Research methodology applied to a comparative case study of the deinstitutionalisation of children in Bulgaria and Ukraine

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Abstract

Following the demise of the Soviet Union, world attention was alerted to the situation of thousands of children living in large residential institutions across countries of the Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) region. Initial analysis of national statistics contained within a UNICEF database revealed a variance in results in eliminating use of large-scale residential institutions for children across the CEE/CIS region, with a noticeable variance between two countries in particular, Bulgaria and Ukraine. As part of a doctorate study I sought to investigate this variance utilising a comparative case study approach. Through a literature review I explored the concept of deinstitutionalisation, the contextual background of post-communist countries, and child care reform in Bulgaria and Ukraine. Fieldwork involving semi-structured interviews with child care professionals in these two countries provided information on the deinstitutionalisation process and analysis utilising NVIVO 10 software offered an in-depth understanding of differences and similarities in efforts to reform the child care system.

Keywords

deinstitutionalisation; comparative case study; research methodology; Bulgaria; Ukraine

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Introduction

My study was prompted by the concerning estimate that well over eight million children live in large residential institutions around the world often in poor environmental conditions, without provision of individual care and a suitable environment in which to thrive (Pinhiero, 2006).Some of these institutions have even been described as 'inhumane' (Walker 2011, p.152).Furthermore, having acquired some professional working knowledge of the child care reform process in the CEE/CIS region I was particularly interested in exploring deinstitutionalisation efforts in this part of the world.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, world attention was alerted to the situation of thousands of children across the CEE/CIS region living in sometimes appalling conditions

in large residential institutions some of which housed over 600 children at any given time (Burke, 1995; Chakrabati & Hill, 1999). Since the early 1990s, countries within the region have, within the framework of a post-communist transition process, invested in the development and application of deinstitutionalisation policy and child care reforms with the aim of reducing the number of children residing in such facilities (Bilson & Larkins, 2013). However, recent studies, policy evaluations and data sets reveal a significant variance in the deinstitutionalisation results achieved across different countries of the region (Hamilton-Giachritsis & Browne, 2012; Sotitopolou & Sotiropoulos, 2007).In particular, my initial analysis of regional statistics found within the UNICEF TransMonEE dataset (UNICEF TransMonEE, 2015) revealed a noticeable difference in deinstitutionalisation results in two countries in particular, Bulgaria and Ukraine.

Drawing on my prior research, and an understanding that Bulgaria and Ukraine had been guided by the same international instruments and guidance on deinstitutionalisation, I wanted to explore the reasons why these two countries were achieving what appeared to be very different results.

Overview of research methodology

Challenges to the research

Before describing the research methods I used for my study I would like to highlight two particular challenges. The first concerns the general lack of rigour in collection and analysis of published data relating to children in alternative care (Ager et al., 2012; Belsey & Sherr, 2011). Such concerns have been noted in relation to data from the CEE/CIS region sourced for this study and specifically the accuracy of information contained within the UNICEF dataset, Transformative Monitoring for Enhanced Equity, (UNICEF TransMonEE, 2015). Although the information is collated and validated by UNICEF before dissemination, concerns have been raised as to the rigour employed in collection and analysis of the data and overall reliability of statistics provided by participating state authorities (Cruijsen, 2014). The TransMoNEE data set is however, the only collation of regional and national data of its kind and provided me access to information that was not available from other sources.

It is also important to note the different terminology used to describe, for instance, children without parental care, institutional care and alternative care depending on different historical and cultural settings in which policy and practice are being constituted and recorded (Stepanova, 2014). In order to address this challenge of definition and interpretation my study included consideration of international concepts related to deinstitutionalisation, and I chose to use terminology corresponding to that of the UNCRC and the 2009 UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. A further noted difficulty for international practitioners, and a subject of ongoing debate, is the failure of the UN Guidelines in providing a formal definition of 'large'. I chose the term 'children's residential institution' to represent any form of large-scale residential care home. I also used 'family-type alternative care' to encapsulate the different terminology used in the UN Guidelines including family-based or family-like care and other alternative settings

typifying a family context, whether within the child's own extended family or in a setting with carers who are not related.

