

Uloga pedagoga u rekoncipiranju pripravničko-mentorske prakse u predškolskoj ustanovi: prikaz akcionog istraživanja

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Apstrakt

U svetlu pokušaja koncipiranja uloge pedagoga u predškolskoj ustanovi kao liderske uloge u procesu uvođenja i održavanja promene, rad prikazuje delovanje pedagoga u domenu podrške profesionalnom razvoju vaspitača, i to kroz prikaz rekoncipiranja pripravničko-mentorske prakse u Predškolskoj ustanovi. Profesionalni razvoj vaspitača, koji obuhvata i proces uvođenja u posao, odvija se u zajednici i oblikovan je kulturom ustanove dok istovremeno može uticati na promenu kulture. Rad prikazuje akciono istraživanje pokrenuto od strane praktičarke-pedagoškinje, sprovedeno u Predškolskoj ustanovi „Dr Sima Milošević“ u Zemunu, u periodu od septembra 2022. do maja 2025. godine. Predmet istraživanja jesu program i praksa uvođenja pripravnika vaspitača u posao, kao okosnica uspostavljanja i razvijanja refleksivne prakse u zajednici učenja u ustanovi. Istraživanje osvetljava izazove u implementaciji programa orijentisanog ka uspostavljanju refleksivne prakse u zajednici učenja i ukazuje na moguće strategije za prevazilaženje izazova. Zaključci pokazuju da postignute promene u sistemu znanja, umenja i vrednosti, kako na nivou pojedinaca tako i na nivou zajednica učenja i zajednice prakse, doprinose unapređivanju kvaliteta realnog programa. Redefinisanje uloga praktičara i odnosa moći u Programu i u istraživanju produbili su osećaj osnaženosti kod vaspitača, kao odnos poverenja i podrške između stručnih saradnika i vaspitača. Rekoncipiranje pripravničko-mentorske prakse, kao planski uvedena promena u obrazovnu praksu postavilo je temelje za dalje razvijanje refleksivne prakse u zajednici učenja u Predškolskoj ustanovi. Održivost pokrenute promene zavisiće od doslednosti u razvoju prakse, ali i daljih težnji ka sistemskom utemeljenju kroz institucionalizaciju novih obrazaca rada i kroz širenje u sistemu putem dalje diseminacije i umrežavanja sa drugim ustanovama i praksama.

Ključne reči: predškolski pedagog, profesionalni razvoj, akciono istraživanje, zajednica učenja, refleksivni praktičar.

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Uvod

Uloga stručnog saradnika – pedagoga sagledana kroz prizmu savremenih programskih koncepcija, kakva je koncepcija na kojoj se temelje „*Godine uzleta*“ (Godine uzleta, 2019), prevazilazi prethodno uspostavljenu administrativno-evaluatorsku funkciju i može se razumeti kao liderska uloga u procesu uvođenja i održavanja promene (Krnjaja i sar., 2023). Pedagog svojim profesionalnim delovanjem oblikuje obrazovnu paradigmu, odnosno doprinosi stvaranju (ne)koherentnog sistema znanja i značenja u praksi predškolskog vaspitanja. Kako bi se uspostavio koherentni sistem znanja i odnosa značenja i razumevanja, potrebno je kontinuirano preispitivanje vrednosti koje oblikuju profesionalno delovanje svih praktičara. Terminom „praktičar“ podrazumevamo stručne saradnike i vaspitače, a termin „vaspitač“ odnosi se i na medicinske sestre-vaspitače (Godine uzleta, 2019:11).

Obrazovna paradigma obuhvata lična uverenja i vrednosti praktičara, koja direktno usmeravaju njihovo ponašanje i način na koji razvijaju praksu (Čamber Tambolaš & Vujičić, 2023), i ta lična uverenja mogu biti (ne)usklađena sa uverenjima i vrednostima na kojima se temelji programska koncepcija. Promene u praksi i kulturi predškolske ustanove (u daljem tekstu će se pod terminom „ustanova“ podrazumevati predškolska ustanova) stoga ne mogu biti održive bez preispitivanja i transformacije ovih uverenja, i filozofije obrazovanja koju praktičari zastupaju (Fullan, 2007).

Pedagog ima važnu ulogu u stvaranju uslova za profesionalno učenje koje vaspitačima omogućava sticanje novih uvida i znanja, prilagođavanje i promenu stilova rada, ali i modifikaciju temeljnih vrednosti i stavova (Čamber Tambolaš & Vujičić, 2019). Ovaj proces ne može biti individualan, već zahteva promenu na nivou cele obrazovne zajednice, uključujući i rukovodstvo, stručne saradnike, roditelje i ostalo osoblje, budući da upravo međuljudski odnosi i svakodnevna komunikacija grade stvarnu kulturu ustanove (Vujičić & Čamber Tambolaš, 2019).

U ovom radu će uloga pedagoga biti prikazana kroz njegovo delovanje u domenu podrške profesionalnom razvoju praktičara, i to kroz prikaz razvijanja i implementacije Programa uvođenja u posao pripravnika vaspitača (u daljem tekstu „Program“). Pomenuti program, razvijan u predškolskoj ustanovi „Dr Sima Milošević“ u Zemunu (u daljem tekstu „Ustanova“), može se razumeti kao lokalizovani pokušaj promene pristupa obrazovanju, saglasno savremenim tumačenjima prema kojima se pomenuti pristup definiše kao koherentan korpus profesionalnih znanja, vrednosti i praksi, koji se kolektivno uspostavlja i institucionalno prenosi (Krnjaja i sar., 2023). Ne samo da ovaj program teži uvođenju novih sadržaja i metoda rada sa pripravniciima već je osmišljen tako da utiče na sve tri dimenzije koje Fullan (Fullan, 2007) prepoznaje kao ključne za suštinsku promenu obrazovne prakse: (1) primenu novog programa, (2) upotrebu novih strategija i aktivnosti u okviru programa, i (3) promenu uverenja i pedagoških pretpostavki praktičara. Polazeći od toga, uloga pedagoga u ovom procesu biće predstavljena kao „liderstvo u procesu promene“ (Krnjaja i sar., 2023).

Pomenuti Program razvijan je u toku 2.5 godine (9. 2022. – 5. 2025.) i ne možemo ga svesti na izolovanu inovaciju u praksi, već se može razumeti i prikazati kao okosnica promene pristupa, odnosno, promene koja uključuje kolektivno preuzimanje odgovornosti za razvijanje i održavanje nove profesionalne kulture u ustanovi.

Kontekstualno-konceptualni okvir istraživanja

Uvođenje *Godina uzleta* (2019) predstavlja ključnu tačku u rekoncepiranju prakse predškolskog vaspitanja i obrazovanja u Srbiji, pa time i u transformaciji uloga vaspitača i stručnih saradnika. Profesionalne uloge vaspitača i stručnih saradnika u predškolskim ustanovama jasno su određene kroz važeće pravilnike (Pravilnik o standardima kompetencija za profesiju vaspitača i njegovog profesionalnog razvoja, 2018; Pravilnik o standardima kompetencija za profesiju stručnog saradnika u predškolskoj ustanovi i njegovog profesionalnog razvoja, 2021).

Ipak, usaglašavanje prakse sa postavljenim okvirima i dalje ostaje zahtevan proces, uprkos različitim oblicima podrške koji su pružani praktičarima. Način na koji se program sprovodi u značajnoj meri zavisi od profesionalne spremnosti i angažovanosti praktičara. Upravo je iz tog razloga suštinski značajno da podrška profesionalnom razvoju svakog praktičara bude osmišljena tako da podstiče angažovanje u složenom i promenljivom kontekstu, uz oslanjanje na savremena saznanja o deci i detinjstvu, kao i na relevantne teorijske postavke koje prate važeće Osnove programa jedne zemlje (Slunjski & Lančić, 2022).

Akciono istraživanje započeto u septembru 2022. godine realizovano je u kontekstu koji je u značajnoj meri oblikovan realizacijom programa obuke *SNOP – Stručni saradnici kao nosioci promene* (Pavlović Breneselović i Krnjaja, 2021, prema: Krnjaja i sar., 2023), kojima je u periodu 2021-2022. bilo obuhvaćeno 268 stručnih saradnika iz predškolskih ustanova. Ovaj program, usmeren na osnaživanje stručnih saradnika za iniciranje i vođenje promena u predškolskoj praksi, vodi preispitivanju uloge pedagoga u ustanovi. Uvidi koji su ponuđeni kroz tematske celine obuke, kao i putem prostora za refleksiju o praksi, otvorili su mogućnost za iskorak ka promenama u razumevanju i rekoncepiranju profesionalnog razvoja vaspitača kao zajedničkog procesa učenja i promene kulture ustanove.

Stručno usavršavanje (kao element profesionalnog razvoja vaspitača) predstavlja ključni korak ka unapređenju kvaliteta vaspitno-obrazovnog rada i razvoja profesionalne kulture u okviru predškolske ustanove. Međutim, stručno usavršavanje vaspitača nije samo njihova odgovornost, već je potrebno da u tom domenu pedagog deli odgovornost sa vaspitačima. Kao što se od vaspitača očekuje da kreiraju podržavajuće okruženje u kojem deca uče kroz odnose, igru i aktivno učešće u različitim situacijama, isto tako je važno da stručni saradnici kreiraju sličnu atmosferu među vaspitačima, odnosno, da kreiraju prostor u kojem će oni imati priliku da uče kroz zajednički rad, razmenu ideja i promišljanje o sopstvenoj praksi (Vujičić & Čamber Tambolaš, 2017a).

Uvođenje pripravnika vaspitača u posao, odnosno pripravničko-mentorska praksa, zakonski je uređena pravilnikom (Pravilnik o dozvoli za rad nastavnika, vaspitača i stručnih saradnika, 2022) kojim se definišu uloge pripravnika i mentora, kao i pitanje ispunjenosti formalnih uslova za izlazak na ispit čijim polaganjem praktičari dobijaju licencu za samostalno obavljanje vaspitno-obrazovnog rada. Odgovornost za organizovanje pripravničko-mentorske prakse formalno ima direktor ustanove.

Bliže određenje pripravničko-mentorske prakse možemo pronaći u dokumentu *Vodič za vaspitače u predškolskim ustanovama – Mentorstvo* (Mentorstvo..., 2025), u kojem se mentori-vaspitači imenuju kao „važan resurs za učenje pripravnika“ (Mentorstvo..., 2025:5), dok se drugi akteri (posebno stručni saradnici i direktori) pominju kao oni koji bi trebalo da budu uključeni u proces i dele odgovornost za realizaciju pripravničko-mentorske prakse u svojim ustanovama. Ovako formulisano, mentorstvo je u vrednosnom smislu zasnovano na modelu prenošenja znanja sa „resursa“ ka „korisniku“, što ne korespondira sa teorijskim polazištima Osnova programa (Godine uzleta, 2019), u kojima je naglašena važnost međuzavisnosti, refleksivnosti i participacije u zajednici učenja.

Pomenuti Vodič (Mentorstvo..., 2025) predstavlja iskorak u domenu obrazovne politike zato što, za razliku od prethodnog Vodiča (Mentor i pripravnik..., 2009, 2012), kojim se pripravničko mentorska praksa definiše kroz iste okvire za kontekst predškolske ustanove i škole, pokušava da pripravničko-mentorsku praksu učini smislenom za kontekst predškolskog vaspitanja i obrazovanja i profesiju vaspitača, koji se razlikuje od školskog konteksta i profesije učitelja i nastavnika. Međutim, ono što još uvek izostaje jeste ne samo liderska uloga već i jasno definisana profesionalna odgovornost stručnog saradnika u poslu stručnog usavršavanja vaspitača, kroz pripravničko-mentorsku praksu, kao i potencijal za razvijanje refleksivne prakse u zajednici učenja, kroz sistemski pristup uvođenju pripravnika vaspitača u posao.

