POSSIBILITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL EDUCATION AND SOCIAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR A FAMILY AT CHILDREN'S DAY CARE CENTRES

Daiva Alifanovienė, Odeta Šapelytė, Nomeda Bėčiūtė
Siauliai University, Lithuania

Abstract

The article deals with the specificity of social education and socioeducational services for children from socially disadvantaged families provided at children's day care centres and possibilities of development of these services in the aspect of family members' social inclusion. The article presents the analysis of qualitative semi-structured interviews. Content analysis targeted at experiences of children's day care centre professionals (N = 10) highlights the content of learners' social education at children's day care centres and of provided socioeducational services for the family, expressed through professionals' subjective assessment of the current situation and the need for services to be provided.

Keywords: social education, social educational services for a family, children's day care centres, family attributed to socially disadvantaged families

Introduction

Legal documents of the Republic of Lithuania (the Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania, 2006, the Concept of the State Child Welfare Policy, 2003) describe the socially disadvantaged family as a community where minors are growing, where at least one parent is dependent, due to the lack of social skills cannot take proper care of children, abuses them psychologically, physically or sexually and uses state support not for family interests, which results in the risk for children's physical, mental, spiritual, moral development and safety, while the socially disadvantaged child is perceived as vagrant, mendicant, truant, as a drug abuser, engaged in criminal activities, as a minor who has experienced or may experience violence and whose self-development and participation in public life for these reasons is limited.

According to the data of the Department of Statistics of the Republic of Lithuania, the Programme for Child Wellbeing 2013-2018 indicates that in 2014, records of Child's Rights Protection Services listed 10 235 socially disadvantaged families, raising 20 664 minor children. In such families children are constantly experiencing parents' negative behaviour: lack of social skills, addictions, violence, throwing about state benefits and their misuse meeting children's needs (Aperavičienė, 2009; Masiliauskienė & Griškutė, 2010).

National documents regulating the development of education and upbringing, social support provide for the development of related institutions, their cooperation, improvement of services (Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, 2011; Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania, 2006; the National Strategy on Education for the years 2013-2022). New documents projecting the country's progress, social and educational welfare (Lithuania's Progress Strategy 'Lithuania 2030') analyze social exclusion existing in the public, reveal violations of rights of vulnerable segments of the society, especially children, families, provide for their solution, improvement of life quality, assurance of social welfare and equal opportunities for the week of the society, supplemented with social inclusion and social participation of vulnerable

social groups. The Programme for Child Wellbeing 2013-2018 provides for quality meeting of the learner's interests and needs, providing conditions for the child to grow in families, developing accessibility of timely preventive and comprehensive support and services in order to reduce social exclusion and ensure quality of social education and services.

Implementation of the Concept of the State Child Welfare Policy (2003) and The Programme for Child Wellbeing 2013-2018 was aimed at reduction of social exclusion, promotion of social inclusion and assurance of the child's right to grow up in a favourable family. To achieve this, activities of children's day care centres in municipalities were developed, providing out-patient social and educational services for children growing up in socially disadvantaged families, for their families, developing natural social support network. Implementing the programme 'Risk Group Children and Youth' under the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 and following the experience of the Republic of Lithuania and other countries, it is intended to develop activities of child and youth day care centres, inclusion of socially disadvantaged families in the social network. Child day care centres belong to the *non-governmental sector* and are non-profit organizations; establishment of day care centres in Lithuania, initiated by these organisations, started in 1996. Main reasons that determined establishment of day care centres were the relative increase of socially disadvantaged families, increasing juvenile delinquency and the lack of after-school activities (Indrašienė & Šlapelienė, 2007; Rimkus & Žemulienė, 2013; Vaitkevičius, 1995; Waytt, 2006).

Implementation of the said programmes, development of social education and services demonstrate positive results: improvement of pro-social behaviour, communication and learning achievements of children attending day care centres, children gain self-confidence and start respecting themselves, they are involved into meaningful activities, their value orientations are changing, manifestations of antisocial behaviours are decreasing, parents begin taking better care of children, day care centres provide consultations of professionals (social educator, social worker, special educator, psychologist), all of it resulting in improvement of children's and their families' social situation (Law on Social Services of LR, 2006, the National Programme of Child Day Care Centres 2005-2007).

