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Parent mentoring to prevent transmission of social disadvantage

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PARENT MENTORING TO PREVENT TRANSMISSION OF SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most effective means to reduce poverty and alleviate numerous social tensions. It is enough to cast a glance at the tendencies in the domestic unemployment rates to ascertain that education can really be effective means of coping with poverty. While in recent years the unemployment rate among those with less than elementary education was over 45%, in the same period the unemployment rate among those with a university degree did not reach 4% (KSH, 2012). Data concerning life expectancy among 30-year-old citizens serve as another example, providing direct information on the issue of life quality. The statistical index (HABLICSEK – KOVÁCS, 2007) shows that in Hungary the difference in life expectancy between the above-mentioned education-based categories is more than a decade. Those in the poor health category essentially differ in terms of school qualifications. For both genders, approximately twice as many among those with lower than elementary education belong to the poor health category when compared to those with a university degree (KOVÁCS, 2012).

A higher level of educational attainment has positive influence not only on individuals' opportunities on the job market and on their quality of life but it is also advantageous to a society as a whole. In other words, supporting educational careers of children of less affluent social groups is not just a mere act of solidarity. The most recognized advantage stems from the relationship between education and economic development, but other numerous social benefits can also be mentioned. For instance, better educated individuals take better care of their environment, are more active socially, and they participate more intensively in cultural life. As far as the long-term

impacts are concerned, it is particularly important to observe that children of educated parents receive more help in their school education, which can have spillover effects on education and quality of life of next generations (CSAPÓ, 2011).

Supporting education of children of indigent families is advantageous both from the point of view of the individual and the society, that is, initiatives that support education and compensate handicaps can bring numerous social gains. Undertakings in the area of education exist in Hungary as well, although a significant number of them narrowly interpret urgent problems and opportunities to be grasped, and thus the effect of those undertakings usually falls short of expectations. Our book intends to contribute to the future success of the launched programs, broadening the perspective of professionals involved, presenting connections between topics and good practices.

Our work offers a broad review of the relationship between child development and poverty. This way we wish to draw attention to numerous intervention possibilities which are not directly connected to education but their management may be decisive in providing support for educational success of socially disadvantaged children. We pay special attention to child-rearing practices of parents who live in disadvantageous social conditions. We do that partly because we feel it is important to demonstrate that the "poverty culture", the diverse behavior and thinking habits of destitute people, while often diverging from the behavior of more socially privileged groups, is very logical under given circumstances. On the other hand, we consider possibilities which rely on mentoring techniques and the active involvement of parents, and which develop child-rearing practices of parents who live in disadvantageous social conditions, thus promoting children's success at school. The classification of these options as well as a short presentation of solutions used in Hungary and abroad may widen resources for future measures to compensate for disadvantages.

In our writing we use mentoring as a collective term for personal coping activities (FEJES – KASIK – KINYÓ, 2013). Our work is not aimed at professionals working in specific fields but we want to collect general information which may be useful for all those professions which, while supporting parents in disadvantageous social situation, can have direct or indirect impact on the development of children.

2. DEFINING DISADVANTAGE

The expression 'disadvantageous situation' started to be used as a sociopolitical term in the 1960s (Papp, 1997), both in numerous subfields of social sciences and in everyday language use. Today, it is perhaps most commonly used in relation to education. The reason apparently is that in parallel with the increase in the importance of education, more attention will be given to children and young people whose life circumstances make it difficult to be successful in school. In order to determine and support this population group, children and young people are classified in various categories of disadvantage. While the concept has a practical aspect, which follows from the legal definition, the educational research perspective often offers a different approach to interpret the concept. The two approaches will be presented in the following section.

2.1. Legal definitions

The legal definition of a disadvantageous and multi-disadvantageous student was implemented under Act LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education. The 2007 amendment of Act LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education effectively defined the concept without major changes. According to the law, "a disadvantaged child / student: is a child or student who is under the protection of the public administration officer or whose entitlement to a regular child protection allowance is established by the public administration officer on the basis of their family situation and social background; children/students

whose parents exercising the statutory control over them in accordance with their voluntary statement made in the course of the procedure regulated by the Act on Child Protection and Guardianship Administration have successfully completed not more than the eight years of the elementary school by the time the child attains the age of three in case of children attending kindergarten and by the date of the commencement of compulsory education in case of students are regarded as multi-disadvantaged children/students within the group of disadvantaged children/students; the child/student taken into long-term foster care is also multi-disadvantaged" (ACT LXXXVII OF 2007).[1]

THE CHILD PROTECTION ACT XXXI OF 1997, ARTICLE 68, describes different cases of child protection, according to which:

"(1) if a parent or other legal representative cannot or does not want to remove the child's vulnerability by voluntarily providing basic care, but there are reasonable grounds for believing that the child's development can be ensured in the family environment if assisted, the child will be taken under the protection of guardianship authorities.

(2) The guardianship authorities, considering suggestions of the child welfare services, can further take under their protection

a) the juvenile who committed infringements reported by authorities dealing with administrative offences,

b) the child under the age of 13, on the basis of the decision of the investigative authorities to withdraw investigation,

c) the juvenile suspected of or accused of committing a criminal offence, on the basis of the indication of the police, the Prosecutor's Office or the Court of Justice." (ACT XXXI OF 1997)

By default, the notary, later the guardianship authorities establish in that case "eligibility for the child in a regular child protection allowance, if the amount of per capita monthly income of the care giving family does not exceed

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[1] With effect from 1 January, 2013, the competence of the public administration officer is amended: their duties are taken over by district guardianship administration.

a) 140% of the respective minimum amount of the retirement pension (hereinafter: the minimum amount of the retirement pension),

    aa) if a single parent or other legal representative takes care of the child or

    ab) if the child is chronically ill or severely disabled." (ACT XXXI OF 1997)

The Child Protection Act also determines conditions of taking the child under long-term care. The guardianship authorities make use of this option if

"a) the court of justice terminated a parent's or both parents' custody of the child,

b) a parent or both parents died, and the child does not have a parental guardian

c) the child's parents are unknown, provided that in the cases specified in points a) though c) the child cannot be taken care of by the guardian appointed under Articles 95–97 of the Family Law.

d) the parent made a declaration of consent for his/her child to be adopted without knowing the adoptive person or his/her biographical data, provided that the child's placement at prospective adoptive parents cannot be put provisionally into force. (ACT XXXI OF 1997)

The Act on Public Education, therefore, classifies students as disadvantaged or multi-disadvantaged in the framework of a complex legal procedure and on the basis of the decision of the notary (from 2007 to 2012) and district courts of guardians (since 2013). From the legal definitions above it appears that permanent child protection allowance as well as the disadvantageous situation are established crucially on the basis of social conditions of the family, while the legal definition of multiple disadvantage conditions also mentions low level of parents' education.

Before 1 January, 2007, the registration of multi-disadvantaged students was assigned to the responsibilities of educational institution leaders. As a result, identifying multi-disadvantaged students could be hindered not only by objective difficulties of the survey, but also by omission, or even by conscious manipulation.

Since 2007, the registration of multi-disadvantaged students has also faced difficulties as a result of delegating it to the responsibilities of the notary. The notary, simultaneously with making the decision on the child's right to receive protection and permanent child protection allowance, was expected to inform the parent about these benefits and opportunities to which the child might be entitled as far as he/she meets the criteria for a multi-disadvantaged child. However, in daily practice parents often do not receive thorough information or its form (statements sent by post) does little to help parents with low educational qualifications to acknowledge and undertake individual involvement (ANDL – KÓRÓDI – SZŰCS – VÉGH, 2009).

In the case of many local governments, mainly those maintaining segregation-based organization of education, there was an observable practice that the notary, referring to parents' privacy rights, did not pass the name list of multi-disadvantaged students to educational institution leaders. A solution to this problem was provided by measures introduced in 2009, according to which a parent in his/her statement may adopt a decision that he/she authorizes the notary to communicate the child's/student's multi-disadvantaged status to the institution the child is attending (ANDL ET AL., 2009).

In the majority of larger settlements (above 10-20 thousand inhabitants) notaries are only nominally on the records of multi-disadvantaged students. Most often they entrust collecting of parents' declarations to public education institutions. There are settlements where all parents receive declarations through educational institutions, while elsewhere data sheets are delivered only to those entitled to child protection allowance. It often happens that a social service office or guardianship authorities entirely fulfill this task and establish whether there are any multi-disadvantaged students in the settlement and in public education institutions (ANDL ET AL., 2009).

Since 1 September, 2013, the concept of a disadvantaged and multi-disadvantaged situation has been regularized on the basis of Article 45, Act XXVII of 2013 on child protection and Article 67/A, Act XXXI of 1997 on guardianship administration.

Since then, those children entitled to permanent child protection allowance are considered multi-disadvantaged, in the case of whom one of the disadvantage increasing conditions below is met:

a. parent(s), foster parent(s) have at most primary education[2];
b. parent(s), foster parent(s) have been registered as job-seekers for at least 12 months[3];
c. the family lives in inadequate living environment or housing conditions[4].

There has been a modification in the multiple disadvantage category. Since September, 2013, those children entitled to permanent child protection allowance are considered multi-disadvantaged, in the case of whom two of the above three categories are met. Children under foster care, those receiving aftercare and young adults with a student or pupil status have also been added to the multiple disadvantage category (Act XXVII of 2013).

The positive impact of the modification is that the multiple disadvantage category has been extended to include not only children under long-term foster care but also all those under child protection guardianship and all young adults receiving aftercare. In other respects, however, the new definition of the two categories significantly narrows down the scope of the target group. It is likely that the new modification will also make the group's identification more difficult as their registration has been moved from the jurisdiction

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[2] The definition of low educational qualifications of a parent or a legal guardian: it can be established on the basis of voluntary declarations that both parents raising their child together, a single parent raising his/her child alone, or a host family guardian, at the time of the application for permanent child protection allowance has at most primary education (Act XXVII of 2013).

[3] The definition of the low employment of a parent or a host family guardian: if it can be established of any of child raising parents or host family guardians that at the time of the application for permanent child protection allowance they are entitled to benefits for people of working age according to Act 33 of Szt. or that within the period of 16 months prior to the time of the application for permanent child protection allowance they were registered as job-seekers for at least 12 months (Act XXVII of 2013).

[4] The definition of inadequate living environment or housing: it can be established that the child lives in a living environment designated as 'segregated area' according to the integrated urban development strategy concerning that settlement, or he/she lives in semi-standard or substandard housing, or in emergency accommodation, or in such housing environment where conditions necessary for healthy development are limited (Act XXVII of 2013).

of notaries to the competence of guardianship authorities. Overall, it can be assumed that the new legal practice will significantly reduce the number of students registered as disadvantaged or multi-disadvantaged.

If we wish to get a more accurate picture of disadvantaged or multi-disadvantaged students at school, then it is worth considering the range of pedagogical definitions as well.

2.2. Pedagogical approach

Disadvantage is difficult to grasp in an exact, scientific manner, as this category is primarily defined by the socio-economic environment (LISKÓ, 1997) and its interpretation is fundamentally affected by the discourse mode and the research objective. The pedagogical point of view represents those economic, social and cultural circumstances in which some students are at disadvantage in terms of their educational progress compared to the majority. It is difficult to restrict the scope of disadvantaged groups due to the relative nature of the concept; reasons (e.g. low educational level of parents) often blur with symptoms (e.g. dropping out of school) and conditions

Inequality dimensions outside the education system	Inequalities within the educational system	Output factors
Social background	Institutional network	Academic performance
Place of residence	Funding	Further education
Gender	Financial situation	Finding employment
Minority status	Personal conditions	
Demography	Material conditions	
	Curriculum Teaching methods	

Table 1.: Components of educational disadvantage
Source: IMRE, 2002. 64.

attributable to the family's social background (e.g. low income) merge with those attributable to the education system (e.g. segregation) (FEJES – JÓZSA, 2005). In order to clarify the conceptual confusion IMRE's (2002) concept can be used, which breaks down educational disadvantage into three components: 1. inequalities outside the education system, 2. inequalities within the educational system, and 3. output characteristics.

The Hungarian literature mentions a number of variables which capture factors deriving from family background (LISKÓ, 1997; PAPP, 1997; TÓTH, 1997; VÁRNAGY – VÁRNAGY, 2000), of which two sets can be identified. One of the dimensions can be named the material disadvantage, and is mostly characterized by low income, low education, poor cultural facilities, and inadequate housing. The other dimension, called the emotional disadvantage, can be characterized by the lack of the family or intact family, by disturbances in family socialization, and by parental deviance. The two groups of factors are not independent. The above-mentioned dimensions also emerge in the work of Papp (1997), who leads back the disadvantage primarily to poverty, and highlights the vulnerability of disadvantaged position as caused by antisocial family lifestyle, emotional desolation, unsettled conditions inside the family and irresponsibility of parents regarding their children. VÁRNAGY – VÁRNAGY (2000), distinguish four symptom-based categories of disadvantage: those in inadequate disadvantaged position, those with unadaptive behavior, those living under dissociative conditions, and those with anti-social behavior, but the analysis of the reasons suggests that the previously mentioned two dimensions (material and emotional handicaps) seem to be predominant. In addition, attention should be paid to the topic of linguistic disadvantage, which from a sociolinguistic point of view can be classified under the material detriment (OLÁH ÖRSI, 2005; RÉGER, 2002).