Metodologija istraživanja

Ovo istraživanje usmereno je na promenu u praksi koja je predmet istraživanja (promena pristupa u programu i praksi uvođenja pripravnika vaspitača u posao), što ga jasno određuje kao akciono istraživanje. Akciono istraživanje izranja iz prakse i podrazumeva sprovođenje akcije sa ciljem postizanja promene, a od istraživača/praktičara zahteva da bude refleksivni proaktivni praktičar koji na temeljima svojih uvida preduzima dalje akcije kako bi unapredio praksu (Pavlovski, 1989; Pešić, 1989; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Mukherji & Albion, 2015).

Za potrebe prikaza faza ovog istraživanja iskoristićemo šemu (Šema 1) koja sadrži i grafički prikaz, preuzet u prevedenom izdanju (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, prema: Malović & Stojanović, 2018).

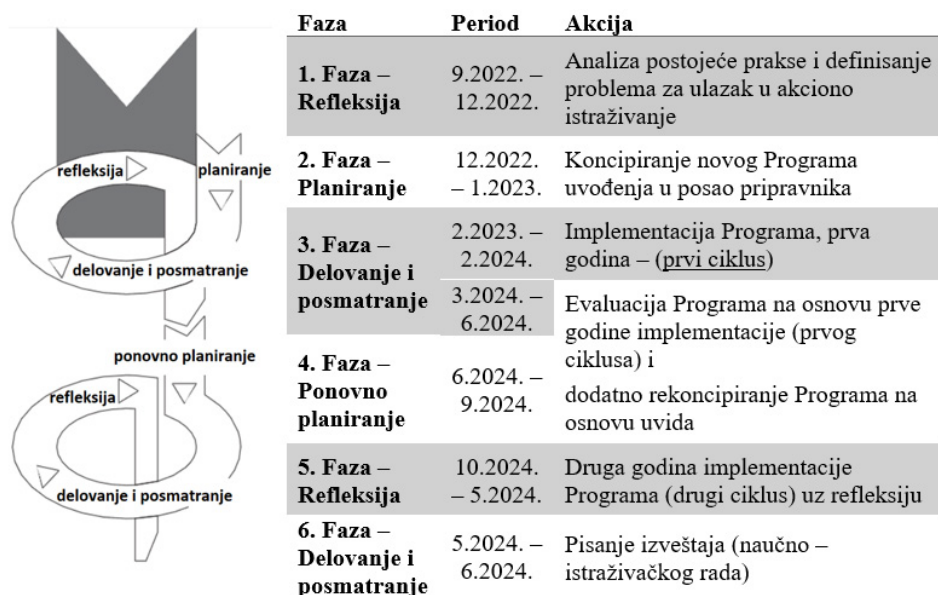
Pored promene prakse, akciona istraživanja zahtevaju i aktivno uključivanje praktičara i promenu značenja, kako na subjektivnom tako i na kolektivnom nivou (Pešić, 1989). Ovo istraživanje pokrenula je stručna saradnica-pedagoškinja, ali su u njemu aktivno učestvovali druge stručne saradnice i vaspitačice.

U prvoj godini implementacije Programa (prvom ciklusu) bilo je 26 pripravnica (30 na početku programa, ali ih je 4 odustalo), dok je drugi ciklus okupio njih 35 (40 na početku, ali ih je 5 odustalo). U prvom ciklusu je Program (od februara, 2023. do februara, 2024. godine) implementirao tim stručnih saradnica koji su činile 4 pedagoškinje i 2 psihološkinje, dok se timu u drugom mesecu implementacije u drugom ciklusu (od septembra, 2024., do kraja istraživanja) pridružila još jedna pedagoškinja. U toku pisanja

ovog rada, implementacija drugog ciklusa i dalje traje za grupu od 35 pripravnica i njihovih mentorki. U junu 2025. godine je istraživačica i autorka rada napustila radno mesto stručnog saradnika-pedagoga u Ustanovi u kojoj je Program implementiran, te rad sadrži uvide stečene do tada.

Šema 1

Prikaz faza akcionog istraživanja



Prikupljanje podataka podrazumevalo je dokumentovanje procesa (izveštavanje i planiranje kroz dokumenta ustanove, sačinjavanje izveštaja o realizaciji različitih koraka – sastanaka, aktivna, fokus grupa beleženje uvida praktičara, sačinjavanje beleški istraživača). Podaci do kojih smo došli u ovom istraživanju ne predstavljaju nalaze našeg istraživanja, već, u skladu sa prirodom akcionog istraživanja (Pešić, 1989), čine sistematski prikupljeni materijal za sledeću fazu u istraživačkom ciklusu.

Prikaz akcionog istraživanja kroz faze

Ulazak u akciono istraživanje

Na početku radne 2022/2023. godine, Ustanova je brojala 252 vaspitne grupe u 33 objekta, a posao stručnih saradnika obavljalo je ukupno 8 stručnih saradnika različitih

profila (Godišnji plan rada predškolske ustanove „Dr Sima Milošević“ u radnoj 2021/2022). Kada se uzmu u obzir zakonom predviđeni uslovi u pogledu zaposlenih (Pravilnik o bližim uslovima za osnivanje, početak rada i obavljanje delatnosti predškolske ustanove, 2023), vidljivo je da je Ustanova funkcionisala sa 8 umesto 10 stručnih saradnika, te da je svaki saradnik bio prosečno opterećen 30% više u odnosu na predviđeni normativ usled nedovoljnog broja zaposlenih.

U opisanim uslovima je svaka stručna saradnica preuzela inicijativu i vodeću ulogu za određenu oblast delanja iako su se svi poslovi i zadaci radili timski, što govori o odgovornosti i pokazuje postojanje kulture delotvornog i podržavajućeg liderstva, u kojem se podstiču zajedničko delovanje, razmena i saradnja. Odgovornost za osmišljavanje Programa uvođenja u posao vaspitača, kao i razvijanje pripravničko-mentorske prakse, preuzela je stručna saradnica-pedagoškinja, što je bio i povod za pokretanje akcionog istraživanja, a kako posao pedagoga jeste i istraživački, autorka ovog rada preuzela je i ulogu istraživačice.

Ideja da se praksa uvođenja u posao rekoncipira u odnosu na raniju praksu nastala je kao rezultat kontinuirane saradnje i zajedničkih uvida stručnih saradnica, uzimajući u obzir: potrebe za podrškom vaspitača u ulogama pripravnika i mentora; potrebu za unapređivanjem kulture ustanove kroz jačanje zajednice učenja; profesionalnu ulogu i odgovornost pedagoga.

Za potrebe analize prethodne prakse uvođenja pripravnika u posao korišćeni su Izveštaj o radu (Izveštaj o radu i realizaciji godišnjeg plana rada predškolske ustanove „Dr Sima Milošević“ u radnoj 2021/2022) i uvidi stečeni u praksi u radnoj 2021/2022. godini. Zaključci koji se mogu izvući pokazuju da se Program koji se ranije realizovao u Ustanovi zasnivao na razumevanjima uloga praktičara, kao i pripravničko-mentorske prakse delimično utemeljene na postojećim legislativno-programskim okvirima, čiji delovi nisu bili najbolje usklađeni.

Programski okvir i uvidi o implementaciji „Godina uzleta“ (2019) u praksi postavljali su imperativ razvijanja refleksivne prakse u zajednici učenja, a profesionalna uloga pedagoga već je bila i određena donetim pravilnikom (Pravilnik o standardima kompetencija za profesiju stručnog saradnika u predškolskoj ustanovi i njegovog profesionalnog razvoja, 2021) gde su razvijanje refleksivne prakse i negovanje kulture saradnje i zajedništva (što je osnov za razvijanje zajednice učenja) definisani kao profesionalna odgovornost pedagoga. Međutim, u Izveštaju o radu Ustanove (2022), rad pedagoga na razvijanju Programa uvođenja u posao pripravnika nije prepoznat kao usmeren na razvijanje zajednice učenja u Ustanovi.

Program koji se ranije razvijao u Ustanovi zasnivao se na razumevanju pripravničko-mentorske prakse kao dijadnog modela, u kom su ključne uloge pripravnika i mentora kao partnera u ovom procesu (Mentor i pripravnik..., 2009, 2012), čime su definisane uloge vaspitača u poziciji pripravnika i mentora, ali i gde je definisanje uloge stručnog saradnika izostalo, te se u praksi svelo na organizacione komponente razvijanja Programa (usklađivanje formalnog plana programa sa krovnim dokumentima u ustanovi, formiranje grupe pripravnika i mentora, posredovanje u komunikaciji i delegiranje zadataka).

Pedagog je u procesu razvijanja Programa imao ulogu „predavača“, koji kroz nekoliko susreta prenosi pripravnici i mentorima uvide i daje im smernice za osmišljavanje sopstvene prakse uvođenja u posao. Pripravnici su dobijali i realizovali zadatke, dok su mentori bili u ulozi posmatrača i evaluatora. Ne samo da se u izveštaju ne govori o razvijanju zajednice učenja već se o aktivnoj ulozi pripravnika govori kao o ulozi aktera koji učestvuju u „horizontalnim razmenama“.

U tom pravcu su osmišljeni i aktivni u formi pauerpoint prezentacija, koje su ilustrovale primere dobre prakse u razvijanju programa u skladu sa Osnovama „Godine uzleta“ i sadržale smernice i zadatke za unapređivanje sopstvene prakse.

Pripravnici su zajedno sa mentorom korak po korak ovladavali strategijama razvijanja tema/projekata, i primere sopstvene prakse uobličavali u prezentacije sa kojima su upoznati stručni saradnici i koordinator Aktiva.

Mentori su kontinuirano tokom godine pratili rad pripravnika i u realizaciji planiranih situacija učenja iznoseći svoja zapažanja o radu pripravnika.

Većina evidentiranih pripravnika aktivno je učestvovala u uvođenju promena u vaspitno-obrazovnu praksu u skladu sa novim Osnovama kroz učešće u horizontalnoj razmeni na nivou pojedinačnih jaslica i vrtića.

(Izводи iz Izveštaja o radu i realizaciji godišnjeg plana rada predškolske ustanove „Dr Sima Milošević“ u radnoj 2021/2022)

Koncipiranje novog Programa uvođenja u posao pripravnika vaspitača

Novi Program usklađen je kako sa zvaničnim dokumentima, koji određuju obrazovnu politiku u oblasti predškolskog vaspitanja i obrazovanja, tako i sa internim dokumentima ustanove. Pravilnik o stalnom stručnom usavršavanju i napredovanju u zvanja nastavnika, vaspitača i stručnih saradnika, koji se odnosi i na vaspitače i na stručne saradnike, definiše da se stručno usavršavanje zaposlenih u predškolskim ustanovama (u koje spada pripravnčko mentorska praksa) „planira u skladu sa potrebama i prioritetima obrazovanja i vaspitanja“ (Pravilnik o stalnom stručnom usavršavanju i napredovanju u zvanja nastavnika, vaspitača i stručnih saradnika, 2021, član 3). Kao potreba i prioritet, prepoznato je razvijanje refleksivne prakse u zajednici učenja, što je trasiralo put koncipiranja novog programa.

Program uvođenja pripravnika u posao zasniva se na savremenim teorijskim postavkama, koje profesiju vaspitača definišu kao etičku i refleksivnu praksu zasnovanu na vrednostima, dijalogu i višeperspektivnosti (Pavlović Breneselović, 2014). Utemeljen je u diskursu kompetentnosti, koji kompetenciju ne vidi kao skup unapred datih znanja i veština, već kao dinamički proces građenja u praksi. Program je osmišljen tako da se u velikoj meri oslanja na Pravilnik, kojim se definiše kompetentnost vaspitača kroz određenje znanja,

umenja i vrednosti koje određuju profesiju vaspitača (Pravilnik o standardima kompetencija za profesiju vaspitača i njegovog profesionalnog razvoja, 2018).

