

ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS IN SPORT EDUCATION TO THE SPORT ACTIVITY OF BLIND PEOPLE IN HUNGARY AND POSSIBLE REASONS FOR THEM

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The very low participation of blind people in sport is fundamentally caused by the inappropriate knowledge of experts on disabled – specific areas of sport. Sport coaches and 582 students learning to be PE teachers were asked about their knowledge and ideas of sport for individuals with disabilities, mainly for blind people. Research has proved that good intentions of PE teachers and coaches taking part in disabled sport are basically not missing, thus the main barrier is the lack of topics regarding sport for handicapped people in the curriculum of their studies. Janečka, Kudláček and Válková (2003) have emphasized the basic need of specially prepared PE teachers, mainly in the elementary schools. Personal experience and direct contact with blind athletes cannot be replaced by audiovisual methods of education. Blind people cannot be trained to be coaches by the nature of their disability, so blind sport must be developed through the active support and cooperation of sighted sport experts. Sport for the disabled has to be taught as a separate subject, or at least as a separate and stressed section of an already existing, regular subject, such as theory of training. Methodically, personal contact with blind people as well as practical sessions in the course of their education is essential and irreplaceable (Asjborn & Tonjum, 1986). Students should not be allowed to graduate without specific knowledge about sport for the handicapped, and about the possible ways for participation in sport for blind athletes. Such a many sided approach of education is the future and the modern way of teaching.

Keywords: Involvement of PE teachers in sport for the blind, coaching training for adapted sport, counter emotion against sport for the blind.

INTRODUCTION

In previous studies (Osvath, 2004; Osvath & Ramocsa, 2006) it has been found that the underdevelopment of sport for blind people, and the unbelievably low number of blind athletes in Hungary has been caused mainly by the lack of sport experts responsible for organizing and conducting training and competition for them. Janečka, Kudláček and Válková (2003) has emphasized the basic need for specially prepared PE teachers, mainly in the elementary schools. Personal experience and direct contact with blind athletes cannot be replaced by audiovisual methods of education. Blind people cannot be trained to be coaches by the nature of their disability, so blind sport must be developed through the active support, and cooperation of sighted sport experts. Intentions of the individuals to perform regular physical activity is strongly related to the type of disability (Longmuir & Bar-Or, 2000; Sit, Lindner, & Sherrill, 2002). Knowing this and being familiar with the shyness and inactivity of blind people (Ponchillia, Staruse, & Ponchillia, 2003), it is not surprising that only 2–3% of the approximately 10000 blind individuals and people with visual impairment do sport on a regular basis in Hungary. This data, as compared to the 25–27% participation of the regular population in

sport, seems boring. Even fewer blind athletes are registered officially in local sport clubs, which fact urges the society to do something in order to mobilize them in the direction of sports. Females with disabilities, including those of them who are visually impaired, are significantly underrepresented in sport (Sherrill, 1993). The optimal socialization of disabled people is a very complex process (Coakley, 1998). It is uniquely true for people with sensory disability (Klapwijk, 1986). Sport, led by highly qualified sport experts can support it efficiently.

Tanaka (Tanaka et al., 1998) found in his study that media was a good tool for generating interest in sport among sighted people, but not among individuals with disabilities.

We thought that an insufficient personal background was the main reason for the immature sport activity of blind people, which could be treated by adequate education, pedagogy, and special courses for sport experts.

Disability – specific topics should be integrated into sport education courses on how the students could get focused on handicapped sport.

It was thought that the knowledge and experience of students in sports education on sports for individuals with disabilities was not enough to get a realistic overview about their special needs.

Answers were searched for regarding the following topics

Is there any counter emotion against practising with blind sporters, or are non handicapped sportspeople open to be involved in work with the disabled? E. g. would you take part in sport for the blind? If yes, why? I would like to help them; I pity them; It is easier to make a career with them; Because of the higher income; I am interested in difficult tasks and challenges; It is easier to work with them.

Why are sport experts keeping a distance from individuals with disabilities and especially from blind athletes? E. g. why would you not take part in sport for the blind? I do not feel well prepared; I am not interested in it; I am afraid of this special job; I feel pity towards blind athletes; It is not well paid enough; It makes no sense to be bothered with them.

What kind of ideas, knowledge do they have about this special area? E. g. have you ever seen any sport event for people with disabilities: yes-no?

