مجلة جامعة الشارقة للعلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية

**اسم المقال:** معتقدات معلمي الرياضة المدرسية نحو الأهداف العامة لمناهج التربية الرياضية بسلطنة عمان
**اسم الكاتب:** د. ناصر الرواحي
**رابط ثابت:** https://political-encyclopedia.org/index.php/library/8796
**تاريخ الاسترداد:** 2026/11/01 23:54 +03

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# Omani Physical Education Teachers' Beliefs about the General Objectives of Physical Education Curricula in Omani Schools

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**Received on : 21-10-2010** **Accepted on : 19-04-2011**

**Abstract**
The purpose of this study was to investigate Omani physical education teachers' beliefs' about the general objectives of physical education in the Omani schools. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to achieve this purpose by using questionnaires and conducting interviews. The sample of study consisted of 157 teachers for questionnaires and 17 teachers for the interviews. The findings of the questionnaire indicated that teachers hold higher and moderator beliefs regarding the different objectives of physical education. Results obtained from the interviews showed that the academic learning objectives were believed to be the most important objectives for physical education. There were no significance differences attributed to the participant's gender or teaching experiences regarding the objectives of physical education. All quantitative and qualitative results were discussed in relationship to the Omani physical education context.

**Keywords : Teachers Beliefs , Objectives, physical education**

## Introduction

Beliefs have been used as a central framework for investigating teachers' cognition and have been found to play a significant role in the teaching and learning process. During the last two decades, it has been widely reported that the most significant contributions to research in educational studies view teachers' beliefs and their relation to teaching practice as an effective way of understanding how teachers' beliefs enhance educational effectiveness (Doolittle et al. 1993; Pajares,1992; Veal, 2004). Veal (2004) also stated that beliefs are the best indicators of how individual teachers make certain decisions, perceive and judge their behaviour.

Several studies in educational settings have shown the importance of understanding teachers' beliefs and how the positive beliefs they hold towards their subjects have an effect on their behaviour in the classroom practice (Calderhead, 1996; Rimm-Kaufman and Sawyer, 2004; Tatto, 1998). Teachers' beliefs viewed as a crucial element to successful implementation of any educational programmes, including physical education (Kelly and Melograno, 2004). Accordingly, the success or failure of any process for designing, developing and implementation of physical education curricula is based, partly, on the positive or negative beliefs hold by teachers toward these processes.

Investigating teachers' beliefs regarding the main objectives of physical education curricula can have outstanding results on determining the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes (Foss and Kleinsasser, 1996; O'Sullivan, 2003; Tsangaridou,2006). The objectives of any curricula are main components that can direct and guide planners to choose compatible content, activities and assessment tools( Alhashmi & Atiah, 2009). Thus, objectives play main role for quality assurance of any subject including physical education.

Physical education school curricula in Oman are in a way similar to those of other curricula in other countries around the world such as United State, United Kingdom and all developing countries. They utilize physical activities to contribute to an individual's fitness, together with the psychomotor, cognitive and affective areas of development. Physical education curricula are concerned with the teaching and practice of skills,

the acquisition of knowledge and the development of attitudes and beliefs through movement (Baily, 2009).

The Omani government has paid significant attention to the design of well-planned physical education curricula that have clear and high expectations for what students are expected to know and be able to do. Motor skills, and cognitive, affective and fitness outcomes are clearly defined and are consistent with the national expectations and standards of the national educational curricula. Examples of the stated learning objectives in Omani physical education school curricula include: a) providing each student with multiple opportunities to improve and develop motor and physical fitness skills; b) engaging students in activities that will strengthen already developed skills as well as acquiring new skills; c) developing new life skills which will enable students to lead full and productive lives, both in and out of school; and d) providing students with opportunities for the development of social, emotional and interpersonal relationships (Nathmi, 2005).

Despite the numerous attempts and the enormous efforts devoted to improve the quality of physical education in Oman and the continuous development of physical education curricula, limited research has been conducted to investigate the importance of the teachers' beliefs they hold about general objectives of physical education curricula. Therefore, this study aims to reveal individuals' interpretations of how Omani physical education teachers perceive the main objectives of physical education in the Omani schools.

## Literature review

The aims or objectives of learning and teaching are the essential aspect of any educational process. They describe what students should be able to do, know and feel as a result of the teaching and learning process (Melograno, 1996). Teachers need to understand the overall objectives that they should achieve in their daily teaching process. Whitehead (2004) views the aims or purposes of teaching and learning as the starting point for teachers to consider in planning and delivering the content of physical education. Researchers in broad educational disciplines and in the physical education field classify the aims of learning under three main taxonomies.

The first is the cognitive domain, in which the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of skills are the dominant objectives. The second is the affective domain, in which feelings, emotions, attitudes and values are the objectives that teachers should consider. Finally, the psychomotor domain encompasses basic fundamental movement skills and physical abilities (Melograno, 1996).

