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Preventive actions in educational work found in Polish system of education

Profilaktyka w pracy wychowawczej i edukacyjnej w polskim systemie oświatowym

Abstract: Preventive action plays a significant role when referred to children and youth while growing or becoming mature. It is a phase when there can be found intensive personality changes. It is also a moment in growing up susceptible to disruptions and taking up risky actions. That means that leading a child towards maturity is both educating as well as a preventive action. School has always been an important, initially even the only place where preventive programs were implemented. During the last few years there has been observed in Polish system of education intensity of actions in the area of preventive programs. Its key aspects concern above all: studies over the efficiency of preventive programs, local and school preventive strategies, diagnosis of the problems conditions and the basis towards further preventive actions, constructing School Preventive Programs, place and role for the teacher in school preventive actions and finally evaluation of these acts.

Keywords: preventive actions, school, preventive strategies and programs, teacher, Poland

Streszczenie: Oddziaływanie profilaktyczne ma szczególne znaczenie w odniesieniu do dzieci i młodzieży w okresie dorastania. Jest to faza rozwoju, w czasie której dokonuje się wiele intensywnych jakościowych zmian w osobowości człowieka. Jest to również moment rozwoju podatny na zakłócenia i podejmowanie działań ryzykownych. Dlatego prowadzenie dziecka ku dojrzałości jest zarówno wychowaniem, jak i profilaktyką. Szkoła od zawsze była ważnym, pierwotnie nawet jedynym, miejscem realizacji programów profilaktycznych. W ostatnich latach w polskim systemie oświatowym obserwujemy intensyfikację działań w obszarze szkolnej profilaktyki. Jej kluczowe aspekty dotyczą między innymi: badań nad skutecznością programów profilaktycznych, lokalnych i szkolnych strategii profilaktycznych, diagnozy uwarunkowań problemów i podstaw działań profilaktycznych, konstruowania Szkolnych Programów Profilaktycznych, miejsca i roli nauczyciela w profilaktyce szkolnej oraz ewaluacji podejmowanych działań prewencyjnych.

Słowa kluczowe: profilaktyka, szkoła, strategie i programy profilaktyczne, nauczyciel, Polska

Introduction

Times we are living now bring new educational chances, inventions which help our lives, scientific, technological, cultural and medical achievements. Today's world creates new, unknown so far possibilities for further development. Unfortunately, undergoing changes in global scale generate numerous dangers. Contemporary children and adolescents face repercussions which result from human interference in the world of nature, lack of authorities, underestimate social diseases, progressing process of life brutality and vulgarization, egocentrism and other annoying phenomena which consequently lead towards occurrence among young generation varied problems of emotional character or behavior disorders.

Efforts to explain reasons and consequences of risk behaviour can be found in popular concepts such as: the theory of risk and protective factors (N. Garmezy, J.D. Hawkins, G.B. Baxley), the theory of problem behaviour (S. Jessor). Risk factors – these are individual features of a human and environment which enable to develop risk behaviors. They include: variables connected with an individual; family linked variables and local community variables. Protective factors – are individuals or social environment characteristics which occurrence reinforces general human health potential and increases his resistance to risk factors effects. Among the protective factors there are following enumerated: close emotional parental link; interest in schoolwork; regular religious practice; respect for the law, norms and authorities; positive group membership.

Despite correct educational actions, children and youth sometimes may reveal risky behaviors. It mostly results due to the fact that they are unable to function in another way. Such behaviors are regarded as their individual way to adapt to new surroundings. Risky behaviors – denotes to various human actions which may lead to high risk of negative consequences in physical and psychical health but also for the social environment. Most important risky behaviors comprise: alcohol and other psycho-active substances abuse; early sexual initiation;

aggressive and criminal behaviour; leaving schoolwork; escape from home [Dzielska, Kowalewska, 2014, p. 141-142].

