Integrative Report on parent and family-focused support to increase educational equality

Yvonne Anders, Joana Cadima, Katharina Ereky-Stevens, Franziska Cohen, Mareike Trauernicht, Juliane Schünke

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Executive summary

This integrative report draws on literature and research findings of work package 3 (D3) regarding parent and family focused support that aim to foster families' home learning environment and thereby increase educational equality. This report is based on (1) a literature review on the concepts regarding family support, (2) an inventory of promising programmes in seven European countries, (3) case studies on promising programmes in four European countries, and (4) the creation of an ICT-facilitated parent intervention (VLE) to support families in linguistically diverse contexts. These four sub-studies identified and compared family support approaches, collected evidence about their effectiveness and created in-depth knowledge about key features of successful intervention programmes. The knowledge gained was incorporated into the development of an ICT based intervention tool (VLE). Based on the findings of the sub-studies, six key topics emerged:

- Family support programmes are part of a diverse field. This diversity consists of the target groups, structural and local conditions, delivery mode and objectives of the programmes, their cooperation with other institutions and organisations, and qualification of their multi-professional teams. These conditions bring up several tensions regarding the outreach and implementation quality, and flexibility/adaptability and quality standards.
- The outreach to the target group is one of the two important aims of the programme. Building trusting relationships and tailoring the programme to the needs of the target groups are the two essentials to facilitate a successful outreach.
- Implementation quality consists of several components to consider which areessential for the effectiveness of the programme with regard to outcomes. Evidence-based practices and integrated formative and summative evaluations are aspects of implementation quality. However, the tension between a successful outreach and programme quality became obvious.
- Programmes often consist of multiprofessional teams and even paraprofessionals. We need to acknowledge multiprofessionalism, reflect the use of paraprofessional practitioners and provide support for professional development. Therefore, a set of professional standards and a comprehensive system of professional support and development for multiprofessional and multiqualificated practitioners needs to be established.
- Inter-agency working and the cooperation between institutions, can improve service quality and the adaptability to the parents' needs. This work demands resources for the involved coordinators and staff.
- The use of ICT is a great potential tool in family support programmes with regard to outreach and compliance. To develop this potential, an appropriate implementation, ICT training for the professionals, and the parents' beliefs and professionals on ICT-use need to be considered.

1. Introduction

This report is part of the ISOTIS project about *Inclusive Education and Social Support to Tackle Inequalities in Society* funded by the European Union. It integrates all findings of the work package 3 (D3) that addresses *parent and family-focused support to increase educational equality.* The work package (WP) focuses on both home- and community-based approaches as well as centre-based initiatives that strengthen parents in creating a safe, nourishing and stimulating living environment for children under the age of six years. The overall objective of WP3 is to provide a broad overview of existing approaches, to collect available evidence and to explore in-depth good practices.

This integrative report includes findings from all subtasks of WP 3 and its already published reports. Subtasks

1) identified and compared innovative and effective parent- and family-focused theoretical approaches for (bilingual) immigrant, ethnic-cultural minority and lowincome families in a literature review (D3.1).

    Report:
    Parent and family focused support to increase educational equality – Central assumptions and core concepts
    Authors: Yvonne Anders, Joana Cadima, Maria Evangelou, & Gil Nata, February 2017

2) conducted an inventory and review of potentially promising interventions, approaches, programmes or projects that support parents and families to create safe, nurturing and stimulating home environments for their children and identified success factors of thriving interventions and outreach to different target groups (D3.2).

    Report:
    Inventory and analysis of promising and evidence-based parent- and family focused support programs
    Authors: Joana Cadima, Gil Nata, Maria Evangelou, & Yvonne Anders, December 2017

3) described key features of successful parent and family support interventions, approaches, programmes or projects in four European countries (England, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal) and investigated the mediating and moderating effects of parental beliefs, motivations, needs and values on the effectiveness of parent- and family-focused support programmes (D3.3).

    Report:
    Case studies of promising parent- and family-focused support programmes
    Authors: Franziska Cohen, Mareike Trauernicht, Joana Cadima, Gil Nata, Katharina Ereky-Stevens, Martine Broekhuizen, Ryanne Francot, & Yvonne Anders, December 2018

4) translated the findings into a transferable innovative ICT-based practice tool to facilitate parent interventions which support parental engagement in children's learning and

development, with an emphasis on families' language resources and language practices in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts (D3.4).

Report:

ICT-facilitated parent interventions to support families with young children in linguistically diverse contexts. Design and implementation, using the Isotis Virtual Learning Environment
Author: Katharina Ereky-Stevens, September 2019

The aim of this final report of WP 3 is to produce an integrative summary of all findings across subtasks, to incorporate relevant findings from other WPs, and to formulate broadly applicable recommendations for the development and implementation of parent- and family-oriented support programmes focusing on ISOTIS' target groups.

We begin this report with short summaries of each subtask, before we highlight general findings and elaborate recommendations.

2. Overview of sub studies

2.1. Literature review (D3.1)

The literature review collected and summarised fundamental theories and approaches about parent and family support services to gain an understanding of the concepts of the home-learning environment, and parenting- and family-support.

Much of the research is based on the theory of reciprocal interaction between the child and its environment by Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Bronfenbrenner, Lüscher, & Cranach, 1981). Following this theory, the development of a child takes place as an interaction with different systems, such as the micro-, meso, exo-, macro, and chronosystem (e.g., the preschool, the parents` workplace or societal values). All these systems interact with each other as well, and systems and factors change over time.

Sameroff's unified theory of development (2010) supports this idea, but stresses the dynamics of transactions between the developing child and his/her social and cultural contexts. Developmental outcomes are a function neither of the individual, nor of the context alone. Consequently, both children and parents bring their individual characteristics into the interaction and are reciprocally influenced by the continuous interactions they have with each other throughout time.

