

Parental Education as a Response to Parental Licensing Program: Report of Croatian Parental Education

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Abstract: LaFollette proposed that the best way to protect children from parents' abuse and neglect would be to implement parental licenses for prospective parents. He pointed out that the state should introduce licensing for all professions in which (1) people can harm those they serve, (2) can perform risky tasks safely only if they are competent, and (3) that the benefits of the licensing program are higher than the potential costs. This paper draws answers to challenges posed by parental licensing in a comprehensive pedagogical education of parents whose purpose is to develop good parenting to maximise the child's welfare. Raising a child from a position where the transition to parenthood was preceded by continuous intensive pedagogical parent education aims to understand parenting as a personal maturation and growth. So, this article presents the current condition of Croatian parenting programmes.

Keywords: Contemporary Parenting, Upbringing, Parental Licensing, Parental Education

1. Introduction: LaFollette's Parental Licensing Proposal

Hugh LaFollette made the original proposal for introducing parental licensing in 1980 in the article "Parental Licensing", and he updated it in 2010 in the article "Parental Licensing Revisited". In these articles, LaFollette pointed out that the state should introduce licensing for any/all professions in which (1) people can harm those they serve, (2) can perform risky tasks safely only if they are competent, and (3) that the benefits of the licensing program are higher than the potential costs. LaFollette was not the only one to propose a parental licensing program. Besides him, Jack C. Westman (1996; 2013), John E. Tropman (1984) and Michael T. McFall (2009) made concrete proposals for parental licensing programs. The basic idea of all proposals is the same, i.e., to prevent child abuse and neglect before it takes place.

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This paper will focus only on LaFollette's original parental licensing proposal because his work was the foundation for considering parenting licensing.

According to LaFollette, licenses should be issued for any profession that fulfils the following criteria: (1) People are engaged in an activity that may harm those they serve, either directly or by failing to fulfil their fiduciary duties; the harm can be significant and life-altering; (2) People can safely perform these risky activities only if they are competent; (3) The benefits of the licensing program outweigh any theoretical reasons against it (LaFollette, 2010, p. 328).

For any profession that fulfils the criteria mentioned above, the state should introduce licensing programs. For example, airline pilots fit into these criteria. An unskilled airline pilot can kill or seriously harm his passengers if he does not know what he is doing. In order to perform a routine flight safely, he is required to get a four-year college degree, finish pilot school, get a private pilot certificate and get a First-Class medical certificate. After these requirements are met, a person needs to get an instrument rating and commercial certificate. Only when all of these requirements are met and a person has clocked a minimum of 1500 hours of flight time, there is a chance of getting hired by a regional airline. In order to work for a major airline, usually 3000 hours of total flight time is required, and this is only a minimum requirement and usually the number of hours of total flight time needs to be much higher. All of that takes a lot of time, study and practice. Of course, the costs of issuing a license for airline pilots are very high and resource-consuming. A whole educational system that is tried, tested and constantly improved needs to be established if we want professionals who can pilot an aircraft safely, without killing their passengers. Although that system is expensive to society and very challenging for potential pilots, a great majority of people would agree that it is necessary if our goal is to have safe flights and competent pilots that will, in most cases, fly their passengers to their destinations rather than killing them in some accidents caused by inexperience. The same goes for professional drivers, lawyers, teachers, engineers, doctors, nurses, etc. All of them need to possess certain knowledge, abilities, dispositions, and be able to make appropriate decisions at the right time. Exactly what knowledge, abilities, and dispositions are required varies from profession to profession (LaFollette, 1980; 2010).

