A plethora of practical and theoretical advice has been produced in the past 25 to 30 years about how to provide opportunities for young disabled people in physical activity and sport. This has included many books and manuals, academic papers in journals or conference proceedings, resource cards, videotapes, CD-ROMs and DVDs. This material has been developed by specialists in adapted physical activity, disability sport organisations, educationalists and practitioners from the higher, secondary, primary and special education fields, coach educators, and, more recently, an increase in sport-specific input from sports governing bodies, federations and related agencies. As a practitioner in inclusive physical activity and disability sport for the past 30 years, I have been fortunate to enjoy many practical sessions with coaches, physical educationalists, sports leaders and volunteers, working with them to share ideas and strategies to enable them to better include disabled children in their sports and programmes. A request common to all of these many sessions has been for practical models and methods and easy-to-grasp ways of making inclusion work. This request has helped shape the chapter, which will:

- highlight commonalities across a selection of these ideas and strategies, and offer practical suggestions that will enable the coach or coach educator to approach the inclusion of young disabled people with confidence and show that inclusive practice has benefits in any coaching and teaching situation;
consider some examples of infrastructural models developed to create pathways in sport for young disabled people and the potential role of the coach in these systems;
identify some coaching guidelines based on real-life experiences of disability sport coaches and current and former participants.

Throughout this chapter, discussions will be supported by the views of practitioners working within inclusive physical activity and disability sport.

SYSTEMIC APPROACHES AND MODELS OF INCLUSION

A parallel universe

Sport, whether for disabled or non-disabled participants, is often represented as a pathway starting with participation and basic skill acquisition in community or school, perhaps leading to local and club competition and ultimately, for the few, the achievement of high-level performance. The traditional ‘pyramid model’ of sports development is examined in detail in Chapter 3 of this book. In the area of disability sport, this pathway is combined with an element of separateness, the pinnacle of which, for many, is defined by the Paralympics, the ultimate arena within which disabled people can compete with their peers. However, in some ways it can be seen as a monument to segregation. Hargreaves (2000: 181, quoted in Thomas and Smith 2009: 120) said of the Stoke Mandeville Games (commonly held to be a Paralympic precursor):

[I]t was not the sporting abilities of the athletes that was the raison d’être of competition, but rather it was their disabilities that created a sportsworld specifically for them – separate, spatially and symbolically, from the ‘real’ world of sport outside.

Although for the athletes this may have changed, media treatment has continued to focus on the ‘superhuman’ aspect of overcoming adversity, delivered in short bursts around high-profile events. For the vast majority of disabled children and adults, however, it is the everyday access to opportunities in physical activity and sport in school and community that restricts choice and defines difference. In a recent extensive consultation exercise conducted in Australia with the users of disability services, and the staff, parents and carers who support them, the lack of interface between sport and ordinary disabled people was still apparent (Australian Sports Commission, 2009). In developed countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia, only a few hundred disabled athletes achieve Paralympic status, a tiny proportion of the wider disabled population.
The accursed acronym

A number of models of inclusion targeting inclusive practice in physical education and school sport have emerged over recent years. In the United Kingdom, the Youth Sport Trust developed the STEP model (Youth Sport Trust, 2011) as a framework for activity differentiation on its TOP Sport activity cards and supporting material in 1997. For example:

- **S** – Space (e.g. change the space in which the activity is taking place);
- **T** – Task (e.g. change the nature of the activity);
- **E** – Equipment (e.g. change the type, size or colour);
- **P** – People (e.g. change the people – the numbers and/or ways in which they are involved, and how they interact with each other).

In a parallel development, the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), through its Disability Education Program, uses a similar device in the form of the TREE acronym (Australian Sports Commission, no date b):

- **T** – Teaching/coaching style (e.g. how the teacher or coach organises, leads and communicates);
- **R** – Rules and regulations (e.g. changes to the rules governing games and activities to promote inclusion);
- **E** – Environment (e.g. changes to the space, for the whole group or individuals within the group);
- **E** – Equipment (e.g. as in STEP, change the size, weight, colour, etc.).

**REFLECTION**

Thomas and Smith (2009) pose the following challenging questions:

- Has the limited coverage of elite disabled athletes . . . helped to challenge dominant perceptions of, and the issues surrounding, impairment, disability and disabled people’s lives?
- Or has it resulted in consequences that . . . may well be the reverse of what was intended by the advocates involved?