3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND THE SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND

It has been well-documented in pedagogical literature that the development of children from marginalized families will usually fall short of the development of their peers who live under more favorable conditions (e.g. CSAPÓ, 2003; JÓZSA, 2004; KERTESI – KÉZDI, 2009). The most evident signs manifest themselves in academic performance. The reasons are partly found in the family environment, partly in educational institutions and systems which do not work properly. This chapter focuses on the impact of the family background and tries to answer the question of how the negative socio-economic background affects the development of children and through what mechanisms. A detailed exploration of these factors can offer the intervention points which may help prevent or reduce the negative impact of poverty on children's development, namely, increasing educational success may reduce the reproduction of poverty.

In Hungarian, VAJDA (2005) sums up those characteristics that are typical of poor families in terms of their child-rearing habits and beliefs. In addition, KERTESI – KÉZDI (2008) as well as SZILVÁSI (2008) provide a systematic overview of the functioning of socially disadvantaged families in the context of child development. Presenting the topic we mainly rely on the aforementioned works. In addition, many topic-related publications on the Roma minority in Hungary can also be found. As previous studies have not found evidence of

such cultural differences between the poor subcultures and the Hungarian Roma minority that would have a significant role in achieving educational success (e.g. KERTESI – KÉZDI, 2011; FEJES – JÓZSA, 2007), likewise, we rely on the publications concerning the characteristics of Roma families.

The relationship between the education and socio-cultural background can be illustrated with the help of a number of interacting factors organized and modeled by individual authors in a variety of ways. In what follows, we review this relationship based on BRADLEY – CORWYN'S (2002) work. The advantage of their model is its process-like character, that is, the systematization of factors also informs us about the relations between them (Table 2).

Parental strategies and techniques related to child rearing may vary considerably, for example, concerning the role of reward and punishment, or the roles of kindergarten and school with its tasks, and in respect of expectations regarding the development of children. Thinking and behavior related to education can be subject to various circumstances, ranging from individual preferences to customs rooted in a particular culture. The socioeconomic status of the parents, which in many ways affects parenting, also belongs to this list. Table 2 provides information on more important connections.

Major group	Subgroup	Examples
Sources	Nutrition	Malnutrition can affect both parents and children's energy resources and as a result children may become apathetic, less capable of drawing their parents' attention to themselves, while parents become less sensitive towards meeting their children's needs. It can affect both the quality of the bond between parents and children, and increase the incidence of negative emotions.
	Access to health care	The health care usually has some cost implications, and there are differences in certain health services in terms of their regional coverage. Furthermore, low level of parents' education may result in late detection of symptoms.

Major Group	Subgroup	Examples
Sources	Housing conditions	Inadequate housing conditions can affect both physical and mental health. For example, the absence of heating results in a more frequent occurrence of diseases, while crowdedness can lead to conflicts between the cohabitants.
	Tools and experience that help intellectual development	Recreation, tools and activities conducive to learning are scarcer, among others due to limited financial means.
	Parenting style and expectations	Parents are less likely to encourage self-reliance, creativity or verbal skills, as well as participation in cultural and educational events. They buy fewer tools for their children that promote reading and learning, and do not regulate the use of television that much.
	Teachers' attitudes and expectations	Teachers pay less attention and offer less positive feedback to disadvantaged students.
Stress effects	Allostatic load	Constant stress (e.g. crowded housing conditions or deviance in the living environment) often leads to the formation of unfavorable changes in the organism (e.g. permanent high blood pressure).
	Child-rearing practices	Psychological characteristics associated with poor living conditions, such as depression or low self-esteem, negatively influence parents' child-rearing habits, such as parental warmth and responsiveness.
Health behavior		Smoking and alcohol consumption are more common, while sports activities are less. These conditions directly affect parents' and children's physical and mental health, and indirectly determine the role model provided by parents.

Table 2.: The link between poverty and child development
Based on BRADLEY – CORWYN, 2002.

3.1. Mental status of parents

Stress factors inherent in poverty (e.g. subsistence difficulties; job insecurity or loss; unhealthy, overcrowded housing conditions; deviance in living environment) may bring about a less favorable mental state of those parents who have to face such circumstances; depression, aggression and self-esteem problems occur more frequently, which in many ways may influence family life and the development of relations between family members. Conflicts between spouses and family members are likely to be more common, and the number of children is likely to be much higher compared to the majority of families. It often happens that parents rear unplanned children, while the support of the family and the social network is lacking. Among the marginalized mothers there is a higher than average proportion of single mothers giving birth to their children at a younger age than average. The child, who was born early and unplanned, especially with the lack of social support, brings uncertainty to child-rearing and family life, and the parent-child relationship may suffer damage and become conflictual as a consequence (VAJDA, 2005).

The standard of living and the number of children typically remain in reverse relationship with each other all over the world, and are intertwined with psychological problems accompanying poverty. The feeling of vulnerability leads this group to frequent self-doubt about influencing the future, and indeed, this group is rarely successful in this respect. The high number of children is certainly related to the lack of management skills and self-confidence necessary for planning the future. Marginalized people are convinced that they have hardly any chance to influence their destiny, which makes the less conscious family planning (VAJDA, 2005) easier to interpret. In addition, for unemployed young women who do not have a regular job, having children is particularly significant and often becomes the only symbol of their transition into adulthood (e.g. DURTS, 2010, KELLY, 1998).

With the increase in the number of children the revenue is more distributed, so the possibility of social advancement becomes more and more distant. The national data well-demonstrate that the

increase in the number of children makes the risk of poverty grow significantly (e.g. GÁBOS – SZÍVÓS, 2006). In parallel, the living conditions are getting worse, which can affect the mental state of the parents, and the entire process can develop a spiral tendency.

Health behavior associated with poverty and mental state influence each other. Health-damaging behaviors (e.g. smoking, alcoholism, drug abuse) are more prevalent among the marginalized groups, sports activities are less common, and less healthy eating habits are typical (VAJDA, 2005). These factors make it more likely that among pregnant women children to be born would develop physical and mental health problems (KERTESI – KÉZDI, 2008), the treatment of which would provide an additional mental and financial burden for parents and families.

3.2. Mother–child relationship

Studies examining early attachment, later mental health, and social, emotional and motivational characteristics provide countless evidence that the parent-child relationship is of central importance for the development of children (see SZILVÁSI, 2008; TÓTH – REGÉNYI – TAKÁCS – KASIK, 2009; VAJDA, 2005; ZSOLNAI, 2001). Maternal behavior conveying security relay is the basis for the healthy development of the child's personality. If the child is growing up in an atmosphere of confidence, then later he has high self-esteem and motivation, and will be more successful in his/her social relations. Studies examining the relationship between attachment patterns and basic dimensions of personality demonstrate that securely attached individuals are less neurotic and extroverted than avoidant and ambivalent attachment types. Further, securely attached individuals have higher personal and social self-esteem than the other two types (ZSOLNAI, 2001).

The mother's feelings and attitudes before the child's birth have demonstrable effects on the child. From the sixth month of pregnancy the fetus is able to distinguish between maternal attitudes and feelings and responds to them as well (LÁZÁR, 1994 quoted in ZSOLNAI,

2001). One of the factors influencing fetal development is the emotional state of the mother which is related to the socioeconomic status associated with living conditions. In her study, EIGNER (2013) examined 50 first-time mothers when their children were four and a half months' old. The results demonstrate that already in the early interactions high levels of stress have negative impacts on the mother's ways of attending to her child in terms of warm, accepting, and uninterrupted relationship.

Discord between the parents of the child may create a situation of separation; the child may lose his/her parents' attention and affection, and may respond with introvert or anti-social behavior. In many cases, parental treatment becomes rough and physically abusive, or any control and monitoring of the child cease to exist (RANSCHBURG, 2008).

3.3. The child-rearing culture

Child-rearing habits of deprived groups differ in many respects from those of the majority group. Parents from socially disadvantaged families consider the characteristics of their children as inherited rather than subject to environmental impacts. This again may be related to the feeling of vulnerability and lack of self-confidence in terms of influencing their future. Among poorer families conformism, respect for authority and hierarchical family structure are more common than among families with more favorable financial circumstances. The contact between parents and children is less flexible, the outer limitations and erratic parental control make school integration and the development of self-control more difficult (VAJDA, 2005). It is more typical that parents use harsh discipline, which in part diverts from school discipline strategies, in part is more likely to lead to behavioral problems among the children of these families (see F. LASSÚ, 2001; RANSCHBURG, 2008).

The parents' occupation and workplace characteristics can also affect the requirements posed on the children, child-rearing principles and habits. Those parents, who face expectations of

obedience and strict observance of rules at work, are also likely to expect conformity from their children. Intellectual parents, whose work is less constrained, may provide more opportunities for their children to develop their potential abilities (SOLYMOSI, 2005).

Among poor families the child's world is less separated from that of the adults, and childhood enjoys less privileged protection. The scope of limitations is usually much narrower in the case of children of marginalized families than among families with more favorable socioeconomic background. The opportunity to obtain care is also limited for these children, the lack of a father is particularly typical (VAJDA, 2005), and these families usually have much lower social capital (VASTAGH – HUSZÁR, 2008). Poverty often means residential segregation, which also contributes to children's and young people's limited access to available models deriving from adults (SZILVÁSI, 2008).

A component of parental behavior which has an impact on the motivation to learn is their support for learning autonomy, which means that a parent provides the child with an environment for self-discovery and activity initiatives, and encourages the child to actively solve problems (POMERANTZ – GROLNICK – PRICE, 2005). However, parents in poor environments are less supportive of their children's independent activities (BRADLEY – CORWYN, 2002). Low-skilled parents have lower expectations towards their children and involve them less in activities developing their feeling of competence (FEJES, 2012).

The number and quality of parent-child interactions are also of essential importance for the development of speech. The socio-economic status and education level of parents fundamentally determine how communicative parents are with their children and to what extent they support their language development (BRADLEY – CORWYN, 2002). Disadvantaged parents talk less with their children, and therefore their level of responsiveness is lower than that of middle-class parents. Also, poor parents are more likely to think that they are not able to influence the development of their children, since they themselves live in a position of vulnerability and are not able to shape their own destiny (Szilvási 2008).

Parents in a better financial position read more for their children and provide more learning opportunities and experiences to help them solve problems; in poor families, such parental behaviors occur less frequently (KERTESI – KÉZDI, 2008). Kertesi and KÉZDI'S (2009) national sample of the Hungarian data show a clear correlation between the frequency of childhood storytelling and the educational level of mothers. The quarter of the parents with lower than elementary education never or hardly ever read for their preschool children, while in the case of university-educated parents it is less than one percent. The positive effect of regular storytelling was also demonstrated in the context of secondary school education. A higher proportion of children who received regular storytelling from their parents participated in GCE training. This relationship was observable both among parents with low and with high levels of education. The link can be clearly associated with the fact that story-telling parents used other components of the home environment as well to create an atmosphere, which affected their children's development positively.

Indigent parents are less susceptible to special abilities of their children and they consider it less important to support children's development in these areas, although the opportunities for such a development are not given anyway (VAJDA, 2005). Obviously, as a result of the adverse circumstances, such skills and talents rarely come to light.

3.4. Material environment that assists development

An important condition for healthy development is a safe material environment with sufficient space for free movement and with tools and games available to facilitate cognitive development. The right tools and toys also offer the opportunity for interaction between parents and children (SZILVÁSI, 2008). Here we may mention story-books, books, and other literacy-related items which may be relevant to the development of the attitude to reading (SZENCZI, 2010).

What fits this issue is RÉGER'S (1995) theory, which is based on the observation of Roma families in Hungary, but the phenomenon is probably not primarily ethnic in nature, but can be interpreted as bound to a subculture of poverty. According to Réger, a considerable part of school failure inducing language problems of Roma children stems from the deficit of pre-school socialization in reading and writing. In general, the children of the majority gain a lot of experience in the use of written and printed texts already at pre-school age. Then they learn a number of language and interaction skills which are essential for learning reading and writing later. The key concept in literacy socialization is the event related to writing and reading, which means any occasion when written or printed letters are an integral part of the parent-child cooperation. The examples include viewing together storybooks, television ads, or reading texts found on cans. The child involved in these events also experiences that the activity of reading and writing is culturally valued in his/her environment.

The research on behavioral disorders demonstrates that the lack of stimulating toys leads to boredom and frustration, which may cause negative reactions and punishment-based child-rearing practices of parents, themselves a risk factor for the development of children of marginalized families. Due to low incomes poor families are forced to live in an area without a nearby playground or park, the opportunities of after-school programs are poorer, and thus there is less opportunity to compensate for the shortcomings in the home environment. The richness of living environment clearly has a positive effect on the child's development and is related to educational methods (KERTESI – KÉZDI, 2008).