Numerous research reveal that risky behaviour often go together and one may trigger another one. On account of such a complex problem, a vital element of education process should be preventive acts understood as proper actions aimed to avert emerging and development of an unfavorable phenomenon in a particular society. It is a complex intervention compensating lack of education based on three parallel currents in actions: supporting the child to deal with difficulties which might threaten proper development and a healthy lifestyle; decreasing and eradicating risk factors which disturb correct development and disorganize healthy lifestyle; initiating and reinforcing protective factors which favour correct development and a healthy lifestyle.

According to the directive of the Polish Ministry of Education on 27th August, 2012 concerning curriculum fundamentals referred to pre-school education and general education at individual types of schools, educational activity of a school is determined by:

- 1) the school set of curricula
- 2) educational school program
- 3) preventive intervention program – adapted to developmental students' needs and the needs of particular environment [MEN, 2012].

Teachers follow these curricula, taking into account individual work with a pupil during both compulsory and extra educational classes.

During the period of adolescence these acts should be directed towards providing knowledge to a student on how to deal with in difficult situations, understanding his behaviours while growing up, emphasizing responsible and personal decisions, developing potentiality and breaking restrictions. Thus preventive actions can be aimed at two major streams: prevention of intentional and constructive process directed towards promoting positive development of individuals in order to fulfill his potential abilities in physical, psychical, social and spiritual spheres but also counteracting harmful effects (violence, risk of health and security loss, stress etc.).

Adequately to European standards prevention actions in Poland are taken up at the three following levels:

- 1) Universal preventive intervention. It is addressed to all pupils or students at certain age no matter the risk of problematic behaviour occurrence or physical disorders and it refers to well known and widespread threats such as violence or taking psycho-active substances. At this level general knowledge is used about risky behaviour, risk and protective factors and epidemiological data. These are aimed to slow down the process of initiation and preventing early attempts to undertake risky behaviour.
- 2) Preventive intervention aimed towards groups of increased risk – the so called selective intervention, demands setting up a good diagnosis of the school society among children and youth groups who show risky behaviour or those who are in a specific social or family situation. For children and youth who are categorized as an increased risk group there are organized preventive individual or group actions: educational therapy; social skills training sessions; socio-therapy.
- 3) Indicative preventive intervention aimed towards an individual of high risk behaviour – these are actions based on intervention and therapy addressed to children and youth which show disorder symptoms. At this stage, there are external institutions involved which are prepared to offer psychological and medical help.

In prevention it is assumed that the basis is the universal prevention which is intensively led by schools as an informative and educational form. Moreover, characteristic for each kind of prevention are worldwide required standardized aims of prevention. These include spreading real information about the phenomenon which is within the interest of prevention, creating conscious consumption patterns, interpersonal skills, self-assessment and self-discipline, conflict solving, ability to choose positive lifestyles, developing bonds with social group and sense of group responsibility the individual belongs to (family, local society, school class) but also developing right and public rules so that they would be coherent with human needs and support positive

lifestyles and allow for early diagnosis of the endangered and developing strategies of counteracting, based on the knowledge of harmful conditioning causes [Gaś, 2006, p. 49-51].

Having in mind the above, it can be assumed that the basic element of preventive action should be to equip a young man with a harmoniously functioning personality, he will be ready to make positive choices based on it. Thus the aims of prevention become coherent with the aims of constructive education.

During the last several years in many countries, including Poland, various prevention programs have been carried out and tested when it refers to children and the youth. Based on the experience a few key and universal strategies have appeared within prevention actions. These may include such as:

Information strategies. The main aim is to provide adequate information on the results of risky behaviors and at the same time to enable to make a rational choice.

Educational strategies. They are to help development of major psychological and social skills such as: ability to establish interpersonal links; overcoming stress; solving conflict situations; resisting peer or environment pressures.

Alternative action strategies. These are aimed to help meet major needs (such as success, affiliation) and achieve life satisfaction by offering opportunities to get involved in positive actions (artistic, social, sports activity etc.). It mainly refers to children and youth who lack of parental care.

