

Editorial / Uvodnik

## Midwifery education: 25 years in the mosaic of the professionalisation of midwifery Izobraževanje babic: 25 let v mozaiku profesionalizacije poklica

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This year marks 25 years since the introduction of midwifery study at the university level, an important milestone in the professionalisation of the discipline. The professional status of midwifery is based on specific expertise unknown to lay people and other professional groups (Mivšek, Pahor, Hlebec, & Hundley, 2015). Another important aspect of this professionalism is a strong sense of affiliation to the professional discipline, which stems from a shared past and pride in its historical achievements. It is also worth mentioning that midwives are proud of the tradition midwifery education has had in Slovenia. Its beginnings date back to 1753, when four midwifery schools were established in the territory of Slovenia under the auspices of Empress Maria Theresa. The midwifery school made a significant contribution not only to midwifery education itself but also to the preservation and strengthening of the Slovene language, as the main study materials were Slovene-language textbooks written by obstetricians. This was also the first organised medical school in Slovenia in which education was conducted in Slovene (Kralj, 2004). The recognition of the rich history and cultural heritage of midwifery is evident on several levels. In recent months there have been steps taken at the Ministry of Culture to include midwifery in the inventory of intangible cultural heritage. The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2018) defines intangible cultural heritage as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and know-how, transmitted from generation to generation within communities, created and transformed continuously by them, depending on the environment and their interaction with nature and history". It is our mission to add midwifery with its rich heritage to the register, thus adding a piece into the mosaic of its

professionalisation.

Today, midwifery can be studied only at the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Ljubljana; however, there are other universities in Slovenia which have the potential to introduce degree programmes in midwifery. The introduction of new degree programmes in midwifery is not only desirable but absolutely necessary. While we wish all mothers and newborns to receive quality midwifery care, we are currently facing a shortage of midwives. It is time for midwives to start implementing the activities set out in the minimum standards of the European Union directive for regulated professions, which also means implementing professional competencies acquired through degree programmes. As one of the key elements of professionalism, autonomy of the profession is manifested in the fact that it recruits its future professionals, trains them, and develops and updates the competencies required for the practice of midwifery (Mivšek et al., 2015). Since the introduction of the higher professional degree programme in Slovenia, midwifery has obtained its own department and qualified university lecturers and associates in the field of midwifery, which contributes to greater professionalisation. Moreover, one of the elements of professionalism is also interprofessional cooperation. We are proud of all our lecturers and renowned experts involved in the academic process, who come from a variety of clinical and other backgrounds. The duration of the current degree programme is three years, which is quite a demanding endeavour for students, especially in light of the provisions of the European Union policy to which we are committed. We also see the need for interdisciplinary content in health care related to midwifery, obstetrics and family andragogy. At the same time, we are aware of the factors which influence the effectiveness of midwifery education in terms of the specific competencies our students need to acquire in

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order to effectively prepare, plan and deliver educational programmes. An increased focus on research in the scientific discipline of midwifery represents another important contribution to the professional status of midwifery.

In order to introduce the necessary improvements, to ease the burden on students in the educational process and at the same time to increase the quality of midwifery studies, we are preparing a new four-year bachelor's degree programme and a master's degree programme in midwifery. The latter is urgently needed due to the growing responsibilities midwives assume in dealing with women, their children and families, and will further contribute to the professionalisation of midwifery. In designing the new programme, we have drawn on the new competencies issued by the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM, 2019) and the Nurses and Midwives Association of Slovenia (Zbornica – Zveza, 2021), while also taking into account the latest guidelines and comparable international programmes.

