

Newsletter September

2017

Editor's note

Dear Readers,

This edition brings to you topics of varied interest.

"Life's true gift lies in your freedom to design it beautifully. With each rise of the sun, you get to chase the opportunity to fill your days with meaning—to live your life the way you choose".

This edition connects us with people who found this gift by breaking away from the clutches of convention.

Happy Reading,

Regards

Bhavna Botta

Info.connectspecial.com



From The Heart

Meet our national level Paralympics swimmer, President of the Wheelchair Basketball Federation of India, Rotary Unsung Heroes Award winner, MS. Madhavi Latha, a firm believer of **"Sports for a healthy life"**

Madhavi, tell us about your baby – "Yes We too can"

Till a few years ago I was clueless about the benefits of sports for People with Disability .I have been affected by polio and years of not doing much physical activity has compressed my spine, affected one lung .I was to undergo even spine surgery, luckily I escaped it by bowing to my physiotherapist's suggestion of hydro therapy. I think that was the best move ever. Once under water I realized that my body was doing many things –walking, stepping etc hitherto never a possibility for me.

That was the eye opener and I became a big addict to swimming and sports. My health started improving, I built stamina and everything was like a miracle! I started participating in competitions and I became the National Paralympics Swimmer .It dawned on me that if swimming and other sports were taken up by people with disability the health benefits are huge.

I had decided that I will propagate sports for people with disabilities, motivate people to take up sports not just for

becoming national champions but also for healthy living. I go all out to create awareness among parents, people with disabilities, Government officials and corporate houses regarding sports for people with disabilities.



Newsletter

September 2017

Thus YWTC (Yes We Too Can) Charitable Trust came into existence to ensure that sport is taken as an empowering tool by people with disabilities.

What about wheelchair Basketball Federation of India.?

2013 saw a meeting with Choice International, UK based Not for Profit organization encouraging and supporting disabled people, specifically those with physical impairments, to maintain their health, wellbeing and self-esteem by participation in sports, mainly via Wheelchair Basketball and Boccia.

I thought it was an opportunity for channelizing the energy of a PwD, develop leadership qualities and also to build a team. Thus was born my second baby - Wheelchair Basketball Federation of India, in 2014. We brought in coaches from Nepal, Netherlands, Australia, US, UK and PwDs from different parts of India participated in the rigorous training.

It was just not sports training, aspects of problem solving, self evaluation, discipline, self empowerment were built in. PwDs were treated just like any other sports person and this was welcomed by all participants and it directly had a positive impact on their self esteems and confidence.

We worked towards U23 Wheelchair Basketball Team to participate in IWBF Asia-Oceania Zone qualifiers for World Championship, which was held in Bangkok.

This is the first time that an U23 Indian team

has represented in an International match!!

Indian Men's and Women's Basketball Team won the Bronze Medal at 4th Bali International WCBB tournament held in Bali, Indonesia from 27 to 30 July 2017. (Thanks to Australian Consulate who supported women's team and the trust run with the contributions of the staff of Standard Chartered Global Business Services Pvt LTD for supporting Men's team) It is the first medal in International Arena. I know we have a long way to go!

Wow, very inspiring Madhavi, I am sure the journey so far was not easy.

Lots of struggles, even sports wheelchairs are not available in India. We need to import them but they are meant for wooden flooring and India has very few of them. We need manufacturers in India to take up building these special wheel chairs. We may not have swimming pools in rural parts of India but we can find a basket ball court in every town, school and college.

Our stadia have to be made accessible. Government can encourage us by the way of creating accessible infrastructure. All we need is accessible toilets and stadia. This will open millions of opportunities.

Have you approached Sports Authority of India?

Yes, they are very supportive. When we had our National Championship in Delhi, they provided their stadium without charging any fee. As per their norms, we can apply for their affiliation after completing 3 years for our Organization to get more support from them. **2**

Newsletter September

2017

Madhavi , share with us some eureka moments

When I look back, I feel proud of the difference a sport is making for a PwD. We have been successful in working with Government and get orders passed. Thus we have equal cash incentives for winners on par with any other sports person, a completely accessible swimming pool being built in Chennai.

