Infusing 'disability' into Coach Education and Development: Guidelines for Inclusive and Empowering Coaching Practice across the European Union and beyond

Intellectual Output 3

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Dr Tabo Huntley (Liverpool John Moores University), Professor Chris Cushion (Loughborough University and ICCE), Dr Robert Townsend (University of Waikato and ICCE), Dr Jacqueline Martins Patatas (Vrije Universiteit and ICCE), Dr Charlotte Williams (ParaCoach and University of Central Lancaster) and Dr Diane Culver (University of Ottawa and ICCE).

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1.0 THE PARACOACH PROJECT

Disabled people have the right to participate and excel in sport and physical activity. However, the majority of coaches tasked with providing quality sporting opportunities in this unique context are underprepared and often unqualified. Worse still, the social stigma and fear of disability may prevent some coaches from taking up a position specialising in Parasport or including disabled athletes in mainstream opportunities. Therefore, the ParaCoach project, funded by Erasmus Plus and led by Liverpool John Moores University, seeks to enhance coaches' learning, mobility and employability in Para sport across the European Union. ParaCoach shares the EU's social agenda in ensuring that disabled people are able to access high-quality inclusive and empowering sporting opportunities led by appropriately trained coaches.

The development of 'Guidelines for Inclusive and Empowering Coaching Practice across the European Union' is an output of the ParaCoach project. As such, these ParaCoach guidelines are considered as a heuristic and non-regulatory reference point for the development of coach education across the EU. Additionally, the ParaCoach guidelines will be used to guide the development of a ParaCoach freely available Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) along with Study Guides (project outputs 4 and 5, respectively). The aim here is to demonstrate the link between guidelines development and a solution-focused output aiming to support the learning and development of coaches across the EU.

1.1 Project Partners

School of Sport and Exercise Science

International Council for Coaching Excellence

Netherlands Olympic Committee Netherlands Sport Confederation

Hungarian Paralympic Committee

European Paralympic Committee

Institute of Sport Poland

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

Para coaching is a complex activity; a social practice that is influenced by wider cultural norms and values associated with disability. Coaches are crucial to the delivery of sports programmes for disabled people, providing access points, enacting inclusive policy and practice, as well as having a responsibility for delivering high quality experiences. The training of coaches is essential to sustaining and improving the quality of sport provision for disabled people. Therefore, the purpose of this report is to outline considerations for enhancing the quality of education, training and developmental support available to support the coaching process and practice in Parasport.

The importance of understanding disability sport lies in its historical roots and is principally concerned with how society perceives and appreciates disability, disabled athletes and practices associated with social inclusion (Bush, Silk, Porter & Howe, 2013; Fitzgerald, 2012; Peers, 2012; Purdue, 2013; Silva & Howe, 2012). Disability sport is a hugely varied and complex sporting landscape, incorporating a range of provision covering rehabilitation, participation and performance/elite. Together, the range of opportunities gathered under the umbrella terms of disability and Parasport creates a unique challenge for coaches, coach developers as well as coach education. This is further complicated by the number of international policies that outline the need for disability inclusion. For instance, both EU (The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020) and UN (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006) policies call for full access to all facets of social life for disabled people, including sport. Furthermore, in recognising that disabled people are often marginalised and excluded from sport the values of international sport organisations such as the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and Special Olympics International (SOI) make references to inclusive sport provision. For instance, the IPC as pioneers for inclusion aim to "challenge stereotypes, transform attitudes and breakdown social barriers and discrimination towards persons with disabilities" (IPC, 2020). Similarly, the values of Special Olympics International refer to athletes finding "joy, confidence and fulfilment on the playing field and in life. They also inspire people in their communities and elsewhere to open their hearts to a wider world of human talents and potential" (SOI, 2020).

Whilst the vision and values of the IPC and SOI are laudable, arguably, it is coaches and coaching who are important conduits for transmitting these values so that athletes are the recipients of quality inclusive and empowering sporting experiences. However, despite these empowering ideals there remains entrenched ableist values within sport, society (e.g. Pullen,

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Jackson, Silk & Scullion, 2018) and coaching (e.g. Townsend, Smith & Cushion, 2015; Townsend, Huntley, Cushion & Fitzgerald, 2018). Ableism is a system of values and beliefs that devalue disabled bodies, favouring normative, able-bodied standards. In sport, ableism can work to exclude and marginalise disabled people, or promote language and practices that overlook or devalue disability. Thus, it is of vital importance that agencies responsible for increasing the provision of high-quality sporting opportunities for disabled people in various contexts or domains (i.e., participation, development and performance), must also ensure their coaching workforce has access to appropriate educational and development opportunities.

Despite the importance of coaching and coaches to Parasport there is not only a dearth of research in this area but also a lack of coach education and support for coaches (Huntley, Whitehead, Cronin, Williams, Ryrie & Townsend, 2019). Furthermore, research on formal coach education continues to critique the historical reliance on institutionalised curriculum design that is perceived to lack relevance and often fails to impact coaches' development (Paquette & Trudel, 2018; Piggott, 2015). As a result, the impact of coach education remains superficial at best with coaching values, knowledge and practices still being derived overwhelmingly from experiential, informal and non-formal sources (Trudel, Milistetd and Culver, 2020). Similarly, findings from coach education research within the Parasport context also echo those of broader coach learning literature. Research within Para coaching has described the unintended consequences of 'disability' being absent from coach education curriculums (e.g., Townsend et al., 2017; Townsend et al., 2018; McMaster et al., 2012). Often coaches are left to learn their craft through trial and error and self-referenced anecdotes related to 'what-works' (Cushion, 2013) that ignore notions of disability (Townsend et al., 2015; Townsend et al., 2018). This can result in coaches demonstrating a reluctance to work with disabled athletes, reporting low levels of confidence, awareness or knowledge to include disabled people (Huntley et al., 2019; Townsend et al., 2017). In other words, 'fear of the unknown' (Wareham, Burkett, Innes & Lovell, 2017). Furthermore, for established Para coaches there is the potential to rely on values and practices that are learnt through experience of 'able bodied' sport, which are then placed uncritically on disabled participants (Cushion, Huntley & Townsend, 2020; Huntley, 2020). The outcome of which may constrain learning and the choices athletes have within the coaching process. Subsequently, rather than being inclusive and empowering, disabled performers experience disabling practices already influenced by societal and cultural norms (Cushion, 2011; 2013). This may go some way to explain why disabled people are less likely to participate in sport and physical activity than their non-disabled counterparts (Evans, Shirazipour, Allan, Zanhour, Sweet, Ginis, & Latimer-Cheung, 2018; Ecorys, 2018).

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Consequently, the education, training and development of coaches in progressive pedagogical approaches is required to change the experiences of disabled people in sport and physical activity. Therefore, the aim of this document is twofold. First, the report outlines a framework for infusing knowledge about disability within all aspects of coach education and development provision. Secondly, to provide an example of subjects that may contribute to the development of inclusive and empowering coaching provision. However, to move forward we need to consider the ways disability has been understood within society, sport and the implications this has for coaching and coach education.

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3.0 UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR COACH EDUCATION

The term 'disability' is a contested concept that has social, psychological, biological, historical and political dimensions. Having clarity on how disability is understood in society is important for practitioners, and these understandings are commonly captured through models of disability. These models provide clarity on terms such as inclusion as well as empowerment, and their use provides clear implications for coach education (CE).

3.1 Medical model

Disability is traditionally understood through medical model terminology (Barnes, 1999). The medical model perspective foregrounds 'impairment' as the source of disability. Such a perspective normalises the ways in which disabled people are excluded from everyday activities and perpetuates a system of beliefs that position able-bodiedness as the norm. This is generally termed ableism. Subsequently, disabling experiences result from a 'problem' with the individual's impairment. With its foundations in medical and psychological rehabilitation, the medial model foregrounds a technical language and expertise associated with specific impairments. As a consequence, the education and development of coaches informed by the medical model view can be described as adopting a *categorical* approach (cf. Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely & Danielson, 2010; Townsend et al., 2021). *Categorical* approaches often recognisable through 'bolt on' workshops or given a 'nod' within current CE provision. These approaches foreground impairment along with understanding its aetiology, classification and strategies for 'dealing with' differences (Townsend, Huntley, Cushion & Culver, 2021). Thus, the assumption of CE informed by a *categorical* approach means if coaches are exposed to 'impairment' they are able to develop specialised impairment-specific intervention strategies (Townsend et al., 2017), shifting the focus away from the coaching environment to the disabled individual. While stimulating the development of technical knowledge and self-efficacy of coaches due to increases in awareness of certain conditions and an expanding 'best practice' repertoire, there are a number of limitations of basing CE solely on a *categorical* approach. These are:

- Impairment is positioned as the problem to overcome, shifting the focus away from inclusion.
- Coaches become familiar with and comfortable coaching athletes with specific impairments whilst excluding others.

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- Tendency to prescribe 'best practice' models or a tool-box of knowledge that treat all impairments as static and therefore homogenous.
- Simplistic approaches to learning that adopt hypothetical practical 'scenarios' and which often do not reflect the reality of difference.
- Coaching by 'trial and error' or 'experimentation' which may have negative consequences for coaches' learning and athletes' experiences.
- The perpetuation of stereotypes about certain impairments.

