



Pedagogical Contexts 2019, No. 1(12)
www.kontekstypedagogiczne.pl
ISSN 2300-6471
pp. 63–71
DOI: 10.19265/KP.2019.11263



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Received: 7.02.2019
Accepted: 7.03.2019

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EDUCATING STUDENTS IN A SAFE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF UKRAINE: CURRENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

WYCHOWANIE OSOBY W BEZPIECZNYM ŚRODOWISKU EDUKACYJNYM W SZKOŁACH ŚREDNICH UKRAINY: AKTUALNE PROBLEMY I WYZWANIA

Keywords:
safe environment,
educational work,
the rights and
freedoms of children,
educational programs,
bullying; prevention,
counteracting violence,
child safety

Summary: The article is devoted to topical issues of the upbringing of students and pupils, in particular, the organization of educational work in the educational institutions of Ukraine on issues of child safety and well-being. Strategic national priorities are described in the paper, among them, the implementation of the State Social Program “National Action Plan for the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child” for the period until 2021, and its main principles and statements, goals and objectives have been analyzed. Modern approaches to the process of counteracting violence in the school environment have been outlined; issues

Słowa kluczowe:
bezpieczne
środowisko, praca
wychowawcza, prawa
i wolności dzieci,
programy wycho-
wawcze, znęcanie
się, zapobieganie,
przeciwdziałanie
przemocy,
bezpieczeństwo
dziecka

ensuring the rights, freedoms and interests of children that are reflected in the concepts of current educational programs have also been substantiated. In particular, the potential of the universal educational program “Personal Dignity. Life Safety. Civic Position” has been defined in the article.

Streszczenie: Artykuł poświęcony jest aktualnym problemom wychowania studentów i uczniów, w szczególności organizacji pracy wychowawczej w ukraińskich instytucjach edukacyjnych związanej z bezpieczeństwem dzieci i ich dobrostanem. W pracę wpisano strategiczne priorytety krajowe, w tym realizację Krajowego Programu Społecznego „Krajowy plan działania na rzecz wdrażania Konwencji ONZ o prawach dziecka” do 2021 r. – jego główne zasady i oświadczenia, cel i zadania zostały przeanalizowane. Podkreślono nowoczesne podejścia do procesu przeciwdziałania przemocy w środowisku szkolnym, jak również kwestie zapewniania praw, wolności i interesy dzieci, które znajdują odzwierciedlenie w koncepcjach obecnych programów wychowawczych. W szczególności zdefiniowano potencjał uniwersalnego programu wychowawczego „Osobista godność, bezpieczeństwo życia, pozycja obywatelska.”

Introduction

One of the priority-based strategic directions of the national educational policy in Ukraine is considered to be the recognition of the upbringing of the younger generation on a democratic basis which envisages the guarantee of the rights, freedoms and interests of children and youth at school. This has been stated in the Law of Ukraine “On the Protection of Childhood,” under which every child is guaranteed the right to liberty, personal integrity and the protection of dignity (Article 10), the Law of Ukraine “On Education,” and where even earlier there were regulations guaranteeing similar rights within families and educational and other children’s institutions, which focused on the prohibition of humiliating the honor and dignity of the child.

Statement of the research problem

Today, the spread of destructive manifestations of violent behaviour such as child aggression, bullying, cyber-bullying, etc., is becoming worrisome in our society, particularly, as it relates to schoolchildren.

It is the task of the state and society to take the necessary measures to protect pupils from such phenomena and to prevent or alleviate their negative consequences and the effects of negative factors of influence. Therefore, the need to improve the activities of public and non-governmental organizations in the area of counteracting violence and drawing attention to educational work in institutions of secondary education is becoming more and more urgent. To a greater or lesser extent, various aspects of the problem have been in the focus of a wide range of modern scholars.

Ziazium, Kremen, Nikonov, Kuzmenko and others have addressed the issues of the humanization of education in the modern globalized world. The influence of upbringing on the development of a creative, intellectual, patriotic personality was covered in the writings of Beh, Kurylo, Lugovy and other researchers. Regarding schools, the problems of the effective functioning and design of a safe educational environment focused on upbringing have been investigated by Absaliamova, Alekseyenko, Ożańska-Ponikwia, Piekhota and Sysoyeva. The interconnection of numerous aspects within the problems of preventing destructive manifestations in interactions and relations between the participants in the educational process has been studied by domestic (Gubko, Panasevych, Saveliev, Stelmakh) and foreign scholars (Besag, Peligrini, Roland, Salmivali, Hezler). They have substantiated the elements, the main statements and principles, causes and possible consequences of the phenomena analyzed. At the same time, the manifestations of violence being observed in the modern educational environment and the contradictory nature of the problems existing in the pedagogical theory and educational practice require the additional consideration of the specifics of the organization of education and upbringing in institutions of secondary education in Ukraine.