It is presumed that teachers' views of the objectives of their subject which they teach at schools is based upon their beliefs about schools as institutions, the role of students in those organizations, and the purposes of education in culture, as well as any other perceptions that teachers may hold about the teaching and learning process (Griffy and Housner, 1999). Beliefs about subjects refer to what it means to know the subject or be able to perform certain professional tasks within that subject matter. The importance of teachers' beliefs concerning subject matter either in physical education and or in educational disciplines have been addressed in the research on teaching and teacher education programmes (Clark and Peterson, 1986; Ernest,1989; Lambdin, and Steinhardt, 1991; Calderhead,1996; Hodgerskulinna and Silverman,1999; Stephen and Prithwi Raj, 1999)

The physical education profession is not isolated from the studies which concentrate on understanding teachers' beliefs regarding the objectives of physical education. Lambdin and Steinhardt (1991) examined elementary and secondary physical education teachers' beliefs about the goals of their subject. The results revealed that teachers believed the most important goals of physical education are: to develop basic motor skills, to stay physically fit, to increase voluntary participation in physical activity, and to develop students mentally, socially, and emotionally. Similar findings were reported by Placek et al (1995), who investigated pre-service physical education teachers' beliefs about the purposes of physical education. Their results indicated that the teachers ranked learning motor skills and physical fitness as the most important purposes of school physical education. The lowest rated goals were to have students develop awareness in movement and develop knowledge of concepts for self-directed learning.

Xiang, Lowy, & McBirde (2002) examined pre-service classroom teachers' beliefs about elementary physical education programmes and the impact of a field-based elementary physical education methods course on their beliefs.

The results indicated that the pre-service classroom teachers held similar beliefs about the value and purposes of elementary physical education. The most valuable purposes from their point of view are (a) that elementary physical education makes a contribution to the development of the whole child, (b) it provides children with opportunities to learn about health and fitness, (c) it allows students a fun break from regular school activities, and (d) it develops motor and social skills.

Another study pertaining the in-service teachers' beliefs in physical education was conducted by Doolittle et al (1995) to investigate teachers' beliefs about the purposes of physical education. The participants of the study revealed that their training was more focused on traditional team sports, games and fitness programmes, with less emphasis on individual sports and "expressive" or non-competitive activities. Teachers' responses about the purposes of physical education were divided into the categories of learning skills, named specific activities, and fitness. The purpose most frequently expressed by the participants was for students to learn skills or activities. Developing physical fitness and knowledge components were also ranked at the top of the purposes of learning physical education.

Further study recently conducted by Kulinna, Brusseau, Ferry and Colthran (2010) aimed to investigate pre-service teachers' belief systems toward curricular outcomes for physical education programs. The sample consisted of (486) preservice teachers from eighteen United State colleges and universities shared their beliefs about curricular outcomes. The result suggested that physical activities and fitness outcomes were the most important goals of physical education curricular. It revealed also that these goals followed by such another important goals like self-actualization, motor skill development and social development.

At the Omani context, and in a paper presented at ISTAPS conference in Algeria, Alrawahi (2009) investigated Omani student teachers and teachers' beliefs toward objectives of physical education programmes. The result revealed that student teachers and teachers hold stronger beliefs regarding variety objectives of physical education. The two types of participants, both, agreed that physical education school programmes should provide students with necessary skills and knowledge; offering a variety of opportunities for all students; and improving physical fitness. The result also showed

that the majority of both types believed that teaching physical activities for all students is at the top of academic learning objectives that should be considered in physical education Omani school programmes. Further result of this study also showed that there is a fully agreement between student teachers and teachers in considering that the spreading of cultural awareness of sports among students and developing social and personal objectives are main objectives of physical education school programmes. Moreover, finding indicated that there were differences between the beliefs of student teachers and teachers regarding the objectives of physical education for health and fitness. While the majority of student teachers believed that improving physical fitness was one of the objectives of physical education, only few teachers believed this to be essential.

Similar finding to some extent revealed by Al-ragad (2008). He conducted a study to identify the actual scopes of sports curriculum for all students,or B.A level at some faculties of Al Balq'a Applied University in Jordan. The result showed that participants hold positive attitudes toward physical education objective's curricula. They mentioned that physical education curricula objectives concerned of cognitive and psychomotor domains, concerned of social and affective domains and it concerned of health benefits.

It appears from the above literature that understanding the beliefs of teachers about the basic objectives of physical education has attracted considerable attention from researchers. This attention to teachers' thoughts and beliefs may be attributed to the recognition of the role that the objectives of subjects play in designing or developing school programmes and in guiding teachers' instructional practice. Therefore, I would suggest that teaching physical education would be important if physical education teachers agreed on a single set of goals for their students. That is, if they all agreed that school physical education programmes should accomplish certain and specific objectives, then this agreement will lead to designing a more logical and applicable curriculum. For example, if teachers believe that students should be skilled and fit, they will structure their lesson plans to teach skills and fitness content, provide opportunities for practice, and test students to ensure that they have learnt these skills. On the other hand, if teachers believe that students should learn to work with and respect others, then, they will also structure their lesson plans to emphasize the social skills needed to play

together. It is important, though, to understand what objectives physical educations teachers believe are important.