Children's day care centres, where learners can safely spend 25 hours per week, provide day care services for children and additional services for socially disadvantaged families, meeting the child's main needs, which have not been met in the family, and providing support for the family, improving parenting skills. Children's day care centres provide conditions for children's socialisation, involving them in useful and interesting activities, assistance for children from socially disadvantaged families and their family members to change value orientations, broaden their horizons, acquire social abilities, adapt in the society, providing psychologists', social educators', social workers' and medics' support. In day care centres children from socially disadvantaged families have the possibility to self-develop, become active participants of public processes. One or another activity in itself does not yet mean social participation and activeness: the activity must be inclusive, relevant and socially significant. Children from socially disadvantaged families often do not have a possibility to participate in this activity due to material deprivation, negative opinion of educators and the public, aggravating involvement in the education and upbringing system, after-school activities, limiting the positive leisure, disclosure of individual abilities (Guščinskienė & Kondrotaitė, 2006; Eskytė, 2008).

Research data (Aperavičienė, 2009; Alifanovienė, Vaitkevičienė, & Kaušienė 2014; Indrašienė & Šlapelienė, 2007; Rimkus & Žemgulienė 2013; Masiliauskienė & Griškutė, 2010, et al.) analyzing social educational support possibilities for children from socially disadvantaged families, social inclusion of these families, development of social and educational support, do not arouse any doubts as to meaningfulness of activities of children's day care centres, seeking learners' positive socialization, inclusion of families of these children into social networks and

successful integration into the social cultural space. *What is the social situation of children from socially disadvantaged families? How is the social education process for children organised? How does cooperation with members of families of these children take place? What are the possibilities of development of these activities? What do professionals working there think about it?* These and other questions form the problem area of the article, aiming *to disclose possibilities of development of social education and educational services at children's day care centres.*

The research subject: possibilities of development of social education and educational services at children's day care centres in the aspect of professionals' subjective experiences.

The research sample. Respondents were chosen using targeted selection; i.e., professionals representing different areas and working in children's day care centres were selected. Ten experts were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Besides, the expert's comments were considered.

Research methodology and sample. To analyse the opinion of professionals working at day care centres (N = 10) the qualitative data collection method was selected (semi-structured *interview*), directly communicating with informants. The interviews were conducted giving open-ended questions that did not limit possible answers according to assessment areas foreseen by researchers. The latter were distinguished having analysed scientific literature (Aperavičienė, 2009, Alifanovienė, Vaitkevičienė, & Kaušienė 2014; Eskytė, 2008; Rimkus & Žemgulienė 2013) and documents (the National Programme of Child Day Care Centres 2005-2007).

The content of responses, which formed the basis of the study, was grouped according to corresponding diagnostic areas, broken down into categories (diagnostic indicators); meaningful statements were selected. Rating of each category was identified by calculating the frequency of meaningful statements of the category. During the course of the study the attitude of professionals working at these centres (social educators, social workers, special educators) towards peculiarities of social and educational activities carried out at children's day care centres and their development possibilities had to disclose itself. Research data were organised applying the content analysis method, employing the open coding procedure (Квале, 2003; Corbin & Strauss, 2014). The results of the qualitative study were grouped into diagnostic areas, answers according to their meaning were grouped into categories, frequency of meaningful units was calculated. According to Merkys (1995), applying this method, it is necessary to detect characteristic, typical structural units in the content of analysed texts. Respondents (professionals of various areas working in children's day care centres) were selected applying targeted sampling. All respondents have higher education and have worked in children's day care centres employ at least for two years.

Qualitative research data were validated using expert method (Квале, 2003; Corbin & Strauss, 2014). The expert was given qualitative study tables with projected diagnostic areas, categories characterising them and illustrating statements. The expert's analysis was followed by his/her opinion regarding suitability of given data. Analyzing and interpreting data, the expert's essential comments (naming and revision of diagnostic areas, regrouping and highlighting of certain illustrating statements, distinguishing and highlighting of 'provided' and 'to-be-provided' or requested services, activity fields) were taken into account. This enabled to seek a more definite and comprehensive presentation of the study, more accurate presentation, analysis of empirical qualitative research data, quality of interpretation and presentation of results.