When combining Bronfenbrenner's and Sameroff's theories while focusing on the first years of a child's life, it is evident that the family is the first and most influential micro-system affecting children's development. Therefore, the home environment and learning opportunities in this particular setting have a high impact. Additionally, any form of early childhood education and care (ECEC) experience, like daycare and preschool settings, are another microsystem the child interacts with. A high quality ECEC experience can have a long-lasting beneficial impact and may be especially valuable for disadvantaged children (Anders, 2013; Melhuish et al., 2015; Ulferts & Anders, 2016).

Based on these theories, we see the importance of both supporting parents in providing a stimulating home learning environment and focusing on preschool programmes with moderate to high effects and a strong cooperation with families (Campbell, Ramey, Pungello, Sparling, & Miller-Johnson, 2002; Schweinhart et al., 2005; Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993).

With regard to the method of supporting parents, in WP3 we refer to the capacity-building paradigm and strengths- and resource-based models (Dunst & Trivette, 2009). Through combining specific components of the child's ecological system by enabling experiences and opportunities, families can be empowered and parenting, as well as family functioning, can be strengthened (Dunst & Trivette, 2009; Forry, Wessel, Simkin, & Rodrigues, 2012). More specifically, this includes the concentration on support, community resource mapping and the building of a community capacity (Trivette, Dunst, & Deal, 1997).

When focusing on families and child development, it is crucial to address specific topics such as families' experiences of discrimination or disadvantages because of their migration or socioeconomic background. That is why cross-cutting concepts, such as a multicultural education, intercultural conflict and stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995) are so important in the area of parent and family-focused support. The described theoretical assumption has driven the following tasks.

2.2. Inventory and analysis of good practice in parent- and family- focused support programmes (D3.2)

This subtask conducted an inventory and analysis of promising and evidence-based parent- and family-oriented support services or programmes providing social context indicators for family support and educational inequality for seven European countries (Czech Republic, England, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Portugal). The inventory provides information on the types of child and family support services and policies with regard to equality issues, monitoring and language support for each country. Additionally, existing challenges and their potential to address them was analysed.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the family of a child is considered to have the most impact on its development, especially in the early years of life (Adi-Japha & Klein, 2009; Bornstein & Bradley, 2008; Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 1998; Hart & Risley, 1995; Melhuish et al., 2008; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2003a, 2003b; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2004).

Previous studies have suggested that children who grow up in families with a migration or socio-economic background are disadvantaged in their cognitive, linguistic and socio-emotional development from the age of 3 years or even younger (George, Hansen, & Schoon, 2007). Therefore, many countries have developed different approaches to support families aiming at improving the quality of families' home learning environments. Their focus is on promoting early access to preschool education, strengthening partnership between preschool and parents, and implementing home- and community-based approaches. However, the views and beliefs of families from different backgrounds are not sufficiently recognised as an important component of the quality of the home environment. So far, the inclusion of parents' home language and the implementation of ICT to support families with different language backgrounds have not been efficiently integrated or assessed in these programmes.

The inventory analysed parent- and family- focused support and its related correlates for the specific countries. As far as social context indicators for family support and educational inequalities are concerned, countries differ in terms of income inequality, child poverty, social exclusion, migration background, and parental leave. However, the proportion of children under the age of five is roughly the same in all countries. The provisions with ECEC settings is an important factor in tackling social inequalities (European Commission, EACEA, Eurydice, & Eurostat, 2014). For example, ECEC participation rates for children aged three to five are high in all countries. However, a big difference can be seen in the rates of participating children under three years of age.

Furthermore, although family support in all countries covers a wide range of services across several sectors, there are significant differences between countries. The main trans-national differences are related both to the main approach to support parenthood and to the extent to which support for parenthood is integrated into a clear policy framework. Compared to Czech Republic, Poland and Portugal, parental support in England, Germany, the Netherlands and Norwayhas been integrated into comprehensive national early intervention strategies with a clear strategic framework covering a wide range of early detection and prevention services for families. The integration and linking of these services is more or less systematic in these four countries. At the same time, there is a trend in these countries towards more holistic approaches for young people and their parents (Boddy et al., 2009), with a focus on early preventive intervention and

stronger government involvement for parents (Daly, 2013). In most countries, other sectors (except social services, which are mainly in contact with at-risk families) have been involved, e.g., health and educational sector, underlining the preventive focus of support. The analysis revealed a variety of underlying theoretical frameworks for selected evidence-based and promising practices of services and programmes for parenthood and family support and education. Some programmes were based on very defined theoretical frameworks, whereas others did not have any framework. However, there was a wide range in between with varying degrees of specificity. An interesting finding is the international coverage of some programmes. There are several examples of programmes to support parents which originate in one country and are adapted and implemented in another. This is most evident in the Netherlands, Germany and, to a lesser extent, Norway and England. This is a good indicator that countries communicate with each other and learn from each other's experiences. However, caution is necessary with regard to examinations of effectiveness of a programme in each new context, even if there is good empirical evidence of the effectiveness of this programme in another context. Consideration of pre-existent services, in addition to local needs and specificities, along with careful implementation plans and continuous monitoring are needed to ensure quality implementation. Furthermore, several programmes aim to increase their outreach by using active recruitment. Several strategies have been identified: guaranteed translation for services, using members of the targeted minority group as employees, universal financial incentives and special teams for small, very deprived groups. Possible tensions were identified between strategies to improve the outreach (members of minority groups are engaged as employees), and the maintenance of programme quality. The vast majority of the programmes included—although considered evidence-based or promising practices—refer to ISOTIS' target groups, but do not explicitly target multicultural goals. However, according to the latest findings of this report, multicultural goals are indispensable to play down intercultural conflicts and stereotypical threats. It has been shown that proficiency in one's home language is important not only for the development of children's language skills, but also for the development of a multicultural identity and other cognitive skills. Previous research has shown that many migrant parents in different countries and contexts express a wish for more respect for their home language and better implementation of different languages in the educational systems.

