

Adventure education

Education



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Saudi Arabia is a new country, less than one-hundred years old. Saudi Arabia as a country is still in the infancy stages of developing the aspects of social services. Although the country is ruled by a king as a monarchy, policies affecting education are governed by the Ministry of Education and Knowledge.

In Saudi Arabia, children start school as a six year old and complete school at age eighteen. School is not required in Saudi Arabia, however most families are concerned about having their children go to school. Schools in Saudi Arabia are segregated by gender. The schools are never mixed in a co-educational fashion or in a special needs / non-disabled fashion.

An average school day in Saudi Arabia starts at 7a. m. and ends at 1: 45p. m. The students have a snack but eat lunch with their family when they get home. Classes are 45 minutes in length with a 5 minute break between classes.

After the third class of the day at around 9: 15a. m., the students have a snack period until around 10a. m. There is also a mid-day break for prayer that lasts approximately 15 minutes at 12: 15p. m. The students bring all their school materials from home and take the materials home with them at the end of the day.

Behavior Management through Adventure Education is a systematic approach to promoting positive behavior for children with social maladjustment issues. Using a continuum of behavior supports and proactive strategies, this model provides alternatives to expulsion and raises academic

and behavioral outcomes and allows children to remain or return to the least restrictive environment.

The coordinated approach customized manual, common language and training by an expert team results in a successful pilot or program that can be readily adapted by schools in Saudi Arabia. Physical Education classes are conducted from the beginning of the school day until around 10 a. m. unless the school has an air conditioned gymnasium.

The physical education classes end at 10 a. m. due to the high temperature outdoors. The students perform physical education in an activity suit separate from the clothes worn the rest of the school day. The primary sports taught in physical education are soccer, track, volleyball, gymnastics, swimming, and team handball. The classes begin with a short warm-up followed by direct instruction depending on the age of the students.

Kindergarten through grade 4 has direct instruction from the physical education teacher. Grades 5 and up have a more indirect teaching style, with the teacher giving instructions and the students completing learning tasks on their own to the best of their abilities. Grades 9 and above concentrate more on actual game play than on skill acquisition.

In Saudi Arabia, the special needs population is viewed by the majority of the society as a hindrance to the rest. Some of these also look upon the special needs population with sympathy and pity. In Saudi Arabian law, all citizens are considered equal regardless of any debilitating factors.

There is an abundance of funding and materials from the Saudi Arabian government for the special needs population. The problem is that there are

very few qualified teachers to put the changes into motion and start integrating the students with special needs and non-disabled peers as one.

Students with special needs are segregated from their non-disabled peers into their own schools. Teachers for these students are specially trained to handle the unique situations occurring in the schools. Students with special needs are involved in physical education at their schools, but their physical education is different from those of their non-disabled peers. Students in special education are allowed to perform physical activities to the best of their abilities, but no improvements are focused on by the teacher.

If a student with special needs cannot perform any physical activity, that student doesn't participate in physical education. There is no integration of non-disabled peers with the special education students in their physical education class. The only participants are the special education students and the teacher.

Adventure Education is something that is a new concept to the Saudi Arabian educational and social system. The people of Saudi Arabia have heard of programs such as Outward Bound and the use of challenge courses for rehabilitation/educational purposes, but have no such facilities of their own available for use. The importance of the process and how it can benefit each individual involved is still new to those in Saudi Arabia.

In travels to the United States, some students are exposed to adventure education and see its benefits and results firsthand. The inclusion of adventure education into such a traditional society will take some time. With the treatment of special needs students as a “subculture” by some in the

Saudi Arabian society, the addition of a program to place them on “ equal turf” with their non-disabled peers will be difficult.

The barriers that will need to be overcome to allow adventure education to prosper in Saudi Arabia are primarily attitudes towards this approach. Adventure education in Saudi Arabia as we know it in the United States is non-existent. There are activities in Saudi Arabia that could be included in the outdoor pursuits “ umbrella”.

The discipline is not the way it was meant to be presented and used with a group of people. Schools that would possibly be receptive to the idea of adventure education first would be the universities. Professors there would be interested in bringing a new discipline such as this to Saudi Arabia to introduce to the students.

The barriers to this would be getting the administration to “ buy into” the idea and benefits of adventure education. In the United States, we know the benefits of adventure education but few in Saudi Arabia know the true nature of the discipline. Getting a few professors at the universities in Saudi Arabia to accept the discipline and readily begin teaching it to students will be great progress towards getting adventure education accepted.

The main barriers towards getting adventure education introduced in the public schools would be attitudes and then facilities available for the teaching of adventure education. There are schools in Saudi Arabia that have the room for activities, but not the equipment required for outdoor pursuits. Another large barrier to introducing adventure education is finding teachers that are proficient in the discipline to teach it.

There are very few teachers in Saudi Arabia that have been exposed to the adventure education discipline and know how to teach it to others. The barriers that would affect the population with a disability are ignorance of how to treat and relate to these students. The teachers and public have a lack of accepting students with a disability as “normal” members of society.

Often the family of a person with a disability is embarrassed of them and don't stand up for their rights. The families often hide these individuals and are ashamed to be seen in public with them due to the public's reaction. Some of the families are overprotective of their special needs family members and don't want them to be exposed to the negative attitudes of the public.

The special needs students aren't sent to regular schools because the teachers are not prepared to deal with these students. Inclusion is a new idea in Saudi Arabia and there is lots of reluctance to forcefully pursue it.

Adventure education in Saudi Arabia is a big step, but one that can ultimately benefit the society beyond comprehension. Very few governments have the funds available to begin such a program within the society, and to take it to the upper echelons of existence.

The research shows that adventure education improves intrapersonal relationships between people and allows them to feel more relaxed and beneficial to the group. It has been shown in programs such as Outward Bound that taking a group of complete strangers and putting them in an unknown and potentially challenging and dangerous situation can have numerous effects on each individual in the group as well as group dynamics.

Personalities can be transformed in participants and group attitudes can be changed as well. These are what the Saudi population needs to see, that these benefits apply to all in society not just those directly involved.