Polazi se od sistemskog modela profesionalnog razvoja, u kojem se učenje dešava unutar profesionalne zajednice, kroz saradničke odnose i zajedničko delovanje svih aktera u predškolskoj ustanovi (Pavlović Breneselović i Krnjaja, 2012; Vujičić & Čamber Tambolaš, 2017a; Vujičić & Čamber Tambolaš, 2017b). Poseban akcenat stavljen je na zajednicu učenja, koja se razvija kroz međusobno deljenje odgovornosti i izgradnju zajedničkih znanja praktičara, što doprinosi transformaciji same obrazovne prakse, a ne samo razvoju pojedinaca (Rogoff, 1994, prema: Pavlović Breneselović i Krnjaja, 2018).

U skladu s tim, Program je osmišljen kao pokušaj oblikovanja konteksta tako da omogućava učenje kroz akciju i (zajedničku) refleksiju, čime se gradi profesionalni identitet pripravnika u realnom okruženju, ali se istovremeno menjaju i uloga pedagoga i sama kultura ustanove i teži se održivoj promeni obrazovne prakse, budući da se profesionalni razvoj razume kao kolektivni proces usmeren na unapređivanje zajedničke realnosti, odnosno realnog programa (Malović, 2023).

Implementacija Programa (prvi ciklus)

Za potrebe realizacije Programa osmišljena su tri materijala, koja su odštampana i podeljena svim pripravicama i mentorkama na prvom sastanku (februar, 2023.): Program uvođenja u posao; Dnevnik pripravnika i Dnevnik mentora. Grupu je inicijalno činilo 30 pripravnica (od kojih je nekoliko odustalo u toku godine, uglavnom iz zdravstvenih/porodičnih razloga). Pedagoškinja i autorka Programa i materijala upoznala je ceo tim stručnih saradnica, kao i sve pripravnice i mentorke, sa novom koncepcijom programa i pozvala ih da budu aktivni učesnici u procesu učenja, te da budu otvorene za sugestije usmerene na unapređivanje procesa.

Vremenska dinamika bila je donekle uslovljena kalendarom rada i već postavljenim Godišnjim planom rada ustanove.

Kako bi se postavila održiva vremenska dinamika, koja uvažava predviđene obaveze i opterećenje svih praktičara u ustanovi, u Program su uvrštena dva tematska aktivna (termin „aktiv“ se interno u ustanovi koristi da označi planirane situacije (zajedničkog) učenja praktičara kroz predavanja ili radioničarski rad), definisana Godišnjim planom (Godišnji plan rada predškolske ustanove „Dr Sima Milošević“ u radnoj 2022/2023). Ovo preklapanje (istih tematskih aktivna predviđenih Programom za pripravnike i mentore i predviđenih za sve praktičare kroz plan rada Tima za stručno usavršavanje), pored gore pomenutog cilja, imalo je za cilj i da se stvore uslovi za razmenu između pripravnika i praktičara koji nisu u toj ulozi, kao i da se osnaži ideja zajedničkih razmena, odnosno uspostavljanje zajedničkih značenja.

Program (...) u trajanju od godinu dana predviđa organizaciju 9 sastanaka aktivna, kojima prisustvuju pripravnici, mentori i stručni saradnici. Sedam sastanaka organizovani su kao aktivni pripravnika i mentora namenjeni onima koji učestvuju

u Programu (...), dok su dva sastanka tematski aktivni koji se, prema Godišnjem planu rada (...) realizuju u Ustanovi. (Izvod iz Programa)

Aktivni kao forma jesu zadržani iz starog programa, ali je izmenjen pristup njihovoj organizaciji i redefinisane su uloge učesnika. Ovaj vid učenja u novoj koncepciji, osmišljen u formi radionica, omogućavao je da se otvore nove teme koje će nakon aktivna biti praćene dodatnim zadacima, kao i da se pokrene razmena između svih učesnika.

...pripravnici vode Dnevnik pripravnika u kom je zadato 12 zadataka, koji će se zajednički analizirati na posebnim sastancima – biće realizovane 4 fokus grupe koje organizuje stručni saradnik sa manjom grupom pripravnika i mentora. U dnevnicima pripravnika nalaze se i smernice za pripremu 3 zadataka za rad na aktivima. Pored toga predviđeno je i rešavanje 5 onlajn zadataka u čiju će evaluaciju biti uključeni svi pripravnici. (Izvod iz Programa)

Zadaci su bili osmišljeni tako da podržavaju transformativno učenje (*double-loop learning*) (Argyris & Schön, 1978) i razmenu između praktičara. Težilo se prevazilaženju oblika profesionalnog učenja poznatog kao učenje unutar postojećih okvira (*single-loop learning*), koje podrazumeva uočavanje i ispravljanje grešaka. Kada dođe do problema ili odstupanja, praktičari najčešće prvo pokušavaju da pronađu novu strategiju koja bi omogućila rešavanje situacije unutar postojećih ciljeva, pravila i vrednosti bez dovođenja u pitanje osnovnih pretpostavki, u pokušaju da se deluje efikasnije u okviru postojećih obrazaca. Za razliku od toga, transformativno učenje podrazumeva preispitivanje upravo tih osnovnih vrednosti, ciljeva, normi i pravila na kojima se zasnivaju strategije delovanja. Takvo učenje vodi dubljim promenama u načinu razmišljanja i postupanja jer ne ostaje na korekciji ponašanja, već uključuje i transformaciju samih temelja profesionalne prakse (Argyris & Schön, 1978).

U kontekstu predškolske ustanove, učenje unutar postojećih okvira može se prepoznati, na primer, kada pedagog uoči da prostor radne sobe nije adekvatno strukturisan, pa sugeriše vaspitaču da načini promene ili ih pedagog načini samostalno – pomeranjem polica, premeštanjem materijala i slično – nakon čega vaspitač nastavlja da radi bez dubljeg preispitivanja smisla unetih promena. U tom slučaju, ispravljanje „greške“ se dešava u okviru postojećih profesionalnih normi, bez njihovog preispitivanja. Nasuprot tome, transformativno učenje se događa kada pedagog ne nastupa isključivo kao korektivni autoritet, već kao inicijator i facilitator zajedničkog učenja. On podstiče vaspitače da kroz kolektivne refleksivne aktivnosti – poput stručnih radionica, zajedničke analize prakse ili profesionalnih dijaloga – kritički preispituju sopstvene vrednosti i uverenja na kojima temelje svoj rad. Takva praksa jača zajednicu učenja u kojoj vaspitači ne samo da usavršavaju strategije, već oblikuju i redefinišu svoje profesionalne identitete. Transformativno učenje uključuje dublju, refleksivnu praksu i promišljanje o tome zašto nešto radimo na određen način, a ne samo kako to radimo. To ujedno predstavlja i temelj za dugoročne promene u kvalitetu realnog programa.

Kako bi se omogućila kvalitetnija razmena između svih učesnika u procesu, osmišljene su fokus grupe koje su podrazumevale da svaki stručni saradnik (njih 6) koji učestvuje u procesu održi po jednu tematski fokusiranu refleksivnu razmenu, koja će okupiti 8-10 učesnika (pripravnika i mentora) i koja će biti posvećena zajedničkom osvrtu na prethodni period i zadatke. Kako bi fokus grupe doprinele stvaranju koherentnog sistema značenja u Ustanovi, svaka je bila unapred osmišljena kroz fleksibilni protokol za vođenje fokus grupe i kroz formu za izveštavanje o radu fokus grupe (za stručne saradnice) i beleškama nakon vođenja fokus grupa (za pripravnice i mentorke), gde je trebalo sumirati zaključke i uvide do kojih se došlo.

Na kraju ćemo šematski prikazati (Šema 2) nivoe razmene koji su podržani kroz implementaciju Programa, u težnji da se sa koncepta „horizontalne razmene“ u učenju pripravnika pređe na koncept razvijanja zajednice učenja.

Šema 2

Prikaz dinamike Programa koncipiranog ka razvijanju zajednice učenja



Osmišljavanje novog ciklusa Programa

Paralelno sa procesom implementacije prvog ciklusa Programa, tekla je i refleksija o procesu razvijanja pripravničko-mentorske prakse. Uvidi koji su se iskristalisali kroz zajedničko sagledavanje procesa implementacije Programa oslanjali su se na: dokumentovanje rada aktiva i fokus grupa; kontinuirani dijalog unutar zajednice; analizu dnevnika pripravnika i mentora, kao i praćenje učešća praktičara u onlajn zadacima i zadacima sa aktivima; uvide stečene putem upitnika, sačinjenog sa ciljem boljeg razumevanja perspektive pripravnika i mentora, i poslužili su kao osnov za izdvajanje nekoliko celina koje u nastavku približavaju složenost iskustva svih učesnika u procesu: mreže podrške, prihvaćenosti uvedenih promena i uloge mentora.

Mreža podrške

Izazovi uslovljeni složenom organizacionom strukturom, koja u ustanovi postoji bez jasno postavljenih procedura i sistema rukovođenja, dovodili su do različitih poteškoća u prvom ciklusu realizacije Programa, a jedan od izazova je ilustrovan u odgovoru pripravnice na upitniku:

...često se pripravnik (kao nov radnik) šalje na ispomoć u druge objekte, i ne uspe da odradi sve zadatke onako kako treba, ne može da isprati npr. projekat za koji je on bio zadužen od početka do kraja... (P10, O1)

Prevazilaženje ovakvih i sličnih izazova zahtevalo je razvijanje mreže podrške za sve učesnike u Programu. Ceo tim stručnih saradnica bio je uključen u realizaciju Programa, što je podrazumevalo brojne sastanke sa ciljem usklađivanja značenja i preuzimanja uloge aktivnih učesnika u realizaciji Programa. Takođe je zahtevalo i da svaka stručna saradnica u praksi ima jasnu predstavu o zadacima na kojima rade pripravnice i mentorke, a koji neretko podrazumevaju i uključivanje šireg kolektiva i preduzimanje koraka ka promeni kulture vrtića, odnosno ka boljem usklađivanju realnog programa sa „*Godinama uzleta*“ (2019).

Pored toga, u proces su uključeni i rukovodioci vrtića i jasli, ali i drugi praktičari, koji nisu bili u ulogama pripravnika, što je podrazumevalo pisanu i usmenu komunikaciju (obraćanje putem zvaničnih mejlova i sastanci praktičara na kojima se razgovaralo o nekim delovima Programa) sa jasnim pojašnjenjem o zadacima kojima se bave pripravnice i mentorke, kao i o značaju koji ima za razvijanje kvaliteta realnog programa uključivanje šireg kolektiva u realizaciju zadatka (recimo, pripravnice su osnaživane da u svojim kolektivima budu inicijatorke promene kroz aktivno učešće u razvijanju realnog programa). Cilj je bio da koncepcija Programa bude transparentna i jasna svima, ali i da se pripravicama i mentorkama olakša pozicioniranje u zajednici kako bi lakše prevazilazili sve izazove na putu učenja.

Prihvaćenost uvedenih promena

Prvi ciklus implementacije Programa pratio je izazov u pogledu mogućnosti da praktičari (najpre vaspitači) prihvate uvedene promene u pogledu rekoncipiranja ustaljene prakse, koje su bile pokrenute od strane pedagoškinje na temeljima njenih uvida, kao i uvida drugih stručnih saradnica u ustanovi. Kako bi se stekao uvid o tome kako uvedene promene doživljavaju pripravnice i mentorke, prikazaćemo kako su odgovarale na pitanje u upitniku formulisano kao: „Opišite ukratko vaše iskustvo iz prakse uvođenja u posao (šta biste istakli kao dobre, a šta kao loše strane Programa, organizacije prakse uvođenja u posao i angažovanja svih aktera u ovom procesu...)“.