2.3. Case Study of promising approaches of parent- and family focused support programmes (D 3.3)

In WP3.3 the objective was to identify and collate success factors of family support programmes based on the knowledge and selection criteria of the inventory (D3.2). To examine in-depth good practices, based on expert panels and the inventory of family support programmes by Cadima and colleagues (2018), five promising and successful family support programmes from four different European countries were selected: *Chancenreich* and *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* in Germany, *Step* in the Netherlands, *Inside and Beyond (Class)rooms of glass* in Portugal, and *Family Skills* in England.

The selected programmes were all examined with regard to their success factors, how they master challenges, how they ensure successful outreach and collaboration, personal and professional requirements, and how they implement the families' home language of parents and the use of ICT in the programmes. To this end, qualitative individual and focus group interviews were conducted with participants, staff, providers and financiers of the programmes. Through

qualitative content analysis, joint strategies were defined across countries and levels.

We found two main common success factors concerning the outreach of the chosen progammes. Building and maintaining trustful relationships seems to be important throughout, but differently interpreted on the various levels. In the programmes' leading levels, we found that it is especially important to maintain the trust of the programme itself. In contrast, staff and participants place more emphasis on the trusting interpersonal relationships between staff and families, where staff should be trustworthy community members working at eye level with parents. Furthermore, to run a successful programme, it seems crucial to be flexible and to adapt towards the needs of the specific target groups by including organisations and key-persons who are already in contact with the target group, bymaking the programme visiblevia channels used by the target group, and byensuring during planning that the content and the place and time are appropriate for the target group.

Nearly all examined programmes consider cooperation with other partners as a beneficial factor to ensure effective outreach and professional development. Furthermore, the cooperation itself can be included as part of the programme and can also be used for external evaluation. The examined programmes match their cooperation to the specific needs and traditions of their target groups. It is important to note that, in some cases, the decision for less visible cooperation of a programme with selected partners can be beneficial, for example when target groups have strong fears towards authorities or specific organisations and institutions.

In addition, looking at personal and professional requirements of people involved with successful programmes, we have found that a high level of motivation, an interest in participation and personal flexibility are required at all levels. For long-term success, clear leadership strategies and the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of procedures from the organisational level are of great importance. Work should be based on high professional competencies of all involved staff. In general, parents must be treated with respect and seen as experts on their children. Also, regular supervision and professional development of employees are essential components of the programmes examined.

Using ICT and dealing with first languages other than the country's language show the greatest need for development in the programmes examined and even its usefulness was not supported by all representatives. ICT, in general, is seen by all programme representatives as a promising approach, but it is rather used as a tool for communication to cope with language challenges. The use of ICT tools needs to be adapted to the needs of providers and families and should be supported by the professional development of staff.

The programmes have very different approaches in dealing with home languages of their target groups. Based on rules and guidelines rather than evidence, its support is either not considered or just uncoordinated. The reasons may be political or due to the circumstances of the programme. The attitude of migrant parents to supporting first language acquisition seems to be twofold: they value and want their home languages to be integrated into the programme while stressing the importance of the main language of the country where they live so that their children have the best opportunities in the education system. The results indicate a strong need for support from providers and staff to reflect and coordinate support for first language acquisition, taking into account parents' perspectives on the subject.

The reviewed programmes are considered successful or promising. However, they all face challenges that are not easy to overcome. Programmes choose different approaches to reach out to their diverse target groups. However, we found that, in an outreach strategy, if the content of a

programme or its activities are effective for one target group, this does not necessarily mean it is also working for another or the same target group in a different context. Therefore, the work of family support programmes must involve constant reflection and evaluation not only at a personal level, but also at a strategic level by working to involve new target groups and to work with societal or framework changes. This comprises also possible implementations of ICT tools and the integration of other languages because analyses revealed a special need for development in order to disseminate technological and linguistic knowledge. The funding of family support programmes was also a challenging factor, as short-term planning rather than long-term planning is generally promoted, which is not in line with the objective of long-term quality of interventions.

2.4. Supporting parent involvement in child learning in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts with a design-based approach model and the help of a virtual learning environment (D3.4)

In line with the objectives of ISOTIS and the framework for the virtual learning environment (VLE) task across work packages 3, 4 and 5, the objective in Wp3.4 was to develop and test ICT-facilitated interventions for parents and professionals working with parents from culturally and linguistically diverse contexts in four countries in Europe: England, Germany, Italy, and the Czech Republic. Across all four contexts, the focus of the interventions was on strengthening the home learning environment, promoting interactive exchanges between caregivers and children and between families in the community, emphasizing the appreciation of different language contexts and cultural backgrounds and stimulating thinking and speaking about different languages at home. Studies were predominately carried out in cooperation with community services offering support to families and parents, and in one case, in the context of the school. Cooperating practitioners were community workers, public librarians, family learning/parent tutors, and teachers. The focus was on supporting families with language backgrounds other than the school language and children at preschool/early school age. Participating parents were part of the local community, and users of services offered by the participating institution/organisation.

A main component of interventions in all four contexts was the use of technology (the ISOTIS virtual learning environment; https://vle.isotis.org/) to address some of the difficult issues arising in parent support (particularly in diverse contexts). A design-based research approach was employed. An essential part of this task was to co-create content for the ISOTIS VLE (Pastori, Mangiatordi, & Pagani, 2019a, b) and to test the tool when implementing interventions which make use of the VLE. Implementation was accompanied by ongoing documentation and evaluation.