Intervention strategies. They are aimed to help weaker people who find difficulty in identifying and solving their problems as well as supporting them in critical situations. Such intervention comprises supporting people in critical life moments. Basic techniques of intervention are: counseling; a trust call; intervention sessions; guidance.

Strategies to decrease loses. They are mainly expected for the use of the third stage prevention. Their addressees are groups of highest risk occurrence who failed by using early prevention, intervention and therapy.

Strategies of environmental changes. They are focused on identifying and changing social and physical factors which favour increasing problem behaviors. They may comprise: environment modification; places of a disfunction individual's stay; change of social attitudes towards dysfunctional people.

Strategies of regulation change. These refer to changes in regulations, local and institutional directives limiting availability and distribution, reducing negative effects [Borucka, Pisarska, Bobrowski, 2014, p. 5-11].

In order to carry out previously planned aims of dysfunction prevention, varied kind of preventive programs are needed. Some of these were created at university centers or institutions which professionally deal with prevention of any pathology behaviour. Most important and frequent are the following:

NOE Program – preventing alcoholism. It is addressed towards the youth and the students of first class middle school and above. Its aim is to change local environment norms referred to drinking.

No, Thank you Program – preventing drug taking. The aim of this is to prevent health dangers which result from taking addictive substances, presenting school difficulties which is the result of taking psycho-active substances but also building skills to oppose to negative influence of peer groups.

VETO Program – preventing violence and drug taking. It is aimed to put a diagnosis of violence and addiction problems in a particular school by organizing prophylactic classes and provide psychological support.

See things differently Program – Provides information on addictive substances however, its major task is to develop personality of the foster child, ability to adapt to new situations and initiate proper interpersonal contacts in the peer group and off school environment [Szymańska, 1995, p. 37].

How to live with others Program – its major aim is addiction prevention by developing personal competences.

Before you try Program – provides knowledge about substances which may lead to addiction but it is also aimed to develop personality skills.

Lend me a hand Program – the program which is based on psychological education towards those who are in need.

Be a friend and have friends Program – its main aim is to know yourself and other people getting satisfaction from peer contacts [Cierpiąłkowska, 2001, p. 227].

In Poland preventive intervention actions taken up by schools are based on legal regulations which determine: limits and areas of the actions and they explain the range of teachers' competence. Legal regulations referred to preventive actions at schools or educational institutions can be found in: Convention of the Child's Rights, Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Article 72.), Penal Code on 6th April, 1997 (Article 304.), Civil Code (Article 572.), Acts of the Parliament and directives and State programs. Institutions which are responsible for providing educational actions towards children and the youth carry out its preventive tasks based on directives of The Ministry of Education and Sport. These enforce implementing preventive programs while educating.

A competent prevention educator at school. At a reformed school competences required from the teacher or educator require possessing full range of skills necessary to lead preventive actions. Every good class teacher is therefore competent in accomplishment of preventive tasks, mainly at basic level.

Range of competences required from the teacher preventionist includes:

General knowledge

Epidemiology knowledge – learnt from the following sources:

- International Research over health behaviour found among school-aged children (Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children HBSC). Such research has been carried out since 1990 among students aged 11, 13 and 15. The entire report can be found at HBSC site: www.hbsc.org

- European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs – ESPAD). Measurement on the spread and take of psychoactive drugs among the youth aged 15-16 and 17-18. The survey has been carried out every four years since 1995. The report can be found at the website of Drugs and Drug Addiction Information Centre: <http://www.cinn.gov.pl>
- All-Poland, local and regional survey research

Knowledge about alarm signals

Change in student's behaviour (especially referred to that one which was not found before) and changes in appearance.

Knowledge on substances – learnt from materials edited by the National Agency of Solving Alcohol Problems, the National Bureau for Preventing Drug Abuse and other agencies.

