

Case Studies of promising parent- and family- focused support programmes

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Document Identifier

Final Report

Version

1.0

Date Due

31. December 2018

Submission date

31. December 2018

Work Package

WP3 Family Support to Increase Educational Equality

Lead Beneficiary

FUB

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are grateful to the European Commission for funding the project ISOTIS “Inclusive Education and Social Support to Tackle Inequalities in Society”.

We would also like to thank all interviewed financiers, providers, staff members and participants of the examined programmes: *Chancenreich* (Germany), *Stadtteilmütter* (Germany), *Step* (Netherlands), *Inside and Beyond (Class)rooms of glass* (Portugal), *Family Skills* (England).

Finally, we thank the members of the advisory group for their participation in discussions and their valuable comments.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EAL	English Additional Language
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
HLE	Home Learning Environment
IAC	Instituto de Apoio à Criança (Children’s support institute in Porto)
ICT	Information and communications technology
L1	First language acquisition
SES	Socioeconomic status

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. BACKGROUND

Within the ISOTIS framework, Work package 3 (D3) addresses the role of parenting support and home-based educational programmes in the support of parents in creating safe, nurturing and stimulating home environments. The overall objective is to create a broad overview of existing approaches, to collect available evidence and to examine in-depth good practices to be able to formulate widely applicable recommendations for the development and implementation of parent- and family-focused support programmes, which specifically focus on the ISOTIS target groups. Theoretically, the work is embedded in assumptions of the bio-ecological system of human development as well as in theories of home learning environment and family systems theory.

The research presented in this report presents findings of five case studies of promising or successful programmes in four different countries. We aimed at obtaining in-depth knowledge of the success factors of parent- and family-focused (home-based) approaches to improve the quality of family environments. Thus, we wanted to shed light on how promising or already proven to be successful programmes overcome existing challenges and ensure high outreach and process quality. In addition, we wanted to explore strategies of implementing the home languages of culturally diverse target groups and ICT in the programmes.

1.2. METHODS

The research follows up on the inventory of family support programmes in Europe, created by Cadima and colleagues (2018). The inventory and the results of an expert panel were the basis for the selection of five programmes with a focus on parent empowerment for the case study D3.3. The programmes worked with migrant families and / or low SES families. They were either judged as highly innovative or had been already been evaluated as successful. Further selection criteria were effective outreach strategies, promotion or inclusion of families' mother tongues and the implementation of ICT in the programmes.

We analysed expectations, experiences and success factors from the perspective of participants, staff, providers and financing institutions from each programme by qualitative interviews and focus group interviews. The interviews were analysed with qualitative content analysis regarding the main categories: outreach, cooperation, requirements, home language support and ICT. The comparative analysis aimed at identifying common strategies across countries and levels, and how strategies need to be tailored to the specific characteristics of the communities, cities, countries or to the specific characteristics of the target groups within the given contexts.

1.3. RESULTS

1.3.1. OUTREACH

In general, two main success factors contributing to effective outreach were identified: The establishment and use of trusting relationships and a strong adaptability and flexibility towards the needs of the target group in a given context.

Representatives of different levels (e.g. financiers and providers versus staff and parents) interpret establishment and use of trusting relationships differently. Whereas representatives of steering or leading levels relate to broader and overarching principles (such as maintaining the trust in the programme itself) staff and members spoke mainly about interpersonal relationships, giving concrete hands-on-examples. In different programmes it was highlighted that the practitioners working with families need to be trusted members of the community, they need to meet the parents at eye level and respect them as experts of their own children. The practitioner should be someone parents can identify with, e.g. sharing the same cultural or linguistic background to establish trusting relationships. Trust of the parents towards cooperating external institutions involved is also considered as important however, from the perspective of the parents the image of different institutions may differ across countries and contexts.

Adaptability towards the target group comprised three aspects: outreach locality, attractiveness of the programme's content, and structural conditions. Adaptability is a general principle, but it is met by each programme in its own way. Successful and innovative approaches meet their target groups through trusted organisations and key-persons who already have contact with the target group at places where parents spend their time. They make their programme visible through communication channels seen and listened to by the target group. They set up initial low-threshold participation possibilities, pleasant schedules regarding times and places of classes or meetings, and promote the programme in a non-stigmatizing way. However, the partners involved, communication channels used, and concrete activities offered need to be carefully adapted to the specific needs of the families in a given context.

1.3.2. COOPERATION

In four out of five programmes, cooperation with other partners is seen as an important mechanism to ensure the success of a programme in various ways: cooperation as an integrated programme component, for an effective outreach, for professional development, and as a strategic way for an external evaluation of the programme. Successful programmes seem to adapt their cooperation strategies against the background of the specific traditions and a careful evaluation of the needs of the target groups in the given contexts and the needs and aims of collaborating partners. Even the decision for a less visible cooperation with other partners may result after a careful evaluation of the needs and characteristics of specific target groups (e.g. target groups with strong fears towards authorities and formal institutions).

1.3.3. PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The findings revealed that successful or promising family support programmes need staff or people in charge with both high personal and professional skills. At all levels, a strong motivation and interest to be involved is needed as well as a personal flexibility to adapt programmes, strategies and activities to different contexts and families. High motivation may be seen as a prerequisite for staff members but may also be implemented as a culture of leadership, which develops a positive vision for a programme. At the same time, motivational aspects as well as other professional skills may be subject to professional development.

At the organisational level, in addition to clear leadership strategies, implementation, monitoring and evaluation procedures seem to be related to programmes' long-lasting success. The work with families in need is a challenging job that should be based on strong professional knowledge (e.g. about the specific characteristics of the target group, about consulting methods, developmental psychology) and driven by an attitude of respect that each parent is an expert of their own child and has as much resources to share as the practitioner himself. Promising or successful programmes establish structured and continuous systems of supervision and professional development for their staff.

1.3.4. USE OF ICT

The integration and use of ICT is seen as a promising approach for family support programmes. However, the interview results showed that ICT - to date is so far an unused resource and facilitator. In some cases it is used as a communication tool to overcome language challenges. However, it is still not seen as a success factor by all representatives in the examined approaches, although implemented officially in the concept of two programmes. We point to the potential benefits of strategic ICT use within the programmes. The implementation of ICT tools needs to be adapted to the needs of the providers and families and should be supported through the professional development of the staff.

1.3.5. FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

Even in otherwise very promising and successful programmes, the support of the first language (L1 support) seems to be either not considered or uncoordinated and seems to be supported partially, arbitrarily or at random. The decisions of programme's coordinators on which language is supposed to be supported – first home language, country language or multilingualism – is not based on evidence or on differentiated knowledge but rather based on rules or guidelines. The interviews showed that these guidelines in turn were more influenced by programme's circumstances or political changes. Migrant parents' attitudes towards L1 support seem to be two-fold: They value and wish the integration of their first languages in the programme and at the same time they stress the importance of the main language spoken in the country they live in order to enable their children to have the best opportunities within the educational system. The

findings point to a strong need to support providers and staff to implement L1 support in a reflective and coordinated way, considering parents' perspectives on this topic.

1.4. EXISTING CHALLENGES

Although we investigated programmes that were proven to be successful and programmes with very promising approaches, the interviews and focus groups also revealed that effective family support is faced with challenges that are not easy to overcome, and this relates to all categories examined. Programmes may have developed effective outreach strategies for one specific target group, but this strategy may not be effective for other target groups within the area. The same holds true for content and activities of programmes. Thus, providers and staff are asked to reflect and evaluate their attitudes and activities continuously and invest continuous efforts into adaptations for new/other target groups, societal changes or changes within settings.

Furthermore, sometimes changes ask for rethinking core principles such as the beneficial effects of cooperation in general. Family support programmes need to adopt knowledge and strategies from other disciplines, for example the implementation and development of leadership models. Otherwise, technological and linguistic knowledge may not be widespread across programme professionals. This may be a reason for the fact that L1 and ICT support have not been strongly and/or successfully implemented so far.

Finally, funding is essential for any social intervention programme, but principles of funding follow quite often short-term rationales and are not supportive for the long-term quality of an intervention.

Following up on this, the findings are reflected against the background of existing research, and policy recommendations for providers and policy-makers are derived.

2. INTRODUCTION

Social and cognitive differences already exist between children at the early age of three; in particular, children from socially disadvantaged families and families with a migrant background lag behind their peers of the same age (Anders et al., 2012; Cadima, McWilliam, & Leal, 2010; Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm, & Waldfogel, 2004; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2002; Weinert, Ebert, & Dubowy, 2010). Parents directly influence their child's development, especially in the very early years of life. A rich home learning environment (HLE), in particular, can have a positive influence on the child's development (Adi-Japha & Klein, 2009; Bradley, H., 2016; Kluczniok, Lehrl, Kuger, & Roszbach, 2013; Melhuish et al., 2008; Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011; Skwarchuk, Sowinski, & LeFevre, 2014). Ways to support parents in providing a stimulating and rich home learning environment for their child are the establishment of partnerships between (pre-)schools and parents as well as ways to develop and implement family support programmes that address parents' needs before their children enroll in educational institutions (Sénéchal & Young, 2008).

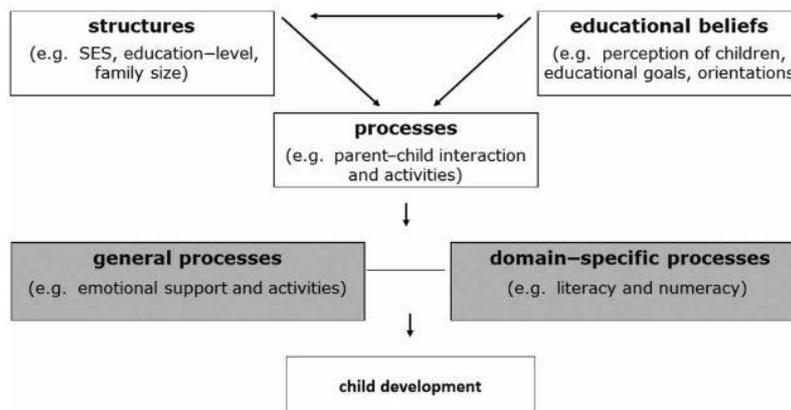
Within the ISOTIS framework, Work package 3 (D3) addresses the role of parenting support and home-based educational programmes in supporting parents in creating safe, nurturing and stimulating home environments. The overall objective is to create a broad overview of existing approaches in order to collect available evidence and to examine in-depth good practices to be able to formulate widely applicable recommendations for the development and implementation of parent- and family-focused support programmes.

Based on the core theoretical models described in the review of D3.1 (Anders, Cadima, Evangelou, & Nata, 2017), the inventory report (Cadima et al., 2018) identified and discussed programmes in various European countries in-depth and in detail regarding potential challenges and factors of success concerning the different target groups and their specific needs. A particular interest was set on approaches valuing or supporting the first language of immigrant groups as well as programmes making use of ICT. The inventory and the results of an expert panel form the basis for the selection of five particular programmes with a focus on parent empowerment for the case study D3.3 in four different countries. The present part of D3 (case studies) aims at investigating key features of successful or promising interventions, approaches, programmes or projects for parent and family support in four European countries (England, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal), identified by involved actors of different levels (financier, provider, staff, participants).

Consequently, the following sections will provide an overview on the theoretical model of the home learning environment and clarify the potential influence of family support programmes, before outlining the present research approach.

2.1. THEORETICAL MODEL OF HOME LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Family characteristics have a strong impact on child development. According to system-theory, the family is described as the first highly influential micro-system the child encounters during the course of its life. Educational scientists highlight the role of the family as a learning environment that stimulates child development in various ways. As presented in D3.1 (Anders et al., 2017), the quality of a home environment is a multidimensional concept referring to the educational function of the family. The HLE is composed of different quality dimensions: structures, processes, and educational beliefs. All of them affect the child's development to varying degrees (cf. Figure 1) (Lehrl, 2018). Structural quality includes not only the educational level, income and origin of the parents, but also the size of the family and the level of equipment (e.g. number of rooms per person). These characteristics are relatively stable over time and have a direct impact on the quality of the pedagogical processes that take place between parents and child. Interactions exist between structural quality and the orientations of a family. Orientations are ideas and opinions predominating within the family with regard to the conveyance of values, parenting behaviour, and the development of the child. These in turn have a direct influence on the process quality within a family. There is a distinction between global process quality, i.e. general activities that take place between child and parents and have an influence on the development of the child, and area-specific process quality. The latter include activities that relate to specific areas, such as reading or mathematics. Both, the global and the domain-specific process quality characteristics ultimately have a direct effect on the development of children's competences



(Lehrl, 2018).

Figure 1. Framework of the home learning environment (Kluczniok et al., 2013)

In summary, parental beliefs and structural aspects have an influence on the quality of activities and interactions (processes) within the family. Process quality in turn has an impact on child development. The interaction of the various quality dimensions of the HLE has been shown in numerous studies (Bradley, R. H., Corwyn, Burchinal, McAdoo, & Coll, 2001; Kluczniok et al.,

2013; Tietze et al., 1998). Empirical evidence can also be found for the effects of family background factors (Anders et al., 2012; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Blatchford, & Taggart, 2004). Apparently, structural risk factors (e.g. low education or low income) tend to correlate. Although some researchers emphasize that structural aspects of the HLE do not fully determine process quality (Bornstein & Bradley, 2003; Sylva et al., 2004), there is still an association between less positive interactions as well as less stimulating activities and structural disadvantages (Bradley, R. H. et al., 2001; Sylva et al., 2004).

After explaining the theoretical model of Home Learning Environment and the importance for child development in this section, the following section discusses how family support programmes can help to improve the Home Learning Environment and child development.

2.2. FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

Family support programmes aim at supporting parents to provide a rich and stimulating HLE for their children. A number of various programmes have been developed and implemented with different approaches. Gordon (1983) distinguishes between universal and target group-specific approaches. The former are aimed at all families and have a universal preventive character. The latter describe programmes whose contents refer to families with potential risk factors (e.g. low income, low level of education or having a migration background). In addition, there is a distinction between course content and course formats (Brooks-Gunn, 2003). While some programmes are designed in a broad way and offer support in a variety of areas, other programmes offer specific content related to certain aspects of the HLE, e.g. helping parents to create more stimulating learning activities. Furthermore, there is a distinction between different methods of delivery. Home-based programmes aim to promote the HLE by training parents in order to improve their parental skills and in turn, indirectly encourage child development. Parents receive tools for better understanding of their child's needs, and to be able to respond better to those needs. Therefore, child development is indirectly stimulated by a home-based approach. In contrast, center-based approaches provide children with direct learning experiences, which is the case in preschool settings, for example (Blok, Fukkink, Gebhardt, & Leseman, 2005). Various strategies can be pursued to support families and enhance the quality of HLE (Cadima et al., 2018). One possible strategy of center-based approaches is to provide an earlier access to early childhood education for families at risk and to raise their attendance rates. Another strategy is to strengthen the partnership between parents and preschools. A combination of home-based and center-based approaches seem to be the most effective (Blok et al., 2005).

After clarifying the different approaches to provide family support programmes, we now discuss good and effective approaches according to the existing literature. Successful programmes do not just work with children, but also include parents (Kuger, Sechtig, & Anders, 2012). They also strengthen parental competences through different modes of delivery, such as through parenting

courses or home visits. Furthermore, programmes with a broad approach and different services show better effects (Blok et al., 2005; Ramey & Ramey, 1998; Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, & Angell, 1994). Programmes that start very early in childhood (Layzer, Goodson, Bernstein, & Price), that are attended more frequently and regularly (Nievar, van Egeren, & Pollard, 2010; Ramey & Ramey, 1998) and those with a longer duration, spanning several years (Denham & Burton, 2003) seem to have a more positive influence on child and parental outcomes.

Various long-term studies show that early family support programmes have important influences on child development (Heckman, 2006; Karoly, Kilburn, & Cannon, 2005; Shonkoff & Fisher, 2013; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), which effects may continue to be visible in later adult life (Karoly et al., 2005; Nelson, Westhues, & MacLeod, 2003; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2002; Teti, Cole, Cabrera, Goodman, & McLoyd, 2017).

Apart from these quite general characteristics, the Inventory report D3.2 gives more specific hints to key features of successful or promising family support programmes, particularly with regard to dealing with multiculturalism and multilingualism and the use of ICT. Cadima et al. (2018) found that low threshold and the avoidance of stigmatization characterize highly outreaching and effective parent support approaches. A successful outreach to the target group is as important as the fit of the content to the target group. However, the challenge is to reach the respective target group in the first place. Family programmes often face challenges to reach out to particular socially disadvantaged families and families with a migrant background (Heinrichs, Bertram, Kuschel, & Hahlweg, 2005; Lösel, 2006; Snell-Johns, Mendez, & Smith, 2004; Wilke, Hachfeld, Höhl, & Anders, 2014; Wittke, 2012). Furthermore, strategies that promote the outreach of the programmes (e.g. involvement of target group members as staff) do not necessarily foster the process quality of the intervention itself. Cadima et al. (2017) show that a high process quality and a high quality of the programme implementation constitute good family support programmes. In addition, those good programmes are characterized by a high level of expertise, scientific support or evaluation studies.

2.3. RESEARCH QUESTION

In the present case study, we aimed to obtain in-depth knowledge of the success factors of parent- and family-focused (home-based) approaches to improve the quality of family environments. Thus, we wanted to shed light on how promising or already proven to be successful programmes overcome existing challenges and ensure high outreach and process quality. In addition, we wanted to explore strategies of implementing the home languages of culturally diverse target groups and ICT in the programmes. Based on the potentially promising or good-practice cases described in the inventory, we selected five programmes from four different European countries – England, Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal. We analysed expectations, experiences and success factors from the perspective of participants, staff, providers and financing institutions by

qualitative interviews and focus group interviews. Characteristics of interest have been the strategies of outreach, the role of cooperation, requirements of financier, provider and staff members, the use of families' linguistics resources and the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the programmes. The comparative analysis aimed at identifying common strategies across programmes in the different countries, and how strategies need to be tailored to the specific characteristics of the communities, cities, or countries or to the specific characteristics of the target groups within the given contexts. To be able to do so, we analysed similarities as well as differences across programmes, interview levels and with regard to specific target groups.

We discuss our findings in light of the existing literature and transfer them into concrete policy recommendations that can guide practitioners, scientists and politicians to set up successful intervention programmes to overcome the described challenges of such approaches.

3. METHOD

3.1. DESIGN

The present case study is based on a qualitative methodological approach and designed as a comparative analysis of promising parent- and family-focused programmes in Europe. In addition to the quantitative results (see section 2.2), the qualitative approach emphasizes a deeper understanding of the strategies, processes and underlying success factors by listening to the different views at all levels of the programme (financiers, providers, staff, participating parents). To identify key success factors, each of the four participating countries selected at least one promising or already proven to be effective programme for an in-depth interview study based on the inventory report and the expert panel conducted as part of D3.2. Data collection involved several interviews at different levels of interaction to generate diverse perspectives on ideas, opinions, and experiences with regard to success factors. We conducted four different interviews in each programme, each with:

- the provider
- the funding institution (financier)
- the staff
- the participants.

We conducted two types of interviews: expert interviews and focus groups. In an expert interview, the interviewees are perceived as experts in a certain field of activity with specific professional knowledge, and as representatives of a certain group (Flick, 2009). One representative of the funding institution as well as one representative of the provider were interviewed individually as experts. Through focus groups, verbal data of a discussion between interviewees on a specific topic are collected (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001). In this case study, we conducted two focus groups with several programme participants (e.g., parents) and staff members.

3.2. SELECTION

Each country team selected at least one family support programme implemented in their own country according to the following criteria:

1. The programme must be included in the ISOTIS inventory of D3.2.
2. Target groups of the programme reflect target groups of the ISOTIS project, namely socially disadvantaged families and migrant families.
3. The programme is partly or fully evaluated in a positive/effective way or is considered promising [A promising programme is newly developed and defined by experts as innovative regarding the country-specific circumstances (see Inventory D3.2)].
4. The programme has an excellent outreach and/or seeks to promote the home language and/or has implemented a component of ICT.

Table 1 and the following sections describe and justify the selected programmes of each country.

Table 1. Selection criteria of the different programmes of each country.

Selection Criteria						
Programme (Country)	Target Group	Evaluation	Innovation	Successful outreach to	L1 Support	ICT
Chancenreich (Germany)	Universal	completed	bonus system; universal, modular approach	low SES, migrant and unemployed families	—————	(in preparation)
Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln (Germany)	migrant families (esp. Arabic and Turkish)	completed	peer-to-peer outreach	migrant families (esp. Arabic and Turkish)	visits in/ general support of L1	—————
Step Programme (Netherlands)	migrant and low SES families	completed	—————	disadvantaged families, widely disseminated, local contacts	translations into other languages, Staff speaking L1 (when possible)	interactive website (more in preparation)
(Class)rooms of glass from both sides (Portugal)	deprived Roma families	—————	highly deprived target group	low threshold in the community	—————	—————
Family Skills (England)	migrant families of primary school children	completed	—————	—————	focus on literacy and language in L1	—————

The table illustrates that each target group and overarching beneficial factor (completed evaluation, highly innovative, high outreach, L1 support, implementation of ICT) is represented in at least two country contexts. This design allows the comparative analysis to identify universal (cross-country) strategies that help the programme to be successful and effective as well as the need to adapt strategies and practices for the country or to target group specific needs in order to achieve or maintain success.

3.2.1. CHANCENREICH

The German family support programme *Chancenreich* is a regional programme offering various support services to all families with newborns, including disadvantaged and migrant families. It connects, in an innovative approach, with the described target groups, despite being offered to all families: Through a modular structure of the programme and an implemented bonus system, it reaches specifically families in which parents are unemployed as well as families with a low socio economic status. *Chancenreich* was chosen because of its excellent outreach. Additionally this programme was fully evaluated by the Freie Universität Berlin (Wilke et al., 2014). More

information on the programme can be found in Appendix E.

3.2.2. STADTTEILMÜTTER IN NEUKÖLLN

Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln is a German programme located in Berlin. It supports migrant families and unemployed mothers with a migration background. After the unemployed mothers receive an educational training, they reach out to families in their communities. It has a two-fold strategy, on the one hand it qualifies women with a migrant background for the job market. On the other hand, the work of the women (*Stadtteilmütter*) aims at supporting the families by providing help and advice on their children's upbringing and allowing the mothers to participate in the community work and thus improve the integration process of migrant families in Berlin. Furthermore, the programme enables participants to speak their native language. The programme *Stadtteilmütter* was chosen because of its excellent outreach. It particularly targets families and mothers with a Turkish or Arabic migration background. The programme was evaluated as well; the evaluation confirmed the excellent outreach to disadvantaged and underprivileged families with a migration background, which is especially important because they usually belong to the hard to reach groups concerning educational and social services (Koch, 2009). More information on the programme can be found in Appendix F.

3.2.3. STEP PROGRAMME

In the Netherlands, the *Step Programme* was selected because of its excellent outreach, its support of the family's home language and the comprehensive evaluation. Additionally, the programme integrated ICT as a tool to support children and parents. The *Step Programme* is an overarching family support programme offering help for vulnerable families with children aged one to six years. Families attending the programme have a high risk for educational disadvantages because of their low socioeconomic status and/or their ethnic background. Since the programme is aiming on enhancing the home environment for those families, the goals are to improve the cognitive and linguistic development, the learning attitude of the children and the quality of parent-child interactions at home. The programme offers four modules that are specifically designed for the different age groups of the children, which include home visits, group meetings and family activities for the week. Evaluations of the *Step Programme* reveal positive outcomes for participating children and families. Studies show positive effects on the academic achievements and linguistic skills of participating children (Leseman & van Tuijl, 2001; Teepe, Molenaar, Oostdam, Fukink, & Verhoeven, 2017; van Tuijl, 2002, 2004). Participating parents showed a higher quality of parent-child interaction (van Tuijl & Siebes, 2006), and felt more competent in teaching and learning with their children (Sann & Thrum, 2005). More information on the programme can be found in Appendix G.

3.2.4. INSIDE AND BEYOND (CLASS)ROOMS OF GLASS

The Portuguese team chose the programme *Inside and Beyond (Class)rooms of glass*¹. The programme aims to reach out to extremely deprived Roma parents and children to tackle the educational disadvantages existing in the community. Through play-based activities in informal community spaces and weekly sessions in preschool settings, the programme's goals are to gain the trust of children and families in the Roma community, provide parental support, raise the awareness about the importance of preschool and strengthen the family-school relationship. To achieve these goals, the staff of the programme focuses on the promotion of child development, specifically communication, language and social skills. Due to its highly innovative approach and its high outreach to Roma community families, the programme was selected as a promising programme in Portugal. More information on the programme can be found in Appendix H.

3.2.5. FAMILY SKILLS

Family Skills is a programme in England that was selected based on its focus on and support of families with young children for whom English is an additional language (EAL). The main aim of the programme is to raise children's literacy attainment by enhancing parents' confidence, knowledge and skills to support their child's learning. Beyond a focus on strengthening parents' knowledge of the English school system and the ways of teaching and learning in primary school in England, one important focus of the programme is to promote the benefits of bilingualism and the use of heritage language. The content of the session addresses home literacy, reading and phonics, as well as oral traditions, the use of heritage language, and the benefits of bilingualism (Cara, 2018; Learning Unlimited, 2016). Sessions are led by external family learning tutors who work for local providers of adult/family learning. Delivery takes place in primary schools. Children attend part of the sessions with their parents, and staff in school are asked to cooperate in the delivery.

The programme is considered to be highly promising due to its development based on existing knowledge of previous family learning programmes. The external evaluation of the *Family Skills* programme, based on a control group setting, did not show significant differences in children's literacy outcomes between children of parents who were offered the intervention and those whose parents were not (Husain et al., 2018; NatCen, 2016). One main reason for this was issues with outreach – around two thirds of eligible parents did not attend any of the sessions that were offered. Additional exploratory analysis (and results have to be treated with care) showed more progress for children whose parents did attend at least one session. Findings of an internal evaluation of *Family Skills* showed a wide range of benefits for families who participated in the programme, including parents' increased confidence to support their child's learning, increased social networks, improved practices of learning with children through play and learning in their

¹ Henceforth, the programme will be referred as "*(Class)rooms of glass*" for convenience reasons (length).

home language (Cara, 2018). More information on the programme can be found in Appendix I.

3.3. INTERVIEW SAMPLE

For each programme several interviews and focus groups were conducted. The following subsections report on the country-specifics.

3.3.1. CHANCENREICH

For the *Chancenreich* programme, two individual expert interviews with the financier and provider of *Chancenreich* as well as two focus groups were conducted. The focus group of staff members consisted of seven women, including three family visitors, three current course leaders, and one retired course leader with diverse professional backgrounds. Most of the interviewees have been involved with *Chancenreich* for several years. The focus group of participants consisted of three mothers. Only one mother was still involved in the programme. The others had participated when their children were younger. Expert interviews took between 30 and 60 minutes, focus groups lasted for 80 to 90 minutes. All interviews were face-to-face interviews, only the interview with the provider was conducted and audio-recorded via phone (see Appendix E).

3.3.2. STADTTEILMÜTTER IN NEUKÖLLN

Two individual expert interviews with the financier at county level and the provider were conducted for the *Stadtteilmütter* approach. Furthermore, two focus group interviews were carried out: One with six staff members and one with two participants of the programme. The focus group of staff members consisted of six so-called *Stadtteilmütter* [neighborhood mothers] with diverse cultural backgrounds. All of them have been involved as staff members for at least one year. One of the interviewed participants was a mother who recently finished participating in the programme. The language abilities in German by the other participating mothers were very limited (see Appendix F).

3.3.3. STEP PROGRAMME

In the Netherlands, individual interviews were carried out with two financiers from the municipality, the national and the local coordinator of the programme. Furthermore, the Dutch team led a focus group with four female staff members; two staff members had a different ethnic background. Only one parent (a mother who recently finished the *Step Up* module) was interviewed via phone. The duration of the focus groups and interviews was between 50 to 80 minutes (see Appendix G).

3.3.4. (CLASS)ROOMS OF GLASS

In Portugal, individual expert interviews with the financier, provider, and staff members of the programme were conducted. Additionally, four parents, whose children were still involved in the programme, were interviewed in a loose group setting. The interviews took between 30 and 100 minutes and were conducted face-to-face. Staff members were female and had different

professional backgrounds. The four interviewed parents, two being female, had very low socio-economic and educational levels (see Appendix H).

3.3.5. FAMILY SKILLS

In England, data collection was carried out through expert interviews, parent interviews and focus group discussions. Interviewees included the financier, who was the senior project manager from the main funding agency of the programme; two national providers who were the manager/directors of the organisations leading in the development and delivery of the programme; two parents with different language and cultural backgrounds, who had participated in the programme in two different regions in England; and seven staff members who had delivered the programme in different regions in England. The length of the interviews ranged between 30 and 90 minutes (see Appendix I).

3.4. INSTRUMENTS (INTERVIEW GUIDELINE)

All country partners used the same general interview guideline with thematic blocks of interest and research questions for all interview levels (see Appendix A, B, C, and D). Based on this, each country partner translated and adapted questions to their specific interview partners and circumstances. Thematic blocks contained the topics motivation, perceived success factors, expectations, challenges, outreach, use of cooperation, as well as requirements. Additionally, the interviewer could enquire about the use of information and communication technology (ICT) as well as first language support (L1 support).

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

The interviews were analysed with qualitative content analysis. In order to validate an existing framework and as a support for creating the initial coding scheme, a directed form of content analysis was used (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Deductively derived main categories were enriched with specific definitions, anchor samples, as well as coding rules in order to explicitly show which text components belong to which category (Mayring, 2014). These coding guidelines were provided by the German team. According to the ISOTIS' goals, our questions of interest, and the existing literature, the main categories included: outreach, cooperation, requirements, ICT usage, and support of the home language. Table 2 depicts the main categories, including definitions, anchor samples, and coding rules.

Table 2. *Categories of analyses including definition and anchor samples.*

Category	Description	Example
Outreach	Text phrases include the description and/or strategies of reaching the target group.	"The course itself doesn't matter, the most important is that everyone is attending."
Cooperation	Text phrases include the description and/or strategies of cooperation with other organisations/institutions/ persons.	"The idea was to invite relevant groups to regular meetings, [...], and give them report about our activities and bring them on board and they can express their opinion."
Requirements	Text phrases relate to personal or professional requirements of provider, financier, staff, or participants (e.g., language skills, charisma, relational skills)	"...when they [family visitors] are known in the neighbourhood, this is what matters." "For this we need their help and their expertise, so to humble yourself a bit and to communicate: we are not the ones who found the wisdom, but we are the ones who need your support to work together on this topic."
ICT	Text phrases relate to opinions about and/or involvement of ICT-based technology within the programme	"I hope they use the Tablet or iPhone or perhaps look into it, because its more/rather their medium of communication."
First language support	Text phrases relate to opinions about and/or strategies of the programme to improve first languages	"Our recommendation is to speak the language you speak best."
Others	(To be determined by country team)	

Data that could not be coded was marked and later it was determined if it represents a new category (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As a next step, assigned data in each category was summarized and inductive subcategories were formed (Mayring, 2014). Each country conducted as well as analysed all interviews by themselves following the presented coding guidelines.

The German partner analysed all provided data in a comparative way in order to derive strategies and processes that work across countries and analyse how strong country-specific adaptations need to be made to ensure the success of an intervention.

To provide results of a high quality, we applied a double coding strategy for the coding process of the main categories. Two researchers in each country team coded the same text material; the final coding process was not blindly reviewed, but rather a part and the results of a feedback loop.

4. RESULTS

In this chapter, we describe the findings regarding the general success factors of the programmes by summarizing the results of the different levels. We compare the programmes and work out similarities and differences regarding effective strategies for outreach, cooperation, requirements, integration of ICT and support of the first language. Successful and promising programmes still face challenges of various kinds. These will be described and discussed afterwards.

4.1. OUTREACH

Interview partners of all levels of the investigated programmes described strategies to achieve high outreach. In general, we worked out **two main success factors contributing to effective outreach**: the establishment and use of **trusting relationships and a strong** adaptability and flexibility **towards the needs of the target group** in a given context. According to the interviewees, both factors serve to initially approach the target group as well as for retention. Interestingly, staff members perceived the first contact and beginning of participation as more important than the maintenance aspect.

During data analysis, it became clear that even though providers and financiers addressed similar issues in comparison to staff members and participating parents, they expressed and framed them in a slightly different way. Whereas providers and financiers often spoke more abstractly about broader principles, staff and parents referred to very practical hands-on strategies used in everyday settings. This observation reflects their roles within the programmes. The provider and sometimes the financier conceptualize and manage the programme and communicate for a broader audience, whereas staff members translate the overall principles into practice and, therefore, describe rather explicit mechanisms. Parents see and experience those mechanisms and report their perspective on them.

We did not just find differences between interview levels. We also found that the overarching factors – trusting relationships and adaptability towards the target group – **were translated differently into each programme's practice**. The following subsections describe the specific strategies of country- and programme-specific translations in more detail.

4.1.1. TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

“I believe, the main success factor is the kind of relationship between the family visitors and the family”, explained the provider of *Chancenreich*. The statement touches upon something that all interviewees talked about: the relational bonds and existing networks as the most effective outreach strategies. However, interviewees reported different strategies on how to build and maintain them. On the one hand, interviewees perceived the relationship between families and institutions or third parties as an important tool for outreach. Among others, the programme *Family Skills* strongly pursued this strategy. The provider of *Family Skills* stated: “Where it was really

successful it was all about relationships and the existing relationship the school had with the families, or where they had a really good intermediary who already had relationships with parents.”

On the other hand, it became particularly clear that personal, face-to-face encounters between staff and family members opened the doors for families to participate in the programmes. For successful relationship building, the interviewees underlined the importance of meeting parents with respect and on the same eye level, so they felt empowered, taken seriously, and valued. In these terms, parents are seen as experts of their own children in their home environment. “She [home visitor] didn’t come and just showed her pedagogical background; she was really down to earth” (participating parent of *Chancenreich*). To foster closeness and create trust, the interviewees often perceived it as helpful when staff members shared similar experiences or backgrounds as the target group. A staff member of the *Step Programme* explained, “I came there as a Moroccan lady, and they [the family] were also Moroccan. So they were thinking, ‘We cannot say no to her, we cannot refuse to let her in.’” Similarly, the financier of *(Class)rooms of glass* expressed: “I think that they have resorted to people with knowledge, with field knowledge and with experience of working precisely with these kind of communities [meaning Roma]”. The provider of *Chancenreich* emphasized the importance of existing relationships to staff members: “The family visitor is known in the neighborhood; they [the families] won’t let someone in, they don’t know.”

In both German family support programmes, staff members and participants considered the differentiation between staff of the programme and staff of the youth welfare office as very important to create trust and openness. Interviewees described the relationship with the youth office as fearful and negatively loaded.

Next to the relationship between staff and families, the interviewees mentioned the even more informal ways of recruitment via inter-parental relationships and word-of-mouth recommendation. “When it comes to making the programme known, I find a lot is still working through word-of-mouth recommendation” (participating parent of *Chancenreich*).

There was one interesting finding regarding a specific programme characteristic of *Chancenreich* that all interviewees of this particular programme agreed on: the financial incentive in the form of free courses and a €500 bonus for attending all mandatory modules. The provider of *Chancenreich* viewed the incentive as “an additional appeal” to participate in the programme, whereas the financier of the programme considered the bonus rather conceptually, namely as appreciation for parents’ effort in raising their children. She said: “Where else do we have that in society, that someone comes and pats on parents’ back and says: It is great that you take part in that, thank you? Here you receive this also in the form of money.” For this reason, we understand the financial incentive is a strategy to build trust between the families and the programme. In comparison, the staff considered the bonus to be a “door opener” and a way to “reach out to

families who really need it in a low-threshold way”; the participants also perceived it as a factor supporting the perseverance of participants (“You need to work a little bit for the bonus”). Irrespective of the financial incentives, the role of indirect incentives should also be noted here. Such indirect incentives may be for example additional materials or access to other resources, that are used as successful outreach strategies in the other programmes as well (e.g. the *Step Programme*).

4.1.2. ADAPTABILITY TOWARDS THE TARGET GROUP

It became very clear through the interviews that another very important factor for successfully involving families in a support programme is to adapt to the needs and circumstances of the target group. In general, **adaptability towards the target group** comprised three aspects: **outreach locality, attractiveness of the programme’s content, and structural conditions**. Adaptability is a general principle, but it is **met by each programme very differently** in accordance to the specific needs and objectives.

According to our interviewees, it is indispensable that representatives of a programme reach the target groups at places where they naturally spend their time, and not expect them to come to the site of the programme. These relevant places can differ between programmes and countries. Concrete strategies included visiting families at home (e.g., *Chancenreich* and *Step Programme*) or in their neighbourhoods (e.g., *(Class)rooms of glass*), and being present in institutions relevant to the target group, such as schools (e.g., *Family Skills*), agencies, or doctor’s waiting rooms (e.g., *Stadtteilmütter*). The provider of *Chancenreich* summarized this as a way to “meet people in their environment”. Similarly, the provider of *Stadtteilmütter* reported: “Then they sit down at the pediatrician in the waiting room and chat with the families and at some point, they find one who says: ‘Yes, okay, that sounds interesting, I can imagine.’”

Furthermore, in three of the programmes, the group of parents emphasized the importance of visibility of the programme within their environments. Programme participants either complained about the lack of visibility in the region (parent of the *Step Programme*) or specifically appreciated the visibility in the form of symbols or flyers within their districts (parent of *Stadtteilmütter* and *Family Skills*). The fact that interviewees from other levels did not mention this might indicate that welfare programmes often lack effective marketing strategies or do not see the need for marketing as much. However, our findings show that participants perceive the marketing and if it is absent, wish for more.

It became also clear that the content of the programme needs to be adapted to the target groups’ needs and wishes in order to win them over. A staff member of *(Class)rooms of glass* puts it in the following words: “I end up understanding the other side, [...] I think that, well, it changes our way of looking, [...] and to learn to deal in a different way in the classroom”. Similarly, the provider of the *Step Programme* reported: “And it is the responsibility of the staff, to look at the parents

and to adapt the activity or to do it in another way [...] for example materials for activities, we try to use many materials from the household, like spoons, cups, so many you can use! You don't need expensive toys. And that helps the parents, because it should have a low threshold. This programme is not only for parents that could pay for toys, on the contrary." A reflective handling of programme contents means identifying and including interesting and relevant topics for the target groups as well as integrating practical activities with children useful for parents (esp. for *(Class)rooms of glass* and *Family Skills*).

The last and very important aspect mentioned regarding adaptability towards families was related to structural issues of the programme. The possibility of initial low-threshold participation, pleasant schedules regarding times and places of classes or meetings, as well as publicly selling the programme as not targeting only problem groups are examples that facilitated families to decide upon participating.

4.1.3. SUMMARY

The findings revealed two main strategies used for outreach of successful programmes: trusting relationships and adaptability towards the target group. These main aspects represent common principles of successful outreach. However, the in-depth qualitative analysis showed how these common principles were implemented in the different programmes. Successful and innovative approaches meet their target groups through trusted organizations and individuals at places where families naturally spend their time. Stakeholders of a programme make it visible through communication channels seen and listened to by the target group. They set up initial low-threshold participation possibilities, pleasant schedules regarding times and places of classes or meetings, and promote the programme in a non-stigmatizing way. However, the partners involved, communication channels used, and concrete activities need to be carefully adapted to the specific needs of the families.

4.2. COOPERATION

Next to effective outreach strategies, we sought to reveal if and how cooperation with other partners or stakeholders is used for the programmes' success from the perspective of different actors involved with the programme.

Similar to what we found in the outreach category, there was a natural gradient between the statements and descriptions of financiers and providers in contrast to staff and parents. The first two mainly referred to general ideas about cooperation and talked about cooperation with political stakeholders and committees for programme development, general outreach, as well as evaluations. Financiers in particular raised the important issue of the necessity to balance out cooperation and collaboration with the need for autonomy and independence. In contrast, the staff viewed cooperation as a means to better support the participating parents – for example,

through providing relevant information or referring them to other institutions. Most of the interviewed parents were not able to respond to the questions about cooperation. The topic seemed to be hard to grasp for them.

In general, we found that all investigated **programmes made strategic use of cooperation**. Four out of five programmes used cooperation **as an integrated programme component for an effective outreach, for professional development**, and as a strategic method **for an external evaluation** of the programme. Each aspect is conducted slightly differently in each country and will be outlined in more detail below. In this context, it is important to note that the Portuguese programme used cooperation in a different way in comparison to the other programmes. *(Class)rooms of glass* representatives did not value cooperation in the same way as the other programmes. Provider and staff perceived cooperation as subordinate compared to outreach and trustful relationships with parents, which is contradicting with their particular target group. However, the programme was developed for a school and is also highly integrated within this school. This can be seen as a form of internal cooperation. We discuss the issue in more detail in the section 4.6 Existing Challenges.

4.2.1. COOPERATION AS PROGRAMME COMPONENT

Internal as well as external cooperation was generally perceived as a deeply integrated programme component with different faces. As one aspect of this, interviewees reported a structural and natural cooperation with schools, public offices or other institutions relevant for the target group. For example, the courses of *Family Skills* and *Step* are conducted in local schools, staff members of *Stadtteilmütter* are present in local preschools, and the modules of *Chancenreich* are interconnected with existing tenders. A staff member of *Stadtteilmütter* reported: "I also think that teachers and educators respect us very much. In many schools, teachers have my number and they call me when there's something to do." Another interviewee said: "If there are any celebrations or resident surveys in the neighborhood, many institutions come to us and ask for help: We plan this and that, can you inform the families [...]?" (provider of *Stadtteilmütter*).

Another aspect of cooperation as a programme component is the use of staff members as mediators to other institutions. For example, staff members refer parents to institutions specialized for certain family issues (e.g., *Chancenreich*) or they establish contact to public offices if necessary. "We are in contact with the youth welfare office if there are any problems. They know us and we know them very well. We'll put some families in touch with the youth welfare office, if necessary" (staff member of *Stadtteilmütter*). They sometimes even serve as translators in doctor's or public offices.

4.2.2. COOPERATION FOR OUTREACH

The analysed programmes clearly use cooperation with external organisations or institutions relevant to the target group – such as schools (e.g., *Family Skills*, *Step Programme*), preschools (e.g., *Stadtteilmütter*, *Step Programme*), or pediatricians (e.g., *Chancenreich*) – for reaching out to them. A participating parent of *Chancenreich* explained: “The pediatrician pointed out the programme *Chancenreich*. [...] There were many institutions that made me aware of the programme, so I had a positive impression from the beginning on”. This statement not only explicates that other institutions promoted the programme, but also that the participating parent perceived and appreciated the good reputation of the programme within other stakeholders in the area. Similarly, a staff member of the *Step Programme* told us: “She [staff at Baby and Toddler Health centres] wants to link me as a contact person, [...] that they can contact me and that I can contact them.”