Do you know any special sport for athletes with disabilities? List them! Did they get any handicap – specific information during their studies, in relation with their particular sport? E. g. did you have classes on sport for people with disabilities: yes-no?

SAMPLES AND METHODS

By means of questionnaires developed by the authors, 582 students were asked, about the attitude, the knowledge, and the plans of the students in relation to sport for the blind. The study was approved by the ethical committee at the National institute for sports medicine. Written informed consent was obtained from all subjects before the investigations. The questionnaire was composed of open and closed questions. A pilot study was made first, in which 50 collected questions were used (Renwick et al., 2003). The pilot study was participated in by 402 randomly selected students. As the final version of the questionnaire, 25 questions were selected from the pilot study. A pretest was performed first with 582 students. None of them took part in the pilot study. The same participants were tested 5 weeks later (Kerkley, Alvarez, & Griffin, 2003; Stelmack & Od, 2001) with the same questionnaire.

The answers had no intensity values, thus they could not be expressed on any scale. Instead of correlation analysis, indirectly, the differences of the received answers were used to verify the reliability of the questionnaire.

There were no significant differences between the frequencies of the received answers: $\chi^2 = 1.17$, $p > 0.05$.

The study was participated in by 378 female and 204 male students. All of them study at the Semmelweis University at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Sciences or at the Fitness Academy courses for coaches. The students of these institutions were asked, because the points of view of the PE teachers and sport coaches are equally important for the improvement of blind sport in the future. Well organized and well conducted PE classes held at an early age for blind individuals can provide the essential basis necessary to direct them toward specialized sport activities, and to increase the number of athletes involved in regular sport. The samples were taken randomly.

RESULTS

The age distribution and the average age of the students (it was 23.8 years) were in accordance with the most common values of the students at the universities or in special adult education in general.

TABLE 1

Age and gender proportion of students

Age (years)	Males	Females
18–20	50	106
21–25	84	202
26–30	38	42
31–45	32	28

Almost half of them (49.5%) declared having a disabled individual among their relatives or friends, but very few of these relations were blind (10.1%). This fact explains why they have hardly any direct connection or experience with blind individuals. Furthermore, only one student had any experience of blind athletes.

A very high number of the students have already seen sport events organized for individuals with a disability (74.2%), mainly on TV (52.7%). Personal experience with such a kind of event was even more rare (24.7%). A very few students mentioned film as a possible information source about sport for the handicapped.

Most of the students have already seen competitions (63.9%), some of them (15.4%) demonstrations, and only a small minority has taken part in really interesting training sessions, which is the most important activity from the professional point of view (10.3%).

The majority of the students (89.6%) had no practical experience in organizing such a kind of event, but the rest (10.4%) had already seen competitions on site, or worked with disabled athletes as volunteers. Unfortunately, only 21% of them had participated in such a kind of event more than once, the majority had only one occasion to do so. There were no students who had already

worked with athletes with a disability as a referee, as an event organizer, or as a coach.

A much smaller number of students could answer the questions focused on sport for the blind on a personal experience basis. Only 2% of them had participated in sport events organized specially for blind people and then only once. They were spectators. It is interesting that none of them had any blind relative or friend, so they attended because of their own interest.

The students had to list sports appropriate for blind individuals as a task to test their general knowledge about the nature of blindness. Although 52.5% of them thought that they are familiar with the special requirements of blind athletes, the results clarified their wrong ideas about the relation of blindness to physical activity. There were students who offered body building to blind people, which is a special sport based on visual, esthetic requirements. Blind individuals cannot be motivated on a visual basis (Sherrill, 1981). Goal ball was the best known sport for blind people, mentioned in 36% of the questionnaires, but only 52.1% of them had seen it played on television.

Most of the students (89.1%) have never heard about the aspects and forms of sport for the disabled during their studies. The topics and explanation of the possible ways of integration of individuals with disabilities into sport is absolutely missing from the curriculum of these courses. Only a small part of the students of Semeľweis University have already met with these topics, but it is understandable, as they studied in the Adapted PE program.

Only 17.5% of the students have refused definitely the idea of dealing with blind athletes in the future. Of the rest, 39% have intentions of working in this field, depending on the task, and 61% were ready to do any job together with blind people. This result strengthens our hopes of increasing the number of experts in sport for athletes with disabilities.

Among the reasons, wishing to help got 64.8%, attraction to challenges got 29.8%, and pity was mentioned in 4.1% of the answers. Of the students 1.3% thought that better income perspectives could be possible if they worked in this special field of profession. None of them thought that dealing with handicapped people, mainly with blind athletes, was easier.