Thus, *the goal of the article* is to analyze the current state of problems in the upbringing of young people in a safe educational school environment; to consider the potential organizational perspectives of educational and upbringing work in institutions of secondary education in order to comply with the requirements of legislation on the guarantee of a safe educational space free from violence.

Key concepts of the research and its findings

The term *school bullying* denotes a range of activities that include the systematic humiliation, persecution or harassment of students, a biased attitude in school, the harassment of students by teachers, and sometimes teachers by pupils (Vorontsova 2017). Teachers, whose main function is not only to share historical and social experience, but above all, to protect their charges' lives and health, should be appropriately prepared to timely and professionally respond to situations of school violence.

A safe educational environment is understood as being the space of safe interaction between children and adults in an educational institution where an atmosphere of physical comfort and a favourable social and psychological climate has been created, a place where all participants in the educational process are protected from violence and abuse and where every person, with due respect to his/her peculiarities, can expect support (Tsiuman & Boichuk, 2018, p. 27). Ożańska-Ponikwia (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2017, p. 49) claims that "Implementation of the positive psychology into the classroom setting should facilitate both achievement and accomplishment among our students." Recently, more and more often, state schools have been experiencing situations that can be characterized by manifestations of the aggressive behaviour of children, a negative attitude toward each other, harassment, bullying, beating. Awareness should be raised regarding the need for decisive and reasonable actions on the part of educational institutions, the state and society to improve the situation by preventing the above-mentioned manifestations.

Large-scale work to this effect is currently being carried out in Ukraine. In particular, this has been reflected in the modernized normative-legal framework on counteracting violence and the content of the adopted national programs and corresponding strategies as applied in the activity of institutions of secondary education. We also see this in models of prevention of the above-mentioned phenomena and the implementation of a system of measures, including specially developed mechanisms for responding to violent cases, and the content of manuals with methodical instructions, information and educational data on the specified problem.

Last year, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the State Social Program – "National Action Plan for the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child" – for the period up to 2021 (Decree No. 453, dated May 30, 2018). The content of the main statements of the document clearly

outlined the purpose and the objectives of the program. The causes of negative manifestations of violence were analyzed, the forms and features of such phenomena were described and relevant statistical data were provided (Derzhavna Sotsialna Prohrama, 2018). The content and the materials of the document have been processed and disseminated to all levels of the field of education and supplemented by informational materials on the issues of the safety and welfare of the child. As a result, the essential educational and upbringing potential of the organization of upbringing work in educational institutions was analyzed through the use of methodical means for solving the defined problems.

The developers found that prior to solving the problems of counteracting school violence, thorough work in the spiritual, moral, intellectual, ethical and civic education of children and youth should be carried out, since a free, tolerant person, motivated to understand the world and encouraged to create new values, both material and spiritual, will establish a humanistic setting and world-view ideas that *a priori* make manifestations of groundless aggression and negative behavior impossible. Specialists on the issues of the upbringing of the younger generation have been advised to implement such productive forms of work with children and youth as round table discussions, debates, brainstorming sessions, essays on relevant topics, and creating and implementing social projects relating to assisting the elderly, people with disabilities, children deprived of parental care, etc. The efficiency of the upbringing efforts should also be enhanced by the use of specially created videos on related topics.

The projects based on the materials of the motivational meetings held by Nick Vuichic with adolescents, teachers and parents and then posted on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine could serve as an example of such educational activities (Vujchych, 2014).

Nick Vujcic (full name Nicholas James Vujcic), born without arms and legs, is a Christian preacher, motivational coach and director of the non-profit organization *Life Without Limbs* (Seon-eon Jeong, 2010). Among the main issues that he offers for discussion with the Ukrainian audience, are the following: frank conversation about values, the readiness of a person for change, sources of love for those who humiliate, a live survey on bullying, tips on combating this phenomenon in schools, the problem of suicide among adolescents, reasoning about helping oneself while rescuing others, etc. (Vujchych, 2014). Therefore, combating negative manifestations of violence in schools must begin with the understanding of the content of the analyzed phenomena, realizing the nature of key concepts and a person's attitude to them.

Discussion

Most often, problems of violence in the school environment arise on the level of interpersonal communication, with conflicts between children, misunderstandings in child-parent relations, between friends, teachers and other people being among the main causes. A wide range of manifestations of psychological and emotional violence, such as being ignored, humiliated, threatened, experiencing abusive attitude, etc., require systematic work within the school educational space in order to prevent or timely respond to possible vulnerable situations.

According to the results of "School Violence," a study carried out in early 2000s covering four regions of Ukraine (Kyiv, Kirovograd, Vinnytsa and Cherkasy), one-third of pupils from 20 schools (ranging from 24% to 37%) suffered physical or psychological violence at school (Stelmakh, 2011, p. 432).

