

ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR APA PROFESSIONALS IN SPORT: A REFLEXIVE APPROACH IN EUROPE

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Adapted Physical Activity (APA) 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. The promotion of active lifestyles and sport & leisure quality activities for people with disabilities require specific skills and competences among sport & leisure professionals that can only be achieved through an adequate academic and professional training.

The purpose of the present work is to disseminate the main achievements of European Standards in Adapted Physical Activity (EUSAPA) project, in the specific area of sport and recreation including the: i) identification and description of needs from all partner countries, ii) description of their competencies and definition of academic standards and iii) development of an international academic framework to improve the quality of professional training in APA at European level.

Results showed that there is still a long way to walk for the homogenization of APA services in the different state members both in the type of services provided and the specific background of the professionals that provide those services. Different types of professionals with and without academic training in APA are participating in the process with different skills and competences providing different levels of service delivery in sport and recreation areas. The development of an international academic framework is a priority to guarantee the quality of professional training in APA and the new Erasmus Mundus Master Programme in APA is appointed to be considered as a good example of a theoretical framework which incorporates practical courses in different intervention areas seen as vital for APA delivery coaching services in sport and leisure areas.

KEYWORDS: Coaches professional framework; APA coaching skills & competences; EU disability sport

INTRODUCTION

Sport is an organized, competitive, entertaining and skilful activity requiring commitment, strategy and fair play, in which the winner can be defined by objective means. Sport is often considered part of play. Play by definition is a non-utilitarian practice that has both intellectual and physical components (Guttmann, 2004) that is pursued simply for the joy of it. In an organized form play becomes a game and games can be competitive or non-competitive.

Sport has both intellectual and physical components but traditionally in Europe people celebrate the physical nature of sporting context, i.e., achieving a result through

physical exertion and/or physical skills. Because of the complex interrelationship between play, games and sport the definition of sport varies greatly across Europe. Generally sport can be divided on: (a) participation or recreational sport and (b) performance sport. Some authors then further differentiate on sports for children and elite performance sports (Winder & Townend, 2010), while others also include physical fitness and health as well as outdoor recreation activities (adventure) as part of sport sector (Kriemadis & Terzoudis, 2007).

Sport is a growing social phenomenon in Europe. Its importance can be documented by

the EU commission White paper publication on sports (EU Commission, 2007, p. 3) defines sport as:

“...an area of human activity that greatly interests citizens of the European Union and has enormous potential for bringing them together, reaching out to all, regardless of age or social origin. According to a November 2004 Eurobarometer survey, approximately 60 % of European citizens participate in sporting activities on a regular basis within or outside some 700,000 clubs, which are themselves members of a plethora of associations and federations. The vast majority of sporting activity takes place in amateur structures. Professional sport is of growing importance and contributes equally to the societal role of sport. In addition to improving the health of European citizens, sport has an educational dimension and plays a social, cultural and recreational role. The societal role of sport also has the potential to strengthen the Union’s external relations.”

It is widely accepted that Sport has a major potential as a tool for promoting social inclusion (Bailey, 2005) and social cohesion in societies (Moody & White, 2003). Among its objectives in the fight against poverty and exclusion, the European Council adopted the objective *“to develop, for the benefit of people at risk of exclusion, services and accompanying measures which will allow them effective access to education, justice and other public and private services, such as culture, sport and leisure”* (European Council - Employment and Social Policy, 2000).

Sport provides citizens with opportunities to interact and join social networks; it helps immigrants to develop relations with other member of society; and it constitutes a tool for reaching out to the underprivileged or groups at risk of or facing discrimination. Through its contribution to economic growth and job creation, it can also help to revitalise disadvantaged areas. Some Member States already use sport as a tool and an indicator in their social policies, in the framework of the Open Method of Coordination on social

protection and social inclusion (White paper on Sport, 2007).

All residents of the European Union should have access to sport and the specific needs of under-represented groups need to be addressed. Sport should play a role in promoting gender equality and in the integration of people with disabilities (White paper on Sport, 2007). To achieve these aims it is important to promote an inclusive approach to sport among EU Members promoting and sponsoring the development of adapted sport, that refers to sport modified or created to meet the unique needs of individuals with disabilities (Winnick, 2000).

In the last decades sport has progressively become an important topic in the disability arena and part of its potential, recognized both by sport science researchers and European political leaders, is its ability to include participation of persons with disabilities at all levels (Sherrill & Williams, 1996; Tasiemski, Kennedy, Gardner, & Blaikley, 2004). Sport is, due to the small number of socialization experiences frequently related with negative social feedbacks, discriminatory and segregational attitudes, a unique opportunity of interaction and construction of a particular and individual identity (Williams, 1994).

The EU commission encourages Member States and sport organizations to adapt a sporting infrastructure to take into account the needs of people with disabilities:

“Member States and local authorities should ensure that sport venues and accommodations are accessible for people with disabilities. Specific criteria should be adopted for ensuring equal access to sport for all pupils, and specifically for children with disabilities. Training of monitors, volunteers and host staff of clubs and organizations for the purpose of welcoming people with disabilities will be promoted (White paper on sport, 2007, pp. 7–8).”

The EU has a Disability Strategy to promote the integration and equal treatment of people with disabilities. This strategy has been recently reinforced with the increasing

development of mechanisms and publication of indicators that fully reflect the multidimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion allowing a better evaluation of the role and effectiveness of the policies mobilised to combat them (Social Protection Committee, 2011). In the Action Plan to implement the Disability Strategy, the Commission considered the role sport plays in promoting the integration of people with disabilities. Special efforts must be made to ensure access to sports venues, infrastructure and activities for people with disabilities, and to ensure that their specific needs are taken into account, including at school.

