

Jurij Marinko: HOW TO REDUCE THE CHILD POVERTY

Abstract

The study critically discusses opinions of relevant authors from different countries on how to reduce the child poverty. The paper first identifies the general area of concern, and cites which measures and policies are most often supposed to reduce the child poverty. It states definitions of the child poverty, the analytical framework of the research, and presents the structure of the paper. The body of the review shows different rates of child poverty in different countries and describes measures and policies that according to relevant researchers seem to reduce the child poverty. Most often mentioned among them have been measures of social welfare, cash transfers, tax system, employment, economic growth, educational and political factors, changes in family patterns, and migration flows. The author is especially interested in the fact that it is obviously not a rule that only rich countries can afford to reduce the child poverty. Slovenia faces smaller danger of the child poverty than the U.K. or the USA although the latter are much more developed. The paper includes theoretical and empirical knowledge in the fields of demography, economics, law, political science, social policy, and education. It tries to make an appraisal which aspects of the welfare state have proved to be a sound investment in children's welfare in different parts of the world. The paper concludes with the author's suggestion that it might be possible to reduce the child poverty if states with high child poverty rates connected several most efficient measures and made them a continuous practice of their policies which should be respected by each government.

1 Introduction

The paper is going to make an overview of the significant literature on the measures and policies used in different countries of the world to reduce the child poverty. It sums up and critically analyses the findings of relevant authors who describe more and less successful projects that tried to reduce the child poverty, and makes a compilation of measures and policies which have most often proved to be efficient and have contributed to reduction of the

child poverty. The paper evaluates policies which seem to function in several countries and/or others that proved efficient in some countries but not in others.

The paper first puts down the most frequent measures that are recommended as efficient in reducing the child poverty and cites some most often mentioned relevant authors who write about policies that influence the level of child poverty. Then it indicates the analytical framework of the research topic and describes two main definitions of the child poverty (absolute and relative). The measures that help to reduce the child poverty are discussed within two main groups of countries: those with high and low child poverty rates. The main findings of relevant authors are that the most efficient policies that can reduce the child poverty rates include mainly cash transfers, tax policies, employment of parents, economic growth, efforts to raise the minimum wage, unemployment insurances, childcare services and importance of education. The critical discussion of the reviewed literature shows which topics/measures/policies were most mentioned, which least mentioned, what were the topics of greatest agreement, and what were the questions of least agreement. When comparing the child poverty rates in different countries I noticed that some states (in front of all the USA) invest a lot of money in the most different policies and measures, and have introduced a number of state as well as private initiatives that try to bring about lower child poverty rates. But these initiatives, measures and policies are of individual type and do not represent a continuous governmental duty that would be obliging for each government. The critical discussion is completed by the idea that countries which have long invested in several measures/policies that lower the child poverty – countries in which the past and present governments found the child poverty an important question – seem to have lower child poverty rates. The conclusion brings together the main strands, highlights some gaps in the research, and gives my own personal opinion about what is missing in countries with high child poverty rates.

This literature overview is limited in scope. The paper mainly deals with the results, outcomes and findings of different relevant authors but it does not evaluate the research methodologies, research design, design frame, research methods and instruments. The main method used is critical analysis of the contemporary literature dealing with measures and policies undertaken against the child poverty. I discuss mainly qualitative data.

The literature quotes a number of relevant authors that enable understanding of the theoretical positions, and undertake a critical approach towards measures and policies of different countries. I mainly used the peer reviewed journals from the OU library, some resources from the Slovenian virtual library COBISS, and some Google Scholar resources. The broader scholarly literature that I have used in this literature overview does not usually deal just with the problem of the reduction of the child poverty but describes child poverty and its effects on children, their milieu and on the state. In some cases I had to extract just the measures and policies that could help to reduce the child poverty.

2 Basic terms connected with the possibilities to reduce the child poverty

Among the basic terms used in this paper are measures and/or politics that reduce the child poverty, the analytical framework of the research and the definition of the child poverty.

