Evaluating effectiveness of parenting support: on-going learning process

Prof. Ninoslava Pećnik, University of Zagreb & Center for Parenting Support „Growing up Together”
Presentation outline

- Parenting support programmes
- Effectiveness evaluation
  - why?
  - how?
- Growing up Together
- Growing up Together Plus

rastimo zajedno Plus
Parenting support
The Turn to Parenting

- to optimize child’s well-being and development through supporting parenting, UN CRC, art.18

- CoE Recommendation (2006)19 on the policy to support positive parenting
Defining parenting support

- those activities from professionals, volunteers or members of a parent’s social network, that have the intention to influence the parent-child relation or parent-child interactions (Hermanns, 2012)
- 'a set of activities oriented to improving how parents approach and execute their role as parents and to increasing parents’ child-rearing resources (including information, knowledge, skills and social support) and competencies' (Daly, 2015)
Parenting support according to target group

- UNIVERSAL
- SELECTIVE
- INDICATED

Access to universal, child’s rights-based support to every parent, adequate to his/her resources
Some underlying conflicts (1/3) (Hermanns, 2012)

- Educating parents vs. respecting intimate relationships
Some underlying conflicts\(^{(2/3)}\)
(Hermanns, 2012)

- Child – directed intervention
  vs.
  parental need-oriented intervention

‘at risk’ families/children

Goals of PS:
- Child-focused
- Parent-child - relationship focused
- Parent-focused (practices, attitudes, wellbeing, social)

Who defines them?
Some underlying conflicts (3/3)  
(Hermanns, 2012)

- Evidence based
  vs.
  flexible, tailored to individual parents needs

- Contradictory standards: standard size for all?

- Demands for evidence of effectiveness favour standardized /manualized programs (easier to evaluate ) over highly demand-led, individualized support interventions
Initiated in response to research findings about widespread violence against (young) children, parents interest for information and support, and lack of services for parents and Rec(2006) on positive parenting.

- Objective
  - to strengthen capacity of local community professionals for supporting positive parenting of parents of young children (1-4 years)
  - to develop a programme which would promote parenting values and behaviors respectful of the rights of the child in the family

- Workshops with parents of young children 'Growing Up Together' (Rastimo zajedno, Pećnik & Starc, 2010)
The rationale and underlying values in programme development (2008 – 2010)

Parents have the right to support because they are parents

Parents’ needs for support and info demonstrated by local research

Rec. (2006) 19 on policy to support positive parenting

And parents have the right to support in bringing up children.

I roditelji imaju pravo na pomoć u odgoju djece.
THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

- UN CRC & CoE positive parenting (Pecnik, 2007; Rodrigo, 2010)
- Relational view of socialization (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2006; Stattin & Kerr)
- Basic psychological needs and facilitating parenting context (Deci Ryan, 2000.)
- Qualities of parental leadership with children, equal dignity (Juul, 2008.)
- Empathic parent-child interaction (3 dialogues) (Hundeide, 1996)
- Ecology of parenting: internal and external resources for parenting (Quinton, 2004.)
AIMS

- to support parents of young children in understanding and carrying out their parental responsibilities in consistence with the values of positive parenting in the best interest of the child

- to facilitate the exchange of information, skills and support that parents have found useful for promoting growth of competence, both of parents and children

- to provide safe and inspiring learning environment in which parents, with professionals and other parents, explore own values underlying their parenting, learn about the needs of children and parents, and different ways to satisfy them, practice communication skills, and work on other questions for which they express interest.

