

ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AS A PROFESSION IN EUROPE

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Adapted physical activity (APA) is a profession that is not well known and acknowledged in many European countries in the year 2011. On the other hand there are a growing number of studies showing the importance of professionals, who would be able to provide services and support in areas of sport, recreation and physical education of persons with special needs. The term 'adapted physical activity' relates to such a service and has been used and promoted by the European Federation of Adapted Physical Activity from the early 1980s. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of APA services and needs in Europe and to introduce the European Standards in Adapted Physical Activities project. The outcomes of this project serve as a foundation of this special issue of the European Journal of Adapted Physical Activity.

KEYWORDS: *Disability; Special Education; Sport; Recreation; Active lifestyle; Adapted Physical Activity*

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (UN) convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (2006) is very significant international legislation aimed at ensuring equal rights of persons with disabilities. While the thrust and philosophy of the entire convention is to be welcomed, of particular appeal to adapted physical activity (APA) advocates, professionals, service users and academics is article 30, part 5. Five goals in this article address participation at a number of levels in mainstream and disability specific sport and recreation, echoing the long held vision of the APA movement. Unfortunately in 2011 there are still great inequities in participation, (National Disability Authority, 2005), and the realisation of this vision and these goals is dependant on the growth, development and support of APA across all UN states. In Europe there are a number of structures, organisations and individuals poised to embrace the challenge of overcoming obstacles and developing the capacity in each member state to bring the aspirations of the convention to fruition. This paper reflects on the European APA journey so far and outlines the current

circumstances that offer real opportunity for greater equity in the near future.

Adapted Physical Activity is a service delivery profession and an academic field of study which supports an attitude of acceptance of individual differences, advocates enhancing access to active lifestyles and sport, and promotes innovation and cooperative service delivery and empowerment systems. Adapted Physical Activity includes, but is not limited to, physical education, sport, recreation, and rehabilitation of people with disabilities (EUFAPA, 2006, article 5).

Adapted physical education can be described as a young cross disciplinary academic discipline on one hand. On the other hand this profession can be traced back as far as 3000 BC (Sherrill & DePauw, 1997). Ancient Chinese believed in the importance of a healthy body and early on developed exercises that promoted health. Adapted physical education textbooks trace its roots to Europe and acknowledge Swedish gymnastics as the forerunner of adapted physical

education. Per Henrik Ling (1776–1839) started gymnastics in Sweden (Kudlacek, 2005). His approach to gymnastics was more calisthenics than gymnastics. Ling explored the beneficial influence of exercise, when it helped him to cure his weak arm. History of our discipline in North America is described in close detail in the chapter of the book “The History of Exercise and Sport Science” authored by Claudine Sherrill and Karen DePauw (1997) titled “Adapted Physical Activity and Education”. Authors of this chapter divided the chronology of APA in the USA in the following eras: (a) Early foundation 1830s – 1970s; (b) Organization of the discipline – 1980s; and (c) Development of the discipline – 1990s. To our knowledge a similar historical overview in European APA is missing or limited in particular countries and their respective languages. Nevertheless such a study could help us to better understand APA and its position in Europe.

Some readers will be familiar with the term Adapted Physical Education (APE), which is the most commonly used term for the discipline, profession and service delivery in the USA. The term APE includes mainly direct teaching of students with special education needs (SEN) and providing support to general PE teachers.

The French-speaking leaders of Canada and Belgium who founded Federation Internationale de l'Activite Physique Adaptee - International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity (IFAPA) in 1973 had a broader vision, which included many professions, age groups, and service delivery settings (Kudlacek, 2010). IFAPA's original purpose was “to give global focus to professionals who use adapted physical activities for instruction, recreation, remediation, and research”.

In the 1970s, the concepts of adapt and adapted were believed to be well understood in French, English, and other languages. Techniques for adapting activities, instruction, programs, and facilities were described in sources with such titles as *corrective physical education*, *corrective*

sport, *APE*, *sport therapy*, and *sports for the handicapped*. In countries like Germany, Czech Republic, and Japan, whose languages were derived from different roots, adaptation strategies were used also, although the word *adapted* was not well understood (Hutzler & Sherrill, 2007, p. 3).

