

تطوير سياسة تعليم التربية البدنية لذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة في المدارس
الكويتية

DEVELOPING A POLICY FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR
STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
WITHIN SCHOOLS IN KUWAIT

إعداد

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المستخلص :

مع عدم وجود خطوط واضحة بينة خاصة بتقديم خدمات التربية البدنية الطلاب الكويتيين من ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة وبالرغم من الاهتمام الواضح والبيت بمسألة الدمج التعليمي لهذه الفئة يبرز الاحتياج إلى سياسة واضحة. هذه الورقة تقدم اقتراحات عملية لتطوير أدوار ومسؤولياتها واضحة لمن يعرفون بأنه معلمي التربية البدنية المختصين في مجال الإعاقة وتوفر الورقة خطوة بخطوة دليل عملي وواقعي يساعد المدارس الكويتية التي تسمو لتفعيل الدمج التعليمي عن طريق التربية البدنية وتنتهي الورقة بنقد تحليلي وسياسة مقترحة.

ABSTRACT

With the lack of clear lines between weather offering physical education for Kuwaiti students with special needs is worthwhile, and the attention that is given lately to inclusive education, the need for a working policy emerges This paper suggests a working practical policy to establish clear roles and responsibilities for is known as the special physical educator in mainstream schools. It offers step-by-step guide that is both practical and realistic to support Kuwaiti schools that aim to provide effective inclusive physical education. It includes roles and responsibilities of those involved as well as critical analysis of what should be included in the policy to support the provisions.

INTRODUCTION:

Policy undergirds all we do, and is far-reaching and all pervasive. In an effort to identify a definition that would broadly indicate the nature and process of policy, it is beneficial to note that the term 'policy' is derived from political science (Fowler 2004, pp.8). Fowler indicates the reasons why there exist a range of interpretations as to the meaning of policy, owing to its political connotations. The compilation of definitions that follow depict this view. Fowler moves on to define policy in these terms:

'Public policy is the dynamic and value laden process through which a political system handles a public problem. It includes a government's expressed intentions and official enactments as well as its consistent patterns of activity and inactivity.'

Fowler then points out that 'government' in this definition refers to not only public officials at governmental levels, but also to school board members, school administrators and classroom teachers as part of public schooling.

By bringing this definition into the context of education, we can move onto utilising its key elements to guide the design of policy. It implies that a problem exists and that action needs to be taken in order to handle it. It also draws in the governing body's intentions in formulating policy that is authorised and indicates structured practices. These elements are vital to school policy making. As Colebatch points out, policy is a central concept in both the analysis and the practice of the way we are governed (2002, p.1). He also suggests that policy may be a means of control, or a means of confronting things as they exist and expressing the right to be involved, or a need to move from principles to outcomes. Policy allows the steering of behaviour through these different possibilities.

In this paper, policy formulation is the focus, and is an exercise into translating the theory behind it into practice. The policy that has been designed below seeks to explore the tenets of policy

development within the field of special educational provision with a focus on physical education.

While schools develop a wide range of policies to suit their needs, it is important to note that a consistent approach to matters that are significant are the result of effective policy making (Shuttleworth 2000, pp.52). As such, the broad school policy should act as the mega-policy that underpins lesser policies within the organization.

RATIONALE:

The decision to formulate policy was made owing to the definite need felt within this researcher's place of work in the area of physical education and the need for all schools to structure activity involved in supporting all students including those with special needs who are included in mainstream schools in Kuwait.

THE CURRENT STATUS

The problems that seem to block the overall issue of the effectiveness of physical education that are related to SEN provision are:

- The lack of role definition for all the key participants in PE functioning.
- Being a relatively new department in most schools, specific statements on activity are still not completely in place. For example, provisions that a student with SEN is entitled to differs from student to student. Despite the need for a particular provision, a student may not receive it owing to the lack of the regulatory nature of policy that is written down. For example, a student may not receive two periods of PE remediation every week as expected if a teacher decides to take up other lessons during these periods. There exists no consequence for lack of activity for those involved in providing for students with SEN.
- Issues such as assessment criteria for physical education and areas to be tackled appear to differ from physical or special educator to physical or special educator. Where one special

educator may evaluate PE skills, another is not bound by rules that state remediation for difficulties.

