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COLLABORATION BETWEEN SOCIAL WORKERS AND SOCIAL PEDAGOGUES IN PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO CHILDREN FROM FAMILIES AT SOCIAL RISK

DONATAS LENGVINAS, ILONA KLANIENĖ, LIUDMILA KAROLIENĖ

Abstract. *The article reveals the situation of collaboration between a social worker and a social pedagogue in providing assistance to children from families at social risk. It presents the results of the research that reveal the situation of collaboration between social workers and social pedagogues, as well as the factors motivating collaboration and the obstacles to collaboration. Based on the results of the research, the main goal of collaboration among support specialists is to provide better quality support to the child and the family. The main obstacles to collaboration are related to the organization and bureaucracy of collaboration, lack of time, and the motivation to cooperate among the specialists themselves. The motivation for collaboration is strengthened by the desire to provide better quality assistance to the child and the family, as well as the opportunities to improve the personal and professional competencies of specialists.*

Key words: *social risk family, children, social workers who work with families, social workers (case managers) coordinating the process or assistance to children and family, social pedagogues, collaboration, social pedagogical assistance*

Introduction. Lithuania is currently undergoing an intensive reform of the child rights protection system. A new Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child was adopted in Lithuania in 2017 (Law of the Republic of Lithuania of 28 September 2017, No. XIII-643 Amending the Law on the Fundamentals for the

Protection of the Rights of the Child No. I-1234). This law establishes the provision that in order to achieve the welfare of the child it is necessary to ensure interdisciplinary collaboration in the provision of comprehensive assistance to families at social risk. The laws that regulate assistance to children and families provide that after assessing the needs of the child and the family, educational assistance, social and health care services shall be provided (Order of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, and Ministry of Health of The Republic of Lithuania “On the Approval of the Description of Procedures for Coordinated Provision of Educational Assistance, Social and Health Care Services”, 28/08/2017 No. V-651 / A1-455 / V-1004). Thus, this law enables specialists, first of all, social workers and professionals responsible for the child's well-being, to provide quality assistance to the child and the family (Eidukavičiūtė, 2017, 134).

Most scholars (Buzaitytė-Kašalynienė, Liaudginaitė-Zamalienė; 2012, Ezechil, 2013; Klanienė et al. 2014) note that the factors prevailing in social risk families most often determine child's learning, communication and behavioural problems at school (Leliūgienė et al., 2008; Wood et al., 2017). A social worker alone is not able to ensure child's well-being; it is necessary to combine comprehensive assistance and close collaboration with the school, i.e. with the social pedagogue whose responsibility is to provide assistance to children and their parents/guardians (Loveless, 2019; Wood et al., 2017).

The work of social workers has interdisciplinary character as the objects of social pedagogy and social work theory belong to different fields of social sciences, but in practice the activities carried out by these specialists overlap, although they also have features that are specific only to those activities. When providing assistance, the social worker gives priority to social support and socialization in the community, meanwhile the social pedagogue emphasizes the quality of education and provides pedagogical assistance to the child in the school environment. Through cooperation with the entire school community, the social pedagogue can identify the child's need for assistance and define opportunities, while the social worker is the first to identify the family's social risk factors and can manage them professionally.

Therefore, these professionals should give priority to interdisciplinary collaboration, which researchers (Bronstein, 2003, 299–300) treat as an interpersonal interaction, the process through which professionals of different fields achieve the goals set or develop new activities. So, it can be assumed that collaboration of child care professionals is an essential condition for creating a supportive environment for children and their families (Targamadzė, Kaušylienė, 2000; Kelly, 2019). In this way, through the joint efforts of the social pedagogue and the social worker, it is possible to more effectively address the problems of families at risk and to provide quality assistance to the child.