Knowledge on pupils' ontogenesis needs.

Self-study – which is meant as an increase of interpersonal skills and development of personality predispositions in it: ability to build-up and remain as an authority; ability to cope with own emotions; ability of positive and conscious modeling (implementing rules and norms coherent with own behaviour); ability to show understanding and respect for a pupil/student.

Preventive intervention actions at school. Every Polish educational institution is subjected to work out and implement the program of preventive intervention. The program is accomplished by the teachers/class tutors, a school counselor and specialists on individual field of issue. It is implemented during informing and educational classes.

The syllabus for education and preventive program at school is approved by the School Teaching Staff after asking for opinion The Parents' and the Students' Councils. School set of education, upbringing and preventive programs must be coherent with each other. Both the school and individual teachers are responsible for implementing the programs [MEN, 2002, pos. 458; 2015, pos. 357].

A school syllabus of prevention can be regarded as 'the project of system solution at school environment which support education and directed towards supporting the student in overcoming difficulties

which might endanger proper development and healthy lifestyle; limiting and eliminating risk factors (individual, family, peer, school and environment) which may disturb a correct student's development and disrupt his healthy lifestyle, initiating and emphasizing protective factors (individual, family, peer, school and environment) which on the other hand support proper student's development and his lifestyle' [Gaś, 2003, p. 168].

The school syllabus of prevention is especially needed in those cases where the process of education failed and there immersed dangers towards proper educational process. Since a successful prevention involves not only a student but also the teachers, family, peer group and local environment constructing a school syllabus of prevention should be initiated with:

- 1) carrying out a diagnosis on the school environment needs, problems which might cause danger both for the pupils and their families in certain time and place (observation, interview, talk, pupils' school products analysis, a questionnaire)
- 2) analyzing school resources (human and material)
- 3) taking into account general preventive intervention

While carrying out questionnaire surveys (school environment diagnosis) they should consider: interactions between the students, student-teacher, student-class tutor, school-children; dangers connected with taking alcohol, tobacco and psycho-active drugs etc.; job orientation; healthy lifestyle; aggression and violence; regulation issues; duties and rules which are required at school (system of values); forms and ways of spending free time; self-development (development of talents), student's potential.

School program of preventive intervention includes: theoretical assumptions (justification), aims, tasks (which aims are supposed to be achieved), structure and a way to carry out and evaluation strategies.

Those who are responsible for the school prevention program to be administered are the teachers, school counselor and specialists in a chosen field. Their actions require constant improvement of own workshop and stream for higher qualifications. Extremely important are

their personality features, empathy, ability to initiate new contacts with other people in order to give correct diagnosis of the problem case and help with overcoming difficulties an individual cannot cope with by himself. People who are responsible for administering preventive actions apart from a wide knowledge about existing dangers should be familiar with the environment reality in which they act (the school, institution, local environment) including family environment of individual students' cases.

A significant element of a school prevention program is evaluation. Evaluation – means a judgment of the program. It is unavoidable when it comes to assess functioning of the program and plan preventive actions for oncoming years at school. Thanks to them it is easier to:

- understand the point of success and failure of the program
- improve the influence process on participants and authors of the program
- enrich the knowledge of prevention measures.

Conclusions

Effectiveness of preventive actions in much extent depend on the teachers' involvement, the school head and cooperation offered by the specialists, parents or out-of-school institutions.

Preventive intervention actions carried out at Polish schools are supported by: local governments (district and commune authorities), health service, psychology and education centers, social organizations, the police, prosecutor's office and family courts and mass media. It is important for children and youth to get involved in various practical forms of preventive intervention e.g. organizing preventive actions and campaigns, theatre plays etc. supported by charity events. Active part found among young people in that sort of actions, induces to cooperation, proves to reflection but also creates favorable conditions towards improvement of social skills, interpersonal communication, constructive dealing with difficulties, rational conflict solving but what is also important it satisfies the needs and develops personal competences.

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