kardum, 2006, Milić Babić, 2010). Hudek-Knežević i Kardum (2006) donose nekoliko definicija: „broj socijalnih kontakata ili veličina socijalne mreže koju neka osoba ima” (Berkman i Syme, 1979), „resursi koje nam daju drugi ljudi“ (Cohen i Syme, 1985), „pomoć pri suočavanju sa stresom” (Thoits, 1986). Sarafino (2002 prema Milić Babić, 2019). govori o pet vrsta socijalne podrške: emocionalnoj, instrumentalnoj, informacijskoj, podršci u vidu poštovanja i mreži podrške. Pri tome, emocionalna podrška odnosi se na davanje ili primanje brige, ljubavi i/ili povjerenja, empatije. Instrumentalna podrška odnosi se na konkretnu pomoć u poslu, iskazivanju brige, plaćanju računa i sl. Informacijska podrška uključuje savjete i upute koji mogu biti korišteni u suočavanju s osobnim i okolinskim problemima. Podrška u vidu poštovanja uključuje pozitivan odnos prema drugoj osobi, uvažavanje tuđih mišljenja, osjećaja i sl., dok se mreža podrške odnosi na osjećaj pripadnosti grupi unutar koje se dijele zajednički interesi i aktivnosti. Koji će tip podrške biti važniji u nekoj situaciji ovisi o samoj situaciji i osobinama osoba koje su u interakciji (Hudek-Knežević i Kardum, 2006; Ivanov, 2008). Socijalna podrška može se promatrati i kao konstrukt koji uključuje fizičku i instrumentalnu pomoć, raspodjelu resursa i dijeljenje informacija te emocionalnu i psihološku pomoć koju pojedinci pružaju jedni drugima ili koju ustanove i organizacije pružaju osobi ili obitelji (Milić Babić, 2010). Definiranje socijalne podrške pomaže nam u pojašnjavanju važnosti podrške kolega, profesora, obitelji, prijatelja te institucionalno organiziranih službi za podršku studentima, a koje su posredno povezane s kvalitetom studentskoga života. Govoreći o takvim izvorima podrške, možemo razlikovati *neformalnu* i *formalnu* podršku. Neformalna je podrška ona koja se prima od članova obitelji, prijatelja i bliskih osoba, dok je formalna stručna podrška koja se pruža u vidu određenih grupa ili institucija (poput savjetovaništa, grupa za podršku, specijaliziranih edukacijskih grupa) (Milić Babić, 2010). Uloga je socijalne podrške zaštita od negativnih efekata stresnih događaja. Djeluje tako da može (1) smanjiti pojavnost stresnoga događaja osnaživanjem pojedinca, (2) utjecati na percepciju nekog događaja (je li kontrolabilan ili ne, je li više ili manje stresan), (3) može umanjiti stres – pružanjem psihičke i emotivne podrške osoba se smiruje ili se pak ponudi rješenje za problem i time djeluje na njegovo rješavanje (Hudek-Knežević i Kardum, 2006). Utjecaj može biti izravan i neizravan; izravan se odnosi na kognitivne promjene u procesu suočavanja ili percepcije stresora, a neizravan na učinke emotivne podrške koji se održavaju u rastu samopoštovanja osobe te vlastitih procjena samoeфикаsnosti (Ivanov, 2008). Kao takva, socijalna podrška pomaže prilagodbi na različite situacije u životu, a također i na izazove studija. Uloga neformalne podrške za studente je značajna, osobito podrška obitelji, međutim zbog procesa odvajanja od obitelji i osamostaljivanja studenata, potrebno je intenzivno razmišljati o formalnoj

podršci. Uz stvarnu socijalnu podršku koja se ostvaruje, važna je i percipirana socijalna podrška. Percepcija o dostupnim osobama na koje se možemo osloniti te procjena stupnja zadovoljstva koje pruža dostupna podrška, pokazale su se značajnijim prediktorom stresa u odnosu na stvarno dostupnu i pruženu podršku - osobe uistinu prisutne u socijalnoj mreži pojedinca (Milić Babić, 2010.).