Adapted Physical Activity: An Academic Discipline in Europe

The area of adapted physical activity on a European level is promoted mainly by the European Federation of Adapted Physical Activity (EUFAPA), which dates its beginning in the 1980s, when the first European congress was organised by *Dr. Jean-Claude DePotter*, at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium), in order to found a European branch of the International Federation (IFAPA). *DePotter* became then also the president of IFAPA (1987-1991) and was a very active collaborator for the development of the European Masters Degree in Adapted Physical Activity (EMDAPA). *Dr. Jean-Claude DePotter* was also the first recipient of the award, given by EUFAPA during the 2008 European congress EUCAPA in Torino (Italy), for outstanding professional contribution in the field of APA. The European chairpersons of the **European Association of Research into Adapted Physical Activity (EARAPA)** in the following years have been: *Dr. Gudrun Doll-Tepper*, Free University Berlin, Germany (1987-1993), *Dr. Herman Van Coppenolle*, K.U. Leuven, Belgium (1993-2002), *Dr. Maria Dinold*, University of Vienna, Austria (2002-2006), and *Dr. Jean-Claude DePotter* (2006-2010, new name: **European Federation of Adapted Physical Activity – EUFAPA**) and currently *Dr. Martin Kudláček*, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic (2010-2014).

EUFAPA is a European organisation concerned with the promotion and dissemination of experiences, results and findings in the fields of adapted physical activity and sport science, and their practical application to the benefit of individuals across the life span. The fundamental purposes of

EUFAPA are: (a) To encourage European cooperation in the field of physical activity to the benefit of individuals of all abilities; (b) To promote, stimulate, and coordinate scientific research and experiences in the field of Adapted Physical Activity (APA) throughout Europe, and to support the application of research results in various areas of professional practice such as education, adaptation, inclusion, coaching, leisure, recreation, and rehabilitation.; and (c) To make scientific knowledge of adapted physical activity and practical experiences available to all interested national and international organisations and institutions.

EUFAPA also promotes APA as an academic discipline in the *European Journal of Adapted Physical Activity (EUJAPA)*. *EUJAPA* is an international, multidisciplinary journal, introduced to communicate, share and

stimulate academic enquiry focusing on physical activity of persons with special needs. Articles appearing in *EUJAPA* reflect the cross disciplinary nature of adapted physical activity ranging from physical education, through sport, recreation, rehabilitation, dance, sport medicine and health care. Regular features include qualitative and quantitative research studies, case studies, review articles and viewpoints. EUFAPA also endorses and coordinates European Congresses in APA (EUCAPA) which have been held from 1993 (Table 1). These conferences rotate with international symposia of APA (ISAPA) and together provide an environment for the enhancement of APA both as an academic discipline and a profession.

Table 1 Host cities of European Congresses of Adapted Physical Activity

1993	Leuven	Belgium
1995	Leuven	Belgium
1998	Thessaloniki	Greece
2001	Vienna	Austria
2002	Amiens	France
2004	Dortmund	Germany
2006	Olomouc	Czech Republic
2008	Torino	Italy
2010	Jyväskylä	Finland
2012	Killarney	Ireland
2012	Madrid	Spain

Adapted Physical Activity as Profession in Europe

Individual professionals involved in the planning and delivery of adapted physical activity are often divided into two distinct groups – generalists and specialists. Generalists are most commonly professionals who have competences and skills in a discipline which does not include adapted

physical activity as a major component. One example of a generalist is that of the physical education teacher who has been trained to deliver a broad curriculum in a mainstream setting. This professional may have received limited or no training in relation to adapting the curriculum to suit the individual needs of persons with special education needs. Conversely the education of the specialist is

steeped in the philosophy, knowledge, skills and competences required to successfully establish, plan, lead and deliver quality adapted physical activity programmes in community settings. Developing the earlier example of the school physical education setting the adapted physical education specialist has received multidisciplinary training enabling him/her to make the necessary adaptations to ensure that students with special education needs are fully included in the physical education programme of the school.

However at this stage adapted physical activity services in Europe are awarded by a variety of professionals including following: (a) Physical education teachers; (b) Generalist teachers responsible for teaching a number of subjects including PE; (c) Special School educators; (d) Teacher assistants; (e) Sports coaches in mainstream and disability sports clubs; (f) Recreation programme developers; (g) Fitness trainers; (h) Sports administrators; (i) Health care professionals; or (j) Therapists. The evolution of legislation and national policy to demand greater equity in society often translates into greater demands being placed on generalists to deliver equitable programmes. However the evolution of training and supports for the generalist has not kept pace with the changing demands. This has led to many professionals expressing a lack of competence in including individuals with disabilities in their activity programmes (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006; O'Brien, Kudlacek, & Howe, 2008) or limitations of time or role constraints to developing or linking with long term community based programmes (Lienert, Sherrill, & Myers, 2001; Hodge et al., 2004).

