

# INNOVATION OF CURRICULA - A PREREQUISITE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE TEACHERS' HEALTH LITERACY

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**Abstract:** *Research investigations undertaken in the Health Education department at Charles University in Prague - Faculty of Education, revealed significant shortcomings in the professional and methodological competence of teachers in the given area. Following the results of a study mapping the selected aspects of health literacy among future teachers and educators, innovation of existing curricula has been proposed (for full-time and combined forms of study) with regard to the objectives of Health Education. The article informs about the current results of this research investigation and presents possible solutions to the requirements of health protection and promotion to include specific subjects in individual study programmes. Selected contents of these subjects are currently being tested in the classrooms at the Faculty of Education at Charles University in Prague.*

**Key words:** *teacher education, health literacy, Health Education*

## Health Education Curriculum

In recent years, in connection with the transformation of Czech schools, educational research is increasingly focusing on the curriculum, its terms and changes in the educational process (Walterová, 1994). This trend reflects the ongoing social changes that bring new problems of global (multi-disciplinary) nature, immediately affecting individuals and community, and especially fundamentally determining the current and future training needs. New, respectively innovated topics become subjects of interest of interdisciplinary research teams and notably the subject of educational research, in order to find ways to gradually reflect them in the design and content of education. The current challenges include the growing importance of citizens' health literacy in health care (Holčík, 2009) and the need of its lifelong development.

In line with the WHO programme objectives "Health for All in the 21st Century" and "Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU for the period 2008 - 2013" (WHITE PAPER EC, 2007) there is a significant expansion of curriculum content at each level of education (according to ISCED 97) by the educational area, whose main

goal is to promote health and protect the safety of children and youth. Curricular research in this context focuses on Health Education, its concept, design and implementation (Mužiková, 2010).

At a conceptual level, the curriculum (in the Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education) contains a requirement to develop health literacy specifying it as an objective of education in ISCED 2 - “to teach students to actively develop and protect their physical, mental and social health and be responsible for it” (RVP ZV, 2007). The concept of framework curriculum assumes that the implementation of key competencies defined in the framework educational programmes will be significantly contributed by a comprehensively conceived implementation programme of health support and protection in schools.

In order to design and implement such programmes in schools, these require an accordingly implemented education field “Man and Health” in the school education programme (ŠVP). At curriculum project level, the issue of health consists of a practical content of training and educational goals (expected outcomes), which will be reflected in educational and training strategies and the educational content of individual subjects in the ŠVP. Efforts to promote health must permeate specific activities and teaching practices so that the programme creates opportunities for achieving the expected health-related outcomes. The designed curriculum also includes regime and organizational measures which ensure a healthy and safe environment for pupils in the school.

Experience shows that designing the curriculum and in particular the transformation of its project form into an implementation form in schools is a complicated process that places increased demands on teaching staff and their training. There is evidence that not only their technical proficiency plays an important role, but also their personal motivation and ability to make the right decisions regarding health. Achieving the expected results of education is not a matter of only selected teachers, but expects teamwork of all teachers who created the school education programme for working with their pupils. (Marádová, 2006).

Teachers of each subject should respect the common strategy of health promotion at school in fulfilling the educational content and think through the procedures at the level of individual subjects. They must cooperate and negotiate with each other about how the curriculum will be incorporated into specific subjects, how will they tackle its integration and its share in meeting the expected outcomes.

Health Education is also a field where the effect of the so-called hidden curriculum plays an important role (i.e. processes that are not projected in the formal curriculum). These include the effects of school and class climate, time and organizational mode of everyday school life. The effect of this implicit curriculum is subject to personal attitudes of teaching and non-teaching school staff to health as a value and their behaviour in their interactions with pupils and their parents.

As the above summary suggests, when researching the Health Education curriculum, it is necessary to address the key players who are designing and implementing it in schools (teachers and educators). It means to collect evidence and to systematically deal with developing the necessary competencies of teachers in their academic preparation.

## Teaching staff competences

Research investigations oriented at the process component of Health Education curriculum conducted so far (Marádová, 2007) show that the development of teachers' necessary competencies need to focus on the interconnection of the three components of education:

- a) expert preparedness expressed through health literacy (the ability to acquire, classify, interpret, and use information services for health, make the right decisions that are related to health in the reality of everyday life);
- b) shaping the teachers' relationship of to the Health Education curriculum and ways of its transformation;
- c) developing methodological erudition (the ability to carry out Health Education in life conditions of the school and community).