Developing the research question and aims of the study

At the initial stage of my study I posed the following research question: What factors have contributed to the variance in achievements in Bulgaria and the Ukraine resulting from deinstitutionalisation policy development and implementation? In order to answer this question I developed three research aims. These aims were:

- To critically review the literature exploring the concept of deinstitutionalisation and the impact institutionalisation has on children;

- To investigate the legacy of communist ideology pertaining to institutionalisation of children and its impact on child care policy development in CEE/CIS countries;

- To understand the variance in results of deinstitutionalisation policy in two CEE/CIS countries: Bulgaria and Ukraine.

A Comparative Case Study Approach

In order to facilitate the extraction of data that would most satisfactorily addresses my research question, I chose to use a comparative case study approach. Yin (2004) has described case study methodology as a distinctive means of empirical enquiry particularly suitable for exploring the how and why of contemporary phenomena within a real-life context. This methodology, notes Yin (2004), is particularly relevant when the researcher believes the context to be highly pertinent to the subject under study, hence the rationale for my choosing such an approach that allowed for 'cross-national' (Hakim, 2000, p.71) comparisons between deinstitutionalisation practices in Bulgaria and Ukraine (see also Flick, 2006; Mangen, 2013).Likewise, case study techniques are recognised as providing a means to examine a multiplicity of perspectives to illustrate a social entity or pattern and to test ideas and processes (Hakim, 2000; Ritchie & Lewis 2006). This research methodology allowed me, therefore, to understand and compare the operation of organisations and institutions, practice and policy implementation, processes of change, and comparative studies of two nations, Bulgaria and Ukraine (Kennett, 2001).

Techniques applied to case study methods have been described by Yin (2004) as including use of multiple sources of information, establishing a chain of evidence, pattern matching, explanation building, addressing and explaining variations and applying replication logic when using multiple case studies. Consideration in terms of case study methods is also given to the need for a transparent, robust and unbiased process of data analysis with accurate presentation of carefully selected and relevant information (Hakim, 2000). Development of theoretical propositions prior to a case study research process is also recognised as beneficial to guiding the logic of research design, data collection and analysis techniques (Kennett, 2001; Yin, 2004).In this manner, and as discussed below, I undertook a comparison of deinstitutionalisation policy development and implementation

in Bulgaria and Ukraine using a theoretical framework for deinstitutionalisation informed by a review of theoretical and empirical literature.

A possible weakness of case study methodology has been identified in terms of objectivity and the vulnerability of this method to being shaped by the researcher's own interests and perspectives (Becker & Bryman, 2004). To address this concern, it was important I consciously retained as much of an objective perspective as possible throughout the study. In addition, it was necessary to remain aware of those challenges identified by Becker and Bryman (2004) as, for instance, the large quantities of data which might be gathered, especially that drawn from interviews with informants, the manner in which some of it may be contradictory in nature, and the research skills required in overcoming the complexities of accurately analysing, determining and capturing unbiased and representative participant views.

Mixed research methods

Case study enquiry has been recognised as a research methodology allowing for utilisation of a diverse range of design, data collection methods and analysis of multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative evidence (Hakim, 2000). The use of mixed research methodology for my study included secondary analysis of an existing statistical data set and collection of primary qualitative data obtained by means of semi-structured interviews, alongside a review of empirical and theoretical literature. It is the triangulation of such information, notes Yin (2004), that contributes to the rigour of research, and has allowed for enhancing the validity and reliability of my findings whilst helping to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (see also Robson, 2002; Lewis & Ritchie, 2006).In this manner, the qualitative aspect of my comparative case study research complemented the information gained through examination of an existing statistical data set (UNICEF TransMonEE). This provided a form of interpretative approach which, noted Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2006), enables the social researcher to gain insight and understanding into the process and meaning of social phenomena, 'to unpack meanings, to develop understanding [and] to generate ideas, concepts and theories' (2003, p.82).

A literature review

Cross-national social policy comparisons, according to Kennett (2001), require an initial understanding of what transpires within each state before examining 'functionality equivalent' (p.144) and applying 'theoretically informed analysis' (ibid) to compare two or more different countries. To this end, I sought an understanding of the concept of deinstitutionalisation and other theories that had informed child care reform both internationally and in the two countries under review. This entailed conducting a review of empirical and theoretical literature encompassing issues of child development theory, social work, social policy, child rights, child care reform and deinstitutionalisation, policy transfer, and countries in socio-political transition.