Na ovo pitanje dobili smo ukupno 24 odgovora (od 12 pripravnica i 12 mentorki). Odgovori pripravnica u najvećoj meri pokazuju da su se u programu osetile podržano, osetile da pripadaju zajednici učenja i da su prihvaćene, da su zadovoljne načinom na koji je praksa organizovana i da im je učešće u Programu pomoglo da bolje razumeju koncepciju „*Godina uzleta*“ (2019).

U toku pripravničkog rada sam dobila dosta podrške od strane svog mentora i stručnog saradnika, svog sobnog kolege i ostalih koleginica, među njima i pripravnica takođe, u vidu razmene iskustava i ideja, pomoći pri izradi zadataka ali i boljeg razumevanja u istraživačkom radu, trudila sam se da deca kroz podršku njihovoj dobrobiti imaju jednake mogućnosti za učenje i razvoj, da se povezujem što više sa roditeljima i koleginicama iz drugih objekata, da učim i radim na sebi konstantno, da proširujem svoja iskustva i znanja, da posmatram i osluškujem decu i njihove potrebe. (P27, O1)

Mentorke su u svojim odgovorima uglavnom isticale da su zadovoljne načinom organizovanja prakse i podrškom koju su i same imale u Programu.

Program je osmišljen tako da se jačaju kompetencije u različitim oblastima - zadaci konkretni, jasni - svi akteri angažovani. (M13, O1)

Posebno značajne uvide dale su mentorke koje su imale iskustvo mentorisanja u prethodnim ciklusima realizacije pripravničko-mentorske prakse (njih 7 je dalo odgovor na pitanje: „Kada se osvrnete na sopstveno iskustvo u procesu mentorstva po starom i novom programu, da li možete da istaknete najznačajnije promene u pogledu programa uvođenja pripravnika u posao?“). Navešćemo neke njihove odgovore koji jasno oslikavaju promenu pristupa uvedenu kroz novi Program.

Na jedan vrlo koncizan način se oslikava rad pripravnika i mentora. Materijal i smernice na aktivima jasno definišu put kojim treba ići, na čemu se bazirati i šta je cilj.... tj. šta treba postići. (M18, O21)

Dnevnici dosta pomažu i organizuju proces uvođenja pripravnika u posao. Zadaci su konkretniji i razumljiviji. (M9, O21)

Veće angažovanje stručnog saradnika da nama kao mentorima takođe pruže podršku u radu sa pripravnikom. Postojanje dnevnika za Pripravnike i mentore je nešto što nam je olakšalo rad. (M6, O21)

Novi program se tumači više kroz praksu i ima više veze sa realnim programom. Stari program je zahtevao pisanje priprema koje se nisu pisale u svakodnevnom radu. Mi smo praktičari tako da sam se u mentorstvu ovog programa lakše snalazila kako da približim i objasnim ono što piše u Osnovama programa. (M3, O21)

Ovi uvidi nam govore da je rekoncipiranje pripravničko-mentorske prakse dovelo do toga da se i pripravnice i mentorke osele podržano i osnaženo, što nas je navelo da i u narednom ciklusu planiramo da Program koncipiramo oko ideje razvijanja zajednice učenja.

Uloga mentora

Početak realizacije prvog ciklusa Programa pratili su izazovi u razumevanju uloge mentorki. Kako bi se mentorkama olakšao proces refleksije o sopstvenoj ulozi, u prvom ciklusu je bio osmišljen Dnevnik mentora.

Mentori vode dnevnik mentora koji svedoči o ispunjenosti njihove uloge u Programu i predstavlja: evidenciju o vidovima podrške koju su pružili pripravniku u razvijanju osnovnih znanja, umenja i vrednosti pripravnika neophodnih za kvalitetan neposredan rad sa decom, saradnju u zajednici učenja i razvijanje profesionalne prakse; zapažanja mentora o radu pripravnika u toku trajanja Programa uvođenja u posao i procenu razvijenosti osnovnih znanja i umenja pripravnika neophodnih za kvalitetan neposredan rad sa decom, saradnju u zajednici učenja i razvijanje profesionalne prakse. (Izvod iz Programa)

Sistemske definisane uloge mentora, koja se mogla učitati u tada postojećem Vodiču (Mentor i pripravnik..., 2009, 2012), uspostavljeni sistem polaganja ispita za licencu, koji je sledio Programu uvođenja u posao i iskustva mentorki iz prethodne pripravničko-mentorske prakse, prouzrokovali su neusklađenost očekivanja mentorki sa idejom mentorstva na kojoj se temelji Program. Program je mentorke stavljao u poziciju učesnica u zajednici učenja, uz uspostavljenju mrežu podrške na koju mogu da se oslone i pripravnice i mentorke. Ranije definisane uloge mentora kao formalnih evaluatora (čija se evaluacija u prethodnim ciklusima bila svedena na formalnost) kočila je mentorke u preuzimanju uloge koja im je Programom bila nuđena.

Navedeni izazov je u implementaciji prvog ciklusa Programa zahtevao osmišljavanje i organizovanje posebnog sastanka pedagoškinje, autorke sa celim timom mentorki. Na sastanku smo se bavili preispitivanjem uloge mentora, počevši od razumevanja toga šta su odgovornosti mentora, sve do pojašnjavanja sistema podrške kreiranog za mentorke u Programu.

Implementacija Programa (drugi ciklus)

Drugi ciklus implementacije Programa započeo je u septembru 2024. godine, sastankom pedagoškinje (autorke) sa grupom mentorki. Tema je bila uloga mentora u Programu, te je na sastanku zajednički tumačen materijal „Smernice za izradu izveštaja mentora“. Ovaj materijal sačinjen je na osnovu uvida iz prethodnog ciklusa o poteškoćama mentorki da razumeju i prihvate svoju ulogu. Na prvom zajedničkom sastanku (aktivu) svih pripravnica i mentorki sa stručnim saradnicama, čija je tema bila upoznavanje svih vaspitača sa programom u kojem učestvuju, podeljeni su štampani materijali (Dnevnik pripravnika i mentora i Smernice za izradu izveštaja mentora).

Kako bi se odgovorilo na izazov percipiranih odnosa moći između stručnih saradnika i vaspitača u Programu (o kom će više reči biti prilikom obrazlaganja uloge pedagoga), odnosno kako bi se odnosi moći učinili ravnopravnijim, novi ciklus realizacije u organizacionom smislu podrazumevao je sledeće:

1. Aktivni, radionice za sve pripravnice i mentorke, organizovani su u dve grupe (u prvom ciklusu su na aktivne dolazile sve pripravnice i mentorke u istom terminu na istoj lokaciji) sa datom mogućnošću svim učesnicama da same izaberu termin i lokaciju koja im više odgovara;

2. Fokus grupe su organizovane u više termina (između 8 i 10 termina i na dve lokacije), sa datom mogućnošću da pripravnice i mentorke same odaberu termin i lokaciju koja im najviše odgovara.

Vremenska dinamika, predviđene teme i tok implementacije Programa u drugom ciklusu prikazani su šematski (Šema 3) u nastavku.

Odgovornost za osmišljavanje i realizaciju svih aktivna i fokus grupa u drugom ciklusu preuzela je pedagoškinja, autorka programa. Za razliku od prvog ciklusa, u kojem jedan od planiranih aktivna nije bio realizovan i u kojem organizacija fokus grupa nije bila ujednačena ni koordinisana, u drugom ciklusu su sve predviđene aktivnosti realizovane u skladu sa vremenskim planom. Ova promena ne ukazuje na superiornost individualne u odnosu na deljenu odgovornost, već, pre svega, na značaj jasne raspodele uloga i dogovorene koordinacije u procesima deljenog liderstva. Iskustvo iz prvog ciklusa pokazalo je da deljeno liderstvo ne podrazumeva odsustvo strukture ili jednaku uključenost u sve segmente, već da je neophodno vreme za uspostavljanje međusobnog poverenja, komunikacionih kanala i precizne raspodele zadataka. Preuzimanje vodeće uloge u organizacionom aspektu od strane pedagoškinje u drugom ciklusu nije umanjilo doprinos ostalih stručnih saradnica, već je doprinelo tome da se zajedničke odluke doslednije sprovedu u praksi, čime je podržan kontinuitet u procesu razvoja kulture saradnje.

Uvidi o poteškoćama koje su pripravnice i mentorke imale u prethodnom ciklusu sa zadacima korišćeni su u cilju unapređenja Dnevnika pripravnika i mentora (kao osnovnog materijala), kao i svih pratećih materijala.

Na primer, u prethodnom ciklusu je bilo predviđeno da pripravnice zabeleže svoje uvide nakon svake fokus grupe (kao refleksiju o procesu učenja), međutim, u samom dnevniku su izostala dodatna pojašnjenja o tome na šta treba staviti fokus, pa se dešavalo da pripravnice navedu tehničke informacije o održanom sastanku (gde je održan i ko je prisustvovao), a ne navedu ni jedan bitan sopstveni uvid o temi, čime beleške gube svoju funkciju. Stoga je u ovom ciklusu precizno navedeno šta je fokus u pisanju beleški nakon fokus grupe (nakon prve zadatak je bio sačinjavanje liste znanja i značenja o koncepciji „Godina uzleta“; nakon druge bio je sačinjavanje liste smernica za uređivanje prostora u vrtiću kojih se pripravnik može u svom radu pridržavati...).

U cilju uspostavljanja zajedničkih značenja i izbegavanja „šumova“ koji su nastajali u prvom ciklusu (recimo, zbog nedovoljno dobro uvremenjenog i međusobno usklađenog realizovanja fokus grupa), ozbiljnije se pristupilo dogovaranju oko zadataka i davanju instrukcija i povratnih informacija na svakom koraku.

Na primer, nakon prve serije fokus grupa, koje su usledile nakon prvog aktivna i realizacije prvih nekoliko zadataka (tema razumevanje koncepcije „Godina uzleta“) koja je realizovana u novembru, analizirane su beleške svih pripravnika. Uočeno je da u beleškama postoje pokazatelji pogrešnog razumevanja ključnih koncepata.

Preduzeto je sledeće: putem mejla je svim pripravnicama poslat detaljan izveštaj o beleškama nakon prve fokus grupe, koji je (bez imenovanja pojedinaca) sadržao podatke o kvalitetu beleški u odnosu na kriterijume koji su na početku svake fokus grupe bili dogovoreni i nakon fokus grupa ponovo obrazloženi u mejlu koji su sve pripravnice dobile.

Šema 3

Prikaz vremenske dinamike drugog ciklusa implementacije Programa



Sačinjeni su i dodatni materijali (1. evidentirane nejasnoće i pogrešna razumevanja sa pojašnjenjima; 2. zajednička lista „ulaznih“ znanja i značenja izvedena na osnovu analize svih beleški; 3. „propeler“ – grafički prikazani sadržaj Godina uzleta sa obeleženim temama i

brojem stranica u programu, za lakše snalaženje u dokumentu). Pripravnice su, na osnovu materijala i pojašnjenja koje su dobile na narednom aktivu, analizirale svaka svoju belešku i prepoznavale kojoj „zoni“ pripadaju (crvena – beleške koje ukazuju na postojanje nejasnoće; žuta – beleške bez fokusa; zelena – dobre beleške) i u odnosu na to dopunjavale ili korigovale beleške u skladu sa uočenim nedostacima.

Analiza beleški nakon druge serije fokus grupa pokazala je da u tim beleškama nema pokazatelja pogrešnih razumevanja i nedoumica, odnosno da su sve pripravnice imale dobre i fokusirane (u većoj ili manjoj meri detaljne) beleške.