Overcoming these limitations is complex and requires careful consideration. That said, there is a clear need to provide coaches with the knowledge and pedagogical strategies to create more high-quality sporting opportunities for disabled athletes with a range of needs. Here, given the constraints of CE and development systems, a move towards integrating 'impairment' specific knowledge as a core element may go some way to enabling coaches to focus on the complex applications of pedagogical knowledge to differentiate their practices (Townsend et al., 2021). What is needed to balance such an approach is an equal focus on the coaching environment and the knowledge and skills of coaches.

3.2 Social Model

In contrast to the medical model approach, the social model of disability moves the focus away from individual impairment and in doing so, positions disability as a socially constructed form of oppression that restricts people with impairment (Finkelstein, 2001). Simply, the social model places emphasis on dismantling the disabling barriers that people face within society (Oliver, 1996; Barnes & Mercer, 1996), focusing on issues such as accessibility and transport; discrimination; awareness and visibility and disability rights. In applying the assumptions of the social model to coaching there is an emphasis on improving the accessibility and availability of adapted, inclusive and disability-specific sports programmes, disseminating information clearly, and designing inclusive activities and practices. These are all achieved through enhancing coaches' knowledge, practices, and skills in the first instance (DePauw & Gavron, 1991). Borrowing from physical education teacher training (PETE), the *inclusion* approach provides a training structure that aligns to the social model (DePauw & Goc Karp, 1994).

Inclusion models in coach development often take the form of 'add-on' inclusion training workshops (Townsend et al., 2021). These typically episodic workshops are delivered through disability charities, specialist consultants or sports organisations and encourage coaches to make adaptations to existing practice structures (Cushion et al, 2020; Townsend *et al.* 2017)

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through reflecting on and with inclusive frameworks[1]. This is often delivered through the use of hypothetical scenarios, practical problem-based approaches and peer-to-peer coaching (Townsend et al., 2021). However, these approaches tend to promote a level of instrumentalism framing coaching practice that overlooks the situated realities of Para coaching. Indeed, as Slee (2010) argued in the context of teacher education:

> "Preparing teachers for inclusive education is not achieved by grafting courses of special education onto the teacher education program" (p. 14).

In other words, researchers often question the degree to which these inclusive workshops impact the practices of those with the responsibility for delivering high quality sporting opportunities. Thus, limitations of these approaches are:

- Inclusion of disabled people in sport is an add on rather than a core feature of CE.
- Limited duration of time to make meaningful changes in coaches' practice.
- Hypothetical scenarios often do not replicate the nature of coaching practice.
- Coaches' practice may still be instrumental in nature and therefore, accommodate rather than include disabled participants.
- Implicit medical model discourses may still be evident within these courses.

An *infusion* approach (DePauw & Goc Karp, 1994; Rizzo, Broadhead & Kowalski, 1997; Coates, 2012) also adopted from teacher education offers an alternative to inclusion approaches, whereby disability content, topics, and issues are threaded throughout teacher education curricula (Townsend et al., 2021). For instance, the use of authentic and carefully structured field-based pedagogical applications is highly valued by practitioners (Coates, 2012; Morley, Ablett, Noble & Cowden, 2020; Walton & Rusznyak, 2020). Adopting such an approach to coach education would enable coaches to apply pedagogical concepts and strategies and allow them to theorise from their experience (Townsend et al, 2021). Such experiences are reported as particularly valuable for enhancing teachers' knowledge and confidence (Vickerman, 2007). Indeed, given the powerful socialising potential of experience, professional development opportunities that harness the power of practical coaching opportunities seem a worthwhile approach to consider in Para coach education. Here, experienced and critically aware coach educators with knowledge of disability can facilitate

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[1]Examples of these frameworks include the Activity Inclusion Model (AIM); Space, Task, Equipment, People (STEP); and Teaching/instructional style, Rules and Regulations, Environments, Equipment (TREE).

reflective practice and introduce relevant theoretical perspectives to facilitate learning (cf. Walton & Rusznyak, 2020).

However, in advocating for structured practical experiences for coaches, coach educators should be encouraged to reflect critically on the use of peer-to-peer scenario-based practical coaching activities (Townsend et al., 2017). This is partly due to the difficulties in replicating the conditions for coaching disabled athletes with the concomitant dangers of reproducing stereotypes, and partly due to concerns about not confronting medical model and ableist values and perceptions that these sorts of pedagogical endeavours can produce (see Townsend *et al.*, 2017; French, 1992). Nonetheless, alongside the relevance of critical theorising and reflective work, *in situ* coach development can be influential in the practice of deconstructing entrenched discourses and examining belief systems about disability. Such a perspective on coach learning shifts disability away from the individual and focuses reflection on the disabling aspects of coaching practice.

- Based on the social model of disability, an infusion approach is recommended as a model *for* Para coach education.
- Infusion approaches weave disability topics, issues and content knowledge throughout general educational structures.
- Key consideration: Coach educators and developers need to be trained and become more aware of how disability is socially constructed.

3.3 A framework for coaches' knowledge: Social relational model (SRM)

An infusion approach – based on the social model of disability – provides a useful structure to rethink the delivery of para coach education. In terms of developing content knowledge to be infused, the social relational model (SRM) provides a framework to guide the development of CE curricula. Building on the foundations of the social model, the SRM considers 'impairment' relationally, that is, having both internalised and externalised effects as the individual navigates differing social and physical contexts (cf. Thomas, 1999, 2004, 2007). Capturing disability as a complex social relationship and how this has relevance for CE can be explained by four interrelated concepts. The first, *impairment effects*, refers to reduced function resulting from physical (i.e., spinal cord injury, visual impairment or intellectual impairment) and social mechanisms (i.e., inaccessibility or stigma). Secondly, the *social-relational construction* of disability, encompasses the social practices, norms and behaviours that are embedded within coaching. This is an important consideration, because it considers how 'ableist' norms and medical model discourses are transmitted implicitly through institutional (e.g., coach

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education) and personal (e.g., coaches') practices (cf. Townsend et al., 2018). For instance, these 'ableist' discourses and pedagogic practices can work to exclude differing types of bodies and abilities, place limits on potential and overreach athletes' work capacity (Townsend et al., 2018). The third concept relates to *physical and structural barriers*, such as exclusion from support services (e.g., coaching or running guides in the case of blind athletes), inaccessible facilities, inequitable funding or a lack of specialist equipment. Importantly, physical and structural barriers can be considered as a 'downstream effect' of coaches' attitudes and beliefs towards disability (Allan, Evans, Latimer-Cheung & Côté, 2020), and as such are closely related. Finally, the SRM considers a *psycho-emotional state*, recognising the negative effect the various forms of oppression can have on athlete's emotion and sense of value. This concept demonstrates the impacts of repeated exposure to negative interactions in placing limits on disabled peoples' participation in sport (Allan *et al.*, 2020), thus emphasising the importance of transforming attitudes towards disability through professional education and development.

By integrating the SRM into CE curricula, the aim is to highlight the "the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments *and* the socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional well-being" (Thomas, 2007, p. 73). However, to do so would require coach educators and coaches to develop reflexive skills in order to question taken-for-granted norms and practices (Huntley, 2020). Hence, there is a need to consider:

- How best to develop reflexivity: the ability to examine how culture and society shape normative values, beliefs and practices associated with disability.
- Collaborating with athletes to understand their views of inclusive and empowering practices and how this may inform CE.
- Coaches' assumptions or lack of knowledge as the problem - not the athlete.
- Draw on multiple, integrated sources of knowledge to understand and meet the needs of the athlete.
- Understand how impairment effects require coaches to adapt their planning, communication and delivery.

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3.4 Summary

This section has reviewed existing models of disability and their implications for the design of Para coach education. Engaging with models of disability provides a shared language from which to explore Para coaching broadly across the EU and offer depth as to the contextual mechanisms that impact the education, development and mobility of the Para coaching workforce.

4.0 UNDERSTANDING INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT

One of the challenges of developing CE guidelines for inclusive and empowering practices in Parasport is that there is often a lack of clarity in their conceptualisation and application. For instance, in relation to inclusion, research within physical education continually reveals that teachers enact integrative practices under the umbrella of inclusion (Maher, 2018). That is, accommodating disabled pupils within a dominant culture and established provision aimed at a non-disabled population (Fitzgerald, 2017). Arguably, the same could be true for the majority of sport and coaching provision for disabled athletes (Townsend et al., 2018). Whereas inclusion is considered as the removal of all disabling barriers, exclusionary practices and a restructure of culture so that disabled athletes can have enjoyable and meaningful experiences (Fitzgerald, 2017; Maher, 2018). Whilst this view of inclusion aligns with the social model, the reality of supporting people with a diverse range of 'impairment effects' is compounded by the arrangement of sporting provision.

