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Analysis of the Teacher's Work with Ill Children

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Abstract

Problem statement: There is an increasing percentage of chronically ill children at schools and teachers have no quality education how to access and evaluate children with chronic diagnosis. **Research Questions:** How much the participation of teachers in the module "Analysis of the Teacher's Work with Ill Children" increases their self-esteem? Does the training in this module support participants' professional growth? **Purpose of the Study:** The aim of the study is to strengthen the professional growth of teachers through participation in an instructional module which is organized within the project funded by the Czech Fund of Educational Policy. The project is named Route from the Beginner to the Mentor. The support for teachers is being provided in the form of instructional modules. A module is a self-contained course for a particular target group of teachers. Each module is for 10-20 participants. Research data will be collected by means of teacher diaries. As the module is in the preparation phase, there are no research findings yet. **Conclusion:** The main aim of the module is the extension of professional knowledge and increase in self-esteem of teachers. The module will provide teachers with knowledge about the most frequent children's illnesses, about illness prevention, and will train the teachers in skills of how to work with chronically ill children at school and how to create positive environment for them or provide first aid.

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1. Introduction

A cross-national study of WHO “Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children”, which has been realized in the Czech Republic since 1980’s, brought data about children’s lifestyle and health (Kalman et al., 2010). Another study which described health and life style of children in the Czech Republic is the Report on Population Health in the Czech Republic published by the Ministry of Health (Kodl, 2014). These data encompassed ten fields which influence population’s health, including the health of the child population. These ten fields are characterized by incidences of cardiovascular, oncological, allergic and sexually transmitted diseases as well as by occurrence of diabetes mellitus and overweight in population. Other data concern lack of physical activity, children injuries, use of addictive substances and deteriorating environment. Unsuitable habits closely related to health, i.e. eating habits, smoking, and alcohol consumption lead to the development of chronic diseases described above. Key findings from both studies related to children are:

- children’s injuries are still the main cause of mortality and morbidity (more than 35,000 of children and adolescents are hospitalized yearly);
- every second child was given medical treatment because of an injury;
- there is an increasing number of children, mainly boys, with overweight and obesity - in the group of 13-15 years old children, 19% suffer of overweight;
- physical activity is insufficient in children – only one fifth of girls and one quarter of boys devote 1 hour per day to physical activity; most children spend watching TV over 2hrs per day;
- there are very bad eating habits – i.e., 55% of children have no breakfast, less than 42% of children eat fruit only once a day, less than 32% of children eat vegetables; sweets eat more than a quarter of children at least once a day;
- around 30 % of children between 13 – 15 years are smoking;
- very serious is the situation with alcohol consumption in adolescents – approximately 60% of 16 years old adolescents are classified as regular alcohol consumers (minimum once a week);
- around 30% of children have allergic diseases; there is an increasing number of children in continuing health care because of asthma (there is a strong effort to increase the awareness of specialists about prevention and therapy of allergies);
- one fifth of boys and a one quarter of girls before 15 years of age have had sexual intercourse.

All of the described factors may result in development of chronic diseases in children (i.e., overweight and obesity) and may increase the probability of their incidence in adult age (Janičková, 2015).

2. Problem Statement

The youngsters with chronic diseases are school-age children and their health condition may influence their school attendance, social interaction, psychological well-being etc. Their teachers have to work with them professionally, adequately, and with respect to their health state. However,

teacher may feel lack of the knowledge or self-confidence of how to do this (Nabors, Little, Akin-Little, & Iobst, 2008; Clay, 2004). In contrast to the past years, nowadays there are no longer school nurses in the Czech public schools. The school nurse was a person who was able to help children and who cared about their health prevention, therapy or provide first aid if necessary (Paholíková, 2009). Their role should be taken over now by class teachers. Unfortunately, pre-service students have no education in the field of children's health diseases and they are not taught of how to work with them. For this reason it could be a big problem to integrate a chronically ill child into a group of peers.

To improve the situation and to prepare teachers at all levels of schools to work with chronically ill children we have developed the project named "The Route from the Beginner to the Mentor" at Faculty of Humanities of Tomas Bata University in Zlín in the Czech Republic. This project is supported by the Czech Fund of Educational Policy and started in 2014. One of the strategies of the project was to develop a network of schools in the Zlín region of the Czech Republic in order to support mutual cooperation (Wiegerová, Gavora, & Navrátilová, 2015). The project consists of 16 modules which encompass a variety of in-service training fields. One of them concentrates on preparing teachers to deal with chronically ill pupils.

3. Research Questions

How much the participation of teachers in the module "Analysis of the Teacher's Work with Ill Children" increases their self-esteem? Does the training in this module support participants' professional growth?

4. Purpose of the Study

The main aim of this paper is to prove the necessity of further training and work with ill children at schools. This paper describes the instructional module which will be provided by specialists in the Faculty of Humanities, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Czech Republic to a group of teachers with the aim of extending their professional knowledge and skills.

5. Research Methods

Participants in this training module will be the teachers in preschools, and primary and secondary schools. This module provides teachers with knowledge of the most frequent children's illnesses, health risk factors and illness prevention. It also trains skills of how to work with ill children at schools, how to create positive environment for them and, if necessary, how to give first aid in life-threatening situations. There will be 8 specific instructional topics covered in lessons. Each lesson will take 4 hours of theoretical teaching and 6 hours of practical training. Self-study of 5 hours is planned for each lesson. The topics covered will be the quality of life, overweight and obesity, diabetes mellitus, allergies, epilepsy, critical state, rare diseases and oncological diseases in children and adolescents. The module will instruct the participants how to work with school children suffering from some of described diseases. The module will be start in autumn 2015.

In order to analyze the teachers' work, teachers will write journals. Teacher journal brings a reflection of the school life. It is a mirror of reality and of what the teacher deals with in a given moment of the day. In addition to provide a view of teacher everyday activities, writing a teacher journal can significantly affect the teachers' professional competencies (Wiegerová, & Lampertová, 2012).

Wiegerová & Lampertová (2012) describe the teachers' journal as a valuable research instrument which is able to observe:

- the process of induction of novice teachers into the school environment;
- the cooperation of the beginning and the mentor teacher;
- integration in the new environment on the part of the beginning teacher;
- activity of the teacher staff;
- traditions and stereotypes of the teacher staff;
- school management.

After receiving the teacher journals from the participants of the module, qualitative analysis of their contents will be performed. Afterwards, data will be processed, evaluated and reported.

6. Findings

In the current stage, the instructional materials of the module are being prepared. This paper provides the first information about the planned research which is starting in autumn 2015. After completion of the module, the paper will be written which will fully describe the training process and the results of the module.

7. Conclusion

The increase of professional knowledge and skills and self-esteem of teachers is very important for the success in their professional practice. The findings will show how participation in the module helps the teachers to develop self-esteem and professional growth during the work with ill children at school. It is hypothesized that the modules will result in improvement of professional skills, communication and work with ill children as well as in increase in knowledge of the most common child diseases, their etiology, and therapy. The last but not least, it will result in creating favorable pedagogical approach to ill children at schools.

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