The scope and depth of necessary knowledge and skills depends on the specific activity of individual teachers – therefore there are different specific education requirements for first primary school teachers, teachers of different subjects of secondary school, educators or teachers directly teaching Health Education. These teachers can then work together in mutual cooperation on effective health promotion programmes at a specific school.

The question: **How to prepare teachers?** has been the focus of a team of specialists for several years. It consists primarily of heads of study programmes, including Health Education at various faculties in the country. Together they consult and deal with issues of accreditation programmes focused on Health Education, implementation of health issues in the curriculum of grade school Teacher Training, tutoring, to the university curriculum basics and pedagogical-psychological training of departmental studies.

An important step to improve Health Education in primary and grammar schools means constituting an independent study programme preparing **teachers-specialists** on promotion and protection of health. Currently, such programmes of study (courses) exist in full-and part-time form, accredited at several faculties of education. Charles University in Prague - Faculty of Education, includes the following:

- Bachelor Programme “Specialization in Pedagogy” - Health Education with a focus on education.
- Master's Programme “Secondary School Teacher” - teacher training courses for primary and secondary school Health Education.

## Special preparation of future primary school teachers

The issue of Health Education is specifically addressed in the Primary School Teacher study programme. The aim of the inclusion of this thematic area is to provide future primary school teachers with sufficient competence to know how to get actively involved in designing and implementing the school curriculum and be able to creatively develop the objectives of Health Education. The implementation of Health Education differs at various faculties.

The Faculty of Education of Charles University in Prague has been offering fourth year students a reinforcing Health Education module for several years, in the primary school teaching programme, including two terms of systematic study of the issue in terms of professional and educational matters. The aim of the six individual subjects (Healthy Lifestyle, Nutrition and Health, Reproductive Health and Sex Education, Prevention of Socially Pathological Phenomena, Family Coexistence, Didactics of Health Education) is to prepare future teachers so that they can put into practice the idea of a school that promotes health in all aspects (cares for physical, psychological and social comfort) by all available means.

For illustration, here is a brief synopsis of these subjects that illustrate the mutual interconnectedness of content and thus a systematic approach to the reinforcing project module.

- **Health and Lifestyle**

The subject presents the basic paradigms of health promotion, based on the WHO objectives “Health 21”. It explains the determinants of health, defines health literacy issues. The goal is to provide future primary school teachers with information on health and life protection from ordinary risks and on protection of the population in emergencies in order to ensure effective preparation of the teaching staff for extreme situations which they may sooner or later encounter. The subject explains basic concepts related to health, health literacy, monitoring health condition and events that are considered extraordinary (natural disasters, threats from spills of hazardous substances, radiation, terrorist attack, etc.). Students acquire basic legal knowledge of the field, get acquainted with activities of the Integrated Rescue System and key guidelines for the population, how to behave in case of danger and how to provide assistance to others.

Students will acquire the necessary knowledge about common childhood illnesses and injuries, including prevention possibilities. The subject enables students to acquire knowledge and skills needed to handle common tasks and processes in risk situations associated with different types of diseases (hygiene measures in cases of spreading infectious diseases, education of children with allergies, asthma, epilepsy and pseudo-epileptic conditions, diabetes, respiratory or cardiovascular diseases). This motivates future teachers to study the presented issues in a broader manner.

- **Nutrition and Health**

The subject is based on the concept of nutrition as a complex of bio-psycho-social factors that permeate the whole life of man. It focuses on the influence of nutrition on physical and mental health, and development of human nutrition behaviour. It introduces a system for assessing the nutritional value of food (the contents of individual nutrients in food, energy value of food, hygienic quality and food safety). Students learn to prepare a menu according to principles of good nutrition.

- **Basics of Reproductive Health and Sex Education**

The subject provides insight into partner and marital coexistence in our society. It analyses the prenatal and postnatal determinants of sexual behaviour, beginnings of sexual life. It is based on the principle of Christian sexual ethics, opens the questions of

preparation for marriage and responsible parenthood. It highlights the negative consequences of sexual risk behaviour, commercialized sexuality, especially commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth. It includes selected topics of medical sexology (sexual dysfunction, sexual deviance, sexually transmitted diseases, incl. HIV / Aids).

