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**SOCIAL PEDAGOGUE ASSISTANCE TO THE FAMILY IN THE CORRECTION OF SCHOOL-ADAPTATION OF THE FIRST-FORMERS**

**Annotation.** The research is related to socio-pedagogical activity with parents, whose first-grade children experience school adaptation difficulties due to the acquired dependence. First of all dependency must be understood as a response to an interest and (or) demand. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the peculiarities of parents’ behaviour with their children; children’s school adaptation difficulties and how these difficulties affect an everyday classroom environment. Parents should be interested in their children’s adaptation process and in finding the most effective solution to problems. Social educators (family researchers) could play a key role in this process. They could solve school adaptation problems of the dependent first-grade pupils and focus on family issues. They could be both social educators and social workers constantly upgrading their theoretical and practical knowledge in response to the interaction between parents and children, the changes in their communication and the expression of the emerging problems in everyday environment. In this case, the activity of a family educator and its relevance is determined by the necessity to assist parents in raising children and correcting their school adaptation difficulties.

**Keywords:** dependent first-grade pupils, school adaptation, socio-pedagogical work with family.

**Introduction**

Individual work with family is necessary in order to solve school adaptation problems of the dependent first-grade pupils. Individual pedagogical family counselling is a very important form of interaction between a social educator, parents and their children. It is based on the achievements of the representatives of the humanistic psychology (A. W. Combs, 1999; A. H. Maslow, 1999; C. Rogers, 1994) and focuses the attention of social educators on self-actualisation of an individual within home

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1 **Social educators (family researchers):** family consultants (counsellors) who are aware of family and child raising issues; are able to link children’s daily school problems to the general knowledge of pedagogy and psychology; are able to specify the gained knowledge by linking it with an individual (specific) situation; are aware of children’s behaviour problems and parents’ ability to raise a child; are capable of combining everything with the specific school adaptation difficulties. Functions of a social educator (family researcher) could be fulfilled by both a class teacher and a social educator or school psychologist if they have the required competence to make parents interested in their children's problems and are able to help parents in finding the best problem-solving methods.
environment, the dispersal of the emotional freedom and the discovery of own identity and mission (L. C. Johnson, 2001; G. Navaitis, 1997).

The contemporary socio-pedagogical work with family has to be directed toward promoting active family involvement in solving the problems of their children (inspire parents so that they could inspire their children).

**Aim of the research:** to reveal the peculiarities of the socio-pedagogical work with family by correcting school adaptation of the dependent first-grade pupils.

**Object of the research:** socio-pedagogical work with family by correcting school adaptation of the dependent first-grade pupils.

**Methods of the research:** the analysis of the pedagogical, psychological and philosophical literature; the analysis of the empirical research and statistical data; the method of individual consultations, questionnaire survey.

**Relevance.** Social educator becomes a guide of any changes within the family’s social situation. He/she helps parents to find the ways of meeting their own and their children’s needs and reduce their worries. According to the description of the socio-pedagogical work by L. C. Johnson (2001), B. Bitinas (2006), G. Kvieskienė (2005), I. Leliūgienė (2002), A. Bagdonas (2009) and other researchers, work of a social educator with family could be defined as mutual interaction pursued under specific circumstances by providing the information on child education and promoting active involvement of parents in the problem-solving process. Social educator becomes a manager (or facilitator) fostering the identification and evaluation of family problems related to school adaptation difficulties of a dependent child. His/her activity is pursued via direct intervention and assistance in complicated situations.

Social educator has to recognize and understand different levels of the holistic reality, which, being an indivisible whole of the related multiple elements, is constantly changing. The approach towards the individual psycho-pedagogical work in correcting the school adaptation of the dependent first-grade pupils varies in the initial attitudes and the principles of organisation of interaction between parents, teachers and social educator.

