

Abstract

Title: Horticultural therapy in individuals with autism spectrum disorder

Objectives: The objective of this work was to map the use of education in the natural environment in children with autism spectrum disorder in schools and leisure organizations in the Czech Republic, with special focus on therapeutic-pedagogical use of gardens, called horticultural therapy. As a part of investigation, it was examined whether this form of therapy was part of the teaching process and how it might influence the behaviour of the individuals concerned.

Methods: Empirical research was conducted by collecting data using a questionnaire of its own design. It has been sent to school educators who include the inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorder and to special organizations caring for individuals with autism spectrum disorder throughout Czech Republic.

Results: The results of the questionnaire survey, which evaluated 40 responses, show that of the respondents interviewed, 41 % encountered the concept of ecotherapy and perceived it as an appropriate supplement. However, the same percentage said they were hearing about ecotherapy for the first time. 38,7 % of respondents incorporate horticultural therapy into an individual education plan and educational support or development plans for pupils/clients when there is an opportunity to do so, but 19,4 % think it is not as integrated as it would be appropriate. Both ecotherapy and horticultural therapy are most supportive of exercise fitness and fine and rough motor skills. But it also has a positive impact in the areas of behaviour, stress management and attention support.

Keywords: Autism, autism spectrum disorder, ecotherapy, free time activities, horticultural therapy