Learning you want to share—

The community has been very supportive and they are supporting genuine causes. I am satisfied with the way sports has changed the lives of PwDs. It gives me an immeasurable pleasure when I see all this happening.

Your ambition-

The field is like an ocean and I have done a drop, before I leave this world I want to do lots more. Let's see....



picture description-A smiling Madhavi Latha on a sports wheelchair ,holding a basket ball



picture description-

The men's team in their blue sports wear sitting on their wheelchairs lifting their hands in jubilation on their win



Picture description-The women's team in their blue sports wear sitting on their wheelchairs and holding their hands up on their win and reflecting a team spirit

Newsletter

September 2017

A promising Tool

Tell us about Bolo and the user segment

Cerebral palsy (CP) is an umbrella term for a group of permanent, non-progressive movement disorders that causes physical disability. People with CP have spasticity or tightness in muscles which is the cause of 70% of CP.

The assistive device **Bolo** will help people with CP as well as physiotherapists, occupational therapists and educators of school for children with CP. It could be used to train them in acquiring motor coordination skills, indulge in recreational activities, communicate their basic needs and learn basic academic topics. It relies on gross motor movement as input because people with spasticity have poor fine motor skills.

what are the features and applications

The system comprises of an input device, a computer and a display device. The input device is a force sensing platform which has a set of overlays that can slide over the input device. These overlays can be changed by the therapist or parents as per the use of child.

Applications of the device--

There are three broad categories where the input device can be helpful:

a) Therapeutic device

The device can help children with CP to develop motor co-ordination skills as well as monitor their progress. The device can record

longitudinal data for physiotherapists to monitor progress of CP affected people.

b) Learning tool

The children at the school can learn simple concepts of mathematics, language and science by using this device. Lessons on alphabets to spell, numbers, sense of direction, spatial ability etc. can be taught using this device.

c) Recreation and games

Presently all their recreational activity requires the teacher's presence. That's where this system can come in, apart from being assistive device it can also train them through medium of games.



Picture description--A poster showing the device BOLO being displayed on a laptop screen and a separate input access device showing arrows for different directions and a big yellow enter button

Newsletter

September

2017

Tell us about the future scope of Bolo

The device is presently at a prototype level and being tested with the children with CP. The feedback from physiotherapist and teachers have been instrumental in refining the design. The next step in the project is to develop software application catering to the needs of therapy, recreation and games, communication and education. These application would be used in conjunction with a set of overlays.

Sajal Nagwanshi ,inventor of Bolo,is a researcher working in the field of HCI (Human Computer Interaction) and UX (User Experience). Currently he is working for Saavn (India's most popular music streaming platform) as a User Researcher. He has a postgraduate degree in Interaction Design from Industrial design center at IIT Bombay.



KEY-BOARD WITH ONE INDEX FINGER

Since my introduction to the keyboard, I have been expressing my feelings through one index finger. I cannot express how much of my feelings and emotions have been unveiled by the keyboard. Typing forever, this index finger has suffered a lot of pain and now it needs some rest.

Drowsy and exhausted, the index finger lay on the keyboard, looking at which the keyboard said, "Get up my son, get back to work." Motivated and challenged, the index finger stretched and took a deep breath. The index finger was now restored with determination but it wondered, "My speed has been decreasing, what I should do to get it back?" Then he thought of an idea, "why not ask the keyboard for a solution." The finger explained to the keyboard, how slow Shradha has become typing with a single finger. The keyboard calmed down the finger and said that he has a solution for Shradha's problem. Dancing with happiness, the finger said, "Fast! Fast! I cannot control my curiosity." The keyboard advised, " Ask Shradha to refer any page of a book and start typing on me. She must try to type as much as possible in half an hour. This will eventually increase her speed in typing."

The keyboard and the index finger gave a high-five to each other as they bragged, " If it wasn't for the both of us, Shradha wouldn't have been able to do anything but cry and wait for a writer."

Now, whenever the index finger dances on the keyboard, so does my heart and mind.