Zbog važnosti socijalne podrške, precipirane i realne, na studijima je potrebno imati i formalne sustave za podršku studentima - od informativne, materijalne do savjetovanišne, o čemu upravo govori uvodno opisana socijalna dimenzija visokoga obrazovanja. Student kojemu će se pri upisu na studij dati informacije o studiju, studentskom prostoru, načinu vrednovanja rada, preporučenom načinu studiranja; na početku kolegija dati jasna pravila i očekivanja te ishode učenja - što je sve informativni vid socijalne podrške, steći će osjećaj sigurnosti u novonastaloj situaciji. Materijalni vid socijalne podrške ostvaruje se kroz različite stipendije, sudjelovanje učilišta u iznosu trošarina studijskih programa, olakšica za siromašnije studente, osiguravanju sredstava za asistenta u nastavi kao pomoćnika studentu s teškoćama i sl. Emocionalni vid socijalne podrške davat će ponajprije obitelj, prijatelji i možda partner u vezi. Formalna socijalna podrška u visokom obrazovanju najčešće se ostvaruje kroz organizirana stručna savjetovaništa i kroz njihove usluge odgovora se na probleme u akademskoj prilagodbi, psihičke probleme ili pripreme za tržište rada. Tako se govori o akademskom, psihološkom i karijernom savjetovanju. Akademsko savjetovanje odnosi se na pomoć oko snalaženja na studiju, osobito na prvoj godini pružajući pomoć oko vještina učenja, pisanja i izlaganja seminarskih radova, poticanja motivacije te davanja općih informacija o studiju i studentskom životu (npr. korištenju zdravstvenih usluga, uključivanju u studentske udruge...). Psihološko savjetovanje može pomoći kod psihičkih poteškoća s kojima se javljaju studenti (Sveučilište u Zagrebu, 2014; Eyuridice, 2019 a, b). Karijerno savjetovanje usmjereno je na bolje razumijevanje vlastitih kompetencija, interesa, osobnih karakteristika s ciljem donošenja kvalitetnijih odluka o izboru studija te upisa odgovarajućih studenata, stjecanje vještina traženja posla, priprema za tržište rada (Đorđević, 2017). Savjetovanje pomaže tako što se interakcijom između korisnika i savjetnika određuje cilj i plan rješavanja problema. Savjetnici koji provode savjetovanja prošli su kroz profesionalno obrazovanje i dodatno usavršavanje te „pomažu pojedincima postići veću svijest o sebi, odrediti smjer vlastitog života i rada, povećati razumijevanje mogućnosti u učenju i poslu, te naučiti usmjeravati se u upravljanju učenjem, poslom i promjenama u karijeri” (Vlada RH, 2015, str. 5,6).

U ostalim europskim zemljama usluge dostupne studentima mogu uključivati savjetovanje, savjeti za mentalno zdravlje studenata, konzultacije i dogovori za ispite, mentorstvo i vršnjačku podršku. U prosincu 2016., Sveučilišta u Velikoj Britaniji pokrenula su program rada koji se bavi mentalnim zdravljem i dobrobiti kako studenata tako i osoblja na sveučilištima. Programom je financiran projekt koji je rezultirao publikacijom Instituta za istraživanje javnih politika iz rujna 2017. U kontekstu sve veće potražnje za uslugama podrške i savjetovanja za studente, preporuke izvještaja uključivale su

sljedeće: sektor visokoga obrazovanja trebao bi kolektivno usvojiti mentalno zdravlje i dobrobit studenata kao prioritetno pitanje, s tim da pojedine institucije razvijaju vlastite „sveučilišne” pristupe koji su podložni reviziji, Vlada bi trebala uvesti novi Fond za zdravlje studenata, pokrenuti novu digitalnu studentsku zdravstvenu putovnicu za poboljšanje kontinuiteta zdravstvene zaštite i liječenja među studentima koji se kreću između kuće i sveučilišta (European Commission, 2019). Sveučilišta u Velikoj Britaniji također su pokrenula okvir „Korak promjena” kao dio programa. Okvir je dizajniran za podršku starijim timovima u ustanovama visokoga obrazovanja u usvajanju čitavog sveučilišnoga pristupa mentalnom zdravlju. Preporuča da sveučilišta usko surađuju s Nacionalnom zdravstvenom službom (NHS) kako bi razmotrili na koji način bi se usluge mentalnoga zdravlja trebale usvojiti i usmjeriti studentskoj populaciji. U lipnju 2018. sveučilišni ministar u Vladi Velike Britanije najavio je izradu Povelje o mentalnom zdravlju koja uključuje nove standarde za promicanje mentalnoga zdravlja i dobrobiti studenata i osoblja na sveučilištima u Velikoj Britaniji. Osnovana je i radna grupa pod vodstvom Odjela za obrazovanje u Engleskoj koja će procijeniti potrebe studenata u tranziciji prilikom odlaska na sveučilište i izlaska i osigurati im podršku (European Commission, 2019).