Pedagog u liderskoj ulozi u procesu uvođenja i održavanja promene

Profesionalna odgovornost u odnosu na to kako je kompetentnost predškolskog pedagoga definisana važećim Pravilnikom (Pravilnik o standardima kompetencija za profesiju stručnog saradnika u predškolskoj ustanovi i njegovog profesionalnog razvoja, 2021) bila je vrednosni orijentir za repozicioniranje pedagoškinje u Programu i praksi uvođenja u posao.

Ovaj program je javno prezentovan tri puta u 2023. godini sa različitim fokusom u izlaganjima i radovima (Malović, 2023, 2023a, 2023b) koji su pratili izlaganja. Ovi prikazi mogu se razumeti kao delanje pedagoškinje u području vlastitog profesionalnog delovanja i razvoja, jer su imali za cilj da širu profesionalnu zajednicu upoznaju sa mogućim drugačijim pristupom u organizovanju pripravničko-mentorske prakse u ustanovi, koji bi bio usklađeniji sa programskom koncepcijom i koji bi predstavljao aktualizaciju profesionalne uloge pedagoga sagledane kroz okvir kompetentnosti.

O tome kako je program koncipiran tako da polazi od definisane kompetentnosti stručnog saradnika za strateško (razvojno) planiranje svedoči rad (Malović, 2023) čiji je fokus stavljen na ulogu pedagoga kao stručnog saradnika koji, svojim kompetencijama za strateško planiranje i praćenje prakse, doprinosi osmišljavanju, realizaciji i unapređivanju Programa, podržavajući profesionalni razvoj vaspitača i negujući kulturu refleksivne prakse u zajednici učenja u ustanovi. Druga dva rada fokusirana su na osvetljavanje kompetentnosti u domenu uspostavljanja saradnje i zajedništva, razvijanja refleksivne prakse i kvaliteta realnog programa (Malović, 2023a, 2023b).

Značaj uloge stručnog saradnika, kao organizatora i nekoga ko podržava sve aktere u pripravničko mentorskoj praksi je bio prepoznat, o čemu takođe svedoče i odgovori pripravnica i mentorki na upitniku.

Od stručnog saradnika smo dobijali materijal, koji nam je uz aktive pripravnika i mentora, olakšao Program uvođenja pripravnika u posao. Takođe, zadaci su bili tako koncipirani da je saradnja pripravnika i mentora bila veća. (M6, O1)

Smatram da su dobre strane Programa aktivni, fokus grupe, razvijanje zajednice za učenje i podrška koju dobijamo od stručnih saradnika i mentora, ali i zadaci koji podstiču pripravnika da sarađuje sa svim akterima u vrtiću. (P15, O1)

Međutim, aktualizacija liderske uloge u procesu uvođenja i održavanja promene nailazila je na brojne izazove. Kontinuirani izazov u toku prvog ciklusa realizacije Programa predstavljalo je u blagovremenom i međusobno usklađenom realizovanju fokus grupa zbog toga što je Program bio tako koncipiran da je podrazumevao usklađeno delovanje tima stručnih saradnica na ovom zadatku. Ovaj izazov u praksi realizacije prvog ciklusa Programa ostavljao je „šumove“, koji su se mogli uočiti, recimo, analizom beleški sa fokus grupa iz Dnevnika pripravnika. Iz tog razloga je u novom ciklusu Programa organizacija i realizacija fokus grupa bila drugačije koncipirana sa preciznije definisanim fokusom za sve učesnike (stručnog saradnika, pripravnika i mentora).

Značaj uloge stručnog saradnika u organizaciji i vođenju fokusiranih diskusija prepoznale su i same pripravnice.

Dobra strana su aktivni na kojima smo razmenjivali iskustva, mišljenja, rešavali problemske situacije... ali je tu falilo malo više primera iz prakse. Dopale su mi se fokus grupe i smatram da bi bilo dobro i značajno za pripravnike da ih je bilo više, jer smo tu sa stručnim saradnikom najlakše uspevali da odgovorimo na sva pitanja. (P14, O1)

Preispitivanje odnosa moći između vaspitača i stručnih saradnika predstavljalo je još jedan izazov. Uvidi vaspitača o uspostavljenim odnosima moći zahtevali su preispitivanje organizacije kako fokusiranih diskusija tako i aktiva.

Dobre strane su česti sastanci, razmena iskustva, saradnja sa kolegama... loša strana je to što se sastanci (+ fokus grupe) organizuju u vrtićima koji su blizu saradnicima, a ne pripravicima i ponekad imamo poteškoća sa organizacijom rada, prevoza itd. (M7, O1)

Sumiranje zaključaka

Govoreći o akcionim istraživanjima koja se sprovode u školama, Ševkušić (2011) ističe da akciona istraživanja imaju potencijal popravljanja „tradicionalno lošeg odnosa između nastavnika i istraživača“ (Ševkušić, 2011:198). Ono što nakon sprovedenog istraživanja možemo zaključiti jeste da se odnos poverenja i podrške između stručne saradnice-istraživačice i vaspitača u Ustanovi osnažio kroz istraživanje. Pored toga, možemo reći da je primetno ojačan duh zajedništva, odnosno da se kultura razmene i zajedničkog učenja prenela i izvan Programa uvođenja u posao. Pripravnice i mentorke svedoče o ličnom osećaju osnaženosti i podržanosti, dok stručne saradnice i rukovodioci vrtića i jasli ukazuju na to da su čitavi kolektivi osnaženi nakon različitih akcija pokrenutih u okviru Programa.

Prikazano akciono istraživanje može se razumeti kao oblik intervencije u institucionalnu praksu sa ciljem pokretanja i podrške promeni u pravcu zajedničkog učenja, profesionalne refleksije i transformacije uloge praktičara. Ukoliko se, kako navodi Pavlović

Breneselović (2008), intervencija razume kao plansko uvođenje promene u obrazovnu praksu, tada se pitanje održivosti te promene nameće kao ključno i konstitutivno za samu intervenciju.

Promena započeta ovim istraživanjem jeste usmerena ka razvoju prakse i profesionalnih kapaciteta zaposlenih, što može voditi ostvarivanju prve dimenzije održivosti, odnosno održavanju kvaliteta, pod uslovom da postignuti put promene, u pogledu uspostavljene prakse uvođenja pripravnika u posao, kontinuirano nastavi da se razvija na postavljenim temeljima. Izazov predstavlja kultura ustanove koju gradi cela obrazovna zajednica, a rukovodstvo ustanove do sada nije pokazalo zainteresovanost da pruži doprinos razvijanju refleksivne prakse u zajednici učenja. Nezainteresovanost se, između ostalog, može učitati u nevoljnosti da se zaposli dovoljan broj stručnih saradnika, kao i da se posao pedagoga uvaži kao značajan za razvoj cele Ustanove.

Da bi pokrenute promene bile dugoročne i imale sistemski značaj, bilo bi neophodno da se daljim radom obuhvate i preostale dve dimenzije koje čine održivost – sistemsko utemeljenje kroz institucionalizaciju novih obrazaca rada i širenje u sistemu kroz diseminaciju i umrežavanje sa drugim ustanovama i praksama. Ovakav pristup podrazumeva izgradnju i korišćenje socijalnog kapitala kroz umrežene odnose subjekata unutar i van ustanove, kao i kontinuiranu izgradnju kapaciteta zaposlenih za refleksivno i smisaono delovanje u sopstvenoj praksi (Pavlović Breneselović, 2008).

Sistemsko utemeljenje se ne čini kao izgledno u trenutno uspostavljenoj obrazovnoj politici, u kojoj je primetna težnja da se teret osmišljavanja i realizovanja pripravničko-mentorske prakse prebaci na mentore, te da se uloga stručnog saradnika odredi kao sporedna u toj praksi. Sa druge strane, čini se da je, uprkos podršci koju su stručni saradnici u predškolskim ustanovama dobili kroz obuke „SNOP“ i druge vidove podrške, smisaono delovanje u sopstvenoj praksi otežano pod teretom uspostavljenih kultura u predškolskim ustanovama u kojima se rad pedagoga ne vrednuje dovoljno, niti se njegova uloga pepoznaje kao značajna. Takođe, narativ o razvoju zajednice učenja ne može se održivo graditi u kontekstu u kom sistemski okviri i podrška kroz obuke ostaju neusklađeni sa vrednosnim i teorijskim polazištima koje zajednica nastoji da utemelji, budući da takva nedoslednost razara mogućnost uspostavljanja zajedničkih značenja kao temelja kolektivnog učenja i razvoja.

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Primljeno: 05.07.2025.

Korigovana verzija primljena: 03.08.2025.

Prihvaćeno za štampu: 08.08.2025.

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The Pedagogue's Role in Reframing Induction and Mentoring Practice in a Preschool Institution: an Action Research Study

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Abstract

In an effort to conceptualize the role of a preschool pedagogue as the leadership role in initiating and sustaining change, this paper presents the pedagogue's engagement in supporting the professional development of preschool teachers by reconstructing the induction and mentoring practice within the institution. The professional development of preschool teachers, including the induction process, takes place within a community and is shaped by the institutional culture, while simultaneously influencing that culture. This paper presents an action research initiated by a practitioner-pedagogue, conducted in the Preschool Institution "Dr Sima Milošević" in Zemun from September 2022 to May 2025. The research focuses on the induction program and practice as a foundation for building reflective practice within a learning community. The study highlights challenges in implementing a program aimed at fostering reflection and identifies strategies for overcoming them. The findings suggest that shifts in knowledge, skills, and values — both individually and collectively — contribute to improving the quality of the real-life curriculum. Redefining practitioner roles and power dynamics within the Program and the research itself deepened preschool teachers' sense of empowerment, as well as the trust-based relationship between them and professional associates. The reconstruction of the induction and mentoring practice, as an intentionally introduced change, established the basis for developing a reflective culture of learning. The sustainability of the change will depend on continuous support, institutional anchoring of new work models, and broader dissemination through networking with other institutions and practices.

Keywords: *preschool pedagogue, induction and mentoring practice, action research, reflective practice, learning community.*

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Introduction

Viewed through the lens of contemporary curricular conceptions such as the framework underpinning *Years of Ascent* (Godine uzleta, 2019), the role of the professional associate – preschool pedagogue, extends beyond an administrative or evaluative function and can be understood as a leadership role in initiating and sustaining change (Krnjaja et al., 2023). Through their professional engagement, the pedagogue helps shape the educational paradigm, that is, contributes to creating a (non-)coherent system of knowledge and meanings in their preschool practice. Establishing coherence in knowledge and shared understandings requires continuous re-examination of the values that shape everyone's professional action. In this paper, the term "practitioner" refers to both professional associates and preschool teachers, while "preschool teacher" includes nursery nurses in the role of preschool teachers (Godine uzleta, 2019, p. 11).

The educational paradigm encompasses practitioners' personal beliefs and values, which directly guide their conduct and the ways in which they develop practice (Čamber Tambolaš & Vujičić, 2023). These personal beliefs may, or may not, align with the values and assumptions embedded in the program conception. Accordingly, changes in the practice and in the culture of the preschool institution (In what follows, the term "institution" refers to a preschool institution) cannot be sustainable unless the beliefs and educational philosophies held by practitioners are questioned and transformed (Fullan, 2007).

The pedagogue plays a key role in creating conditions for professional learning that enable preschool teachers to gain new insights and knowledge, adapt and shift their ways of working, and, importantly, to reconsider and modify their core values and stances (Čamber Tambolaš & Vujičić, 2019). Such learning cannot be an individual undertaking; it calls for movement at the level of the whole educational community, including leadership, professional associates, parents, and other staff, because everyday relationships and communication constitute the lived culture of the institution (Vujičić & Čamber Tambolaš, 2019).

