

# **“It was a school year like any other”: evidence-based approach regarding school quarantines and hybrid education in Czechia in the school year 2021/2022**

*Hejzlarova Eva*

*Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic*

*Štěpánka Volfová, Faculty of Social Sciences, Prague, Czechia*

**Abstract:** The substantive topic of the paper is quarantines of school children and related hybrid education in the period from September 2021 to April 2022, when (not only) the Czech education system was strongly affected by the covid-19 pandemic. The main research question is what the roots of non-evidence in this period and in this topic are. Alongside, we will also discuss the questions of the necessity of evidence within the crisis period and of the role of private sector companies in providing evidence.

This paper emerged as a side-line of our original research interest in the analysis of the implementation structure and various interpretations of the applied policy recommendations. We followed the path from the ministerial guidelines through state administration institutions such as the Regional Public Health Authority and the Czech School Inspectorate, the municipal authority responsible for schools in its area and the schools where we were interested in the position of principal (or his/her deputy for the first grade - ISCED 1) and finally the teacher in the first grade (ISCED 1). We aimed to understand how in the process of implementation the policy meaning was interpreted and transformed at various levels of the implementation structure and what individual actors considered as important in a given situation and how they interpreted the policy in their particular contexts.

To put our investigation in a larger context, we aimed to find any evidence possible. We found out that neither state administration nor municipal authority had only limited evidence of how many children were unable to attend full-time education and to what extent. While the previous pandemic years of 2019/20 and 2020/21 school years where “lockdowns” were the key measure to control the disease, the 2021/22 school year was considered "normal" by the authorities and was monitored using only the usual indicators. At the end of the day, only partial evidence was provided to us by a private software company providing schools with electronic application working with attendance and absence records and the management of grades and communication between school and family.

In the case study we work with expert interviews with representatives of different parts of the implementation structure and their perception of evidence. s