In recent years, increasing attention is being paid to the topic of digital divide, which refers to manifested social differences in the use of information and communication technologies, and is based on the assumption that digital inequalities and social inequalities are related. According to the analyses, the existing social differences are reinforced by digital inequalities (NAGY, 2007). Those who are not familiar with information and communication technologies may be at a disadvantage in many areas, like electronic government

or paying taxes online. In addition, more empirical research demonstrates that the appropriate level of ICT use can also promote educational effectiveness (see MOLNÁR – KÁRPÁTI, 2012). In terms of the access to such facilities, the disadvantage of the children of parents with poor family and home backgrounds is obvious. The impact of this circumstance on educational and labor market success is likely to continue to grow, together with the ICT literacy moving to the fore. In other words, in case of children from disadvantaged families, the limited home access to ICT and the low level of ICT skills are likely to result in disadvantages similar to those found in connection with written texts. NAGY'S (2008) study conducted among 19–29 year olds empirically confirms the existence of digital inequalities.

4. THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN REINFORCING SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE

It has been supported by numerous studies that the majority of students with disadvantageous socio-cultural backgrounds have lower than the average school performance in all parts of the world (e.g. OECD, 2010). Many background factors can be observed, some of which – as we have seen – can be connected to the family, while others to the system of educational institutions.

Properly functioning institutions are significantly capable of alleviating the disadvantages of family background. However, the Hungarian school system belongs to those education systems where such effects – despite the hard work of teachers – hardly prevail. Instead of reducing the disadvantages, the education system tends to amplify the difficulties of students with a disadvantageous family background (OECD, 2010). The negative impact of home background, without doubt, is already showing when school starts (Józsa, 2004), but an average of five years' difference in intellectual development at the start of school is doubled by the end of the tenth grade (Nagy, 2008), which is partly a consequence of the selection mechanisms in the Hungarian education system. This topic will be dealt with in detail below. Besides segregation, we will discuss the relationship between parents and institutions, which indirectly – for example, through the motivation to learn (Pomerantz – Grolnick – Price, 2005) – may also affect the success of disadvantaged students. Although as for the parent-institution relationship, both the

attitude of the parents and that of the institutional staff play a role, it is worth referring to this factor in the domain of institutional responsibility, that is, to discuss it in this section.

4.1. The relationship between parents and educational institutions

An important factor to be taken into account with regards to the development of the relationship between marginalized parents and institutions is the prior experience of parents, including their attitude towards institutions and mainly towards school due to, among others, earlier school failures. Beliefs and role conceptions of institutional employees appear to be equally important factors. The emphasis on inherited characteristics among parents with disadvantageous financial conditions may result (VAJDA, 2005) that they attach a minor role to educational institutions in terms of influencing their children's development, which could also affect their cooperation with institutions.

The conflictual nature of this collaboration is also evident in the domestic research carried out among teachers. Multi-disadvantaged children are sent to kindergarten much later, for shorter periods, or attend it irregularly, although the kindergarten has a significant role to play in reducing developmental disadvantages of young children and in establishing the foundation for their success in school. Almost 90% of the children whose parents graduated from high school attended kindergarten longer than for two years, while this was true for only half of those children whose parents' education was less than eight grades of elementary school (KERTESI – KÉZDI, 2009). The lack of pre-school education, its shorter duration, stem, inter alia, from mutual distrust between families and the kindergarten (e.g. HAVAS, 2004; PIK, 2000, 2001, SZABÓ-TÓTH, 2007). HAVAS (2004), in a questionnaire survey examining kindergarten education in 330 municipalities, clearly points out the problems with kindergarten education in connection with uneducated, poor parents. The conflictual relationship is indicated by the fact that 18% of kindergarten teachers formulate criticisms of those parents' conduct and of poor family

socialization. The criticism also appears on the part of elementary school teachers, who claim that those parents usually do not motivate their children and do not keep in touch with teachers (e.g. LISKÓ, 2001).

The relation to school significantly varies among parents with different social identities. More educated parents hand over those expectations and patterns to their children which are a standard to follow in kindergarten and at school. Less educated parents often convey such attitudes and norms to their children that diverge from what the institutional education expects from the child or young person.

FORRAY (1997) takes into account the possible contradictions between school and the Roma families (Table 3), but many of these conflicts are interpretable not as primarily cultural differences, but as viewpoint differences of the middle-class and poor subcultures. Although empirical evidence confirming the majority of displayed differences is missing, a significant portion of them can be derived from the differences in the characteristics of the marginalized and middle-class families.

Table 3 makes it also highly visible that the family and the school can mediate different expectations to the students, which can lead to conflict. At the same time, the difference itself, without the presence of conflicts, can also influence children's and young people's well-being and development, for instance, via the attitude towards school and via the relationship formed with the teachers. In addition, there may be extreme differences between the home and the required language use in educational settings, which may be the source of further difficulties and failure at school (RÉGER, 1995, 2001), and influence both the education and the social relationships.

Goals and expectations of the school (self-image of the school)	ROMA'S INTERPRETATIONS (ROMA'S ALIEN IMAGE)
1. Education and teaching objectives	
Operation of the school is based on social consensus as regards the goals, values, norms, etc.	Operation of the school is based on laws and regulations.
Children (pupils) at school prepare themselves for life.	Children's "real" life happens here and now, and outside of school.

Goals and expectations of the school (self-image of the school)	Roma's interpretations (Roma's alien image)
1. Education and teaching objectives	
Education and training at school offers a better chance in life.	The school teaches the science of reading, writing and counting.
School qualifies students with grades.	Children at school are qualified by being praised and scolded by teachers.
The school determines the knowledge to be taught.	The child (family) has the right to determine the skills required to be mastered.
2. School education	
The school has priority at the time of teaching.	Family and the community always come first.
It is the family's duty to send the child to school prepared.	It is the school's duty to prepare the child as it requires.
The school takes over educational tasks form the family.	Only the family and the community are responsible for child-rearing.
3. The "Hungarian" school and the Roma family	
Pupils are always "children" at school, in terms of their relationship to learning.	Children are truly children only until puberty.
Personal feelings are not an essential part of school work.	The school will be accepted only if teachers have a personal, emotional relationship with the children.
Conflicts at school occur only between pupils, or between a teacher and a pupil.	School conflicts occur essentially between Roma and non-Roma (gázsók).
Parents usually do not belong in school.	The duty of a parent (family, community) is to protect children in school.
School pulls the child out of the family.	The child's only natural place is in the family and in the community.

Table 3.: Main conflicts between school and family

Soource: Forray, 1997. 16.

4.2. Selection and segregation at school

4.2.1. What does segregation mean?

The issue of educational segregation and integration issues in the media is intertwined with the Roma minority. Pictures in newspaper articles on this topic usually show Roma pupils, and television reports on that matter are mostly accompanied by Roma folk music. However, in reality, the issue is not about ethnicity, that is, the segregation can also take place when there is not a single Roma child in a given learning community, and it is not sure that there is integration if Roma and the majority pupils are in the same school or class. As far as the issue of segregation and integration is concerned, the financial situation of pupils' families is more important than ethnicity, although the ethnic dimension is also essential. Still, the truly decisive factor is the ratio between student groups with different family backgrounds, attending the same community.

One characteristic feature of the functioning of the national school system is that talented or less talented students are early on placed in special schools or classes. There is seemingly rational argument behind this practice, namely that if the heterogeneity among students decreases regarding skills and prior knowledge, it is more likely to ensure the most appropriate education for them, and teachers' work also becomes easier. However, the implementation meets with a number of obstacles, the most important of these being that in reality – contrary to the objectives – learning communities (schools, classes) are established not on the basis of skills but according to the family background (JÓZSA – HRICSOVINYI, 2012). This phenomenon is known as school selection, the extreme form of which implies segregation (KELLER – MÁRTONFI, 2006). It is particularly characteristic of Hungarian schools that children with similar social positions would study in the same institution or class, or, in a segregated environment. According to international comparative studies, in that global comparison Hungary takes the lead (CSAPÓ – MOLNÁR – KINYÓ, 2009).

Segregation is not just special education of a certain group of students, but also a lower level of educational requirements and

lower quality of services[5]. Contrary to the widely held views, segregation cannot be described only as the segregation practice of Roma pupils, although this phenomenon affects particularly adversely the Roma minority in Hungary. Since a large proportion of Roma pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds, thus, generally, ethnic segregation means also socially based educational segregation.

It is a common misconception that the equal number of Roma and non-Roma, or disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students in a learning community means that there is no segregation. Although there are no accurate data to demonstrate what rate of disadvantaged students makes the quality of education start to decline, it is likely to pose insurmountable obstacles for teachers, and unfavorable learning conditions are more likely to emerge when more than one quarter of students are disadvantaged in a learning community.

In our interpretation, segregation means that there is the ratio of disadvantaged students in a learning community is above 25%, which results in a lower standard of learning environment and educational services. Certainly, there are schools and classes where slightly higher proportions of disadvantaged students do not diminish the quality of education, while elsewhere more favorable student ratios do not result in effective education. The specified ratio is therefore an estimation; however, we consider it important to highlight the magnitude. The Hungarian literature, taking into account the proportion of Roma students, uses such terms as schools turning into ghettoes (30-50%) and ghetto schools (over 50%) (e.g. HAVAS, 2008; PAPP, 2011), which somewhat confirms the rates we have used. In FEISCHMIDT – VIDRA'S (2011) study, teachers in a focus group interview mention the ratio of 4-5 students per class as critical for the successful integration of Roma school children, which further supports our prediction. The increase in rates clearly decreases the performance (HAVAS – ZOLNAY, 2011, PAPP, 2011), however, it can also be demonstrated that this is not due to the Roma

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[5] The meaning of segregation and integration is different from how these expressions are used when referring to special education students in need of care (l. CSÁNYI – PERLUSZ, 2001).

origin of pupils, but due to their living conditions (KERTESI – KÉZDI, 2012A; PAPP, 2011).

It follows from the above definition of segregated education that the main purpose of the integration efforts is the even distribution of children of adverse family backgrounds in schools and classes, and in such a way that their ratio should be low for all student communities. Another important factor is that the right proportions should be granted when entering school and not as a consequence of a later "re-distribution". This is contrary to the popular belief that the process of integration means "imposing" disadvantaged and Roma pupils on some schools.

It is important to draw attention to the fact that learning and teaching difficulties at school are caused not by the family's unfavorable financial situation itself, but by socialization shortcomings and learning problems inherent in this situation. Children with learning and/or behavioral problems may also occur in well-off families, while children from poor families do not necessarily have deficiencies which would make the job of educators and teachers more difficult. However, these difficulties occur more often among pupils with poor home backgrounds (E.G. BROOKS-GUNN – BRITTO – BRADY, 2008; KERTESI – KÉZDI, 2005A), and the parents have by far fewer tools at their disposal to address of these problems.

4.2.2. What is the problem with segregation?

According to the literature, one of the most damaging consequences of segregation is what is referred to as "learning opposing subculture" (KERTESI – KÉZDI, 2005B), which mainly implies demotivation in the learning community. A lower learning motivation of the segregated Community is not surprising since the students often come from a social environment that is less appreciative of school performance and learning. In other words, the students fall behind as a result of inadequate environment, which they can overcome in a community that encourages school-related intellectual performance. But such opportunities are limited in a school population which is homogeneous

in terms of family background, because those who could partially counterweight the effects of family background are missing. Thus, not only the home, but also the circumstances do not support the motivation to learn. The low motivation to learn is often intertwined with behavioral problems, which are more common among students with learning problems (FELLEGINÉ, 2004) and with a low socioeconomic status (RANSCHBURG, 2008). Students in such groups can create a sub-culture that devalues activities related to learning and urges group members to resist the school and the teachers[6]. Thus, it is difficult to achieve results with segregated communities not because individual members of the community are problematic due to their family background. Members of the community become problematic because they get to segregated communities as a result of the socio-cultural backgrounds.

Further negative effects of segregation are linked to teachers' expectations. According to the phenomenon known as the Pygmalion Effect, if someone has expectations about the behavior of another person in a particular situation, that person will tend to produce a behavior that confirms the expectations. The existence of a self-fulfilling prophecy in education has been examined for nearly half a century, and its effect on disadvantaged students is greater than on the students of the majority group (JÓZSA – FEJES, 2010). There is no doubt that a teacher entering low-level classes does not have the same expectations as when coming to teach student groups with advantageous social backgrounds, which clearly affects the quality of education. According to GOOD – BROPHY (2008), teachers in slow progress classrooms often teach a simplified syllabus and testing is often focused on the memorization of the learning

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[6] Some studies investigating the effect of schoolmates show that their role is essential in influencing school performance, whereas according to other studies it is negligible (ANGRIST – LANG, 2004; RANGVIN, 2007). In addition, that effect may vary in different groups of students, thus the connection cannot be interpreted in such a way that the proportion of disadvantaged or less successful students in a community clearly determines the performance of individual members. However, due to the indirect effects, including the school facilities and the composition of teachers, the question of proportions cannot be neglected.

material. There are fewer efforts to reach integrity of content, topics are less frequently linked to the interest of the students, and teachers are generally less sensitive to students' opinions. These classes usually become collectives of various low achievers, and are characterized by the reduced quality of education, and not by a more effective satisfaction of students' needs. The factors listed above are most likely to affect students' learning motivation as well. Thus, teachers in segregated classes provide reduced quality education, adjusting to the community's real or perceived low level of motivation and to their prior knowledge, seeking (usually unconsciously) to minimize the possibility of conflict with students and parents, and reducing requirements.