According to Hirsch the main influences on the level of child poverty are demographic processes, family formation, unemployment rates, benefit and retraining levels, childcare services and housing costs, which are more or less determined by the economy and/or government social policy (Hirsch, 2006). Engster (2012) found out that child cash and tax benefits, paid parenting leaves, public support for childcare, disability and sickness insurance correlate significantly with lower child poverty in almost all the investigated cases. However, he does not think that demographic and household characteristics such as the number of children living in single-mother families have an important influence on the child poverty rates in different countries. Engster and Stensöta (2011) further discovered that policies which combined employment of both parents, high levels of support for paid parenting leaves and public child care are strongly associated with low levels of child poverty and child mortality. Engster and Brady come to the conclusion that the main factors which decide if the demographic or family characteristics influence higher child poverty rates are politics and policy (Engster, 2012; Brady, 2009). Also other authors whose findings are described more in detail in chapters 4 and 5, most often mention cash transfers, tax policies, employment of parents, economic growth, efforts to raise the minimum wage, unemployment insurances, childcare services and importance of education. Relevant authors from different countries

(developed and undeveloped countries with high, medium and low child poverty rate) do not think that the above mentioned influences are of the same importance.

The policies that reduce the child poverty are discussed within the analytical frameworks of Bronfenbrenner and Maslow. The paper takes into account Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979) that the children exist not just within the family but also within a broader environment like the kindergarten, schools, states etc. Another important framework is Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). The authors cited in this paper deal with the question of the child poverty mainly considering the first needs of the child: basic physical survival (the needs for shelter, food, warmth), and the needs of the next level: for safety and security (physical and economic safety, comfort, peace). There are not many authors dealing with further levels of the social needs (like acceptance, group membership, love and affection), with the needs for self-esteem (important projects, status etc.), and finally self actualisation (creativity, learning at a higher level). Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Article 27 (1) mentions that the eradication of the child poverty should provide for an adequate standard of living and include economic welfare, capabilities and social exclusion, this paper and the majority of the relevant authors do not speak about the needs of higher levels. It is obvious that even in the developed countries it is first necessary to satisfy the most basic needs.

Poverty is defined mainly as absolute and relative poverty. When speaking about the absolute poverty, authors think about a fixed measure of income (Montgomery, 2003). Absolute poverty is measured in numbers referring to food, shelter and other material needs. Typical country that uses the term of the absolute poverty is the USA in which the annual income is expressed in dollars and calculated as three times the cost of an adequate diet. Yoshikawa, Aber and Beardslee (2012) speak about the official definition of poverty used by the U.S. federal government that counts the poor and determines eligibility for means-tested benefits and services: living in a household with a gross income under the official poverty line (about \$22,000 for a family of four in 2009).

Relative poverty is defined as levels of inequality and assessed by income inequality at the lower range of income values. European countries speak about relative poverty among those whose incomes fall below half of the average income for the nation in which they live. The

UK defines as poor families with incomes below 60% of the national medium (UNICEF, 2000, 6).

3 Different countries and different rates of the child poverty

There is a lot of literature written on the topic of the child poverty. It is possible to find rather logically constructed but simplified opinions that only rich countries can afford to fight against the child poverty but statistical data prove that this is not so.

A conventional argument suggests that one has to first produce economic growth and redistribute wealth only afterwards. In EU this question is made in the form if European countries can afford expensive welfare state in the future. Such opinions lead to expectations that good economic situation of a country contributes to a lower degree of the child poverty. However the statistical data and many relevant authors prove that is not so. According to OECD Family Database (2012) the lowest poverty rates for children are in the following ten countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Slovenia, Hungary, Cyprus, Austria, and Czech Republic. Ten countries with the highest child poverty rates are Israel, Mexico, Romania, Turkey, Chile, United States, Bulgaria, Latvia, Spain and Lithuania. Although the USA and UK are among the most developed countries in the world, their percent of the child poverty is high, especially the USA. Slovenia, Hungary and Czech Republic are much less developed but their child poverty rates are much lower than in the USA.