- **Family Coexistence**

The subject is based on a system concept of a family. It presents the definition of marriage and family, the impact of orientation and procreation family, the basic typology of instrumental components of partner / family relationship. It deals with the current family in the CR, family policy, the problem of extremely young marriages, family myths and problems of family disorders. It presents the basic contours of family law and social protection of children. Attention is focused on the functioning of the family, children at risk in the family and children in especially difficult situations, complex diagnostics (diagnostic tools), and early intervention (state and non-state system to help children and families with children).

- **Prevention of Socially Pathological Phenomena**

This subject defines risk behaviour of children and youth, revealing possible causes and consequences on the health of children and youth. It deals with the problems of addictive behaviour, aggression and bullying among children, truancy, crime among children and youth. It provides information about the current drug scene, epidemiology, risks of drug abuse, the impact on individuals and society and addiction treatment. It includes legislation on protection of children from addictive substances and prevention strategy for manifestations of children's risk behaviour within the school premises.

- **Didactics of Health Education**

The concept of the subject is based on the WHO document "Health 21". It is based on educational programmes for primary education, especially on the expected outcomes of health promotion in primary school. It provides a concrete basis for implementation of the key themes of health promotion in teaching at each grade of primary school, including current issues in emergency protection. Students create thematic teaching programmes focused on pupils' health and safety, acquire specific forms and methods that can be applied when working with students.

A seminar provides space for the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed to manage tasks in the provision of first aid: life-saving procedures, procedures necessary for resuscitation and stopping bleeding, procedures for treatment of various types of injuries. A constructivist approach to didactic curriculum transformation is preferred, and a manner of teaching which universally develops health literacy.

Based on the evaluation of the above subjects, it can be stated that students who completed the reinforcing module significantly expanded their health literacy, expressed positive attitudes towards issues of health promotion in schools and through their defence of sub-projects demonstrated their mastering of basic teaching practices applicable in the design and implementation of Health Education.

## A survey carried out in 2010 - 2011

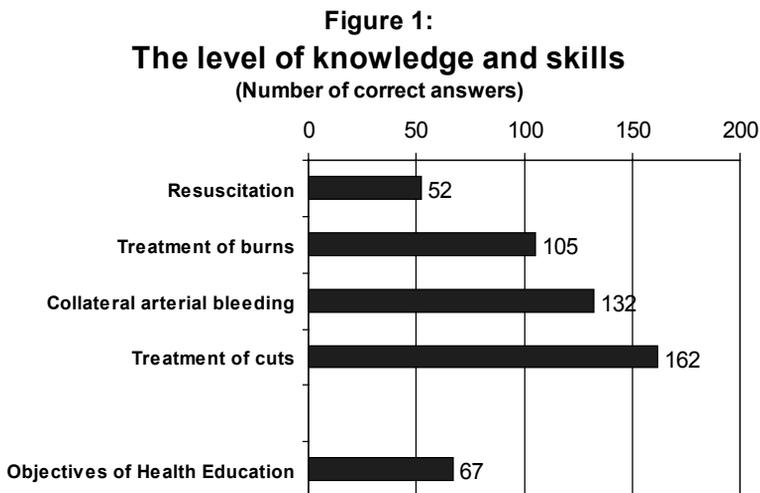
As mentioned above, the implementation of Health Education into school curriculums requires the cooperation of all teachers. How are teachers involved in this process? To what extent are educators in the after-school centres or secondary school teachers willing to help in this regard, while not being directly engaged in Health Education? Do they have the necessary knowledge?

A long-term research monitoring selected aspects of Health Education in teacher education took place at Charles University in Prague - Faculty of Education, from 2010 to 2011 in the form of a research investigation focused on the monitoring of selected aspects of health literacy of future teachers and educators and of their attitudes towards Health Education programmes in schools. The aim of the study was to map the current educational needs of students as a basis for adjusting study programmes of individual subjects.

The sample of respondents consisted of second and third year students of bachelor degree tutoring programmes and various branches of Specialization in Pedagogy. Students of Health Education were deliberately not the only ones addressed, while they deal with healthy lifestyle issues systematically as part of their studies, both on the professional as well as methodological level.

Given that health is generally perceived as a high value standard, we assumed that all those addressed were interested in health issues and the students as future teachers will be willing to think about how their performance in school can contribute to promoting and protecting pupils' health.

The research method was a questionnaire survey (210 questionnaires evaluated) and structured interviews (with 42 students). Evaluation of only a few key issues was selected for this paper.



