

## **CHILDREN'S SPORT: PROBLEMS OF HUMANIZATION**

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### **Summary**

Different and even opposite approaches of scientists and specialists-practitioners from different countries to estimation of humanistic value of children's sport are characterized. The basic attention is paid to presentation of projects and programs of humanization of this sport, called to raise its social and cultural value.

### **1. Introduction**

Currently sport is used more widely and more often in the system of health improvement, organization of leisure and education of children. The number of competitions organized specially for children and teenagers grows each year. So, for example, in Germany the so-called Federal games of youth (mass sports competitions for children of school age) are held annually. There are also special competitions for children and youth, named "Youth trains for further participation in Olympiad". Their program includes 10 kinds of sport: track and field athletics, swimming, gymnastics, volleyball, football, basketball, handball, boat racing, cross-country skiing, and hockey. In Austria mass competitions of schoolboys called "Summer week of sport" are held regularly. Semi-marathon among schoolboys in kind of a relay race with a large number of participants is organized in France. Development of school basketball in Austria has resulted in the creation of organizational model of cup competitions of schoolboys - "The Golden Goblet". In Russia in 1991 with a purpose to stimulate schoolboys to go in for sports public authorities have developed the Regulation on holding All-Union sports games of schoolboys. The Games of rural youth, special sports contests ("Spartakiads") between secondary schools are also held. In many countries, there are regular children's sports competitions under the name "Small Olympiads" (imitating summer and winter Olympic Games). Sometimes they are held with participation of preschool children. More and more often we can see international children's and junior sports competitions. So, since 1968 the International Games of schoolboys, and since 1991 - Olympic Days of young European sportsmen are held regularly. In 1998 and in 2002, the World Youth Games took place in Moscow.

So, extensive development of children's sport, of course, calls for a special attention of scientists. It is possible to distinguish two basic directions of scientific researches regarding this type of sport.

Within the framework of the first direction (conditionally it can be named *technological*) specialists set a task to build a scientific basis for methods of selection of children and teenagers, which are most suitable for successful performance in some kind of sports. Such basis should also define ways of selection of means and methods of youngsters' sports preparation, such modification of their body, physical condition and mentality, which is conducive to successful performance, achievement of extremely high results in a particular kind of sport. Currently within the framework of this approach a concept of sports selection of young sportsmen with reference to various kinds of sport is developed and the main methodological approaches to the solution of this problem are scientifically proved. The fundamentals of a system of sports preparation of young sportsmen are formulated: stages of long-term preparation and a primary orientation of preparation at each stage are determined, optimum age borders for achievement of the maximum results in different kinds of sport are determined. The basic methodical statements, on the basis of which a long-term sports training should be built, are formulated. The technology of selection of means and methods of training children and teenagers is developed. Within the framework of the given theory and the corresponding practice, based on the specified paradigm, a child (and not only its body, but also mentality, in complex) acts as a certain tool for solution of some problems in a sports sphere, with reference to a particular kind of sport.

However, for many reasons an absolutely opposite approach to development of a theory of children's sport is required. First of all, it is necessary to note that modern society undergoes deep, fundamental changes. They are connected to human aspiration not only to proclaim, but also to implement in practice, ideals and values of *humanism*. The idea of humanization of a system of social relations, different spheres of activity of people, underlies the majority of those social programs of modernization, which are developed and implemented in our times.

Humanism, as we know, comprises a system of views, which treats a human being (an individual) as the best value in the world. According to such initial paradigm, an individual is considered not as a tool, but as a purpose, and also as a criterion (measure) of an evaluation of all social processes, phenomena, spheres of social life (science, engineering, art, sport, etc.). This theory postulates that things and phenomena can be humane, if they "work" for an individual in daily activity of a society and a person, if they serve to "cultivate humanity" in an individual, to develop "human qualities in a human being". To a number of such qualities of a person, humanistic theory attributes freedom, dignity, creativity, harmonious and all-around development of a person, ability of a person to self-actualization, self-realization, self-determination, self-development – ability "to open in oneself own essence", "to surpass oneself", "to rise above oneself".

The aspiration to practical implementation of ideals and values of humanism at the present stage of development of human civilization stimulates a wish to look at different phenomena and events from a new point of view, to estimate them, taking into account their significance for implementation of universal humanistic ideals and values,

their role in this matter in modern conditions and with reference to methods of increase of their humanistic value.

In this matter, sport and the process of development of a humanistic theory of sport (with a humanistic instead of technocratic paradigm in a basis) deserve a special attention. The main task of such theory is a scientific justification of ways, means and methods of humanistic principles and ideals implementation in sport and through sport. Hence, not sport, but human interests, needs, individuality, relations, come to the foreground in this case, and sport is considered just as a tool, intended to promote such development of a person and relations between people, which corresponds to ideals and values of humanism.