The purpose of the present article is to disseminate the main achievements and conclusions of European University Standards in Adapted Physical Activity project (Kudlacek, Morgulec-Adamowicz, & Verellen, 2010), in the specific area of sport and recreation (Morgulec-Adamowicz, & Ferreira, 2010) including: i) to identify and describe the needs of all partner countries for APA professionals in adapted sport and recreation area, ii) to describe their competencies and to define their academic standards (subject specific competencies and learning outcomes), and iii) to provide an useful contribution for the development of an international academic framework to guarantee the quality of professional training in the fields of APA at European level.

METHODS

Participants

Participants were 233 institutions (143 in the area of education, 48 in the area of sport and leisure and 42 in the area of rehabilitation) from the different participating countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and United Kingdom) where APA is offered as an educational, sport and/or rehabilitation service.

Research consortium

The EUSAPA project is a research study in the area of APA financed by the Education,

Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency, Life-long Learning Programme Sub-programmes – Multilateral projects, networks, accompanying measures of the European Union developed in a network base involving several European institutions, Palacky University (Czech Republic), University of Jyväskylä (Finland), Swedish Development Centre for Disabled Sport (Sweden), Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium), Joseph Fourier University (France), University of Coimbra (Portugal), Jozef Piludski University (Poland), Latvian Academy of Sport Education (Latvia), Institute of Technology Tralee (Ireland), Loughborough University (United Kingdom) and the European Federation of Adapted Physical Activity (EUFAPA) from ten different European countries. Partners were selected among EUFAPA network members, one per country, from those who expressed interest and availability to take part in the consortium and were able to complete the application forms in the deadline established for the EU agency.

Study design

The project was developed between November 2008 and October 2010 over two separate phases. The first phase took place from November 2008 and June 2009 and consisted on the development and application of a research survey aiming to describe the situation of Adapted Physical Activity (APA) in Europe and the professional competencies valued in each one of the partner countries. The second phase took place from July 2009 and October 2010 and defined the academic standards (subject specific competencies and learning outcomes) in the three APA areas and provided an useful contribution for the development of an international academic framework to guarantee the quality of professional training in the fields of APA at European level. The present article will focus on the results from APA sport and recreation area only.

Instruments

A survey aiming to assess and describe the present situation of Adapted Physical

Activity (APA) in Europe was developed, in English language, for each one of the three Adapted Physical Activity areas: (1) Adapted Physical Education in school; (2) APA in sport and recreation, and (3) APA in rehabilitation. The final version of the survey was translated into Czech, Finish, Flemish, French, German, Latvian, Polish and Portuguese languages and used in each one of the participant countries. England and Ireland used the original English version.

Procedures

Participants were tested individually using a research survey with previous consent from the management boards of the different sport clubs. The research survey was administrated using an electronic format after a short briefing about the purpose of the study. Standardized instructions were provided to all participants as well as encouragement to answer all the questions.

Additionally and in order to describe and define the competencies and the academic standards (subject specific competencies and learning outcomes) for APA sport and recreation professionals in Europe, a group of experts in sport and recreation area from each one of the partner members used a brainstorm technique aiming to improve the reflexive capacity of the group and highlight the knowledge, the learning outcomes, the competences and the skills seen as relevant for a qualified professional intervention in APA sport and recreation area.

Data interpretation

Due to the descriptive nature of the survey data in the sport and recreation area was analyzed in different categories aiming to describe the needs of all partner countries for APA professionals in adapted sport and recreation area answering the following pre-established general questions:

a) What is the general situation of APA in participating state members over Europe?

b) Do participant state members really need APA professionals in Europe? If so why?

c) Do participant state members need APA professionals in the sport and recreation contexts?

d) What kind of sport and recreation professionals do participant state members need?

Additionally and to define a proposal for specific competencies and learning outcomes of APA sport and recreation professionals, participants from the reflection group discussed the following questions:

e) What are the key roles and the key functions for APA coaches in sport and recreation area?

f) What are the skills, competences and knowledge that are expected in this sport and recreation professionals?

The functional analysis of the survey and the outcomes from the sport and recreation reflection group were then used to establish the guidelines for key roles and key functions using a Functional Map format as well as the knowledge, the competences and the skills framework for professionals working in disability sport/ APA coaching.

RESULTS

The purpose of the present article is to disseminate the conclusions of the European Standards in Adapted Physical Activities (Kudlacek, Morgulec-Adamowicz & Verellen, 2010) project in the specific area of sport and recreation at European level.

The first aim of the project was to assess and describe the present state of Adapted Physical Activity (APA) in Europe. Results from the present study revealed that present state of APA in Europe is deeply influenced by the idea of *heterogeneity* (Morgulec-Adamowicz & Ferreira, 2010). In spite of the common European Union guidelines and policies for Education and Sport supported by different agreements and official reports (the Bologna Process, the 2010 Education and Training Programme, the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty's

Declaration on Sport, 1998 Helsinki Report on Sport, the 2000 Nice's Council Declaration on Sport, the 1992 Recommendation 1185 *on rehabilitation policies for the disabled*) developed over the two last decades, aiming to provide similar opportunities to all the European citizens, the reality is slightly different. Europe is still characterized by a huge diversity of social, educational and health systems with different priorities, very much influenced by regional policies and by the strength of each individual member's economy.

In sport, this heterogeneity of policies is clearly accepted as the European Union assumes to play a minor and mostly indirect role in sport policy, because (a) sport is normally considered to be outside the competences conferred by the member states to the European Union and (b) sport is in general organized internally, on a European continental level (which is not the same as the level of the European Union), or globally. The idea of *heterogeneity* is also very much supported by the continuous increase of new members, ever increasing the Union's diversity as a result of enrichment and enlargement, but also different levels of development which directly influence the type of services and the quality of the services provided to different European citizens in different state members.

Because APA is essentially focused on a service delivery profession and as an academic field of study, it is expected that the quality and availability of APA services differs from one European country to another, very much influenced by Education, Sport, Health and Rehabilitation policies and priorities in each State member. Some countries offer good quality service delivery and training systems for professionals working with persons with disabilities while other countries have well developed academic study programs in APA but limited service delivery and some other countries have neither service delivery nor study programs.