4.2.3. COOPERATION FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Another use of cooperation refers to developing and improving the programmes through new ideas and extended professional knowledge. The financier of *Chancenreich* recollected memories from the start of the programme: “Then, we walked through the landscape and [...] met once with all stakeholders of the scene [...]. We simply talked with them about what they do, how they are organized, where problems occur, how they work. We tried to get an understanding of the topic ›early education‹ and out of this, our first project developed.” Similarly, the staff of *Family Skills* reported that they explicitly sought information from other institutions before the start of the programme: “We met with the primary school teachers before the course started to find out if there was anything they particularly thought we should include in the course.” One of the providers of *Family Skills* also emphasized a kind of internal collaboration between provider and delivery partners to foster a sense of ownership and to include the experience and knowledge of many by saying: “We sent them a summary of what we were trying to achieve and the target audience. We also invited them to co-create the final programme because there were many people doing this kind of work, but it is not coordinated. There is not a fixed programme, but there is lots of expertise. We did a development day, not to sell them the concept, but much more to involve them in the final delivery product so that they had some ownership of it.”

Later in the programme, *Chancenreich* established a strategic panel that regularly met with local stakeholders for an open exchange with them. In addition, the *Step Programme* initiated a strong collaboration with external partners: “You need each other, you cannot do this on your own as staff. We [organisation and (pre)school] also try to communicate with each other when things are not working out [...]. You start to come up with ideas like that. [...] It really is a collaboration” (Provider of *Step Programme*).

In both German family support programmes, cooperation with local politicians was used for programme development and advocating for the target group. For example, the provider of *Stadtteilmütter* reported: "The mayor [...] then took care that in 2006 all quarters were opened, that is, the women were allowed to visit more than their own neighborhood. He also supported the cooperation with the job center, so that the women who were unemployed - and most of them were – now are allowed to work under these employment measures".

4.2.4. COOPERATION FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

All providers and financiers (besides *(Class)rooms of glass*) talked about the necessity of monitoring their work and scientific cooperation in order to evaluate programmes empirically. For example, the financier of the *Step Programme* reported: "That's why we have such a study [from the external research organisation], because we were wondering whether the programme still fits the needs, [...] so we can see whether we can offer something else in certain neighbourhoods."

A quote from one of the providers of *Family Skills* also underlines the importance of scientific cooperation: "When we saw the opportunity for a very rigorous evaluation of the project, we thought that could be really interesting and valuable. And also the fact that it would provide the opportunity for us to work in close partnership with other organisations and other delivery partners across the country so that we could share what we were all doing between ourselves and use the good practice that already exists to develop a curriculum that we would then all deliver."

4.2.5. SUMMARY

The programmes strategically use cooperation in different ways. They use it as a deeply integrated component of the programme, for an effective outreach, as a strategy for professional development, or for external evaluation of the programme. In contrast, *(Class)rooms of glass* is particularly careful with external cooperation as a way to meet their objectives and the needs of the target group. Successful programmes seem to develop their strategy of cooperation in a very thoughtful way and adapt it not only to the specific needs of the target groups, but also towards the needs of the collaborating partners and staff.

4.3. REQUIREMENTS

Requirements for successful programmes are not only characterised by **efficient programme structures and strategic decisions**, but also by **personal attitudes and professional characteristics** of those who are responsible for developing and carrying out the programme ideas: the provider, the financier and the staff. In the following section, the main results with regard to requirements of the different actors within a programme are described.

Due to the partial lack of strict separation between the financier and the provider role in the analyses, both levels are presented in one paragraph. However, it is important to note that their

specific tasks can differ between programmes. Financiers were sometimes involved in the conception of the programme, while in other programmes they were solely responsible for the funding aspect (e.g., municipality). Furthermore, the *Step Programme* had two providers, a local coordinator and a national coordinator.

4.3.1. FINANCIER AND PROVIDER

With regard to the financier and provider, two dimensions of requirements were revealed to be important: personal attitudes and professional requirements.

4.3.1.1. MOTIVATIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDES

According to the interviews, in order to successfully lead a family support programme, financiers and providers need to have a clear **vision** about the goals and objectives of the programme and to “strongly believe and trust in the success” (*Chancenreich*, provider). To have a clear vision helps to motivate all levels of actors within a programme as well as other partners and external stakeholders to work with the programme. The financier of the Portuguese programme (*Class)rooms of glass* described it as follows: “This [projects’ implementation] only makes sense, if we have here a coordination of the pre-school department that has a clear vision of what it wants for pre-schooling and knows how to integrate this action in an intervention plan and that is properly articulated with the first cycle”. The provider of the same programme pointed out: “The ability to integrate is fundamental, because otherwise people do not know what they are doing around here, and so, they have to know, and so that everyone is rowing in the same direction, otherwise we do not make it”. A shared vision transferred through all levels is the basis for a strong identification with the programme’s objectives and goals. The Portuguese team, for example faced a high fluctuation of their staff members, which the remaining staff needed to compensate. The commitment of the staff and the provider to the programme has been crucial in order to not hinder the programmes success.

In turn, a requirement for sharing a vision is to be a financier/provider who is **strongly interested** in the topic of the programme. It is a “highly exciting field of topics” and “a societally relevant question” (*Chancenreich*, financier). The financier of the German programme *Stadtteilmütter* described that a leader needs “a lot of engagement and passion and heart blood [...], the willingness to conduct a project like this after all” (*Stadtteilmütter*, financier).

Additionally emphasized was the necessity to act in **humility** towards “failing with ideas” and “not to think we know it all” (*Chancenreich*, provider). The financier of (*Class)rooms of glass* put it in these words: to “involve and engage the different actors, create a sufficient climate of trust to mobilize external actors [to school] and, therefore, create synergies”. To be tolerant to criticism from the outside, to accept mistakes and to display a certain **openness**, for example, towards necessary changes, were other aspects mentioned by almost all interviewees. From the perspective of the interviewees, facing changes meant a continuous adaption of the programme

and, therefore, a high **flexibility** and agile mind of the leading team or person: “I just helped in what was possible to help and to reformulate and to modify, turning the project into a dynamic one so that it continued to have success” (*(Class)rooms of glass*, provider).

4.3.1.2. FURTHER PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

According to the interviews, strategic leaders have other professional skills apart from motivational requirements. These comprise aspects of leadership, cooperation, management, communication, monitoring and staff management. According to the financier and provider interviews, strategically **shared leadership** is an important skill to successfully manage a programme. The financier of the programme *Chancenreich* puts it into the following words: “I need differently networked people” that have expertise in different fields and “I need at least the drive and the trust of three, four people”. The respective experts of the leading team are strategically recruited and used to pursue a common goal. Additionally, the leading team needs to accept the experts in their role with their corresponding professional knowledge and give them space. Good communication and cooperation skills are indispensable.

Using monitoring as a tool for documentation and development of the programmes was another requirement for leaders. Monitoring systems were used for internal evaluation and documentation and also to understand the needs for adaptation, for example the changing needs of the participants. It was used to support the development of the programme and to figure out how to successfully face challenges, changes and innovations.

Furthermore, the interviewees on all levels emphasized the importance for the leading actors to take on the **responsibility for their employees**. One aspect was the appreciation of and caring for the staff. For example, the staff of the Portuguese programme *(Class)rooms of glass* mentioned: “So, essentially this, an open communication channel, being conscience of the difficulties that we face on the field [work], but also and very importantly, the valuing of our work, that is very important”. The financier of *Chancenreich* described the programme as a very attractive workplace regarding stability of the contract and work-family-balance. Working relatively self-determined and autonomously was also considered as motivating for the employees. Another aspect that was mentioned in all programmes regarding the organisation’s responsibility was the composition of the team – “they had a good mix of skills” (*Family Skills*, financier) – and enabling professional development of the staff. The provider of *(Class)rooms of glass* emphasized the importance of preparing new staff members for their fieldwork: “The first thing to do, the [new] staff members are not going to the field immediately, so the staff members are properly... they read, we have team meetings, they are briefed [...] about what has been done, of what one intends to do, [...] our goals for this year” and “no one goes to the field without knowing what each one is doing”.

On the other hand, the interviewees stated that a requirement for the financier and provider is an

openness to involve different stakeholders.

4.3.2. STAFF

Three main aspects of the staffs' requirement were described across all levels: **a) motivational requirements and professional attitudes, b) further professional skills and c) an understanding of the target group.** In the following section, all three aspects will be described in more detail.

4.3.2.1. MOTIVATIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDES

The most important motivational requirement for the staff was to be fully engaged in the project and to be highly motivated, **passionate and enthusiastic** to work with the target group, and to have the willingness **to build partnerships with these parents.** The provider of the Dutch *Step Programme* states, for example: "The engagement, that is really so important. The ability to empathize with a different culture and to do something *together*".

Similar to the requirements of the financier and provider, a shared vision through all levels down to the staff and eventually also parents, even though it might be on an executing or receiving level, helps to identify with the project and the content of the programme: "to put the shirt on [meaning: to join a cause] and believe in what we are doing"; "for this all to work it is necessary for us to give beyond what we are asked, it is necessary to feel this [the project], it is necessary to feel that it is worth it" (*Classrooms of glass*, staff members).

Additionally, most interviewees perceived it as crucial that staff members **meet the participants on the same eye level.** The parents of the programmes appreciated the humanity, kindness and "down to earth" (*Chancenreich*, parents) manners of the staff. The parents of the German *Chancenreich* programme described that they were seen as equals and the staff did not approach them in a top-down manner and that it helped them to open up and maintain a long-term relationship. Furthermore, staff should display a focus on **empowerment** and on positive resources of parents, not on things that are going wrong. One staff member of the Dutch programme *Step Programme* summarized it in her own words: "Well, it should not be too school-ish, you know, there once was an intern who had been a teacher. She retrained but she really gave the parental meetings as a teacher. You don't want that, because you want to keep interacting with each other." Staff members need to be able to communicate basic topics in a simple and understandable way. The staff needs to be able to continuously **adapt** the content and their approaches to offer their services **to the needs of the parents.** This aspect can be linked to the requirements on the provider and financier level. That means the financier/provider transfer responsibility to the staff members to adapt to different challenges with parents in their daily practice, but on the other hand install a continuous monitoring system to get information about the target group.

In general, the importance of the relationship between participating families and professionals on a personal level was emphasized by respondents of all programmes. Adaptability and **modesty** were crucial aspects of building relationships. “To step down of our castle and go there, but to be there, in our essence and to like this work, that is a work that deals a lot with the unforeseen, capacity to work things out in a short period” (*(Class)rooms of glass*, staff). According to the staff, it was also important to their work to respect and accept the parents’ decisions, which required an attitude of humility and the ability to reflect on one’s own mistakes and limits” (*Chancenreich*, staff). In general, **appreciation** towards the parents was a pervading strategy of the staff.

Apart from the personal characteristics and attitudes, the interviewees on different levels reported that a professional pedagogical background of the staff is fundamental for the success of the programme.

4.3.2.2. FURTHER PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Professional skills encompass knowledge and skills needed for working with children and parents. It also implies knowledge of and accessibility to relevant information and institutions. Additionally the interviewees mentioned that a certain view on parents and their children play an important role in reaching parents and in building strong personal relationships that keep parents in the projects over a long period. It included sensitivity, responsiveness and good listening competences in interaction with parents and children.

All of the programmes developed and implemented required certain professional preparation or training for the staff members. While the German programme *Stadtteilmütter* trains mothers who do not have a pedagogical professional background for six months for the work with the families, other programmes like the *Step Programme* stated that all staff members are early childhood professionals working in early educational settings before they worked for the programme. Additionally, it became clear that a variety of professional backgrounds of staff members were used as an adaption to the target group. A mother of the *Chancenreich* programme reported, “If someone would come to me without a pedagogical background, I would not reject her, but I can’t really imagine it like this.” In contrast, the parents of *Stadtteilmütter* emphasized the importance of a staff member’s informal experiences as a mother. These mothers reported strong reservations towards professionals in institutions and ,that being the case, the informal character of the programme and the recruitment of parents through family and friends of the staff are very successful outreach strategies. The challenge is to not lose professional knowledge, skills and attitude at the expense of a high outreach.

All programmes installed a continuous internal support system of professional development, for example regular team meetings, regular peer feedback, supervision groups or regular additional qualification courses on specific topics.

4.3.2.3. UNDERSTANDING OF THE TARGET GROUP

Another important requirement of the staff was to understand families in their experiences. This was mostly realized not only through sharing the same experiences or having a similar background, but also through field knowledge and strong sensitivity. On the one hand, it meant the knowledge of growing up in diverse families and “someone who understands my reality of life” (*Chancenreich*, provider). On the other hand, it meant having the knowledge about the cultural origin and its everyday practices in order to reach out to the target group, to avoid misunderstandings and to allay fears and uncertainty. A common family language or cultural background helped to establish a relationship of trust and facilitated the access to the families through an already existing level of familiarity and shared values between the parents and the staff members. The Portuguese provider of *(Class)rooms of glass* described it as an awareness of what the culture is. One mother of the *Step Programme* described it in her own words: “And yes, culturally speaking we are also close to each other. So, that helps too. Yes, I am from X. and she is from X. Our culture is somewhat close to each other. For example, what we find important for our families, they find important too. They are really close to each other. So that helps us to understand each other more, do you know what I mean?” Beside the fact that parents are better able to understand the full programme in their best spoken language, to address a parent in their own language from someone with the same cultural background had an additional effect. Parents “don’t feel excluded, just because they are in Germany” (*Stadtteilmütter*, parent). Particularly for the first contact, the spoken language was important. It was useful to reduce fears and reservations towards the programme. A mother from *Chancenreich* said: “I know parents that would have not attended the programme without a family visitor with the same language background, because it’s difficult with the language and you don’t understand what the programme is about.” Of course, the same cultural and language background of staff and participating parents was also very convenient for communication and building partnerships.

4.3.3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

To put it in a nutshell, our findings indicate that all actors involved with a family support programme should show a strong motivation and interest to be involved and should have the ability to flexibly adapt to different contexts and families.

The provider and financier specifically need to have a clear vision for their work and show humility in a sense that they realize that they do not know all the right answers by themselves. Furthermore, they should share leadership, document and monitor the programme’s processes, and take responsibility for their staff.

Next to professional knowledge and skills as well as a deep understanding of the target group, staff members in particular should be able to meet parents with respect and on an egalitarian basis. The wide range of skills, attitudes and experiences of successful staff members indicate

that it might not always be easy to find adequate personnel.

4.4. USE OF ICT

The rapid development of digital media and technology is changing the lives of children like hardly any social change before. Digital media and technologies are now a part of life for almost all families and children in Europe. By digital media and technologies we mean all communication and information technologies, which are taken under the abbreviation ICT (Information and Communication Technology). The promotion of media competence and the appropriate usage of ICT – for young children – is a topic discussed within various groups, including educational institutions. We examined how ICT and its potential benefit were reflected in the family support programmes. One programme had already included an ICT tool in a conceptual way (interactive website ‘bereslim’, *Step Programme*); another one was in the process of development of an app (*Chancenreich*). Interviewees of the German programme *Stadtteilmütter* were the only ones mentioning the topic media competence for parents and young children as an aspect in their work with parents. In contrast, *(Class)rooms of glass* did not include any ICT aspect. Therefore, the actors of the programme were not interviewed about this topic.

In general, the interviews showed that the use of ICT was **not perceived as a success factor**, but rather as a possible means to a certain end. Interestingly, interviewees on a higher level, such as the provider, were usually more enthusiastic about the integration of a general ICT tool than the staff and parents who, in turn, barely used it. The usage of ICT for communication, translation and sometimes even to support educational learning situations, depended on a single person’s motivation and skills and was only used if chosen by themselves. For example, a parent of the *Step Programme* explained how she used ICT as means to communicate and relate with other parents: “Only there was one activity... [...] so maybe I told it wrong. So he [her son] did it, but he did it wrong. So the other mothers also send pictures of their results in the app, and I said: ‘Did I do something wrong?’ [...] There was a mother from X. She only speaks English, but she tries to talk Dutch too. She does it very well! So she told me what to do in English and gave me some tips [...] So then it was done within a minute! And then I needed to send the results to the group and they said: ‘Well done!’. And I said, ‘yes, thanks to X.’ So I really liked that and it gave me a good feeling”. The financier of the *Step Programme* explained how ICT was informally used as a translation tool: “You notice that people who are not that proficient in a language, that they are usually skilled in using their mobile phone or iPad to overcome this.” A staff member of *Family Skills* was using ICT as a teaching tool for her parent classes.

Even though some of the interviewees used ICT in their daily work, generally, we found mixed beliefs, hesitant attitudes and only little reflection about the application in the practical implementation. For example, interviewees stated: “I don’t know, I somehow have mixed feelings” (*Chancenreich*, staff), “IT was another issue. IT in schools was a huge problem. Wifi was not

always working. We had to take our own mobile network. Generally there is always an issue with programmes where ICT is involved, like accessing online material” (*Family Skills*, staff) or “I know from much younger parents than I am who say very clear, we no longer want facebook and consciously quit WhatsApp and all those stories. I believe there might be a little change right now [...] and I would not be angry. Insofar, I am open, but also sceptical” (*Chancenreich*, staff). A participating parent of *Chancenreich* describes requirements of a useful app: “The app really needs to be very structured and give me a lot [...]. For this, it needed to offer very good contents.” A participating mother of *Stadtteilmütter* explained: “When I read something and hold it on my hands, I think about the writing much more than if I only listen to TV or radio.”

To summarize, interviewees partially described the potential of ICT – as a tool for teaching or parental education, for translations, for communication and as an aspect of the programmes’ educational content (media competence), but also displayed mixed opinions and beliefs. Staff members or parents mainly valued and used ICT if they selected the particular technologies by themselves. This shows that ICT initiatives work better bottom-up than top-down.

4.5. FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

One of ISOTIS’ goals is the promotion of revaluing the family’s home language (L1), particularly for families with minority languages (e.g. Turkish), and to view the value of home language in the light of identity. Three of the promising programmes particularly included the support of L1 into their concept: *Family Skills*, *Step Programme*, and *Stadtteilmütter*.

The interviews left the impression that L1 support is uncoordinated and partially arbitrary. The decision of providers about the type of language support – first home language, community language or multilingualism – was often not based on evidence or differentiated knowledge, but on not reflected rules or policy guidelines.

The provider of the *Stadtteilmütter* mentions that bilingualism is a relevant topic and parents should see how they can support both languages. She points out that “Every family has the right to decide on their own in which language they feel more comfortable.” (*Stadtteilmütter*, provider). Although the staff made clear that they advise parents to speak only the language that they really know, the staff and participants further stated that German can be learned through formal settings, like (pre)schools.

Also, the *Step programme* encourages parents to use their preferred language during parent-child interaction. However, the programme itself does not fully support the home language of the parent anymore - the main language during the meetings is Dutch. The staff mentioned, the parents now have a higher Dutch language proficiency and want to decrease their language delay so they want the language of the programme to be Dutch... One staff member of the *Step programme* stated: “Yes, many parents do not even want it in their own language. We offer it to

them, we still have Turkish instruction booklets and Arabic books. But the parents do not want that, they deliberately choose and say ‘no, I want Dutch books, so I can do this with my child in Dutch.’. In contrast a staff member of *Family Skills* mentioned that parents reported back to her, that they were partly relieved by the encouragement to use their native language: “That was great because initially they were really shocked that we were promoting the use of home languages and most of them said ‘we thought we should only be doing it in English’ and the school told them that they should be practicing English. So they really enjoyed that.”

The way bilingualism or home language was considered in a programme hinged further on social and political discourses and policy, which in turn might influence the beliefs of the professionals and parents regarding the use of country language versus their home language and the concept of bilingualism. Even within a programme, we found disagreeing statements with regard to language support due to different local language policies. For example, in the Netherlands since the early 2000’s, the national (political) discourse has taken a rather assimilation approach on integration, which affects education- and support services. The municipality who participated in this case study has a clear ‘Dutch language’ policy. One financier of the *Step programme* stated: “Yes, it is of course nice that it is possible in this way [regarding the use of Google Translate to communicate], but to really have the policy that the modules can be performed in other languages. You should not want that. You can make it as easy as possible with pictures for example, so all parents understand it” while the provider said, “That is always mentioned as first! It is the most important thing they [the parents] could do. Teaching the own language to the child and keep using this language at home. Because it is better to learn and use one language well than to learn a second language very limited.”

The findings underline the need for an organisation to develop a shared understanding on the implementation of language use and support, based on evidence and the parent’s needs.

4.6. FURTHER EXISTING CHALLENGES

Even though we selected promising and best practice family support programmes which use strategies that work well and efficiently, it became apparent that each programme also struggles and experiences difficulties. This chapter summarizes the most important reported challenges.

Both German programmes explicitly mentioned that there are still some unreachable groups of parents. For example, staff members of *Chancenreich* reported that some newly immigrated and very religious Russian families, very young mothers, and parents with handicapped children are still hard to reach. The financiers strategy is to constantly try to establish trusting relationships through various channels. She stated: we are “...silently growling and stalking and from all sides and all over again”. Still, the very hard to reach groups are challenging.

(Class)rooms of glass critically addresses the problem of high fluctuation of staff members.

However, they created strategies to face the challenge: team building and preparation of new staff to encourage commitment to the programme.

In the Dutch *Step Programme*, interviewees mentioned the tension between different needs of different actors, for example the financier aims to reduce costs, whereas the provider wants to increase quality and services. Furthermore, staff members mentioned an increasing diversity within their courses that are not always easy to handle. A stronger demand for professional support and professionalization became apparent.

Another challenge that some programmes faced referred to cooperation. Interviews carried out for the English programme *Family Skills* brought up the issue of challenges in the collaboration between the delivery and evaluation team, which were due to some drop-out of schools and delays in recruitment start caused by the procedures and timings of pretesting. English data also suggested that there was some discrepancy in the interest on the main outcomes between agencies, with the external evaluation (and main funding agency) mainly focusing on children's literacy outcomes in English, and the programme focusing mainly on the benefits of bilingualism, and the value of heritage language use.

The Portuguese programme *(Class)rooms of glass* expressed a strong intention to strive for independence and autonomy in order to reach out to the target group. The Roma community belongs to a very disenfranchised minority that is often suspicious towards public officials and stakeholders and feel discriminated by them. Both the provider and the staff mentioned many cooperating partners at different levels. However, they made clear that these top-down set partnerships existed because of legal or structural obligations and they did not necessarily perceive them as beneficial. Interviewees mentioned one exception: the cooperation with the IAC (Children's Support Institute; a non-profit institution that provides child support at the national level) in the beginning of the programme which helped to reach out to the target group. With time, the necessity for cooperation naturally decreased. The provider explained it in this way: "Gradually, we were making our independency [...]. We no longer needed as much other's support, and we got to give more value to what we have and we have a lot of means to work with them [the target group]". Interestingly, the financial institution sees itself as a main cooperating partner and provides resources as well as consultancy for *(Class)rooms of glass*. However, since programmes are supposed to be highly tailored to the school context and the financier explicitly mentioned his/her aim to enhance autonomy, independence, as well as sustainability, the collaboration was not perceived and planned as a long-term involvement.

A major challenge for all programmes with regard to our investigated categories was the use of ICT and the integration of L1 support. It became clear that even though some programmes had implemented ICT components, their potential has not been used in an exhaustive way and the diverse actors were oftentimes not even positively inclined towards the use of ICT. Most actors

insufficiently reflected the support of the home language and – partly due to an increasing multilingualism – there was often no consistent plan how to deal with different languages.

5. DISCUSSION

The general aim of the case study was to obtain an in-depth knowledge about general strategies which serve to foster the success of promising family support programmes and to investigate how these strategies need to be adjusted according to specific characteristics of target groups or characteristics of different systems, such as the meso- or macro level in a given context. We analysed the data along the following categories: outreach, cooperation, requirements, use of ICT, and support of first language. Here, we depict our findings on general strategies and discuss them in light of the existing literature.

5.1. OUTREACH

Our results on common strategies across countries reveal that the use and establishment of trustful relationships and adaptability towards the target group are the most important aspects for an effective outreach. These aspects can be seen as fundamental principles for successful outreach. Our analyses showed that the studied programmes implement the basic principles differently in practice. The strong notion of relationships as a tool to reach out to the target group is consistent with the literature. For example, Duncan and Wallace Goddard (2011) write that personal approaches, such as personal invitations and word-of-mouth recommendations, are the most effective outreach strategies. Being recruited by a trusting person is also what parents from a South-African parenting programme reported as helpful (Wessels, Ward, & Lester, 2016). Furthermore, treating parents as partners as an effective element of programmes is also in accordance with the literature (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). In a narrative systematic review, Mytton, Ingram, Manns, and Thomas (2014) found that participating parents considered working with trusted people as highly relevant for them in order to engage in a programme.

One German programme emphasized the importance of monetary incentives to their outreach success. The literature shows mixed effects regarding the effectiveness of monetary incentives (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). For example, Dumas, Begle, French, and Pearl (2010) found that, compared to a non-incentive condition, parents did not enroll in greater numbers, attend more sessions, or participate more actively in an 8-week parenting programme with monetary incentive. However, younger and socioeconomically disadvantaged parents enrolled a little more, but did not attend sessions more often than other groups. In contrast, Heinrichs (2006) could show that monetary incentives increased initial participation of socioeconomically disadvantaged parents in a parent programme. This indicates that financial incentives may be a successful tool for outreach for a certain group of families, namely for socioeconomically disadvantaged families. Irrespective of the financial incentives, indirect incentives in terms of additional material or free access to resources are successful outreach strategies.

The fact that actors need to adapt their strategies to the specific needs of target groups reflects what we know from literature coming from the United States. The needs of the target group have to be addressed for implementing and conducting successful programme implementation (Duncan & Marotz-Baden, 1999; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). Tailoring programmes towards the target group varies from choosing accessible venues to considering childcare to choosing interesting topics for parents (Mytton, Ingram, Manns, & Thomas, 2014). However, our findings also revealed that the needs of specific target groups (such as low SES parents or parents with particular immigrant background) and the nature of trustful relationships may vary across contexts and may change over time. Promising or successful programmes study and reflect the needs of their target groups before and during implementation and execution of the programmes.

5.2. COOPERATION

Our results regarding cooperation activities of the programmes showed that the programmes strategically make use of and implement cooperation activities, for example for an effective outreach or as a strategy for professional development. This category is highly related to theories of networking in organisations. Networking is defined as “goal-directed behavior, both inside and outside of an organization, focused on creating, cultivating, and utilizing interpersonal relationships” (Gibson, H. Hardy III, & Buckley, 2014, p. 150) and has many positive outcomes, such as enhanced visibility, performance, and access to information. Collaborations and networks are crucial to effectively address families’ needs (Duncan & Wallace Goddard, 2011). We found that the level of involvement in collaborations seemed to increase with the job position which reflects findings from networking theories (Gibson, H. Hardy III, & Buckley, 2014). That cooperation is used for outreach is also consistent with the literature. Duncan and Wallace Goddard (2011) describe cooperation with others as a means to increase participation. In this way, clientele of other partners are easily transferred to the programme.

5.3. REQUIREMENTS

The findings on the financier and provider level are reflected in two existing theoretical models of effective leadership: transformational leadership (Bass, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000) and distributed leadership (Harris, 2004). Charisma and vision are two basic characteristics of transformational leaders, which serve to inspire, motivate, and enhance the professional development of their staff. These leaders can convince their staff with shared goals and can persuade people to develop commitment to the institution. Thus, our findings of needing a clear vision, motivation, enthusiasm and charisma on the management level find confirmation in this theory.

On the other hand, the interviewees stated as requirements on the financial and provider level an openness to involve different actors/stakeholders and emphasized the advantage of a shared

leadership within a team of experts. In this sense, the empirical findings can be interpreted as evidence for the framework of distributed leadership as well. Distributed leadership defines leadership as a shared work by more than one person. It describes how the team of experts work together with distributed responsibility and in consequence empower those at different levels within one programme (Bolden, 2011; Harris, 2004).

Different models of professional competences of pedagogical staff stress professional skills, motivational requirements and professional attitudes and beliefs as core components of professional competence of pedagogical staff (e.g. Anders, 2012; Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, & Muttock, 2002). With regard to professional skills they stress the importance of professional knowledge which includes three dimensions: content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge (Baumert & Kunter, 2006; Shulman, 1986). Our findings support these assumptions for pedagogical staff working in the area of family support. All data support the importance of a professional understanding of their own role as well as knowledge about target groups, outreach strategies and local knowledge, a professional attitude towards parents and high motivation and enthusiasm towards the tasks.

According to the theoretical model of professional competences, the different aspects are prerequisites or have an influence on the educational process quality in educational services/facilities. The theoretical models of professional competences refer to pedagogical staff in schools and ECEC settings, our findings, however, support the assumption that they can be transferred to the context of family support programmes as well. The model of professional competences (figure 2) from Fröhlich-Gildhoff, Nentwig-Gesemann, and Pietsch (2011) summarizes the relation between professional competences and professional acting in the field of ECEC. The model comprises three dispositional components: knowledge, motivation, abilities and skills. Knowledge and motivation influence the perception and analysis of a situation. These dispositions affect in turn the performance, in terms of planning an action and the action itself. The process of acting is accompanied by reflection and evaluation, the results of which are, in turn, taken up as knowledge and skills. According to this model, the thinking and acting of professionals are shaped by their professional attitudes.

The model of professional competences for ECEC practitioners can be adapted to professionals in social services, e.g. family support programmes. To conceptualize and implement a programme and to continuously further the development of the programme's motivational aspects and explicit and implicit experiential knowledge, for example about the aim or effects of the programme, the target group and the methodical approach are crucial for the implementing process. A self-reflective attitude forms the basis for the reception of challenges and evaluation results, which, in turn, prompts further planning and action. We assume similar mechanisms for the executive professionals that are working directly with parents in family support programmes. Early childhood/ pedagogic professionals that need to act in complex pedagogical situations need

to be flexible, creative and self-reflective in order to adapt to challenges (Fröhlich-Gildhoff et al., 2011). Self-reflective skills are also the motor for continuous adaptation needs of programmes.

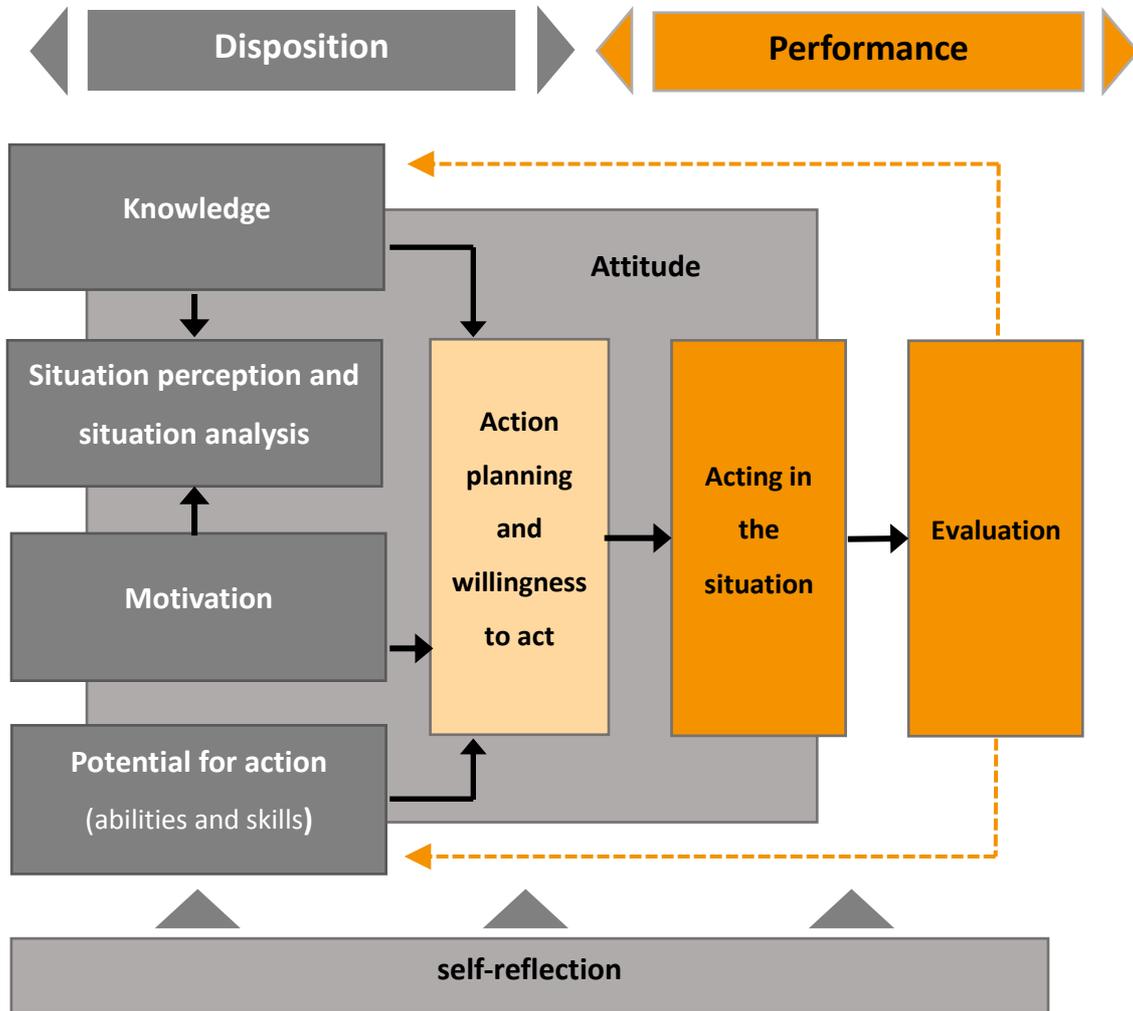


Figure 2. Model of Professional Competences for ECEC practitioners (Fröhlich-Gildhoff et al., 2011).

5.4. USE OF ICT

Regarding the implementation of ICT in family intervention programs, ICT-tools may have great potential for the outreach and compliance of participants, for example they can help to provide flexible access to programme content in terms of time and place and can be useful for the implementation of first language support (Cadima et al., 2018; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). However, our results show that ICT is not viewed as an important success factor (yet) and is not used by most actors even though it is officially implemented in some of the programmes. All actors showed mixed opinions and beliefs regarding the use of ICT. Pedagogical beliefs and motivations are a central aspect of the professional competence of pedagogical professionals. International studies confirmed a controversial attitude

toward ICT and showed that pedagogical professionals have reservations about digital media and their integration into pedagogical practice (Plowman & Stephen, 2005). The use of ICT in pedagogical contexts depends on three aspects: the facilities, the professional competences (knowledge and skills) (Koehler & Mishra, 2006) and the beliefs towards ICT in pedagogical practice (Knezek & Christensen, 2008; Teo, 2010). The results also showed that a bottom-up approach seems to improve the implementation acceptance.

5.5. FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

Our findings showed that the first language support is not consistently implemented in the studied programmes. Furthermore, it is not really reflected by the different interviewees and is not supported by all levels. The implementation strategy seemed to be dependent on external influences, such as state policies or mainstreams. We find programmes with existing practices on supporting language development at home, but not specifically on how to support parents to create a bilingual environment and to address both the first and second language.

On the other hand, we find that the appreciation and the usage of the first language as a tool for a successful outreach is accepted by many programmes. Thus, our results point to the strong need of developing strategies to clarify the concept of implementation of the home languages of immigrant parents as well as developing effective strategies.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Successful or promising approaches seem to be characterized not by a single key factor, but by the interplay of core principles which may be different depending on the societal context and may change over time. The following recommendations have been developed for two different groups of stakeholders (programme developers and managers (e.g., providers or financiers) and policy makers).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMME DEVELOPERS AND MANAGERS

BEFORE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PROGRAMME

➤ **Study the characteristics and needs of your target group and the context**

Before the choice or implementation of a family support programme, an intense analysis or inventory of the context and target group is needed regarding the specific needs of the target group, their problems, their environments, and particularly the trusted and non-trusted institutions and persons. This phase needs time and any information available (perspectives of experts, statistics, reviews, interviews with members of the target group) should be considered. All partners and stakeholders of the planned programme should be informed about the results of the analysis.

➤ **Develop a vision and strategy of leadership for the programme**

The success of programmes is highly driven by the enthusiasm of the involved partners. A clear vision for the programme, including a shared understanding of multilingualism, and its implementation helps all partners to develop motivation and enthusiasm to implement and carry out the programme in a successful way.

➤ **Adapt the outreach strategy and the content to the needs of your target group**

Based on the target group analysis, outreach strategies as well as contents of programmes may be adapted to the life realities of the target group and their specific needs. The establishment and use of trustful relationships is a prerequisite for any other processes to work.

➤ **Use research evidence and knowledge of other disciplines for your programme**

Successful or promising family support programmes draw on knowledge of different disciplines (such as pedagogy, psychology, economy, consulting) and research to develop a programme suited to the needs of families in needs in given contexts.

➤ **Explore and activate collaborative networks of trustful partnerships**

Successful programmes rely on trustful partnerships of partners with expertise in different fields. Collaborations with other institutions and stakeholders on different levels of society within the region of implementation are very useful for a sustainable strategy regarding outreach, programme development, evaluation, and delivery of adequate contents. However, it is important to examine if collaborations conflict with the needs of the target group.

➤ **Develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy for your programme**

Successful programmes are programmes that are open to change. To respond and react to societal changes, changes of the target groups or experiences with ineffective or unsuccessful strategies ongoing monitoring and evaluation is necessary.

➤ **Select qualified staff aligned to the programme's mission and able to deeply relate to and create trust within the target**

Staff needs to display high motivation and professional skills at the same time. Further, families need to respect and trust them. This may be fostered by shared backgrounds and experiences or by deep knowledge about the target group. Further, a professional attitudes towards the target group (respect, egalitarian view on parents, empowerment) should be a selection criteria.

DURING A PROGRAMME

➤ **Allow for change**

Monitoring and evaluation findings may point to ineffective strategies; societal changes may ask for a reflective rethinking of target groups, outreach strategies or contents of a programme. Programmes need to be fully aligned to the realities of families and build upon it to be effective. This asks, for example, for useful strategies to implement ICT into family support programmes.

➤ **Provide comprehensive systems of professional support and development for your staff**

The personal and professional qualifications of the professionals are key for the success of a programme. Family support is a professional task and needs to be treated as such. Successful and promising programmes provide continuous supervision and professional support systems that take up societal or programme changes.

➤ **Be aware of and develop strategies regarding multilingualism**

The value of multiple languages spoken in some families should be highlighted and supported in a way it fits to the programme's aim and context. ICT can be a tool to overcome challenges. Develop and implement strategies to address or even support multiple languages.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

Family support needs to be seen and treated as an important and challenging task for societies. Thus, policy makers are asked to provide the framework to enable providers to offer family support in the described manner. Drawing on these assumptions, the following recommendations seem to be key to promising interventions.

- **Provide suitable and long-term funding for family support programmes**
- **Select providers that base the development of programmes on research evidence**
- **Support the establishment of trustful networks**
- **Consider social work as a serious and highly important profession. Provide financial means for the training of staff and the establishment of professional development systems**
- **Provide funding for comprehensive evaluation studies**
- **Take up steering responsibility and allow for autonomy and change at the same time**
- **Create integrated services for the interchange of knowledge and professional development**

NEXT STEPS

Our findings deepen our understanding of existing and successful family support programmes throughout Europe which were described in the inventory of D3.2. The results will supplement case studies from other Work Packages (D20.4, 4.3, 6.3) by including the perspective of different actors of promising or best practice family support programmes. Findings will be and have been used to inform the development of a virtual learning environment for families (link to D3.4). Further, the results will feed into the final report of this Work Package (D3.5).

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APPENDIX A

Manual

Expert interview: provider

Introduction

- *a thank-you for participating in the interview*
- *short presentation of ISOTIS | Work Packages*
- *introduction of the interviewer*
- *setting the interview's time frame*
- *explaining the course of the interview and the response scheme*
 - *kindly asking for subjective and detailed responses*
- *kindly asking for permission to record the interview; requesting the signing of the consent form;*
starting to record the interview

Please introduce yourself briefly, describe your tasks in »programme name« and relate to your professional background.

categories	research questions	interview questions
MOTIVATION	Why are you supporting the project - having this particular content, target group and local focus?	
FACTORS OF SUCCESS	Which factors contribute to the programme's success?	
EXPECTATIONS	What expectations of the programme did you have before its start? What expectations have been met?	
CHALLENGES	What challenges have there been meeting the goals of the project?	
OUTREACH	What challenges and strategies were there to successfully reach the target group?	
COOPERATION	What is your perception of the programme's reputation in external on-site organisations and projects? Does cooperation between these other organisations and projects work out?	
REQUIREMENTS	What personal and professional skills should providers and employees have, to increase the chances of the programme's success?	
ICT	In how far is ICT important for the programme?	
additional module FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT	Why is it important that the programme supports childrens' learning of their mother tongue?	

Conclusion

Is there anything important left you would like to mention we have not covered so far?

- *a thank-you for the interview*
- *switching off the recorder*

APPENDIX B

Manual

Expert interview: financing institution

Introduction

- *a thank-you for participating in the interview*
- *short presentation of ISOTIS | Work Packages*
- *introduction of the interviewer*
- *setting the interview's time frame*
- *explaining the course of the interview and the response scheme*
 - *kindly asking for subjective and detailed responses*
- *kindly asking for permission to record the interview; starting to record the interview*

As a first step, please introduce yourself and describe your tasks regarding »programme name« and your professional background.

categories	research questions	interview questions
MOTIVATION	Why do you support THIS project, with respect to its target group, its core areas of interest and its local/national focus?	
SUCCESS FACTORS	Which factors contribute to the programme's success?	
EXPECTATIONS	What expectations did you have of »programme name« prior to the start of the programme? Which expectations have been met?	
CHALLENGES	Which challenges arose during the programme? Which challenges remain?	
OUTREACH	Which strategies were followed for reaching the target group? Which challenges arose?	
COOPERATION	How do you perceive the programme's reputation from the perspective of external projects and organisations on-site? How do these agencies cooperate with each other?	
REQUIREMENTS	What personal and professional skills should providers and employees have in order for the programme to be successful?	
ICT	In how far is ICT important for the programme?	
additional module FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT	Why is it important that the programme supports childrens' learning of their mother tongue?	

Conclusion

Is there anything important left you would like to mention we have not covered so far?