Consideration was given to a body of international guidance and instruments that have informed and underpinned the development of child care reforms and

deinstitutionalisation around the world as, for example, the recognition of children's rights encapsulated within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations General Assembly 1989), the 2009 'UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children' (UN Guidelines) and the handbook entitled 'Moving Forward' published by the University of Strathclyde (Cantwell, Davidson, Elsley, Milligan & Quinn, 2012).

Furthermore, having noted the importance of understanding the socio-political and cultural environment and values in which the phenomenon under examination occurs, I also paid particular attention to literature that mapped the socio-political and economic transition of countries moving from Soviet control to independence with a specific focus on the historical and cultural context of Bulgaria and Ukraine (Clasen, 2013; Hantrais, 2013).

I believe that particularly important to the study was the manner in which the literature review informed my development of a theoretical framework for deinstitutionalisation and a structure around which my primary research could be designed and analysed. This theoretical framework comprised:

- An appropriate legal and regulatory framework

- Well-managed oversight and coordination of child protection policy and services

- Adequate structures and mechanisms for delivery of child protection services

- A sufficient and capable work-force

- Service provision and access to alternative family-type care

  o Services that aid prevention of family separation

  o Provision of alternative forms of family-type care

  o Support for reunification of children from alternative care back with parents

- Adoption as an alternative permanent solution

- Data management and accountability mechanisms

- Positive social attitudes and practices

- Consistent political will

Method of secondary data analysis

Secondary analysis of data is the process of re-examining existing information sets (Arber, 2006). This method is most commonly applied to quantitative data but is also applicable to the use of qualitative material (Hakim, 2000). Such use of previously collated data can provide a valuable source of information and mitigate the need for resources for new

research (Babbie, 2007). It can be a resource used in its original form or re-analysed, thus allowing the researcher to gain a further set of conclusions (Babbie, 2007; Lewis, 2006). A number of factors should be considered when utilising secondary analysis. For example, it is important, to gain an understanding of the intention and theoretical perspective of the original research and to ascertain whether they are fully appropriate to the current research (Lewis, 2006). Arber (2006) also emphasises that the data should only be used if it meets appropriate criteria of validity and reliability (see also Billiet, 2013). Factors relevant to validity include the applicability of original sample size, and use of variables, terms and definitions in relation to the current research (Babbie, 2007). In terms of reliability, understanding the rigour of research methodology employed in the collection, and analysis of the original data are especially important (Lewis, 2006).

I began my study with a detailed examination of the existing UNICEF TransMonEE data set. This source contains child welfare information updated annually through a standardised template issued by UNICEF to the National Statistical Offices in 28 CEE/CIS countries and complemented with data provided by other international bodies including EuroStat, OECD and UNESCO. The database contains 400 social, economic and child protection indicators, variables deemed extremely relevant to my study. Initial examination of the data comparing changes in rates and numbers of children in different forms of care highlighted a noticeable variance in results between Bulgaria and Ukraine. Data relating to these two countries was then extracted, tabulated into Excel sheets, and a set of graphs was formed allowing for further comparative scrutiny.

Methods for primary data gathering

In order to further investigate the initial findings drawn from the UNICEF TransMonEE data and the literature review, I decided to gather primary data through the use of semi-structured interviews with key informants in Bulgaria and Ukraine. The formation and application of semi-structured interviews necessitated a series of steps as described below.

Sampling methodology

The sampling technique used for the selection of specialists with knowledge of deinstitutionalisation policy and practice in Bulgaria and Ukraine was purposive. A purposive sampling approach is one that allows for an intentional selection of participants in studies that can best generate the theory and understanding of the specific social process you are studying (Arber, 2006). Hakim confirms that collection of data contributing to case study methodology may involve 'specialised interviewing of informants, professionals and organisational or public role-holders' (2000, p.73). In this manner, the purposive sampling approach permitted the selection of interviewees due to their specific experience and knowledge of deinstitutionalisation policy and programming in Bulgaria, Ukraine and the CEE/CIS region. Hakim advises that as case studies involve specialised interviewing of informants, discussion should take place on 'a basis of equality' (2000, p.73) requiring the researcher to have a good knowledge of the subject matter. This requirement was considered met due to my many years of professional work experience and research related to the subject matter.