Based on the information collected through the survey's administration and aiming to identify and describe the general

needs of the different participating countries in each one of the three APA areas about the type of APA services provided in each of the ten European countries, four distinct groups were identified:

i) Countries where APA already exists as a profession, providing services in the three different areas of intervention (education, sport and rehabilitation) and the services provided are financed by the national educational, sport and health systems (ex: Finland)

ii) Countries where APA exists as a profession in one of the three intervention areas and services on the other two are offered by other professionals with expertise in APA (ex: Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Sweden)

iii) Countries where APA does not exist as an official profession but where APA services are provided for all the areas of intervention (education, sport and rehabilitation) by other professional with background in APA¹ (P.E. teachers, coaches or physiotherapists) (ex: Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, United Kingdom)

iv) Countries where APA does not exist as an official profession and where APA services are offered by none or poorly qualified professionals (volunteers).

Such heterogeneity among countries, concerning different types and quality of services provided, reinforced the need to establish a common strategy and policy to develop APA services in Europe as well as to define the best professional qualified profile (competences, skills and knowledge) for training APA professionals to provide those services.

The second aim of the project was to identify state member's need for APA professionals and the major reasons for that need. The answer to this question is

¹ In these countries Professional providing APA services could be considered as APA Professional if APA would be recognized as a profession.

quite complex and may be influenced by political, theoretical and conceptual issues. Theoretically, inclusion as an educational and social outcome is assumed by most of the European State Members in their political and educational guidelines. In order to implement these policies professionals in general and education, sport and rehabilitation professionals in particular should have a qualified background to provide specific answer to the needs of children, youngsters, adults and elderly with disability.

From this point of view, perhaps there is no need to talk about APA and about APA professional training in Europe as social and educational policies highlight inclusion as an ongoing process and many European countries assume that this social and educational stage has been achieved, however the survey results reveal a slight different reality in Europe. The results from the EUSAPA survey showed that there is a need for APA professionals in Europe and that need will probably remain for longer than expected because many European countries are not yet providing good quality services in APA, and many children, youngsters, adults and elderly with disability are not sharing adequate inclusive environments with similar opportunities offered to those without disability. To make matters worse policies and decision makers are, in many state members, being strongly pressured to reduce costs decreasing budgets and cancelling essential services that negatively influence the quality and variety of APA services provided.

The third aim of the project was to understand the participant state members need for APA professionals in the sport contexts. In the last decades, the number of athletes with disability participating in sport has increased dramatically. Top level sport for athletes with disabilities has become increasingly organized, highly competitive and achieved the potential to create additional needs both at physiological, technical and tactical domains requiring higher levels of expertise and deeper levels of training skills and knowledge much different from those

required until then just for therapeutic and recreational purposes.

Over the years the impact of disability sport on society has been increasing much as a result of the growing exposition of disability sport on the media and the inclusive policies implemented in most of the European countries. On the other end, economic interests realized that disability world is still an unexplored diamond for publicity and business purposes so better opportunities and conditions are provided to elite disability sport athletes, however there is a price to be paid. Higher levels of competition, pressure for better results, different competitive environments, more pressure from the media, sponsors commercial interests are just a few examples how disability sport achieved the potential to create anxiety in many disability sport participants (Ferreira, Chatzisarantis, Gaspar, & Campos, 2007). This new reality requires further specialized services in psychological counselling and training as well as the development of new competences and expertise for a new generation of APA coaches involved both in recreational and/or in performance sport contexts.

This need for APA specialists in sport is also recognized and reinforced by a recent review of the European Union 5-level structure for the qualification and recognition of coaching qualifications, when highlighting the need for equality of opportunity in sport as a key underpinning principle of the European Qualifications Framework, and providing a strong emphasis on the inclusion of minority groups (ENSSEE, 2007) and the need for adequate coach qualifications to provide opportunities to work with these groups.

The fourth aim of the EUSAPA project was to identify what kind of professionals do participant state members need. In general, State Members need qualified and skilful professionals able to assess, plan, prescribe and monitor good quality training sessions, according the specific needs of the athletes, in different disability sports, as well as to understand athletes behaviour both in

training and in competition and able to motivate them to focus in pre-defined goals in order to empower them as athletes and give them the opportunity to improve performance. APA coaches and instructors nature of work in sport has already been described by the European Classification of Sport and Sport Related Occupations (NEORS²) which is a European classification of occupations for the sport sector produced by the European Observatory of Sport and Employment (EOSE). Sport coaches and instructors plan, develop, implement and evaluate coaching programs and sessions meant to guide improvement of athletes/teams (performance-oriented sports participants at a competitive or a high performance stage) or sportspersons (participation-oriented sports participants, including children, adolescents and adults at a initiation stage or a ongoing/non-competitive stage) in a single sport and at identifiable stages of the athlete/sportsperson pathway (EOSE, 2008a).

In order to describe and specify the nature of work of the APA coaches, the methodology of The Sport and Active Leisure Sector Qualification Strategy (step 3) was used (EOSE, 2008b). To identify the key tasks and activities undertaken by the worker it is recommended by EOSE approach (in the step 3rd of the strategy) to use surveys and focus groups of practicing professionals. In EUSAPA project the survey was prepared by experts from 10 participating countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom) and addressed to coaches from sport and/or recreation federations, organizations and associations for individuals with and without disability at the national, regional and local level (e.g. Czech Olympic Committee, Polish Paralympic Committee, Great Britain Wheelchair Basketball Association, Special Olympics Ireland, Swedish Basketball Federation, Rekryteringsgruppens, Association of

Physical Culture, Sport and Turism of Blind and Weakseeing "CROSS") in all partner countries. Additionally, the experts asked selected APA coaches about the work activities in which they are engaged; the knowledge and skills needed in their occupation; the behaviors required in their work; the tools and equipment used; and the future trends and concerns that may affect what they do and how they do it (EOSE, 2008b).