Also the economic growth does not always lead to reduction of child poverty. The results of a study comparing the economic growth and child poverty reduction in Bangladesh and China (Begum, Deng, Gustafsson, 2012) show that economic growth cannot always reduce the child poverty. On the other side Harper and Jones (2011) find that financial crises have impacts on children and that policy responses can be effective.

Many of the articles on the child poverty and policies to reduce the child poverty discuss the situation in the United States. This is understandable because the USA is a world force number one and belongs to the most developed countries so it is perplexing that it has one of

the highest child poverty rates in the world. Scientists, researchers, politicians, charity organizations and also the government have been trying to do something to reduce the child poverty in the USA. There are a number of articles written about the policies that try to reduce the child poverty in Germany, UK, Portugal, Spain and even in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Slovenia (although the child poverty in these countries is among the lowest in the world). I have found also quite some authors speaking about what to do against the child poverty in India, Bangladesh, China, Turkey, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and even Japan. Rather strange, I could not find almost anything on how the child poverty is being solved in Russia which is on the top of the child poverty rating.

4 Measures and policies in countries with high rate of child poverty

This chapter presents numerous measures and policies used to reduce the child poverty in the USA, UK, Latin America, Spain, Portugal, Japan, India and Africa.

The USA has a number of benefits programmes that provide assistance to low-income individuals and families with no money on their bank accounts, e.g. the federally - funded SNAP, The National School Lunch Program, Women, Infants and Children Program, Temporary aid for Needy Families etc. (Isaacs, 2009). During the years 2006 till 2010 (during the recession years) the number of those who participated in the programmes increased (e. g. in SNAP for 54 %).

Different organizations in USA provide single domain programmes that have been developed to help children with nutrition, health care, housing, employment and economic assistance, savings and asset building, childcare and early childhood education. Some policies and programmes such as TANF and family/child savings programmes try to influence the poverty directly by increasing the income and/or assets of families and in this way contribute to the economic stability of the child. Other programmes try to deal with the consequences of the child poverty (e.g. with food, with education). However single domain programmes do not seem to have long-term effects on child poverty. Greenhalgh et al. (2007) found small benefits of school feeding programmes.

Evaluations of programmes like child care subsidy and the quality of child care and early child hood education seem to have some good results but again no long-term effects have been made (McCartney et al., 2007). Even the cases of publicly-funded insurance have not proved successful because nearly two-thirds of the eligible children are not enrolled in either Medicaid or the State Children's Health Insurance Program (Wachino and Weiss, 2009). Some analyses show that eligible families and children do not enrol because of stigma, the complicated application process, lack of awareness of the programs, confusion about how to obtain services etc. (Cohen-Ross and Cox, 2000; Kenney and Haley, 2001).

The most recent plan to reduce the child poverty in the USA is Obama's policy to end the child hunger by 2015. It is less ambitious than UK Prime Minister's Blair who in 1998 wanted to eradicate the child poverty (not just hunger) in twenty years and reached approximately half of the programme.

Beside the single domain programmes there are also multi-service programmes but relevant authors claim that they do not exist long enough to produce evaluation evidence: Making Connections (MDRC New hope for families and children: Five-year results of a program to reduce poverty and reform welfare, 2003; Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010), the Harlem Children's Zone (Tough, 2004) and Children's Services Council. Making Connections combined six core outcomes: increased family earnings, increased family assets, increased family and youth civic participation, family supports, increased access to family services, and increased child health and readiness to succeed in school. The MC staff works with the help of religious organizations, businesses, local government agencies, and non-profit groups. The Harlem Children's Zone project includes early childhood education, after-school programming for school-aged children, employment assistance for young adults, and parent support by literacy programmes, parenting classes etc. The Children's Services Council in Florida has goals like increasing the number of healthy births, reducing the child abuse and neglect and increasing school readiness.