In this paper, the pedagogue's role is presented through the support of the professional development of practitioners by developing and implementing the Induction Program for novice preschool teachers (hereafter: the Program). Developed in the Preschool Institution "Dr Sima Milošević" in Zemun (hereafter: the Institution), the Program can be viewed as a localized attempt to shift the approach to education, in line with contemporary understandings that define approach as a coherent corpus of professional knowledge, values, and practices collectively established and institutionally transmitted (Krnjaja et al., 2023). The Program does not aim merely to introduce new content or techniques for novices; it is also designed to act across the three dimensions identified by Fullan (2007) as key to substantial change in educational practice: (1) implementation of a new program, (2) use of new strategies and activities within the program, and (3) change in practitioners' assumptions and beliefs. Accordingly, the pedagogue's role in this process is framed as "leadership in the process of change" (Krnjaja et al., 2023).

Developed for over two and a half years (9/2022–5/2025), the Program is not an isolated innovation but a backbone for changing the approach, one that entails collectively taking responsibility for cultivating and maintaining a new professional culture within the institution.

Contextual–Conceptual Framework of the Study

The introduction of *Years of Ascent* (2019) is a key turning point in re-conceptualizing preschool practice in Serbia, and, accordingly, in transforming the roles of preschool teachers and professional associates. Professional roles are formally defined by current regulations (Regulation on Competency Standards for the Profession of Preschool Teacher and Their Professional Development, 2018; Regulation on Competency Standards for the Profession of Professional Associate in Preschool Institutions and Their Professional Development, 2021). Nevertheless, aligning everyday practice with these frameworks remains demanding, despite different forms of support offered to practitioners. The manner in which a program is enacted depends greatly on practitioners' professional readiness and engagement. For that reason, any support for each practitioner's professional development must be designed to foster engagement in a complex, shifting context, grounded in contemporary insights about children and childhood and in the theoretical commitments that accompany the national preschool framework (Slunjski & Lančić, 2022).

The action research begun in September 2022 unfolded in a context significantly shaped by the professional learning program SNOP - *Professional Associates as Agents of Change* (Pavlović Breneselović & Krnjaja, 2021, as cited in Krnjaja et al., 2023), which involved 268 professional associates from preschool institutions during 2021–2022. Focused on empowering professional associates to initiate and lead change in preschool practice, this program prompted re-examination of the pedagogue's role within the institution. The themes explored and the space for reflection it opened supported a step toward rethinking professional development for preschool teachers as a shared process of learning and of cultural change within the institution.

Professional learning (as one dimension of preschool teachers' professional development) is a key pathway to enhancing the quality of educational work and nurturing a professional culture in preschool institutions. At the same time, it is not solely a matter of individual responsibility, but the pedagogue shares responsibility with preschool teachers. Just as preschool teachers are expected to create supportive environments where children learn through relationships, play, and active participation in varied situations, professional associates are called to cultivate a similar atmosphere among preschool teachers, spaces for collective work, exchange, and reflection on practice (Vujičić & Čamber Tambolaš, 2017a).

The induction of novice preschool teachers, i.e., induction and mentoring practice, is legally regulated (Regulation on the Teaching License for Teachers, Preschool Teachers, and Professional Associates, 2022), which defines the roles of novices and mentors as well as formal conditions for the licensing exam that confers independent practice. The director of the institution bears formal responsibility for organizing induction.

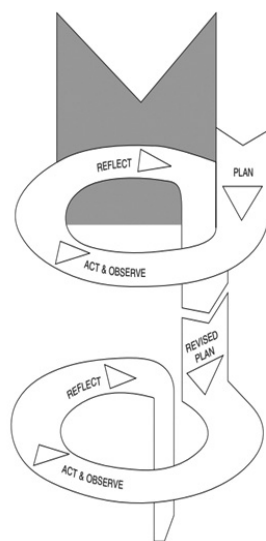
Further guidance appears in the *Guide for Preschool Teachers – Mentoring* (Mentorship..., 2025), which names mentors as a "key resource for novice teachers' learning" (p. 5) and notes that other actors (especially professional associates and directors) should participate and share responsibility. Conceptually, however, this resource-transfer framing does not fully correspond to the values underpinning *Years of Ascent*, which emphasize interdependence, reflexivity, and participation in a learning community.

In spite of that, the 2025 Guide marks a policy step forward compared to previous editions (Mentor and Novice Teacher..., 2009, 2012), which shaped the induction similarly for both preschool and school contexts. It seeks to make induction and mentoring meaningful for the preschool context and the preschool teaching profession, distinct from the school context and the professions of teachers in primary and secondary education. Yet, what is still missing is a clearly defined leadership role and professional responsibility of the pedagogue in preschool teachers’ professional learning through induction and mentoring, as well as a system-level opening for cultivating reflective practice in a learning community through a systemic approach to induction.

Methodology

This study is oriented toward change in the very practice it examines, that is, shifting the approach in the program and practice of inducing novice preschool teachers, which positions it squarely as action research. Action research arises from practice, involves acting with the intention to bring about change, and requires the researcher–practitioner to be a reflective, proactive practitioner who, on the basis of emerging insights, undertakes further action to develop practice (Pešić, 1989; Pavlovski, 1989; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Mukherji & Albon, 2015). For the depiction of phases, we reference a schematic (Figure 1) from Kemmis & McTaggart (2005).

Scheme 1:
Overview of the Action Research Phases



Phase	Period	Action
Phase 1 – Reflection	9.2022 - 12.2022.	Analysis of existing practice and identification of entry issues for action research
Phase 2 – Planning	12.2022 - 1.2023.	Conception of a new Induction Program for novice preschool teachers
Phase 3 – Action and Observation	2.2023 - 2.2024. 3.2024 - 6.2024.	Program implementation, Year 1 (first cycle)
Phase 4 – Re-planning	6.2024 - 9.2024.	Program review and partial reconception based on insights.
Phase 5 – Reflection	10.2024 - 5.2024.	Second year of implementation (second cycle) with ongoing reflection
Phase 6 – Action and Observation	5.2024 - 6.2024.	Writing up the study

Action research entails not only changes in practice but also shifts in the meaning, both at subjective and collective levels (Pešić, 1989). Although initiated by the pedagogue as professional associate, the work engaged other professional associates and preschool teachers.

In Year 1 (first cycle), 26 novices participated (30 at the start; 4 withdrew), and in Year 2, 35 novices (40 at the start; 5 withdrew). The implementation team comprised four pedagogues and two psychologists in the first cycle, with an additional pedagogue joining the research in the second cycle. At the time of writing, implementation of the second cycle was still in progress for the cohort of 35 novices and their mentors. The author left the position of pedagogue in June 2025; the paper reports insights gathered up to that point.

Data collection involved systematic documentation of the process (institutional planning and reporting documents, reports from meetings, professional learning sessions, and focus groups, practitioners' notes, and the researcher's field notes). In line with the nature of action research, these materials are treated not as "findings," but as systematically gathered resources that inform the next turn in the action-reflection cycle.

Overview of the Action Research Phases

Entering the Action Research

At the beginning of the 2022/2023 working year, the Institution comprised 252 preschool groups across 33 facilities, with a total of eight professional associates of various profiles (according to the *Annual Work Plan of the Preschool Institution "Dr Sima Milošević" for 2021/2022*). Considering the legally prescribed staffing requirements (Regulation on Detailed Conditions for the Establishment, Commencement of Work, and Performance of Activities of Preschool Institutions, 2019, 2022, 2023), the Institution was operating with eight instead of ten professional associates. As a result, each associate was, on average, burdened with 30% more work than the prescribed standard.

Under these circumstances, each professional associate took the initiative and a leading role in a specific area of work, while all tasks and activities were carried out as a team effort —demonstrating responsibility and reflecting a culture of effective and supportive leadership that encourages joint action, exchange, and collaboration. The responsibility for designing the *Induction and Mentoring Program for Preschool Teachers* and developing the induction-mentoring practice was assumed by the preschool pedagogue, which served as the basis for initiating the action research. Since the work of a pedagogue is inherently also research-oriented, the author of this paper took on the role of researcher.

The idea to reconceptualize the induction practice, compared to previous approaches, emerged from continuous collaboration and shared insights among professional associates, taking into account: the need to provide support to preschool teachers in the roles of novice teachers and mentors; the need to enhance institutional culture through strengthening the learning community, and the professional role and responsibility of the preschool pedagogue.

To analyze the previous induction practice, the *Annual Report (Annual Report and Implementation of the Annual Work Plan of the Preschool Institution "Dr Sima Milošević" for 2021/2022)* was used, along with insights gained from practice during the 2021/2022 working year. The conclusions drawn indicate that the previously implemented Program in the Institution was based on understandings of practitioner roles and induction-mentoring practice that were only partially grounded in existing legislative and programmatic frameworks, some of which were not fully aligned.

The programmatic framework and insights from the implementation of *Years of Ascent* (2019) in practice established the imperative of developing reflective practice within a learning community. Moreover, the professional role of the preschool pedagogue had already been defined by the *Rulebook on Standards of Competence* (Regulation on Competency Standards..., 2021), in which the development of reflective practice and the nurturing of a culture of cooperation and community, foundations for developing a learning community, are identified as professional responsibilities of the pedagogue. However, in the Institution's 2022 Annual Report, the pedagogue's work on developing the induction program for novice preschool teachers was not recognized as being aimed at fostering a learning community.

The previously developed program in the Institution was grounded in the understanding of induction-mentoring practice as a dyadic model, in which the key roles are those of the novice preschool teacher and the mentor as partners in the process (Mentor and Novice Teacher..., 2009, 2012). This model defined the roles of preschool teachers as novices and mentors, but left the role of the professional associate undefined, reducing it to organizational aspects of program development in practice (aligning the formal program plan with the institution's core documents, forming novice-mentor groups, mediating communication, and delegating tasks).

The pedagogue's role in program development was that of a "lecturer", who, through several meetings, conveyed insights and provided guidelines to novices and mentors for designing their own induction practice. Novices received and carried out tasks, while mentors acted as observers and evaluators. Not only did the report fail to mention the development of a learning community but it referred to the active role of novices as participants in "horizontal exchanges."

In this approach, professional development meetings (Professional Council) took the form of PowerPoint presentations illustrating examples of good practice in program development aligned with the Years of Ascent framework and offering guidelines and tasks for improving individual practice.

Novices, together with their mentors, gradually mastered strategies for developing themes/projects, shaping examples of their own practice into presentations, which were then shared with professional associates and the coordinator of the Professional Council.

Mentors continuously monitored the novices' work throughout the year, providing observations on their performance during planned learning situations. Most

documented novices actively participated in introducing changes to educational practice in accordance with the new framework, through participation in horizontal exchanges at the level of individual nurseries and preschools.

(Excerpts from the 2021/2022 Annual Report)

Designing the New Induction and Mentoring Program for Preschool Teachers

The new Program is aligned both with official documents that define educational policy in the field of preschool education and with the institution's internal documents. The *Rulebook on Continuous Professional Development*, applicable to both preschool teachers and professional associates, stipulates that professional development of employees in preschool institutions (including induction and mentoring practice) should be "planned in accordance with the needs and priorities of education" (Regulation on Continuous Professional Development and Advancement into Professional Titles for Teachers, Preschool Teachers, and Professional Associates, 2021, Act 3). Developing reflective practice within a learning community was recognized as both a need and a priority, which paved the way for designing the new Program.

The induction and mentoring program is grounded in contemporary theoretical perspectives that define the preschool teaching profession as an ethical and reflective practice founded on values, dialogue, and multiperspectivity (Pavlović Breneselović, 2014). It is situated within the discourse of competence, which does not view a competence as a fixed set of pre-given knowledge and skills, but rather as a dynamic process built through practice. The Program is largely based on the *Rulebook on Standards of Competence for the Preschool Teacher Profession and Its Professional Development* (2018), which defines a competence through specific knowledge, skills, and values that shape the profession (Regulation on Competency Standards..., 2018).