Among those institutions and organisations involved in this research, we found that leaders and practitioners expressed motivation to recognise the value of heritage language and culture. However, a focus on actively supporting heritage language maintenance and bilingual children's development was either relatively new in our participating organisations or had so far not been part of their parent support work. Our interventions put emphasis on paying attention to how families think and feel about their languages and how they use their languages at home. Findings of our studies showed that parents appreciated opportunities for reflection and the sharing of experiences concerning these issues. Many practitioners commented that those moments were valuable in increasing their knowledge, both regarding the culture of the families and the use of different languages at home. Documentation that reflected (language) experiences and activities

at home was found to have much potential to stimulate and support reflection and learning in parent groups and to strengthen communication and partnerships between home and educational institutions. However, creating such rich resources was not an easy task. To produce those valuable resources, parents need opportunities to practice and require ongoing support by experienced practitioners. Creating and sharing rich documentation also relies on respectful and trustful relationships. Importantly, we found that preschool has the potential to play an important role in sharing documentation which enables parents to see their children in 'action'.

Many parents reported challenges they face, in particular, related to children's heritage language learning, and (over time) a tendency to prioritise learning the language of instruction. However, parent motivation to engage with our interventions were not predominantly driven by wishes to address goals related to support for heritage language learning. Many parents wanted to learn more about the school system and supporting child learning in school and were highly motivated to do what schools expect from them. Practicing their language skills in the majority language and finding a peer group to connect with and a practitioner who is emotionally supportive appeared to be additional motivators. It was also found that children's skills, their enjoyment of activities, and their motivation to participate can play an important role in facilitating parent involvement.

Despite the fact that parents were expressing motivation to be involved in children's learning and in school, practitioners expressed challenges in motivating parents to engage in home activities (outside session time). If parents had opportunities to practice skills during sessions, parents felt they knew better how to engage children in valuable learning activities at home. However, teaching of strategies wasn't usually focused on heritage language practices at home, rather interventions were clearly more focused on beliefs, values, and knowledge rather than on skills and actions.

An integral part of all interventions was the involvement of the ISOTIS VLE. What participants valued most about the platform were the materials that were audio-visual and attractive to parents, didactic and focusing on teaching content and stimulating shared reflections. Practitioners appreciated the potential of the platform as a resource to help their planning, with the opportunity to collect more ideas and share good practices within the team, and the potential to facilitate communication, collaboration and networking. The multi-lingual character of the platform was seen as attractive. Nevertheless, the multi-lingual tool was rarely used in practice, pointing towards the need for further explorations and development.

However, with regard to practitioner and parent engagement with the platform, many challenges were met, pointing towards the need of additional resources (including skills training and material resources ensuring reliable opportunities for access), as well as important improvements needed to the platform itself to realise the potential of a VLE. Our findings call for a stronger consideration of how the use of digital technology to support parent interventions can best match (or be integrated with) the tools that parents choose to use in their day-to-day life and the ways in which they use them. Importantly, child involvement with the platform was found to motivate and support parent involvement. At the same time, however, parents expressed some ambivalence towards the potential of digital technology to support them in bringing up their children and were more concerned about getting support in monitoring 'screen time' at home. Finally, using the platform during sessions with parents had an effect on the use of time and the pedagogical approach. Some adjustments were needed, and in some instances, this created tensions, pointing towards the need to plan in advance how to combine and balance (independent) parent work on the platform with a pedagogy that focuses on hands-on activities and collaborative group learning.

3. Integrating the findings

The findings of WP2 (Broekhuizen, Wolf, Francot, Moser, Pastori, Nurse, Melhuish, Leseman 2019) indicate that family support services aiming at empowering parents (e.g., building on their resources and providing context-sensitive support for parenting self-efficacy, knowledge about the education system) have the potential to enhance the quality of children's home learning environment and family's investments in children's educational experiences.

Work package 3 focused on such parent and family-focused support services across Europe that aim at supporting parents in creating safe, nurturing and stimulating home environments. The four involved sub studies identified and compared family support approaches, collected available evidence about their effectiveness and created in-depth knowledge about key features of successful interventions. The knowledge gained was incorporated into the development of ICT facilitated interventions tool (VLE) to promote parental engagement with children' learning and development with an emphasis on families' language resources and language practices in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts. In the following part of the report, we work out common topics across substudies: diversity, outreach, implementation quality, professionalisation, interagency working, and the use of ICT. In each section, we describe key results, embed findings in other research, and discuss challenges of family support services.

3.1. Diverse field of family support programmes

Child development takes place in different contexts. According to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model, these contexts influence children's development in an interplay between processes, time and contexts (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1981; Bronfenbrenner, 1986). According to his model, the child is influenced by different proximal and distal systems.

Family support services in WP3 are (intervention) programmes that aim at supporting families in providing a rich and stimulating home learning environment and that aim at empowering families to enable their children's development. Programmes included in the (sub-)studies of WP3 vary in their support approaches: center-based, home-based and community-based. They target specific groups of families (immigrant families, low SES) and are universal, being offered to all families in the community (Anders, Cadima, Evangelou, & Nata, 2017). According to the above-mentioned bio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner, such family support programmes act at multiple levels, depending on their target group. If the child itself takes part in the programme they function as one more microsystem. If parents take part (e.g., as a participant in a parenting training), the programmes belong to the exosystem and have an indirect influence on the child's development. However, the practice of family support programmes also shows that there are points of contact and cooperation/collaboration between the different programmes themselves (or certain components) and various institutions of the microsystem at the mesosystem level (e.g. the collaboration of family support programmes and preschool for strategic outreach). At the analytical level, no unambiguous classification seems to be possible which makes it more difficult to describe the field of family support programmes.