4.1 Inclusion and the complexity of Parasport

The differentiated landscape of Parasport that seeks to provide opportunities for disabled people provides a challenge as to how to conceptualise inclusion. This is especially so when the common view of inclusion is the integration of disabled people in mainstream sport settings. This view of inclusion does not appear to match the reality of a complex Parasport structure. While the governance and structure of Parasport depends on many different factors and can differ internationally, a common situation is the significant diffusion of power between government and a number of 'not-for-profit' organisations responsible for the expansion in provision for disabled people. For example, there appears to be a plethora of agencies with responsibility for mainstream sport and disability derivatives (e.g., Sport Governing Bodies), disability sports (e.g., IBSA Goalball, Boccia England), disability-specific participation (e.g., Cerebral Palsy Sport, WheelPower), and local disability multisport clubs (e.g., Malmo Disability Club). Therefore, when considering the notion of inclusion of disabled people in sport, two overarching positions appear to have been adopted: *integration* between disabled and non-disabled people in mainstream sport (e.g., athletics and swimming) and participation in *separate* sport provision (e.g., Goalball, Wheelchair rugby, Power hockey) (Black & Stevenson, 2011). However, reverse integration, that is where nondisabled people participate in disability sports (e.g., wheelchair basketball) alongside disabled people—offers an additional consideration for coaches and sports organisations (Black & Stevenson, 2011; Fitzgerald & Long, 2017). However, each of these approaches are not without their challenges (cf. Fitzgerald & Long, 2017):

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4.1.1 Separate provision

- Some disabled people do not identify as being disabled and so may shy away from disability-specific sport provision.
- Other disabled people have preferences for separate provision because it provides an opportunity to identify and connect with others who share similar experiences.
- Sport provision depends on clusters of disabled people able to reach one geographical location where a coach resides.
- Some coaches do not want to be considered a disability sport coach, whilst others may have a desire to develop expertise in these settings.
- Some mainstream agencies may leave provision and education of coaches to disability specific groups and charities who have particular expertise.
- Having disability specific sport provision may continue to promote separatist ideologies.

4.1.2 Integrated provision

- Provides opportunities to raise awareness of disability among able bodied individuals.
- Training and competing alongside non-disabled people may reinforce low self-esteem, low self-confidence and a sense of otherness.
- Non-disabled counterparts show signs of frustration when disabled people are not able to perform activities to expected levels and in doing so reinforces the sense of difference.
- Coaches universally apply their coaching to all athletes without differentiating for individual needs which in turn excludes disabled athletes' needs.
- Typically caters for people with more function whilst marginalising those with moderate to severe impairment groups.

4.1.3 Reverse integration

- A concern that non-disabled people will take over sports that are intended for disabled people.

Thus, in considering these CE guidelines, the aim is not to promote any of these approaches as a universal ideal. Rather, the intention is to highlight the complexity and challenges arising from attempting to effectively train and educate coaches to support athletes' quality experiences across these environments. Furthermore, the points raised in this section may help readers to

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engage reflexively about the most effective ways to ensure CE meets the contextual requirements of sports.

4.2 Empowerment

Given the functional complexities of inclusion, the addition of empowerment may provide a more specific conceptual guide for the design of the ParaCoach CE guidelines. This goes beyond idealistic views of 'athlete centred coaching', 'athlete ownership' or 'coach the athlete not the disability', often reported in the literature (Cushion et al., 2020; Townsend et al., 2018). For instance, within Para coaching research, empowerment is used to justify approaches to coaching that emphasise a disassociation from disability, rather than acceptance (Cushion et al., 2020; Huntley, 2020; Townsend et al., 2018). Whereas empowerment as used within disability sport research involves gaining and or having power through increased, choice, accessibility and competence in sport (Cushion et al., 2020; Townsend et al., 2018). Here, following Purdue and Howe's (2012) application, empowerment is defined as "people assuming control and mastery over their lives in the context of social and political environment" (Wallerstein, 1992, p. 198). In light of this definition, CE and coaches should be doing everything in their 'power' to ensure athletes have 'control and mastery' over their choices to participate to the fullest extent in any expression (i.e., separate, integrated or reversed integrated) or domain of sport (i.e., elite or participation), while providing consistent opportunities to develop competence, self-esteem and self-efficacy (Martin, 2010). This view of empowerment moves beyond the social model of disability, whereby participation simply reflects access to an ableist normative sporting culture. The assumption being that in doing so disability disappears. Indeed, research has begun to problematise the practice of 'accommodating' disabled athletes in elite sport, mainly because evidence suggests that empowering practices are not universally experienced by disabled athletes (see, for example Allan et al., 2019; Huntley, 2020; Culver & Werthner, 2018; Powis, 2018; Townsend et al., 2018). For instance, left unquestioned the popular athlete first notion of 'coach the athlete not the disability'— whilst superficially aligning with the social model — emphasises the athlete having to 'leave their disability at the door' in order to comply with an ableist social norm (Townsend *et al.*, 2018; Huntley, 2020). In doing so, the label of 'athlete' justifies normative approaches to coaching that coaches may apply without question, thus asking athletes to 'fit' into pre-existing environments based on 'able-bodied' norms. The reality is that disabled bodies are real, different and lived in by athletes, therefore, understanding the holistic needs of the athlete as an individual requires careful consideration when discovering how best to ensure participation is maximised. In doing so, the intention here is to ensure that coaches are moving from 'power over' to 'power to' disabled athletes.

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In considering how best to achieve empowerment, Evans et al., (2018) provided a comprehensive overview of the considerations required for disabled people to experience quality sport experiences. The authors proposed the feeling of quality sporting experiences may derive from athletes' perception of having one or more of the following values or needs being met:

- Belongingness – to feel accepted and connect within a group and are able to contribute to shared goals
- Autonomy – to have choice, control and independence in all aspects of sport participation
- Challenge – in receipt of appropriate levels of training difficulty that requires their best effort
- Mastery – the ability to accomplish new things or incrementally develop skills and feel confident about their ability
- Engagement – a sense of being involved and immersed within a sporting activity
- Meaning – the extent to which sport represents a personal or social meaningful activity

Henceforth, CE should consider in more detail the athletes as the recipients of coaching practice and how best to facilitate coaches' application of these inclusive and empowering principles. This may require CE providers to engage with more contemporary pedagogical approaches to facilitate athlete learning.

Evans et al., (2018) have provided some useful points to consider within the sporting context. As a complementary perspective, the following section outlines how life skills development through sport and its transference into social life may offer another approach to facilitating empowering practices.

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4.3 Life skills development and transfer

> "Through sport, persons with disabilities acquire vital social skills, develop independence, and become empowered to act as agents of change" (United Nations, 2021).

As alluded to by the United Nations (2021), through engaging in sport individuals can develop numerous functional skills that contribute towards an individual feeling empowered. Whilst the facilitation of these skills is often promoted within the sport context, many of the skills

individuals develop within the sport domain can be transferred to contexts outside of the sport domain. These skills are most commonly referred to as life skills and have been defined as "functional skills that individuals develop and use effectively in one context to manage demands (such as the home, school, sport, community, workplace) and that are also used effectively in other contexts beyond that in which they were learnt" (Williams, Neil, Cropley, Woodman & Ross, 2020, p. 5). A central aspect of this life skills definition is the notion of transfer. Indeed, for a skill to be categorised as a life skill it must be developed in one context (e.g., sport) and be applied to alternative contexts (e.g., community). In their recent review, Williams et al. (2020) identified the most common life skills integrated within sport-based life skills programmes, these included skills such as: communication, goal setting, teamwork, relaxation, self-talk, seeking help, leadership, planning, self-management, health, social support, reflection, media skills, social skills, positive thinking, and problem solving (Williams et al. 2020). Prior to this, Jones and Lavallee (2009) explored the life skill needs of adolescent athletes and highlighted that social skills were perceived by adolescents as the most important life skill to be developed.

Whilst literature exploring the life skill needs of disabled athletes is limited, researchers have highlighted that sport is a context whereby individuals with impairments can develop life skills. Indeed, in their exploration of the sport experiences of disabled athletes, Turnnidge, Vierimaa, and Côté (2012) found that disabled athletes within a Canadian competitive swim team developed skills such as time management, goal setting, and social skills. Furthermore, the athletes within this study emphasised that as a result of being involved in the sport, they had learnt to become more independent, and empowered. Researchers within the field of disability sport often allude to the importance of creating environments that are supportive of independence. Indeed, the findings from Tawse, Bloom, Sabiston, and Reid (2012) suggest that fostering life skills development within the disability sport context may be a mechanism through which disabled athletes can experience independence. In line with Evans et al. (2018) framework, the coaches within Tawse et al. (2012) referred to facilitating athlete *autonomy* through creating autonomy-supportive environments whereby athletes were encouraged to engage in decision making. Furthermore, and again in line with Evans et al.'s concept of *mastery*, coaches provided opportunities for athletes to develop and transfer life skills related to personal care and participation in the community (e.g., transport to and from practice/competitions), which in turn helped to foster independence. The coaches within this study inferred that developing and transferring life skills, and as such fostering independence was as much a part of their coaching responsibility as coaching the technical skills of the sport.