However, statistical data prove that neither single domain programmes nor multi-service initiatives actually reduced the child poverty in the USA. The programmes exist but do not

necessarily mean that resources are distributed or available. Other barriers are stigma, language and cultural barriers, limited awareness or access to services, complicated application procedures and inadequate information about the need for services (e.g. medical care). According to some opinions there is hope that multiple domain programmes might have long-term effects on reducing the child poverty. But after all they exist for quite some years and if we compare them with the quick success of Blair's government they should already lower the child poverty rates if they were efficient. The multiple domain programmes are still relatively new and it is difficult to give an evaluation of their efficiency.

Harrell, Rodgers and Payne (2007) analysed the child poverty in American states and have found out that states with most generous, inclusive, and supportive welfare programs have contributed most to lowering the child poverty. Morgan and Kickham claim that state policies – actions of the state and of the government can help to reduce the child poverty in the USA, especially by the minimum wage, aid to families, the earned income tax credit etc. However, they admit that it is not at all clear how to ensure long-term progress. Morgan and Kickham (2001) mention that there are authors who think that family breakdown and economic circumstances are the main reasons for child poverty but admit also that several authors disagree over the effects of these two factors. Also the growth of single-parent families and percentage of African American do not seem to have an important effect on the child poverty.

The United States aids families with children also through its tax system (Pressman, 2011) so that it is provided for tax exemptions for children. Each child provides a tax exemption to the household, reducing its taxable income and lowering the income tax it owes. This is not very successful because low-income households owe very little in taxes therefore they do not get the refund. Pressman suggests that the United States should adopt a liberal child allowance programme as other developed countries. Pressman further (2011) claims that a 3000 to 4000 \$ child allowance would reduce the child poverty in the USA to the level of other developed countries.

A typical recent successful example of benefits to poor families is the British policy of Tony Blair. Great Britain expanded transfers aimed at low-income families with children by almost 1 percent of GDP (Couch, Pirog, 2010). Since the late 1990s, child poverty started to fall

because of parental employment and by large increases in tax credits and benefits paid to low-income families with children. These measures did not lead to eradication of poverty but certainly brought about considerable results. Blair's policy seems to be appreciated also in other countries because e.g. Mc Donald argues that Australia should also adapt the approach taken in the UK (Mc Donald, 2009).

A research of the Child Savings Account (Cheung, Delavega, 2012) tried to persuade the USA to support projects that aim to reduce poverty. The authors mainly referred to the cash transfer policy made to help families pay for their children's education. However, they are aware that education cannot always help to reduce the child poverty. Children in poor families fail to graduate due to a lack of resources and encouragement (Sherraden et al., 2006).

Also authors from other countries with high child poverty rates describe cash transfer programmes introduced by either the state or by charity organizations which help to reduce the child poverty. The Chile Solidario programme is said to have a significant impact upon helping families in extreme poverty in Latin America. The programme contributed especially to increasing participation in school and to increased enrolment with the public health services (Sanfilippo, Neuborg, Martorano, 2012). However, the authors admit that it is not sufficient to overcome poverty so they suggest that the policy action should cover a more significant part of the poor.

Also Spain and Portugal belong to countries with high rates of child poverty. Child poverty rates in Spain are according to Canto and Gradin (2012) connected with labour instability factors and it seems that also in Portugal (Bastos, Machado, 2009) the employment has an important influence on the child poverty so better employment should be provided for in these two countries.

Japan (another developed country) has quite a high degree of the child poverty. Aya (2012) suggests that in Japan poverty is strongly affected by the Japanese public's anti-materialistic sentiment which does not consider the child poverty as an important question.

India knows something similar as food stamps in the USA but the problems in India are much more extensive. Poor households have a BPL card but the limit of families who receive it is so

low that the majority of the poor do not get them. Besides, Mohanty (2011) suggests that the allocation of BPL cards is not clear and that it should be examined. He also recommends that the fiscal resources should be transferred from the centre to the states and that the poor should have access to health care, education etc. without regard to the caste, creed, religion and space.

