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Kľúčová úloha médií a humánneho dizajnu pri debarierizácii v oblasti vzdelávania

Debarrierization in Education and the Key Role of Mass Media and Human Design

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Abstract

The paper deals with a barrier-free environment in terms of its purposes, creation, and importance. It justifies the question of why the free-barriers issue deserves to be a topic of immediate interest within everyday life and mass-media content. To take into consideration the participation of medical, research, and education specialists, the paper explains and justifies the key role of mass media that have developed methods and strategies for presenting the current situation and issue to responsible agents in public administration as well as executive, law-making bodies. The emphasis is given to legal coverage and support to implement international standards in this field. Mass media can find out responsible and decision-making persons that can improve the situation and mood of physically disabled people and significantly improve their lives. The paper explains media strategies and presents authentic examples from the online world of mass media.

Keywords: Educational institutions. Barriers-free environment. Legal support. Universal design. Debarrierisation. Mass media.

Introduction

Debarrierisation of schools, educational facilities and cultural institutions is important to ensure accessibility and inclusiveness for all individuals. This process aims to remove physical, informational, and social barriers that limit access and participation of people with different types of disabilities. The aim of this thesis is to review the legislative framework, definitions, current status, main objectives, categorizations of accessibility, and the implementation of the debarrisation of the environment. The thesis also examines the expected impacts of debarrierisation and issues related to the financing of the process. Implementing the principle of inclusion in education and training, the Slovak Republic is based on the idea that inclusion concerns all actors in both the school and out-of-school environment. This means all children, pupils, students,

teachers, educators, parents and other stakeholders in education and training. There is a legislative framework for debarrisation of schools and school facilities in the Slovak Republic. Efforts to debarrierise the environment are based on the following generally valid and accepted legal documents. A barrier-free environment is one of the basic conditions for the implementation of inclusive education and extracurricular activities.

A barrier-free environment is one of the basic conditions for the implementation of inclusive education and extracurricular activities. It was identified and approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic as a priority in its document on 8 December 2021. In implementing the principle of inclusion in education and training, the Slovak Republic is based on the idea that inclusion concerns all actors in both the school and out-of-school environment. This means all children, pupils, students, teachers, educators, parents, and other stakeholders in education and training. Priority area 4: Debarrierisation of the school environment is also part of the strategy. The universal design of naturally inclusive school environments together with mass media play a crucial role in shaping public opinion, raising awareness, and advocating for social issues, including the improvement of life for handicapped people.

According to Steinfeld and Maisel (2012) Technology can be a barrier as well as a facilitator for usability. Within the context of human evolution, the purpose of design is to help the species increase its survival potential. Design is more than aesthetics, which is primarily a surface effect. Universal design, at its most elemental level, seeks to make our built environment, products, and systems as enabling as possible; in other words, it seeks both to avoid creating barriers in the first place and, through intelligent use of resources, to provide as much facilitation as possible to reach human goals. Social and technological trends have converged to put more value on enabling design. Because the elimination of barriers is so central to the universal design philosophy, it is important through mass media and other institutions, to begin with an examination of barriers as an experiential and intellectual phenomenon.

There are some ways and strategies in which mass media supports and promotes through human design the rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities.

The current state of debarrierization and legal framework

The situation in Slovakia in terms of barrier-free accessibility of school and cultural environments is not satisfactory. Barriers are identified mainly in relation to the physical environment (architectural barriers), but there are also other barriers in the school environment, e.g. in communication (communication barriers), in access to information (information barriers), in thinking (psychological barriers), but also in access to people (social barriers),

or in the suitability of the environment for people with sensory sensitivity. To eliminate them, it is important to establish rules - both in the field of debarrisation the existing environment and in the creation of inclusive school environments using the universal design method, to understand the principles of universal accessibility of the environment, and to gradually introduce systematic steps, including the education of key and interested stakeholders.

However, the understanding of accessibility to date has often been limited to partial or superficial solutions to debarrierisation, such as the construction of an accessible entrance to a building. However, declared barrier-free solutions often fail to meet even the basic requirements laid down in Slovak legislation, e.g. length and slope of ramps, width of doors, accessibility of information, etc. Accessibility and accessibility is understood by society in a very vague way, and there are no systemic measures and control mechanisms leading to improvement of the current situation. For this reason, the design of uniform (universally applicable) strategies and measures in the field of debarrisation is very important.

