

# INTRODUCTION

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The modern school system increasingly specializes in individual educational goals intended to build up competence in certain areas of life. One of the current and relatively new trends of that kind is health education and the related effort to improve health literacy and promote health awareness in general. A number of institutions in the world are working on these issues and various research programs are dedicated to their resolution.

This book is devoted to the same issues. It combines the work of educators at the *Faculty of Social Sciences and Healthcare, University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra* and the *Faculty of Education, Masaryk University in Brno*. In 2005–2011, the Faculty of Education of MU worked on a research project called *SCHOOL AND HEALTH FOR THE 21ST CENTURY* (MSM0021622421), which explored the relationship of schools and the level of health awareness in the population. It was inspired especially by the materials of the *World Health Organization* and documents entitled *General Educational Programs*, which, for the first time in the history of Czech scholastic education, explicitly recognize health education as a subject of study.

Very important in health education are the approaches that develop health-related disciplines on a platform of social sciences. Significant progress in this direction has been achieved at *University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra, Faculty of Social Sciences and Healthcare*, where a number of psychologists focus on medical specialties such as nursing, physiotherapy and rescue medicine. The main objective of a socially oriented healthcare is prevention, particularly primary prevention, based on a well-structured health education. The development of prevention, which relies on health education or applied health behavior research, is the starting point of a good health education program. It is also the subject of a number of studies that originated at the institutions in Nitra and Brno.

The investigations were done in different contexts, depending on the researchers' professional orientation and work commitments. There are articles on teaching, nursing, environmental sciences, personality development, prevention of behavioral disorders, presentations on experiences with health education design in school environments, prevailing opinions on adolescent health, and prevention of risky behavior. The relatively broad range of insights compiled in this publication enriches the discussion on current health education in an interesting way, be it by showing the roots of this activity or offering a variety of possible solutions.

Much has been done in the field of health education, but, at the same time, more tasks are looming on the horizon. Health education transcends the definition of healthcare by embracing new tasks, which are often absorbed by a qualitatively novel and modern patient care. As the health education is being incorporated into instruction, curriculum analyses may find difficulties due to discrepancies between the curriculum as designed and as practiced in the classroom. In general, citizens do believe that schools have a positive influence on young people's health, yet a notion persists that, in many cases, the students are overloaded with schoolwork. This point alone makes it very

timely to pay attention to mental health and take advantage of the existing psychological programs that monitor the quality of life and the personality profile.

Health education, and the promotion of health literacy, is a great social and political challenge of modern society. This publication looks at these issues from different angles, it reviews current information, and it points to the programs and knowledge leading to an effective health education. The Czech and the Slovak experiences are very similar given the cultural and historical tradition, but in a contemporary sense sometimes divergent, therefore perhaps beneficial for both parties. It is the authors' wish that this book, which publicizes their findings and their views, would not only showcase their work but stimulate a discussion and ignite interest in learning about health from a multi-disciplinary perspective.

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