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The explicit awareness and integration of life skills that the coaches within Tawse et al. (2012) study infer highlights that the development of life skills is not an automatic process. That is, by merely participating in sport, individuals do not automatically catch life skills. Rather, it is important that a coach and/or practitioner creates an environment that supports the explicit adoption of strategies to facilitate life skills. When facilitating the development and transfer of life skills, there are a range of strategies that coaches' and practitioners can adopt. In 2018, Bean, Kramers, Forneris, and Camiré proposed that the strategies coaches and/or practitioners adopt to facilitate life skills development and transfer range on a continuum from implicit to explicit strategies. The implicit strategies used to facilitate life skills development and transfer reflect a more reactive approach through coaches and/or practitioners *structuring the sport context* and *facilitating a positive climate* (Bean et al., 2018). However, research has demonstrated that through adopting more explicit strategies to life skills development and transfer, individuals may become more aware of the skills they are learning and may begin to develop an understanding of how they can be applied in other contexts (Pierce, Kendellen, Camiré, & Gould, 2018). Thus, enhancing the life skills development and transfer process.

4.3.1 Practical Application of Life Skills Development and Transfer

It is important to consider how this looks for a coach and/or practitioner when they are delivering a coaching session. As such, below are several explicit strategies that coaches and/or practitioners can integrate into their current coaching that have the potential to influence the development and transfer of life skills.

- Planned activities – Plan coaching sessions that integrate life skills development and transfer related activities as a specific focus. For instance, this can be achieved by providing athletes with opportunities to create training activities, lead and communicate the nature of activities and work in groups to solve problems.

- Intentional discussions – Set aside time within coaching sessions to discuss with athletes the importance of life skills, the skills that are under focus and how these skills can be transferred to other contexts (e.g., school, work).

- Debriefings - Hold a short debriefing activity at the end of the coaching session as a way of consolidating athletes learning whilst facilitating the transfer process. Questions that could be asked, '*what skills have you learned today'* and *'where else do you think you could apply these skills*'.

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- Reflexivity - There are often ‘teachable moments’ that occur organically during a coaching session which provide opportunities to facilitate life skills development and transfer. To take advantage of these moments, it is important for a coach and/or practitioner to engage in reflexive practice whereby they develop their levels of self-awareness and begin to assess the situation as it is unfolding. (See chapter 6).

4.4 Summary

This section has explored complex nature of disability sport provision and attempted to provide some conceptual clarity as to the nature of inclusion and empowerment. In doing so, we have highlighted that athletes may be empowered by giving them choice to participate in differing sporting contexts (e.g., integrated, separate or reverse integration), experiencing coaching practices that meets core values (e.g., belonging, mastery and autonomy) and coaching practice designed to promote the development and transfer of life skills. The combination of these experiences would move coaching on from a focus on performance development towards the holistic development of athletes who are able to effectively negotiate an ableist society.

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5.0 UNDERSTANDING COACH AND ATHLETE LEARNING

The section explores learning in Para coaching and considers the interaction between the coach, athlete and context. The intention here is to highlight the importance of promoting self-reflexivity as a means to facilitate learning and bring about social change. Subsequently, this section is covers; (1) the nature of learning; (2) Para coaching as social learning; (3) coaches' and athletes' learning; (3a) coach and athlete learning: learning as becoming; and (4) the influence of context.

5.1 The nature of learning

What is learning? There are significantly different ways of understanding learning, and any understanding relates to how the person is perceived, the nature of reality, and the nature of knowledge; in other words, there exists an underlying philosophy that informs that understanding (Cushion 2011). In other words, in its simplest form, all theories of learning are based on philosophical assumptions and beliefs concerning the individual, the world and the relationship between the two. It is this underlying philosophy that frames theories and theoretical models of learning, and subsequent practice. Learning and practice, therefore, are not value free and cannot be removed from the social context built on values, beliefs and ideology (Jarvis, 2004) – learning is a complex social process. In considering the coaching framework, it is important to acknowledge the nature of learning in considering how learning takes place and what is learnt.

Much of the coaching research on learning related to Parasport has been underpinned by psychological approaches in which human agency rather than the social context is foregrounded (e.g., Cregan et al., 2007; McMaster et al., 2012). In doing so, the picture of the coach and athlete is often painted as primarily cognitive entities promoting a non-personal and objective view of knowledge, skills, tasks, activities and learning. This assumes a seamless and uncritical transfer of knowledge and theories about learning from wider coaching to disability sport contexts. Such perspectives of learning are recognisable in Para coaching through the dominant categorical approaches to educating coaches described above (see section 3.0). While cognitive/behavioural approaches have tended to underpin much coach learning and practice, increasingly in Parasport more 'social' or 'constructivist' approaches to learning are being advocated in the literature (e.g. Duarte, Culver, and Paquette 2020a, 2020b). As useful additions to the literature, these approaches place an emphasis on experientially grounded expertise, networks and interactions as a basis for knowledge sharing.

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5.2 Para coaching as social learning

There are several social theories that help us understand how people learn. However, for the most part, social learning theories share a common feature, that is how learners construct knowledge through interaction with their environment that is shaped by culture, power and history. This is an important consideration within Para coaching, as disabled people are typically positioned within sport (as in wider society) through dominant ableist values and structures which have resulted in exclusion and marginalisation. In other words, coaches' and athletes' experiences and knowledge of 'disability', 'ability' and 'expertise' are shaped by their social environments. Therefore, understanding and experience are in constant interaction and, through participation, persons, action and the world are connected in all knowing and learning (Lave & Wenger, 1996). Several social theories of how individuals construct knowledge exist. The common thread running through them suggests that learning is most effective when new knowledge and skills are used, and individuals construct meanings for themselves within the context of interaction with others (Cushion, 2011; Culver & Trudel, 2008)

Within Para coaching, much like the wider coaching literature, research has highlighted that learning occurs over time and is mediated by experiences in and out of sporting practice (Taylor et al., 2014; Huntley, 2020). In the absence of effective coach education and development opportunities, immersion within sport and Parasport – as athletes transitioning to coaching, solidifies these dispositions (Huntley et al., 2019; Townsend et al., 2021). In other words, learning in Para coaching is principally shaped by social interaction (Duarte, Culver, & Paquette 2020a, 2020b) within networks that promote the sharing of specific forms of knowledge (Townsend et al., 2021). Coaches and athletes become socialised into the acceptance and acquisition of 'practices, discourses and accumulated wisdom.' (Townsend et al., 2021, p. 4), usually reflecting 'able bodied' sport (Huntley, 2020; Townsend et al., 2017). As such, given the low impact nature of formal learning opportunities, learning primarily involves informal interactions between coaches and athletes, discussing with and observing more experienced others, trial and error, and reflective practice (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003; Cushion, Nelson, Armour, Lyle, Jones, Sandford, R. & O'Callaghan, 2010; Taylor et al., 2015). This results in coaches consolidating, adapting, or 'cherry-picking' coaching approaches to apply to Parasport according to their perceptions of 'what works' (cf. Stodter & Cushion 2017). These notions are typically grounded in mainstream (able-bodied) sporting contexts. Which, in turn, usually entails the acceptance of medicalised discourses and the transference of technocratic and sport science practices that attempt to predict and control for future athlete performance. This reliance on self-direction and self-medication from informal sources reproduces ableist assumptions which can become difficult to displace (Hammond, Jeanes,

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Penney & Leahy, 2019). As a consequence, practice infused with ableist assumptions then contributes to either the exclusion of disabled people from Parasport (Townsend et al., 2021) or loss of agency (Huntley, 2020).

Once in Parasport implicit and explicit beliefs about disability are central to the coaching process and practice. Thus, a social perspective demonstrates that authentic learning in and about coaching consists of more than formal engagement; it is also in the unplanned intersection of people, culture, tools and context (Cushion, 2011). A social approach to learning in this sense reminds us that there is no such thing as one kind of learner, one learning goal, one way to learn, nor one setting in which learning takes place (Cushion, 2011). Hence, there is a need to consider how coach education and development can infuse disability within the delivered curriculum.

5.2.1 Contextual considerations

In suggesting a focus on social learning as a means to develop and support coaches, the intention is to shift the attention away from the individual coach or disabled athlete to a learning process that is reflected in and through their interaction with the context within which the learning takes place. This is an important issue as although it can certainly facilitate learning, context can also constrain, as it sets up boundaries, parameters and criteria for membership, thus engendering exclusionary practice (Alfred, 2002). Indeed, the tendency to conceptualise the learning context or community simplistically and functionally disregards the influence of power in the pedagogic community (Alfred, 2002). It must be recognised that the social context is a power-ridden one where members take on the values and morals of a dominant group, regarding them as normal. Similarly, values and behaviours that do not mirror those of the majority are viewed as deviant or wrong (Alfred, 2002). As Nieto (2000, p.140) argues, "the difference in perception is due more to the power of these groups than to any inherent goodness or rightness in values themselves".

In a truly social understanding of learning, context is more than just a container into which the individual is dropped, for example, the classroom, gym or pitch. Instead, contextual structures (e.g., sport governing bodies, sports clubs and national funding agencies) such as those found in Parasport consist of a complex formation of social norms. These include disability, history, culture, race, gender and physical ability of coaches and athletes; their roles and responsibilities, their prior knowledge and their experiences; the course or programme design, the curriculum, the learning activities, in addition to the history, culture and structure of the sport (Alfred, 2002). Indeed, the interaction and intersection of these contextual factors will

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influence the meaning that coaches and athletes make of the learning process. Moreover, contextual factors can impact the learning environment in overt and covert ways and can be powerful in terms of a 'hidden curriculum'.

