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Ancuța PÎRVAN

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The Importance of Volunteer Activities for Students from Physical Education and Sports- Kinetotherapy

Ancuța PÎRVAN¹

Abstract

It is well known that the International Special Olympics foundation runs various social and professional inclusion programs. Under the auspices of the organisation, in partnership with Valahia University Targoviste, several projects and concepts have been developed in the last few years, targeting children both with and without disability. The purpose of these projects has been to integrate children with Down's Syndrome, and general physical development with special focus on the recreational character of the social inclusion activities. This, of course, required optimal conditions of professionalism and safety, as well as the involvement of higher level education students, as volunteers for the activities.

Keywords: *role, volunteers, physical education, disability, integration*

1. Introduction

Today, at Valahia University in Targoviste, where I am a teacher, I was very happy to see the desire and the major involvement of the students as volunteers in the physical and sports activities with children with disabilities within the existing partnership between the two institutions. First of all, the children's chance to exercise in an organized setting, on the other hand the joy of the students to engage with these children, makes them more humane, more responsible and more empathetic.

¹ Ancuta Pirvan, Universitatea Valahia din Târgoviste, Romania , anca_tofan78@yahoo.com

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Corresponding Author: Ancuta PIRVAN

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2. Problem Statement

The research gap should be highlighted in the context of the scientific literature, emphasizing the value added by the article (how is the article different from other similar ones, what novelty it brings to the field) The mission of the organisation is to create, annually, a series of sport events for young people, the finality of which being their integration into society, of acceptance and respect, and the possibility of becoming useful and productive citizens. The participation of students from the universities in the field as volunteers is of major importance to the success of these programs.

3. Research Questions/Aims of the research

Purpose of the study - the purpose of this paper is to present the method of approach, the significance of the concept of volunteering and the behavioral and emotional changes that occur to students as a result of their participation as volunteers. An overview of the objectives and outcomes of their participation as volunteers in sport activities.

In this scientific approach, we have gone from the hypothesis that social inclusion programs can generate positive effects such as physical abilities and social skills on the one hand, and on the other hand involving students as volunteers, gives them the chance to develop in a three-dimensional (biological, psychic and social) personal and professional way.

4. Research Methods

The research methods applicable in the present case are both interdisciplinary and specific to the field of physical and sports education. Thus, the specialized literature method supports the understanding of the place and role of volunteer activity among students, along with the research and conversation method, direct observation, through discussions with the specialists in the field, along with the children and parents directly involved in activities physical education for children with disabilities for a better understanding of them.

5. Findings

The present work with a theoretical character proposes to familiarize and approach the students, future specialists in Physical Education and

Sport, to the world of people with disabilities, to know it and act in an inclusive way, with the courage to embrace the world of people adapted, without no fear and prejudice, through their direct participation in physical activities organized by educational institutions.

What should the volunteer student know ?!

Teaching methods evolve according to the perspectives, attitudes and didactic processes present in the education of people with disabilities, respecting the functional diversity, taking into account the possibilities of each child to learn and develop, so it is necessary to establish where and when how children with special educational needs can be included, which requires a moment of reflection on the measures to be taken, necessary for the development of human diversity.

In our country, the integration policy present in special education should be further stimulated and oriented towards social and occupational training, with the aim of forming the person for an independent adult stage, thus guaranteeing social integration with equal rights and opportunities. Inclusive physical activities are a way to achieve these results, and for this, professionals with a high level of training and knowledge are needed to know the particularities and possibilities of this particular group, their preferences, interests and motivation, and to create an open space of tolerance, respect and solidarity for all participants in this type of activity.

However, the path to integration is a lasting one, and in the field of adapted physical activities the following shortcomings are highlighted:

- Lack of information, documentation and training of teachers and of society as a whole
- Lack of scientific sources needed to extend the integration process, which means that the potential of these children remains unexploited
- Lack of community activities including disabled people
- Limitations in families of origin in favoring the inclusion process of the child, with difficulties in the intellectual sphere

Students engaging in Sports Activities as volunteers alongside people with disabilities are of significant importance in our society, leaving their mark on their personal development and social importance.

They have to understand that socialization is a two-way process, we can say that the importance of sport in our case also has to do with this relationship, being significant for the subject, just as it is for the activity in which it participates. "Sports, from a sociological point of view, is the physical activity typical of a developed society whose foundation is scientific organization and believes in linear human progression." [1: 23]

The best example in this regard is the SPECIAL OLYMPICS INTERNATIONAL Foundation, which was founded in 1968 by the

Kennedy family to benefit people with intellectual disabilities. The mission of the organization is to create annually a series of sporting events for young people and adults, aiming at integrating them into society in conditions of acceptance and respect, having the opportunity to turn into useful and productive citizens. The major importance is the participation, not the result, with a special focus on the recreational character of the activity.