What do you think? Reflect on the central issues involved here: does the emphasis on the achievements of the few deflect attention from the legitimate rights and desires of the many? It is important for coaches working with, or who contemplate working with, disabled participants, to consider this seemingly contradictory dichotomy.

A more recent ASC programme, Active After-school Communities, launched in 2005, uses the ‘Change it’ principle to assist teachers, coaches and sports leaders in finding ways of making activities different in order to promote inclusion of all abilities (Australian Sports Commission, no date a; see also Bee, 2008: 77–86, who applies it to coaching scenarios):

- C – Coaching style
- H – How you score
- A – playing Area
- N – Number of players
- G – Game rules
- E – Equipment
- I – Intensity
- T – Time.

‘Change it’ has also been adopted by a number of national sporting organisations (governing body equivalents) in Australia. The recently established Football Federation Australia has incorporated this model into its coach education system as a practical planning tool (Football Federation Australia, no date).

These acronyms are useful as an aide-mémoire for coaches, and provide vehicles for activity adaptation and modification. These models can be applied to assist coaches differentiate tasks and skill development practices with any group of developing players or athletes.

**Functional and structural models**

The Inclusion Spectrum was developed in the late 1990s in the United Kingdom to provide a structure for inclusion. It was initially aimed at teachers and support staff working in mainstream schools to help them to better include young people who had statements of special educational needs in physical education programmes (Stevenson, 2009; Black and Williamson, in press: chapter 7). The Inclusion Spectrum consists of five different approaches to the organisation of physical activity arranged in a continuum of participation. The most appropriate level of inclusion can be selected according to the situation, such as age, ability and composition of the group; the nature of the activity; the environment; the equipment; and the number of support staff.

Disability sport activities are associated with all the other approaches. This means that activities originally aimed at disabled children and adults are ‘reverse-integrated’ to include all and can be used as the basis for open, modified, parallel or separate activities.

While the Inclusion Spectrum focuses on delivery approaches, Kasser and Lytle (2005: 138) concentrate on the process of adaptation and modification, outlining a step sequence aimed at the inclusion of all abilities in physical activity, which they label the FAMME model (a Functional Approach for Modifying Movement Experiences). Using this process in a logical
way, coaches can apply their imagination and observational skills to modify activities appropriately for each participant.

FAMME sets out the following four-step procedure, and examples have been provided for greater clarity.

Step 1: Determine underlying components of skills – in other words, what components are necessary to perform a movement skill successfully. For example, moving to catch a ball involves eye–hand coordination, but it also involves speed, balance and spatial awareness. Differences affecting any of these components will require a modified approach. For example, in general, throwing and catching (or sending and receiving) are normally learned and practised together, as they are complementary. However, where an individual has coordination difficulties a large ball may be easier to catch and a smaller ball easier to throw. Therefore, for some children initial practices may involve coaching these skills separately using appropriate equipment.

Step 2: Determine current capabilities of the individual. For example, a difference in age will affect skill acquisition, with an 8-year-old child obviously having less strength, balance and coordination than an adolescent. A swimming coach might have less modification to consider...
with a swimmer who has a single lower-limb impairment than a coach working with a similar individual whose discipline is track athletics.

**Step 3: Match modification efforts to capabilities.** This means, for example, ensuring that modifications are necessary and support inclusion. If an individual is capable of holding a lightweight bat or racket, then their existing capabilities are reduced if the coach insists on attaching a full-size implement to the individual’s arm using a glove-bat (an assistive device to enable a young person with an impaired or absent grip to participate in a racket sport).

**Step 4: Evaluate modification effectiveness.** Here the coach uses their powers of observation and analysis to check whether any suggested modification or adaptation is contributing to skill acquisition and development, or is failing to support, or even hindering, the process. For example, a coach observing the throwing action of a wheelchair user might focus on their arm action, when an adjustment in the positional angle of their wheelchair in relation to the direction of throw might enable the athlete to throw more freely.

Yet another inclusive activity acronym has been coined by Matt LaCortiglia, a physical educationalist at Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts (LaCortiglia, 2009). This is an example of a process devised to meet the needs of a specific population, but with wider application in other settings. LaCortiglia’s system, called FAIER, is essentially an individual-centred structure within which practitioners, such as coaches, can seek creative solutions, in progressive steps, to ensure the inclusion of young people in physical activity. The FAIER process is organised along a similar activity–modify–review process to that of Kasser and Lytle. Again, examples have been provided for greater clarity:

- **Foundation.** This involves identifying achievable goals for each participant, and the activities likely to lead to the goals being met. An example would be a strengthening activity leading to a long-term goal of improved performance in a throw. At this stage, it is also important to identify the strengths, capabilities and preferences of the individual, as these can be a starting point for the subsequent development of the activity. Finally, available resources required to conduct the sessions, such as space and equipment, are considered.

