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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Content And Principles Of The Social-Pedagogical Approach In Family Upbringing

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Abstract

Family upbringing remains the primary environment where a child's worldview, social behavior, and value orientations are formed. Contemporary social change, digitalization, migration, economic instability, and increasing diversity of family structures have complicated this process and expanded the range of risks for children's development. In this context, the social-pedagogical approach offers a coherent framework for understanding family upbringing not only as a private matter, but also as a socially conditioned pedagogical reality that can be supported through professional guidance, community resources, and preventive interventions. Using theoretical analysis and model-based synthesis, the study clarifies the approach's conceptual foundations, its key functions in the family context, and the guiding principles that ensure ethical, culturally responsive, and developmentally appropriate practice. The results formulate a principle-based framework that integrates child-centeredness, systemicity, partnership, inclusion, preventive orientation, continuity, and reflective support. The discussion highlights how these principles translate into real family interactions and professional activities, emphasizing the balance between parental autonomy and social responsibility. The article concludes that the social-pedagogical approach strengthens family upbringing by connecting family resources with institutional support while protecting the child's rights and promoting resilience.

K E Y W O R D S

Social pedagogy, family upbringing, parenting support, child development, prevention, inclusion, systemic approach, partnership.

INTRODUCTION

Family upbringing is commonly associated with emotional care, moral guidance, and everyday social learning. Yet in modern societies the family operates under the influence of wider economic, cultural, and institutional forces that shape parental opportunities and children's developmental trajectories. Employment patterns affect parental time, media environments redefine communication norms, and social inequality often determines access to educational and cultural resources. These factors mean that family upbringing cannot be fully explained by individual parental intentions alone. It also cannot be effectively improved by purely psychological advice that overlooks social context. A social-pedagogical perspective addresses this gap by viewing family upbringing as a pedagogical process embedded in social relations, community structures, and cultural expectations.

In the social-pedagogical approach, the family is both a micro-environment for the child and a social institution interacting with schools, health services, local communities, and state policies. This approach emphasizes that parental practices are

influenced by social conditions and that the child's socialization depends on the quality of interactions between family and broader social systems. Accordingly, social-pedagogical work with families focuses on strengthening parental competence, supporting child wellbeing, preventing social risks, and mobilizing community resources. It avoids reducing family problems to "bad parenting" and instead interprets difficulties through a systemic lens that includes stressors, social support networks, and institutional responsiveness.

The relevance of this approach is particularly evident in contexts where families face vulnerability due to poverty, disability, displacement, conflict, or limited access to services. However, the approach is not restricted to "problem families." It can also guide universal family education, parenting programs, and school–family partnerships aimed at promoting positive development. Despite its growing practical significance, the theoretical content and principles of the social-pedagogical approach in family upbringing are sometimes described in general terms without clear operational definitions. This article therefore aims to clarify the approach's content and to formulate a set of principles that can guide both family practices and professional interventions.

The research objective is to analyze the conceptual content of the social-pedagogical approach in family upbringing and to systematize its guiding principles in a way that is applicable to educational and social service settings. The guiding question is how social pedagogy conceptualizes family upbringing and what principles ensure that support for families remains ethical, effective, and culturally responsive.

This article is based on theoretical and conceptual methodology. The first procedure is analytical review of social pedagogy, family socialization theory, and ecological approaches to child development, focusing on how they interpret the relationship between family, society, and education. The second procedure is conceptual modeling, where key functions and principles of the social-pedagogical approach are reconstructed and arranged into a coherent framework suitable for family upbringing. The third procedure is deductive interpretation, where principles are translated into practice-oriented implications by connecting them with typical family situations such as value formation, communication, conflict resolution, and cooperation with institutions.

The methodological stance treats principles not as abstract ideals, but as normative-regulative guidelines that organize educational influence, protect child rights, and improve the quality of family–community interaction. Validity is strengthened through logical consistency checks, ensuring that each principle corresponds to the central assumptions of social pedagogy and that the overall framework supports the declared objective of strengthening family upbringing through socially grounded pedagogical support.