The fifth aim of the EUSAPA project was to establish guidelines for key roles and key functions for professionals working in disability sport/ APA coaching. These types of guidelines developed in this first stage of the project are general ones, applicable to both levels identified for professional purposes in the area of coaching (ENSSEE, 2007):

a) Coach of participation-oriented sportspeople, i.e., coaches involved in leisure and non formal competitive training as well as coaches involved in lower non-competitive development levels.

b) Coach of performance-oriented athletes, i.e., coaches involved in formal talent orientation athletes/teams and high performance levels.

Future stages of this project will focus their attention on the definition of specific competences, skills and knowledge based on the revised structure of 4 levels for recognizing the competences and qualifications of coaches suggested by the ENSSEE (2007), providing further in-depth for the minimum qualifications needed to achieve each level.

Functional Map (FM) for APA coaches

The functional analysis of the survey led to the development of the Functional Map, which is a structured way of describing the functions of the APA coach. The key purpose of APA coach is to plan, develop, implement and evaluate adapted coaching programs plan, develop, implement and evaluate adapted coaching programs and sessions meant to

² Nomenclature Européenne des Professions/Occupations du sport et en relation avec le sport.

guide improvement of athletes with disabilities/teams (performance-oriented sports participants with disabilities at a competitive or a high performance stage) or sportspersons with disabilities (participation-oriented sports participants with disabilities, including children, adolescents and adults at a initiation stage or a ongoing/non-competitive stage) in a single sport and at identifiable stages of the athlete/sportsperson pathway. To achieve the above key purpose the five **key areas** (planning, management, coaching/instructing, monitoring, adapted sport development) need to be fulfilled with **key roles** and **key functions**. Key roles (“basic functions”) are understood as the essential functions needed to achieve particular key areas (“major functions”), while the key functions (“sub-functions”) are detailed functions needed to be performed in order to achieve particular key roles. Therefore each key area is broken into different key roles (A.1 to A.3, B.1 to B.4, C.1, etc.), which are composed of several key functions (A.1.1 to A.1.2, A.2.1 to A.2.3, A.3.1 to A.3.4, etc.). A.

The following functional map describes what job roles and functions can be expected from APA coach:

A. Planning

Many professionals consider the most challenging part of APA profession to coach athletes with disabilities, however just a careful and responsible preparation of training sessions creates a solid foundation for successful and safe instructions in sport. APA professional must be able to: (1) Develop and adapt exercise and training programs, (2) Assess the current situation and past history of athletes with disabilities; and (3) Develop and adapt exercise and training plans. These key roles are listed bellow together with key functions to describe job expectations in further detail.

A.1 Develop and adapt exercise and training programs for individuals with disabilities for specific sports

A.1.1 Identify mission, vision, aims and

objectives of the organization in relation to provision of opportunities for people with disabilities in sport and recreation in different settings (e.g. inclusive/segregated/unified or competitive/recreational);

A.1.2 Identify competencies, environments and attitudes needed to meet program objectives.

A.2 Initial assessment of current situation and past history

A.2.1 Compile a comprehensive account of previous history relevant to future participation in sport/recreation (e.g. medical, achievements, social, communication etc);

A.2.2 Assess individuals in the following areas: interest and motivation; sports specific (i.e. anthropometrics, bioenergetics, neuromuscular, psychological, functional ability, classification); communication;

A.2.3 Assess the environment of the individual (e.g. economics, sport and recreation structures, extrinsic barriers, family, supports, etc).

A.3 Develop and adapt exercise and training plans

A.3.1 Agree short, medium and long term goals based on strengths and weaknesses;

A.3.2 Identify resources (e.g. human, equipment, finance);

A.3.3 Devise training plan to cover following areas: physical, tactical, technical and psychological;

A.3.4 Agree monitoring process and schedule.

B. Management

In disability sport APA coach can many times also be expected to deal with management issues including: (a) communication and cooperation with key partners, (b) administration, (c) financial tasks, and (d) human resources related responsibilities. These key roles are listed bellow together with key functions to describe job expectations in detail.

B.1 Communication and Cooperation

B.1.1 Consult with other professionals as

part of a multi-disciplinary team;

B.1.2 Communicate with staff/volunteers, athletes, families, school, organizations and media.

B.2 Administration

B.2.1 Prepare reports;

B.2.2 Make bookings;

B.2.3 Maintain correspondence.

B.3 Finances

B.3.1 Plan budgets;

B.3.2 Organize fundraising strategy.

B.4 Human Resources

B.4.1 Recruit and evaluate staff;

B.4.2 Recruit and evaluate volunteers.

C. Coaching/Instructing

Most expectations from APA coach will be in the area of adapting coaching methods and strategies to the needs of persons with various disabilities. These key roles are listed bellow together with key functions to describe job expectations in detail.

C.1 Adapt coaching strategies

C.1.1 Adapt coaching styles to meet the needs of the individual;

C.1.2 Adapt coaching methods;

C.1.3 Plan communication strategies;

C.1.4 Plan behavioural strategies.

D. Monitoring

A key part of good coaching also relates to the monitoring of progress in relation to training or exercise plans. These key roles are listed together with key functions to describe job expectations in detail.

D.1 Evaluate impact and re-adjust the plan

D.1.1 Regularly establish if goals have been met (as per plan);

D.1.2 Re-assess individual and social strengths and weaknesses according to plan;

D.1.3 Identify causes for under/over achievement of goals;

D.1.4 Agree new short, medium and long term goals based on strengths and weaknesses;

D.1.5 Identify new resources (e.g. human, equipment, finance);

D.1.6 Devise training plan to cover following areas: physical, tactical, technical

and psychological.

