

## THE HISTORY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN GREECE

In Greece the latest years special education has followed the same progression as in any other country in Europe but in a very slow pace. Specifically, Special Education services were available to Greek children since the beginning of the 20th century, adapted Physical Education was introduced the last two decades.

After the first half of the century various associations developed intense activity with the aim to protect specific groups of people with special needs such as, the blind, the deaf and motionally disabled. The initiative had clearly charitable characteristics with pity as the main feeling. The state welfare was non-existent every kind of care and prevention was accorded to the authorization of the charitable organization that with full power decided during the course of the years about the life and the future of thousands of people with special needs. The offers of the individuals had the form of institutional care (enclosed protection) with the offer of basic knowledge.

The interest of private initiative led to the introduction of various institutional units and schools; firstly in the area of Attica and then in other cities of Greece. Some of the first institutions, which were created, was the “house of the blind” in 1906, the “house of the deaf and dump” in 1923, and the “Hellenic organization for the protection and rehabilitation of disabled children”.

In 1937 much late there were more branches created such as the “national institution for the protection of the deaf and dump” in 1937, the “lighthouse of the blind” in 1946, the “ school of the blind in North Greece” in 1948 etc.

These institutions housed a great number of children but the role of the individuals was not only always a charitable one. However, the private sector helped in its way the state preparation so as to take up later the responsibility and interfere institutionally. The first state interferences began in 50's and concerned mainly legislation arrangements for the blind and after for the motionally disabled.

The state however was interested in the group of the mentally retarded children and later in the motionally disabled, which the private agents had completely ignored. The first school, which was founded by the state for the mentally retarded children, was the “ original special school of Athens” in 1937. Many people consider

the state interference in the space of special education during the 30's non-occasional. The considerable evolutions of pedagogical and psychology sciences, the establishment of obligatory attendance for all the children and the great number of mentally retarded children comparatively with other groups of "inferior individuals" was a reality which the Greek state could not ignore.

From the mid of 50's the 70's the developments in special education came again from the wide activity of the private sector while the state followed with mainly legislation inferences and the well known sympathy towards the people with special needs. So, during this period educational units were founded and "deaf and dumb" schools in various areas of Greece and units for motionally-disabled people. Another offer of the private sector was the foundation of children's neuropsychiatry clinics and schools for the group of "marginal adults" and "mentally retarded children".

The exemplification of the Greek state and the educational policy of the western countries begins in the mid of the 70's approximately. Specifically towards the end of the 70's measures were promoted for the professional rehabilitation of the disabled by giving motives to employers for the employment of these people.

Since 1980 and then special classes for the children with, learning difficulties and slight mental retardment began to be estamplished. The Greek state in the 80's seems to desire to participate actively with the other social factors in an attempt of re-organization of the philosophy and pre-existent structure concerning the people with special needs, which imposed their life and social back round. Precisely, emphasis was given in the whole development and the development of the potential of the people with special needs, their

introduction in the productive procedure and their mutual acceptance in the social group.

Today, thousands of individuals with disabilities are introduced to sports in various settings such as schools or in sports clubs in both segregated and integrated settings by a variety of national and international organizations. The momentum for such change is contributed to several reasons:

- One of the most important reason is the introduction and approval of a new law, which mandates not only free public education for all children, but most important integration of children with disabilities in schools settings. This law is considered

as a springboard for the recognition for all children's rights to participate in physical education activities.

- A second reason, is beginning of 90's the implementation of the program "Sports for All", which is organized by the General Secretariat of Sports and implemented with the support of different municipalities within Greece.
- A third reason, is the mandatory exposure of all students of physical education in adapted physical activity course work during their core university studies. In this way they have the opportunity not only to be introduced, but also to become specialized later on this subject. This has considerably affected their attitude to teach integrated sports.
- A fourth reason is the organization of the Paralympic Games of 2004, which is considered one of the largest events in the world. Due to the magnitude of this event, Greece started to evaluate the current status of the movement for sports for the disabled people, as well as, begin to take important actions towards the best organization of the games.