



Pioneering policies and practices tackling educational inequalities in Europe

Deliverable No. 6.5

Evidence-based co-authored and open-access report of most promising pioneering policies and practices

Call:	H2020-SC6-Transformations-2020
Topic:	TRANSFORMATIONS-22-2020: Enhancing access and uptake of education to reverse inequalities
Funding Scheme:	Research & Innovation Action (RIA)
Grant Agreement no.:	101004392
Project Title:	Pioneering policies and practices tackling educational inequalities in Europe
Contractual Submission Date:	31/12/2023
Actual Submission Date:	18/12/2023
Responsible partner:	Switzerland



Parents as Teachers [22]

Country	Switzerland
Authors of the table	<i>Robin Benz, Andrea B. Erzinger, Simon Seiler</i>
Name of the policy / practice	Parents as Teachers – PAT/Mit Eltern Lernen (Zeppelin – Familien Startklar) [22]
Short description and the main characteristics of the policy / practice	<p>“Zeppelin – familien startklar” is a public-private partnership organisation that implements the “PAT – Parents as Teachers” programme, an early intervention and parent education programme that originated 1980s. PAT is an outreach programme that offers wide-ranging support to families suffering from multiple socio-economic and psycho-social stressors with children from 0-3 years old. In most cases, families are referred to the programme by social workers, paediatricians or family support centres. Depending on families’ willingness to participate and upon consultation with the management of “zeppelin – familien startklar”, families may enter the programme, which lasts approximately 24 to 36 months. The programme aims to empower parents (or legal guardians) to support their child’s age-appropriate development and facilitate their child’s school readiness. Home visits by trained social workers are this intervention’s main feature. During home visits, parents receive guidance both on child-rearing and their own life circumstances, including employment, housing, health-related issues, language development and social welfare. Furthermore, home visits aim to identify adverse developments early and, if necessary, refer parents and children to specialised institutions. During group meetings, families participating in the programme receive guidance on specific issues, for instance childbearing or dealings with public authorities.</p>
Target group of the policy / practice:	The intervention targets families suffering from multiple socio-economic and psycho-social stressors with children from 0-3 years old. Possible stressors include but are not limited to poverty, unemployment, single parenthood, mental illness, insufficient proficiency in the national language, welfare dependency or regulatory disorders of children. Eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis by professional social workers.
Educational stage or transition phase of the policy / practice	The intervention focuses on early childhood from birth to three years old. PAT aims to ensure children’s age-appropriate development and school readiness.
Type of inequality the policy / practice tackles	As PAT is an early intervention targeting children from 0-3 years of age and aiming to ensure that these children start learning on the same level as their peers once in school, the programme primarily aims to mitigate inequalities in educational outcomes.
Level of implementation	“Zeppelin – familien startklar” is a regional sponsorship of “PAT – Mit Eltern Lernen”, which is administrated by a national coordination office (“Koordinationsstelle PAT Schweiz”). “zeppelin – familien startklar” is a

		regional sponsorship of the internationally operating franchise “PAT”. The intervention is practically implemented during home visits.	
MILC dimensions		<p><i>Multilevel:</i> PAT acknowledges that the factors associated with educational disadvantage stem from multiple analytical levels and manifest in adverse conditions in children’s home environments. Yet, the programme operates primarily on the micro level by supporting families in order to mitigate early educational disadvantage.</p> <p><i>Intersectionalities:</i> By tailoring the support parents receive around the various stressors they are suffering, “zeppelin – familien startklar” acknowledges the complex interrelations of factors from which specific disadvantages may arise. Accordingly, many families participating in the programme find themselves at the intersections of different axes of inequality, such as low-SES migrants.</p> <p><i>Life course perspective:</i> The programme offers early support and aims to ameliorate the conditions under which children develop. By supporting families facing several challenges, children’s age-appropriate readiness for school can be strengthened, thus promoting equal educational opportunities. Put differently, if early disadvantages are not addressed appropriately, these disadvantages are likely to endure.</p>	
Key dimensions of the identification procedure			
CONDITIONS: Foundational premise level	<i>Comprehensive</i>	PAT follows a holistic approach in ensuring the child’s development and school readiness but also addresses specific familial circumstances that lie at the base of early disadvantages.	High
	<i>Coherent</i>	By supporting parents suffering from multiple stressors, the programme aims to ensure equal starting conditions for school entry for children who would otherwise face severe challenges throughout their educational careers.	High
	<i>Continuous</i>	The support “zeppelin – familien startklar” provides is increasingly recognised by educational authorities. However, the amount of resources the programme has at hand remains scarce.	Medium
ELEMENTS: Structural level	<i>Contextual</i>	The programme is highly sensitive to contextual features as it aims to improve the familial circumstances in which a child develops holistically.	High
	<i>Relational</i>	Through frequent home visits, “zeppelin – familien startklar” enacts a constant dialogue between the target group and the social workers. Furthermore, social workers mediate between the targeted families and	High

		other service providers or authorities, such as specialised institutions, ECEC facilities or migration offices.	
TOOLS: Action level	<i>Autonomous</i>	While the implementation of “zeppelin – familien startklar” is guided by principles and standards of the “PAT” intervention, practitioners retain extensive autonomy in supporting targeted families in a way that addresses their specific needs.	High
	<i>Reflexive</i>	Practitioners are able to adjust their means of support throughout the intervention. In addition, practitioners cooperate with each other and exchange their experiences and share knowledge.	Medium
Evidence backing the policy / practice:		Since 2009, the intervention has been continuously supervised and evaluated within a longitudinal study (HfH 2023). Overall, the longitudinal study finds that the intervention positively affects children’s development, most notably in terms of children’s language development, cognition and psycho-social behaviour. The study further indicates that parents are encouraged by the intervention to promote their child’s development. Through group sessions and the utilisation of various public offerings, targeted parents feel better integrated into society.	
Brief concluding analysis of policy / practice in the context:		“Zeppelin – familien startklar” provides holistic support for families and aims to improve the circumstances in which a child develops. The programme strongly emphasises in-formal learning and acknowledges the importance of early childhood disadvantage for later educational outcomes. The intervention empowers parents in child rearing and mediates between various specialised institutions offering additional support. The programme acknowledges the specific familial circumstances and provides tailored support to the target group.	

References:

HfH (2023). ZEPPELIN Longitudinal Study – Early Childhood Intervention. Publications (2011-2023). Online: https://www.hfh.ch/sites/default/files/documents/publications_zeppelin_01.01.23.pdf [accessed: 09.05.23].