Analysis of Research Results

The interviews aimed to find out the informants' opinion about peculiarities of development of social education, educational services (educational process, leisure, material support, cooperation with children's families, etc.) at children's day care centres. We will present only some assessment areas in the article. One of them is organisation of the social education process, its peculiarities at children's day care centres (Table 1).

Table 1. Organisation of the social education process at children's day care centres: subjective assessment of the situation and need

Organisation of the social education process: assessment of the current situation		
Categories	**N**	**Examples of supporting statements (meaningful units)**
The need of identification of the child's individual abilities and their realisation	12	*'Art therapy, psychologist'; '…development of abilities according to the needs… not as much as we would like to…'; 'Possibilities are searched for so that the child could disclose his/her abilities… music classes, additional work with worse learners, but talented children are not given any attention';*
Practical, educational classes in groups	11	*'What is going on every day is related to practical benefit'; '… thematic talks'; 'children enjoy quizzes, competitions, table games,… dictionaries, references, encyclopaedias, maps…'*
Development of personal hygiene skills	10	*'Every Friday hygiene classes with the specialist'; '…using the toilet, hand washing, talks both with children and parents'*
Development of domestic abilities	10	*'Tidying the surroundings, .. premises, cooking'; '… for girls – tidying, for boys – household work'; 'the activity do-it-yourself … usage of chemical cleaners…'*
Artistic education	9	*'…drawing,…performances, concerts'; 'participation in public exhibitions, visits to art events, … audiovisual art, art classes'; 'playing instruments, needlework; modelling from clay… artists visit…';*
Physical education	9	*'Sport… when it is warm outside…'; 'Sports games'; '… agile games in the yard';*
Doing homework	8	*'We are working like hell… we are doing what has not been done by school teachers'; 'it is most effective with primary school learners… volunteers help to work individually… this is children's duty';*
Public activity	8	*'Not much: civic activities, participation in parish activities…'; 'performances (in the city, elderly people's home); civic actions ('food bank'; 'tidying the city)…';*
Organisation of the social education process: assessment of the need		
The need of professionals, volunteers for individual work with the child	10	*'The psychologist is required,… to look for specialists who could work individually…'; 'we badly need more volunteers… specialists are required…'; 'we would need a special educator… we would very much need artists', medics' support…';*
The need of practical, educational classes	9	*'For this main funds would be allocated'; 'Talks, meetings, thematic classes…';*
The need of development of personal hygiene skills	9	*'Should be but very subtly…'; '… there should be a personal example… to talk with the family…'*
The need of development of domestic abilities	8	*'… it is a necessary thing, but not theoretically, practically… personal example is very important…'*
The need of artistic education	8	*'According to the trend of the project'; 'Necessary…there should be a separate person…';*
The need of doing homework as perception of duty	8	*'To learn strictly according to the set schedule'; 'It is necessary… because it helps to perceive a duty'; ' By all means because the majority does not have any other chances';*
The need of public activity as positive socialisation	6	*'Should be a very open thing…'; 'This is the child's most distinct socialisation…'; 'Very good socialisation method…'*
The need of physical education	4	*'According to possibilities…'; 'more during the warm season'*

Analysing the assessment of the organisation of the educational process, it is revealed that informants treat **individual work with learners** as an important trend of activity (both as a desirable activity and as the already implemented activity). The informants (N=10) believe that the most successful work could take place in the presence of child welfare professionals (*art therapists, psychologists, special educators, medics*) and other professionals, volunteers, who are able *to work with children individually*. It is noticed that seeking educational success additional work is done with worse learners while talented children are not given any attention. The informants are not satisfied with the fact that the focus is only on children with average abilities while those with exceptional abilities are left to chance. Research data (N=12) highlighted the necessity *of disclosure of children's individual abilities*.