In the case of Parasport, disability is not homogenous, in terms of disability classifications nor coaching domains or contexts (Lyle & Cushion 2017; Townsend et al., 2021). Instead, addressing coaching knowledge and learning in Parasport it is necessary to acknowledge and differentiate according to coaching domains. For instance, for coaches working in the participation domain – where impairment can play a more defining role in sporting participation and performance – a conceptual understanding and application of inclusion and integration is of vital importance (cf. Corbett & Slee 2000; Cronin et al. 2018) to ensure athletes with multiple and severe impairments are able to participate to the fullest extent. This may require coaches to reconsider prescriptive coaching approaches or inherited practice frameworks and expand their adaptive practice repertoires (Cronin et al. 2018; Pinder & Renshaw 2019). In contrast, in the performance domain, where rather than a focus on inclusion, performance agendas and medal-winning ideologies (Townsend et al. 2018) place emphasis on an outcome-driven framework for coaching practice. In this context, the emphasis is on enhancing performance through coaching interventions designed according to an 'athlete-first' view, which is often based on 'able bodied' high-performance values (Townsend et al. 2018; Cushion, Huntley, & Townsend 2020). In addition, across the domains, the Para coach workforce is largely voluntary which means that coaches may not have the time nor financial recourses required to access the developmental opportunities that are available to them.

The differentiated opportunities to learn and develop within the Parasport context appears to create uneven experiences for coaches. For instance, Para coaching research has revealed how some coaches were fast-tracked into head coaching positions (e.g., Douglas et al., 2016; Huntley, 2020; McMaster et al., 2012), an opportunity that was not available to all coaches. Unevenness of coach learning is dependent on the nature of the context and access to support (e.g., coach mentors and sport scientists). Connection to a particular athlete can also contribute to this given the uneven nature of athlete learning as a result of the athlete's differentiated 'position' within a sporting hierarchy (e.g., levels of funding). Moreover, Para-athletes (and coaches) can have a marginal state of cultural identity within sports, for example, positioned at the symbolic boundaries of 'performance sport' can lead to inferior and ambiguous learning. Hence why, from a social learning perspective learning is considered relational. That is, the interaction between the individual and social structures and culture they are embedded in (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Hodkinson, Biesta & James, 2008). Consequently, for learning to take place,

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coaches (and athletes) need to encounter new concepts and moments of disjuncture – an uncomfortable situation – to drive change in their biography (Jarvis, 2006). Similarly, learning may also be more effective by changing the learning culture that coaches and their practices are situated in (Stodter & Cushion, 2014). This would need alignment between well designed coach education and workshop curricula, relevant topics and mechanisms of delivery. Here it is also important to point out the position of tutors and coach developers in helping coaches deconstruct and challenge their normative approaches to coaching (Huntley, 2020; Stodter & Cushion, 2014). Indeed, coach developers can inadvertently be reinforcing existing coaching norms while believing they are facilitating empowering and transformational development (cf. Downham & Cushion, 2020).

5.3 The need for reflexivity

Cushion and Partington (2016) argue that coaches learn and acquire "practical cultural competencies, including a social identity" as "dispositions" (p. 860) which operate "outside conscious control" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 13). This unconscious embodiment of cultural norms by coaches within Para coaching centres on views about disability, disabled athletes and what counts as valued knowledge. Therefore, developing coaches' 'reflexivity' and 'understanding' of disability may support coaches to become more aware of and "deconstruct" their "taken-for-granted assumptions about *practice*", and who stands to profit from their practices (Hunter et al., 2015, p. 15, original italics). Doing so may provide impetus to move towards more inclusive and empowering practices.

Reflexivity is a notion that moves beyond idealistic views of learning that is said to occur through reflective practice (e.g., Taylor et al., 2015), towards an awareness of cultural norms and power (Cushion, 2018). For Bourdieu (2000), the practice of "critical reflexivity" (p. 120), requires agents (coaches in this case), to question and deconstruct their subjectivities associated with embodying cultural norms, values and ways of knowing. Indeed, according to Bourdieu (1990) this would require both a critical disposition and the practice of "awaking of consciousness and socioanalysis" (p. 116), through which the coaches' dispositions may undergo refinement. Elsewhere, Brubacker (1993) in positioning a need for "reflexive self-monitoring" (p. 214), argued *reflexivity* to be an important *disposition* for agents. Meaning that coaches, can monitor how their own sense of self came into being and the social mechanisms that shaped the production of their identity. For coaches, across Parasport, reflexivity would mean, questioning values and beliefs about coaching and disability and how these became embodied and unquestioned (Huntley, 2020). Indeed, for cultural change to take place, DePauw (1997) argued "disability allows us to make problematic the socially constructed nature of sport

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and once we have done so, opens us to alternative constructions, and solutions" (p. 428). Arguably then, problematising normalised values, beliefs and practices, could be achieved through engaging with a framework questions aimed at promoting the development of a reflexive coach disposition (see below) (Huntley, 2020). These questions could inform critical discussion within coach education, workshops or within coach-mentor relationships (Huntley, 2020).

Examples of questions to promote reflexivity (adapted from Huntley, 2020)

a. What is your view of disability and disability sport and how did you come to know?
b. In what ways does engaging with models of disability challenge your perceptions and practice?
c. In what ways have you challenged disabling barriers that exist in sport and physical activity
d. In what ways has coach education impacted your coaching practice?
e. How is coaching success understood and how did you come to know?
f. Who or what has been then greatest influence on your coaching practice and why?
g. In what ways have you benefitted from coaching disabled performers?
h. To what extent are athletes involved in the design and evaluation of the coaching process and your practice?
i. In what ways do you adapt training and your communication to meet the needs of your athlete(s)?
j. In what ways do you understand the needs of your athlete out of sport and to what extent do you support these needs?
k. What resources or support mechanisms are you able to draw on in order to improve your knowledge and practice?

5.4 Summary

Adopting a social learning approach to coach education in Para coaching recognises that learning is not simply the 'transfer' of knowledge but is part of situations, practice and context, and often is a collective process. Moreover, as well as contextual factors, learning is impacted by individual biography and is as much about 'becoming', a transitional process that crosses differing contexts at differing times (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009). Viewing learning through this lens allows those involved with coach and athlete development to create or enhance contexts for learning and discover, discuss and make explicit discourse, and any overarching hegemonic frame (Kilgore, 2004). This, of course, is not an easy task, transcending these issues while suspended within them presents a critical challenge, however, a challenge worth taking to

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emerge with powerful learning for coaches and athletes that create sites for “intervention and change” (Tierney, 2001, p.362).

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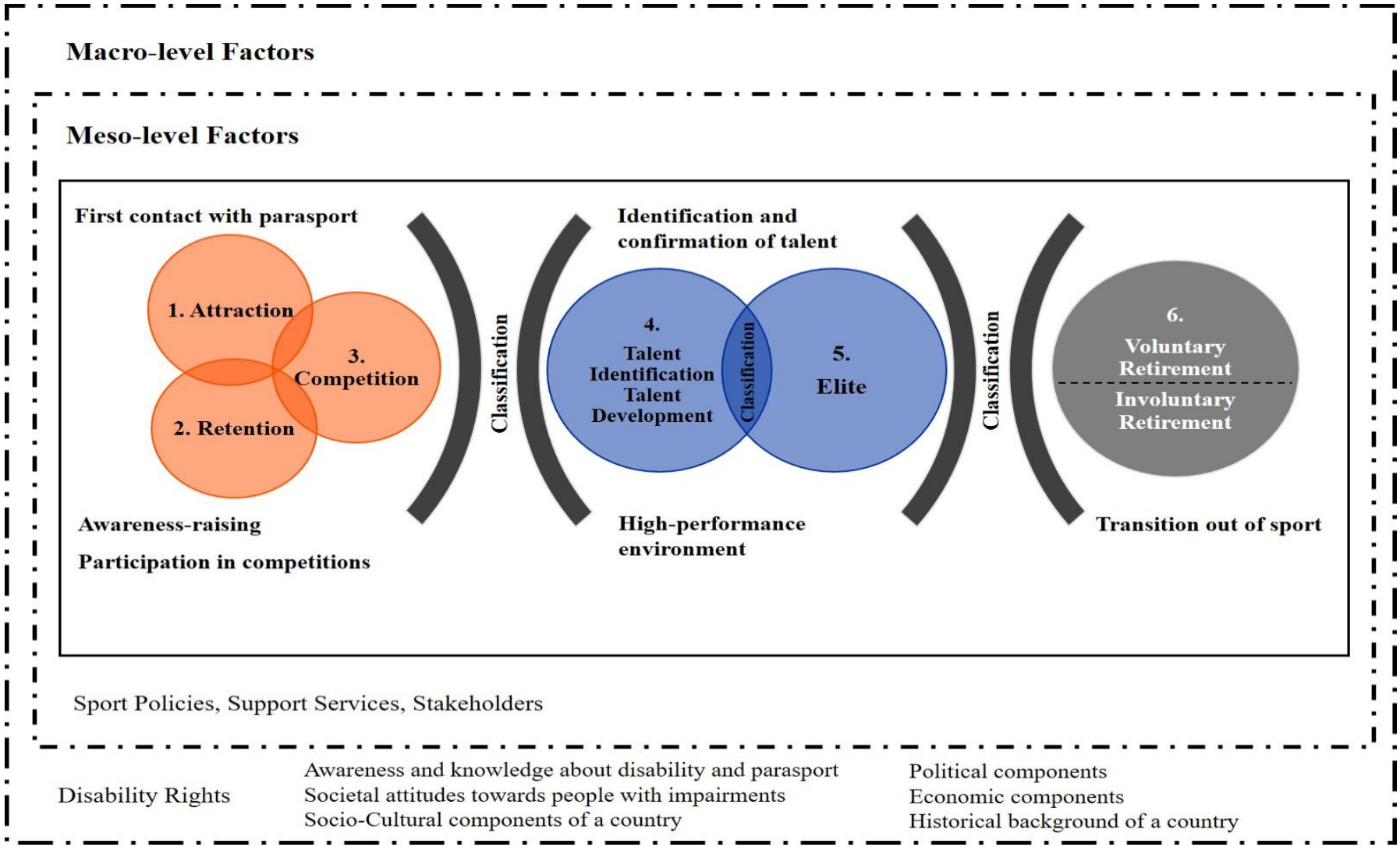
6.0 ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT IN PARASPORT