Critical questions about the needs and means of development of professional competencies for working with persons with special needs in sport and physical education setting thus remain unanswered. EUFAPA propose that both additions to current education programmes for generalists as well as support from specialists are vital for professional competence and quality service delivery across the inclusion spectrum to

persons with disabilities. If signatory states to the UN convention are serious about realising the goals of article 30, part 5, then the development and safeguarding of a professional status for Adapted Physical Activity Specialists is warranted.

Course content of sport, recreation, health, medical, therapy, physical education and other physical activity related courses varies significantly across European countries. The inclusion of adapted physical activity content exists in the following models: (a) distinct modules in some courses, (b) integrated (infused) into a variety of modules in others and (c) minimal or no place for issues related to adapted physical activity. Examples of initiatives to address this imbalance include the following: (a) EMMAPA study program; (b) Study program at ITT Tralee, Ireland; (c) Study programs at Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic (d) EIPET project; and (e) EUDAPA intensive study program.

The European masters in adapted physical activity (EMMAPA) is a 2 year Msc. study programme delivered jointly by four universities from Belgium, Czech Republic, Ireland and Norway. It is based on the principle of specialisation in three professional streams (1) adapted physical education, (2) APA and sport management and (3) APA and active lifestyles. The Adapted physical activity stream was introduced in 2009 to the health and leisure programme in the Institute of Technology Tralee. After 2 years of foundation knowledge and skills in the areas of health, fitness and leisure students can choose to concentrate the remaining 2 years of their undergraduate studies in adapted physical activity. The modules expose students to the theory and philosophy underpinning adapted physical activity as well as practical experience of implementing programmes in a variety of activity settings to individual and groups with a variety of disabilities. The faculty of physical culture in Olomouc, Czech Republic started a MSc. study programme in Adapted Physical Education in 1991. This study programme was composed of physical education, special education and adapted

physical education modules. This programme was divided into bachelor and master programmes with the implementation of structured university degrees in the Czech Republic. In 2009 this faculty also offered a bachelor study programme with an emphasis on recreation and active life style of persons with special needs titled BSc. in adapted physical activity which was extended in 2011 to a masters in adapted physical activity. The European Inclusive Physical Education Training (EIPET) project (2007-2009) aimed to tackle difficulties associated with the inclusion of people with disabilities into mainstream physical education by offering a ready to roll module and associated resources for addressing undergraduate PE training on the effective inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream education. The European Diploma in Adapted Physical Activity in Haaga-Helia University in Finland offers students from universities across Europe and opportunity to supplement the prerequisite 10 credits in APA modules from their home university with 3 months of intensive study in adapted physical activity and 12 weeks of work practice in the field.

With increasing opportunities for acquiring the knowledge, skills and competencies in the academic field of adapted physical activity it is also necessary to examine the job opportunities for graduates of these undergraduate and postgraduate courses. As with many previous emerging professions the skilled adapted physical activity graduates are currently infiltrating existing structures and organisations (including sport, recreation, disability, rehabilitation and physical education) which exist in Europe. This practice will raise awareness within these structures and organisations of the benefits of investing in the knowledge, skills and competences of these professionals who can compliment and add to the multidisciplinary skills of the organisation. Examples of the good practice pioneered by APA scholars are presented in the book “European Standards in Adapted Physical Activities” and the website of the European Federation of Adapted Physical Activities and include the following:

(a) Special Education Support in Sweden: Appropriate support is given to inclusive physical education by trained and experienced specialists (Hammar, 2010); (b) COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) Rehabilitation Programme in France: This programme focuses on follow-up care for patients on discharge from hospital. It aims to enhance exercise capacity, reduce symptoms and to improve quality of life and autonomy. Patients are informed and encouraged to join appropriate community based programmes at the end of the four week programme (Tomasi & Flore, 2010); (c) Programme for Football Coaches in the Czech Republic: This is a coach education programme which educates future top level coaches to include individuals with disabilities. Elements of the programme include disability awareness, principles of communication and adaptation of football coaching. The programme is delivered by a panel of professionals including an adapted physical activity specialist (Valkova, 2010).

While the number of good practice examples in APA is growing many are still very closely linked with third level education providers or rehabilitation centres. To provide quality opportunities in APA in all communities across Europe there remains an immediate need to create specialist positions. In the United States where APE specialists are employed in many states and districts there are many good examples of consultation between general physical educators and APE specialists (Kudlacek et al., 2008). The same success could be transferred to all European countries for the benefit of students and teachers and broadened beyond physical education to physical activity and sport areas.