Expressing their opinion about development of **practical** (N=11), **domestic** (N=10), **hygiene** (N=10) abilities, research participants stated that such type of education was a necessity, took place every day (*tidying the surrounding, premises, cooking, usage of chemical cleaners, clothing and shoe care, domestic waste sorting, for boys – household works, etc.*) and must be both theoretical and practical. In informants' opinion, learners of children's day care centres lack hygiene abilities too; therefore, there are talks about *washing, using the toilet, personal hygiene* both with *children* (separately with boys and girls) and with *parents*, who often lack these skills themselves and do not create conditions for children at home to acquire such skills.

Research data show that **doing homework** (N=8) is *one of the main activities, a compulsory work* but takes place not always; homework is done *chaotically* because other activities are done in parallel, *there is no fixed time for doing homework*, there is a lack of premises, often everything takes place in the same room. Specialists treat this activity as a measure for developing the sense of duty. Children's day care centre specialists state that they work a lot but believe that they are doing what school teachers have not done. No secret that teachers' attitude to children from socially disadvantaged families is often negative, hindering learners to get additional support and avoid learning gaps.

The analysis of informants' opinion about **children's artistic education** (N=9), **public activities** (N=8) shows that this kind of education and activities (*playing instruments, needlework, making things from clay*) take place at day care centres, children visit *exhibitions, films, meet artists, participate in parish life, civic actions*. It is desirable that the person responsible for these activities should work at the institution on a permanent basis. Often such type activities are the only self-expression possibility for learners of day care centres, which develops imagination, fantasy, creativity, self-confidence or is a way to integrate into public life, touch art and culture.

According to informants, **physical education** (N=8) possibilities at day care centres are quite limited. Assessing the current situation, research participants state that in most cases children's activities are limited to agile games; they also play sports games outdoors. The answers *according to possibilities or situation* most often mean that there are no possibilities for games that require space. Specialists believe that physical education is necessary because children's physical condition is not good enough; however, in this stage, day care centres would hardly afford even modest facilities. However, it is always worth attempting.

The social development process carried out at children's day care centres should be treated as a constituent of holistic education, in which all participants of the educational process (school, family, community, etc.) are important. Seeking inclusion of socially disadvantaged families and their children in public changes, successful social development, it is important to seek positive changes in the said areas, including the activities of day care centres. The latter, organizing activities with learners, should involve child welfare specialists, representatives of creative occupations, family members, volunteers to develop children's cognitive, artistic, domestic, social, physical abilities. Such *systemic-structural* perception of constituents of social education and support highlights the importance of the participants of the educational

process and enables to seek their inclusion in the development of the socialization process (Aramavičiūtė, 2009; Vaitkevičius, 1995).

The study was designed to find out professionals' opinion about possibilities, content and key trends of socioeducational work with socially disadvantaged families (Table 2).

Table 2. Socioeducational work with members of socially disadvantaged families: subjective assessment of the situation and need

Socioeducational work with members of socially disadvantaged families: assessment of the current situation		
Categories	**N**	**Statements**
Individual socioeducational work with parents	8	*'parents ask for individual talks'; 'parents are heard out and solutions are searched for... development of parents' responsibility...sometimes we lack knowledge of psychology';*
Mediation, information about services provided by institutions	8	*'Sending to the right institutions... Children's Rights Protection Service, Pedagogical Psychological Service, school...'; 'Social Care, flats management, heating company, paying taxes,... school';*
Home visits	7	*'Take place but not on a permanent basis...'; 'most often when a new child comes, when a concrete problem arises; once per quarter...';*
Organisation of parents' self-help groups	6	*'last Friday of every month.. groups are led by a professional....'; '... around the round table, so that parents discuss their problems... from time to time';*
Socioeducational work with members of socially disadvantaged families: assessment of the need		
The need of individual socioeducational work with parents	10	*'this must be done by an experienced person'; 'so that it is possible to help the child.. to promote parents' self-confidence, their responsibility...'; 'not only to listen to complaints..., but to help to solve problems'; etc.*
The need of cooperation with other institutions (education, social)	10	*'It is necessary... especially Children's Rights Protection Service ... prevention'; 'According to the needs (e.g., because of addictions, work search)... the very parents' decision...'; 'to combine activities and school'; 'desirable link with kindergartens'; etc.*
Emphasis on home visits as a measure of support and prevention	10	*'If there is reciprocal wish to reach a result.. this is prevention...'; 'Possible, desirable, very subtle.. but not insistent...'; '(the visited persons) should not feel humiliated...'; etc.*
The need of organisation of parents' permanent self-help groups	10	*'Necessary, so that parents understand both their own and other people's problems...'; 'another attitude to problems appears... hearing out others'; 'It would be useful if classes were fixed and continuous'; etc.*

