CURRENT STATE OF RISK AND PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR OF PUPILS AND ITS REFLECTION IN SCHOOL PLANS OF PREVENTION

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Abstract: The study theoretically presents the current state of problem or risk behaviour of pupils at elementary and high schools, as well as school prevention in Slovakia. It presents the results of content analysis of school documents, specifically of school plans of preventive activities, or work plans of prevention coordinators, with special focus on the reflection of the current state of risk and problem behaviour of the pupils in these plans. The results show that the plans take only minimal account of the current state and trends of risk and problem behaviour of pupils.

Keywords: problem behaviour of pupils, risk behaviour of pupils, prevention, school prevention, school prevention plans, coordinator of prevention
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1 The Current State of Problem or Risk Behaviour of Elementary and High School Pupils

Elementary and high school teachers often, many of them daily, face inappropriate behaviour of their pupils. It covers wide scale of behaviour: starting from small misdeeds, through violation of the school order, up to serious socio-pathological phenomena, that should be differentiated from the point of view of prevention and subsequent solution.

Risk behaviour is the more frequently used term in school prevention, as can be seen in the strategic documents, guidelines and other materials (e.g. Pedagogical-organisational instructions for the school year 2018/2019). The term "risk behaviour" should according to several authors (Miovský et al., 2010, Bělík, Hoferková, 2016) mitigate the stigmatization of pupils with problem behaviour of different character.

Pupils of elementary and high schools show various kinds of inappropriate – problem behaviour, that doesn't necessarily have to be included among behavioural disorders or socio-pathological phenomena. From the point of view of pedagogical and vocational training employees, inappropriate, provocative, aggressive or undisciplined behaviour of pupils should be adequately referred to as problem behaviour of pupils. In the context of problem behaviour, M. Lipnická (2014) states that it most often has these negative features that dominate on the long-term basis, are often repeated and have negative effect on others: intransigence, inattention, maladjustment, disobedience, moodiness, unpredictability, restlessness. Problem behaviour could also be a symptom of disability or social disadvantage of a child, or his/her talent.

Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education (the School Act), in § 144, section 4 regulates the obligations of elementary and high school pupils, so teachers have legal support, e.g. to respect the instructions of school employees (general regulation of prevention of undisciplined behaviour), not to restrict other people's rights by your actions in the process of education (bullying prevention), to protect the property of school or school facility used for education against damage (vandalism prevention), to regularly participate on education and to study properly (truancy prevention), etc.

The increase in socio-pathological phenomena among adults in Slovakia has been manifested also in the increase of problem behaviour of elementary and high school pupils. We talk about wide scale of unacceptable behaviour of various gravity. First problems with behaviour occur among still younger pupils. Despite the fact, that several data indicate a decrease of problem behaviour of pupils (e.g. Criminality statistics SR, European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs – ESPAD), we cannot consider the situation as positive. Pedagogical and vocational training employees of common schools point out the occurrence of problem behaviour. The kinds of risk, or problem behaviour vary, e.g. in connection with ICT. However, besides the new risks, some kinds of problem behaviour still persist.

The current situation is illustrated also by negative changes concerning the sex of pupils: balancing between sexes occurs, in some cases girls outperform boys. R. Tomšik, M. Dolejš, M. Čerešník, J., Suchá and O. Skopal (2017), based on their empirical findings state, that risk behaviour does not concern just boys, but is similarly extent in both sexes and the breaking age of sharp increase of this behaviour is between the 14th and 16th year of age.

Effective preventive activities require prognosis of the probability of occurrence of a given phenomenon and to think over the choice of methods and forms of action, in the area of primary and secondary prevention in the school environment. The reality of school practice is illustrated by the results of researches carried out among teacher and prevention workers.

The necessity of systemic and effective prevention is proved also by the results of the screening carried out in 2013. Teachers from all Slovak counties (except Bratislava county) noted pupils they recommend to the care of educational counselling and prevention facility, because their problem behaviour cannot be handled by common pedagogical measures at school. On the basis of the most significant findings we can state (2014):

- teachers from the researched schools would recommend 18,10% of pupils to counselling care,
- compared to the previous periods, the number of problematic girls increased,
- all demonstrations of problem behaviour (including truancy, contact with drugs, criminal activities) does not concern the second-grade pupils only, compared to the past we registered a significant increase of problem behaviour among first-grade pupils. The necessity of implementation of risk behaviour prevention among first-graders is pointed out also by M. Procházka, M. Vítečková and K. Špačková (2017).