E. Adapted sport development

As adapted sports (in some countries disability sports) and inclusion of athletes with disabilities into mainstream sports is in many EU countries underdeveloped expectations from APA coach can also be in the areas of: (a) advocacy for the adapted sports and (b) life-long learning. These key roles are listed together with key functions to describe job expectations in detail.

E.1 Advocacy

E.1.1 Promote adapted sport;

E.1.2 Lobbying for realization of rights;

E.1.3 Advocate for standards in APA including the need for specialists.

E.2 Lifelong learning

E.2.1 Identify own needs for professional development;

E.2.2 Engage in continuing professional development activities (e.g. reading, workshops, etc.);

E.2.3 Networking;

E.2.4 Self-evaluation.

It is important to state that it was decided in EUSAPA project to focus on general/complex model of APA coach functions. However the extent and number of functions needed to achieve the key purpose depend on APA coach environment and context. The application of this approach also need to take into account the disability sport structure differences among EU countries, for example APA coach working for a big national federation (e.g. Special Olympics Poland) will not make bookings (B.2.2), while for APA coach in a small association (e.g. Warsaw Goalball Club) it may be the regular function. In addition, the detailed recognition of APA coaching functions with respect to the existing levels of coaching and including 8-level structure of European Qualification Framework (EQF) will be the following step in the next project.

The last aim of EUSAPA project was to define the knowledge, the competences and skills framework (KCSF) for the APA

coaches. After completing the functional map more detailed analysis was carried out to develop the Knowledge, Competence and Skills Framework (KCSF), which describes **performance requirements** for APA coach. In the present KCSF approach the performance requirements are based on the key roles from the functional map (A.1 to A.3, B.1 to B.4, C.1, D.1 to D.2, and E.1 to E.2). All performance requirements are described in terms of skills³ and knowledge⁴ needed for APA coach. Moreover KCSF provide information of appropriate evidence to demonstrate the particular performance requirements.

Recently, some changes in the EU have occurred that impact on the structure of coach education. ENSSEE (2007) has observed important new perspective on the education of coaches, where coach education has been strongly embedded within the higher education sector. Focus on the employability and the need of the labour market is likely to lead to a greater degree of interaction between the higher education sector and national/international federations than previously has been the case (ENSSEE, 2007). However, there is still an emerging doubt about the recognition of APA coach's qualifications (knowledge, skills and competences). It should be recommended that university-based APA coach education will be recognized by the relevant federation/organizations which are issuing the coaching licenses. Moreover, future recognition of APA coach vocational qualification has also to identify non-formal learning⁵ (e.g.

volunteers in disability sport) and informal learning⁶ (e.g. family members of individuals with disability who get involved in disability sport).

In spite of these doubts EUSAPA Project proposal suggested that university-based professional coaches qualification should include the following knowledge, competences and skills:

I) Develop and adapt exercise and training programs for individuals with disabilities and/or special needs for specific sports

In order to develop and adapt exercise and training programs for individuals with disabilities professionals must be able to: (a) develop an appropriate program; (b) communicate in the appropriate environment; and (c) adapt in the appropriate environment. The knowledge and the individual needs to learn to do this includes:

- Mission, vision, aims and objectives of the program;
- Individuals with disabilities and/or special needs in relation to sport (exercise and training);
- Sport opportunities and settings for individuals with special needs;
- Sports sciences and theory of sport training;
- Sports specific background with rules and classifications;
- Legal and ethical issues;
- General principles of adaptation.

II) Initial assessment of current situation and past history

To execute initial assessment the APA professional must be able to: (a) consider and assess accessibility in the sports specific context; (b) use specific assessment instruments; and (c) analyze and interpret the

normally does not lead to certification (ENSSEE, 2007).

- ⁶ Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organized or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification (ENSSEE, 2007).

³ Abilities to perform tasks and solve problems (Cedefop, 2008).

⁴ The outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of study or work (Cedefop, 2008).

⁵ Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It

data on the basis of theory. The knowledge and the individual needs to learn to do this includes:

- Protocols, test measurements, batteries, biographical information, techniques for questioning;
- Accessibility issues.

III) Develop and adapt exercise and training plans

To develop and adapt training plans APA professional must be able to: (a) identify resources; (b) adapt and use appropriate equipment; (c) apply principles of theory of sport training; and (d) set realistic goals. The knowledge and the individual needs to learn to do this includes:

- Rules and classifications;
- Sports Science;
- Theory of sport training;
- Sports specific background.

IV) Competencies related to communication and cooperation

In order to cooperate effectively APA professional must be able to: (a) communicate with the appropriate support networks; (b) communicate effectively with participants and target groups; and (c) identify and choose appropriate strategies to communicate with key individuals or networks. The knowledge and the individual needs to learn to do this includes:

- Methods of alternative communication
- General communication strategies as required.

V) Competencies related to Administration

In order to be effective administrator APA professional must be able to: (a) perform administrative tasks and organize and prioritize information. The knowledge and the individual needs to learn to do this includes:

- Basic administration systems;
- Language and information technology;
- Prepare reports.

VI) Finances

To be successful in financial issues APA professional must be able to effectively manage accounts and be able to source

appropriate funding. The knowledge and the individual needs to learn to do this includes:

- Basic Book Keeping.

VII) Human resources

To be successful in human resources area APA professional must be able to manage people and recruit and evaluate staff and volunteers. The knowledge and the individual needs to learn to do this includes:

- Motivation, coping, leadership strategies;
- Recruitment process principles.

VIII) Adapt coaching strategies

Adapted coaching is at the heart of the APA profession. In order to be good in this areas APA professional must be able to: (a) use appropriate coaching methods; (b) communicate; and (c) actively engage with the coaching environment e.g. interaction, learning process, cooperation, cohesion. The knowledge and the individual needs to learn to do this includes:

- Coaching styles and coaching methods
- General communication strategies and methods of alternative communication as required;
- Appropriate Sports Science knowledge.

