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### PARENTAL PROGRAMS FOR QUALITY CHILDHOOD

**Abstract:** Parenting has a different treatment then and now. In the past, people spontaneously prepared for parenthood. The model according to which they were brought up had a strong influence, which was difficult to change due to the strong cultural tradition. Today the situation has changed. The need for systematic support of parents by professionals is clearly stated. With

the reform pedagogical movements in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as with the more intensive development of pedagogical theory and practice, the first associations, the first counseling centers and the first schools for parents appeared, through which the parent programs are realized.

The research in this paper aims to determine whether parenting programs provide activities and program content that support and lead to quality parenting. In theory, but also in practice, there are a number of different parenting programs. Hence, the research will focus on two approaches in parenting programs, namely:

- Parental programs of a preventive nature aimed at building parental competencies;
- Parenting programs to change behavior patterns.

The expected result in this paper refers to the fact that parenting programs increase parental competence in the parental role and lead to improved parental interaction with children by encouraging their positive behavior. The results and conclusions go in the direction of the effects of parenting programs in terms of developing attitudes, behavior, communication, perception, thought, parental emotion and the way it reflects on the quality of childhood.

**Keywords:** Parenting, Programs, Support, Quality, Childhood

## Introduction

Parenting is treated differently now compared to it used to be. The literature says that in the past people spontaneously prepared for parenthood. The model according to which they were brought up had a strong influence, which was difficult to change due to the strong cultural tradition. (Evans, 2006) Today the situation has changed. The need for systemic support of parents by professionals and experts is clearly discussed. With the reform pedagogical movements in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as with the increasingly intensive development of pedagogical theory and practice, the first associations, the first advisory centers and the first schools for parents appeared. Taking into account modern living conditions (Pećnik & Sratac, 2010), especially the numerous challenges of different nature that parents face, it can be concluded that they set specific conditions in the organization of their own life and the daily life of their children. For this issue, it is particularly significant that the child is recognized as the bearer of human rights, the implementation of which is guaranteed by the state, while parenthood leaves privacy and enters the sphere of public policy. The multiplication of human roles in modern society, with changes in value systems, and the constant acceleration of lifestyle, significantly change the context of living and behavior of adults towards children, especially young children. (Јул & Јенсен, 2014). It is this position that imposed the need for an increased offer of childcare and early learning programs, promotion of the importance of early education and development for every child, but also a change in the structural approach to parenting. (Evans, 2006) The change in circumstances imposed a need to support the development of knowledge, attitudes and practices acquired through the personal experience of parents. (Rinaldi, 2006) This flow imposed a need to develop awareness in parental approach, actions, behaviors and relationships. Developing awareness also meant the personal desire and motivation of parents who wanted to learn and improve their knowledge, abilities and skills for parenting. We believe that these are pioneering steps in building awareness of parenthood, discovering parenthood and self-initiative in the need to develop the parental role. (Hanssen & Zimanyi, 2000) In that sense, in the developed systems, different sources and forms of parenting programs and support began to be developed. If in a certain period the advice for better parenting came from close people (relatives, friends), through new trends parents can refer to various printed, electronic and human resources within the institutions and organizations that deal with parenting in a formal or informal way.

Parental programs aim to provide activities from a wide range of program contents that provide support and lead to quality parenting. Namely, parenting support enables parents to be helped

