

## TEACHING OF THE ISSUE OF FIRST AID AT SCHOOLS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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### ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on examining the implementation of first aid in schools. It reflects the obligation of schools to provide first aid in the event of health problems or risks to the life of students and school staff. The second area deals with first aid education of students so that they can gain the competencies to provide first-aid in practical life. The basic possibilities of education of first aid in general basic education programmes are characterized. The characteristics of first aid development in schools are developed in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the first aid education issue. A historical-comparative analysis is used as the method of research.

**Keywords:** first aid, general education programme, human protection under current risks and emergencies

### INTRODUCTION

Knowing at least the basics of providing first aid is the moral duty of every person. The topic of first aid is permanently topical. It is necessary to start teaching first aid to children, as they are more open, and the basic idea of saving life and helping others can be taught to them in an entertaining way.

Whilst current legislation and related regulations generally set out an obligation for schools to provide first aid and train students in providing it, there exists no specific standard or recommendation specific to this environment for first aid education in schools. Despite the fact that a number of more or less useful materials of various authors are publicly available during the current “information revolution”, there is no authority or mechanism (such as a review procedure) to guarantee their acceptable quality. As a result, the quality of available materials is unbalanced and often contains erroneous or even potentially dangerous information and recommendations<sup>1</sup>.

## OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of the paper is to examine the implementation of first aid education in schools, and the obligation for schools to provide two basic tasks in this area is reflected. Firstly, it is about providing first aid in the event of health problems, or if the lives of students and school staff are endangered. The second area is to educate students in providing first aid so as to gain first-aid competencies in practical life. The characteristics of the development of first aid in schools are elaborated in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of first aid education.

A historical-comparative analysis is used as a method of researching the issue of teaching first aid topics. This method is used abroad<sup>2</sup>. The historical-comparative analysis is referred to as a method which, together with empirical research of educational reality, forms two basic information sources for the creation of pedagogical knowledge<sup>3</sup>. The historical-comparative analysis is considered a specific type of qualitative research. Generally, an analysis is considered a breakdown of a particular structure, the essence of which is the division of the monitored whole

<sup>1</sup> P. Trčková et al., *Návrh koncepce vzdělávání pracovníků škol v problematice první pomoci*, [in:] *Občanské sdružení ve škole i mimo ni*, project: CZ.1.07/1.3.40/02.0022, 2014, <http://ppp.mimoni.cz/download/navrh-koncepce.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> M. D. Gall, J. P. Gall, W. R. Borg, *Educational research: An introduction*. Longman Publishing, New York 2003; A. Sweeting, *Doing comparative historical education research: problems and issues from and about Hong Kong*, [in:] *Doing comparative education research. Issues and problems*, K. Watson (ed.), Oxford University, Symposium Books, Oxford 2001, p. 225–243.

<sup>3</sup> J. Maňák, Š. Švec, V. Švec, *Slovník pedagogické metodologie. Pedagogický výzkum v teorii a praxi*, MU, Paido, Brno 2005.

into simpler components. This consists of the transfer of a certain phenomenon – first aid issue – to its basic elements, through which we can get to know this phenomenon in more detail and subsequently clarify and explain it<sup>4</sup>.

The historical-comparative analysis monitors and compares first aid education, military education and human protection under current risks and developing emergencies. This method therefore combines two basic aspects – historical research and comparative analysis. Historical research is specific in that the object of its scientific interest does not exist here and now, and therefore, unlike empirical research, we cannot observe it or subject it to an experiment<sup>5</sup>.

### EARLIER CONCEPTS OF FIRST AID EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Prior to 1989, first aid education was included as one of the important topics in the subject of military education<sup>6</sup>. As part of the obligatory curriculum, the content and the scope of first aid was clearly defined and standardized in this subject, and all students of primary (or higher) grades of education were trained. The state was the guarantor<sup>7</sup> that ensured that the entire population received first aid training with precisely-defined limits.

Military education was a subject with a strong contemporary ideological subtext, and after 1989 it essentially left classroom immediately. Military education was part of the school curriculum in accordance with the Act on Military Education<sup>8</sup>; this Act was abolished by law in 1991<sup>9</sup>. The entire subject, including the useful topics that were part of it, was removed from the school educational process.

After military education was cancelled, it became clear that all of the subjects related to the issue of human protection in emergencies had dis-

<sup>4</sup> S. Julínek et al. *Základy oborové didaktiky dějepisu*, PdF MU, Brno 2004.

<sup>5</sup> J. Maňák, Š. Švec, V. Švec, *Slovník...*

<sup>6</sup> The year 1989 is a turning point for the Czech Republic due to socio-political changes and transition from the socialist system to a democratic society.

<sup>7</sup> J. Dušek, V. Protiva, *Veřejná ekonomika*, Vysoká škola evropských a regionálních studií, České Budějovice 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Act No. 73/1973 Coll., Act on Military Training, as amended.