IX) Evaluate impact and re-adjust the plan

To be able to evaluate the impact of a training plan APA professional must be able to: (a) use specific assessment instruments; (b) practically interpret, reassess and re-adjust the plan; and (c) be self reflexive. The knowledge and the individual needs to learn to do this includes:

- Protocols, observation techniques, test measurements, batteries, biographical information, techniques for questioning.

X) Advocacy

The current situation in many EU members is not appropriate in the area of including persons with disabilities in sport. The APA professional should be able to advocate for equal provision of PE for all.

APA professional needs to acquire the ability to communicate and develop networks as well as the ability to create opportunities for empowerment. The knowledge and the individual needs to learn to do this includes:

- Legislation at local, national and international levels;
- Support services;
- Marketing.

XI) Lifelong learning

To keep up to date with new trend and findings in the area of sport training and adapted physical activities all APA professionals must be able to:

- Effectively manage time;
- Accept/re-act to new trends;
- Identify individual needs for professional development;
- Actively engage with other relevant professions.

The knowledge the individual needs to learn to do this:

- Access and evaluate appropriate resources;
- Educational/career progression opportunities.

Finally, and aiming to highlight an “example of good practices” in the area of sport and leisure professional training and an international academic framework that guarantees the quality of professional training in the fields of APA in Europe, the EUSAPA consortium identified the reviewed version of the Erasmus Mundus Master in Adapted Physical Activity (EMMAPA) as a European reference for coaches at both academic and professional training levels as it incorporates the skills, the competences and the knowledge required to high quality professional training required for the development of better delivery services in adapted sport and leisure areas.

CONCLUSIONS

Adapted Physical Activity as a profession and as an academic field of study faces different realities in different European

countries. In some European countries APA already exists as a profession while in others is seen as a specialization area for other professions (such as physiotherapists, physical education teachers or coaches) that are responsible to provide APA services in educational, sport & leisure and rehabilitation settings, however there are still some European countries where APA services are delivered by low qualified or unqualified professionals, many of them working as volunteers with no APA academic background and a limited level of competences and skills.

Good quality APA service delivery both in educational, sport and rehabilitation settings is very important to improve people's with disability quality of life and well-being. APA professionals should be able to offer similar quality APA services in the different European State Members and a particular attention should be paid to the development of an international academic framework both at undergraduate and pos-graduate level to guarantee the quality of professional training in the field as a priority.

The EUSAPA project defined an extensive list of key roles - basic functions - and key functions - sub-functions - seen as detailed functions needed to performed good quality APA services in sport & leisure as well as the knowledge, the competences and the skills perceived as major requirements for coaches and monitors professional certification in this area.

Based on the results of the EUSAPA project decisive steps forward are required to improve the quality of APA services in Europe and these steps involve a coordinated action between all those involved in disability sport and leisure activities aiming for short term practical implications:

1. European Union member states should create or upgrade national legislation aiming to clarify professional careers for those working in APA area;
2. Academic institutions responsible for teachers, coaches and monitors training should take in deep consideration the key roles and key functions, the competences

3. and the skills perceived as fundamental when organizing their APA training curricula;
4. Professional organizations should confirm these competences and skills before certifying professionals to interact in APA environments;
5. Sport and leisure organizations and sport clubs should check and value these competences and skills when selecting new APA sport professionals to coach children and youngsters with disabilities aiming for better quality services;
6. Athletes and sport and leisure participants play a decisive role on controlling and reporting the (lack of) quality of the sport & leisure services offered.

Limitations of the study

Some limitations of the present research need to be underscored. The first limitation was that only 10 or the 25 European countries took part in the study. Future editions of the present study should make a considerable effort to include data from more European countries allowing a broader view about APA in Europe. A second limitation of the present study is the unbalanced number of sport & leisure organizations assessed in the study (48) in comparison to education (143) and rehabilitation (42) areas. Future editions of the present study should also look for an higher homogeneity in the number of organizations per APA area.

A third limitation of the present study is that the definition of key roles, key functions, competences and skills resulted from the reflexive work of a group of experts in sport & leisure (similar procedure in both education and rehabilitation areas) but they were not validated by the agents involved in the practise (institutions, athletes and participants). The following major step for the present results is their dissemination among all those involved in practise in order to understand which roles, competencies and skills are more valued and a priority to those involved in practise.

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(Abstract)

ACADEMISCHE STANDARDS FÜR APA-FACHKRÄFTE IM SPORT: EIN REFLEKTIERTER ZUGANG IN EUROPA

Adapted Physical Activity (APA) ist ein Berufsfeld für Dienstleistung und Vermittlung sowie ein Lehr- und Studiengbiet, das eine anerkennende Haltung zu individuellen Differenzen unterstützt, für einen verbesserten Zugang zu Sport und aktivem Lebensstil eintritt und innovative und kooperative Vermittlungs- und Selbststärkungssysteme fördert. Die Verbreitung der Werte von Sport und aktivem Lebensstil sowie von qualitativ hochwertigen Freizeitaktivitäten für Menschen mit Behinderung erfordert spezifische Fähigkeiten und Kompetenzen von den Fachleuten für Sport und Freizeit, die nur durch eine adäquate und professionelle akademische Ausbildung erreicht werden kann. Die Absicht des vorliegenden Beitrags ist die Verbreitung der wichtigsten Arbeitsergebnisse des Projekts ‚European Standards in Adapted Physical Activity‘ (EUSAPA) im spezifischen Bereich Sport und Freizeit. Diese Punkte umfassen: i) Identifikation und Beschreibung der Bedürfnisse aus allen Partnerländern, ii) Beschreibung ihrer Kompetenzen und Definition ihrer akademischen Standards sowie iii) Entwicklung eines internationalen akademischen Rahmenprogramms zur Verbesserung der Qualität der Berufsausbildung in APA auf Europäischer Ebene. Die Resultate belegten, dass es noch ein langer Weg für die Homogenisierung von APA Angeboten in den Mitgliedsstaaten sein wird – sowohl auf die Art der Vermittlungsangebote bezogen als auch auf den spezifischen Ausbildungshintergrund der Fachleute, die diesen Unterricht anbieten. Verschiedene Berufsgruppen mit und ohne akademische Ausbildung in APA sind an diesem Prozess beteiligt, haben unterschiedliche Fähigkeiten und Kompetenzen und liefern unterschiedliche Niveaus der Vermittlung in Sport- und Freizeitbereichen. Die Entwicklung eines internationalen akademischen Rahmens ist von vorrangiger Bedeutung um die Qualität der professionellen Ausbildung in APA zu gewährleisten. Das neue Erasmus Mundus Master Programm in APA ist dafür ausersehen und wird als gutes Beispiel für ein theoretisches Bezugssystem angesehen, das auch Praxiskurse in verschiedenen Interventionsbereichen mit