The majority recognizes that disadvantaged students need particularly well qualified teachers, and that the effective education of these students is a task that is more difficult than the average and requires great expertise. However, the reality is disappointing because, in terms of preparedness, those schools have the worst composition of the teaching staff which have a high number of disadvantaged students. According to VARGA'S (2009) analysis, it becomes clear that schools with mainly disadvantaged students often employ inadequately trained teachers, teachers who are more likely to have lower than university education, who are beginning teachers or senior teachers over 50 years of age. In addition, the income of teachers is lower in these institutions[7]. Teachers who can afford it – especially the well-educated and experienced ones – leave schools with a high proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and look for a job in institutions where working conditions and earning opportunities are more favorable, and where it is easier to achieve educational and professional success.

[7] Teachers' salaries are based on qualifications according to the pay scale and on practice time, however, the pay scale records the lower limit of earnings. Education expenditures and the income of municipal governments are related, and thus the less advantaged municipalities that maintain schools teaching higher rates of students with less favorable family background, cannot augment the salaries of teachers from other sources (VARGA, 2008).

There is certainly a number of qualified and committed teachers working in schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged students, and no doubt that many of them achieve considerable success in a segregated environment. However, their success is relative and cannot be seen at the system level, or, considering the number and range of students, it is rather an exception. In addition, schools with high numbers of disadvantaged students generally have less favorable facilities and financial opportunities (HERMANN, 2007; LISKÓ, 2002; PAPP, 2011). In conclusion, there is a lesser chance to expect an outstanding performance from teachers who teach in communities with the high proportion of disadvantaged students, because their work takes place under burdensome conditions, in a less equipped educational environment and receives less external success and reinforcement.

Those factors are intertwined with each other and lead to a situation where the students in segregated schools and classes usually receive a lower quality of education. In other words, children of poor families, in addition to the disadvantages resulting from the family background, have to overcome significant additional obstacles which are set before them by our school system.

In addition to school performance, segregation negatively affects inter-group relations, which, whether in terms of the coexistence and solidarity between the majority and the Roma minority or between different social status groups, is essential to experience belonging to a community, that is, essential for the functioning of democracy and daily wellbeing (KERTESI – KÉZDI, 2009). Experience has made it clear that inclusive education can improve intergroup relations (e.g. ARONSON, 2008; KÉZDI – SURÁNYI, 2008). Obviously, the better the effect, the earlier inclusive education starts. The late "mixing" of students is in reality accompanied by conflicts (e.g. CSEMPESZ– FEJES, 2013, KOVAI 2011), but these are not the result of integrated education, but can be interpreted as its lack. In addition, inclusive education achieved by a new "redistributing" of students may in the long run positively influence inter-group relations, because if students belonging to groups afflicted by prejudices and segregation get access to quality education, then their labor market position improves, which positively affects the future assessment of these groups.

4.2.3. How does segregation emerge?

Below we will provide a brief overview of the factors which play a role in the national selection process (see BERÉNYI – BERKOVITS – ERŐSS, 2008; HAVAS, 2008; KERTESI – KÉZDI, 2005B; SZALAI, 2010). Above all, we must begin with a statement that the social fabric of school districts varies considerably, resulting in marked differences in the composition of students at schools. Let us just think of schools in an upper middle-class suburban district and schools in a small settlement inhabited mainly by families living in extreme poverty. Although there were always loopholes in the system of compulsory residence-based schooling, since 1985, when the free school choice system was introduced, differences in the social composition of schools have increased dramatically. As a result of the free school choice, a parent is not required to enroll the child in the school district, but may consider a choice of a better school which can be another mandatory district school or a public, private, or church-run school. The elite and the middle class seek to enroll their children to such schools and classes, where the proportion of disadvantaged and particularly Roma students is low, as most parents assume that their presence is detrimental to the development of their children. If their needs are not met, they will "vote with their feet", that is, they will undertake additional costs and choose another school for their children. This way they exercise pressure on the institutions, which, meeting the needs of the parents, develop and maintain segregation, even when parents' "voting with their feet" has not actually happened.

A school without a mandatory school district is free to pick and choose the candidates while a district school, in case it still disposes of free places after the admission of students from the district, can choose from candidates outside the district with some restrictions (see ANDL ET AL, 2009). Elementary schools are interested in collecting pupils from the families who support school's work, as such pupils are likely to perform well in the future. It is vital for schools to select students who are perceived to be talented, because it means better working conditions and a more accessible pedagogical success for teachers, which, due to the school's reputation, contributes to

a better use of school capacity, to reducing costs, and last but not least, to the preservation of teachers' posts. Since the law prohibits entrance exams to elementary schools, schools choose hidden 'exam' forms for those purposes, using conversations with prospective students and their parents, games and quizzes as a form of screening, and personal connections also play a role in the process. Later, the six- and eight-year grammar schools continue to reinforce the differences between schools (HORN, 2010). Although at this point schools sort out students on the basis of prior academic performance, those students have the opportunity to achieve good performance in the first four to six years of schooling who received high quality education, and most of all those who come from favorable family backgrounds.

Another factor reinforcing segregation is self-selection of parents. Poor families usually do not realize the importance of choosing a school, do not have the necessary information to make the decision or the resources needed for commuting, that is, the free choice of school is not given to everyone. Less wealthy parents can be frightened away from choosing a better school for their child by the school's high prestige and thus expected higher costs of schooling, as well as by their own school failures (BERÉNYI – BERKOVITS – ERŐSS, 2008).

Private schools without mandatory school divisions and church-run elementary schools may find it easiest to "skim off" students with better family backgrounds (DOROS, 2010; L. RITÓK, 2012). Private schools which charge tuition preclude children of less well-off families from applying. In the case of church schools, parental self-selection seems to be the most essential factor, but additional costs usually occur here as well (RITÓK L., 2011).

Within the school, additional tools for segregation are regular and special classes, or the classification of students on the basis of the students' ability and/or socio-ethnic background. The integrated urban educational centers and small regional educational associations also offer opportunities for significant differences in student composition among parallel classes in the same grade (HAVAS, 2008). In small municipalities it is not uncommon that teachers compile "good" classes in accordance with the opinion of the parents whose interests matter.

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In particular, the disadvantaged and Roma school children, as a result of the unjustified claims concerning their special learning needs, are directed to schools with a special curriculum or to special education classes, and often receive a lower quality education than the average child (HAVAS, 2008)[8] . The advocacy of the majority parents' interests can play a role here, although it is a globally well-known problem that low socioeconomic status merges with special education problems (e.g. ARTILES, 2003/2006, MESTERHÁZI, 2007), intensified by diagnostic shortcomings of the national special education system (e.g. FEJES – SZENCZI, 2010; SZÜGYI, 2009).

An overview of the segregation factors demonstrates that some participants, taking advantage of their opportunities, only follow their own interests and a deliberate, malicious intent usually cannot be detected. In fact, in some cases, it is the "good will" that maintains education inequality.

Although sorting of students begins in elementary schools or even before starting school (BERÉNYI – BERKOVITS – ERŐSS, 2005; JÓZSA – HRICSOVINYI, 2011), at this age it is hardly possible to predict future performance on the basis of the current underdevelopment of skills, at least in theory. The development of skills does not follow a linear path but can be described by a logistic curve, that is, the pace of progress is not uniform but varies by the age group with the same learner as well. This means that in the development rankings of a particular ability, students can change their rank even several times, so at an early stage of development it is impossible to predict the ultimate level available (CSAPÓ, 2002). However, in most cases, no precise information is available, and skills are judged based on impression. Compared to their peers, disadvantaged children do not perform well in the "recruitment" situation because of unfavorable conditions, but some of the backlog could be later made up for when

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[8] We do not criticize the competence or attitudes of the experts in special schools or special education sections, we only show that as a result of the accumulation of disadvantaged pupils, the quality of education will necessarily be reduced in these schools and classes as well, due to the previously discussed reasons. In addition, the teaching of disadvantaged pupils is presumably more favorable in mainstream schools and classes, as long as their proportion is low in a learning community. (see GERŐ – CSANÁDI – LADÁNYI, 2006).

adequate circumstances are provided. Paradoxically, the sorting of students just prevents overcoming the disadvantages because it creates an inadequate environment. Thus, in practice, as a self-fulfilling prophecy, a school career will be predicted at the age of seven (Józsa – Csapó, 2010). However, it's not only the consequence of the differences in the initial level of skills, but can be traced back to different quality of educational services.

4.2.4.What is the status of segregation eradication in Hungary?

Numerous comments in the media suggest that in recent years rigorously forced, draconian school integration has taken place. In order to describe the perceived trend, the advocates of this position often use such phrases as forced integration, violent integration and enforced integration. Reading such opinions, we think that the elimination of segregation has started and we are moving toward the realization of inclusive education, although according to many we are not on the right track. In the following, we wish to deny the claim that significant progress has taken place in connection with integration, and we call your attention to the fact that one of the prerequisites for the success of the integration can be compulsion, that is, a consistent non-circumventable implementation.

Aronson (2008) places the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance in the context of desegregation in the United States, and demonstrates how prejudice can be extenuated when desegregation is coupled with a sense of inevitability. That is, when it is coerced, forced, violent. It is well known that deep-seated prejudices hardly change as a result of awareness campaigns. However, if a person knows that he/she inevitably has to come into contact with a member of a group that person does not like, then he/she will experience cognitive dissonance due to the discordant, dissonant nature of the situation and their own attitude. Cognitive dissonance is an unpleasant state of tension, which the individual seeks to reduce. One way to do it is to change the previous views. Unlike awareness campaigns, the inevitable

relationship triggers a mechanism that motivates individuals to change their views. They may start to revise stereotypes about particular groups and even look for their good qualities in order to reduce the tension that arises from the inconsistency between their attitude and the situation. Positive experience may further boost the process. The largely unconscious dissonance reduction is likely not only among students but also among parents and teachers, and not only in the case of the Roma minority but other groups affected by prejudices.

It appears that the need for the start-up of those mechanisms emerges not only from laboratory experiments, but the American desegregation research also supports this argument, since parallel with the eradication of school segregation of African-American and the majority pupils the ratio of those agreeing with the desegregation measures increased. However, the process was not peaceful every-where, riots broke out in some towns, in those places, where the management was not firm, and there was a chance that the measure could be avoided in some way (ARONSON, 2008). In other words, in places where it was not enforced enough. It does not require any special explanation to understand how the educational policy which tends to avoid conflict can influence the educational integration efforts.

Recently, progressive legislation has been drawn up and significant resources have been mobilized to mitigate segregation (ANDL ET AL, 2009; KELLER – MÁRTONFI, 2006; GYÖRGYI – KŐPATAKINÉ, 2011, SZIRA, 2005). As a result, the practice of placing Roma children in special schools and classes was partially suppressed (ERŐSS – KENDE, 2010), and a few students from these educational institutions were placed back into majority student groups (TORDA, 2008). Segregation in schools has also somewhat decreased since the conditions of access to certain grants require that the proportion of disadvantaged students should not differ significantly between parallel classes. Although several school-maintaining local governments have taken steps to fulfill the desegregation requirements, we have found just a couple of examples of situations where the maintaining institution presumably achieved a positive change through the transformation of the local school system (e.g. KERÜLŐ, 2011, ORSÓS, 2009, SZŰCS,

2013; Szűcs – Kelemen, 2013). In addition, in several desegregation-executing settlements there are visible signs of re-segregation, that is, moves towards the restoration of segregated education (e.g. Becker, 2012; Feischmidt – Vidra, 2011; Zolnay, 2010).

Certainly, it is these changes that those have in mind who talk about forced integration. At this point, it is important to emphasize that many of those steps do not fit into the concept of integration but of de-segregation, on the other hand, even then, significant progress is not visible. Moreover, the available data tend to suggest that, overall, in recent years, the segregation of disadvantaged and Roma children was further strengthened in Hungary (Havas – Zolnay, 2011, Kertesi – Kézdi, 2012, 2009, Papp, 2011, Varga, 2009).

Contributing to the misconception formation in the context of integration process is the fact that many teachers commonly do not differentiate between Roma pupils and pupils with special educational needs, and these categories are conflated (e.g. Berkovits, 2008; Bereczky – Fejes, 2013; Németh – Szilassy, 2006). As the proportion of pupils with special educational needs integrated in elementary schools exponentially increased in the last decade (Ministry of National Resources, 2010), overall, it is true that in the area of inclusive education we have witnessed significant changes. However, the picture is different in case of certain groups of pupils. Given the whole system of education, the segregation of disadvantaged and Roma school children certainly has not diminished. Thus, from the local Hungarian experience, it is hard to draw firm conclusions in terms of the success or failure of the integration of disadvantaged and Roma school children, mostly because we have not got closer to integrated education.