- **Awareness.** Here the coach takes into consideration any aspects specific to the individual. For example, certain communication methods may be required, such as ‘finger Braille’ for deaf-blind children, or regular reinforcement and repetition of key messages. These considerations should not be central to the process, but act more as ‘supporting information’. For example, in a wider application a child who has an intellectual impairment may benefit more from an accurate demonstration of a skill than from a verbal explanation.

- **Implementation.** In this phase, the activity is constructed on the basis of the factors identified in the foundation and awareness stages. The activity or equipment used can be modified if this is necessary for the successful completion of the activity goal and progress towards the long-term goal.

- **Evaluation.** This is where the coach observes the individual’s performance and suggests modifications or changes in technique or equipment. For example, manual guidance
may be needed to help reinforce verbal instruction. The safety of the activity can also be assessed.

■ Refinement. The coach analyses the performance and suggests changes that might be required to challenge the individual further, or to develop a specific aspect leading towards attainment of the long-term goal.

These systems are designed to provide a structure against which teachers and coaches can apply task differentiation, where tasks are set and adapted, and support is provided to reflect the needs of the learner. The key factor is the flexibility of these systems, with potential application in any physical activity and sport scenario and across a range of abilities. The systems empower coaches, allowing them to change their approach or modify their delivery to provide optimum opportunities for the athletes. If the systems are truly participant centred, will they therefore not also empower the child as well as the coach?

REFLECTION

Find out more about these models in the texts and websites detailed in the References section:

■ the TREE model
■ the Inclusion Spectrum
■ the FAMME model
■ the FAIER process.

Compare their practical application and user-friendliness as tools of inclusion. Are they equally effective in the coaching environment, as opposed to supporting inclusion within physical education?

Would these models be inappropriate when working with any group of young people?

SPORTING PATHWAYS: PHYSICAL EDUCATION TO COMMUNITY TO PERFORMANCE

Ways and means

As discussed previously, models of inclusion have been consistently aimed at the inclusion of school-aged, disabled children in the physical education (PE) domain, although some question the nature and extent of inclusion within physical education or after-school provision (Thomas and Smith, 2009; Atkinson and Black, 2006). However, the various ways of achieving inclusion...
in practice will be less effective if they are not integrated within an infrastructure that creates an environment of opportunity, linking young disabled people to trained and motivated coaches and teachers.

A number of initiatives in different national sport systems have attempted to provide an interface between physical education and sport, connect young disabled people with participant pathways and provide a mechanism whereby coaches can develop inclusive practices. The following subsection highlights a few examples of best practice.

**The Australian Sports Commission: Sports CONNECT**

In Australia, the Disability Education Program (DEP), an education and training programme based on the creation of a network of coordinators and presenters in each state and territory, has been coordinated by the Disability Sport Unit at the Australian Sports Commission since 1995. Its aim has been to provide support to sport providers to assist them in creating opportunities for disabled people within their clubs, programmes and activities.

Acknowledging that the education and training focus had been mainly on the ‘supply’ side of the sporting equation, the DEP has been supplanted by Sports CONNECT (Australian Sports Commission, Disability Sport Unit, 2011), a national framework that works to build pathways for disabled people to get involved in sport by creating a positive and active interaction between sports and disability organisations and the people they support (the ‘demand’ side).

By 2009, Sports CONNECT had engaged with 25 national sporting organisations (NSOs), each funded for a period of five years and supported by a dedicated consultant, to develop inclusive policy and practice from board level to coaches working with athletes. This process encourages sports to take responsibility for everyone who wants to access their programmes. At state and territory level, the key relationship is with the departments of sport and recreation (within which most of the Sports CONNECT state or territory coordinators are based). One aspect of this relationship is to link inclusive practice NSOs with their state and territory equivalents. The Sports CONNECT network aims to create a supportive environment for local development, sometimes in targeted communities.

I know of a disability sport club based in Tasmania that links children and adults into existing sport systems. It’s designed to enable them to move on or remain within the club. Participation in open leagues enables better players to move on. However, the development of social and sports etiquette skills is just as important. Not all people go to clubs to achieve elite status.

