Evaluation of a health promoting program in French primary schools: methodological presentation of a mixed methods study

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INTRODUCTION

Schools’ contribution to students’ health and well-being has been increasingly recognized. Nevertheless, the development of suitable evaluation approaches for health promotion in schools remains a central question. In France, few studies have been published on the implementation and evaluation of programs aiming to develop health promoting (HP) practices among teachers and school communities.

Our research focuses on the development of an evaluation design that enables to take into account the complexity of the implementation of HP programs. We thus developed a design based on:

- a systemic approach of evaluation taking into account the mechanisms, the contexts and the outcomes as defined in realistic evaluation that we adjusted to our context (Chen, 1990, Pawson & Tilley, 1997);
- the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

PRESENTATION OF THE HP PROGRAM

This initiative aims at:

- improving children’s well-being at primary school,
- developing sustainable HP projects in school settings by promoting, sharing and enhancing teachers’ and schools’ HP practices.

Figure 1 presents the main principles and practices that underlie this HP program.

![Figure 1: Program’s main principles and practices](image1)

In each region, a resource team is trained. It is formed of teacher trainers, pedagogical advisors, members of HP services and members of local HP NGOs. This team then trains and supports the teachers. The aim is that teachers integrate HP approaches in their everyday practices at the class level as well as at the school and community levels.

The project is constituted of two stages: a pilot and a generalization stages. Figure 2 presents the localization and the participation to the 2 stages of the project.

![Figure 2: Localisation and participation to stage 1 (dark purple) and stage 2 (purple) of the project](image2)

This initiative is supervised by a scientific committee formed of health and educational experts and practitioners. An ethics committee was also set up.

DISCUSSION

Mixed methods provide a framework to combine qualitative and quantitative data, it helps to understand complex systems and therefore is an option to strengthen evaluation in the field of health promotion. Moreover, a systemic approach of evaluation that aims at understanding how the mechanisms are triggered, in which context and for whom, gives elements that can be decisive in the extension of the program and may help policy-makers and stakeholders to adapt the program to the specificities of their context and population.