

THE ROLE OF OLYMPIC EDUCATION IN TODAY'S SPORT WORLD

**Professor Dr Margaret Talbot
President,
International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education**

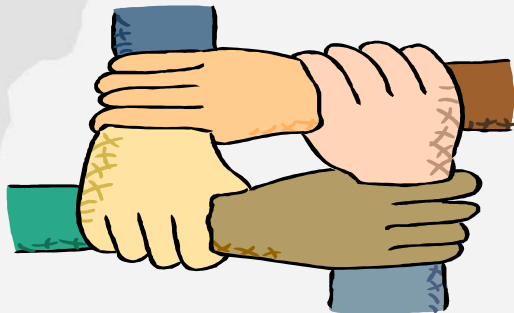


International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education
Conseil International pour l'Education Physique et la Science du Sport
Weltrat für Sportwissenschaft und Leibes-/Körpererziehung
Consejo Internacional para la Ciencia del Deporte y la Educación Física

ICSSPE's mission is

- **to promote** better scientific understanding of all facets of human movement
- **to educate** better quality of life and improved health for all people and
- **to advocate** the benefits related to an active lifestyle and the ethical values inherent in sporting activity

ICSSPE CONTRIBUTION – SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF SPORT:



- **SCIENCE:** better informed, more rigorous examination of experience and evidence;
- **EDUCATION:** dissemination & explanation of information, development of the skills for informed choice;
- **ADVOCACY:** promotion of ethical basis for sport and physical education – inclusion & positive values.

SCIENTIST, EDUCATOR, ADVOCATE



- **Scientists – we use facts, logic, reasoning – knowledge & rationalism;**
- **Educators – we use knowledge and skills to develop others – belief;**
- **Advocates – we use rational argument and belief to promote causes and values – passion.**

I AM A PASSIONATE RATIONALIST FOR SPORT!

BUT –

There are some issues and dilemmas in sport, which are not simple and which cannot be solved by science – only by recognising the sources and implications of problems – and choosing the least damaging solution (not always the most popular!).

“SPORT”

- Rhetoric, theology of sport – defined by inherent values – fairness, common language, availability to all, eg Olympism

V/S

- Sport as a “value receptacle” (Harry Edwards 1978) – reflects the values of the people who control and play it.

“TODAY’S SPORT WORLD”



- FIFA/EUFA “Respect” campaign, v/s behaviour of Premier League players and managers - & case of suggested ethnic quotas in French national team;
- Denial that international players are role models for children;
- “Boys will be boys” ...
- Challenges of governance for federations – often less wealthy & powerful than professional leagues and some clubs – who may resist control and sanctions.
- OLYMPIC EDUCATION?

WHAT DOES THIS IMPLY FOR OLYMPIC EDUCATION?

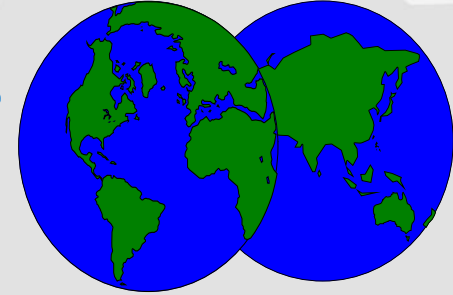


Educators “swim against the tide” – face enormous challenges, therefore need:

- KNOWLEDGE
- BELIEF
- PASSION

To fulfil their roles as moral guardians of an ethical sport system. They have to be prepared to work with *the system*, as well as with *individuals’ behaviour*.

ETHICAL FRAMEWORK?



- **Self-evident need – “colliding worlds” of “professional” players and clubs, v/s those responsible for governing the game;**
- **Collusion & confusion by stakeholders (administrators, fans, media, politicians);**
- **Evidence of distinct, competing priorities, value systems, behaviours.**

An ethical framework is a system of *shared, agreed* values and behaviours, which define and support the management and delivery of a service system.

