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# **Managing diversity and European policy: Towards a typology for sport pedagogy**

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*This article adds to the growing body of knowledge in sport pedagogy and focuses specifically upon the intersection of gender and disability. Its purpose is twofold, to create a typology for examining good practice in sport pedagogy that is reflective and inclusive and raises awareness of the diverse needs of all participants in physical activity 'regardless' of gender and ability for all children. We acknowledge that access to physical activity, education and sport are complex and multifaceted, however, the main purpose of this paper is to raise awareness of 'diversity' by focusing specifically upon the role of gender and ability. Through an examination of gender and disability policies in official European Union (EU) policy documents and commercial examples of policy-in-practice we propose a typology for diversity and diversity management. A close look at EU level is instructive because national policies of the member countries vary a lot with respect to diversity issues but should be in accordance in the main areas. Such a reading enables the building of a typology of recommendations for how such policy can be rendered in sport pedagogy practice. We suggest six significant, but related principles that include (1) mainstreaming; (2) teaching and coaching sensitive to difference; (3) empowerment; (4) inclusion; (5) adaptation; and (6) inner differentiation. This holistic typology seeks to 'mainstream' issues of gender and disability policy by providing a set of principles that can be applied to a range of teaching and coaching settings.*

**Keywords:** Sport pedagogy, gender, disability, inclusion, gender mainstreaming, physical education and sport policy

## **Introduction – the gendered experience of disability**

Within the last decade the question has risen whether men and women experience disability in a similar or different way (Meekosha, 2005). People with a disability have often been represented as without gender, as asexual beings, the 'Other' of the social norm. Yet, the image of disability may be intensified by gender – for women a sense of intensified passivity and helplessness, for men a corrupted masculinity by enforced dependence (Gerschick, 2000). The gendered experience of disability reveals sustained patterns of differences between men and women with consequences in terms of education, employment, living arrangements and personal relationships that reinforce these images in the public sphere. Nonetheless, gender stereotypes interact with disability stereotypes to constitute a deep matrix of gendered disability in every culture. At the

very least, disabled men are expected to behave and express their being differently to disabled women in all cultures and it is likely that the hierarchies of power – most usually male over female, able-bodied over disabled – will set the cultural parameters. For men, who are not able to behave in a stereotypically competitive masculine way, sports may be adopted as a strategy to cope with the stigma, e.g. in building physical strength in areas of physical capacity. Gender can also be seen as a type of performance (Butler, 1993), given only few women engage in high-level disability sport. Women with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in today's society and are said to be 'double discriminated'.

### **European policy and the rights of women**

A wide range of documents exist in the public policy domain that focus upon the rights of women in Europe. Most of them neglect the need for equal gender participation in physical activities and sport because this area seems not to be of high priority. Yet, sport is characterised by a predominance of male players. The field of physical education and sport pedagogy offers a way to highlight this inequality by respecting general policies on the rights of women.

The policy document 'Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006\_2010' (European Commission, 2006a) produced by the Commission of the European Union (EU) outlines a number of policy priority areas that 'represent(s) the Commission's commitment to driving the gender equality agenda forward, reinforcing partnership with member states, and other actors'. In its response to commitments made in this document the EU Commission highlighted the need to progress towards achieving:

1. equal rights for women and men, girls and boys;
2. equal access to, and control over, resources for women and men;
3. equal opportunities to achieve political and economic influence for women and men (European Commission, 2007).

The promotion and protection of women's rights figures repeatedly in EU external policy and is systematically discussed by the EU and its member countries, in particular in the context of EU human rights dialogues, consultations and dedicated subcommittees on democracy and human rights. Recently adopted EU guidelines prioritise women's rights in 'human rights' policy in Third World countries, thus providing clear guidance on the way the EU should deal with individual cases of human rights violations and advocate cooperation with stakeholders on its implementation.

The European Commission (2006b) has also worked for many years with Mediterranean partner countries in promoting equality between women and men. There are also activities within the framework of multilateral organisations such as the United Nations, by participating in the UN-Commission on the Status of Women (CWS, 2012) and by supporting the negotiation of a resolution on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women at the UN-General Assembly. The EU has shown a commitment to fight violence towards women in situations of armed conflict as well as seeking to enhance the role of women in peace negotiations, and championing their involvement in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UN, 2000). UNSCR1325 focuses on the protection of women in conflicts and in particular highlights the role of *inclusion* and *empowerment*. The intention, therefore, is to define women not just through the lens of 'protection', but to focus on women's empowerment *through increased participation in decision-making processes* and their active participation in social life, physical activity and sport. In June 2010, the United Nations celebrated the 10th anniversary commemorations of UNSCR1325 by calling for women's engagement in conflict resolution and peace building. In a press release it was revealed that some progress had been made in the last 10 years, however, gaps in implementation of the resolution clearly remained (UN, 2010).