- Key players differ in their approach to inclusion and SEN provision as principles. While the class teacher may be willing to accommodate a child with a physical difficulty in the PE session, by allowing extra time to complete tasks, a supervisor may deem it a waste of time, or vice versa.
- Accountability between staff and management does not exist in a structured manner. Often, physical educators get caught between following conflicting directions given by the Principal and the HoD, which appears to be unintentional on their parts.
- Differing approaches to crucial issues such as coordination with external bodies tend to be confusing and limiting for staff as well as supervisors. Frequent changes to which agency can or cannot be consulted with respect to student needs hampers smooth functioning.
- There exists a greater focus on procedures more than actual consideration of philosophy underpinning activity. While clear practices exist in the usage of new physical education curriculum, for example forms for record-keeping, there exists a weak framework for the actual purpose behind these forms, as in the case of Individual Educational Plans (IEP). While the IEP exists, there are no set rules for formulation or review in relation to physical education goals. As such, focused remediation is compromised.
- Conflicting views on the role of the PE teacher as part of the school contribute to unnecessary friction between departments. For example, teachers may feel learning support should cover syllabus portions.

The lack of set guidelines impacts optimum PE functioning due to the problems described above. Policy must cover all the issues raised in order to be a functional policy. In an attempt to bring these issues

to the surface, this policy aims at the major practices that require a statement of intent.

It is essential to the development of this policy that both the horizontal as well as the vertical perspectives are considered so as to include views from key players. Despite belonging to the horizontal group that is responsible for the application of this policy, an attempt has been made to consider the possibility of coherence between the aims of those on the vertical perspective with those on the horizontal axis.

An effort has also been made to develop structure that allows policy to govern practice and not practice to govern policy, as pointed out by Shuttleworth (2000, pp.60), so as to guard against a procedural description. Enmeshed with this potential policy, there can exist a separate guidebook laying out guidelines for practice, and has been referred to in this policy as the Physical Education Procedural Guidebook. It would hold instructions as to the way to carry out relevant PE procedures correctly, such as the filling out of forms, or the referral procedure hierarchy. Such an outline is derived from Shuttleworth's recommendation that two documents exist when making SEN provision, so as to distinguish between the essential intentions as stated in the policy, and the handbook which would interpret those intentions in terms of daily recommended practice (2000, pp.55).

THE POLICY:

The Physical Education Policy of the School aims to lay down guidelines within which the PE is to operate to offer learning support to meet the needs of its students within the broader framework of the whole school policy on quality education for all its students.

Physical Education Aims and Values:

- The Physical Education shall follow the school values and ethos on supplying education that is characterised by high standards and quality, through its approach based on student needs.

- The Physical Education aims to provide access to the curriculum followed by the school for enrolled students at risk for or diagnosed with Specific Learning Difficulties.
- The Physical Education operates on the principle of inclusion of students with special educational needs, and shall not indulge in activities that signal exclusion.
- Training at the Physical Education department shall be skill-based in orientation and shall not directly deal with lessons that are part of the curriculum.
- By promoting learning support within the school, the school aims to facilitate the development of a wider knowledge about the range of needs within students.

Objectives of the Policy:

- It is the aim of the Physical Education Policy to create a framework for operational functioning of the Learning Centre (LC).
- This policy aims at considering and meeting the needs of students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), to help them gain the education that is available to them.
- A primary aim of this policy is to stipulate the physical education provisions available to students with SLD, in terms of training, classroom learning, examination provision and any other accommodations or modifications that may be deemed relevant to accessing the curriculum.
- It is intended that this policy may streamline whole school functioning towards learning outcomes that keep students with SLD in school, and not end with the student having to transfer to another curriculum or facility prematurely.
- The Physical Education should be a support to not just students with SLD, but to the entire school, in terms of promoting:
 - whole school values on inclusion

- higher levels of teacher involvement with students with SEN
- a positive outlook on part of staff and students towards students with SEN
- school objectives of making significant contributions to SEN provisions within the larger society.
- Parents as equal partners in their child's education is a principle that this policy aims to promote.
- This policy aims to guide school activity that requires liaison with special schools and external agencies connected to SEN, through the Learning Centre.