The same is true of parenting, at least according to LaFollette. Parents are legal guardians of their children for at least 18 years, or in some countries even longer. For the greater period during those 18 years, children are entirely dependent on their parents, which means that they are not capable of taking care of themselves and making decisions and choices that will influence their lives. In that period, parents are obliged to look after their children in the best possible way and make decisions that will be in the best interest of their children. However, there are no guarantees that parents will act in that way. Unlike pilots, teachers or engineers, parents do not have a certificate that guarantees that they will adequately care for their children. Furthermore, if they do not, 18 years is more than enough time for incompetent parents to cause much harm to their children that will profoundly influence the course of their adult life. It should also be noted that patients, passengers, and defendants are in a better position concerning their doctors, professional drivers or lawyers than are children concerning their parents. For example, if you doubt that your lawyer will defend you adequately in a court proceeding, you can change the lawyer. Children do not have this option. They cannot just walk to social services and say that they want new parents because the current ones seem incompetent. If parents are incompetent, children are usually stuck with them until they grow

up and move out. Circumstances need to be severe for a state to intervene and remove the child from incompetent parents. This is sufficient to show that parenting fulfils the first criterion for a profession that should be licensed. Parenting is an activity that can seriously harm children if it is conducted by incompetent parents (LaFollette, 1980; 2010).

According to LaFollette, parenting, like other professions mentioned above, requires certain knowledge, abilities and dispositions if people want to be successful parents with responsible and mature children. Children have specific needs at specific periods of their development, and parents need to know what those needs are and how they change. Parents also need to possess the knowledge of child development to intervene or ask for professional assistance if they suspect that something is not going as it should. If parents do not possess that knowledge, they can seriously harm the child by acting improperly or by not acting at all when they should. Nevertheless, knowledge alone is not enough. Even if parents know their children's needs, they also need to know how to fulfil them. They need to have the required skills to fulfil them. If they do not, they could also seriously harm their child. Possession of knowledge and skill by itself is still not enough to be a good parent. It is still required of parents to be capable of assessing individual situations and making the appropriate decisions. Let us say that a 3-year-old child has a slight headache. What should the parents do? Should they take the child to the hospital immediately or not? Is it something that will pass on its own, or is it something they can treat with aspirin, or perhaps even something that requires immediate medical attention? If they ascertain that it is something benign that will pass on its own, and it turns out that it is not, consequences could be fatal. It is crucial that parents possess the certain judgment to react appropriately to this and other similar situations. But certain dispositions are required as well. Imagine a parent who has the necessary knowledge, abilities and judgment for being a good parent but is also egoistic, tends to freeze in stressful situations, tends to overthink decisions when the situation requires fast reaction times etc. Despite all of her virtues, that person could also harm their child and would be a bad parent. Children cannot communicate their needs clearly, which can be stressful too; also, some of their needs need to be fulfilled with haste. According to LaFollette, all those things, only when taken together, constitute a competent parent. It should be apparent that parenting can be a risky activity that, if not taken seriously, can result in detrimental consequences for children (LaFollette, 1980; 2010).

We still need to see if the benefits of the licensing program outweigh any theoretical reasons against it. A cost-benefit analysis is required to answer this question. The significant advantage of introducing a licensing program for parenting would ideally be complete prevention of child abuse and neglect caused by incompetent parenting. We are saying ideally because complete prevention of child abuse and neglect would result from the parental licensing program in which it could be possible to identify all and only those who would necessarily commit child abuse and/or neglect at some point of their parenthood. Theoretically, that could be possible since the whole point of a parental licensing program is to prevent child abuse and neglect before it takes place, unlike in the present system in which the state intervenes on occasion and only when child abuse and/or neglect have already happened (LaFollette, 1980; 2010).

However, that is highly unlikely in practice since “no licensing system could be perfect” (LaFollette, 2010, p. 330). And it’s almost guaranteed imperfection is the first potential cost of parental licensing. If the criteria for issuing the parental license were set too high, too many good parents would not get their licenses. On the other hand, if the criteria are set too low, some parents who are likely to commit child

abuse and/or neglect would get the license, and as a consequence, the whole point of the parental licensing program would come into question since it would fail to prevent child abuse and neglect. The second potential cost is the abuse of new parental licensing system from people in influential positions. The third potential cost could be too high a level of intrusion into the parent-child relationship since some level of supervision would be required. There would be a cost in the narrow sense of the term as well. How much would the parental licensing system cost? Almost certainly, countries that would implement parental licensing would need to invest additional resources in the program's new administration. The new administration is required since the parental licensing program would work entirely differently from the current social service system. Some possible additional costs of the parental licensing system: parenting courses, supervision and support, tests, costs of issuing the license itself, implementation of penalties for the offenders, costs of potential lawsuits from the children who were victims of child abuse and/or neglect from the parents that were licensed (Bracanović, 2012), and other costs that are impossible to predict now. Theoretically, it is possible to imagine a situation where a parental licensing program works perfectly (child abuse and neglect is completely eradicated from society). However, the cost is so high that even the wealthiest country in the world cannot implement it (LaFollette, 1980; 2010).