• Specific aims and expected outcomes of each workshop
strengths-based

Workshops with parents, vs. Schools for better parenting;

seeking partnership of professionals and parents

The program was developed in collaboration of professionals and parents through pilot with 25 teams & 36 parent groups
Parents of the 21st century
The four pillars of parenting
Child's psychological needs and parental goals
All of our children and how we love them
Listening - an important parenting skill
How does the child learn about the world?
Boundaries: why and how?
Choosing and creating solutions
Parental responsibilities and more questions
Being a parent: Influences and choices
The ending and a new beginning

Additions: Conflicts of parents and children;
Conflicts between children;
Compendium of activities for Clubs of parents

- Manual for workshop leaders
- DVD (ppts, 6 short films)
- Materials for parents
- Book for professionals
PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION
2009-2015

• for groups of approx. 8 – 12 parents
• facilitated by teams of 2-3 professionals (psychologist/pedagogue/ kindergarten-teacher/social worker)

• standardized initial training and evaluation seminar after the first implementation

• participation in the network of facilitators, supervision, yearly conference

-27 implemented in 300 groups in Croatia
-60 parents completed pre-post

-in 30 kindergartens of Bosnia&Hercegovina

-40 groups in Bulgaria
Growing Up Together Plus

- a selective parenting support programme for parents of young children with disabilities tailored for their **universal** and **specific** needs
- a response to lack of services, early intervention only emerging, **parent-focused** parenting support almost non-existent
- GUT groups experienced as not very helpful

- Program piloted and evaluated in 2014
- Manual, materials for parents...
- Standardized training for group leaders
- Implemented in kindergartens, family centers, rehabilitation centers, NGOs
Goals of the Growing Up Together Plus

- to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge, skills and support that parents use to fulfill their parental responsibilities and promote growth in competence and resourcefulness, both of the parent and the CWD.

- GUTP provides an enabling and empowering environment where parents together with group leaders and other parents share ideas about the ways they live their parenthood, get to know themselves better as parents, recognize effective ways to cope with additional loads under which they live, recognize the ways in which they relate to their child and other possible ways of supporting the child’s wellbeing and development, discuss recent knowledge on developmental needs of children with disabilities and the positive parent-child interaction.
Growing Up Together
workshops with parents of young children

1. Parents of the 21st century
2. The four pillars of parenting
3. Child's psychological needs and parental goals
4. All of our children and how we love them
5. Listening - an important parenting skill
6. How does the child learn about the world?
7. Boundaries: why and how?
8. Choosing and creating solutions
9. Parental responsibilities and more questions
10. Being a parent: Influences and choices
11. The ending and a new beginning

Growing Up Together Plus
workshops with parents of young CWD

1. Every child is special, every parent is special
2. Between expectations and adjustment
3. The four pillars of parenting
4. Child's psychological needs...
5. All of our children and how we love
6. Listening- an important parenting...
7. How does the child learn ...
8. Boundaries: why and how?
9. Parental responsibilities...
10. Being a parent: Influences and...
11. The ending and a new beginning
Evaluation of parenting support programmes
Why and how?
Evaluation of effectiveness

- Does this intervention achieve its expected outcomes (and to what extent)? How effective is it in producing the intended changes (in relation to...)? Does it work (better than...)?

- For whom/when does this intervention work (better)?

- Why is this intervention effective/how does it work? What is/are the mechanism(s) of change or 'active ingredient(s)'?
Reasons for evaluating programme effectiveness

- Accountability to programme users
- Assistance to professionals (in matching interventions to parents, etc.)
- Improving programme theory, understanding mechanisms of change and core elements
- Building research and theory of parenting and child development
- Informing responsible policy/funding decisions
- Meeting criterium of ‘a high-quality parenting support programme’ (Oates, 2010)
Role of effectiveness evaluation in the development of the Growing up Together

- To learn how the programme fits parents needs and how effective it is in producing the desired changes (improve!)

- Intense (weekly) participatory process of parents’ and professionals’ assessments of impact / usefulness

- Fostered partnership relationship

- Co-creators of the programme and its evidence base

- Introduced the culture of evaluation

- Contributed to receiving authorities’ permission to implement it
The purpose of pre-post evaluation as integral part of the programme and licencing

• To empower parents’ self-reflection (at final workshop)
• To monitor effectiveness
• To discover unmet needs, and adjust follow-up activities
• To maintain intrinsic motivation of providers
• To stimulate professional growth and learning
• To change mind-set towards more collaborative approach to parents
• To provide feedback to trainers and supervisors (improve)
• To maintain the culture of evaluation in the Growing up together network
• ...