Strategy:

The policy for the Physical Education has been established to streamline behaviour of all parties involved in SEN provision into a pattern that is cohesive with the overall running of the school.

As per the date of this policy being drawn up, students assessed to require learning support will be provided Learning Centre assistance between Grades 1 and 6 (that can later on extend to other grades).

Each Physical Education department has one special educator responsible for it. Every Learning Centre will function and maintain records independently, under the guidance of the HoD. Activities that require coordination between the three special educators shall be at the HoD's discretion and will have to be carried out as per instructions given.

In case of restructuring and additions to the department's strength, these policy statements hold good unless otherwise revised.

Key Roles and Responsibilities in relation to Physical Education operation:

The following key personnel are directly involved in executing the objectives of this policy, and their roles and responsibilities have been included in this document so as to guide behaviour appropriately:

- 1) Special Physical Educators:

The Special Educator is the main person involved in the daily operation and functioning of the Learning Centre for which she is in charge of, according to management decision, and as such holds a number of responsibilities. The Special Educator shall:

- Set up and run the Physical Education for her section, and follow procedures as laid down by the Head of Department, with regard to operation, record keeping and liaison with other school personnel.
- Be responsible for informal assessments and decisions regarding fulfilment of intake criteria.
- Draw up Individual Educational Plans for students enrolled at PE, as per assessment/ review indicators.
- Take up training of students at risk for or diagnosed with SLD in skills required to access literacy and numeracy within the curriculum followed in the classroom.
- Liaise with school personnel in matters affecting PE student provision and learning.
- Explain the implications of SLD, counsel and support parents through the field of SEN, and work towards maximum co-operation from parents. Possible remedial activity lists are to be provided to parents to aid student learning and maintenance of skills.
- Consult the counsellor attached to her section in matters concerning PE students' emotional health and stability that fall outside the line of special education training and support.
- Continually monitor student progress both in PE as well as in class in the areas of literacy, numeracy and learning skills.
- Source out materials and resources that would aid student learning.

- Shall not be involved in decisions regarding student promotion or detention in a grade.
- Shall maintain confidentiality of each case.
- Establish rapport with all key players involved in ensuring student learning.
- Organize and hold talks related to the field of Special Physical Education for parents and teachers, once every term for each group, to create awareness and foster skilful handling of the child with SEN.

2) Head of Department of Special Physical Education:

As the Physical Education is a part of the whole school, the Head of Department of (HoD) is responsible for matters concerning the Physical Education, and holds direct authority over Physical Education staff. The duties associated with this role are:

- To oversee the functioning of the PE and its staff.
- To guide staff towards actions that mirror school and policy values.
- To coordinate with other departments when needed, with respect to PE functioning.
- To act as a liaison between staff and management when required to.
- To facilitate physical special educator resource and equipment requirements, allocating part of budget to the PE.
- To ensure whole school development of SEN and inclusive principles.
- To monitor staff compliance with policy guidelines.
- To review staff effectiveness and performance.

Training and Review:

Physical Education training for the student needing learning support is to be skill-based. Syllabus portions are not to be dealt with at the PE. Special educators are not responsible for curriculum learning. Special educators will focus completely on the learning skills required by the student to cope with the SLD.

The special educator will also carry out regular observations of the student's ability to cope with classroom demands and adapt teaching methods accordingly.

Training will take place only during the two periods specified in the PE Guidebook. The special educator will draw up the student's Physical Education timetable, following the procedures laid out in this guidebook.

Term review of progress made by students of the PE will be carried out via the Progress Report Form to be filled out by individual students' class teachers. These forms are to be handed back to the PE to keep on record.