In African states the child poverty rates are very high. Several authors from Nigeria write about the possible measures that should be undertaken. Sunkanmi (2012) suggests that children poverty in Nigeria should be reduced by education of parents. He emphasizes the importance of the residency as a significant determinant of child health. Achimugu et al. from the Department of Public Administration, Kogi State University, Nigeria, recommend that poverty reduction should be institutionalized and not left to the charity of the government. They claim that reduction of the child poverty should become a duty of the government and that the government should improve the status of women by helping them to achieve at least vocational education (Achimugu et al., 2012).

5 Measures and policies in countries with low rate of child poverty

This chapter discusses measures and policies in Scandinavian countries, in some wealthy western countries and in Slovenia.

Sweden, Norway and Finland are among countries with low rate of child poverty. According to Heuveline and Weinshenker the main reason is the overall generosity of income redistribution through taxes and transfers (Heuveline and Weinshenker, 2008). They quote Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999) that these measures have similar effects as the socialist welfare regimes. According to Lindquists children in Sweden are economically insured in the case of their parents' sickness or death and also single mothers do not represent a danger to make their children chronically poor. However, one out of every five children is in danger to become poor at least once during their childhood. Only 2 % of children are chronically poor and the most difficult group of the chronically poor are children of immigrant parents (Lindquist and Lindquist, 2010). While Sweden successfully saved the questions of its own

child poverty, they still have problems what they are going to do as regards the immigrant children. Also Borjas (2011) speaks about immigration as cause of the child poverty but also he does not suggest solutions except some type of public assistance. Myungkook (2013) further claims that lower parental education and employment status influences the immigrant child poverty while higher education and employment rates and lower rate of single parenthood cause lower rate of the child poverty.

Slovenia is among countries that together with Denmark, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands face the smallest risk of child poverty in the EU (11 %). According to Stropnik (2011) the reasons for the good situation in Slovenia are in high labour-market participation of both parents. Besides, childcare provisions in Slovenia are a great help to parents participating in the labour market: one-year fully compensated maternity and childcare leave, additional 90 calendar days of paternity leave, quality public and private day-care centres and kindergartens which enable a continuous full-time employment of mothers.

Engster made a broad investigation of the child poverty (2012) and family policies across eighteen wealthy western countries and wanted to find out the significance of family policies and other welfare policies on child poverty rates. He discovered that child cash and tax benefits, paid parenting leaves, and public support for childcare correlate significantly with lower child poverty rates. Also disability and sickness insurance correlate significantly with lower child poverty in almost all the investigated cases. On the other side, Engster claims that demographic and household characteristics such as the number of children living in single-mother families do not have such an important influence on the child poverty rates in different countries. Engster and Stensöta (2011) analyzed the association between family policy regimes and children's wellbeing. They focused especially on three family policies: family cash and tax benefits, paid parenting leaves and public child care support. Their analysis showed that policies which combined employment of both parents, high levels of support for paid parenting leaves and public child care are strongly associated with low levels of child poverty and child mortality. However they found little long-term effect of family policies on educational achievement. Engster and Brady come to the conclusion that the main factors which decide if the demographic or family characteristics influence higher child poverty rates are politics and policy (Engster, 2012, Brady, 2009).

Also other authors made comparative studies and highlighted the importance of welfare state transfers and parental employment (Bradshaw, 2006, Chen and Corak, 2008). Chen and Corak found out that demographic factors do not seem to cause higher child poverty rates however increased number of employed mothers consistently lowered child poverty rates while decreases of employed fathers and earnings of fathers caused higher child poverty rates. Chen and Corak think that the significant fall in child poverty rates in the UK is due to government transfers and that labour markets were not not very important. In Norway the child poverty rate was lowered by income transfers that reduced the risk of low income among children. Families in Norway also had older and better educated parents and relatively fewer children lived with single parent but Chen and Corak think that this had a small impact on the child poverty rate. Also labour market changes did not influence the child poverty in Norway. The number of employed mothers seemed to decrease the child poverty in Norway but this labour did not contribute enough to the low-income families to compensate for the decline and social support. Benefits directed to families increased and this was the main reason for the fall in child poverty in Norway. In Canada the child poverty fell because of demographic factors (aging of parents), because of labour market developments and changes in the amount of government transfers (but there were no strong changes in child poverty rates in Canada since 1990). The Netherlands does not show considerable changes in the child poverty rates. Although the country tried to encourage the number of the employed people the child poverty did not fall. According to Chen and Corak (2008) the increase of the child poverty in Germany seems to be influenced especially by immigrant children.