In particular, attention should be focused on the creation of a comprehensive inclusive environment through a universal design/design method, including the accessibility of the environment respecting individuals with different disabilities, including those with sensory sensitivities, as well as the accessibility of information and communication resources/tools, educational methods, materials, etc. The CEDA Barrier-Free Design Research and Training Centre at the Faculty of Architecture and Design of the Slovak Technical University in Bratislava has produced a number of publications and methodologies taking into account the principles of universal design in the creation of inclusive environments in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The current building legislation does not sufficiently accept the issue of universal - barrier-free accessibility. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities clearly stipulates the requirement to implement universal design/design in the legislation of the Slovak Republic. There is a lack of harmonization of legislation, i.e. translation of a measure from one law into other laws that are related to accessibility under the competence of other ministries. Based on these experiences, findings, and facts, it is necessary to proceed with changes from the bottom up, from practical knowledge to their verification for the national system and then for amendments to laws and decrees with regular updates that should reflect international treaties as well as the parameters of the compensatory aids used.

This is why there is currently an effort at the European Union level to harmonize the rules on accessibility, interoperability, and mobility for the different areas of life in the Member States of the European Union, which also includes the field of culture and education. An example is the uniform European standard STN EN 17210 Accessibility and usability of the built environment. Functional requirements (date of issue: 1 July 2021, English

version EN 17210:2021 Accessibility and usability of the built environment - Functional requirements), which is also valid in the Slovak Republic and based on this standard it will be necessary to harmonize legislation.

On the issue of accessibility at the international level, it is also necessary to mention the agreement of the UN countries, which are associated in the World Disabled Union (WDU) organization based in Istanbul, where the document WDU Accreditation System of 2016 is referred to as the basic output and convention. The document in question outlines the General Standards for Persons with Disabilities and how they are assessed (the so-called USTAD system). In light of these conclusions, in November 2021, "OZ Bez bariéry" - National Platform against Barriers and Technical University in Košice issued a professional publication entitled International Accessibility Standards for the Slovak environment, which is a harmonization of more than 1400 technical standards and provisions on barrier-free accessibility, and which was created based on the need for objective accessibility and barrier-free accessibility for the Slovak environment and is also applicable in the international environment. In this case, this is not the only publication in this area that can be used for the preparation of the barrier-free system in Slovakia, similar publications have been produced by other academic institutions.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities² (hereinafter referred to as the "UN Convention"), which the Slovak Republic ratified in 2010 and which defines the requirements of universal design (in Article 2), accessibility (in Article 9) and inclusive education (in Article 24); Decree no. 532/2002 Coll. of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, laying down details on general technical requirements for construction and on general technical requirements for buildings used by persons with reduced mobility (hereinafter referred to as Decree No. 532/2002); the basic requirements are set out in the fourth part of Decree No. 532/2002 Coll. of the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, laying down details on general technical requirements for construction and on general technical requirements for buildings used by persons with reduced mobility (hereinafter referred to as Decree No. 532/2002 Coll. 532/2002 and the specific technical requirements are set out in the Annex to Decree No. 532/2002; (the building legislation is currently being amended in the light of the following technical standards and other measures on accessibility in the European area) European standard STN EN 17210 Accessibility and usability of the built environment. Functional requirements (date of issue: 1 July 2021, English version EN 17210:2021 Accessibility and usability of the built environment - Functional requirements). This standard describes the basic, minimum functional requirements and recommendations for an accessible and usable physical environment according to the principles of Universal Design and Design for All that will enable a wide range of users, including people with disabilities, to use the environment equitably and safely; Technical Standard TNI CEN/TR 17621 Accessibility and usability of the built

environment. Accessibility and usability of the built environment - Technical performance criteria and specifications (date of issue: 1.9.2021, English version: Accessibility and usability of the built environment - Technical performance criteria and specifications.), which specifies in more detail the parameters to STN EN 17210.

Directive 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on requirements for accessibility of products and services (hereafter EU Council Directive 2019/882), which covers, for example, computer hardware systems and operating systems for consumers, e-books and specialised software, audiovisual and media services.

International treaties are binding on the Slovak Republic and their implementation into Slovak law is currently carried out through the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and its First Section, First Title, Art. "The Slovak Republic recognizes and observes the general rules of international law, the international treaties by which it is bound and its other international obligations" and subsequently Art. "International treaties on human rights and fundamental freedoms, international treaties the implementation of which does not require a law acts, and international treaties which directly create rights or obligations of natural or legal persons and which have been ratified and promulgated in the manner prescribed by law shall take precedence over laws."