- *a thank-you for the interview*
- *switching off the recorder*

APPENDIX C

Manual

Expert interview: staff

Introduction

- *a thank-you for participating in the interview*
- *short presentation of ISOTIS|Work Packages*
- *introduction of the interviewer*
- *setting the interview's time frame*
- *explaining the course of the interview and the response scheme*
 - *kindly asking for subjective and detailed responses*
- *kindly asking for permission to record the interview; starting to record the interview*

Please briefly explain your professional background and describe your tasks in »programme name«.

categories	research questions	interview questions
MOTIVATION	Why are you supporting the project - having this particular content, target group and local focus?	
FACTORS OF SUCCESS	Which factors contribute to the programme's success?	
EXPECTATIONS	What expectations of the programme did you have before its start? What expectations have been met?	
CHALLENGES	What challenges have there been meeting the goals of the project? What challenges still remain?	
OUTREACH	What challenges and strategies were there to successfully reach the target group?	
COOPERATION	What is your perception of the programme's reputation in external on-site organisations and projects? How does cooperation between different professionals in »programme name« work out?	
REQUIREMENTS	What personal and professional skills should parents and provider have in order for the programme to be successful?	
ICT	In how far is ICT important for the programme?	
additional module FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT	Why is it important that the programme supports childrens' learning of their mother tongue?	

Conclusion

Is there anything important left you would like to mention we have not covered so far?

- *a thank-you for the interview*
- *switching off the recorder*

APPENDIX D

Manual

Expert interview: participants

Introduction

- *a thank-you for participating in the interview*
- *short presentation of ISOTIS|Work Packages*
- *introduction of the interviewer*
- *setting the interview's time frame*
- *explaining the course of the interview and the response scheme*
 - *kindly asking for subjective and detailed responses*
- *kindly asking for permission to record the interview; requesting the signing of the consent form; starting to record the interview*

Please describe in the beginning, how much you have participated in »programme name« so far.

categories	research questions	interview questions
MOTIVATION	Why are you engaging in the project - having this particular content, target group and local focus?	
FACTORS OF SUCCESS	Which factors contribute to the programme's success?	
EXPECTATIONS	What expectations of the programme did you have before its start? What expectations have been met?	
CHALLENGES	What challenges have there been meeting the goals of the project? What challenges still remain?	
OUTREACH	What challenges and strategies were there to successfully reach the target group?	
COOPERATION	What is your perception of the programme's reputation in external on-site organisations and projects? Does cooperation between these other organisations and projects work out well?	
REQUIREMENTS	What personal and professional skills should providers and employees have, to increase the chances of the programme's success?	
ICT	In how far is ICT important for the programme?	
additional module FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT	Why is it important that the programme supports childrens' learning of their mother tongue?	

Conclusion

Is there anything important left you would like to mention we have not covered so far?

- *a thank-you for the interview*
- *switching off the recorder*

APPENDIX E

Country Report Germany

Chancenreich

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This report presents the German family support programme *Chancenreich*. After providing some background information about the programme and data collection, we present the results of our interview study for each interview group and for each major category of analysis. We finish the report by giving a short discussion of results.

1. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMME

1.1 MISSION STATEMENT

The motto of the programme sums up its mission: “Chances for a good start – support for successful child-raising” (Carina Stiftung, n.d.).

1.2 TARGET GROUP

The programme’s target group are families with newborn babies of all cultural and social backgrounds whose home is located in the town of Herford or who have moved in the town in the first six months of the child’s life and whose children mainly grow up in Herford for their first three years of life (Carina Stiftung, n.d.).

1.3 CONTENT

The programme focuses on early intervention and positive infant development, enhancement of parenting skills, pediatric check-ups, and early preschool attendance. For successful participation, families receive a bonus payment of €500.

1.4 STRUCTURE

Chancenreich follows a modular approach, meaning there are several options for parents. However, in order to get the financial incentive, five modules are mandatory: Parents have to participate in a parent training course, take their child to the required pediatric check-ups, register their child in a preschool before the age of three, participate in scientific evaluations of the programme, and take part in a home visiting module. Additional options include a parent handbook as well as children’s books, parent meetings, support from family midwives, and support from female family mentors.

1.5 ORGANIGRAM

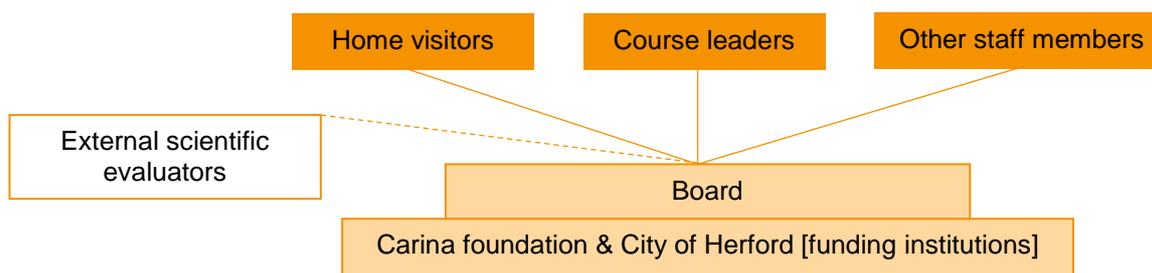


Figure 3. Organigram of Chancenreich

Whereas the Carina foundation and the city of Herford are the funding institutions, the CEO of the Carina foundation together with the executive board of *Chancenreich* are the provider of the association. The programme has a variety of staff members, including home visitors, diverse parenting and parent-child-course leaders, as well as mentors, midwives, administrative staff, and others. Some of them are directly employed, others are external partners that are permanently involved with the programme (e.g., course leaders). Furthermore, *Chancenreich* is accompanied by researchers from Freie Universität Berlin for scientific knowledge, support and evaluation (Carina Stiftung, n.d.; Wilke et al., 2014).

1.6 FOUNDATION

Chancenreich is a project developed and implemented by the town of Herford and the Carina foundation. It was founded in 2009 and is still an ongoing project (Braun, 2015).

1.7 EVALUATION

The evaluation was able to show that the program is in fact reaching families of different educational and cultural backgrounds. *Chancenreich* connects educationally advantaged and disadvantaged families and almost half of the parents participating in *Chancenreich* have a migrational background, which gives the program cultural diversity. Additionally, compared to the non participation families, the families attending *Chancenreich* receive more often unemployment benefit (Carina Stiftung, n.d.).

1.8 SELECTION PROCESS

We chose *Chancenreich* because of its excellent outreach strategy. It does not just implement a very interesting strategy, namely applying financial incentives, but the evaluations also show that the programme reaches out to a diverse and broad population.

Furthermore, the programme sticks out due to its universal approach and beginning involvement of ICT components in form of an app.

2. DATA COLLECTION

Data collection took place between December 2017 and March 2018. We conducted one expert interview with the provider and one with the financier; additionally, we conducted two focus groups, one with the staff members and one with participants. Expert interviews took between 30 and 60 minutes, focus group lasted for 80 to 90 minutes. We conducted all interviews face-to-face, only the interview with the provider was conducted and audio-recorded via phone.

2.1 SHORT DESCRIPTION OF INTERVIEWEES

The interviewed provider is parson and chairman of the association the project belongs to. His involvement started with the beginning of *Chancenreich*.

The interviewed financier of *Chancenreich* holds a degree in business administration and is the only member of the executive board of the Carina Stiftung. The foundation originated, develops, as well as (mainly) funds *Chancenreich*.

The focus group of staff members consisted of eight women, including three family visitors and five current course leaders with diverse professional backgrounds, e.g. nursing, social pedagogy, and social work. Some of the staff is also involved with other elements of the programme, such as parents meetings. Except one member who just finished her first course, all of the interviewees have been involved with *Chancenreich* for several years. One of the interviewees explicitly mentioned her Turkish background.

The focus group of participants consisted of three mothers. Only one mother was still involved in the programme. The others had participated when their children were younger and are currently working in other roles for *Chancenreich*. However, they still responded to the questions as participants.

3. RESULTS

3.1 PROVIDER

3.1.1 OUTREACH

The provider mentioned various strategies to reach families and convince them to take part in the program as well as to maintain their participation.

Reputation of the programme

The provider stated that the fame and reputation of the program within parents as an important success factor for reaching out to families. Through its reputation parents already know *Chancenreich* before the staff is contacting them.

Universal approach

The provider emphasized that *Chancenreich* is open to all families through its content and structural approach. He views the openness and, thus, social and cultural intermixing of the participating parents as a success factor that even outweighs the content, e.g. the offered courses. He says: “The course doesn’t matter, but it matters that all parents attend to the programme.”

Marketing of the programme

The appearance of *Chancenreich* through appealing materials, such as “a nice logo and a happy kangaroo”, are also seen as successful strategies to find access to the target group.

Home visits

Another mentioned success factor was that the family visitors go to the families and talk to them where they “can meet the people in their environment”. This provides a certain degree of security for the families as they move in their own environment. The provider also justified this procedure by saying that the visits are perceived as an esteem for the families. By comparison, parents perceive home visits by staff members of the youth welfare office skeptical and assume a controlling character.

Characteristics of the family visitors

Another success factor are the family visitors themselves, who have been selected to cover different cultural backgrounds and have access to different environments. Access to parents through the cultural background has been particularly successful in groups that tend to separate and form their own infrastructure. A degree of familiarity among family visitors in the field also facilitates access to families, because “the family visitor is known in the neighborhood, they [families] won’t let someone in, they don’t know”.

Long-term participation of the parents through positive relationships

However, the family visitors are not only characterized by their milieu knowledge and experience, but should also have a medical, pedagogical or psychological professional knowledge. All three

aspects, environmental experiences/knowledge, awareness in the field, and professional knowledge not only facilitate access to the target group but also the building of a trusting relationship, which in turn is necessary in order to be able to cooperate with the parents and intervene if necessary. The provider emphasized: “I believe, the main success factor is the kind of the relationship between the family visitors and the family”.

Bonus

The provider considered the bonus that is awarded to all families by successful participation as “an additional appeal” for many people, especially for financially needy groups. The bonus can convince families to attend the program and to maintain participation.

Relationship between family visitors and the families

According to the provider, the fundamental success factor for families’ interest in the programme is to establish a good relationship between family visitors and parents and to intervene based on this. The content of the program has to focus on finding solutions and building on resources of the families. Through the professional and experiential knowledge in concrete situations, a trusting relationship can be built indirectly and a possible change in parenting skills can be achieved.

3.1.2 COOPERATION

Strategic networking

The provider reported that they tried to establish structures for networking. They regularly meet relevant stakeholders “to try to keep them on board and give them the opportunity to express their opinion”. Further, they establish formal committees and an advisory board. However, to repeatedly search for critical appraisals (by the auditor, city, foundation) is important and contributes to transparency.

Use of external expertise

The provider stated that they used external experts of the field to work together on the project and to establish themselves in the field.

Challenges

The provider identified some challenges in establishing the program by external institutions. He referred to the difficulty of accepting some program aspects (e.g. bonuses to all families, regardless of the financial situation of the family), but also to distrust in the project itself. “There was no applause in the beginning [...]. The youth welfare office as well as daycare centers were sceptic.” From the provider’s perspective, the team “needed to inspire all stakeholders in the field” or at “least establish acceptance” of the programme at external institution. Through different strategies, challenges and conflicts could be solved.

3.1.3 REQUIREMENTS

The provider mentioned several professional and personal skills of the different actors within the programme that foster a successful implementation of the programme.

Requirements of the Financier and the Provider

Trust in and vision for the project

The provider reported that the leading team needs to develop a vision and “strongly believe and trust in the success”, the importance and value of the programme.

Leadership as a team

The provider emphasized that working together as a team of experts is a strategy of successful leadership. “I need differently networked people” that have expertise in different fields and “I need at least the drive and the trust of three, four people”.

Use of experts

The respective experts of the leading team are strategically used to pursue a common goal. “I believe it’s the right way to use different people for different purposes”. The provider considered it as important to accept the experts in their role with their corresponding professional knowledge and to give them space. Therefore, the leading team should be able to withdraw, show openness, and work together.

Local knowledge

The awareness of the local experts and their knowledge about the region and its needs are seen as advantage.

Management Skills

Management competences, knowledge of law, personnel management, and knowledge of budget planning are mentioned as important competencies for the management team.

Personality

The interviewee described the necessity for the openness that “we can fail with ideas”. He viewed flexibility as an important skill leading to new strategies. Further, he pointed out that a certain amount of humility is important, “not to think we know it all”. He stated that it is important to be open to changes or ideas from the outside and ask for support. Furthermore, he perceived it as advantages if a leader can represent himself publicly and has access to decision-makers (social capital through social networks).

Requirements of Staff

Family visitors are the main group of employees, apart from the course teachers. The provider mentioned several requirements important for family visitors.

Level of awareness to the target group

For the recruitment of families, the closeness to the environment of the target group as well as the awareness in the field are mentioned as important requirements. If the family visitors are

known in the target neighborhood, “it’s a lucky find”.

Environmental closeness

Environmental closeness includes various aspects. On the one hand, it means the knowledge of growing up in different families and “someone who understands my reality of life”, and on the other hand the knowledge about the cultural origin and its everyday practices. Also, the fact that family visitors and families speak the same language, as well as a degree of familiarity with the family visitors in the milieu, facilitates the access to families.

Low-threshold access and meeting as partners

In order to establish a good relationship between family visitors and families, from the provider’s perspective a successful strategy is to seek access through talking about everyday practices and to focus only indirectly on emotional well-being or changes if needed. It is important that family visitors do not appear as being educating the families from above, but as understanding and on the same eye level. Families should perceive family visitors as partners and not as controllers.

Professional skills

Family visitors should also be professionalized in a medical or pedagogical area to build credibility and trust in families.

3.1.4 USE OF ICT

Tool to meet parents’ need

From the provider’s perspective, the use of ICT in the program can only be a means to an end, for example, to communicate with parents or to better address them. Therefore, it is important to meet the needs of the target group, even if this means expanding one’s own competencies concerning ICT.

3.1.5 OTHERS

The provider mentioned the advantageous fact that the programme has a relatively small local catchment area and, therefore, size that is easier to manage than other programmes.

3.2 FINANCIAL INSTITUTION

3.2.1 OUTREACH

The financier of *Chancenreich* explained that the main success factors of reaching out to the target group are: paying families for their participation (bonus) and reaching out to everyone, not to a specific subgroup of families (universal approach). These as well as additional outreach strategies mentioned by the financier are presented below.

Bonus

A family receives a monetary incentive of € 500 if all project requirements (e.g., taking part in a course, medical check-ups) are met. The financier explicitly mentioned that paying money is not

just a strategy to involve and motivate participants, but also to acknowledge parents' effort of learning about good upbringing of children. "Where else do we have that in society, that someone comes and pats on parents' back and says: It is great that you take part in that, thank you? Here you receive this also in form of money." Every family is treated in the same way regarding the bonus, no matter of their financial backgrounds. This also relates to the programme's universal approach.

Universal approach

„All are treated in the same way!“ The financier made clear that she does not want to stigmatize anyone by only including a specific target group to the programme. *Chancenreich* is for everyone. Because of this, *Chancenreich* is an integrational project, stated the financier, without having this as an aim in the beginning. The financier also believed that intermixing participants from diverse backgrounds serves as sustaining factor to keep people attending the programme.

Adaptation to target group

The programme is somehow adapted to the target group and not just set from above. This means that wishes of the target group regarding course selection are being accepted and integrated and the concept designers try to adapt the presentation of contents to the needs of the target group (e.g., languages, design). They also use staff members with similar cultural backgrounds to reach out to and maintain the participation of families, for example "we employed a Russian speaking staff member to lower barriers."

Facing challenges

Even though some groups are still hard-to-reach, the interviewee mentions they consequently hang on them – "silently growling and stalking and from all sides and all over again" – to get access to them. The programme uses communicational means of those groups (e.g., weekly paper) or conducts courses in places the group gather anyway (e.g., mosque). They also try to promote *Chancenreich* through institutions relevant for the target group, such as through sponsoring a choir.

3.2.2 COOPERATION

Strategic networking and collaboration

The financier of *Chancenreich* reported that it is crucial to make the programme known in the town, to communicate as well as work together with other local stakeholders, and to regularly meet important actors of the field in order to maintain the network.

Especially in the beginning, they strategically approached people in the field, used their expertise, and created an "excellent network".

"Then, we walked through the landscape and [...] met once with all stakeholders of the scene, let' say it this way. We simply talked with them about what they do, how they are organized, where the shoe pinches them, how they work. We tried to get an understanding of the topic ›early education‹ and out of this, our first project developed."

To establish the connection and cooperation, the financier and the provider of *Chancenreich* established a “strategic panel”. All of the important local partners are part of it and meet about two times a year to get the latest information about *Chancenreich*. Additionally, the financier invites the front benchers of the city every first or second year to also stay connected to them. Another reported strategy is to involve institutions that are directly relevant to and in contact with the target group (e.g., doctors). They also serve as promoters of *Chancenreich*. The financier explained that by now *Chancenreich* is represented in all relevant groups of stakeholders in Herford. The financier perceived the reputation of the programme within the city as “good and positive”.

Scientific cooperation

For the financier, strategically seeking scientific cooperation plays a major role for the development of the programme. The financier is “really seriously interested” in working together with scientists and values the information provided by them about *Chancenreich*.

Financial participation

One important strategy regarding finances is the financial collaboration with the town of Herford, according to the financier. For her, it is very important that the programme is also borned by other, public institutions, even though they cover just 20 % of the total costs. The financier explained that they “react, as soon as they know that they get money from somewhere, even though they have to pay some part by themselves”.

Limits of cooperation

Sometimes there are also obstacles, such as new contract negotiations or criticism of politicians. When it came to disputes, the financier engaged in discussion, but retained the right to make the final decision. In her words: “Then, we can discuss for ages, but at some point we need to come to a decision. And they did not like the decision at all, in the beginning.” This shows that cooperation has its boundaries.

3.2.3 REQUIREMENTS

The financier mentioned and showed several requirements of the provider, the financier, as well as the staff that make a programme successful. All are displayed below.

Requirements of the Provider

Working conditions

The interviewee described *Chancenreich* as very attractive and motivating workplace for employees. The staff often received encouraging feedback, they can try out different things in their work, and they were part of a scientific study. The financier described the workforce as relatively stable, even though many young women were part of it and many were still getting children.

Personal features

The provider or provider team needs to have a personal interest in the topics covered by the programme and an ability to animate people to come along. A certain intuition for good project decisions seems to be very helpful as well. On the other side, the interviewee mentioned the need for a readiness to compromise in some instances, the necessity for perseverance – “to have a very long breath” or trying out other strategies instead of giving up –, and an honesty when it comes to admitting failures or bad outcomes. It is important to say, “okay, this is not the right way” and to readjust or even terminate projects if they do not work. The financier also described the need to flexible adapt to new external partners from the city.

Skills

The interviewee mentioned the importance that there is a provider personality with good leadership skills. Additionally, the financier strongly emphasized the need for organizational, mathematical, and commercial skills as well as long-term planning competencies. It is “smart to combine disciplines” and connect “people with commercial know-how and expertise with experts for the topics educational science, social pedagogy, and public administration. If they work together, it is outrageous fruitful”.

Problem analysis

The financier reported the importance to acquire a deep understanding of a specific problem in a certain area before implementing an intervention. One aspect of this is to deeply analyze existing (public) data. Very helpful in the process is also good local knowledge through (former) residency and a consisting local network. The financier said, “it is preferable to start on one’s own doorstep, if you want to change something.”

Programme planning

For successfully implementation of the programme (e.g., kinds of courses), the provider needs to be aware of and understand the diverse needs of the target group, respect requests relating to offered courses, and react on them. Another aspect that the interviewee mentioned several times is the necessity to include scientific findings in the programme’s planning – not just for selecting appropriate courses, but also to evaluate conducted course of *Chancenreich* in order to have “measurable results”. The provider also needs to know the limits of *Chancenreich* and when to send families to another institution.

Monitoring

It is crucial for the provider to document everything that is being done. “What is not documented, has not happened.” In this way, the provider can analyze connections and monitor participating families. This is especially useful if there are families that need to be transferred to other institutions (e.g., youth welfare office).

Requirements of the Financier

Steadfastness

In order to successfully support, the programme the interviewee indicated several aspects a financier should display. The financier needs to have a strong character to be able to withstand challenges. At some point, this could mean simply enduring situations or impasses, if “you cannot do anything” about it, and displaying a certain flexibility if paths are obstructed. At other points, this could mean staying strong and enforce a certain decision “to the best of (...) [one’s] knowledge and belief”, even though there is external opposition. A successful financier also needs to be able to negotiate contracts with external partners in an advantageous manner.

Strategies

One of the strategies of the financier of *Chancenreich* is to actively involve other (public) sponsors. She says, “on principle, I do not do anything without money of the public authorities”. In the case of *Chancenreich*, the city pays 20 % of the programme costs. Another pursued strategy is to only invest in effective projects with “high return on investment”. The interviewee takes *Chancenreich* for an effective project.

Joy and interest

A driving factor for her longlasting engagement for *Chancenreich* is that the work seemed to please the financier intrinsically and she had fun creating and supporting the programme. The financier had also a strong interest in the thematic aspects of the programme – it is a “highly exciting field of topics” and “a societally relevant question”.

Requirements of Staff

The financier of *Chancenreich* mentioned several personal, but no professional requirements for staff members visiting families. According to the financier, staff members should be able to “flexibly adapt to different conversational situations”, have a winning charisma, and a “genuine interest” in people. The financier also mentioned that staff members visiting families, but also all others are highly motivated for their work.

3.2.4 USE OF ICT

At the time of the interview, the programme had not involved ICT. But *Chancenreich* was planning an app containing all the contents from the analogue handbook that had been used before. The financier is a driver of this new idea.

ICT requirements

The financier mentioned several requirements a successful ICT environment needs to fulfill. They included translations into several languages, a simple and attractive design with visualized elements, as well as the possibility to “intelligently moderate” conversations between parents without “patronising” them.

Reasons for the use of ICT

The financier mentioned several reasons why a digital tool improves the quality of the programme. First, permanent updating regarding dates and information is much easier. Furthermore, taking up contact with parents is facilitated, also after their participation in the project (e.g., for study purposes). The financier also mentioned that ICT environments are cheaper because there are no printing costs, they are more sustainable, and simply contemporary.

Applicable contents

The app is supposed to consist of information extracted from the parents' handbook with updates, additional information relevant for older children – in this way, parents can use the app also after their participation in the project – and with broader content (e.g., information about nutrition and cooking). They also plan to involve a platform that allows exchange between parents.

3.2.5 OTHERS

There are some aspects that did not fit into the other categories and are summarized below.

Cost-benefit consideration

The financier described *Chancenreich* as transferable, cheap and with good outcomes. She stated: “There is a desperate search for cheap projects that are working. (...) *Chancenreich* is working, it is scalable (...) and I find that *Chancenreich* is a cheap project.”

Locality

The interviewee explained several times that it is important to implement a project like *Chancenreich* in one's own local environment. „I am absolutely convinced (...) that it is always sensible to sweep in front of your own front door.” She perceived it as a success factor.

Another reason for implementing the programme only in Herford are limited financial resources that naturally decrease the radius of the outreach. “We can only pay *Chancenreich* in Herford. (...) I would very much like to do that in a bigger way, but I simply cannot do that.”

Range of activities

Characteristic of *Chancenreich* is the variability of activities the participants take part in. It ranges from educational courses to early start in daycare centers to medical check-ups.

3.3 STAFF

3.3.1 OUTREACH

During the focus group, the staff members reported several strategies and programme characteristics that either reach out to new participants or maintain their participation.

Recruitment

In the beginning of the programme, a staff member literally “walked from house to house and said ‘Hey, don't you want to participate in that?’” Little by little the programme became known and the

reputation of the programme helped to engage more and more participants. Additionally, former and current participants help to recruit new participants – either through making the programme known and facilitating the access to the target group (“Let her in. You can let the blond lady with the curly hair in.”) or through directly involving friends and family members in the programme.

Attractive programme characteristics

The staff members mentioned several characteristics of the programme making it appealing to the target group. They included the variability of courses, the possibility to choose between courses according to own preferences, as well as the diverse professional backgrounds of staff members. Additionally, families are accompanied long-term and not just visited for one or two times as it is the case in other programmes.

Social interaction in courses

According to the focus group, it is not just the course catalogue that constitutes the way *Chancenreich* works, it is also the way participants are treated and treat each other. Parents are not approached in a condescending manner and “people really treat each other at eyelevel” regardless of their background. There is a focus on exchange among each other and with the staff, not on top-down teaching. A casual and open atmosphere supports parents to become honest and open up. Additionally, staff members seek to highlight parental strengths instead of weaknesses.

Dealing with multilingualism

There is an openness for families with other native languages. In the beginning of the programme, they sometimes included professional interpreters to ensure that parents understand everything. Meanwhile, either compatriots take over this task or staff members themselves use gestures and signs to make them understood. The staff viewed the openness for other languages as important success factor for reaching out to the target group.

Universal approach

The staff members generally considered the universal approach of the programme as attractive, both for themselves as well as for participating families. A staff member ensured, “I can only confirm that many see it in a positive way”. Someone else shared a story of a mother with high educational background who gave feedback after a course. The mother described that she especially enjoyed the course because of the mix of participants’ backgrounds and because she experienced they all had similar problems. This is why she had been looking forward to keep visiting the course. “It is a success [...] if it works out that they find out in front of each other ‘we can learn from each other’. That is awesome!”, contributed a staff member.

Through inviting and including everyone, the programme reaches out to families that would have never participated in a family support programme (e.g., due to financial reasons), but also to families with hidden and not expected problems from higher classes. Furthermore, migration groups and language minorities are addressed. For them, observing someone without good

German language skills participating in the programme, served as motivation to participate themselves.

However, the interviewees also mentioned that not all courses were equally visited by intermixed participants, but that there were natural and directed selection processes taking place. Staff members recommend courses for certain social classes and also the locality of a course often decided about the kind of participants of the course.

Financial incentives

A huge outreach strategy mentioned by the staff members are the financial incentives. They include taking part in a course for free that usually costs a lot; this especially draws families from the lower classes that would not have visited a course like this otherwise. “We really reach out to families in a low-threshold way who really need it”.

Another aspect is the bonus system, that families receive €500 for fulfilling all obligations. The interviewees considered the bonus as main enticement for participation of families. The families either use the money as financial buffer for special times of the year (e.g., Christmas) or for major purchases. The staff described that some better-off families explain they do not need the money and would not take part in *Chancenreich* because of the money. But in the end, most of them kept it even though it may not have been the main reason for their participation. “The money is a door opener”, but it is also more. The bonus also leads families to regularly and not occasionally take part in the courses and the whole programme. However, it does not ensure that families with certain weaknesses always end up in the best courses for them. They sometimes simply choose courses with the lowest time requirements.

Other strategies

The interviewees mentioned some additional factors that helped to reach out to or maintain participation of the target group. For many families a presented selection of helpful courses and activities simply serves as facilitation because they do not have to search for it themselves. Additionally, choosing localities relevant for the target group helped to reach them (e.g., mosque).

Hindrances

The staff members considered some groups as very hard-to-reach. They included people with certain religious backgrounds having beliefs contradicting *Chancenreich's* requirements (e.g., early preschool), some non-German or newly immigrated families, families or very young mothers without time and local flexibility, parents with sick or handicapped children, or families full of mistrust that a certain authority is behind the programme and bonus system.

3.3.2 COOPREATION

Strategic networking and collaboration

Staff members reported that – even though it was not the case in the beginning of the programme – by now, each of them is assigned to a certain district in Herford. Within this district, staff

members know the existing institutions, attend the district's conferences, and are in contact and in exchange with relevant stakeholders. This also includes political representatives and medical doctors. The latter became a fixed component for putting the target group in touch with *Chancenreich*. The knowledge about and exchange with other institutions is generally seen as positive resource. A staff member explained: "This is actually really nice and positive. You do not feel any competition or something like that". Besides this kind of exchange and network, there are also established cooperations with external partners that offer courses for participants of *Chancenreich* and, thus, are strongly involved in the programme.

3.3.3 REQUIREMENTS

The focus group mentioned several requirements staff members should show and some that relate to the provider and the participants of the programme.

Requirements of the Provider

One of the interviewees described how the provider complies with the needs and wishes of participants. As an example, one family did not want their child to enter kindergarten before the age of three, even though it is a requirement of the programme. However, they still wanted to take part in the programme. The provider came towards the family by still allowing them to participate, but disbursing only half of the bonus after the programme.

Requirements of Staff

Motivation and enjoyment of work

During the focus group the interviewees expressed high motivation for their work. They enjoy being part of a programme that explicitly reaches out to all groups of society. One interviewee said, "this [...] really pleases me, that also this class of people in Germany can be reached." They also experience excitement for effectiveness of their work.

Attitudes

The interviewees talked about various attitudes they display or consider as important in their work with the families. This included humility and openness – being able to reflect own mistakes and limits in the upbringing of children and communicating it to the group. Generally, appreciation towards the parents is a pervading strategy of the staff. They focus on positive behavior and resources from the parents and teach parents to do the same in difficult times. They want to empower parents and they explicitly use positive reinforcement of behavior. Thereby, the interaction with the baby is used to strengthen the parents' own self-confidence. According to the staff, it is also important to respect and accept decisions of participants, for example if parents do not want to give their child in a daycare facility under the age of three, or dedicate responsibility to the parents when it comes to selecting fitting courses. A willingness to communicate with parents despite of language hindrances and the flexibility to creatively adapt to such situations is another aspect the staff members reported during the interview.

Skills

Staff members need to be able to communicate basic topics in a simple and understandable way. Additionally, they sometimes need to take over the role to convince parents to participate in the programme and evince persistence in that. One staff member reported a feedback from a mother who said, “so nice that you convinced me at the time, that was really nice.” Another skill useful for their work seems to be sure instinct. This includes the flair when and how to react to parents, to social interactions and to mutual learning possibilities within the courses. It also seems to be important to know when another institution is a better contact instead of *Chancenreich* and to hand families over if necessary.

Indication of courses

Interviewees reported that they sometimes explicitly encourage parents to select and visit a particular course. This might be because certain courses are better for children in a certain age or because certain courses are considered as more fitting to familial background variables, such as class, education, or living circumstances. To be able to do this, the staff members need to be informed about contents and formats of all courses.

Requirements of Participants

The interviewees mentioned a few qualities they consider as important for the participants to bring along. They should exhibit a motivated and tolerant attitude, commitment and a certain structured nature, as well as an openness for new experiences and knowledge, including the attitude to be able to learn something new through the programme.

3.3.4 USE OF ICT

Up to the time of the interview, there has not been any involvement of ICT in *Chancenreich*, even though an app was in the works. However, we asked the staff members about their thoughts about it.

Generally, the staff members depicted mixed opinions about the involvement of ICT. Some could see advantages (e.g., less acquisition costs), most of them more disadvantages (e.g., apps are easy to delete). The interviewees thought that most of the families and especially young people have and use smart phones. But the staff also thought that the families have mixed emotions when it comes to replacing the old handbook with a new app.

3.3.5 OTHERS

One staff member constituted the role of local media. She explained that the way an article frames courses of *Chancenreich* had consequences on the perception of the course and on what kind of parents participate.

3.4 PARTICIPANTS

3.4.1 OUTREACH

The parents reported several strategies and programme characteristics that either reached out to them or maintained their participation.

Relationship to family visitors

The parents emphasized the positive relationship to the family visitors. One parent said, “I enjoyed the visit very much. [...] There was someone external who came, and it was a really nice conversation”. They mentioned the relaxed atmosphere during the visits. “We laughed; we immediately addressed each other informally”. Family visitors and parents meet on the same level, with neither domination the other. One interviewee told, “Her focus was the child, but also me as a woman and mother. [...] She didn’t come and just showed her pedagogical background; she was really down to earth”. The parents also highlight the availability of the family visitors and family midwives. They explained: “You have always a contact person who stands by you and has some solutions”.

Financial incentives

The parents perceived the financial bonus of €500 as a positive and successful outreach strategy. However, they also mentioned that the financial support is so attractive, that some families might be sceptic and ask themselves “What is the catch?”

Another aspect to maintain participating in the programme the parents mentioned were the regulations regarding the bonus. The parents receive the bonus only if they attend most of the course. They describe it as a big motivator to attend all the sessions and take part in all the mandatory modules. One interviewee stated, “You need to work a little bit for the bonus”.

Attractive programme characteristics

The parents mentioned the variety of courses, the content of the courses, the extended information of the parent handbook/manual, free additional pediatric checkups and all together the presented preselection of courses and modules as very positive. The interviewees said: “*Chancenreich* just presented it. Welcome, just do it!”, “I still have the parent handbook; I still look inside to get information”, and “I knew lots of information already, but to have it presented in a summarized way, I just thought ‘Wow’.”

Universal approach

The parents pointed out that the universal approach of the programme is positive and worth to support. “I didn’t think about it that long and it was clear for me, that I want to support such a programme”.

Infrastructure of the programme/local context

For the parents, the local proximity of the courses as well as easy accessibility were attractive. “We were advantaged with our course; we didn’t need a bus or a car. I just needed to walk two blocks from home”.

Reputation of the programme

The parents agreed that the reputation of the programme was a strong outreach strategy. This included the advertisement of the programme through external institutions as well as through recommendation of other parents. The parents particularly highlighted the latter one: “When it comes to making the programme known, I find a lot is still working through word-of-mouth recommendation.”

Distinction to youth welfare office

For the parents, the distinction between the staff members of the youth office and the staff members of *Chancenreich* was very important. If this was not clear, it could be a possible reason to not attend the programme. They reported some insecurity among the parents. They reported fears like, “sometimes it looks a bit messy and the flat is not cleaned up, than they take my children”. An advantage of home visits was seen because “the appointment will just happen, even though you might be sceptic about it, but they come to you and first you can listen”.

3.4.2 COOPERATION

The participants reported that *Chancenreich* has a good reputation within other institutions, which is perceived as positive resource. On the one hand, it helped them to get to know and to get in touch with the programme. One participant described, “The pediatrician pointed out the programme *Chancenreich*. [...] There were many institutions that made me aware of the programme, so I had a positive impression from the beginning on”. On the other hand, *Chancenreich* staff transferred knowledge about and contact to other existing institutions and forwarded parents to them.

3.4.3 REQUIREMENTS

The parent focus group discussed requirements regarding the provider and the staff of the programme.

Requirements of the Provider

The interviewees described that the provider tried to accommodate the needs of the participants. One parent said, “There were some reasons that I could miss three sessions of the course. You were only allowed to miss two dates, I believe. Nevertheless, *Chancenreich* offered me to attend another course instead”. The parents appreciated the flexibility of the provider.

Requirements of Staff

Attitude

The interviewees described the attitude of the family visitors as very pleasant. They appreciated the humanity, kindness and “down to earth” manner of the visitors. In general, the parents perceived the visitors as open and flexible regarding their needs. The parents described they were seen as equals and the staff did not approach them in a top-down manner.

“If she had treated me a condescending manner, we would not have become comfortable with each other. I would not have talked so much. We were on the same wavelength, from mother to mother. We were simply on the same eyelevel. This helped me to open up.”

Cultural and language knowledge

The parents described the knowledge about their own cultural background as important. Particularly the language was an advantage to get in contact with the parents. It could be useful to reduce fears and reservations towards the programme. “I know parents that would have not attend the programme without a family visitor with the same language background, because it’s difficult with the language and you don’t understand what the programme is about”.

Skills and experiences

The parents reported that a professional pedagogical background of the staff is fundamental for the success of the programme, because this implied the accessibility of interesting and relevant information without contacting a third institution. A mother reported, “If someone would come to me without a pedagogical background, I would not reject her, but I can’t really imagine it like this.”

On the other hand, they emphasized the importance of a staff member’s informal experiences as a mother. “You can learn facts and read a lot in books, no question. But this little bit of extra what you only learn as a mother, you can never read in books”.

3.4.4 USE OF ICT

Chancenreich did not involve ICT up to the date of the interview. The parents were asked for general opinions about ICT usage in the programme and about the prospective *Chancenreich* app.

The parents displayed mixed opinions about the involvement of ICT in the programme. For example, they believed ICT could have an additional value, but it would not serve as replacement of the parent handbook. When it came to concrete ideas about an ICT involvement in form of an app, the parents highlighted that is “should be very structured and should give me something”. They preferred to let the parent choose between the paper material and the usage of the app.

4. DISCUSSION

This country case study aimed to find out crucial success factors of *Chancenreich* in the perspective of the parties involved. For this reason, we conducted two expert interviews with the provider and financial institution as well as two focus groups with staff members and participants. Below, we summarize the most important findings.

4.1 OUTREACH

According to the interviews, one important outreach strategy of the programme is the universal approach. Families of all cultural and social origins take part in the programme. This does not just lead to low barriers for attendance, but interviewees perceived this as attractive for participants. Another strategy mentioned by all interview partners is the bonus system that serves not just as an additional appeal to take part in the programme (esp. for the otherwise harder-to-reach low-income families), but also to remain participating for several years in order to receive the payment.

The relationship to the family visitors that come home to the parents was described as another important tool to reach out to participants. The visitors often have similar cultural backgrounds facilitating the outreach and building of trust, mutual understanding and eye-to-eye fellowship. The provider also mentioned the necessity of professional knowledge as a form of outreach strategy.

Provider, staff, and participants explicitly mentioned the reputation in the city as successful outreach strategy. The provider additionally mentioned the marketing material, such as the kangaroo logo, as further tool. Participants, staff members, and provider explained that they appreciated the wide variety and adaptability of courses and material provided by *Chancenreich* to the families as well as the local accessibility.

4.2 COOPERATION

All four interview partners emphasized that the knowledge of and the exchange with relevant institutions is one of the most important success factors of the program. In the eyes of the individual protagonists, various advantages depend on it: The financier explained that the regular meeting of the various stakeholders and frontbenchers ensured the publicity and support of the programme within the city; this also explains the excellent reputation of *Chancenreich*. The provider confirmed this perception.

The implementation of the program had initially caused skepticism among the relevant institutions in the city. Only through regular exchanges and meetings, doubts among the stakeholders could be dispelled. The employees saw a further advantage in the fact that knowledge of the important institutions helps them in their daily work and facilitates contact to the target group. The participants, in turn, perceive the networking of *Chancenreich* as positive, because on the one

hand, it confirms their confidence in the programme and, on the other hand, they benefit from being forwarded to other institutions if necessary.

4.3 REQUIREMENTS

Requirements of the Provider

Both the financier and the provider expressed that it is important for the provider to have a clear vision for the programme as well as a strong belief in its success. This also plays a role for motivating staff and partners. Both also stated the need of a provider team of experts with diverse backgrounds, including management competencies, as well as the need for local knowledge.

During the interview with the financier, additional points came out. The provider should create an attractive work environment to attract good personnel and to have a stable workforce. The provider needs to be able to sometimes take prompt decisions, to be open for compromises, to show perseverance, to know the limits of what the programme can do, and to admit failures if necessary. The financier also mentioned the importance of a deep problem analysis, the involvement of scientific findings for the programme's design, and the need to monitor and document processes. An aspect that financier, staff, and participants altogether mentioned as important for the provider to display is that the provider complies with the participant's needs and shows flexibility in favour of participants.

Requirements of the Financier

Through the interviews with the provider and financier we found that in their perspective a successful financier needs to show intrinsic interest for the programme's mission and he or she needs to feel a certain joy through being involved with the programme.

The financier also needs to be able to withstand challenges at times and show humility, meaning he or she needs to be tolerant towards failures and open for external suggestions. Access to decision-makers and a secure public appearance are other aspects. The financier herself also mentioned how important it is to split financial responsibility with other sponsors.

Requirements of Staff

For most of the interviewees, it was perceived as very important that the staff members meet the participants on the same eye level and not from above. There should be a focus on empowerment and on positive resources of parents, not on things that are going wrong. The staff's task is to create trust and get a connection to participants.

Another aspect to establish trust is professional knowledge. Some of the participants even mentioned that they appreciated if a staff member is a mother herself. In general, interviewees view similar cultural and experiential backgrounds of staff members compared to the families as beneficial. Staff members should also be highly motivated.

The provider mentioned that it is helpful if the family visitors are known in the district they work in.

Additional skills that came up during the staff focus group were good communication skills, knowledge of the programme and its limits, and indication of courses.

Requirements of Participants

The staff thought it is helpful if participants show a motivated, interested, and tolerant attitude.

4.4 USE OF ICT

Up to now, there is no focus on ICT in *Chancenreich*. However, the financier wants to implement an app replacing the analogue handbook with all the information necessary for participating in the course. Her vision is to translate it into several languages, enable digital conversations between parents, reduce copy costs, as well as add more and updated information. For the provider, an ICT tool can only be “means to an end” and the most important thing about it is to meet the needs of the target group. Participants and staff displayed mixed emotions and opinions.

4.5 OTHERS

Throughout the interviews it became clear that the locality of the project is an important aspect of its success and working model. The knowledge of relevant stakeholders, the clarity and knowledge of context as well as accessibility seem to be crucial for the functioning of the project.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The most important success factors following the line of interviews are good relations, intrinsic motivation, financial incentives, and a universal, but locally focused approach.

The interviewees mentioned the strong importance of good relationships between family visitors and participants as well as between other institutions/stakeholders and *Chancenreich* as well as within the leadership team. An intrinsic motivation and joy of work are necessary to be effective and to withstand hindrances and low extrinsic rewards. The bonus system and universal approach draws families from all backgrounds with low barriers to start and maintain participating in the programme. On the other side, the financial incentives show societal appreciation of their parenthood. Local knowledge of stakeholders, problems, and infrastructure help to tackle existing problems and to work effectively.

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APPENDIX F

Country Report Germany

Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln

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1. PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln (district mothers of Neukölln) is a project created by the social and charitable organization Diakoniewerk Simeon. The project enables unemployed non-German mothers to take part in a six month course with ten different topics about child-rearing, education and health. After completing the course, the trained staff visits other families in their community in the area Neukölln in Berlin. During those visits, they provide families with their knowledge as well as concrete help and show them social services in the district they live in (Diakoniewerk Simeon gGmbH, n.d.).

1.1 MISSION STATEMENT

“Our work is based on respect and appreciation for the different religious/cultural environments and life plans of families. We pursue a participatory approach based on the resources and strengths of the parents. The visits are free and are aimed towards interested mothers/parents regardless of their denomination and nationalities.” (Diakoniewerk Simeon gGmbH, n.d.)

1.2 TARGET GROUP

The priority objective of the project *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* is to reach mainly Arabic and Turkish families and mothers in Berlin with many children, since they are usually in need of help and service, but also belong to a hard to reach group. Other mothers are still welcome to participate in the project (Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft, Energie und Betriebe, n.d.). The staff members themselves are unemployed mothers at the age of 35 or older with a migration background (Diakoniewerk Simeon gGmbH, n.d.). It should be noted that the mother themselves are defined as a target group of the programme, aiming at integrating them into the labor market. Because of the aim of our study we focused only on the families as a target group.

