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Re-examining the Relationship between Socioemotional Learning and Positive Youth Development: Systematic Review[2]

Extended summary

Positive youth development is not seen only as a context for adequate cognitive development, but also as an aspiration in itself. The actualization of the concept of socio-emotional learning returns the focus of experts dealing with the prevention of problem behavior to the importance of general prevention. The tendencies in prevention science are such that some elements of promoting the mental health and psychological well-being of young people are increasingly being included in the design of prevention programs. Regarding the principles of prevention, science school programs aim to improve cognitive, emotional, and social skills through the curriculum. Programs are focused on the prevention of aggressive behavior, crime, substance abuse, sexual risk behavior, unwanted pregnancy, and mental health problems, with effects lasting from one to fifteen years. There seems to be a lack of data on the implementation of socio-emotional interventions within the curriculum considering prevention science and practice in Serbia, with those that are most often based on peer support or formal mentoring. In recent years, the authors' great attention has been focused on re-examining the relationship between socio-emotional learning and the positive youth development. There are efforts to integrate these concepts, as socio-emotional learning is seen as one of the models for

operationalization of the positive youth development. The aim of this paper is to consider the relationship between the concept of positive youth development and socio-emotional learning, which are perceived in the scientific and professional public as the concepts of key importance for education, on the one hand, and the psychological well-being of students, on the other. It is expected that the insight into current studies based on the review of the most successful interventions of positive youth development will provide an insight into the practical implications for the differentiation of these concepts. Also, a clearer distinction between the concepts could contribute to a greater systematicity in the "sea" of school interventions, the content of which often overlaps, while many important aspects of students' psychosocial functioning remain uncovered. The criteria for including scientific results in the analysis were as follows: 1) that the article was published between 2016 and 2021; 2) that it is a systematic review or a meta-analysis of interventions of positive youth development; 3) that it is published in English; 4) that the interventions are implemented in a school environment (or that at least one of them); and 5) that the studies include a population of children and adolescents. The searched databases include: Google Scholar, PsycINFO, Web of Science (WOS), Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) and Scopus. The following keywords were used: systematic review/meta-analysis, school-based intervention, positive youth development, socioemotional learning. The research process was conducted in the period from June 9 to 14, 2021. As a result of the review of these databases, 22 articles were found and only seven systematic reviews among them reached the baseline criteria and were set aside for review. Based on the review of the effective interventions, it is concluded that the most frequently implemented and providing the best results are those incorporated into the curriculum, with teachers as the main implementers, i.e., the interventions based on socio-emotional learning. The data on the criteria according to which the programs are classified within the considered studies indicate that, regardless of whether the "logic of positive youth development" was followed, the environment, participants or preventive and promotional outcomes, one can conclude that socio-emotional learning is one of the most important mechanisms leading to positive youth development, that the effects of these interventions last the longest, they are most successful with low-risk students, and that it is desirable to apply the intervention in an environment other than school. Unlike the programs that directly derive from the positive youth development paradigm, where great importance is given to external educators, in socio-emotional learning teachers have the main role. In this regard, one of the main expectations is that more attention will be paid to this topic at the home faculties for teacher education, as well as through professional development.

Keywords: positive youth development, socio-emotional learning, well-being, students

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