Mass-media strategies for the debarrierisation of institutions

Mass media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and attitudes toward persons with disabilities because of sophisticated mass-media procedures and methods that support persons with disabilities. By implementing inclusive and accessible procedures and methods, the media can effectively support and empower individuals and groups with disabilities. Here are some approaches that mass media can adopt:

- **Inclusive Representation:** Ensure that persons with disabilities are accurately and positively represented in media content, including television programs, films, advertisements, and news stories. This includes featuring disabled actors, journalists, and content creators, as well as highlighting their achievements and abilities. By promoting inclusive content, media producers are increasingly incorporating disabled characters and storylines into their content. This includes casting disabled actors to portray disabled characters authentically, ensuring representation, and breaking down stigmas. By including disabled individuals in advertisements, media campaigns, and entertainment programming, mass media helps to normalize disability and promote inclusivity.
- **Avoiding Stereotypes:** Challenge and avoid perpetuating stereotypes about disabilities. Portray individuals with disabilities as diverse, capable, and multi-dimensional, rather than relying on clichéd and outdated portrayals.

Sensitize Journalists and Content Creators: Conduct training sessions and workshops for journalists, reporters, and content creators to raise awareness about disability issues, appropriate terminology, and respectful reporting. This helps to foster a more accurate and empathetic portrayal of disability-related stories.

- **Accessible Media Content:** Make media content accessible to individuals with different disabilities. Provide closed captioning for videos, audio descriptions for visually impaired individuals, and transcripts for podcasts and radio shows. Incorporate sign language interpreters in news broadcasts and live events. Collaborate with Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs): Engage and collaborate with disabled people's organizations to ensure that media content reflects the lived experiences and perspectives of persons with disabilities. Involve them in the production process, from concept development to post-production. **Promote Digital Accessibility in Media Infrastructure:** Advocate for accessibility standards in media infrastructure, such as websites, mobile applications, and streaming platforms. Ensure that these platforms are designed to be usable and navigable by people with disabilities. Mass media organizations strive to make their digital platforms accessible to individuals with disabilities. This includes providing closed captions for videos, alternative text for images, and ensuring website accessibility for people with visual or auditory impairments. Accessible media allows disabled individuals to access information, engage with content, and participate in online discussions. Overall, mass media has the potential to drive positive change by promoting inclusivity, challenging stereotypes, and advocating for the rights and well-being of handicapped people. By representing their stories, raising awareness, and promoting understanding, media outlets can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society. Here are some of the ways in which the mass media support and promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities:
- **Collaboration with Assistive Technology Companies:** Partner with assistive technology companies to showcase the latest advancements and innovations that enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities. This can be done through product reviews, features, and informative segments.
- **Celebrate Disability Awareness Days:** Acknowledge and commemorate international disability awareness days such as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Use these occasions to amplify disability-related content, share personal stories, and promote inclusivity.

By adopting these approaches, procedures and methods, mass media can contribute to a more inclusive society, where persons with disabilities are valued, respected, and provided with equal opportunities by following three ways:

- **Representation and Visibility:** Mass media platforms, including television, films, and online media, have made significant strides in representing

disabled individuals in their programming. Increased visibility allows for better understanding, empathy, and breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding disabilities. TV shows, documentaries, and news features highlight the achievements, challenges, and stories of disabled individuals, showcasing their abilities and resilience.

- **Disability Rights Advocacy:** Mass media outlets often highlight disability rights issues, helping to generate public discourse and support for policies that promote inclusion and accessibility. News articles, opinion pieces, and investigative journalism shed light on barriers faced by disabled individuals, such as discrimination, lack of accessibility, or inadequate support services. Media coverage of disability rights movements, protests, and policy changes can amplify the voices of disabled activists and foster social change.
- **Education and Awareness:** Mass media provides a platform for raising awareness about disabilities and educating the public on various aspects of disability. Articles, interviews, and documentaries explore the experiences and challenges faced by disabled individuals, promoting understanding and empathy. Media campaigns, public service announcements, and social media initiatives help to disseminate information on disability etiquette, accessibility tips, and available resources. Mass media that are based on the visual effect should enforce their impact by presenting the results and recent findings of universal design which is focused on inclusion and humanity.

Examples of media presentations of disabled persons and debarrierisation in media

The TV broadcast on TA3 is a good example of the implementation of the above theory in practice. The charity event, aimed at helping people with disabilities, has a long tradition. It started as a challenge and has gradually built a name for itself as a respected and socially valued project that helps disabled people, and the results are published.

Handicapped Foundation administrator Peter Káčer rides a specially adapted three-wheeled bicycle across Slovakia to spread the ideas of solidarity with sick and disabled people and inspire healthy people to help and empathize with his perseverance and determination. Besides loyal sponsors, the viewers of Television ta3 are the ones who for years have given justification to this charity bicycle ride.

Peter Káčer is a cerebral palsy sufferer who decided to help people with this handicap. He cycled across the whole of Slovakia and raised funds for dozens of people for treatment and rehabilitation exercises.