Another challenge is met by looking at the actual practice and its actors in the field of family support programmes. Due to the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in European societies, working with families and children can be described as highly complex, non standardised and demanding (Urban, Vandenbroeck, Peeters, Lazzari, & van Laere, 2012). Structural conditions of

such programmes are additionally challenging. Family support programmes are, for example, assigned/allocated to/in different political and administrative systems (health system, youth welfare system, educational system). Furthermore, these programmes are implemented differently in the countries administrative system, which is represented by the overall coverage of them: national vs. local. Furthermore, programmes themselves need to cooperate with different institutions and organisations within the programe structure (Cadima et al., 2018).

The personnel structure of such programmes is characterised by an enormous variety of professions and qualifications. Practitioners work together in multiprofessional teams (e.g. pedagogues, nurses, psychologist, teachers) and qualified and non-qualified (paraprofessionals) are working together in teams (Musick & Stott, 2000; Slot, Romijn, Cadima, Nata, & Wysłowska, 2018) — sometimes on the same tasks and sometimes on strategically different tasks.

The findings in WP3 showed as well, that family support programmes aim at two different goals at the same time: outreach of the target group and implementation quality. Both aspects are absolutely necessary to yield positive effects. The circumstances in which family support programmes are structured and in which practitioners work can pose great challenges in successfully reaching the target groups of the programmes while at the same time ensuring high process quality within the programmes, both of which are the main objectives of a programme.

3.2. Outreach to families

Based on the theories from WP3.1 outlined above, the importance of supporting parents in creating a stimulating home learning environment becomes obvious. This objective succeeds, among other things, through close cooperation with families of the target groups. A major challenge that has been identified is to particularly reach families that need the most support, e.g., socially disadvantaged families and families with a migrant background (García Coll & Pachter, 2002; Heinrichs, Bertram, Kuschel, & Hahlweg, 2005; Lösel, 2006; Snell-Johns, Mendez, & Smith, 2004; Wilke, Hachfeld, Anders, & Höhl, 2014; Wittke, 2012).

Successful outreach is thereby an actual objective of family support programmes. The findings of WP2 (Broekhuizen, Wolf, Francot et al., 2019) found from the perpective of the parents, that Interventions and inter-agency coordination of support services have to be context sensitive and adjusted to living conditions of families. Furthermore, parents most often search for support regarding children's health and well-being. Discussing successful outreach strategies, the cultural background of the parents need to be considered. The WP2 finding showed a relationship between the level of material deprivation and feeling of national identity and the use of support services (in some countries). For example, the parents perceived German skills are negatively correlated to early use of ECEC. This might indicate certain experienced barriers and can as such inform family support programmes.

Several strategies have been identified to increase the outreach of programmes through active recruitment: Translation for services, target group members hired as programme staff, universal financial incentives and special teams for disadvantaged groups. The findings from WP3.3 give an in-depth look into the mechanisms behind successful outreach strategies of the selected programmes and identified two common key success factors. One of these is the necessity of building and maintaining trusting relationships. As stated in the WP3.1 (Anders et al., 2017, p. 13) trust is defined as the "...confidence that another person will act in a way to benefit or sustain the relationship, or the implicit or explicit goals of the relationship, to achieve positive outcomes for

students..." (Adams & Christenson, 1998). These relationships are built upon mutual listening, respect and meeting at eye level, and also spending enough time to actually build trust in relationships. The results of WP3.4 confirm the close contact between families and educational settings. An important aspect is the great openness to the different cultural backgrounds and languages of the families. The results of the WP3 case study confirm the important role of trust. Employees and families place great value on trusting interpersonal relationships with each other and emphasize the importance of working at eye level. Trust is a prerequisite to a successful outreach and an intervention with families. Trust is most important when working with families that mistrust countries institutions (see WP3.2, WP3.3).

Additionally, it is crucial for the implementation of a successful programme that it be tailored to the needs of the target group – "One size does not fit all". The case study results revealed different strategies of the programmes that are an expression of adaptability: organisations and key people should be involved who are already in contact with the target group, the programme should be aware of its reputation by the target group and it is also necessary to ensure that the content, place and time are appropriate for the target group. The specific needs of target groups are suspect to change over time and may change according to the context of a programme. Thus, programme developers must be aware and open to changes of strategies.

Furthermore, caution is required due to possible tensions between strategies to improve the outreach (particularly members of minority groups are employed as staff called paraprofessionals) and maintaining implementation quality. Adapting a programme to the needs of the target group can also create challenges. It has also been noted that an outreach strategy is sometimes effective for one target group, but not necessarily for others. Therefore, the work of the family support programmes must include continuous reflection and evaluation at both a personal and strategic level to provide in turn a high adaptability to the needs of the target group.

With the support of interagency working and the related interaction between different actors, outreach strategies and ideas for improvement could be exchanged. For example, it was told that the heads of preschools, who have many children from disadvantaged families, meet in neighbourhood networks and local networks with several other associations to discuss, for example, how to reach parents. They talk about how preschools can receive counselling or support, e.g., on a better understanding of different cultures and how this influences the work with families (see WP6.3).

3.3. Implementation quality

Each programme has its specific objectives that need to be adapted to the specific target group and the particular context a programme is working with/in. It consists of factors that affect implantation quality as well as factors under which implementation conditions lead to positive outcomes. In accordance to literature from ECEC contexts (e.g. Kluczniok & Roßbach, 2014), achieving these goals and working effectively means displaying a high process or educational quality of services in the field. With regard to family support programmes, it means a program's effectiveness may be affected by the field conditions required for the correct implementation of the program (e.g., adequate dose, curriculum, quality of delivery, methods and strategies used to work with parents, material), which in turn requires certain professional competencies and a functioning organisation (Rodrigo, 2016).