## European policies and the rights of people with disabilities

European policy explicitly recognises the disadvantages faced by disabled people and, in particular, the discrimination in finding employment at a level commensurate with their abilities. Whereas the 'Americans with Disabilities Act' (ADA) of 1990, which protects qualified individuals with disabilities from unlawful discrimination in the workplace, including access to training and career development, there is no such legal basis in Europe. In this document a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Specifically, a qualified individual with a disability is someone who can perform the essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodation. Anyway, some companies and some educational institutions detected the need to respect the challenges of people with disabilities and try to improve their employment rate. They follow the American examples which suggest that companies that include people with disabilities in their diversity programmes increase their competitive advantage. People with disabilities add to the variety of viewpoints needed to be successful and bring effective solutions to today's business challenges (Disability Diversity, 2010).

European policy on disability and the position of people with disabilities in society is encapsulated in the following statement:

The EU perceives disability as the result of the dynamic interaction between a person and their environment, including social constructions, which lead to discrimination and stigmatisation. It is therefore the environment that should be adapted to each individual person, including people with disabilities, by removing these barriers. (Goelen, 2005, p. 7)

The legal basis for EU action in this area is provided by Article 13 of the European Treaty from 1999 Commission for Racial Equity (2000). which permits the European Council to 'take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation' (Goelen, 2005). Policy documents such as the Charter of Fundamental Rights (European Parliament, 2000) and the Commission communication 'Towards a barrier free Europe for people with disabilities' (European Commission, 2000), also reiterate this sentiment.

Building on the momentum created by the policy outcomes of the 'European Year of People with Disabilities' of 2003 the Commission introduced an action plan through 2010, aimed at mainstreaming disability issues in community policies and implementing specific measures in key areas that sought to enhance the economic and social inclusion of people with disabilities (European Commission, 2005). This served to impact upon a range of policy areas and, in particular, had implications for the inclusion of those with disabilities in the context of physical activity, sport and school sport, but failed in large part to simultaneously consider the situation of girls and women.

In order to connect these issues reference to a published document is useful, one which aims to provide a resource tool for action for the intersection of 'Disability Rights, Gender, and Development' (UN CRPD/DESA, UNFPA, and Wellesley Centers for Women, 2008, p. roadmap-1):

This resource tool for the first time examines the connection between gender and disability in development and analyzes how gender, disability and development converge and intersect. On the other hand, the CRPD [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities] complements and intersects with the CEDAW [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women] and the CRC [Convention

on the Rights of the Child] and a gender perspective must be integrated into all aspects of disability rights. In turn, disability rights perspectives must inform the landscape of lawmaking for women and children in order to effectively transform the CRPD into concrete action in the domestic sphere.

Article 6 of the CRPD recommends specific measurements concerning women with disabilities by stating:

1. States Parties recognize that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination, and in this regard shall take measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by them of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the present Convention. (UN CRPD/DESA et al., 2008, p. Module 1\_12)

## **Diversity**

The concept of *diversity* is an inclusive term that captures the intersection of gender and disability. In the context of social groups, ‘diversity’ simply means variety or difference between individuals with respect to certain characteristics or attributes (Thomas & Ely, 1996). *Gender diversity* highlights the differences between the sexes and respective gender variances, whilst *cultural and/or ethnic diversity* reflects a person’s place of origin and/or their religious background, with scholars rarely including the term *disability* within debates surrounding *diversity*. Clutterbuck (2002, p. 55) offers a further definition, by suggesting that ‘at one extreme, diversity can be seen as a means of overcoming injustice - righting wrongs - and at the other as a means of enhancing individual and group contribution to the organization’s goals’. Such an interpretation acknowledges that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and perceptions which can improve the efficiency of work, products and services. It has also been argued that diversity is a broader concept that refers to any mixture of items characterised by differences and similarities (Thomas & Ely, 1996). A more inclusive definition of diversity is provided by Rasmussen (2007, p. 1) who argues that:

diversity is the mosaic of people who bring a variety of cultural, social and historical backgrounds, styles, perspectives, values and beliefs as assets to the groups and organizations with which they interact.’ These basic definitions are developed below to explore ‘diversity management.