5. SYMPTOMS OF FAILURE AT SCHOOL

The school career of a significant group of disadvantaged students is a failure due to the factors listed above, that is, due to the disadvantaged family background and the dysfunctional operation of the school system. A lower than expected levels of knowledge and motivation can be mentioned as the most common symptoms, along with behavioral problems, which emerge among some groups of students, particularly from adolescence. The difficulties accompanying school work can be interpreted as symptoms of the reasons listed above, that is, when solving these problems it is worth taking a wider focus than usual. In addition to symptomatic treatment of gaps in students' knowledge, their lack of motivation and their behavioral problems, initiatives aimed at compensating for the disadvantage should take into account the factors mentioned above, the management of which will be illustrated with a number of practical examples collected in the next chapter.

In this section we discuss difficulties in catching up experienced by disadvantaged students in the context of education. First we focus on the domestic context and demonstrate how the lag that appears on entering school and results from unfavorable family and cultural background leads to serious learning problems of disadvantaged children in the context of current educational practice. Then, through the examples of reading comprehension we will examine in more detail the phenomena discussed.

5.1. A potential interpretation framework for learning problems

When entering school, students in the same age group may demonstrate, on average, over five year difference in cognitive skills which play an important role when starting school (NAGY, 2008). In particular, children of low-educated parents from disadvantaged family and home background are lagging behind (e.g. JÓZSA, 2004). Addressing this gap would require a very different period of time from the school for each student. For a portion of the students it will be sufficient to get the time lower grades are given to develop skills for further learning. At the same time, assistance in developing basic skills (e.g. reading, writing, basic arithmetic) stops at the end of first grade, while the development of skills for a significant number of students does not reach the level of optimum usability for independent learning. The progress slows down due to lack of targeted development, and for a considerable proportion of students no significant progress will be made in many areas in the future either (see NAGY, 2008). As a result of the underdeveloped basic skills, some of the students cannot experience success in learning, they increasingly fall behind due to the complexity of material, and their motivation simultaneously decreases. The process is likely to be strengthened when, on approaching adolescence, it will become less important to live up to the expectations of teachers, and the role of the peer group will become more and more dominant (JÓZSA, 2007). As we have seen, this may lead to a particularly problematic situation, to a subculture in a segregated community, which opposes school and learning.

Numerous domestic measurements show that the development of several key cognitive skills stops in a quarter or one third of students between the fourth and sixth grades (NAGY, 2008). It is no coincidence that in this period learning motivation begins to significantly decrease (JÓZSA – FEJES, 2012). However, school failures and decreased motivation to learn raise problems not only in terms of the cognitive development but also make classroom work difficult, since learning problems often lead to behavioral problems (e.g. FELLEGINÉ, 2004).

Learning difficulties become conspicuous mainly from the upper grades, when the school expects more independent learning from students, and increasing emphasis is put on lexical knowledge. But a significant proportion of students do not possess the knowledge necessary for learning at home, and thus cannot successfully meet the school's 'curriculum-based' expectations.

The most common responses to these problems include tutoring, which focuses on supplementing lexical knowledge, and grade retention. However, these solutions may not bring spectacular results, as they affect only indirectly students' learning skills and motivational problems. Thus, after repeating a year or after tutoring, which helped them acquire knowledge, in general, students are still neither able nor motivated to learn independently at home.

In order to catch up with the majority, it is central for disadvantaged students to develop tools necessary for self-study (e.g. reading, writing and learning strategies), and the process needs to be continued until the optimal acquisition occurs. It is of paramount importance not only for the acquisition of missing lexical knowledge, but it can also be effective to prevent loss of motivation and behavioral problems.

5.2. An example: reading comprehension

MOLNÁR – JÓZSA'S (2006) cross-sectional study provides an excellent overview of how to develop reading skills of students. The participants in their survey were students from the 3rd through 11th grades, nearly 600 participants from each year, who solved the same reading tasks, thus their performance is comparable (Figure 1). The participants in 9th through 11th grades who completed the tests were the pupils on the GCSE level, that is, high school and vocational high school students. The authors provide the development of reading skills in percentage points, which defines the test score as a percentage of the maximum achievable performance. 80 percentage points are defined as the level at which it can be assumed that students are able to learn from a textbook on their own.
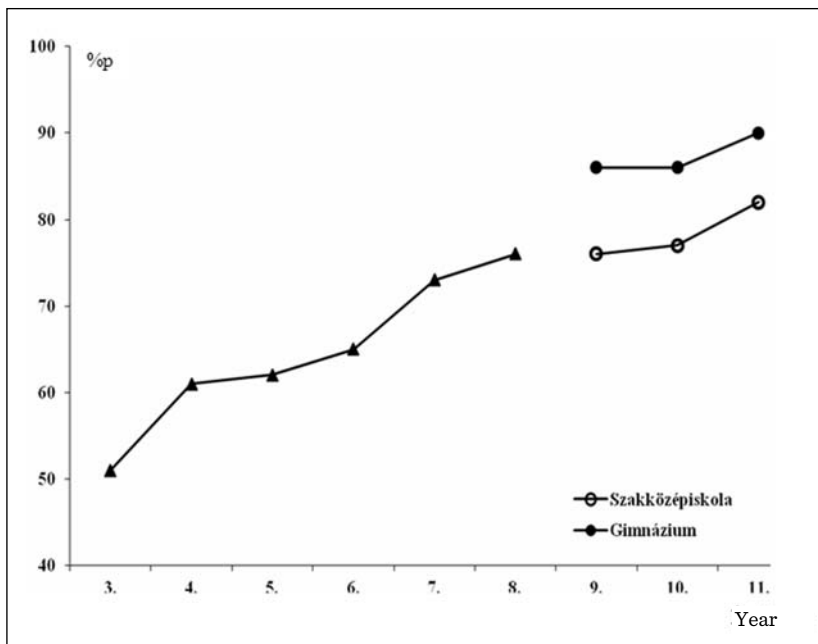
Figure 1.: The development of reading skills
Source: Molnár – Józsa, 2006. 162.

The averages may not illustrate well the importance of the problem, thus the proportion of those who performed under the criterion of 80 percent deserves to be examined. This limit is not reached by 82% of the fifth graders, 56% of seventh graders, 38% of the ninth graders, and 19% of the eleventh graders (Molnár – Józsa, 2006)[9]. After the lower grade, the progress stagnates in the 5th and 6th grades, since the direct training usually stops then. The figure shows also that the optimum usability of reading skills is a result of a nearly decade-long process.

Depending on the family and cultural background, some of the students can make significant progress spontaneously after the

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[9] It should be noted that since students attending vocational schools do not appear in the survey, the actual outcomes among secondary school students are much less favorable than in the described case

upper grades, but more than a third of students leave elementary school with functional illiteracy (NAGY, 2005). This makes it difficult or sometimes impossible to educate those students, at least in the current practice. Some of the students are unable to acquire lexical knowledge expected in most assessment situations at school, which leads to a series of frustrating failures and to abandoning the school and learning. For these students any activity that requires reading – that is, most of the learning-related activities – is a struggle, which makes it hard to maintain motivation for learning. Furthermore, as the education progresses, not only reading will be an obstacle, but also the lack of lexical knowledge that is a prerequisite to understanding a given topic. As time passes, the lag in particular subjects and topics grows bigger, while there is less and less chance to develop reading comprehension, one of the prerequisites of the catch-up process – considering that the process of development is slow and may take years.

In sum, proper reading comprehension is a key precondition for new knowledge acquisition and success in school as well as for the development of learning motivation, and indirectly can play a determining role in the development of behavioral problems. It becomes clear from the data that the development of reading skills cannot stop at upper grades of elementary school but should enjoy top priority even in high school. In addition to disadvantage compensation programs it would be important to focus more on the development of reading skills.

6. GOOD PRACTICES BASED ON INVOLVEMENT AND MENTORING OF PARENTS

Following the review of factors hindering educational success of pupils from unfavorable socio-cultural background we will present such initiatives which focus on overcoming barriers due to family disadvantages cited above. We have collected programs which place great emphasis on activating the parents and the local community, on improving the relationship between parents and institutions, and on the development of reading skills, which fundamentally determines educational success. Other key aspect in the process of program selection was the description of less-known disadvantage compensation enterprises in order to enrich the national literature on that topic. The selected programs are such initiatives whose many elements we consider as adaptable.

Some of these programs fulfill scientific standards of impact assessment, while other programs, although not supported by such test results, offer appropriate strategies to support school success, bearing in mind the previously presented problems and the initiatives mentioned earlier. While presenting each program description, we do not intend to describe impact assessments. Our summaries will focus on the initiatives' objectives, their main features and on the most important details of program operation.

We note that in our country the alleviation of school selection and segregation in terms of compensating for educational dis-advantages is at least as important as the treatment of family-based

disadvantages, however, progress in these issues can be made mainly through systemic interventions. The selected programs are smaller scale interventions, and may not provide substantial assistance in the treatment of the segregation problem.

6.1. Nurse-Family Partnership

The Nurse-Family Partnership program (hereinafter referred to as NFP) was launched in the United States to support poor, young, first time mothers. We summarize this disadvantage compensation initiative on the basis OLDS (2012). The main idea of the program is that children from poor families need support especially in infancy, but also before birth. Under the program, nurses visit and assist the mother during pregnancy and until the baby turns two years old.

The NFP program has set three main goals: 1. improve pregnancy outcomes by helping the mother improve her health condition; 2. improve the child's health and mental development after birth by helping parents provide responsible and competent care and 3. assist the mother in her career development, help her plan future pregnancies, continue her education and find work.

The operation of the NFP program was developed based on three theories. The first is BRONFENBRENNER'S (1979) model of human ecology, according to which the child's development is largely determined by how parents care about their child, which is determined by the family and the social network such as neighborhood and community. Thus, nurses in the program place great importance on other family members', especially fathers' involvement, and on linking the family to other family support services.

In order to understand how women make decisions affecting their health behavior during pregnancy, child care and their personality development, the program makers relied on BANDURA'S theory (1977) of self-efficacy. According to this theory, people choose behaviors which they consider to be leading to a particular outcome, and which they assume they can successfully carry out themselves. Thus, people's choices are influenced by how they judge their own efficiency, and are determined by how much energy they need to invest in achieving

their goals when faced with obstacles. Consequently, attention will be given to help women understand what influences their decisions regarding their own health and their children's health and development, and they will be assisted in making realistic and achievable social goals, which will enlarge the number of their successful experiences. These successes increase women's self-confidence when they are confronted with various challenges.

BOWLBY'S (1969) attachment theory is the third theory which has been used. According to the theory, children, by their very nature, are looking for their parents' (caregivers') proximity when they are ill or fatigued to promote their own survival. The mother's (caregiver's) responsiveness determines the amount of children's confidence in the world; it affects the development of their self-concept and their relationships with others, and determines their subsequent empathy and responsiveness to their future children.

To ensure that the NFP program should contribute to that mothers provide sensitive, responsive care for their children, nurses try to help mothers recall their own childhood experiences, and in this light, decide how they wish to care for their own children. In addition, nurses want to establish an empathetic, compassionate, trusting relationship between the mother and other family members, since such experience helps women trust others and build a more sensitive relationship with their children.

According to OLDS (2012), mothers were involved in the program usually in the second trimester of pregnancy, and during their pregnancy an average of 6-9 home visits were made; an average of 21 to 26 visits were completed till the child's second birthday. The frequency of visits changed as the pregnancy progressed and was adapted to the needs of parents, for example, nurses' visits were more frequent during a family crisis. The visits were conducted by nurses who had formal training in women's and children's health, and in many cases had appropriate competencies in the management of complex clinical situations with at-risk families. This means in practical terms that nurses are able to competently handle pregnancy complications, labor and delivery problems, and this way becoming credible and convincing for the family members.

During a visit nurses followed particular guidelines, which, on the one hand, addressed the challenges parents were likely to face during the different phases of pregnancy and during the first two years of the child's life, on the other hand, proposed specific actions for the management of these situations. During pregnancy, nurses helped women to plan a 24-hour diet, and recorded their weight gain at every visit. They evaluated women's smoking, alcohol and drug use habits, tried to help reduce their use and taught women to identify signs and symptoms of pregnancy complications. In addition, they encouraged women to inform the medical centre staff of the symptoms, and helped to implement treatments.

After the birth, nurses helped mother adequately satisfy the child's physical and emotional needs. Parents were taught to pay attention to signs of disease, to measure the child's temperature, and to inform health care institutions about their child's health. Nurses helped parents interpret the infant's communication signals, thereby contributing to the development of parent-child interactions.

The results of controlled trials involving different populations have demonstrated the effectiveness of the program over the last 30 years. (KITZMAN – OLDS – HENDERSON – HANKS – COLE – TATELBAUM – KENNETH – MCCONNOCHIE – SIDORA – LUCKEY – SHAVER – ENGELHARDT – JAMES – BARNARD 1997; OLDS – HENDERSON – TATELBAUM – CHAMBERLIN, 1986; OLDS – ROBINSON – NG – SHEFF – KORFMACHER – HIATT – TALMI, 2002).[10] According to the research, the women who were visited by nurses were familiar with more family support services available to them and the fathers concerned expressed interest towards the women's pregnancy on several occasions. The quality of maternal nutrition improved during pregnancy and women smokers decreased the amount of cigarettes smoked per day. The mothers involved in the program were arrested and convicted on fewer occasions and spent fewer days in jail. There was lower child abuse and child neglect

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[10] Several elements of the NFP program overlap with the home care nursing service. At this point we wish to observe that, based on the NFP program effectiveness study, the development of the home care nursing network as well as the resolution of current problems promise significant benefits in terms of disadvantaged students' educational failure prevention.

among the women participating in the NFP program and the mothers had fewer false ideas of parenting (e.g. lack of empathy, necessity of physical punishment, unrealistic expectations concerning their infants). The children of those women achieved higher scores in math and reading at 12 years of age, and produced better academic achievement in math and reading from the first to the sixth grade. These children less often smoked, drank alcohol or used drugs.

