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(DOI: 10.17460/PHO_2025.3_4.10)

MODERNIZATION OF THE PRIMARY EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC IN THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

1. INTRODUCTION

The analysis of available national-level curriculum documents presented in this text, the Framework Educational Programs for Primary Education from 2023 (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2023) and 2025 (Framework Educational Program for Primary Education, 2025) monitors the gradual modernization of the Czech education system in the context of current social needs, focusing on security issues, specifically health and safety. The purpose of the revision of the Framework Educational Program for Primary Education is to fulfill two basic objectives: to improve the educational outcomes of pupils and to increase the influence of schools in balancing the different conditions of pupils for their learning in accordance with the requirements of the Educational Policy Strategy of the Czech Republic until 2030+ (Fryč et al., 2020+).

The connection between the issues of „health” and „safety” is indisputable in many respects. If human health is influenced by external factors, primarily lifestyle, then safety is primarily influenced by the way of life of society, which is made up of activities that transcend the individual dimension (Sak, 2018). The renaming of the educational area from „Man and Health” to „Man, Health, and Safety” points to the expansion of the thematic focus to include safety aspects of education. This shift reflects current global trends in education, where safety is becoming an integral part of the comprehensive development of the student’s personality. (Eichler, 2009; Tiwari & Dhiman, 2025). The search for the optimal form of education in security issues in the Czech Republic is burdened by connotations with the existence of the school subject of defense education, a subject linked to the political regime until 1989.

2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND AVAILABLE SOURCES

The analysis is based on the documents from the Framework Educational Program for Primary Education from 2023 (RVP ZV) and the Framework Educational Program for Primary Education from 2025. Methodologically, it is based on a comparative analysis of these national-level curriculum documents. The aim of the analysis was to identify structural and content changes in the educational area of health and safety.

Limitations of the analysis.

The available sources differ considerably in their approach. The RVP ZV from 2023 explicitly lists the curriculum in the monitored educational area of Man and Health, while the RVP ZV from 2025 no longer contains it and only lists the expected learning outcomes in all educational fields. As stated in the 2025 RVP ZV document on page 2, „the document contains only mandatory parts“ (MŠMT, 2025, p. 2). It is left to schools or creators of school educational programs (ŠVP) to decide which curriculum will be used to achieve the expected learning outcomes. Help for SEP creators is provided in the form of a model (subject-based) SEP, which contains the curriculum, but is a non-binding document that is part of methodological support.

For this reason, the analysis does not focus on the curriculum, but rather on the expected learning outcomes, according to the 2023 terminology, the expected outcomes of the monitored educational area with the new name Man, Health and Safety, which replaced the previously used name Man and Health. Therefore, this is not a comprehensive comparative analysis, but an analysis of a selected educational area, Man, Health and Safety, and only one educational field within that area, Health and Safety Education, with a focus on the development of education in safety issues.

3. PROCESS AND RESULTS OF PROBLEM SOLVING

Changes in the RVP ZV 2025 document were first compared in terms of the main, i.e., conceptual changes presented mainly in the general part of the RVP ZV document from 2025, followed by changes in the content of the Health and Safety Education field of study in terms of expected learning outcomes with a focus on safety issues. Methodological changes are also listed.

The main conceptual changes in the new RVP ZV include the very essence of the document, the central idea of which is an emphasis on the concept of competence as a prerequisite for lifelong learning and an overall emphasis on the personality of the student, their learning process, and responsibility. This is reflected in the text by a change in terminology (Main directions of the revision of the Framework Educational Program for Basic Education, 2022). For each field of education, the expected learning outcomes (of the pupil) are listed instead of the expected outputs in all categories of the curriculum, which represent

key competences, basic literacy, cross-curricular themes, and fields of education. The focus on the pupil and their choice in learning is also made possible by strengthening the available part of the curriculum. Another significant change is the strengthening of links between the individual levels of education. The document is future-oriented, aiming to strengthen global and development education, i.e., the acceptance of personal responsibility and influence on the environment. The conceptual change in the educational area of People and Health is also evident in the expansion of the educational area to include safety issues, which is already apparent from the change in the name of the area to People, Health, and Safety. The change in name, but above all in the expected learning outcomes (discussed in more detail below), signals a shift from the traditional understanding of health education, which focused primarily on physical and mental health, to a holistic approach that includes preventive aspects of safety. This trend is in line with international education standards, where safety education is integrated into the core curriculum as a key life skill (Muhusina et al., 2024; Ahmad et al., 2022). Renaming the educational area and field to Health and Safety Education is not a formal adjustment, but reflects a conceptual shift in the understanding of health and safety literacy as an integrated whole. This change is accompanied by a reform of content and methodological approaches that responds to current social challenges ranging from cybersecurity to psychosocial wellbeing (Novotná, 2022; Tiwari & Dhiman, 2025).