## Statement of the problem

Despite the importance of studying teachers' beliefs and the official efforts made by the Ministry of Education to improve physical education in Oman (from 1970, when the official educational programmes were initiated, until 1998 when the final reforms were made and the new national curriculum was put into effect), there is little evidence that any of these changes took teachers' voices into account. Also, from my experience as a supervisor of teacher trainees, and as a teacher of physical education, I found that most teachers hold negative beliefs about physical education curricula in Omani schools. These negative views of Omani teachers may be related to the mismatching between the philosophy of physical education curricula as stated by policy makers and the teachers' personal beliefs toward these curricula. Moreover, by analytic view toward physical education curricula in Oman, it is clear that some general objectives stated in curricula are not reflected in content. That means, there are some general objectives mentioned in syllabus, but they have no indication of how they approached in the curricula content. Examples of some general curricula objectives stated in syllabus but there is no content or activities related to them are; integration of physical education objectives curricula with objectives of other school subjects; taking care of students with special needs and providing the opportunities for developing their performance (Ministry of education, 2007). These are just few examples of objectives stated in curricula but are not reflected in content or activities in the curricula teachers guide to achieve them. Furthermore, from the best knowledge of the researcher, very little attention has been made to understand Omani physical education teachers' beliefs about physical education curricula objectives except the study mentioned in the literature which conducted by the researcher himself but it was a comparison study between student teachers and teachers . Thus, to get more comprehensive understanding of how Omani physical education teachers perceive the general objectives of physical education curricula in Oman and with taken more variables into account that have not been studied before, this study aims to aims to answer

the following research questions:

* **What beliefs do Omani teachers hold about the general objectives of physical education curricula?**
* **Do their beliefs toward the general objectives of physical education curricula differ according to their gender?**
* **Do their beliefs toward the general objectives of physical education curricula differ according to their teaching experiences?**

## Significance of the research

Empirical studies have affirmed that investigating teachers' beliefs about their subjects can have outstanding results on determining the effectiveness of teaching and learning programmes and the ways in which they approach the teaching and learning process (Foss and Kleinsasser, 1996; O'Sullivan, 2003; Tsangaridou, 2006). However, it is surprising that very little qualitative research has been conducted to investigate teachers' beliefs about physical education subject in worldwide settings (Tsangaridou, 2006). The Omani context is not an exception; almost no attempt has been made to describe Omani teachers' beliefs about their subjects. This study can thus add another dimension to belief studies by understanding Omani physical education teachers' beliefs toward physical education general objectives. Also, by gaining an understanding of teachers' beliefs may help reveal and explain perspectives on the beliefs and perceptions they hold towards teaching and learning physical education. Moreover, by conducting the research through exploring teachers' beliefs, curricula planners may be able to identify the needs of teachers regarding content, activities, teaching methods etc. Furthermore, the findings can be used to shed light on the effectiveness of physical education curricula current implemented and help identify the pitfalls that teachers encounter during teaching practice. Finally, the results of this study are expected to demonstrate the belief orientations of physical education teachers in the Omani context that frames all aspects of their professional practice in a way that either hinders or enhances the implementation of physical education programmes in schools.

## Methodology

### Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all physical education teachers who work at the Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman from at different educational regions. According to Ministry of education statistic, the total numbers of physical education teachers who work at different reigns are (261) (Ministry of education, 2009). The participants of this study were randomly chosen from the total number of physical education teachers. A questionnaire used in this study distributed to a random sample consisted of (230) and only (157) were returned including (76) male and (81) female. For the interview sample, seventeen teachers (12 male) and (5 female) were chosen to be interviewed.

### Data collection

The data of the current study has been collected through the use of a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire was designed based on different resources including (Wthitehead, 2006, Ministry of education, 2005, Lambdin, & Steinhardt, 1991, Placek, Doolittle, Ratliffe, Dodds, Portman, & Pinkham, K.M. 1995). It is divided into two main parts: the first part is a general introduction to the questionnaire that provides instructions to the way the questionnaire can be answered. This is followed by questions on the demographic information such of the participants. Part two includes 12 statements aimed to elicit teachers' beliefs about the general objectives of their physical education school curricula. To check the validity of the questionnaire, it was reviewed by nine physical education lecturers from Sultan Qaboos University and four teachers from the Ministry of Education, who have wide and extensive experience in teaching and supervising in the field of physical education. Their responses were used to assess the instrument's content and to determine whether the statements elicit the information needed to answer the research questions. This process has resulted in some necessary modification based on the jury members' suggestions and the final form of the questionnaire was approved and

established. The reliability was obtained by calculating Cronpach's Alpha correlation coefficient and the overall score was 0.75, which indicates an acceptable level. The reliability achieved by distributing the questionnaire to a sample of (33) teachers who also work as physical education teachers but they were excluded from the study sample.

