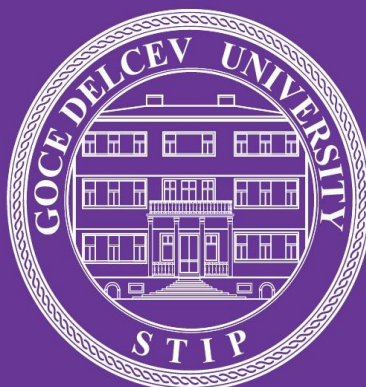


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FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES THEORY AND PRACTICE



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THE EDUCATOR'S PEDAGOGICAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE PARAPARENTAL CARE OF CHILDREN

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Abstract: The modern education priority objective is the individualized care in an environment that is a trusted one and helping each child. Along with the traditionally differentiated risk groups in the educational and social practice, there is a necessity to support children whose parents are labor migrants and for a certain period of time are incorporating parenting with other people. The report analyzes the results of studies conducted among pedagogical specialists on the specifics of socio-pedagogical interaction with children in the situation of paraparental care.

Key words: parents-labor migrants; paraparental care; children left behind; pedagogical involvement

Introduction

The education system, the legislation and the protection reform of children introduced a number of changes in the overall conceptual model for adolescent upbringing and education:

- the desegregation has raised issues of tolerance towards ethnic and cultural diversity;
- the process of deinstitutionalization provokes questions about the socialization of children in unequal social status;
- the introduction of the whole-day organization of the learning process emphasizes the educational interaction and the willingness of the school to create conditions for absorbing socially acceptable behavior patterns.

Admittedly, in this new conceptual model all childcare options in child's life should be found - children with social problems and special educational needs, children facing the justice system, children left for raising in different of its characteristic social communities, and so forth. The contemporary social situation is still quite controversial and interprets narrowly the issue of "children's rights". Their violation, however, is a specific fact that continues to "search for" the professional subjects and their competencies in order to overcome not only the facts but also the negative consequences on the development, upbringing, and socialization of children in the childhood age (Dzhorova, 2017: 220). Indeed, the priority objective is the individualized care of the child in a trustworthy and helping environment.

The above-mentioned requires considering the school not only as an educational but as a socio-pedagogical institution. At the same time, these processes provoke the pedagogical community - the skills, competencies and teachers' ability and other pedagogical specialists (resource teachers, educators, pedagogical counselors) to work with different groups of children and to continuously increase their professional qualification under the new regulations (Dokova, Kinov, 2016:524). Nevertheless, these processes provoke the pedagogical community - the skills, competences and the preparation of teachers and other pedagogical specialists (resource teachers, educators, pedagogical counselors) to work with different groups of children. Thus, the teacher endures most of the "pressure" from the student community. In fact, the teacher is the one

who should foresee the problems of adolescents and the need for a special support to overcome them. In this difficult task, one can rely on the professional support of a pedagogical counselor in a school, a resource teacher, social worker, psychologist, occupational therapist, or educator from other socio-pedagogical institutions.

A complex of interpersonal relations is realized in the processes of education and training between teacher-student, teacher-students, student-students, student-student, students-parents, teacher-parents who require diagnostics and management. The design of the educational process implies that the educator needs and is able to communicate with the trainees, "diagnose" and relies on their emotional state and to direct it in the same aspect in order to realize the goals of education and upbringing. This diagnosis is instrumental, but the procedural existence of the learning process suggests that it is too often a product of intellectual and socio-emotional competences of the teacher (Popkochev, Marulevska, Topalska, 2017: 813).

The confidential relationship educator-child is of the utmost importance for the successful adaptation of the pupil to school life, to overcome learning difficulties, to cope with different life situations. Therefore, this trusted relationship at the primary school is very important, where a great proximity between the teacher and the children is observed. Upon the emergence of a socio-pedagogical problem, the child would be willing to cooperate and communicate with the educator to overcome the situation. Although, as M. Dishkova highlights, it is determinant the role of the educator, who is expected to respond adequately and to use such methods of socio-pedagogical work that will lead to positive results. The inadequate response of the pedagogical specialist may cause the child to "shut in" and inability to educate him/her. It is very important the educator being professionally prepared to overcome such issues (Dishkova, 2017: 121).

Of particular importance for the present study is the interaction between the family and the school. The family life (family communication, distribution of duties, etc.) and the participation of parents in the life of the school as factors influencing the institution success of children (Petrovska, 2009: 130) are also related to the issue. Do parents consider it necessary to inform teachers that they will be absent for a certain period of time to go to work abroad? Do they continue to participate in educational co-operation, albeit from a distance? Who is the active subject combining parenting functions? These are the scientific issues that seek their interpretations in the survey conducted among pedagogical specialists.

Materials and methods

This study aims to reveal the manifestations of paraprofessional care in the interaction student-parents-teacher.

The assumption is that in the process of pedagogical interaction we observe:

- a confidential relationship teacher-parent and teacher-students;
- the educator's willingness to solve socio-pedagogical problems provoked by this type of care.

It is necessary to specify that by paraprofessional care is understood (Kovacka, 2017:49) such care that resembles the parental, but it has different:

- legal status, ie. carers do not have parental rights and cannot execute them if necessary;
- social status that is difficult to fit into the concept of parenthood (siblings);
- pedagogical status ie. has different functionality.

It is performed by close relatives, custodians or guardians who are organized and through different forms of interaction and partnership accomplished the care that is close to parenting, realized together with parents but with different functionality.