J. Skopalová and K. Janiš (2017) carried out a research at elementary schools among teachers, headmasters and prevention workers in 2017. They surveyed the occurrence of risk behaviour of pupils. Among the most wide-spread ones the respondents stated the following: aggressiveness, relationship problems, cyberbullying and rough behaviour (relatively broadly conceived type of risk behaviour), smoking (despite the decreasing trend of the number of smokers, it is still a wide-spread form of risk behaviour among pupils), vulgar language, truancy and hidden truancy, frauds and failure to fulfil their school duties (cheat sheets, writing off, falsifying a signature, etc.), thefts. The fact, that some types of risk behaviour did not occur does not mean they do not exist among pupils. The authors asked for the most frequent types of risk behaviour.

In 2017 we carried out a research among prevention coordinators (15) and police preventists (5). All respondents, prevention coordinators and police preventists alike, consider the situation of problem behaviour occurrence as negative – they all point to the increase in the problem behaviour of pupils. They emphasized especially the increase in aggressive behaviour and risk behaviour connected with ICT.

The scale of problem or risk behaviour is broad and it is constantly changing. Besides the phenomena that occur for years among children and youth (truancy, experiments with drugs, committing criminal offences, etc.), new trends in the occurrence of problem behaviour of pupils appear, such as binge drinking with the goal to get drunk as soon as possible, and especially new risks connected with ICT and online environment.

One of the serious issues is also the rapid increase of certain kinds of problem behaviour, as it is with eating disorders. Eating disorders among children and youth have in Slovakia increasing tendency. It is proved by National Health Information Center (www.nczisk.sk). Eating disorders present a serious problem, because they endanger health and sometimes even life of a person. Among most common eating disorders belong mental bulimia and mental anorexia. People suffering from these eating disorders have morbid fear of obesity and they lost control of food intake. Dangerously many girls and women suffer from this disorder, this mental disorder also occurs among men, but in a much lesser extent.

Another serious problem of today is experimenting with drugs, legal and illegal, by pupils of elementary and high schools. Experimental and recreational drug use present significant risk of addiction emergence. School researches TAD and ESPAD describe the situation in Slovakia and other countries. Pupils of elementary and high schools have personal experiences with legal drugs (pupils stated regular smoking, drinking alcohol, they admitted being drunk), they experiment also with illegal drugs, mainly with marijuana.

A substantial problem these days is also the increase of aggressive behaviour of pupils (Tomšik, Dolejš, Čerešník, Suchá, Skopal, Čerešníková, 2018) and its occurrence among still younger pupils (Saracho, O. N., 2017). Aggressive behaviour of elementary and high school pupils may lead to committing criminal offences. Such behaviour of pupils is becoming more daring and brutal. The extreme form of aggressive behaviour is bullying. It is a targeted and repeated violence against such pupil or pupils who can't defend themselves. Bullying may take different forms and it must be dealt with by teachers of both elementary and high schools. (Wachs, Bilz, Niproschke et al., 2019).

While in the past aggressive behaviour and bullying was mostly spread among pupils, nowadays there are many cases when aggressive behaviour is aimed at teachers. Several authors point to this shift (Csémy, et al., 2014, Espelage, Anderman, Brown, Jones, Lane, McMahon, Reddy, Reynolds, 2013, Garrett, 2014, Kopecký, Szotkowski, 2017 a i.).

Current situation is characteristic by spreading new negative phenomena connected with media and information technologies. Their usage brought along with many advantages also many risks and threats, especially for children and youth. A serious problem of today is the so called cyberbullying, aka electronic bullying (Hollá, Fenyvesiová, Hanuliaková, 2017, Wagner, 2019). It is the abuse of cell phones and the Internet to send aggressive, hateful and damaging messages, or intimidation of people. In particular, the anonymous Internet environment poses in this case a considerable danger. Electronic bullying or cyberbullying, despite the absence of real physical force, is very insidious and dangerous.

Cyberbullying can grow into cyberstalking. Stalking (hunting, persecution) is a term that identifies repetitive, long-term, systematic and gradual persecution, which may vary in form and intensity. We talk about cyberstalking when an attacker uses ICT (through chat, social networks, etc. he/she arouses victim's fear). In relation to virtual space, it is necessary to draw attention to the cyber-grooming, which is such behaviour of the internet user that evokes the victim to false trust and convinces him/her to meet him/her personally. The motive of such behaviour is sexual abuse, physical violence, or the abuse of victims for pornography or prostitution.