Selected results concern the students' level of knowledge required to provide general first aid (Figure 1). This graph shows serious deficiencies with regard to life-saving operations – the rules for cardiopulmonary resuscitation would be properly managed only a quarter of respondents, treatment of burns would proceed correctly only in half of the respondents. More than two-thirds of respondents were unable to formulate appropriate Health Education goals. Most of these responses showed a narrow understanding of the concept of health (in bio-medical terms).

The questionnaires and structured interviews also showed that 70 % of respondents were afraid to provide general first aid. Students described circumstances of fear of first aid: 45 people reported that their fear was associated with not knowing the proper procedure, 35 respondents were afraid of making a mistake that would harm the victim. Eighteen students dreaded their own failure (due to panic, anxiety, helplessness, shock, response to human pain, the sight of blood, fear of interfering with a foreign person). Further concerns were expressed: help would not be fast and efficient enough, the possibility of infection, the reality is different from practice, not assessing the situation properly, panic from the victim's death, possible claims and a great responsibility, failing to help physically. The students' testimonies show that they are aware of their lack of knowledge in the field and especially their unpreparedness to provide first aid. This reality needs to be taken into account when upgrading the education of prospective teachers.

Regarding attitudes to promoting and protecting health in schools, our research investigation revealed that students of combined studies were aware of their role in protecting the health and safety of pupils (probably due to the fact that they were already active in educational practice). Full-time students generally perceived only a personal need to be "health literate". They admitted that their own inability to provide general first aid was their personal handicap. Due to the fact that they perceived their future educational activities from the perspective of their chosen field (language, history, math, etc.), they did not yet assume that they should use the knowledge and skills related to health in their own pedagogical work and engage in project education for health at school (e.g. in relation to child injury prevention).

This research probe brought a number of other interesting information. Above all, it provided a picture of the students' educational needs in this area. The results were taken into account in designing content innovations of teacher education in combined and full-time programmes.

## **Innovation of teacher education curriculum**

Developing health literacy should be open to all prospective teachers studying at the faculties of education, regardless of their chosen field of study, as part of the basic university studies and pedagogical-psychological training. Designed implementation of this issue in degree programmes at the Faculty of Education of Charles University in Prague, includes a set of system-related professional and teaching subjects whose main objectives include the following:

- transmit the scientific information on health and its protection,
- deepen students' relationship to health,

- enhance students' ability to make decisions about their health and life,
- develop skills that determine a healthy lifestyle and quality of life,
- teach students to provide general first aid
- equip students with the necessary legal awareness to ensure the safety and health of pupils,
- develop social skills necessary to assist a child in a situation threatening its health and safety,
- develop the skills needed for participation in the creation and implementation of health promoting school projects.

## **Offer of optional courses for combined study programmes**

A set of optional courses was recently designed to develop health literacy for combined study students. A brief synopsis of each subject is presented below. Some of them are designed as multi-stage subjects (I to III).

- **Healthy Lifestyle**

The course gives an introduction to selected current issues of healthy lifestyle (risk and protective lifestyle factors, civilization diseases). Emphasized topics are particularly relevant to the professional activity of teachers. Selected diagnostic tools for the approximate assessment of health level and quality of life are presented. Based on available research results mapping citizens' health status, it includes arguments for finding ways to promote health.

- **Health Protection and First Aid**

The course provides basic information regarding the provision of pupils' health and safety in schools and school facilities. The issue of health is presented with regard to legal, health and educational aspects. The content of the seminar consists of theory and practice of providing first aid – life-saving procedures, the procedures necessary for resuscitation and stopping bleeding, procedures for treatment of various types of injuries.

- **Health Education I**

This subject presents the basic paradigms of health promotion. It defines the issue of health literacy and its development priorities. It draws on the objectives of the WHO "Health 21" programme and other health-supporting European documents. Health education is considered as the conscious creation of opportunities for learning ways to promote health, and the basis for necessary changes in behaviour. It presents alternatives of practical strategic behaviour leading to managing health risks, including methods of prevention in schools and school facilities and highlighting the role of educators in this process.

- **Health Education II**

The subject focuses on selected determinants of health. It monitors the development of human nutritional behaviour, the influence of nutrition on physical and mental

health. The subject content is based on systemic assessment of nutritional values. Attention is paid to the ratio of individual nutrients in food, energy value of food, hygienic quality and food safety, which allows students to comprehensively assess the impact of one's diet on human health. Building on nutrition expertise, the subject deals with food and drink intake in children, prevention of eating disorders and nutrition education in schools and school facilities.

