

Education of staff working in Pedagogical Universities for the needs of health education of the Polish school

Bożena Zawadska¹

In 1997 a concept of common health education in schools was introduced. It was recommended by WHO, UNESCO, and UNICEF. In this concept, a holistic approach to health is accepted and its dependence on lifestyle, environmental conditions, genetic factors and health service. School is looked upon as an institution supporting health education on different levels, such as a class, school, family and local community.

Educational tasks of school being under reform are supposed to make it possible for students to learn, understand, improve, create and acquire skills which are needed to be able to control their lives and cope with different situations in life. Similarly, the aim of health education is not only a change of people's behaviour so that they care for their health more but also making student competent in undertaking conscious activities for the benefit of health.

Expectations towards teachers and schools in the reform (Current Legislation Gazette nr 14 1999 r.) for the benefit of health of school population are really widespread and they are as follows: creating proper conditions for promoting healthy lifestyle and proper development of pupils, making people conscious of being responsible for their health and teaching people basic skills to take care of their health, making people conscious of the correlation between four aspects of health: physical, psychological, social and spiritual.

It is not only knowledge, awareness and skills which are a part of health education but also teaching children and adolescents skills (making them competent) to be able to undertake actions for the benefit of health. World Health Organization defines this approach as developing life skills — as a basic element of health education of children and adolescents and the promotion of health and preventive activities in schools. Those skills should refer to every-day life, i.e. making decisions, solving problems, good communication, self-awareness and coping with emotions and stress. Moreover, they should involve specific skills — being able to cope with dangers, e.g. refusing to take drugs, alcohol (Wojnarowska, 1994).

Taking all this into account, if school health education is to be successful in the case of children and adolescents, it should combine health activities with their application in every-day life, with the prospect of health benefits, life aspirations, and as a result, a better quality of life.

Teaching those skills to children and adolescents requires teachers prepared in the right way.

T. Lisicki and B. Wilk were responsible for conducting an investigation of attempts to educate staff by Universities for the needs of health education. At the beginning of the 70-s, it was only Physical Education Universities that undertook such education and it was not until the last ten years that other Universities and Pedagogical Schools started to do so. (Lisicki, Wilk 1998).

From the analysis of education programs and the preparation of teachers and educators at different Universities conducted by prof. B. Wojnarowska's team a conclusion can be drawn that different aspects considering health are considered to a varying degree and students are taught by teachers with different qualifications and experience in the field of health education.

It was very important for the development of teachers' education system that The Main Council of University Education showed interest concerning the education of students and their health, which was expressed by "Attitude nr 44/88 from 17 December 1998 towards educating students in a healthy way". The Main Council appealed to ministers supervising Universities and to the Rectors of Universities to take suitable organizational and program activities in

¹Świtokrzyska Academy, School Education Institute, 25-369 Kielce, Poland

this field. A problem of organizing a Commission consisting of Ministry of Education representatives and ministers supervising Universities was also discussed. This Commission would be responsible for the formation of health education program on different levels of education, ways of realizing it, appointment of responsible institutions and preparation of finances. (The attitude of The Main Council, p. 343).

In Poland, the idea of "a University promoting health" is also put forward. According to this, every academic teacher and every student will be "a promotor of health". Prof. M.K. Klamut in the introduction to the book "University promoting health" stresses the fact that "promotion of health in Universities should be given priority" because the graduates "taking leading positions in different fields can and they should form social awareness, make proper conditions and also propagate models of healthy behaviour, influence the choice of system of values and also the lifestyle of people who surround them". (Klamut 1995, p. 11).

Two problems appear here: one refers to health education concerning students and the other refers to the system of educating staff for the needs of primary, junior high school and secondary education. In the first problem, the introduction of compulsory subject "Health Education into all types of schools of higher education seems right, independent of specialization. Prof. B. Szczygiel says "schools of higher education, both state and private, preparing staff for industry, environment, administration, science, schools, politics, culture and art., preservation of health and environment, agriculture and other fields — have an important task to do in two fields. One is the formation of culture in general, and the other the formation of health culture of society on condition that you and your graduates will take into consideration those 'additional tasks'" (Szczygiel 1998, p. 81, 82).

As far as the second problem is concerned, the education of staff for the needs of schools and public health, there should be a specialization or a kind of studies (or post-graduate studies) in pedagogical Universities, Universities or Physical Education Academies.

Those tasks were expressed in a legal way in the Current Legislation Gazette by the Minister of Education as an appendix nr 10 to the act nr 494/99 from 24 June 1999 specifying "additional requirements concerning the professional preparation for minimum program requirements for studies preparing future students". Also, in the Act published by The Main Council for Higher University Studies from 27 January 2000 r concerning minimum program requirements in the case of M.A. University studies (Pedagogy) subjects concerning health are mentioned: among basic subjects — biomedical basis for development and up-bringing — 30 lessons, and among majoring subjects — health education — 30 lessons.

The subject matter that the first subject concerns are: basis for good health, civilization dangers, health influencing students' achievements, the most frequent health problems of children at school and also prevention of problems. However, the subject matter of Health Education concern mainly the promotion of healthy lifestyle, measures of health, chosen areas of health education and prevention of addictions.

In the subject matter of the programs, the main emphasis was put on: positive health and problems Directly concerning students — young people who are the main addressees of the program.

The basis for the formation of the principles of the program are the following: principles of educational system reform and the program basis for the educational path "pro-health education", theory and practice of health education and pedagogy of health in Poland, the concept of overall health education WHO, UNESCO and UNICEF, and also experience of schools promoting health in Poland and other countries.

The general aim of "Health Education" is to prepare future teachers and pedagogists to realize the educational path "pro-health education" in the reformed school on all levels of education. The subject is aimed at student, to increase their interest in health matters and support their actions concerning: identifying their own health problems, solving them improving

their own health and development, and also protecting other people's health. (type-written material)

To sum up, the program is the answer to current needs of schools, it deals with the history of actions taken in this field, takes into consideration the health situation of children and adolescents in Poland and also principles of The National Health Program (1996-2005).

For education to be fully realized and to be realized in the right way, structures and programs of continuous education and improvement of teachers must be created. And here comes the need for scientific research conducted by Universities.

Bibliography

- [1] Current Legislation Gazette nr 14 23 February 1999 r. item 129, dealing with the way and deadlines for suiting the so-far activities of primary schools to the requirements of the new school system and creation of junior high schools, p. 597-600, 615-620.
- [2] Klamut M.K. (1995); Introduction. Z.Kawczyńska-Butrym: Health Promoting University. Principles of the program. Published by M.Curie-Skłodowska University. Lublin.
- [3] Lisicki T., Wilk B. (1998): Health problems and health education in the awareness of primary schools pupils in the Gdańsk Region. Gdańsk, Physical Education Academy.
- [4] National Health Program (for 1996-2005), Warsaw 1996.
- [5] Attitude nr 44/88 17.12.1998 The Main Council for Higher Education dealing with pro-health education of students B. Dobrzyński, A. Dziak, K. Nazar: Pro-health education of children and adolescents. III Interdisciplinary National Conference. Warsaw 1998, p. 343.
- [6] Szczygieł B. (1998): Pro-health education at Universities B. Dobrzyński, A. Dziak, K. Nazar: Pro-health education of children and adolescents. III Interdisciplinary National conference. Warsaw 1998, p. 343.
- [7] Woynarowska B. (1994): Health education and democracy. "Physical and health education" nr .