Another type of risk behaviour is sexting, the possible negative consequences of which young people do not realize. It also occurs among pubescent and adolescent youth. Sexting is the electronic distribution of text messages, one's own photos or videos with sexual content. Most often, it is the distribution of erotic photos or videos between partners. However, after a breakup one of the partners may distribute these materials through a cell phone or the Internet.

K. Hollá (2017) found out that boys and girls in the Slovak Republic between the ages of 12 and 18 send their intimate photographs, a significant increase in sexting in the form of sending their naked and half-naked images was demonstrated at the age of 12-17 years.

According to the current research from 2017 in the Czech Republic, sexting is performed by 15% of children and youth in the age of 8 to 17 years.

There are many reasons why children and youth commit this form of risk behaviour (Kopecký, 2012, Hollá, Jedličková, Seidler, 2018). Most often it is boredom, sexting is perceived as a part of romantic relationships, it appears as the product of social pressure (of a group), sexting is the product of consumer society and it becomes a tool of self-presentation, sexting as a tool of revenge.

A serious risk is the fact, that sensitive material can be sent to a stranger (anonymous environment enables anyone to pretend to be a classmate, elicit an intimate photograph by blackmailing, etc.).

According to some authors, there is a close relation between cyberbullying and sexting (Davis, Schmidt, 2016, Hollá, 2016). Publishing the misused intimate materials on the internet hurts the victim and may cause repeated harm.

Sexting provides the sexual deviants (predators) with a relatively easy access to information that will help them gain the trust of a child or juvenile and lead to extortion. It may be related to the dangerous phenomenon we call sextortion. Sextortion is a compulsion for sexual services or favours, the online extortion of the victim. K. Kopecký (2014), based on the analysis of actual cases, developed a model of perpetrator behaviour: establishing contact with the victim (after first contacting, where he/she acts under the same gender identity as the victim, the offender convinces the child to provide him/her with personal, or even intimate information), manipulation with flattery (the offender evaluates positively of all the materials he/she receives, by which he/she is getting the child close, the child longs for admiration and appreciation), verifying the true identity of the child (the offender needs to make sure that he/she actually communicates with the child and that the photographs are authentic, using the method of photographing with a specific inscription, current newspapers, etc.), gradation of intimacy (the intimacy of photographs that the victim and the offender exchange usually raises, the photographs of the offender are scams, and he/she gets them from foreign portals, the child then begins to perceive the distribution of intimate material as something ordinary, and sends his/her own shots to the offender), multistage extortion (when the victim decides to quit, the offender goes into extortion and he/she menaces that he/she will publish and forward the material he/she has received). With the obtained materials, the perpetrator can force the victim to a personal meeting; extortion may go through to forced prostitution.

2 Prevention of Risk and Problem Behaviour of Pupils in Slovakia

School, especially primary school, plays an important role in prevention as it is attended by the whole population of children from their sixth year of age, with some rare exceptions. School, as a professional institution, ensures implementation of prevention, mainly primary prevention and since problem behaviour is wide-spread among pupils, also secondary prevention. The area of secondary prevention covers a complex care of pupils with problem behavior, starting from educational problems in a family, through violation of the school order, up to violation of valid legislation.

Prevention coordinators are the main actors of prevention at elementary and high schools in Slovakia. A school director assigns one of the teachers the function of prevention

coordinator on the basis of his/her voluntary interest, personal skills and professional competence, usually for the duration of one year. It is a teacher who supervises, coordinates and directs the activities within prevention. In current school practice, the focus of responsibility for prevention implementation is on the shoulders of prevention coordinators - teachers who also teach full-time and they are not extra financially rated for performing this function.

In practice, the director of a primary or secondary school will determine the prevention coordinator from the rank of teachers based on their voluntary interest, personality assumptions and professional competencies. The prevention coordinator, together with the director, develops a prevention plan, or preventive activities plan for the relevant school year, based on strategic documents of the Slovak Republic or the EU.

The prevention coordinator should coordinate preventive activities at school, not to be the only preventer at the school. The coordinator should also cooperate with preventive, advisory and other professional institutions. The prevention coordinator has the following tasks:

▪ To work out the plan of preventive activities for the respective school year.
▪ To perform the role of school counsellor on the issues of prevention.
▪ To pay special attention to pupils from a disadvantaged social environment (at risk from social pathology) who are at increased risk of developing socio-negative phenomena.
▪ To provide coordination of prevention as an integral part of the education and training process. Within the school's activities the coordinator should provide preventive and educational consultations to pupils and their legal representatives.
▪ To provide a connection between a school and preventive, counselling and other professional institutions and NGOs involved in prevention.
▪ To coordinate and methodically guide the preventive and information activities of pedagogical staff at school alongside the long-term systematic monitoring and evaluation of the development of pupils at risk of drug addiction and other social pathology.
▪ To inform pupils, their parents (or legal representatives) about the activities of preventive counselling and other professional institutions about the possibilities of prevention.