1.3 CONTENTS

Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln is supporting non-German families with children. The project encourages and sensitizes parents to actively perceive their responsibility towards their children's education. To reach this goal, the staff provides information and contacts for the families. Next to others, addressed topics include the stimulation of speech of both children and parents, the benefits for children of an early attendance in kindergarten as well as communication and handling with educational institutions. Again it should be noted, that another main emphasis lies in the qualification and support of unemployed mothers with a migrant background in Berlin who be employed and trained as staff members (Diakoniewerk Simeon gGmbH, n.d.).

1.4 STRUCTURE

After attending the six month course, the trained staff members are working at advertising the programme in addition to their visits in the families. Even though the courses take place in German they can also speak with the families in their mother tongue to ensure successful communication. Furthermore, the staff regularly attends further qualification courses and team meetings (Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft, Energie und Betriebe, n.d.).

Families with children and a migrant background attending the programme will get ten home visits from a staff member who also usually has a similar cultural background and speaks the mother tongue of the family (Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft, Energie und Betriebe, n.d.). To get families participating in the programme, oftentimes the staff gets in contact with their friends and neighbors to ask about families in need for help or advice. In this way, they ensure mutual trust between them and the families even before they meet each other. At their visits, the staff talks and informs the families about different relevant topics concerning their children like healthy eating, signing in at a childcare centers or school as well as pointing out other social services in the district (Witt, n.d.).

1.5 ORGANIGRAM

The project *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* was initiated through the district exchange Neukölln in Berlin and the Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing. The district office in Neukölln Berlin and the Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing are financing the programme. The provider of the project is the Diakoniewerk Simeon, a social and charitable organization lead by the protestant church in Berlin and Brandenburg (Diakoniewerk Simeon gGmbH, n.d.). Altogether, three administrative assistants, five coordinators and the project manager work for the programme in addition to the staff members. An important cooperation partner is the job center Neukölln, which is providing unemployed mums with the opportunity to start working as a staff member. Furthermore, the project is working closely with the neighborhood management/quartier management Neukölln, childcare centers, schools, counseling centers and other social institutions (Bildungswegweiser Flughafenkiez, n.d.).

1.6 FOUNDATION

The project *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* was created in 2004 by the organization Diakoniewerk Simeon (Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln, n.d.).

1.7 EVALUATION

The evaluation of the project shows that in fact socially disadvantaged and underprivileged families and mothers with a migration background are reached through the staff even though they usually belong to the hard to reach groups concerning educational and social services. Based on self-reports, there is also a change in behavior visible in the target groups. Families in the project have a stronger awareness concerning the relevance of active education and early child support (Koch, 2009).

1.8 SELECTION PROCESS

The main reason for choosing *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* for this study, is their excellent outreach approach towards marginalized groups. The programme reaches families, who based on their migration background are usually considered to belong to the hard to reach group. The great special characteristic of this programme is that it simultaneously helps unemployed mothers with a migrant background to be admitted to the programme as employees.

2. DATA COLLECTION

2.1 SHORT DESCRIPTION OF INTERVIEWEES

The interviewed provider is a certified pedagogue, holds the project management and played a major role in developing the concept in the first place.

The interviewed financier of *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* is a women holding the project lead at county level. She is one of four financial institutions and as such she has a range of tasks, reaching from providing office rooms and respective equipment as well as regular funding of the project.

The focus group of staff members consisted of six so-called *Stadtteilmütter* [neighborhood mothers]. All of them have been involved as staff member for one to three years. Two of them originally come from Lebanon, two from Turkey, one from Rumania, and one from Egypt. Before their involvement with *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln*, many of the staff members had already taken part in the programme as participants.

The second focus group was supposed to take place with four participants of the programme, two of whom appeared for the interview. One of those participants is a mother who recently finished the official visits by a staff member, but is still in contact with her. The language abilities in German by the other participating mother were very limited. Her answers were mainly unusable.

2.2 PERIOD OF DATA ACQUISITION

Interviews and focus groups were conducted between March 2018 and May 2018.

2.3 LENGTH OF INTERVIEWS

Expert interviews took between 40 and 60 minutes, focus group lasted for 60 to 80 minutes.

2.4 OTHER SPECIFICS

It should be noted, that during the interview with the participants, one staff member appeared to help out with the child of the participant.

3. RESULTS

3.1 PROVIDER

3.1.1 OUTREACH

According to the provider, the project *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* visited 800 families last year. Each family was visited 10 times, which corresponds to 8000 visits in the last year. In total, around 11,000 families have been visited.

Low threshold

The main reason for the outreach of the programme is explained by the provider with the low threshold of the offering: "Mothers inform mothers and these are not professionals to be embarrassed or afraid of. They are on the same level and the staff members made the same experiences as the mothers visited." Furthermore, the provider emphasizes that no one is excluded and any family that is interested in educating them in raising children can participate, without getting the mark of being a "difficult family". Even in their own native language, if desired. The provider has the opinion that anonymity and trust in the staff are other important factors. Participation on trial is also possible.

Relevant institutions

The staff members work with kindergartens, schools and some doctors and have regular attendances there. The provider explains the example of a pediatrician: "[...] then they sit down at the pediatrician in the waiting room and chat with the families and at some point they find one who says: 'Yes, okay, that sounds interesting, I can imagine.'" An additional benefit of doing so in the waiting room, according to the provider, is that the staff can be consulted when needed to translate. Another important aspect in the providers' point of view is that the staff members are asked in difficult situations to go to the family together with the health department, in order to ensure cooperation between the families and the health department.

3.1.2 COOPERATION

The provider emphasizes that it has been possible to build good cooperation. The staff members are working together with day care centers and schools and have permanent places there, where they can work at. The good reputation of *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* led to a permanent cooperation with the Children And Youth Health Service (CYHS) at all 4 locations. Even with many doctors, staff members have the permission to work in the waiting room. "Things are going well with the CYHS; pediatricians are usually open minded and allow the *Stadtteilmutter* to work in the waiting room."

Use of external expertise

The provider explains that the conceptual orientation was created at the request of a working group (residents and professionals), because it was stated, "that the parents were not really part in the action". The thematic orientation was carried out by assessing the various views of stakeholders, such as schools, kindergartens, professionals and doctors.

Challenges

Despite the benefits of stakeholder involvement, the provider also describes this as a challenge, as different groups of people had different requirements for the programme. In addition, the professionals of the provider felt threatened, because "now cheap workers come and do similar work and so unprofessional". The regulation of financial support for the programme was initially difficult.

Benefits

Through cooperation with various institutions, the staff members of the programme show a high presence. In the providers point of view this leads to an increasing awareness and acceptance among the target group and "So you can create trust". The professionals of the provider regard the staff members now no longer as a "threat" but as a "supplement". Additionally the mayor has successfully campaigned for acceptance of *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln's* work at the job center.

Networking

Staff members can convey families with "bigger" problems to the appropriate institutions. However, the provider emphasizes that *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln's* work is not one-sided because Institutions ask staff for help as well, e.g. "If there are any celebrations or resident surveys in the neighborhood, many institutions come to us and ask for help: We plan this and that, can you bring it to the families so that anyone can come?"

Political leaders also appreciate the work of the staff members and stand up for them: "The mayor [...] then took care that in 2006 all quarters were opened, that is, the women were allowed to visit more than their own neighborhood. He also supported the cooperation with the job center, so that the women who were unemployed - and most of them were – now are allowed to work under these employment measures [...]".

3.1.3 REQUIREMENTS

The provider identifies several requirements of the staff, the participants and the provider, mentioned below.

Requirements of the Provider

Careful familiarization

In order for the *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* concept to work, the mothers must first be carefully trained, emphasizes the provider: "The training takes six months, the work itself two to three years. The induction includes the qualification in the 10 topics, but also role-plays, communication training and tips on how best to address families. At the beginning, new staff members are accompanied by experienced staff from which they can learn.

Adaption to employees

It is important to the provider that the contents of the qualification are adapted to the educational level of the staff: "The group that really starts out are usually women who do not have a vocational qualification and also have little or very little professional experience in any area. That is why we must also simplify the courses. Most of the women did not go to school for years." In the qualification, the provider sees his main task to pay attention to whether the women are suitable for the programme or whether they are overwhelmed and need help: "Where can we give women more structures so that they really can do that?"

Pedagogical support

For a successful work, it is important to the provider that the staff members are also supported. In addition, there are coordinators who accompany them pedagogically. In weekly team meetings, the staff can discuss difficult situations with families, counselling centres or others and receive encouragement and tips from pedagogical specialists.

Requirements of Staff

Personal characteristics and competencies

The provider emphasizes that a staff member at *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* must have certain characteristics, as they have to go to the families themselves. According to the provider, the most important qualities include a winning charisma, motivation, openness, interest in people and communication. Furthermore, they must be able to reflect on what they are taught and how to use it themselves.

Local knowledge

In the eyes of the provider, an important prerequisite for the staff to be able to work successfully is that they know the relevant advice centres. The qualification is structured in such a way that theoretical work is carried out over two days and the facilities are visited on one day. According

to the provider, this should ensure that the staff gets to know the employees of the institutions and knows for which cases the various bodies are responsible.

Requirements of Families

Personal characteristics and competencies

According to the provider, the families must also fulfil certain conditions so that the project can help them: Families must be open to learning new things and accept tips from strangers. The provider also states that the families must have an interest in continuing education and learning new things. Otherwise, the staff members cannot do much.

3.1.4 USE OF ICT

At the time of the interview, the programme had not involved ICT and there were no considerations on how to implement ICT in the programme.

Curricular media education

Although there is no implemented ICT in the programme, the provider emphasizes that media education is anchored in the curriculum. This involves rulemaking, appropriate media consumption by children and “protecting children from certain things.” The provider explains that within this framework it is possible that certain contents of ICT are implemented in the future.

3.1.5 FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

The provider makes clear that first language support is not the focus in the programme. On the contrary the staff recommends parents to speak the language with the child they know best no matter if it's the language of origin or the national language. She points out that “Every family has the right to decide on their own in which language they feel more comfortable.”

Methods

According to the provider, bilingual education is a topic during home visits. The staff discusses with the parents how to promote both the national language and the language of origin. The provider goes on to say that, libraries are also visited where there are simple books in the local language and children's books in the original language.

3.2 FINANCIAL INSTITUTION

The interviewed financier of *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* is project leader from the district side and as such one representative of four financial institutions of the programme. The job description includes the provision of the staff with materials or additional rooms, but also establishing regular funding.

3.2.1 OUTREACH

The financier mentions several outreach strategies displayed below.

Involving institutions

A major strategy of the programme is to reach out to their target group through institutions relevant to them, such as schools and kindergartens. They either consult or work with parents inside of an institution or use the chance to get in contact with them and meet elsewhere.

Making the project known

The financier explains the programme becomes mainly known by word of mouth, distributing flyers plays a minor role.

Cultural and experiential background of staff

Another very important factor is the background of the staff members, as the financier mentions. That they have the same cultural background and that they gathered similar experiences as the target group is of enormous benefit to find access into those communities.

Visiting families

The financier highlights that a particularity of the programme is that “the mountains comes to the prophet”, meaning the staff visits the families at home and not the other way around. In this way, groups can be reached that would have never accessed or even found a service center by themselves.

Hard-to-reach groups

However, there are still some groups that are not accessible for the programme. In this context, the financier mentions highly religious and Southeast European families leading a very withdrawn life. It is not necessarily the people that just arrived in the country, but often those families that have lived in Germany for a long time already.

3.2.2 COOPERATION

Cooperation with institutions relevant to the target group

A huge part of the programme’s recruitment and even work takes place directly in institutions relevant to the target group, such as kindergartens, schools, medical practices, and youth welfare offices. The staff members either serve as bridge builders between migrated families and agencies or create places where staff members of *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* inform mothers about certain topics and get in touch with them. For this, either the institutions themselves reach out to the programme or the programme representatives approaches them. The financier cites a staff member of the youth welfare office: “We cannot imagine anymore to work without *Stadtteilmütter*.” But it is not just the provider or staff reaching out to them, in the beginning it is often the interviewed financier establishing the contact. Many cooperations between the

programme and respected institutions are well consolidated by now and cooperation in general plays a huge role within the work of the staff. Some additional aspects are pointed out below.

Political networking

When it comes to politics, the financier mentions that she is often the advocate for the programme and serves as intersection to the political level. Furthermore, there is strong support for the programme from the district mayor.

There is one aspect of the programme that actively involves staff members with the political realm. They are requested to be part of the district councils to be able to vote for subsidies. The staff knows very well the needs of families in the districts.

Cooperation for programme control and development

To further develop the programme the financier talks about cooperative initiatives in form of external working groups working out strategies. She also mentions that there are steering meetings the provider reports to in order to ensure the quality of the programme.

Reputation

The financier mentions several times that the programme is highly appreciated from diverse stakeholders, well known within the district, and has a good reputation. She explicitly explains that the programme's respect is a key factor of success for the programme. "If we had not have the appreciation of the project, we would not be where we are today."

Limits of cooperation

Among many positive aspects of cooperation, the financier of *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* also mentions challenges. She reports that sometimes providers of other projects react enviously towards the programme's success, especially when it publicly receives grants.

3.2.3 REQUIREMENTS

The financier mentions and shows several requirements of the provider, the financial institution, as well as the staff that make a programme successful. All are displayed below.

Requirements of the Provider

In-depth analyses

Before the beginning of the programme, a piloting phase took place. The evaluation of the piloting showed that a project like this really meets the needs of the families. This indicates the importance of several aspects: The provider needs to do a problem analysis and find out what the target group's needs are, the provider needs to monitor the work of the programme to keep track of and document incidents and changes, and the provider needs to value and conduct evaluations of the programme in order to know what to change or carry on. This also emphasizes the inclusion of scientific methods, as programme evaluation do at best.

Attitudes

The financier points out the cultural diversity being reflected in the employee base at all levels. That means also coordinators have diverse cultural backgrounds so they can reach out to the staff. Another aspect is that the provider needs to have “a lot of engagement and passion and heart blood [...], the willingness to conduct a project like this after all”.

The financier also mentions the necessity for openness towards other cultures, other religions, and for changes and dynamics taking place within the programme. However, fundamental values should be untouched and serve as orientation, also when it comes to staff selection. For example, if potential staff members do not accept the German culture, they cannot become part of the programme. It becomes also clear through the interview that spontaneity, commitment, and fast reactions are important at times.

Staff management

The provider needs to show a certain flexibility where to use staff members (selection of families). Furthermore, the provider needs to adapt the work and education for the staff members to their needs and prerequisites. Another aspect is that the provider has to respond to the challenge to select and choose appropriate staff members in order to have a good employee base. This also means observing and accompanying new staff members. Another aspect of good staff management the financier mentions is that the provider should keep an eye on the needs of the staff, also outside of the programme. The provider tries to find out how they can further support employees, also after their involvement in the programme, e.g. through enabling them for a certain educational track.

Upper level staff

The programme does not only employ the home visitors, who are the *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln*, but also staff on an upper level that takes over educational or organizational work. The financier indicates that these staff members need a certain expertise that they can also pass on to the home visitors as well as empathy. Furthermore, they together with the provider in general need the ability to organize and coordinate, for example when it comes to communicate and network with external institutions.

Requirements of the Financier

Joy and engagement

It is striking how enthusiastically the financier talks about the programme. She says, “you simply have to support this project” and is happy that she can be involved with the programme and that it really has an effect for the target group. It becomes also clear through the interview how engaged the financier is to further develop and improve the programme. She is not content with the status quo if there are still pieces that can be adapted in a better way.

Administrative competencies

There is a lot of administrative work for the financier. Therefore, administrative abilities are highly important. This also includes filing many applications. Additionally, the financier needs to make his or her work and the programme itself transparent to cooperating agencies and senate administrations.

Cooperational competencies

Sometimes the financier must be willing and open to cooperate with other partners, either to use the expertise of other people to improve the programme or to maintain contacts on the political level. Another aspect in this connection is that the financier sometimes coordinates different cooperations for the programme. For example, the financier accompanies meetings with staff members and representatives of external organization in the beginning.

Readiness to learn

The financier needs to display a readiness to learn, a flexibility to adapt programme aims and/or target groups, an openness for new processes and directions if necessary for the effectiveness of the programme. This vigilance for expected and unexpected output. As an example, at some point the financier had to admit that they actually release women into unemployment after their involvement with *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln*. They had to admit that this happens and think about solutions.

Requirements of Staff

The financier mainly mentions requirements for the home visitor staff, not for staff members on the upper level, such as coordinators.

Role model

The staff members of *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* are supposed to be role models – role models for integration (e.g., concerning German language competencies and appreciation of both home and host culture), but also for educational matters. They are meant to serve as “door opener for families” into the German society and as mediator connecting migration families with relevant institutions (e.g., doctor’s offices, counselling services).

Engagement

The financier describes the staff as highly motivated and prosocially active. They are available around the clock, indicating a strong commitment to their work. It also becomes clear that an inner drive for the new role and augmented expertise is necessary.

Formal requirements

Before a person can be a staff member, she needs to be unemployed. This is due to the cooperation with the job centre. Mostly, they do not have an education or it is not accepted in Germany. The knowledge and skills they need for their work in the programme is made available

by the provider. Another prerequisite is that the staff members need to speak German in a way that they understand and are understandable. They also need to speak the language of at least one of the target groups. Staff members also need to share the experience of being a mother. Furthermore, for the programme it is really important that the staff members have the cultural knowledge about the target group and that they share similar experiences, such as migration stories.

Skills

Staff members need to have good communicative skills, to be able to present the programme and its topics, and to actively reach out to and step towards the families. It is not a nine-to-five job, but staff members also need to be able to distance themselves from the families to keep mental hygiene. The financier also points out that staff members need a certain degree of reflection abilities.

Attitudes

Through the interview it becomes obvious that the staff members need courage to connect with strangers and they really need to appreciate and accept both cultures, the home and host culture. Furthermore, they need an openness for own internal processes and to apply newly learned things in their own lives.

3.2.4 USE OF ICT

Officially, there is no information and communications technology involved within the programme. However, media education is part of the curriculum staff members go through with the families. It contains topics such as website restrictions for children. The staff uses certain ICT, for example computers.

3.2.5 FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

Language education is not a focus of the programme. However, it is part of the curriculum staff members go through with the families. Their recommendation is that each parent should talk with the child in the language they speak best themselves. Rarely, families are referred to specialized service centers with regard to language learning.

3.2.6 OTHERS

A particularity of the programme is that there actually is a second target group of the programme: the staff members, the so-called *Stadtteilmütter* (neighborhood mothers) themselves. They are the door opener to the families. The financier mentions that they found out over time that only when the staff members are well equipped, they can act as role models and really make a difference for the families. These women are empowered to discover their own competencies and personalities and step (back) into work roles outside of their families.

3.3 STAFF

3.3.1 OUTREACH

The staff members emphasize how important it is for the successful outreach of the programme that the parents are informed early that the employees do not work for the Youth Welfare Office. Many families fear sanctions and paternalism and therefore react hesitantly when they hear about the programme.

Low-threshold offering

In the eyes of the staff, the programme reaches so many mothers because it is adapted to their resources and participation in the programme is so easy: "Then I'll say: I'll come home too; I have topics that are very interesting for you". Depending on requirements, the staff members also meet in cafes or other neutral locations. According to them, the possibility of participation on trial is also particularly important in order to relieve the mothers of their fears and to be able to present the programme to them without obligation.

Mediators

The staff members see a further advantage in the fact that they can also go with them to various authorities if necessary to mediate there: "A *Stadtteilmutter* visited me at that time; they showed me which advice centers one can go to, how one accompanies and so on." The staff now passes this knowledge on to other mothers. It also mediates between the Berlin Foreigners Registration Office authorities and the families.

Challenges

Nevertheless, the staff members describe various difficulties they encounter in their work. In some cases, mothers do not want to be visited at home. At the same time, they do not want to meet in public places. One staff member describes it as follows: "Yes, this mentality exists; they ask themselves what might happen or are afraid of what the *Stadtteilmütter* do. If families don't understand what we do, there's a line between us. We try to reach these families many times. But some don't come; they are ashamed."

Acquisition by participants

The staff members also believe that mothers who took part in the programme recommend it to others. "This goes from one to the other. If a *Stadtteilmutter* has given her tips that have helped her, it spreads. Those in need of help come along and ask if they can be helped."

3.3.2 COOPERATION

The staff is proud of the many partners, some of whom approach the programme on their own initiative and ask for cooperation: "[...] and they came to us and said: "There is this project, can you pass it on to the families?" [...]"

Relevant Institutions

The employees mainly report on cooperations with schools and day care centers. They work in welcome classes, take part in parents' cafes or have breakfast with other parents. It is important to the staff to work together with the youth welfare office, family and counselling centers. The staff members and their work are well known: "We are in contact with the youth welfare office if there are any problems. They know us and we know them very well. We'll put some families in touch with the Youth Welfare office, if necessary."

Reputation

The staff perceives the reputation of the project as very positive: "I also think that teachers and educators respect us very much. In many schools, teachers have my number and they call me when there's something to do; when there's a family or something." The staff describes that they have the feeling that both the participating mothers and the "German society" appreciate their work very much and are grateful.

Benefits

Participation in the programme gives mothers certain advantages. One staff member describes it as follows: "In the family centre there was a playgroup, a dance group with small children, up to 1 year old. And they were full and then I came with a mother and she said to me, "We're actually full, but for you, yeah, okay." The staff knows where they can currently receive benefits and pass this information on to the families where they are sure they need it.

3.3.3 REQUIREMENTS

Requirements of Staff

Personal requirements

In order to be a good staff member, various characteristics are indispensable according to the employees. On the one hand, an interest in people is helpful: "With me it's like I want to work with people anyway and in the social field. Meet new people. The more people you can help, the more peaceful you feel inside." It is also helpful that the staff members themselves are mothers and can understand the experiences, worries and problems of other mothers. In addition, tolerance towards the diversity of life situations and an appreciative approach are very important in the eyes of the staff themselves. Furthermore, they emphasize that it is essential to build trust with the other mothers and maintain their anonymity.

Empowerment

One goal of the programme, according to the staff members, is, that participating mothers become (more) self-reliant on one's own resources in the end. "We motivate and strengthen the mothers so that they learn German, for example, so that they don't just sit at home, but go out and do something. Then they see the result and they are proud". In this procedure, the staff members

describe that it is very important to be tactful, because they do not want to patronize the mothers and do not want to hurt them.

Enthusiasm

Another prerequisite in the eyes of the staff is that you are convinced of the programme and can pass on your enthusiasm to the mothers and thus act as a kind of role model: "On the one hand, it's a lot of fun. On the other hand, many mothers see that you can also raise children on your own, for example. They see this success and then they want to do the same". All staff members emphasize how much they like their work and how much they support the programme.

Internal qualification

As a preparation, staff must be qualified internally. They describe weekly meetings: "Every Wednesday we have team meetings and talk about our week." Another says: "Today, for example, I had the qualification course. Every Tuesday, three hours." Content wise they are trained in the topics, which they discuss later with the mothers. Another staff member explains that you can also address difficulties or even nice things and exchange them with each other.

3.3.4 USE OF ICT

ICT is not implemented in the programme. However, the staff reports that they have formed WhatsApp groups for interested mothers in parent cafes. By this method, information is given directly and different requests can be passed on directly.

3.3.5 FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

The staff make it clear that they advise parents to speak only the language that they really know: "Then speak only those languages that the parents can speak well with the children. Then the children will learn as well." According to staff, it is irrelevant whether it is the language of origin or the language of the country of residence: "The main thing is that it is spoken correctly." Parents can also talk to the children exclusively in their language of origin, emphasize the staff members. The children learn German automatically in day care and / or school.

Methods

The staff members point out that they recommend never correcting the children if they say something wrong. "If the child mispronounces his or her own language, do not correct it. In time, the child will find that he or she is pronouncing wrongly," one employee explains. As another method, the staff members cite "Corrective Feedback" instead of correction.

3.3.6 OTHERS

There are also personal advantages for the employees through their work as a staff member. They say that a positive side effect of their work is that they are not alone (anymore) and meet many new people: "The good thing about it is, there are mothers; because you are in the same

area or always in the same school or day care center, friendships also arise there.” They also learn many new things and take a lot out of the programme for themselves.

3.4 PARTICIPANTS

3.4.1 OUTREACH

Distinction to the youth welfare office while home visits

One of the most important and discussed topics in the focus group was the distinction of the programme to the youth welfare office. On the one hand, they reported “it was just good to have another contact point than the youth welfare office” on the other hand they describe fears and insecurity among the parents “Maybe it’s the connection that makes parents doubting. They feel ashamed”. The parents describe the cooperation to the youth welfare office processes as lengthy and the staff as “cold”, while the staff of *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* are “closer and more intense”. These insecurities might be a reason why some parents don’t want to participate in the programme. Particularly the home visits might be seen as an intrusion of the privacy “they [parents] might fear to be confronted with their problems”, “they feel ashamed”. On the other hand a mother described the home visits as a chance to get to know each other better and to see the circumstances in which children grow up.

Contact person always available/intense contact

The parents highlight the availability of the staff members. The relationship between them and the mothers is described as positive, personal “I like it more to see a person and to talk to her” and close “she is like a grandmother for my children”. Mothers report, that they have private contact to the staff members even after the completion of the programme.

Representation of the programme

A consistent representation, regarding the design or logo of the project, helps the parents to recognize the programme and contextualize the material. This aspect is relevant regarding the distinction to the youth welfare office and other official agencies. One mother summarizes: “I don’t even need to read it, when I see it [the logo] I know what it is about”.

Relevant places

Describing that institutions are not informing about the *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln*, the parents mention that the project is represented in street festivals where interested parents can ask for information.

Attractive programme characteristics → resources of parents

Offering home visits to different topics regarding child development, child raising and contact information to other supporting institutions, the programme starts and builds the contact to the families where its most needed. They offer topics that are relevant in the concrete situation “both

of my daughters gained weight [...] they love to eat. It was very helpful to hear about healthy food". Further, they highlight the flexibility and the relatively non-binding character of the home visits "you don't have always time as a housewife, there are a lot of tasks to do. It is just an agreement, whenever you have time or not." The parents regret the limitation of ten home visits "The end was really very sad. But I said to myself, I take everything I can".

Reputation of the programme recommendations of other parents

The reputation of the programme seems to be an important outreach strategy for the parents. The parent focus group highlights how often they recommend the programme to other parents, particularly to closer family and friends. "I would always recommend the programme with clear conscience to friends when they have problems".

3.4.2 COOPERATION

The participants mention that the staff members are in contact with other relevant institutions (youth welfare office) but they did not hear or could not find information about the programme in other institutions. But the staff members have a mediating role in establishing contacts with other relevant institutions and forwarding these contacts to the parents "I didn't know that this projects exist, for example like Blueberry, a youth club where kids can play." One mother describes "it surprises me, at the youth welfare office, I never saw material of *Stadtteilmütter*". But parents report, that the project is represented on street festivals "so the people can ask what the project is about and get explanations".

3.4.3 REQUIREMENTS

The parent focus group discusses requirements regarding the staff and the provider of the programme.

Requirements of the Provider

The prerequisite for the qualification as a staff member is the age of 35 and to have a migration background. The participant described it as excluding, because she was born in Germany and does not fulfill the prerequisite for the qualification.

The local context of the programme is seen as an advantage.

Requirements of Staff

Cultural knowledge/language background

The parents can choose if they want to speak in their origin language or in German to the staff. That's why the staff members need to be able to communicate in a simple and understandable way. The support of origin language is seen as a tool for integration by the participants. "Because the parents have the opportunity to get a *Stadtteilmutter* in our language, they don't feel excluded, just because they are in Germany". One mother mentioned, that she sees the different cultural

background between her and the staff member she gets visited by as a chance “and a real enrichment [...] because it is something completely new, I can try new things, to do things differently, that I never did before.”

Qualification/Skills

Regarding the qualification of the staff member, the parent focus group sees the fact, that the staff members are mothers themselves, as most important. “You just know it’s a mother. She has own children, grandchildren – the feeling is different, compared to a young mother or young staff from the youth welfare office.” They feel like, they can ask more detailed private questions, that only mothers know answers to.

Attitudes/methods

The interviewees described the visits and the attitude of the staff members as very positive. They appreciate the humanity, kindness and “warmth” of them. “She needs to come with feelings/emotions, I cannot work without” and “sometimes when you are sad, she takes you in her arms”. The parents say, they were seen as equal and they respond sensitive to their needs - “she just understands”. The parents also appreciated the way the staff consults/advises/gives tips, that they didn’t want to teach the participants and furthermore respect their decision to take or not take advice. In general, the staff members were open and flexible regarding the parent’s needs. The parents describe the them as always helpful “they would never say no, we will not help you. It’s good to know how they are working and that you don’t need to fear they take your children”.

The mothers describe a very close relationship to their staff member who visits them, for example they can call them whenever it’s needed or they share private information. This implicates a willingness as a staff of *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* to share their private life.

Indication of relevant institutions

According to the parent focus group the staff members play an important role in mediating between the parent and other institutions. They give them knowledge about services of other family support institution (e.g. workshops), local initiatives and “shows me other neighborhoods, because I don’t want to stay only in Neukölln. It’s a beautiful experience to see other neighborhoods. Staff members need to have knowledge not only about cooperation with family relevant institutions but also have an integrating role, by showing and representing the neighborhood.

3.4.4 USE OF ICT

Digitalization is not included in the conceptional framework of *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* as a tool for parents or staff. Asking for the role of ICT in the programme, the parents didn’t mention it as a relevant aspect of working together with the staff members.

3.4.5 FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

The parents were recommended to speak the language with the child they know best, no matter if it's the language of origin or the national language. During home visits the language support was an important topic for the parents. The staff emphasizes the importance of bilingualism and to speak a lot in the origin language (Arabic) because the child would learn German anyway through the childcare institution and the mother's German language.

4. DISCUSSION

This case study aimed to find out crucial success factors of family support programmes in the perspective of the parties involved in it. For this reason, we conducted two expert interviews with the provider and financial institution as well as two focus groups with staff members and participants. Below, we summarize the most important findings.

4.1 OUTREACH

All interviewees talked about the collaboration with other institutions as important outreach strategy. The staff members are and do their work where the target group is and sometimes even work together with the institutions, for example for translations. Another factor mentioned a lot, was that the staff shares the same cultural and experiential background as the target group. They not just meet on the same level, but this is also a good starting point for relationships and trust. The relationship to the staff is often the factor that encourages mothers to keep participating in the programme. Many of the interviewees mentioned that in terms of advertisement it plays a big role that the mothers themselves recommend the programme to other mothers. Additional aspects are that all (migrant) families can participate, not just problem families that the programme very much adapts to the needs of the target group and interestingly, for both the staff and the participants it was very important to mention that the programme was distinct from the youth welfare office. Especially the participants, mentioned the importance of the programme's public representation in form of the logo.

4.2 COOPERATION

All interviewees reported that there is a strong collaboration with other agencies, such as schools, daycare centers, doctors, and the Youth Welfare Offices. Even the starting point of *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* was a collaborative group of residents and professionals who wanted to change the situation of migrant families. External expertise is used to ensure quality and improve the programme. Cooperation with other institutions is used to reach out to participants – both through reputation of the programme in other institutions and through accessing places of the target group –, to benefit participants through transferring information about interesting events or locations, but also as a means to help other institutions making their offers known. A success factor of the programme is also the link to politicians. The mayor supports the programme and staff is required to be present and represent the target group's interests in district councils. The financier mentions that she often establishes the contact to other institutions. In the beginning, *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* was sometimes seen as competition for similar agencies, but according to the provider this now changed and the programme is seen as complementary. But according to the financier, some institutions still react envious when the programme publicly receives grants. Interestingly, the participants do not report that they learned or got information about *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln* from other institutions before participating.

4.3 REQUIREMENTS

Requirements of the Provider

Only the provider and financier mentioned requirements of the provider. Both made a strong claim for the tutoring of staff. This means the provider needs to make sure the staff is adequately trained and is accompanied by an experienced worker in the beginning of their work. The training schedule and work needs to be adapted to the staff's abilities and needs, and there must be regular team meetings. Some additional comments are made by the financier: The provider should do a thorough problem analysis, monitor his or her work and do frequent evaluations. The provider's attitudes should be mirrored in an openness for cultural diversity, dynamics, commitment, but also in fundamental values. She also points out the necessity of engagement and passion for the project. She also mentions the staff members of the upper level who need a certain expertise and empathy in order to be successful. The provider should also be able to organize and coordinate.

Requirements of the Financier

We only have information from the interview with the financier when it comes to requirements of the financier. It becomes clear that next to administrative competencies and a readiness to learn, joy and engagement as well as the willingness and skills to cooperate with other institutions in the sense of the programme are crucial aspects of success.

Requirements of Staff

Staff members need to be highly motivated, committed to, and enthusiastic about their work. They act as role models for integration and education and need to have good communication and reflective skills. On the one side, they need to always be available, live out relationships to the families, and sometimes share things from their private lives, but on the other side they need to be able to do psych hygiene – as the financier states. Next to knowledge about other relevant institutions in the area and passing through the internal qualification process, they formally need to be unemployed to become a staff member. They need to speak German and another language of the target group, and they need to have children themselves. Interviewees pointed out that staff members need to show high sensitivity toward participants to create trustful relationships, maintain anonymity, and see them as equals. Empowerment and tolerance are important values. Interestingly, whereby the financier stated that staff members should share cultural knowledge and experiences with the target group, the participants mentioned that it is helpful that they speak the same language, but one stated that she perceived the different cultural background of the staff member who visits her as enrichment.

Requirements of Participants

Only the interview with the provider sheds light on this issue. She states that it is important that the families need to show an openness for learning new things in order for the programme to be successful.

4.4 USE OF ICT

The provider and financier mention media education as an educational aspect within the programme. The financier is open to future ICT implementations and the provider mentions that staff members work on PCs. Interestingly, the staff members themselves report that they use WhatsApp groups as a way to quickly communicate with mothers. But this is not an official part of the programme. Participants did not mention any ICT-related involvement in the programme.

4.5 FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

As media education is, language education is also a module of part of the curriculum to be discussed with parents. All interviewees clarify that the parents should talk the language they speak best. Whereas the provider mentions that bilingualism is a topic and parents should see how they can support both languages. Staff and participants state that German can be learned in formal settings, like schools.

4.6 OTHERS

Staff as second target group

In the programme *Stadtteilmütter in Neukölln*, both staff members and participants are seen as target groups. The financier mentions how they found out over time that only if the staff is well equipped, they can have an impact on the participants. So they actively strengthen the staff to reach out and support participants. The staff members complement this view by adding that they themselves see personal advantages in working for the programme, such as building new friendships and getting educated.

4.7 CONCLUSION

In general, interagency, trustful relationships with staff members, and trained employees are the most important factors for the success of the programme. Interestingly, the staff is perceived as a second target group which is also mirrored by the strong focus on their education and role in outreach and cooperation.

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APPENDIX G

Country Report The Netherlands

The Step Programme

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1. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMME

1.1 MISSION STATEMENT

The overarching mission of the *Step programme* is increasing the educational opportunities of children from vulnerable families by supporting the parents in their childrearing. More specifically, the programme has three sub goals:

- Improving the cognitive and linguistic development of the child.
- Improving the learning attitude of the child.
- Improving the quality of parent-child interactions at home.

1.2 TARGET GROUP

The *Step programme* focuses on young children (age one to six) from families that are possibly at risk for educational disadvantages because of their low socioeconomic status and/or because of their ethnic background. Since 2015, all Dutch municipalities are responsible for the whole range of care for children from birth to 18 years of age and families in need of support (Netherlands Youth Institute, 2017)². The ministry of Education, Culture and Science manages the educational disadvantages policy. According to the official regulation, a pupil can be regarded as 'disadvantaged' when his/her parents are (very) low educated. Many of the parenting- and education programmes are targeted at these children (Statistics Netherlands, 2017). Alongside applying the official policy, municipalities with significant representation of disadvantaged groups have the liberty to use different criteria for defining target groups. Usually non-Dutch home language and non-Western immigration background are added (and recently also having a refugee status). Half of the 'disadvantaged' children come from non-Western immigrant families, where Turkish and Moroccan immigrant background are most common.

1.3 CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

The *Step programme*³ has different modules for different ages of children:

- Step In [Instapje]: Focusing on one- to two-year-old children. This module focuses mostly on parent-child interaction. Other goals are informing parents about preschool and encouraging them to enrol their child when the child is 2- 2.5 years of age. Parents receive home visits every week for half a year from a staff member (who is a local contact person).
- Little Step Up [Opstapje]: Focusing on two- to four-year-old children. This module focuses on all three sub goals, including supporting early development and learning of the child and

² Please see ISOTIS report *D3.2 Report on inventory and analysis of good practices in family support programs* for more information on the educational disadvantages policy in the Netherlands.

³ Note that each module is an independent programme in itself, with small differences in theoretical background and goals. For simplicity reasons, we designated all modules as the 'Step programme'. For more information, please see www.nji.nl

encouraging preschool attendance. The duration is two years, in which the first year is characterized by weekly home visits and the second year by group meetings every two weeks, given by a local contact person.

- Step Up [Opstap]: focusing on four- to six-year-olds who already attend kindergarten. In this module, the focus is on all three sub goals and prepares the child for formal learning. This module lasts two years, in which the parents go to group meetings every two weeks, also given by a local contact person.
- Early Education at Home [VVE Thuis]: This is a less intensive module for two- to six-year-old children that already attend preschool (2/2.5 to 4 years) or universal kindergarten (4 to 6 years), which is integrated in the primary school system. It is a home-based complementary programme to centre-based ECEC, and as such intends to support the effectiveness of this curriculum. The number of group meetings depends on the specific curriculum the preschool uses, but in general there is one group meeting every month, for maximum three years (preschool and kindergarten). This module is usually supervised by a teacher of the preschool or kindergarten.

The content of the programme is aligned with the sub goals: Parents receive an extensive manual that contains ideas for daily activities surrounding specific themes. Moreover, families receive children's books, games, toys and access to an online platform (web.bereslim.nl). The amount of offered parent-child activities depends on the module. For example, the Step Up module is the most intense module with ten activities per week, whereas the Early Education at Home module, as a complementary module to ECEC, only has two activities per week. Within each meeting, whether these are group- or individual meetings, parents learn about the different themes, the activities they can perform with their child, and general guidelines for parent-child interaction. They receive supervision and feedback by role-playing with other parents or with their own child while being observed by the staff (see Kalthoff, 2010 for more information).

1.4 ORGANIGRAM

The *Step programme* is led by the national coordinator (here: provider) from the Dutch Youth Institute [Nederlands Jeugd instituut, NJI]. Since the youth care sector is decentralized, each municipality has its own local coordinator of the Step-programme who supports the staff that guide the parents. The municipality can be regarded as the financing institution, since they can choose which support programme they will financially support.

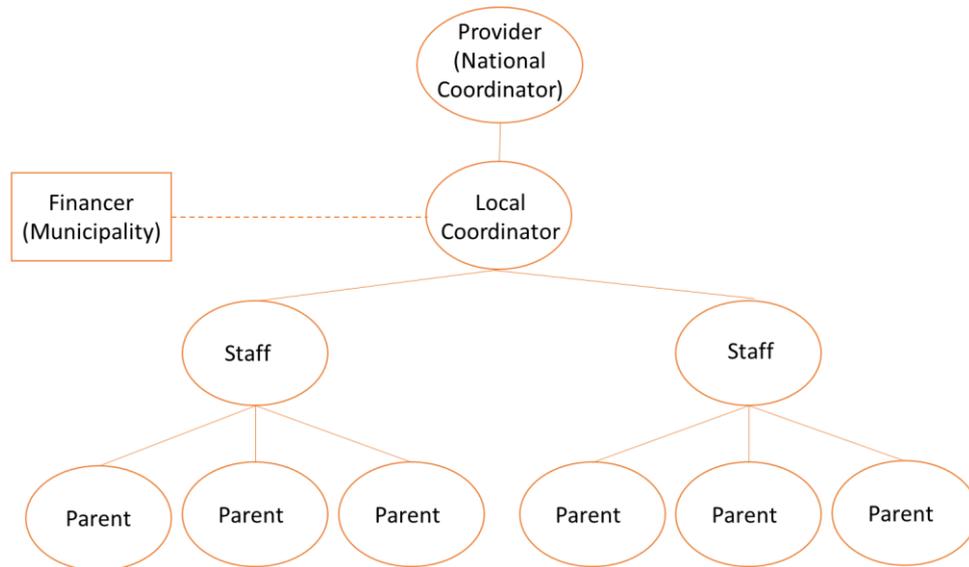


Figure 4. Organigram of the Step programme

1.5 FOUNDATION

The Dutch *Step programme* was developed 30 years ago, with Step Up as the first module. Step Up is originally based on the Israeli Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY, Lombard 1981) but is thoroughly revised (by research institutions) to up-to-date emergent literacy, numeracy and language development theories and aligned with the Dutch educational system and the needs of the target families. The other, later developed, modules were based on the adapted Step Up module. Early Education at Home is most recently developed in 2006.

1.6 EVALUATION

Some modules of the *Step programme* are evaluated more extensively than other modules. Evaluation studies focused both on child outcomes and family outcomes. Studies have shown that the Step Up module has some positive medium sized (long-term) effects on the academic achievements of Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch children. For the Turkish children an increase in their emergent numeracy and language proficiency scores in Turkish were found (Leseman & Van Tuijl, 2001). Longitudinal studies show that children who participated in the Step Up module have a smoother transition to the first and higher grades of primary school (e.g. lower

numbers of grade repetition) (Leseman & Van Tuijl, 2004; Van Tuijl, 2002, 2004). Observational studies have shown that mothers who participated in the Step Up module show a higher quality of parent-child interaction (Van Tuijl & Siebes, 2006). Only a few small scale studies have been conducted on Step In and Little Step Up in the Netherlands, though a German adapted version has shown that children improve their language and cognitive skills, and parents reported that they feel more competent, that they play and read more with their children, have less worries and feel better integrated in society (Sann & Thrum, 2005). Recently, studies on the Early Education at Home module shows that preschool children from parents who attended this module improve their curriculum-specific and general vocabulary knowledge significantly more than control-group children who were only involved in a preschool programme (Teepe, Molenaar, Oostdam, Fukkink and Verhoeven, 2017).

1.7 SELECTION PROCESS

The current case study focuses on the *Step programme* for several reasons. First of all, it has been implemented in more than 70 Dutch municipalities, and is seen as one of the most effective parent support programmes in the Netherlands. It has been studied, evaluated and adapted multiple times, not only by the Dutch Youth Institute but also by universities (e.g. Utrecht University) and research centres. As a consequence, the programme innovates continuously: Activities and books have been adapted, translated to multiple languages and digital material has been developed. It focuses on a broad range of vulnerable families: Low educated and often having a different cultural background. Therefore, the mission of the *Step programme* fits well with the ISOTIS goals. Furthermore, the programme seems to have a good outreach strategy: The programme is adapted in each municipality to the local needs of the parents by working with local contact persons as staff members. They are familiar with the neighbourhood, the parents, their challenges and possibilities, and some of them have the same background and speak the same language as the parents.