In connection with wide and intensive involving in sports activity of the increasing number of children starting from preschool age, within the framework of a humanistic theory of sport, special attention is to be paid to *children's sport*, a complex of problems concerning influence of active going in for sports on social and cultural development of children, on a process of their socialization. First of all, it is necessary to consider the following questions.

- Whether usage of sports competitions in a system of health improvement, organization of leisure and education of children is allowable from humanistic positions?
- What opportunities of sports activity can be used for implementation of humanistic ideals and values within the framework of the above mentioned system?
- Whether modern children's sport is oriented to implementation of the mentioned ideals and values? What influence does it exert on spiritual (moral, aesthetic, intellectual) culture of a child?
- Whether sports competitions lead to negative consequences for personal development and social relations of children?
- Whether it is possible somehow (and how) to avoid these consequences, how to provide positive and most full humanistic influence of sport on an individual and social relations of children?

These questions are very important and actual firstly because children are persons of a rising generation, and future of all our society depends on it. Secondly, all those negative phenomena, which are in some degree inherent to modern sport, are especially sharply demonstrated in children's sport and so they require the faster settlement.

In the following we present the basic theoretical approaches of scientists and experts towards estimation of humanistic value of children's sport and ideas on humanization, formulated on the basis of such theories.

## **2. The Basic Approaches to Evaluation of Humanistic Significance of Children's Sport**

The problem of a humanistic meaning (value) of children's sport for many years is a subject of discussion not only for sociologists, but also for teachers, medical specialists, psychologists, and philosophers. Often international seminars and symposiums devoted

to this problem are held. So, for example, in 1996 at the international symposium in Saarbruecken (Germany) specialists discussed the problem of participation of children and teenagers in sport of the supreme achievements. Special issues of the journal *“International Review for the Sociology of Sport”* of the International Committee for Sociology of Sport (1997) and *“Review of the CIEPSS”* (The International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education) (1985), *Proceedings of the Olympic Scientific Congress (1984)*, collected articles of a thematic series *“Sport, intellectual values, culture”* of the Humanitarian Center “SpArt” of the Russian State University of Physical Culture, Sport and Tourism (1998), comparative international sociological researches, etc. are devoted to the subject.

An analysis of these and other publications on the specified questions reveals some approaches to estimation of value of sport in a process of children socialization and education.

### **2.1. A Positive Approach to Children's Sport**

In the majority of scientific works, reports and speeches at conferences and symposiums, devoted to children's sport, sports competitions and preparation for them are considered as an important pedagogical tool, which necessarily should be used in a system of health improvement, education and organization of leisure of children, i.e. in a complete process of their socialization.

The 1st International conference of ministers and executives responsible for physical training and sport has taken place in 1976 in Paris (Paris, April 5-10, 1976). It has been organized by the UNESCO in cooperation with the International Council on Physical Training and Sport. In the final report and recommendations of the conference on *“The role of physical training and sport in preparation of youth during a process of long term continuous education”* it is reported that the conference reveals wide consensus *“regarding the value of physical training and sport for harmonious development of an individual not only in physical, but also in intellectual, moral, aesthetic and emotional spheres”*. On the basis of such conclusions, specialists have come to the understanding that development of physical training and sport *“should be an integral part of national education planning, executing by countries-members of the mentioned union, and should correspond to a criterion of education, established in view of interests and needs of different age groups, from preschool age and up to a university level, and also taking into account interests of continuous education, all-round preparation of a person and his/her full participation in life of a society”*. The conference recommended *“to make some arrangements with the purpose of development of practice “Sport For All”, starting from school education, to establish widespread practice of going in for sport in the course of the whole human life”*. The conference *“solemnly proclaims, that physical training and sport are the basic elements of culture and, as those, are the national and international duty”*, and on the basis of such conclusion it *“recommends to carry out physical and sports education of youth simultaneously in the school and out-of-school environment”*.

The starting point of such an approach to evaluation of an educational role of sport, apparently, is Ancient Greek agonistics. The spirit of rivalry and competition penetrated

all spheres of life of Ancient Greece, including the educational system for the rising generation. In later times, Thomas Arnold (1755-1842) a rector of the College of Rugby, seemingly, one of the first has started wide usage of sports meets in the system of school education in England. Such positive attitude to children's sports prevails till now.

In theoretical justification of the positive approach to children's sport practically all specialists underline its value for health improvement and physical perfection of rising generation in their papers. Supporters of children's sports programs state also, that active participation in sport allows students to become self-confident, competitive persons, to develop their self-discipline, interaction in groups, to raise their motivation to achievements, courage, and persistence.