Wüst and Volkert quote that the European Union stated that in Germany transfers to families had the greatest impact by reducing the risk of childhood poverty. Wüst and Volkert (2012) think that one of the major causes of income poverty of children and their families is unemployment or insufficient employment. The employment of women in Germany was higher than in the Netherlands and the South European countries like Malta, Italy and Greece but considerably lower than in the Scandinavian countries (Finland, Sweden, Denmark), Slovenia, and other countries where the child poverty rate is also lower than in Germany. They also claim that the child care coverage should be improved. In 2001 Denmark and the United States had child care coverage more than 50 % for children under 3 years, Sweden, Norway, New Zealand and Canada of 40 % or higher, but Germany only 10 %. Since German

women cannot give their children in the child care, they cannot get employed. In Denmark child care is well provided for and this coincides with a high absolute and relative employment rate of mothers. Fertig and Tamm (2010) think that the main measures that could help to reduce the child poverty in Germany are the household composition (single parenthood), the labour market status and the level of the education.

Chen and Corak state that there is no single way to lower the child poverty rates. The social policy should be conducted in dependence with the nature of labour markets. Income transfers intended to increase the labour market engagements sometimes lower the child poverty rate and sometimes not.

6 Critical discussion of the overviewed literature

In this chapter I intend to show which topics/measures/policies were most mentioned, which least mentioned, what were the topics of greatest agreement, what were the questions of least agreement and what I missed when investigating the literature. My research is connected with action and meant for a broad public and for people who decide on different strategies that should be taken when fighting against the child poverty. Therefore I tried to make suggestions what should be done to reduce the child poverty.

I found it important to include in the research the authors from as many countries as possible, of different nationalities, race, religion, sex etc. and in this way take into account also the ethical point of view. I tried to provide an objective insight and/or evaluations and make objective claims although I do admit that it is difficult to remain neutral when dealing with the problems of the child poverty. It is difficult to understand that a rather poor country like Slovenia has invested enough to maintain a low child poverty rate while the rich USA have not shown the right political will.

A lot of literature has been written on the child poverty and its effects on both children as well as the costs of the state. There are also many different opinions about the child poverty: from those who think that there is no hope to reduce the child poverty if the state does not prove a

sound economy and show economic growth to the others who express opinions that education will save the problem of the child poverty. There are many states that try to bring about at least temporary solutions. There are also many international institutions around the world that try to do something against the child poverty: the UNICEF, UNFPA and NGOs, such as Save the Children, Plan and World Vision. I am convinced that their work is necessary even if it helps to survive to only one child. However all their efforts do not bring about better statistical indicators of the child poverty. The statistical data quite clearly show that the lowest child poverty rates are in Scandinavian countries, Slovenia, Hungary, Cyprus, Austria, Czech Republic and the highest child poverty rates are in Russia, Israel, Mexico, Romania, Turkey, Chile, United States, Bulgaria, Latvia, Spain and Lithuania.

The overview of relevant authors and their findings about which policies and measures contribute to lower child poverty rates shows that almost all are convinced that income redistribution through taxes and transfers can bring about positive results. In the Scandinavian countries like Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway but also in Slovenia, and some other social welfare regime countries the government has invested in transfers and taxes in the manner that caused lower rates of the child poverty. Cash transfers and taxes are also often mentioned measures in the USA, in the UK and in other countries with high child poverty rates. In the UK where the government decided for expanded transfers aimed at low-income families with children by almost 1 percent of GDP the transfers also proved successful. In the USA, these transfers are obviously not big enough and/or are not performed long enough so they do not have the desired effects.