## **Policies for sport and physical education with respect to gender and disability**

A range of official policy documents highlights the importance of equal opportunities in physical activity, education and youth sport, e.g. documents from the EU (*European Charter of Sport-for-All*, Council of Europe, 2001), United Kingdom (*UK National Curriculum - Statutory Inclusion Statement*, Lancashire Grid for Learning - LGfL, 2000), Germany (*Memorandum zum Schulsport*, dvs, DOSB & DSLV, 2009), Austria (*Fit-fur-Osterreich-Charta*, BSO, 2008) and the United Nations (UN, CRPD, 2006, Art.30.5). Only few effective enhancing measures are reported by the individuals concerned or from research (Rulofs & Dahmen, 2010; Tiemann, 2007). The degree of social inclusion of minority groups varies widely.

Article 30.5 of the UN CRPD lends weight to arguments for the implementation of equity measures in sport by highlighting the need for inclusive practice that enables persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities. According to the draft position statement of the International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity (IFAPA) the convention is seeking to achieve significant policy developments with respect to (1) participation in mainstream and disability-specific sport and recreation activities; (2) providing appropriate accessibility to facilities; and (3) providing physical education, school sport and community activities for children ([www.ifapa.biz](http://www.ifapa.biz)).

### Policy approaches to diversity and diversity management in work and business

In the field of business, concepts of diversity management are already successfully implemented. The aim of the project ‘Charter for Diversity’ with big German companies was to create a working environment that is free of prejudice:

We deeply respect all colleagues irrespective of sex, race, nationality, ethnic background, religion or worldview, disability, age, and sexual preference. The appreciation and promotion of these diverse potentials produce economic benefits for our business (. . .). We are definitely convinced that practising and appreciating diversity will have a positive impact on German society. (Charta der Vielfalt e.V., 2011)

The aim of the *Austrian network* ‘diversity works’ is to create a context in which individuals regardless of their ability are able to develop their potential without restrictions thus fully integrating them into the working process. This new approach differs in many ways to the ‘deficit-oriented’ approach that provides supportive measures for disadvantaged groups (see Table I).

As a consequence, managers learn to assess whether they need to change their policy regarding diversity initiatives and, if so, how they can accomplish that change. The aim is to tackle diversity, to examine the role of peer pressure in discriminatory practices and to eliminate it in order to achieve competitive advantages by concentrating on an individual’s competences. This means a change of paradigm from ‘homogeneous’ to ‘heterogeneous’ organisational practices is indicative of the process of diversity management.

Table I. Comparison of *deficit approach* and *working with different approach* (adapted from Konard, 2011)

Deficit approach for disadvantaged groups ( <i>supportive measures</i> )	Working with differences ( <i>diversity management</i> )
Target groups: e.g. women, migrants, individuals with disabilities, older people	All staff members of a company are perceived with their differences and similarities

Impulses/incentives come from outside (government or NGOs)	Impulses/incentives are boosted from inside (the organisation does things voluntarily)
Goal: equal opportunity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conforming to the law</li> <li>• equitable</li> </ul>	Goal: pragmatic win for the organisation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced motivation of the staff</li> <li>• Major attractiveness as an employer</li> <li>• Increased productivity</li> <li>• Improved image of the company</li> </ul>
Assessment: quantitative	Assessment: qualitative
Approach: problem centred/deficit oriented	Approach: goal oriented
Limited target group	Inclusivity – everyone is concerned/included
Pattern: reactive	Pattern: proactive

## **Translating policies and practice for diversity management to the sport pedagogy context**

Transferred into sports pedagogic contexts, diversity management focuses on the target group of ‘all of our children, who should experience appreciation’ as well as on the physical education teachers and coaches, who should learn to assess whether they need to change their teaching regarding diversity initiatives.

The following six key concepts could help to ‘manage diversity’ in sports and physical education contexts: (1) mainstreaming; (2) teaching and coaching sensitive to difference; (3) empowerment; (4) inclusion; (5) adaptation; and (6) inner differentiation. The selected principles stand for different levels. ‘Mainstreaming’ and ‘inclusion’ can be considered as similar paradigms but differ in practical consequences in the specific contexts. Both terms encompass inclusive thinking with respect to pedagogical and sociological questions. ‘Mainstreaming’ is more often used in the sense of ‘gender mainstreaming’ while ‘inclusion’ is more familiar in the school system with respect to including students with disabilities in regular classes.

