European Inclusive Physical Education Training

Martin Kudláček¹, Ondřej Ješina¹, Pat Flannagan²

¹ Faculty of Physical Culture, Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic, ² Institute of Technology in Tralee, Ireland

Summary

The purpose of this presentation is to introduce the outcomes of the project European Inclusive Physical Education Training (EIPET; LLP/LdV/TOI/2007/IRL-502). The project aims to tackle difficulties that arise associated with the inclusion of children with disabilities into general education; and associated current deficiencies in initial and continued physical education teacher training to deal with same. The purpose of this article is to describe job specific functions, which general PE teachers can face in inclusive physical education, and related professional competencies, which teachers should acquire in their pre-service or in-service training. The functional map was developed based on the model of service delivery titled PAPECA to reflect systematic step in teaching children with disabilities in inclusive PE. We will discuss the implication of functional map and competence framework for teacher preparation programs in light of presented barriers and facilitators of inclusive physical education. We will provide practical examples of modules and courses build on the EIPET theoretical framework. We will discuss the possibilities and limitations related to the theoretical principles, practical training and practicum experiences working with persons with disabilities as part of EIPET module (introductory APA courses).

Key words Teachers – Competencies – Adapted physical education – Adapted physical activity

Background

In past years persons with disabilities have experienced improvements in many areas of their lives (e.g. access to public services, inclusion into mainstream education, social attitudes of mainstream society). However, the area of inclusive physical activities for people with disabilities, called ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES (APA), has stayed on boundaries of inclusive approaches. The quality and availability of services and education in APA differs from one European country to other. International studies [1–3] tell us that with a growing number of students with disabilities being included in general education, more and more physical education teachers are faced with the reality of teaching these students together with the rest of the children. In most cases teachers are not permitted to decide if they will have a student with a disability in their class, but they can decide to which extent they will include this student [2]. There is a great difference between dumping children with disabilities without proper support into general programs and including them in education with other children [4, 5]. According to Sherrill [5, p. 107], “The practice of assigning almost everyone to regular physical education and assuming that teachers will take the initiative in adapting instruction is widespread.” With a growing number of students with disabilities being included in general education, more and more physical educators will be faced with the reality of teaching these students together with the rest of the children. Unfortunately while school inclusion in academic disciplines has been relatively successful, physical education has been largely overlooked and many educational systems in Europe were not able to put in place systematic support for inclusive PE. We assume that this is caused by perceived lack of importance of PE for students with physical disabilities. It is important that future physical education (PE) teachers be prepared to work with individuals with disabilities in inclusive settings. One of the areas of competencies to focus on in order to be ready for teaching in inclusive settings is attitude [6]. Specifically, Sherrill [6] organizes the competencies that future PE teachers need to acquire under (a) philosophy, (b) attitude, (c) knowledge, and (d) skill.
One of approaches for improvement of competencies of general PE teachers in relation to inclusive physical education is project “EIPET” European Inclusive Physical Education Training is a two year project supported by the Leonardo da Vinci fund through Léargas the National Agency for Ireland (LLP/LdV/TOI/2007/IRL-502). The project aims to tackle difficulties that arise associated with the inclusion of people with disabilities into mainstream education; and associated current deficiencies in initial and continued physical education teacher training to deal with same. A functional map of the physical education teachers role will be developed and the knowledge competence and skills requirements of PE teachers given the rapidly changing work environments resulting from the aforementioned changes. The main aim is to adapt the model and modules of inclusive PE teacher training in ITT Tralee to the partner countries and beyond through dissemination and valorisations into the wider PE teacher training environment. We will be hosting an International Conference in Tralee in 2009 to launch our project results and resource pack. Aims of the EIPET project are: (a) To transfer the innovative model at the Institute of Technology, Tralee, of teaching inclusive physical education to partner organisations in initial and continued vocational training, thus improving the quality and volume of cooperation between institutions in Europe; (b) To critically examine and adapt the inclusive physical education training module in ITT with the guidance of internationally acclaimed partner organisations and associated APA network contacts; (c) To progress towards the Education and Training work programme 2010 priority areas through; advancing peer learning activities, facilitating the development of innovative practices, promoting excellence and equal opportunities, enabling learning to cater for rapidly changing work environments, and enabling efficiency and equity in education and training systems; (d) To empower teacher training providers and PE teachers with the knowledge, skills and competence to operate effectively in the work environment; (e) To facilitate equity of opportunity in Physical Education for all; (f) To develop a resource pack to accompany the model and modules and make it available for download from the project website (www.eipet.eu) or available on CD. The purpose of this article is to describe job specific functions, which general PE teachers can face in inclusive physical education, and related professional competencies, which teachers should acquire in their pre-service or in-service training.