2. Data collection

Data have been collected by conducting personal interviews and focus groups with persons from five different perspectives of the programme: First, a personal interview with the provider was conducted. The provider is the national coordinator of the *Step programme*, working at the Dutch Youth Institute. Through the provider, a specific municipality was chosen. This municipality implemented all modules of the *Step programme*. In this municipality there is a relatively large group of non-Western immigrant families. A personal interview with the local coordinator in this municipality was conducted, who works at the local support organisation that is responsible for offering care for young children and their families in the specific municipality. Four staff members were contacted by this local coordinator and a focus group was conducted with them. Each staff members worked with a different module of the *Step programme*. They all had experience in working in ECEC before supervising parents in the *Step programme*. Two staff members had a

migration background (Turkish and Moroccan). Staff members were asked to contact parents who would like to participate in the case study. Due to time limitations and dependence on the network from the staff, only one parent (a mother who recently finished the Step Up module) was interviewed via phone. Finally, two policy representatives from the municipality, working at the early childhood department, were interviewed in the perspective of their role as financier. All data have been collected between April and July 2018. The duration of the focus groups and interviews was between 50 to 80 minutes.

The coding framework was based on the provided coding guidelines. The framework was then refined by including specific sub-categories that emerged from the data. Main categories were confirmed by a second researcher for 20 percent of each interview or focus group, with only minor differences noted (95% agreement). Differences were discussed until consensus was reached.

3. RESULTS

3.1 FINANCER

3.1.1 OUTREACH

Introduction to the Step programme

Regarding the introduction to and informing the parents about the *Step programme*, the financiers state that it is essential for the parents to know *where* to go if they have a specific question or specific needs. There are many support systems and programmes that the parents can go to, but which one fits their needs? It is important that the field, so the different local organisations offering support to the parents, communicate well with each other and refer to each other, to offer a solid and comprehensive supporting environment for the family and the children (i.e. interagency).

Second, the financiers stress the role of the schools as a place where parents can get information and where parents are introduced to the *Step programme*. Schools and preschools should emphasize the importance of joining (and completing) the programme to parents.

Use of local contact persons as staff

The financiers state that it is very helpful that some of the staff have the same cultural background or speak the same language as the target group parents, in order to approach the parent or to familiarize them with the support systems.

Freedom for local organisation

The local organisation tries to adapt as much as possible to the needs of parents. Therefore, they receive an overall budget from the financier, and they (e.g. the local coordinator and the staff) divide the means for each module or part of the module of the *Step programme* themselves, instead of the financier deciding which module should receive most attention. This was a wish from the local organisation, because they can adapt more easily to the needs of the parents and the changes that occur in the field, in order to reach more parents or strengthen the effects of the *Step programme*.

“Two years ago they [the local organisation] said to us, we would like to merge those budgets so they can adapt to the needs. Because, it used to be like, ‘well the budget is gone and now we cannot support or start new groups of Step In, because yeah.. that budget is gone’”

Furthermore, the financiers say they fully trust the local organisation to ‘do what is best’ for the specific target group in the municipality: The local organisation has the liberty to adapt the outreach of the *Step programme* and to improve modules for the local target group (of course to a limited extent, given the national agreements and guidelines). The financiers state that they function solely as the ‘money provider’.

“Yes, that is what we mean, the local organisation really decides which intervention is offered and when this is offered. They are free to differ from methods used in earlier years and we encourage to explore innovative elements”

Decreasing the drop-out rate

Overall, the drop-out rate in the programme is rather low. Based on a study conducted by an external research organisation, commissioned by the municipality, the Early Education at Home module has the highest drop-out rate within the *Step programme*. This is due to the less intensive character of this module: It is too casual for the parents to stay engaged to the programme. There are only monthly meetings, with a larger group of parents (hence, less social pressure to attend) and less home activities than the other modules. Moreover, some parents need a more intense programme, not only to ensure that they keep coming, but also to match their capabilities and language skills. The financiers state that some parents do not have the required Dutch skills to fully understand this complementary module, so they drop out. To overcome this challenge, the local organisation and financiers are trying to intensify this module. As mentioned before, the local organisation has the freedom and the responsibility to do what they think is best, according to the financiers.

Challenge for outreach in Step Up: small contribution from the parents

Financers say that some parents might not participate due to the contribution they have to pay for the concrete materials they receive within Step Up. Although this is a rather small contribution, it could be that some parents decide not to participate due to this: ‘Sometimes, every euro counts for these families’.

3.1.2 Cooperation

Evaluation from external research organisation

The municipality finances the *Step programme* for many years now. Recently, an external research organisation was commissioned to examine the way the *Step programme* is implemented in the municipality, whether this is still suitable and if they (i.e. the local organisation) still meet the needs of the target group. By doing so, they hope to improve the quality of the *Step programme*.

Role of schools

Also related to the outreach of the *Step programme*, the financiers state that good cooperation with (pre)schools is very important for the outreach and effects of the programme, but that there is still room for improvement here. For example, schools vary in the effort they put in approaching or recruiting parents for the *Step programme*. The financiers suggest that this is not something that every school should decide for themselves, but that the overarching school boards should take a joint decision on whether their (pre)schools should offer the modules to the parents or not. This would improve the cooperation and communication between the local organisation and the schools.

3.1.3 REQUIREMENTS

Requirements for local organisation

The financiers state that the local organisation has the most knowledge about and experience with the field and the target groups. On the other hand, the financiers admit that they prefer the Early Education at Home module, since this is the cheapest version. Moreover, they would like to see that the local organisation decreases the use of Step Up, which is the most intensive and therefore expensive module. They require from the local organisation to be critical about the need of each module, the expenses of each module, and report this to the municipality.

“Yes of course, we take a financial look at it. You know, a lot of money goes to the organisation! And if things are going well, of course you cannot say ‘let’s significantly reduce the budget’ [...] but I do think that sometimes it is necessary, otherwise it just continues and continues. Sometimes I believe that they can do the same with a little less money. We would like to see a little bit more creativity regarding this”

3.1.4 USE OF ICT

Familiarity with ICT environment

The parents using the *Step programme* have access to a large interactive website on which they can find e-books, games, general information about literacy and tips and tricks. The financiers state that they are not aware of this interactive website.

Possible future of ICT

Although the financiers did not know about this interactive website, they acknowledge that ICT might offer a lot of advantages for the target parents and the staff. Parents and staff are busy, and the idea of having an online environment where parents can communicate with each other or can find additional material, seems promising to them. They believe that ICT possibilities can be especially helpful for this target group, for example the use of Google Translate.

“You notice that people who are not that proficient in a language, that they are usually skilled in using their mobile phone or iPad to overcome this”

On the other hand, the financiers stress that face-to-face communication always works best, so ICT should never replace this.

“You could think of some kind of combination, right? For example, well, once a month you go to Early Education at Home, and besides this you get, via e-mail or via an app, some activities that you can do with your child. I know many schools also use this approach!”

3.1.5 FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

The financiers clearly stated that in this municipality they have a one-language policy, aimed at the Dutch language. They do not want that the mother tongue is used in the *Step programme*, though they admit that it sometimes can be helpful.

Financer 1: “Yes, it is of course nice that it is possible in this way [regarding the use of Google Translate to communicate], but to really have the policy that the modules can be performed in other languages.. You should not want that. You can make it as easy as possible with pictures for example, so all parents understand it”

Financer 2: “Yes.. but to my personal opinion you should sometimes do something in their own language. Because we want the best for the children! So sometimes.. it should differ from the municipal policy..”

Financer 1: “Yes.. well I believe that pictures can already do a lot, and also movie-clips and other visual input”

3.1.6 OTHERS

Educational partnership

According to the financiers, one of the biggest success factors of the *Step programme* is the connection with the school environment: The focus on the importance of ECEC and preparing the child for formal learning. They value the continuity from the home environment to the school environment and that the parents are encouraged to be involved at the (pre)school.

3.2 PROVIDER

3.2.1 OUTREACH

Introduction to the programme: (pre)schools and other support systems

Similar to the other interviewees, the provider stresses the important role of (pre)schools and the teachers to introduce the parents to the *Step programme*. Whereas the (pre)schools are important for the modules focusing on children in the preschool age (age 2 to 4) (i.e. for the Little Step Up, the Step Up and the Early Education at Home module), other support systems such as Youth Health Care Centres [Jeugdgezondheidszorg] and Baby and Toddler Health Care centres⁴ are important for reaching the parents with younger children (i.e. for Step In). These centres are a universal service for all parents and since the attendance rate of all parents with young born children is more than 95%, this is an important partner for the *Step programme* with regard to the outreach.

⁴ Please see ISOTIS report *D3.2 Report on inventory and analysis of good practices in family support programs* for more information on the Youth Health Care Centres and the Baby and Toddler Health Care Centres.

Use of local contact persons as staff

The staff are the backbone in terms of outreach. They go to the parents, build a trustful relationship and keep the parent motivated. All professionals are familiar with the local context and some of them speak the same languages as the parents (mostly Turkish, Arabic, Berber or Papiamentu). This is very helpful, since they can reach parents who do not speak or are illiterate in Dutch. However, because of the increasing diversity of the Dutch population, it is no longer feasible to always appoint a staff member who speaks the same language as the parents. Sometimes there are five different languages in one Step group. Another important thing pointed out by the provider is that when the staff is enthusiastic and shows engagement, parents will also maintain the modules and motivate other parents to join and maintain as well.

Home-visits

One of the reasons that the *Step programme* is so successful in reaching their target group, is because the staff goes to the parents instead of requiring the parents to come to organisations or group meetings (note that this does not hold for the Early Education at Home module). Especially for those families that encounter the most challenges, or those who are afraid to contact formal organisations, it is crucial that the staff can visit them in their home environment. These parents need the low-threshold, individual support, which is why these parents often drop-out when the programme is not intensive enough or when there are too many group meetings (as is the case for the Early Education at Home module).

3.2.2 COOPERATION

Schools and (pre)schools

The provider states that there is a good cooperation with the schools and (pre)schools. One of the aims of the programme is to both lead the child to ECEC and prepare the child for (formal) learning. Therefore, she stresses that it is important that the staff has good connections with ECEC to make the parent familiar with the educational system.

Municipality

The *Step programme* originally focused on children of low-educated parents, considered they are (possibly) at risk for a developmental delay. Moreover, each municipality can decide to broaden the target group, for example by also including families with a migrant background, if these groups also need support. Since the municipality is also the financier, it has a big influence on the intensity of the programme.

Due to budget cuts, many local organisations decided to reduce the number of home visits within the programme, because these were too expensive. For instance, the Step Up module used to have home visits as well, but due to budget cuts, only the group meetings remained. Some municipalities tried to replace the staff with voluntary workers to continue the home visits, but this did not work out well. The home visits were too intensive for voluntary workers, required specific skills and attitudes, and there has to be continuity in the visits, which is hard to achieve with

volunteers. The provider hopes that the number of home visits can increase again, but this largely depends on the financier.

Interagency with Youth Care system

Other support services are not only important for the *Step programme* to reach the target parents, they continue to refer parents to other services if needed. When the staff notices something, especially when they are visiting the parents at home, or when the parents have specific questions, it is the responsibility of the *Step programme* to refer the parents quickly to another support system or to recommend certain organisations or courses, such as language courses for the parents.

Universities

Since the implementation of the *Step programme* in the Netherlands in the '90, universities and other research institutes have been involved with the programme, to adapt and innovate modules and content. Recently, a large evaluation research on the Early Education at Home module was conducted, focusing specifically on the possible role of ICT and the influence of professional learning communities with parents.

3.2.3 REQUIREMENTS

Requirements of Staff

Professional requirements

The provider states that all professionals should be qualified early childhood professionals (specialised vocational degree). Since the *Step programme* is very well structured, it is relatively demanding for professionals. Therefore, they require a good training and continuous support from the local and national organisation.

Personal requirements

Alongside the professional skills, it is very important that the staff is engaged, enthusiastic, and has a positive attitude towards the parent. Staff should acknowledge the parent as a partner during the module, and not stigmatize or lecture the parent. On the other hand, they do need to be able to oversee the personal situation of the family and to know what the parent needs at that moment.

“The guidelines for high quality interaction that the parents learn, also apply to the staff and coordinators. So sensitivity, responsiveness when interacting with the parent. That is very important. Being able to listen. [...] And enjoying to play and to read aloud!”

Requirements for local organisation

It is important that the local organisations take up the responsibility of an employer: Having a clear management plan, enabling professional development of the staff, controlling the budget and establishing and maintaining strong ties with other local support systems and the municipality.

3.2.4 USE OF ICT

Bereslim

Parents attending the *Step programme* have access to the Bereslim website. The provider explains that this is owned by an external organisation. Therefore, the content is not adapted specific to these target parents, since other schools, preschools, and libraries can also access this platform. The provider does get information about the use of the website by the *Step* parents. She thinks this monitoring function is very useful for a digital tool.

Virtual learning environments

The provider mentions that they are currently developing a Virtual Learning Environment themselves, which is adapted to the parents and professionals of the *Step programme*. She is enthusiastic about the possibilities that ICT could bring.

“Here they can find materials that they can use for the meetings, per module. For the staff you need to think about instruction materials but also movie clips that they can show in the group meetings or home visits. Sheets with images about aspect of the development of the children, for example. So all kind of materials they can use systematically during the meetings with the parents. And the staff can upload activities that the parents can do. These are the animated books and digital games from Bereslim [the website]. So the staff puts this online for the parents, so the parents won’t receive it all at the same time, but step for step and they can do this at home. And they upload additional movie clips and images for the parents. So on the one hand it’s about information and transferring content, during parent meetings and during home visits. And there will be a chat function, for staff and parents, that form one group. So they can contact each other.”

She states that it is almost completed, but they want to implement it together with updated manuals for the parents, in which the VLE is more integrated with the daily activities. There are several reasons for developing an online environment. In many families there are computers or tablets, but only limited online content is suitable for children. In addition, it is a strategy to offer more visual material to the target parents, given their diversity in languages and language proficiency. For example, the VLE can include short movie clips regarding good practices of parent-child interaction, as a demonstration for the parents. She stresses that ICT should be used as a supporting tool for the meetings and the home environment, not as a replacement for face-to-face meetings.

When asked about the future of the *Step programme*, the provider states that is important that they should keep searching for ways to enrich the programme, perhaps via ICT. A digital component should encourage and enhance the parent-child interaction, not just ‘putting the child behind an iPad’. For example, a game that parent and child have to play together, focusing on a specific theme, and in which they have to collaborate to solve the game.

App

The *Step programme* used to have a story tell App for smartphones, called *Timo and the Magic Wand*. Via this app, children and parents could listen to a story, or could record the story themselves (e.g.in the home language). The provider states that this app is no longer used, because they had to update and develop it according to the new legislation rules, and that this was too expensive. However, the provider and developers are thinking of putting something similar on the new VLE.

3.2.5 FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

The *Step programme* stimulates parents to use their preferred language during parent-child interaction. However, the programme itself does not fully support the home language of the parent anymore as not all local contact persons speak the same language as the parents. Although booklets were translated into other languages, these booklets are hardly used. Furthermore, the main language during the meetings is Dutch. There are two main reasons for this, according to the provider:

1. Increasing diversity

Around twenty years ago, most parents attending the *Step programme* had a Turkish, Moroccan or Dutch background. Nowadays, parents from more than 80 different nationalities take part. As a consequence, it is no longer feasible to appoint a contact person who has the same background and speaks the same language as the parents. This is a challenge for the outreach to and communication with parents.

2. Influence of national and local policy

Since the early 2000's, the national (political) discourse has taken a rather assimilation approach on integration, which affects education- and support services such as the *Step Programme*. As a consequence, there is less attention and support for the use of the home language in the programme. Besides this, municipalities and (pre)schools can have their own language policy, which also influences the way in which the professionals use the *Step programme* and the thoughts of parents regarding the use of Dutch versus their home language. The provider explains that a couple of years ago, the focus was solely on the Dutch language, but that recently, the use of other languages is being appreciated again. She hopes that this will lead to an increase in the use of the home language during the activities.

3.2.6 OTHER

Educational Partnerships

Although improving the relationship between parents and (pre)school is not a direct focus of the *Step programme*, there is an indirect influence, especially for the Early Education at Home module, where the teacher of the (pre)school guides the meeting.

“The beauty of it, to me, is that they [the teachers] start to think differently about the parents. First they thought ‘parents don’t want that, they can’t do that’. But if you have good meetings, parents actually can do that. So you see that a different attitude arises, a different communication and different relationships. Parents are more confident to walk into the classroom and things like that.”

Content and duration

Most of the modules are suitable for parents who need intensive guidance in improving their parenting skills, since the duration of the programme is relatively long. Furthermore, the programme offers a lot of support to the parents, enables them to do the activities themselves, and builds their confidence. Next to this, parents receive many concrete material and guidelines to perform low-threshold activities with their children in the home environment. For example, during each meeting the professionals systematically implement the guidelines for high quality interactions through multiple methods: practical tips and tricks, roleplaying, showing examples et cetera. Thanks to the intensity of the Step In, Little Step Up, and Step Up modules, the parents are able to ‘have successful experiences’ which boost their confidence

3.3 LOCAL COORDINATOR

3.3.1 OUTREACH

The local coordinator states that the organisation uses several strategies to reach the target group or to keep the target group motivated to attend the modules.

Introduction to the programme: Baby and Toddler Health Care centres

The Baby and Toddler Health Care centres play an important role in reaching out to the parents. The centres are notified of new-born children directly from the municipal population register. When the child and family are (possibly) at risk for a developmental delay (based on the definition of the municipality), the local organisation is notified. The staff approaches the parents when they visit the centres to explain the possibilities of family support, including the *Step programme*.

Introduction to the programme: (pre)schools

The coordinator stresses the importance of the (pre)schools in giving information about the programme and motivating the parents to attend. She says that the parents from the target group need to be reminded to attend the programme, and that the (pre)schools can play an important role in this.

Use of local contact persons as staff

The local coordinator values the cultural diversity of the staff, since this is an important outreach strategy. The parents are more easily connected to the staff if they share the same background or language.

Group influences

Some modules of the *Step programme* are more intensive (e.g., more meetings), while Early Education at Home has only one meeting per month. The coordinator states that because of group influences, or sometimes even ‘social pressure’, the parents keep attending the group meetings. This is especially the case for the more intensive module, in which the parents create close connections and friendships over time, given the long duration of the module. This is less the case for the Early Education at Home module.

“Yes, that cohesion in the group is so significant then. Almost like social control, like ‘where were you?’ And when you compare it, there [in the Early Education at Home module] it is less noticeable, since it’s only once a month.”

Small contribution

Since this year, a small contribution is asked from the parents for some modules (Early Education at Home, Little Step Up and Step Up). This is more a symbolic contribution given the amount, but the coordinator states that it gives an important message: The modules are not completely without obligation; ‘We expect you to come’. She adds that because of this small contribution, there are also more possibilities during the meetings: Providing some extra materials during the meetings to explain a certain theme or arranging childcare if the parents need this. The coordinator stresses that when there are real financial problems within the family, this extra contribution is not mandatory.

3.3.2 COOPERATION

Schools and (Pre)schools

Regarding the cooperation of the *Step programme* with other organisations or systems, the coordinator stresses the strong collaboration with (pre)schools for reaching out to, and understanding the target group. Schools and preschools value the work of the *Step programme*, because they see a difference when parents attended (or attend) one of the modules. The coordinator usually has contact with the management of the (pre)schools, whereas the staff of the programme has contact with the teachers. The (pre)schools can choose whether they would like to promote the Step In, Little Step Up, and Step Up modules or even offer the Early Education at Home module within their schools. Therefore, the management is usually enthusiastic about the programme, but the coordinator notices that the management needs to motivate their teachers, otherwise the teachers will not refer the parents to the *Step programme* or fully implement the Early Education at Home module.

“Well, you need each other, you cannot do this on your own as staff. We [organisation and (pre)school] also try to communicate with each other when things are not working out, like what can we do, do we need to arrange an activity in the classroom, should we be more visible, should we be at the start of a specific theme? You start to come up with

ideas like that. Nowadays they have these beautiful screens in schools, well maybe we can show a movie clip on these screens to enhance our visibility. It really is a collaboration.”

Municipality

The coordinator is really satisfied with the cooperation with the municipality (as financiers). She appreciates the freedom regarding the division of the budget, which enables them to adapt the modules to the individual needs of the parents.

Interagency with Youth Health Care sector

The coordinator emphasizes the importance of good collaboration with other support systems in the field, in order to cover the whole care range for both child and family, and to guarantee fast referrals to the right support system. Therefore, the local coordinating team has strong ties with the Youth Health Care sector, not only for reaching out to the parents, but also to refer the participating parents to other organisations such as speech therapists, language courses, childrearing advisors, youth care organisations specialized in mental issues etcetera.

External Research organisation

The municipality asked an external research organisation to review the *Step programme*. The local coordinator fully supports this. She thinks it is important that an independent external organisation studies the programme, which will lead to concrete suggestions and areas of improvement for the *Step programme*.

3.3.3 REQUIREMENTS

Requirements of Staff

Experience in the field

One of the strong features of the staff, according to the local coordinator, is that most of them started as early childhood professionals working in preschools before becoming the contact person for the *Step programme*. This implies that they possess certain attitudes, knowledge and skills regarding working with young children and their families, but also that they understand how ECEC works and where the challenges lie for these parents.

Personal requirements

As stated by the coordinator and the other interviewees, the most important personal requirement for the staff is engagement: Passion and enthusiasm for their work, the willingness to build a partnership with these parents, and intercultural competences.

“The engagement, that is really so important. The ability to empathize with a different culture and to do something together. To walk this road together, stand next to the parent, not above the parent, not to play the teacher, but really together. That is really the most important I believe. Then you can teach them [the parents] anything you like.”

Professional requirements

All staff members are qualified early childhood professionals. They have to follow a two-day training from the Dutch Youth Institute before working with the *Step programme*. Besides this, they have biweekly meetings with the entire team of the local organisation, each six weeks a personal meeting with the coordinator, twice a year an intervision meeting in which they receive peer-feedback from colleagues, and once a year a performance interview with the coordinator.

Multilingual skills

The coordinator states that some of the staff has the same cultural and linguistic background as the participating parents, which is very convenient for communication and building partnerships. For example, the organisation has some Turkish speaking and Arabic speaking staff members. However, due to the increasing diversity (e.g., Chinese or Polish parents), there are some linguistic barriers in communicating with the diverse group of parents that participates in one of the modules. The staff tries to overcome these barriers by the use of multimodal ICT, ask help from a translator, or concentrate more on home visits for these parents, so parents have more individual support to overcome the language barriers.

3.3.4 USE OF ICT

Translation tool

As stated before, one of the solutions in overcoming the language barriers could be the use of translation tools during the meetings.

“First we said very strict ‘You cannot have your phone on, we need to focus with each other’, but now the phone has to be on during the meetings, so it can translate.”

ICT environment

The coordinator mentions the interactive website Bereslim, but states that this website is purely complementary for the parents to use in the home environment. The staff does not focus on the website during the meetings. She notices from parents and staff members that parents use some of the e-books on the website, but do not spend much time on the other activities, games or information. Furthermore, not all parents have a tablet or computer, and the Bereslim website is not optimally adapted for use via smartphones.

Possible future of ICT

The coordinator thinks that a Virtual Learning Environment, as described by the provider, might be helpful, but she stresses the importance of personal contact with the parents. Especially for these parents, who are struggling to interact with others, benefit greatly from personal contact. Digital tools should never replace face-to-face meetings. She is also hesitant about this in regard to the use of ICT with young children: High quality interactions between parent and child are most important, and it is unclear for her how ICT could enhance this.

3.3.5 FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

On the question whether there is attention for the home language of the parents, the coordinator clearly states that the importance of the home language is always mentioned to the parents.

“That is always mentioned as first! It is the most important thing they [the parents] could do. Teaching the own language to the child and keep using this language at home. Because it is better to learn and use one language well than to learn a second language very limited. “

Multilingual materials

There are no more multilingual materials available in the *Step programme*, according to the local coordinator. These used to be offered, such as booklets in all different languages, but now everything (e.g. manual, books, toys) is in the Dutch language. Also, during the group meetings or during the home visits, the Dutch language is mostly used. If the Dutch language proficiency of the parents is really limited, the own language is used if possible. Parents do not report the use of Dutch as a negative aspect, since they want to learn Dutch to help their children.

3.3.6 OTHER

Empowerment of parents via group meetings

One of the aspects that really motivates the coordinator to work with the *Step programme*, is that it entails much more than ‘teaching’ the parents. It is about supporting the entire family with childrearing and empowering them. The group visits are really important, since this is the (sometimes rare) opportunity for the parents to leave the house and interact with other parents. This does not only improve their language skills, but it changes their lives.

“Because now they know people, they get to know a complete social environment, they understand the school better since we always make the connection with the schools and preschools. Yes, their world grows majorly, and their confidence increases, which enables them so much more to handle the problems they generally encounter.”

Adaptability and continuous development

Though the *Step programme* is a rather structured programme, the coordinator explains that the staff always adapts the content to the needs of the parents. This is necessary, she argues, as the parents they meet now have different challenges than the parents from five years ago. Innovation and creativity of the staff is always needed.

Depending on the interests and capabilities of the parents, some activities can be emphasized or explained only briefly. Activities requiring specific materials can be adapted, so all parents can perform it with daily objects instead of buying specific materials. Although there are many activities to perform, it is not just ‘ticking the boxes’ while doing ten activities a week, but rather

stimulating a few high-quality parent-child interactions. Furthermore, if parents have specific questions regarding childrearing, the staff can invite an external professional or researcher to answer the questions from the parents.

Evaluation

After finishing the modules of the *Step programme*, each parent fills out a survey, given by the local organisation. Their perceived progress in parent-child interaction and childrearing is measured and they give feedback on the module, its content, delivery and the qualities and skills of the staff. This information is used to improve the programme at the local level.

3.4 STAFF

3.4.1 OUTREACH

Introduction to the programme: (pre)schools and Baby and Toddler Health Care centres

Staff states that they are depending on (pre)school teachers and Baby and Toddler Health Care centres to reach the target parents. They have information meetings at the centres and (pre)schools, communicate with the centres and (pre)schools when new groups will start and provide letters and booklets that the teachers and other professionals can distribute to the parents. They think that the outreach can improve if they can contact the parents themselves, without the intermediate person or organisation.

Furthermore, the staff states that sometimes teachers overestimate the capabilities of the parents: Teachers think parents do not need it, since ‘the parent speaks Dutch’, so they will not refer them to the *Step programme*. Related to this, teachers need to be remembered from time to time what the goal of the Programme is and why parents should participate. It is not just about ‘learning the language’, but it is stimulating many developmental areas of the child and helping the parents.

Introduction to the programme: Influence of municipality

Not all *Step programme* groups are completely full, especially not for the Early Education at Home module. According to the staff, some parents are more interested in more hours of ECEC for their children, than attending a complementary module themselves. They suggested that the municipality could offer the parents more hours of ECEC, if they agree to attend Early Education at Home.

Staff 1: “I do think that, if you as municipality want to reach something within these families, you should also invest in the outreach.”

Staff 2: “Yes, they [the municipality] want this to happen purely from internal motivation. But, only when you have already reached the parents, they will get motivated.”

Use of local contact persons as staff

The staff stresses that the use of local contact persons who have the same background as the target parent is a good outreach strategy. Parents can identify themselves with these persons, and it is easier to approach the parents, or to go to the houses to introduce themselves and the programme.

“So I came there as a Moroccan lady, and they were also Moroccan. So they were thinking like ‘We cannot say no to her, we cannot refuse to let her in.’ And then they first start talking about their own personal problems [...] So first you are not even working with the Step programme, you will tell them afterwards what the Step programme is about, how important it is.”

This outreach strategy is especially important if you have many target parents who are first generation migrants. This group was larger twenty years ago. These parents were harder to reach than the parents nowadays. The professionals then had to convince them and their partner that it is safe to come to the group meetings, because they themselves, as persons from the same background, were also there during the meetings. And if you had convinced a few parents, the rest would follow.

Change in delivery of programme: more group meetings

The staff states that the target group has changed over the years and that therefore, the modules and how these should be delivered, have also changed, which they like. Nowadays, the threshold of going to group meetings is declined for parents. Women from a different cultural background can leave the house more easily. Parents are now also more educated and speak more Dutch. Therefore, parents are willing to join meetings with other parents, which reduces the need for home visits. Furthermore, parents seem to enjoy the group meetings, because they can discuss their challenges with other parents. There is a lot of recognition, and parents try to help each other. The staff states that the group meetings really pull the parent out of their isolation position.

Maintaining the parents

All staff members mention that they do not have drop-out: ‘Once the parents are in, they are in.’ The challenge is the outreach, not maintaining the parents. Parents really enjoy the programme, and they will motivate other parents to join too, according to the staff.

Demonstrating benefits and privileges for parents

One outreach strategy mentioned by the staff is stressing the concrete advantages and privileges of participating in the *Step programme*: Show the parents what they will get if they will participate, demonstrate the materials, toys and books, perhaps even mention the costs of the material they will receive. Raise the awareness that this is a good opportunity for the family and for their child.

Intensity of the programme

The Early Education at Home module is less structured and contains less meetings than the other modules, and the staff believes that this influences the bond that they create with the parents.

“Step Up is of course weekly, it is a weekly thing, so you see much more structure there. Also parents really come each week to the meetings. You build a bond with them. You can adapt much more. And Early Education at Home is only once a month, and when a parent does not come once or twice, you don’t see them for three months and that is a disadvantage of Early Education at Home, there no structure, no bond.”

3.4.2 COOPERATION

Professionals with (pre)schools and Youth Health Care centres

As mentioned in the outreach section, it is very important that the *Step programme* and the staff members have a good cooperation with the other microsystems around the family, such as schools, preschools and Youth Health Care centres (e.g. Baby and Toddler Health centres). The staff likes to have more contact with the target parents, and they hope that the other support systems are open to this.

“They [Baby and Toddler Health centres] see all parents, right? In the age group we need to reach. And the Youth Care professional said to me, ‘yes I think I’m going to do it differently, because I do tell the parents [about the programme], but then they don’t do anything with that’. And she wants to link me as a contact person, by directly giving my name, so there is a connection to me and that they can contact me and that I can contact them. So you know, that is how you are thinking together about this.”

3.4.3 REQUIREMENTS

Requirements of Staff

Experience

The staff mentions that it is important to have experience with young children, either by working in a preschool, but also by being a parent themselves. They think it is valuable that they all worked as an ECEC professional, working with young children, before guiding the parents, because they understand the educational system and have knowledge about the development and needs of young children

Building a partnership with parents

On the one hand, it is important that you will not lecture the parents, but to be ‘one of them’ and that you treat them as equals.

“Well, it should not be too school-ish, you know, there once was an intern who had been a teacher. She retrained but she really gave the parental meetings as a teacher. You don’t want that, because you want to keep interacting with each other.”

One the other hand, professionals stated that some of the parents like the assurance that the professionals give them, as they believe that the professionals know best. So it is important that the parents can discuss topics, questions or challenges with each other, but that there is also someone to guide this process and to provide clarity in what is being discussed.

Requirements of Parents

The staff mentions that it is important that the parent have an active attitude during the meetings, and that they are willing to do roleplaying and interact and discuss with other parents. This leads to the best results.

3.4.4 USE OF ICT

The staff explains that the parents sometimes use internet during the meetings if they encounter a language barrier: Not only to translate the difficult word, but also to find a picture of the word. They also use WhatsApp groups to communicate with each other, and send pictures of their performed activities and react on each other’s pictures.

Bereslim

Staff states that the parents do not use the interactive website Bereslim much. Some parents do not want their child to play with ICT at such a young age. Other parents hardly use ICT, not even e-mail, let alone Bereslim. The challenge is mostly introducing and implementing the tool. Another staff member states that the few parents who already use Bereslim, are enthusiastic about it. Staff members also receive the learning analytics of their group of parents, so they can see who is using Bereslim and how they are using it. But since not all parents use Bereslim, they do not use these statistics.

First language support

Regarding the support of the home language, the staff members personally fully support the use of the home language, but they state that the amount of use of the home language is changing over time. Around twenty years ago, the whole programme was often carried out in the home language. However, nowadays staff members hardly see parents who do not speak Dutch at all. Since parents now have a higher Dutch language proficiency, the parents want to decline their language delay so they want the programme in the Dutch language.

“Yes, many parents do not even want it in their own language. We offer it to them, we still have Turkish instruction booklets and Arabic books. But the parents do not want that, they deliberately choose and say ‘no, I want Dutch books, so I can do this with my child in Dutch.”

The staff stresses the importance of speaking the home language with the child, especially when the parents language skills are still limited. They feel that the bond between child and parents will become stronger when the parents use the own language.

“So when I’m at a home visit, and I hear that the mothers’ Dutch language skills are very limited, I suggest to do the activities in the own language. And I explain this to her, but then she says ‘But I need to learn the language’. I tell them yes, but if you learn the language crooked, it is even harder to unlearn this. So then it is better to do it in your own language, then you can also enhance your vocabulary.”

3.4.5 OTHER

Changing the families by concrete guidelines and activities

The staff states that they really try to make a change for the entire family, not just changing the language or just focusing on the child. They invest a lot of time (i.e. one year in most modules) in explaining the guidelines for interaction and raising the awareness of the parents to change the patterns in the family. They stress that the activities are low-threshold, that often do not require material or much time, but that parents can easily do during their daily chores. For example, teaching the parent to interact with the child while walking the child to the preschool or kindergarten. The material they receive is so concrete that parents do not need to come up with ideas themselves. Their activity book tells the parents for each activity: What do you need, what does your child learn from this, what are words you can use, which questions can you ask your child and some little facts about the activity for the parents. The parents really like this.

Educational partnership

Parents become more aware and more knowledgeable of their child’s development, hence, they see the progress of their child. As a consequence, the relationship between the parents and the (pre)school teachers improve, since parents have more to talk about with the teachers.

Parents also like the connection between the themes of the preschool and the themes they learn during the meetings, because it is easy for them to link the home activities to what the child is learning in the preschool.

3.5 PARENT

3.5.1 OUTREACH AND COOPERATION

Introduction to the programme

The mother learned about the *Step programme* because she asked the teacher: ‘What can I do for my child?’ She asked this after the child showed a language delay in kindergarten and he had to retain the grade. This was the first time she heard about such a programme, she did not hear it from other teachers or the g Baby and Toddler Health centres that she regularly visited either. She states that this should be improved, since the *Step programme* was really important for her

and it helped her and her child.

“And I have more friends who have children, they are all foreigners, and they don’t know that Step Up exists, or Little Step Up. So it is really good that on schools mothers are informed, especially the mothers that have bilingual children I mean. So yes, it should not be the case that when you have a problem with your child, who is bilingual, that you need to search yourself and eventually, very late, you get some tips and tricks about how to support your child. I don’t know how this programme should be distributed to the other mothers. It should simply go via Baby and Toddler Health centres and schools. Mothers and parents should be informed that something like this exists. Such good things. It’s so easy! “

Enthusiasm of other parents

When parents like the programme, they will tell other parents to join the programme too. The mother stated she recommended this programme to all her friends, and told them how to subscribe for the programme, since they also did not know how to do this.

Enthusiasm of children

The mother explained that her child loved the activities they did together, which motivated her also to continue with the programme.

3.5.2 REQUIREMENTS

Requirements of Staff

She stresses that she trusted the staff very much. They are qualified, so they know best. The mother states that the staff had answers to her many questions but that the staff also said that the parents should not just follow their answers. Compare your ideas with her ideas and then put it into practice, was the advice. Furthermore, the mother explains that the background of the staff also helped. Sharing the same backgrounds is convenient, since it is easier to understand each other.

“Yes I just trusted her a lot, I really trusted her. And yes, culturally speaking we are also close to each other. So that helps too. Yes, I am from X. and she is from X. Our culture is somewhat close to each other. For example, what we find important for our families, they find important too. They are really close to each other. So that helps to understand each other more, do you know what I mean?”

The staff listened to the parents and if the parents stated that something was very helpful, they wrote that down. The mother states that she liked the fact that the staff listens to the parents and that they ask parents for feedback.

3.5.3 USE OF ICT

The mother mentions that she uses ICT for translation purposes, also during the activities with her son, and as a communication tool with other parents and the professional. They use WhatsApp to ask questions and to inform each other about how the activities are going. She really liked this because it is an easy way to support each other.

“Only there was one activity... [...] so maybe I told it wrong. So he [her son] did it, but he did it wrong. So the other mothers also send pictures of their results in the app, and I said: ‘Did I do something wrong?’ [...] There was a mother from X. She only speaks English, but she tries to talk Dutch too. She does it very well! So she told me what to do in English and gave me some tips [...] So then it was done within a minute! And then I needed to send the results to the group and they said: ‘Well done!’. And I said, ‘yes, thanks to X.’ So I really liked that and it gave me a good feeling”.

The staff also uses the groups app to send links and sites that the parents can go to. The parents send pictures of (the results of) the activities in the groups app, and staff will give feedback on this via the app.

Bereslim

The mother does not recognize the name Bereslim, but she says that the staff might have told about this or have sent the link via WhatsApp. She has not used Bereslim. Sometimes she uses the links that the staff sends.

ICT and Children

The mother thinks it is really important that the activities evolve around learning for the children and whether this is via paper and pencil or via ICT, is not important. Her child likes to use the iPad, and together they watch the links send by the staff, or some movie clips.

3.5.4 FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

Important topic during meetings

Like many mothers participating in the *Step programme*, this mother uses a different language at home. The mother states that multilingualism and how to raise a child bilingually is an important topic during the meetings. Many parents have questions about it, so the parents discuss this often.

Material

The mother stated that she uses both her mother language and the Dutch language for interacting with her child, since the materials (e.g. activity books, books and toys) are Dutch, but normally she speaks her home language. She does not experience problems with this.

Staff

The mother thinks it is important to maintain the home language, so this is why she is using both languages. The staff told the mother that is important to use the language she feels most comfortable with, and if the child wants to use the home language, then that is fine. The mother appreciates this advice.

3.5.5 OTHER

Group meetings and home visits

The mother stresses the importance of the group meetings. Before the *Step programme* she had many questions, for example about the use of language or about school results, and she felt alone in this.

“But when I went to the group, they were all the same! They had children and the same problems, the same things they daily experience with their children. And yes, it is just a nice feeling and you trust, you trust each other very quickly. It is what you have been looking for.”

The parents in this group really supported each other, gave each other tips and tricks and formed a close bond. On the other hand, the mother states that also she enjoyed the home visits. It should be a combination according to her.

“So then she [the staff] can see how I interact with my child. Maybe I’m doing something wrong. When I go the group, it is different. So yes, I like that she comes to my house, but I also like the group. Then I can see the other mothers and they tell what their children do and then we can compare. And sometimes I also learn from them. It is just passing information to each other.”

4. DISCUSSION

The current case study focused on the *Step programme* in the Netherlands. The aim of the case study was to explore and analyse the success factors of this promising programme, by collecting data from persons with different perspectives regarding this programme; the financier (here: the municipality), the provider (here: the national coordinator), the local coordinator, the staff, and the parents. The experiences and success factors were collected via focus groups and personal interviews, hereby focusing on five main categories. We will now summarize the main findings regarding these categories.

4.1 OUTREACH

The *Step programme* is characterized by successful outreach strategies. One of the most important strategies is the use of local contact persons as staff. These professionals, who guide the parents in the programme, come from the same neighbourhood, often have experience as early childhood professional, therefore know the local education- and support systems, and sometimes they share the same cultural and linguistic background with the target group. According to the participants in this case study, this is important for building a relationship with the parents, in order to reach these parents but also to maintain the parents.

Another key-factor for the outreach is the guidance of the parents to the programme via (pre)schools and Baby and Toddler Health Care Centres. This works well if the management, teachers and nurses are motivated, well-informed and equipped to do so, and if there are close ties with the staff from the programme for a quick referral.

4.2 COOPERATION

Related to the outreach category, it is very important that the local organisation, who carries out the programme in the municipality, and their staff members have close ties to other important education- and support systems in the municipality (i.e. good interagency). The organisation should have a connecting role within a broad network, hereby stimulating the outreach to reach the parents but also referring the parents to other institutions if necessary (for example speech therapists) or to inform other professionals (for example informing teachers about the progress).

Second, a success factor of the *Step programme* is the close relationship with their financiers, in this case the municipality. They have regular meetings to inform each other. Furthermore, the municipality acknowledges and trusts the local organisation as an expert in the field. Therefore, the organisation has a lot of freedom to divide the means they receive from the financiers, and to adapt the modules as much as needed to the local context, which improves the outreach opportunities and the effects of the *Step programme*.

This is an important success factor specific for this municipality and a recommendation for the other municipalities who implement the *Step programme*.

A final important success factor of the *Step programme* is the constant innovation and evaluation of the modules because of the cooperation with universities and research organisations, both on the national level and local, municipal, level.

4.3 REQUIREMENTS

Participants of the case study mentioned various requirements for the staff members, both professional and personal requirements. All staff members are well-trained by the Dutch Youth Institute and receive frequent supervision and feedback from the local organisation. They are all qualified early childhood professionals, and most of them worked in ECEC before. Furthermore, regarding their personal requirements, it is important that they are engaged, enthusiastic, have intercultural competences and that they are able to build a partnership with these parents. They guide the parents and the parents see them as professionals, but they should not lecture the parents by solely a top-down approach; a mutual relationship should be created.

No significant requirements for the other stakeholders were explicitly mentioned, though it is important that the local organisation is leading in the field of family support and that the financiers have a trustful relationship with the local organisation and give them a certain degree of freedom in implementing the different modules of the programme.

4.4 USE OF ICT

Given the continuous innovation of the programme, it is likely that ICT will play a larger role in this programme in the future. A Virtual Learning Environment is being developed by the Dutch Youth Institute, that will support the staff and that can enrich the meetings or the home environment, for example with visual information or movie clips.

Currently, ICT is mainly used as successful communication tool: Parents with a limited Dutch proficiency can use their smartphone to translate or to look up examples. Most of the staff has WhatsApp groups with the parents. This is a very convenient tool to keep each other updated, to ask questions and to support each other, even when the language skills are limited.

In addition, parents have access to an interactive website with e-books and games, called Bereslim, though it is interesting to see that the Dutch Youth Institute is very positive about its possibilities, but that on a local level there is some hesitation about the actual use of and familiarity with this website. It should be noted that all participants mentioned that ICT should be implemented carefully and only implement it if it adds something to the face-to-face meetings, rather than replacing it.

