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The mainstreaming of disability cricket in England and Wales: Integration ‘One Game’ at a time

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ABSTRACT

Disability sport in Great Britain has, since its genesis over sixty years ago, gained greater public profile with each passing decade. Arguably, this is a result of a more direct, interventionist approach from the British government and the Sport Councils into the field of disability sport over the past twenty years. In this paper we highlight a case of integration within sport by examining the process of mainstreaming disability cricket within England and Wales. Following a review of the extant literature in this area we will draw upon Bourdieu's practice theory in order to examine the impact of the implementation of policy on the management of issues of disability in mainstream cricket. Longitudinal ethnographic data (including participant observation and semi-structured interviews) was collected on the organizations involved in this mainstreaming process. Informants were either involved in the delivery of disability cricket or in the management of disability sports partnerships. Preliminary findings suggest that true integration is still unrealized. Whether the policy seeks true integration or whether mainstreaming is simply another modernizing process seeking greater efficiencies from sport organizations is unclear. Nevertheless a number of institutional pressures from the proximal and distal external environments have provided support for generating mainstreaming initiatives at management levels. In addition to these findings we argue that an additional outcome of this research is to demonstrate the suitability of a relational approach for conceptualizing policy, its interpretation by sport managers and the implementation strategies that follow.

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1. Explanation of terms

Before outlining some key definitions in this paper it is important to stress that understanding nomenclature as it relates to disability sport is a social constructed terrain. Terms are given meaning by a variety of cultural practices and discourses. Two perspectives that present opposing approaches to how disability is considered in the management practices of leisure, culture and sport (see [Aitchison, 2003, 2009](#); [Darcy & Taylor, 2009](#)) are the medical and social models. The medical model posits that it is the structure and organization of medical institutions which place limits on individuals who are perceived as disabled. One of the leading figures in the development of disability studies [Oliver \(1990\)](#) referred to this as the main tenant of a social (oppression) theory of disability. Following Oliver we will explore through this paper the manner in ‘which

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disability is 'produced' as an individual and medical problem within capitalist society' (Oliver, 1990, p. 11). Specifically of course here we are looking at one component of the capitalist system English National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and how they manage and organize the integration of disability cricket. In order to achieve this aim we ground our understanding of disability in the social model. The social model of disability challenges the medical model that may be seen to enhance oppression by arguing that 'the responsibility for the disability lies with society rather than with the individual' (Thomas, 2003, p. 106). In reading this paper, we ask readers to be mindful of the social model, which is a useful tool that frames the social construction of disability. With this social model in mind we now attempt to examine three further concepts that require elucidation; mainstreaming, integration and inclusion.

What is meant by mainstreaming in the context of disability sport? Thomas (2004) study into the modernization of English NGBs found that Sport England (the English Sports Council) deemed that sporting systems and structures for people who have a disability should be the same for those who are able-bodied. Hence, the Sport England wanted 'the responsibility for the organization and provision of sport for disabled people' placed within 'sport-specific governing' NGBs (2004, p. 114). Therefore, mainstreaming in this paper is defined as the process of integrating the delivery and organization of all organized sporting opportunities to ensure a more coordinated and inclusive sporting system. This definition clearly raises some issues that require further clarification. In the first instance integration and inclusion require differentiation. Integration strives to increase opportunities for the participation of a person who has a disability within sport's clubs and governing bodies (adapted from *Advocacy for Inclusion, 2013*) and hence is concerned with the placement and location of athletes with disabilities within sport's governance structure. Integration takes numerous forms. Berry's (1996) theory of integration demonstrated the relationship between a wider culture that seeks to integrate a particular subculture. This theory posits four modes of relationship; the first true integration which can be seen as harmony between both cultures where each other's values are adopted and integrated. The second type is assimilation whereby the minority culture, and its values is merged into the values of the majority culture. Third is segregation whereby each culture keeps its values by avoiding integration. The final relationship is marginalization, in which individuals or groups withdraw from the values of the majority or minority culture. Each of these relationships can exist before, during and after integration is adopted. Ideally policy makers might wish for true integration however this is seen as the most difficult relationship to foster.

Inclusion can be defined as the full participation of a person who has a disability within the programmes of a mainstream sports organization (adapted from *Advocacy for Inclusion, 2013*) and is concerned more with equitable participation. Inclusion implies 'a more systematic and social meaning' (Norwich, 2007, p. 19) about restructuring how sport organizations and their programmes are managed in order to accommodate all people who want to get involved. While inclusive environments can be seen as 'a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports and is supported by his or her peers' (Stainback & Stainback, 1990, p. 3). True integration and inclusion clearly imply slightly different meanings however for our purposes their similarities rule out any further separation, hereafter the term integration is used. Whether cricket in England and Wales has achieved true integration or another version is the focus of the following article.

2. Introduction

Few studies have examined how mainstreaming policies are implemented within the workplace (Howe, 2007; Sørensen & Kahrs, 2006; Thomas, 2004). Policies seeking the integration of persons who have a disability into mainstream provision in related fields, such as physical education have, so far, struggled to achieve their intended aims (Smith, 2009). Within NGBs, the researched evidence of integration has shown limited success and more work is required. Sørensen and Kahrs (2006) found that Norwegian disability sport was assimilated into the values of the able-bodied sport system and only "the best athletes with disabilities survive in mainstream sport" (p. 200). In addition Thomas (2004) found that some NGBs adopted mainstreaming purely as a means to illicit greater funding. He suggested that these approaches were possibly bought about by a lack of clear direction from the peak agency, the English Federation for Disability Sport (EFDS). Howe (2007) examined integration at Athletics Canada and revealed that true integration had not been achieved but a level of accommodation was occurring. This accommodation still marginalizes athletes who have a disability within Canadian athletics and demonstrates, somewhat the inability of the peak agency Sport Canada to effectively influence the sort of change that was seen in other areas of governing body modernization (Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1995; Slack & Hinings, 1992).

Notwithstanding the paucity of studies examining the integration of disability sport, mainstreaming policies have continued to be a key feature of sport policy for disability sport. The purpose of this paper is to situate management action and experience within the process of integration in the sport of cricket in England and Wales. In order to do this we adopt a relational approach that aims to better understand the nuances of the relationship between individual and organizational actors who operate at various levels across the organizational field. This paper seeks to contribute not only to the integration of disability sport literature but focus upon how integration is viewed and implemented by practicing sport managers.

Following this introduction we present a brief examination of the industry setting where the key organizations that are the focus of the study exist. In place of a traditional theoretical framework and methodology sections we provide an overview of the social praxeology (Everett, 2002) of Pierre Bourdieu. As his theoretical and methodological approaches were intertwined we will demonstrate how a relational and reflexive sociology can enlighten the study of integration. This section will also provide detail of the ethnographic approach deployed and the challenges faced by the researchers. The results are organized using key elements of Bourdieu's practice theory as key markers and highlight a multitude of initiatives from the

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