...
Methods of evaluating programme effectiveness
Classification of research designs
Did evaluator assign parents to groups?

YES:
EXPERIMENTAL STUDY
- Randomized controlled trial (RTC)
- Non-randomized controlled trial

NO:
OBSERVATIONAL STUDY

COMPARISON GROUP?
- Yes: Analytical study
- No: Descriptive study

QUALITATIVE STUDIES
MIXED METHOD DESIGNS

Rosen et al., 2006
Evaluation of effectiveness

- **Programme development**

  Pre-post intervention (N=200), with comparison (N=200)
  - Changes in *Beliefs about (treatment of) the young child*, (more consistent with children’s rights) including *beliefs justifying corporal punishment*;
  - Increase in *parental competence / self-efficacy*
  - Increase in *frequency of joint activity, picture-book, autonomy support*
  - Decrease in *frequency of hitting and yelling* at the child
  - *more positive* (listening, emotional support, autonomy support) and *less negative* (lecturing, interrogation, punishment) reactions to *child’s distress* vignette
    
    (Pećnik & Starc, 2010)

- **Ongoing evaluation/programme monitoring**

  Pre-post intervention (N=1700), no comparison
  - Replication of results (also on 240 parents in B&H, Bulgaria)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived gains from participating in the program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling more confident as a parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More insight into own strong and weak sides in parenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in interactions with the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring new useful knowledge and attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better understanding of the child’s reasons of behaviors/perspective/needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for being more responsive and enjoying the time with the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for taking care of own personal needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing of experiences, dilemmas, problems; feeling that you are not alone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are the most important gains from your participation in the programme for YOUR CHILD?

**Perceived CHILD’S gains from parent’s participating:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The child gained calmer, more patient, more reasonable, more flexible and more content parent</th>
<th>(the child experiences more respect/less violence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The child gained parent who listens more, hears more, devotes more attention to understanding child’s viewpoint and needs, more recognition</td>
<td>(the child is being ‘seen’/heard by the parent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child is happier (more joyful, less frustrated)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>More time/joint activities/play with the parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better guidance, realistic expectation, clearer approach in limit-setting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child is more self-confident</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Better atmosphere at home</td>
<td></td>
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The jigsaw of personal growth as a parent
Evaluation of the effectiveness of the Growing up Together Plus

- Are there effects of programme on participants’ experience of parental role (parenting morale, parenting stress, need for support) and interaction with CWD?
  
  Do these effects depend on the type of child’s disability?

- Are the individualized goals of programme participation achieved?

- Are outcomes related to dosage (shorter and longer version of GUTP)?
Outcome measures

- **The Parenting Morale Index** (Trute and Hiebert-Murphy, 2005) (k=9)
  
  *When you think of your daily life as a parent, how often do you feel... optimistic, fullfilled, satisfied, happy, worried, frustrated, distressed, lonely, exhausted?*

- **Parenting Stress**, subscale Incompetence (k=5) (Profaca and Arambašić, 2004, adjusted Abidin PSI) *(e.g. I do not know how to set limits to my child’s behaviour.)*

- **Family Needs Survey** (Bailey and Simeonson, 1988)
  - Need for information (k=5),
  - Need for support in explaining to family (k=3), non-family (k=2)
  - Need for personal support in parenting role (k=7)

- **Parental Interaction with the child**:
  - positive/joint fun unrelated to therapy, picture-book, autonomy support
  - negative/shouting, hitting (k=2)

- **Perceived progress in parent-identified objectives of programme participation** (or desired changes) (k=7)

- Answers found
**Quasi-experimental design (almost)**

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Short GUTP</th>
<th></th>
<th>Long GUTP</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 weekly workshops</td>
<td>11 weekly workshops</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>N=44</td>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>N=32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>N=206</td>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>N=65</td>
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</table>

Intervention group – completed at least 2/3 of the program

Comparison group – *Would you participate in PS program...?* (*surely not*’ and *probably not*’ – excluded);

No differences in gender, age, education, marital status, no. of children
The effect of ‘dosage’

• No significant differences for short GUTP on any measures, except the need for information. But, on open-ended question about finding answers to questions that have brought them to the programme, the short GUTP parents report some gains.

