

Developing Disability Sport: the evolving role of the university sector

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As global interest in disability sport expands, the pressure to resource its development grows. Securing state funding, developing related business activity and attracting commercial sponsorship form important elements in that process. However, resourcing development depends on investment in the human capital necessary to promote inclusive practices which lie at the heart of enhanced disability sport provision. It also needs the intellectual capital and technical expertise required to support the sorts of technological innovations, governance frameworks and athlete development programmes already referred to in this Handbook. While a number of actors can and do contribute, the university sector has the potential to play a unique role in such developments.

This chapter explores ways in which universities have the capacity to contribute to the development of disability (including para) sport. We identify two key perspectives to this contribution. The first perspective considers universities as not just centres for knowledge production, technological innovation and servicing the knowledge economy, but also as focal points for promoting a critical pedagogy. From this perspective, when developing students as the next generation of disability sports administrators, coaches and sport scientists the focus should not be limited to technical expertise, but also on nurturing critically reflective practitioners. The second perspective relates to ways in which universities can contribute most effectively to disabled athlete development. In this, developing the disability sport coaching base, adaptive strength and conditioning programmes, providing a focal point for the work of national and international federations and engagement with research, for example

relating to development of adaptive equipment and the revision of classification frameworks underpinning para-sports, can and do form components of expanding university portfolios.

Research for this chapter included conversations with representatives engaged in developing provision across a small number of UK universities, as well as other stakeholders in disability sport development associated with university sector partnership work. Their comments were considered in the context of wider debate concerning the evolving role of universities, not just as providers of Higher Education but as agents for critical inquiry, democratisation, inclusive practices and the promotion of civic values. The universities considered as part of this study do not constitute a representative sample of UK Higher Education providers. The overall number of universities (167 recognised bodies who award degrees were cited on the Gov.uk website u.d.) together with marked differences in historical context, scale and concentration of intellectual capital and technical resources, would present significant challenges for such an endeavour. Neither, given the wide range of activities associated with this area of work, does the chapter attempt to compile an exhaustive list of university-based initiatives relating to the development of disability sport. Rather, the aim was to cast light on the evolving role of universities as key stakeholders within a wider network of actors engaged in the development of disability sport. The contextual material dealing with the evolving role of universities and curriculum development relating to disability sport, draws directly from the previously published Beacom and Golder (2015) 'Developing Disability: the case for a critical pedagogy' in the *Journal of Sport for Development*.

28.1 Universities and the development of critical practitioners

Radice (2013, 408) argues that there has been a fundamental change in the nature of higher education in contemporary society; 'the purpose of the university has changed from the

education of the elites in business, politics, culture and the professions to the provision of marketable skills and research outputs to the 'knowledge economy'. In an era dominated by neoliberal ideals the public sector has had the values, structures and processes of private sector management imposed upon it. In the case of universities, this has been reflected in an increased focus on practitioner research and a growing emphasis on work-based learning.

This dominant paradigm with its focus on vocationalism is however subject to challenge. Ares (2006) suggests that the aim of education is learning that comes from critical examination of the social order which leads to action in service of social justice as the result of the learning process. This is supported by Monzó (2014, 73) who controversially suggests that 'A fundamental goal of the university must be to advance a democracy based on the socialist principles of freedom and critique'. Giroux (2009, 672) indicates,

Higher education has a deeper responsibilityto educate students to make authority politically and morally accountable and to expand both academic freedom and the possibility and promise of the university as a bastion of democratic inquiry, values, and politics, even as these are necessarily refashioned at the beginning of the new millennium.

Pimental (2006 9) suggests that education is a human right where individuals 'learn about their past, understand their present and acknowledge the power to fight for their future.' This is supported by UNESCO's (2016) Right for Education where they advocate that education promotes individual freedom and empowerment. As such both content and pedagogical approach are crucial. One such approach that seems to support Pimental's views is critical pedagogy. Freire (1970) contended that critical pedagogy empowers classroom participants to critically reflect upon the social and historical conditions that give rise to social inequalities and to question the status quo. Applying critical pedagogy to the study of disability and disability sport therefore seems apt as Nevin, Smith and McNeil (2008, 1) state, since models of disability that are needs based, reinforce inequalities.

The focus on people with disabilities, once left to special education professionals and charitable organizations, has been changing from a charity model based on

medicalization of disability (i.e., disablement as the source of problems) to an empowerment model based on the relationship between disability and society (i.e., society as much or more a source of the problems as particular impairments).