Easy to publish – challenging to implement (eg WADA)

MAJOR REALITIES

- **Institutions of sport are run by people – with all the human flaws, talents and peculiarities they bring. Sport can become exclusive and unfair;**
- **“Sport ethic” (Coakley 1998) – overconformity to the sport ethic legitimises deviant behaviour. Who defines the sport ethic?**
- **Power is in the hands of people with “currencies” – money, spaces, people, institutions. “Power corrupts”?**

ABUSE OF POWER ENABLED BY:

- **Disfunctions between agencies within the sport system – lack of recognition of responsibility, own power to influence;**
- **Lack of connection/accountability to client groups, by people controlling and delivering sport – ie lack of genuine professional accountability.**

DANGER – self-perpetuating cliques, lacking critical reflection – mystification, secrecy.

ACCOUNTABILITY central to successful ethical framework – but how to get agreement and shared view?

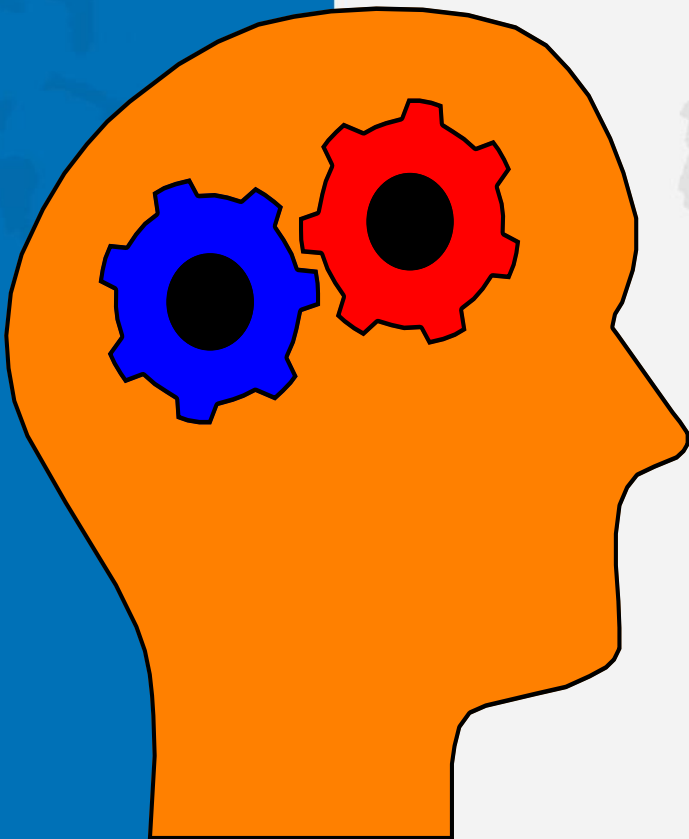
THINKING AND VALUING

Martin Luther King:

“It is surprising how many people find it difficult to think about what they know best and value most.”

Samuel Johnson (Rasselas Ch 41):

“Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful.”



OLYMPIC EDUCATORS' SPECIAL ROLE



- **Guardians of MORAL capital – values of sport and pro social behaviour – fair play and inclusion, protection of participants from exploitation, maximising people’s potential -**
Under-written by educators’ primary purpose, passion, dedication, commitment the interests of the learners & participants.

ETHICAL FRAMEWORK



VALUES: “principles or standards, judgements of what is important or valuable in life”.

PROFESSIONS are characterised by values and codes of conduct, by which professionals can be judged and held accountable.

