



Professional Attitudes of the Teachers in Implementation of a School-Based Programme about Prevention of the Use Psychoactive Substances in 5-7 Grade

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Received: 10.04.2015; Accepted: 07.17.2015

Abstract: *The subject of the research is the planning, implementation and evaluation of the program about prevention of the use of psychoactive substances among students 5-7 grade. The study was conducted by survey method with 314 teachers who teach in twenty-six schools. The qualification of the teachers to work with the program about prevention was studied in the lesson of the class. We studied the forms, through which the preventive activity, topicality, the methods used and course curricula for hours in individual classes were implemented. It was found that there was an interaction between the various recipients of the preventive activity. The preparation and qualification of the teachers to work on a program for the prevention of the use of alcohol and tobacco products was studied in the lesson of the class. We pointed out some problematic aspects and guidelines for development of the preventive activity.*

Keywords: health education, school-based prevention of drug use, teachers, risk factors, protective factors

Educational programmes about the prevention of the abuse of psychoactive substances in schools include both public and additional health curricula, creating a safe and healthy learning environment, providing adequate services and assistance, as well as the commitment of family and community in the planning and realization of the programs.

The main principles in the implementation of school-based prevention programmes are linked to (Porath-Waller, Beasley & Beirness, 2010), (Botvin, 1995).

- Providing an opportunity for the participation of the whole school community in the decision-making process of the level of assessment of the needs and generating ideas of conducting school initiatives and their evaluation;
- Directivity of the educational components of the planned and implemented program towards reducing the risk and enhancing the protecting factors;
- Implementation of a comprehensive, systematic whole school approach;
- Establishment of interaction with external to the school organizations and building partnerships;
- The use of adequate methodology objectives

Reference standards for the prevention of school level include (Lemstra, et al., 2010; Kröger, 2012; Caria et al., 2011).

Management of the school – the presence of developed and adopted, in accordance with the needs of the school and sociocultural norms and values of the members of the school community, long-term planned school strategy for optimal physical, emotional, social and educational development of the students.

School plans and programmes – developing a school plan for health education, in which activities are planned at all levels of education and in respect of all or of most subjects – Compulsory Preparation, Compulsory Selectable Preparation, Optional Selectable Preparation, lesson of the class, school and extracurricular activities. Training programs, that follow the guiding principles of school-based educational program for the prevention of drug abuse, are an essential component of the curriculum, and correspond to the different levels of prevention by focusing on the needs of different target groups with specific interventions for each of them (Szabó, 2012:101).

Human resources management – the presence of a plan for the development of the teachers and specialists in the field of prevention, building a school team and coordinator for the planning and management of the priorities given in the plan and program. Ensuring appropriate professional development and training for the staff engaged with the program.

Partnership and resources – the existence of agreements for joint work with parents, and external organizations and institutions for the school. Information and support to parents, especially parents of students at risk. Presence of material and methodological resources for implementation of the programmes (Porath-Waller, Beasley & Beirness, 2010:711).

Safe and supportive school environment – provided by a range of discussed and established policies and procedures that provide care, advice and assistance to all students, and also an approach of collaboration between staff, students, parents, experts, agencies and civil society organizations (Mihalic, Fagan & Argamaso, 2008; Hawkins, Catalano & Arthur, 2002:18).

Processes in the school – mechanisms for continuous monitoring and reviewing of the school's approach towards the education for drug abuse and dealing with incidents. The existence of a system of indicators for monitoring of the processes and their results. The presence and operation of a mechanism for updating the school curricula or plans at the beginning of the school year (Vogl et al., 2012).

In recent years, there has been a certain dynamics in the main indicators of drug use in Bulgaria, which corresponds to the General trends in the European Union, but the specific features have been accounted. According to the annual reports of the European Monitoring Centre for drugs and drug addiction (EMCDDA) there was a tendency for the preservation of the level of use of illicit drugs and decreasing of the use of legal drugs, such as tobacco, as a result of the strategy of World Health Organization to restrain smoking, and prevention programmes (EMCDDA, 2014). National and regional surveys reveal the increasing number of children and students, who consume and abuse alcohol, tobacco products and marijuana, there is also a trend of dropping the age limit (Apostolov et al., 2009).