6.2. Chicago Child–Parent Center

The Chicago Child-Parent Center (hereinafter referred to as CPC) is one of the oldest state-funded pre-school programs in the United States, and we will present it relying on Reynolds – Ou's (2010) review. The program aims to promote children's school progress and to support parent involvement in children's lives. It provides comprehensive, child-centered services to children from ages 3 to 9 with special focus on communication skills, and mainly on the development of reading. The program consists of the following components: one or two-year half-day preschool program (for children from ages 3 to 4); one year half-or full-day kindergarten program (for 5 year old children); and three years of education program in the first three grades of school. The program also provides health screening and free or reduced-price meals for children. It ensures coordinated adult supervision and assistance to children and their parents, and organizes in-service teacher training. The program puts great emphasis on the development of reading skills through reduced class size, and assists the development of children through reading and writing activities in the learning centers.

The CPC centers are located in separate buildings close to the elementary school or attached to the school's wings. To be eligible for enrollment in the CPC program, children must live in the highest poverty school neighborhoods, cannot be enrolled in another similar preschool program, and parents must agree to participate in the program at least one half-day per week. The program operates on the regular school year calendar and in addition provides an eight-week summer program. Each district tailors its program to children's

needs through a unified CPC philosophy of literacy and the following three core activities: individualized instruction, small group activities, and field trips.

One of the greatest strengths of CPC is its emphasis on enhanced family involvement in its various programs. When children begin their participation in the program, parents are asked to visit their children for half a day at least once a week, so as to facilitate the child-parent interaction, children's attachment to school and shared parental support. Parents also have the opportunity to participate in vocational and other training programs in the CPC centers. In addition, parents can benefit from other services: at least once a week every family is visited by a contact person who assists families in gaining access to additional necessary support.

The CPC program was evaluated in The Chicago Longitudinal Study, using a controlled trial (TEMPLE – REYNOLDS, 2007). A larger proportion of children participating in the program achieved state-specific levels of school readiness and the reading performance at ages 14 to 15 exceeded that of the control group. Children at ages 6 to 15 who participated in the program had lower rates of grade retention and special education. In addition to better school achievement the participants in the CPC program had higher rates of family support of children and lower rates of inadequate treatment and juvenile delinquent behavior.

6.3. The Meséd Project

The Meséd Project operates in several countries, and in Hungary it started in six settlements in east Hungary[11] (KAVENAGH, 2009) as part of the Sure Start program (see HERCZOG, 2008; SZILVÁSI, 2011). The Sure Start Program, besides its main objective to secure increased access of disadvantaged Roma children to high quality early childhood services, aimed at developing child-rearing practices and reading skills of disadvantaged parents. The primary

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[11] The Meséd Project was carried out in Nyíregyháza, Hodász, Nagyecsed, Nagydobos, Kántorjánosi and Nyírkáta.

participants involved in the program were nearly 200 Roma and non-Roma young mothers in 13 Meséd groups, through whom the initiative reached more than 600 disadvantaged Roma children.

The majority of participating mothers early dropped out of school. For them, years spent at school were often linked with a sense of failure and inadequacy, and with the rejection of learning and learning. That negative association, as we discussed above, is easily transmissible, and school failures can also be repeated as a result. The program based on the use of illustrated children's books tries to break this circle, providing mothers with a positive experience related to books and reading, and encouraging the transfer of this attitude to their children.

The project consists of three phases: the first phase focuses on the development of mothers' reading skills, the second focuses on developing mothers' writing skills, next the focus is on specific subjects (mathematics, literature) so that, on the one hand, motivated mothers get support in resuming their studies, and on the other hand, they can help their children's development more efficiently.

As part of the first phase, mothers attended weekly activities held by a qualified facilitator, usually of Roma origin. At the beginning of each workshop they were presented with a storybook. The books were carefully selected, beautifully illustrated volumes, which usually contained messages related to children's feelings, behavior or life events. Mothers read stories aloud and discussed their meaning. During such activities participants became involved in the text, and with the facilitator's help modeled how to work on the stories with their children. The workshops functioned as an informal learning medium where mothers could regain their confidence about reading. Besides reading, the participants discussed their everyday problems and questions related to children's education, and this way, within the project, a network of mothers helping each other was also created.

The majority of participating mothers, on the basis of their experiences, emphasized that reading aloud was an increasingly pleasurable pastime for them, that their parenting skills developed and that their relationship with their children became closer. Many of them even considered continuing their own education. Nearly

two-thirds of mothers reported that they read to their children every day, one third did it every few days and there were only a few who read less frequently.

The benefits of the Meséd Project are exploited by other programs concerned with the same target group. As part of the Sure Start program and within the framework of a university course, andragogy and teacher training students at the College of Nyíregyháza regularly participated in sessions organized for young mothers. The involvement of students was designed to promote a better understanding and to build a bridge between teachers and Roma parents.

The project was also connected with an initiative called Home Preschool Community Liaison. In order to build a better relationship and cooperation between preschool teachers and parents the parents are given the opportunity to hold workshops for kids in a preschool, which may have considerable benefits in respect of parenting skills and knowledge.

6.4. The STAP Programs

On the initiative of the Dutch government, following the example of the Israeli HIPPY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters), in 1980 three STAP (meaning step) programs (INSTAPJE, OPSTAPJE, OPSTAP) were launched to overcome linguistic disadvantages of disadvantaged, primarily immigrant children, and to facilitate their social integration, which over the years was developed focusing on the child-parent interaction. We will review the essential features of the programs following KALTHOF (2010).

The INSTAPJE program aims to improve the quality of interaction between children aged 1–2 and their parents. Four dimensions of parental behavior are in focus: emotional support of the child, respect of the child's autonomy, designation of frames and borders, and provision of information as well as explanation of situations and tasks for children. Along these dimensions, the program consists of four modules, the modules last for several weeks and deal with dimension-specific themes. Professionals visit families on a weekly basis and show mothers a variety of tools and activities offered by the program, which can be used to develop children's potential.

The OPSTAPJE program is designed to help disadvantaged children aged 2–4 to enter the Dutch educational system[12] by facilitating their language development, their fine motor skills and their perception skills. The two-year program is divided into two parts, the first year focusing on playing and child development, the second year having in focus parent-child interaction. The program consists of family visits, group activities for mothers, and playhouse activities for children. During family visits, specialists provide tools and suggest play activities for mothers and children, as well as convey information and fill in model roles for mothers. During group sessions held every two weeks mothers receive support to participate and remain in the program. During meetings issues related to child raising are addressed, and information concerning services for mothers in the area is provided.

The OPSTAP program assists children aged 4–6 and their parents in preparation for school. Its main purpose is to promote children's language, cognitive, social and emotional development. Parents learn how to help their children carry out and solve various tasks. The program lasts for two years and consists of family visits and group sessions taking place every two weeks. In the family home a specialist shows the mother how she can deal with her child using provided resources (for example toys, books). During the group sessions experiences and encountered problems are discussed and different resources are presented.

So far two of the programs presented above have been nationally adapted in Éva Janikovszky Nursery School in Hódmezővásárhely (PATKÓSNÉ, 2008). The nursery school has been using the OPSTAPJE program for three year old children since September 2002. The parents who completed the program felt the need to continue the program so since 2007 the nursery has incorporated the OPSTAP syllabus[13]. Parents participate in the program voluntarily. The goal is that, via individual employment and involvement of parents, the program should help disadvantaged, primarily Roma children unfold their

[12] Children enter the Dutch education system at the age of 4.

[13] In 2010, within the SROP 332 project ˝Together, to make it better˝, the version of the Dutch program ˝Mom, play with me!˝ was developed, tailored to local conditions.

imagination, intelligence and abilities, develop their vocabulary, and in the long run prepare them for learning in school. The key feature of the program is that the development of children takes place playfully, with the involvement of parents at home, this way contributing to supporting family socialization.

The program takes place from September to May and is implemented in the form of workshops held on a weekly basis. The sessions, run by the nurse, last 30 minutes and mother and child are involved. During each session the teacher prepares the parents how to deal with their child at home. The teacher describes the current weekly tasks to be performed and provides necessary tools (e.g. rattle balls, baby tableware, wooden dice, books, puzzles, coloring sheets, memory games, colored pencils, crayons, glue, scissors, paint, colored paper, geometric plat shapes). Parents can take the devices home and use them together with their children for a week. The mother is expected to deal with her child at home, according to the given task for 20 minutes a day. During the sessions the teacher and the parent discuss their past experiences and the problems that may arise.

At the beginning of the school year mothers receive an illustrated annual syllabus, which includes descriptions of the most important words and activity options for particular topics. The syllabus helps parents in their home activities and sessions with their children. A kindergarten teacher prepares home tasks and activities according to the child's level of development.

In order to promote the programs there are kindergarten presentations organized twice a year, in which parents can learn about the programs' goals, structure, tools, and become familiar with participants' experiences. According to the observations of session-leading kindergarten teachers, parents' participation and session activity show significant differences, so the impact on children cannot be uniformly assessed. However, regardless of parents' activity, informal conversations have clearly contributed to the strengthening of the relationship between parents and the kindergarten teacher. Among the tools, it is the book, and among the activities it is drawing pictures that are most favorable among program participants.

6.5. The US Families and Schools together

The U.S. Families and Schools Together (hereinafter referred to as FAST) is a program developed in the United States of America (Carroll, 2005). It aims at preventing educational failure, juvenile delinquency and drug abuse among school children at risk, and to this end, it puts great emphasis on the involvement of families. Most essentially, the focus of the program is to organize the cooperation among the educational institutions, agencies and non-profit mental health organizations, as well as between school children and their families. The program is targeted at those children who are at risk according to their teachers. They and their parents are provided with a two-year program that strengthens family bonds. The program starts with an eight-week interactive period (FAST), followed by two years of monthly meetings organized by parents (FASTWORKS). The specific objectives of the FAST program are the following:

– strengthening the parent-child relationship so that parents become primary supporters for their children;
– preventing the child from school failure, and exercising positive influence on the child's behavior and achievement;
– improving the parent-school relationship;
– reducing stress by establishing group sessions for parents;
– preventing alcohol and drug abuse by children as well as parents.

During the eight-week program families meet on a weekly basis in the school building or in other community centers. Eight to eleven families participate in the program. The meetings take place in the evening, and all family members are present. The session structure is constant: it begins with an informal 15-minute parent-child play, which is followed by a family dinner (each family has a separate table) involving structured communication tasks, singing together, playing games, or parent discussions. Every session ends with a lottery, where the family winner will provide a dinner for the next meeting.

The selection of the families operates as a two-stage system First, the selection of children takes place. Those elementary school children aged 5–9 enter the program who are at risk for educational

failure, juvenile violence and alcohol or drug abuse. The teacher contacts appropriate authorities, who get in touch with the parents and inform them of the program opportunities. If the parent wishes to take part in the program, the FAST staff will visit the family together with one of the parents involved in the program. The program administration and evaluation is a result of teamwork, which includes opinions of the school, mental health services, and the experts working in alcohol and drug abuse prevention programs.

After participating in the eight-week program, the families are encouraged to continue their participation in the two-year program organized on a monthly basis. This phase (FASTWORKS, Families and Schools Together, Working, Organizing, Relaxing, Knowing and Sharing) consists of a series of family supporting meetings organized by the parents, which seek to maintain and extend the social networks formed in the FAST program. created to Encounters series, which. The FASTWORKS is based on the work the Parent Advisory Council (hereinafter referred to as PAC), which plans monthly programs and activities. The PAC members are appointed though elections. They plan the budget, develop the rules and are responsible for the operation of FASTWORKS.

6.6. Learning Community

The Learning Community (hereinafter referred to as LC) program will be presented based on a summary of DOOLY – VALLEJO (2007). It is part of a complex program (Barcelona's City Educational Project) functioning in Barcelona, Spain. The central element of the program is to develop a participatory educational model for the school community through reforming the social and cultural characteristics of the school and the environment. The main objectives of the LC program include the fight against social exclusion, conflict resolution between various social groups within the school, the prevention of school failure, and the promotion of academic success of children from Roma, Arab and other minorities or from disadvantaged families. An important guiding principle is to build partnership between school children, parents and teachers and to

coordinate their expectations. In the course of organizing the daily functioning of the school the program aims to involve the local community and to enhance the participation of civil organizations. They reject the traditional organization of learning, and introduce innovative teaching methodology in the classroom.

The introduction of the program is preceded by two phases. In the first phase, the potential participants in the program, primarily parents and teachers, participate in a 30 hour training course, where the phenomena of the information society are presented and discussed, particularly in the context of the knowledge expected of school children. The course also addresses methods eradicating social inequalities and supporting students' personal and academic success. The second phase is that of decision-making: the community members jointly decide whether they want to begin the transformation of the school. At this point, certain minimum requirements need to be met, for example, that 90% of the teaching staff should support the project, and the parents' association together with the school management should enable the planned innovations.