Understanding the developmental pathway of athletes is of paramount importance to ensuring coaches are able to effectively apply their knowledge and practice to bring about positive athlete outcomes. However, despite the paucity of research on athlete development in Parasports, research has started to illuminate the inherent contextual complexity associated with disability-specific factors and fragmented sporting systems (e.g. Dehghansai, Lemez, Wattie, & Baker, 2017a; Dehghansai, Lemez, Wattie, & Baker, 2017b; Dehghansai et al., 2020; Patatas, De Bosscher, De Cocq, Jacobs, & Legg, 2019; Patatas, De Bosscher, Derom, & De Rycke, 2020a; Patatas et al., 2020b). As such, it may be assumed that there is no universal model for athlete development in Parasports. Given the heterogeneity of Parasport athletes' profiles, their developmental pathways should be regarded with fluid and dynamic approaches that embrace the particularities of each impairment group (Patatas et al., 2020b). Regarded in this way, Para athlete development reinforces the need for coaches and CE to continually recognise the importance of considering the individualised characteristics and experiences that constitutes the person, of which athlete is one aspect of the whole. To capture the diverse range of particularities and idiosyncrasies of athlete development in the Parasport context, the Patatas (2019) Para Athlete Development framework (PADF) (see figure one) is particularly useful.

Like the SRM of disability, the PADF (underpinned by the Brazilian Parasport system) pays attention to the macro-level factors (i.e., the context of disability in society), the meso-level factors (i.e., sport policy, support services, and stakeholders), and Parasport-specific elements (i.e., athlete's sport class, impairment type) that collectively exert influence during all the developmental phases of Parasport athlete pathways (Patatas, 2019). They can be divided into six key phases: (1) Attraction; (2) Retention; (3) Competition; (4) Talent Identification and Talent Development; (5) Elite; and (6) (voluntary and involuntary) Retirement. Each developmental phase is also influenced by a set of sports policies, support services, and stakeholders (Patatas, 2019).

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Figure 1: Initial conceptual framework of building blocks of the developmental phases of athletic career pathways in Parasports (Patatas, 2019).



However, before explaining the phases (i.e., *attraction, retention, competition, talent identification and development, elite and retirement*) it is important to consider the relational and temporal nature of athletes' developmental trajectories. Following the definitions of typical Parasport athletes' developmental phases proposed by Patatas et al. (2020a, 2020b), the phases are represented in circles in Figure 1 to emphasise the non-linear progression that might typify Parasport athletes' development. Some specific characteristics are presented below.

6.1 Talent characteristics

Linear and non-linear progression. Although developmental progression is illustrated linearly, these interconnected phases also allow for non-linear movement. This takes into account 'impairment effect', that is, the way athlete's impairment mediates access to and exit from a development pathway at any point during the temporal phases. For example, athletes with an acquired or congenital impairment and / or stable, unstable or degenerative impairment, may spend different amounts of time in each phase due to previous sporting experiences and levels of ability. The developmental phases of an athletic career pathway for athletes with a congenital and acquired impairment are usually the same, however, there are differences on the duration of each phase or whether an athlete spends more or less time in a particular phase (i.e., transitioning through the pathways at his/her own unique pace).

*Overlap of phases***.** Some phases may overlap and thus are represented as interconnected circles in Figure 1. This entails that some phases may occur simultaneously, meaning that an athlete can start participating in competitions while at the very beginning of his/her athletic pathway. Similarity, an athlete can start in the sport and, at the same time, be identified as a talent. It is a common characteristic of Parasport that athletes have a rapid rise to the top (from attraction to elite phase).sense, the

*Intersections***.** Athletes' trajectories towards elite sport varies according to the nature of their classification and impairment effect, the evolving classification system (e.g., confirmed or under review) and availability of sporting opportunity. Therefore, the intersections between phases are characterised by the classification influencing each transition to the subsequent phase. Education of coaches in different classification systems could be valuable in identifying optimal Parasport athlete pathways.

*No fixed age boundaries***.** Para athletes with either a congenital or an acquired impairment tend to have a late start in sport. This fact can be related to the lack of sports opportunities for people

with disabilities, which can inhibit attraction to Parasport. The impairment severity and type also influence the ages and time at which Parasport athletes progress through the developmental phases. In that regard, Parasport athlete pathways are not chronologically prescriptive; they omit fixed age boundaries and age-related phases. In so doing, it offers a viable and more flexible alternative that may be more salient for para-athletes who have a late attraction to the sport or may skip some earlier phases. A model with age-related training prescriptions would limit the inclusion of many disabled athletes.

6.2 Developmental Phases

Attraction is the phase during which athletes with an impairment are recruited to participate in and/or have access to sport, characterised as the *first contact with sport and/or Parasport*. For many athletes, first contact with sport can involve part of a *rehabilitation* process (fixed duration or ongoing) which could occur at any point of a person's life cycle (e.g., birth, childhood, adolescents and adulthood). The need for, and duration of sport as part of *rehabilitation*, is typically associated with having acquired an impairment (e.g., amputation or neurological in nature) or having a congenital unstable/degenerative impairment that requires ongoing medical support. The *attraction* phase also encapsulates athletes with a stable congenital impairment (e.g., hidden impairment, visually impaired, cerebral palsy) who experienced their first contact with sport - as recreation or physical activity, during childhood. It is important to reiterate that irrespective of need, an athlete's first experience of sport could be in the context of school, community or Parasport participation. Therefore, this phase has a strong social association with notions of inclusive practice and the need to make sport accessible, enjoyable and rewarding for all disabled participants. For this phase to work effectively, the guidelines for coaches are:

- Promote and provide accessible sporting opportunities for disabled people.
- Understand the needs and aspirations of the person and as an athlete, and this may include working closely with parents, carers and health providers.
- Have knowledge and understanding about the nature of impairment effect and how this may impact their communication, planning and practice.
- Be aware of ableist values and norms that may explicitly and implicitly disable the experiences of athletes.
- Have a working understanding about the physiological, biomechanical, nutritional and psychological adaptations that meet the need of the athlete.
- Understand the coach's role within the rehabilitation process.

Retention phase is considered an *awareness-raising phase*, due to the need to create better links between school and community sport, promote and resource Parasport-specific programmes, develop policies and incentives to increase awareness in mainstream clubs and retain disabled athletes across the pathway. The *retention* phase can also be interconnected with the *attraction* and *competition* phases (i.e., foundation phases). Athletes with an acquired impairment may skip the retention phase, due to residual motor skills developed in previous sport experiences; alternatively, they spend significantly less time in each developmental phase, which indicates that athletes with an acquired impairment progress more rapidly to the next phases in the athletic career pathway. From a progression perspective, the *retention* phase starts to promote sport specialisation, meaning that the trajectory of athletes in Parasport may vary according to the athletes' classification (which may also allow for differences across Parasports). The impairment type and the sports class in which an athlete is allocated can dictate the sport(s) where athletes may have a greater disposition for development. Clubs with accessible facilities, which are prepared to receive disabled athletes in their programmes, are crucial in developing Parasport athletes. Building on the guidelines for coaches during the attraction phase, to ensure athletes have a positive experience in sport, coaches should be aware of:

- Local and national Parasport development agencies and structures.
- Specialist agencies with expertise in how impairment alters function and the types of adaptations that need to be considered in order to maximise athlete outcomes (e.g., physical, emotional and social).
- Knowledge of classification systems and processes.
- Making links with rehabilitation centres in order to best understand athlete need.
- Creating accessible spaces and programmes.
- Inclusive and empowering pedagogical practices.
- The types of training load and adaptation that is needed for each individual athlete.
- Advocacy, the need to challenge discriminating barriers to participation.