The design draws on a systemic model of professional development, where learning occurs within a professional community through collaborative relationships and joint action of all participants in the preschool institution (Pavlović Breneselović & Krnjaja, 2012; Vujičić & Čamber Tambolaš, 2017a, 2017b). Special emphasis is placed on the learning community, which develops through shared responsibility and the co-construction of practitioners' professional knowledge, thus contributing not only to the transformation of individual practice but also to the transformation of educational practice itself (Rogoff, 1994, as cited in Pavlović Breneselović & Krnjaja, 2018).

Accordingly, the Program was conceived as an effort to shape the context in ways that enable learning through action and (shared) reflection, thereby building the professional identity of novice preschool teachers in real-life settings, while simultaneously transforming the role of the pedagogue and the institutional culture. This aims toward a sustainable change in educational practice, understanding professional development as a collective process focused on improving the shared reality, that is the real-life curriculum (Malović, 2023).

Program Implementation (First Cycle)

For the purposes of implementing the Program, three different materials were developed, printed, and distributed to all novice preschool teachers and mentors at the first meeting (February 2023): *The Induction and Mentoring Program*, *Novice Teacher's Journal*, and *Mentor's Journal*. The initial group consisted of 30 novice preschool teachers (several of whom withdrew during the year, mostly for health or family reasons). The pedagogue (also the author of the Program and materials) introduced the entire team of professional associates, as well as all novices and mentors, to the new program concept and invited them to be active participants in the learning process, remaining open to suggestions aimed at improving the process.

The timeline was partly determined by the institutional work calendar and the already established Annual Work Plan.

In order to establish a sustainable timeline that takes into account the planned obligations and workload of all practitioners in the institution, the Program included two thematic professional meetings (the term *aktiv* – meeting – Professional Council – used internally in the institution to denote planned situations of (collective) practitioner learning through lectures or workshop-based work) as defined by the Annual Plan (*Annual Work Plan of the Preschool Institution "Dr Sima Milošević" for 2022/2023*). This overlap, where the same thematic meetings were foreseen both in the Induction Program for interns and mentors and in the plan for all practitioners through the work plan of the Professional Development Team, was, in addition to the aforementioned purpose, also intended to create conditions for exchanges between the interns and the practitioners who are not in that role, and to strengthen the idea of shared exchanges, i.e., the establishment of shared meanings.

The Program (...) lasting one year envisages the organization of nine meetings attended by interns, mentors, and professional associates. Seven meetings were organized as intern-and-mentor meetings intended for participants in the Program (...), while two were thematic professional meetings, implemented in the institution in line with the Annual Plan (...). (Excerpt from the Program)

Professional meetings as a format were retained from the old program, but the approach to their organization was changed, and participant roles were redefined. In the new concept, these meetings were designed as workshops that opened new topics to be followed by additional tasks after the meeting, and that initiated exchanges among all participants.

... Interns kept an Intern's Journal with 12 tasks, which would be jointly analyzed at dedicated meetings — four focus groups organized by the professional associate with a smaller group of interns and mentors. The journals also included guidelines for preparing three tasks for the meetings. In addition, five online tasks were planned, whose evaluation would involve all interns. (Excerpt from the Program)

The tasks were designed to support transformative learning (*double-loop learning*) (Argyris & Schön, 1978) and exchanges among practitioners. The aim was to move beyond the form of professional learning known as *single-loop learning*, which involves identifying and correcting errors. When problems or deviations occur, practitioners are most often likely to initially attempt to find a new strategy to resolve the situation within existing goals, rules, and values, without questioning the underlying assumptions, in an effort to act more efficiently within the existing framework. On the contrary, transformative learning involves questioning those very values, goals, norms, and rules on which strategies for action are based. Such learning leads to deeper changes in thinking and acting because it does not remain at the level of correcting behavior, but instead, it includes transforming the very foundations of professional practice (Argyris & Schön, 1978).

In the context of a preschool institution, *single-loop learning* can be recognized, for example, when a pedagogue notices that the room space is not adequately structured and suggests that the preschool teacher make changes, or the pedagogue alone makes changes, by rearranging shelves, moving materials, etc., after which the teacher continues working without deeper reflection on the meaning of these changes. In this case, the "error" is corrected within existing professional norms, without questioning them. By contrast, transformative learning occurs when the pedagogue does not act solely as a corrective authority, but as an initiator and facilitator of collective learning. They encourage teachers to critically examine, , joint practice analysis, or professional dialogues, the values and beliefs underlying their work through collective reflective activities such as professional workshops. Such practice strengthens the learning community, where teachers not only refine strategies but also shape and redefine their professional identities. Transformative learning involves deeper reflective practice and questioning *why* something is done a certain way, not just *how* it is done. This forms the foundation for long-term improvements in the quality of the real-life curriculum.

To enable richer exchanges among all participants in the process, focus groups were designed so that each of the six professional associates involved in the process would hold one thematically focused reflective session gathering 8–10 participants (interns and mentors), dedicated to jointly reviewing the previous period and tasks. To ensure focus groups contributed to building a coherent system of meaning in the institution, each was pre-designed through a flexible focus group protocol and accompanied by a reporting form for professional associates and a notes form for interns and mentors, in which conclusions and insights reached during the discussion were to be summarized.

Finally, we will schematically present (Scheme 2) the levels of exchange supported through the Program's implementation, aiming to shift from the concept of "horizontal exchange" in intern learning to the concept of developing a learning community.

Scheme 2:

Overview of the Dynamics of the Program Designed to Develop a Learning Community



Designing the New Cycle of the Program

In parallel to the implementation of the first cycle of the Program, reflection on the process of developing the induction and mentoring practice was also taking place. The insights that emerged from the joint review of the Program's implementation process, based on the documentation of the work of meetings and focus groups; continuous dialogue within the community; analysis of the interns' and mentors' journals; monitoring practitioners' participation in online tasks and tasks from the meetings; and insights gathered through a questionnaire designed to better understand the perspectives of interns and mentors, served as the foundation for identifying several thematic areas that, in what follows, shed light on the complexity of the experiences of all participants in the process: the support network, the acceptance of the introduced changes, and the role of the mentor.

Support Network

Challenges arising from the complex organizational structure of the institution, lacking clearly defined procedures and leadership systems, led to various difficulties in the first cycle of the Program's implementation. One such challenge was illustrated in a trainee's response to the questionnaire:

...often a trainee (as a new employee) is sent to assist in other facilities and is unable to complete all tasks as required, for example, they cannot follow through on a project they were responsible for from start to finish... (T10, A1)

Overcoming these and similar challenges required the development of a support network for all Program participants. The entire team of professional associates was involved in the Program's implementation, which entailed numerous meetings aimed at

aligning understandings and assuming the role of active participants in the process. It also required that each professional associate have a clear understanding, in practice, of the tasks being carried out by trainees and mentors, tasks which often involved engaging the wider staff collective and taking steps toward changing the preschool's culture, aligning the real-life curriculum more closely with the *Years of Ascent* (2019).

In addition, preschool and nursery principals, as well as other practitioners that were not in trainee roles, were included in the process. This involved both written and verbal communication (via official emails and practitioner meetings where certain Program elements were discussed) with clear explanations of the tasks assigned to trainees and mentors, and the importance of involving the wider collective in their implementation to enhance the quality of the real-life curriculum. For example, trainees were encouraged to act as the initiators of change in their teams through active participation in developing the real-life curriculum. The goal was to make the Program's concept transparent and clear to all, while also making it easier for trainees and mentors to position themselves within the community and overcome challenges along their learning path.

Acceptance of Introduced Changes

The first cycle of the Program's implementation was accompanied by the challenge of how practitioners (primarily preschool teachers) would respond to changes in established practice initiated by the pedagogue, based on her insights and those of other professional associates in the institution. To better understand how these changes were perceived by trainees and mentors, we will present some of their responses to the questionnaire item: "Briefly describe your experience with the induction practice (what would you highlight as the strengths and weaknesses of the Program, the organization of the induction practice, and the engagement of all actors in the process...).

We received 24 responses in total (12 from trainees and 12 from mentors). The majority of trainee responses indicated that they felt supported in the Program, felt a sense of belonging to the learning community, felt accepted, were satisfied with how the practice was organized, and believed that participation helped them better understand the *Years of Ascent* (2019) framework.

During my induction period, I received a great deal of support from my mentor and professional associate, my classroom colleague, and other colleagues, including fellow trainees, through the exchange of experiences and ideas, help with completing tasks, as well as better understanding of research work. I strived to ensure that children, through support for their well-being, had equal opportunities for learning and development, to connect as much as possible with parents and colleagues from other facilities, to constantly learn and work on myself, expand my experiences and knowledge, observe and listen to the children and their needs. (T27, A1)

Mentors generally expressed satisfaction with the way the practice was organized and with the support they themselves received in the Program.

The Program is designed to strengthen competencies in different areas tasks are concrete and clear all actors are engaged. (M13, A1)

Particularly valuable insights came from mentors who had prior experience with the induction and mentoring practice in previous cycles (seven of them responded to the question: "When you reflect on your own mentoring experience in the old and new programs, can you identify the most significant changes in the induction program?"). Here are some of their responses that clearly illustrate the shift in approach introduced through the new Program.

In a very concise way, it reflects the work of trainees and mentors. The materials and guidelines from the meetings clearly define the path to take, what to base it on, and what the goal is... i.e., what needs to be achieved. (M18, A21)

The diaries help a lot and organize the induction process. The tasks are more concrete and understandable. (M9, A21)

Greater involvement of the professional associate in providing us as mentors with support in working with the trainee. The existence of diaries for trainees and mentors has made our work easier. (M6, A21)

The new program is interpreted more through practice and is more closely related to the real-life curriculum. The old program required the preparation of lesson plans that were not used in everyday work. We are practitioners, so I found it easier in this mentoring program to convey and explain what is written in the Program Foundations. (M3, A21)

These insights show that the reconceptualization of the induction and mentoring practice led both trainees and mentors to feel supported and empowered, which guided our decision to again center the next Program cycle around the idea of developing a learning community.

The Role of the Mentor

The start of the first cycle's implementation was accompanied by challenges in understanding the mentors' role. To facilitate mentors' reflection on their role, a Mentor's Diary was introduced.

Mentors keep a Mentor's Diary, which documents the fulfillment of their role in the Program and serves as: a record of the types of support provided to the trainee in developing the basic knowledge, skills, and values necessary for quality direct work with children, collaboration in the learning community, and the development of professional practice; the mentor's observations of the trainee's work during the Program; and an assessment of the trainee's development of the basic knowledge and skills necessary for quality direct work with children, collaboration in the learning community, and the development of professional practice. (excerpt from the Program)

The systemically defined role of the mentor, as outlined in the then-existing Guide (Mentor and Novice Teacher..., 2009, 2012), the established licensing exam system that followed the induction program, and mentors' experiences from previous cycles of induction practice, created a mismatch between mentors' expectations and the vision of mentorship underpinning the new Program. The Program positioned the mentors as participants in a learning community, supported by a network accessible to both trainees and mentors. The previously defined role of the mentor as a formal evaluator (whose evaluation in previous cycles was largely a formality) hindered mentors from embracing the role envisioned in the new Program.

Addressing this challenge in the first cycle's implementation required organizing a dedicated meeting between the pedagogue–author and the full team of mentors. The meeting focused on re-examining the mentor's role, from understanding their responsibilities to clarifying the support system created for the mentors within the Program.

Implementation of the Program (Second Cycle)

The second cycle of the Program's implementation began in September 2024 with a meeting between the pedagogue–author and the group of mentors. The topic was the mentor's role in the Program, during which the material *Guidelines for Preparing the Mentor's Report* was jointly interpreted. This material was developed based on insights from the previous cycle regarding mentors' difficulties in understanding and accepting their role. At the first joint meeting (workshop) of all trainees and mentors with the professional associates, focused on introducing the Program, printed materials (*Trainee and Mentor Diaries* and the *Guidelines for Preparing the Mentor's Report*) were distributed to all preschool teachers participating in the Program.