einbezieht und, soweit absehbar, entscheidend erscheint für die Vermittlungs- und Trainertätigkeit in Sport- und Freizeitfeldern.

SCHÜSSELWÖRTER: Rahmenprogramm Trainerausbildung; APA Trainer-Fähigkeiten und -kompetenzen; EU Behindertensport

(Résumé)

**NORMES ACADEMIQUES POUR LES PROFESSIONNELS DU SPORT APA :
APPROCHE REFLECHIE EN EUROPE**

L'activité physique adaptée (APA) est une profession de prestation de service et un domaine d'études académique qui met en avant l'acceptation des différences individuelles, encourage l'accès à un mode de vie actif et aux sports, favorise l'innovation, la prestation de services et l'habilitation des systèmes. La promotion d'un mode de vie actif et la qualité des activités sportives ou de loisirs au sein des personnes handicapées requièrent des compétences spécifiques de la part des professionnels du sport et des loisirs qui ne peuvent seulement être acquises après une formation académique rigoureuse et un encadrement professionnel. Le but du travail actuel est de disséminer les accomplissements principaux du projet "Normes Européennes en Activité Physique Adaptée" (EUSAPA), dans le domaine spécifique sportif et de loisir comprenant : i) l'identification et la description des besoins de tous les pays partenaires, ii) la description de leurs compétences et définition des normes académiques et iii) développement d'un cadre scolaire international afin d'améliorer la qualité de la formation professionnelle en APA au niveau européen. Les résultats ont démontré qu'il reste un long chemin à parcourir avant que ne soit homogénéiser les services en APA dans les différents états membres, aussi bien dans le genre de services fournis que dans l'enseignement donné aux professionnels qui fournissent ces services. Différents professionnels, avec ou sans formation, participent au processus avec différentes qualifications et compétences offrant différents niveaux de prestation de service dans les secteurs du sport et des loisirs. Le développement d'un cadre académique international est une priorité afin de garantir la qualité d'une formation professionnelle en APA. Le nouveau programme d'Erasmus Mundus en APA est considéré comme le bon exemple d'un cadre théorique incluant des cours pratiques dans différents secteurs d'intervention, perçus comme essentiel pour des services d'entraînement en APA dans les secteurs du sport et des loisirs.

MOTS CLÉS: Encadrement professionnel, Compétences et habiletés en APA, Sport adapté Européen

(Аннотация)

**АКАДЕМИЧЕСКИЕ СТАНДАРТЫ ДЛЯ СПЕЦИАЛИСТОВ АФК:
РЕФЛЕКСИВНЫЙ ПОДХОД В ЕВРОПЕ**

Адаптивная физическая культура (АФК) является сферой предоставления услуг, а также научной областью исследования, которая поддерживает отношение принятия индивидуальных различий, сторонников расширения доступа к активному образу жизни и спорту, а также способствует инновациям, кооперативным услугам и расширению прав и возможностей системы. Содействие активному образу жизни, спорту и качественному досугу людей с ограниченными возможностями требует специальных знаний, умений и навыков специалистов спорта и рекреации, которые могут быть достигнуты только путем создания адекватной научной и профессиональной подготовки. Целью данной работы

является популяризация основных достижений проекта "Европейские стандарты в адаптивной физической культуре" (ЕСАФК) в конкретной области спорта и рекреации, и в том числе: 1) определение и описание потребностей из всех стран-партнеров; 2) описание их компетенций и определение академических стандартов; 3) расширение международных научных рамок для повышения качества профессиональной подготовки в АФК на европейском уровне. Различные специалисты с учетом и без академической подготовки по АФК принимают участие в процессе предоставления различных услуг в области спорта и рекреации. Расширение международных научных рамок является одним из приоритетных направлений для обеспечения качества профессиональной подготовки в АФК.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: профессиональные возможности тренеров; знания, умения и навыки специалистов; адаптивная физическая культура

(Resumen)

