

## EDUCATION TO HEALTH IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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**Abstract:** *The paper presents the potential of education to health as an effective pro-health intervention reflecting the need to establish the principles of healthy lifestyle to be adapted by primary school pupils. Furthermore, it outlines basic tenets for a special-purpose school subject Education to Health as an integral part of the education system at schools, in accordance with the principles and objectives of the governmental education program. The health-prevention competence within the teacher's profession is introduced and defined as a pivotal paradigm of an erudite and systematic structuring of the expected knowledge and views.*

**Key words:** *Education to Health. Primary school. Professional competence of teacher. Governmental education program. School education program.*

The phenomenon of education as a process of conscious formation of a personality in the sense of recognition and self-recognition cultivates all its aspects, promotes the maintenance of a validated, valid life and creation of a new life, it is a space for intentional enrichment of life. Education is a living, permanent process of structuring the complex of competencies necessary in all aspects of human activities.

Education to health can be considered as one of the dominant target categories of educational activities as it correlates with positive value preferences and desirable stances towards the style of living focused on health as the supreme value of human being. It forms a purposeful reflection of physical, mental and spiritual health and related dynamic interactions between somatic, mental and social demonstrations of health as a result of social and personal influences. The target of the educational efforts should be intentional and continuous creation and interiorisation of pro-health attitudes, values and competences reflected in the cognitive – informative, recognitive effects as well as affective – emotional aspects, focusing on expectations, desirable behaviour. In the educational efforts of schools, the education to health is an important and integral part of the educational complex.

Education to health resting on recognised and valid objectives and attributes represents a process that assimilates, integrates, develops, systematises new findings, ide-

as, and reality, critically analyses and then defines and verifies new paradigms oriented at cultivating the child's personality (pupil). The forming, stabilising and interiorising of the accepted standards, principles, norms, and the value framework purposeful underscoring and accepting of the set of conditions favourable for the personality development within the process of educational activities. We mean a team focusing on educating aimed at personal and social development of the pupil while respecting his/her assumptions. The individual potential within the context of fulfilling the above target has a stage of junior school age, when the sensitivity to external stimuli, characteristic strenuousness, interest and activeness create positive conditions for influencing, intervening, inspiring, initiating, i.e. for an offensive strategy of education to health. The aforesaid stage of ontogenesis related to the primary stage of education in the school hierarchy is irreplaceable when developing important characteristics, abilities, habits and skills.

Primary education (1st form of primary school – 1st -4th year) should according to the international education classification ISCED 1 (Tab. 1) ensure trouble-free transition from pre-school education and family care to school education via a stimulated children's cognitive curiosity based on their personal knowledge and experience. The primary education program should prepare the students to independent work and work in groups so that each of them achieve firm foundations of common knowledge as well as personal experience related to the mutual respect, recognition and esteem. Primary education forms the beginning of the systematic study, i.e. a creation of the basic elements of literacy, fundamental knowledge and attitudes towards the world. The characteristics by Pupalu (2005, p. 47) is fitting within this context, stating that primary education mediates the very basic elements and tools of culture ensuring instrumental and value entrance of children to the public life, in other words, provides the basics of the cultural literacy. Spilková (2004, 2005) stresses the requirement for comprehensive and multilateral cultivation of the child's personality while respecting the potential. According to this author, these are changes in the hierarchy of the targets of education where instead of the traditional trio – knowledge, skills, habits emphasising the memorising of a large volume of knowledge in a defined (ready) form, emphasis is placed on all-round cultivation of the personality of the child, the comprehensive and well balanced development of cognitive, as well as emotional, will-related, social and moral aspects. The formulated target and the attitude are based on the expected major extension of the competence of the teacher, profession, implying a complex of competences unavoidable to manage such a conceived profession of the teacher. As stated by Portík (2004), it is about preparing the teacher for the „European dimension“ via programme and conceptual openness, innovativeness, prospectiveness, and responsibility, it is about educating teachers as experts on childhood.