“PROFESSIONALISM” FOR OLYMPIC EDUCATORS –

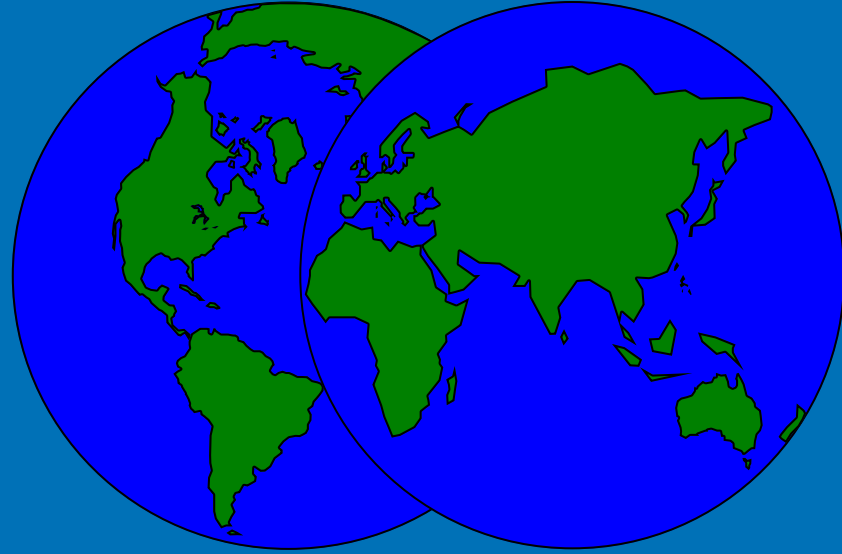


REDEFINE through the nature of service and professional practice – Olympic pedagogy.

PROFESSIONALS ARE DEFINED BY knowledge, skills, values, behaviour – for which they must be accountable.

Olympic educators need to find a common ground with sport and physical educators (teachers and coaches) – with a shared sport pedagogy.

DANGERS OF “DUAL- WORLDS” OF SPORT – the “mercenaries” v/s the “professionals”



Profit & personal gain v/s public good

**Selective meritocracies & rewards, led by market forces
v/s protection of integrity of “game” and access by all**

?Effects on equity and inclusion

?Role of NGOs and governments?

?Role of Olympic educators?



International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education
Conseil International pour l'Éducation Physique et la Science du Sport
Weltrat für Sportwissenschaft und Leibes-/Körpererziehung
Consejo Internacional para la Ciencia del Deporte y la Educación Física

“PROFESSIONALISM”

**Charles Leadbetter “Seeing the Light”: RSA
2003**

**“The essence of professionalism depends
on the effective performance of 2
separate, but overlapping elements:
knowledge and judgement.”**

**Knowledge – technical & factual
information, skills**

**Judgement – application through values &
behavioural agenda – understanding the
special gifts which physical education
and sport can bring.**

**HAVE WE IN SPORT EXPRESSED OUR
SPECIAL GIFTS? OR HAVE WE
ALLOWED SPORT'S AGENDA TO BE
SET BY OTHERS?**



EARLY RECOGNITION OF ISSUES: 15 January, 1884



Pierre de Coubertin

“Human imperfection tends always to transform the Olympian athlete into a circus performer. One must choose between two athletic methods which are not compatible ... The re-establishment of the Olympic Games on a basis and in the conditions in keeping with the needs of modern life would bring together, every four years, representatives of the nations of the world face-to-face, and one is permitted to think that these peaceful, courteous contests constitute the best form of internationalism.”

EG “FAIRNESS” AND INCLUSION - SPORT COMPETITIONS:

Sport accommodates difference to promote fairness in a few, selected categories:

- **Weight (combat sports);**
- **Chronological age (children & veterans);**
- **Sex (male and female)**

NOT maturational age, NOT height or other physical attributes.

Categories defined by arbitrary limits (age, weight) - ??sex.

EG SCIENCE – CONCEPTUAL CLARITY

- **SEX** – status as conferred by chromosomes at birth – relatively immutable, unchangeable. Used by sport as competition category for “fairness” (except in equestrian events, mega-distance events, eg long distance swimming).
- **GENDER** – social interpretation of normative behaviour associated with sex status – changes over time and across cultures
- **Blurring of sex/gender concepts, ongoing debate about nature and nurture.**

