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Inclusive values of sport activities

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Abstract

The universal nature of sport, together with its positive impact on physical, emotional and social development, is an effective means of eliminating the stigma associated with disability. Sport identified as a phenomenon of modern culture and education, thanks to its unique character, refers to broadly understood humanism, significantly contributing to supporting socialization, independence, initiation and full integration. Sports activity along with the idea of Olympism and behavior in accordance with the established rules of "fair play" are also an alternative way for disabled people to gain faith in their own abilities, eliminate the effects of disability, or are an area of improving the quality of life and strengthening family and social ties. It seems obvious that in this context sport should not be elite, but should be characterized by the mass participation of disabled people in recreational and qualified sports activities.

Keywords: sport for the disabled, social values of sport, Olympic games

Introduction

Views on the functioning of people with disabilities in society have changed significantly in recent decades, shaped under the influence of a "different view" of the disabled people, while strengthening the belief in their rights to a normal and dignified life. An extremely important element in the process of rehabilitation of a disabled person is his rational attitude towards his disability along with the shaped motivation to overcome the limitations resulting from his own deficiencies. The obstacle to achieving the indicated qualities - usually accompanying disability - is negative assessment of one's own abilities, stress caused by powerlessness, unwillingness to undertake any activity and a sense of lower social value.

The importance of sport in the lives of people with disabilities

The concept of restoring faith in the sense of life and subjective treatment of a person who is "otherwise fit" is an expression of globally understood humanitarianism, according to which society should treat every, even the most disabled individual, on an equal basis with others in all manifestations of social life [1, p. 356].

It seems that one of the effective directions for creating positive values in people with disabilities is their active participation in physical culture, with particular reference to recreational and qualified sports activity. According to T. Maszczak, maintaining a dignified attitude towards a disabled person and their own health is inseparable:

[...] with full and creative participation in various forms of physical activity, which can include physical education and sport of disabled people, thus giving them the opportunity to move from isolation to full integration with the environment of able-bodied people "[2, p. 226].

T. Michalik also argues that sport for the disabled is a manifestation of consolidating humanistic values in society - emphasizing that:

[...] the more intense and broader presence of sport for people with disabilities in modern culture is possible as a result of changes aimed at building a society without barriers, but not only architectural, but above all axiological "[3, p. 48].

Conscious participation in sport competition along with adherence to established "fair play" rules should be an alternative way for disabled people to regain a sense of humanity. Sport can neutralize and even eliminate the effects of disability, as well as it can become a catalyst for improving the quality of life and strengthening interpersonal relationships. All available forms of sports and recreational activities in which a disabled person takes part, shape unlimited possibilities for improving health, eliminating the effects of disability and create the opportunity for full participation in all manifestations of social life [4, pp. 129-132].

Considering the historical conditions of sport for people with disabilities, it is necessary to mention the activities of two doctors - A. Mallwitz from Germany and R. Watson-Jones from England, who during World War II recommended to soldiers wounded as a result of warfare physical activity as a form of rehabilitation. However, the breakthrough seems to occur in 1944, when the neurosurgeon Dr. Ludwig Guttmann at Stoke Mandeville hospital in London introduced sports activities to the paraplegic rehabilitation program. In pursuing his intentions, he was convinced that sport in the rehabilitation of the disabled is an effective means of returning to "full life" by integrating these people into the social environment. L. Gutman believed in the essence of the health and educational role of sport in shaping the personality of each disabled person [5, p. 112]. In his opinion, all forms of sport activity (exercises, competitions, Olympic Games) significantly reduce the consequences of physical disability and fully shape the social relations of the disabled with the outside world. It is assumed that since then sport and sports competition, implemented at various levels of development in the form of Olympic Games, begins to play an important role in the rehabilitation process of invalids.

Organized sport for people with disabilities at world level begins on July 28, 1948, when L. Guttmann organized archery competitions for 16 wheelchair war veterans on the opening day of the London Olympic Games. Twelve years later, the first Summer Paralympic Games were held in Rome, which were to some extent detached from the tradition and ideas of modern Olympism. Only in 1988 in Seoul, for the first time, could disabled athletes compete for Paralympic medals at the same sports facilities at which the XXV Summer Olympics were held [4, pp. 129-137).