We all know the benefits of physical activity but especially the benefits of the volunteers involved by giving them the opportunity to work with people with reduced mobility or serious physical conditions in an environment where they can move independently and bring important physical and psychological benefits, valid for both parties involved in the process of activity?!

A volunteer is a person who, consciously, willingly and without personal interest, participates in organized community activities. Who can be a volunteer? Anyone over the age of 16, who freely decides to dedicate some of his time or community use. It is our duty as citizens to include people with disabilities in the society we live in.

The role of inclusive activities is highlighted by diversity, an intrinsic quality of human groups. Inclusion presupposes that all pupils in a community study together, regardless of their personal, social or cultural class. We are talking about a school where there are no prejudices or selective mechanisms or any kind of discrimination. It is a place where structure, functionality and teaching methods are substantially altered to meet the educational needs of its members as a group as well as individually (including those with disabilities).

From this perspective, the school plays a role, adapts to the diversity of its students, and not vice versa (as is often seen).

An inclusive school can be considered one that:

- successfully finds solutions for educating all students without exception;
- has a global, interactive and systematic view of the needs of his pupils;
- increase student participation in the community in school and cultural programs
- identifies and removes participation and learning barriers for all of its students.

An eloquent example of social inclusion through student physical activities at the Faculty of Humanities, Department of Physical Education and Sport and Physical Therapy, in partnership with Special Olympics, where students become volunteers under the careful guidance of the coordinating teacher, and the activities are conducted at the Department of

Physical Education, with the support of the Târgoviște Municipal Sports Club, the local council and the Society for Social Assistance and Child Protection in Dambovită County.

For a good course of volunteering, the student will focus his attention

• WHAT CAN DO THE SUBJECT, NOT ON WHAT CAN NOT.

• ask the subject about any disagreement regarding his / her disability;

• set learning objectives accessible to the possibilities of the team;

• stimulate constant feedback between him and his subjects;

• use demonstration methods;

• Ensure that the subject understands the work he / she needs to carry out. [5: 24]

Today's students who work as volunteers can be tomorrow's professionals who can work for child rehabilitation and child-rehabilitation departments by developing criteria and goals to improve the conditional and coordinating capacities of subjects and the interest in the rules of activity can also achieve cognitive improvements, self-esteem and foster socialization and a sense of belonging to a group.

The specialized literature reminds that "constant education and appropriate training of professionals in the field are vital to achieving results on the inclusion of people with disabilities in society, along with the participation and education of parents / tutors and / or volunteers. Moreover, therapists and teachers need direct information from the environment in which the subjects live, and from those who spend most of their time in their company, knowledge to guide lessons to the real daily needs of the individual. " [9: 76-79]

It is therefore crucial to propose, promote and engage in physical activity in which objectives are compatible with the development needs of the target group. Aquatic activities facilitate this process, positively influencing all the elements involved in the training-learning process, from the regulation to the context of the lesson, and is a simple and easy way to facilitate inclusion in any social environment of children with disabilities.

Volunteer students benefit from the opportunity to get in touch with all kinds of disabilities (intellectual, sensory and physical), and as part of the program they work as volunteers with weekly programs, two sessions per week, each lesson takes about 90 minutes, in aquatic or terrestrial activities (gymnastics).

The first section, adapting to the aquatic environment, also involves involving parents where it is imperative, being encouraged to accompany

their child in the water, under the strict supervision of volunteer teachers and students, learning the ABC of swimming.

This group is the foundation from which the athletes are selected to compete in the Special Olympics Specialized Swimming Competitions, motivated by the interaction of the individual, the task to be met and the organizational environment. It is "the extent to which persistent effort is directed towards achieving an objective" [8].

In addition, volunteers and persons with disabilities are given the opportunity to participate in competitions with a character including with children without disabilities, stressing once again that "performance motivation is the basis for any effective activity and is the most important factor for mobilizing human capacity, which is why it can be considered the most needed adjustment factor in sport." [2: 69]

By organizing annual competitions for physical activities, in partnership with the aforementioned institutions, there is a growing desire to develop new concepts of social inclusion, where volunteer students have the opportunity to learn once again what the joy of doing small things for large souls means. Moreover, it is very important to understand that "the motivational structure as well as the influence received from the value system is the key in determining the conditions by which the level of motivation can be optimized for an athlete to achieve high performances in the competition." [3: 186]

The functional recovery section is intended for people with reduced mobility of the lower extremities and the activity is intended exclusively for persons with physical disabilities, except for subjects with Down syndrome, who often have significant muscle weakness and can therefore be included in this group. [6: 32] This is the section that requires most volunteers, each participant needing permanent assistance.