(Scott Goodman, Senior Coach, Athletes with Disabilities, Australian Athletics)

This system is leading to the embedding of inclusive coaching practice within mainstream coach education programmes. Where sporting bodies adopt this approach, coaches receive sport-specific inclusion information as part of their regular professional development. This
contrasts with the previous system in Australia, Coaching Athletes with Disabilities, and the inclusion modules offered by agencies such as sports coach UK, which are optional.

The Youth Sport Trust: Playground to Podium

In England, the Youth Sport Trust, in conjunction with Sport England, UK Sport and the British Paralympic Association, embarked on an ambitious project to form a pathway in sport for young disabled people that would take them from physical education, through community-based participation, to high-level performance and competition.

The framework, launched in 2006 and called Playground to Podium (P2P), has the ultimate target of discovering and preparing young disabled people for Paralympic representation, the initial target being the London Paralympics in 2012. However, it also hopes to broaden the participation base and provide opportunities at all levels.

Each component part of P2P is the responsibility of a different agency, linking school sport partnerships (community of primary, secondary and special schools clustered around a specialist sports college), county sport partnerships (networks of agencies promoting co-ordinating community sport at county level in England; see Sport England, 2011), national governing bodies of sport, sports coach UK (see www.sportscoachuk.org), and the English Federation of Disability Sport (see www.efds.co.uk). In this way, the participating agencies are encouraged to provide leadership and organisation within their sector, liaise with internal and external partners, and deliver agreed local and national outcomes.

The process is a fairly simple one: high-quality PE; access to an enriched experience in school through events and on-site club; twin-track participation and coaching options, introducing a first competitive experience; higher-level performance coaching enabling progression and participation in regional events; a network of national events and squad systems underpinning selection for elite performance programmes.

(Mark Botterill, Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Officer, Youth Sport Trust)

The P2P approach involves coaches at different stages along the pathway working with different levels of ability. However, the issue for them is to be aware of which agency is co-ordinating at each stage and providing them with a point of contact.

Disability Sport Wales

Disability Sport Wales (DSW; also known as the Federation of Disability Sport Wales) is accepted worldwide as an example of a successful and progressive national disability sport development model (see www.disabilitysportwales.org).
Following an initial pilot project in one local authority in 1997, the Sports Council for Wales utilised relaxed National Lottery funding regulations to initiate the recruitment of a specialist disability sport development officer in each of the 22 Welsh local authorities.

The pilot project had revealed two main issues:

- Locating a specialist disability sport development officer within a disability trust, and not within the local authority’s own sports development team, left them ‘outside the system’ with reduced influence.
- There were no clear, identifiable exit routes from community level into competitive disability sport programmes.

Therefore, the Sports Council for Wales funded 50 per cent of the cost of the sports development officers, locating them within the sports development units and encouraging the local authorities to increase these to full-time appointments. By 2009, 70 per cent of the local authorities had created full-time posts.

A further review encouraged the local authorities to embed the work of these specialist officers within mainstream sports development programmes, treating them as a source of information and support rather than simply passing all disability-related issues in their direction.

The creation of a human resource network led to a subsequent vertical leap in participation, with only 1,200 opportunities per year for disabled people in 2002 but an impressive 320,000 opportunities by 2008.

The creation of an Academy programme in 2006 established a focus for a talent identification process, linking the increased grassroots opportunities to a player pathway for young disabled people. The Academy consists of three tiers:

- **Tier 3.** Emerging talent is identified, for example through DSW competitions or ‘come and try’ events held at community level. Athletes at this level are unlikely to have been classified for national or international disability sport.
- **Tier 2.** At this stage, at least six months into the programme, athletes have demonstrated achievement in competition and receive official sports classification. Tier 2 athletes receive support from Academy coaches and moderate financial support from DSW.
- **Tier 1.** These athletes have demonstrable talent and the potential to access the UK performance programmes (e.g. World Class potential through UK Sport). They will also receive enhanced support through the Sports Council for Wales.

The Academy programme identified 9 of 15 new athletes who achieved selection for the Great Britain Paralympic team for Beijing in 2008. In the Welsh system, coaches working with disabled athletes benefit from working within a clearly defined structure.
Big picture, narrow view

There are a number of important issues raised in these examples.