<sup>9</sup> Act No. 217/1991 Coll., on cancelling Act No. 73/1973 Coll., on Military Training, as amended by the statutory provision of the Bureau of the Federal Assembly no. 17/1976 Coll.

appeared from the school curriculum along with military education. It is desirable for the population to be extensively educated on these topics – incorporating the topic into compulsory education is the easiest, and likely the most effective way to do so. The first indication of a return of security issues to teaching is the instruction of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to incorporate the topic of human protection in the event of emergencies into the 1999<sup>10</sup> educational programmes. As a result of large floods, the existing instruction was updated in 2003<sup>11</sup>, and textbooks were complemented with an addendum. The texts contained the basics for teaching four basic thematic areas:<sup>12</sup>

- protection of the population,
- natural disasters,
- accidents with leakage of dangerous substances,
- radiation accidents of nuclear power plants.

The core topics were again partly incorporated into the educational programme. However, there are no first aid topics in this composition. Due to a change in the system of curriculum documents (the issue of human protection in the event of emergencies included in the general educational programmes), this need was included as a task in the Time Schedule for the Implementation of Measures to Protect the Population until 2013 with prospects to 2020, which is part of the Concept of Population Protection until 2013 document with prospects to 2020 (approved by the Government Resolution no. 165 of 25 February 2008). An inter-ministerial work group composed of experts from the relevant ministries was formed to carry out this task. Its administration was assigned to the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic (health care) and the Ministry of Transport of the Czech Republic (traffic education). The group subsequently agreed

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<sup>10</sup> Instruction of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to include the topic of human protection in the event of emergencies in the educational programme, ref no. 34 776/98–22, dated 4 May 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Instruction of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to include the topic of human protection in the event of emergencies in the educational programme, ref no. 12050/03–22 dated 4 March 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Human protection in the event of emergencies – addendum to educational documents for elementary schools, secondary schools, special schools and higher vocational schools. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, ref no. 13 586/03–22 dated 4 March 2003.

on a common approach due to the mutual interdependence and close interrelationship between the issues<sup>13</sup>.

### CURRENT FIRST AID OBLIGATIONS OF SCHOOLS

Valid legislation and binding school educational documents are the basic starting point for reflection on the education of school staff. This means, in particular, the General Education Programme for Basic Education<sup>14</sup>. It is the responsibility of schools to provide two basic tasks in this area. Firstly, this concerns providing first aid in the event of health problems or if the lives of students and school staff are endangered (Sections 102, 103, 105)<sup>15</sup>, and secondly, to educate students in providing first aid so as to acquire first-aid competencies in practical life.

For schools, the binding part is from the Education Act<sup>16</sup>, wherein the following is specified in Section 2: “Schools and school facilities ensure the safety and protection of the health of children, pupils and students during education, and the directly-related activities, and in providing school services, and they provide pupils and students with the necessary information to ensure the safety and protection of health. Via a decree, the ministry determines measures for ensuring the safety and protection of the health of children, pupils and students during education in schools and school facilities, and during activities relating thereto”.

Another relevant document is the methodological instruction of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic for ensuring the safety and protection of health of children, pupils and students in schools and school facilities established by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The following areas are dealt with in the methodological instruction:<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Decree of the Government of the Czech Republic to include the topic of human protection in the event of emergencies, health care and traffic education in the educational programme of faculties of education no. 734 dated 5 October 2011.

<sup>14</sup> General Education Programme for Basic Education. Prague, January 2016. Annex No. 1 to the Measures of the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, by which is amended the General Education Programme for Basic Education, ref no. MSMT-28603/2015.

<sup>15</sup> Act No. 262/2006 Coll., Labour Code, as amended.

<sup>16</sup> Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education, as amended.

<sup>17</sup> Methodological instruction of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, ref no. 37014/2005–25 for ensuring the safety and protection of the health

- avoiding risks (Article 2).
- first aid and treatment (Article 8),
- special rules during certain activities (Article 11),
- ski training (Article 15).

In order to prepare the education process, a basic document for schools is the General Educational Programme for Basic Education<sup>18</sup>, which defines the binding framework for education for individual stages. General education programmes are based on a new education strategy that emphasizes key competencies, their interdependence with educational content and the use of acquired knowledge and skills in practical life. Based on the general educational programme, school education programmes are developed according to which education is carried out at individual schools. First aid education is included in the general educational programmes, and it must therefore be incorporated into the school educational programme of a particular school.

#### **BASIC CHARACTERISTIC OF FIRST AID IN A GENERAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME**

The issue of first aid is mainly embedded in the “Man and Health” educational area. Human health is perceived as a balanced state of physical, mental and social well-being. It is shaped and influenced by many aspects such as lifestyle, health-promoting behaviour, quality of interpersonal relationships, quality of the environment, human safety, etc. Because health is an important prerequisite for an active and happy life and for optimum work performance, cognition and practical influence of support and protection of health becomes one of the priorities of basic education<sup>19</sup>.