- **Health Education III**

The subject develops students' competence in the preparation and implementation of health promotion programmes in schools. It is based on the current curriculum, i.e. the expected outcomes in the field of Health Education at various levels of schools and school facilities. It summarizes the principles of a comprehensive approach to health promotion in schools. Emphasis is placed on the creation of favourable material and social conditions, respecting the principles of collaboration, cooperation and open partnership. Students individually prepare sectional health promotion programmes utilised in a particular educational establishment.

- **Addiction Prevention**

The subject is based on government policy guidelines of narcotic and psychotropic substance abuse prevention and crime prevention. It provides insight into the current drug scene at home and abroad, including applicable legislation. It contains characteristics of individual addictive substances, risk analysis of their abuse, symptoms of addiction and treatment options, basic forms of prevention and early intervention. A strategy is presented to prevent risky behaviour of children and youth in the education sector and the methodology of prevention programmes in schools and school facilities.

- **Violence in the Family - CAN Syndrome I**

The course provides insight into problems of family violence from the perspective of victims and perpetrators. It clarifies the definition and basic forms of violence, manifestations and consequences of CAN syndrome, the legislative framework of the issue. It emphasizes the need for an interdisciplinary approach in dealing with family violence, explores the involvement of state and non-governmental institutions in the CR and abroad.

- **Violence in the Family - CAN Syndrome II**

The course introduces the historical, social and cultural context of abuse and sexual abuse. It discusses the role of corporal punishment in today's society, the boundaries between physical punishment and physical abuse. The issue of sexual abuse is presented from the perspective of the victim and the offender (CSA syndrome, commercial sexual exploitation of children, offender motivation, treatment of offenders and victims, legal aspects, secondary victimization).

- **Bullying in Children's Groups I**

The subject provides basic knowledge of the issue of violence and bullying among children. It is designed in the form of interactive lectures and aimed at students

who have not completed an educational programme on bullying prevention. Students are acquainted with the current situation of bullying among children in the country. The emergence of bullying, its development (typical stages) and the consequences of bullying is mentioned together with characteristics of its perpetrators.

- **Bullying in Children's Groups II**

The subject further develops the topic of bullying in children's groups. It presents specific solutions and possibilities of bullying prevention among children. It discusses the most common mistakes in investigation and correction of bullying in schools and school facilities. Attention is paid to systematic bullying prevention and possibilities of institutional aid.

- **Bullying in Children's Groups III**

The subject follows the content of Bullying Children's Groups II. It acquaints students with less common forms of bullying, informs about legal aspects of solving school bullying and the current situation in prevention. It presents results of selected research and trends in bullying prevention among children.

- **Quality of life and health in old age**

This subject presents selected topics in social gerontology with special emphasis on educational aspects of this issue. Attention is paid to the position of seniors in contemporary society, education for inter-generational understanding and preparation for old age. It analyses in detail the factors that affect quality of life and health of seniors in our population and possibilities to support seniors' quality of life and health.

## **Verification of innovative content of the subject “*Protection in Emergency and first aid at school*” in full-time study programme (FRVŠ support)**

The introduction of practical seminars on health and safety of children, pupils and students in the event of life and health threatening incidents into full-time study is problematic due to the financial cost of implementing these disciplines. Effective teaching can only be associated with practical workshops (realized in small study groups), the corresponding necessary tools and equipment (aids to practice life and health saving procedures in general first aid).

The project which was supported by the University Development Fund this year at the Faculty of Education of Charles University in Prague succeeded to upgrade the concept of a subject entitled **Protection During Emergencies and First Aid at School** designated for full-time students (set up its professional and didactic content and create the necessary organization and tool equipment). The teaching concept requires seminar form, using work study texts, supplemented by practical lessons in first aid training. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the content and a considerable extent of the issue, innovation lies in concurrent use of direct teaching and e-learning forms of support (a course on Moodle e-learning portal).

## Aim and subject content

The goal of this subject is to provide prospective teachers with information related to health and life protection of the population in emergency situations and ensure the actual preparedness of the teaching staff for the extreme situations in which they may sooner or later find themselves in.

The subject presents descriptions, causes and consequences of events that are considered extraordinary (natural disasters, threats from spills of hazardous substances, radiation, terrorist attack, etc.). Students acquire basic knowledge in the field, learn about activities of the Integrated Rescue System and the basic guidelines for the population, how to behave in emergency and how to provide assistance to others.