Following the psychoanalytical approach, social educator has to analyse the intra-mental dynamics of a child and facilitate the management of inner conflicts of an individual. The psycho-social approach is directed toward an in-depth analysis of a complex problematic situation “personality in the social environment”, as well as toward identifying the social diagnosis as a set of effective actions of a social educator.
Representatives of the functional approach opposing the psychosocial approach are of the opinion that versatile diagnostics of personality and situation is impossible. Therefore, social educator has to assist children, their parents and first-grade pupils’ teachers to coordinate their requests with the functions implemented by a specialist as a representative of a certain institution. The approach focused on problem-solving is in principle directed toward the initiation and stimulation of intellectual powers of the child. This process is aimed at teaching the child to make independent decisions in difficult situations. Pursuant to its theoretical attitudes the behaviourist approach focuses on the desadapted child’s behaviour patterns and on their adjustment. Despite their external differences the above approaches don’t contradict each other because of the applied operational principles and diagnostic/methodological procedures.

Despite some differences, all approaches anticipate the following interaction between a social educator, a child and his/her parents (foster-parents): primary communication (emotional and intellectual contact); investigation and analysis of a problematic situation; identification of general performance objectives and tasks; the change in the person’s relationship with social environment and (or) with himself/herself; realization of the progress and common work results. These approaches offer multiple means of assistance. Parents, whose dependent children have school adaptation problems need qualified psycho-pedagogical assistance to promote parents’ involvement in solving their children’s adaptation problems. This moment is extremely important in selecting work methods.

Assistance to family could be provided by a social educator who has pedagogical and psychological knowledge about family, child’s development during the preschool period; is aware of the work methods with parents and can apply theoretical knowledge in solving the problems of a particular family. Such a specialist could be referred to as a family researcher whose activity is oriented toward family research; moreover, the above person is both a researcher/investigator and a practitioner providing actual help to a specific family.

Pursuant to general provisions set forth in the qualification requirements and job instructions for social educators, social educator shall facilitate children’s adaptation in the society, community, educational or care institutions and other social institutions pursuing education functions, and efficiently use all opportunities for the development, teaching and raising self-sufficient citizen. Social educator works together with teachers and parents or with the legitimate children’s representatives, and with the community (Job Description of a Social Educator [approved by the Order
Parents’ meetings should become the main form of the general pedagogical parental education. According to B. Bitinas (2004) parental education has the following advantages: homogeneous audience, uniform goals, specific teaching material, possibility to apply the acquired knowledge in practice, sustainable universal pedagogical education involving the parents of disadvantaged pupils, the links between pedagogical education of parents and their practical assistance to school. The analysis of the scientific literature revealed, that while correcting school adaptation of the dependent first-grade pupils the focus should be given to the assistance to family and the teacher. During the process of individual psycho-pedagogical work with family or teacher a family educator shall pursue the following tasks:

1) give a complete overview of the problem (based on observations of a teacher, parents and pupils themselves) and be in close contact with parents, the child and the teacher;
2) evaluate parent’s perception of children’s problems and search for possible problem solutions;
3) plan joint actions;
4) get in touch with and coordinate the interaction between parents and social workers/educators;
5) monitor implementation of the work plan;
6) initiate changes in the plan pursuant to the requirements and the established procedure (B. Bitinas, 2004).

The research related to adaptation difficulties of the first-grade pupils is directed toward two main areas: 1) prevention of school adaptation difficulties; 2) correction of school adaptation difficulties. M. J. Letarte, S. Normandeau, S. Parent, J. F. Boudreau, M. Bigras and F. Capuano (2008) focused on child's education results and social skills and discussed these issues in the context of prevention problems. This research was directed toward an individual correction of school adaptation difficulties faced by the dependent first-grade pupils.

In this research the dependent first-grade pupils are identified as:

- children with non-confident behaviour who cannot detach from parents; during breaks often search for teacher’s comfort; sensitively react to other pupils’ opinion; are afraid to ask for help; cannot be healthily aggressive; are
excessively peaceful, altruistic and sympathetic; cannot defend themselves from bullying; do not show initiative.