The study is conducted among 112 pedagogues - primary, resource teachers, and educators from 16 living areas (diagram 1) working with children of primary school age.

Regarding the population of the areas, their distribution is as follows: large city - Sofia N = 33; Blagoevgrad, Dupnitsa, Samokov, Pernik, Gotse Delchev, Buhovo, Lukovit N = 52 and villages - Breznitsa, Krainitsi, Samoranovo, Toros, Skrat, Dermantsi, Marchaev N = 27.

Diagram №1 Territorial scope of the survey

Regarding the respondents' work experience there is a good data dissemination (chart №2), as the survey contingent includes both teachers with very little work experience as educators - 6 months, and those who work as educators for more than 35 years.

Diagram №2 Experience as teachers in the education system

Results and discussion

Positive is the fact that the higher percentage of respondents (97) indicate that in their educational practice the share of children raised in conditions of pararental care is still small and these cases are considered as a single (Diagram 3). At the same time, for 12 teachers this represents more than half the children they work with. The more specific analysis shows that these are respondents from the cities of Sofia (N = 1), Dupnitsa (N = 2), Blagoevgrad (N = 3) and Breznitsa (N = 4). And more than half of another 3 of the respondents from the village of Breznitsa. These data point to the fact that the phenomenon selected for research is highly marked in small living areas where unemployment rates are higher and hence higher labor migration rates.

Diagram №3 Pararental care manifestation

Of particular interest for the study is the parent-teacher interaction and the extent to which parents are active in it. From the data obtained, it is evident that a large number of parents (73) inform the educator of their choice to be absent for a certain period of time to work abroad, which shows the parent's aspirations for positive interaction with the teacher and commitment to the education and upbringing of the child (Diagram 4). Unfortunately, however, in a small percentage of cases (37), there is no such feedback, and parents do not consider it necessary to inform teachers about these decisions. This can be interpreted in a variety of ways - from the absence of free time to meetings with the teacher, omission of control over the child's educational development to the deficiency of a need for such interaction. It is possible that some parents think that is not the teachers` responsibility but is something that concerns only the family and the closest relatives.

Diagram №4 Teachers` awareness about the absence of the parent / s

As if expected most respondents require a need to be informed (Diagram No. 5) of decisions concerning the parents` absence because they rely on their interaction with them. For a small part, this is not a priority, to such an extent they believe that this cannot affect their work with children.

Diagram 5 The educators`s wish to be informed about the absence of a parent/s

In addition to informing the teacher of their absence, parents who are actively involved in pedagogical interaction with the teacher find ways to keep in contact with them even from a distance (Diagram 5). This happens most often via the phone, Facebook, Skype or Weibur. Approximately the percentage of the parents who do not think it is necessary to communicate with the teacher is the same. Such an absence of interest regarding the educational process can be explained by the large hourly differences, excessive labor engagement, lack of Internet or skills to work with it. At the same time, for periods of absence, they share the care with other people and rely on informing them if any problem arises.

Diagram No. 6 Interaction with parents from distance

Institutional support for children in a situation of pararental care can be implemented both in mass educational institutions such as kindergartens and schools, as well as in specialized ones, which aim to work with specific vulnerable groups of the population. The fact is that most of the surveyed people state the possibility that this support can take place in the mass educational institutions. Considerably fewer are those who think that it should not be realized there. This, in turn, provokes the discussion of the need for other specialists, such as pedagogical counselors to implement social pedagogical support for children in schools as well as in kindergartens.

Diagram No. 7 Preferred institutional support

An interest to the study is whether the teacher, despite the ever-growing commitment to his educational practice, believes that he may be an active subject in the process of socially pedagogical support for children raised and educated by conditions of paraparental care. For almost all of the participants in the research, the educator is a significant one who must provide social and emotional support to children in this situation. (100). This means that the pedagogical specialists are aware of their important role in the socio-pedagogical support of adolescents. However, in order for it to be implemented into practice, teachers must be informed in a timely manner by parents or to seek different opportunities to explore the specifics of their interactions with parents.

Diagram No. 8 The pedagogues readiness to support students

Further, in the study, there are attempts to understand whether the pedagogue sees himself as part of this process. The fact that a large part of the respondents see themselves as subjects in the process of social and pedagogical support (71) of the children and declare that they have done so is very optimistic (Diagram №). This shows that they are aware of their leading role in the overall development of the child and the ability to support it in overcoming different socio-pedagogical problems.

Diagram 9 Support provided by the educator

The research conducted among the pedagogical specialists allows us to draw the following conclusions:

- The manifestations of paraparental care in educational practice are still seen by the pedagogues as single cases. At the same time, preventative programs for working with children in the conditions of paraparental care and their active social and pedagogical support, as well as those combining parental functions, should be directed mainly to small living areas. In these communities, the phenomenon studied is observed in a significant proportion of adolescents who work with pedagogical specialists.

- A trust relationship between the parents and the educator has been established; most of them informed the teachers of their absence, although about 40% do not think it is necessary to do so. The educators themselves feel they need to be informed about the dynamics of the family community and who is entrusted with the care of the children, it is important for them to interact with the representatives of this community to realize an effective pedagogical interaction.

- Pedagogical specialists express their willingness to provide social pedagogical support to children, if necessary within the educational institution. A small part considers that the phenomenon studied does not in any way affect their educational practice.

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