It also enables students to acquire knowledge and skills needed to manage operations in providing first aid: life-saving procedures, the procedures necessary for resuscitation and stopping bleeding, procedures for treatment of various types of injuries.

The programme of the course is designed in accordance with the requirements of the ongoing curricular reform. Its concept meets the curriculum needs in schools according to the Framework Educational Programmes and encourages future teachers to broader study of the presented issues. Theoretical and practical training component is aimed at practical application of acquired skills in teachers' work in primary and grammar schools.

## Syllabus

- Emergencies - ensuring population protection in an emergency, definition of basic concepts.
- Types of emergencies, ways of warning and informing the population in emergency situations.
- Legislation - measures resulting from the current legislation on protection of the population in the Czech Republic.
- The authorities and components of the Integrated Rescue System.
- Active role of man in self-protection and mutual assistance in overcoming imminent or occurring emergencies.
- Hiding the population, individual protection, evacuation, emergency survival.
- Natural disasters: fires, floods and inundations, landslides, atmospheric disturbances, earthquakes, dangers while in nature, mass infection.
- Accidents with leakage of hazardous substances, radiation accidents.
- Other emergencies - suspected mail, bomb notification, explosive or other hazardous substances, finding suspicious luggage.
- Protection in emergencies for educators at work.
- The role of educators in protecting children's health in emergencies - procedures after announcement of the warning signal, using means of individual protection, evacuation, etc.
- Protection in emergencies described in the framework educational programmes, possibilities of implementing the school curriculum, preventive programmes.
- Possibilities of using available sources of information for further education of teachers in the area.

- School projects in support of education in the community.
- Theory and practice from the perspective of a Fire Rescue worker.
- General principles of first aid - basic rules of first aid, examination of vital functions.
- Life-saving procedures, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, bleeding, unconsciousness.
- Bleeding from natural cavities, basic dressing (practicing basic bandage techniques), treatment of wounds, electric shock, hypothermia and frostbite, sunburn and sunstroke, seizures, epilepsy, insect bites, animal bites.
- Diabetes, poisoning, diarrhoea and vomiting in children.
- First aid kit and its basic use.
- Health and safety at work, in education and teaching.

Pilot testing of the innovative content of the subject is currently taking place in the classrooms at the Faculty of Education, Charles University in Prague. The experience gained, the results of interim and final evaluation will be incorporated into the material to be presented at professional seminars and provided as output of the project for teacher education at other faculties and universities, helping to inform the teaching public and to advertise education in protection and promotion of health.

## Conclusion

As the above list of innovations shows, we succeeded to implement the themes of health support and protection at least in the optional section of future teacher training. The newly offered subjects can contribute to the development of health literacy of future educators. Yet we still cannot be satisfied by far be with the current state. Following the results of the described project supported by Ministry of Education, the next phase will therefore seek to expand the offer of optional courses focusing on Health Education in full-time study. It will be important to adjust their content directly to their study programme (the needs of graduates). A different approach to the content should be applied to modules for students of preschool education, primary education, special education, Specialisation in pedagogy and of Teacher Training for Secondary Schools. An option is being prepared where doctoral students of pedagogy will cooperate on the realization of individual subjects focused on Health Education.

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## **INOVACE STUDIJNÍCH PROGRAMŮ – PŘEDPOKLAD PRO ROZVOJ ZDRAVOTNÍ GRAMOTNOSTI BUDOUCÍCH PEDAGOGŮ**

**Abstrakt:** Výzkumná šetření realizovaná na pracovišti výchovy ke zdraví na Univerzitě Karlově v Praze – Pedagogické fakultě odhalila značné nedostatky v odborné i metodické připravenosti pedagogů v dané oblasti. V návaznosti na výsledky studie mapující vybrané aspekty zdravotní gramotnosti u budoucích učitelů a vychovatelů byla navržena inovace stávajících studijních programů (v prezenční i kombinované formě studia) se zřetelem na cíle výchovy ke zdraví. Stať informuje o aktuálních výsledcích tohoto výzkumného šetření a předkládá možné řešení, jak požadavky ochrany a podpory zdraví zahrnout do konkrétních předmětů v jednotlivých studijních programech. Vybrané obsahy předmětů jsou v současné době ověřovány v rámci výuky na Pedagogické fakultě UK v Praze.

**Klíčová slova:** vzdělávání pedagogů, zdravotní gramotnost, výchova ke zdraví