- **children with the interpersonal relationship attitudes**, i.e. children who try to help and be friendly with everybody, sympathise with others and avoid criticism; are over-sensitive to criticism and cannot cope with negative relationship with others; feel bad when there is no possibility to communicate in warm and cosy environment, in a large classroom or when they are exposed to unfamiliar people; usually keep silent or speak very quietly in front of a large group of peers; respond sensitively to bullying and cannot defend themselves; are afraid to speak, keep silent or start blushing in an unfamiliar situation or when approached by a stranger; are not able to express and defend own opinion or are too diffident to express their opinion; seek tenderness/closeness from other people and are inclined to idealise others.

- **children with learning difficulties**: when asked during lessons usually keep silent or speak very quietly; are afraid to raise hand; lack confidence in their capability to accomplish tasks, try to copy from classmates; are afraid to make mistakes etc.

- **children expressing a range of emotions and aggression**: they analyse other people’s feelings, identify with other people’s thoughts and emotions; are warm, sensitive, altruistic and therefore are more likely to become the object of bullying; are constantly moaning and complaining; can be unfriendly with family members; can make other people feel guilty by behaving like victims; the aggression is directed towards oneself; are self-accusing and too demanding.

**Methodology of the research.** The method of semi-structured interview was applied with the aim to provide educational support for teachers and parents in situations when dependent first-grade pupils face adaptation difficulties, and in order to put in place the right conditions for the correction of adaptation difficulties. At this stage the work was carried out with all parents who had questions and sought out the ways to facilitate their dependent children’s adaptation in school. Parents have been provided with individual counselling.

During the first meeting parents were asked general questions. Besides, general information on the learning environment of the child was collected. Table 1 presents the number of children whose parents asked for help, and the number of individual consultations with parents.
The number of individual consultations with parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits common to children</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Number of individual consultations with parents</th>
<th>Number of parents, who sought help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>„Vy turio“ mokykla</td>
<td>„Taikos“ mokykla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent children</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children with harmonious personality traits</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to L. Jovaiša (1975) the aim of such a conversation is to identify possible problems and their reasons, and find the best way to help the child through joint efforts of parents and the teacher. During the first meeting the method of semi-structured interview was applied; during other meetings – the method of conversation. The plan of individual consultations was prepared in advance:

1. The aim of the first meeting with parents was to collect as much as possible general information on children’s learning environment in the family and to record the findings.
2. The purpose of the second meeting was to identify, together with parents, the problems based on the expression of daily adaptation difficulties in the classroom. The main objective of work with parents is to help them in identifying children’s education mistakes, and solve first-grade school pupils’ problems through self-education methods. Perception of the problem implies family changes aimed at altering and improving the established order and culture.
3. During the third meeting parents were involved in the elaboration of the pedagogical correction programme for first-grade pupils’ adaptation in school (appropriate for every child and complying with parents’ capacities). Direction of the programme was determined by the range of daily school problems.

Pedagogical correction of the adaptation process of the dependent first-grade pupils, which also included the assistance to parents, was directed towards the following areas with the aim to (Miškinis, 2003):

- Provide a calm and ordered learning environment for the child
- Establish a reasonable timetable
• Ensure proper nutrition and good quality sleep
• Ensure regular physical activity
• Consistently increase children’s attention abilities
• Build self-confidence
• Eliminate intellectual laziness
• Take into account children’s capacities and avoid being too demanding
• Set limits on the time children spend in front of TV and playing online games (in the clubs, computer game rooms).
• Avoid overloading primary school pupils with writing assignments
• Encourage positive attitude to learning
• Maintain positive relationship with the child’s parents and other family members
• Teach children the value of time.

4. During other meetings which usually were arranged once per week, accomplishment of the set programme was discussed together with parents; if needed, and taking into account the unforeseen problems, work plans were corrected. The problems were discussed together with parents by highlighting relevant facts, defining the main problem (based on the above facts) and trying to find specific problem-solving methods. Parents continued work if programme turned out to be effective.