The teaching of sport and disability in this context, requires a consideration of wider social dynamics including locating disability within policy discourses for example those related to civil and human rights. However such topics cannot be taught in a vacuum, requiring a level of political and civic literacy that must be nurtured across the student's higher educational experience (and preferably grounded in their earlier educational experience) and which in this way, link to teaching of citizenship. The body of evidence developing around disability studies in higher education supports this as Linton (1998, 2) explains:

Disability studies provides the means to hold academics accountable for the veracity and the social consequences of their work, just as activism has served to hold the community, the education system, and the legislature accountable for disabled people's compromised social position.

Curriculum development and disability sport

The study of disability sport is an area of growing academic interest, in part because of the rapidly expanding global interest in the phenomenon (Bailey 2008). Shapiro et al (2012) argue it is important that professionals in the field are prepared to deal with the uniqueness of disability sport and are knowledgeable about its complexity and its relationship to the wider sports environment. Many sport related degree programmes embed consideration of disability in their curriculum design, through three key design features, a) permeated or infused approach, b) specialist studies and c) options. While having dedicated courses on disability in sport has a place in the curriculum, Shapiro et al suggest that it reinforces the notion that segregation of knowledge about individuals with disabilities is the norm. Shapiro et al refer to Rizzo's (1997) suggestion that infusing or permeating knowledge about disability throughout the curricula should be the goal so as to avoid emphasising differences or assigning specialists to 'deal with' disability rather than all faculty members assuming ownership of disability issues throughout their curricula. There have been a number of

specific benefits to this infusion approach identified in research. These include:

- (a) increased knowledge and understanding of disability, individuals with disabilities, and issues of equity;
- (b) increased commitment to disability issues and concerns of individuals with disabilities;
- (c) increased collaboration among colleagues;
- (d) acquisition of new skills by higher education faculty;
- (e) increased ownership and commitment to disability and elimination of stigma.

However, the method of curricular design does not automatically result in development of principles that underpin critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy focuses on how to create classroom spaces that challenge students to question assumptions, explicitly recognise power relationships in their analysis of situations, engage with other students in collaborative efforts to critically reflect on the embedded network of relationships, and consider alternatives for transformation of that network (Reynolds 1997). In the study of disability sport and inclusive physical education there are a wide range of agendas of worldwide significance for example globalisation, social responsibility, sustainable environments as well as topical events such as the Paralympic Games or models of disability to provide a curriculum focus. A challenge for academics is to assess how these debates can be integrated into a critical pedagogy and how students can be encouraged to think critically about the implications and challenge the status quo.

In relation to the education process more broadly, the importance in teacher, coach and sport development education of promoting inclusive approaches to sport and physical education has never been greater. This is reflected in part, by what appeared during research, to be a consensus among key stakeholders, that a key impediment to the development of

disability sport is the limited focus on disability within the physical education teacher training curriculum. While Initial Teacher Training (ITT) has expanded its focus on inclusive education, the issue of disability arguably remains peripheral to the process. Goodley (2011) suggests that as the number of children with disabilities in mainstream school increases, the pressure on teachers, coaches and other facilitators to be able to develop imaginative and effective adaptive practices, taking account of a range of conditions, increases. Rather than needs-based services that focus on helping individuals with disabilities 'cope' with deficits, Nevin, Smith and McNeil (2008) support a more empowering person-centred, strengths-based orientation tied to perceptions of the individual as competent and thriving. The focus on strengths-based orientation supports using more active learning strategies which incorporate diverse pedagogies to stimulate student engagement (McKinney and Van Pletzen 2004). When considering inclusive sport and disability it is useful to draw from the debates around inclusive teaching and learning in schools.

Central to the development of effective higher education curricula, that effectively address issues of inclusive practice and ensure a voice for people with disabilities, is that sport related programmes are accessible and attractive to disabled students. Given ideas of advocacy, inclusion and equity that feature strongly in debates relating to disability rights, enhancing representation of this group which has been traditionally under-represented within higher education, is an important component in the development of disability sport. In the UK, an increase in the number of sports scholarships for disabled athletes has been a significant contributory factor in this. At best however, this will only provide a conduit for a limited number of students. More generally, a policy of recruitment that reaches out to a community that has been routinely under-represented, ensuring that the necessary support frameworks are in place, form an important part in securing significant long term change. Working in partnership with specialist disability units and educational centres may be one

way to achieve this, for example in the UK, the partnership of Liverpool John Moores University and Greenbank Stadium, an established provider of disability sport (operating as a separate social enterprise organisation). Recruitment of students with disabilities in a Foundation Degree programme in Inclusive Sport, has impacted on the dynamics of delivery; introducing alternative perspectives on what constitutes an inclusive sport development process (BUCS 'Greenbank: From Foundation to Fruition' ud). Other examples of Disability Sports programmes include University of Worcester where the portfolio in this area has been developing since 2012 (University of Worcester 2012). At the same time, disability and inclusion based modules are components of most sports related Degree programmes nationally.