The new programme involves midwives who work in clinics and facilities and make an important contribution to the development of the competencies of our future graduates. We too often forget the importance of the role of clinical mentors and their guidance of students in the clinical setting. They model the role of midwives and their professional practice, while also helping students to develop their professional identity and professional affiliation. They serve as role models for future midwifery graduates and thus make an important contribution to their professional socialisation, which is crucial for professionalism. Their role is even more important in light of the fact that midwifery students spend half of their academic training in clinical settings. A professional group also needs to know that each individual contributes in their own way to the mosaic of professionalisation, both in terms of formal education and theory, as well as in terms of practical training, clinical work and independent practice. In midwifery education, it is essential that the practical work of young graduates and midwives is carried out in accordance with the philosophy of midwifery and its ethical and moral principles. The Code of Ethics for Midwives of Slovenia requires midwives to engage with and supervise student. It is important that this role is performed by midwives who are guided by joy and respect for students. The Code of Profession in itself does not guarantee professionalism (Mivšek et al., 2015). Reflective practice, i.e. the individual's self-inquiry as to whether they have indeed acted correctly and in accordance with ethical principles, is what constitutes an expert in the context of the new professionalism and ensures the public good of the profession.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought many challenges to midwifery education. The new

epidemiological situation has forced us to move most of the educational and counselling process to the virtual environment. Educators had to become experts in digitising materials and facilitate a process where we were all learning. After a year and a half, we find that our students most missed the face-to-face interaction, mutual contact, and socialisation. It is a notable fact that midwifery is a nursing profession that is typically taken up by individuals to whom empathy, interpersonal relationships and connectedness mean a great deal. However, during the epidemic, all of these elements were curtailed by the restrictions on interpersonal contact. On the other hand, distance learning was easier as learning could take place in a more tailored and individualised way. As students were able to manage their time individually, they were able to devote more time to independent study. In the future, we would like to keep some examples of good practice, which was the reason for partnering with faculties from Austria, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands, Latvia and Belgium as part of the international "COIL" project. Through an elective course, we will connect students from different countries and create culturally diverse groups in which students will learn about midwifery workload and competencies abroad.

Professionalism in a field is important not only to the members of that profession. It does not mean social prestige, status or power, monopoly over the field or greater economic well-being, but primarily enables the representation and safeguarding of social values (in the case of midwifery, this is the health of women, children and families). Professionalism also means that professionals work for the benefit of society and, most importantly, that users of professional services are guaranteed quality care which requires evidence-based work by the professional group and the active involvement of users. The pursuit of professionalism is an important factor in ensuring fair, quality and holistic care for women, their children and families.

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#### *Slovenian translation / Prevod v slovenščino*

V letošnjem letu mineva 25 let izobraževanja za babice na visokošolski ravni, kar je pomemben mejnik v profesionalizaciji babiške stroke. Specifično znanje strokovnjakov, ki je nepoznano laikom in ostalim poklicnim skupinam, je namreč pomemben element profesionalizma stroke (Mivšek, Pahor, Hlebec, & Hundley, 2015). Drug pomemben vidik profesionalizma je močna pripadnost stroki, ki izvira iz zavedanja o skupni preteklosti in ponosa na dosežke v zgodovini. Ob tem ne smemo zanemariti dejstva, da smo babice in babičarji ponosni na tradicijo babiškega šolanja na Slovenskem. Začetki izobraževanja za babice segajo v leto 1753, ko so bile pod pokroviteljstvom vladarice Marije Terezije

ustanovljene kar štiri babiške šole na takratnem ozemlju Slovenije. Babiška šola ni bila pomembna le zaradi izobraževanja za poklic babice, temveč tudi za ohranjanje in krepitev slovenskega jezika. V tistem času so bili glavno študijsko gradivo učbeniki, ki so jih porodničarji napisali v slovenskem jeziku, hkrati pa je bila to prva organizirana zdravstvena šola v Sloveniji, v kateri je šolanje potekalo v slovenskem jeziku (Kralj, 2004). Prepoznavanje bogate zgodovine in kulturne dediščine babištva se danes kaže na več nivojih. V okviru Ministrstva za kulturo ravno v teh mesecih potekajo dejavnosti za nominacijo babištva za vpis v nesnovno kulturno dediščino. Unescova Konvencija o varovanju nesnovne kulturne dediščine iz leta 2003 (UNESCO, 2018) pod nesnovno kulturno dediščino uvršča »prakse, predstavitve, izraze, znanja, veščine in z njimi povezana orodja, predmete, izdelke in kulturne prostore, ki jih skupnosti, skupine in včasih tudi posamezniki prepoznajo kot del svoje kulturne dediščine«. Prizadevamo si, da bomo babištvo s svojo bogato dediščino vpisali v register in tudi na ta način dodali delec v mozaik profesionalizacije.