Generally, pre-graduate preparation of primary school teachers emphasises specialised-subject-oriented, didactic and psycho didactic, general-pedagogical, diagnostic and interventional, social, psychosocial and communicative, managerial and normative, professional and personality cultivating, advisory-consulting, informative, explorative, self-reflecting, autoregulative competence, while projecting the profession of the teacher almost implicitly accepts the health prevention competence. Given the aforesaid,

we stress that the primary school teacher preparation programme should represent an open system having its internal dynamics reflecting the transformational and innovative changes, trends and requirements. The teacher should be able to analyse his/her own work in the educational reality, and subsequently redefine, modify or potentially innovate what is considered as well proven.

**Tab. 1.** International Standard Classification of Education - ISCED

Grade ISCED	Schooling system grades-description	Slovak schooling system
ISCED 0	Pre-primary education of zero degree – all types of education preceding primary level	Education in kindergartens
ISCED 1	<b>Primary education or first stage of basic education</b>	<b>Lower primary school (1st – 4th class)</b>
ISCED 2	Lower secondary or second stage of basic education. Follows up on the primary education before entering a higher secondary education	Second stage of primary education(5th -9th form) and lower years of 5th – 8th year grammar schools and conservatoires (until the year corresponding to the 9th form of primary school)
ISCED 2A	Second stage of primary education	
ISCED 2B	Completed compulsory education as part of uncompleted vocational training	
ISCED 2C	Vocational training	
ISCED 3	(Upper) secondary education – education following the completed lower secondary education before entering the tertiary stage	The upper secondary education includes four-year grammar school and upper 5th and 8th year grammar school (general education), secondary vocational schools (including upper conservatoire grades) and trade schools (vocational education)
ISCED 3A	Secondary (general) education with a school-leaving exam (grammar school)	
ISCED 3B	Secondary vocational education with a school leaving exam	
ISCED 3C	Secondary vocational education	

ISCED 1 forms the targets of the primary education focusing on staged development of key abilities (competence – combination of knowledge, qualifications, experience and attitudes) of the pupils at the level that is personally achievable for them. The implementation takes place via the following targets of the school:

- provide the pupils with vast possibilities of managed exploration of their immediate cultural and natural environment so as to enhance their imagination, creativity and interest in exploring their surroundings;
- enable the pupils to get to know their own ability and developmental possibilities and become familiarised with the basics of the ability to learn and get to know oneself;
- encourage the cognitive processes and ability of the pupils to critically and creatively think through their own cognitive experience and active problem handling;

- to develop, in a balanced way, the pupils' ability to communicate and understand each other, assess (select and decide) and act initiatively and also based on self-control and self-reflection;
- encourage the development of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, in particular, enter openly into social relationships, cooperate efficiently, develop social perception and sensitivity towards school mates, teachers, parents, other people in the community and one's own cultural and natural environment;
- guide the pupils towards tolerance and acceptance of other people, their spiritual-cultural values;
- teach the pupils to exercise their rights while fulfilling their duties, bear responsibility for their health and protect and strengthen it actively.

The definition of the fundamental target orientation of the primary education is currently ensured via a government (nationwide) education program (ŠVP) in schools, expressing the main principles and objectives of the state education policy. In terms of hierarchy, it is the supreme target-oriented education program project representing the first, framework level of a two-level participation model of school management, and it remains an open curriculum document to be supplemented as needed and required. The state educational programme represents a starting point and a binding project creating an individual school educational program (ŠkVP) reflecting the specific local and regional conditions and needs. The school educational program saturates the optional contents of education and forms the second level of the participative model of management. It provides the schools with the possibility of profiling themselves and addresses the needs and interests of the pupils. It also makes it possible to use any number of lessons for creative subjects (ov) chosen by the school itself and the school also prepares the curricula. The state and school educational program should ensure the profile of the pupil in the primary education system who is acquainted with the following key abilities:

- social communication abilities;
- abilities in the field of mathematical and natural science thinking ;
- abilities in the field of information and communication technologies;
- abilities to learn;
- abilities to solve problems;
- personal, social and civic abilities;
- abilities to perceive and understand culture and express oneself with cultural tools.

The in-depth analysis of the aforesaid abilities is a model in terms of the content components, whose heterogeneity and stratification place high demands on the pupil's personality. At the same time, the ability (competence) determining efficient development of other abilities is presented only modestly and, principally, in an implicit manner. This concerns the ability of an instructed and active care of one's own health, which is „mentioned“ in the part of *personal, social and civil key ability*, stating that – the primary school leaver concentrates on the quality and suitability of his/her choice of leisure-time activities, actively protects his/her physical and mental health.