- Sports CONNECT is underpinned by an equity message, with a central aim of influencing sports providers to adopt inclusive policies and practices. However, it exists in parallel to the competitive sports focus of the Australian Paralympic Committee, with which it has only tenuous links. They each have independent relationships with the mainstream sport governing bodies.
- The Disability Sport Wales approach concentrated first on the creation of opportunities in physical activity and sport, followed by the development of a player pathway, leading towards a greater cultural understanding of inclusion as a result.
- Playground to Podium has a core philosophy of shared responsibility in order to achieve the goal of increased participation and talent identification, but is completely dependent on the ability and motivation of the constituent agencies to deliver their commitments.
- The funding that supports some of these programmes is linked directly to Paralympic sport pathways. However, Paralympic sport is open only to a minority of the disabled population.

Only 13 per cent (currently) of impairment groups in the UK can access Paralympic sport, which means 87 per cent of disabled people (as recognised by disability legislation) who can still access competitive sport may miss out.

(Ray Ashley, Regional Manager, English Federation of Disability Sport)

REFLECTION

Look again at the sports development models described previously (details of each can be explored through the specific references). What benefits are provided by each system for:

- the community coach;
- coaches working with higher-level athletes?

What does sports development need to consider at each level of participation? What is its most important resource?
REAL LIVES: SOME GUIDELINES BASED ON COACH AND PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES

I gathered the views of a number of current and former Paralympic athletes, and those of individuals coaching and working in disability sport.

The coach

Most athletes expressed a preference for a coach who was:

- flexible
- a good communicator and listener
- knowledgeable
- patient
- prepared to share ideas
- trustworthy.

Someone who doesn’t think that they know everything. Someone who wants to learn. Someone who talks to athletes about their goals.

(Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE, five-time Great Britain Paralympic athlete, winner of 11 gold medals, now retired)

The athlete

As expressed in the FAMME and FAIER systems previously described, it is important to know the existing skills, capabilities, knowledge and preferences of the participant. But it is also important to acknowledge that young disabled people may have had less opportunity to develop physical skills naturally than their non-disabled peers.

The coach needs to establish the physical development and skill preparation of their athlete. It may be necessary to return to basics and spend time developing the fundamental movement skills that non-disabled children might develop through play.

(Chris Nunn OAM, High Performance Manager, Australian Paralympic Committee)

The role of physical education varied according to individual experiences. Some athletes questioned did not feel that physical education had impacted on their later sports careers. Others felt that they had been included at primary level, but in the more competitive sport-specific environment of secondary school they spent more time on the sidelines.

I had to fight to be included in the Talented Sports Program at high school.

(Wade McMahon, current Australian Paralympic javelin athlete)
My parents encouraged me to take part in all activities, and this attitude was echoed by my school teachers and my peers.

(Don Elgin, former Australian Paralympic pentathlete)

One practitioner of long standing considered the issues from the viewpoint of the PE teacher, also suggesting how a two-way school–club process could be mutually beneficial:

Mainstream PE teachers face many challenges today: more behavioural and neurological conditions amongst schoolchildren; obese and passive children who struggle even with the basic motor skills because of too little daily activity; large group sizes; and lack of knowledge of mainstream PE teachers about disability sport. For all these reasons, teachers in inclusive settings are tempted to allow the non-participation of a significantly disabled child. We should work with schools to show them how their students can benefit from community sports programmes, how sports clubs can assist schools, and how the club coaches can learn from more contact with disabled children.

(Aija Saari, Development Manager, Finnish Disability Sport Association)

Motivation

There was a strong view about the role of the individual participant in terms of motivation.

Motivation should come from within; if it’s not there in the first place, the coach cannot provide it.

(Fred Periac, former French/Australian Paralympic track and road athlete)

Another athlete supported the importance of self-motivation:

Sometimes when the coach is away for long periods, it can be hard to stay motivated and finish sessions. But training on your own does show how dedicated you are if you finish every session without taking short cuts.

(Wade McMahon, current Australian Paralympic javelin athlete)

Supporting continued participation

This view stresses the importance of continuing professional development mirroring the progress of the athletes.

A major barrier for young disabled people lies in the skills and capacity of people – teachers, coaches. Their level of expertise has to grow as the young person progresses through the coaching system.

(Mark Botterill, Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Officer, Youth Sport Trust)
When considering the content of this chapter, a conscious decision was taken to avoid a ‘tips for coaches’ approach. Instead, the author invites coaches to consider and use the models outlined above to challenge and question their current coaching practice, utilising their coaching expertise to expand opportunities for disabled children. The solutions lie with the enquiring mind and adaptable imagination of the coach.

REFERENCES