The other aspects of positive value of sport in the process of socialization and education of children are also noted: specialists underline the interrelation between participation in sports, intellectual development and moral education of children and teenagers, scientists also prove statements asserting that going in for sports under certain conditions help to cultivate in a person specific moral qualities, which are demonstrated not only in sport, but also in study, at work, in a whole life of a schoolboy-sportsman.

The experts from the New Zealand, created a special program of development of children's sport called "Kiwi-sport", underline an important value of going in for sport for physical, social and emotional development of children. They mark out, that participation of children in this activity stimulates a process of growth and improves strength of an organism, helps to acquire particular motor skills and accuracy of movement, creates good opportunities for mental and social development. Sport creates a special environment in which an individual can develop positive self-estimation and acquire additional confidence in his/her own forces. Sport helps develop a spirit of cooperation between groups of individuals. Participation in sports events also promotes development of correct attitude to victories and defeats. The satisfaction from going in for sport in an early age serves as the basis for the further going in for sport in the course of the whole human life.

A number of researchers finds a positive role of games with strict rules and games-competitions, including sports, for children in the fact, that they require from participants to be master of certain cognitive skills - it is necessary to know rules, to take into account the consequences of those or other actions, to be able to win and to lose - and simultaneously they promote development of the mentioned skills, and also promote prevention of conflicts. It is underlined also, that sports stimulate development in children of such important ability as performance (impersonation, playing a role), since players should take into account in different unpredictable situations both expectations of team partners and rivals. For example, a football player - dribbler should act as a ball defender against a contra-player, pressing him, (orientation to rivals), he also should know, what type of a pass his team partners expect from him (orientation to his team), he should move ahead, not taking the ball in hands even in the most difficult situations, and, moreover, he should take into account, that a pass to a player, who is in an offside position, is wrong (orientation to game rules). Though a child performs here only one role, but simultaneously it should understand roles of the other children and

take into account all opportunities of their behavior to react rightly to corresponding situations.

Humanistic importance of sport for solution of pedagogical problems in educational institutions is estimated high. So, for example, the Association of physical training of the Great Britain and Northern Ireland in "British Journal of Physical Education" mentions five principal reasons, which, in the opinion of the Association, underline importance of school sport. 1) It promotes strengthening of health of school children. 2) This type of sport has important educational value for development not only of the human body and mind, but also for formation of character of a person, since achievement of a certain level of physical qualification and mastering any motor skills requires significant efforts of will and self-discipline. 3) Sport promotes strengthening of solidarity, uniting all members of a school group (team). 4) Sports interests, arisen at school, can find their application after school finishing in local sports clubs or other sports organizations. 5) Though a priority of school sport is granting to all children an opportunity to go in for sports, irrespective of a degree of their endowments, school sport are considered also as the first step on a way to big sports achievements, that is why a high level of its organization serves as a basis for future successes in sport both at national, and at international levels.

Similar reasons concerning a role and importance of school sport are stated by the American scientists D. Eitzen and G. Sage. First of all, they mark out positive influence of sport on a school. Any organization, including a school, requires solidarity of its members and their fidelity to its principles. An important role in this matter is played by sport. School children - members of a certain team identify themselves with their school and protect its interests. Sports meets stir up enthusiasm and solidarity of the whole school community at the face of their rivals – a team of another school. Besides, school sport carries out a function of social control. Sport occupies a free time of students, distracts them from unnecessary reflection and doubts. Participation in sports competitions is permitted only to those, who do not break educational and sports requirements. Therefore, students-sportspersons, as a rule, are disciplined and are an example for the other students, and also often they study better. The important role of sport is in the fact, that it practically neutralizes severe forms of rivalry between cities, regions and schools. In fact, sports competitions, regulated by certain game rules, are "symbolical competitions between rivals". Secondly, as marked out by D. Eitzen and G. Sage, school sport also exerts positive influence on the surrounding society. It unites the inhabitants of a certain region irrespective of their profession, education, racial and religious belonging in their common desire to support their regional school team. Thus it serves as a link between different generations. D. Eitzen and G. Sage emphasize, that sport positively influences also an individual - promotes development both of physical, and different mental qualities of a school student.

According to the opinion of experts, it is important to take into account also the fact, that in modern conditions children constantly find themselves in a situation of rivalry - both at school, and after its finishing. In this matter, the opinion of Bryan Start, a professor of the Melbourne University is very interesting. He was engaged in studying the interrelation between rivalry and cardiovascular system diseases, caused by stresses from rivalry. Though he has revealed this interrelation, but nevertheless, according to

his opinion, upbringing of a child in conditions free from rivalry can exert baneful influence on his health and future, since attempts to achieve higher results in study, sport, at work will result in nothing in case of his/her refusal or unwillingness to improve his/her own previous results. Therefore from the point of view of B. Start, not to refuse of rivalry of children, but to cultivate is a correct approach to rivalry. He recommends to give children and teenagers tasks, corresponding to a specific level of each person, so, first of all, they could cope with these tasks, applying enough effort, and, secondly, such procedure would not touch their dignity and would not influence their opinion about their own individuality.