Universities can also play a part in wider curriculum development. In the UK, the National Governing Body for wheelchair basketball – British Wheelchair Basketball - has worked with a number of universities to promote the rapidly developing four-a-side *Inclusive Zone Basketball* for schools and colleges to establish the sport through level one to three of the UK School Games. At the same time, British Wheelchair Basketball is working, again in partnership with universities, to develop cross curricular resources appropriate for key stages one to four, as part of the aspiration to roll out the sport to younger age groups. The 'Pushing the Boundaries' project developed in partnership with the University of Worcester aims to develop awareness of disability sport and disabled people and promote wider understanding of equity issues. A variety of regulatory frameworks exist depending on the age of the participants, however typically, requiring a minimum of one disabled athlete on the court at any one time. This helps overcome the challenge of being unable to field teams due to lack of athletes with disabilities who wish to participate. The capacity to develop wheelchair basketball beyond its origins as a sport for people with disabilities, has then been made possible by opening up to non-disabled participants – with a consideration of wheelchairs as

sports equipment rather than solely as aids to mobility for disabled people. Strategic plans for expanding the sport is partly dependent on the finance necessary to increase accessibility of chairs for schools. Again, the governing body has worked with wheelchair manufacturers and the University sector to develop entry level initiatives in secondary schools and colleges, and explore opportunities amongst primary school pupils.

Learning through doing: experiential learning and developing community based disability sport programmes

Previous research exploring how undergraduate students generated knowledge of disability, focused on what is referred to as mode two knowledge development where students learnt through reflection on their work experiences, interaction with other students and with instructors (Bourner T, Bowden R, Laing S. 2000). In doing this, students were encouraged to identify and use tools for analysis of problems or ways of working and finding strategies for challenging their own and co-workers' practices. The process of change identified in Bourner et al's study was extended over several courses and years and was the culmination of a programme of study as well as work experience.

Similar research carried out by Beacom and Golder (2015) into pedagogic approaches for developing a critical pedagogy for disability sport followed students across a series of modules and experiences at the University of St Mark and St John, Plymouth, UK. A year two elective module was selected by some students and followed with a year three module which focused on contemporary developments in disability sport. The module included a placement element where students engaged in a variety of disability sport and outdoor education contexts. A range of pedagogic strategies were used by staff to actively involve students in their own learning which support the discussion about the role of the teacher in critical pedagogy.

In this research one such strategy adopted by the authors drew on authentic materials such as video and images which according to Ohara, Safe, & Crookes (2000) serve as the basis for discussion and critical reflection of the culture. A second strategy adopted was that of dialogism which encourages student voice, where, as a result of listening to students' discussion around a series of posed questions, they learnt about their understanding of key problems relating to contexts in which they completed placements and enabled students to debate possible solutions to solve problems. Problem solving pedagogy was used to explore how students developed their critical understanding of conceptual debates in disability sport through the range of taught and experiential learning experiences; an assessment activity took the form of a poster presentation where students had to critically reflect upon contextual developments for their placement provider and on their efficacy as a facilitator in this context. Supporting problem solving pedagogy a number of guest lecturers were engaged to involve students in uncovering of reality, striving for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality and develop a more accurate perception of disability in sport and society. In exploring the extent to which students had engaged in critical pedagogy they were encouraged to unpick past and present beliefs, values and experiences and future implications of these to enable them to develop skills needed to be a critically reflective practitioner.

The opportunities to reflect on placement experiences supports the belief that critical pedagogy should challenge conventional views of the relationship between student and teacher and involve the learners in the generation of knowledge. In the placements a number of students felt confident challenging the ways in which different environments operated, policies and practices they adopted '*I learnt from the instructors and I think they learnt from me.*' (Student 10 Outdoor adventure centre). The placement then, provided an impetus for more criticality in their discourses, where the teaching of theory was illuminated by the

reflection on practice and new knowledge was generated through debating mismatches in observed practice, beliefs and values.