The results of WP2 showed that parents are fairly satisfied with the used support services, though

there is room for improvement in all investigated groups and countries.In Particular, the WP 3.3 report made clear that a high implementation quality is expressed by the establishment of trustful relationships with families, a shared vision with concrete actions, openness, display of relevant content, and a suitable pedagogy of courses by skilled staff members. However, in WP 3 the tension between high outreach and programme quality became obvious. Reaching out to families is facilitated by staff members (e.g., para-professionals) that are already involved in the community or have the same cultural or experiential background as targeted families. In contrast, good programme quality requires high-professionalised staff trained in pedagogy and content relevant for supporting families. Additionally, the report of WP 3.2 worked out that implementing effective programmes in other contexts and to other target groups is good and sustainable. However, their effectiveness needs to be re-assessed because new contexts might change their quality. Setting standards for a high professionalisation is important for high quality, but at the same time, diverse fields and changing contexts need a certain adaptivity with regard to content and objectives of a programme.

WP 3.2 as well as WP 3.3 pointed out that many programmes still stand on vague theoretical feet and more evidence-based practices are needed These require professional competencies of staff members, clear visions, and clear implementation strategies. Furthermore, many programmes lack good evaluations, especially of external partners and those covering minority views. In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of the program, the assessment of the implementation process and quality is an essential success factor of family support programmes and their evaluation. Good monitoring and formative as well as summative evaluations are important to ensure a high implementation quality over a long period of time and despite changing circumstances.

3.4. Professionalisation of a field

European countries are facing increasing societal cultural and linguistic diversity. Dealing with diversity is required for professionals working with young children and families in family-social services. As already described at the beginning, family support programmes are characterised by specific characteristics, which in turn have an influence on the structural framework conditions of the field of work.

Referring to the theoretical principle of WP5.1 "Professionals are viewed as agents within a wider context of school, institution or organisation." (Slot, Halba, & Romijn, 2017). However, how does professionalization of staff in family support services look like?

"The concept of professionalisation is used pragmatically in the expert opinion in the sense of a more scientifically sound form of professionalism and in the sense of the search for an increase in the effectiveness and quality improvement of pedagogical work…" (Vereinigung der Bayerischen Wirtschaft, 2012).

Family Support Programmes often consist of multiprofessional teams of pedagogues, social workers, nurses and other professions. Furthermore, within the past years, there was a trend that more and more non-qualified lay practitioners work together with qualified staff in family support programmes (Musick & Stott, 2000). Dewe, Otto, and Schnurr (2006) describe it as one aspect of the ongoing de-professionalisation of the social service work. Qualified staff is replaced by paraprofessionals and in consequence, declassifies professional positions (Dewe et al., 2006). Another explanation of involving paraprofessionals in social work services would be, that more

grass root services/programmes by paraprofessionals have been developed. The results of the inventory of family support programs (Cadima et al., 2018, WP3.2) emphasizes that there are many different strategies to use to reach out to parents and that outreach strategies are a very important aspect that the programmes intentionally and actively track; and that among all of the different strategies, some – such as the use of paraprofessionals – may be successful for outreach but can create new challenges with regard to the quality of implementation. However, paraprofessionals function as bridgemakers between home and school and as role models and supporters of the families with the same cultural and language background (Slot et al., 2017, p. 6). The results of the WP3.3 study (Cohen et al., 2018) confirm this assumption. Non-qualified practitioners e.g., as members of minority groups have a high inside/in-depth knowledge about the cultural and linguistic background of the target families. With this knowledge, they ensure the development of trustful relationships from the beginning on.

To work in multiprofessional teams on interdisciplinary topics/tasks can be challenging. Family support programs need resources to integrate and coordinate different approaches and a common understanding of the terms, tasks and values or to discuss the understanding of roles. The added value lies in the fact that multi-professional teams are better able to draw on the broad range of skills of their employees and thus respond more individually to diverse families with different needs. Not all characteristics, competencies and expertise can be provided by one person – we need a coordinated approach to parent support which involves different actors and diverse professionals to meet diverse needs of the parents.

It raises the question of the future structure of staff/practitioners/professionals in family support programs and the need of qualification standards and further professional development. Required professional and personal skills for the success of the programme consists of knowledge, beliefs and motivational skills, e.g., active listening; respect for the other; openness, multicultural sensitivity, flexibility, intentionality, communication, collaboration, that may require high levels of preparation making professional development so important.

Referring to theoretical models of professional competences (Fröhlich-Gildhoff, Nentwig-Gesemann, & Pietsch, 2011) these are required to provide a high implementation quality in pedagogical practice (see also WP5.1 Slot et al., 2017). The results of the WP3.3 study (Cohen et al., 2018) reveal that professional competencies and their constant development are important on all levels – particularly on the leadership and staff level- of family support programs. We found that strategic leaders in successful programs have a strong charisma and a vison of the goals of the programs. Both serve to inspire, motivate, and enhance the professional development of their staff (Cohen et al., 2018). Leaders apply aspects of shared (Harris, 2004) and transformational (Bass, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000) leadership, cooperation skills, management and communication skills and implemented monitoring and staff development strategies. In comparison, the results on staff member competencies support the importance of a professional understanding of their own role as well as knowledge about target groups, outreach strategies and local knowledge, a professional attitude towards parents and high motivation and enthusiasm towards the tasks. This includes developing further knowledge about the implementation of ICT in pedagogical contexts and supporting the first language of families and their children.