According to a UNICEF survey, within a three-month period in 2018, 67% of children in Ukraine aged 11 to 17 were affected by school bullying. Also, 24% of children appeared to be the victims of this phenomenon, and 48% of them did not share information about being bullied with anyone (UNICEF, 2015). The above-mentioned data indicate that bullying is fiercely spreading. Analysts have estimated that shy pupils with exemplary behaviour are the most frequent victims of bullying; pupils who are communicatively restrained for various reasons, as well as schoolchildren from low-income families can be added to this list. The dynamics of the growth of such manifestations are worrisome, thus, concrete, effective steps to improve the current condition of children should be taken immediately.

Bullying as a form of violence can be characterized by manifestations of aggressive behaviour in relation to a person or group of individuals. Usually, a person who humiliates or demonstrates dominance over others seeks physical or psychological self-affirmation (Absalamova, 2013, p. 68). The period of self-affirmation of the individual, according to data provided by developmental psychology, coincides with adolescence, sometimes with pre-adolescence, so the problem of school-based bullying among this age category has sparked the highest interest among scholars.

The pedagogical staff of institutions of secondary education should be capable of identifying, predicting and defusing dangerous situations. They should be aware of the mechanisms of response and intervention procedures, implementing them when necessary to solve problems in particularly vulnerable situations.

In such cases, it is important to act promptly, clearly distinguishing priorities in their actions in relation to a particular situation. Such actions include a general assessment of the situation, considering the consistency and feasibility of steps in solving a particular problem, understanding the causes and anticipating the consequences of the actions of each participant in a difficult situation, applying one's knowledge of the law and relevant documentation, etc. Each problem situation (conflicts between pupils, bullying, aggression from parents, guardians, teachers, etc.), if not avoided in an appropriate way, should be solved reasonably, that is, positively, to the greatest extent possible and in the shortest time possible.

Possible Solutions

To solve such issues, Ukrainian teachers have developed a universal upbringing program for adolescents and students "Personal Dignity. Life Safety. Civic Position" and a set of methodological resources.

The purpose of the program is to prevent and overcome destructive manifestations in society development and to promote the self-knowledge, self-realization, self-affirmation and self-improvement of one's personality. The tasks of the program include: the development of responsible and safe behaviour skills, such as the ability to make adequate decisions in various and difficult life situations; the development of a civic life position among children and pupils; enriching the intellectual and creative potential of pupils; the development of abilities and talents for the sake of a person and society (Osobysta Hidnist. Bezpeka Zhyttia. Hromadianska Pozytsia , 2012, p. 14). To implement the program in institutions of secondary education, special multi-stage teacher training is required.

The institutions of postgraduate education have taken responsibility to fulfil this task. Current in-service teachers go through special training in counteracting destructive manifestations of violence in the family and at school. Such training is carried out during the course of continuous professional development programs and in the intersession period by means of seminar attendance. Apart from a document certifying their preparation to carry out such instruction, teacher-trainers receive materials that are thoroughly processed during the study program. There are also electronic versions (remote, on-line courses) of methodological recommendations, curricula for forms 7–11 pupils, additional materials, etc.

Initially, the Ukrainian Child Welfare Fund presented the Program ("Personal Dignity. Safety of life. Civic Position") and methodological materials for

educational work with forms 7–11 pupils specifically for the implementation of the educational and preventive component of the project “Prevention of human trafficking through the development of social work and community mobilization” (Osobysta hidnist. Bezpeka Zhyttia. Hromadianska Pozytsia, 2012, p. 54). While being studied and applied practically by teachers, the program was acknowledged to be universal, which implies its applicability in the field of the prevention of all destructive manifestations in modern educational and social spaces. It was also mentioned that its content is oriented towards the development of pupils’ key values and necessary vital competencies.

The Program and methodical materials were approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and recommended for implementation in institutions of secondary education.

Information on the activities of the National Action Plan Against Violence is of vital importance today for dissemination in educational institutions. In this way, educators, children and parents have the opportunity to obtain necessary information about the signs and manifestations of violence and the rules of response to such situations. Consultations and recommendations are provided by highly skilled psychologists and social workers acting as agents of implementation of the above-mentioned Program.

Conclusions

Consequently, modern schools should provide a safe environment for education, upbringing and personality development in which all participants of the educational process should feel physically and psychologically comfortable and where they can develop a positive attitude towards themselves and others, gain an adequate understanding of the world around them and sustainable skills for tolerant behaviour, constructive communication and solving educational and life problems. To do this, children should be taught to avoid conflicts, solve tasks creatively and find their way out of difficult life situations. In their turn, the state and society should take care of creating a safe and humane developmental environment in institutions of secondary education.

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