The analysis shows that the content of the social-pedagogical approach in family upbringing can be understood as a system of interconnected ideas, functions, and practices that position the family as a key educational environment while recognizing its social embeddedness. The approach expands the meaning of upbringing from private parental instruction to a socially supported pedagogical process where the child's development is shaped by relationships, cultural norms, institutional expectations, and opportunities for participation.

At the conceptual level, the social-pedagogical approach contains a child-centered orientation anchored in the idea that the child is an active subject of development rather than a passive recipient of parental influence. In family upbringing, this means that educational interactions should respect the child's dignity, developmental needs, and right to voice. The child's experiences, emotions, and perceptions are treated as meaningful indicators of the quality of upbringing. The approach does not oppose parental authority, but it reframes authority as responsible guidance that supports autonomy, social competence, and internalization of values through dialogue and shared activity.

A second element of content is the systemic view of family upbringing as a process influenced by multiple environments. Family practices are shaped by employment, housing, local culture, peer networks, educational institutions, and digital media. The social-pedagogical approach therefore interprets family upbringing through relationships and contexts rather than isolated behaviors. When difficulties appear, the question is not only what parents do, but also what resources they have, what stressors they face, and what support systems are available. This systemic view is essential for preventing stigmatization and for designing interventions that are realistic and sustainable.

A third element is the integration of educational and social support functions. Social pedagogy links upbringing with social protection, community participation, and prevention of risks. This does not imply that social services replace the family, but rather that families can be strengthened by professional support and community resources. The content of the

approach includes educational counseling, social mediation, facilitation of family–school communication, and guidance in accessing support systems. In many contexts, social-pedagogical practice helps families navigate institutions, reduce conflict between family and school expectations, and build consistent educational messages for the child.

A fourth element is the focus on prevention and resilience. Family upbringing is viewed as a key protective factor, yet families can also become sources of stress if communication is destructive or if social pressures overwhelm parental capacities. The social-pedagogical approach therefore emphasizes early support, development of positive parenting strategies, and creation of resilient family routines. Prevention is not limited to preventing delinquency; it also includes preventing emotional neglect, school disengagement, and social isolation. Resilience is strengthened through stable relationships, supportive communication, and opportunities for meaningful participation in family and community life.

Within this conceptual content, the guiding principles of the social-pedagogical approach function as criteria for the organization of family upbringing and professional support. The principle of humanistic value orientation requires that every educational influence within the family acknowledges the child as a person with rights, dignity, and individual potential. This principle shapes communication style, disciplinary practices, and parental expectations, favoring respect, fairness, and emotional safety. It also regulates professional work with families by preventing coercive interventions and ensuring that support is built on respect and trust.

The principle of child-centeredness specifies that family upbringing should be aligned with the child's developmental stage, psychological needs, and individual differences. It implies that educational expectations and rules must be realistic, and that the child's participation in decision-making should increase with age. This principle supports the formation of responsibility and self-regulation, since children learn values more effectively when they experience consistent explanations and emotionally meaningful relationships.

The principle of systemicity ensures that family upbringing is interpreted and supported as part of a larger social system. In practice, this principle demands coordination between family and institutions, clarity of roles, and attention to contextual factors influencing family life. It supports comprehensive understanding of problems, preventing simplistic blaming and enabling multi-level support when necessary.

The principle of partnership and dialogue emphasizes that effective upbringing is constructed through cooperation between parents and children and through constructive relationships between families and educational institutions. Partnership does not mean equality of power in every situation; rather, it refers to mutual respect, joint responsibility, and open communication. In family life this principle is expressed through attentive listening, negotiated rules, shared routines, and collaborative problem-solving. In professional practice it requires that social educators work with families as partners rather than objects of control.

The principle of cultural sensitivity and value continuity acknowledges that family upbringing is grounded in cultural traditions, moral norms, and intergenerational experience. Social pedagogy does not aim to standardize families according to one model; instead, it seeks to support children's development within culturally meaningful frameworks, while ensuring that cultural practices do not violate child rights. This principle is crucial in diverse societies where families may have different parenting beliefs and communication norms.