Procedure of individual counselling. The time of an interview was limited (1 hour). During every meeting the date of the next meeting was set. Individual consultations were held separately with one of the parents or with both parents and included the analysis of individual everyday family situations.

The case study method was used during the research tool and included: identification of relevant facts and the problem, and anticipation of specific problem-solving methods/measures. Family educator played the function of moderator by applying the general knowledge of pedagogy, psychology and sociology, linking this knowledge with specific family problems and trying to help parents in finding the right solutions.

During individual consultations family researcher tried to encourage parents to seek self-education to be able to promote their children’s positive self-education (create adequate education conditions) and help them overcome school adaptation difficulties. Counselling focus group included parents who:

1) wanted to help their children to overcome difficulties;
2) were ready to seek self-education in order to help their children and enhance mutual relationship;
The aim of consultations was to help parents in the following areas:
1) via the case study method parents were taught to distinguish between the fact and opinion and give preference to objectivity in family;
2) in problem situations with children parents were taught to identify the key facts and the problem and look for evidence-based solutions;
3) parents were taught to distinguish between major and trivial problems;
4) parents were encouraged to think about long-term education results;
5) parents were taught how to get rid of tension and stress related to the child’s education.

Substantiation of the questionnaire inquiry. Teachers and parents of the dependent first-grade pupils were questioned on the basis of the accumulated results (see Table 2) in order to get parents’ views on the effect of the provided help. It was also necessary to identify the most effective psycho-pedagogical methods for the dependent first-grade pupils. The breakdown of respondents is presented in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Number of parents</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Vilnius elementary school “X”</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Vilnius elementary school “Y”</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Vilnius primary-school “Z”</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents completed the questionnaires and identified the most effective forms of assistance and the means for pedagogical correction of adaptation of their first-grade children.

Discussion of research results. Scientists examined various aspects of assistance to family. In this research the problems of the dependent first-grade pupils were corrected by providing assistance to their parents. During the first meeting family researcher identified positive and negative social and emotional characteristics of a specific family. It was also necessary to evaluate other family problems which may affect the formation of the dependent child’s personality traits. This is a detailed analysis of the relationship between brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, husband and wife. It was important to identify and anticipate possible potential future problems, which served as an important motivational factor for the involvement of parents in the problem-solving process. Parents also took part in developing an individual child’s education programme which was referred to as the prevention of possible major
problems in the future. The research of the dependent first-grade pupils revealed a mutual attachment between parents and children when parents sought to protect the child by doing everything themselves instead of letting the child do things independently; and a low level of independence of the child when he/she looked for parental assistance (especially during the first month of a school year). The researchers didn’t manage to find standardized methods to determine the child’s attachment to parents and the level of the sense of security. All decisions and evaluations were based on observations of the relationship between parents and the child: from bringing the child to school in the morning/taking him/her after school to observation of the child’s behaviour during lessons and breaks in the absence of parents.

In correcting the problems of the dependent first-grade pupils, assistance was provided to parents by anticipating changes in their behaviour with children. The use of various psycho-pedagogical methods revealed the most acceptable forms of assistance to parents of the dependent first-grade pupils (see Diagram 1).

![Diagram 1. Most acceptable psycho-pedagogical methods for parents in solving first-grade pupils’ school adaptation problems (n=32)(ab. sk.)](image)

According to the research data, 8 parents (n=32) preferred specialist counselling in solving the child’s school adaptation problems. Other parents (7 (n=32) were inclined to work according to an individual pedagogical correction programme. Two parents (n = 81) preferred discussions, 2 parents (n = 32) individual consultations,
only 1 parent (n = 32) said that he would refer to the recommended literature, and 4 parents (n = 32) would choose other options.

