

Current Situation and Prospect of Inclusive Physical Education in Mainland China

中國大陸融合體育教育的形勢與發展對策

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Abstract

Methodologies such as literature, investigation, and logic analysis were employed in order to examine the developmental status and challenges of inclusive physical education in mainland China. The result indicated that short history of legislations and polices for inclusive physical education, the passage of “Learning in Regular Classroom” led to the revolution of current structure of instructional placement for students with disabilities, and then bring with the possibility of inclusive physical education. The current structure of instructional placement for students with disabilities shows the concurrence of three states (A, B and C, see Figure 1) which provide some students with special needs to stay at the special schools rather than putting all of them at regular educational settings without support. The philosophy of inclusion is not only including students with disabilities into the regular classroom, but also preparing the supporting services. Placement with supporting service is, however, a big challenge that confronts inclusive physical education in mainland China, supporting service such as lack of a large number of qualified adapted physical teachers, pressing needs to construct inclusive and social or personnel circumstance to include people with disabilities, and adapted physical education programming are not well prepared. At the end of this article, suggestions for conquering these challenges were also provided.

Key words: inclusion, physical education, developmental status, challenges, mainland China

摘要

本文運用文獻法，調查法等研究方法，目的在於探討大陸體育融合教育的發展現狀以及對策。結果發現，大陸融合體育教育立法或政策的歷史並不悠久，“隨班就讀”政策的提出改變了教育體系的架構，為融合體育教育的執行提供了可能。目前對於特殊學生的安置體系共有三種方式（即A，B和C，參見圖1）。融合體育教育的精髓在於為得到安置的特殊需要學生提供支援，然而這也是目前大陸融合體育教育所面臨的主要挑戰。這些挑戰包括師資數量不足，個人及社會尚未形成良好的對殘疾人的接納態度，以及融合體育課程尚不夠完備。文章的最後提出了應對挑戰的建議。

關鍵字：融合，體育教育，發展現狀，挑戰，中國大陸

Introduction

Over the last decade or so, increasing focus of national and international policy are paid to the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education (Armstrong, 1998). Meanwhile, the government of mainland China has been paying more attention to the inclusive education in the late of 1990s in order to keep pace with the developmental tendency of special education. In this view, the government mandated many policies and laws for supporting inclusive education, one of which is called the “Learning in Regular Classroom” (Xiao, 2005). The policy of “learning in regular classroom” mandates that the students with mild and medium disabilities should be placed in regular education settings. However, the inclusion doesn’t mean dumping the students with disabilities into the general physical education setting (Sherrill, 2004); the placement should demonstrate that the students with disabilities can receive an appropriate physical education. The purpose of this article is to present the developmental status of inclusive physical education in mainland China, such as the current structure of instructional placement and regulations or policies for inclusive physical education. At last, suggestions will be given for the future direction on inclusive physical education.

Regulations and Policies for Inclusive Physical Education

Table 1 is a brief summary of major laws or policies that has had an impact on the inclusive physical education. It demonstrates that the history of legislation for supporting inclusion is not very long compared with some western countries, and indicates that the mainland china has been closely following international trends in western countries to develop special education in mainland China. Also, the regulations and policies has been trying to guarantee the human rights plus providing education and services for people with disabilities from the second half of the 1980s. Over the years, the regulations and policies has begun to pay more attention on improving quality of delivering service and education.

Current Structure of Instructional Placement for Students with Disabilities

The successful inclusion in physical education partially relies on good regulations and policies. The policy of “Learning in Regular Classroom”, perhaps, had the most significant influence on inclusion which lead to the revolution of structure of special education (see Figure 1) and offered the children with disabilities to hold an opportunity to study in regular classrooms.

Table 1. Key Laws or Policies that Influencing on Inclusive Physical Education.