The transparency of the aid provided, and the use of funds is also guaranteed by media coverage and a form of public scrutiny of the Foundation's activities. Even the pandemic did not interrupt the Káčer cycle

event. In 2020 and 2021, the ta3 Foundation tested its capacities given situations when epidemiological measures changed from day to day. Peter Káčer on a bicycle was able to react promptly to the challenging conditions and even more successfully! He did not come empty-handed to the towns and villages he visited. At the start, he handed over a cheque worth 1,000 euros to the representatives of the municipalities, which, at their discretion, the mayors donate to a family with a social disadvantage, an individual with a disability, or an organization with a humanitarian or charitable focus.

Examples of barrier-free design in media

There are universal design approaches in building environments. Advanced countries pay attention to human capabilities and limitations that are an important factor in how effectively they interact within a built environment. According to Payal Sajnani disability equals mismatched interaction between features of the individual body and features of his/her environment.



Figure 1: Mismatched interaction between features of the individual body and features of his/her environment¹

Regional television Poprad broadcasted information about Barrier-Free Access to Schools. In the report, the presenter said that people in wheelchairs can get to the offices, but it is worse in schools. The problem is not only for people who cannot walk, people with disabilities also have a problem, but also people with visual impairments and mothers with prams. The law directs schools to allow access for pupils with special educational needs. Inclusive education is preferred.

¹ Source: Sajnani Payal, 2020, p. 24.



Bezbariérový prístup do škôl



Figure 2: Example of barrier entrance designed with long stairs²

Many of the schools in Poprad were built in the 1970s-80s and were designed with pompous entrances with long staircases. The new building code includes a barrier-free accessibility requirement.

As for elevators this advertisement also presents the results of scientific and technical solutions. The elevator has doors on both sides. The engineers had to completely change the layout of the technology in the shaft. They explain the unique solutions that are related to the depth of the car. The wheelchair lift is half a meter deeper. Noteworthy are the color-illuminated stainless steel buttons.



HELGOS s.r.o. - bezbariérový dvoudveřový výtah v Ústí nad Labem

Figure 3: Barrier-free two-door lift – Helgos Ltd.³

² Source: Popradská televízia, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79iDEkSyxrc>, online 17.5.2023

³ Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KApPrdNcUM0&t=193s>

Conclusion

Debarrierisation schools, educational facilities, and cultural institutions is a fundamental process that seeks to remove barriers and ensure accessibility and inclusivity for all individuals. According to Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, more than 10 % of Slovak citizens are considered to have some kind of disability. Based on the analysis, the main finding is that debarrierisation is necessary not only from a rights and equality perspective but also from a societal perspective. The existence of barriers in schools, educational facilities, and cultural institutions limits the access and participation of people with disabilities to personal development. It has a negative impact on their education, social integration, and the development of society itself. The main identified barriers free objectives include architectural accessibility with human designs, information accessibility, as well as the gradual removal of barriers. Creating a barrier-free environment requires a comprehensive approach that includes changing mindsets, adapting infrastructure, and providing information through education. It is important to make debarrierisation a priority in the education system and the cultural sector. This requires cooperation between government bodies, institutions, educators, families, and individuals with disabilities themselves. Another key aspect is the provision of funding for the implementation of debarrierisation and the monitoring of the entire progress. The anticipated impacts of debarrierisation are significant. The creation of an inclusive environment will have a positive impact on the education and social development of disadvantaged people. In addition, an inclusive environment contributes to the formation of a tolerant and inclusive society where individuals are accepted and respected regardless of their individual differences. Despite the challenges that debarrierisation poses, it is important to recognize that it is an ongoing process. Changing mindsets and removing barriers require sustained effort and commitment from all stakeholders. The result should be an environment that is accessible, inclusive, and respects the needs and rights of all people. Funding for debarrierisation is an important aspect that requires support and investment from the government and other relevant institutions. Sufficient funding needs to be secured to make the necessary adjustments, train staff, and monitor the progress of debarrierisation. Collaboration between the various stakeholders is key to achieving sustainable and effective results. The benefits of debarrierisation extend far beyond individuals with disadvantages. Creating a barrier-free environment allows all individuals to enjoy educational and cultural facilities without restrictions. This strengthens social integration, cooperation, and understanding between different groups of people.

In conclusion of this paper, it can be stated that the debarrierisation of schools, educational facilities, and cultural institutions is a key step towards an inclusive society where the rights and needs of all individuals are respected. Ensuring accessibility and barrier-free accessibility is a task for all

of us - individuals, institutions, and society. It is our duty to support and implement measures to remove barriers and ensure an inclusive environment for all.

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