Research of the topic. The quality of assistance to families at social risk and their children has been analysed by a number of both, Lithuanian and foreign researchers (Klanienė et al., 2014; Eidukavičiūtė, 2017; Thapa et al., 2017; Burvytė, 2018). The functions of social workers and social pedagogues and content of their work are analysed by I. Leliūgienė (2008), G. Kvieskienė (2007), J. Buzaitytė-Kašalynienė, E. Liaudginaitė-Zamalienė (2012), A. Mažionienė (2014). Foreign researchers also study the work of social pedagogues and social workers: Wood et al. (2017), B. Loveless (2019). The activities of a social pedagogue were studied by L. Ezechil (2013), D. Zaviršek (2015). G. Kvieskienė (2007), A. Ališauskas and et al. (2011) studied the peculiarities of collaboration between social sector specialists. So far, the opportunities for collaboration between a social worker and a social pedagogue have been studied and sought in Lithuania only a little, therefore the article analyses the situation of collaboration between the social worker and the social pedagogue in providing assistance to children from families at social risk. The following main questions are raised: how does collaboration between social workers and social pedagogues happen in practice? What are the goals that social workers and social pedagogues set in interdisciplinary collaboration? What areas of activity are the most important? What are the factors that motivate social workers and social pedagogues to collaborate? What are the main obstacles to collaboration?

The article aims to reveal the situation of collaboration between a social worker and a social pedagogue in providing assistance to children from families at social risk.

Objectives: 1) to theoretically substantiate the features of collaboration between a social worker and a social pedagogue. 2) to reveal the goals, areas, problems and results of collaboration between a social pedagogue and a social worker. 3) to evaluate the factors encouraging and inhibiting co-operation between a social worker and a social pedagogue in providing assistance to children from families at social risk.

Research methods: Analysis of scientific literature, written survey questionnaire, statistical data analysis. All collected data were processed by statistical analysis program SPSS 22.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The following data processing methods were applied in the research: descriptive statistics of data and statistical analysis methods (Kruskal-Wallis criterion is used to compare the responses of three groups of respondents as the dependent variable is rank-based; Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to determine statistical relationships between variables).

Theoretical preconditions of collaboration between social workers and social pedagogues

Every family can experience crisis situations caused by social risk factors (abuse of psychoactive substances, violence, long-term unemployment, lack of social skills, etc.). The family experiencing social risks is identified as a family affected by social risk factors (Case Management Description of Procedures, 2018). Most researchers unequivocally state that social risk factors in the family negatively affect child's well-being, emotional stability, and behaviour at school. The researches by scholars J.D. Phillips (2015), S. Burvytė (2018), B. Loveless (2019) show that children living in families with various social risks are more likely than other children to have low self-esteem, lack social skills, experience fear of the future, and so on (Thapa et al., 2017). So, the children because of the unfavourable social environment not only do not satisfy their essential needs, but also experience behavioural and emotional difficulties that determine unsuccessful social functioning (Boles, et al., 2019, Klanienė, Rupšienė, et al., 2014).

Researchers unequivocally agree that help to the child must be an integral part of family support (Kvieskienė, 2007; Thapa et al., 2017). This provision is also established in national documents regulating social pedagogical assistance to children and families (Law of the Republic of Lithuania of 28 September 2017, No. XIII-643 Amending the Law on the Fundamentals for the Protection of the Rights of the Child No. I-1234; Law on Protection against Domestic Violence of 26 May 2011, No. XI-1425; Order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania "On the Approval of the Description of Procedures of Case Management" of 29 March 2018, No. A1-141; Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania "On Approval of the Description of the Procedures for Providing Social Pedagogical Assistance to Children and Pupils" of 2 November 2011, No. V-950, etc.). Today, there are a number of laws protecting children in Lithuania, but the efforts of one professional are not enough to implement them, therefore collaboration between social workers and social pedagogues in providing health, social and educational services is especially important.