Substantial problems are observed in the system of preventive activities in school, both in organizational and content plan. The priority is still the preventing of the use of illegal drugs among students in secondary school stage, while the risk of the use of alcohol and tobacco products is underestimated, together with the related to them models of use. School prevention is insufficiently systematic and sustainable and very often lacks continuity between educational levels and work of different specialists (Popov, 2002). The initial introduction of school-based programs for the prevention of the use of psychoactive substances must overtake the development of the occasional use in sustainable. Early intervention of the risk factors often has a greater impact than the later intervention by changing the way of living of the child, moving him/her away from the problems and positive behavior targeting (Spoth et al., 2002).

Methods and Procedures

The subject of the study: For studying the problematic aspects in the planning and implementation of the programme for the primary prevention of risks associated with the use of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs in the lesson of the class, in 2012-2014, the research was conducted with 314 teachers who teach the students of the 5th, 6th and 7th grade in twenty-six schools in the territory of the municipality of Varna.

Method: A survey method with, structured and open questions, was conducted. With some of the questions the evaluation is done with the help of the five staged Likert scale. The talk on the established criteria and indicators was also conducted.

In this report we will discuss the results related to the following indicators: analysis of information for the assessment of needs and the planning of the programme; forms through which the preventive activities are implemented; main objectives, thematic content, methods and tools used in the lesson of the class; the interaction between the various subjects of preventive activities; the preparation and the need for development of

the professional skills of teachers to work on a programme for the prevention of the use of alcohol, tobacco products and illegal drugs in the lesson of the class.

Analysis of the Results

Analysis of information concerning the risk of use of tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs using by students. Teachers receive information on the level and trends in the use of psychoactive substances from children and young people, primarily through informal talks with students ($Av = 3.23$, $SD = 1.18$), at an average rate from trials of national level ($Av = 2.65$, $SD = 1.10$) and at lower rate from studies in the school ($Av = 2.08$, $SD = 1.36$) and the region ($Av = 2.18$, $SD = 0.97$). The media were referred to as the most accessible source of such information ($Av = 3.08$, $SD = 0.97$). In a lesser degree the teachers communicate with specialists, dealing the problems of the use of psychoactive substances, and the parents.

Forms of making preventive activities. Half of the teachers in the fifth grade (55.41%) and approximately one-third in the sixth (33.12%) and seventh (32.8%) presented topics related to the use of psychoactive substances in the lesson of the class. Problems associated with their use were addressed through integrated educational content of the disciplines Man and Nature in the fifth and sixth grade and Biology and Health Education, and Chemistry and Environmental Protection in the seventh grade. Half of those surveyed teachers of physical culture and sports, two thirds of the art teachers and half of the teachers in manual labour and technology discussed in the classroom problematic aspects of the use and abuse of psychoactive substances. One-tenth of the teachers put these problems in extracurricular activities. At one-sixth (16.2%), the topics are dealt with in the context of a school project for the implementation of the programme for the prevention of the use of psychoactive substances.

On average 2.1 hours in the fifth, 1.5 in the sixth and 1.3 in the seventh grade were spent for the presentation of these problems. In the teachers' opinion the time spared in training was insufficient for the presentation of the issues. These topics were necessary, according to them, to be presented on average in 3-4 academic hours in fifth and sixth grade and five or six in the seventh. The actual condition of preventive activity revealed that there was no stability in the presentation of the problems associated with the use of psychoactive substances. Teachers shared that, apart from the small amount of time, they did not feel competent enough to plan and develop learning content, effecting in continuity between the topics during the school years, included in the program.

Main objectives, contents and methods for implementation of preventive activities. The main objectives of the preventive activity, connected with the presentation of information on the effects of psychoactive substances on health. The attitude and the skills formed at students for a motivated choice of non-use and skills to avoid risky situations were not sufficiently taken into account as expected results.

According to the teachers in the topicality, it is necessary the issues related to the short-term and long-term effects of the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs to be included ($Av = 4.21$, $SD = 0.95$), and also the risks

for the use ($Av = 4.33$, $SD = 1.02$). At a lesser degree the social aspects of drug use were assessed ($Av = 3.12$, $SD = 1.16$), the reasons for the spreading of psychoactive substances ($Av = 2.73$, $SD = 1.18$) and the measures for their reduction ($Av = 3.21$, $SD = 1.18$). In the fifth grade, half (54.45%) and in the sixth, two-thirds (63.37%) discussed issues related to the use of alcohol and smoking. Illegal drugs were presented by one-quarter of the teachers in the fifth (22.29%) and in the sixth (25.47%) grade and half of the teachers in seventh grade (47.77%). Two-thirds found difficulty in search of specialized literature and educational materials to assist them in the planning and preparation of the topics.