28.2 Universities and disabled athlete development

Universities have then, a responsibility to encourage critical reflection concerning disability and inclusion as an aspect of citizenship and civic values and to relate this to inclusive practices as they develop their role in community sport provision. An inclusive culture is however, not limited to participatory sport and physical activity. Inclusive practice in sport incorporates opportunities for differently abled athletes to achieve their potential in a competitive setting. Given their resourcing, position within wider networks of stakeholders, research agendas, and coaching and athlete development infrastructures, the university sector has the potential to play a vital role in this aspect of sport development (Silva et al 2013). They can also provide a forum for engagement in debate concerning the equitable governance of competitive disability sport.

Alongside the moral and, in some contexts, legal imperative to extend inclusive practice to competitive sport, there are strong business arguments for universities in an increasingly competitive sector, to enhance the infrastructure to support disability sport. The New Public Management (NPM) perspective (Olssen and Peters 2005), provides a framework through which to consider this. Engagement with inclusive competitive sport can become part of the wider organisational objectives, contributing to the development of the brand and providing distinctiveness within an increasingly crowded higher education market-place. At the same time, such engagement lends itself to the target setting and results orientated regime that characterises the NPM model. In the UK for example, crucially, British University and College Sport (BUCS) and Universities UK recognised the potential for the higher education sector to contribute in a range of ways, to the success of the 2012 Games and of the British

team within the Games. The joint Universities UK and BUCS paper published prior to London 2012 (BUCS 2012) identified the role of universities in the development of Olympic and Paralympic sport as encapsulating:

- research and development
- provision of specialist training facilities
- provision of a key volunteering base
- delivery of legacy benefits through community links

In addition, the high proportion of Olympic and Paralympic athletes who were students and alumni of universities across the UK, was also highlighted.

Beyond the development of competitive sport within the student community through for example BUCS, universities have increasingly provided venues for the organisation and delivery of School Games events; providing opportunities for local schools to participate in competitive events (including disability sport) that play an important role in longer term athlete development. The activities of County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) as co-ordinators of these events, requires universities to engage in partnership working that again reflects their expanding role in sport (including disability) sport development within the UK context

Taking the long view

Over the past two decades, as universities have pursued a strategy of expansion and responded to enhanced competition within the UK and international sector, improved sports facilities and attracting successful sports men and women, have become an increasingly important aspect of their marketing strategies. At the same time, bursaries and scholarships have formed an expanding part of the elite sport development frame over the past 10 years and universities provided a focal point for the expansion of the UK sports infrastructure. Reflecting this, the Complete Universities Guide (2013) noted that ‘At the Beijing Olympics,

58% of Team GB athletes and 55% of medallists had come through the university sector'. It identified universities as key to the support of athletes, primarily through the TASS (Talented Athlete Scholarship) scheme which is a 'Sport England funded partnership between talented athletes, education institutions and governing bodies of sport' (TASS u.d). This it noted, was an increasingly significant role alongside the sports institutes and centres of excellence based at universities. BUCS events became integral to build-up to London 2012, with for example, the BUCS Visa Outdoor Athletics Championship running as a test event in the Olympic stadium. In all 200 TASS athletes or alumni competed in the London 2012 games, of whom 33 were Olympic medalists and 24 Paralympic medallists. TASS has continued to be a significant resourcing tool for Team GB Paralympic athletes, with 67 receiving support from the TASS initiative in the lead up to the 2016 Games in Rio (Tass.Gov.UK 2016).

The relative newness of the Paralympic Games (Brittain 2014) and the rapid growth in scale, complexity and competitiveness of para-sports, creates a distinctive context which serves to enhance the importance of specialist research and development and other supporting frameworks that universities can provide. In addition, the relationship of the Paralympic movement to disability rights and the global civil rights agenda opens the topic up to intellectual debate where the academic community can contribute in a meaningful way (IPC Women in Sport Leadership Toolkit 2010).

In the UK, the build-up to the London 2012 Paralympics provided a significant catalyst for the further development of disability sport and with it, an enhanced role for universities. The UK Sport talent identification and development programme was focused on both Olympic and Paralympic sport and provided a range of support frameworks, many of which were situated within the university sector (UK Sport Talent Identification ud). The English Institute of Sport was increasingly focusing on para-sports through its network of support centres, which in many cases involved the university sector (in particular,

Loughborough, Bath, Leeds Beckett, St. Mary's and Liverpool John Moores) (English Institute for Sport u.d).

