

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Case Study

University: Hong Kong Baptist University |

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 40 physical education, sport, recreation & physical activities |

Title of case study: Promoting sport and physical activity participation and development of athletes among persons with disabilities |

(1) Summary of the impact

Topics relating to persons with disabilities' (PWDs) access and participation in physical activity has been a focal point of the Department's recent research. Through a series of qualitative and quantitative studies, the Department has exposed social and structural barriers preventing or hindering such participation. The Department has also conducted programmes that have provided interventionist approaches to physical and psychosocial development of PWD whilst also encouraging inclusive participation. As the following examples demonstrate, our Department remains committed to ensuring that physical activity and wellbeing is promoted and equally accessible to all residents of Hong Kong.

(2) Underpinning research

Through its research, the Department has identified several major barriers specifically for children with intellectual disabilities (ID) which obstructs their involvement with sports. The following three examples highlight the imperative work we have conducted in this field.

The first research example focuses on the views and experiences of parents of children with ID [3.1]. Parents were the focus of this study as they are usually the major directors of their children's leisure participation. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted in order to identify the main social barriers that children with ID face when accessing and participating in sport. These barriers include a lack of quality contact between people with and without ID; a lack of understanding of persons with ID; parents' lack of sense of entitlement; and a lack of understanding of sport values, participation, and opportunities. In this work, the Department demonstrates how evidence-based interventions provide a means to overcome such barriers and encourage children with ID to be more involved in sport. This study has produced attitude changes among parent and normal children when they face the ID students in the society through inclusive sport participation.

Through devising and implementing an after-school programme that targeted the motor performance of primary school students with ID, the second research example has taken an interventionist approach to the promotion of physical activity and wellbeing of people with ID [3.2]. Conducting a comparative study with a target group consisting of 18 children and a control group of 12 students, both groups with mild forms of ID, this study investigated whether physical activity had a positive effect on the psychosocial behaviors and development of children with ID. The findings confirmed that structured programmes could contribute to gradual improvements in emotional self-control, whilst also minimizing psychosocial-development delays. This study has gained the consent from schools to provide more sport programmes for the ID students to achieve the psychosocial benefits. The study concluded that further longitudinal studies are needed to assess the long-term benefits of prolonged participation in such programmes.

Talent identification was one of the objectives of the third research example of our work with persons with ID. A sand-shoeing training programme developed a means of training students with ID in the

sport of snowshoeing [3.3]. This programme consisted of 12 classes where each session comprised of two 1.5-hour lessons. 232 students with ID and 66 undergraduate students received the training. Successful performances at the 2013 and 2017 Special Olympic Games in South Korea and Austria characterize the success of this programme. Evaluations of the programme indicated that all teachers strongly agreed or agreed that their students with ID were able to learn the basic skills of sand shoeing effectively. This finding has changed the stereotyping perception among educators towards ID student's sport ability and learning potential. Furthermore, both the undergraduate students and teachers regarded the programme as being most effective in promoting teamwork and communication. The students with ID also indicated that they enjoyed playing the sport with the undergraduate students, demonstrating a successful example of inclusive sports in addition to talent identification. All parties expressed a strong interest to organize more workshops in schools.

In addition to conducting work with people with ID, the Department has also conducted research on overcoming barriers preventing those with other forms of disabilities from accessing and participating in sport. One study [3.4] focused on the perceived constraints obstructing children with hearing impairment from participating in leisure time physical activities. By issuing questionnaires and conducting interviews (using sign language) with 149 students with severe or profound hearing loss, the researchers identified two prevalent barriers obstructing participation: (1) mainstream societies' feeling of unease towards PWDs; and (2) a lack of accessible information about activity opportunities. This study changes the traditional perception that people with hearing impairment cannot understand and participate in sport due to their hearing impairment problem. Based upon this finding, people understand that hearing impairment cannot stop those children with hearing difficulty playing sport. This study therefore opens a new opportunity for individual with hearing impairment to enjoy sport in Hong Kong.

The research team has also undertaken a consultancy study for the Home Affairs Bureau, Hong Kong Government to develop strategies that would further support disabled athletes and promote sport and physical activity participation for PWDs [3.5]. Results revealed that the demand for sports, as well as the degree of support needed, varied among PWDs. In the study the researchers suggest the objectives and paramount issues that should be included in policies relating to the development of sport for PWDs. These include providing barrier-free sports facilities, organizing more international sports activities, providing more attractive and affordable sports programmes, recruiting more qualified coaches, and providing better support to disabled athletes. The research also urged that the government should play a more important role in coordinating with different stakeholders, while schools could play a key role by opening their sport facilities to accommodate for diverse sport activities.

(3) References to the research

- 3.1 Tsai, E., & Fung, L. (2009). Parents' experiences and decisions on inclusive sport participants of their children with intellectual disabilities. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 26, 151-171.
- 3.2 Choi, P. H. N. & Cheung, S. Y. (2016). Effects of an 8-week structured physical activity program on psychosocial behaviors of children with intellectual disabilities. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 33, 1-14.
- 3.3 Choi, P.H.N. & Cheung, S. Y. (2019). Inclusive Sand-shoeing Training Program for Students with and without Intellectual Disabilities in Hong Kong. *International Council for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Sport, and Dance, Journal of Research*, 10(2), 3-7.