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted to elicit teachers' beliefs about the objectives of physical education curricula with seventeen teachers (12 male) and (5 female). Using this type of interviews has multiple functions. It enabled the researcher to get inside the perspectives of the interviewees, to generate hypotheses from such perspectives and to understand what the participants think is important for their own situations (Radnor, 1996). All interviews were conducted in convenient settings. For all participants, interviews took place in the schools where they were doing their daily teaching. Each interview lasted approximately 35-45 minutes, and was recorded on audio tape, followed by a verbatim transcription.

## Research design

In order to conduct this study, it is crucial to draw up a research framework that enables me to develop a sufficient richness of data that can assist me to identify and describe the belief systems of physical education teachers. Using triangulation (the use of several research methods to study the same phenomenon) is believed to be a successful approach to achieve the aims of this study. Researchers can choose to implement different types of triangulation including data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978 cited in Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998). In the current study, methodological triangulation was adopted, involving a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods, i.e. questionnaires and interviews.

There are many crucial aspects justifying the use of mixed methods in a single study. Firstly, it can be useful for getting further explanation and more detail about the phenomena being studied instead, of relying solely on statistical or interpretive findings (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Secondly, dependence on a single method would be risky as it only provides a limited view of the complexity of human behaviour and the situations experienced

by human beings (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Thirdly, different research methods have different strengths and weakness; therefore, combining more than one method improves the quality, integrity and trustworthiness of the research finding (Johnson and Christensen, 2004). Fourthly, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods can be used to maintain a balance between qualitative in-depth data, and quantitative data, to the extent to which insights can be generalized to include the wider population (Lewis, 1990).

## Data collection procedures

The questionnaire was distributed to the target sample during the academic year 2008/2009 from September until November. I distributed it personally and with the help of physical education supervisors who work in different educational regions as supervisors for physical education teachers.

All interviews were conducted in convenient settings. They took place in the schools where teachers were doing their daily teaching practice. Each interview lasted approximately 35-45 minutes, and was recorded on audio tapes, followed by a verbatim transcription. Seventeen teachers were interviewed and they varied from beginners to experienced teachers, and all drawn from the questionnaire sample. Most of the participants that were chosen to be interviewed were met once during their daily work, with permission for a further interview obtained if needed.

Various procedures were taken into account to ensure the success of the data collection. Firstly, permission from the Ministry of Education was obtained to facilitate the research project. After getting the permission, I personally distributed the questionnaire copies with the help of physical education supervisors. Also, I personally contacted teachers at their schools and arranged a mutually convenient time to conduct the interviews. I started each interview with a personal introduction and an overview of the study and its purposes and significance. Then, we selected quiet, comfortable and appropriate locations to encourage interviewees to feel free to expand upon their own answers. These were very important aspects to encourage participants to cooperate with me (Ritchie & Lewis, 2004).

## Data analysis

Data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively by using the SPSS software programme (v. 17) and then grouped with qualitative data obtained from the interviews. Qualitative data were analyzed using analytic induction and an interpretive analytic framework. The analysis and data interpretation processes followed in this study were based on Merriam's (1998) approaches for analyzing and managing qualitative data combined with the analytical stages of the grounded theory approach. For quantitative analytical purposes in this study, the following standards in the following table were used to describe Omani physical education teachers' beliefs toward general physical education curricula objectives.

Table (1) Standards for describing the quantitative data of the study results

| Mean range | Belief level |
|---|---|
| 1-2.33 | Low belief |
| 2.34-3.67 | moderate belief |
| 3.68-5 | High belief |

## Results

In the following pages quantitative and qualitative results of this study are presented. It is organised based on the questions of the study.

Question one: What beliefs do Omani teachers hold about the general objectives of physical education curricula?

To get an answer to this question, the results obtained from the questionnaire and the interviews conducted in this study are presented as follows:

**Firstly: Quantitative analysis of beliefs regarding the general objectives of physical education curricula**

The answer to this part was obtained by calculating the means and standard deviation of participants' response to the general objectives of physical education curricula listed in the questionnaire used in this study. More details exemplify in the following table:

Table (2) Means and Standard deviation of teachers' beliefs about general objectives of physical education curricula

| N | Statements | Teachers N=157 | | Belief level |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | M | Std.D | |
| 1 | Providing students with necessary skills and knowledge to allow them to lead active lifestyles | 3.9 | .997 | High |
| 2 | Providing students with opportunities for having fun through physical activities | 2.6 | 1.07 | Moderate |
| 3 | Offering a variety of opportunities for all students (sport for all) | 4.6 | .656 | High |
| 4 | Developing the basic movement skills such as (throwing, catching and striking, jumping,etc) | 3.7 | 1.194 | High |
| 5 | Providing students with opportunities for developing interpersonal relationships such as cooperation. | 3.9 | .997 | High |
| 6 | Improving physical fitness such as cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, endurance, flexibility and body composition. | 3.7 | 1.062 | High |
| 7 | Influencing students' attitudes to achieve healthy living throughout their lives. | 3.4 | 1.236 | Moderate |
| 8 | Including opportunities to meet specific individual's needs and interests | 3.6 | 1.165 | Moderate |
| 9 | Preparing students to understand that winning is the most important aspect of physical activities. | 3.2 | 1.209 | Moderate |
| 10 | Teaching students to understand the physical development, structure and functions of the human body. | 3.5 | 1.384 | moderate |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | Utilizing physical activity for the development of individual psychomotor, cognitive and affective development areas. | 3.7 | 1.019 | High |
| 12 | Providing opportunities for developing educational values such as respect for others and making friends. | 3.3 | 1.229 | moderate |