U zemljama poput Velike Britanije, Irske, Njemačke i Austrije psihološko savjetovanje smatra se uobičajenim za mlade ljude. U zemljama u kojima studenti tradicionalno upisuju visoko obrazovanje u starijoj dobi, oni se smatraju odraslima i očekuje se da će se sami pobrinuti za sebe (Rücker, 2015). Način organiziranja savjetovanja, razina kompetencije i kvalifikacije savjetnika uvelike se razlikuju u različitim sektorima, institucijama i državama (Rücker, 2015). Dok u nekim državama sveučilišta imaju obvezu pružanja savjetovanja, u drugim državama mnoge privatne udruge ili nevladine organizacije pružaju savjetovanje studentima, posebno u zemljama s visokim zahtjevima u visokom obrazovanju. U Njemačkoj i Austriji razvijen je program studentskih udruženja u kojima studenti sami pružaju psihosocijalnu podršku kolegama i vršnjacima tijekom studiranja. Zbog nedostatka kvalificiranoga kompetentnog kadra, postoji velik broj volontera savjetnika preko kojih je omogućena psihosocijalna podrška. Ortenburger (2013) navodi kako u Njemačkoj 74 % studenata navodi prednosti studentskoga savjetovanja i smatra ga korisnim.

O potrebi socijalne podrške među studentima u Republici Hrvatskoj rađeno je nekoliko istraživanja. Istraživanje u sklopu IPA 4 projekta „Unapređivanje kvalitete studiranja za skupine studenata u nepovoljnom položaju kroz usluge studentskih savjetovanih službi” (2013-2015). Istraživanjem je zahvaćeno 9 962 studenata prve godine studija s 33 hrvatskih fakulteta i sveučilišta. Rezultati su pokazali da ti studenti smatraju važnima informacije o studiranju (85,2 %), razvoj akademskih vještina (80,5 %), razvoj socijalnih i komunikacijskih vještina (78,4 %), suočavanje sa stresom (70,0 %), vještine organizacije vremena (70,4 %), vještine razvoja karijera (78,8 %), savjetovanje (72,9 %), podršku studentima s poteškoćama (33,3 %) te ostale aktivnosti poput sportskih aktivnosti, razvoj kreativnosti, socijalnih kontakata s drugim studentima

(62,0 %) (Divjak, 2015). Istraživanje procjena potreba za podrškom tijekom studiranja (Drusany i sur., 2012) obuhvatilo je 1 150 studenata Sveučilišta u Zagrebu. Rezultati su pokazali veliku potrebu za podrškom vezanom uz akademske poteškoće (53,3 %), ali i pomoć oko organiziranja vremena i obaveza (51,5 %), komunikacijskih vještina (55,3 %). Od načina usluga koje bi im odgovarale najviše je istaknuto sljedeće: individualno savjetovanje, informacije na mrežnom portalu, radionice te *online* tečajevi. Ovo je istraživanje pokazalo da je najveća potreba za akademskim i karijernim savjetovanjem. No, istraživanje stavova studenata Sveučilišta u Zagrebu prema korištenju psihološke pomoći (Ostović, Težak, Tkalčević i Lugomer Armano, 2012) na uzorku od 1614 studenata sa 17 fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu pokazalo je da 96,3 % smatra da je potrebno osigurati besplatnu psihološku pomoć te da bi 50,8 % koristilo istu kada bi im bila dostupna. Problem dostupnosti pokazalo je i istraživanje o zadovoljstvu studenata studijskim programima i spremnosti za tržište rada (Mrnjavac i Pivac, 2015) - pokazalo se da studenti ocjenjuju dostupnost savjetodavnih službi potpore s ocjenom 1 do 3 (ljestvica od 1 do 5).