The principle of inclusion and non-discrimination requires that family upbringing and family-support services ensure equal respect and opportunities for all children, including those with disabilities, special educational needs, or social vulnerability. In family upbringing, inclusion involves the development of an accepting atmosphere, prevention of stigma, and the creation of realistic pathways for participation in education and social life. In professional support, inclusion requires accessible services, respectful language, and cooperation with specialized institutions when necessary.

The principle of continuity and developmental progression requires that family upbringing be organized as a long-term process with consistent messages and stable expectations. Values cannot be formed through episodic instruction; they are internalized through repeated experiences and coherent communication over time. Continuity also applies to professional work, which should avoid one-time consultations that do not lead to sustainable changes. Instead, support should be staged, reflective, and adapted to changing family needs.

The principle of preventive orientation requires that families and professionals focus on early signals and protective factors rather than waiting for crises. Preventive work in family

upbringing includes supportive communication, predictable routines, constructive conflict management, and attention to emotional wellbeing. Preventive professional work includes parent education, community-based support, and early mediation when family–school problems appear.

The principle of reflexivity emphasizes that both parents and professionals should critically assess their practices and adjust them based on outcomes. Family upbringing improves when parents can recognize patterns, reflect on emotional reactions, and revise strategies without losing authority or dignity. Professional reflexivity ensures ethical practice, as educators examine their biases and adapt approaches to each family's context.

The principles articulated above demonstrate that the social-pedagogical approach in family upbringing is not a narrow method but a coherent value-based and system-oriented framework. Its strength lies in balancing two realities that are often treated as opposites: the autonomy of the family and the social responsibility to protect and support children. The approach respects that families have unique traditions and internal rules, yet it also recognizes that child development depends on access to supportive social environments. This balance becomes particularly important when families face stressors that reduce their capacity to provide consistent educational influence. Social pedagogy offers tools to reduce the gap between family intentions and family possibilities by mobilizing community resources and strengthening parental competence.

The child-centered principle requires careful interpretation. It does not demand that children lead the family, nor does it reject discipline. Instead, it reframes discipline as developmentally appropriate guidance that maintains dignity and aims at internal regulation rather than fear-based compliance. In many cultures, parental authority is a central value, and social pedagogy does not dismantle this authority; it encourages authority to be exercised through explanation, predictability, and respect. Such authority is compatible with cultural continuity and produces more stable moral outcomes, because children learn to understand reasons behind rules rather than simply obey.

The systemic principle also has practical implications for institutions. Schools and social services often expect families to adapt quickly to institutional norms, while families may experience institutions as judgmental or inaccessible. A social-pedagogical approach encourages institutions to build supportive partnerships, communicate clearly, and recognize family constraints. When families feel respected, cooperation increases, and the child experiences a consistent educational environment. Conversely, when institutions use a punitive approach, families may withdraw, and children may experience tension between home and school expectations.

Inclusion and cultural sensitivity can sometimes appear to conflict, particularly when cultural practices create unequal treatment or restrict children's opportunities. Social pedagogy resolves this tension through the humanistic principle, which treats child rights and wellbeing as non-negotiable while still recognizing cultural context. The objective is not cultural confrontation but constructive change, achieved through dialogue and gradual transformation of harmful practices, supported by community-based initiatives and parent education.

Finally, preventive orientation highlights that family upbringing is most effective when it is proactive. Many crises in child development emerge from accumulative stress and inconsistent communication. Prevention is not about controlling families; it is about strengthening protective conditions early and ensuring families have access to guidance and support. The reflexive principle complements prevention by helping parents and professionals learn from experience, adapt strategies, and sustain positive change over time.

CONCLUSION

The social-pedagogical approach in family upbringing conceptualizes the family as a central educational environment embedded in broader social systems. Its content includes child-centered orientation, systemic understanding of development, integration of educational and social support functions, and a focus on prevention and resilience. The guiding principles of this approach regulate both family practices and professional interventions, ensuring that upbringing is humanistic, developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, inclusive, continuous, preventive, and reflective. Implemented consistently, these principles strengthen family capacity to shape children's values and social competence while supporting constructive cooperation with institutions and communities. Future applied research may operationalize the principles into measurable indicators for family support programs and evaluate their effectiveness in different cultural and socio-economic contexts.

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