Table (2) highlights the distribution of teachers' beliefs regarding the general objectives of physical education curricula. Generally speaking, the results show that teachers hold high to moderate beliefs regarding this domain. The findings indicate that teachers tend to hold higher beliefs regarding the following objectives; offering a variety of opportunities for all students (sport for all) (4.6);providing students with necessary skills and knowledge that allow them to lead active lifestyles (3.9); providing students with opportunities for developing interpersonal relationships such as cooperation (3.9); developing the basic movement skills such as (throwing, catching and striking, jumping .etc) (3.7); improving physical fitness (3.7); and utilizing physical activity for the development of individual psychomotor, cognitive and affective development areas(3.7)

The results showed that teachers possess moderate positive beliefs about the following objectives of physical education school curricula: a) providing opportunities to meet specific individuals' needs and interests; b) teaching students to understand the physical developmental, structure and functions of the human body; and c) influencing students' attitudes to achieve healthy living throughout their lives.

Further results indicated that teachers do not agree that the objectives of physical education curricula should be for fun or that winning is the most important aspect of physical activities.

**Secondly: Qualitative data about the teachers' beliefs toward the general objectives of physical education curricula**

This section explores how teachers perceive the general objectives of physical education in Omani schools. The results generated from interviews with the participants of the study were classified into five main categories: 1) academic learning objectives which focus on gaining knowledge about different sport activities in the cognitive domain) ; 2) cultural objectives;

3) social and personal objectives; 4) objectives of health and fitness; and 5) objectives of enjoyment and fun in physical education.
The following table outlines the various objectives of physical education as they were perceived by Omani teachers.

Table (3) the total responses of participants' beliefs about the general objectives of physical education curricula

| The general objectives of physical education curricula | Total mentioned by teachers (N=17) |
|---|---|
| **Objectives of academic learning** | |
| Teaching physical activities for all students | 14 (82%) |
| Teaching rules and principles of sporting activities | 8 (47%) |
| Identifying and developing talented students | 8 (47%) |
| **Cultural objectives** | |
| Spread cultural awareness of sport among students | 13 (76%) |
| Spread cultural awareness of sport among society | 10 (58%) |
| **Social and personal objectives** | |
| Developing social and moral skills | 15 (88%) |
| Developing personal characteristics | 7 (41%) |
| Linking physical education with the needs of society | 12 (70%) |
| **Objectives for health and fitness** | |
| Improving students' fitness | 3 (17%) |
| Promoting students' health | 14 (82%) |
| Implanting the concept of " sport for health" | 8 (47%) |
| **Objectives for enjoyment and fun** | |
| Make students happy in PE lessons | 11 (64%) |
| Physical education for fun | 2 (11%) |

## 2.1 Objectives of academic learning

Eighty two percent of the teachers (male and female) that participated in this study believe that the aims of the physical education school programme should be concentrated on teaching students physical activities as well as

the skills of different sports. They also believe that students should not only know the practical ways of performing physical activities and skills, but that they should also gain cognitive knowledge and understanding about these activities and skills. Majedah illustrated this by saying:

"I think the main objectives of [a] physical education school programme should focus on teaching students how to do different skills, including the theoretical and practical ways, because without knowing the technical way of performing skills..,students will not be able to practice successfully."

In the same domain, forty seven percent of the teachers believe that the aims of physical education in school should be to teach students the rules and principles of different sports. These teachers also commented that they met many students who did not understand the rules and principles of different sports, although they participate in these practices in or outside school. As Saeed noted:

"I think physical education should help students to understand the rules of different sports… Unfortunately most of our students in school don't understand the rules of activities and this state causes problems when they participate in sporting competitive activities at school. Also, even if they don't practice different sports in school, knowing the rules and principles of skills will extend their knowledge."

A further objective classified under this domain mentioned by eight experienced teachers who have been teaching for more than five years is that physical education should identify and develop student talents in various sports skills. In their view, this aim contributes to the establishment of a base for national and international Omani team clubs. Hasan said:

"The physical education school programme is a place for developing students' talents in different sports skills…. because we are a part of a society.., and many students have natural talents in different sports but they don't have a chance to improve them at home, so, the physical education class should be an appropriate place to develop those talents".

Similarly, Kawther commented:

In fact, I believe that school is a place for discovering talents, because it is an opportunity to choose players for clubs.