With reference to the official documents endorsed by the state (Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania, 19 January 2006, No. X-493; Order of the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania "On Approval of the Description of Procedures of Case Management" of 29 March 2018, No. A1-141), family assistance is primarily provided by a social worker dealing with families at social risk. Social workers assess the needs for family support, evaluate the changes, develop the assistance plan, etc. The social worker, together with the Child Rights Protection Division, is involved in the decisions on the continuity of assistance or other measures. With reference to the above-mentioned

description “On Approval of the Description of Procedures of Case Management”, a new specialization of social workers (case managers) emerges – case management. The main work of the social worker (case manager) is coordination of the assistance process, which helps to ensure the involvement of different institutions into the assistance process and collaboration.

The social pedagogue at school provides assistance to the child in collaboration with parents (guardians), class teachers, other support specialists, the school community and specialists from other institutions (Order of the Ministry Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania “Regarding the Approval of the Model Job Description of the Social Pedagogue at School” of 2 November 2016, No. V-951).

Thus, the analysis of the social worker’s and a social pedagogue’s work revealed that the goals of these support specialists are the same – to help the family and the child to achieve social well-being, to ensure safe environment for children in the families and educational institutions. This means that the social worker, in collaboration with the social pedagogue, can better identify social risk factors in the family, carry out early intervention, and manage social risk factors in the family. The social pedagogue’s assistance to the child is more effective when information is exchanged with social workers, when they participate in making decisions related to the needs of the child and family and the help provided. The collaboration of these two specialists representing different institutions helps to manage the child’s socialization and education process more effectively (Kvieskienė, 2007; Wood et al., 2017, Thapa et al., 2017). Thus, both of these child welfare professionals, working in different educational and social systems, have every opportunity to work effectively as a team to achieve the common goal of providing assistance to children and their families in ensuring the protection of children’s rights.

The analysis of collaboration between social workers and social pedagogues refers to the theory of social systems, because the basic premise of this theory is that the solution of social problems is inseparable from the development of personal relations between different systems and personal involvement in various support systems (Vaicekauskienė, 2009, 184 - 186). Only through collaboration between different systems and professionals can change be expected and social functioning of the family can be improved. The social worker, through case management, expands the opportunities for individual’s access to separate functional systems to best meet the needs of the child and family (Thapa et al., 2017; Loveless, 2019). The social pedagogue takes care of the child’s engagement in school life, also creating conditions for child’s positive socialization outside the school, too.

Collaboration between social workers and social pedagogues is based on the theory of collaboration, which defines collaboration as a form of social interaction based on successful communication and agreements (Vaicekauskienė, 2003, 58–59). Only interdisciplinary collaboration among professionals can help

to provide the necessary assistance to the children from families at social risk, therefore motivation of collaboration determines the level of achievement of goals and results (Phillips, 2015; Rumping, Boendermaker, Ruyter, 2019). “Interdisciplinarity is a category of innovation process characterized by the interaction of different disciplines and professions (professional knowledge and specialized competencies); the result of this interaction is new services, and in science – new disciplines” (Petrauskienė, 2011, 43).

Thus, the concept of collaboration is based on the teamwork of professionals from different fields that is inspired by mutual initiatives and joint agreements on the goals and desired results. When social workers collaborate with social pedagogues, it is important to establish both professional and social relationships, which J.S.Coleman (2005) treats as the resource of teamwork, as the social capital that consists of the competencies, pursuit of goals, experience and other attributes of both professionals. As noted by S.Katz, L.M.Earl, S.B.Jaafar (2011), J.S. Coleman (2005), building social capital through collaboration rather than individually helps achieve more effective results, while exchange of mutual knowledge and pursuit of problem-solving at the same time also help professionals to improve their competencies. Communication among social welfare professionals develops the features of collaboration only when these professionals understand the joint goals and the roles, when they share responsibilities and success, and experience the benefits of interaction (Chreptavičienė, Tautkevičienė, 2010).