LaFollette thinks that the cost is acceptable if a limited licensing program is implemented. He suggests the following parental licensing program: “set minimal requirements for a license, then reward those with licenses – say with special tax breaks – rather than punish those without” (LaFollette, 2010, p. 338). Parenting courses should be introduced that would be conducted during high-school education or as free-standing courses. The intended benefit of parenting courses would be for potential parents to understand “the difficulties of good and safe parenting” (Frisch, 1982, p. 174). People who would pass the test upon completion of the course would be licensed, and those who would fail could retake it later. If people without the license became parents, their children would not be taken away from them, but they would not get tax breaks. That means that parents without licenses would not be in a worse position than they are now. The only difference between unlicensed and licensed parents in LaFollette’s system would be that licensed parents would have slightly more money due to their tax breaks. Additionally, some parents support programs could be implemented, such as assigning a nurse to parents with children under the age of five (LaFollette, 2010).

Before we go to the next part of the paper, four important caveats should be mentioned. First of all, one of the goals of LaFollette's proposal is to identify only those prospective parents that could potentially cause serious harm to their children. He is not trying to determine average parents and deny them the license. So, if we imagine that LaFollette’s proposal is implemented somewhere, only the worst prospective parents would be denied the license, and everybody else would get them. On a similar note, LaFollette’s proposal for introducing parental licenses has nothing to do, nor should it be related to any form of eugenics. LaFollette is not proposing selective breeding of humans, nor is he proposing any sterilization of any social group. The only thing that LaFollette says is that a) parenting is a potentially risky activity that can seriously harm children if incompetent parents conduct it, that b) children would benefit from the introduction of a parental licensing program because, c) ideally, child abuse and neglect would be prevented before they happen. No social group is selected for procreation, and no social group would be precisely selected. In his proposal, all prospective parents could have children even if they did not obtain their parental license. The third caveat is in close connection to the first two. In LaFollette’s proposal,

freedom of procreation, an important element of all human rights declarations, is not brought into question since everybody can still have children if they so choose.

Also, it is important to note that the idea of parental licensing is not without precedent. The whole adoption system requires that people who would like to adopt, have to meet certain prerequisites before they can adopt. Their parenting competencies are tested; they need to go through personality testing, they need to be of certain minimal age – in Croatia, the minimum age is set at 21 – they must not have a record of certain behaviours that could indicate that potential adopters would be bad parents. Prospective adoptive parents in existing legal practices need to meet much higher standards before they can adopt than biological parents need to in LaFollette's parental licensing proposal (Kušević, 2009).

2. Objections to Parental Licensing

Frisch (1982) points to another significant difference between the professionals mentioned above and parenting. Licensing pilots or nurses is to ascertain whether candidates for these professions can practice them now, while the point of licensing parents is to ascertain whether people will be good parents in the future. Licensing programs that exist are designed to test present performance and not make predictions about future performance, while the parental licensing program is going for the latter (Frisch, 1982). Prospective parents should not be banned from parenting based on the prediction that they could harm their child one day. It is possible to imagine a situation where a parental license would not be issued to a prospective parent who would never actually harm his child because the test showed that the person in question is likely to commit child abuse. In this part of the paper, we will briefly review the objections to LaFollette parental licensing proposal.

One possible objection to parental licensing, anticipated by LaFollette, is that parenting differs from other paradigmatic professions such as teachers, professional drivers, nurses, in the number of people they can harm through incompetence. Incompetent parents will harm only their children, and that number is relatively small. In contrast, the professionals mentioned above will be able to harm many of their clients if they are incompetent, and that is why licenses are required for these professions and not for parenting (LaFollette, 2010).