ISCED 1 defines the „Health and movement“ field of education covered by the subject of physical education with the contribution of Natural Science, Ethical Education, and other subjects (fig. 1). If we want to perceive such a strategy and accept it as an efficient education to health, then we state (based on several-year-long research efforts promoted by the educational empirical knowledge of the teachers), it is a little efficient procedure. The main problem is to a large extent the scattered nature of health-preventive topics in the subjects taught, which reduces its informative but also formative potential. What is limited is the continuity and necessary succession of the curriculum, the restricted possibilities of relevant evaluation of the education activities. This statement is based upon sufficient knowledge and experience the receipt of which documents multiple adverse health and social-pathological indicators affecting the stage of early school age (obesity, allergy, hypokinesia, passive and little purposeful spending of leisure time, frequency of contacts with drugs ). In line with the aforesaid, we find it important that ISCED 1 provides room in the areas of education (divided into selected subjects) as part of **cross-sectional topics** (Personal and social development, Environmental education, Media education, Multicultural education, Transport education, Protection of life and health, Development of projects and presentation skills) interconnecting, deepening, extending knowledge and positively affecting the attitudes and values also by means of **an optional subject**. We promote such an approach while realising the subject extension in our school curricula. We argue not by proclamative, but real positive experience of schools that have adopted this approach (separate subject taught at school), and the „added value“ of the achieved success is the fact that it is a school with Romany pupils. The integration of health topics in the subjects taught at school has brought about a positive shift in the cognitive as well as emotional and psychomotoric areas.

The cornerstone of the context of structuring the subject Education to health – characteristics, objectives, key competences, strategy, content, evaluation, has been the definition of the education to health as a process of acquiring a corresponding amount of information, findings, knowledge, skills, habits, abilities, principle and creation of attitudes, interests and value standards directed at identifying oneself with the values of health and interiorising the principles of healthy style of living (for detail see Liba, 2010); as a process of acquiring knowledge leading towards orientation in the issues of health, positive way of thinking, and the choice of proper decisions to the benefit of health (for detail see Mužíková, Mužík, Kachlík, 2006). We present a framework content of teaching in the subject Education to health as it was introduced in the school year 2009/2010 at the lower primary education system (Primary school Čaklov, district of Prešov (fig. 2). The education sets and education topics imply target orientation of the Education to health and, at the same time, cross-section topics. The educational context encompasses detailed elaboration of the contextual, performance and evaluation standard of the subject Education to health. We emphasise that is one of the first (if not the very first) project that validated the efficiency of the separate teaching of a subject in relation to the development of pro-health competences of socially disadvantaged pupils. The validated curricula reflecting the current education reality in the relevant field may gain a significant application potential via their recommendation to the Ministry of Education of the SR as part of the State Educational Program. It may also be an alter-

native when implementing health-preventive approaches in the conditions of the school education, not only with respect to socially disadvantaged pupils.