In relation to the build-up to 2012 for the UK Paralympic team, University of Bath won the competitive tendering process to host the pre-games training camps for the British Paralympic Association (BPA). Four camps ran (each taking place across a four day period) between 2010 and the 2012 Games. The initial two focused on talent identification and supporting athlete development, while the latter two set the stage, acting as dress rehearsals for the Games. In this the focus was on nurturing a high performance environment within which not just athletes but also the support team, enhanced their performance and clarified their roles. An accreditation system was in place for the last camp just prior to the Games, when the environment around the camp was designed to prepare athletes to deal with the pressured atmosphere of the coming event. Again, the range of specialist venues, support infrastructure and resident expertise, meant that the University had the attributes necessary to facilitate effective team preparation.

Moving beyond 2012, University of Bath continues to effectively promote its engagement with the British Paralympic team through for example, securing the opportunity to act as a host venue for preparation camps for Rio 2016. With preparation underway for the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games, a competitive process had opened up in 2013 to secure a host for the Paralympics GB training camps for the Rio cycle. The University had drawn significant publicity from its hosting of the British Paralympic team in 2012 and the Sports Training Village was chosen as the National Performance Partner of Paralympics GB for the build-up to Rio 2016 (Teambath 10 September 2013, British Paralympic Association 10 September 2013) Recent developments of specialist facilities has seen the University of Worcester Arena, promoted as 'the country's first fully inclusive sports arena' when it was chosen as the host venue for one of the BPA 'Sports Fest' series in November 2013

(University of Worcester 2013). It is clear from coverage of the announcement, that it was considered significant in the development of the University's profile as a progressive and inclusive institution. This continued with the student wheelchair basketball championships, the first of which took place at Worcester Arena. The Arena is now the venue for the GB women's wheelchair basketball squad's centralised training programme. Universities featured as hosts succeeding BPA sports fests, with Durham University providing its Graham Sports Centre as a venue in March 2015 (University of Durham, 2015).

Universities and athlete development frameworks

As the development of disability sport generally and para-sport more specifically, moved up the sports policy agenda, a number of universities have increasingly engaged with key stakeholders such as National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) and National Governing Bodies (NGBs), in talent development and athlete development initiatives. In the UK, Loughborough University played an increasingly prominent role for example hosting the British Paralympic Association (BPA) 'Talent Search' project in the build-up to the Beijing Paralympic Games (BUCS British Paralympic Association Talent Search Project 2010). There was a greater focus on the inclusion of disabled athletes in the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS), which was based in the university sector and BUCS began the process (still evolving) of expanding to include disability sport as part of its framework (BUCS Into Inclusion 2011). Reflecting the increasing commercial interest in disability sport, in 2009 Deloitte, a key commercial partner, received recognition for its contribution to the TASS initiative in its support of disabled athletes. As the recognised disability sport partner for TASS, Deloitte secured 'Best Corporate Responsibility in Sport' at the *Beyond Sport Awards*. The TASS programme, administered in partnership with SportsAid, in conjunction with the British Paralympic Association, had according to Taylor, National Manager for

TASS, not just benefited the athletes directly in supporting their training regimes but ‘it has helped us to continue developing the infrastructure and capacity within Higher and Further Education to deliver services that these talented athletes need to achieve their potential such as physiotherapy, strength & conditioning and lifestyle support’. It was noted that 33 members of the UK Paralympic team for 2008 had been engaged with the TASS programme (Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme 2009).

In August 2015 BUCS / English Federation for Disability Sport (EFDS) published their joint report *Time to Get Inclusive: activating participation with disabled students in higher education*, in which practical guidance was given to stakeholders in a range of areas including developing effective internal and external partnerships, researching trends in participation, detailed impairment specific guidance as it relates to sports participation, practical options for inclusive practice, suggestions for programme design, developing performance pathways, effective communication, dialogue with disability groups and examples of good practice. BUCS does however, face a number of resourcing and structural challenges, reflected in the limited portfolio of disability sports as part of its competition calendar. At time of writing, popular team sports such as wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby are not included in the BUCS domestic competition calendar (although an active university competition structure, run by British Wheelchair Basketball, operates independently). In the absence of this, the organisation provides links through its website (Bucs ‘Disability Sport in Higher Education’ u.d), to appropriate governing bodies, with suggestions for student bodies who wish to engage with the sport. Expansion in this area will require a significant investment in resources and development of partnership working. In this context there is some debate concerning the merits of having in post, a development officer with specific responsibility for disability sport within the BUCS framework.