Another possible objection to introducing parental licensing that LaFollette tries to anticipate is that its introduction would be superfluous. The right to have children is conditional on actual child abuse and/or neglect (LaFollette, 2010). That means that parents can raise their children without the state's intervention as long as they do not abuse and/or neglect their children. When and if the state notices that children are being abused and/or neglected, the state will intervene and remove the abused children from such families. With this system in place, the additional introduction of a parental licensing program is unnecessary.

It is possible that by the introduction of parental licenses, parenting would be uniformed. If the criteria that determine good parenting are introduced, there would be two consequences; a) parents would be forced to raise their children in a manner predetermined by parental licensing program, which would, in turn, reduce the plurality of approaches to child-rearing, and that would b) limit parental freedom to raise their children as they think would be in their children best interest (Furedi, 2002; Kušević, 2009; cf. Berge 2013).

Bracanović (2012) argues that LaFollette's proposal for the introduction of parental licensing contradicts his view of close personal relationships and their importance for the development of impersonal morality. According to LaFollette, "close personal relationships can empower us to act morally, they are the grist for the moral mill" (LaFollette, 1996, p. 207). Personal relationships and morality are not at odds with each other; instead, they are mutually supportive. According to Bracanović (2012), the introduction of parental licensing "would probably introduce entirely new and disturbing elements into relationships that are supposed to be the most intimate and personal" (Bracanović, 2012, p. 229), which would, in turn, be detrimental for the development of the impartial morality.

3. Pedagogical Support to Parenting through Parental Education

Keeping in mind what has been said so far in the previous part of the paper, one can understand more clearly why the concept of a parental license is unsustainable despite having offered detailed ways and executions of licensing. However, it is possible to respond to the challenges that led to the idea of this concept within the framework of modern pedagogical science through comprehensive parental education. The changed social circumstances, and also the shifts that have occurred in the postmodern family (e.g., in the context of the development of postmodernism, the creation of a new form of family - vital family) (Elkind, 1995; Maleš & Kušević, 2011) and parent-child relationships require pedagogues and pedagogy as well to come up with new visions and answers. That does not necessarily mean that such an approach to parental education will nullify the unacceptable parental behaviour towards children. However, it should contribute to acquiring a greater awareness and willingness of parents to the challenge of parenthood. Thus, parental education includes: a) parent training for parenthood, b) parenting skill programs, and c) parenting programs.

Although Parent training for parenthood does not exclusively refer to classical parental psychotherapeutic training, also known as Behavioural Parent Training (BPT) or Simply Parent Training (SPT), they deserve to be mentioned. Both programmes aim to learn the valid parental response to problems in preschool and school children such as learning difficulties, hyperactivity, aggression or inappropriate behaviours (theft, lying, frequent breaking of rules, etc.). These programmes are all focused on the fact that parents play the most important and responsible role in developing their children by training themselves to become "assistant therapists". The mentioned programmes help acquire the skills of appropriately reacting to inappropriate child behaviours while encouraging the child to behave more desirably (Bank et al., 1991; Tucker et al., 1998; Feldman & Werner, 2002; McCart et al., 2006) while, at the same time, developing the skills in parents of controlling one's focus. Parent training for parenthood represents a more comprehensive action consisting of a series of steps, each one representing unique dilemmas and challenges. It consists of a comprehensive approach towards parenthood starting with the very decision to become a parent (Hobcraft & Kiernan, 1995; Cowan & Cowan, 2000), Childbirth preparation (Hallgreen et al., 1999; Geissbuehler & Eberhard, 2002; Khorsandi et al., 2008), Transition to parenthood (Roy et al., 2014) and others. Childbirth preparation programmes can include individual educational programmes, courses for pregnant women and couples, but also customised educational group programmes. A quality psycho-physical preparation within the framework of parental preparation is also important since it will strongly contribute to emotional stability because parents often feel fear and anxiety during pregnancy (Franić, 2016). Transition to parenthood (Roy et al., 2014) follows current trends in family structures,