I have not found much research on the time scope of such investments in transfers and taxes but I think that it would be important to check this question. The Scandinavian countries and Slovenia have invested in the welfare regimes for many years. This has been part of the state strategy and/or national culture for decades) while cash transfers and tax exemptions in e. g. USA or U.K. have been decisions made and executed just by some governments while the other governments decided to give priority to other problems. Bamfield (2012) claims that reduction of the child poverty is a long-term goal and that it is not possible to expect results in just a couple of years. According to her the projections show that the rates of the child poverty in UK will rise from 18 per cent in 2010/11 to 24 per cent in 2020/21. The analysis took into account changes in governmental personal tax and state benefits, including universal credit.

Another, very often mentioned measure that lowers the child poverty rate in several countries, seems to be employment of both parents and there are several relevant authors who stress the importance of women's employment. Employment of both parents is usual in Scandinavian countries, in Slovenia and in some ex-socialist countries like Czech Republic which all have low child poverty rates. The importance of employment is emphasized also by German authors and by authors who speak about the child poverty in Spain and in Portugal. In Germany many women cannot afford employment because they do not have the corresponding childcare services. Employment of parents is obviously connected with also with other measures like paid parenting leaves and public child care support like kindergartens if it should help to reduce the child poverty, with disability and sickness insurance. Chen and Corak claim that in the UK the most important force was the cash transfer which was really significant but many other authors think that employment of both parents is really important. Also the childcare services are important because they enable the employment of both parents. E.g. in the USA child care subsidy and the quality of child care and early childhood education seem to have some good results but again no long-term effects have been made (McCartney et al., 2007).

Hirsch and some other authors mentioned also some other reasons that contribute to the child poverty rate and/or that could lower the child poverty. He mentions demographic processes, family formation and housing costs. The USA provides single domain programmes that help children with nutrition, health care, housing, and early childhood education. However, Greenhalgh found small benefits of school feeding programmes. Morgan and Kickham mention that there are authors who think that family breakdown and economic circumstances are the main reasons for child poverty but say that several authors disagree over the effects of these two factors. Also the growth of single-parent families and percentage of African American do not seem to have an important effect on the child poverty.

The overview of the literature brings about the conclusion that the most important factors which decide about the child poverty rates are politics and policy (Engster, 2012, Brady, 2009). The literature overview showed that countries which have had a long-term, stable,

constant belief that children poverty is an important problem and in which this policy has been obligation of each government, have the lowest child poverty rates (Scandinavian countries and Slovenia). The USA put great efforts in reducing the child poverty. They introduced a number of single and multi-domain measures to reduce the child poverty. Among the multi domain services they combined increased family earnings, increased family assets, increased family and youth civic participation, family supports, increased access to family services, and increased child health and readiness to succeed in school (Annie Casey Foundation), they further combined early childhood education, after-school programming for school-aged children, employment assistance for young adults, parent support by literacy programmes, parenting classes (The Harlem Children's Zone project); and tried to increase the number of healthy births, reduce the child abuse and neglect and increasing school readiness (The Children's Services Council in Florida). But still these great efforts do not seem to bring about considerable results and the USA remains among the countries with high child poverty rates. However, in the USA these measures have not been part of a continuous policy and they are not supposed to be a duty/priority of each government. The Japanese opinion Aya (2012) which suggests that in Japan poverty is strongly affected by the Japanese public's anti-materialistic sentiment which does not consider the child poverty as an important question brings about the thought that people should consider the child poverty as something important. I do agree with the Nigerians who claim that reduction of the child poverty should become a duty of the government (Achimugu et al., 2012).