## 2.2. Cultural objectives

The cultural objectives of physical education are among the objectives of physical education that the Omani teachers believe to be essential. There is an agreement between four female teachers and nine male teachers that one of the main objectives of physical education school programmes is to improve students' cultural awareness of different sporting activities. In this vein, Salem said:

"Our problem in school is that all students like playing just football… and they don't like playing other sports… So, it is really important that we should try to change this matter by making students aware of the benefits of other activities."

Raya, a teacher said:

"I think one of the most important objectives of physical education is to spread the awareness of cultural sports among students and how physical education is important in their lives"

Similarly, fifty eight percent of the experienced teachers studied thought it was important to spread cultural and sporting awareness in society. They believed that students' cultural awareness of sport has an impact on the cultural awareness of society towards physical education. In this regard, Mansoor said:

"When students have positive attitudes toward doing PE activities, this will change their family attitudes… for example if one family has a son or a daughter who represents a school club in such sporting activities … and he or she has got a reward or a gift as a result of his/her achievement in that activity… they will feel proud of his achievement and I can say they will become a "sportive family."

## 2.3. Social and personal objectives

Involvement in physical education activities enhances and develops the personal and social characteristics of participants. The nature of participation in physical education activities is engaging in a rich environment that can be used to strengthen the social domain. Eighty eight percent of teachers in this study believed that developing social and moral skills (such as cooperation and respect among students) is one of the main objectives of

physical education school programmes. Saleh said;
"Physical education is all about developing social and moral aspects... in PE lessons when students play with each other… they learn how to work together… and how to help each other in order to win the game".
Forty one percent of the experienced teachers studied also believed that physical education is a good place for developing personal characteristics such as self-confidence and self-motivation. In this respect, Maryam noted;
"In my opinion, the aim of physical education is to enhance students' personal abilities... Because we need students who have confidence in order to do various activities particularly the hard ones … if they don't have confidence or motivation they will not be able to do any thing."
There is no doubt that physical education school programmes as well as other educational subjects serve the society in Oman and elsewhere. Thus,70% of the Omani physical education teachers in this study believe that physical education school programmes should be linked with the needs of Omani society. Similarly, they believe that one of the main objectives of physical education school programmes is to prepare students for being proficient players in different sports. As Othman stated:
"We in Oman do have successful players in many sports. So... I think that the physical education school programme is the right place to start preparing students to serve clubs and society."

## 2.4. Objectives for health and fitness

Physical education school programmes are considered to enhance students' health and fitness. Surprisingly only seventeen percent of the teachers participated in this study with less than five years' experience believed that physical education school programmes should work to get students physically fit and improve their fitness to enable them to engage in various sporting activities. In this vein, Rahma indicated that:
"we have students who are weak and they don't have the power to do different sporting skills, so I think we should focus on developing students' physical fitness."

Promoting students' health, and teaching them how important physical

education is to their health, is an objective that was viewed by eighty two percent of the teachers studied as an important part of physical education school programmes. Badryah, a teacher, commented that:

"Now we are facing many health problems in society, so, we should teach students the importance of physical education to their health. They should maintain healthy life styles at all times."

Experienced teachers do not only believe that the objective of physical education is to promote students' health, but, in addition, that it should be used to implant the concept of "sport for health" in students' daily practice inside and outside the school. Raya illustrated this by saying:

"Our job in school is not just to teach students skills and activities, but we should implant in their mind that sport is important….. because sport is important for our health… and as I am a sports woman... I am active… my work is better... so, when this becomes a belief in minds… Physical education or sport in general will be one part of my lifestyle. I found in research that women who do sport are more active and productive and that is why many countries give workers an aerobics class before they start their jobs.

## 2.5. Objectives for enjoyment and fun in physical education

Enjoyment cannot be excluded from physical education school programmes. This is because one of the virtues of physical education programmes is to encourage students to be active and feel happy while they participate in various sporting activities. Sixty four percent of the Omani teachers studied believe that one of the objectives of a physical education school programme is to provide students with activities that make them happy to participate in physical education lessons. They believe that developing the love of sport and of participation in physical education classes among students should be one of the top priorities for planners of physical education programmes. Nora, a teacher, clarified this by saying;

"I think that the central objective of physical education is get students to love physical education in school… this is because of the status of physical education and the belief that physical education is for fun, but many students have negative attitudes toward physical education, so this in my opinion is

the central objective of PE I believed in".

A similar comment was made by Hasan:

"Physical education is important because it makes you to feel happy and active… particularly for student females.. they don't have a chance to do exercise at home.. so, the appropriate place is in physical education lessons… for that I believe the physical education school programme should provide students with enjoyment."

