

Chapter 8

Adapted Physical Activity: Overcoming Diversity Through Physical Education and Sports

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ABSTRACT

Physical activity (PA) is important for all individuals regardless of their age, gender, and/or abilities. Adapted physical activity includes PA that has been adapted or modified, so that it is as appropriate for the person with a disability as it is for able-bodied individuals. As the authors investigate the world of movement and the challenges that come along with it, they explore possible approaches on how to include PA among individuals with special needs. Approaches to overcome diversity in terms of inclusive environments within physical education and sports will be the main focus. Inclusive instructional modifications will be presented, along with basic principles for modification in games and sports in inclusive environments, highlighting equality participation for all. They presently see diversity and acceptance being embraced by using modifications, open minded approaches, and adaptive equipment that facilitate PA. Society has come a long way in exploring best practices for inclusive environments that are specially designed to promote the inclusive environment.

INTRODUCTION

Physical activity was first documented by Hippocrates in ancient Greece more than 2000 years ago. Before the Industrial Revolution era, PA was part of daily life. We can look at the past in order to see the future. As we circle our historical beliefs of PA, we discover how the past is connected to the future. From holistic approaches to the scientific approaches, Physical Education and Adapted Physical Education teachers incorporate PA into their curriculum for positive outcomes. Physical activities are unique

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Adapted Physical Activity

to everyone. When working with individuals with disabilities on improvement through PA we see a pattern of individualization immerge. Each student has individual needs that need to be addressed. The approach to PA is not a cookie cutter strategy or a one shoe fits all concept. Each student's needs are unique to them. An individual with Down Syndrome or cerebral palsy (CP) physical abilities will vary from mild, moderate, to severe. An individual with Down Syndrome musculoskeletal qualities will be hypotonic, where an individual with CP will have a musculoskeletal structure of hypertonic, each needing the opposite training, unique to themselves.

Halfway into the middle of the 19th century, our society and school system started identifying and accommodating more students with a variety of disabilities. It may have taken a while now, but both schools and society have started accepting such accommodations. As a result, in order to meet a variety of needs, a larger program has been introduced to such a larger student diversity. In the United States, it was around that time, in 1952, that adapted physical education (APE) was defined as “a diversified program of developmental activities, games, sports, and rhythms suited to the interests, capacities, and limitations of students with disabilities who may not safely or successfully engage in unrestricted participation in the rigorous activities of the regular physical education program” by the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (AAHPER). The professional association has changed its name several times since 1885 and is currently known as the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) since 2014; one of the reasons for those changes being to meet new guidelines, diversity, and inclusion. The point being that adapted physical education was not considered from 1885 until 1952; up to that point, individuals with disabilities were primarily involved in corrective attributes. This historical turning point initiated and still continues promoting physical education diversity, including the special group of students with disabilities. (American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 2013).

BACKGROUND

Before we address the specifics of the nature of this chapter though, it is important to address some history on the use of language surrounding this special group of individuals. Individuals with disabilities used to be called cripples, abnormal, freaks, retarded, and even monsters. Later, terms like handicapped, disabled, physically challenged were used. The current widely used term is “people with disabilities”, also known as “people of determination” in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It is now recommended that we look at the person first before considering their disability; for example, an individual with an intellectual, cognitive, developmental disability, rather than retarded, or a person who uses a wheelchair, rather than a cripple. Once again, of the reasons for those changes being to meet new guidelines, diversity, and inclusion, without forgetting that we should respect that people with disabilities also have their own word preferences.

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