An important trend of activities of children's day care centres, which should be given special attention, is socioeducational work with the family, because it is one of the most important systemic-structural constituents of social education and support, affecting formation of the personality. Data obtained during the study only confirm the fact that the priority providing socioeducational support is organisation of individual support for the family both in the aspect of the assessed situation (N=8) and in the aspect of assessing the need (N=10). The study also discloses the need of cooperation with the social, educational and upbringing institutions and the need of organising constantly operating self-help groups for parents

(N=10). Informants' subjective assessments highlight orientation to the ways of increasing parents' (self-)involvement in the process of organization and provision of support, this way increasing parental responsibility for assurance of their own and children's life quality. Often cooperation of professionals and families is a one-way process: when families with certain social educational needs treat professionals as omniscient, as saviours and the very professionals rarely resist this approach, taking the position of the only expert of the situation. In other words, specialists start modelling the family's field of activity, certain powers begin dominating, others obey, resulting in a tendency to pass all the initiative of the child's education to professionals; the family remains kind of near education (Guščinskienė & Kondrotaitė, 2006; Eskytė, 2008; Vaitkevičius, 1995) and the support process. Therefore, according to study participants' subjective assessment, participation in parents' continuous self-help groups would create preconditions to understand *'... not only your own but also other people's problem*s'; '…*there appears a different approach to the problems ... hearing out others*' and this might encourage the very parents to take the initiative and responsibility for their lives, for their children's education, assurance of quality of life. It is also important to note that expressing subjective assessments with regard to visits to children's homes, study participants did not demonstrate monitoring and power possessing position. Professionals perceived home visits more as a preventive measure, as an opportunity to get to know the family, in no way violating the person's autonomy and dignity. According to Freire (2000) only when cooperation is grounded on parity based interaction, when both sides are treated as knowledgeable, able and proficient, it is likely that to the results of both education and support organization will be better. When specialists help the family to find the strength to overcome difficulties, trust in its powers, joint actions for a common goal may result in better achievements in the child's education and creation of preconditions for the child's positive socialization.

Conclusions. Discussion

The analysis of scientific sources, statistical data shows that due to the country's difficult socioeconomic conditions and high migration the number of socially disadvantaged families and children growing in them remains relatively stable with a negligible downward trend. It is likely that the tendency of reduction of these families can be more significantly influenced by *systemic-structural* perception of constituents of social education and support, highlighting the importance of participants of the educational process (children, family members, school, community, etc.) and enabling to strive for their inclusion in the development of the socialization process. In this respect, the development of social education and socioeducational services in the community, children's day centres remains important. These processes can be ensured by aforementioned socioeducational initiatives of communities of educational and upbringing institutions, involving vulnerable social groups, particularly children into this process.

State documents provide for development of education, social and educational services, support for the learner, prioritising children from socially excluded groups and socially disadvantaged families. Implementing ideas provided in these documents, it was sought to reduce social exclusion, increase social inclusion and ensure the child's right to grow up in the family. Therefore, the activities of children's day care centres, providing out-patient social and educational services for children growing up in socially disadvantaged families, where they experience considerable difficulties, were developed.

The social education process carried out at children's day care centres should be treated as a part of holistic education, in which all participants in the educational process (school, family, community, etc.) are important. To achieve inclusion of socially disadvantaged families and their children into public changes, successful social education, it is important to seek positive changes in the said areas, including the activities at day care centres. The latter,

organising activities with children, should involve child welfare specialists, representatives of creative occupations, family members, volunteers, develop children's cognitive, artistic, domestic, public, physical abilities.

