

Chapter 6

Multidisciplinary Work and Health Education

ABSTRACT

In recent years, health needs have changed in society, especially for children and adolescents. New social habits that are often detrimental to their health, such as having an inadequate diet with increased consumption of ultra-processed foods, sweets or sugary drinks, a significant increase in the time spent on screen devices and a decrease in the time devoted to physical activity, are causing the appearance of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) at increasingly younger ages. In addition, the global pandemic caused by COVID-19 only worsened the situation by provoking changes in the habits of the child and youth population, which has led to greater social concern for the health of the youngest members of society. That is why the school, along with the family, becomes one of the main agents of change of such habits harmful to health as well as being an ideal entity for the promotion of health.

EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Throughout history, health has always maintained a close relationship with the educational sphere, which demonstrates the importance of educating from a very early age in the promotion of health. In addition, it should be noted that both health and education are two fundamental rights of children around the world. This fundamental right to health and according to the Ottawa Charter for the Promotion of Health (World Health Organization, 1986), must contemplate different aspects or conditions that guarantee the health of children, among which we can find access

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to education, decent housing, living in harmony and peace, access to food, sustainability, living with a sustainable ecosystem, social justice or the guarantee of equity.

It is for this reason that education is of fundamental importance for the health of the school-age population and that there are some social determinants that influence people's health, their risk of contracting certain diseases and even their life expectancy (World Health Organization, 2024). From this we can see the need to work on social inequalities in order to guarantee adequate health for all members of society. This work must be carried out under a holistic perspective and where the educational institution is of great importance and this responsibility does not only fall on the health systems.

From these conditioning factors it is clear that students in early stages, such as early childhood education, belong to an environment of continuous interaction with different influences. This is why Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory emphasizes the great importance of the development of health in the educational environment. This theory understands “*the development and learning processes of children in early childhood education as a set of processes through which the properties of the person and the environment interact to produce constancy and change in the biopsychological characteristics of the person throughout his or her life*” (Gifre & Esteban, 2012).

For this reason, educational systems around the world should have among their fundamental objectives that all members of the educational community, but with special emphasis on their students, can develop certain skills and competencies that help them to achieve a full life, allow them to function efficiently in society and have a balanced relationship with themselves, with the social environment and with the natural environment to ensure healthy lifestyles.

In addition, other international institutions such as the World Health Organization and UNESCO highlight the need for educational centers to work on life skills for all students, especially those related to socioemotional aspects (Organización Panamericana de Salud et al., 2022).

Similarly, international institutions of recognized prestige such as the Schools for Health in Europe (SHE), point to the existence of numerous scientific evidence to affirm the importance of the relationship between education and health, highlighting the following (Vilaça et al., 2020):

- That the prevalence of people with poorer health is linked to those with lower levels of education. Likewise, low educational levels have a greater relationship with mortality.
- Students with better health indicators have low levels of school absenteeism and have a context that facilitates learning.

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