

RESEARCH GROUP  
MODERN TECHNOLOGIES

RESEARCH AREA  
SOCIAL SCIENCES (POLITICAL SCIENCES, LAW,  
EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES)

# Shared Spaces, Tolerance and Volunteering



## METHODOLOGY

The design of the methodology, on the one hand, is subject to the generally accepted principles and requirements for methodologies of social empirical research. On the other hand, a fundamental requirement for the creation of such a methodology is that all its components are developed in such a way as to be methodologically relevant to the multifaceted nature of volunteering and its ambiguous projections in working with children and students with special educational needs. This means that it is necessary to provide for all mandatory procedures through which it is possible: 1) The collection of reliable information about the object and subject of the study; 2) The design of control actions through which methodological guarantees are created for the collection of reliable information, as well as for the qualitative mathematical and statistical processing of the aggregate empirical information and its preparation for analysis. The methods for implementing the activities, their sequence and implementation contribute to the creation of a model of a Center for training students and teachers of physical education and sports as volunteer mentors in educational institutions.



## INTRODUCTION

Sport as an ideal tool for breaking stereotypes provides opportunities for the full integration of people with disabilities into society. Consistent and purposeful physical activity gives children with special educational needs the opportunity to obtain physical, mental, social and spiritual satisfaction. Their families are strengthened and society begins to understand and respect their problems. The principles of Adapted Physical Activity are applied in the activities, which integrate interdisciplinary knowledge. The successful application of this model cannot be achieved without the preliminary preparation of teachers and coaches. And volunteers who work with children with SEN especially need qualifications in adapted physical activity. This understanding lies at the heart of the creation of a Specialized Center for Working with Volunteers. The aim is to establish volunteering in Bulgarian society, since this social phenomenon, although it has some followers, is still not widespread in our country.



## PROJECT GUIDELINES

The project is aimed at preparing students and teachers of special education to work with children with special educational needs through the development of skills for a healthy lifestyle, physical activity, interactive activities, including communication with peers and various activities supporting the educational process. The idea is also to explore the possibilities of volunteering in educational institutions, to achieve a change in attitudes and to build a positive attitude among the student community and teachers of special education towards this social phenomenon. The aim is to develop and implement a sustainable model for the integration of children with various difficulties and deficits through sports activities and additional activities for a healthy lifestyle.

## RESULTS

Through the results of the project, real actions are being taken to inform and involve young people with different specialties in volunteer activities related to the integration of children and students with disabilities. At the first stage of the study, the needs of PE teachers who teach children and students with special educational needs were identified. The state of volunteering in our country was also studied based on data from active volunteers, as well as from students who expressed an opinion regarding their inclusion in volunteer activities. The scope of the research work is expanding, making a transition from ascertaining the state and identifying needs to creating and gradually implementing new approaches to the activity, which are the basis for creating a structural-functional model of a Specialized Center for Working with Volunteers. Within the framework of this center, meetings were held with teachers and directors of educational institutions in the Federation for Adapted Physical Activity (FAFA), which allowed for the exchange of experience and to achieve full conviction of the need to implement additional sports activities with children with SEN. The practical results are associated with the development of a system of physical exercises that are adapted to the capabilities of children with various disabilities. Activities for training volunteers to conduct a Bocce tournament have been tested. The activities and results have been implemented and discussed jointly with FAFA; future activities with 8 clubs are planned (СК „АС Фаер“, СК „АФА Фаетон“, СК „Уондърс“, СК „АФА Победа“, СК „Лаянс – Кубратово“, СК „АФА Шампион“, СК „АС Варна“, СК „Средец АФА“) As a result of the activities carried out in the Specialized Center for Training Volunteers for Participation in Work with Children and Students with Special Educational Needs, models in inclusive education for support through additional sports activities and a healthy lifestyle have been prepared. At the third stage, a toolkit was prepared for a control study of changes in the motivation of students and teachers of physical education in relation to volunteering. Based on the control section, data were collected that show that conditions have been created for informing, motivating and preparing students for inclusion in volunteer activities for working with children with disabilities. It can be expected that the work of physical education teachers will also be supported in applying the prepared didactic models for forming a culture of tolerance and sharing in the school community.

## CONCLUSION

The targeted activity of informing and preparing young people about the possibilities of Adapted Physical Activity supports the work with children with special educational needs and through additional sports activities is a real support for their integration. The understanding is being implemented in practice that children with SEN should be helped not only by specialists and that the inclusion of partners without disabilities (volunteers) in sports activities will help improve social relationships. Measures are being taken to change attitudes in society, the idea is being realized that it is necessary to make targeted efforts to achieve greater popularity of volunteering in Bulgarian society. The built model contributes to: - Understanding the social phenomenon of "volunteering" as an opportunity for personal and professional development in the educational institution; - Formation of attitudes and attitude towards sports activities as an important factor for inclusive education of children with SEN; - Acquisition of knowledge and competencies related to a healthy lifestyle, physical activity as an integrative model in organizing additional activities and a supportive environment in the educational institution; - Improvement of the model and method of informing and communicating with students in connection with the use of additional sports activities as a factor for inclusive education and community formation in educational institutions. The study responds to a topical and socially significant topic in modern society, contributes to the training of student volunteers; institutionally engages the higher education institution for a more active and sustainable policy in the field of inclusive education and the integration of children with SEN.



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