There are multiple organisations at European and national levels, which focus on activities related to sport and physical education of persons with disabilities. The most well-known and influential organisations are Paralympic sport organisations including: International Paralympic Committee with headquarters in Bonn, Germany, International Wheelchair and Amputee Sport Federation (IWAS) with headquarters in Aylesbury, United Kingdom,

Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association (CP-ISRA) with headquarters in Edmonton, Canada, International Committee of Sports for the Deaf, Inc. (ICSD) with headquarters in the USA, International Federation for sport for para-athletes with an intellectual disability (INAS-FID) with headquarters in Birmingham, United Kingdom and International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) with headquarters in Madrid, Spain. Most of these organisations are based in Europe and most of them also have national members who play an important role in service delivery and training professionals. Special Olympics International is also well known for its outreach and educational programmes with many activities also based in Europe.

Therefore there are many initiatives in the field of APA, although many of them can be named by terms alternative to the term Adapted Physical Activity. EUFAPA aims to build a network of national APA organisations, which are usually associated with connecting APA as an academic discipline and profession. Among the oldest APA national organisations are the Swedish and Finnish APA associations, recently joined by other national organisations among them the Italian organisation APA Italiana, Polish Scientific Association of Adapted Physical Activity (PTN-AAF), Turkish association of Physical Activity for Individuals with Disability (EBFAD) or Czech Association of Adapted Physical Activity (CAAPA). These organisations are very active in the promotion of APA as an academic discipline and profession, organising seminars, workshops or conferences and publishing professional or scientific journals. However our knowledge of the state of the APA profession in Europe is still very limited and in many times outdated (in relation to the relatively fast developments in legislation and social inclusion of persons with disabilities in Europe).

European Standards in Adapted Physical Activities Project

The education of professionals working in education, recreation and sport for persons with special needs should be a priority in all EU countries as competent professionals are essential to the inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities (European Charter of Sport for all persons with disabilities, 2001). In accordance with the recommendation of the ministers of education of EU countries from 30.4.2003 (rec. Nr.1 improvement of physical education for children, including those with disability) to ensure 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. The European Standards in Adapted Physical Activities (EUSAPA) project was initiated by the European Federation of Adapted Physical Activity. The objectives of the EUSAPA project were: (a) To describe the professional competencies in: (1) adapted physical education in schools; (2) APA in sport, and (3) APA in rehabilitation; (b) To identify the needs for each APA area in all partner countries and; (c) To define specific competencies and learning outcomes in the three areas of APA.

Adapted physical activity is a profession needed in Europe in the year 2011. There is growing social inclusion of people with disabilities and with their emancipation also growing participation in physical activity, sports and physical education. The International Paralympic movement was pioneered in Europe, where sport was considered an integral part of rehabilitation at Stoke Mandeville in United Kingdom, Kladruby in Czech Republic and many other rehabilitation centres since the 1940s. On the other hand currently in most European countries coaches and instructors of various sports are usually not being prepared to

include people with disabilities in their everyday practice. There are also numerous accounts of the need to ensure support systems for inclusion in physical education (O'Brien, Kudláček & Howe, 2009). We believe that without appropriate support there is danger that inclusive PE becomes only a political statement or cliché without true participation. Therefore we strongly advocate for the inclusion of APE related services in national legislation and education, therapeutic and coaching practices.

Adapted physical education must be built on the foundation of physical education teacher preparation (PETE) programmes and APA in sport or rehabilitation settings should be built on a foundation of sport coaching and leisure studies. EUFAPA should hope that in future APA specific competencies will become integral parts of PETE programmes and programmes for sport coaches and instructors at all levels in all sports. There is always a danger that inclusion related issues will be changed only "on paper" as a "political initiative" rather than a professional approach. Therefore we must work: (a) on further developments and promotion of APA related competencies and standards; (b) changes in national legislation and practices, which would allow creation of job for qualified professionals and require certifications (accreditation) assuring their competencies; and (c) introduction of specialised studies at all levels of professional preparations before APA competencies will be fully integrated in all professional preparations in the sport sector.

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(Abstract)

ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ALS BERUF IN EUROPA

Adapted physical activity (APA) ist ein Berufsfeld, das im Jahr 2011 in vielen Europäischen Ländern weder bekannt noch anerkannt ist. Andererseits gibt es eine wachsende Zahl von Studien, die belegen, wie wichtig solche Fachleute, die Vermittlung und Unterstützung auf den Gebieten Sport, Freizeit und Bewegungserziehung von Menschen mit besonderen Bedürfnissen anbieten können, wären. Der Fachausdruck 'adapted physical activity' bezieht sich auf solche Angebote und wurde von der European Federation of Adapted Physical Activity seit den frühen 80er-Jahren gebraucht und beworben. Die Absicht dieses Artikels ist es, einen Überblick über Angebot und Bedarf in APA zu geben und das Projekt 'European Standards in Adapted Physical Activities' vorzustellen. Die Ergebnisse dieses Projekts dienen als Grundlage dieser Spezialausgabe des European Journal of Adapted Physical Activity (EUJAPA).