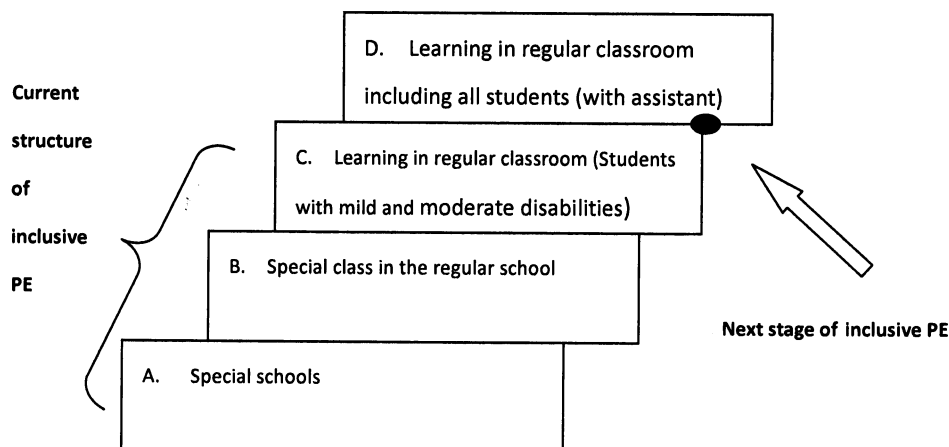
Year	Laws or Policies
1986	Compulsory Education Law, establish special school for children with disabilities and every child even he or she with disability has the right to receive education
1990	Law on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities, encouraging and supporting people with disabilities to attend the physical activity
1994	Plot Scheme for Developing Learning in the Regular Classroom for Students with Disabilities, the school need to place the students with mild or moderate disabilities in the regular physical settings.
1998	Sports Law, the school has to initial the suitable activities to students with disabilities.
2001	Advise for the "Tenth Five-Year" period to Further Promote the Reform and Development of Special Education, focus on consummating the compulsory education for the children with disabilities
2008	The Utterance to Promote the Development of Cause for People with Disabilities, encouraging people to engage in special education, strengthening teacher team building and improving the quality of special education

(Government Documents from The Central People’s Government of the PRC, 2009)

Figure 1 indicated that the concurrence of three states (A, B and C) in physical education for children with disabilities in mainland China. A data showed that there were 582,683 students with disabilities received education in mainland China but 160,337 of which were placed into special schools (China Disabled Persons' Federation, 2008). It seems that it remains a long way for mainland china to realize the inclusive physical education

for the current structure of instructional placement as well as large amounts of students with special needs are still settled at special schools. However, it is a better way to provide some students with special need to stay at the special schools rather than putting them at the regular educational settings without supporting.

Figure 1. Current Structure of Instructional Placement for Students with Disabilities.



Preparations and Challenges for Inclusive Physical Education

Shift in the structure of instructional placement offer the cornerstone for inclusive physical education. Significant preparation must occur if the inclusion is going to be effective in a given community and schools (Auxter et al., 2005, p.159). Libebberman et al. (2002, p.241) held that the majority established barriers to including students with special needs are connected with teacher preparation, teacher attitudes, equipment, programming, and time. Based on this, we are going to examine condition of preparation and challenges for inclusive physical education in mainland China.

Preparing Teachers

Though the first special education specialty was set up by Beijing Normal University, it was not until 2001 that the first students enrolled in the programme for teacher preparation on adapted physical education in Tianjin University of Sport (Chen, 2007). Table 3 shows that the list of adapted physical education higher education programs provided in mainland China.

Table 3. Adapted Physical Education Higher Education Programs in Mainland China.

School/university	Level	Duration	Certification
Tianjin University of Sport	Undergraduate	4 years	No
Shandong Sport University	Undergraduate	4 years	No
Liaoning Normal University	Undergraduate	4 years	No
Xi'an Physical Education University	Undergraduate	4 years	No

It is so pleased to witness that more and more programmes are available for adapted physical educator preparation (Table 3). Nevertheless, a lot of challenges in adapted physical teacher preparation still remain to be solved. Firstly, the number of adapted physical educators cannot fulfill the size of the adapted physical education. Secondly, the quality of physical education cannot be ensured in respect of undergraduate program level and lack of adapted physical teacher certification (Xiao, 2005). Thirdly, more and more students with severe disabilities, not only the primary and second students but also college students, will be included in the general education environment in future. Mao et al. (2008) found that universities which the number of students with special needs surpass 50 occupied around 62.7% of the investigated universities. The other statistic indicated that 5,234 students with disabilities enrolled in higher learning institutes in 2007 (China Disabled Persons' Federation, 2008). Because of that, the physical education will confront more challenge that before.