ESTÁNDARES ACADÉMICOS PARA PROFESIONALES APA EN EL DEPORTE: UN ENFOQUE REFLEXIVO EN EUROPA

Actividad Física Adaptada (APA) es una profesión de la prestación de servicios y un campo de estudio académico que apoya una actitud de aceptación de las diferencias individuales, aboga por la mejora del acceso a estilos de vida activos y al deporte, y promueve la innovación y la prestación de servicios de cooperación y sistemas de capacitación. La promoción de estilos de vida activos y el deporte y actividades de ocio de calidad para las personas con discapacidad requiere de habilidades y competencias específicas entre los profesionales del deporte y de ocio que sólo se puede lograr a través de una adecuada formación académica y profesional. El propósito del presente trabajo es dar a conocer los principales logros del proyecto Estándares Europeos en Actividad Física Adaptada (EUSAPA), en el área específica del deporte y la recreación como: i) la identificación y descripción de las necesidades de todos los países socios, ii) la descripción de sus competencias y la definición de los estándares académicos y iii) desarrollo de un marco académico internacional para mejorar la calidad de la formación profesional en APA a nivel europeo. Los resultados mostraron que todavía hay un largo camino por recorrer para la homogeneización de los servicios de APA en los estados miembros diferentes, tanto en el tipo de servicios prestados y la formación específica de los profesionales que los prestan. Diferentes tipos de profesionales con y sin formación académica en las APA están participando en el proceso con diferentes habilidades y competencias, proporcionando diferentes niveles de prestación de servicios en las áreas deportivas y recreativas. El desarrollo de un marco académico internacional es una prioridad para garantizar la calidad de la formación profesional en la APA y el nuevo Programa Erasmus Mundus en APA debe ser considerado como un buen ejemplo de un marco teórico, que incorpora cursos prácticos en las diversas áreas de intervención consideradas vitales para los servicios de APA relacionados con el entrenamiento y las áreas deportivas y de ocio.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Marco profesional para entrenadores, Entrenamiento en habilidades y competencias APA, Deporte y discapacidad en la Unión Europea

(Resumo)

PADRÕES ACADÉMICOS PARA A FORMAÇÃO DE PROFISSIONAIS DE AFA NO DESPORTO: UMA ABORDAGEM REFLEXIVA NA EUROPA

A Actividade Física Adaptada (AFA) é uma profissão que envolve a prestação de serviços, sendo também uma área académica de estudo e investigação que tem por base uma atitude de aceitação da existência de diferenças individuais, que defende o desenvolvimento de estilos de vida activos associados à prática desportiva e que promove a inovação, o fortalecimento de sistemas e de serviços cooperativos de prestação de serviços especializados. A promoção de estilos de vida activos e de prática de actividades desportivas e de lazer para pessoas com deficiência requer o conhecimento de *skills* e de competências específicos entre os profissionais de desporto & lazer que apenas poderão ser obtidos através de uma adequada formação académica e profissional.

O objectivo do presente trabalho é disseminar os principais resultados do projecto *European Standards in Adapted Physical Activity* (EUSAPA), na área específica do desporto e da recreação, incluindo a: i) identificação e descrição das necessidades de todos os países parceiros, ii) descrição da suas competências e definição dos padrões académicos e iii) desenvolvimento de um quadro de referências académico de nível internacional com o objectivo de melhorar a qualidade da formação dos profissionais em AFA a nível europeu.

Os resultados obtidos demonstraram que ainda existe um longo caminho a percorrer para a homogeneização dos serviços de AFA nos diferentes estados membros, tanto no tipo de serviços prestados como no percurso formativo específico dos profissionais que prestam esses serviços. Diferentes tipos de profissionais com e sem formação académica em AFA estão a participar no processo apresentando diferentes *skills* e competências, proporcionando diferentes níveis de prestação de serviços nas áreas do desporto e da recreação. O desenvolvimento de um quadro de referências académico de nível internacional constitui uma prioridade para garantir a qualidade da formação dos profissionais de AFA e o novo programa do Mestrado Erasmus Mundus em AFA é mencionado como um bom exemplo de quadro de referência teórico, o qual incorpora formação prática em diferentes áreas de intervenção tidas como vitais para a prestação de serviços na área do desporto e do lazer em pessoas com deficiência.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Quadro de referências profissional para treinadores, Skills & competências de treino em AFA; Desporto Adaptado na EU

(Streszczenie)

AKADEMICKIE STANDARDY KSZTAŁCENIA SPECJALISTÓW APA W SPORCIE: REFLEKSYJNE PODEJŚCIE W EUROPIE

Adaptowana aktywność fizyczna (APA) jest profesją usługową oraz akademicką dziedziną nauki, która wspiera postawę akceptacji wobec indywidualnych różnic, zaleca zwiększenie dostępu do aktywnego stylu życia i sportu, a także promuje innowacyjność i współpracę w świadczeniu usług i systemach wzmacniania. Promowanie aktywnego stylu życia i sportu oraz wysokiej jakości aktywności rekreacyjnej dla osób ze specjalnymi potrzebami, wymaga od specjalistów w obszarze sportu i rekreacji szczególnych umiejętności i kompetencji, które mogą być osiągnięte jedynie poprzez odpowiednie szkolenia akademickie i zawodowe.

Celem niniejszej pracy było upowszechnienie głównych efektów projektu „Europejskie Standardy w Adaptowanej Aktywności Fizycznej (EUSAPA)” w jednym z trzech analizowanych obszarów - sportu i rekreacji, poprzez 1) identyfikację i opis potrzeb wszystkich krajów partnerskich, 2) opis zakresu kompetencji i określenie standardów akademickich oraz 3) rozwój międzynarodowych ram kształcenia akademickiego w celu poprawy jakości kształcenia zawodowego w APA na poziomie europejskim.

Wyniki wykazały, że ujednolicenie usług APA wśród krajów członkowskich, pod względem rodzaju świadczonych usług i przygotowania zawodowego specjalistów świadczących te usługi, wymagało będzie długofalowych działań. Obecnie, w obszarze sportu i rekreacji dla osób ze

specjalnymi potrzebami, pracują rozmaici specjaliści, z lub bez wykształcenia akademickiego w APA, posiadający zróżnicowane umiejętności i kompetencje, w efekcie czego świadczą usługi o zróżnicowanym poziomie jakości. Rozwój międzynarodowych ram kształcenia akademickiego jest priorytetem w zagwarantowaniu jakości kształcenia zawodowego w APA. Przykładem dobrej praktyki jest program studiów magisterskich - Erasmus Mundus Master Programme in APA, który jest zgodny z ramami kształcenia akademickiego w APA, gwarantującymi wysoką jakość usług APA m.in. w sporcie i rekreacji.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: ramy kształcenia akademickiego dla trenerów; umiejętności i kompetencje w APA, sport niepełnosprawnych w EU