Shradha writes essays ,short stories and few poems in Hindi and her nephew translates them to English.



Newsletter

September

2017

Straight Talk-

A rights-based approach to accessible play.

Originally published at-

<http://www.patientsengage.com/healthy-living/relevance-adapted-physical-education-schools>

Every child has the right to play.

According to the Right To Education, it is mandatory for every school to have a robust Physical Education (PE) programme, complete with a curriculum that ensures that play is available to each student according to her capabilities and needs, just like academics. Right to play notwithstanding,

it is important to make sure that play facilities are available and accessible to each type of learner. This availability of play is especially significant when we are dealing with persons with Special Needs. Most of the 'problems' associated with special needs, like the person who can't maintain himself, who does not have 'growth' as per norms, etc. can be managed to a great extent by play.

The focus in all schools, as well as homes, is primarily on academics. The sensory as well as social aspect of play is totally bypassed. This leads to deficits not only in self growth, but also to obesity and other health problems as well. Research shows that the number one cause of morbidity is lack of movement, a situation that play will ensure that we do not get into.

The Current Scenario in Schools

1. In schools, Physical Education continues to be a competitive subject. The fact that Physical Education helps to develop an overall personality of child/ young person is largely overlooked.

2. The concept of differentiated learning and

teaching has yet to be developed in most schools. Here is where the relevance of Adapted Physical Education (APE) comes in to account. We have the syllabus of Physical Education in India, but we do not have curriculum / syllabus & expertise/ experience of APE.

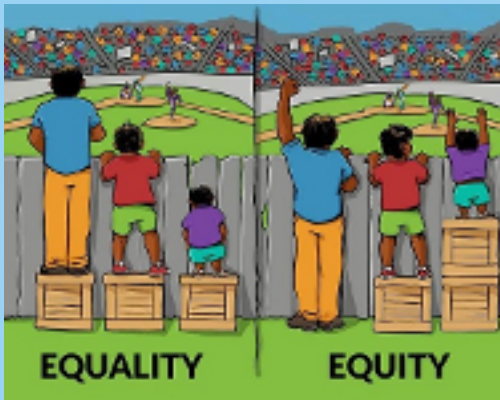
3. When we talk about APE, most stakeholders think about wheelchair sports and /or para sports, which are geared towards physical disability. On the other hand, in schools, most enrolled students have cognitive disability, like Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Downs Syndrome or Intellectual Disability. For this category of learners, we are using the same syllabus as we use with the main stream/neurotypical students. Here is where the main gap and divide arises between what is needed and what is available.

4. Most schools are already sensitised to the concept of EQUALITY. The need of the hour here, however, is EQUITY. Each and every student, regardless of her ability, should be provided with an opportunity (not necessarily equal) to be able to function to the maximum of her potential.

The Approach to competition- Coaching v/s Education We all agree that competition is healthy, regardless of one's special needs. We all need to be able to participate in events that bring to fore our individual potential to the maximum.

Newsletter

September 2017



Picture description-pic on left-An adult and two children standing on equal sized stools are watching a match leaning over a fence, the adult and one child are able to watch but the second child who is short is unable to -labelled- Equality while pic on right shows the adult standing on floor and his stool is placed on the shortest child's stool so he can watch the match-labelled -Equity

At the competitive level, increased awareness of APE will lead to a shift in the approach to delivering PE; from a Coaching- Based Approach to an Educational -Based Approach. APE awareness will also lead to an enhancement in the overall culture of PE. Currently, many potential players/ sport persons of the future go unnoticed, as they are not able to explore their own potential in the field of sports as play, and subsequently sport, is not made accessible to them from an early age. At most levels the players themselves are

not aware, or have got no exposure to their own capabilities. Even if they have the potential, they can not actualise it as they are not getting any opportunity to compete to their level of competency. Talent loss is huge.