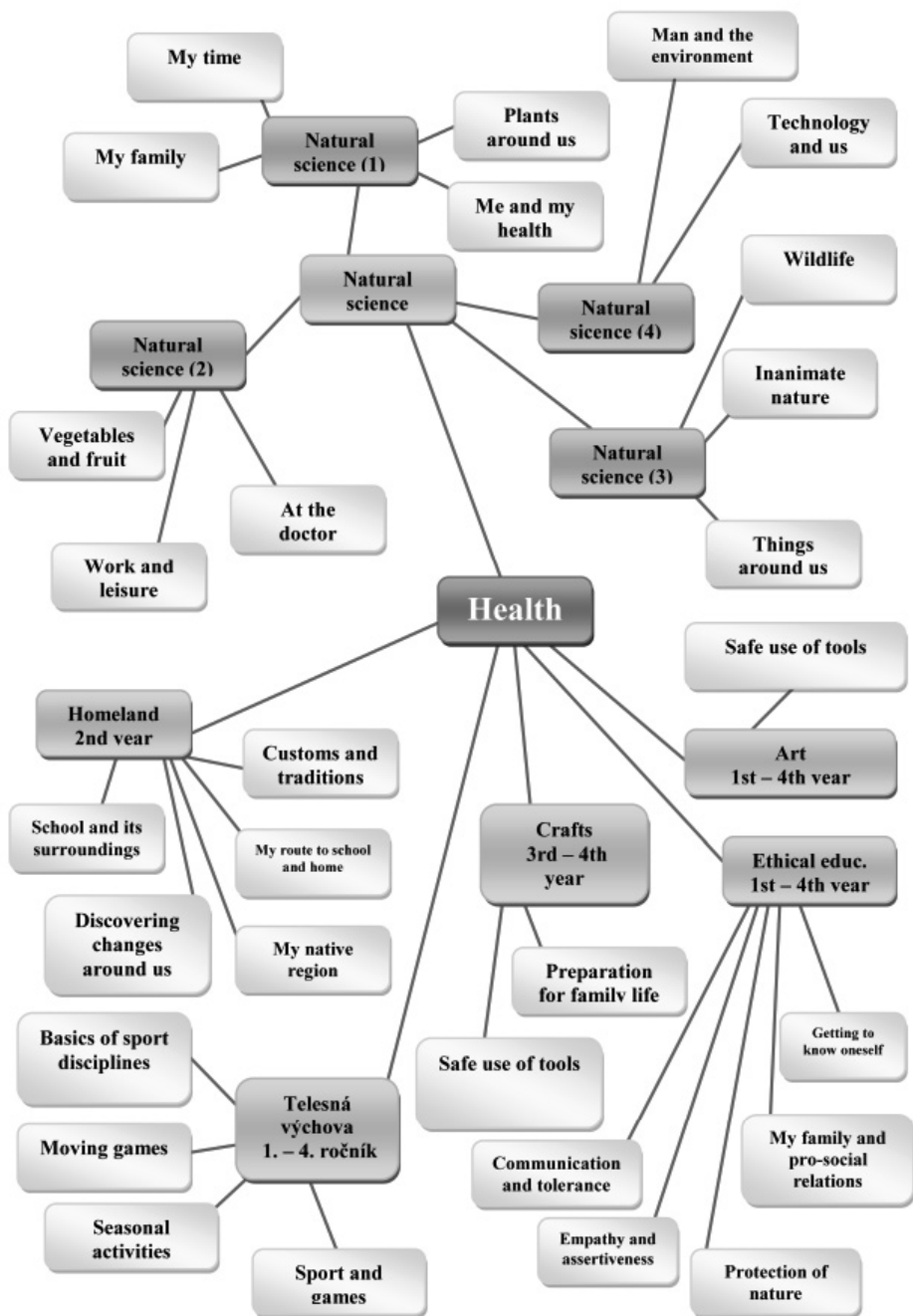
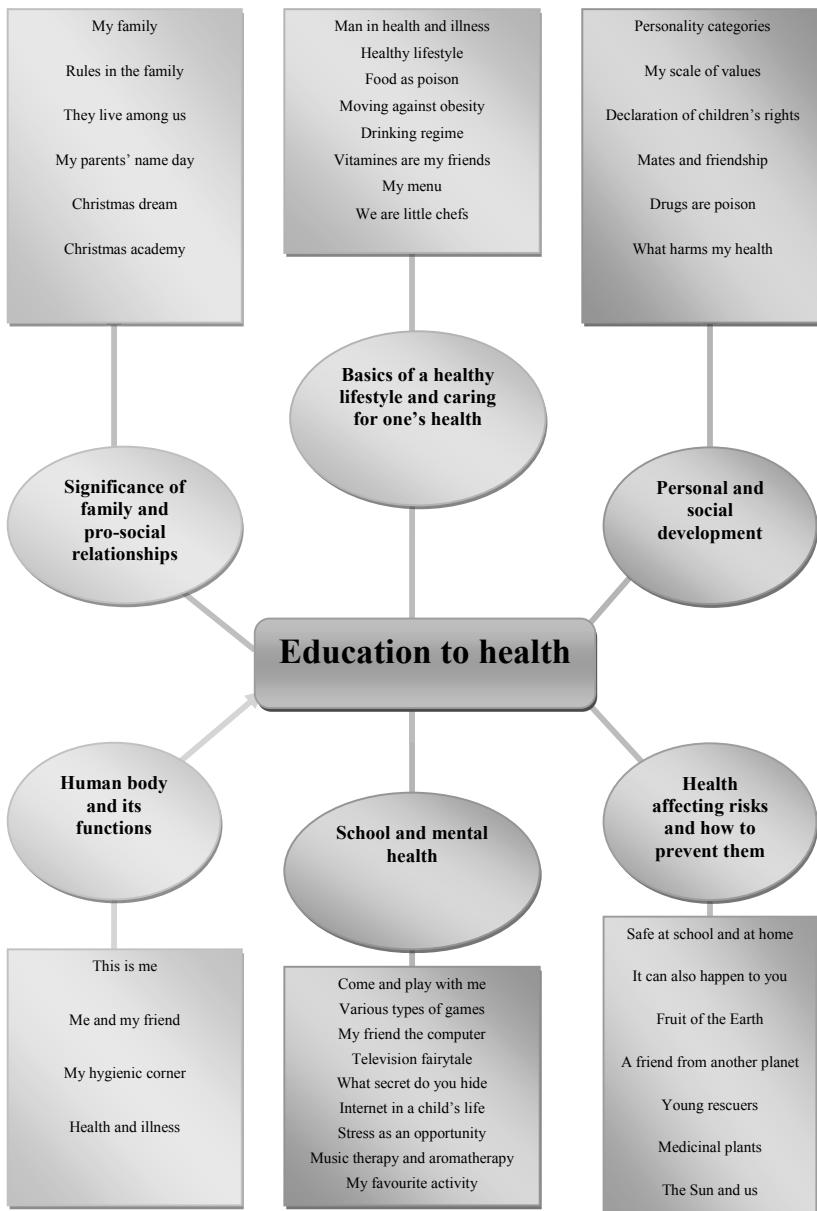