Did you find the answer(s) to the question(s) you had at the programme entry?

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=44</td>
<td>N=60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.4% yes</td>
<td>52.7% yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% partly</td>
<td>41.8% partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.9% no</td>
<td>5.5% no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants in 30 groups (N=206)

86% mothers, 14% fathers; 91% two-parent families

**Education:**
3% primary, **55%** secondary, 13% some collage, **28%** degree

72% CWD in kindergarten;

**Time since diagnosed:**
54% more than 2 yrs ago;
29% 2yrs - 6 mts ago;
16% less than 6 mts ago

**THE TYPE OF CHILD’S DISABILITY (TCD)**
- Motoric impairment (e.g. CP) **7 %**
- Intelectual disabilities (e.g. Down sy.) **16 %**
- Autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) **25 %**
- Speech and language disorders **21 %**
- Hearing or visual impairment **6 %**
- Multiple disabilities **14 %**
- Atypical development, without confirmed diagnosis **11 %**
Does the programme have effect on parents experience of parental role and on p-c interaction?
Does the effect depend on the type of child’s disability?

Repeated measures ANOVA

Within subjects

- 2 time points, pre- and post- intervention

Effect size $\eta^2$
- 0.01 small
- 0.06 medium
- 0.14 large
(Cohen, 1988)

& Between subjects

- Intervention group (participants in GUTP)
- Comparison group

- 7 subgroups of intervention group – type of child’s disability
The Parenting Morale Index for intervention and comparison groups at two time points

Main effect of time .000

Medium effect size ($\eta^2 = .076$)

Main effect of group .078

Effect of time x group .004

Small effect size ($\eta^2 = .031$)
Parenting morale of 7 groups of programme participants, according to the type of child’s disability

Time/GUTP
η^2 = 2.166
Large effect size
TCD η^2 = .114
No decrease in the Need for personal support in parenting role.
The effect of GUTP on frequency of shouting at the child with disability

Within subjects all differences significant; speach p = .06
The effect of GUTP on frequency of hitting the child with disability
Effects of GUTP on ‘positive interaction’

Reading picture-books

Autonomy support

GUTP
PARENT-DEFINED GOALS

What would you like to change through participation in the GUTP, with the help of group leaders and other parents?

- the relationship with my CWD: 52.9%
- the way I feel as parent of CWD: 44.7%
- the behaviour of my CWD: 33%
- the relationship with spouse: 24.8%
- the relation. with other child: 22.3%
- something else: 11.2%
- the relation. with someone else: 9.2%
Perceived progress in parent-identified goals or desired changes

*Accomplished (to medium or large extent) changes in...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Accomplished Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the relationship with my CWD</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the way I feel as parent of CWD</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the behaviour of my CWD</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the relationship with spouse</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the relation. with other child.</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>something else</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the relation. with someone else</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22.3%</td>
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<td>9.2%</td>
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Groupleaders feed-back

- **Gains for parents:** empowerment, possibility to share experience and receive support from other parents, experience of a partnership relationship with professionals. For the first time someone asked them how *they* were!

- **Gains for groupleaders:** new insight into the (heavy) experience of parenting a child with disability, deepening relationships with parents, new experience of different form of cooperation with parents - partnership.

- Program provides comprehensiveness, structure and security in working with parents.

- Possibility of professional growth, new knowledge and skills of groupwork with parents.
To sum up...

• Initial evidence for the effectiveness of GUTP as a parenting support programme for parents of CWD - a new resource is available 😊
• Produces (some of the) changes consistent with programme- and parent-defined goals,
• Further reflection and research of implementation is needed for improvement of the programme and it’s evaluation
Concluding remarks on evaluation methods

- The importance of methods and purpose/values commitment to ensure the universal right to parenting support

- Experimental designs and descriptive / qualitative studies provide complementary insights, stimulate critical reflection

  Necessary to build capacity for evaluation!
Developing effective parenting support programmes & the evidence of their effectiveness is an on-going process.
Thank you