STEREOTYPE

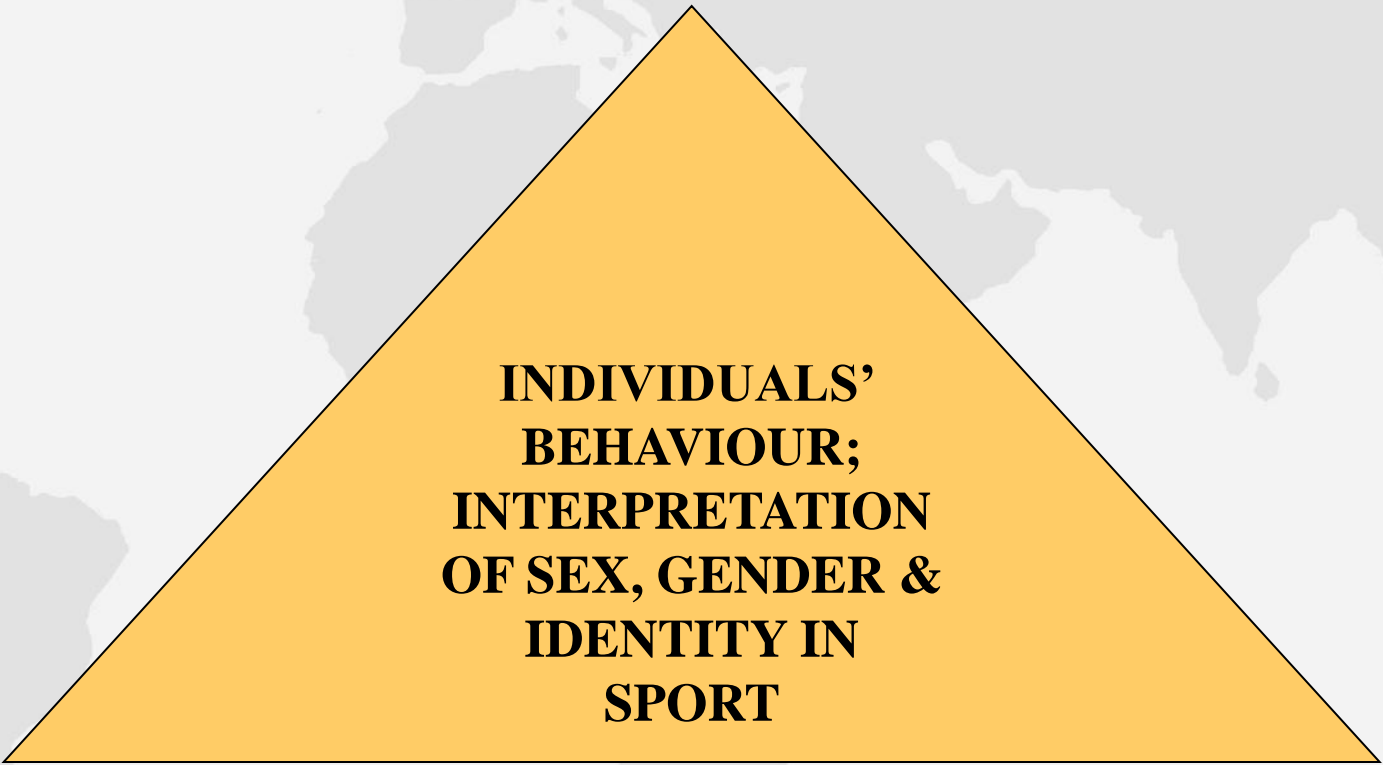
- **The attribution of characteristics to a person by category, rather than by observed behaviour, eg “women aren’t interested in sport”, “boys don’t like dance”, “older people can’t climb mountains”.**
- **Closely related to myths – and help to redefine myths rather than challenging them. Anti-scientific, anti-educational!**
- **In sport, stereotypes and myths are further entrenched by the physicality and masculinity of sport systems, power structures, “conventional wisdom” and value systems.**

STEREOTYPES & MYTHS – A CENTRAL CONCERN FOR EDUCATORS

- **They affect and restrict expectations according to category – both for individuals and by society;**
- **They deny individuality, diversity and ranges of behaviour;**
- **They constrain (& deny) achievement;**
- **They polarise between categories;**
- **They affect the ways in which rules are made and services are delivered.**

AN ETERNAL TRIANGLE?

Myths about performance



**INDIVIDUALS'
BEHAVIOUR;
INTERPRETATION
OF SEX, GENDER &
IDENTITY IN
SPORT**

**Sex at birth –
Chromosomes & hormones**

**Social construction of
sport and its rules**

**AN EXAMPLE OF GENDER
STEREOTYPE & SEXUALISATION IN
THE GOVERNANCE (RULES) OF SPORT
- why these different uniforms?
SPORT BLURS THE EDGE BETWEEN
SEX AND GENDER**



BADMINTON RULING – WHAT IS THE RATIONALE?



