

Risk behaviour among young people today

A theoretical-empirical study

Summary

This interdisciplinary paper discusses a multi-aspect narrative in the field of education sciences focusing on: socialisation, education, personal development and psychological-pedagogical help. The main problem presented in the book is that of risk behaviour among young people today. Studies have been conducted on different aspects of how adolescents function during this transition stage, which, on the one hand, is characterised by great creative potential regarding one's identity and relations with other people and the world, and on the other by uncertainty and risk. In creating their own identity and (re)constructing their place in surrounding social reality, young people engage in new forms of behaviour, including risk behaviour. These are not chance behaviours, but a response to changes occurring inside the organism and external expectations. Risk behaviour among young people poses a challenge to those responsible for their development, namely parents, teachers and psychologists to provide the correct intervention, from fostering development and strengthening resources, through prophylactic measures to therapy itself.

The book comprises two parts. The first is devoted to a discussion of a theoretical and diagnostic nature. In this part an analysis was carried out of the significance of young people's risk behaviours for the developmental tasks of adolescence, based on the assumption that young people act in a purposeful way in order to achieve the developmental objectives that appear in a specific context. Chapter One includes a description of adolescence as a life stage and a review of the different theoretical concepts related to risk behaviour among young people. Chapter Two provides an overview of risk behaviours with a particular focus on behaviours involving the use of psychoactive substances, aggression and sex-related risk behaviours. Chapter Three looks at the prevention of risk behaviour.

Part Two of the book contains an analysis and interpretation of qualitative research. Data presented in general terms in the first part of the book are analysed in detail in Part Two in order to elaborate on theories and generalizations already presented. A qualitative group case study was employed and this dealt with risk behaviour as perceived by secondary school class tutors and sociotherapists working with lower secondary school pupils in therapy. It was possible to gain an 'understanding of the phenomenon' of risk behaviour among young people by selecting study participants who deal with whole groups of young people (teachers), and with individuals from groups at greatest risk (sociotherapists), and analysing their responses.

This made it possible to obtain information about young individuals in danger of starting risk behaviour or those who engage in it only occasionally, as well as those who have been referred to specialist therapy as a result of increased incidences of a particular risk behaviour.

Chapter Four contains the methodological basis for the research: its objectives, research problems, sample selection method, research plan, methods and ethical principles taken into consideration during design stage, the duration of the study and analysis of findings. Subsequent chapters in the second part of the book – Five, Six, Seven and Eight – contain an analysis and interpretation of material gathered during interviews. The conclusion of the research provides the conceptualization of the risk behaviour phenomenon, as well as a classification of risk behaviours depending on their intensity and function.

Translated by Rob Pagett