Different authors present a different structure of collaboration, prioritizing one or another component. After summarizing Lithuanian and foreign scientific researches (Bronstein, 2003; Katz, Earl, Jaafar, 2011; Večkienė, A. Budėjienė et al, 2012; Rumping, Boendermaker, Ruyter, 2019) the following essential elements of collaboration have been identified: positive approach and motivation of specialists, regular communication among the team members, dialogue partnership, exchange of information and experience, joint agreement on goals, areas of activity, pursuit of results, coordination, and satisfaction with joint activities. Other scholars (Vaičekauskienė, 2003; Johnson 2001; Petrauskienė, 2011, Phillips, 2015) state that the following components are important in collaboration of social workers with the representatives of other professions: coordination of joint actions, agreements on the goals, areas and the desired results, reflection on the collaboration process, sharing of responsibilities, development of collaboration system, building of social assistance relationships, and personality traits. After summarizing the insights of interdisciplinary collaboration by various authors, the following essential components of collaboration between social workers and social pedagogues have been identified (see fig. 1).

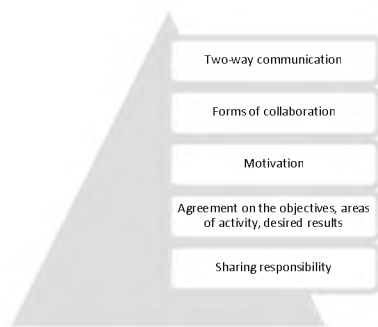


Fig. 1.

Components of collaboration between social workers and social pedagogues (compiled by the authors of the article)

Thus, the success of collaboration lies in the motivation of the participants, the purpose of the agreements and values, areas of activities, and the results. The attempts to ignore these agreements, to act individually, as well as the lack of knowledge about the areas of work carried out by different professionals, failure to understand the importance of collaboration and communication problems create obstacles to collaboration (Večkienė, Budėjienė et al., 2012; Targamadžė, Kaušylienė, 2000; Brake, Kelly, 2019).

In summary, both of these child welfare professionals, working in different educational and social systems, have every opportunity to work effectively as a team in order to achieve the common goal – provide assistance to children and ensure the protection of the rights of the child for their families.

Research methodology. There was an empirical study with participation of social workers and social pedagogues conducted in 2019. The research instrument was developed based on the essential statements of social systems, social capital, and the collaboration theory (Vaicekauskienė, 2009, Coleman, 2005, Katz, Earl, Jaafar, 2011, Petrauskienė, 2011, Rumping, Boendermaker, Ruyter, 2019). According to the provisions of this theory, essential components of collaboration between social workers and social pedagogues have been identified. Collaboration is a very broad concept and there are many of its components, so, it is not possible to review all of them in the article. Therefore, it was decided to refer only to the basic components, as the study of their content could benefit the further design and development of the collaboration system. The research instrument is constructed based on the analysis of scientific literature and documents (Creswell, 2009). The following research criteria and indicators have been set: *collaboration goals* (focused on the assistance to the child and the family, on the improvement of coordination of inter-institutional collaboration, on sharing responsibilities, etc.); *priority areas of collaboration* (work with the family, assistance to children in solving problems at school, assistance to children

with special educational needs and their families, protection of the rights of the child, organisation of joint projects, trainings, etc.); *forms of collaboration* (direct, indirect, etc.); *results of collaboration* (involvement of the family in the assistance process, complex problem solving, improvement of the quality of the child's education, solution of the problems faced by the children); *factors promoting collaboration* (child's achievements, better quality of provided services, teamwork, sharing of responsibilities, development of competencies, etc.); *factors inhibiting collaboration* (lack of regulation of collaboration or recommendations for collaboration, low variety of activities, weak motivation of specialists for collaboration, unacceptable approach of another professional to the child's needs or problem solving). The identified questions helped clarify the goals, areas, results, as well as the factors that promote and inhibit collaboration between social workers and social pedagogues. A written survey method was chosen for the research. The questionnaire for the survey of social workers and social pedagogues consists of 3 parts: 1) sociodemographic data on respondents; 2) goals, areas, results of collaboration; 3) factors promoting and inhibiting collaboration.