The name change also reflects the need to adapt the education system to current security challenges, which include both traditional aspects of physical security and new dimensions related to the digital environment and cyber threats (Vegrichtová, 2019). The interconnection of health and safety creates a synergistic effect, where both areas complement and reinforce each other. However, the change in the concept of the RVP ZV document may not be reflected in practice, and even the innovation of school educational programs in accordance with the requirements of the RVP ZV will not be sufficient if there is no coordinated approach to teaching by teachers and if pupils do not learn in such a way as to achieve the expected learning outcomes. The path from the planned curriculum to the transferred and, above all, acquired curriculum will require systematic methodological support and sufficient teaching materials for each level of education.

4. CONTENT AND METHODOLOGICAL CHANGES

An analysis of the content of the Health and Safety Education field of education from the 2025 Framework Educational Program for Primary Education brings about a change in the form of greater interconnection at the horizontal and vertical levels compared to Health Education from the 2023 Framework Educational Program for Primary Education. Horizontal links at the subject level are based on the interconnection between the expected learning outcomes

of the thematic areas of the educational field and the expected learning outcomes of selected key competences, basic literacies, and cross-curricular themes. Table 1 shows an example of a horizontal link between a selected expected learning outcome in the field of Health Education and the integration of expected learning outcomes from other categories of the curriculum. In the text of the Framework Educational Program for Basic Education, each expected learning outcome in a given category is also marked with a code. This interconnection did not appear in the 2023 RVP ZV document.

Vertical links in the RVP ZV are given by consecutive nodal points at the end of grades 5 and 9. The expected learning outcomes, i.e., educational content, are described at these nodal points. For each expected learning outcome (ELO), there is a brief comment, the level of mastery at the beginning, along the way, and at the level of mastery. Each level contains a description of the learning phases, as illustrated in the example in Table 1, an illustrative task, and the aforementioned links to other expected learning outcomes. The description of the gradual progression of the levels of mastery of expected learning outcomes is a significant innovation that guides the creators of school curricula, and especially school management, to allow sufficient time for all students to reliably master the common core. The educational content therefore determines the time (the number of hours) and not the other way around. The curriculum provides schools with considerable freedom in structuring educational content. A comparison of the educational content and expected learning outcomes from the RVP ZV 2025 document and the expected outcomes of the RVP ZV 2023 thematic areas on security issues yields the following findings. There is a reduction in the number of thematic areas from six in 2023 to four in 2025. Of the four existing areas, two are focused on security issues (see Figure 1). The expected learning outcomes in the current RVP ZV are formulated in terms of competencies, while the RVP ZV is dominated by expected outcomes that are more knowledge-based and less application-based. Two of the four thematic areas are devoted to security issues, which is a significant strengthening, and the protection of people in emergency situations related to national defense has been newly included.

METHODOLOGICAL CHANGES

The current Framework Educational Program for Primary Education creates a continuum between the first and second stages of primary school. While in 2023 health issues were addressed in a fragmented manner in the educational field of Man and His World in the 1st stage, the new concept introduces systematic teaching of health and safety literacy from the 1st grade onwards, with health issues having a separate thematic area entitled Man, His Health and Safety, with a graded level of educational outcomes and explicit links between grades. Emphasis is placed on the balance of educational content in the subject of Health

and Safety Education, its gradual spiral development throughout the entire education process, with an emphasis on promoting health and safety in a holistic bio-psycho-social approach. Spiral development of topics, as opposed to a linear approach (where a topic is covered once, usually in a single grade), allows for a return to key topics in different grades and stages, each time at a higher level of difficulty and with greater depth (Hřivnová 2017, Fialová et al., 2016). The spiral model responds better to different learning speeds among students and allows for the individualization of student learning. Spiral development of knowledge is in line with a competency-oriented curriculum; students not only acquire knowledge but also develop the ability to use, reflect on, and apply it in different situations.

Spiral development of topics has always been recommended by subject-specific didactics of health and safety education (Kovaříková & Marádová, 2020). Repeated surveys by the Czech School Inspectorate (ČŠI, 2014, 2016) pointed to insufficient mastery of expected outcomes in the field. The current RVP ZV creates optimal conditions for the implementation of the spiral model in school educational programs, with a gradual gradation of expected learning outcomes and their interconnection.

5. DISCUSSION

Security issues in education are a dynamically evolving area that closely reflects current social, political, and technological changes (Ferguson, 2014). In recent years, security education in primary and secondary schools has been the subject of intensive research, both nationally and internationally. Research focuses on the inclusion of safety topics in the curriculum, teaching effectiveness, teacher competence, and the implementation of safety policies (Petal, M., Ronan, K., Ovington, G., & Tofa, M., 2020). In recent decades, there has been a fundamental shift in the perception of security towards a much broader concept encompassing the social, psychological, economic, environmental, and informational aspects of modern civilization (Astor & Benbenishty, 2022; Colin, 2024; Gaikšte & Katane). This transformation is a response to the growing complexity of security threats, which have not only geographical and historical but also socio-cultural and political contexts. Discussions on the form of education in this area are also being held abroad (Timm, 2019; Mayer & Jimerson, 2019; Scott Dunlab, 2013). However, countries with long-established security education systems do not provide information. Recommendations for the establishment of uniform security education in the field of EU defense are currently emerging (Urych & Matysiak, 2022).