WP4 findings (Aguiar & Pastori 2019, D.4.5) showed as well the key role of classroom teachers, with professional development and positive attitudes as success features & facilitators. According to the assumption and results of WP5.1/WP5.3 (Slot et al., 2017; Slot et al., 2018) and WP4.3, we understand that professionals benefit from professional development in educational

institutions e.g. from professional exchange initiated by additional experts. The WP3 results confirm that there is a need for constant strategical implementation of professional development of practitioners and leaders in family support programs.

To sum up, we need professionalisation at the individual level of staff and at the institutional level This requires a necessary analytical description of professional competencies in the field of family support programmes and the constant monitoring with regard to compliance with standards to ensure successful outreach and high implementation quality.

3.5. Interagency working

Networking is defined as "... goal-directed behavior, both inside and outside of an organization, focused on creating, cultivating, and utilizing interpersonal relationships." (Gibson, H. Hardy III, & Ronald Buckley, 2014, p. 150) and has many positive outcomes, such as enhanced visibility, performance, and access to information. Based on this, the work between different agencies "… involves more than one agency working in a planned and formal way, rather than simply through informal networking (although the latter may support and develop the former). This can be at strategic or operational level." (Warmington et al., 2004). According to that, cooperation between agencies is an important aspect regarding family involvement and therefore in family support programmes (Australian Research Alliancefor Children & Youth, 2009; McDonald & Rosier, 2011). Cooperation between several partners is not only considered as helpful but also as necessary in particularly complex systems. Target families face complex problems and demands and can benefit from cooperation between the involved institutions (Bromfield, Lamont, Parker, & Horsfall, 2010; McDonald & Rosier, 2011). Furthermore, cooperation between institutions can improve the service quality, the adaptability to the parents needs and also the connection of families and other institutions (McDonald & Rosier, 2011). Accordingly, collaborations and networks are crucial to effectively address families' needs (Duncan & Goddard, 2011).

In the case studies (WP3.3), cooperation revealed to play a central role for the success of the programmes. The programmes strategically use cooperation in different ways and with different partners (e.g., political stakeholders, research institutions, institutions that are relevant for the parents) and on different levels of the programme (financier, professionals). They used cooperation as an integrated programme component for an effective outreach, for programme development, and as a strategic method for an external evaluation of the programme.

Successful programmes seem to develop their strategy of cooperation in a very thoughtful way and adapt it not only to the specific needs of the target groups, but also towards the needs of the collaborating partners and staff. To achieve these goals, cooperation requires time, structural, personal and financial resources. High motivation may be seen as a prerequisite for partners and needs to also be implemented as a culture of leadership, which develops a positive vision for a programme. It needs an openness to involve different actors/stakeholders and it emphasizes the advantage of cooperation. Modern Leadership models e.g., distributed leadership, confirm the importance of sharing responsibility, work and knowledge among different people. It describes how the team of experts work together with distributed responsibility and in consequence empower those at different levels within one programme (Bolden, 2011; Harris, 2004).

According to the inventory (WP3.3), some countries, e.g., the Netherlands or Norway, share the trend towards more integrated approaches to child and family services through the joint work of education, health and social services. The trend towards service coordination and interagency

work is also mentioned as one of the central aspects of family centres designed in various ways to support families in England, Norway, the Netherlands and Germany.

The results can be linked to the main findings of WP6, which described the facilitation and barriers of interagency coordination and cooperation. Barnes et al. (2017) mention the inclusion of key-informants, shared values and commitment to inter-agency cooperation and receptivity of professionals; and importance of encouraging cooperation activities. WP4 findings found that the partnerships within the school and with the community play a key role for successful interventions and approaches aiming at reducing educational inequality through curriculum design and implementation.

3.6. Using ICT as a tool to success

In today's world, ICT tools, which are easy to use are readily accessible, are part of almost everyone's private life (report of WP2). Their particular use for social networking as well as tools for translation points to the important potential ICT can have to facilitate family support programmes in (linguistically) diverse contexts. Professionals in family support acknowledge the potential ICT can have in strengthening outreach, engagement and compliance (WP 3.2; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). However, the implementation of ICT to facilitate support services for families have neither been efficiently integrated nor assessed. There seems to be a great deal of uncertainty whether, how, and when to use ICT tools in parent and family focused support programmes and initiatives; beliefs are often given little reflection and consideration (WP3.2, 3.3).

The ISOTIS WP3 VLE-interventions (WP3.4) showed that content that can be developed and shared with the help of a digital tool is attractive to stakeholders because of its strength to incorporate audio-visual and multi-lingual elements. Moreover, participants can be involved in creating content, which can facilitate practitioner and parent involvement in sharing beliefs, values and experiences – thus supporting learning through reflection. WP3 VLE interventions were also valuable in further exploring and demonstrating the potential of ICT to facilitate networking and collaboration between stakeholders, thus strengthening partnerships and communities of learners (e.g. parent-school partnerships, the VLE as a resource bank for practitioners to share good practices). Yet, the ISOTIS VLE-interventions also showed many difficulties when engaging practitioners and parents with the digital platform, pointing towards the need of additional resources (including skills training and material resources ensuring reliable opportunities for access), as well as important improvements needed to the platform itself. Lack of resources, as well as rejecting beliefs towards the use of ICT, and a lack of motivation to use ICT in pedagogical contexts (reports of WP 3.3 and WP 3.4) impede successful integration of ICT tools into family support services. This mirrors also other research in the field (Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Knezek & Christensen, 2008; Teo, 2010) and this holds also true if a programme officially integrates ICT components, such as an online environment for activities and interaction (see WP 3.3).

To realise the potential that ICT can have to facilitate family support, a clear strategy is required on how to implement ICT tools to facilitate programme elements and work towards programme goals, and how to adapt the use of ICT in ways that strongly build on the ICT resources and habits of participating families. ICT support and training need to be provided by managers and programme developers, and training needs to go beyond ICT skills and also focus on the

pedagogical integrations of such tools into the ongoing work with parents. Finally, practitioners' and parents' beliefs about the usefulness of ICT tools to facilitate family support interventions need to be considered and addressed.