Respondents were selected using non-probabilistic target sampling method. They were selected based on the following selection criteria: social pedagogues who work with children from social risk families in schools, and two groups of social workers: 1) who work directly with the family at social risk and their children and 2) case managers who coordinate the process of assistance provision to the child and the family. Social pedagogues from Klaipeda city schools were selected as respondents for this empirical research. But some social workers of one institution, which coordinates the work of social workers dealing with families at social risk, were also interviewed. Case managers were also interviewed because they are the social workers that initiate and organize case management when the family is exposed to social risks. 2 categories of social workers work in the centre (the social workers who deal directly with the families at social risk, and the social workers, case managers, who coordinate the process of assistance provision to the child and the family; they are assigned by the municipal institution of social services. Thus, case managers by professional status are the social workers who initiate and organize the case management when the family is exposed to social risks. This means that 2 groups participated in the survey: social pedagogues, whose field of activity is assistance to children at school and social workers, who provide social services to the family.

The questionnaire for the respondents was published on the web portal, and the link was sent to the survey participants by e-mail. The survey questionnaires were filled out by 70 specialists, almost half (47.1%) of which were social workers dealing with families and children, 37.1% – social pedagogues, and 15.8% – case managers. In order to ensure the anonymity of the respondents, the findings of the survey are published in a generalized report form. The survey data were analysed by the program SPSS 22. During the analysis of the collected data,

information on the percent distribution of responses by respondents was provided. The Kruskal-Wallis criterion was also applied to examine the differences in responses by social workers, case managers, and social pedagogues. Meanwhile, the Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between the two variables. When interpreting correlations based on the strength distribution of correlation coefficients presented by B. Bitinas (2006): there is no correlation between the variables from 0 to 0.20; from 0.20 to 0.40 – denotes a very weak correlation between the variables, from 0.40 to 0.60 – essential, from 0.60 to 0.80 – a strong dependence, from 0.80 to 1 – a very strong correlation between the variables. Letter “p” is used to denote statistical significance. The correlation coefficient is considered statistically significant in this research if $p < 0.05$.

Sociodemographic data of respondents. The prevailing age of the majority of respondents was 31–40 or 41–50 years (31.4% and 34.3%, respectively). 18.6% were specialists aged 26–30, 12.9% were 25 years and younger. The lowest number (2.9%) of respondents included people over 50 years of age. More than half of the survey participants (67.2%) indicated having higher university education, and 31.4% – higher non-university education. More than half of the surveyed specialists (55.7%) had not more than 5 years of work experience in social or social pedagogical work. 22.9% of specialists had 6–10 years of experience, and 21.4% – 11–20 years. After evaluating the answers of the survey participants about their qualification category, it was observed that almost half of them (47.2%) were social workers or senior social workers, 22.9% were social pedagogues and senior social pedagogues, 12.9% were social pedagogues and methodologists. 17.1% of the survey participants had not yet defended the category of social work qualifications.

Research results. In order to analyse the collaboration between social workers and social pedagogues in providing assistance to children from families at social risk, first of all, the goals that specialists set for collaboration were identified. As the findings of the research revealed, the main goal of collaboration between social workers and social pedagogues is to ensure the child's well-being and protection of their interests (85.7%), to improve work efficiency (78.6%), to receive more detailed information about the child and family (70%), and earlier identify families experiencing social or other exclusion (67.1%). Also, more than half of the respondents state that collaboration help them solve problems more effectively: to faster react to violations of children's rights (61.4%), to share the responsibility for solving social problems. Both social workers and social pedagogues see collaboration as an opportunity to provide services to children and families in a coordinated manner, and to strengthen inter-institutional collaboration (52.2%). So, basically collaboration helps to achieve these essential objectives: improve the quality of assistance to children and families, and strengthen inter-institutional co-operation as well as teamwork for the provision of social educational services.