Following the positive decision, learning communities define goals and tasks for 2-3 years in advance. To achieve the set goals interactive groups are established, in which teachers share responsibility with others, usually with the children's parents, so that the motivation of families increases in connection with their children's education, while the teachers get help to deal more effectively with difficulties and conflicts that may arise in the classroom.

In order to involve parents and the local community the school is transformed into a center of education available for everyone. As a means of achieving joint learning and experience the IT rooms are open to families. In addition, opportunities for low-skilled adults, especially parents, are provided in the form of courses developing reading and writing skills. The community model of conflict management is used within the school, whereby the resolution of arising conflicts takes place with the involvement of families. In order to jointly identify the source of a problem, any parent can participate in the discussion under equal conditions, regardless of their origin or socio-cultural position. Thus, everybody can feel they

are members of the community, where the school does not instruct, but is a partner, or, participants in the program are working together for the same goals.

6.7. Home School Community Liaison Scheme

The Home, School, Community Liaison Scheme (hereinafter referred to as HSCL) was established in Ireland, as a governmentally funded government initiative, and we will be present it on the basis of CONATY'S (2006) work. The objectives of the HSCL program include 1. supporting marginalized students; 2. promoting co-operation between home, school, and community; 3. empowering parents; 4. retaining young people in the education system; 5. disseminating best educational practice. The basic principles of the scheme include the organization of integrated education and the support for the collaboration of parents, students and teachers. The latter goal is achieved when based on the work of HSCL coordinators. The coordinators are teachers who do not teach but, among other tasks, mediate between families, schools and the local community. Another important task is keeping contact with parents, which is achieved through regular home visits.

The activities organized for parents are determined by their needs and fall into four categories distinguished by the program:

1. Leisure activities which are designed to provide relaxation and experience, thereby achieving the marginalized parents' involvement.
2. Curricular activities which enable parents to come closer to their children's learning.
3. Social and parenting skills development training included in formal education.
4. Supporting activities, when parents become a resource for their own children, to coordinators, and to the community. Parents participate in classroom teaching of certain subjects, they provide advice to school leavers concerning job interviews and work relationships, help children with homework in afternoon "home-work clubs", and provide support to other members of the community.

6.7.1. Program elements supporting the development of reading

Another objective of the HSCL program is that it provides the parents involved in the program with skills enabling them to take an active role in their children's education and to create an atmosphere that supports learning at home. Activities focusing on the development of reading and reading comprehension provide an excellent opportunity for that. These programs include such activities which can be used to support students from kindergarten to the end of high school. In kindergartens, at the beginning of the school year parents receive a kit containing crayons, a coloring booklet, and a rhyme book for children. Parents are also trained how to effectively use these tools in order to develop their children and prepare them for school.

Parents, while visiting classes, can acquire the techniques of storytelling from the teachers. During "family reading sessions" they can listen to stories together with their children, and then participate in arts and crafts activities interpreting the story. During these events, parents may observe what methods and questions the teacher uses to help children to understand the history, and the opportunity arises to establish a link between parents and teachers in a safe and comfortable environment. The HSCL coordinators prepare parents for reading and learning methods used in schools, and show them what kind of exercises and games they can use to help their children at home.

At school, the parents can participate in classes where different reading techniques (shared reading, paired reading)[14] support the development of their children. The program encourages the use of school and local libraries. Coordinators organize visits in the institutions where librarians can help in choosing the right books.

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[14] The shared reading (shared reading) takes place when the child and a parent read together. In the first phase of the process, the child selects a book or a story, and then discusses with the parent why s/he chose it. Then they begin to read the text aloud together at a pace suitable to the child. As the child is getting more confident the adult retreats, letting the child to take the lead, and will take back control only if the child is stuck or you has trouble reading individual words. The paired reading method is similar, but the circle of helpers can be wider (e.g. grandparents, an older child, a peer helper).

Secondary schools are involved in write-a-book projects, where students write their own book on a topic of their choice, with the teacher's support. The HSCL coordinators encourage parents to monitor the process of writing and show interest in the nascent work of art, and then to jointly celebrate it when the book is completed. The high school also expects parents' support in the process of reading and analyzing required school readings. Parents are provided with a series of questions concerning the characters, major turning points and events, which may be the common basis for discussions at home.

Besides supporting children's reading, the coordinators also encourage parents to participate in a variety of writing-reading courses initiated for adults. One of such programs is the Family Learning Program, which familiarizes the parents with different reading techniques. The Read to Succeed program introduces parents into the paired learning methodology.

6.7.2. Program elements supporting parental involvement

The HSCL coordinators organize numerous trainings for parents, with the central aim of putting parents in the school environment in such a way that it becomes a safe, enjoyable and positive experience for them. This could help to overwrite bad past experiences about the school and learning. One of the results of the training is the development and strengthening of the relation between the parents, which enables sharing of each other's problems, solving them together, and supporting each other.

The training syllabus is preceded by a needs assessment in order to respond to the participants' needs. The most popular courses are: cooking courses, flower arranging, information technology, ceramics, macrame, decoupage, crafts study groups. The gained experiences encourage the parents to complete other courses (e.g. first aid, healthy eating, childcare programs). Training related to school subjects and to reading and writing provides parents with precise assistance on how they can effectively support their children in learning, and become open to the principle of continuous lifelong learning.

Under the HSCL program, in order to improve the teacher-parent cooperation and the parents' attitude to the school, special parents' rooms were created in the schools which can become locations for training, meetings and recreation programs.

6.8. School Completion Programme

The School Completion Programme (hereinafter referred to as SCP), an initiative of the Irish Department of Education and Science, is a program compensating for disadvantages, which will be reviewed on the basis of CAROLL'S (2005) work.

The objectives of the initiative are the following:

– to retain school children in the formal education system and to prevent early school leaving and dropping out of school;
– to improve the quality of participation and educational attainment;
– to bring together all local stakeholders (school, parents, local community, non-governmental organizations);
– to offer positive supports in elementary and post-elementary schools towards the prevention of educational disadvantage;
– to encourage mainstream education leavers to return to school;
– to positively support decision-making policies so as to prevent early school leaving in the education system.

There are four basic types of support under the SCP program: 1. in-school, 2. after- school, 3. out-of-school, and 4. during holiday time. Although the SCP works with the centralized database of students, there is no standard methodology, and the participants implement various activities in different regions and sub-programs. It is common introduce mentoring programs, transfer programs which facilitate transitions, and to organize learning and social integration activities.

In addition to student programs, the project aims to organize parental programs and family support, to ensure that parents are able to contribute to the educational success of their children, and assist in dropout prevention. Like in the HSCL-program, specialists

visit the families and keep in touch with the parents. The SCP staff works closely with other organs supporting families, such as the HSCL coordinators. The task of SCP staff is to investigate the family problems, determine their needs, and if necessary, mobilize the appropriate supports, mediate between the family and the school, and involve parents, children and young people in the various programs.

As the SCP subprograms, so the initiatives that support families are locally adapted, and vary by region. For example, in the Leinster region, the families who did not participate in the HSCL program are in touch with the professionals employed by SCP. They regularly visit the families, inform the parents of school happenings, and organize programs for the parents and pupils. In Dublin they organize weekly club meetings for mothers and their children, led by a family therapist and a social worker, where participants can discuss their everyday problems, questions regarding parenting and take part in common creative workshops.

6.9. Triple P (Positive Parenting Program)

The Triple P program was developed by the University of Queensland in Australia (SANDERS – MARKIE-DADDS – TURNER, 2003). The primary objective of the program is to prevent child abuse by raising parents' awareness and developing parenting skills, and to prevent and modify dysfunctional parenting practices which can cause behavioral and emotional problems in children. The program sets out five main objectives: 1. to provide a safe and welcoming environment for children; 2. to promote a positive learning environment; 3. to use assertive discipline; 4. to sustain realistic expectations towards children; 5. to raise adult parent self-awareness.

Within the Triple P system there are five program levels of different intensity and depth, which are offered to parents and organizations dealing with families. The target groups of different levels range from the whole society to an individual person. The program can be implemented by state institutions (such as kindergartens, schools, child protection organizations) and by professionals of non-governmental organizations alike, who learn the methodology in the course of the Triple P training.

The **first** intervention **level** (Universal Triple P) is the level of general information and prevention which through advertising campaign and with the help of the regional and national media (e.g. print media, television, electronic media) reaches a broad cross section of the population. The campaign aims to raise public awareness of child-rearing and of the importance of parenting tasks. In addition, great emphasis is placed on improving access to information for parents on a variety of parenting issues. There is a wide range of campaign elements: television series, talk shows, newspaper articles and radio interviews on child rearing, public service announcements on television and on the radio, and telephone information lines, all of which help to inform the society. This strategy primarily aims to destigmatize parental problems encountered in rearing children and encourages parents, if necessary, to seek help and advice about their child's behavioral problems.

The **second level** supplements the information campaign with the support of primary care services which remain in regular contact with families and experts from community agencies. Within this level, there are three ways to offer support. In the course of individual support (Selected Triple P) professionals responsible for primary care engage in conversations with parents about children's development and behavior problems, and inform parents how to solve certain child-rearing problems. As auxiliary materials topic-related videos and take-home tip sheets are used. Every sheet works up one problem related to child rearing according to the following issues: why the problem can develop, how it can be prevented and managed, and where to turn for assistance. The other form of support (Triple P Seminar Series) is a series of seminars for a wider audience, consisting of three 90-minute lectures. Presentations work up the following topics: power of positive parenting; raising confident and competent children; and raising resilient children. The lecture consists of a presentation and a question-and-answer part. The third element of this level (Selected Teen Triple P) is the seminar series version concerned with teenagers.

The **third level** (Primary Care Triple P) consists of four 15–30 minute advisory meetings aimed at problem prevention

and treatment. During these meetings parents receive practical advice on how to manage problem behavior, using advisory booklets and videos. Through the so-called behavioral rehearsals (modeling, coaching, constructive feedback and goal setting) the parents acquire specific skills, parenting strategies and behavior routines. During the first meeting the exploration of the nature and history of the problem, setting necessary goals for change, and assessment and monitoring of the problem's prevalence take place. During the second meeting the examination results are talked over, the nature and possible causes of the problem are discussed and the coordination of parenting plans. During the meeting, experts and parents discuss the obstacles hindering the implementation of the plan, and create a coping plan to overcome these barriers. At the third meeting, the family's progress and contingent difficulties in the implementation of the plan are discussed. If necessary, the demonstration of new strategies and intensive practice of new skills may occur. The purpose of this meeting is to refine the routine implementation of the agreed plan, and to encourage parents in their efforts. The fourth meeting includes an assessment of the process, the discussion of how to troubleshoot possible problems encountered by parents; in addition, professionals motivate parents with the help of positive feedback and encouragement, and then the relationship is resolved.

The **fourth level** of intervention, just as the third one, combines the provision of information with active skills training and support. There are several delivery formats available at this level. The first (Standard Triple P) is a module of ten sessions, 60 minutes each, which deals with causes of children's behavior problems, with strategies for encouraging children's development and strategies for managing misbehavior. The second module (Group Triple P) consists of eight sessions, and does not deal with problems individually, but works them up and tries to offer help in groups of 10–12 parents. The program consists of four 2-hour group sessions which provide opportunities for parents to acquire new knowledge and learn new skills through observation, discussion, practice and feedback. Following the group sessions, three 15–30 minute follow-up telephone consultations provide additional support to parents. The third module (Self-Directed

Triple P) is a ten-week self-help program that is based on a self-help workbook. Each session consists of discussing set readings and homework tasks and of sharing the related experiences. The self-help module can be supplemented on demand with weekly telephone supervision.

After the participation in the four-level intervention program, those parents who need additional help or wish to pursue the program are offered individually tailored assistance on the fifth level (Enhanced Triple P). In addition to the prevention focus, this level extends the focus of intervention to include mood management and stress coping skills, as well as marital communication skills. During the first session the parents' progress is evaluated and further goals are set. Next, the participants choose one among three items (practice, coping techniques, partner support), offered individually or in combination, whichever is the most appropriate according to the goals.

The **fifth level** further narrows down the circle of parents involved. The Module (Standard Stepping Stones Triple P) consists of ten sessions for parents of children with intellectual and physical disabilities, where parents acquire various management strategies to cope with children's developmental problems and disruptive behavior. A four-session module (Pathways Triple P) targets parents at risk of child maltreatment. This adjunctive module is used in combination with other level modules. In this module the parents can master techniques that help in managing their own and their children's emotions and behavior.

The effectiveness of the Triple P program, among others (see NOWAK – HEINRICHS, 2008) is confirmed by the study carried out in eighteen (nine studies, nine controls) counties (PRINZ – SANDERS – SHAPIRO – WHITAKER – LUTZKER, 2009). This research evaluates a two-year intervention period, during which three indicators were considered: 1. the number of child abuse cases recorded by child protection organizations, 2. placing children outside the family, 3. hospitalization of children and emergency cases. Regarding the population of the participating counties and the participating control counties, preceding the survey period there was no significant difference in the population size, in the number of people living in

poverty, in the size of the African American population, and in the rates of child abuse (child abuse cases, placing children outside the family, recorded injuries). The numbers of participating families were 8 883 and 13 560, in which at least one child aged 0–8 was raised. 71–75 percent of the parents attended the second and third levels of Triple P program. The results indicate that regarding all three indicators the child abuse rate was significantly lower after the intervention period.