4.5 FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

Regarding the support for the home language of the parents, it is important to note that the *Step programme* has a positive attitude towards the use of the home language by the parents. The programme states that the activities between parent and child should be carried out in the strongest language, regardless which language. Furthermore, the multicultural staff of the *Step programme* is an important success factor. When a parent only has a limited Dutch proficiency, it is very convenient that the staff sometimes speaks the same language. However, this becomes more and more challenging with the increasing diversity of Dutch society.

It should be noted that although there is some information and material available in multiple languages, this is rarely used any more. This has several reasons: Parents value the Dutch language more and are more proficient in the Dutch language than the parents who participated twenty years ago. The actual use of the home language and the support for this in the programme is also influenced by the national political discourse and the local language policy: The municipality who participated in this case study has a clear 'Dutch language' policy.

4.6 OTHER

Besides the abovementioned success factors of the *Step programme*, there are four other factors that came up during the focus groups and interviews.

Intensity and structure

Participants in the case study mentioned that the relative long duration, the high intensity of meetings, activities and supervision and the organized structure of the programme are important success factors. This is beneficial for the outcomes of the programme, but it also decreases the drop-out rate. If the intensity of the meetings and the amount of the activities is lower, it becomes more casual with less guidance, which causes higher drop-out rates.

Combination of group meetings and home visits

It seems that the combination of group meetings and individual home visits works best for these target parents. The home visits are a good strategy for the staff to explore the home environment of the family and to give more individual support to the parent, especially when there are cultural or linguistic barriers or when the parent does not feel confident to seek formal support. On the other hand, the group meetings are also very popular among parents. In the group meetings parents learn from each other and build a social network, which was often quite small before joining the programme. These meetings pull the parent out of their isolation position and show them that other parents struggle with the same issues. Consequently, they feel more empowered.

Educational partnerships

It was mentioned several times that one of the strong points of this programme is the connection with the educational system. Parents are informed about (pre)schools and stimulated to enroll their child. There is continuity between the home- and school environment since the modules follow the same themes that the (pre)school uses. Moreover, the parents become more aware and more knowledgeable of their child's development because of the information in this programme. As a consequence, the relationship between the parents and the (pre)school teachers improves, since parents have more to talk about with the teachers and feel more comfortable to talk to the teacher. Teachers appreciate it when parents participate in the programme because they can see the difference in attitude and involvement of the parent, which in turn changes their attitude towards the parent.

Increasing diversity in the target group

The last important factor is that the target group has changed over the years: There is much more cultural and linguistic diversity in the Dutch society than twenty years ago. This has significant consequences. Whereas the local contact persons often had a similar background to the parents twenty years ago, is it now not feasible anymore to offer this match. Moreover, it is no longer possible to offer much material in other languages, because there are so many languages. This is a serious challenge for the staff and the coordinators of the programme. They try to overcome this challenge by the use of ICT (as a communication and translation tool), by developing more visual material, by asking more help from a translator and external experts and to increase the number of home visits if necessary, so parents can have more individual support to overcome the language and cultural barriers.

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APPENDIX H

Country Report Portugal

Inside and Beyond (Class)rooms of glass

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1. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMME

1.1 MISSION STATEMENT

*Inside and Beyond (Class)rooms of glass*⁵ aims to promote preschool inclusion and develop preschool skills in children who aren't enrolled or attending pre-school (due to a lack of appreciation of (pre)school value or/and a generalised distrust in state institutions, as well as deficiency of transportation between home and school). Moreover, it aims to provide parental support and to strengthen the family-school relationship.

1.2 TARGET GROUP

(Class)rooms of glass targets children under 6 years old and their families, from three severely deprived Roma communities.

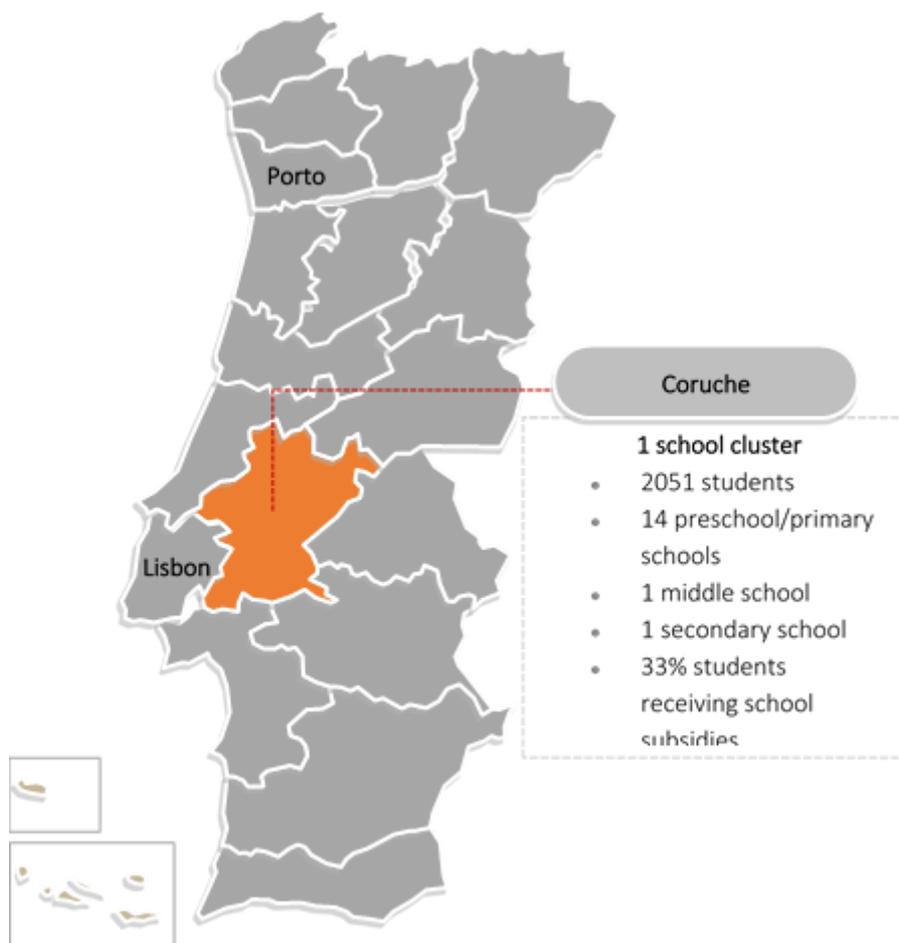


Figure 5. Geographical coverage of the programme *Inside and Beyond (Class)rooms of glass*

⁵ Henceforth, the programme will be referred as *(Class)rooms of glass* for convenience reasons (length).

1.3 CONTENT

The intervention includes the development of play-based activities. Sessions are developed in Roma communities and focus on the promotion of child development, specifically communication, language and social skills. These activities offer an opportunity for staff to interact with parents and provide parental support, raising awareness about the importance of preschool and building a relationship of mutual trust between Roma families and school. The intervention also includes play-based activities in pre-school setting for children and regular visits with families to preschool.

Some sessions are conducted in collaboration with local partners (namely, the local early intervention team, local health centres), providing specialized support to families (i.e., sessions about parental practices, children hygiene, healthy eating).

ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) is not included as part of the programme. Regarding home language, the mother/heritage-language used in target-communities is Portuguese, so there is no need for (other) language support.

1.4 STRUCTURE

The multidisciplinary intervention team provides 1,5 hours bi-weekly informal activities to children (who are not enrolled or attending pre-school) and their family members (usually mothers and grandmothers) in neutral and familiar community spaces within the communities where they live in. All the activities occur in *(Class)rooms of glass*, meaning where anyone from the community can watch what is happening and monitor the children (and the staff interactions with the children). As trust begins to emerge, the staff starts to interact with parents to promote parental support and build trust relationships between families and school.

The programme also includes 1-hour weekly sessions in the preschool setting with children and visits to preschool with their family members. The activities are designed as informal, flexible and playful.

1.5 ORGANIGRAM

(Class)rooms of glass is a Portuguese local programme developed by a school cluster, targeted by a national compensatory education programme from the Ministry of Education – the TEIP Programme (Territórios Educativos de Intervenção Prioritária, meaning Educational Areas for Priority Intervention).

TEIP is a nationwide programme designed to reduce the effects of socioeconomic disadvantage on school outcomes and to promote equity and social inclusion from an early age. School clusters covered by the programme benefit from extra financial and human resources, such as more teachers, assistants and specialized staff (e.g. social workers, psychologists). An external expert advises them based on their needs and then schools develop their own strategies, actions and set their goals to address the specific needs of students and families. Thus, TEIP programmes are highly tailored and specific actions

vary greatly from school cluster to school cluster. It is important to highlight that school clusters involve students from preschool to middle or secondary education, and actions can therefore target any age group, depending upon the school’s goals and principles.

In short, the TEIP programme (financier) provides (material and human) resources, but also consultation in what concerns student’s needs, defined goals and measures. The school director (provider) supervises a multidisciplinary team who implements the programme. The multidisciplinary team is composed by a psychologist focused on school mediation, a sociocultural animation professional, a travelling preschool teacher and a social educator (cf. Figure 1). It is important to stress out that this programme is part of this school cluster’ broader Educational Project, which in turn is covered by the TEIP programme.

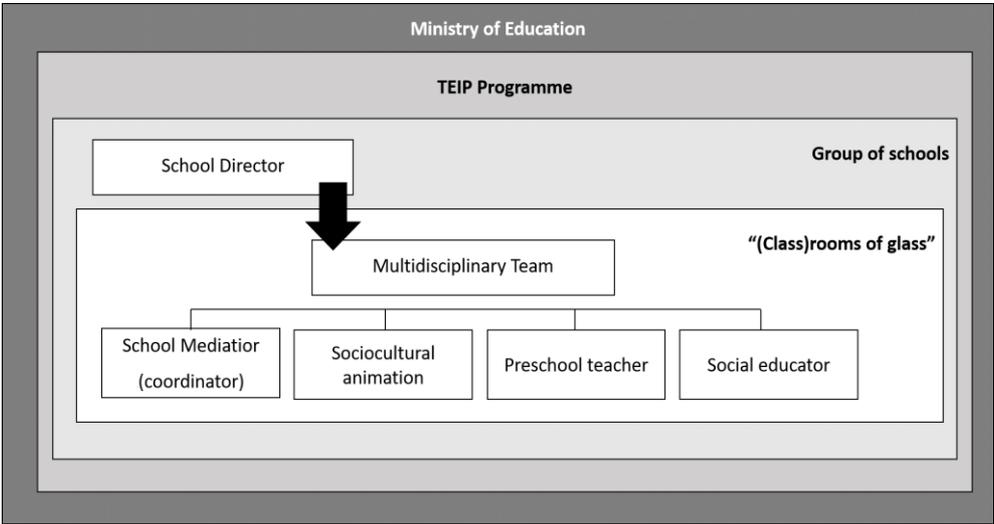


Figure 6. Structure of institutions and relationships to the TEIP programme (organigram)

1.5.1 FOUNDATION

(Class)rooms of glass was created in 2009/2010 by a school cluster addressing the needs of children under 6 years old and their parents, living in disadvantaged Roma communities. The programme covers two key-phases, which resulted in a change in the name of the programme as a consequence of its evolution over time. The programme implementation started with *Inside (Class)rooms of glass*, delivered from 2009/2010 as a unique measure with activities developed outdoors, within disadvantaged Roma communities. As 100% of the children who participated in this first phase of the programme enrolled in the pre-school in 2012/13, in 2013/14 a second phase started, named *Beyond (Class)rooms of glass*, with activities in the pre-school setting, providing continuity to sessions developed in the community context (Agrupamento de Escolas de Coruche, 2013, 2014).

1.5.2 EVALUATION

Outcomes/goals have been only measured in terms of number of sessions conducted and number of families/children participating. According to the evaluations available, conducted by the school cluster

for monitoring internal purposes, in 2016/17, the programme was successful in enrolling 100% of children in pre-school and involving more than 55% of Roma families from target-communities in the activities delivered by the intervention team in the community setting. Also, in that school year, more than 33% of the programme's sessions were developed in cooperation with local partners (sessions included topics as positive parenting practices, healthy eating and children's hygiene). More than 3 intervention sessions were promoted in pre-school setting with the participation of families (Agrupamento de Escolas de Coruche, 2017).

Further evaluations are needed to assess the effectiveness of the programme, in terms of family support and the educational pathways of children.

1.5.3 SELECTION PROCESS

The programme was selected because of its excellent outreach, as it aims at the disadvantaged within the disadvantaged, trying to reach severely deprived Roma parents and children. In fact, some of the target-group(s) were, at the beginning of the intervention, severely disenfranchised (e.g., with children that are not registered as citizens, i.e., the birth was not registered). Consequently, these communities are considered to be very hard to reach, since they do not even use regular universal services. The outreach strategy, therefore, depends upon the development of a relation of trust, with progressive increase in contact with the parents within their own settings. Thus, the programme can be considered highly innovative, given that there are few interventions in Portugal designed both for Roma parents and early aged children, tackling, in a preventive approach, the educational disadvantages existing in this community. One of the biggest strengths of the program is that activities are first conducted within Roma communities, in familiar physical and cultural places and, later, in pre-school settings, bringing families and schools closer. Also, the programme is designed in cooperation among schools, local partners and families, strengthening connections with these Roma communities.

2. DATA COLLECTION

2.1 SHORT DESCRIPTION OF INTERVIEWEES

The interviewee from the financial institution chose not to be identified in the consent form. Consequently, very few details can be given, since the fact that only few persons from the financing institution (i.e., the Portuguese Ministry of Education) have specific knowledge on this project could allow for an identification if even apparently “insignificant” details (e.g., sex of the interviewee) were reported.

The representative from the provider institution also chose not to be identified in the consent form. In this way, very few details can be given, apart that the provider representative is a member of the school’s cluster administration.

For this reason, throughout the text, the financier and the provider representatives will both be referred as “he/she”.

A Focus-group was conducted with all the 4 members of the intervention team, all female, with different professional backgrounds and roles in the team: a psychologist focused on school mediation (team coordinator), a sociocultural animation professional, a travelling preschool teacher and a social educator.

The total number of beneficiaries interviewed (“participants”) was four, two being male participants and two female, all of which were parents of children that participated in the “*(Class)rooms of glass*” and all of them lived in the same Roma community (the project reaches three Roma communities in total). Two of the interviewees were a couple. Ages of the interviewees ranged from 30 to 55 years old. An important aspect to take into account since it strongly limits the complexity of the questions that one can ask is the very low socio-economic and educational levels of the interviewees: none of them had completed the mandatory schooling (at the respective dates). This explains the comparatively short duration of the interviews and consequently the (small) amount of data gathered.

2.2 PERIOD OF DATA ACQUISITION

The interview to the representative of the financial institution took place on the twentieth of June 2018. The interviews with the project staff, the provider representative, as well as the project participants, all took place on the third of July 2018.

2.3 LENGTH OF INTERVIEWS

The duration of the four interviews/focus groups were as follows: 1h22m for the financing institution; 1h20 for the provider; 1h41 for the staff; and 0h33m for the participants.

2.4 ANY OTHER SPECIFICS

It is important to report the following regarding the interviews with the beneficiaries. Although the original objective was to conduct a Focus-group interview, that was not possible. Alternatively, the interviews occurred at the Roma community neighbourhood, where we went with the *(Class)rooms of glass* staff, in one of the programmes' regular sessions. The interviews' setting was informal, in an outside area, near the place where the activities with the children were taking place. The parents interviewed were not necessarily present at the same time; rather, while we were interviewing one participant, other(s) were listening at a distance, coming forward slowly and eventually accepting to participate in the interview. Some of the times, while new interviewees joined in, previous interviewees left. Additionally, from time to time, a member of the *(Class)rooms of glass of glass* would also come nearby; this did not appear (at least in our judgment) to cause any reaction from the interviewees, that always seemed to be comfortable with this.

2.5 DATA ANALYSES

Following the coding guidelines, one researcher coded all transcripts through a deductive-inductive process. Specifically, the main categories were coded, through a deductive process, and new codes (subcategories) were created through an inductive process. NVivo software assisted in coding and organizing the data.

A second researcher read all the transcripts and the generated codes. The two researchers met on multiple occasions to discuss the coding process and to achieve consensus.

Regarding the financier interview, 21 codes were identified; the discussion loops resulted in small changes into 6 categories, namely into the title/definition of the category for clarity purposes; 6 categories were moved to a different main category; 1 category was combined, and 3 codes were removed. The resulting changes achieved consensus, with the exception of 1 category.

For the provider interview, 23 codes were identified, and all agreed between researchers, with only one changing the title wording for clarity purposes.

For the staff interview, 21 codes emerged, and all of them reach consensus. For the parents, 4 codes were identified, with 2 receiving small changes in the title wording for clarity purposes.

3. RESULTS

3.1 FINANCIER

3.1.1 OUTREACH

The financier of the programme (*Class*)*rooms of glass* considers the programme to have excellent results in terms of outreach: “when it [the programme] finished in that particular neighbourhood⁶ [Roma housing conglomerate], there started to be one hundred per cent enrolment rate of children in pre-school”. To explain these results, four main features are identified: adjusting staff expertise to the project’s objectives; building trust with parents by including them; and going out to bring them into school. .

Adjusting staff expertise to the project’s objectives

The financier speaks highly of the fact that this project differentiates itself from other TEIP programmes since its inception by choosing the staff for the project according to the project’s objectives rather than going for the staff that was commonly chosen by the other projects (technical staff, namely sociocultural animation professional, social services, psychologists, and cultural mediators): “But in this [school] cluster, there it is, there was this option, right? In this cluster there was the option of no, we will not get a technician, we will get an early childhood educator. (...) I think this was one of the most important factors, right? That is, to go and select who knows, who knows how to do it, right?”.

Building trust with parents by including them

The financier stated that building a trustful relationship with parents is a pre-condition for anything that might follow. “While it is not created a sufficient trust climate, it is not going to be able to succeed”. For that, the critical issue was to involve the families in the activities that were being carried out with the children: “because they could have gone to them [to the Roma community], but taking the children, taking them on the side, working there, any place, but the families stay out. (...)”. Interviewer — “Hum, yes, hence [the name of the programme] *Rooms of glass*, so that they can see, they can gain trust.” Interviewee — “But it’s more than that. The room of glass here even stops having glasses. Because they are there, they are inside, also, they are a part of it, right?”

Going out to bring them into school

Another identified key aspect was the clear intent to reach out to the parents in their own environment as an intermediate step to the final goal that was to bring children (and parents) into the school. “This is a very important thing here, because I have seen [other] actions [meaning programmes] that go into the communities. (...) sometimes, because of the beneficiaries specificities one chooses to intervene outside the school (...). Here [in this programme], the concern was precisely, no, we are going to begin outside, because it is necessary, because we have to reach them, they are not coming to us, but what

⁶ Neighbourhood, when used in this context, refers to a complex of houses or buildings inhabited by low-income population, usually built by the state. It can also refer to a complex of houses that were built by the population with scarce resources, similar to “slum”.

we want is for them to come here, to the school”.

3.1.2 COOPERATION

In the case of the Portuguese programme, it is important to notice that the financing institution can and should be regarded, in itself, as a (cooperating) partner. In fact, programmes are highly tailored and schools have freedom to set their own goals and strategies. Thus, although the Portuguese Ministry of Education, through the national compensatory education programme (TEIP), does provide some additional resources (that may or not be material/financial), it also takes the (perhaps primarily) role of a consulting partner, discussing and negotiating with school clusters the goals that these are committing themselves to, as well as the pertinence, feasibility, alternatives to, etc., of the actions that schools propose to achieve their goals. Therefore, when speaking about cooperation with other partners, the financier was largely (although not exclusively) referring to the relation between the financing institution and the school responsible for developing the programme. Four main categories emerged from the analysis: collaboration based on capacity building; partners with field knowledge; and ability to realize when to search for external help; uncertainty from partners as a caveat.

Collaboration based on capacity building

Referring to the cooperation between the TEIP (Ministry of Education) programme and the *(Class)rooms of glass*, the financier emphasized several times that one of the Ministry’s main concern is one of sustainability, which implies that additional resources should be regarded as an initial investment that will not be maintained in the future. The intention is that schools do not see the financing (TEIP) partner as an entity that provides endless resources, “but as an enterprise that makes the [schools’] clusters to think, to focus and to use the resources they have available in the most adequate manner, not needing additional resources, whenever possible. (...) So that, later, when it is no longer possible to continue to have those resources via some programme, (...) they had already created the conditions to give continuity to the more structural actions”. In the Financier perspective, this is the most important aspect when establishing collaborations, i.e., that these will increase the “know how” of the school/organization, in order to foster the organization’s autonomy and independence, which is the most secure guarantee of the organization/programme sustainability.

Partners with field knowledge

Another feature identified through the analysis that relates to the programme’s success in what outreach is concerned, is the fact that they have resorted to partners that were experienced in working with Roma communities: “I think that they have resorted to people with knowledge, with field knowledge and with experience of working precisely with these kind of communities [meaning Roma]”.

Ability to realize when to search for external help

Additionally, the financier identified that an important requirement relates to the ability, or in his/her words, “the humility”, of those involved in the project to realize that they cannot, for example, communicate with the families, and consequently ask for external help; in this case, someone that will serve as an intermediate between the families and the school.

Uncertainty from partners as a caveat

This last category about cooperation relates to the previous point about fostering programmes' autonomy and independence, which seem to be, according to the financier, the best indicator for its sustainability. Coherently, the financier refers as a possible caveat the “uncertainty of partners, right? To what extent will partners keep themselves on the field or not, will keep the willingness to continue to collaborate or not”.

3.1.3 REQUIREMENTS

The Financier has listed several requirements as important features that can explain this (and others) project's success. It is interesting to notice that the financier mentioned several requirements that should be attributes of the programme itself, as well as attributes for the what the interviewee calls “intermediate leaderships”, that can be, in this particular context, thought of as the provider. Specifically within the first category, the financier referred the importance of a clear and adequate framework, the coherence between this framework and the actions implemented, the programme's ability to mobilize key members from the community, the programme's ability to “translate the school's grammar” to the minority, the dynamic nature of the programme, the highly degree of the programme's tailoring, and focus on prevention with early intervention. The subcategories that specifically refer to requirements of the provider are: clear intermediate leadership; and shared leadership that engages others, creates trust, and synergies.

Requirements of the Programme

Clear and adequate framework

Another aspect referred by the financier points to the importance of the Ministry of Education's (i.e., the financier institution) framework when designing projects for implementation. In a nutshell, the financier has described the framework as “the all school approach”, an approach that interprets an “individual as highly complex” which, above all, does not exist “in isolation to itself, that has behind it a whole set of relationships and even the organization, the community that seeks to help, also it doesn't exist in isolation, right?”. So, as already stated (see above cooperation's “Collaboration based on capacity building” category), the financier criticizes those that start by thinking in terms of resources available and extra-resources needed — in the financier's opinion, that is “starting from the end” — arguing that the schools' communities should conceptualize challenges as community problems (meaning the school community but also the surrounding community) and coherently seek for solutions within/with the involvement of both community levels (school and surrounding communities).

Coherence between the framework and the actions implemented

Although the interviewee generally thinks that school leader have in essence “appropriated the politically correct narrative [meaning the Ministry's of Education framework]”, he/she then adds a possible caveat of the lack of coherence between the framework principles and what is actually done by the projects: “another thing is after, foremost by those who are on the field, how do they appropriate and effectively transform this, integrates this narrative or not, right? Because I know the right words to say, but it is in my actions that I see up to what extent this is incorporated”.

Ability to mobilize key members from the community

This category is more general than others, in the sense that the financier was drawing on the knowledge from other projects and, although giving examples applicable to the *(Class)rooms of glass* project, he/she did not mean that this feature had been or was present in the *(Class)rooms of glass* programme. Even so, the ability to mobilize key members from the community was referred to as an important requirement for a successful programme: “and now I am extrapolating and thinking on other experiences, either national, either international, where you mobilize key members of that community, (...) the patriarch⁷ for example, or a representative of the church, that is, of the cult⁸, that is, someone that has influence in the community and that is in some way engaged with the school, right? And therefore, the ability to, through him being able to then mobilize the community”.

Ability to “translate the school’s grammar” to the minority

The financier also stressed the importance to “translate the school’s grammar” to the beneficiaries, namely because of the “target groups that have a difficulty in understanding the ‘schools grammar’ [meaning the purpose and functioning of the school]”. Therefore, it is up to the project to translate “this grammar”, so that it becomes “understandable by the families”.

Dynamic nature of the programme

This category refers to an aspect that seems to be of great importance in the financier’s perspective, since several excerpts were coded in this category throughout the interview. It relates to project design and the necessary procedures that guarantee the constant monitoring in order to change the course of action as needed: “ability to plan, ability to monitor, ability to assess and to intervene given the results that one is achieving, making the necessary adjustments”. In summary, the financier systematically underlines the necessity of including change when thinking about the programmes. That is, a programme ought to be “dynamic” by nature, since, if successful, it will change the context in which it has intervened; consequently, projects will have to adapt. A good example of this can be seen in the *(Class)rooms of glass*. In fact, the changes in the name of the programme accurately depict, according to the financier, the evolving change of the school context (see above the description of the programme). In contrast, the financier speaks of other programmes “that had a lot of difficulties because they started to intervene with a specific plan, a specific strategy, a set of actions and then, suddenly, there had already been an evolution, the population changes, and they have to start again”. It is also interesting to note that the evolving nature of the needs/context also should question the very existence of the programmes. The financier speaks about *(Class)rooms of glass*: “after all these years, one of the things that constitutes a task for the school is: is it important to continue with this action, is it justifiable or not?”.

⁷ The financier is referring to a common figure in the organization Portuguese Roma communities, that is the “head” of the community. This will usually be an old male who is highly respected within the community. This position will also mean particular privileges/duties. For example, the patriarch is called upon to give (possible with other old males) “law”, i.e., to make decisions on matters that are conflictual amongst the community members. Notice that, although changing, it is still uncommon for Roma citizens to resort to regular civil or criminal courts.

⁸ Although we do not know of any reliable estimation of the religions followed by Portuguese Roma communities or individuals, it is widely “known” that a great number are Christian Evangelics, and they usually use the expression “going to the cult” to express that they are attending the equivalent of the Christian Eucharist (in the Roman Catholic Church).

Highly tailored programme

One key aspect of the financier's interview is the explicit rejection of the term "good [let alone best] practices". "I will not call it a good practice". "I do not know what a good practice is". The point that he/she argues for, is that "what is good here is not guaranteed to be good anywhere else". Therefore, one should never think of a programme as "a recipe", as "an only way to reach an objective": "that [referring to *(Class)rooms of glass*] was done in that specific context, with that specific population, with those specific resources and with that specific methodology, right? If, if any of these factors change, there is no guarantee that one will get the same kind of results". The financier thus prefer to speak of "inspiring" practice or programme, highlighting that its highly tailored character is intrinsically connected with the programme's success.

Focus on prevention with early intervention

In the financier's perspective, *(Class)rooms of glass's* focus on parents' valuing of pre-schooling is inspirational if one notices that this is rare in the Portuguese context. To be sure, the financier refers that only two of all of the TEIP school clusters (more than 100) had "a clear and explicit preoccupation in intervening at the pre-school level". "If we assume that the pre-school is a predictor of success" and that one should "try and act over the factors that predict the problems and therefore try to prevent them or act at an early stage", it becomes clear that "this cluster is already, is already more advanced because it has experience" in this.

Requirements of the Provider

Clear intermediate leadership

Here, the financier refers to what he/she considers to be the crucial role of what he/she refers to as the intermediate leadership⁹. He/she considers these intermediate leaderships to be crucial (albeit often overlooked) to this and other projects, since they are responsible for the articulation between a specific project's aim(s) and the overall school's project(s) aims, deemed to be an essential characteristic of any programme to be successful. Therefore, one can see that two facets of the same feature are subsumed in this category. First, the acknowledgement of the importance that intermediate leaderships have for a programme's success, since they are the ones who directly oversee the project's implementation. Second, the need for the articulation of a specific project with the overall school's project. "Very important here [is] the intermediary leadership. This [meaning projects' implementations] only makes sense if we have here a coordination of the pre-school department that has a clear vision of what it wants for pre-schooling and knows how to integrate this action in an intervention plan and that is properly articulated with the first cycle".

⁹ In the Portuguese system, schools are aggregated in school clusters. Each school cluster has one director, as well as each school; these are considered by the financier as top leaderships. Furthermore, there are also departments, that correspond to the cycle studies (roughly equivalent to ISCED levels). For example, there's the pre-school department, the first cycle department (elementary school first 4 years schooling), and so on. Each department has a coordinator, and are these figures that the financier refers to when speaking about intermediate leadership.

Shared leadership that engages others, creates trust, and synergies

The financier deems important for coordinators to have competencies so that “they can involve and engage the different actors, create a sufficient climate of trust to mobilize external actors [to school] and, therefore, create synergies”. In essence, according to his/her view, these boil down to competencies associated with “shared leadership”.

Namely, the financier highlighted the importance of the autonomy of the provider to manage resources, of “making management options of their own resources”, the existence of an external expert that “critically looks at the school [including the *(Class)rooms of glass* programme] and helps the school to think and develop”, and, lastly, the importance of professional training through the allocation “of sums to training”.

3.2 PROVIDER

3.2.1 OUTREACH

The provider stated that it was an outreach issue that was the origin of the programme. “Initially we had children in the Roma communities that were in the mandatory education [meaning that, by law, they ought to be enrolled] and they were not even enrolled in the mandatory education, therefore, the project is born due to the need of reaching the community, of understanding how they lived, who were the children that were there, of register them and bring them to what was the mandatory schooling. (...) and it borns out [referring to the programme] of the need to involve the families and to make the families realise that the school is necessary”.

There were several aspects highlighted by the Provider as being important for explaining *(Class)rooms of glass* success in terms of outreach. Specifically, starting to approach the children with playful activities seemed to be a successful first step, followed by bringing the parents into school through key moments. Furthermore, treating the beneficiaries as equals and building very personalised relationships were crucial for creating the feeling that the team was trustworthy. This also implied differentiated strategies according to the specific community context, which means that there can not be one single plan of action that equally applies to all of the Roma communities that the programme now serves, as well as the management of potentially threatening cooperation partnerships so that outreach is not hindered.

Playful activities as the foot-in-the-door technic

One important strategy referred by the provider to start to build up trust step-by-step is the use of playful activities with the children: “as a strategy we entered [meaning we established the first contacts] in essence through the ludic (...) because you do not enter a community in every way, therefore, we have to reach in a ludic way (...), to reach the families and then try with the families and within the community context to reach to the children that did not had pre[school]”.

Bringing the parents into school through key (ludic and shared) moments

After having “entered” the Roma community and established the underpinnings for a trusty relation, the team starts to bring the children (and their parents) into the (pre)school in special dates: “we are able to bring these children to the school centre in some key moments, namely on father’s day, the day of the children, therefore, they come to the school centre in key moments since we can bring, the parents come and bring them, and they participate in the activities that take place in the class where purportedly, some of these children, should be” [meaning the class to which the children would belong, would they be enrolled in pre-school activities]; “so there is this mediation work [with the parents], that is, let’s show the school, let’s do a visit to the children’s school, let’s see how the children work in school, let’s see... (...) let’s take the families to the school and, therefore, one starts to create activities, Saint Martin’s day, chestnuts’ day...”.

Treating Roma members as equals

Another feature that the provider mentioned as important so that a trusty relation can be accomplished is the equal treatment of the Roma beneficiaries. The interviewee gave a concrete example to illustrate this point, of a meeting held with a couple of beneficiaries: “We entered and just a simple thing as this one, in a meeting room, I closed the door, him, his wife, and me. And he told me ‘for the first time I am received with a closed door’. Therefore, notice that are these asymmetries that also hurt them. And I go like this ‘but why?’, I wasn’t even understanding why [he made that specific comment] and he told me ‘because I am always received with the door open with fear of what I can or can’t do”.

Establishing very personalised relationships

Another key feature referred by the provider to build a trustful relationship was the development of very personalised relationships. There were several examples given to highlight the importance of such relations as well as the possibilities open by these. In fact, the profound knowledge that the provider had of the beneficiaries’ lives was manifest throughout all of the interview, with several detailed episodes being recalled that personify the existence of meaningful one-to-one relationships. Ultimately, it is these personal bondings that allows that “if it is not possible to call a parent of a, b, or c to the school, they [the school professionals, namely the teachers] have the team on the field [meaning the *(Class)rooms of glass* team] and the team goes, without any problem. And this is, well, as I say, the school is inside the community, the community goes to the school, but the school also goes there [to the community], and they feel that, and for us it is very good because all of the school community recognizes the value of such things, rightly because it felt there were barriers, there were closed doors that were open with this project”.

Sensitiveness and adaptation to important community’s specificities

This category is, one can say, somewhat different than the other categories here presented, since its meaning is not completely explicit in the interviewee’s own words. This is due to the very sensitive nature of the issue addressed, which resulted in conveying a message without blatantly speaking about it. Nevertheless, as this points to a crucial feature that allows the programme to be successful in reaching out to one of the Roma communities involved in the *(Class)rooms of glass*, we feel that it is important to

report it.

In a nutshell, rumours circulate that (some members of) a specific community might be related to some kind of illicit activities. Without ever referring directly to this (but see the staff results for a more open reference to this issue), the provider does indicate that the staff has developed strategies to adapt to this situation. It is within this context that these (and other) excerpts are completely understood: “when we go there, we know what we are going to do and we are aware that we are going to work with that audience [meaning community], we are going to work with certain familial situations, certain conflicts, we are going... but we also know that we have there certain limits [referring to the hypothetical connections with illicit activities] and we also do not cross these, because that’s part of the culture [not meant in the abstract sense, but in the concrete case of that community specificities], its part of the community and we also do not cross that part, therefore, there [meaning that “subject” of illicit activities] we are not going”; “there is a phone call, ‘look, we are going there, can we go?’...’oh come, come’, and there you go. There is this articulation, this whole preparation... when one goes, one goes aware that one can go”. It is quite interesting to notice that the team are adopting different outreach strategies according to the community that the project is trying to reach out to: “it is this, one never goes to the community without a motive, this one [meaning this community], that one not [meaning another community], that one we do not need a reason [to drop by without warning]”.

Cooperation management so outreach is not hindered

Safe School is a cooperation programme between the school cluster and the police —see more under the cooperation category— that expressly foresees an increase in the visibility of the police in the school boundaries. Nevertheless, Roma (Portuguese) communities generally tend to be suspicious of the police, a generalised held belief that the provider also echoes: “they [meaning the beneficiaries] do not recognise in the Safe School a partner of their own, no, that... Safe School is an authority that goes there to do something that they do not like”. As this cooperation might hinder the family school partnership, it is very interesting to notice that the provider explicit states that this cooperation has to be managed so that it becomes less visible, due to these specificities of the Roma beneficiaries: “Safe School does not work a lot [with Roma communities]; We know that if there is a safe school around, things are complicated; (...) they are far, near, but far from sight [meaning they are in reach through a phone call but they are cautious so that the programme’s beneficiaries do not perceive them as being present].

Overall, the provider attributes to the combination of these factors the success in terms of the outreach, since “they do not feel that we are outsiders, they feel that we are someone that goes because it goes there to make them good, someone in which they can trust”.

3.2.2 COOPERATION

Regarding cooperation, the provider did mention that the school cluster within which *(Class)rooms of glass* programme is carried out had an exhaustive list of cooperation partnerships that included institutions at local, regional and national levels across several areas, namely education, health, social

security, and justice. Nevertheless, these are required cooperation by the institutional setting in which the programme is being delivered, with very few being considered paramount for *(Class)rooms of glass* success. This rule seems to have one exception, with the provider naming one partnership that was relevant in the outset of the programme. Interestingly though, is the fact that the increase in the programme's autonomy curbed the need for this cooperation partnership.

(Required) cooperation at several levels and across areas...

Generally speaking, the provider started by listing a considerable number of institution when prompted about *(Class)rooms of glass* cooperation with other projects and organizations, namely the "CAFAP" (Family Support and Parental Counselling Centres, designed to provide support for families of maltreated children or in situation of risk), the "Health Centre", the "CLDS" (partnerships between local social institutions that develop solidarity-based initiatives designed to combat poverty and exclusion), the "Municipal Government", the "Safe School" (a programme between the police and the schools, so that schools have a "direct line" to the local police; furthermore the programme frequently involves a more direct/visible presence of the police in school's premisses), "GNR" (Guarda Nacional Republicana; in this case, can be simply thought of as the police), "RSI" (Social Inclusion Benefit is a benefit granted by the state to those that do not have other forms of subsistence, usually people that are unemployed and not covered by the unemployed subsidy), "[the Ministry of] Social Security", "EMAT" (Multidisciplinary teams designed to assist courts), "CPCJ" (Child protection services), the "district hospital", the "IAC" (Children's Support Institute, a non-profit institution that provides child support at the national level), the "DGE" (Education General Directorate, from the Ministry's of Education).

... But very few paramount for *(Class)rooms of glass* success

It is worth explaining that the provider was not stating that all of these cooperation links were in place because of the *(Class)rooms of glass* programme; in fact, these are cooperation links that apply to the school cluster as a whole. Furthermore, it is also relevant to notice that some (in fact, the majority) of these cooperating institutions are not *ad hoc* cooperations that were established due to *(Class)rooms of glass* (or other programme, for that matter) or the school's cluster specific needs. Instead, these cooperations are generally universal (i.e., they apply to all school clusters), some of which are framed by law¹⁰. Since the programme's provision is the school's cluster responsibility (and merit), *(Class)rooms of glass*, at the same time, benefits and is bound to these cooperation protocols.

It is within this context that one should understand that, despite all of the listed cooperation partnerships, the provider did not argue for nor gave examples of cooperating institutions that were paramount for *(Class)rooms of glass* success. The only exception to this rule is presented in the category below.

Cooperation changes as a result of the dynamic nature of the programme

The only cooperation partnership that the provider explicitly refers as being relevant to the success of *(Class)rooms of glass* is with the IAC (see above). Interestingly, the provider clearly states that the relevance of this partnership, that had been very important in the beginning of the programme, is now

¹⁰ For example, schools are required to denounce cases of child mistreatment to the "CPCJ".

considerably curbed: “[*(Class)rooms of glass*] had a strong support from the IAC at that time [referring to the programme’s beginning], of the Children’s Support Institute, and that also made me think. Well, IAC was giving a lot of support that, gradually —it is still our partner— but gradually feels that we don’t need as much as we needed initially. IAC came to the communities with the super funny vans to mobilize the families, the children, the parents, and in that first years we had a lot of that support”.

Furthermore, the changes in this partnership were a result of the greater autonomy that *(Class)rooms of glass* achieved over time: “Gradually, we were making our independency (...), we no longer need as much other’s support, and, well, we got to give more value to what we have and we have a lot of means to work with them [the beneficiaries]”.

3.2.3 REQUIREMENTS

The provider detailed several aspects that were deemed important or even crucial as requirements for a programme such as *(Class)rooms of glass* to be successful. Concretely, the provider detailed diverse characteristics of the (Staff’s) Right Profile, and referred the role of external and internal recognition, as well as continuous monitoring and questioning. Furthermore, the interviewee thinks that the programme’s success is also related to the fact that the team and the school cluster find it meaningful. The continuous adaptation to changing needs/goals is yet another success feature, which prompts new goals for success.

(Staff’s) Right Profile

Although detailing several concrete components of the staff’s and its coordinator’s right profile, the provider referred what might be considered a pre-condition in a programme such as *(Class)rooms of glass*, that is a general willingness to engage in this type of (field) work. More specifically, the interviewee also considered important for the staff to have relationship competences and ability to develop team work, knowledge of the Roma culture and the specific community, and awareness of the tasks. Furthermore, a requirement was highlighted specifically for staff’s coordinator(s), namely the ability to make everyone part of the team.

General willingness to engage in this type of (field) work

One aspect that the provider considered as a key requirement for staff’s right profile is a general willingness to engage in a project with this kind of characteristics. In fact, “even if the teams [meaning the team members] help each other it is necessary to have some [meaning the right] profile to work with this type of population”. The provider went on by giving a concrete example of a previous staff member that did not fit the right profile and did not continue in the project. This issue is intimately connected with the provider’s autonomy (or lack of) to hire, since the provider argues that the staff pool from which the school director has the (limited) autonomy to allocate to the programme do not possess an adequate profile, namely because of their age: “you can say to me, well, don’t you have in the house [referring to the school cluster] who goes there [meaning the *(Class)rooms of glass* field work]? I might have in the house, but probably not with the profile that I need to go there (...); young people have other type of profile to these things (...); I have preschool teachers (...) above 50 [years old] (...) [whose profile is fit] to work with children inside a classroom, not to go to an open field”.

Relationship competences and ability to develop team work

Another fundamental characteristic that all staff members must have are relationship competencies: “look, I think that at the level of personal relationships, it is, so, a person who knows how to relate well, that, in terms of socialization, of interpersonal relations, this is fundamental”. These competencies for relations are, according to the interviewee, also at the base for another set of important requirements, namely competencies for team work: “then, they have to be persons with the ability for team work, so, this is fundamental in our project, the way we behave, if they are not persons capable of team work, the individualism may take down some of these things and we had some experiences less pleasant in this regard, and so, we were able to understand that alone, we do not walk (...); underlying it [the team work competencies] are the relationships, the ability to manage relations is fundamental”.

Knowledge of the Roma culture and the specific community

Additionally, all the involved professionals should be knowledgeable of the “their” culture: “I think professionals have to be extremely aware (...) of what is the Roma culture”. However, it is interesting to notice that the provider is not only referring to the general knowledge of Roma culture, but, on top of that, to specific knowledge about the communities with whom one is relating to: “and only a few know [“their” culture]. Well, there is a lot of things done, there is a lot of things published that we can access and who deals with these communities can have access to, but even so there are, there are those [referring to Roma communities] who are not quite this, nor quite that...”.

Awareness of the tasks

A characteristic that was briefly mentioned by the provider was the “awareness of their tasks in the field, aware of what is their work plan”.

Coordinator’s ability to make everyone part of the team

The characteristics above mentioned refer indistinctly to staff members. Additionally, the interviewee has highlighted one characteristic that applies specifically to the staff coordinator, namely “the ability to integrate [staff members]. I think that if a [staff] coordinator is not able to integrate, if we do not have a good team coordinator, this is also, might also be problematic (...) The ability to integrate is fundamental, because otherwise people do not know what they are doing around here, and so, they have to know, and so that everyone his rowing in the same direction, otherwise we do not make it”.