When I started to investigate the data about the child poverty rates in different countries it sometimes seemed to me as if it was not possible to eradicate the child poverty. How should it be possible to reduce the child poverty in a poor state like Romania or Bulgaria if a rich country like the USA has been trying to reduce its high child poverty rate in so many ways but it is still among the countries that have the highest child poverty rate? On the other side the UK successfully decreased its child poverty rate when Blair's policy undertook the right steps (at least for a certain period). However I am now convinced that it is possible to reduce and eradicate the child poverty if all the states who decide to do it follow the measures and policies undertaken by Scandinavian countries like Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Slovenia. I think that these countries differ from others in that: 1) their national culture finds child poverty an important question, 2) their government made reduction of the child poverty a

political and/or state decision, 3) they performed this politics for decades on continuous basis, 4) this policy was not a question to be changed by each new set of government.

Every state that decides to reduce the child poverty, should support the cash transfers, tax exemptions, maternity leave, it should try to stimulate employment of both parents and provide for childcare services. There should be no possibility that another governmental party should change or stop this policy. This goal should become the cornerstone of each government because each government presents its policies as humanitarian and social. Governments should not leave this question as unimportant or leave it to charity institutions.

Some relevant authors, e.g. Davies, Crothers, and Hanna (2010) who speak about the high rate of the child poverty of New Zealand suggest that public attitudes towards the poor, particularly beneficiaries, can be a barrier to changing government policy therefore psychologists should influence public attitudes towards poverty. This might be so also in other countries. It would be necessary to make a research in the public attitude towards the child poverty.

There are some frequently mentioned problems connected with the child poverty for which there have not been any solutions found so far (not even in the developed Scandinavian countries): immigrant children. I am sure the immigrant children are another question opening in the area of the child poverty and I think that also this should be solved in the socialist welfare manner.

7 Conclusions

The paper discusses literature of relevant authors from different parts of the world and includes in the research both countries with high and low rates of the child poverty. It starts with the most often mentioned policies that help to reduce the child poverty, definition of the absolute and relative poverty, gives definitions of the child poverty and describes the analytical framework.

According to Hirsch the most powerful influences have demographic processes, family formation, unemployment rates, benefit and retraining levels, childcare services and housing costs, which are more or less determined by the economy and/or government social policy (Hirsch, 2006). This paper agrees with Hirsch in many ways but not all. I have found out that authors most often think that the child poverty can be reduced by benefits to poor families – cash transfers, financial support, tax system, minimal wages, employment (relevant authors emphasize the importance of women’s employment), childcare support (e.g. paid maternity leave), childcare institutions (e. g. kindergartens). However, a number of authors are not convinced that food support (e. g. food stamps in the USA), medical support (several programmes in the USA), housing support, economic growth and education can bring about significant influence on the child poverty.

One cannot say that countries with high child poverty rates do not take efforts to reduce the child poverty. In the opposite, the USA has numerous programmes that try to solve the child poverty. The single domain measures try to help children with food, housing, education, medical help, cash transfers while the multi domain policies offer assistance in several fields. Some are performed by the state, others by charity institutions. They try to do something but the USA is still almost on the top of the high child poverty rates. Countries with low child poverty rates have invested in similar measures: cash transfers, tax exemptions, medical insurance, maternity leave etc. but they started with this policy long ago and the welfare state has always been part of the government policy even if there were different parties in the government. Therefore I think that this practice should be undertaken also by other countries whose governments claim that they respect social welfare. On the basis of this literature review I would suggest that certain socialist welfare programmes that influence the child poverty should be taken into account all the time by all the states and all the governments. I think that this question should be analysed more in detail by a large scale research.

Many authors claim and also I am convinced that it is important that these measures should be a political decision and action and that they work only if the government implements such decisions in appropriate actions and not if they are left to the possibilities of different charity

institutions. Some authors stress that these measures should be undertaken in a combined way and that individual ones are not so efficient and/or do not have a long-term influence.

The literature overview contributes to the already existing knowledge on measures and policies that could reduce the child poverty. The comparison of states with high and low child poverty rates can be useful to policymakers and to practitioners. It could also motivate further research about how important is long-term performance of welfare policies, about the most successful combination of the policies and measures, and about the possibility to make the question of child poverty reduction a continuous priority of all the governments in a country.

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