TABLE 2

Reasons for participating in sports for blind people

Intention to help	64.8%
Attraction to hard professional work	29.8%
Pity for blind people	4.1%
Opportunity for better income	1.3%
Opportunity for faster career building	0.0%

Nobody believed in a faster career in sport for the disabled as compared to able bodied sports, although the observably small number of rather uneducated experts in sport for the disabled could allow faster career building for the highly educated experts.

Those students who completely refused to work with blind athletes have given the following reasons: they are not well prepared for this special area of their profession (44.3%), have no attraction to the disabled, including blind people (28.2%), have a fear of them (22%), or are not able to work with them, because of the pity they feel for them (5.5%).

TABLE 3

Reasons for refusing participation in sport for blind people

Do not feel well prepared	44.3%
Are not interested in	28.2%
Are afraid of this special job	22.0%
Feel pity for blind athletes	5.5%

The following answers were given to the questions concerning the possible advantages of sport for blind people. Sport strengthens both their self confidence, and can give them a new aim in their life received equally 94.8%. The health protective effect of sport received 89.6%. Most of the students (83.5%) thought, that blind people could build close relationships with sighted people through sport. It is in absolute contrast with the opinion of the blind athletes, who did not see this role of sport at all. Many of them (72.9%) believed that sport was an efficient tool to recognize the performance of blind people, even on a governmental level. In our previous study (Osvath & Ramocsa, 2006) it was found that financial, or governmental recognition was very rare and improbable, and then possible exclusively only for the elite athletes who are members of the national team. That sport could help the blind athletes in orienteering in traffic or make it easier for them was the opinion of 43.3% of the students. A small minority (6.2%) believed that sport could be a tool for improving the quality of existence of blind people, thus professional sport in not a real option for them.

It was particularly interesting that the students did not find the opportunity for travelling abroad important for blind people, whereas the athletes themselves found it to be a very useful "side effect" of sport.

TABLE 4
Advantages of sport for blind athletes

Improvement of self-confidence	94.8%
New goals, perspectives in life	94.8%
Health protection	89.6%
Opportunity for creating relationships with sighted people	83.5%
Opportunity for recognition of achievement	72.9%
Improvement of abilities for travelling	43.3%
Financial recognition of athletes	6.2%
Opportunity for travelling abroad	0.0%

No ideas about the challenges the blind face in relation to sport were had by 14.5% of the students. Most of them (77.3%) believed that the most important difficulty for them was access to the venues; they could not use the facilities because they could not approach them physically. It is an obvious mistake, because it is valid only for people physically disabled in other ways. This is supported by the next answer, that in 74.3% of cases they believed that blind athletes need special venues or sport facilities.

The insufficient financial support and the lack of sport experts involved in sport for handicapped people were also mentioned (72.6%) as main barriers to the development of blind sport.

Very few students (8.2%) believe that blind people are basically inactive, and that it is very difficult to motivate them. This is also in contrast with the point of view of the blind athletes.

That there were no real differences in organizing sport events for blind as opposed for sighted athletes was thought by 7.2% of the asked people.

They thought that the transportation of the athletes is not challenging, which is also a misconception.

TABLE 5
Challenges of sport for blind people

No idea	14.5%
Lack of accessible venues, sport facilities	77.3%
Lack of special facilities	74.3%
Insufficient financial background	72.6%
Inactivity of blind people	8.2%
There are no more challenges than in the sport for able athletes	7.2%
Small number of blind athletes	3.0%

The most important finding was that the majority of the students (74.5%) could not imagine that the integration of sighted people into blind sport could be a possible, favourable solution in order to strengthen the activity of blind athletes. It could be a really strong barrier to the improvement of sport for people with visual

impairment. Only the traditional, reverse direction of integration is known and acceptable for them.

CONCLUSION

It is important to state that the results of this study are declarative.

Most of the students had no precise idea about the professional tasks necessary in order to work with individuals with disabilities. They hadn't access to appropriate information about sport practise, and theory of sport for handicapped people. All of these facts can be the cause of them keeping their distance from sport for people with disabilities. It is very good news that only the minority of the students refused to work with the blind definitely. This attitude can also have been changed by educational modifications, which are supposed to have started in secondary grammar schools. There is a general refusal of the idea of the integration of sighted people into the sport of blind people, although it is strongly believed that this way of integration could be a very efficient route to the expansion of blind sport, and for the increase of the numbers of athletes among those with visual impairments. Goal ball could be a perfect sport for starters.