Študij babištva danes poteka na Zdravstveni fakulteti Univerze v Ljubljani, vendar imajo potencial za odprtje študijskega programa babištva tudi nekatere druge univerze v Sloveniji. Odprtje novih študijskih programov za babištvo je ne samo zaželeno, temveč nujno potrebno. Babice in babičarji so namreč kader, ki ga v praksi primanjkuje, hkrati pa si želimo, da so vse matere in novorojenčki deležni kakovostne babiške obravnave. Čas je, da babice in babičarji pričnejo izvajati dejavnosti, ki so kot minimalni standardi opredeljene v direktivi Evropske unije za regulirane poklice, kar pomeni tudi udeležanje s študijem pridobljenih poklicnih kompetenc. Avtonomija stroke, eden od bistvenih elementov profesionalizma, se kaže tudi v tem, da stroka sama rekrutira svoje bodoče pripadnike, jih izobražuje ter jim podela in obnavlja pristojnost za delo v praksi (Mivšek et al., 2015). V času od ustanovitve visokošolskega strokovnega študijskega programa v Sloveniji je babištvo pridobilo lasten oddelek za babištvo, lastno katedro ter kvalificirane visokošolske učitelje in visokošolske sodelavce za področje babištva, kar prispeva k večji profesionalizaciji. Vseeno pa je eden od elementov novega profesionalizma tudi medpoklicno sodelovanje. Ponosni smo na vse sodelujoče predavatelje in hkrati priznane strokovnjake v študijskem procesu, ki prihajajo iz najrazličnejših kliničnih in drugih okolij. Trenutno veljaven študijski program traja tri leta, kar je ob upoštevanju direktive Evropske unije, h kateri smo zavezani, za študente precej obremenjujoče. Vidimo tudi potrebo po interdisciplinarnih vsebinah na področju zdravja z vidika babištva, porodništva in družinske andragogike. Hkrati pa se zavedamo dejavnikov, ki vplivajo na učinkovitost izobraževanja študentov babištva za pridobitev specifičnih kompetenc na področju priprave načrtovanja in izvedbe izobraževalnih programov. Pomemben prispevek pa je tudi intenzivnejše usmerjanje k znanstvenoraziskovalnemu delu na področju babištva.

Ker si želimo izboljšav, razbremenitev študentov in hkrati dvigniti kakovost študija babištva, pripravljamo nov prvostopenjski štiriletni študijski program babištva in drugostopenjski podiplomski študijski program babištva. Slednji je nujno potreben zaradi vse večjih odgovornosti, ki jih babice in babičarji prevzemajo pri obravnavi žensk, njihovih otrok in družin, in bo sčasoma dodatno prispeval k profesionalizaciji poklica. Pri oblikovanju novega programa smo izhajali iz novih kompetenc, ki sta jih izdali International Confederation of Midwives (ICM, 2019) ter Zbornica – Zveza (2021), upoštevali pa smo tudi najnovejše smernice in primerljive tuje programe.