Many scientists and experts emphasize the importance not only of “Sport For All” (mass sport), but also sport of the supreme achievements for children and teenagers. So, in the Statement of the German Sports Union (DSB) regarding participation of children in the sport of the supreme achievements, published in 1983 in the West-German magazine “*Olympische Jugend*”, it is marked out, that a certain level of a physical load is necessary for development of children. In all spheres of life, the gifted children have a right to display their uncommon abilities. A competition between children in solution of different problems is their natural need. In itself sports achievement and the corresponding experiences and feelings have an important value for development of a child and for disclosing his individuality. In the mentioned Statement the following basic positive functions of sport of supreme achievements, corresponding to children’s age, are distinguished: stimulation of physical, mental and spiritual development of a child; assistance to practical studying by child of own efficiency and own skills, and also to strengthening of confidence of own forces; familiarizing of children with a collective and formation of their social behavior; expansion of experience and enrichment of emotional life of a child by the rational organization of his leisure.

A positive role of sport of supreme achievements for children and teenagers is marked out also by Lia Manoliu from Romania – an Olympic champion of 1968 in discus throwing. In her article “Sport with participation of children: danger or a chance?” she proves a statement, asserting that modern “children-athletes” mature through sport, better cope with common life situations and carry out an important integrating function (demonstrating good examples of socialization).

Alongside a positive evaluation of a role of children’s sport in a system of socialization and education of children, there is *negative* attitude to its role.

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## Biographical Sketches

**Vladislav Ivanovich Stolyarov** is Doctor of Philosophy, Professor.

He was born on February 4, 1937 in Moscow. In 1959, he graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy of the Lomonosov Moscow State University. From 1959 to 1972, he worked at the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. In 1964, he received his Ph.D., and in 1971 he becomes Full Doctor of Philosophy; his thesis concerns the problems of logic and methodology of scientific research.

Since 1972, he works at the Russian State University of Physical Education, Sport, Youth and Tourism (SCOLIPE). Till 2007, he was the head of the Department of Philosophy and Sociology, and currently he is a professor at this department and a Director of SpArtistic Humanistic Center.

From 1986 to 1989, he has been elected for a post of the first vice-president of the Philosophical Society of the USSR. From 1972 to 1991, he was a director of state researches regarding philosophical and sociological problems of physical culture and sport, and also a director of an international group of scientists on the same problems. Since 1976, he is a member of a bureau of the International Committee for Sociology of Sport and a member of an editorial board of an international magazine on sociology of sport. More than 10 years, he is a member of the Olympic Committee of Russia (the OCR), currently he is a member of the "Fair Play" Commission of the OCR.

He is an author of a SpArtistic program of health improvement, recreation and complete development of a person, and also an author of a concept of a new humanistic movement "SpArt"; since 1991, he is a president of Coordinating Board of this movement, which currently develops in 20 regions of the Russian Federation.

His scientific researches are devoted to different problems in the following scientific disciplines: philosophy; logic and methodology of scientific researches; sociology of physical culture and sport

(PC&S); philosophy of PC&S; culturology of PC&S; pedagogy of PC&S; aesthetics of sport; ethics of sport; sociology of a human body. He has proved necessity and has started development of new scientific disciplines: a humanistic theory of sport; a non-classical theory of children's sports; Olympic pedagogy; a theory of Olympic culture; a theory of sports culture; humane features of rivalry; a theory of a SpArtistic model of rivalry, etc. Results of scientific researches on these problems are presented in more than 700 publications (more than 100 in foreign languages): treatises, scientific articles, textbooks, manuals, etc.

He took repeatedly the first place in contests for the best research work on problems of the Olympic Movement by the Olympic Committee of Russia; twice he won the first place in a SCOLIPE contest "The best scientist of a year".

In 2003, for development and implementation of SpArtistic program of spiritual and physical improvement of children and youth, he was awarded with the top prize of the Russian Movement "Fair Play", and in 2007 he was awarded with the top prize of the European Movement "Fair Play" - The Honorable Plaque and a diploma - for the personal contribution to distribution of ideals and values of "Fair Play".

**Vladislav Ivanovich Vishnevsky** was born in 1953, In 1974, he graduated from the Lvov State Institute of Physical Culture; in 1985, he completed his postgraduate study at the State Central Institute of Physical Culture; in 1987, he becomes Ph.D. after defending a thesis on "Social-educational aspects of mass sports competitions of schoolboys in the USSR"; in 2010, he completed postdoctoral study at the Russian State University of Physical Culture, Sport and Tourism. Currently, he works at the same university as a senior lecturer (an associate professor). He is a Deputy Director of SpArtistic Humanistic Center.