7. A POSSIBLE METHODOLOGY OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

The steps of possible involvement of families in the educational programs compensating for disadvantages will be summarized on the basis of the methodology guidebook developed with the participation of practitioners and professionals from a number of countries.[15] The guide sets seven stages of join work with Roma families: 1. situation assessment and program awareness, 2. attracting families and partners interested in the program and recruitment process, 3. developing bonding, 4. the initial survey 5. preparing a family work plan and creating an alliance, 6. implementing the actions set out in the family work plan 7. monitoring and evaluation of the intervention.

7.1. Situation assessment and program awareness

Prior to the contact with the family it is necessary to gain information, assess the family situation, get acquainted with the social environment and with the operation of the educational, public and private institutions,

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[15] The methodological guide was written as a result of the project "The involvement of Roma families. International Methodological Guide: Working with Roma families to ensure their children's successful performance in school" supported by the EU Lifelong Learning Programme of The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency.

which all have an impact on family life. Simultaneously, it is necessary to raise the awareness of the families and the community about the program and inform them about the planned intervention. The most appropriate method of informing the target group needs to be found and it is necessary to find the local key participants who can help the experts develop and implement the program. The guide suggests three stages of information collection: the information on the immediate environment; the information in the wider environment, that is, on the social situation in the area of intervention; and the information on the public and civil resources. The guide recommends the following methods and techniques for data collection: 1. secondary sources: taking account of the existing assessments and analyses; 2. collecting information directly from the community through personal interviews (families, community leaders, professionals); 3. direct observation; 4. focus group discussions (needs assessment), and 5. additional interviews and questionnaires with randomly selected members of the community (involving experts). The document can assist the preparatory stage providing detailed guidelines broken down by topics.

Relevant information concerning the families:

– identifying families who can be beneficiaries of the planned program
– spoken language;
– living conditions;
– labor market conditions;
– health conditions;
– the educational attainment of the family, attitudes to school;
– the social capital of the Roma community (e.g. cultural patterns, values, beliefs, skills and abilities);
– the community's expectations and needs.

Relevant information concerning the social context:

– degree of exclusion and marginalization, the level of isolation and violence in the given environment;
– integration and social inclusion/exclusion problems on the site of intervention;

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– the issue of social integration, family self-identification in the environment in which they live, the issues of affiliation, acceptance and rejection;
– family participation in community dynamics, involvement in social and cultural services, participation in community events.

Relevant information concerning public and private community resources:
– in order to avoid duplication, different interventions that were conducted in the target area, are continued;
– various services (health, social, employment, socio-cultural, entertainment);
– families' access to, and use of the services;
– school's attitude towards the Roma community, its characteristics, openness, professionals' profiles;
– attitudes of organizations active in the area to the intervention goals, identification of key persons in the organizations, information about who will participate in the program activities;
– organizing workgroup meetings with other institutions, organs and services in the area, in order to develop networks, share information, assign responsibilities, and involve interested groups;
– defining education policies, their implementation on national and regional level.

7.2. Attracting families and partners and the recruitment process

The aim of the second phase is to develop a personal relationship and bonding with selected families, as well as to raise awareness about the program among the participants: educational institutions, Roma families, the students and other persons and organizations performing social tasks. In order to achieve this it may be useful to identify and involve key persons who fill key positions in the community. It is important to clarify the degree of their engagement in programs. The guide recommends the following steps:

– establishing contact with the families (the availability of families belonging to the target group can be obtained through various institutions and bodies);
– identifying appropriate cases, families and students which meet the program criteria and are susceptible to participating in the program;
– group interventions in order to build trust and attachment, which helps and motivates the family.

7.3. Developing bonding

The main task of the expert is to create a direct, trust-based contact with the families. S/he has to listen to their problems, their needs and expectations. The expert should help parents to understand that ensuring school attendance of their children is parental obligation. Further, the expert's responsibility is prepare educational institutions, especially teachers, guidance counselors and social workers to receive Roma families and children, encourage the organization of such programs and events which promote Roma families' involvement (e.g. introductory lectures, open programs); support the communication between institutions and families. The proposed activities and methods are as follows: meetings, interviews, assistance and counseling, parenting groups and organizations, training programs organized for parents.

7.4. Initial survey

The purpose of this phase is to make a detailed survey of the family and children in order to prepare a specific intervention plan. The survey should explore family characteristics, the difficulties which they face, their needs and expectations. Besides, it is important to get to know the possibilities and to assess the family's resources and strengths. The guide considers interviews recorded during home visits as the most appropriate form of data collection. Proposed survey areas:

– family structure and organization,

– family parenting style,

– family attitudes and relationship with educational system institutions,

– community relations.

7.5. Preparing a family work plan and creating alliance

The fifth step is preparing a family work plan (hereinafter referred to as CSMT) together with family, in line with the previously identified needs, in which various stakeholders (family, school, professionals, and students) also participate. The CSMT should be a fixed schedule, which includes the time-frame and the analysis of planned actions, so it may include occasional amendments as well. The plan is a dynamic tool that can be reviewed and adapted it required. The main objective of CSMT is to prevent school dropout, to promote children's educational success and to support families in these processes. The CSMT strategic principle is to increase family's competence, abilities and expectations, so that it can support their children's education.

The guide covers the most frequently performed steps on the level of individuals, groups, educational institutions and community. Here belongs, for example, individual or group tutoring, workshops motivating and stimulating learning, school interviews, counseling, home visits, conflict resolution between the school and the family, meetings with various participants, organization of recreational activities.

7.6. Implementation of the measures set out in the family work plan

The goal of the sixth stage is the implementation of created work plans, their follow-up and modifications, which implies tracking the student's school integration to ascertain that the student actively

participates in school life and programs of other social and educational institutions. The two key measures of this phase are the CSMT implementation and the evaluation of the objectives (every evaluation of the objectives means setting new ones, if necessary).

7.7. Intervention tracking and evaluation

Regular qualitative and quantitative data collection takes place in order to determine the outcome of the intervention implementation, the extent to which the objectives were achieved, and the effectiveness of the program. The assessment can be internal or external. The internal evaluation is performed by the program design and implementation team, and its elements are incorporated into the plan in the process of designing. The internal assessment should be understood as a process that helps implementers receive continuous feedback on activities, thereby enabling effective response to the issues and problems that arise. In addition, the involvement of external evaluator is recommended. The methodological material identifies three evaluation criteria: efficiency (whether the desired effect has been achieved), coverage (reaching the target group), and execution (whether the implementation of the proposed action was appropriate).

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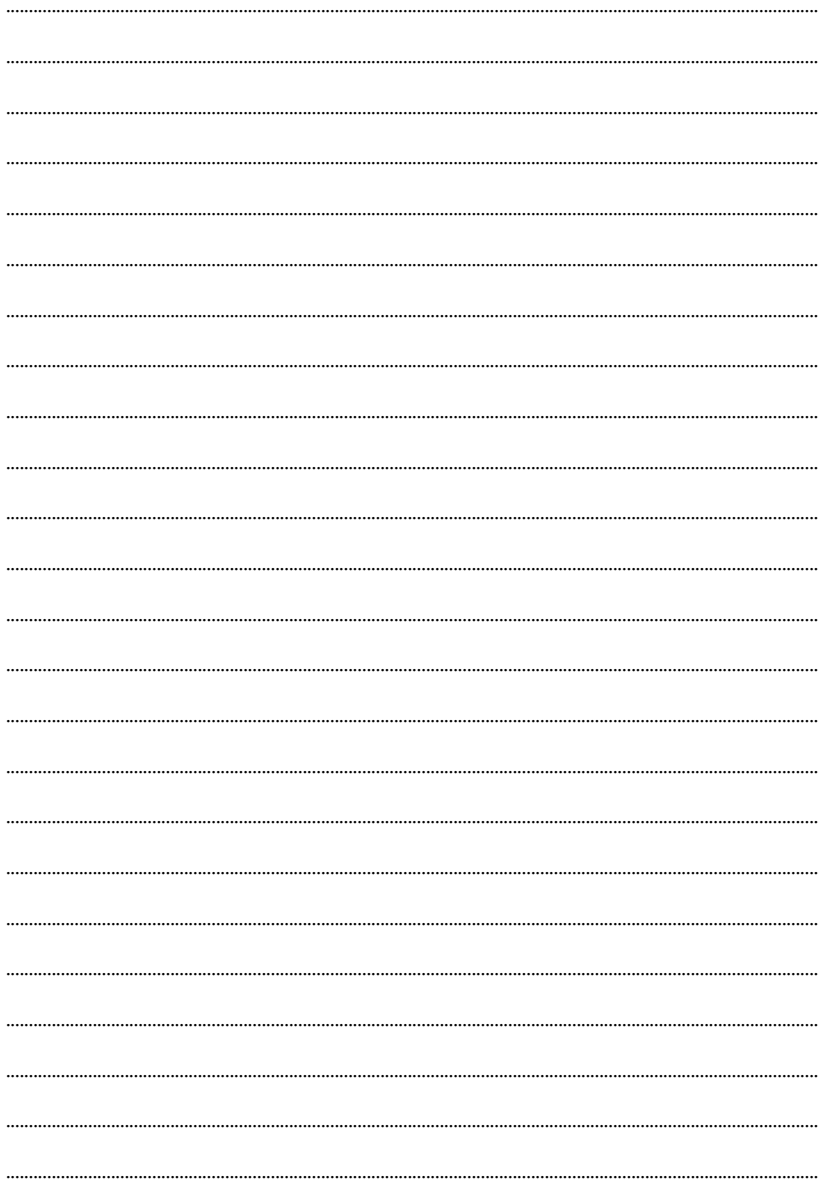
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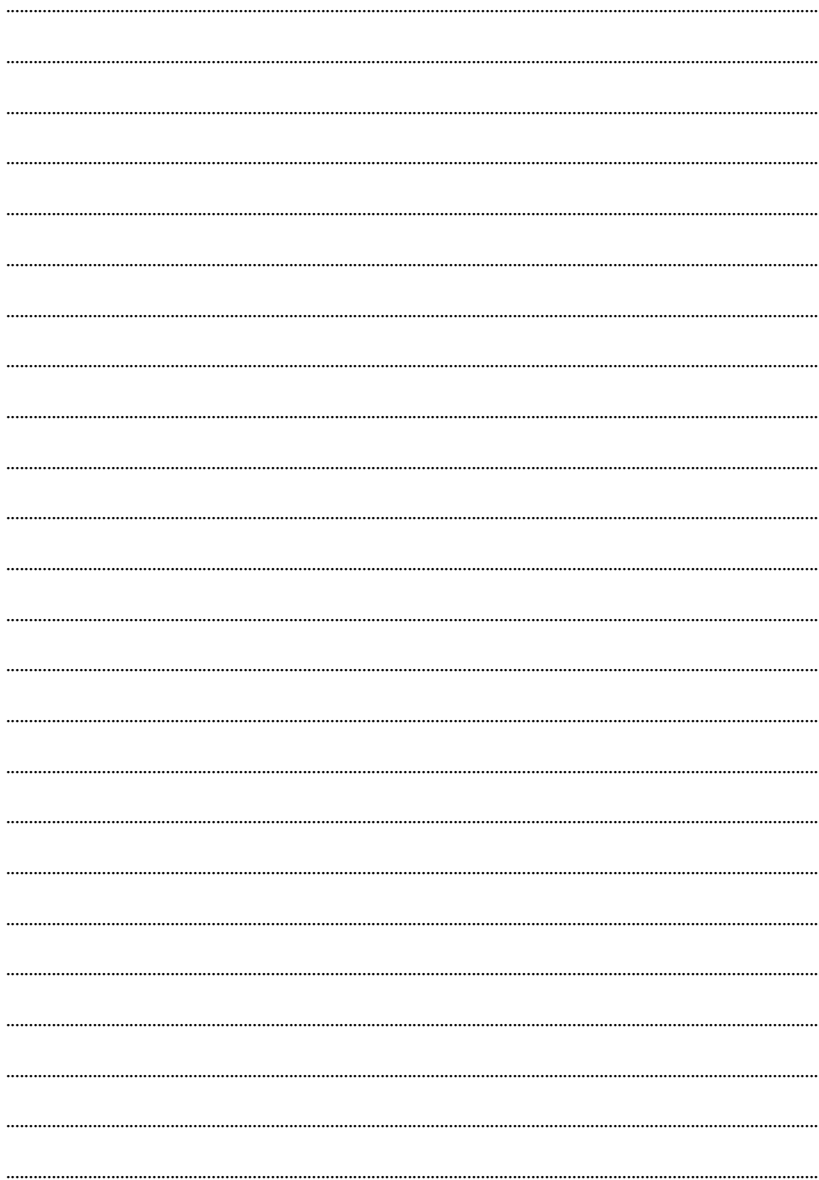
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