### *Mainstreaming*

Mainstreaming is seen as a process of inclusive thinking. It is a general policy management strategy rather than a pedagogical approach and we focus on gender mainstreaming as a gender perspective which is integrated into every stage of the policy process (i.e. design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) with a view to promoting equality between women and men. Rulofs and Dahmen (2010) discuss the concept and its relevance for sports policy within intersectoral approaches and the concept of diversity management. It considers how policies impact on the life and position of both women and men and re-addresses them if necessary. This strategy ensures gender equality is a concrete reality in the lives of women and men, by creating space for everyone within organisations and communities. As a top-down process, senior personnel in organisations and communities are mainly responsible for the implementation of this European policy requirement. Thus, within educational institutions, head teachers, teachers, as well as officials and sports coaches, federations and clubs have to integrate gender dimensions into all their decisions and to implement measures within their organisations to close the gender gap. It is necessary, therefore, to teach and sensitise staff and to be aware of gender issues to close the gender gap and to be able to identify and adapt structures.

### *Sensitivity to difference in teaching and coaching*

The behaviour of PE teachers and coaches has an influence on pupils' and athletes' views of accepted differences in terms of masculinity and femininity as well as ability and disability. Gender and disability stereotypes and norms are often reproduced and perpetuated unconsciously in educational processes (Penney, 2002; Wright, 2002). The main goal of inclusive and gender sensitive approaches in teaching and coaching is to overcome these stereotypes and to widen opportunities for all – e.g. offering gender-neutral or untypical contents, like soccer for girls or dance for boys. It refers to the assumption that gender and (dis)ability are socially constructed, learned and perpetuated through daily routines and actions: in the way we think, act, behave, speak, dress, make differences and engage in sports and PE. Therefore, teachers' attitudes towards gender sensitive and inclusive teaching and coaching are crucial strategies to promote equality in sport and to fight discrimination based on gender and ability.

Kugelmann, Röger, and Weigelt (2006) argue that policy, curricular and pedagogical perspectives need to be taken into account in order to understand gender, non-discriminatory language and participatory processes. As a consequence, gender sensitive teaching ought to be made obligatory within school curricula in order to ensure that PE teachers and coaches teach inclusively and not gender blind (Diketmüller, 2005; Penney, 2002; Talbot, 2003; Wright, 2002).

### *Empowerment*

Empowerment is a core concept within social work, gender sensitive pedagogy as well as in inclusive pedagogy. Within gender and feminist discourse the empowerment approach emerged from a deficit-oriented approach to pedagogy (Parpart, Rai, & Staudt, 2002). It is a goal as well as a method to reach this goal. Empowerment refers to the process through which women and disadvantaged groups gain confidence, strength, information and skills required to make strategic choices in order to improve their lives. Sport is seen as a vehicle of empowerment and an 'engine of gender equality' (Brighton Declaration, IGW, 1994; Windhoek Call for Actions, IGW, 1998; United Nations, 2007), which especially supports girls and women.

Empowerment is equally important for managing diversity and it is argued that sport and physical activity can bolster the empowerment process. This is achieved by challenging gender and ability norms, thereby reducing restrictions, offering greater mobility to disadvantaged groups, providing access to public spaces and by creating opportunities for physical, intellectual and social development. By involving families, community leaders and individuals of all sexes and abilities in gender and inclusive education, changes can bring benefits to all members of the society. Physical activity has the potential to provide powerful role models, leadership skills and experience that can be transferred to other domains such as family life and civic involvement (see [www.righttoplay.com](http://www.righttoplay.com)).

### *Inclusion*

The concept of 'inclusion' is itself very diversified. In the context of education, in particular with respect to physical education, we talk about 'inclusive physical education (IPE) [which] is defined by non-discriminatory practices when students' backgrounds include differences in ability levels, culture and gender' (Activate Your School, 2012, p. 11). Inclusion refers to the process of educating students with disabilities along with their general peers (Rouse, 2009). Literature and research on inclusion in general physical education (GPE) is growing with a shift from segregated special education programmes to a merger between general and special education. Many findings confirm the overvaluing of positive effects on children with disabilities with little



negative influence on their peers without disabilities (Block & Obrusnikova, 2007). Besides, the non-specialised physical educators are not always comfortable or adequately prepared to respect the individual needs of the disabled and hence are unable to provide inclusive service delivery.

