

From research to practice in Adapted Physical activity: International perspectives

Introduction

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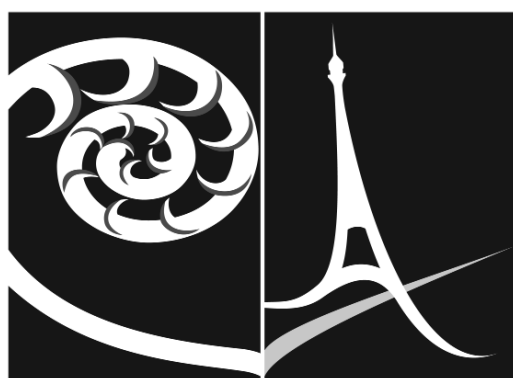
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THIS book is linked to the 18th International Symposium on Adapted Physical Activity held in Paris in July 2011. Every even years, the International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity (IFAPA) organizes an international symposium which provides a unique exchange between professionals, researchers, students, parents, organizations around the world working in the field of Adapted Physical Activity. The conference brought together over 300 participants from 52 countries across the world. The main theme highlights a major concern at an international level: **translating research results into practice.**


Since the birth of the concept of Adapted Physical Activity in Canada in 1973 by Clermont Simard, many researches have emerged, creating a new disciplinary and multidisciplinary field aiming at measuring the impact at the micro and macro social policies and practices related to Adapted Physical Activity (APA). The purpose of

ISAPA was to link theory to practice or rather to establish links between academic research and its applications in various fields of intervention. This dialectic, to be operative, must be achieved by taking into account the needs, achievements and problems of the practitioners in the scope of research on the one hand and by translating the research outcomes into practice. Many researches are conducted from issues raised by practice and enable to connect professionals and researchers. It is within this dialectic between research and practice that this book is situated, whose contributions show how research has its place and legitimacy to inform and improve practices, and how practices can foster research.

It seems that research concerns are sometimes far away from those of practitioners, or that the results of the researches, whereas promising, are not always translated into practice. Today the scope of APA, while being diversified, has gained a real international recognition for its contributions in terms of health, socialization, social cohesion, and personal development. It is necessary to examine the appropriateness of practices and the dissemination of research findings. The need to assess the impacts of programs and policies is emphasized at all levels. What is the impact of APA programs on individuals, communities, institutions? How can we develop worldwide opportunities for all? Who are the key actors?



ISAPA 2011
PARIS / FRANCE




ISAPA 2011
18th International Symposium on Adapted Physical Activity
4 - 8 July 2011
Paris / France


ISAPA 2011

**18TH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON ADAPTED
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

*Theory meets Practice in APA
Translating theory and evidence into practice*



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<http://isapa2011.inshea.fr>

APA is a concept that encompasses all activities, services, structures and strategies focusing on the social participation and development of people with special needs through physical activity and/or sports. This is an area of interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary expertise, including rehabilitation and therapy, physical education and sport, leisure and recreation, and competitive sport at all levels. APA is a scientific discipline with its own object lightened by multiple fields of knowledge. This conception of APA is accompanied by a philosophy and, a humanist ethics. Thus, the approaches and programs not only focus on human rights but more on the idea of Man and his future. This is fully consistent with the founding principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities who are: *“To promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.”*

Thus, the goals that must be followed by all countries that have signed and ratified the Convention are ambitious. It is about non-discrimination, full and effective participation in the social sphere, inclusion, respect for differences, equality of opportunity, accessibility and recognition of the evolving capacities of persons with disabilities. These are major ethical goals to guide any practice any policy. In our area, the key article is the 30th which promotes the right to *“participate in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport.”*

This highlights the issue of accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities. Beyond these concepts, a new idea is advocated : all activities must include the participation of disabled people: *‘Nothing about us without us’*. This means to give the same opportunities and choices to all, which brings to the fore the issue of **equity**. This highlights the issue of accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities. Beyond these concepts, a new idea is advocated : all activities must include the participation of disabled people: *‘Nothing about us without us’*. This means to give the same opportunities and choices to all, which brings to the fore the issue of **equity**. It also promotes accessibility and the social participation of persons with disabilities, then asserting a claim to **full citizenship**. Finally including them in decision-making processes concerning their lives is consistent with the respect for **human rights and empowerment**.