The talk (70.38%), discussion (50.31%), presentation on the topic (30.57%) were referred as the most commonly used methods. Approximately one quarter of the teachers indicated the use of the resources of the art activities, role-playing, discussion of films.

Partnership and resources. During the process of presentation of the topics related to the use of the psychoactive substances the teachers, in high degree, had partnership with pedagogical advisor ($Av = 3.21$, $SD = 1.64$), nurse or doctor in the school ($Av = 3.07$, $SD = 1.21$). In the process, they shared their experiences and problems with the colleagues and parents, and included students in applying the approach «peers train peers». At a lesser degree they contacted with professionals outside the school, civic organizations and media.

One third of the teachers expressed their willingness to enhance their professional skills for the presentation of topics related to the prevention of the use of psychoactive substances through training courses, two-fifths through the topics presented in the methodological units in school. Half of the teachers shared a need for introduction with the sources of information and resources for the implementation of preventive programmes. Problem areas in which they wanted to increase their professional competence were related to the knowledge of the risk and protective factors for the use of psychoactive substances, skills for the implementation of the programme for prevention, use of interactive methods and forms in the preventive activity, interaction with parents, partnership with institutions and organizations, on the issues of the use psychoactive substances.

Conclusions

The teachers mainly used informal sources in the analysis of the problem of the use of psychoactive substances from children and young people, and in the assessment of the needs in the implementation of school-based prevention program. Information, they received, reflected more global trends, and was not always appropriately chosen, so that the specific demands and needs for planning the program for preventive activities to be analyzed, taking into account regional specificity and subculture of the school.

Educational outcomes related to drugs, were planned in the context of the plan of the school for the formation of students' health education and were implemented through integrative links with other health issues in various academic disciplines. The lesson of the class was referred to as one

of the main forms of presentation of topics related to smoking, use of alcohol and drugs, but the stability upon presentation of the topics was not tracked in the period 5-7 class. The preventive programs need to be long term with multiple interventions to enhance the original goals of the prevention.

The objectives, that teachers indicated upon presentation of topics in front of the class, were oriented primarily to obtain information about the harmful effects of psychoactive substances. In determining the objectives and expected outcomes, what the students already knew about psychoactive substances and what they would like to know must be taken into account, as well as their values, attitudes, beliefs and concepts about drugs, what skills they had already mastered and which skills they needed to develop.

According to the teachers in the topicality, it is necessary issues related to the short-term and long-term effects of the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs, the reasons for use and skills for overcoming the risk to be included. The social aspects of drug use, the reasons for the prevalence of psychoactive substances and the measures for their control were assessed at a lesser degree.

The teachers indicated talk, discussion, presentation of the topic as the most commonly used methods. Prevention programs were most effective when they applied interactive methods and techniques such as peer groups, discussions and role-playing, research and experiments, which allowed the active involvement in training for drugs abuse and enhancing the skills and competencies.

When planning and implementing the topics in the lesson of the class teachers, most commonly implemented partnership within the school. It is necessary more sustainable interaction between the school, the family, institutions on prevention of the use of psychoactive substances, the media and the community to be established. The joint cooperation should be developed in terms of planning a policy for action against drugs, application of the program, realization of secondary prevention, aimed at minors at risk, the development of the school environment and culture, periodic monitoring and evaluation.

Approximately half of the teachers are motivated to develop their professional skills for the implementation of the programme for prevention, the use of interactive methods and forms in the preventive activity, interaction with parents, partnership with institutions and organizations on issues related to the prevention of the use of psychoactive substances from the students. The preparation of the teachers is essential, not only to master the strategies for the prevention of drug use, but also to give the meaning to the interdisciplinary and disciplinary links and to highlight how the themes for the formation of the health culture and social skills fit into the curricula of each class.

The educational components of the planned and implemented school-based program for the prevention of the use of psychoactive substances should be directed towards reducing the risk factors and enhancing the prevention factors through the implementation of a comprehensive, systemic whole school approach and the development of school culture. In planning and implementation of the program it is necessary to preserve its essential elements, based on a survey of needs, analysis and planning of

the structure of the programme, its content, strategies for implementation, assessment and adaptation.

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