- 3.4 Tsai, E.H., & Fung, L. (2005). Perceived constraints of leisure time physical activity participation of students with hearing impairment. *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 39(3), 192-206.
- 3.5 Fu, F., Cheung, S. Y., Cheng, P., Choi, P. H. N., Fung, L., Ip, H., Tsai, E., Yuan, Y. (2016). A Consultancy Study on Sport for People with Disabilities in Hong Kong. Dr Stephen Hui Research Centre for Physical Recreation and Wellness. Submitted to the Home Affairs Bureau, Hong Kong.
(<https://www.gov.hk/en/residents/government/publication/consultation/docs/2016/Disabilities.pdf>)

(4) Details of the impact

In this section, we focus on the impact our Snowshoeing programme has had on persons with and without intellectual disabilities. This programme epitomizes our innovative and engaged approach towards encouraging inclusivity and promoting physical activity and wellbeing for all, whilst also developing training programmes that contribute to the achievement of podium results during elite competition.

Special Olympics Hong Kong encountered difficulties in providing suitable training and in identifying talented snowshoeing athletes with ID to compete in the Special Olympic Games. They approached the Department to develop a systematic mechanism that would both provide an opportunity to train athletes in Hong Kong's sub-tropical climate whilst also identifying talents for competition. As a result, the research team developed the sand-shoeing training programme.

The impact of the programme was demonstrated when athletes won two gold, three silver and three bronze medals at the Special Olympics World Winter Games in South Korea in 2013. Due to its success, Special Olympics Hong Kong adopted the programme. During the following Special Olympics World Winter Games in Austria in 2017 the programmes success was further demonstrated with the team winning two gold, one silver and one bronze medal [5.2][5.3].

According to Special Olympics Hong Kong, the sand shoeing method has been widely shared amongst local and overseas coaches for snowshoeing training in environments similar to Hong Kong. Special Olympics Hong Kong will continue to use the programme for talent identification and training [5.2]. In addition to this, the Hong Kong Government has drawn on the experiences and success of the programme to devise a longer-term scheme that provides full-time training to athletes with disabilities and funding support for elite sports for the disabled [5.1].

The impact of the sand-shoeing programme however extends beyond its ability to promote the sport of snowshoeing or deliver podium results at the Special Olympics, as it encourages inclusivity and interaction amongst persons with and without disabilities. Both persons with and without ID participated in the sand-shoeing training workshops, and as a result, greater interaction and inclusivity was actualized between the two groups. In addition to the students' involvement, teachers from local special schools and sport coaches participated, making 118 participants. A survey conducted after the workshop indicated that 90% of respondents agreed that the programme successfully introduced them to the sport and that it is a welcomed approach towards promoting inclusive sport participation [5.5].

The sand-shoeing training programme has also helped change the public's perception of the needs of students with ID and gained public recognition. In 2013, for example, Radio Television Hong Kong selected winning the snowshoe event in the Special Olympics World Winter Games as one of the "Top 10 Happiest News" [5.6].

Following the success of the programme, the Home Affairs Bureau of Hong Kong Government commissioned the Department to conduct a public consultation report on “Sport for People with Disabilities in Hong Kong” in 2015 [5.7]. This report included case studies, a literature review, a survey among over 1000 stakeholders and 131 in-depth interviews. A wide range of stakeholders were involved, including students and teachers from special schools, athletes with disabilities, coaches, staff and committee members of Sport Associations of Disabled Sports, and staff from social service agencies.

In 2016, the Legislative Council discussed the results of the consultancy study. The following year the Chief Executive mentioned it in his policy address. Both the development of the snowshoeing programme and the consultation study that followed has positively influenced policy pertaining to sport for PWD in Hong Kong. Our Department’s research has helped the Government develop a detailed work plan that has evolved out of collaboration with stakeholders to promote sport and PA participation of the disabled population [5.1].

(5) Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 The Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address: We Connect for Hope and Happiness. Item 259, Page 82. Last revision date: 11 October, 2017 (<https://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/2017/eng/pdf/PA2017.pdf>).
- 5.2 Letter of testimony from Dr Allison Wong, National Director of Special Olympics Hong Kong (HKSO). The letter confirms that HKSO adopted the Talent Identification Protocol to identify students with intellectual disability to represent Hong Kong in the snow-shoeing event and won eight medals (two gold, three silver and three bronze) in the Special Olympics World Winter Games 2013 and four medals (two gold, one silver and one bronze) in 2017.
- 5.3 Orient Daily (東方日報), (2017年3月12日), 「特奧冬季世界賽首日香港隊雙金！」 (English translation: “Hong Kong team won double gold at the 1st day of Special Olympics Winter Games”). http://hk.on.cc/hk/bkn/cnt/sport/20170321/bkn-20170321143812348-0321_00882_001.html.
- 5.4 Details of the sand-shoeing training workshop in November 2014: <http://hkso.org.hk/tc/newsDetails.php?id=364>.
- 5.5 Department of Physical Education, Faculty of Social Sciences, Hong Kong Baptist University. Sample of Impact Case Study: Talent Identification Protocol for Sand-shoeing for Persons with and without Intellectual Disability. Produced by Knowledge Transfer Office, Hong Kong Baptist University.
- 5.6 The talent winning in the Special Olympics World Winter Games 2013 was selected as one of the “Top 10 Happiest News” by Radio Television Hong Kong on 27 December 2013: <http://app3.rthk.org.hk/press/main.php?id=1013>.
- 5.7 Prof Lena Fung's research work contributed to the public consultation on “Sport for People with Disabilities in Hong Kong” commissioned by the Home Affairs Bureau. The submitted consultation study was discussed in Legislative Council: <https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr16-17/english/panels/ha/papers/ha20161111cb2-97-5-e.pdf>.