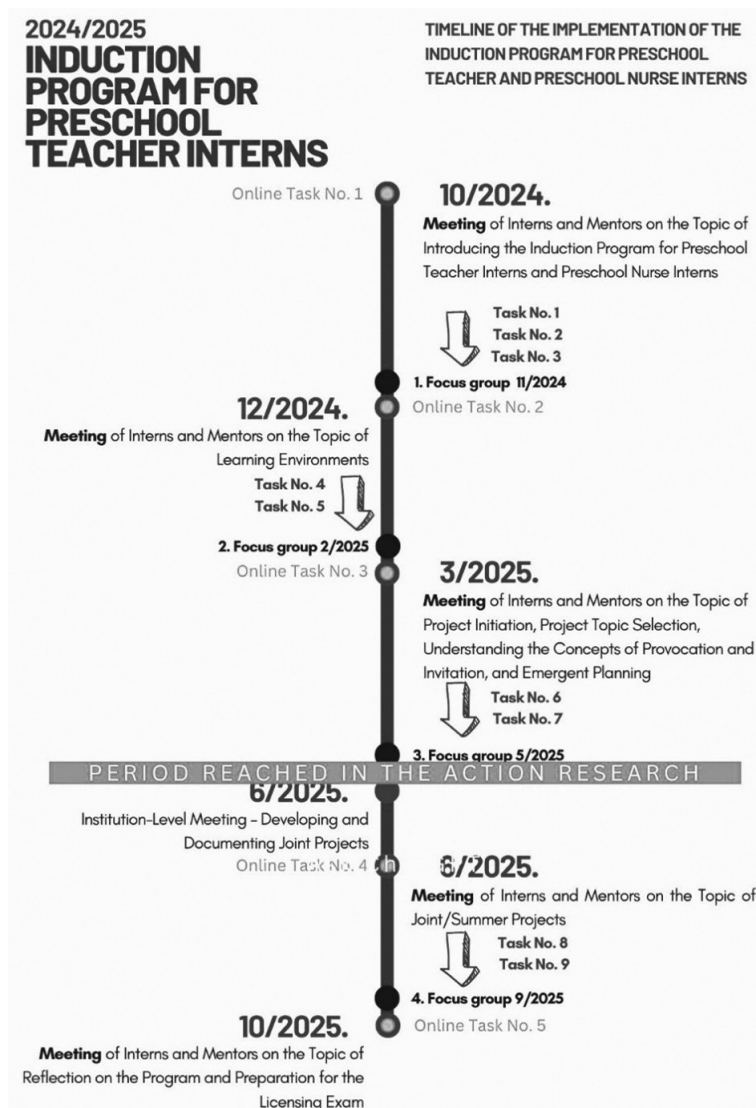
To address the challenge of perceived power relations between professional associates and preschool teachers in the Program (which will be discussed in more detail when elaborating on the pedagogue's role), and to make these power relations more balanced, the new cycle of implementation included the following organizational adjustments:

1. The workshops (for all trainees and mentors) were organized in two separate groups (in the first cycle, all trainees and mentors attended the same session at the same location), giving all participants the opportunity to choose the time and location that suited them best;
2. The focus groups were scheduled across multiple sessions (between 8 and 10 sessions, at two different locations), again allowing trainees and mentors to select the time and location most convenient for them..

The timeline, planned topics, and flow of the Program's implementation in the second cycle are presented schematically (Scheme 3) below.

Scheme 3:

Timeline of the Second Cycle of Program Implementation



The responsibility for designing and implementing all meetings and focus groups in the second cycle was assumed by the preschool pedagogue, the program's author. Unlike the first cycle, in which one of the planned meetings was not held and the organization of focus groups lacked consistency and coordination, in the second cycle all planned activities were carried out according to the timeline. This change does not indicate the superiority of individual over shared responsibility but, above all, the importance of a clear distribution of roles and agreed-upon coordination within shared leadership processes. Experience from the first cycle showed that shared leadership does not imply the absence of structure or equal involvement

in all segments: in fact, that time is needed to establish mutual trust, communication channels, and precise task distribution. The preschool pedagogue's assumption of a leading role in the organizational aspect during the second cycle did not diminish the contribution of other professional associates: in fact, it ensured that joint decisions were more consistently implemented in practice, thereby supporting continuity in the process of developing a culture of collaboration.

Insights into the challenges interns and mentors faced in the previous cycle regarding tasks were used to improve the *Intern and Mentor Journal* (as the main material) as well as all accompanying resources.

For example, in the previous cycle, it was expected that after each focus group interns would record their insights (as a reflection on the learning process), but the journal itself lacked additional clarification about what to focus on. As a result, interns often provided only technical information about the meeting (e.g., where it was held and who attended) without including any meaningful personal insight on the topic, thus losing the intended function of the notes. Therefore, in this cycle, the journal explicitly stated the focus for note-taking after each focus group (e.g., after the first group, the task was to compile a list of knowledge and shared understandings about the *Years of Ascent* framework; after the second, to create a list of guidelines for arranging preschool spaces that the intern could follow in practice).

To establish shared meanings and avoid the "noise" that occurred in the first cycle (for example, due to poorly timed and uncoordinated focus group implementation), greater care was taken in jointly agreeing on tasks, providing instructions, and giving feedback at every step.

For instance, after the first series of focus groups that followed the first meeting and the completion of the first few tasks (theme: understanding the *Years of Ascent* framework), which was implemented in November, all interns' notes were analyzed. It was observed that the notes contained indicators of misunderstanding key concepts.

The following actions were taken: a detailed report on the focus group notes was emailed to all interns, without naming individuals, outlining the quality of the notes in relation to the criteria agreed upon at the start of each focus group and reiterated in the follow-up email; additional materials were created: 1) a record of ambiguities and misunderstandings with clarifications; 2) a shared list of "input" knowledge and understandings derived from the analysis of all notes; 3) a "propeller" - a graphic representation of the *Years of Ascent* content with marked topics and page numbers in the program to make navigation easier.

Using these materials and the clarifications given at the next meeting, interns analyzed their own notes, identified which "zone" they fell into (red – notes indicating misunderstandings; yellow – unfocused notes; green – good notes), and supplemented or corrected their records accordingly.

The Leadership Role of Pedagogue in the Process of Introducing and Sustaining Change

Professional responsibility, as defined by the *Rulebook on Standards of Competences* (Regulation on Competency Standards..., 2021), served as a value-based guide for repositioning the role of the preschool pedagogue within the Program and the induction practice.

This Program was publicly presented three times in 2023, each time with a different focus in the presentations and accompanying papers (Malović, 2023, 2023a, 2023b). These presentations can be understood as the pedagogue's professional action in the field of their own practice and development, aimed at acquainting the broader professional community with an alternative approach to organizing induction and mentoring practice in the institution: one more closely aligned with the program concept and one that reaffirms the professional role of the pedagogue through the lens of the competence framework..

The way the Program was designed, starting from the defined competence of the professional associate for strategic (developmental) planning, is illustrated in paper (Malović, 2023), where the focus is on the pedagogue's role as a professional associate, whose competence in strategic planning and practice evaluating contributes to the design, implementation, and improvement of the Program, supports the professional development of preschool teachers, and fosters a culture of reflective practice within the learning community. The other two papers focused on highlighting competences in the areas of establishing cooperation and collaboration, developing reflective practice, and improving the quality of the real-life curriculum (Malović, 2023a, 2023b).

The significance of the professional associate's role as an organizer and supporter of all actors in the induction and mentoring practice was also recognized in the responses of the interns and the mentors to the questionnaire.

We received materials from the professional associate, which, along with the interns' and mentors' meetings, made the Induction Program easier to follow. Also, the tasks were designed so that collaboration between interns and mentors was greater. (M6, O1)

I believe that the strengths of the Program are the meetings, focus groups, the development of a learning community, and the support we receive from professional associates and mentors, as well as the tasks that encourage the intern to collaborate with all actors in the preschool. (P15, O1)

However, activating the leadership role in the process of introducing and sustaining change came with numerous challenges. A continuous challenge during the first cycle of Program implementation was the timely and coordinated execution of focus groups, since the Program was designed to require synchronized work of the team of professional associates on this task. In practice, this led to "noise" in the process, visible, for example, in the analysis of focus group notes from the interns' journals. For this reason, in the new Program cycle, the organization and execution of focus groups was redesigned with a more precisely defined focus for all participants (professional associate, intern, and mentor).

The importance of the professional associate's role in organizing and leading focused discussions was also recognized by the interns themselves.

The good part was the meetings where we exchanged experiences and opinions and solved problem situations... but there could have been a few more practical examples. I liked the focus groups and think it would be good and important for interns to have more of them, because that's where, with the professional associate, we could most easily get answers to all our questions. (P14, O1)

Re-examining the power dynamics between preschool teachers and professional associates was yet another challenge. Insights from preschool teachers regarding the established power relations required reconsideration of how both focused discussions and meetings were organized.

The good parts are the frequent meetings, experience exchange, and cooperation with colleagues... the bad part is that meetings (and focus groups) are organized in preschools closer to the associates rather than to the interns, and sometimes we have difficulties with organizing work, transportation, etc. (M7, O1)

Summary of Conclusions

When it comes to action research conducted in schools, Ševkušić (2011) points out that an action research has the potential to improve the “traditionally poor relationship between teachers and researchers” (Ševkušić, 2011, p. 198). Based on the research conducted, we can conclude that the relationship of trust and support between the professional associate-researcher and the preschool teachers in the institution was strengthened through the research process. In addition, it can be said that the spirit of community was visibly reinforced, with the culture of exchange and joint learning extending beyond the limits of Induction Program. Interns and mentors testify to their personal sense of empowerment and support, while professional associates and heads of kindergartens and nursery groups note that entire teams have been strengthened as a result of various actions initiated within the Program.

The presented action research can be understood as a form of intervention in institutional practice aimed at initiating and supporting change toward joint learning, professional reflection, and the transformation of practitioners’ roles. If, as Pavlović Breneselović (2008) states, intervention is understood as the planned introduction of change into educational practice, then the question of the sustainability of that change emerges as key and constitutive to the intervention itself.

The change initiated through this research is aimed at developing the practice and professional capacities of employees, which could lead to achieving the first dimension of sustainability – maintaining quality provided that the achieved trajectory of change in the induction practice continues to develop on the established foundations. A challenge remains in the institutional culture, which is built by the entire educational community, as the leadership of the institution has so far shown no interest in contributing to the development of reflective practice within the learning community. This lack of interest can be seen, among other things, in the unwillingness to employ a sufficient number of professional associates and to recognize the work of pedagogues as significant for the development of the entire institution.

For the initiated changes to be long-term and have systemic significance, it would be necessary to address the remaining two dimensions of sustainability: systemic embedding through the institutionalization of new work patterns and expansion within the system through dissemination and networking with other institutions and practices. This approach requires building and utilizing social capital through networked relationships

among actors within and outside the institution, as well as continuously building employees' capacities for reflective and meaningful action in their own practice (Pavlović Breneselović, 2008).

Systemic embedding does not seem likely under the current educational policy, which shows a tendency to shift the burden of designing and implementing induction and mentoring practice to mentors, while assigning the professional associate a secondary role in this process. On the other hand, despite the support provided to professional associates in preschools through "SNOP" trainings and other forms of assistance, a meaningful action in one's own practice remains difficult due to established cultures in preschools where the work of pedagogues is undervalued and their role is not recognized as significant. Furthermore, the narrative of developing a learning community cannot be sustainably built in a context where systemic frameworks and support through training remain misaligned with the value-based and theoretical principles that the community seeks to establish, since such inconsistency undermines the possibility of establishing shared meanings as the foundation for collective learning and development.

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Article received: 05.07.2025.

Updated version received: 03.08.2025.

Accepted for publishing: 08.08.2025.

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