The authors who contributed to this book share the same perspectives on social and educative accessibility. The underlying ethical issues remain central to their concerns. The diversity of approaches is not only linked to their geographical origin but further reflects the richness and diversity of APA in the world.

Lisette Burrows from New Zealand herald the ideas developed by the other contributors. She raises key questions about the place of persons with disabilities, the role of teachers/coaches and families. The issue of training and coaching professionals is examined. Lisette Burrows shows that *“experts recipes”* have no meaning and that the teachers, coaches and volunteers must appropriate and translate them into practice, combining them with their human qualities.

While human communities need a diversity of abilities, she reflects on teachers investments in maintaining hierarchies of *‘ability’* in Physical Education. Why do teachers and coaches privilege very few activities, particularly ball games and running

that leave so many young people out in the cold? Poststructural social theory is called to answer these questions, as it provides a framework for identifying the dominant discourses which have an impact on the adapted physical activities.

Following Lisette Burrows's ideas, **Donna Goodwin** and **Øyvind F. Standal** can question the relevance and scope of researches in the field of APA, specifically the role they can play in helping us to understand the ethical issues related to practice. The authors begin by showing that the confrontation of "*counterstories*"; practical knowledge and ethical principles can improve our actions and reduce the risks of "*bad practices*". They rely on applied ethics, which include top-down and bottom-up approaches, to identify the conditions for a good balance between ethical principles and empirical experience, whose realization is a challenge for researchers and professionals. From this perspective is stressed the importance of the *relational ethics* (namely mutual respect, engaged interaction, creating an environment of freedom and choice).

Carla Silva and **David Howe** also insist on the importance to include physical activity in an ethical framework, while adopting a different perspective: that of the *Human development and capabilities approach*. They consider that it can be used as a powerful tool to transcend the representations within APA circles. It can also challenge the social meaning of "difference, so often interpreted collectively as inherently negative. They note that a disciplinary ethical code of practice would be crucial to ground decisions. The capability approach concerns people and their freedom to live the life they choose. This vision requires not only to work with persons with a disability in the scope of APA programs but also at a political, economic and social level to ensure equal opportunities for all.

Gilles Lecocq invites us to analyze the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the scope of sport and physical activity, from the perspective of teachers. New challenges emerge for professionals. The feeling of insecurity is tangible and the professional abilities questioned (how to deal with the complexity of parameters to take into account? How is it possible to favor all students' progress?). The author identifies four basic components concerning inclusion in APA: empathy, resilience, care and empowerment. He believes that training sessions for teachers and coaches enable them to stand back and discuss about their practices, from three inclusive postures:

- Conceive the act of teaching as an acceptance of the *unknown*;
- Focus on a person-centered approach;
- Take into account what vulnerable people say to their teachers.

Peter Downs has been developing for many years programs of APA in Oceania as well as many teaching tools for teachers and coaches. He examines environments and persons that create opportunities for physical activity for people with disabilities, particularly in an inclusive context. He proposes a typology of these actors: first the Connectors, who bring people together and allow the emergence and the realization of common projects. Secondly the *Mavens* (this term comes from the Yiddish and

means *who accumulates knowledge*) with a strong knowledge and experience and who will be able to answer to the connectors' questions. Finally the *Salesmen* who is able to persuade others to do things they previously wouldn't. They are closely related to the dissemination of good practice. Peter Downs shows how the joint action of Connectors, Mavens and Salesman can create opportunities in sport and physical activities for persons with a disability, especially in the scope of inclusive settings.

Marcel Bouffard, associate editor of the journal *APAQ*¹, is interested in research and practice conducted in the field of APA. He presents an approach that allows professionals to take into account the best research to guide their practice. His question concerns the choice of methods used to conduct assessments of practices, knowing that the methods affect the plausibility of the results.

We must nowadays justify the appropriateness of practices and assess the effects on business, financial and ethical. Thus clinical research (e.g. case studies) have their place and complete experimental research. In the domain of APA the practice is often guided by a philosophy of individuality meaning that programs are tailored to each participant. This also implies that disabled people participate in decision-making and express their choice.