Numerous scientific studies prove that sport provides disabled people with the development of social skills, making new acquaintances, enables them to perform responsible tasks and gives the opportunity to play the role of a leader in some situations. Through sport, people with disabilities acquire the skills to develop independence, physical and mental resistance and the ability to adapt to new situations. In B. Wybraniec-Lewicka's view, sport is a specific life choice for a disabled person, as well as an alternative

[...] for the loneliness, inaction and helplessness of disabled people, giving them a chance for comprehensive rehabilitation. Cultivated in accordance with the principles of coaching art, under the full control of a sports doctor and physiotherapist, sport can be part of not only broadly understood rehabilitation, but also a recipe for a better, more valuable life "[6, pp. 6-8].

The essence of the Olympic rivalry of the disabled has its social foundation and realizes to a large extent the goal, the basic canon of which is the universality of participation in sports

competition of both children, adolescents and adults. Olympic sport practiced by disabled people is largely modeled on the organization of sport of able-bodied people (regulations, competitions), and thus is adapted to the functional possibilities as well as the type and degree of disability of a given individual. The classification of people with disabilities into a specific sport consists in dividing the players into groups and teams with identical or similar degree of disability, which gives participants a fairly equal chance in sport competition. Currently, the Olympic sport of disabled people has grown into several important international competitions, including three at the level of Olympic competition of disabled athletes:

- Paralympic Games (for people with physical and intellectual disabilities, including those with mobility problems, after amputation of limbs and blindness and cerebral palsy),
- Special Olympics (for people with intellectual disabilities),
- Deaflympics (for people with hearing impairments).

Certainly the largest and most important sports meeting of disabled people are the Paralympic Games. The basic idea of the Paralympic movement is to create opportunities for competition for disabled people on the same canons as in the sport competition of non-disabled players. Disabled athletes participating in the Paralympic Games set world records and strive for sports excellence in line with their own - limited by disability - physical and mental capabilities. It is worth emphasizing that the considerable commitment and sporting aspirations of the disabled match the level presented by non-disabled athletes. However, T. Michaluk believes that the sport of the disabled functions to a much lesser degree in "cultural semioses" and is indifferent to modern media, in comparison with the sports disciplines admired by millions of fans every day;

[...] today's media do not undertake the effort to shape semiotic interpretative mechanisms in the recipient, because it is much easier to promote the simplest schemes that have been commercially grounded for years (player-product-success) "[3, p. 41].

The international movement of Special Olympics was based on the idea of universal values of sport, which have their reference in a certain way of gaining faith in one's own strength, improving physical fitness and constant development in the social sphere.

The task of Special Olympics is to provide a year-round series of trainings and sports competitions in various Olympic sports disciplines for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, ensuring continuous opportunity to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, share the joy of winning prizes and making friends between families, other players, the local community. The Special Olympic movement refers to values related to courage, agility, joy and active participation in competitions (sparring). Flexibility and accessibility of this trend is

manifested in three forms of sport disciplines: official for those who understand the sense of sport competition, showcases constituting the attractiveness of Olympic Games and adopted sports intended for participants with deep disabilities.

The words of the oath made by the participants of Special Olympics "I want to win - but if I can't win, let me be brave in my effort" promote the thesis that it is not the most important to win over other players, but the victory with own weaknesses and following the rules of "pure game". "Fair play" also in sports competition of the disabled is a message the potential benefits of which - both individual and social - determine the development of sport, Olympism, as well as are a carrier of humanistic values in other areas of life. It is worth mentioning that the principle of "fair play" teaches people with disabilities tolerance for racial, national, religious differences, the need to improve themselves, peaceful coexistence between people, voluntary respect and respect of norms and regulations defining the principles of social coexistence, trust in other people and faith in their good. It seems that such attitudes in the spirit of the meaning of "fair play" are more often found in sports competition of the disabled than in competitive sports, youth and recreational sport of able-bodied players [7, p. 153]. The behaviors indicated result from the greater sensitivity of this community to the needs and expectations of others and are the result of a sense of group solidarity. A competent analysis of the impact of sport activity on selected areas of life of disabled people was carried out by J. Sobiecka [8, pp. 41-50], which included a group of 135 disabled athletes (111 men and 44 women) - participants of the summer and winter Paralympics in 1972, 1976, 1980, 1984, 1988. In the opinion of almost all athletes in the study group (92%), sports activity significantly reduced their disability, while only 8% of disabled athletes did not notice significant changes in their disability. Analyzing the impact of sports training on physical and mental well-being, 94% of disabled athletes indicated that sport has a positive impact on personality formation, contributes to better integration with the social environment, concentration and working capacity. Probably for this reason, 62% of Paralympians did not identify their person with a disability, and 80% made a high self-assessment of their independence in the context of their disability, material independence, fulfillment of family and professional responsibilities.