Socijalna podrška kroz savjetovanje i savjetovališta na sveučilištima i veleučilištima u Republici Hrvatskoj

Zbog svijesti o važnosti jačanja socijalne dimenzije s podkategorijom organiziranja socijalne podrške studentima, kao i važnosti savjetovališta, u Republici Hrvatskoj organizirana su studentska savjetovališta na svim hrvatskim sveučilištima, usmjerena prvenstveno na pružanje psihološkoga i karijernoga savjetovanja, dok je akademsko savjetovanje prisutno u njihovom radu. Osim na sveučilištima, podrška studentima omogućena je preko savjetovališta i na veleučilištima. Na primjer, na Veleučilištu Velike Gorice u čijem radu Savjetovališta za studente sudjeluju stručnjaci za ljudske potencijale, pedagozi, psiholozi, nastavnici Veleučilišta i mentori po godinama studija. U rad Savjetovališta za studente mogu se uključiti motivirani studenti u funkcijama i uvjetima koje će odrediti Veleučilište Velika Gorica (Veleučilište Velika Gorica, 2020). Veleučilište u Požegi studentima pruža podršku putem karijernoga savjetovanja usmjerenoga na koordinaciju i sustavno pružanje podrške studentima Veleučilišta u Požegi u području razvoja vještina upravljanja karijerom. Postoji i Savjetovalište za djecu i mladež u koje se mogu uključiti svi koji imaju poteškoća s učenjem, komunikacijom, ovisnosti, ponašanjem i slično (Veleučilište u Požegi, 2020).

U procesima vrednovanja rada sveučilišta tzv. reakreditacije koju u Republici Hrvatskoj provodi Agencija za znanost i visoko obrazovanje vrednovanje usmjereno je i na promatranje dostupnosti savjetovališne podrške pri sveučilištu tzv. savjetovališni uredi (centri) za psihološka i karijerna savjetovanja te se daju preporuke ako nisu uspostavljeni ili nisu dobro organizirani (AZVO, 2017). Njihov ustroj i rad također se prati kroz nacionalna izvješća europskih zemalja koja se objavljuju na stranicama Eyuridice, pod rubrikom *usmjeravanje i savjetovanje*. U tim izvješćima vidljivo je da većina zemalja pruža akademsko i psihološko i karijerno savjetovanje. Prema hrvatskom nacionalnom

izvješću za Eyuridice iz 2018. godine, u Hrvatskoj akademsko usmjeravanje pružaju najčešće asistenti i druge osobe određene za mentorstvo. Psihološko savjetovanje održava se u posebnim savjetovalištima organiziranim za cijelo sveučilište ili na pojedinim fakultetima te posebnim vanjskim institucijama (navedene kao klinike za studente). Karijerno usmjeravanje pruža se u posebnim institucijama, često kroz radionice za pisanje životopisa i molbi za posao te spajanje s poslodavcima (Eyuridice c, 2018).

Tijekom posljednjega desetljeća provedena su istraživanja i projekti kojima se analizirao rad savjetovališta, procjenjivalo potrebe studenata, ali i davalo preporuke za unaprjeđenje savjetovališta i centara za rad sa studentima. Neka od njih su: *E-quality (2013-2015)* (IRO a), *ECAS (2007-2009)* (IRO b), *CAREER (2005-2006)* (IRO c), *PLASD (2012-2015)* (IRO d), *WISE (2014-2016)* (Pilato, V., 2018), *Istraživanje procjene potreba studenata za podrškom tijekom studiranja* (Drusany i sur. 2012), *Eduquality (2009-2012)*, *Unipsinet – razvoj mreže sveučilišnih službi i unaprjeđenje skrbi o psihološkom zdravlju studenata* (2012) (Badovinac Škrinjar, 2013), *Tempus Ducas (2008)* (Živčić-Bećirević i Jakovčić, 2013) te više istraživanja provedenih na Sveučilištu u Rijeci (Živčić-Bećirević i Jakovčić, 2013). Nedostatak u pružanju podrške studentima tijekom studiranja očituje se u tome što na Sveučilištu u Zagrebu nije ustrojeno psihološko savjetovalište, već ono postoji na nekim sastavnicama, dok na većini sastavnica ne postoji. Psihološka pomoć nije jednako dostupna svim studentima, što ih stavlja u neravnopravan položaj. U akademskoj godini 2011./2012. u savjetovalištu je registrirano 4 710 posjeta studenata, a razlozi dolaska su u najvećoj mjeri bili vezani uz reproduktivno zdravlje, kronične bolesti i mentalno zdravlje. (Sveučilište u Zagrebu, 2014.)