Results

Functional map and knowledge, skills and competence framework were built around PAPTECA model: P = Planning; A = Assessment; P = Prescription; T = Teaching; E = Evaluation; C = Consulting and Coordination of resources; A = Advocacy. We strongly believe that PAPTECA areas create sound framework for service delivery in the area of adapted physical activity. In functional map we have focused on the nature of teaching jobs of PE teachers in KEY AREAS, KEY ROLES and finally KEY FUNCTIONS. An example in TEACHING KEY AREA (Teach students with special educational needs in an inclusive setting together with students without disabilities) where one of KEY ROLES would be: Adapt teaching in order to meet the needs of ALL students in inclusive physical education. In KEY ROLE of ADAPTATIONS we would have following KEY FUNCTIONS:

(a) Adapt or acquire appropriate equipment, which can facilitate inclusive physical education (e.g. brightly coloured, sounded, lighter or heavier);

(b) Task analysis of desirable skills with the aim to adapt them to suit the needs of students with special educational needs;

(c) Adapt the rules of games to facilitate inclusion;

(d) Adapt teaching style to facilitate inclusion; and

(e) Adapt physical setting (current environment) to facilitate inclusion.

The second important outcome of EIPET project was Knowledge, skills and competence framework Competence Skill and Knowledge are understood to mean the following: Competences (described in terms of responsibility / autonomy); Skills (described as cognitive or practical); and Knowledge (described as theoretical and/or factual). With the above described key area (Teach students with special educational needs in an inclusive setting together with students without disabilities) we would have following competencies, skills and knowledge essential to assure successful inclusion.

I. COMPETENCE: Adapt teaching in order to meet the needs of ALL students in physical education.

II. SKILLS: (a) adapt own teaching style to facilitate inclusion; (b) acquire or adapt appropriate equipment; (c) adapt the games and activities; (d) ability to do task analysis; (e) creative practice and problem solving.

III. KNOWLEDGE: (a) teaching styles appropriate for inclusion; (b) task analysis; (c) adapted games; (d) adaptation strategies.

In summary we have following four key areas of job functions we believe general physical education teachers can required to provide:

(a) Plan developmentally appropriate learning experiences in physical education, which are also suitable for students with special educational needs (with disabilities);

(b) Teach students with special educational needs in an inclusive setting together with students without disabilities;
(c) Evaluate progress of learning of students with special educational needs and effectiveness of applied teaching (support) strategies; and
(d) Support professional development of self and others and development of the quality of teaching students with special educational needs.

For successful teaching in inclusive physical education we believe general physical education teacher needs to acquire following competencies:

(a) To adapt schools curriculum in physical education to reflect current conditions and the needs of all students with special needs in physical education;
(b) To assess the current level of performance of students with special needs in physical education;
(c) Plan developmentally appropriate learning experiences in inclusive physical education;
(d) Prepare school class, and classroom for inclusion of student with special educational needs;
(e) Adapt teaching in order to meet the needs of ALL students in physical education;
(f) Manage students’ behavior to assure the most appropriate and safe learning for ALL students;
(g) Communicate with students with special educational needs and others who are directly and indirectly involved in teaching inclusive physical education;
(h) Evaluate the progress of student with SEN in inclusive PE in relation to his/her IEP goals;
(i) Evaluate the effectiveness of inclusive PE program;
(j) Continue to develop own professional skills and knowledge and that of others;
(k) Advocate for the needs and rights of students with special educational needs.

