

Assoc. Prof. Boyanka Peneva, dr
National Sport Academy, Sofia, Bulgaria

GOOD PRACTICES IN ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AT SOME BULGARIAN GENERAL SCHOOLS

Early or late, quick or slow, world tendencies in education reach everyone country and start to master its social systems. Last two decades are time when special attention to people with disabilities is paid. As if it is the third step in equalizing the education. The first step is equalizing on base of race, the second one is equalizing on base of gender.

Speaking about pupils with disabilities 30 years ago PE specialists understood only pupils with obesity. Today things changed radically. To the group of pupils with special educational needs can be related handicapped children with mild to moderate physical or psychic damages but also pupils with accelerated abilities in one or another sphere of knowledge or skills. To all of them teachers must offer adequate and developing education but all this within mainstream school. Individual and differentiate approach is unavoidable. The aims and goals of education should be the same for all pupils. So, mainstream teachers should assume responsibility for meeting these special needs of their pupils. The problem is new for them, so they still feel themselves slightly confused. Though that they always seek ways for best solving of concrete situations. This refers even to teachers that have many years experience in kinesitherapy. Practice in Bulgaria shows that even obligatory instructions from the side of the Ministry of education cannot always help solving the problems.

Our paper is an attempt to show some decisions of PE teachers from Sofia with pupils that need special education.

Introduction

In mainstream school teachers meet pupils with different abilities. The number of talented in some attitude pupils is very low. Eminent and world famous Bulgarian musician Ibro Lolov – Ibrjama, says: “Music cannot be learnt. It is inside the man.” Transduction of these words to the field of activities that interests us, leads to physical abilities and sports talented people. To reach the top they have to be found at very early age. Many sports champions are thankful to their PE teachers and not so much to parents or other people of their nearby circles. Though physical education in ordinary classes of physically talented pupils is a problem for PE teachers too it is not the centre of our attention in this material.

For years continues the debate about the integration of handicapped children in the ordinary classes. Already there is not any doubt that this integration is more than a human act and there is not any country in modern society that at least has not made this act legislative.

This policy is result of the development of the idea over the past 200 years.

“Education for all” is the 21st century idea that seeks its realization in school practice. Undivided part of its realization is the integrated education of children with special educational needs. They need special education because of their disabilities and/or difficulties they have during acquisition of the educational content.

Every child is due to be educated. We can say that a school is democratic only when the individual is in the center of all its activities and the offered education is oriented towards everyone particular school pupil. Differentiated approach to the different occasions is necessary, so that all children can realize their own right to be stimulated and helped when acquiring knowledge. On this basis a disabled child can be integrated in a common class only when just there it can receive the necessary for him/her training for a personal development and self-dependent life.

About the Nature of Integrative Education

At the beginning of XIX century some humanistic oriented scholars start to conduct their vision about integration of handicapped children in the ordinary classes. Real effective realization of this vision in the whole educative systems becomes nowadays.

From the beginning of 21st century step by step starts obligatory introduction of integrated education in Bulgarian educational system. The number of integrated pupils constantly increases. So, in school year 2003/2004 only 717 children with special educational needs are integrated in the general school. For 4 years their number increases 6 times to above 4000 children in school year 2006/2007. At this time we are witnesses to four parallel processes:

Firstly, for 2 years 31 from 130 special schools are closed. Though this, at the beginning of school year 2007/2008 the number of the special schools in Bulgaria is 76.

Secondly, 920 teachers with qualification special education are appointed to the mainstream schools in help to the education of the pupils with special needs. One additional teacher is responsible for 7 – 8 pupils and has to go around 3 - 4 schools. Practice shows that the number of additional teachers (in Bulgaria named “resource” teachers) is not sufficient. Their help to PE teachers is not seen.

Thirdly, the number of the publications whose topics are means and methods for education of disabled pupils increases (N. Mavrudieva, 2006, M. Nikolova, 2007, etc.).

Fourthly, in newspapers and magazines also appear articles that acquaint society with the problems of the disabled pupils and their families. Society starts to pay greater attention and understanding to them and their socialization and re-socialization.

In the following table is made a comparison between some differences in the way of teaching or the conditions for the disabled pupils that are educated in the special schools and those of them who are in the common mass school.