The Man and Health educational area provides basic incentives for positive health influences (knowledge, activities, behaviours) that students become familiar with, and learn to use them and apply them in their lives. Education in this educational area is primarily designed to make students aware of themselves as living beings and to understand the value of health, its protection, and the depth of the problems associated with illness or other

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of children, pupils and students in schools and school facilities established by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports dated 22 December 2005.

<sup>18</sup> General Education Programme for Basic Education. Prague, January 2016. Annex No. 1 to the Measures of the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, by which is amended the General Education Programme for Basic Education, ref no. MSMT-28603/2015.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

damage to health. Students become aware of the different risks that threaten health in common and extraordinary situations, they acquire skills and behaviours – decisions that lead to the preservation or enhancement of health, and they acquire the necessary degree of responsibility for their health and the health of others. This therefore largely concerns learning about vital life values<sup>8</sup>, about gradually forming attitudes towards them, and about actively acting in accordance with them. In the implementation of this educational area, emphasis is primarily placed on practical skills and their application in model situations, as well as in the everyday life of the school.

The Man and Health educational area is defined and implemented in accordance with the age of the students in the educational fields of Health Education and Physical Education, which include health physical education. The topic of first aid is particularly important in the Health Education field. The field of Health Education leads students to actively develop and protect health in the interconnection of all of its components (social, psychological and physical) and teaches them to be responsible for them. Through its educational content, it builds on the content of the educational area of Man and his World and merges with other educational areas. Students acquire the principles of a healthy lifestyle and are guided to their application in their lives, as well as to acquiring effective behaviour when at risk in day-to-day emergency situations and in emergencies. Due to the individual and social dimensions of health, the Education for Health field includes education for interpersonal relationships<sup>20</sup>.

Education in the Man and Health educational area is aimed at shaping and developing key competencies of students by leading students to:

- recognize health as an important value in the context of other life values,
- understand health as a balanced state of physical, mental and social well-being and perceive joyful experiences from activities supported by movement, a pleasant environment and an atmosphere of positive relationships,
- obtain basic orientation in terms of what is healthy and what health can benefit from, and what threatens and damages health,
- utilize adopted preventive procedures for influencing health in a daily regime, consolidate decision-making and behaviour in line with active

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<sup>20</sup> General Education Programme for Basic Education. Prague, January 2016. Annex No. 1 to the Measures of the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, by which is amended the General Education Programme for Basic Education, ref no. MSMT-28603/2015.

- health promotion in every life situation, and to identify and use of locations related to preventive health protection,
- connect activities and actions related to health and healthy interpersonal relationships with basic ethical and moral attitudes, with volitional effort, etc.,
  - understand fitness, good physical appearance and mental well-being as an important prerequisite for choosing career paths, partners, social activities, etc.,
  - protect health and life in day-to-day emergency situations and emergencies, and use adopted procedures to resolve individual emergencies.

One of the expected outcomes for students is that they exhibit responsible behaviour in hazardous situations during road and rail transport; they actively prevent situations when health and personal safety are at risk, and if necessary, they provide adequate first aid. In addition to the Man and Health education area, first aid also appears in other areas of the general education programme. An example of this is the Man and Nature educational area where first aid application during injury and other body damage can be found in the educational field of Natural History, Human Biology part, among the expected outcomes<sup>21</sup>. In general, the aim of security education at primary schools is the linking of the theoretical knowledge with practical activities, with the possibility of completing the practical responsibilities and exercises of students together with experts in the field of security<sup>22</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

Being able to provide first aid to another person in a situation where his or her life or health is endangered should be the subject of every person's interest. Each of us should therefore have an internal motivation to educate ourselves in this area. In the public, in the sphere of personal life, the decision about whether or not to educate oneself in this matter can be left up to the personal responsibility and awareness of each individual.

Legislative documents show that schools are obliged to provide first aid to students and employees, and to educate both students and employ-

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<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>22</sup> L. Kováčová, *Návrh rozšírenia bezpečnostného vzdelávania na základných školách pre ochranu detí*, "Kultura Bezpieczeństwa, Nauka – Praktyka – Refleksje" 2016, no. 24, p. 118–134.

ees in first aid. It is therefore essential that first aid education be adapted to the context of current knowledge in the field of emergency medicine. Like other disciplines, the field of emergency medicine is developing, and it is important that education in this area does not take place as a one-time occurrence, but rather repeatedly, e.g. in the form of regular retraining, updating of knowledge and skills, etc.

A certain perspective of a system approach to the preparation of students in the field of first aid is appearing in the effort to implement interdisciplinary teaching of the topics of protection of human beings under current risks and emergencies. It is not possible to assume the creation of a separate subject, but according to the current discussions of the interdepartmental group, the direction is focused on inclusion into the civic education subject. As part of this procedure, the area of first aid will find a systemic place in instruction.

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