Assistance was sought in selecting and contacting interviewees in Bulgaria and Ukraine. To this end a national NGO was selected in each country. The selection of these NGOs was based on my experience working in the field of child protection in the CEE/CIS region as well as an in-depth knowledge of the professionalism of the two organisations chosen. Careful selection criteria also included my familiarisation with the scope of their deinstitutionalisation and child protection work and a qualitative appraisal of their publications and reports on the subject.

In order to select the most suitable and reliable key informants with ability to provide relevant information, criteria for the selection of interviewees were prepared. These criteria, along with an overview of the information sought and overall expectations of the research field trip were discussed by means of correspondence and a series of Skype meetings with the Directors of the two chosen NGOs. Selection of interviewees included their dependability in terms of providing honest and factual information, willingness to declare personal bias if any, and ensuring representation from both governmental and non-governmental bodies. The two NGOs were also asked to declare any prior professional relationships with selected interviewees. Instances where interviewees were employed in projects directly related to the work of the NGO, or worked for a government agency and therefore might feel obligated to express a particular bias, were also taken into consideration during the interview process.

Based upon the informant profile it was agreed that a combination of key government staff, national child care professionals, social workers and a staff member of a children's residential institution would be selected in each country. Letters of introduction were prepared in each respective language accompanied by a Participant Information Sheet. A final selection of interviewees was made following several weeks of dialogue with the respective organisations. Challenges were faced in relation to late finalisation of the key informant selection, in part due to the existing heavy work load of the organisations, the delay in response from key informants and political reforms that were taking place in both countries immediately before the planned field trips resulting in changes in politicians and civil servants.

In addition to interviewees in Bulgaria and Ukraine, in order to gain additional perspective from international child protection specialists, two additional participants with professional experience related to deinstitutionalisation in the CEE/CIS region were interviewed.

Formulation of interview guide

An interview guide allows for consistency in the process of seeking information during a series of semi-structured interviews, whilst permitting for flexibility in the sequencing of questions and additional probing in accordance with the expertise and knowledge of individual interviewees (Flick, 2006). I developed an interview guide containing interview topics informed by the theoretical framework for deinstitutionalisation. These topics included: the content, strengths and weaknesses of the legal and regulatory framework and its application; the role of sector oversight and coordination; governmental structures for, and the delivery of, relevant child care services; access to alternative forms of care;

workforce capacity; influence of non-state actors; social norms and attitudes; perceptions regarding scale of achievements in the past 15 years; and recommendations for future policy development and practice. A guiding set of questions was listed under each topic heading. The interview guide was modified for the semi-structured interviews with two regional experts so that a comparison of achievements and challenges in both countries could be explored.

Semi-structured interviews

Face-to-face interviewing can assist the process of information gathering by allowing for the building of rapport and interaction with each participant, gauging how deep questioning might go, and the direction it might take (Fielding & Thomas, 2006). I used semi-structured interviews due to the flexibility such methodology allows as for instance being able to respond to interviewees' particular area of knowledge and further exploration of additional themes that may arise (Robson, 2002).

In total, 22 key informant interviews lasting approximately one hour each were conducted in Bulgaria and Ukraine. A visit to a children's residential institution in each country was also undertaken. A further two semi-structured interviews were conducted with regional experts in Geneva and the UK respectively. Interviews were undertaken in the English language wherever possible and translators with a good knowledge of the subject matter under discussion were used in both Bulgaria and Ukraine when interviews were conducted in the national language. After seeking permission, interviews were recorded digitally accompanied by the taking of written notes.

Research Analysis

Primary Data analysis

For my study, analysis of primary qualitative data was undertaken in a manner that aimed to complete a rigorous comparison of 'themes and concepts' (Fielding & Thomas, 2006, p.137) extracted from information in interview transcripts highlighting similarities and differences in the deinstitutionalisation process in Bulgaria and Ukraine. This extraction of data was also guided by reference to themes within the same theoretical framework for deinstitutionalisation used to formulate interview questions. To this end, the recordings of all 24 interviews were transcribed and an in-depth reading completed.