End of year review will be carried out by the special educator in relation to IEP targets. Results shall be recorded and filed accordingly.

Professional Development of Learning Centre Staff:

The HoD shall send members of staff to training courses when and if he feels it is necessary. Members of the Learning Centre staff are also encouraged to respond to opportunities for professional development and inform the HoD of potential opportunities. The HoD is to look into the request for professional development and obtain the necessary sanction if he is in favour of this particular training opportunity. All fees will be paid by the school.

The special educators are then to make the necessary arrangements to attend the training session as per instructions given by the HoD.

Documentation of this training is to be made and its details stored for future reference. The HoD is to be briefed on the training and the special educators' feedback of its perceived benefits.

Monitoring of the Policy:

The Physical Education Policy will be evaluated in ¹three main areas as outlined below, with specific people responsible for this monitoring:

- a) General policy application which the Principal is responsible for
- b) Particular focal points within the policy which will be monitored by the HoD
- c) Progress made by students which will be recorded by the special educators

Review of Policy:

The above suggested policy statements should be reviewed at least every two years. This policy review can be conducted during a formal meeting of the Principal, the Supervisors, the HoD, the parent representatives and the special physical educators, held primarily for this purpose. Reports based on monitoring of the policy should be discussed at this meeting to serve as evidence for decisions on this policy. The Principal is to prepare a report on the perceived success of the policy based on input from attendees on the key areas covered, which is to be submitted to the school's board of directors, in connection with the decision on the policy review.

Objectives and statements are to be evaluated, and a consensus should exist between those present in order to continue with the policy in its unchanged form.

In the event that there is disagreement on the components of the policy, the HoD will initiate the process of redesigning the policy, keeping in focus views expressed at this meeting. The School's policy making procedures apply and shall be followed explicitly. The policy

¹ Main areas to be monitored derived from Shuttleworth, V. (2000). *The Special Educational Needs Coordinator: Maximizing Your Potential*. Pearson Education Limited: Harlow

must go through the appropriate channels for authorisation. If not, the redrafted policy will stand null and void.

CONCLUSION:

In order to formulate this policy, opinions and discussions that this researcher has been privy to over the course of time within several organizations have been major influences in putting together a policy that may be able to bring some level of cohesion between the desires of management and staff, as well as students and parents in a much needed area (Physical Education for students with special needs).

Finding the balance between the horizontal and the vertical perspectives is crucial to the success of policy implementation. Without an involvement of implementers at some level in policy formulation, this policy could easily remain as words on paper. While the vertical dimension looks at the statements as rules, the horizontal dimension wishes for structuring of action. This basis for participation falls back on the attributes of policy, which are the elements of order, authority and expertise, each allowing key players the right to participate in formulation (Colebatch, 2002, pp.23-25). Gaining a host of different views indicates greater success of the policy as although compromise may be involved, by and large, various views are incorporated and catered to in the policy. Gibson & Blandford state that 'Democratic and inclusive leadership is that which listens to and acts upon the voices of all groups in the community' (2005, p.114), and add that policy formulators need to be aware of existing values.

Policy also allows for the means to get issues that may otherwise be ignored onto the table for negotiation. As Colebatch puts it, it is not a matter of different answers to an issue, but different questions themselves (2002, pp.4). An instance of allowing policy to shape processes is that by defining roles and responsibilities, key players now become accountable for their actions or lack of them. Most of the major actors in this policy have expressed uncertainty at one time or another, about how to effect a particular change. By laying out their unique roles, ambiguity lessens.

Physical Education for SEN students and their provision is a new way of thinking for the school, and is still in its fledgling stage. Having a policy to back it paves the way for changes that cover broader issues, such as including other categories of SEN, other than SLD, when providing learning support. Review of policy allows for discussion between key players and those with vested interests to voice opinions and initiate change. This policy has within it the scope for additional provision that management may give thought to, if current policy aims are fulfilled without hardship to those involved.

Policy is broad in its expanse, but can be very specific and useful in getting to the heart of matters to deal with issues or problems that plague an organization and disrupt smooth functioning.

References:

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