Competition is an intermediate phase that often supports the transition toward talent identification and development. It is during this phase that development coaches and officers recognise the 'talent' of para-athletes as they participate in local, regional or national competitions. It is a common characteristic of Parasport that athletes start participating in regional and national events early in their competitive careers. The NPCs, NSOs, and the classifiers are essential stakeholders in this phase. NPCs and NSOs are the main agent responsible for promoting and organising competitions (in addition to providing training to national coaches focusing on talent identification). The classifiers are vital in the process of

ensuring that the national classification process is reliable (i.e., to avoid classifying athletes in the wrong class and informing talent identification).. From the next phase (i.e., talent identification and development), the athletes' classification may influence how Parasport athletes progress towards the elite phase. As athletes begin to participate in competition, coaches should be aware of:

- The role competition plays in the development of athletes and how to foster process rather than performance related goals.
- Understand the aspiration of athletes as they develop.
- Available competitions, organisers and entry criteria.
- Competition format and rules (e.g., first past the post or points systems, mixed competitions or disability specific events).
- Accessible transportation and accommodation when required.
- Transportation and set up / de rig of equipment.

Talent Identification and Talent Development phase involves identifying and confirming the talent of a potential para-athlete. . The Parasport system is a classification-oriented system in terms of athlete identification and development. The classification, therefore, may influence and dictate how a Parasport athlete is initially identified as a talent and, in later phases (i.e., leading towards elite) this influences the type and amount of resources and supports that the athlete will receive. For coaches with athletes identified as talented, it can involve:

- Increased accountability and monitoring of progress.
- Dependent on classification of athlete an instant or quick rise to the top.
- Logging of annual training plans and predicted future performances.
- Opportunities to gain coach development support (from experienced coaches and sport science practitioners).
- Increase status and benefits to the coach.
- In some cases, performance related funding.
- Logging of athletes' learnt patterns and skills from previous sports and the transferability to current Parasport.

Elite phase is where differences between athletes with and without an impairment become less prominent (but not inexistent). Similar to the non-disabled counterparts, Parasport athletes also require financial and athletic career support, training facilities, coaches, and access to competitions in order to excel in their athletic careers. The difference relies on the specificities, for instance, the accessibility of training facilities and the disability-specific knowledge from coaches to provide specialised training to athletes with different impairment types. The

classification is fundamental in this phase, given its influence on the allocation of public funds due to prioritisation of specific disciplines by sports federations. Additionally, because of the nature of impairment effect and classification, an athlete may be performing at an elite level (e.g., Paralympic medallist), however, may still be young or inexperienced developmentally (e.g., newly identified as a 14-year-old athlete). Furthermore, because of the exchange between medals, money and status, athletes' performances can become commodified which may impact the coaching process and practice. Here coaches need to be acutely aware of the desire to place universal practices based on non-disabled norms on to a diverse disabled athlete population. Coaches need to consider:

- The cultural norms of elite sport and the unintended consequences of not reflecting on how these influence practice.
- That athlete's performance alone cannot determine elite status and coaching process.
- That facilities and support services are not always available to support elite athlete performances in the way non-disabled athlete receive support.

Retirement (Voluntary and Involuntary) represents the transition out of the sport. However, some athletes are 'forced' to terminate their athletic career due to Parasport-specific reasons, i.e., as his/her impairment progresses or to (re)declassification (meaning an *involuntary* retirement). The NPC or NSO represents an essential stakeholder in this phase, providing support for the athlete's career, as well as guidance and advice regarding the job market, professional opportunities in preparation for a possible career transition (i.e., out of the athletic career into a professional one). Whilst supporting athlete transition out of sport may not be the main reasonability of the traditional coach, however, given the need to empower athletes, coaches should consider how best to support the development of life skills (see page 17) throughout the coach-athlete relationship.

6.3 Summary

Taken together, explaining the phases athletes generally progress through begins to highlight the knowledge, skills and experiences coaches need, in order to meet the individual needs of athletes. As such, increasing *coaching provision and coach education* is the most important sport policy factor impacting on athlete outcomes throughout the sport lifespan (Patatas et al., 2020a). Indeed, athletes perceived *coaches with disability-specific knowledge* to be the top ranked requirement throughout all the development phases (from attraction to elite phases). In other words, the roles of coaching provision and education as a policy dimension and coaches

with disability-specific knowledge as key stakeholders, extend beyond offering training and guidance from mass participation to the elite level. This reinforces the need to provide inclusive policies and practices that support the training and qualification for coaches to gain disability-specific knowledge from the beginning of Para athletes' sporting careers.

7.0 THE PARACOACH COACH EDUCATION GUIDELINES

The previous sections of this document have attempted to provide a theoretical and empirical basis for the formation of the ParaCoach CE Guidelines, with a focus on developing inclusive and empowering coaching practice. In addition, this document is also underpinned by the findings of the ParaCoach Workforce Audit (Output 1), Best Practice Case Studies (Output 2) and the project Literature Review (Townsend et al., 2021), which together has highlighted a largely complex, under resourced and fragmented space, that contains examples of good practice. Acknowledging the social complexity of Para coaching and viewing these phenomena as a constructed activity offers an opportunity for reflexive examination as to the ways normative and ableist perceptions, norms and practices exist to shape the experiences of coach developers, coaches and athletes. Thus, through critiquing Para coaching we open up opportunities for learning, change and innovation. To do so, by drawing on disability studies and in particular Thomas's (1999, 2004) social relational model of disability (SRM) provided a way forward to grasp the complex reality of developing coaches and coaching practice in this context. The outcome of this process means that we advocate for disability to be infused in all aspects of formal CE provision and in the delivery of specific coach development workshops. As a result, infused with models of disability, the ParaCoach CE guidelines attempts to provide some overarching learning outcomes for consideration, whilst also suggesting some subject areas that are perceived to be associated with creating inclusive and empowering coaching practices for disabled people. The key here is to recognise that the learning and development of coaches is hugely complex and requires recognition of coaches and athletes as learners, athletes' developmental needs and welfare, practice design and delivery and the socio-cultural forces at play within sporting contexts. In essence, there is no single type of learner and no universal curriculum that can meet the need of every individual. Therefore, readers are reminded to use this document to stimulate reflection, debate and change according to the contextual need.

7.1 Learning outcomes

Before moving forward, the following definition of learning outcomes (LOs) provides a helpful guide to constructing this section:

> Learning outcomes describe the knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning (AQF, 2013, p.97).

Taking this definition into consideration, the following aim and LOs have been identified for supporting the development of inclusive and empowering practices in sport:

AIM: To call for disability to be infused within coach education in a way that facilitates athletes' access to increased high-quality sport through inclusive and empowering coaching.

> LO1. Understand disability through a reflective framework based on models of disability.
>
> LO2. Understand and demonstrate awareness of disabling aspects of coaches' practice, leadership, communication and behaviour.
>
> LO3 Develop coaches' lens of adaptability and empowering practices through engaging with adaptive practice and life skills frameworks, and contemporary pedagogical approaches.
>
> LO4. Develop knowledge and understanding of the physical and social effects of 'impairment' and how this may lead to meeting the needs of athletes effectively.

Against these suggested learning outcomes, table one provides examples of the type of subjects, knowledge and skills that could be covered within CE provision.

Table 1. Subject areas that may be infused across coach education provision provision

Learning Outcome	Subject number	Subject area
1	A	Understanding the right to inclusive and empowering environments
1	B	Knowing disability
1 & 2	C	Understanding inclusion and empowerment
1,2 & 4	D	Developing a coaching philosophy
1, 2 & 3	E	Developing reflexivity
3 & 4	F	Understanding your athlete holistically
4	G	Impairment effect
3	H	Creating effective and empowering practices
1 & 2	I	Understanding the barriers to sport and physical activity
4	J	Working with athlete's support network
3 & 4	K	Understand how to foster the development and transference of life skills
4	L	Athlete safeguarding and welfare

7.2 Mapping the suggested ParaCoach subject areas to the learning needs of the coach

The ParaCoach guidelines and subjects relating to inclusion and empowerment do not stand alone but considers descriptors of coaches' roles, levels of responsibility and associated qualifications generally associated with these roles that are found within the European Sport Coaching Framework (Lara-Bercial, North, Petrovic, Oltmanns, Minkhorst, Hämäläinen, and Livingstone, 2017) and International Sport Coaching Framework (ICCE, ASOIF & LBU, 2013) (see table 2). Additionally, in order to reflect the general education landscape across the European Union, these guidelines are also referenced against the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and in particular the descriptors used to identify the learning outcomes as each stage of development (see table 2).

Table 2. Coaching roles linked to expertise, levels of responsibility and typical qualifications that are mapped against the EQF.

Coaches Role	Level of Expertise	Expected Coach Outputs		Typical qualification	European Qualification Framework level and learning outcomes.
		Level of responsibility	Coaching intervention		
Coaching assistant	Novice	Support the delivery of coaching practice under direct supervision of a coach or higher	May plan and deliver singles sessions or parts of sessions.	Level 1	L 1-2 Basic knowledge required to carry out simple tasks and problems
Coach	Advanced beginner	Can independently plan and lead coaching practice. Supports the development of coaching assistants	Can plan, deliver and review an annual programme.	Level 2	L 3-4 Knowledge of facts, principles, theories and general concepts that can be applied to solve general or specific problems
Senior Coach	Competent to proficient	Can independently plan and lead coaching practice and small-scale programmes. Supports the development of coaches and support staff.	Can plan, deliver and review multi-annual cycles.	Level 3	L 5-6 Comprehensive to advanced knowledge and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles used to develop creative solutions to abstract problems.
Master / Head Coach	Proficient to expert	Can independently plan and lead coaching practice and larger programmes. Supports the development of coaches and support staff.	Can plan, deliver and review multi-annual cycles.	Level 4	L 7-8 Moving towards highly specialised knowledge considered to demonstrate original thinking and the processes of evaluation that addresses critical problems and redefines knowledge or professional practice.