In conclusion it could be stated that parents searching for answers to relevant questions look for specific assistance fitting their particular situation. It could be assumed that due to busy working lives parents have no time to go into details of the specific literature, attend lectures or search for relevant information. Family researchers could fill this gap and provide specific assistance to parents on a daily basis including: identification of problem-related facts and the main problem, and assistance in choosing the right problem solving approach. The above specialists must be able to relate general pedagogical, psychological and sociological knowledge to the specific everyday school adaptation difficulties, and assist parents in executing pedagogical correction of school adaptation difficulties of their children. Correction of first-grade pupils’ adaptation difficulties, psycho-pedagogical assistance to parents, establishment of adequate conditions for the child with the aim to develop a harmonious personality - all the above functions could be performed by a family researcher. He/she could teach parents (through the analysis of everyday problematic family situations) to identify the facts and the main problem, and choose the right approach to correction of adaptation problems of the first-grade pupils. The functions of family researcher can be performed both by social educators, primary school teachers, psychologists or other professionals/advisors equipped with the knowledge of general pedagogy, psychology and sociology, and the extensive knowledge on family and its patterns, peculiarities of child’s personality traits, and the importance of family for the development of child’s personality. The above specialists must be able to relate the knowledge of general pedagogy, psychology and sociology to everyday family problems, and provide assistance to parents trying to find the best solutions for pedagogical correction of adaptation difficulties of the dependent first-grade pupils.

So far the society does not give due attention to pedagogical correction of the first-grade pupils’ adaptation problems. The research findings revealed specific school adaptation difficulties of the current dependent first-grade pupils which were determined by the dominant personality traits, as well as by the possibilities of their correction through the assistance to parents. The current first-grade pupils’ adaptation problems which determine the future trends are not yet properly evaluated. Adaptation problems arise when first-grade pupils or their parents decide that they do not meet school requirements or school fails to meet their requirements. The number of such situations is increasing, therefore the need for assistance is becoming
increasingly important. Family researchers could help parents to identify the main problem, reveal the current situation in the society, its reflections in each family, and possible consequences. They could also assist parents in identifying specific and problem-related facts and in finding the right solutions of a particular situation.

This systematic framework consisting of six interrelated stages and joining universal features of any correction (psychological or educational) (see Diagram 2) was applied in developing the framework for organization of the assistance to parents.

Below you will find an overview of the effectiveness of the framework for organization of the assistance to parents and teachers in correcting the adaptation difficulties of the dependent first-grade pupils, including a brief description of the advantages and disadvantages of each model implementation stage.

1. **Problem analysis.** At this stage family researcher was observing the adaptation of the first-grade pupils and recorded the expression of specific first-grade pupils’ problems in everyday classroom environment. In other words, family researcher collected the data on the expression of adaptation difficulties of a specific dependent child in everyday classroom environment. This data was used for problem analysis. Identification of the problem was based on the family researcher’s data, the problematic facts specified by parents, and on the observations of teachers which were related to school adaptation problems stemming from children’s behaviour. The work of a family researcher requires constant development of a mutual trust both with first-grade pupils’ teachers and with the parents. Family researcher should carefully listen to their stories on difficulties, concerns and problems; he/she must be sincere, authentic, empathic, caring, and shall avoid evaluation/manipulation. The collected facts on adaptation difficulties of the dependent first-grade pupils are necessary
for problem identification and motivation of parents to participate in solving the problems of their children. The success of this stage depends on the ability of family researcher to assist parents and teachers in indentifying the problem-related facts.

2. **Problem identification.** At this stage family researcher tried to precisely describe school adaptation problems caused by the dependent child’s behaviour, and addressed these problems through the emotional, behavioural, communication and cognitive aspects. The problem was specified and analysed until it was equally understood by family researcher, child’s parents, and teacher. The problem was defined by using precise and specific concepts. The success of this stage was determined by a specific definition of the problem providing for understanding of its nature and contributing to problem resolution. Sometimes it was difficult to define the problem. In case of the failure to reach a common agreement between parents and teacher, they returned back to the problem analysis stage.

3. **Identification of alternative problem solutions.** At this stage all possible methods for problem solving have been identified and openly discussed. Family researcher, together with parents and separately with class teacher tried to identify all adequate and realistic problem solving methods. They searched for alternative problem solutions which could be directly applied to the child. By applying different methods parents and teachers tried to achieve the same goal – to correct the behaviour of the dependent first-grade pupils at school and at home.

