

TAFISA Abstract

Presenter: Dr Therese Conway, UNESCO, IT Tralee

Title: “Quality Comes First - Mainstreaming diversity: examples from the UNESCO Chair, IT Tralee”

Assuring quality comes first in projects and programmes is paramount to success. The UNESCO Chair at IT Tralee, established in 2013, has commenced with a quality approach in transforming the lives of people with disabilities, their families and communities. The overall premise of the Chair is to mainstream diversity through, physical education, sport, recreation and fitness. The establishment of the UNESCO Chair reflects the long term commitment of the IT Tralee to the area of social justice as addressed by the Article 30 of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and UNESCO’s International Charter of Physical Education and Sport (1978).

The United Nations define sport as ‘all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games’ (United Nations Interagency Task Force, 2003). Sport is part of society and has been found to reflect both society and culture (Depauw 1997). Benefits of sport extend from an individual to a societal level, across; human flourishing, health, gender equality, social integration and social capital. Sport, however, can also be seen to create and illustrate inequalities (Donnell 1996). Nonetheless, sport has the potential to be the site of social change (Kaufman and Wolff 2010). Accordingly, the UNESCO Chair has a role in stemming the tide of inequalities and promoting inclusion as part of this social change.

Using transformative and participative research approaches, through mediums such as the Universal Transformative Management Framework (UTMF), and a CRAFT Strategy (Communication, Research, Advocacy, Funding, Training and Education) the Chair has promoted a quality comes first approach in achieving transformation. Inclusion is a central tenet of the UNESCO Chair, however, inclusion as a concept, although very successful, can be problematic. The term is passive, and does not, per se, promote active action on behalf of those involved. Therefore, the Chair has developed innovative terms such as ‘inclusivize’ and ‘UniversAbility’ allowing for constant action.

This presentation will discuss, using a number of key projects, how the UNESCO Chair at IT Tralee, through transformative research approaches (UTMF and CRAFT) and using innovative terms (inclusivize and UniversAbility) promotes a quality comes first approach in inclusive sport, recreation, physical education and fitness.