SCHLÜSSELWÖRTER: *Behinderung; Sondererziehung; Sport; Freizeit; Aktiver Lebensstil; Adapted Physical Activity*

(Résumé)

L'ACTIVITE PHYSIQUE ADAPTEE COMME PROFESSION EN EUROPE

A l'heure actuelle, en 2011, l'enseignement de l'activité physique adaptée est une profession peu connue et reconnue dans la plupart des pays de l'Europe. Cependant, de plus en plus d'études montrent l'importance d'un encadrement professionnel qui serait capable d'apporter un soutien dans le domaine sportif, récréatif et un enseignement de l'activité physique au sein de personnes en situation de handicap. Le terme d'« activité physique adaptée » dénote un service spécifique qui a été utilisé et mis en avant par la Fédération Européenne d'Activité Physique Adaptée (EUFAPA) depuis les années 1980. Le but de cet article est de proposer une vue d'ensemble des services et besoins de l'activité physique adaptée en Europe et également de présenter le projet sur les normes européennes en activité physique adaptée. Cette édition spéciale du Journal Européen de l'Activité Physique Adaptée (EUJAPA) est basée sur la finalité de ce projet.

MOTS CLÉS : *Handicap, Education spécialisée, Sport, Récréatif, Vie active, Activité Physique Adaptée*

(Аннотация)

АДАПТИВНАЯ ФИЗИЧЕСКАЯ КУЛЬТУРА КАК ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНАЯ СФЕРА В ЕВРОПЕ

Адаптивная физическая культура (АФК) как профессиональная сфера не очень хорошо известна, но является признанной во многих странах Европы в 2011 году. Возрастает число научных исследований, свидетельствующих о важности наличия профессионалов, которые смогут предоставлять услуги и поддержку в области спорта, рекреации и физического воспитания для лиц с особыми потребностями. Термин "Адаптивная физическая культура" относится к определенной сфере и был введен в оборот Европейской Федерацией Адаптивной Физической Культуры с начала 1980-х. Целью данной статьи является обзор всего спектра услуг и потребностей АФК в Европе и внедрение европейских стандартов в проект по адаптивной физической культуре. Итоги этого проекта послужат основой для специального выпуска Европейского журнала адаптивной физической культуры.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: инвалидность; специальное образование, спорт, рекреация, активный образ жизни; адаптивная физическая культура

(Resumen)

ACTIVIDAD FÍSICA ADAPTADA COMO UNA PROFESIÓN EN EUROPA

Actividad física adaptada (APA) es una profesión no bien conocida y reconocida en muchos países europeos en el año 2011. Por otro lado, hay un número creciente de estudios que demuestran la importancia de los profesionales, que deben ser capaces de proveer servicios y apoyo en las áreas del deporte, la recreación y la educación física de las personas con necesidades especiales. El término "actividad física adaptada" se refiere a este tipo de servicio y se ha utilizado y promovido por la Federación Europea de Actividad Física Adaptada a partir de la década de 1980. El propósito de este artículo es proporcionar una visión general de los servicios de APA y las necesidades de Europa y de presentar el proyecto Estándares Europeos en Actividad Física Adaptada. Los resultados de este proyecto servirán de base de este número especial de la Revista Europea de Actividad Física Adaptada.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Discapacidad, educación especial, deporte, recreación, estilo de vida activo, actividad física adaptada

(Resumo)

ATIVIDADE FÍSICA ADAPTADA COMO PROFISSÃO NA EUROPA

A Atividade Física Adaptada (AFA) é uma atividade profissional que é pouco conhecida e reconhecida em muitos países europeus no ano de 2011. Por outro lado, há um número crescente de estudos que mostram a importância dos profissionais, que seria capaz de proporcionar serviços e suporte nas áreas da recreação, desporto e educação física de pessoas com necessidades especiais. O termo "Atividade física adaptada" refere-se a esse serviço e tem sido utilizado e promovido pela

Federação Europeia de Atividade Física Adaptada desde o início dos anos 1980s. O objetivo deste artigo é facultar uma visão geral dos serviços e das necessidades em AFA na Europa e apresentar o projeto dos Padrões Europeus de Atividades Físicas Adaptadas. Os resultados deste projeto servem de base nesta edição especial do Jornal Europeu de Atividade Física Adaptada.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Deficiência; Educação Especial; Desporto; Recreação; Estilo de vida ativo; Atividade Física Adaptada