We strongly believe that if the above described competencies are not acquired during university preparation training or in-service training (for teachers in the field) we cannot expect inclusion in physical education [7–9]. However, there is a certain level of support which can be provided by teachers of adapted physical education, who can be employed as APE consultants as described by Kudláček, Ješina, Štěrbová and Sherrill [10] or Lytle and Collier [11].

Some countries in Europe offer service delivery and training system for professionals working with persons with disabilities while other countries have well developed academic study programs in APA but they have limited service delivery and some countries have neither service delivery nor study programs in different areas of adapted physical activity. Therefore European Federation of Adapted Physical Activity decided to prepare the proposal for the project EUSAPA (EUROPEAN STANDARDS IN ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY). This project has been developed in accordance with the aim of the European Federation in APA – “Encourage European cooperation in the field of physical activity to benefit individuals of all abilities.” This application of this project has been developed in the framework of the “Tuning Educational Structures in Europe” in specific academic domain of Adapted Physical Education. With the use tuning model including eight methodological steps this project will improve the level of service delivery in APA at local as well as at European level. Objectives of proposed project are:

(a) Describe the professional competencies in each of the three areas of Adapted Physical Activities: (i) adapted physical education in schools; (ii) adapted sports and recreation, and (iii) Adapted physical activities in rehabilitation;
(b) Identify the needs for each APA area in all partner countries;
(c) Define academic standards (subject specific competencies and learning outcomes) in the three areas of APA and develop international academic framework to guarantee the quality of professional preparations in the fields of APA at European level.

Discussion

Adapted Physical Activity is relatively young academic discipline and service delivery which is aiming towards the improvement in quality of life and greater independence of persons with disabilities. It has been shown that sport and physical activity in general can lead into the empowerment of those who have both acquired and congenital disability. As societal paradigm and attitudes toward persons with disabilities changed, they are facing new challenges. All developed societies should be establishing support services and networks, which would aim towards greater acceptance, involvement and inclusion of persons with disabilities. These changes should not be only “paper based suggestions” but the set of real initiatives. The education of professionals working in education, recreation and sport in both segregated and inclusive settings should be priority in all EU countries as competent professionals (teachers, coaches, physiotherapists) are one of the keystones to inclusion (European Charter of Sport for all person with disabilities, 2001). In order to assure this there should be clear requirements on competencies that all specialists in this area should acquire as well the competencies that should be transferred to general PE, sport and recreation specialists. This project is initiated by European Federation of Adapted Physical Activity, whose aim is among others: “Encourage European cooperation in the field of physical activity to the benefit of individuals of all abilities.” According to the
published studies teachers of physical education still do not manage to include children with disabilities in general physical education and the level of sport participation of persons with disabilities is significantly lower than in mainstream society. Our project aims to contribute to more social inclusion by setting up the standards for training professionals who will be responsible for inclusion in the areas of physical activities. In accordance with recommendation of ministers of education of EU country from 30.4.2003 (rec. Nr.1 improvement of physical education for children, including those with disability).

In EUSAPA project similar approach to job specific competencies as in previously described project EIPET is being utilized. We are currently developing the description of service delivery in three above described areas of APA and we will follow with functional map and competence, skills and knowledge framework with highlighted examples of good practice in each or key job areas in APA. We strongly believe that project EUSAPA will set high standards for both university based study programs and in-service trainings with the aim to prepare teachers, coaches and therapists to work with persons with disabilities in educational and rehabilitation settings as well as in sports and recreations.

References


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