- Badminton World Federation “to boost the sport's profile among viewers and sponsors”;
- Indian player - "I wear skirts or dresses only on special occasions, but never in tournaments," she said. "Skirts hamper my movement when I play."

**ONLY APPLIED TO WOMEN –
AND ALSO REVEALS GAP
BETWEEN ADMINISTRATORS
& ATHLETES**

ANOMALY:

MARY DOUGLAS “Purity and Danger” (1966)

- **“It is not the act itself which has absolute value, but the social classification of it”**
- **5 types of anomaly:**
- **Place in category & deny other attributes - “women/men can’t”**
- **Remove by physical control - “women/men must not”**
- **Avoid as abhorrent - “women/men should not, masculine/effeminate”**
- **See as dangerous, not to be associated with - “not real women, lesbian; men playing “girls” games”**
- **Use ambiguous symbols (eg humour) - “not to be taken seriously”**

ANOMALIES

- **Are a nuisance for both the law and “fairness” in competition.**
- **They call into question, the basis of justice and fairness – especially categories on which judgements and decisions are made.**
- **Much of the law is based on *normative* assumptions and behaviours.**

“SEX” AND “GENDER” – DIFFERENTIAL BASIS OF FAIR TREATMENT IN SPORT AND SOCIETY

SPORT: single-sex competitions are often based on notions of **GENDER**, but competitors must meet conditions related to **SEX** category;

SOCIETY- European and many national legal systems are based on values in human rights - **GENDER** as a category, ie individuals’ perceived & lived identity.

**POTENTIAL CONFLICT & CONFUSION
for sport and recreation**

CASTER SEMENYA – A CASE OF CONFUSION ABOUT REGULATIONS



- **“Fairness” in sport depends on competition in categories (weight, age, sex).**
- **“Sex” categories are not always absolute: biological anomalies are complex individuals who may be unaware of the anomaly and have well-established gender identities.**

DECISIONS BASED ON CONFUSION BETWEEN “SEX” AND “GENDER”

- IOC Medical Commission has indicated that gender transition athletes should be able to compete in single sex events.
- New IOC guidance on hormone levels.
- Case of anomalous sex identity is confused by gendered assumptions & expectations.
- Conflicts between “fairness” in sport competition, & “fairness” in human rights – the rights of the athlete to participate and compete – and conflicts between legal status of trans s in different .
- Duty of care & confidentiality for the athlete should be the first priority – sport institutions did not perform well for Caster Semenya.³¹

CHALLENGES

- Possible return to gender verification;
- Assumptions that only international level competition affected – but includes recreational sport, eg access to facilities including changing rooms.
- Sex/gender conceptual confusion and pre-post puberty “advantages” for transexual athletes likely to cause appeals.
- Whole basis of single sex competition will be open to question – could affect access.
- Sport leaders must be informed, understand the issues, and manage tensions with care for fairness in competition, and care and compassion for individual athletes – and ensure that everyone in the system does the same.

ANOMALY – BOY COMPETITOR, SYNCHRONISED SWIMMING



SPIEGEL: You're the only male synchronized swimmer in Germany. With your teammates at FS Bochum, you became the top German team. But now you're not being allowed to swim with the German national team in international competitions. Why not?

Stoepel: The German Swimming Association applied to the international swimming association FINA two years ago to let me compete. But FINA rejected the request. I believe that officials just don't want to see any men in this sport. ...You can already sense that at the national level. Many of the judges are more strict in their scoring of me than they are with my female competitors. It's not fair.

But I haven't given up my dream of one day competing in an international championship.

ANOMALY – BOY COMPETITOR, SYNCHRONISED SWIMMING



SPIEGEL: You swim with sequins on your bathing suit and you have to shave your legs before competing. How do your fellow classmates react to your unusual passion?

Stoepel: Even I am surprised by how relaxed people are about it. I have been swimming in a girl's group for almost 10 years, and so far I have only had one experience where someone laughed at me. Someone at a party was making fun of this guy who swims with a bunch of girls. He said that in front of me, not realizing that I was that boy. The others all laughed, and I think it was more embarrassing for him than it was for me.