The Current Scenario in the Universities that Offer professional Courses in PE

Adaptive Physical Education awareness is minimal in India. In the Indian universities that offer professional course in Physical education, there is no curriculum to teach APE. The gap is in the absence of any content related to the field of Intellectual Disability, ASD, Hidden Disabilities, Development Delay and some specific conditions like SPD, GMS deficiencies etc., in the existing curriculum of PE. There are very few, if any, recourse persons related to Adapted Play and subsequently Adapted PE. There is no benchmark for APE practices. This leads to an absence of collaboration between practitioners from the area of PE and other Therapeutic and Cognitive areas.

After working in the field for 10 years, we found that APE programme is very useful to achieve Daily Living and Independent Living Skills targets as well. APE will help complete the holistic circle of learning as well.

The FIVE KEY STAGES approach to delivering APE in Schools – a workable model

After day to day experience and research in the field of Special Needs and PE, and having worked in several schools, we have designed and implemented a system that has been tried and tested successfully in Inclusive schools across NCR (National Capital Region). The approach allows for the PE curriculum and plan to be delivered in five key stages,

Key Stage 1 - We work on the behaviour of the student, and get him ready to respond and function in a group.

Key Stage 2 – We focus on the student learning to accept PE as a part of recreation and the fun factor serves as a motivator for him to participate willingly in the PE plan.

Newsletter

September

2017

Key Stage 3 – We focus on the individual potential of the child and his skills for a particular game (or generic skills involved in PE) are worked upon.

Key Stage 4 – We are geared for inclusive classes where the student not only gets to use the skills that she has learnt in stage 3, but is able to practice her social skills as well.

Key Stage 5 – We are purely focused on competition.

The way forward

1. The immediate need of the hour is to ensure that the existing Universities that offer professional courses in PE make sure that basic knowledge of disability across all genres is included in their syllabus. They should also ensure that APE should be a compulsory

subject in their existing curricula.

2. There should be collaboration between Indian Universities and those overseas, as International Universities are doing focused and exemplary work in the field of APE. Experts from the fast developing field of APE need to share their knowledge with the Indian counterparts to ensure that we are abreast with the latest developments in the field.

3. PE staff across schools should be given an orientation and professional development opportunities in the field of APE. Schools should host separate PE events for students with special needs and main stream students, and then later try and merge the two, leaning towards fun and recreation

Shaloo Sharma, Founder Director, Evoluer has over 20 years of experience as an Artist and a Special Educator. She has globally advised on designing and implementing therapeutic and educational processes across all genres and disabilities. Sunil Bhatt is a certified physical instructor for children with special needs from Ancramdale, New York and has over 10 years of experience. The two experienced educators share their views on the importance of Adaptive Physical Education and how vital it is to spread its awareness

Newsletter

September

2017

Voiceitt lets people with speech impairments use voice-controlled technology

Voice-controlled technology like Amazon Echo, Siri or hands-free features in Google Maps are things we're starting to take for granted. Speech recognition or voice controls are being added to medical devices and business applications, even vehicles and industrial robotics.

But there's a problem — voice systems have been built for standard speech today. That leaves out millions of people who live with speech impairments, or who just have a strong accent. Now, a Tel Aviv-based startup called Voiceitt has raised \$2

million in seed funding to translate into clear words speech that's not easily intelligible. Here's how Voiceitt works: Users fire up the company's app and it asks them to compose then read short, useful sentences out loud, like "I'm thirsty," or "Turn off the lights." The software records and begins to learn the speaker's particular pronunciation. A caregiver can type phrases into the app if the user is not able to do so independently.

After a brief training period, the Voiceitt app can turn the user's statements into normalized speech, which it outputs in the form of audio or text messages, instantly. Voice-controlled apps and

devices can easily understand the newly generated audio or written messages. But Voiceitt also can be used to help people with speech impediments communicate face to face with other people.



Picture description-a lady using Voiceitt(on an ipad) in a restuarant
 Published originally on Access and Inclusion through Technology [//techcrunch.com/2017/06/01/voiceitt-lets-people-with-speech-impairments-use-voice-controlled-technology/](http://techcrunch.com/2017/06/01/voiceitt-lets-people-with-speech-impairments-use-voice-controlled-technology/)



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