Across Europe, a number of countries have approved legislative initiatives aimed at the full inclusion of students with special needs (Adomaitiene, 2004) with similar trends observable in wider society. Recent reviews of studies on IPE criticised the limited number and quality of published studies (O'Brien, Kudlacek, & Howe, 2009). A problematic situation in Europe exists with respect to teachers' training and collaborative support for team teaching; there is a clear discrepancy between any inclusive curriculum policies and day-to-day realities in school (Morley, Bailey, Tan and Cooke, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2005 all cited in Kudlacek, Morgulec-Adamowicz, & Verellen, 2010). It is remarkable that many authors, researchers and practitioners in IPE are female, yet, there is no specific data on how the situation of girls with disabilities differs from boys with disabilities in IPE or not.

## Adaptation

The didactical tool used in inclusive teaching is adaptation. Adaptation in physical activity and sport pedagogy is according to Sherrill (2004, p. 7 and 85) '( . . ) the art and science of assessing, prioritizing, and managing variables to facilitate the changes needed to achieve desired physical activity or movement outcomes'. Adapted physical activity (APA) is an umbrella term for all services that promote an active and healthy lifestyle for people with special needs in order to enable them to participate in activities of their choice. Adaptation is an elementary, interactive and reciprocal process between the individual and the environment through which elements can be changed or modified. Changing any one aspect of this adaptation model which consists of the individual, the activity/task and the environment will, it is argued, affect all other aspects (Van Lent, 2006).

With the intention to structure this framework it seems necessary to use inclusive thinking in the sense of managing diversity with respect to ability, gender and all other possible differences in sport pedagogy.

1. The intention of adapting or adjusting a person to the environment must be changed to a different awareness of inclusive thinking.
2. Individuals who are called different are entitled to insist on the same rights and to be included in the same tasks.
3. Inclusion promotes the acceptance, tolerance and conscious identification of a broad variety/ diversity of personality, genetic or cultural heritage, sex, religious beliefs, individual abilities and social possibilities.
4. Inclusion seeks to reduce all barriers in education for all students to a minimum.

An inclusive attitude takes the presence of girls and children with special needs for granted, reflects on adapting teaching methods, and takes advocacy for equity and participation of all.

A task can be too difficult or too easy, or may include an element of risk to a person – hence the need for adaptation. A person's motivation, their interests and previous experience may have an important influence on the planned activity. Consequently, adaptation should ideally be a self-organised and intentionally reasoned and a planned process. Sherrill (2004, p. 85) additionally emphasises the role of *accommodation* (small changes), *modifications* (large changes) and *supplementary resources or aids*. She highlights how these adaptations enable children with disabilities to be educated alongside their peers. In other words this method may be called *inner differentiation* (translated from German) or individualisation.

### *Inner differentiation/individualisation*

The term *inner differentiation* differs scarcely from *adaptation* and describes a teaching style that is adapted to the individual needs of the students. German Authors (Fediuk and Hölter, 2003; Weichert, 2003) recommend two types of realisation in PE: either the adaptation of the learning outcomes or the adaptation of teaching methods. An inclusive situation respects individuals' abilities by adapting the task or the rules and by modifying the equipment or the environment, all to be done in order to remain attractive and challenging (Fediuk and Hölter, 2003; Van Lent, 2006). Such modifications, including instructional modifications, are applicable in single-sex classes as well as in co-education of girls and boys. If appropriate learning outcomes are to be achieved, different methods, flexible forms of instruction such as team teaching, peer tutoring or individualising performance levels (qualitative differentiation) should be adopted. Sherrill (2004, p. 244) suggests that 'inclusive instruction teaches people how to succeed, how to accept the strength and limitations of everyone involved, and how to strive for improvement'. This approach advocates for use of specially created instructional groups and instructional content that supports inclusion; additional human support and written plans that focus upon facility, equipment and transportation issues.

### **Conclusion**

This contribution argues for an inclusive approach to sports pedagogy, given the current unsatisfactory situation of females, in particular those with disabilities in a sporting context. A suitable strategy would appear to tackle gender and disability equality issues through positive reinforcement and empowerment. Hence, the paper looked at discrete pockets of policy and practice in European public policy documents and derived a generic set of principles for policy and practice in this area. An awareness of the diverse needs of all participants in society, 'regardless' of gender and ability, should be reflective of an inclusive sport pedagogy that supports physical activities for all. We argue that the management of diversity in PE and school sport should be underpinned by the six key concepts of *mainstreaming*, *sensitivity to difference*, *empowerment*, *inclusion*, *adaptation* and *inner differentiation* that may support good practice in teaching and coaching settings. We acknowledge that there remains a gap between the rhetoric of the policy statements outlined in this paper and the pedagogical practices of PE and school sport. We argue, however, that our typology provides an apposite starting point for designing and delivering inclusive pedagogical practice.

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