All transcripts were imported into NVIVO 10[1] and by means of a text query process, the software was used to extract and collate 'instances' (Fielding & Thomas, 2006, p.138) of similarities and variances in relation to the deinstitutionalisation process in Bulgaria and Ukraine. In order to generate initial themes, these instances were categorised into 'codes of equal status' (Lewins, 2006, p.315) in the form of NVIVO 'nodes'(nodes are the NVIVO name for codes you create). Finding and understanding the significance of themes and compilation of nodes was assisted by the undertaking of such processes as text search and word frequency which, for instance, identified the 50 most used words and their linkages illustrated through cluster analysis diagrams and tree maps.

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[1] NVIVO 10 is a software package that allows for analysis of qualitative data

In this manner, the analysis process continued through the identification and clarification of 'core' (Babbie, 2007, p.386) themes, and relationships between themes, and linking findings together into categories and sub-categories described by Flick (2006) as a process recognised as 'axial coding' (p.302). Axial coding has been described by Straus and Corbin as a focussed and 'complex process of inductive and deductive thinking... accomplished... by making comparisons and asking questions... geared toward discovering and relating categories' (1990, p.114). Further consideration of the initial nodes formulated in NVIVO resulted in categorisation of principal themes and sub-categories within those themes, thus creating a hierarchy of parent and child nodes.

NVIVO software also allowed for the formulation of reports which provided a clear picture of the index detailing the hierarchy of parent and child nodes, number of coded sources and references per node. This provided a clear sense of the findings in the text, relationships between categories of data and significance in terms of comparable emphasis attached to different nodes between interviewees in Bulgaria and Ukraine. The use of NVIVO also allowed for the creation of analytic memos (Fielding, 2006) noting the process, principle findings and thoughts and initial analytical thoughts. Finally a further process described by Fielding as 'selective coding' (2006:248), allowed me to identify a select number of the most prominent emergent themes which informed the chapter in my study on principal findings (see also Babbie, 2007).

Reliability and validity

In order to achieve reliability of research, Ritchie & Lewis (2006) suggest several processes related to data collection and analysis should be observed. These include: unbiased sample design and selection, consistency in application of fieldwork, systematic and comprehensive analysis, and interpretation supported by evidence. Validity, specify Ritchie & Lewis (2006), relates to precision in terms of credibility and plausibility of research. This can be attained through the use of an unbiased sample frame, allowing interviewees to fully express their views; accurate categorisation of data, sufficient evidence as to validity of data interpretation, and accurate portrayal of findings through a transparent analytical process (see also Robson, 2002).

All attempts were made to incorporate principles of reliability and validity to all stages of the research process in my study. In this respect, data collection, analysis and discussion was undertaken with an understanding of, and in accordance with, well prescribed practices as presented in a range of research methodology. Selection of research methods and sample design were chosen and executed in a manner that intended to reach an objective understanding of the subject matter under investigation. Use of interview questions was carefully considered in terms of relevance and appropriateness with care taken in application that was non-leading in manner whilst allowing interviewees free expression of their views and ideas. Carefully considered criteria for interviewee selection were used in order to obtain as appropriate and unbiased interviewees as possible. In order to gain as unbiased information as possible, interviewees were assured of the anonymity of data attribution. Rigour of data analysis was reinforced by use of verbatim transcripts and specialised data software. All findings were supported with evidence.

Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data has further contributed to strengthening the validity of findings.

Researcher bias, advises Robson (2002), is the manner in which assumptions and preconceptions of the researcher impact the way in which research is designed, executed and presented. Snape & Spencer, acknowledging the concept of interpretivism, suggest the researcher and the social world they are investigating will inevitably 'impact on each other' (2006, p.17). In this manner, research findings are 'influenced by the researcher's perspectives and values' (Snape & Spencer, 2006, p.17). To minimise researcher bias, therefore, a researcher should be aware of any preconceived ideas and beliefs they may have and take all precautions to minimise their influence on the research process and outcomes (Fielding & Thomas, 2006).It was my aim to conduct my study free from all bias whilst also recognising that 20 years of work experience in the areas of international development and child protection have brought an existing interest and awareness of the issues under research. Although this interest informed the initial desire to investigate the research question, all endeavours were made to ensure openness to the process of exploration and discovery of the subject matter.