<i>Special School</i>	<i>General School</i>
<p>1. Special schools can be divided to several specific groups: health recovering, for children with chronic diseases, for children with sensor damages, for mental handicapped children, for children with deviations in behaviour, etc.</p> <p>2. Often pupils have more than one <i>attendant diseases</i> and this makes more and new difficulties in their education. Demands also quick but correct decision taking acts.</p> <p>3. The number of pupils in a class is from 6 to 12.</p> <p>4. Gym halls have at their disposal specific and plenty apparatuses for conducting a good PE lesson, at the same time suitable to the general disability of the pupils.</p>	<p>1. In general school can fall among pupils with different kind of disability. Extent of disabilities is from mild to moderate.</p> <p>2. This disability is only one and is of mild to moderate degree. Problems come from the individual attention that this child has to have in the frame of the work of the whole class.</p> <p>3. The number of pupils in a class is from 16 at least to maximum 26.</p> <p>4. Disable pupils have to use apparatuses in the frame of the general equipment of the gym hall.</p>

Integrated Education in Practice

Our examples will be taken from mainstream school № 105 in Sofia and will show only some tendencies about the way of teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs in the PE classes. Meantime comparison with similar kind of education in Finland will be done.

As excursus I will mention about my former study on the problem in 2005. Data and conclusions of that time are:

1) According to UNESCO in 1988 in the world there are *112 millions children* for whom are necessary special educational needs but only 2% of these children go to school.

2) Society expects *new functions of schools*, so flexible school programmes must be offered for the necessities of everyone child. For the purpose still in university future teachers have to receive enough knowledge about special education. The emphasis must be put on work with children with multiple disabilities.

3) The cradle of special education is France but nowadays *greatest advance* in work with children with disabilities have USA, Great Britain, Canada, Germany and the Scandinavian countries.

So, Finland is a good basis for comparison. In 1986 P. Heikinaro-Johansson after an interview with 138 PE teachers carried out a study only with 22 of them who voluntarily participated in the next step of the research. In totally 47 PE lessons were observed the activities both of disabled and non-disabled pupils. Furthermore, after each lesson the general atmosphere which prevailed during the lesson was evaluated.

The conclusions of this study are:

1) The activities of disabled and non-disabled pupils did not differ to any significant degree. On average, performing a task took half of the lesson time. Half of the time was taken up in organizing the pupils, positioning apparatus, waiting for one's turn to engage in a task, etc. Although organization takes more time, once the performance starts it is more effective quantitatively.

Some years ago S. Auferheide et al.(1982) ascertained similar situation. “Organizing the various tasks similarly took about half of the class time.”

2) The physical activities of the disabled pupils were less intensive than those of non-disabled pupils. In the 37 minutes for activities disabled pupils were active for about 16 minutes and non-disabled pupils were active for about 18 minutes. In addition all pupils moved with a very low intensity.

3) One third of the teachers thought that the presence of disabled pupils made teaching more difficult. The presence of disabled pupils in regular classes gave the teachers more work; for example in planning and implementing the lessons.

4) Rejection by other pupils of disabled pupils was seen mainly in game and competition situations. At the same time co-operative learning situations create positive attitudes towards the acceptance of classmates, regardless of their disabilities, more than competition or individualistic teaching does.

5) Teacher attitudes towards teaching disabled pupils affect the atmosphere which prevails during lessons. In a stimulating atmosphere pupils are more ready to move. Furthermore, teachers with negative attitudes generally made all decisions on their own. By contrast, teachers with positive attitudes gave pupils more opportunities to make their own decisions.

6) There are no ready-made solutions in adapted physical activity but teachers must be able to consider pupils' different needs.

Physical activity and sports opportunities for people with disabilities have increased substantially over the past 40 years. This was established by K. P. Depauw (1990) two decades ago. Since that time started concrete researches in APA and inclusive and integrated education. They are focused upon (a) effective teaching and learning of individuals with disabilities, (b) effects of integration, (c) assessment techniques, and (d) effective programmes.

From the world's experience we return to the Bulgarian experience in APA and integrated education. It is a personal opinion and it is based on observations, written materials, and discussions with PE teachers.

Conclusions

1) PE teachers were not satisfied of the organized by the educational inspectorate discussions on the theme maybe because they expected “ready prescriptions”.

2) Number of disabled pupils in different schools and classes is different, so the problem does not stay in front of some of the teachers.

3) All PE teachers understand and sympathize pupils with special educational needs but they still never plan lessons according to the new situation in the class. Most often a disabled pupil is given individual tasks. Maybe reason for this approach is the prevailing of the competitive elements in the PE classes and they are not always suitable for some of the disabled pupils. Furthermore, very often there are pupils that get away and are frightened of direct sociability. They prefer being alone, living in their “own” world, though this being happy of the staying nearby their classmates.

4) Still exists the problem about evaluation of disabled pupils.

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SUMMARY

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