



Socio-pedagogical Challenges and Prospects for Interdisciplinary and Integral support to families and children in the Early Years in Bulgaria

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1. Background

- Socio-pedagogical Challenges in Bulgaria
- Socio-pedagogical Prospects in Bulgaria
- Interdisciplinary and Integral support
- Families and children
- Early Years

Socio-pedagogical Challenges in Bulgaria

Bulgaria is the country in the European Union with the most children in poverty and at risk of social exclusion (First Years First Priority, 2021):

- 1/3 of children in Bulgaria are at risk of poverty and social exclusion (for the EU, this is below 20%),
- almost 10% of children in Bulgaria are of Roma origin (EU average is 3%),
- 25% of children in Bulgaria have at least one parent who works abroad

(Official Journal of the European Union, 2021).

- 18% are "students who have few educational opportunities in the family", the highest percentage in the EU" (average 7% for the EU) (Results of the participation of Bulgarian 4th-grade students in the International Study of Math and Science Skills TIMSS 2019, 2020).
- One hundred eight points less is obtained on PISA by students with an unfavourable socio-economic status compared to those with a privileged socio-economic status in mathematics (this is higher than the OECD average of 93 points)" (Results of the participation of Bulgarian students in PISA 2022 |. Ckoko, 2023, 20).

Intergenerational transmission of inequality through education
(Bourdieu, Boudon, Bowles and Gintis).

2. Research Questions

RQ1: What are the socio-pedagogical challenges for interdisciplinary and integral support for families and children in the early years in Bulgaria?

RQ2: What are the socio-pedagogical prospects for interdisciplinary and integral support for families and children in the early years of Bulgaria, and how can they be implemented?

3. Methods

Non-systematic/narrative literature review using empirical studies, international reports and analyses, regulatory documents and strategies, statistical information, researcher publications, etc.

Period: from 2019 to 2024 (5 years)

4. Results (1)

Building cross-sectoral capacity for ECEC is a "primary need in governance" and synchronising ECD and ECEC policies (European Commission, 2021, 90);

Measures taken or planned: a permanent inter-ministerial working group was established to develop an annual plan for the promotion of early childhood development 2024. This plan, with its focus on ensuring access to social, educational, health and integrated services, holds the promise of a brighter future for early childhood development (Annual plan for the promotion of early childhood development for 2024, 3).

Need for additional measures: Coordination between the three sectors—education, health, and social services.

4. Results (2)

Ensuring equal opportunities for each child's development and support for social inclusion from early childhood (TSOIDUEM, n.d.; STRATEGY FOR REDUCING EARLY DROPOUTS, 2013).

Measures taken or planned: Recognized role of parents in shaping their children's attitudes towards education:

- By encouraging their partnership, we aim to change their attitudes towards education and motivate them to actively involve their children in the preschool education system.
- Providing effective early education programs for children from small towns and marginalized communities (Plan to promote early childhood development in Bulgaria, Area of impact "Early learning, education and early childhood care").

Need for additional measures:

Implement measures to ensure access to early childhood education and guidance, including preschool education and education for children aged 0 to 3.

4. Results (3)

A contractual curriculum framework for all children from birth to primary school

Measures taken or planned:

Educational content based on pedagogical aims, values and approaches that enable children to reach their full potential and address their social, emotional, cognitive, physical development and their well-being. Quality is expected to be measured by the following indicator: "the percentage of ECEC providers using a formal, approved or mandatory framework that meets state ECEC quality standards" - whether the indicator excludes the target (National Framework for the Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care" (Quality Area Educational Content).

Need for additional measures:

Educational curriculum that enables children to reach their full potential.

4. Results (4)

Improving the quality of ECEC

Measures taken or planned:

- Ensuring a sufficient number of qualified specialists to work in ECD services
- Provision of general and additional support for personal development in the ECEC system
- Introduction of modern requirements for the physical environment in ECEC services
- Providing support to improve early learning and early childhood care
- Providing support for implementing and sharing the experience of innovative practices in kindergartens, for which BGN 600,000 have been provided (Plan for the Promotion of Early Childhood Development in Bulgaria: Area of impact "Early learning, education and early childhood care").

Need for additional measures

"Increasing the capacity of professionals to implement policies in the field of early childhood development with a focus on the competence approach and promoting educational innovations; Creation of regulatory conditions for the functioning of innovative kindergartens" (as stated in the Strategic framework for the development of education, training and learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 - 2030))

5. Discussion

According to the quality indicator of the education system, Bulgaria is ranked 83rd in the world and in 26th place in the EU (World Economic Forum, 2019).

Human Capital Index: A child born in Bulgaria immediately before the pandemic will be 61 per cent as productive when they grow up as they could be if they enjoyed complete education and health.

Comparison to other post-communist countries.

6. Conclusion

Limitations of the research
New research proposals

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Thank you for your attention!

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