At schools, prevention is implemented through various forms of preventive action. Preventive projects or programs are the most suitable form. The most common one-shot activities at schools are discussions with experts, lectures and classroom prevention. It is appropriate to include the prevention of socio-pathological phenomena in individual subjects (e.g. Ethics, Civics, as well as other subjects that allow it within their curriculum).

3 Content Analysis of School Plans of Preventive Activities

The current state of prevention implementation in the conditions of elementary and high schools can be evaluated on the basis of content analysis of the plans of preventive activities at elementary and high schools, or work plans of a prevention coordinator. We analysed 70 plans of preventive activities from the school year 2018/2019 in the Slovak republic (35 plans from elementary schools and 35 plans from high schools).

A plan of preventive activities must be worked out in detail and must be specific. It is important for the author of the plan to be aware of the real risks that endanger the pupils. It is inevitable to monitor the problem behaviour. Each school must have a plan of preventive activities worked out for the respective school year. Some schools develop a plan of activities (or a work plan) of a prevention coordinator.

Positively can be evaluated those plans, which have activities aimed at identifying the occurrence of risk and problem behaviour at school planned at the beginning of a school year.

The majority of plans (52 plans) contained the issue of extremism, racism and xenophobia prevention, fully in accordance with the valid Pedagogical-organisational instructions for the school year 2018/2019. However, the activities were not specified.

The issue of virtual environment risks was covered by 27 plans, in another 2 cyberbullying was mention in connection with bullying. So the prevention of cyberspace risks was included in the plans of 29 schools, which represent 41% of the evaluated schools.

The results showed that insufficient attention is paid to certain issues in the process of planning the preventive activities. Of the plans that paid special attention to cyberspace risks, only 3 explicitly mentioned sexting. None of the evaluated plans contained the prevention of risk sexual behaviour. Similarly, none of them mentioned eating disorders.

When evaluating the plans from elementary schools, a serious deficiency was identified – preventive activities were only rarely aimed at primary level pupils. The preventive plans contained activities for the 5th-9th grade pupils only.

A plan of preventive activities, or work plan of prevention coordinators, can be considered a strategic school document in the area of prevention. We can assume that if it contains planned preventive activities, they will be really implemented. Naturally, even precisely worked-out plan may not be implemented. Or, on the other hand, such situation may occur that even if a certain phenomenon is not included in the prevention plan, it is covered by activities from counselling facilities workers and performed on a professional level.

4 Conclusion

Pay adequate attention to plans of preventive activities, so that they are conclusive and specific. We found out, that the surveyed school preventive plans take only minimal account of the real occurrence of problem or risk behaviour of pupils.

At schools, it is necessary to pay attention to prevention, it is suitable to implement programs focused on harmonization of relationships and improvement of school climate. To implement effective forms of prevention (e.g. solving the problematic situations, trainings, experience and interactive forms). To make prevention of risk, or problem behaviour an integral part of the educational process. Incorporate into school educational programs the compulsory topics connected with multicultural education, education in the terms of humanism, human rights education, prevention of all forms of discrimination, xenophobia, antisemitism, intolerance and racism and in the area of migration. To continually monitor the behaviour of pupils and the changes in the cases their healthy personal development endangerment to ensure their protection and to deal with the problem in cooperation with the school management and legal representatives of the child.

When planning the preventive activities, it is important to take account of the risks that result from modern technologies. At schools, it is important to inform pupils in an appropriate way about the risks connected with modern technologies and to organize interesting preventive activities on the topic, e.g. on the Safe Internet Day, to teach pupils to protect their identity (e.g. when creating their profile, publishing their photographs and personal information) and to emphasize the danger of personal meetings with contacts from internet, to keep the rule not to go on with communication with sexual context. Not to forget the prevention of victimization.

School headmasters should appoint such teachers for coordinators who passed a specialized education in the area of

prevention, or they should allow them to participate on such education (the opportunities for such education are relatively broad). To increase knowledge and to support education of all pedagogical employees in the area of prevention. To pay more attention to this area also within university training of future teachers.

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