in developing and using available psychological and material resources to help themselves and their children. An integral part of this support today is parent education through learning activities designed to promote positive parenting practices. (Zepeda, Varela & Morales, 2004) The main goal of all activities is to improve the well-being of children, for which it is especially important to take into account the needs of parents, as well as the context of society as a whole. Parenting programs can be organized in the form of workshops and counseling for parents within health and social institutions, the educational system (kindergartens, schools) and the non-governmental sector (daycare centers, playrooms, psychological counseling). During the implementation of parenting programs, professional support is provided by professionals in their field, such as: pedagogues, psychologists, social workers, educators, medical staff, educational assistants, but the parents themselves are also an important resource. Some parenting programs are universal and are intended for all parents, while others focus on the specific needs of certain categories of parents. Parenting programs can be implemented through work in groups, where the model of individual counseling is particularly important, it is rarely represented, but it exists as a form, namely home visits. All these forms can be combined with varying intensity for a shorter or longer period of time depending on the parenting program. Parenting programs can be made available in a less intensive way through brochures, newsletters, hotlines, television campaigns, billboards and websites. Modern parents are often able to solve their dilemmas about raising their children (Radley & Randolph, 2009) using information and communication technology, which has significantly changed the availability of content relevant to parents. In the literature, it is said that parents' motivation to increase the quality of their parenting can be observed on a continuum that begins with awareness of the need for additional information, and its translation into personal knowledge that will lead to a change in behavior in a positive direction. Parents' attitudes are closely related to their behavior because they shape parents' perception, opinion, emotional response, and motivation. Attitudes are considered as reactions or established ways of thinking about different aspects of parenting. Attitudes include knowledge and information gained through personal experience, education, or understanding of an issue or phenomenon, which are often intertwined with cultural beliefs based on shared experience. The relationship between parenting programs and behavioral changes in parenting practice remains an open and evolving question. (Zepeda, Varela & Morales, 2004) Certain studies show that those parents who show interest and acquire knowledge in the field of child development, compared to those who do not, have a better interaction with their children and thereby increase the likelihood that the acquired knowledge will be put into practice. Also, there are analyzes that say that parents who are familiar with the approaches and procedures that promote the health and safety of the child in practices pay more attention to the safety of children. Analyzes of the implementation of parenting programs show that they increase parents' knowledge of children's development and learning, improve parent-child communication and improve parenting skills for establishing positive discipline, which is associated with a reduced rate of child neglect and abuse. as well as with greater physical, cognitive and emotional progress of children. (Samuelson, 2010) This is exactly why parenting programs are important, because they lead to the development of attitudes, behavior, communication, perception, thought, emotion... reflecting on the quality of childhood.

## **Types of Parental Programs**

In theory, but also in practice, there are a number of different parenting programs. Parenting programs are generally divided into two approaches, depending on the goal being achieved. The first approach of parenting programs refers to activities aimed at improving parents' knowledge and skills. The second approach refers to parenting programs whose activities are aimed at acquiring new knowledge about parenting. In that direction, we distinguish:

- parental programs of a preventive nature aimed at building parental competencies (acquiring knowledge about child development, development of parents' self-awareness, self-understanding, understanding of their own attitudes and actions);
- parental programs to change the behavior model.

Both approaches are designed to increase parental competence and self-confidence in the parental role and lead to improved parental interaction with children by encouraging their positive behavior. (Stričević, 2011)

The *parental program Children's House* (Kameno, 1982) was created as a result of the need for continuous cooperation between educational institutions in Great Britain and parents. Within this program, attempts were made to establish the concept of successful and positive upbringing, first of all, as a significant support for young parents. During the realization of this program, every educational procedure was planned in detail. Planning took place at the very beginning of the application of the educational procedure. It is particularly significant that the principle of evaluating the effects of the application was established in terms of coverage, influencing factors, interpersonal coordination and flexibility of approach. The significance of this parental program is the high level of cooperation between all important institutions and entities, which was not the case until then. This program offered an unconventional approach to physical conditions and sought to create an environment that would be pleasant for parents. These tendencies created conditions for parents to visit the Children's House more often as an institution and as a program that, undoubtedly, made a step forward in the development of the parental position in relation to children and childhood itself.

The *Bloomingtondale parenting program* puts the parent on a pedestal and tries to point out his irreplaceable role in the educational environment. Although this program was created way back in 1966, it is still relevant today. During the implementation of the program, parents whose children attended kindergarten were involved. Parents were treated as independent factors, they constantly received information about everything that needs to be achieved, they basically solved numerous challenges of an educational nature, they were put in a situation to make decisions about the so-called problem situations and often appeared in the role of the so-called assistant educators. One of the benefits of this program was the sharing of experiences between parents, a process that is of particular importance for any parenting program. The results of the application of this program were visible because to the greatest extent this program influenced a change in the behavior of many parents, increased knowledge about the importance of encouragement in child development, as well as the actions taken for the quality growth and development of each child.