4. **Prediction of new behaviour patterns.** This stage included critical assessment of problem solving methods and the elaboration of a realistic problem resolution plan. Educators have been taught to realise that the success of the pedagogical correction of first-grade pupils’ adaptation depends on their motivation and on the consistent and hard work with a dependent child. Parents were encouraged to enjoy minor achievements rather than expect rapid results; and to understand that certain adaptation problems could be solved partially by reducing their destructive and disruptive effect. Problem solving plan included the methods and means facilitating the work of parents and first-grade teachers directed toward the correction of school adaptation process of the dependent first-grade pupils. First of all parents and teachers checked the possibility of realisation of chosen solutions. In case of unforeseen difficulties they looked for new ways and means of correction, discussed them and tried to apply in practice.

In this stage parents and teachers should take part in the elaboration of the operational plan for only parents know their children’s capacities and determination for self-education.
5. Implementation of new behaviour patterns. The success of this stage was determined by the sustainable implementation of the plan prepared by parents and teachers. Family researcher helped parents and first-grade teachers to make relevant decisions on future actions by taking into account the actual situation, the time, emotional qualities and needs. Family researcher also helped to understand that in pursuit of the goal problems might arise and that partial success or even a failure is not a disaster; that it is necessary to proceed with implementation of the plan. Family researcher encouraged parents and first-grade teachers to link their actions to the ultimate goal.

6. Evaluation and feedback. Family researcher, together with parents and teachers of the dependent first-grade pupils, evaluated the level of goal achievement by taking into account the desire of parents and teachers to achieve the goal and child behaviour problems, and revised the achieved results. If necessary, problem solving plan was corrected. Earlier stages were referred to in case of the emergence of new or hidden problems.

Pedagogical correction of adaptation of the dependent first-grade pupils was based on self-education of parents and encouraged the parents to establish children-friendly environment in the family for the development of harmonious personality traits. It was effective in pursuing pedagogical correction of school adaptation problems.

In order to develop a favourable environment promoting the children’s self-education skills, family researcher should work individually with each family and facilitate implementation of the prepared programme. It is also important to educate parents on child development issues and encourage their involvement in the correction of adaptation difficulties of the dependent first-grade pupils, including the changes in the parental behaviour patterns.

Conclusions

1. In order to establish a child-friendly environment promoting the children’s self-education skills and correct children’s school adaptation difficulties, the role of a family researcher is instrumental. It includes: individual work with and education of parents, the increase of their motivation to take part in the correction of children’s adaptation difficulties including the changes in the parental behaviour patterns.

2. Teacher must be a psychologist for he/she has to solve not only the children’s learning problems but also the problems requiring psychological knowledge and the knowledge about the school adaptation of the first-grade pupils.
3. Adaptation problems emerge when first-grade pupils or their parents encountering a new school environment decide that they do not meet school requirements or school fails to meet their requirements. This is an increasingly frequent phenomenon, therefore the need for the above assistance has become more relevant.

4. The above qualities are also characteristic of the dependent children’s parents who have good communication skills and try to understand their children’s problems. These parents need self-education assistance in order to control their excessive concern, provide their children the freedom they need at that age; be consistent and strict to their children. Constant protection of the child and inability to require performance of the age-relevant duties (in order not to be deprived of their love) increase the dependency of the child.

5. Parents of the above children took active part in the pedagogical correction of their children’s adaptation difficulties. Their life experience facilitated anticipation of children’s future problems and motivated parents to help the kids through self-education. Family educator working with these parents faced problems when parents had to accomplish the programme and develop consistent work skills/strict attitude toward children. At the end of the school year parents were surprised by the results of children’s independent behaviour (children could express and defend their opinion; stayed calm in response to bullying; were able to say that another child’s behaviour was wrong; managed to accomplish tasks independently etc.).

References


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