Od osobite je važnosti za razvoj socijalne podrške studentima Nacionalni plan za unaprjeđenje socijalne dimenzije visokoga obrazovanja u Republici Hrvatskoj (2019-2021) (Vlada RH, 2019). Nacionalni plan ističe potrebu razvijanja sustava studentskoga savjetovanja pa se tako uz psihološko savjetovanje preporuča uspostava karijernoga, financijskoga, akademskoga savjetovanja kao i specifične individualizirane podrške studentima s invaliditetom. Nacionalni plan za unaprjeđenje socijalne dimenzije visokoga obrazovanja u Republici Hrvatskoj (2019-2021) pod ciljem 3 – *Omogućiti jednake prilike svim studentima* navodi sljedeće aktivnosti: „uspostaviti sustav savjetovanja na visokim učilištima sa sljedećim elementima: psihološko savjetovanje; karijerno i financijsko savjetovanje; akademsko savjetovanje; savjetovanje i potpora studentima s invaliditetom” (Vlada RH, 2019, str. 11), dok se u cilju 4 - *Podići stopu završavanja studija i zapošljavanja podzastupljenih skupina nakon završetka studija predstavlja podcilj* „Organizirati aktivnosti centara za potporu studentima (akademsko i psihološko savjetovanje, savjetovanje za razvoj karijere, studentske prakse) koji pomažu studentima u postizanju kompetencija potrebnih za završavanje studija i rani razvoj karijere”. (Vlada RH, 2019). To se želi ostvariti kroz aktivnosti „početna analiza stanja i potreba na visokim učilištima, financijska potpora visokim učilištima koji su osnovali centre i uložili vlastita sredstva kako bi se dalje razvili i umrežili te stvaranje mreže centara u RH kako bi se razvili i razmijenili programi, materijali za edukaciju te objedinili

virtualni resursi” (Vlada RH, 2019, str. 13). U Cilju 6-*Uključiti standarde vezane uz unaprjeđivanje socijalne dimenzije visokog obrazovanja u sustav osiguravanja kvalitete*, potiče se donošenje akata kako bi se provele opisane mjere te ustroj odgovarajućih tijela koja osiguravaju podršku (Vlada RH, 2019, str. 20-21). U 2019. godini kao potpora mjerama ovoga nacionalnog plana pokrenut je projekt SIDERAL (*Social and International Dimension of Education and Recognition of Acquired Learning*) (MZO, 2019), u sklopu kojeg se financira rad Savjetodavne skupine za socijalnu dimenziju Europske skupine za praćenje bolonjskoga procesa (BFUG Advisory Group on Social Dimension) koja ima veliku ulogu u jačanju socijalne dimenzije u području europskih obrazovnih politika. To pokazuje da je pravo vrijeme za unaprjeđenje rada visokih učilišta i njihovih sustava socijalne podrške. Tamo gdje savjetovaništa nisu uspostavljena, prilika je da se što prije uspostave, a gdje već jesu, moguće je raditi na širenju usluga i razvoju aktivnosti. Dobrobit njihove uspostave trebala bi se odraziti na kvalitetu studija, uspješniji proces studiranja, lakše ostvarenje ishoda učenja, ali i većem zadovoljstvu studenata – kako studijem tako i osobnim životom. Posljedično u društvu to može rezultirati uspješnom, visokoobrazovanom i kvalificiranom radnom snagom, koja može biti temelj kvalitetnijega i naprednijega društva.