External and internal recognition

One aspect that the provider underlined throughout the interview relates to the recognition of the success of *(Class)rooms of glass*, either locally, nationally, and even internationally. For example, “and there is the invitation [from DGE] to present our project so that, in essence, be seen as a project of good practices and mostly with success, well... We have already done it twice [with local school clusters]. (...) Internationally (...) it [referring to *(Class)rooms of glass*] has been presented in Brussels, we have made the poster here and it was taken to Brussels by the DGE (...). We had already taken it to Turkey (...). In the beginning of this third period [meaning the last third of the school year] the Minister [of Education] also came to the school, also because of the *(Class)rooms of glass*”.

Recognition is also important inside the school cluster, since “who is a resident, as I usually say, has to recognize that the project is important”. This recognition is actively promoted through partnerships as well as through communication and dissemination: “and then there is the divulging and internal communication factor and the internal recognition of the project as also the external appreciation, we also feel good about it”.

But perhaps more interesting is the explicit consideration that this recognition, either by the Ministry of Education, the overall community or the school community, is a success factor *per se*: “That recognition is also fundamental for us, to live [meaning keeping the programme alive], it is a success factor”.

Continuous monitoring and questioning

The provider also refers the existence of a continuous monitoring system: “there is an official internal monitoring, so, we are always looking inside, to what we do”.

Meaningful project for the team/school cluster

The fact that the project is meaningful for the whole team and that it responds to a need felt by the school community is considered by the interviewee a relevant success factor: “and for us this makes sense, because only to be accountable is not enough, it is important if it makes or not sense for us, and it does”. It is crucial to note that for the project to keep on being meaningful throughout time, has to modify its goals, according to the changing needs of the beneficiaries and the school.

Continuous adaptation to changing needs/goals

A feature that the provider strongly relates to the success of *(Class)rooms of glass* is the programme’s continuous adaptation to changing needs, a feature that is present since the programme’s beginning: “When I understood that the programme had legs to walk, if I may speak like this, after that I just helped in what was possible to help and to reformulate and to modify, turning the project into a dynamic one so that it continued to have success”. This adaptation is deeply intertwined with the importance/meaning that the team attributes to new needs and goals for the programme, as previous objectives are fulfilled: “then, another factor that I consider important it’s really what we feel that it is important to change and what is important do do, because that factor is the factor that lends all the dynamism to the project, because otherwise this [referring to *(Class)rooms of glass*] would die”.

New goals for success

The evolving nature of the needs felt by the team as the original goals were achieved resulted in the adoption of new goals for the programme’s success. The provider detailed four: transportation to the preschool; ending the segregated Roma school; parental education and support; and (inside) increasing school teachers’ sensibility so to not push Roma students away.

Transportation to the preschool

A particularly important issue (where collaboration would be crucial for a successful response to the evolving needs of the programme’s beneficiaries) is the need for transportation of the children to the pre-school. In fact, now that there is the will from the three different Roma communities that participate in the programme to enrol the children in preschool, there is (at least) one community that is not able to

transport their children to the preschool (recall that these are very poor communities and —reasonably accessible—public transportation is not available). By law, as the provider explains, “the municipality ought to transport the children that are more than four Km from the school (...); the municipality says that the [name of the community] is not more distant than four Km (...); but it is, it’s seven, it’s seven. We know that the municipality insists that it isn’t because it makes a straight line [meaning that the calculation of the distance between the community and the (pre)school is a straight line instead of the real distance using the roads]. The provider refers to this issue as a “struggle” with the municipal government due to the fact that “there was a policy of openness to the Roma communities thirty, forty years ago, and right now the policy is exactly the opposite, the municipal policy is that each one should look after themselves”.

Ending the segregated Roma school

Another goal that the (*Class*)rooms of glass is now trying to tackle is the need to put an end to the existence of a *de facto* Roma segregated school¹¹: “In this moment we are having a problem, well, a problem that we are trying to solve, that is having a lot of ethnic [meaning Roma] children in [name of the school], or a great chunk is from Roma ethnicity and we do not want that, we wanted a more diversified public [meaning students] and we don’t have, so, and that is another problem, that even part of the [Roma] families starts to feel as discriminatory”. The strategy foreseen by the provider implies the transportation of the children to different schools: “that it is our new challenge, is to get transportation for the students of that school, so they can socialize with other students of another school or of other schools, where they can have a different openness to the world, because there is not only their world, there is more world”.

Parental education and support

Another area in which the team, according to the provider, as felt as progressively more important, is the provision of parental education and support: “and we are going further. At this moment, we are already training parental competencies, educating them [the beneficiaries] to certain aspects, the food care, hygiene aspects...” (...). It is to work the families, because there are still behaviours that we, from the families, that we feel have to be improved”.

Increasing (inside) school teachers’ sensibility so to not push Roma students away

When speaking about the new challenges that the programme now faces, the provider referred to the need for sensitizing the school teachers to not expel Roma students from classes, let alone from school (asking for suspension days): “[speaking as if a Roma student] I do not have classes, I do not do anything [in the case of suspension, having arguing previously that some of these students do not take suspension as punishment, but rather as a positive consequence], so, we have to think about that also; if we already won them [meaning if Roma students are now at school], now we are going to send them home to do what?”.

¹¹ Notice that this is due to informal social processes, since an intended segregation is forbidden by law. The vast majority of the children of this school, as we were told by the provider, are Roma.

3.2.4 OTHERS

Additionally to the success factors already mentioned in the above categories, the provider spoke about the strategies put in place to compensate for the lack of stability of the programme's staff: successful strategies for unstable team compensation.

Successful strategies for unstable team compensation

One of the main challenges that the provider referred during the interview derives from the lack of autonomy to hire and maintain the *(Class)rooms of glass* staff from one year to the next: "I do not only speak of hiring autonomy, I speak of autonomy in hiring and renewal, because if we had the possibility to renew, we would solve the issue up front (...); therefore there is exactly this need of autonomy from the Ministry that will not grant us". This lack of autonomy brings additional challenges since it sharply reduces the provider's ability to hire the person(s) with a profile fitted to the *(Class)rooms of glass* requirements (as detailed above): Interviewer — "Well, in essence, you are saying that you would need autonomy to hire..."; Provider — "To hire, yes, that's what I am saying"; Interviewer — "...so that you can hire the adequate profile..."; Provider — "the right profile, the right profile".

Consequently, strategies were developed to deal with this fact in order for it not to hinder the programme's success, namely a focus on the programme as being (ia) team-based rather than individual-based, and a (ib) plan for training new staff members.

Team-based rather than individual-based

Another factor that was mentioned during the interview is that the programme cannot depend on a single person. This is particularly important in the case of the *(Class)rooms of glass*, since the team (provider included) is not stable. In fact, in the present constitution of the team there is not a single member that has been in the programme since its inception. It is exactly when speaking about the problem of continuity that the provider recalls that "one inspector [from the DGE] asked me, in one of our conversations, if the preschool teacher [who was the main responsible for the program] would leave our territory [meaning TEIP territory which is the school cluster], the project would die. I said it can't, it can't die (...); and it didn't die".

Plan for training new staff members

Intertwined with this latter factor is the training of new staff. As the team is not stable and it includes new members on a regular (yearly) basis, the provider attaches great importance to the way the new members are integrated: "The first thing to do, the [new] staff members are not going to the field immediately, so the staff members are properly... they read, we have team meetings, they are briefed (...) about what has been done, of what one intends to do (...) our goals for this year"; "no one goes to the field without knowing what each one is doing".

3.3 STAFF

3.3.1 OUTREACH

One of the main ideas underlying the staff interview is one of an organic programme that keeps evolving according to the previous success goals that have been met. As this idea —that meeting an outreach goal (e.g., entering to the Roma communities through playful activities) allows for the team to set higher/deeper levels of outreach objectives (e.g., parents taking part in school meetings)— is very strong, we created a category titled evolving programme/outreach by layers. Although it is possible to argue that these are not success factors in a strict sense, it is important to keep in mind that the staff refers to this idea explicitly to illustrate what they interpret as one of the main characteristics that has granted success to this programme. Additionally, several other features were identified as being important and/or essential to the success of the outreach, namely Adaptation to beneficiaries' characteristics, Working “around” legal obligations so not to endanger the relation, Experience, Going to the community to build up trust, Personalized relationships, Adapting to and working around beneficiaries' illicit activities, Symmetric relation, and Slowly step-by-step relation building when entering communities.

Evolving programme/outreach by layers

Although *(Class)rooms of glass* original goals were “mainly to diminish school dropout, monitoring school absence, to get families nearer to the school” (T1), the staff was very keen throughout the interview to share anecdotal episodes that show, on the one hand, that a lot has been accomplished regarding the beneficiaries relation to school and schooling, and on the other hand, that this allows for and has as a consequence the development of other (more evolved) goals. “Yes, John’s¹² father came immediately ‘teacher, I already enrolled him in the first grade’, that is, in other conditions [meaning in the beginning of the programme’s implementation], it would be us that had to go to him [meaning the father], it would be us to go to them with all the papers [meaning the necessary paperwork], [and now] no, they came to the school to enrol the little boy and proudly saying “I already went to enrol my child in the first grade; therefore, there was here some change” (T3). The idea of a step-by-step change that resulted in expressive changes is clear throughout the interview: “[at the beginning] parents were completely closed, closed, they wouldn’t let anyone in, no one knew what was going inside there [meaning the community], no one... and, so, there was a lot of grubbing (...); sometimes I think like ‘really, what has changed, it has changed so much’ [referring to the relation between Roma communities and the school]” (T1).

Interviewer — “What were your expectations when you started the programme? And which ones were met, and which weren’t?”; T1 — Well, all of them were met. What happened was a constant innovation or an increase of actions [meaning goals and activities to achieve them], well, within the project itself”.

The team also gave concrete examples of these “innovations”, as “the need to start a parental

¹² Some specific information, like names of individuals, was changed in order to protect the individual’s anonymity.

competencies programme” (T1), or formation about “pre and post natal care in adolescence, so, we are trying to innovate” (...); so, notice that we are overcoming ourselves [referring to the renewal of the programme’s goals]” (T1). Another example of adaptations that the school had to make to respond to success of the *(Class)rooms of glass* outreach relates to the fact that “before, the girls would get pregnant and that was more than enough to stay at home; now, now, they are pregnant and come to the school” (T1). In the staff perspective, this comes as a consequence of the *(Class)rooms of glass* intervention, but it does require further adaptations from the programme and the school to respond to this new reality: “Yes, there is an [increasing] acceptance [of the school’s importance] from their culture [meaning from these Roma communities] and there is also here an opening of the school itself to receive them [the girls] pregnant and give the necessary support” (T1).

Adaptation to beneficiaries’ characteristics

One aspect briefly referred by the one of the staff members relates to the need to adapt one’s behaviour/intervention to the beneficiaries characteristics: “we have a different connection because I end up understanding the other side, you see? From the ethnicity [meaning the Roma perspective], the community context, and I think that, well, it changes our way of looking, even in a classroom, these children and to learn to deal in a different way in the classroom, because they just can’t be that many hours seated, they can’t, really” (T3).

Working “around” legal obligations so not to endanger the relation

One of the legal obligations that schools have is to report absenteeism from school or school dropouts to the relevant authorities. One of the possible (likely) consequences for a family whose child is not attending (mandatory) school on a regular basis is to lose the social benefits to which they are entitled to. Since a very significant proportion of the Roma families receive state benefits, it is a very sensitive issue to denounce irregularities. “We are always trying not to put ourselves on an authority position, always from a perspective of mediation (...); otherwise [if the staff is perceived to be on the side that denounces and cuts benefits], we lose all the mediation work that is done. ‘Are you here to help or to punish us’? Therefore, here at the school level, we try to escape a little from the pattern [meaning the perception] that we are here to punish (...). Otherwise, after, ‘which side are you on’, right?” (T1).

In order to work around these potential harmful obstacles and manage to escape the perception that they can/have to denounce certain behaviours, the team has created “this story that... it has worked quite well... that the computers are all connected... the school, social security, RSI [the name of the most important social benefit for people that are not eligible for the unemployment benefit] (...), this issue of not attending [school], it works quite well to tell them ‘be careful, they have already called us’, so we never put ourselves as being the ones [to denounce]” (T1).

Experience

Another issue that was briefly referred was the experience is important, since “as one intervenes more and more, more one learns about the way to be with them [meaning the Roma], and to talk, and to deal... and to be able to react to some of these situations that occur when we are there” (T2).

Going to the community to build up trust

One of the key features, according to the staff, that allows for the development of a trustful relation is to go to the community: “It is [the fact that] we stop having a room, to stop having a certain support that is inherent to the school, right? It’s to go to the field, well, in my perspective, one creates bonds of trust much more deep, right? Because we go inside, to be [with the community members], to mingle with them, to share their space...” (T1).

Personalized relationship

A very clear feature that runs across all the interviews is the meaningful personalized relationships that the staff members have built with the beneficiaries. This is most evident in the very rich and detailed anecdotal episodes told by the staff members, showing a thorough knowledge of the community children and their parents and their respective network of relations. Furthermore, the staff spontaneously shared several episodes of the informal relations that exist between them (i.e., the staff members) and the beneficiaries. To illustrate we transcribe two examples from two different staff members. “We had a kid, little [name], which is my little one [this expression shows a lot of affection by the interviewee towards this particular child], started to write his name already, and the father came like... ‘oh teacher, come here to see what my son did to my car’, and I [thought] ‘mother Mary, what did the child do to the car’ [laughing], then I see the car all written [name, name, name, name] all over the place, and I [said] ‘Oh father, I am sorry’, [and the father answered] ‘No, teacher, look, my son has already written’ [meaning that he was proudly sharing with the teacher that his son could already write]” (T3). “No, that was related to drug traffic (...) and he was killed (...); And sometimes I would call her [the widow], ‘So, madam [name], how are you?’ (T1).

Adapting to and working around beneficiaries’ illicit activities

As already stated (please see the provider interview), some members of one of the *(Class)rooms of glass* beneficiaries’ communities are known to be involved in illicit activities. In order to successfully outreach to these community children and their parents, the team had to adapt and to devise strategies to build trust and work around this sensitive issue. “We have here a situation that is implicit in the illicit businesses that they have and that is they change cellular phones as we change shirts (...). To us it is very important to know the neighbourhood, who lives next to who, where, so that, I can not go this way [meaning if I can not reach a parent], but I can phone to this person that has the number available and is going to give the message to the other one” (T1). “These are years of work, right? And we already can communicate through looking to each other, right? There was a situation that we immediately realised that was [drug] traffic and I made an eye sign to them [the other staff members] and we go away and there is none ‘oh but this child is almost finished’ or anything else, no, ‘ok, then we are going because it is already time to go’ [meaning the staff immediately left the location] (...). As I usually say, we look like street vendors, we set our stand, but at any moment we have to close it and run” (T1).

Symmetric relation

Another aspect referred as being key to the creation of a trustful relations is the existence of a symmetric relation, in which “we are not, like, the doctor [meaning the teacher] here above and they down there,

[it is important] seating on the ground with them and play, doing something, painting (...) in their own blanket, that they might have there, results in the creation of a completely different bound than what would be possible in an office or even inside a school” (T2). This symmetric relation is also protective to the staff, namely in relation to possible dangers due to the illicit activities: “now, if we are caught up in a situation like this [meaning a “police raid, eventually some shooting, a fighting amongst them”], we know that they themselves will do a barrier to protect us, and bonds are created, and mostly, if we drop that posture of the staff here, the beneficiary there and there’s a line in between, no, when we set off to this kind of work that is the posture that we have to drop, not to have an asymmetric relation, but [instead] a symmetric relation and we have everything to gain” (T1).

Slowly step-by-step relation building when entering communities

Lastly, the staff mentioned that entering the community and building trustful relations is a very slow process, that one should take with careful small steps: T2 — “One thing is for sure, I have worked with Roma communities in other schools, working in schools has nothing to do with working in communities. We are entering their space, their houses, in what is their corner (...). I had to go there, one step now here, another there in the other side...”; T3 — “Slowly”; T2 — “Like if I was crossing a small river full of stones, all slippery, to see if I don’t fall, because it is like this, they [the Roma] are people that if you do one [meaning one mistake], forget it, it is not worth it [meaning you will not be able to get back on to a good relation] (...). Now, slowly, with ease, one day... you can make it”.

3.3.2 COOPERATION

When prompted about the *(Class)rooms of glass* cooperation protocols, the staff listed the same institutions that were also listed by the provided. Furthermore, the analysis yielded very similar results with the cooperation category of the provider interview, in the sense that not one cooperation protocol was referred as important (let alone vital) for the *(Class)rooms of glass* success. Instead, these are in general partnerships that are in place because of the school cluster needs and obligations (for more detail, please refer to the cooperation category of the provider interview).

3.3.3 REQUIREMENTS

The interviewees referred several requirements that concur to explain the *(Class)rooms of glass* success, a few the regarding the coordinator/provider, and a more exhaustive set that compose the right (staff) profile.

Regarding the Coordinator/Provider

In the specific case of the *(Class)rooms of glass* programme, one can distinguish two coordinating roles, one being the coordinator of the field team and the other being the coordinator of the whole team (that includes all the field staff), which is this programme provider. To complicate this terminology issue a little more, the coordinator/provider is also referred by the staff as the director. During the staff focus group, the interviewees mentioned specific characteristics that the coordinator (i.e., the provider) should possess. Although these are intertwined, one can distinguish three: Knowledge of the work that is done in the field, Accessible and engaged, and Valuing the work done and trusting the staff.

Knowledge of the work that is done in the field

From the staff perspective, it is important that the coordinator/provider is able to “identify and recognize the difficulties that the staff face in the field [work] (...). [the director] is always at pace with what’s going on” (T1).

Accessible and engaged

Also, the coordinator/provider should be someone that is very close to the staff and the work developed, “i.e., someone that is sitting here [meaning the school], but that easily gets in one’s car and goes there [meaning the communities’ neighbourhoods] and is there with us (T1). Furthermore, the fact that the director is considered to be easily accessible is also deemed valuable: “[The director] is always available for any situation (...), any doubt, any authorization, more formal, more informal, so... the [director’s] office is always available to listen to the team [meaning the staff], to receive us, to resolve our situations. In sum, is the existence here of an open communication channel” (T1).

Valuing the work done and trusting the staff

Lastly, it is highly praised by the staff as “the most important” aspect is that the director has “the notion of how important is the work we do” (T1). When summing up what are the important factors relating to the director, T1 says: “so, essentially this, an open communication channel, a conscience of the difficulties that we face on the field [work], but also and very importantly, the valuing of our work, that is very important”.

The right (staff) profile

The interviewees put a lot of emphasis in the relevance of the staff having an adequate profile to this kind of work. “This [referring to the “field” experience not being to everyone] is extraordinarily important, this has been very, very important along all these years, the intervention profile, because it has to be [meaning one has to have] a certain type of characteristics and if one doesn’t have them, it is not worth it, because it is wearing oneself, and ultimately, is wearing the team, right?” (T1).

The main features that compose the right staff profile are, according to the interviewees: Being open and willing to this type of work; Adaptability and modesty; Team cohesion and help; Personal considerable commitment by the staff; Logistic (personal) requirements; and Knowing and adapting to cultural and community specificities.

Being open and willing to this type of work

The field work is, as told in the first person, very challenging and one to which one needs to be open to: “well, this was a challenge, because I was counting with my small classroom with twenty something students, right? And suddenly I am send to (...) [(Class)rooms of glass], I go to the field, [and I think] ‘oh my God, where are you sending me’ [laughing]. But no, it went swell, I loved it, the experience is marvellous, really, it is not an experience to everyone, one needs to be open to it” (T2). To be sure, another staff member (T1) corroborates this perspective, expressly stating that T2 has the right profile, precisely because, contrary to a former staff member that worked “in her little classroom” whenever she could, T2 thinks that “she has to be with the team [meaning in the field]” whenever she can. “It also depends a lot of the person itself” (T1).

Adaptability and modesty

Another feature deemed fundamental by the staff is the adaptability and modesty: “Adaptability and modesty are two characteristics that I think are fundamental, because when there are here some situations of people thinking ‘no, because I even have a degree, because I don’t have to be doing this, right? (...) I don’t have to leave there [meaning the communities neighbourhoods] with my boots covered in mud, I don’t have this and that, and I don’t have to move to intervene’, that, it doesn’t stand a chance. (...) Therefore, adaptability, modesty, to step down of our castle and go there, but to be there, in our essence and to like this work, that is a work that deals a lot with the unforeseen, capacity to work things out in a short period” (T1).

Curiously, the interviewees related a posture of haughtiness —hence, not adequate to this kind of work— with the social service formation/training: T1 — “We had until last year social service, social assistant, and we arrived to the conclusion that it doesn’t work out, precisely because of the posture of the social assistant was always of much haughtiness”; Interviewer — “But couldn’t that be a question of personal competencies or...”; T1 — “No, because we had several social assistances and they all behaved like this, that is, always like a social assistant within social security”.

Team cohesion and help

Team cohesion was also referred as a relevant feature: “And then it ends up being implicit, ultimately, the team cohesion within the team itself” (T1); “I speak as a preschool teacher, really, because if I do not have their support, I am completely alone. (...) I support a lot on the team, because it is with them [referring to the other team members] that I work, otherwise I would be very alone” (T3).

Personal considerable commitment by the staff

A general attribute for which relevance all the staff seems to agree upon is the considerable commitment required from the staff, i.e., “the big involvement from the staff”: “not having a beginning or finishing hour; we have the concern of reaching everywhere and never... the word no does not exist and, therefore, responding to all needs” (T1); “to put on the shirt [idiomatic expression meaning to join a cause] and believe in what we are doing” (T2); “For this all to work it is necessary for us to give beyond what we are asked, it is necessary to feel this [the project], it is necessary to feel that it is worth it” (T1).

Logistic (personal) requirements

A pragmatic requirement for the staff members is the possibility to use their own vehicles to visit the Roma communities. This aspect was yet another reason to refer to a former staff member, that did not drive, as not having the right profile: “[the national teachers contest] puts this person, that doesn’t have a car, that comes here by taxi (...). Well, the preschool teacher [name of the current member that substituted the former staff member] has autonomy to take her car” (T1).

Knowing and adapting to cultural and community specificities

To begin with, it is valuable, according to the interviewees perspectives, to have a general knowledge of the Roma culture, as well as to adapt to specificities of the different communities: “There is always a concern and I had that concern when I started to work with them [meaning the Roma communities] and every time that someone new joins the team that does not have experience in working with the ethnicity [meaning Roma], that I suggest that one reads a little about the ethnicity, one studies, because there

are certain type of situations that in the interpersonal relationship, that we can sign our death sentence, that there are things very obvious to them and that we are not minimally, nor sensitized, nor alerted to” (T1). T1 continues by giving concrete examples where one can easily disrespect, without realizing, the communities cultural codes: “and the [Roma] lady so to paying that when the patriarch dies, this mother gets a bunch of responsibilities and restrictions in life, namely she can not go to parties, weddings, she can not go here, there, they take everything from the house, furniture and the bed is all that remains and the other [referring to an operational assistant] was saying that that is ridiculous, it didn’t make any sense, and it almost started a serious fuss there, an operational assistant, why? Because you need that sensitivity, right? It is the same as coming and offending our social behaviours, right? Our social rules, and therefore this is important to have in consideration, to know them” (T1).

3.3.4 OTHERS

Additionally, the staff referred strategies to compensate for the lack of stability of the programme’s staff: strategies to compensate for the unstable team.

Strategies to compensate for the unstable team

Within the context of the reference to the crucial value of the right profile (see above) the staff refers to the importance of the “continuity of the staff, the preschool teacher”, which is not possible due to the lack of autonomy that schools have to hire personal in conjunction with the yearly rotation of teachers between schools (please see the provider results for more detail on this issue).

To be sure, the continuous change of the staff members is felt as a great challenge for which the staff has to compensate: “We have been suffering some changes in the team, we have been able to keep a coherent line [of intervention], but it hasn’t been easy (...); there is here a great effort of the team to compensate; (...) I mean, with a 10 year project staff member [leaving], there has to be necessarily a very strong push from the people that are here so that this doesn’t severely hinder [the programme], and it hasn’t fortunately” (T1).

In a nutshell, two factors were identified to tackle this issue. First, a “lot of commitment, a lot of dedication” to the project from the remaining team. Second, “it has to exist always a staff member of continuity, that’s mandatory, otherwise...” (T1).

3.4 PARENTS

As stated above in the “Data collection” section, the interviews with the programme beneficiaries understandably did not return abundant and sufficiently elaborated data (as one can justifiably expect from the other participants), that would allow for a detailed and nuanced content within all the main categories.

3.4.1 OUTREACH

Personal relationships between children and staff

When questioned about the “things” that they thought were important in order for the programme’s success to reach out to them, beneficiaries generally spoke about trust in the staff, highlighting the highly personal and bonding relationships that (in particular one of the) members of the team were able to build with the children, as well as a positive regard for the activities that the staff carries out: “he [referring to her son] made [draw] a bus and teacher XXX, because she liked and I appreciate very much from her behalf [meaning appreciation for the teacher’s attitude] and she has it in her house. My son really likes teacher XXX, adores teacher XXX, she does a great job. I like her a lot, she did much good to my son” (Pa1); “Teachers are super” (Pa3); “I like them, here, they come here meet the children, play with them and help us” (Pa2).

Since trust, bonding and relationship building were key features referred by the beneficiaries, the (staff) requirements category will understandably reflect the necessary attributes to foster such dimensions.

3.4.2 COOPERATION

As already stated, *(Class)rooms of glass* beneficiaries are, coherently with the programmes’ targeting goals, severely disenfranchised minorities, with a very low socio-economic and educational levels. This meant that some of the questions were not understood by the interviewees and/or they did not have an opinion about it. Hence, information was often scarce and sometimes, as in the case of this category, was completely absent.

3.4.3 REQUIREMENTS

The right staff profile

Generally speaking, all of the interviewees referred that it was important to feel that the staff members had a deep sense of appreciation for the children. “Children being well treated and respected by the teachers, [they] always are” (Pa3). More specifically, several characteristics were identified as being valued by the parents, namely “being nice”, “caring”, “with a lot of patience”. The patience requirement relates to the perception that “[our] children quarrel a lot” (Pa1), “because children, our children, they are a little like this, are raucous” (Pa2). This “fact” also justifies the need for the requirement that staff has conflict management competencies, “when they are in conflict, they [the teachers] do not allow” (Pa1). This may point to the need for staff to have or develop specific competencies according to the characteristics of the target population.

Furthermore, the fact that the children “like the teachers” was also referred as important by all of the interviewees may point to the central role that children’s perceptions and reactions have to the programmes’ acceptance amongst the parents.

Lastly, it is noteworthy to point that the maintenance of the staff throughout the years does not appear to be a requirement for the programmes’ success, since “they [referring to the staff], depending on the year, they always leave [the programme] (...). There are many that left” (Pa1).

3.4.4 OTHERS

A great deal of time of the interviews was used to speak about issues that do not fit the previous categories, some of which relate to this case study purpose, while others not so much. For example, the interviewees spoke about the existence of general discrimination against Roma: “sometimes, I call, yes ok, there’s a job, I get there, they see that I am of Gypsy (sic)¹³ ethnicity, there’s no work. I feel angry by this” (Pa3). They have also complaint about the poor housing and living conditions that they face, while making some political remarks and demands: “I wish the city hall had some concern about us, built us some houses” (Pa3). A specific school nearby is also seen as a place of discrimination due to the fact that the students are almost entirely from Roma communities: “In a school there has to be Gypsies, non-Gypsies (sic), so we mingle with each other, right?” (Pa3). This is also seen as a reason for the constant ruffle between the children: “Because there are only children from the same ethnicity [meaning Roma] and they are always getting in confusions and I would like to move my children [from school] because of that” (Pa2). Additionally, one of the interviewees argued for the need of a school for (Roma) adults, since a great majority of them cannot read: “A very nearby school is closed, for what? Right? And, then, if school is very important, and it is very important, to have a school also for adults, because there are a lot of illiterates” (Pa4).

In respect to discussed issues that more closely relate to this research aims, it was possible to distinguish two subcategories: original and evolving/new needs and areas in which the programme and activities are seen as having an impact.

Original and evolving/new needs

The original aim of the *(Class)rooms of glass* programme is to foster a relationship of trust with (very) disenfranchised Roma minorities. This relationship, built simultaneously with children and their parents, would foster appreciation towards (pre)school and ultimately result in the enrolment of the children in pre-school. A first point to be highlighted is that this original aim does still apply to this community: Pa2 — “it’s like this, my children never went to pre-school”; Interviewer — “do you think that it is all of the community [that values school] or just you [since Pa3 had previously stated that he valued (pre)school a lot]?” Pa3 — “not all, not all”. Nevertheless, other needs and challenges now require that the programme finds new solutions in order to get children from this community to enrol in pre-school. Concretely, the main reason, according to the interviewees, why the children from this particular community do not attend pre-school is due to the distance of the pre-school from the community and lack of transportation: Pa2 — “But there you go, I have the papers over there, my son had a place to the school nearby Coruche, one [school] for that you don’t need to pay. Doctor YYY, whom is my technician [meaning social worker], had all the work, filled in the paperwork, but when I was going to hand it in there, they said they would not have a transportation to come and pick my boy, just a child, and so I didn’t handed anything in” (Pa2).

¹³ Portuguese Roma refer to themselves as Gypsies. The same is true for the non-Roma population.

Areas in which the programme and activities are seen as having an impact

From the interviews content it is possible to distinguish several areas in which the programme and the activities carried out are seen as having an impact. Explicitly, the programme is deemed to: (i) increase the development of the children (Pa2 — “It’s good, yes, the children are developing more”); (ii) increase children’s appreciation for school (Interviewer — “do you think [the project] as increased the community’s appreciation for school?” Pa2 — “I think so, my children... I speak for my children, my children like school a lot”); (iii) foster school readiness (“Well, to talk, they [referring to the staff] would come to play with them, so they get used to it, so they have an idea about it... when they go to school, so they have an idea of what they are going to do, certain things that they should do”); while also (iv) having a ludic component (Pa2 — “they [meaning teachers] take photographs here of the kids, they make a kind of sheets with the photos, with things written, with... sheets with music, with things for the kids to read, with stories, I think this is a very beautiful project that they are doing with the children”). Additionally, the programme is also seen as teaching the children “proper manners”, “to have other manners” (Pa1).

4. DISCUSSION

(Class)rooms of glass was selected as the Portuguese case study given its capacity to reach out to disadvantaged within the disadvantage. To be sure, if Roma communities are generally, within the Portuguese context, poor and disenfranchised minorities, *Rooms of glass* beneficiaries were characterized by an extreme degree of disenfranchisement and disadvantagedness. In fact, one of the first goals of the *(Class)rooms of glass* programme was to get to know how many Roma children were in these communities that were not attending the obligatory school enrolment.

Perhaps the most fundamental aspect to explain *(Class)rooms of glass*’ success, according to our analysis, was the development of trustful relationships between a dedicated team and the Roma parents. According to the provider and staff views, the establishment of such relations was possible through a very personalized human contact over an extended period of time, requiring a deep commitment of the staff involved, as well as an adequate profile. Furthermore, it was interesting to record that as both the staff and the provider — whom were deeply aligned in most of their shared opinions — underlined, playful activities with the children were used as a way to get into the community, which was also acknowledged by parents by explicitly valuing the children’s praise towards (some of) the staff. This was surely one aspect of paramount importance highlighted by the parents.

It is also important to highlight that the provider and staff gave several examples that denotes that the programmes’ intermediate goals and actions are set in accordance to the degree of trust already developed (for instance, providing parental education only after there is a positive relation between staff and parents), and in such a way that will not endanger the relationship. In other words, developing trustful relationships guides all the intervention goals and actions, it is actively seek and it is a permanent goal of the programme in itself.

Another crucial aspect for the programme’s success rests on its high degree of tailoring, to

accommodate the changing needs of the community but without losing sight of the overarching goal of school inclusion. This was generally referred to as a requisite for any programme's success by the financier, but was made very concrete through several examples given by the provider, and to an even greater extent, by the staff. Notably, the nature of the relations established, as well as the strategies employed, did differ between the three different Roma communities covered by the *(Class)rooms of glass*. Moreover, the results achieved are not at the same level across the three communities.

Closely related to this previous aspect is the continuous evolution of the programme according to the achieved results as well as the evolving needs of the communities. Therefore, if at the onset of the programme there was the common need to get into these communities so to identify children that ought to be at school, currently the needs, objectives and strategies have evolved, varying according to the specific community characteristics, as well as the response to the team's intervention (e.g., the need for transportation to the preschool due to the distance and lack of transportation of one of the communities vs. the need to manage the school's cooperation with the police in order to curb its visibility). So, it is worth noting that the evolving character of the *(Class)rooms of glass* was considered, in itself, a success factor.

It is important to keep in mind, though, that all the above mentioned features, foremost the latter evolving aspect of the programme, concur to the overarching far-reaching goal of inclusion and diminishing these Roma communities educational gaps, an objective to which the developed bridges of trust between the staff and these Roma communities continue to be the cornerstone for its achievement.

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APPENDIX I

Country Report England

Family Skills

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This report presents findings from an English case study of *Family Skills*, a family literacy programme focusing on families with reception-aged children, for whom English is an additional language. The aim of the case studies, carried out in different countries in Europe as part of the ISOTIS project, was to obtain in-depth knowledge of the success factors of parent- and family-focused approaches to improve the quality of family environments.

1. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMME

1.1. MISSION STATEMENT

Family Skills is a 30-hour Family Literacy programme focusing on families with reception-aged children for whom English is an additional language (EAL). The main aim of the programme is to raise pupils' literacy attainment by increasing the parents' knowledge of the English education system and improving their skills, enabling them to get more involved in and support their children's learning. The programme places an emphasis on home literacy, reading and phonics, as well as oral traditions, the use of heritage language, and the benefits of bilingualism (Cara 2018; Learning Unlimited 2016).

1.2. TARGET GROUP

The target group of *Family Skills* is EAL families and their children aged 4-5 years, attending an English primary school (Cara, Marshall, Morris and Vojtkova, 2016; Husain et al. 2018; NatCen 2016; Vojtkova and Jabin 2017). EAL means that children are defined by their school as speaking English as another language and that the parents/carers and their children are still developing their skills in English. The term EAL involves a highly diverse group of families in terms of their English language and literacy skills and their use of heritage language at home (Cara, 2018).

1.3. CONTENTS

The *Family Skills* course covers topics on the benefits of bilingualism, oral traditions, home literacy practices, reading strategies and phonics, learning through play, and primary education in England (Learning Unlimited, 2016). The 'benefits of bilingualism' session aims to familiarise parents with the advantages of bilingual children over their monolingual peers and to teach them strategies supporting the use of the heritage language. 'Oral traditions' supports the home language use by improving parents' skills in storytelling to children with a focus on the similarities in fables from different cultures. Parents can get acquainted with 'phonics', how reading is taught in schools, as well as strategies on how to read together with children and support their emerging reading skills. Through the course, families also get a chance to learn more about the English education system and the approach of 'learning through play', which is the foundation of early years education in the country.

1.4. STRUCTURE

Programme delivery takes place in primary schools over one term in 11 2.5-hour sessions which are led by external family learning tutors who work for local providers of adult/family learning. The first part of the sessions is designed for parent-learning only, followed by 30-45 minutes for parents and children learning together and planning for further learning activities at home (Learning Unlimited 2016). Teachers or teaching assistants are also involved in the programme delivery: they help to organise and lead a library visit and a school tour, they do a talk on reading and phonics for participating parents, and they join the parent-child activities during the second half of the sessions.

1.5. ORGANIGRAM

The programme development and delivery was led by Learning Unlimited (LU) in close partnership with Campaign for Learning (CfL) and the UCL Institute of Education. LU is a non-profit organisation specialising in family learning, ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) and integration, literacy and numeracy. LU specialises in supporting adults/families with migrant/refugee/other language backgrounds. Bilingualism and the experience of other cultures are recognised, valued and celebrated. (see <http://www.learningunlimited.co/family-learning>). CfL, a national charity promoting lifelong learning, works with partners and collaborates on initiatives to test new approaches and generate new ideas about lifelong learning. Many of their activities are collaborative ventures, where findings and research are shared with partners, networks, and policy makers.

LU was responsible for the overall project management of *Family Skills*. Campaign for Learning was responsible for the delivery and coordination of the programme. The UCL was responsible for the internal evaluation (Cara, 2018).

The delivery of the project was tied to an external evaluation, and the evaluation project (including programme delivery and evaluation) was funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), the Bell Foundation and Unbound Philanthropy. The EEF is an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. The Bell Foundation works to change lives and overcome exclusion through language education for excluded individuals and communities, with the aim of changing practice, policy and public opinion through evidence. Unbound Philanthropy is a private grant-making foundation dedicated to ensuring that migrants, refugees, and their families are treated with respect and dignity, are able to contribute fully in their new communities and can ultimately thrive in a society that is comfortable with the diversity and opportunity that immigration brings.

The external evaluation was carried out by NatCen, an independent social research agency. The programme was evaluated as a randomised control trial (RCT) with half of the participating

schools being ‘intervention schools’ and hosting the *Family Skills* course from January to April 2017, and the other half of the schools running ‘business as usual’ in order to form the control group for the evaluation (Cara, Marshall, Morris and Vojtkova, 2016; Vojtkova and Jabin 2017).

The project involved 115 schools and 1,985 pupils in total, including intervention and control (Husain et al. 2018; NatCen 2016; Vojtkova and Jabin 2017; Vojtkova, Morris, Cara, and Marshall 2016). *Family Skills* was delivered by experienced Family Learning tutors, who were employed by 16 Delivery Partners across England, e.g. councils and voluntary sector organisations.



Family Skills – Local Delivery Partners Dissemination Event, 29 June 2018, London

Figure 7. Family Skills - Local delivery partners

1.6. FOUNDATION

The programme content was initially put together for a funding round of EEF on international support for English as an additional language. Different parts of the content were taken from previously implemented projects of Learning Unlimited. The whole project, including the evaluation, ran between April 2016 and December 2017 and the course was delivered to parents between January and April 2017.

As part of the *Family Skills* project, the programme developers put together a toolkit which is available by request (<http://www.learningunlimited.co/projects/family-skills/family-skills-toolkit>). The toolkit is designed to be used by skilled and qualified Family Learning tutors working in primary school settings; it provides ideas and resources and information on the course content. After the end of the *Family Skills* project, local providers of family learning (often funded by the local council) can choose the programme to be delivered in their local areas.

1.7. EVALUATION

EEF Report

The external evaluation of the programme was carried out by the Education Endowment Foundation between September 2016 and July 2017 using a randomised control trial to compare outcomes in intervention and control schools. Children's literacy and English language skills were assessed using the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) BASE reception baseline assessment, which is an online literacy and numeracy test. CEM was used at both baseline and post-intervention phases, capturing the effect of the programme on pupils. A total of 1,985 students in 102 schools were included in the analysis. Further data was collected through surveys and interviews with *Family Skills* tutors and parents who attended the sessions.

Based on the RCT (and comparing the intervention and control group without taking account of actual course attendance), EAL children in intervention schools did not make additional progress in literacy compared to those in control schools. One main reason for this was challenges in the recruitment of parents; around two thirds of parents offered the course did not attend. Exploratory analysis showed 1 month's additional progress in literacy among EAL children whose parent(s) attended at least one of the *Family Skills* sessions, compared to EAL children in control schools. The evaluators stressed that this exploratory result should be treated with caution. Process evaluation reported that the programme was promising in building home-school links and engaging parents in their children's learning (Husain et al. 2018; NatCen 2016).

Internal report

The internal evaluation of the programme was led by UCL Institute for Education in 59 treatment schools. The aim of the evaluation was to complement the external research by focussing on the assessment of implementation quality and programme fidelity, specifically the recruitment process, facilitators and inhibitors of programme delivery and the broader outcomes for families. Data was collected at different stages, using tutors surveys, parental evaluation forms, class attendance registers and Standardised Quality Assurance observations of the sessions. Results showed a wide range of benefits for families, including increased confidence of parents to support their children's learning, increased social networks, improved practices of learning with children through play and of learning in their home language. The most popular sessions were reading and phonics; benefits of bilingualism; and learning through play, those which offered parents the most practical knowledge on how to support their children. The evaluation also highlighted issues around attendance, reported by 54% of the schools. The main reasons for non-attendance were employment patterns of parents (63%); lack of motivation (52%); low English language skills (33%) and childcare issues (33%).

Based on the results, more time before the start of the course a short ‘taster’ courses could improve the recruitment process. Learning from the reported barriers to engagement and attendance and responding to those issues could further improve the effectiveness of the course (Cara, 2018).

1.8. SELECTION PROCESS

The selection of the programme for the English ISOTIS case study was based on three main criteria. First, based on its target group and aims, the programme was highly relevant for ISOTIS. The programme supports families with other language backgrounds and their young children, with a focus on language development and parental engagement in learning, including the aim to strengthen heritage language and culture. Second, the programme was highly promising – it had been selected by the EEF to be funded as a large scale evaluation project (out of 60 projects that applied). It was developed by a team with experience in delivery and research, and the content was designed based on existing knowledge of previous family learning programmes. Third, the programme had been developed recently and locally, and was not internationally known.

2. DATA COLLECTION

2.1. INTERVIEWEES

Financier

1 senior project manager from the main **funding agency** of the project, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)¹⁴, which is an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. His responsibilities included leading the project call, selection of the project, coordination between the evaluation and implementation team and working on the final evaluation report. He specialises in early years and parental engagement.

Providers

2 National Providers, the project manager, director of Learning Unlimited, and the National Director at the Campaign for Learning. Both have many years of experience with delivering family learning, with developing and coordinating family learning projects/programmes, and with coordinating research projects which aim to show the impact of family learning and parental engagement on a range of outcomes.

Staff

7 Family Skills tutors from London, Birmingham, Lancashire, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. Most of the tutors taking part in the focus group discussions were also local coordinators of family learning in their areas and had had previous training and experience in family learning, some of them with a focus on speakers of other languages.

Parents

2 participants/parents from London and Leicestershire, who had participated in the *Family Skills* programme and had different cultural and language backgrounds¹⁵.

¹⁴ Based on literature reviews the EEF formulates funding rounds and selects 'high potential projects' to test their impact through trials and generate new evidence of what works.

¹⁵ In addition to carrying out these interviews, the researcher also observed a final session of a course with similar content and aims to Family Skills, which took place in a primary school in London and was led by the project manager of Family Skills. Parents' self-evaluation was part of this session. Observations of parents and informal conversations at the end of the session was in line with information received from the two parents who took part in the Family Skills interviews. The parents in this group had many different language and cultural backgrounds. Countries of origin included China, Columbia, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Portugal, and Sudan and languages spoken included Amharic, Arabic, Mandarin, Spanish, Pashto, Portuguese, and Urdu.