Martin E. Block, Aija Klavina, and Shayke Hutzler have been working for many years on inclusion of persons with disabilities in APA. They describe specific strategies and tools that can be implemented to assess the impact of inclusive programs. They present the results of a research measuring the "*perceived competence*" of physical education teachers towards the inclusion of disabled pupils in PE. The scale labelled The Situational-Specific Scale for Physical Education Teacher Education Majors towards disability (SE-PETE-D) was applied to young physical education teachers from the United States. This research shows that the sense of professional competence is closely related to the theoretical and practical trainings received.

This is a case study about a student with physical disability supported by peer tutors during PE sessions in a Brazilian primary school which is presented by **Marli Nabeiro**. She stresses the importance of coaching and training student tutors. The reinforcement of this training is indeed seen as the precondition for the development of the autonomy of the students with a disability tutored. They need to learn not to impose their help and to accept to wait for the tutored student's request to favor his autonomy and self-esteem.



Lauren Lieberman has worked for years in the field of APA. She has developed innovative activities involving the creativity of the professionals. She has published numerous books on education where the concept of adaptation (equipment, rules, environment, etc.) allows a successful participation of persons with disabilities in sport and physical activity. In addition to her teaching

1. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*.

contributions, Lauren has worked to provide extra-curricular activities, including summer camps for disabled children. She highlights the interest of the activities for young visually impaired on the one hand and the impact on teaching strategies for teachers on the other. The name given to these camps is revealing: “*Camp Abilities*” which aims are to develop abilities of children and professionals.

Anne-Mette Bredhal exposes her extraordinary story whose film was awarded during the 18th ISAPA. Anne-Mette lost her sight due to a progressive disease when she was 20. During the PE sessions she practiced when she was young, she was feeling uncomfortable and clumsy. She did not realize then that her difficulties were related to her diminished visual capabilities. After she lost her eyesight, she began to practice sports thanks to relatives and friends. She became a multiple Paralympic champion in biathlon. She pursued her university studies and obtained a doctorate in sociology. This exceptional testimony questions the life-stories of persons with disabilities. What about their choices, their social position, their future? Anne-Mette does not hide the difficulties that she encountered in the scope of her daily life, her studies, and her sport career. She has faced many obstacles she has overcome with tenacity. Anne-Mette struggles to convince more students with disabilities to become researchers. Here we find an illustration of the famous “*Nothing about us without us*” of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As an expert from the inside, her ideas and questionings take a special flavor.



Charles Saez, sports instructor, has been working for a long time with children with intellectual disability in a special school. He has developed within the Aressif ² multiple activities such as playing flag-rugby which, besides its simplicity, enables everyone to have fun and to succeed. This activity provides an inclusive environment in which young and old, boys and girls – whatever the abilities – can play together. He hopes that this new sport will be developed at the international level as its pedagogical values, social and ethical issues are now confirmed.



FannyThourot studied the impact of a program using animal as mediation during APA sessions with children with autism. Her hypothesis was that the presence and participation of dogs during physical activity sessions could enable them to initiate and develop social interactions. Beyond the originality of its program, FannyThourot worked with various professionals in order to assess the impact of its program. The results suggest that this new educational approach is relevant, leading to a tangible increase in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication of the children. This approach is an illustration of Marcel Bouffard's recommendations. It is an example of Evidence Based Practice which can lead to innovative educational opportunities.

2. Aressif : Association of PE teachers working in Special schools in the Île-de-France.



Shen Ruling, Satoru Okagawa and Gao Frenghua have established, in partnership with Nanjing University in China, a adapted practice of Tai Chi Chuan. They describe the positive effects on health, physical abilities and self-esteem of children and adults with disabilities. This activity was developed through various programs implemented and evaluated, which convinced the politicians of its merits. This activity has been spread all around China. In this case, the impact of research on the effects of APA programs makes sense. The video shows how deaf children and others with intellectual disability practice this activity, become more self-confident and experience pleasure.

Ken Black, whose article concludes this book, has led many inclusive programs in APA in England, in developing countries and in the scope of post-disaster interventions. He emphasizes the importance of working with local actors to create inclusive activities, using easily accessible materials thanks to imagination and creativity. He shares with Lauren Lieberman the idea that the use of specific facilities or equipment is not necessarily required to implement appropriate physical activities. He questions governments and federations on the importance of traditional sports, highlighting the interest to develop other forms of practice to enable participation of everyone without barriers related to the socio-economic, political or geographical context. He shows the social impact of such practices which can be a good tool for national and international organizations. He gives advices in terms of designing APA programs which aims are to promote peace and development.