Ethical considerations

Prior to initiating the fieldwork, approval for my research was sought and obtained from the University of Bristol School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee. In order to ensure research integrity, all efforts were made to meet the standards laid out in the University of Bristol's Ethics of Research Policy and Procedure and the Research Governance and Integrity Policy. This included compliance with all legal and ethical requirements relevant to the undertaking of this study in an honest, transparent, accountable and responsible manner possible. This entailed for instance, providing a summarised feedback on research findings to participants through the national NGOs that facilitated the fieldwork.

In order that interviewees could make an informed decision regarding participation, they were supplied with a Participant Information Sheet translated into their respective language. The Sheet contained information including research purpose, methodology, proposed use of data and what participation would entail. All interviewees were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary. They were also informed that, unless they provided any indication that a child might be at risk of significant harm, all information they supplied would remain confidential. In anticipation that such information regarding an individual child at risk of significant harm would be received, a confidentiality protocol was prepared.

Consent was requested of each participant who was provided with and asked to sign a consent form that had been translated into the appropriate language. The form asked the interviewee to confirm they had been provided with details of the study, given the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the research, and received sufficient information to make a decision regarding their participation. Anonymity of data attribution was guaranteed. Permission was sought from each participant regarding audio recording the interview. The service of a translator was required in both countries. The translators

signed a confidentiality agreement and an agreement which also binds them to the University of Bristol's School for Policy Study's ethical research practice.

The recording, transcripts of interviews and all other data files were kept on a password protected computer only available to me. Names and any other details of interviewees have been kept in a separate coded file in order this information could not be linked to interview transcripts and breach the anonymity of participants. All gathered data will be securely stored for 10 years in the University of Bristol Research Data Storage Facility.

Conclusions of the research

Although I was asked to write this article with the principal aim of describing my research, I wanted to share with those of you who might be curious, a little about my actual findings. My chosen research methodology allowed me to confirm that within an international concept of deinstitutionalisation, in order to realise the best interests of children, it is not only the closure of large residential institutions but a multi-faceted child care reform process incorporating programmes to prevent unnecessary child and parent separation, and support family reunification whenever possible, that is required. It is this broader concept that has prompted the use of new terminology identified as 'gatekeeping' to describe a more extensive process.

Consideration of a body of literature concerning Bulgaria and Ukraine and findings drawn from interviews confirmed there are variances and similarities in deinstitutionalisation efforts reflected in both processes and achievements of each country. A broad understanding for the need to develop all the elements contained within the theoretical framework for deinstitutionalisation, developed during the research process, is shared by practitioners and decision makers in both countries. However, differing socio-political contexts have supported and/or hindered their ability to develop and implement successful policy and programmes. Findings of primary research have validated the analysis drawn from the literature review and examination of existing quantitative data undertaken for this study, in that Bulgaria is attaining a greater degree of deinstitutionalisation achievements than Ukraine by reducing the rates of children living in large residential institutions and working towards the total demise of such facilities. In comparison, the rates of children being placed in residential institutions in Ukraine have risen and consecutive governments have failed to develop policies that would accomplish their eventual closure. Findings also confirm that, in Bulgaria, there is no overall decrease in the rates of children being separated from parents, with new placements being facilitated by the development of additional family-type care. In Ukraine, the rates of children being placed in all forms of care have continued to rise.

There is much evidence to suggest that the ideology of state paternalism and autocracy experienced during the period of the USSR has continued to impact on child protection and child care reforms since Bulgaria and Ukraine gained independence from the Soviet Union. A specific result of this legacy has been the creation of thousands of social orphans, who due to the direct effects of poverty and social exclusion, have been removed from parental care by state authorities and placed in large residential institutions or other forms of alternative care. This has been coupled with a reliance of parents placing their

children in state custody as an expected safety-net during times of difficulty. My study particularly noted how communist ideology has been retained to a greater degree in Ukraine than in Bulgaria and the correlation between this factor and weak and inconsistent political will toward deinstitutionalisation in this country.

Finally, returning to the initial focus of this article, I believe the research methods I chose allowed for a pragmatic approach to exploring different concepts and cross national comparison of deinstitutionalisation policy and practice of two countries. Findings that I hope will further contribute to policy development in the CEE/CIS region that results in more children remaining in the safe and caring environment of their own family, or, when not possible, living in more suitable family-type alternative care.

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