However, the social learning position adopted within this document does not mean that these guidelines are to be universally applied according to the linear nature of learning and development depicted by the coaching frameworks and EQF. Rather, it is suggested that the ParaCoach guidelines are adapted and refined by Vocational Education and Training

Institutions (VETIs) and Sport Governing Bodies (SGBs) according to contextual knowledge, resources and objectives that meet the needs of a coaching cohort. To support this process, we have provided an example of how key subjects related to disability and inclusive and empowering practice can be infused into coach education and development in table three (see table 3).

Table 3. Mapping ParaCoach subjects to the profile of the developing coach
(Key: Changes in shades of grey reflect increased depth in knowledge and understanding typically associated with a coach's level of responsibility. However, it is important to note that coaches irrespective of position may have very different levels of knowledge and understanding relating to disability.)

Ref	Subjects areas for inclusive and empowering practice	Knowledge and understanding	Actions	Novice Coaching assistant Level 1 EQF 1-2	Beginner Coach Level 2 EQF 3-4	Competent Senior Coach Level 3 EQF 5-6	Proficient Master Coach Level 4 EQF 7-8
A.	Understanding the right to inclusive and empowering environments	1) Understand EU and UN legislation regarding the rights of disabled people	○ Coaching practice is in line with EU and UN legalisation and policies on the rights of disabled people within sport				
		2) Understand EU and UN legislation regarding the rights of disabled people to access sport and physical activity	○ Provide inclusive and empowering practices to all disabled people in sport and physical activity				
		3) Understand the role activism plays in challenging social inequalities	○ Advocate for the removal of all barriers to sport and physically activity for disabled people				
B.	Knowing disability	1) Understand the models of disability	○ Demonstrate knowledge of the models of disability: • The medical model • The social model ○ The social relational model				
		2) Understand how models of disability influence coaching practice	○ Demonstrate an ability to reflect on how models of disability may influence coaching practice ○ Develop deeper knowledge and awareness of the social relational model and its utility in highlighting the relational nature of disability				
C.							

	Understanding inclusion and empowerment	1) Understand the central features of inclusion, equity, equality and diversity 2) Understand the central features of empowerment 3) Understand the inclusion spectrum 4) Know how to develop inclusive and empowering environments	○ Ensure sporting environments and practices are safe and inclusive of disabled people ○ Ensure that disabled people have parity within the coach-athlete relationship and have input into the direction of practice ○ Develop awareness of how different expressions and structure of sport can be categorised according to degrees of inclusion ○ Ensure that sport and practices not only include disabled people, but they are empowered to make informed choices and decisions	
D.	Developing a coaching philosophy	1) Knowledge and understanding of personal philosophy, values and beliefs	○ Identify coach's philosophy, values and beliefs ○ Identify influences shaping philosophy, values and beliefs ○ Identify how philosophy, values and beliefs shape coaching practice and are also shaped in and through practice.	
E.	Developing reflexivity	1) Understand the relationship between reflexivity and learning 2) Understand the importance of developing greater self and social awareness	○ Develop awareness of how coaches learn and what they learn ○ Become aware that much of coach learning is a reproduction of ableist norms ○ Identify the mediators of social norms, values and beliefs and that impacts Para coaching practice. This includes considering topics such as: • Disability • Inclusion	

				• Coach behaviours • Learning and learners			
		3)	Understand how power is expressed and shapes the coach-athlete relationship	○ Consider differing ways to develop greater parity within the coach athlete relationship ○ Proactively seek feedback from athletes and their support network on how best to improve coaching practice			
F.	Understanding your athlete holistically	1)	Understand the person being coached	○ Demonstrate the importance of learning from your athlete ○ Demonstrate an appreciation that athlete is just part of a person's identity and other characteristics impact how coaching maybe differently perceived: • Age and life experiences • Living with or acquiring a disability • Gender, religion, ethnicity and sexuality ○ Demonstrate an ability to consider the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of athletes within practice			
		2)	Understand how athletes learn	○ Demonstrate knowledge of the differing theories of learning: • Behaviourist • Cognitivist • Constructivist ○ Demonstrate how theories of learning impact the development of coaching practice			

		3) Understand the differentiated athlete development pathways in Parasport and how this may impact the developmental needs of athletes	○ Ensure sure that coaching practice meets the needs of the individual • Develop practice sessions that meet the needs of the individual • Understand the key concepts associated with research informed athlete development models: ○ Para sport development model ○ Developmental model of sport participation • Within Para sport, recognise whilst some athlete's performance may be world leading, their level of maturation and experience may still fall within developmental stages • Demonstrate understanding of the differing values systems associated with the elite and participation domains of sport and inclusive and empowering practices can be delivered in these settings: ○ Elite - performance driven, extensive monitoring and exclusive ○ Participation: Fun and developmental	
G.	Impairments effects	1) Understand how living with an impairment alters function	• Demonstrates knowledge of the impact of: ○ Impaired Muscle Power ○ Impaired Passive Range of Movement ○ Limb Deficiency ○ Leg Length Difference ○ Short Stature	

		○ Hypertonia ○ Ataxia ○ Athetosis ○ Blind and vision impairment ○ Intellectual Impairment
2)	Understand how living with an impairment results in disabling experiences	• Recognise and appreciate that living with an impairment impacts life in and out of sport • Appreciate an athlete attending training or competition may have experienced emotional stress resulting from living with their impairment
3)	Understand how adaptations to practice needs to change as a result of impairment in order to maximise athletes' experiences and goals	• Demonstrate an understanding of impairment effect and the ability to differentiate practice in order to maximise athlete's outcome goals • Demonstrate knowledge of the way impairment can be integrated within sports technical and tactical models in order to maximise athlete's potential
4)	Understand sport science and medicine considerations associated with impairment	• Demonstrate a working knowledge of sport science and medicine principals in supporting athletes: ○ Strength and conditioning ○ Physiology ○ Biomechanics ○ Nutrition ○ Sport psychology ○ Rehabilitation ○ Physiotherapy ○ Health and wellbeing

		5) Understand where to gain knowledge about the differing types of impairment	• Demonstrate the ability to gain credible knowledge about impairment effect
			  ○ Specialist disability organisations
			  ○ Sport organisations
			  ○ Empirical research
			  ○ Experts in the field

H.	Creating effective and empowering practices	1) Understand the location of disabled people in sport through the inclusive spectrum	• Demonstrate knowledge of the inclusion spectrum • Understand best practices associated with delivering practice in these settings

		2) Understand inclusive practice models in sport	• Understand how to apply inclusive practice models in sport:
			  ○ STEP model
			  ○ TREE model

		3) Understand learner centred models that aim to create and promote:
		  a. Holistic approaches
		  b. Life skills
		  c. Decision making
		  d. Self-awareness
			• Understand how to apply learner centred models and behaviours to promote athlete learning:
			  ○ Guided discovery
			  ○ Problem based approaches
			  ○ Games based approaches
			  ○ Nonlinear
			  ○ The role of instruction and feedback
			• Understand how to create a practice environment that promotes:
			  ○ Belongingness
			  ○ Autonomy
			  ○ Challenge
			  ○ Mastery
			  ○ Engagement
			  ○ Meaning

		4)	Understand the role of coach behaviours in the coach-athlete relationship	• Demonstrate an awareness of the different ways coach behaviours both shapes the learning environment and the coach-athlete relationship •	
I.	Understanding the barriers to sport and physical activity	1)	Understand the barriers that exists at an individual, social, cultural and political level	• Recognise the role fear and stigma plays and how this might be implicit within current perceptions • Show awareness of the social factors, such as exclusivity and group norms that may present a barrier to disabled people • Recognise the physical barriers that exclude disabled people access to sport • Recognise cultural norms about how disabled people are viewed and treated can exclude them from sport • Demonstrate awareness of the political constraints such as the financial resourcing of support services and equipment	
J.	Working with the athlete support network	1)	Understand that disabled athletes have a useful support network to learn from and support the coaching process	• Demonstrate appreciation of the ways the following positions can support effective coaching: o Parents and family o Carers o Medical staff	
K.	Understand how to foster the development and	1)	Understand the key principles of life skill development	• Identifies the life skills that are relevant for the need of the athlete	

	transference of life skills	2) Understand how the coaching process and practice can facilitate the development of life skills	• Constructs practices that foster the development of life skills
L.	Athlete welfare and safeguarding	1) Understand the key topics associated with athlete welfare and safeguarding 2) Understand how to describe and identify athlete abuse 3) Understand the importance of developing risk assessments and policies 4) Understand the responsibilities of coaches, clubs or organisation in protecting the welfare of athletes	• Be aware of or have the ability to develop athlete welfare and safeguarding policies • Be aware of or have the ability to develop detailed risk assessments • Be aware of or have the ability to develop clear and appropriate reporting protocols • Demonstrate an ability to recognise all forms of athlete abuse • Demonstrate the ability to report all athlete safeguarding and welfare breaches

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