Social workers and social pedagogues play different roles in providing assistance to children and families, so, the participants engaged in the research were asked to identify areas of collaboration. The main areas of collaboration include: solution of social problems arising in the family (78.6%), assistance to children and families after identifying social risk factors (74.3%). Social workers also help social pedagogues to solve children's problems at school, mostly school absenteeism (72.9%), learning difficulties (71.4%), bullying among peers (60%), help to children with special educational needs and their families (57.1%). Another important area of collaboration mentioned by more than half of the respondents is protection of children's rights (60%). Where social workers and social pedagogues cooperate the least include implementation of joint projects (14.3%), organization or participations in joint trainings themselves (11.4%).

Social pedagogues and social workers evaluated the effectiveness of the forms of collaboration. From the point of view of the majority, the most effective forms of co-operation include meetings of the two specialists (90%), consultations during case management meetings (85.7%) where assistance to children and family is discussed. Telephone communication was rated by the respondents as a moderately effective form (41.4%). The least effective forms identified by the respondents included communication by e-mail (18.6%) or sending letters (17.1%). Thus, for collaboration respondents give priority to direct communication. J. Buzaitytė-Kašalynienė, E. Liaudginaitė-Zamalienė (2012) studied the collaboration experience of child day care centres and found that most often the methods of indirect communication were used in collaboration of assistance specialists, i.e. correspondence, telephone conversations. So, inefficient methods of collaboration are often used in practice.

When looking for solutions to collaboration problems, it is important to identify the factors that hinder or promote collaboration. First, the factors inhibiting collaboration were identified. Respondents' motivation is weakened primarily by factors related to organizing collaboration, such as the lack of collaboration coordination and regulation (52.2%), diversity of activities (59.1%) and their continuity (57.6%) as well as the lack of methodological recommendations for improving collaboration, and appropriate conditions for collaboration (43.9%). Another demotivating factor is the lack of interest of the collaboration partner (social worker or the social pedagogue) in collaboration (39.4%) and different approaches to the child's needs or problem solving (27.3%). Thus, most of the defined collaboration obstacles are related to the collaboration management, especially organization of collaboration. Slightly fewer respondents are disturbed by the reluctance of colleagues to cooperate or by different approaches towards the provision of assistance to the children.

The Kruskal-Wallis criterion was applied to compare the approaches of social workers, case managers, and social pedagogues towards disruption of collaboration. The Kruskal-Wallis criterion helped to identify statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$). Social pedagogues more often than case

managers and social workers stated that they were demotivated because of high workload ($p = 0.001$, rank averages among: social pedagogues – 47.04, social workers – 31.52, case managers – 20.18) and because coordination was missing in collaboration activities ($p = 0.32$, rank averages among: social pedagogues – 43.17, social workers – 31.55, cases managers – 29.23).

As mentioned above, through analysing the situation of collaboration, it was important to identify the factors that strengthen the motivation of social workers and social pedagogues to cooperate. According to the findings of the research, the factors that strengthen the motivation to cooperate are related to better comprehension of the needs of the child and the family and their satisfaction, as well as to the child's achievements. 95.5% of the respondents noted that they were most motivated by the improvement of the child's achievements, which is conditioned by effective collaboration, while 94.1% of the respondents see collaboration as an opportunity to better understand the child's needs and to meet them. Other motivating factors are related to better delivery of services (93.9%), shared responsibilities with the partners of collaboration (62.2%), reliance on colleagues' competence and experience (61.2%), and to gaining teamwork experience (71.6%). A number of respondents also noted that they were motivated for collaboration because of personal goals (92.5%), the opportunity to maintain personal relationships with colleagues from the related profession (59.7%) and to improve competencies through collaboration with other professionals (69.7%). Cooperation between a social worker and a social pedagogue creates conditions for learning from each other and effectively solving social problems (Merfeldaitė, 2008).

Thus, first of all, collaboration creates opportunities to encourage child's achievements, to provide better services to the child and the family. Another group of motivating factors include the perception of the benefits gained through the teamwork of assistance professionals in solving the problems of the children and families. The respondents have also observed that collaboration provides an opportunity to improve personal and professional competencies, maintain closer relations with partners, and gain better teamwork experience. Thus, both social workers and social pedagogues see the benefits of collaboration not only in achieving service quality, but also in meeting their personal and professional needs.