On the other hand, there is a widespread belief that physical education is a discipline solely for play and fun. This attitude is not accepted by the majority of Omani physical education teachers, who attributed this belief to the marginalised status of physical education, the lack of equipment in schools, and the negative attitudes held in society toward physical education and the teachers themselves. They believe that in the past, the Ministry of Education in Oman did not give physical education priority as a core school subject such as maths or science. Similarly, some physical education teachers merely used to give students a ball and ask them to go to the pitch to play football. According to Omani physical education teachers, these factors have all contributed to the maintenance of the belief that "physical education is just for fun." Kawther commented on this:

"I don't agree that physical education is just for fun…yes this belief started in the past … and unfortunately there are many people who still hold this belief. We can say that after the huge improvement in physical education curricula...every thing has changed ….. the people who are responsible for physical education in the past did not give priority to it.. They did not value it ...also the PE teacher himself.. He used to give students the ball and said "go and play".. he didn't teach them any thing."

In the same arena, only 11% of teachers agreed that fun and play are important elements in physical education classes but that they should not be the sole objectives in physical education. Besides providing fun activities, students should gain subject knowledge about different sporting activities. Salwa mentioned that:

"Fun is an important part of physical education but should not be the only part. Beside fun, physical education should serve to improve student mentality and students' knowledge about sport skills and sport rules."

**Question two: Do their beliefs toward the general objectives of physical education curricula differ according to their gender?**

To understand statistical difference between male teachers and female teachers, means and standard deviation of participants' response toward general objectives of physical education curricula were calculated. Then, t-test was applied to see to whom statistical differences are. The result shows in the following table:

Table (4) Independent Samples T-test for the statistically significance of participants according to their gender

| Gender | Number | Mean | St-deviation | t | Sig.( 2-taild) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 76 | 3.68 | .859 | ,89 | .493 |
| Female | 81 | 3.59 | .810 | | |

The above table clearly states that there were no statistically significant between participants according to their gender. This result may be attributed to the similar vision held by all the participants toward the importance of physical education and its different objectives to be considered is designing and planning the Omani physical education curricula.

**Question three: Do their beliefs toward the general objectives of physical education curricula differ according to their teaching experiences?**

To answer this question, means and standard deviation were calculated according to teaching experiences' level (1-5 years), (6-10 years), and (11 years and above). Then, One-Way ANOVA was applied to find out statistical differences between levels of participants teaching experiences. The following tables show more details:

Table (5) means and standard deviations according to teaching experiences levels

| Levels of teaching experiences | Numbers | Means | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| (1-5 years) | 57 | 3.77 | ,82 |
| (6-10 years) | 54 | 3.62 | ,88 |
| (11 years and above) | 46 | 3.48 | ,79 |

Table (6). One-way ANOVA statistical result for the statistical significance

of participants according their teaching experience

| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 2.058 | 2 | 1.029 | 1.494 | .228 |
| Within Groups | 106.247 | 158 | ,690 | | |
| Total | 108.306 | 156 | | | |

As the above table shows, the results indicated that there were no statistical differences between participants' beliefs toward general objectives of physical education curricula according to their teaching experience. This result may be related to the similarity of vision held by the participants toward the importance of physical education and the variety of objectives that should be considered in planning and designing physical education curricula.

## Discussion

The findings obtained from the questionnaire pertaining to the participants' beliefs about the general objectives of the physical education curricula in the Omani context indicated that teachers held highly and moderately positive beliefs toward different objectives of physical education curricula. Accordingly, the mean of participants' responses toward all listed objectives ranged from a minimum of 2.6 to a maximum of 4.7. However, the results obtained from the interviews with 17 teachers regarding their beliefs toward the objectives of physical education were significantly consistent with the results of the questionnaire but with further additions.

The congruence of the findings of the questionnaire and interviews in this study is compatible with the findings of previous studies (e.g Lambdin and Steinhardt, 1991; Pleack et al, 1995; Xiang et al, 2002, Al-Ragad, 2008; Al-rawahi, 2009; Kulinna et al, 2010). These studies also concluded that teaching motor skills, developing physical fitness, and developing personal and social skills are among the objectives of physical education believed to be important by pre-service and in-service teachers. The compatibility of the findings of this study and previous studies might be attributed to different reasons. Firstly, this might be related to the realization of the importance of varying objectives of physical education to meet students' needs and interests. Participants might realise that different objectives of

physical education should be achieved through official framework like physical education curricula. Secondly, this result might be attributed to the awareness of different disease attack children in our modern life like obesity and thus officially consideration of different physical education objectives in PE curricula can offer sport opportunities to increase children participation. Finally, these general objectives of physical education curricula believed by Omani physical education teachers can be used as a starting point to provide children in schools variety of sport activities based on Omani culture.

The interviews result showed that the majority of teachers believed that one of the general important objectives of physical education curricula that should be taken into account when developing PE curricula is promoting students' health. This finding is supported by Laker (2000) who argued that "health-related exercises deserve to be more than just a 'theme' in the National Curriculum in physical education" (p24). This finding might be attributed to the awareness among participants that physical education in school is not given priority among students, and that the first step to change this situation is through a realisation of the importance of physical education for their health and life. Health problems among students are a worldwide situation and there is evidence that physical education activities make a positive contribution not only to students but also to public health (Trost, 2006). Without awareness of the contribution of physical education to health by students themselves, there will be limited opportunities to encourage them to participate in physical education classes.