Of all the determinants that are encountered in the process of social inclusion, the favorable attitude of the volunteer student involved is the most important. It is directed to something real, a person or a certain situation. On the other hand, we must remember that attitudes are not innate, but they are formed throughout a person's life. Every individual learns what is and is not favorable to himself, and this fact causes him to act in a certain way. Attitude has the most components and features, each of which constantly influences a person's personality, thus determining the direction and purpose of his actions.

The student-volunteer understands that integration is favourable to the development of positive attitudes and facilitates the social inclusion process for both parties involved in the process. Athletic training is not a goal, it is just a privileged tool to convey a series of essential social values in

the formation of the individual, due to the intense and close links that establish with the practice of any sport discipline. Therefore, practicing Inclusive Physical Activity turns into an ideal education environment for people with special needs and involves a range of benefits from both parties (practitioners versus sports organizations):

A useful pedagogical resource for positive attitudes and solidarity is the experience and experience of a type of disability, in which the participant can become aware of the limitations to which he is subjected and can capitalize on the capacities at his disposal. Respect for functional diversity must start from knowledge and awareness. "Sensational motoring games are those that make participants pass in a playful form through the limitations and difficulties faced by people with disabilities (physical or sensory) and to value and appreciate the capabilities they have." [10: 153].

Transposition into a disability situation to know disability:

- Change attitude
- Know the limitations
- Values capabilities

Therefore, the sensitizing game means:

- adapting the rules to the needs and / or possibilities of all participants;
- basic criterion: adapts only what is needed;
- all participants must be able to assume any role in the game

In organizing inclusive games there are two possibilities:

- the use of one known / practiced within the group;
- another new one.

Whichever variation we choose, this activity will feature the following features:

- Equal opportunities for practicing for all participants
- recognizes the value of each member of the group
- the right of each participant to make decisions and to make mistakes;
- the need for personal independence and self-determination;
- the right to choose. "[4: 70-73]

Special Olympics Romania supports volunteer students of our faculty by running projects for the inclusion of children with disabilities through gymnastics, dancing, swimming, activities where students come to discover, exploit their potential, wanting to be themselves promoters , future specialists to implement that idea of having a healthy mentality, starting from

an early age. This means it will be much easier for them to "shape" the adult later.

Today's students, the budding tomorrow teachers, I understand during my studies that their role as a volunteer in these inclusive activities is to promote sports activities among pre-schoolers and pupils in all education cycles, of the special ones, and especially the importance of including people with disabilities in society, in this case through physical activities.

Developing the level of competence of these future teachers must be considered crucial, with emphasis on the principles of social inclusion.

To avoid situations of false integration, teachers working in inclusive groups should consider the following:

- perceived competence of the teacher
- training experience
- degree of disability
- availability of assistance and material resources
- gender and age

Only by firm conviction and motivation will they become aware of the importance of inclusive education in the future, and will assume the role of preparing the future citizens of the society we live in.

6. Discussions

The paper aims to familiarize the student, future specialist sport physical education teacher, with the world of people with disabilities, to know it and to act in an inclusive way, with the courage to adopt an adapted world of life without fear and prejudice. Also, society should be aware of the fact that it is not something obscure to volunteer, relate and work with people with special needs.

We are convinced that power lies in us, to sensitize public opinion and to normalize integration into society, on the one hand, on the other hand, I am convinced that there is the possibility that we can not teach all people with special needs to swim by participating in physical activities, but we can include them in a group of beautiful people and encourage their socialization process. These aspects are particularly important because they will make them feel good, improve their quality of life, contribute significantly to maintaining their personal independence, bringing their physiological and psychological benefits, maintaining general health and quality of life in optimal parameters, both integrated and volunteer.

7. Conclusions

Today's volunteer, tomorrow's specialist, needs to know that the world of people with disabilities is complex and does not allow formulas or prescriptions to be issued in the interventions of professionals in the field.

My personal experience leads me to affirm that there are not two people with similar disabilities, and this can be verified by any of us regarding the group of students with whom they work.

Also, the same training method can not be used to achieve the same goals, requiring an individual approach to the capabilities of each subject, ultimately resulting in particularly complex workload schedules but equally gratifying, always different, which makes you always in action, use your imagination and creativity.

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