In relation to broader UK development frameworks for disabled athletes, in the UK,

the *Playground to Podium* framework, administered by the Youth Sport Trust in conjunction with local and regional partners (including educational institutions), provided a structure for athlete development prior to 2012. Nevertheless, the time frame that the initiative was working to and the attempt to broaden access to a wide range of disability sports for athletes with potential, created limitations in terms of the production of Paralympic athletes for the 2012 Games. Post 2012, the emphasis for athlete development sits predominantly with National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and, where appropriate, the British Paralympic Association (BPA). At the same time, there is a recognition of the need to strengthen the club structure to support the continued development of new talent in the long term. In both senses, the university sector can again play a role. In the case of the UK, there are clear examples of sports that are in the process of expanding rapidly, due to the development of club structures and national leagues. Wheelchair basketball, athletics and most recently Boccia, are cases in point. Again, the university sector provides an important resource for such expansion, through specialist facilities, coaching expertise and where appropriate, attendant athlete development frameworks. Integral to all of these development processes, the awarding of sports scholarships to disabled students, is of critical importance. A perusal of currently available scholarships across the sector would suggest this area is attracting a significant increase in activity. The impact of such scholarships on enhancing the profile of disability sport and securing the critical mass necessary to ensure success is proven. In one example the University of East London were unable to enter an eligible team in the 2015 University Wheelchair Basketball Championships. However the following year, partly as a consequence of the awarding of scholarships, the University of East London were able to field a team which went on to secure third place in the championships, the following year. Wheelchair basketball is one example of a team disability sport that has effectively used the university sector to leverage its rapid development across the UK. The five-a-side format that has

formed the basis for the British Wheelchair Basketball's University Championships, has succeeded in expanding from five teams in 2014 to sixteen teams in 2016. This in turn has contributed to the wider national development of the sport. Wheelchair basketball now has nine regional centres operating from universities around the UK. These are the Universities of Worcester (home of the GB women's wheelchair basketball team), Bath, Northumbria, Manchester Metropolitan, Sheffield Hallam, Nottingham Trent, East Anglia, University of East London and Brighton.

Opportunities for Paralympians to engage in training programmes conducive to preparation for high performance events, are provided in many university settings, through general university club programmes. In swimming for example Paralympic and would-be Paralympic swimmers frequently train with non-disabled university swimming squads as well as working with the appropriate World Class Pathway programmes. Such opportunities are not limited to existing but also emerging para-sports, which have yet to develop an extensive training and development infrastructure. In the case of para-badminton for example (to be included in the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games), two promising athletes form part of the Badminton training squad at the University of Bath (alongside work with the performance director for Para-Badminton, who is based in Sheffield).

Research and development programmes

Engagement in extensive research and development programmes relating to disability sport is a relatively recent phenomenon; reflecting the recent emergence of disability sport as a global force. Given the concentration of intellectual capital and technical expertise and the established role of universities in research and development relating to able-bodied sport, the potential was there, for developing programmes of research that would support the expansion of these sports. A perusal of recent successful bids to the IPC research applications

demonstrates the range of sports science and classification projects currently underway at universities internationally - in a number of cases in conjunction with rehabilitation and medical facilities (IPC u.d.). As with other areas of research, the academic conference provides the international forum of knowledge exchange and creates the basis for future research collaboration. For example the VISTA sports science conferences (in 2015 held in Spain) provide the opportunity for extensive knowledge exchange between academics and senior administrators.

In relation to the UK, there are a small number of institutions who collaborate with the English Institute of Sport (EIS), in the research and development of Paralympic sport. Of particular note is the Peter Harrison Centre for Disability Sport (PHC) (based at Loughborough University). The centre engages a range of researchers including PhD students and post-Doctoral posts and focused on specialist areas relating to physiology, biomechanics, performance analysis and health and well-being. Specialisation has also tended toward a focus on particular sports, including wheelchair tennis, skiing, goalball, wheelchair rugby and – more recently – para-triathlon (where involvement included a contribution to the classification of this sport which was introduced to the Paralympics for the first time in Rio), hand-cycling and wheelchair racing. Research activity at the PHC has in this way, been part of the VISTA and ICSEMIS international conferences, as well as UK based sport science and sport medicine conferences. The PHC memorandum of Understanding with the EIS also focuses on knowledge exchange between practitioners and academics to ensure that Great Britain remains at the forefront of Paralympic Sport Science. Among the development projects undertaken at the PHC that have had a direct impact on disability sport, was the design and manufacture - in conjunction with RGK the wheelchair manufacturer, BMW and UK Sport - of moulded seats for the wheelchair basketball team prior to 2012. The research conducted at the Centre involves a number of collaborations with researchers at other

institutions Internationally (in particular those in Holland, Canada, Japan and USA).