Another remarkable finding regarding objectives is that 76% of the teachers studied believed that spreading cultural awareness of sport among students is one of the essential objectives of physical education curricula. This finding might be related to the awareness of the participants that physical education is a marginalized subject in Omani schools and thus any attempts to change the status quo of physical education might be not successful without the contribution of students. The growth of students' cultural awareness of different sporting activities is important to help teachers overcome the challenges they face in schools, since greater cultural awareness of different sporting activities leads to an expectation of changes and a rise in participation (Sparkes, 1991). Also, when students have a wide cultural

awareness of different sporting activities, this reduces the problems faced by teachers who wish to introduce any learning objectives they wish to achieve in their classrooms, or in teaching students any sporting activities. Students in Oman, as the results demonstrate, only like playing football, so teachers find difficulties in teaching students other sporting activities. Thus, if Omani students value sporting activities other than football, more participants in physical education lessons may be expected.

## Conclusion and recommendation

The findings of this exploratory study indicated that teachers' beliefs about the general objectives of physical education curricula may play a significant role in the successful implementation of physical education schools programmes (Tsangaridou, 2006). The results proved that the successful implementation of physical education programmes cannot be achieved without consideration of teachers' beliefs, which should be the first step in designing and improving school programmes. The results have validated Richardson's (1996) and many other researchers' (e.g. Pajares, 1992; Doolittle et al, 1993; Tsangaridou, 2006) arguments that beliefs are an important concept in understanding teachers' thought processes, classroom practices, and learning to teach.

The results showed that although curriculum planners had identified a variety of physical education objectives which consider teaching and learning in physical, social and intellectual domains, Omani PE teachers' beliefs have not been taken into consideration in the drawing up of physical education curricula objectives in terms of their applicability in practice. Thus, this result implies that if change is expected to be effective in practice, any innovations must be based in teachers' beliefs. As Penny (2006) has asserted, "it is a time of curriculum change instigated by teachers' in schools and/or colleagues in tertiary institutions" (Penny 2006, 565). Physical education teachers should not be expected to be the implementers of other planners' curricula objectives or philosophies, since they have their own philosophies and objectives for these curricula, which are their beliefs that they draw upon to interpret these curricula.

Another remarkable point to be mentioned here was that there is a dire need for interventions and strategies provided by policy makers and curriculum planners that aim to increase physical activity levels among students in schools and among communities in the country. Also, the results of this study imply the need for giving Omani physical education teachers the knowledge and skills to impart positive attitudes toward physical activities for their students to engage in health related behaviours and understand the principles underline these activities. Omani policy makers and curriculum planners can also benefit from recent summarisation of different frameworks that can be used to increase physical activity levels via groups and individuals which are provided by Biddle and Mutrie (2008).

Finally, future researches are needed to explore teachers' beliefs about the objectives of physical education at different school levels. In other words, there is a need to explore how Omani physical education teachers approach the general objectives of physical education curricula into practice. Also, it will be beneficial to conduct comparative studies between teachers who work in the basic education system and teachers who work in the general education system.

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# معتقدات معلمي الرياضة المدرسية نحو الأهداف العامة لمناهج التربية الرياضية بسلطنة عمان

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تاريخ الاستلام: 21-10-2010 تاريخ القبول: 19-04-2011

**الملخص**

هدفت هذه الدراسةِ إلى تقصي معتقدات معلمي الرياضة المدرسية حول الأهداف العامة لمناهج الرياضة المدرسية في المَدارِسِ العُمانيةِ. استخدم الباحث المنهج الوصفي والنوعي لتحقيق هدف الدراسة عن طريق تطبيق الاستبانة والمقابلة كأداتي جمع وعرض البيانات. اشتملت عينة الدراسة التي شملتها الاستبانة على 157 معلمًا ومعلمة، بينما شملت عينة المقابلات 17 معلمًا ومعلمة.

أظهرت نتائج الاستبانة وجود معتقدات عالية ومتوسطة لدى عينة الدراسة نحو الأهداف العامة المختلفة لمناهج التربية الرياضية في المدارس العمانية، بينما أظهرت نتائج المقابلات مع عينة الدراسة أن غالبية العينة من المعلمين أيضا يعتقدون بأن أهداف التعلم الأكاديمية لمناهج التربية الرياضة بالمدارس العمانية تأتي في مقدمة الأهداف التي يجب التركيز عليها عند تصميم مناهج الرياضة الدراسية بسلطنة عمان. كما أشارت النتائج إلى عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين معتقدات معلمي ومعلمات التربية الرياضية نحو أهداف مناهج التربية الرياضية تعزى إلى متغيرات النوع أو الخبرة التدريسية. تمت مناقشة نتائج الدراسة في ضوء الأدب التربوي المتعلق بدارسة المعتقدات حول أهداف التربية الرياضية وتقديم بعض المقترحات التي من شأنها أن تعمل على تحسين وتطوير الرياضة المدرسية في سلطنة عمان.

معتقدات المعلمين، الأهداف، التربية الرياضية