J. Sobiecka concluded the analysis of obtained research results, among others, formulated the following conclusions:

[...] 1. Sport for the disabled has both therapeutic and preventive functions; 2. Improving people with disabilities through sport has a positive effect on their physical and mental well-being; 3. Playing sports by the blind and visually impaired leads to compensation of disturbed functions of the eye and other senses; 4. Systematic practice of sport by the disabled is a

continuation of rehabilitation and a factor consolidating the therapeutic effects obtained in its earlier stages. [9, p. 77].

The presented conclusions indicate that sport is an important element in the integration of people with disabilities both with the environment of the disabled and the social environment. Integration through sporting activities can compensate for failures in other areas of life, and also allows mutual understanding and learning of the needs between disabled and non-disabled people. Disabled athletes through the hardships of sports training, a brave attitude in sports competition constantly prove that through sport they are able to rise to the top of sports championship, overcoming many barriers of their own imperfection. In this context, it is difficult to disagree with the thesis of T. Michaluka that sports success of people with disabilities should have:

[...] greater socio-cultural significance than breaking the next world record on the verge of lethal "exploitation" of the organism [10, p. 280].

The universal values of sport, which are part of improving the quality of life of people with disabilities, have become the subject of strategies and normative regulations of many international organizations, countries and governments almost all over the world. In 1978, UNESCO established the "International Charter on Physical Education and Sport", which was the result of cooperation with the International Olympic Committee. The records of the document state, inter alia, that:

[...] access to physical education and sport should be guaranteed and ensured for all human beings "[11].

In 1982, on the basis of a resolution of the UN General Assembly, the "Action Program for People with Disabilities" was adopted. The program includes recommendations that oblige all countries to support all forms of sport and recreation for people with disabilities by investing in appropriate equipment and proper organization of this activity [12]. Then, in 1993, the UN adopted a document called "Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities for People with Disabilities", in which the right to sport and recreational activity of people with disabilities was also emphasized [13]. At the 61st session of the UN General Assembly on December 13, 2006, the "Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities" was adopted. Pursuant to the provisions of this document, people with disabilities have the right to participate on an equal footing with other people in recreational, leisure and sport activities. Among other things art. 30 point 5 obliges all countries to take appropriate measures and actions that include:

[...] (a) Promote and encourage people with disabilities to participate to the widest extent in all areas of sporting activities within the mainstream of social life;

- (b) Guarantee the possibility of people with disabilities to organize, initiate and participate in sports and recreational activities aimed at people with disabilities, and encourage the provision of resources, training and education for this purpose, on an equal basis;*
- (c) Guarantee access for people with disabilities to venues where sporting, recreational and tourist activities are carried out;*
- (d) Enable disabled children to participate in recreational and sports games and activities, including activities organized as part of the school system, on an equal basis with other children;*
- (e) Ensure access for disabled people to sports, recreation, tourism and other leisure activities* [14].

Also in the European Union Action Plan on the "EU Disability Strategy", the Commission took into account the functions and importance of sport for people with disabilities and the extent of support for Member States' activities in this field.

Summary

To sum up the above considerations, it should be clearly stated that sport activity is an excellent means of supporting disabled people in acquiring social skills, effective communication with the external environment, team cooperation skills, self-discipline, respect for others and compliance with certain rules. In the rehabilitation process, a significant emphasis should be placed on broadly understood sports (qualified and recreational) activities that will allow optimal and comprehensive development and preparation for independent life in which disabled people will play useful roles, in line with their capabilities, interests and expectations of the social environment.

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