2.2. PERIOD OF DATA ACQUISITION

Data collection took place between June 2018 and August 2018. The length of the interviews ranged between 30 and 90 minutes. The shortest were the interviews with the parents and the longest the focus groups with the national providers.

2.3. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Data collection included two focus group discussions and four semi-structured individual interviews. Participants during the focus group discussions were *Family Skills* tutors (*staff*) and one of the national providers (*provider*). Individual interviews included one face-to-face parent interview, one telephone parent interview, and two face-to-face expert interviews – one interview with the project manager of the main funding agency (*financier*) and one interview with one of the national providers (*provider*). Data was also collected through observations of a dissemination event and a course session. The dissemination event was attended by family learning tutors, coordinators and researchers with presentations given by representatives of the national provider, the parents, tutors and local coordinators. The end of a course session with one tutor and a group of parents was also attended by a researcher, with an opportunity to socialise with the parents and ask some short questions.

2.4. DATA CODING AND INTER-RATER AGREEMENT

Interviews and focus groups were recorded, transcribed, and analysed through qualitative content analysis. Deductive coding categories were derived from the theoretical background and research questions, and provided to the researchers by the lead team. Deductive main categories were: Outreach, Cooperation, Requirements, ICT, and First Language Support. Other main categories could be added by country teams. Two researchers in England then developed sub-categories for coding in several data-coding cycles. Both researchers completed the coding of all material. Double coded materials were compared and discussed between researchers. After comparison and discussion, agreement was found on all main codes (100% agreement). Agreed codes were used for further analysis.

While a number of topics were reported during the interviews carried out for this case study (including for example the needs and concerns of the target groups, challenges in recruitment and implementation etc.), the main aim of data coding was to identify success factors, or strategies that were employed (or could be employed) to overcome challenges. The following sections describe the results of coding carried out for each of the stakeholder groups separately. The structure follows the main categories of coding. Quotes are provided to support the summaries.

3. RESULTS

3.1. FINANCIER: FUNDER

3.1.1. OUTREACH

In terms of factors that support outreach, the following factors were mentioned: the right targeting approach; involvement of schools; attractive and relevant activities for parents; and a clear plan on recruitment with sufficient time and resources for personal contact.

The funder appreciates that the **benefits** of a broad targeting approach lie in **keeping the risk of stigmatisation of the target group as low as possible**. Nevertheless, he also referred to the **challenge** of meeting everybody's needs with one programme. He suggested that targeting the programme to a more specific group and linking the programme's content directly to them could be more beneficial to those families participating in *Family Skills*

"[O]ne of the things the developers flagged up was not wanting to make it a really targeted programme, and the risk of labelling parents of families as being struggling readers. They wanted to keep it broad, and universal, and an open and appealing programme, and were worried about stigmatising which made a lot of sense. But there was also a feeling of how do you cater to such a wide range of families."

The funder referred to the high number of schools where the programme was fully delivered, and mentions two factors in relation to this success: first, a **positive attitude from the staff towards the intervention**, and second the fact that participation in the project was **not too much of a strain on teachers' time and workload**.

"I think actually most schools stuck with the programme and you did not see huge amounts of drop-out after the randomisation. In our experience of some programmes that can happen if schools find something unpopular or do not like it. They will stop doing it. ... [A]ctually that suggests they did see value in it and you did not find lots of teams who just cancelled half way through."

"[B]roadly my reading of what teachers said in the evaluation report was that they were quite positive about the programme, that they felt that it was a beneficial way of improving home-school links with parents, and getting parents into the schools. I don't think it was a massive drain on teachers' time and workload which is an important factor in running these types of interventions. It seemed to be pretty positive from schools."

It was also mentioned during the interview that sessions, which involved the **learning of practical skills** for helping children's development were the most popular among the parents, and refers to the phonics component of the programme, which 'was popular with parents, they were

interested and it was not something they necessarily know about but was very relevant to their children in reception’.

Longer lead-in times and more **face-to-face recruitment** of parents were mentioned as strategies that could help to increase the level of take-up and attendance in the future, and thus increase the efficacy of the programme. In making a choice on the programmes to fund in the future, the funding agency will look for a **clear outreach plan** (including recruitment of parents and schools) and clear specifications of what taking part in the programme requires from participants.

“I think the time-scales that schools have to engage and support parents to take part in something becomes really important, and making sure they have long enough to recruit parents into a programme. To some extent we knew this but it was reinforced that it is a crucial part.”

3.1.2. COOPERATION

When commenting on issues and processes of cooperation, the funder mainly referred to the **external cooperation** between the team developing and delivering the programme, the evaluation team, and the funding agency.

The funder described the application process for projects funded by the EEF as highly competitive. Well-developed proposals have to be submitted and are put through a rigorous review process. The funding agency carries out literature reviews at the forefront to identify promising features and need for evidence. While the funder does not directly state this, one can argue that the process facilitates **ensuring that the highest quality programmes get chosen** for large scale evaluation projects.

The funder described that the success of the programme in getting selected for this competitive funding was due to a number of facts: a) it fitted the funder’s interest areas, b) it showed that it was policy relevant, c) it built on evidence, and at the same time addressed a need of further evidence; d) it made clear the expertise of the people involved in development, delivery and project management.

“The fact that elements of the programme had been widely delivered in the country before, not in this form exactly, but through Skills Funding Agency and family literacy programmes which are a big part of delivery in English schools. [This] led us to see it as policy relevant and question-relevant to schools where these types of programmes are being widely delivered. ... [I]t is very valuable to build on the evidence for their level of effectiveness.”

The funder stressed the process of **shared decision-making and agreement** in the cooperation between the national providers and the evaluators, and teams of people with a mix of skills and

experience, including experience in delivery but also academic experience ‘which helped with research design and having a liason between evaluation’.

“[W]e review the evaluation proposals, select what we think is the best design and the best team and fit, and then bring the two teams together for a series of quite long intensive meetings. ... All the features of an evaluation design, we work through as a group until we reach something where everybody is happy in terms of sample size and year group etc.”

When commenting on issues and processes of cooperation, the funder mainly referred to the **external cooperation** between the team developing and delivering the programme, the evaluation team, and the funding agency.

3.1.3. REQUIREMENTS

The funder stressed that the national providers of the project needed a set of different skills within their team. In this case, what was promising about the team was that a) the national providers were the experts on the theoretical background of working with EAL children, b) they had practical experience in delivering family learning programmes, c) they had academic experience.

“As a team of people they were very experienced in delivering the family literacy programmes, they had a good mix of skills, and had both the delivery experience from the Learning Unlimited team and the Campaign for Learning team, but also some academic experience.”

In terms of the content of the programme itself and the delivery, the funder expressed trust in the expertise of the national providers.

“[W]e were trusting the delivery team to be experts in this area and draw on the best practice of what was going on in terms of family learning, rather than us saying what we think should be the content and we know that wer are the experts on EAL.”

3.1.4. USE OF ICT

ICT was not integrated into the delivery or content of the intervention due to the nature of the evaluation process and the aim to ensure similar conditions in all delivery locations. Differences in access to ICT between different sites was seen as too much of a confounding factor.

When being asked about the potential of ICT to support interventions, the funder appreciated that digital approaches could be beneficial in addressing the experienced difficulties, specifically around recruitment and attendance. He referred to a body of evidence on the **use of text messages** in prompting the engagement of participants. He further mentioned that technology could also be used to **prepare parents** coming to the sessions, increasing the level of

effectiveness of the programme. Finally, **delivering the programme in the home environment** with the use of technology could also tackle issues of low-attendance.

3.1.5. FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

First language support was the area where the interest of the main funder and the interest of the national providers did not come together. However, the funder emphasised that the project was funded by three organisations and one of the other funders of the project had particular interest in this area. While this was not mentioned during the interview, it can be argued that the cooperation between different funding organisations in funding one project can ensure a broader focus and a better fit in interests between the funding bodies and the team developing and delivering the project.

3.2. PROVIDER

3.2.1. OUTREACH

In terms of outreach, one factor was stressed as essential for all stakeholders (the parents, the schools, and the delivery partners): building on existing relationships and partnerships, and personal contact. For delivery partners, opportunities for professional development were also important motivators for engagement with the programme; for parents, the programme meeting their needs and concerns was seen as essential.

Target group

Parents' motivation to attend the programme because of its aims to support parents in helping their children's learning in school was seen as a driving force in recruitment.

"I know from feedback that parents on my current courses, they really do want to know about their children's learning and how their children are being taught and how they can support that. And very often parents who would like to do some language learning, let's say for themselves, may not find the time to prioritise themselves, but if they think it is going to help their children, they'll find a way of getting there. And they really do want to understand what schools are doing and how they can support their children."

One issue that came up in the interview was the British anti-immigration atmosphere related to Brexit and how the programme's focus on families with other language backgrounds can lead to it being perceived as negative and **stigmatising**. This context can give an explanation to the difficulties experienced with the recruitment of families for the programme. However, **existing good relationships were seen as a buffer**.

3.2.2. RECRUITMENT

Delivery partners

Existing relationships and opportunities for learning

According to the national providers, successful recruitment of delivery partners (local providers) depended on **existing relationships** between the national providers and local providers.

A second main success factor in recruiting delivery partners mentioned was the fact that local providers saw an **opportunity to learn** new approaches and skills, such as teaching phonics, which is embedded in early years education in England. Delivering family learning programmes through schools had not been common practice historically, and this model was attractive to family learning providers.

“I think one of the things that is quite interesting was that it was the thing that most providers had least experience of. A lot of the funding historically has come through the adult learning budget, so it is not a school’s budget and therefore has tended to attract a lot of people who are used to doing adult learning but not working through schools. Phonics is something that is very embedded in primary schools and early years, so that was particularly one of the biggest new learning things they had. So I think they really liked the fact that they had learnt new skills that they could integrate into other programmes.”

Schools

In order to get schools involved, the national providers emphasised the importance of the local **providers’ and tutors’ relationship to the teachers in the school or trusted intermediaries**.

“I think you had multiple challenges but those could be overcome when you had a good relationship internally, either directly with teachers in the school or with trusted intermediaries because parents would engage because they trusted the person that was getting them to engage. ... [S]o, it all comes down to relationships, the relationship between the provider and the school, and the school and the parents.”

Families

The national providers described the schools’ role in the recruitment of families as essential. The providers expressed that success of recruitment and ongoing involvement of families depends on the **quality of relationship between the schools/teachers and the parents**. The quality of that relationship seemed to be dependent on an intermediary among the staff, e.g. a family liaison, who is trusted by the parents and who is communicating the message that the school wants the best for their children rather than a criticism on the parents and their skills.

“Where it was really successful, it was all about relationships and the existing relationship the school had with the families, and or where they had a really good intermediary who

already had relationships with parents.”

Face-to-face recruitment was reported as the other successful recruitment strategy (e.g. introducing *Family Skills* to parents at the school gates), however, this approach was described as the most time-consuming and not all schools had sufficient time to choose this approach.

“One of the challenges at the time of the programme was that schools and the delivery partners didn’t necessarily have the amount of time you usually would want to have to do the recruitment. When people did have that time, the recruitment was strong, people did have time to do face-to-face recruitment at the school gates and so on.”

3.2.3. COOPERATION

External, scientific cooperation

For the national providers, linking programme implementation to a **rigorous evaluation was seen as a very valuable opportunity**, which would allow them to see the effectiveness of their programme, and also to work in partnership with other providers nationally.

For the programme developers, the scientific cooperation also meant that they had to be adaptable: *‘because the Education Endowment Foundation is very focused upon literacy outcomes and we knew that phonics was one of the key things, rather than have the sessions on phonics we kind of scattered it through so parents could miss one session and they would not have missed that input’.*

Internal cooperation

One of the main drivers of the national providers’ motivation for participation in the evaluation project was their **interest in working in close partnerships with other organisations and delivery partners** across the country, to bring together existing good practice in order to develop a curriculum that can then be implemented nationally.

“[I]t was one of the things that we thought was really interesting about the process of pulling together the content of the different tutors and delivery partners, all invited to contribute to shaping this and identifying the main focus of each of the sessions and suggesting materials or activities to include.”

Thus, the programme was developed by the providers in **cooperation with the delivery partners**. This process was seen as important because it facilitated a **sense of ownership** the local providers developed with regards to the programme, and because it provided **opportunities for learning**.

“We sent them a summary of what we were trying to achieve and the target audience. We also invited them to co-create the final programme because there were lots of people

doing this kind of work, but it is not coordinated. There is not it a fixed programme but there is lots of expertise. We did a development day, not to sell them the concept, but much more to involve them in the final delivery product so that they had some ownership of it.”

The main strategy used by the national providers in ensuring good quality implementation was the selection of local providers with expertise. Thus, while a training day was held, their focus was not on training staff, but on **building upon what local providers already knew**.

“We were not interested in bringing on board to train and support people who had never delivered or did not have the internal expertise already. It was very much allowing for people to build upon what they already do.”

When describing ongoing support of delivery partners and tutors, the national providers refer to **strategies which support processes of sharing experiences and expertise** in the group, first through an online platform, where tutors had the opportunity to share their problems, solutions and strategies with each other, and second through a central email group that was set up.

“[W]e had on-going support, people knew that they could phone, e-mail, and then we had the SLACK online platform as well, so people could post questions, and some people did. SLACK worked for people who used it, not everyone signed up for it or used it, but some people were saying, ‘I’m struggling with understanding the instructions for this activity...’ so that was really good so people could get straight back and say what they did.”

The importance of **treating parents as partners** in the parent-school relationship was highlighted, with building relationships right from the beginning.

“[I]t also starts too late, in terms of school inductions when kids start school ... [P]artnership ethos and concrete methods of making that partnership work need to be embedded there, you cannot wait until they have been at the school and they ask you to come on a course, you need to build the relationship from the outset.”

3.2.4. REQUIREMENTS

Delivery partners

The criteria for the selection of delivery partners was their **capacity and experience of delivering a family learning** intervention, and their **ability to provide experienced tutors** for the programme.

National providers

Practical experience in delivering a programme was seen as essential for developing and leading a programme. The providers also reported the importance of **understanding the**

national policy context, the **ability to balance between research and practice** while being pragmatic, and the **ability to maintain collaboration between stakeholders** without imposing ideas on them.

“Well I think it is really helpful to have had some practical experience in delivering it because until you have delivered you cannot really understand how it is formed and what the criteria are.”

Tutors

The requirements for tutors were that they had to be **knowledgeable and experienced** (with expertise in family learning and experience of having worked with EAL families, both adults and children). Whilst qualifications and experience were emphasised as important, it was also highlighted that the field of family learning was very broad, with people contributing with expertise and experience from different areas.

“I think one of the things that makes it so interesting is the fact that family learning can be delivered in so many different ways with different types of parents. ... [T]he tutors - the feel is so diverse in terms of their own skills and experiences, the expertise.”

Tutors had different backgrounds within the field of family learning, and what was important was the engagement in processes of **peer learning** (sharing ideas and strategies, learning from each other), and **building on existing experience** and learning new approaches.

“[I]t was one of the things that we thought was really interesting about the process of pulling together the content; with the different tutors and delivery partners all invited to contribute to shaping this, and identifying the main focus of each of the sessions, and suggesting materials or activities to include. So it was a really good opportunity for people to learn from each other.”

One of the requirements mentioned was flexibility – the **tutor’s ability to adapt content** so it fits each particular group of learners (because “each group of learners is different”).

“[W]hat you do as a learning provider is you make sure that you respond to your learners needs and respond, which may lead to change. You will have a lesson plan, but you will move away from that if it does not fit the needs as you are delivering it, if you find additional needs that you need to spend more time on.”

Schools and teachers

Teachers’ knowledge of children and parents

When being asked about the success factors, the **schools’ support** of the programme was highlighted as the first important factor. The schools’ role was described as essential in the recruitment of families, and success was explained by the fact that staff in schools have the

greatest **knowledge of the target group** (e.g. they know which parents need the course the most, who finds it hard to fill in forms, who doesn't communicate at parents' evenings).

3.2.5. USE OF ICT

When being asked about the potential of ICT supporting the programme, it was mentioned that technology could be used for 'blended learning' to support parents remotely, for example with the help of a virtual classroom, such as Google Classroom, allowing parents' access to learning resources.

"I think one of the things we should be looking at doing is more blended learning so that we can support parents remotely rather than always face-to-face. I would not want to do it as an online programme because I think the dialogue, the peer support, and the community building, and the engagement with the school is really valuable."

3.2.6. FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

The national providers both emphasised that an important part of the approach underpinning the programme was about **reassuring parents** about the value of home languages, and the ways in which they can support their children's literacy learning in school using their first language.

"Around valuing your home language, it's much better for a child to hear their home language spoken really well than to be supported by a parent who is not confident and who is a beginner learner in the language they are being taught in school."

3.2.7. OTHER

Delivery

An important element of the programme delivery described by the national providers was that it **builds on parents' experiences and on what parents know** and creates an atmosphere and opportunities for people to share and discuss ideas and app

"I think an important part of the ethos ... was around that it's very much parents-based and that it builds on what parents already knew. ... [P]roviding lots of opportunities for discussion and people to share their ideas and approaches, things that have gone well, things that didn't work as well. And they could give each other ideas and so on."

The national providers emphasised the parents' interest in their children's learning in school, and described the importance of **links to the curriculum**, and opportunities parents got to engage in activities that were linked to what children were learning in school at that moment.

"And they really do want to understand what schools are doing and how they can support their children. So, I think making it really explicit and showing how this links so closely to

what's going on in the class and the Early Years Foundation Stage was so important for these parents. And the fact that they could make some activities like the phonics fan that linked so specifically to phonics and phonics phases and stages their children were at. It was really, really important."

3.3. STAFF

3.3.1. OUTREACH

Involving the schools in the programme

Good communication with the school was mentioned as the main supportive factor for recruitment of schools, and their ongoing involvement in the programme. Communication strategies that go beyond the sharing of written invitations (the first step in recruiting schools) were emphasised, in particular personal meetings between the local providers/tutors and all staff members of the school (*'So because we organised to meet the staff beforehand and explain the programme, they knew the importance of it, they helped the recruitment.'*) Good communication between the local providers and the schools was also mentioned as the main strategy of overcoming challenges in schools' and children's involvement in the programme – mainly by enabling schools to be better prepared for the task (e.g. booking rooms in time, freeing up resources, considering the timing of sessions).

Beyond the involvement of the staff members in the school, the importance of the **commitment of the head teacher** was emphasised: the head teacher takes the lead in the cooperation between the local providers and the schools (e.g. signing the memorandum of understanding, agreeing on the terms of cooperation between the two parties). *'We've been doing family learning programmes for many many years and from our experience, it has to have the commitment with the head. If the head's not on board, it is not going to happen.'*

Schools were reported to be more motivated to participate when they were already familiar with the concept of family learning or/and had run similar programmes before. Tutors suggested that it is the **shared interest** in the aims of the programme which drives the schools' motivation to get involved in it. In the case of *Family Skills*, this worked well because teachers saw the need for a programme, which supported the engagement of parents in their children's education by enhancing their knowledge about how children learn in school (e.g. phonics), and how they can support their children's learning at home.

"I think it worked in the school where I worked because the school historically had lots of family learning. They had teaching staff that was responsible for family and the family learning tutors were involved before the children started at school. So in this particular school, family learning is talked about by the teaching staff, and I think that makes a big difference."

Involving families in the programme

Several strategies were used to recruit families for the programme, the most efficient ones being those requiring **personal, face-to-face contact** with parents, such as recruitment in coffee mornings. Schools had an active role in involving families with the help of a family link worker or in some cases a teacher responsible for family learning. The tutors found that the recruitment is the most successful when a teacher who is responsible for family learning in schools is involved in the recruitment of families for the programme, because they are **building on existing relationships**. Tutors' building of relationships with parents when delivering the programme was an important facilitator for ongoing attendance.

“The way we find family learning works is because the school recruits the parents, you never have that relationship with the parents. Once you start delivering, that’s when you have that relationship. So the attendance after was depending on your relationship as well, because the school helps the managing and facilitating but a lot of parents then contact you directly asking you questions.”

The timing and duration of the course also influences parents' participation. Creche facilities were provided in some cases, and tutors motivated the involvement of both parents to ensure the presence of at least one family member in all sessions.

“But one of the really nice things was that if a participant couldn’t make it, then obviously the partner or another member of the family was very welcome to come. ... [W]ith my group, if someone couldn’t make it, they often got the fathers to come along.”

According to the tutors, **getting children excited about the course** motivates parents to attend the sessions. A very successful recruitment strategy was a family passport which was created by the children, with stamps or stickers showing the attendance of parents.

“[T]he most successful activity as far as the children were concerned, was the family passport that the children made, in which the parents got a stamp at each class that they came to. And they loved that and I know some children got really concerned if mum was ill for example and couldn’t come or had an appointment, what’s going to happen with the sticker for that session.”

Involving tutors in the programme

As one tutor expressed, their motivation to participate in the programme was because of its research aspect; tutors wanted to be involved in gathering new evidence between parental engagement and children's education.

“[I]’ve worked with families for about 17 years as a family learning tutor amongst other things, so when I heard about this project I thought it is very valuable just to have some

research that would support all the hard work that we've done. And to see that link between parental engagement and children's education, and all the different outcomes that we're often told but very often aren't captured or reported. I think a lot of our colleagues were very keen to be part of this project for that reason."

3.3.2. COOPERATION

Local providers had opportunities to draw on the expertise of the national providers; the national providers were available to support tutors – from responding to questions to being involved in the delivery of some sessions. An online platform (Slack) was available for tutors for communication and the **sharing of strategies**. However, many tutors reported that they did not really make use of it. Time was mentioned as a factor that would overcome the barriers of making use of this tool for cooperation.

"We had SLACK but it wasn't effectively used in terms of individual communication. When you get involved in the project, you don't have time for that, as much as you want to, you just don't."

Based on the interviews with the tutors, it became clear that **understanding and agreement on the aims of the programme** between the different stakeholders involved highly contributes to its success. Tutors expressed that it was a major impediment to cooperation with schools when schools were involved but did not necessarily believe in the potential of the programme. One strategy that supported a shared mission between the school and the tutors was **listening to the school's wishes** in terms of course content. Some tutors adjusted sessions to fit in what was important to the particular school.

"Some partner schools I go to, they have parents' evenings for Reception children and talk about family learning and show examples of works and what we do. So it is becoming for parents at the point of entry.' This is what it is, this is what we do, it's not just handing children over.' And those schools are fantastic and they are supporting these families in different ways, through family learning for example, but then other schools I find... That headteacher I mentioned ... she was extremely reluctant and negative about family learning and that is always an obstacle for me as a coordinator for language provision."

3.3.3. REQUIREMENTS

Family Skills tutors

The pastoral support that tutors were giving to the parents outside the sessions created more personal relationships, which positively influenced the running of the programme. For this reason, tutors stressed that they must have good interpersonal competencies and allow one-to-one time for parents to talk with them after the sessions.

“[W]e are giving them a lot of pastoral support. That’s not built into the programme but that’s what makes your relationship a lot stronger with the parents and the groups. You have to almost wear many hats rather than go there and deliver Family Skills because you have to support them in lots of different ways.”

The quote above also make clear that the tutors felt they needed to be able to switch between different roles – the experts delivering content and advice, and the person listening, providing pastoral support for parents, and being available outside the session time. The ability to adapt content or activities to meet the needs and levels of learners was also mentioned by tutors as an important requirement (although there was less room for this in the *Family Skills* project due to the RCT research design).

Tutors had to be able to make parents understand why the programme would be useful and relevant for them and their children, and where they would be heading, and they had to do so in the very beginning of the course, in the first session ‘when parents made up their minds about attending the sessions.’

“From the parents’ perspective, what we found was that right at the beginning, parents just test what it’s like, whether it is going to be right for them ... they are considering whether they are going to have time for this, whether it is going to benefit their child, etc. If they don’t hear all that in the beginning of that first session, some of them don’t come back.”

School teachers

The teachers’ **existing relationship** with parents was the foundation that tutors built on. It provided them with the opportunity to involve families in the programme and start developing their relationship facilitating the delivery.

“The way we find family learning works is because the school recruits the parents. You never have that relationship with the parents. Once you start delivering, that’s when you have that relationship. So the attendance after was depending on your relationship as well, because the school helps the managing and facilitating, but a lot of parents then contact you directly asking you questions.”

Tutors felt that in the context of *Family Skills*, teachers were more successful in recruiting parents than family support workers because they had the knowledge of the student cohort and knew where the pockets of need are. Tutors explained that teachers’ involvement was also so important in facilitating the success of the programme because they have a greater overview of the school and know the curriculum.

“[T]he Head was always involved in the beginning, always involved at the end and even sometimes in between. [...] At the end they were giving out certificates for taking part. It was really helpful that they were so engaged because they could talk about the curriculum and organise schools visits.”

Finally, the tutors expressed how important it was that teachers supported them in promoting a positive image of children’s home culture.

“[T]he school was absolutely great, for example in supporting us promoting the home culture and being positive about the children’s identity. At least one parent said to me that the class teacher does say ‘You and Ethan are Chinese.’ And I thought that’s really good that they are identifying what their home culture is.”

Parents

Family Skills promoted the use of the heritage language with EAL children, which often contradicts the advice parents get otherwise, which is to speak in English at home. To take on board the tutors’ message on the importance of the home language, parents had to have **trust in the tutors’ expertise**. Tutors mentioned that during the course, families could see the progress children were making which helped the building of that trust as well as the pastoral support they provide, the building of relationships and the ability to ‘wear many hats’ – the expert, the person listening to them etc.

“That’s the sort of medical advice that comes from speech therapists. However, when you look at this programme, it encourages the use of the home language, even multi-languages, and it showed a lot of benefits. It did contradict some of the advice that externals were giving but it really did work for Family Skills parents.” “They [the parents] see the benefits of it week after week, they see the child actually developing and they see themselves developing. ... [T]hey do see the delivery people as the experts and that’s why from the school’s perspective it’s important that they have that bind.”

Openness for sharing and communication in the group were important requirements to facilitate peer support in the group, something that was seen as very valuable. Parents learned that they were in a similar situation to parents from other cultural and language backgrounds, and that they could learn from each other.

“I think it was really great, the support that parents were able to give each other and the sort of friendships and networks particularly for families who sometimes can be very socially isolated. [T]hey actually in some cases started Whatsapp groups and maybe met up and went to the park together or did something extra out of school. So ... the positive effect on reducing social isolation of migrant families, I think it is really important.”

Parents’ **knowledge of and familiarity with family learning** was mentioned as an important

factor facilitating their involvement in the programme.

I think it worked in the school where I worked because the school historically had lots of family learning. They had teaching staff that was responsible for family and the family learning tutors were involved before the children started at school. So in this particular school, family learning is talked about by the teaching staff and I think that makes a big difference.”

3.3.4. USE OF ICT

Although ICT was not integrated in the programme design, it was used by some tutors to facilitate the delivery of the sessions. Successful strategies of the integration of ICT in the project delivery were:

- the use of Power Point presentations during the sessions
- the use of Google Translate by parents who had difficulties understanding the language
- the use of a game-based learning platform (Kahoot)
- some educational games were suggested for parents for playing at home with their children
- the World Stories website with stories from different countries in English and the original language was very popular among the parents.

“[T]hey [the parents] really liked those lessons, especially the World Stories website, where there is a long list of all countries and stories from each, some with illustrations and videos as well. Each story is in English and the home language, so you can hear it and you can see it written. ... [F]or children who are not used to seeing the parents’ home language or hearing it, it’s really lovely because they can hear it in English as well.”

Access to computers and a stable internet connection on site were mentioned as a main prerequisite to using ICT to support the programme.

“IT in schools was a huge problem. Wifi was not always working. We had to take our own mobile network. Generally there is always an issue with programmes where ICT is involved, like accessing online material.”

An online platform (SLACK) was available for tutors to communicate and share strategies with each other but many tutors reported that they did not really make use of it.

Tutors recommended some ways in which ICT could be used to improve the programme. Google Classroom could support activities in the home environment, also allowing parents to share their feedback and download the hand-outs online. A similar virtual learning environment (VLE) could be used for the managers and tutors as well, where course materials and handouts would be available for everyone. Finally, a *Family Skills* application could be used to engage parents

between the sessions.

“We recently started to deliver another course using Google Classrooms. And I think having a Family Skills app or using Google Classroom would be a good incorporation of the online activities that parents can do as a home work, and they could share feedback online. So instead of giving a handout, you could upload the information to Google Classroom or to an app for example. And all of them use smart phones so through the app, the course content could be integrated into their everyday life. I think it would engage parents more between the sessions and perhaps give it a bit of a structure.”

3.3.5. FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

One of the aims of the programme is reassuring parents in their use of the home language with children in different ways. Tutors motivated parents to do homework together with children in their home language, so that children can learn that type of vocabulary. Parents also had a chance to talk to a family learning specialist, a bilingualism expert and ask their questions.

“That was great because initially they were really shocked that we were promoting the use of home languages and most of them said ‘we thought we should only be doing it in English’ and the school told them that they should be practicing English. So they really enjoyed that.”

The course also addressed a common problem in the target group, of children not identifying with their home culture. Tutors’ approaches included talking positively about children’s home cultures throughout the course and the creation of a ‘world wall’ with different countries, their languages, their flags and key vocabulary. The World Stories website, with fables from different cultures in the original language and English, was very popular among EAL families.

“Another thing that I did just to get the children used to seeing where their family came from, I created a Word Wall. In the room ... there was a big plain wall so ... I printed out flags representing the 6 countries that they came from. And then I wrote the names of the languages that they spoke. There were 8 adults and between them they spoke 8 languages. So we had the flags, we had the name of the countries, we had all the languages they spoke and each week I printed off all the key vocabulary, and had it all on the wall so the Word Wall got bigger. I felt that I got to try to get the children used to seeing that it was really positive, that everybody came from different places and how interesting that was. And that it was a positive and not a negative thing.”

One tutor highlighted the importance of facilitating parents’ learning journeys rather than imposing fixed ideas on them, particularly regarding the topic of first language use.

“I think for me it’s a case of ... reassuring those parents that ‘don’t give up with your home

language, find ways to use it and support your child'. But everyone has to make what feels like the best decision for them and their child, based on where they are up to ... [B]ecause some parents just stopped using their own language all together, whereas others were using it a lot and some were using a mix."

3.3.6. OTHER

Delivery

Tutors discussed the important **role of a family liaison person or teacher** in both the recruitment process and in supporting the families and tutors throughout the course. Tutors felt supported when a reception teacher would sit in on a session and it was also beneficial for the teachers because some content of the course, particularly on bilingualism, is not covered in teacher training. The teachers also became more motivated when they saw the outcomes of the intervention, with improvements in children's participation in class activities.

The **school as the location of delivery** was essential for the success of the programme, allowing parents to become more familiar and engaged with their children's education. In each school, a teacher delivered a session on phonics and also took part in the tour around the school for parents. Through the course parents had a chance to get an insight into the learning that is done in schools, observing children in the classroom learning through play and also seeing how the classroom is set up and how that supports the learning. The programme also contributes to schools' and teachers' better understanding of bilingual families.

"But I had a reception teacher in my class for the whole class every session....And she said that some of the content, she found really interesting. [I]t hadn't necessarily been covered in her own teacher training, particularly around bilingualism and we had some really interesting conversations about how the whole culture of schools could really take this on board and how it could be a much more positive feature of the school setting."

"But I think for me, the thing that I really noticed, was that the headteacher came in to give the certificates out at the last session, and she was really really positive about the impact of the course. The fact that we had different staff members who were involved in different parts ... I think it had a really profound effect on the parents who hadn't necessarily met the headteacher or had one-to-one conversation with her before."

According to the tutors, **children's involvement** greatly contributed to the success of the programme, facilitating recruitment, the engagement of parents, and the delivery.

"And the fact that they were working with their children for the 40 minutes, I think it really built on their confidence, and to be able to use their skills and use it in practice in a sort of safe environment."

3.4. PARTICIPANTS

3.4.1. OUTREACH

The aims of the programme appealed to parents because they related directly to their concerns. First, both parents who took part in the interview stressed that they wanted to support their children with learning in school, but felt they had difficulties supporting their children's education because of their limitations in the English language, for example sounding out certain English words correctly. Parents reported that their ability to help is also constrained by their lack of understanding of the English education system and its requirements for the students, and also by the lack of available information for EAL families regarding what their children are doing in school.

“[[I]]n some of the countries the education system is totally different. If we try to teach children at home, we probably just use what we've learnt from our background and our school and it's totally different from the UK.” “My husband received his education here but it was quite a long time ago and it changed a lot since then. For me, the issue is to see the way they teach kids in the UK because it's totally different from the way I was taught in China.”

Parent recruitment worked through **invitation leaflets**, face-to-face contact with teachers and tutors.

Contact to other parents in the school and getting to know others was mentioned by parents as a motivator for the parents to attend the sessions.

3.4.2. REQUIREMENTS

Tutors

Parents mentioned several skills they valued in the tutors. They emphasised interpersonal skills and multi-cultural competencies and expressed their appreciation for the fact that the tutors made them feel welcome and comfortable in the sessions, were considerate about the cultural diversity of the group and also about parents' other commitments outside the course, e.g. employment.

According to the parents, tutors must be helpful and able to guide parents' learning in the right direction. They also need very good communication skills in order to get people involved in the programme, as well as good knowledge of the English education system.

“Obviously the person who is delivering the course, she must have experience. From my point of view X [naming the tutor] was really, how could I say ... she is really welcoming, she was worried to make us feel welcome. If, at just any point of the lesson, if there was

any problem, she would be willing to help us to guide us to the right direction. From her experience I could learn. And she was, she took the chance as I can realise to learn to the diversity, because of course different cultures, different ways of speaking, behaving, things like that. She was always careful about that.”

Parents emphasised the value of being able to be in touch with the tutors outside the session times, through the phone and e-mail as well, in particular when they missed sessions.

Flexibility from the side of the tutor was also mentioned.

Teachers

One parent mentioned how helpful she found the involvement of the teacher in the delivery of the programme because of the expertise teachers had with regards to some of the content – in this case phonics and teaching phonics. The parent also emphasised that the teacher was in her child’s phonics group. This seemed to be of importance because it meant she could understand better how this particular teacher worked directly with her child.

Actually one of the teachers there, she was really helpful because the teacher that was doing the course at the same time, she was also on the phonics group with my younger one and she was really helpful. Obviously there are those actions in phonics that us parents sometimes we don't know, but actually we didn't realise at that time because we just say the alphabet and then singing for the phonics that was really something new, so she helped us [...].”

3.4.3. USE OF ICT

Parents mentioned that they were suggested some websites, apps, and online educational games with information relating to the course material, e.g. phonics.

When being asked about ICT they thought that it might be helpful to integrate ICT in the programme, such as in presenting information during the sessions in a more interesting way, thus facilitating the learning. They also mentioned the need for accessing course material at home, allowing parents to prepare for the sessions.

“I realise that we are lazy in reading something but if you put exactly the same information on the computer, we finish everything in one go.”

3.4.4. FIRST LANGUAGE SUPPORT

Parents mentioned that they were suggested some websites, apps, and online educational games with information relating to the course material, e.g. phonics.

3.4.5. OTHER

Delivery

Sharing and peer support were important programme components to parents. Parents were encouraged to share their educational experiences from their childhood with the group. They felt comfortable talking openly about their doubts and worries and they realised that they have similar problems with their children at home and they would work on the solutions together. When a parent couldn't come to a session, the rest of the group would share the course material and what they learnt that day.

“Everyone was friendly. Obviously, some of the parents who were there, they knew the school already, I was the new one. And I felt welcomed from the first place. Whenever I had any maybe little doubts, I could share it with the people there. They were really supportive.”

“Yes, we would support each other during the activities, when someone wasn't in the session that day, we would share everything on the following lesson, because we used to have once a week on Mondays and we would share and before the lesson started we would also have to explain what happened prior, and our expectations and things like that.”

Parents appreciated the **involvement of teachers and children** during the sessions. A teacher delivered a session on phonics and taught the parents the phonics song, which was perceived as very helpful.

At the end of most sessions, the children were brought in for the parents to practice with them the activities they learnt on that day, such as reading together. Parents expressed how they enjoyed those shared activities.

“[B]efore the course finished we had a few minutes to be with the children. They would come from class and do with us some activities, like reading stories, sharing some thoughts on what we used to like when we were back in school with the other children, we made treasure box with our children.”

According to the parents, many *Family Skills* activities, which they learnt in the sessions, are used at home even after the end of the course. Parents learnt how to play with their children in a way that would facilitate their learning, and they learnt games, which were useful in getting children away from the screens. Families were also taken to a local library, were registered and could take books out for their children.

Learning new strategies also raised parents' confidence when interacting with their children.

“Family Skills made me aware that sometimes it's just not like saying it's wrong, but letting the child become aware that he has made a mistake. Also, that you can correct. It's not wrong

to make mistakes but then, me being able to say 'okay I can help you there' because I learned and now I know and I'm confident that I can do that."

4. DISCUSSION

One of the main aspects characterising the *Family Skills* programme is its delivery by trained and experienced adult learning tutors in collaboration with teachers, with the inclusion of children, and in the location of the school. This context relates to strategies of **outreach**, to **collaboration**, and to **requirements**.

Networks and relationships were an essential ingredient for outreach, and this related to those between local delivery partners and schools, and also between schools and parents. Outreach was facilitated the most if existing structures for partnership working are already in place – and this concerned connections between local providers of family learning and schools, and connections and trustful relationships between schools and parents. Not surprisingly, the two were connected.

If those networks and relationships were not already in place, outreach became more challenging, but challenges could be met where local providers invested time, and made the most of opportunities to establish working relationships with staff in schools. Staff in schools were best positioned to reach out to parents, and to recruit families to the programme. This worked best if staff were trusted by parents and if they were fully supporting the intervention.

Personal contact between programme tutors and staff in schools (including leadership and teachers) was essential. Communication had to go beyond written materials, and time needed to be devoted to face-to-face meetings that introduced the school to the programme. The collaboration between local providers and schools worked best where programme tutors ensured school staff understood well what the programme was about and developed a positive attitude towards the intervention.

In order to develop this positive attitude, teachers had to recognise that the aims of the intervention met the concerns of the families, and also their own concerns. In short, schools had to see the shared mission in their involvement in the programme. This seemed to be supported where schools had a say about some of the content of the intervention, and if they could see that their involvement with the programme facilitated their own learning as well.

The process of collaboration had to run smoothly, and from the side of the programme tutors this meant being well organised and ensuring communication from both sides. Communication had to involve teachers, but also the school leadership – the positive attitude of the head of the school towards the programme was an important ingredient in the collaboration. Schools had to be well prepared and know what their involvement in the programme meant. Working with the staff in

schools meant more than just introducing the programme, it meant keeping staff in school well informed throughout the intervention period. Where schools organised staff meetings with programme tutors, where those meetings included a number of teachers as well as the school leadership, and where local providers made sure they communicated with the staff in schools throughout the programme delivery, the collaboration worked best and supported outreach and programme delivery.

Involving teachers in the delivery was an essential ingredient of the programme, and worked in several ways to support success. Where teachers had opportunities to observe sessions, this supported their own learning (in particular around understanding the concerns and issues of bilingual families) and thus appreciation of the programme. Teachers also had an active role to play in bringing children into the sessions and interacting with the children during session activities. Opportunities to observe school staff in interacting with and teaching their children, and opportunities to observe their own children's joyful learning facilitated parents' engagement with the programme.

The school as location of programme delivery was an essential ingredient. Parents' were concerned about supporting their children's learning in school, and their involvement in the programme meant that they could collect first-hand experiences about their children's learning, and also establish a trusting relationship with teachers which supported their partnership working after the end of the programme.

Working and learning together in a peer group also seemed essential. Getting to know the other parents (whose children attend the same classrooms as their own children) motivated parents to take part in the programme. Sharing experiences and concerns with other parents was highly appreciated by parents and supported their engagement in the programme. In facilitating the building of parent networks in school, the programme might also have positive longer-term effects - parents might carry on supporting each other.

Collaboration between external programme tutors and school staff was also essential because it meant that different expertise and resources could be brought together. School staff were experts at knowing the individual families at the start, of teaching children, and of knowing the curriculum. Tutors on the other hand, were experts of working with parents, of parent concerns in general, and of family life in the context of cultural and linguistic diversity in particular. The understanding and pastoral support family learning tutors provided was essential for creating positive and trustful relationships to parents, which positively influenced the running of the programme.

Trust into the expertise of all stakeholders was essential. Programme delivery was supported by the trust of parents in the expertise of the programme tutors and teachers. Collaboration between local providers and schools worked best where tutors and teachers recognised and valued each other's' expertise and knowledge. National providers trusted and valued the expertise of the local

providers, and this was reflected in the involvement of local providers in the programme development, where sharing and building on existing experiences was paramount. This process facilitated a sense of ownership the local providers developed with regards to the programme. Finally, local providers and the financier had trust in the expertise of the national providers because of their practical experience of working with EAL children and in family learning, their understanding of the national context and their ability to balance between research and practice.

An essential aspect of the programme was working with families with other cultural and linguistic backgrounds. An important part of the approach underpinning the programme was about reassuring parents about the value of home languages, and the ways in which they can support their children's literacy learning in school using their first language. This resonated well with the concerns of families dealing with issues of bilingualism. Parents valued the advice of tutors on issues related to balancing the **heritage language** with the school language, and for parents who were more comfortable and competent in their heritage language, support expressed by trusted tutors for the value of heritage language came as a relief.

Although **ICT** was not integrated in the programme design, programme tutors recommended links to relevant web-based resources to parents. They saw the value of those resources in supporting parents in interacting with their children at home. Here, the help of educational games-based learning apps, and story websites were found to be helpful. Programme providers also saw the value of ICT in supporting parents' access to course materials remotely, to translating course materials (e.g. use of google translate), and to making course materials more accessible in using visual and audio-inputs rather than mainly written information. Blended learning that also addresses the community building aspect of the programme with peer support and engagement with the school was recommended as one way forward.

Finally, we briefly want to mention that some of the **challenges** mentioned by the stakeholders referred to the **link between the programme evaluation and the implementation**. First, there was a discrepancy in the interest in outcomes. Despite the wide range of topics that *Family Skills* addressed, the formal evaluation solely focused on the testing of language and literacy skills in English. Second, the main difficulties of cooperation between the different stakeholders related to the nature of the RCT (randomised control trial) research design. The uncertainties around randomisation and technical difficulties with the pre- and post-tests caused delays which shortened the recruitment period.

And third, due to the RCT design of the evaluation, all participants had to receive the same "treatment", which caused a certain lack of adaptability of the intervention to respond to the learners' specific needs – an ingredient described as essential by national providers and programme tutors.

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This project has received funding from the
European Union's Horizon 2020
research and innovation programme
under grant agreement No. 727069.