The direct personal experience of the students with people with disabilities seems to be few and far between, although the main characteristics of sport for the handicapped are known more or less from television, a rather superficial information source that cannot provide a wide range of knowledge about this topic. Many students considered sports to be appropriate for the blind, which however are, in reality, absolutely not suitable for them to do. It shows that they are not familiar with the nature of blindness itself, and the impact of it on the daily life of blind people. This misconception can be treated with disability specific classes, education at an early age, beginning in the grammar or high schools. The health and environment subject could give the frame to these topics. Answers received to the questions focusing on the advantages and disadvantages of sport for the blind have proven that the point of view of students about the use and goals of sport was in contrast with that of the blind themselves. Some of the advantages were over esteemed, and many of them were under-estimated. These misconceptions could be caused to disappear by the integration of disability specific subjects and by systematic education based on personal, practical cooperation with individuals with disabilities.

From the answers received, it seems to be obvious that most of the students in sports education declare themselves to be open to work with blind athletes, but they have no direct personal experience in this field, so their intentions should be considered as a theoretical

wish. Counter emotions against practising with the blind was not found.

Disability specific topics have to be integrated into the curriculum of their studies, and more special teachers and experts should be involved in these subjects. Due to the small number of special professors, familiar with sport for the blinds or other handicapped individuals at the above mentioned institutions, closer cooperation must be established or strengthened with universities or academies specializing in adapted sport or education. Training a new generation of sport experts cannot be done without the contribution of special professors and without the creation of special, disability focused subjects. This lack of sport experts can be considered to be one of the main challenges faced by sport for the blind.

In summary, it can be stated that the main challenges of sport for the blind are based on personal and educational reasons. Access to sport facilities and venues do not cause real limitations for blind athletes, but the lack of sighted experts responsible for organizing and conducting their sport activities are what make their opportunities almost hopeless. A centrally organized and directed new educational approach is the solution. The blind face many barriers in their daily life, so their possible life quality improvement cannot be dependent on the inattentiveness of sighted people, and the unadvised concept of education in the schools at different levels.

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POSTOJE STUDENTŮ SPORTOVNÍ VÝCHOVY KE SPORTOVNÍ AKTIVITĚ NEVIDOMÝCH V MAĎARSKU A JEJICH MOŽNÉ PŘÍČINY (Souhrn anglického textu)

Velmi nízká účast nevidomých na sportovních aktivitách je způsobena především nedostatečnými znalostmi odborníků v oblasti sportu pro postižené osoby. Sportovní trenéři a 582 budoucí učitelé tělesné výchovy byli dotazováni na znalosti a představy o sportovních aktivitách osob s postižením, především nevidomých. Průzkum prokázal, že učitelům tělesné výchovy a trenérům, kteří se účastní sportovních aktivit určených pro postižené, dobré úmysly v zásadě neschází a že hlavní překážkou je nedostatek témat týkajících se sportu pro postižené v osnovách studijních oborů. Janečka, Kudláček a Válková (2003) zdůraznili zásadní potřebu speciálně připravených učitelů tělesné výchovy, a to především na základních školách. Osobní zkušenosti a přímý kontakt s nevidomými sportovci nemohou být nahrazeny audiovizuálními vzdělávacími metodami. Nevidomí se

nemohou v důsledku svého postižení stát trenéry, takže sport pro nevidomé musí být rozvíjen s aktivní podporou a spoluprací se sportovními odborníky bez zrakového postižení. Sport pro postižené musí být vyučován jako samostatný předmět nebo alespoň jako samostatný a zdůrazňovaný úsek již stávajícího běžného předmětu, jako je teorie tréninku. Z metodického hlediska je zásadní a nenahraditelný osobní kontakt s nevidomými a také praktická setkání v průběhu výchovy (Asjborn & Tonjum, 1986). Studenti by neměli školu opouštět bez specifických znalostí o sportu pro postižené a o možných způsobech zapojení nevidomých do sportovních aktivit. Takový mnohostranný přístup ke vzdělávání je budoucí a moderní metodou výuky.

Klíčová slova: zapojení učitelů tělesné výchovy do sportovních aktivit pro nevidomé, výuka tréninku pro adaptovaný sport, negativní emoce proti sportu pro nevidomé.

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