The *Parental Intervention Program* was created in Great Britain in 1976. Through this program, vocabulary, numerical terms, familiarity with temporal and spatial relationships, as well as with colors and shapes are developed. For the purposes of this program, a research was conducted for a duration of 4 months, and parents of children of three and four years of age are the sample on which the research was carried out. Parents had the obligation to realize daily meetings in kindergarten. During the visit, they had the opportunity to carry out joint reading activities with their children. For the needs of this program, half-hour activities were created that the parents together with the children realized, but in home conditions in an attempt to create interaction and a stimulating environment. The obtained results of the research indicate the significant role that parents have towards children. The children showed significant progress in their development, as a result of the active involvement of parents in the life and development of the children.

The *Ypsilant Project* is different from the parenting programs mentioned so far, because everything happens in the home, as opposed to in kindergartens. From here we can notice that it is a different approach of a parenting program. This program included 35 children aged four years. All children from this group were exposed to some form of deprivation. The visits to the home took place during three months, with a duration of one and a half hours per week. The program referred to activities intended for the parent and the child in the area of manipulative activities,

role-playing, perceptual familiarization, classification and speech development. There were multi-level goals in this program.

But the key was the change in the upbringing style, as well as the enrichment of the speech between the parent and the child.

*The parenting program for safe children* was created in 2013 and is aimed at strengthening parenting skills and practices. The program is realized through partnership with organizations, professional agencies, as well as experts and professionals who carry out training within the framework of the program. The support from the community is of special importance for the program. By its design, the program is flexible so that it can be implemented by different institutions and organizations in the community, but also leaves the possibility of its integration into existing interventions and services intended for parents.

*The parenting program entitled "Appropriate Time for Parenting"* was developed in the USA in 2015 and is a significant and unique program that deals with mechanisms to support and encourage child development. Through this program, parents receive specific information about their child's development, supplemented with advice on ways and opportunities for support in the early years of child development and learning. The goal of this program is to lay the foundations for timely and quality information for parents as partners in the process of growth and development of children in the early period of their lives.

*The "Growing Together" program* began to develop in the Republic of Croatia during 2008/2009. This program was created as a part of the wider program of the UNICEF office in Zagreb, intended to support parenthood within the framework of the campaign "The first three are the most important". The "Growing Together" program represents the thematic content of a series of workshops that are implemented with parents of children up to the age of four. The purpose of this program is to enable the availability of information, knowledge, skills intended for parents in developing their parental role. During the workshops, a stimulating environment is created in which parents together with the workshop trainers and other parents exchange ideas on topics related to parenting. During the workshops, we talk about the ways in which parents live, the modern needs of children and parents, conditions are created for parents to get to know themselves better, parents are given the opportunity to get acquainted with some of the theoretical determinations of this program, mainly, aimed at building a positive relationship between the parents and the child.

Through developed mechanisms, in the course of this program, the values underlying one's own parenting are reexamined, the needs of children and parents are learned and the ways of satisfying them, communication skills are trained and answers to other questions that parents express interest in are sought.

## **Positive Parenting Program**

A positive approach to child development refers to encouraging children to develop self-confidence and independence, as a prerequisite for their responsibility. Then the positive approach refers to understanding, encouragement and constructive communication between parents and children, as important elements for a stimulating and supportive environment. Very often, in the context of the positive approach to children's development, positive discipline is also discussed, which is considered as the child's guidance towards achieving self-control. Discipline is about establishing a balance between the child's need for autonomy and the need for restrictions. Throughout the literature, there is a growing number of scientifically supported research that shows that those children who practice positive discipline manifest multiple positive effects on their development as a whole. Basics of positive discipline are: cooperation; responsibility and autonomy; tenderness and understanding; correct understanding of the rules; children's participation; freedom of action; healthy and successful development.

When we talk about positive discipline, it is significant to mention that demands are placed on the parent for empathy and structure. Empathy helps parents to understand the child, to respect his needs, to hear what he is trying to tell us, what need he wants to satisfy, how the child feels and what he is facing at a given moment. Structure allows parents to provide instructions and set necessary boundaries that help children learn how to meet their own needs. The positive approach to education, the pursuit of positive discipline of the child – these are important elements of the program for positive parenting. At the base of this program, in fact, is the understanding or vision of parenting that is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also on scientific knowledge in this field. These are scientific knowledge about the characteristics of the parental context that assume the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs of the child for connection, competence and autonomy, and it refers to the personal parental involvement, creating structure, as well as supporting the child's autonomy.