Other international centres focusing on the development of disability sport include McMasters University in Canada (with specialism in rehabilitation) and the Lakeshore Foundation in Alabama US. Further expertise centred on the university sector has in certain contexts, proved critical to research underpinning the classification process. This has been brought into sharp relief most recently, with the challenge to develop robust classification protocols in order to secure re-admission of athletes with intellectual disability. In the case of 2012, this was limited to three sports – table-tennis, athletics and swimming. Burns in chapter nineteen refers to the work of the ID centre at the Catholic University of Leuven, in the classification of intellectual disability. This is one of three IPC research and development centres for classification, working in the areas of visual, physical and intellectual impairments. A specialist centre (physical disability classification) was opened at the University of Queensland in Brisbane in September 2013, preceded in July by the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam, which focused on the development of sport-specific classification for athletes with a visual impairment

One challenge for the University research community, particularly given the commitment to the values of global citizenship and inclusion, is to begin to address the marked asymmetry evident in access to Paralympic sport (explored in detail elsewhere in the Handbook). One response of the Paralympic Movement to this challenge is to attempt to support the development of NPCs from resource poor regions. This attempt comes in a variety of forms, including promoting sharing of research and development and good coaching practice between resource-rich and resource-poor regions, a process which draws in the university sector as key stakeholders. This activity has in the past, included the Peter Harrison Centre engagement with the Right to Dream initiative, as a route to supporting Ghanaian athletes (Peter Harrison Centre Newsletter 2012). The role of Manchester

Metropolitan University as joint host of the World Sports Academy in conjunction with the IPC is also noteworthy in this respect. In addition, the university sector engages in activity linked to capacity building for Paralympic stakeholders, including those from resource poor regions. For example, in advance of the 2015 Parapan Games in Toronto, the Agitos Foundation (the development arm of the IPC) in conjunction with the organising body Toronto2015, facilitated a series of workshops aimed at capacity building across the Americas region of the Paralympic Movement (IPC News Bulletin 2013). The first took place in Bogota, Columbia focusing on organisational capacity building, athlete and sport development and strategic partnerships. Academics from universities across the region, engaged with the debate and with subsequent development planning. Further summits took place during 2014, in San Paulo, Brazil (April) and in Kingston, Jamaica (August). Universities have also featured in a number of initiatives undertaken by the Agitos Foundation, which is a key stakeholder in developing a strategic response to the asymmetry characteristic of global access to disability sport infrastructure.

While there is a clear commitment on behalf of the individuals and organisations engaged in these initiatives, to address the resource deficit experienced by athletes and teams from resource-poor regions, the extent of support that can be provided through such projects should be seen in perspective. Given the growing investment in para-sport which is characteristic of many resource-rich countries, it is unlikely that the gap between the small number of countries that dominate the Paralympic medal tables and the remainder will close significantly without more fundamental changes in the constitution and governance of Paralympic sport. From the perspective of universities, there is a strong rationale for extending engagement globally through such development activity, as they seek to enhance their global footprint in an increasingly competitive marketplace. At the same time, equipping students as future sports administrators, to engage in the debates surrounding these global

tensions, should form part of the drive to enhance a global civic literacy.