Tudi v novem programu h kompetencam bodočega diplomanta pomembno prispevajo babice in babičarji, ki so zaposleni na klinikah in zavodih. Premalokrat si priznamo, kako zelo pomembna je vloga kliničnih mentorjev in njihovo spremljanje študentov v kliničnem okolju, saj jim predstavljajo podobo babice, način dela ter ob tem pomagajo graditi profesionalno identiteto in pripadnost poklicu. So model in zgled za bodoče diplomante babištva in pomembno prispevajo k profesionalni socializaciji, ki je ključnega pomena za profesionalizem. Če ob tem upoštevamo dejstvo, da študenti babištva med študijem polovico svojega izobraževanja preživijo v kliničnem okolju, je njihova vloga še toliko bolj pomembna. Pomembno je tudi zavedanje profesionalne skupine, da v mozaik profesionalizacije poklica na svoj način prispeva prav vsak izmed nas tako v okviru izobraževanja in teorije kot znotraj praktičnega usposabljanja, dela v kliničnem okolju ali samostojnega opravljanja poklica. Pri izobraževanju babic in babičarjev je bistveno, da mladi diplomanti in babice v praksi delujejo v skladu z babiško filozofijo ter etičnimi in moralnimi načeli. K mentoriranju in sodelovanju s študenti babice zavezuje Kodeks etike za babice Slovenije. Pomembno je, da to vlogo opravljajo tisti babice in babičarji, ki jih pri tem vodi veselje in spoštovanje do študentov. Kodeks stroke sam po sebi ne zagotavlja profesionalizma (Mivšek et al., 2015). Reflektivna praksa, torej samoizpraševanje posameznika o tem, ali je v delovni situaciji resnično postopal pravilno in v skladu z etičnimi načeli, v novem profesionalizmu opredeljuje strokovnjaka in zagotavlja javno korist stroke.

Koronavirusno obdobje je tudi na področju izobraževanja babištvu prineslo številne izzive. Nove epidemiološke razmere so nas prisilile, da smo večji del študijskega, izobraževalnega in svetovalnega procesa prenesli v spletno okolje. Kar naenkrat smo morali postati strokovnjaki za digitalizacijo, pri čemer smo se vsi učili. Po letu in pol ugotavljamo, da so študenti zares pogrešali osebni stik, medsebojno povezovanje in socializacijo. Ni zanemarljivo dejstvo, da je babištvo negovalen poklic, v katerega vstopajo posamezniki, ki jim empatija, medosebni odnosi in povezovanje veliko pomenijo. Vsi ti elementi pa so bili v času epidemije okrnjeni s prepovedjo medsebojnih stikov. Po drugi

strani je bil študij na daljavo lažji, saj je učenje lahko potekalo bolj prilagojeno in individualizirano. Ker so si študenti sami razporejali čas, so ga lahko več namenili samostojnemu študiju. V prihodnje želimo ohraniti nekaj primerov dobre prakse, zato smo se v okviru mednarodnega projekta »COIL« povezali s fakultetami iz Avstrije, Nemčije, Švice in Nizozemske, Latvije in Belgije. V okviru izbirnega predmeta bomo povezali študente iz različnih držav in ustvarili kulturno raznolike skupine, v katerih bodo študenti spoznavali delokrog babic in njihove kompetence.

Profesionalizem stroke ni pomemben le za pripadnike poklica. Ne gre za družbeni prestiž, status in družbeno moč stroke, monopol nad področjem ali večjo ekonomsko dobrobit, temveč predvsem za to, da stroka predstavlja in varuje družbene vrednote (v primeru babištva je to zdravje žensk, otrok in družin); da strokovnjaki delajo v dobrobit družbe in predvsem da je uporabnikom profesionalnih storitev zagotovljena kakovost, kar predpostavlja delovanje članov profesionalne skupine na podlagi dokazov raziskav ter z dejavnim vključevanjem uporabnikov. Stremljenje k profesionalizmu stroke je pomembno za zagotavljanje pravične, visokokakovostne in celostne obravnave žensk, njihovih otrok in družin.

## Conflict of interest / Nasprotje interesov

Avtorice izjavljajo, da ni nasprotja interesov. / The authors confirm that there are no known conflict of interest.

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