These are insights into the quality of parental guidance, which is based on the equal dignity of parents and children, as well as the features of empathic interactions between parents and children. The positive parenting program, as an integral part of this concept, offers parents approaches, educational concepts and specific strategies that will help them develop their own skills and abilities for positive interaction with their children. In fact, it is a concept that helps parents in many ways, which has been working for more than 35 years and provides parents with support in their desire to develop a quality parental role for a quality childhood.

The harbinger of the launch of this program is Matthew Sandres, who, together with his colleagues from the University of Queensland, Australia, conducted an individual comprehensive preventive program and trainings for parents. (Sanders, 2008) This program aimed to create:

- positive thinking among parents;
- to meet the growing demands for parental assistance;
- to encourage parents to participate in positive parenting interventions;
- to increase awareness and reach positive parental interventions;
- to create messages in the media that are not alarming, disturbing or accusing parents;
- to help parents become more confident and self-confident in their parenting.

The Positive Parenting Program is also known as the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program. This program provides parents with simple and practical strategies to help them build strong, healthy relationships, confidently manage their children's behavior, and prevent problems from developing. The Triple P program has been applied in more than 25 countries across cultures, socioeconomic groups, and many different types of family structures.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of discovering parenting through understanding the parental context for quality childhood, which refers to different categories, approaches and styles of parenting. It is undoubtedly significant to accept the intentions of the so-called conscious parenting and the authoritative parenting style. Because the authoritative parenting style has developed authority in itself, but at the same time provides support. This style contains the advantages of all other styles and is therefore the most significant. Through this parenting style, children's needs can be understood, children can be asked questions, things can be explained, children can be included in the discussion and in the decision-making process. Authoritative parents almost always consider the parenting situational context, as a significant paradigm in modern approaches to parenting development. While, on the other hand, conscious parents constantly think about the degree of awareness of their actions, they constantly question how aware they are of the choice of their parenting concept and whether it is in the best interest of the child. Authoritative style and awareness of parenting are the first steps towards a positive parenting approach. If the model of positive parenting is based

on meeting the basic needs of the child through personal parental involvement, structure throughout the day, but also constant support of the child's growth and development, then we consciously celebrate the mistakes that children, as well as adults, make. This very moment is important, because parenting and childhood are dynamic and developmental situations in which there is no ideal approach. In today's conditions, it is very easy to get this information, especially due to the existence of numerous parenting programs with the possibility of choosing activities aimed at improving the knowledge and skills of parents, the so-called parental programs of a preventive nature aimed at building parental competences (acquiring knowledge about child development, developing parents' self-awareness, self-understanding, understanding their own attitudes and actions), but also the type of activities aimed at acquiring new knowledge about parenting and change of the behavior model. It is understood that both approaches are designed to increase parental competence and confidence in the parenting role and lead to improved parental interaction with children by encouraging their positive behavior. Undoubtedly, it can be pointed out that the most popular is the program for positive parenting, which is received and accepted by the professional, as well as the general public. The implementation of these programs leads to the development of parental competencies that refer to knowledge, abilities and skills for quality parenting that ensures quality childhood. Relational competencies are particularly important, which aim to establish a mechanism for cooperation between parents and their involvement in kindergartens. A particularly significant body in this process is the Counseling Center for Parents and Children, which we believe will still develop in its full essence and application.

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## PERSONAL GROWTH AND DYNAMICS OF IDENTITY IN A MULTICULTURAL EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

**Abstract:** The scientific report presents ideas that rethink the social meanings of diversity, which nowadays provokes pedagogical interaction in the school institution. The need to support global education is revealed on the basis of a detailed analysis of the findings on the social role of the “student” and the main characteristics of the role inherent in the role. The global dimensions of modern societies are beginning to dominate, which necessitates a change in traditional pedagogical practice. The term “global education” gives rise to a discussion of the formation of knowledge, skills and attitudes based on cultural pluralism, interdependence and international economic competition. School age is the time when the individual accumulates knowledge about the world. The introduction of global education means that students understand the importance and complexity of globalization processes and build an identity for intercultural interaction and existence in an interdependent world. In its dynamic structure, identity is a phenomenon related to the peculiarities of values, way of life, regulation of relationships based on history, ethnology and cultural development. The implementation of a targeted educational policy for equal rights goes hand in hand with the idea of acquiring competencies for interconnection, consolidation and partnership in a multicultural environment. Promoting the philosophy of awareness