SEX & GENDER DIFFERENCES LESS OBVIOUS PRE- PUBERTY – REFLECTED IN SOCIAL ATTITUDES & EXPECTATIONS



- **Girls and boys' range & levels of physical activity diverge after puberty.**
- **Choices are affected by gender as much as by sex.**
- **Mixed sex participation still an issue for many countries & cultures.**

ONE ATHLETE'S ANSWER TO A LIVED, GENDERED ANOMALY



(c) allsport



CHALLENGE ANOMALIES AND DOUBLE STANDARDS

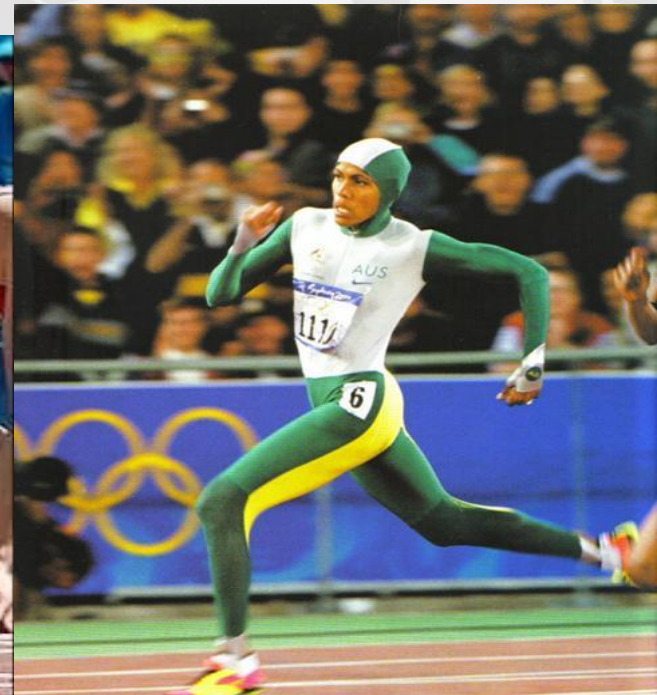


- “Ask Why? – and Change It”;
- Re-examine “performance”, “science”, “evidence”;
- Challenge generalised and stereotyped views of male & female achievements;
- Question why some kinds of experience are more valued than others – whose experience?
- Acknowledge structural inequalities in sport.
- Revisit ideas of “ability”.