An important trend of activities of children's day care centres, which should be given particular attention, is empowering socioeducational work with the family. The family is one of the most important structural-systemic constituents of social education and support, affecting personality formation. It is often the case that the family with socio-educational needs treat professionals as omniscient, as saviours and the very professionals rarely oppose this approach. Such paternalistic support model presupposes that the whole initiative is given to professionals and at the same time discourages the very family to take responsibility to overcome arising difficulties. Modelling priorities of support for the child and family, the very professionals emphasize the importance of both cooperation with the family, its inclusion and organisation of self-help groups, where the very parents, hearing out other parents, would create possibilities to identify the needs of their family and possibilities of meeting these needs; i.e., so that the very parents take the initiative and responsibility for their lives, actions, decisions rather than develop the chain of relationships dependent on professionals.

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Possibilities for Development of Social Education and Social Educational Services for a Family at Children's Day Care Centres

Summary

Daiva Alifanovienė, Odeta Šapelytė, Nomeda Bėčiūtė
Šiauliai University, Lithuania

The article deals with the specificity of social education and socioeducational services for children from socially disadvantaged families provided at children's day care centres and possibilities of development of these services in the aspect of family members' social inclusion. Implementation of the Concept of the State Child Welfare Policy (2003) and The Programme for Child Wellbeing 2013-2018 was aimed at reduction of social exclusion, promotion of social inclusion and assurance of the child's right to grow up in a favourable family. To achieve this, activities of children's day care centres in municipalities were developed, providing out-patient social and educational services for children growing up in socially disadvantaged families, for their families, developing natural social support network. Child day care centres belong to the *non-governmental sector* and are non-profit organizations; establishment of day care centres in Lithuania, initiated by these organisations, started in 1996.

Research data (Aperavičienė, 2009, Alifanovienė, Vaitkevičienė, Kaušienė 2014, Indrašienė, Šlapelienė, 2007, Rimkus, Žemgulienė 2013, Masiliauskienė, Griškutė, 2010, et al.) analyzing social educational support possibilities for children from socially disadvantaged families, social inclusion of these families, development of social and educational support, do not arouse any doubts as to meaningfulness of activities of children's day care centres, seeking learners' positive socialization, inclusion of families of these children into social networks and successful integration into the social cultural space. *What is the social situation of children from socially disadvantaged families? How is the social education process for children organised? How does cooperation with members of families of these children take place? What are the possibilities of development of these activities? What do professionals working there think about it?* These and other questions form the problem area of the article, aiming *to disclose possibilities of development of social education and educational services at children's day care centres.*

The research subject: possibilities of development of social education and educational services at children's day care centres in the aspect of professionals' subjective experiences. **Research methodology and sample**. To analyse the opinion of professionals working at day care centres (N = 10) the qualitative data collection method was selected (semi-structured *interview*), directly communicating with informants.

The analysis of scientific sources, statistical data shows that due to the country's difficult

socioeconomic conditions and high migration the number of socially disadvantaged families and children growing in them remains relatively stable with a negligible downward trend. It is likely that the tendency of reduction of these families can be more significantly influenced by *systemic-structural* perception of constituents of social education and support, highlighting the importance of participants of the educational process (children, family members, school, community, etc.) and enabling to strive for their inclusion in the development of the socialization process. In this respect, the development of social education and socioeducational services in the community, children's day centres remains important. These processes can be ensured by aforementioned socioeducational initiatives of communities of educational and upbringing institutions, involving vulnerable social groups, particularly children into this process.

The social education process carried out at children's day care centres should be treated as a part of holistic education, in which all participants in the educational process (school, family, community, etc.) are important. To achieve inclusion of socially disadvantaged families and their children into public changes, successful social education, it is important to seek positive changes in the said areas, including the activities at day care centres. The latter, organising activities with children, should involve child welfare specialists, representatives of creative occupations, family members, volunteers, develop children's cognitive, artistic, domestic, public, physical abilities. An important trend of activities of children's day care centres, which should be given particular attention, is empowering socioeducational work with the family. Modelling priorities of support for the child and family, the very professionals emphasize the importance of both cooperation with the family, its inclusion and organisation of self-help groups, where the very parents, hearing out other parents, would create possibilities to identify the needs of their family and possibilities of meeting these needs; i.e., so that the very parents take the initiative and responsibility for their lives, actions, decisions rather than develop the chain of relationships dependent on professionals.