4. Conclusions and policy recommendations

Parent- and family support services helps families, particularly at-risk families, to create a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment for their children. These in turn affect children's cognitive, language and social-emotional development. Therefore, it is an important task for policy makers and the society as a whole to create and continuously improve support programmes that have a positive impact on families' learning environment. However, the availability and quality of services differ within and between countries and programmes. Family support services play a key role in reducing educational inequalities in informal educational contexts. Therefore, policy makers are asked to create the framework for providers to offer family support that is accessible and of high quality. Drawing on these assumptions, the following recommendations seem to be key to promising support programmes. The following recommendations have been developed for two different groups: policy makers on a macro level and programme developers and managers (e.g., providers or financiers).

Recommendations for policy makers

1. Provide suitable and long-term funding for family support programmes. This contributes not only to the recognition of this challenging task, but also to the appreciation of the families themselves. Long-term planning makes it possible to work with families in a trusting relationship.
2. Provide resources for comprehensive evaluation studies and use it to continuously develop programmes' content in terms of a "learning programmes". For this purpose, standards should be set to establish their effectiveness and quality of implementation.
3. Select providers that implemented continuous strategic and structured monitoring of the target group, the project tasks and staff competences.
4. Select providers who adapt the programmes continuously to the local environment and the families' needs (based on the monitoring), particularily when the programme is adopted from a different context.
5. Set reasonable professional standards for the staff of social service providers. Provide resources /time and funding) for the training of staff and the establishment of professional development systems within these professional standards. The field of family support programmes in terms of multiprofessional teams with interdisciplinary tasks and various target groups is highly diverse. This demands the consideration of social service professionals as a serious and highly important profession with set standards.
6. Integrate family support programmes into a broader context and understanding of public and private educational institutions.
7. Establish a structured framework for cooperation and exchange between educational institutions, civic organisations and public authorities. This would require resources (funding and time) to be allocated to the coordinators and staff involved in the inter-agency working.
8. Recognition of families' heritage languages and culturally different educational practices. Demand that these issues be addressed within the framework of the programme. The value of multilingualism and growing up with cultural diversity should be emphasised and

supported in a way that corresponds to the aim and context of the programme and is based on research evidence.

9. Acknowledge ICT tools as a useful ressource. Ensure that ICT is implemented appropriately for the target group, and provide and promote ICT-specific training for the professionals.

Recommendations for programme developers and managers

1. Develop programmes in a structured but bottom-up approach.
2. Be aware that effective programmes have a high process quality and in-depth expertise. Re-evaluate programmes if applied in another context or with another target group and ensure high process quality, considering an integration of formative and summative evaluation findings. Monitor implementation quality continuously.
3. Implement a strategic and continuous collaboration with other experts and institutions. Provide resources for the coordinators and staff involved in this inter-agency working. Reflect on the use of leadership theories: Programmes need a clear vision and strategy regarding delivery mode, content, organisation, implementation of ICT and L1 support and networking with families and other organisations. This means, organisations need to plan and take a lead in how practitioners can use digital tools to build and continuously contribute towards a 'resource bank' that facilitates the sharing of good practices. Quality of resources need to be insured through ongoing monitoring and the provision of ongoing support.
4. The personal and professional competencies of professionals are key for the success of a programme. Successful and promising programmes run continuous supervision and professional support systems that take up societal or programme changes. Acknowledge multiprofessionalism and provide comprehensive systems of professional support and development for your multiprofessional and multiqualificated practitioners. This is particularly important for the integration of ICT in the programme. The need for ICT training needs to be recognised, and sufficient opportunities need to be planned pre- and during interventions for practitioners and parents and to gain the confidence, motivation and skills needed to explore and use digital platforms and digital tools (independently).
5. Create and support multi-professional teams within family support programmes, as these can provide holistic care for families. However, be aware of the challenge in working in multiprofessional teams in an interdisciplinary field. Provide resources to integrate and coordinate work in multiprofessional team.
6. Monitor the family support programme goals based on the target groups needs and resources. With this perspective, also monitor the steps taken to work towards them: the staffs' resources and needs, their knowledge, skills, beliefs and motivational requirements.
7. It is often challenging to reach the families that need the most support in parenting. Apply two essentials to facilitate outreach: building trusting relationships and tailoring the programme to target groups' needs.
8. Develop, implement and monitor strategies to address and support the acquisition of multiple languages and families' multicultural heritage - based on research evidence.
9. ICT tools and the use of digital media as a topic of the home learning environment are either not or not efficiently integrated and evaluated yet in the programmes and is an

unused resource for working with families. Planning is to be based on careful considerations of how the use of digital technology to support parent interventions can best match (or be integrated with) the tools that parents choose to use and the ways in which they use them in day-to-day life.

10. The use of ICT requires professional competencies. Beliefs of the parents and professionals on ICT use need to be considered.

11. Planning needs to acknoweldge practitioners' and parents' beliefs about the usefulness of ICT tools to facilitate family support and parents involvement in child learning. Planning needs to consider the supportive role children can play in facilitating parent engagement with the platform. It also needs to acknowledge, that especially parents with younger children are hesitant to use ICT to support their children's learning, which can create tension and discourage parents from usingdigital tools.

12. Adequate technical support needs to be provided throughout, and ICT resources need careful evaluation.

13. Continuous monitoring needs to assess how the use of ICT in concrete contexts facilitates work towards programme goals, and how the use of ICT needs to be adapted to align well with the ICT resources and habits of participating families.

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