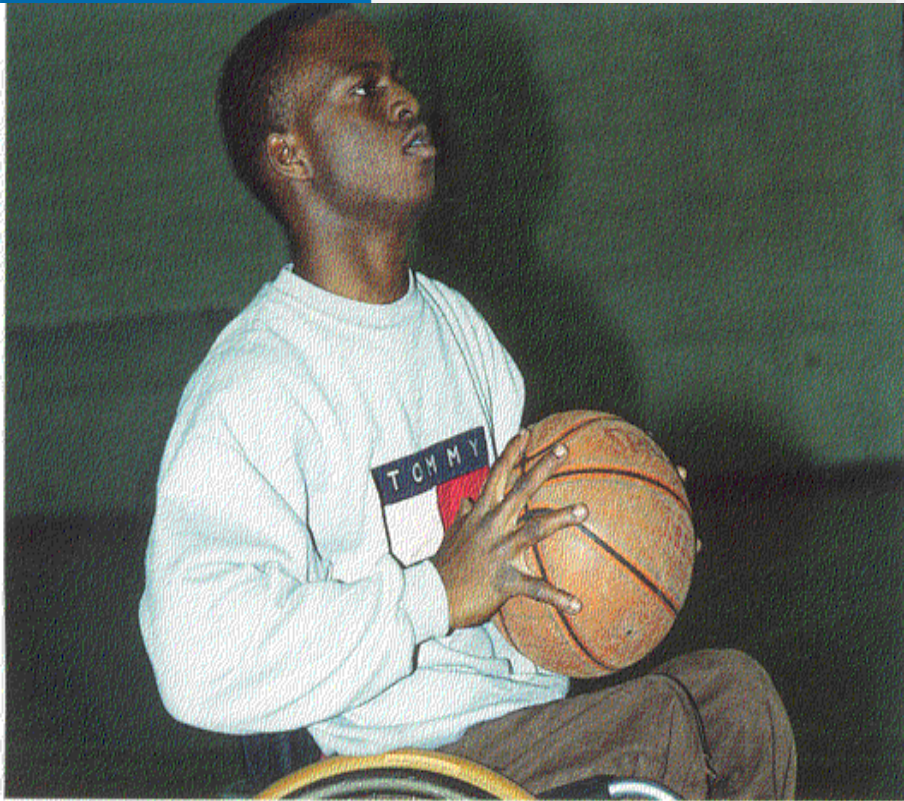
CHALLENGES TO BOTH CULTURES AND NORMALISED PRACTICES IN SPORT

**DIFFERENT REASONS FOR COVERING THE
BODY – SIMILAR VISUAL IMAGES?**

**2008 “ACCEPT AND RESPECT” DECLARATION
REQUIRES International Federations TO
ASSESS THEIR OWN RULES & PRACTICES**

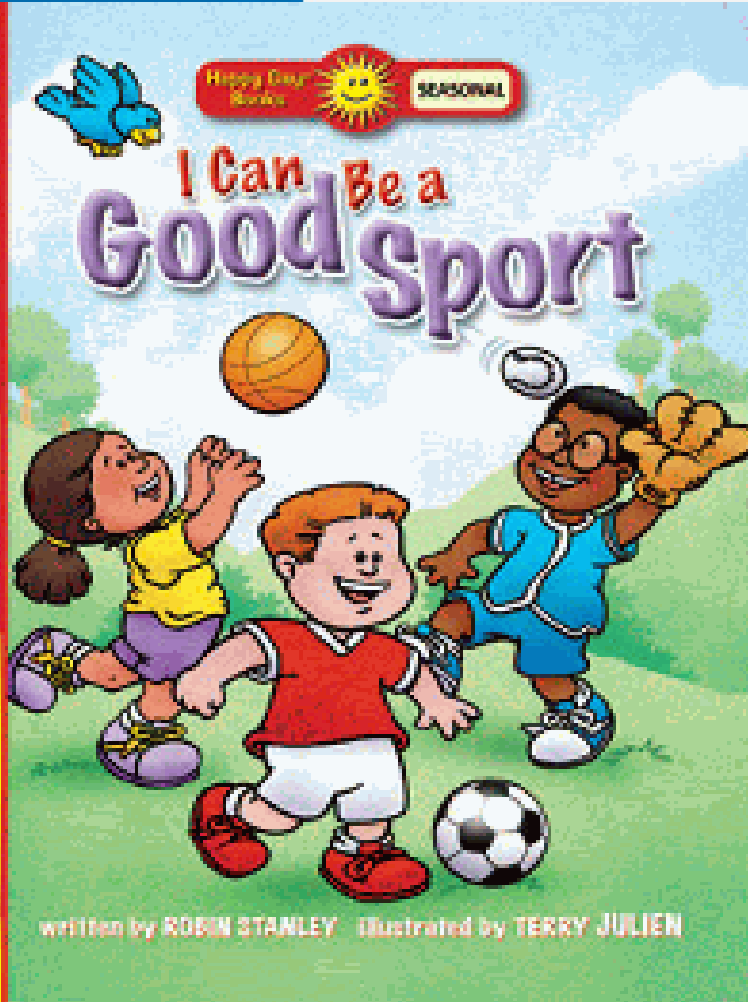


GOAL



To set a new agenda for professionalism in sport – knowledge, judgement and responsible guardianship.

CHALLENGES FOR OLYMPIC EDUCATORS



- To know enough for rational critique and (re)constructive suggestions;
- To believe strongly enough in an ethical sport;
- To develop the skills of advocacy to persuade and change behaviour;
- To build an international community of Olympic educators;
- To have the courage to express what is special about sport – the excitement, contact with nature, achievement, beauty, physical participation, joy.