roles and family dynamics by researching the impact of individual family members and the impact of the social environment on the family. Transition to parenthood is undoubtedly the most critical step in the personal and family life cycle, and it deserves to be actively approached from a pedagogical point of view. By doing so, one should in no way disregard cultural and ethnic factors that are a key influence on the transition to parenthood (Palkovitz & Sussman, 2014), which means that it includes multidisciplinary work on all families involved in this approach, which reflect social trends, changes and the most important expectations (Roy et al., 2014). We should also point out the strong influences of institutional policies and practices that affect the sustainability of modern lifestyles of individuals and their families in this transition (Nilsen et al., 2013). In the field of pedagogy, parenting also implies biological and non-biological or social parenting. We should also point out para-parenting as informal, temporary, in some cases permanent, type of help or support provided by individuals to single-parent families and/or low-income families (Ljubetić, 2007), which represents great importance because there are people who, upon finding out that they are expecting a child, struggle with multiple and unexpected psychological, social and other behavioural changes that may ultimately result in an adjustment to parenthood, but also psychological functioning (psychological aspects of a modern family). The impact on parenting can ultimately be reduced to three groups of factors: "a) factors directly related to parents: their childhood, personality, education and social status, maturity, marital status, etc.; b) factors directly related to children: child's personality, order of birth, sex of the child, and c) factors of the broader social context: war and post-war reality, economic status of the society as a whole, migration, culture, religion, etc." (Ljubetić, 2007, p. 48). When it comes to preparing parents for the transition to parenthood, it is necessary to include all of the mentioned factors, since parenthood is one of the most common life experiences of an individual, which is why the transition to parenthood is often perceived as a completely normal experience and is believed that it should not be given special attention. Keeping in mind that this represents a complete reorganization of one's life, but also the inner world of the individual who is to become a parent, this change must be given extremely high importance via information, education and comprehensive education of future parents with the ultimate aim of developing quality parenting such as: Parenting and the provision of child care (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2008), preparing the parents for psycho-physical and social challenges that await them in parenthood (Amato, 2005; Rivers et al., 2008), how to cope with an unplanned parenthood (Musick, 2002; Moore, 2013), how to be a single parent (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Kinnear, 1999; Matthews, 2010; Hetherington, 2014). Given the challenges (divorce, employment of both parents, longer working hours, job insecurity, technological development, pluralization of the family structure, dual socialization, individualistic culture) that a postmodern parent faces (Akrap, 1999; Čudina-Obradović & Obradović, 2000; Živić, 2003; Brady & Guerin, 2010; Ailincăi & Weil-Barais, 2013; Abela & Walker, 2014; Svilar Blažinić, 2014;), parent education programmes provide support to parents in performing their parental function, as well as help in changing their parental beliefs (Smith et al., 2002; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016).

Working on parental beliefs about children's needs and their role in raising a child can influence parental behaviours and their choice of upbringing approaches (cf. Neuhauser, 2010; cf. Assarsson & Aarsand 2011; Pećnik et al., 2011). Knowing children's developmental needs change parental expectations of children's behaviour (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). Parents want to know how to become better parents to feel more secure in adapting to their new role (Zepeda et al., 2004; Brady & Guerin, 2010; cf. Ahlden et al., 2012). The reason for parents' failure to understand and

respond to a child's needs can be found in their lack of knowledge when it comes to raising children (Steinberg & Bradford Brown, 1996; cf. Neuhauser, 2010) and also in underdeveloped parenting skills, which represent one of the risk factors for violence towards children (Sanders & Pidgeon, 2011). That is why the solution can be found in well-thought-out and science-based parenting programmes aimed at educating parents for this complex role and supporting them during the process of searching for mechanisms that will enable them to successfully respond to their child's needs as this paper tries to point out.

4. Pedagogical Parental Education in the Republic of Croatia

Parental upbringing methods are crucial for the quality relationship between parents and children, and they directly affect the child's progress and further life path (Jurčević Lozančić, 2015), which only emphasizes the need to work on strengthening parental competencies (Sanders & Pidgeon, 2011). Strengthening parental competencies implies social support to parents via informative and professional support, which is achieved by acquiring knowledge and skills in a personally and socially supportive environment (Milanović et al., 2000). Through researching parenting programmes in the Republic of Croatia, the authors of this paper conclude that we are intensively developing awareness of the need for the immediate introduction of programmes that should include knowledge in the field of partnerships and relationships with children from birth to adolescence (such as the programme *Conscious Parenting*).