It is now clear that safety issues cannot be addressed separately in individual subjects in school education, but must be approached in an integrated manner within the framework of a so-called school safety culture (Ismail et al., 2024). This means that safety issues are integrated into the primary education

curriculum at the national level, with clearly defined expected learning outcomes and an emphasis on interconnection with school culture. A broader anchoring of safety issues in framework educational programs is also necessary in view of the results of repeated surveys by the Czech School Inspectorate, which highlight the need for a systematic approach to safety in schools. The situation is significantly influenced by the different starting positions of schools. For some schools, working on the new school educational program will not be difficult, as they have already incorporated the changes presented in the RVP ZV into their school educational program, and the revision confirms that they are on the right track. For some schools, the changes will be fundamental, and critical voices and rejection of the changes can be expected (Karthikeyan, 2024; Nohavová et al., 2021).

Discussions on education in security issues are therefore still influenced not only by current threats such as cyber attacks, environmental risks, and migration, but also by efforts to find a balance between theoretical preparation and the formation of students' values and attitudes (Concept of Preparing Citizens for National Defense 2025–2030, 2025). The expert debate focuses on the question of how to effectively combine the scientific and technical component with educational influence and how to ensure that security behavior is not the result of fear or coercion, but of inner conviction and acceptance of responsibility. No curriculum document can ensure this.

In conclusion, education in security issues remains a significant challenge for today's schools. It requires not only an appropriate curricular framework and high-quality teacher training, but above all an open discussion about the values, norms, and strategies that will lead to the development of a safe and healthy school culture in a changing world.

6. CONCLUSION

The transformation of the educational area from „human beings and health” to „human beings, health, and safety” represents a turning point in the concept of prevention-oriented education. The integration of safety issues and the strengthening of the personal and social components create a comprehensive model that goes beyond the traditional biomedical concept of health. Renaming the educational area from „people and health” to „people, health, and safety” represents a significant step in the modernization of Czech primary education. This change reflects current social needs and international trends that emphasize the importance of comprehensive preparation of students for the challenges of the 21st century. The integration of safety issues into health education creates a comprehensive framework for the development of key life skills. There is a cultural shift in the perception of safety in a holistic concept of safety culture, which cannot be achieved without the acceptance of personal responsibility for one's own safety and, thus, internal motivation for the value of safety.

The transformation of the educational area from „people and health” to „people, health, and safety” represents a change in the concept of prevention-oriented education. The integration of safety issues and the strengthening of the personal and social components create a comprehensive model that goes beyond the traditional biomedical concept of health. However, the successful implementation of these changes will require systemic support from schools, continuous training for teachers, and innovative approaches to evaluating educational outcomes.

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Modernization of the primary education curriculum in the Czech Republic in the challenges of the 21st century

Summary

Aim: The main aim of the contribution is to analyze the current concept of security issues within the existing Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education (RVP ZV) and compare it with the RVP ZV from 2023. A key perspective is the education in security issues in the Czech Republic. A partial goal is to highlight the didactic specifics of teaching these issues.

Methods: The concept of education in security issues was compared using the method of analysis of curricular documents, thematic reports from the Czech National Institute of Education, and other normative documents from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The definition of didactic specifics is based on a description of the development of didactic thinking in the field of health and safety education, resulting from the analysis of key didactic texts in the field.

Results: The new Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education (MEYS, 2024), aligned with the Czech Republic’s Educational Policy Strategy 2030+, has anchored security issues at the first level of education (in the area Man and his World) and the second level (in the area Man, Health and Safety). This structure allows for a comprehensive, cross-disciplinary connection of health and safety issues, emphasizing an active individual approach and the development of protective factors. Furthermore, the current curriculum confirms that the concept of closed and isolated school subjects no longer corresponds to the reality of the modern world. The analysis reveals a clear shift from the prevention of individual risks to a broader concept of school safety, focusing on strengthening resilience and adaptation mechanisms.

Conclusions: Security issues constitute a complex problem requiring a systemic approach and the interconnectedness of formal, non-formal, and informal education. Crucially, the attitude of teachers towards this issue will be essential for achieving the expected learning outcomes. The contribution proposes the necessity for a discussion on a change in curricular thinking, rather than focusing on prevailing debates about moving sub-topics between educational areas.

Keywords: curriculum, safety issues, security, didactics.