When assessing the factors that stimulate collaboration, the Kruskal-Wallis criterion helped to identify statistically significant differences among the 3 groups (social workers, case managers and social pedagogues) ($p < 0.05$). Case managers more often than social workers and social pedagogues stated that they were motivated to cooperate by the opportunity to share the responsibilities with another specialist ($p = 0.009$, rank averages among: case managers – 50.05, social pedagogues – 28.92, social workers – 35.83) and willingness to maintain both personal and professional relations with social pedagogues ($p = 0.001$, rank averages among: case managers – 54.2, social pedagogues – 30.69, social workers

– 33.02). The Spearman's correlation coefficient was applied to identify the relationship between respondents' age, education, work experience and the factors that strengthen and inhibit collaboration. Statistical analysis did not reveal any statistically significant correlations between the age, education, work experience of specialists and the assessment of collaboration factors.

The research aimed to reveal what results social workers and social pedagogues notice about collaboration. The findings of the research showed that collaboration benefits both specialists by helping to provide better quality assistance to children and families. V. Ivanauskienė (2009), referring to the results of her researches, states that collaboration is the essential factor in ensuring the effectiveness of the assistance provided to children. What assistance specialists notice first of all is that collaboration helps them involve the social risk families into the assistance process more effectively (86.6%), and solve the problems in a complex way (81.4%). Another positive result of collaboration highlighted by social workers and social pedagogues is the improvement in the quality of children's education: better motivation to attend school (62.9%), to seek a profession (52.9%), correction of students' misbehaviour (45.7%), with the school less often addressing the child welfare committee(s) regarding imposition of minimum (45.7%) and medium childcare measures (44.3%), etc. To sum up the findings of the research, it can be stated that collaboration brings forth the opportunities to better ensure social welfare of children and families, to create conditions for positive socialization of children and helps improve the quality of children's education and reduce the dropout rates of school students.

Conclusions

As a result of social risk factors in the families, children experience behavioural and emotional difficulties at school that determine unsuccessful social functioning. Scholars agree that help to the child must be an integral part of family support, therefore, when providing services to social risk families, social workers need to work together with social pedagogues. Collaboration between social workers and social pedagogues is based on theories of collaboration, social capital, social systems that define collaboration as interpersonal interaction of professionals based on successful communication and agreements, and teamwork is regarded as social capital. The collaboration of these professionals has some features of interdisciplinary collaboration, the essential components of which include communication, agreement on goals, areas of activity, desired results, awareness of one's roles, motivation and reflection. Collaboration between child welfare professionals is an essential condition for providing complex assistance to the child exposed to social risks in the family.

Collaboration helps both specialists to provide better services to the child and the family, which reduces the social exclusion of social risk families.

Collaboration not only helps to involve social risk families into the assistance process, but also contributes to improving the quality of the child's education at school. Assistance specialists cooperate the least in project implementation or in professional competence development processes. The most effective forms of collaboration highlighted by the respondents include: face-to-face meetings to discuss solutions to child and family problems. Meanwhile, the respondents consider that indirect communication in writing is a completely ineffective form. Thus, collaboration of social pedagogues as the increase of social capital improves the provision of services to the child and the family

The motivation of assistance professionals is weakened mainly because of inefficient management of collaboration, lack of regulation of collaboration activities, bureaucracy, lack of time, as well as lack of interest from their colleagues in collaboration and different approaches of specialists to the child's needs and provision of assistance. The main factors that strengthen the motivation to cooperate are related to the desire to provide better quality support to children and families, opportunities to work in the team and to improve personal as well as professional competencies. Thus, building of social capital in the collaboration activities of social workers and social pedagogues not only enables the achievement of more effective results in providing assistance to children, but also improves both professional and personal competencies of specialists.

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