Preparing Attitude

Three reports may present a representative slice of attitude for preparing inclusive physical education. A report (China Disabled Persons' Federation, 2008) indicated that a lot of work should be done for constructing an inclusive and harmonious social circumstance to include people with disabilities. The other survey demonstrated that 34.8% of general high schools chose to place students with disabilities learning in regular physical education classes. Regrettably, 41.4% of high schools exempted students with disabilities from learning physical education (Wu, 2007). The same result can be seen in Duan (2002). However, it's cheerful to hear that most PE teachers in high schools agree to offer physical education to students with disabilities. The third research conducted by HKIED showed that many pre-service and in-service teachers felt unconfident to teach students with disabilities in regular settings (Chen, 2008).

Based on the above findings, it can conclude that both the social isolation of people with disabilities and negative attitudes from physical education educators are a setback on the development of inclusive physical education in mainland China.

Preparing Curriculum and Equipment

Some research findings demonstrated that teachers can successfully accommodate students with special needs in general classes without support. Yet, inclusion without support most likely results in failings (LaMaster, Gall, Kinchin, & Siedentop, 1998; Liberman, Houston-Wilson, & Kozub, 2002). In mainland China, there is still not a "national physical education curriculum" for students with disabilities and this will lead to PE teachers being confused in teaching. For example, PE teachers may not understand what they should teach or how to assess these students without the direction from a "national physical education curriculum".

Most high school PE teachers point out what high schools can do for students with special needs in physical education is very limited at present Wu (2007). Yao's survey also showed that few students with special needs take physical education in regular settings. Even when they are placed in the regular environment, most of them don't receive the physical education as the safety consideration or lack of support, such as teacher preparation and facilities (2004).

Another investigation on the current situation on adapted physical education for college students showed that around 66.13% and 68.25% of sport college principals agree the teaching content and the assessment for students with special needs are reasonable. However, the responses from students with special needs showed that they were not very satisfied with limited teaching content. Wu (2007) also find that only a few universities have special finance aid for supporting adapted physical education.

Suggestions

Although Block (1999) admitted that adapted physical educators may have "jumped on the wrong bandwagon" in their attempt to serve children with disabilities in the general physical education program, it seems that to challenge the philosophy of inclusion imply to test the international tendency. The door for inclusive physical education was unlocked for the policy of "Learning in Regular Classroom" and more and more students with special needs hold opportunities to receive physical education in regular classrooms. However, mainland China is not well prepared for the inclusive physical education as there are lots of rising challenges. The suggestions for solving these challenges are provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Challenges and Solutions for Integrated Students with Disabilities in Regular Education.

	Challenges	Solutions
administration	size of class; number of teacher; facilities; lost in teaching and assessment	regulations; funding; syllabus of national adapted physical education curriculum
attitude	administrators; Teachers; social isolation	advocacy behaviors; communication; co-operation
quality	qualified teacher; teaching methods and techniques; supervision	pre-service and in-service teacher training; teacher certification; research on teaching strategies

For dealing with these challenges, initially, laws or policies should be established to guarantee the quality of physical education, such as reducing the size of class, providing financial supporting, and setting up syllabus of national adapted physical education curriculum. Secondly, advocacy behaviors for building up positive attitude for inclusion should be carried out. Advocacy behaviors can include setting a good example of inclusive physical education, using the written word to change attitudes, and giving publicity to benefits of inclusion through all forms of media. These advocacy behaviors will be more effective through the communication and cooperation by both government departments and non-governmental organizations. Thirdly, improve the quality of teaching by means of augmenting the preservice and inservice physical education educators training and continuing professional development. Research on teaching theory and strategies are needed to support adapted physical educator preparation.

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