Zaključak

Studentsko razdoblje je vrijeme koje donosi izazove prilagodbe na studij, ustrajnosti u učenju i prevladavanju raznih poteškoća koje se javljaju tijekom studiranja te strahove i nesigurnosti oko svega što slijedi po završetku studija. Većinu tih izazova student može riješiti sam, no uvelike mu u tome može pomoći sustav formalne socijalne podrške organiziran na visokom učilištu. Razvoj takvih sustava podrške potiču i europske politike visokoga obrazovanja, osobito u području socijalne dimenzije visokog obrazovanja. Hrvatska prati taj razvoj te su u Hrvatskoj na svim sveučilištima, i mnogim veleučilištima organizirana savjetovaništa. Pozitivan smjer ovoga razvoja može se iščitati i u donošenju akata kao što su Nacionalni plan za unaprjeđenje socijalne dimenzije visokog obrazovanja u Republici Hrvatskoj (2019-2021) (Vlada RH, 2019) te Strategija cjeloživotnog profesionalnog usmjeravanja (CPU) i razvoja karijere 2016. – 2020. (Vlada RH, 2015). Time je Hrvatska stala uz bok s drugim EU zemljama koje promiču pozitivnu praksu socijalne dimenzije visokoga obrazovanja kroz jačanje formalnih službi podrške. Tako će se omogućiti studentima veća kvaliteta života, veće zadovoljstvo sobom i studijem te uspješnijim završetkom studija. Jedan od prijedloga za unaprjeđenje formalne podrške studentima bio bi uvesti program studentskih udruženja preko kojih bi studentima bila omogućena podrška između njih samih. Naravno, međusobno savjetovanje studenata bilo bi omogućeno nakon prethodno provedenih edukacija i vježbi s educiranim mentorima preko kojih bi studenti stekli dodatna znanja i kompetencije za provođenje vršnjačkoga savjetovanja. Nadalje, nužno bi bilo unaprijediti već postojeća *online* savjetovanja tako da pristup bude omogućen za sve studente, uključujući studente u podzastupljenim skupinama

(studente s invaliditetom, studente u radnom odnosu, studente u ruralnim krajevima i ostale prethodno spomenute skupine). U suradnji s tehničkim službama, upravama fakulteta i udrugama moguće bi bilo organizirati adekvatni prostor za pružanje usluge savjetovanja za one studente koji nemaju pristup internetu na svim (ili barem većini) sveučilišta i veleučilišta u Republici Hrvatskoj kako bi se unaprijedila formalna podrška za sve studente u Republici Hrvatskoj. Nadalje, nužno bi bilo educirati nastavno osoblje za provođenje savjetovanja u sustavu visokoga obrazovanja na sveučilištima i veleučilištima na kojima oblik savjetovanja kao pružanja psihosocijalne podrške ne postoji. Također, nužno bi bilo učiniti formalnu podršku vidljivom kroz jasan sustav informiranja studenata o oblicima savjetovanja koji se nude na pojedinom sveučilištu ili veleučilištu i dodatno na sastavnici studija koju pohađa. U konačnici, postojanje studentskih savjetovašta i sustava socijalne podrške treba sagledavati šire i staviti u kontekst društvene skrbi za dobrobit cjelokupnoga društva kroz jačanje kapaciteta svih kategorija studenata da razvojem svojih potencijala doprinesu društvu, koristeći svoj ljudski, socijalni i ekonomski kapital. Upravo time možemo postići napredak u prevenciji negativnih akademskih ishoda ali i psihofizičkih posljedica koje odrastanje i prolazak kroz visoko obrazovni ciklus za dio populacije donosi. Zaključno ulaganje u kvalitetnu psihosocijalnu podršku studentima kroz dostupno individualno i grupno savjetovanje, *online* savjetovanje, specifično akademsko i karijerno savjetovanje, ali i ulaganje u edukaciju savjetnika, prostornu i kadrovsku ekipiranost savjetovašta u okviru sveučilišta i veleučilišta predstavlja imperativ socijalne dimenzije visokoga obrazovanja na koju se obvezala i Republika Hrvatska kroz izloženu regulativu i strategije razvoja visokoga obrazovanja.