28.3 Concluding thoughts

Castells, in his analysis of the changing role of higher education in society, argues that as well as emerging as a key actor in driving and managing scientific and technological change, the university also becomes a ‘critical source of equalisation of chances and democratisation of society by making possible equal opportunities for people – this is not only a contribution to economic growth, it is a contribution to social equality...’ (Castells 2009, 1). Universities are then, key institutions in promoting social change and enhancing quality of life, not just for their students but also for communities and for wider society of which they are a vital component. Considering the challenges which continue to face people with disabilities living in an uncertain global environment, with contested views on meanings attributed to inclusion, the equitable distribution of resources and the role of education in civic as well as technological and physical literacy, universities have a central role to play in fostering the attitudinal and material changes necessary to establish a more inclusive society. The chapter has explored this contention in relation to the role of the university in the development of a physical and sporting culture supportive of the enhancement of disability sport. The chapter commenced by considering higher education and the role of the University in contemporary global society. This laid the basis for a consideration of curriculum development and promotion of intellectual debate necessary to encourage a critical pedagogy of disability and sport. This involved taking account of the intellectual, social and emotional development of individual students and ways in which the curriculum can contribute to the promotion of civic and physical literacy, which predicate an inclusive physical culture (relating to both the student community and wider society of which it forms a part). From there it considered how universities were expanding their engagement in the development of competitive disability

sport. This included involvement in athlete development as well as the governance and administration of disability sport – including para-sport- and the role of research in the wider development frame.

Having considered the role of the university in the development of disability sport, from the perspectives of curriculum development, engagement of students with disabilities and contributions of the sector to wider development of disability sports, (primarily, it must be said, from a UK perspective) some tentative suggestions can be made:

- Programmes of study should consider carefully how a critical pedagogy is translated into effective engagement with university based initiatives supportive of people with disabilities. While experiential learning may form part of this, its location within the programme is not a foregone conclusion since the linear movement from theory to practice does not take into account the previous experiences of students nor their capacity to grasp the intellectual debates underpinning current practices
- University sport and physical activity programmes should in themselves, seek to be more inclusive of diverse student needs. In the UK, the recent Sport England Activation fund provides the potential for university sport departments to engage in more inclusive practices, however its implementation will need to be monitored carefully in this context
- Students should be aware of the relationship between the lived experience of individual athletes and global political issues that characterise competitive disability sport. Criticality should include being prepared to challenge governance issues at every level of disability sports
- While the development of expertise in the area of disability sport, requires a concentration of resources and a critical mass of intellectual capital, too much concentration into a very few universities (from a national and international

perspective) increases the impediments to accessibility which the disability sport movement is, as an advocacy body, committed to challenge. Sharing of best practice and developing provision in regional centres where local and regional demand from individual athletes and clubs, can be best served, can be part of an alternative perspective.

- Just as universities are emerging as hubs for regional, national and international sport development, so there is considerable potential to expand in the area of disability sport. Locating national governing bodies of emergent disability sports on campus sites offers opportunities to expand development work through already established networks and enhance performance through utilising the intellectual capital and technical expertise already available (as well as providing opportunities for practice based learning for students).
- One opportunity to promote Paralympic legacy is through developing the role of universities in host countries, as sites for Pre-Games Training Camps for Paralympic squads. The role of universities in providing a network of Pre-Games Training Camps for Paralympic teams arriving in the UK in the build-up to the 2012 Games, provides an important milestone in capacity building relating to disability sport.
- Given their infrastructure and history in hosting events, universities have the potential to provide venues for disability sport competition (including para-sport competition). Working with other stakeholders such as the Special Olympics, regional, national and international championships can form part of this (for example Special Olympics British Championships held at University of Bath in 2013).
- Where scale and resources permit, sports development and administration frameworks within universities can be considerably enhanced through the input of a dedicated disability sports officer. The experience of such posts on the ground has demonstrated

their potential to enhance the process of disability sport development (University of Nottingham being one example).

- Partnership working is critical. For example, in relation to the UK, University sport, including BUCs, needs to take account of, and where possible align with, the development frameworks initiated by NGBs (and the BPA where sports have yet to establish fully operational NGBs).
- Finally, there is considerable scope for empirical research which quantifies the contribution of universities to the development of disability sport; providing the basis for comparative investigation and identification of areas of good practice that could be adopted across the sector.

The challenge of working in a higher education environment driven by the neoliberal impulses of increased competition and marketisation, while encouraging increased specialisation and development of expertise in areas such as sport development, can stifle co-operation across the sector. While there are strong grounds for seeing universities as making significant progress in the promotion and development of disability sport, equally it may be argued, such progress has been part of the wider shift toward a neoliberal sporting environment within which commercial operators, sponsors and universities as competitive organisations, fight for market share in the new disability sport market place. If universities are to serve the public good locally, regionally and globally, sharing information and expertise across the sector can provide the basis for a more accessible disability sport environment. Supporting the development of students and researchers as critical reflective individuals prepared to challenge established practices, forms part of that alternative vision.

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