Fig. 1 Education to health in primary school subjects (term map)



**Fig. 2 Subject – Education to health: Example of education sets and education topics (term map)**

We can state that education to health as currently implemented as part of the school curricula saturates sufficiently the cognitive space. We need to stress again that the dominant objective is a positive outcome in the field of emotions, volitional acts and

the pupil's style of living. The health dimension of the education reflected in the education to health should form a synthesis of knowledge, principles, conceptions integrating medical, biological, psycho-social, pedagogical and other approaches and knowledge leading towards a well balanced forming of the cognitive, emotional and psychomotoric aspects of the pupil's personality. The success of the formulated ambition is determined here by the personality of the teacher, mainly in relation to the primary school, which still uses the model of a „single teacher“. The complex position of the education to health as part of the school curricula is reflected in its verbal support (teachers, school management) by introducing the subject that is, however, not embodied in the existing education reality. Our presentation aims at documenting the possibility, fact that the implementation of education to health in an integrated form (subject in ŠkVP) is a precondition (guarantee) for a well-thought, coordinated, continuous and systematic educational activities guiding the pupils in the field of care of their own health, as well as in the field of planning and effective use of leisure time.

Health as a dynamic category determines the openness of the education to health in the sense of accepting the validated facts and reflection and implementation of innovations in the school education practice.

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# VÝCHOVA K ZDRAVIU V ŠKOLSKOM VZDELÁVACOM PROGRAME PRIMÁRNEJ ŠKOLY

**Abstrakt:** Príspevok prezentuje potenciál výchovy k zdraviu ako efektívnej prozdravotnej intervencie reflektujúcej potreby a požiadavky kreovania a interiorizácie zásad zdravého životného štýlu žiakmi primárnej školy. Konkretizuje profilovanie samostatného vyučovacieho predmetu Výchova k zdraviu ako súčasť školského vzdelávacieho programu v súlade s princípmi a cieľmi štátneho vzdelávacieho programu. Predstavuje a vymedzuje zdravotno preventívnu kompetenciu v profesiograme učiteľa ako určujúcu paradigmu erudovaného a systematického štruktúrovania očakávaných vedomostí, postojov a hodnôt.

**Kľúčové slová:** výchova k zdraviu, primárna škola, profesionálne kompetencie učiteľa, štátny vzdelávací program, školský vzdelávací program.