4.1 The Analysis of the Programmes for Parental Education in the Republic of Croatia

By analysing the available parental education programmes, the authors of this paper divide the available programmes into the following categories: financial availability (free and programmes that require payment), time availability (are the programmes adjusted to the parents' working hours), regional availability (are the programmes evenly distributed in the Republic Croatia) and the availability of courses online. We arranged the researched programmes in the table based on the mentioned criteria (see Table 1).

Table 1: Review of the programmes for parental education in the Republic of Croatia

Parenting programmes	Categories of analyses			
	Financial availability	Time availability	Regional availability	Online availability
Programmes provided by <i>Family Centre</i>	Free programme	Counselling by appointment	Represented in the most parts of Croatia	-
<i>Parenting school (Brave Phone)</i>	Free programme	Once a week in the evening (by appointment)	Zagreb	-
<i>Let's grow together (UNICEF)</i>	Free programme	Depending on the agreement with the institution implementing the programme (association, kindergarten)	68 cities in different counties	-
<i>Parenting Differently (The Centre for Children, Youth and Family)</i>	Free programme	Evening hours during the week (Wednesday)	Velika Gorica	-
<i>Conscious parenting</i>	Whole programme is from 3000 HRK to 3600 HRK; if both parents are included, from 450 to 550 HRK for each parent	Saturdays	Zagreb, Rijeka and Split	-
Institute D.O.M.	Free programme	Every first Wednesday of the week, in the evening	Zagreb	-
<i>Parenting 0-6 + early development – impact on life (Centre Natural Parenting)</i>	Whole programme 2100 HRK per parent, the second parent has a discount of 1000 HRK	In the evening	-	<i>Online programme (Zoom)</i>

The table highlights parental education programmes in the Republic of Croatia. UNICEF's programme *Let's grow together* (2020) aims to create a stimulating and empowering environment for parents through the exchange of parenting experiences; getting to know oneself as a parent, as well as scientific views on the interaction of parents and children for the benefit of the child (Pećnik & Starc, 2010). Furthermore, *Parenting School* is a programme implemented by *Brave Phone*. The workshops are free, and the goal is to empower parents and enable them to recognize and solve problems they encounter during upbringing, as well as enable them to raise a parental image of the child, to overcome parental stress, ways of communication, and directing a behaviour (Brave Phone, 2014). The Centre for Children, Youth and Family (2019) in Velika Gorica organises the programme *Parenting Differently*, which provides parents with instructions about parenting styles, and develops their parenting skills. Centre for Social Welfare can also be included in the institutions that provide free parental programmes, within which there are *Family Centres* (Centre for Social Welfare Zagreb, 2017), which offer free support to parents through counselling, family mediation and group programs. Also, the Institute D.O.M. (2020) organizes free counselling for parents every first Wednesday of the month.

When it comes to workshops that require payment, the Programme *Conscious Parenting* (2022) is available with a total of six modules in six workshops organized on Saturdays (with the aim of better accessibility for parents). The price for the entire program is 3,000.00 HRK for early applications and 3,600.00 HRK for late applications, but if both parents are included, price is from 450.00 to 550.00 HRK for each parent (Conscious Parenting, 2022). Also, each module is from 500.00 to 600.00 HRK (in total six modules). Furthermore, the *Centre Natural Parenting* (2022) within its programme Parenting 0-6 offers online lectures that help achieve two goals - getting to know the child and getting to know oneself. The mentioned programme requires payments, and the price of the complete programme (workshops included) is 2,100.00 HRK for a single parent and 2,500.00 HRK for both parents the second parent there is a discount of 1,000.00 HRK. They also offer free webinar *Challenges of Parenting* with different topics - from various developmental child's phases to relationship challenges parents face after having children.

Considering that the average monthly net salary in the Republic of Croatia in 2021 is HRK 7,280.00 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2022) the monetary amounts of the above-mentioned parenting education programmes that require payment are not financially available to all parents. Also, given the geographical specifics of the Republic of Croatia, it is clear that regional accessibility has not been evenly achieved, while time availability is aligned with the needs of parents. There is only one online parenting programme and it requires payment (by the Centre Natural Parenting), which makes it regionally available (it is possible to attend it from the comfort of home). However, that programme is not financially available to all parents. Since the mentioned online program requires payment, it is clear that parenting programs do not include all structures of society or all parts of the Republic of Croatia, which requires a professionally planned and guided programme at the state level with challenges that can be observed through several dimensions: a) parents' awareness of the need for parental education; b) the actual availability of parental education programmes from a financial perspective; c) (un)equal representation of accessing the programmes in certain parts of Croatia. Given the geographical specificity of the Republic of Croatia, online programmes have the potential for regional and temporal availability. If the potential and need for parenting programmes can be recognized at the national level, the programmes might be available to all parents from a financial point of view. If we compare the Republic of Croatia with other European Union

countries (e.g., examples of good practice in Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands with the programme Triple P - Positive Parenting Program; and Spain with the programme Educar en positivo (Online Parenting Support: Positive Parents), Belgium with the programme Blended Parenting Advice (European Commission, 2020)) it is evident that EU member countries recognized the potential of online space for systematic and quality education of parents.

5. How to Successfully Implement Parental Education Programme?

A subjective parental competence is the parent's sense of capability and success, and positive self-esteem will affect the emotional climate essential for the child's development (Čudina-Obradović & Obradović, 2003; Neuhauser, 2010). But what happens when parents do not question their ability to be a parent? The first step in successful parental education is the raising of awareness of its needs because it is the most difficult to include the parents “who need help the most” (Čudina-Obradović & Obradović, 2003, p. 63) such as parents with lower education and economic status, single parents, “careless”, overworked or unemployed parents (Čudina-Obradović & Obradović, 2003; Ahlden, et al., 2012). These parents represent the most vulnerable in a society where parenting education programmes could help. Some of the prerequisites for successful parental education can be divided into: a) regional and time availability, which means the availability of programmes to a large number of parents and timeframes suitable for parents (e.g., late-night hours, the availability of online courses with the help and motivation provided by mentor via phone or home visits); b) parental involvement depends on the financial status of the parental education programme, namely whether the program requires payment or is available free of charge; c) creating a programme that included all the necessary skills for successful parenting with the cooperation of experts from several fields; d) establishing smaller groups of parents who will continue to support each other even after the completion of a programme, which can be established via quality exchange of experience, mutual support, motivational content which help shape attitudes and beliefs on upbringing in the best interest of the child (Čudina-Obradović & Obradović, 2003; Pećnik & Starc, 2010; Petani & Kristić, 2012; Jelenić Aćimović, 2016). Parental support and an approach that establishes a relationship between programme leaders and parents, as well as parents with other parents, should be the programme's primary goal, as well as the design of a program that reflects the needs of a postmodern parent (Miller & Sambell, 2003; Ahlden et al., 2012).

6. Conclusion

In his Licensing Program, LaFollette stated a clear goal – parents' education for parenting to protect children from neglect and abuse. Although the idea of parental licensing is unsustainable for several reasons: (a) financial aspect (financing of the licence), (b) difficulty in determining systematic licensing criteria, (c) unification of upbringing styles where the instinctive action in upbringing is disrupted; the fundamental reason for conducting parental licensing, and that is the necessity of educating parents, remains stable. Based on expert knowledge, quality design and implementation of parenting programmes can be achieved in pedagogical science. The answers to the challenges posed by parental licensing, under the scope of pedagogical science, can be provided by a comprehensive pedagogical education of parents, which aims to develop good parenting to maximise a child's welfare. From the point of view that the transition to parenthood is preceded by continuous intensive pedagogical parental education, the act of upbringing aims to understand parenting as personal maturation and growth, reflecting the need for

continuing education. Parental education that includes programmes for parental education, parenting skills programmes, and parenting programmes confirm that parents cannot and must not be ill-prepared for parenting. Parents must be pedagogically educated, keeping in mind multiple social and economic changes that transform a family and society, which ultimately makes LaFollette's parent licensing proposal redundant. The basic premise of parenting licensing, which is their education, survives and concludes that to achieve a successful education of parents, it is necessary to create a quality program that will enable systematic and continuous monitoring of the quality and effectiveness of the programme.

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