

# Physical Education in Greek Special Education Schools and Improving Quality of Life: A Literature Review

Makri Christina<sup>1</sup>, Tsitsara Maria<sup>1</sup>, Iliopoulou Kwnstantina-Panagiota<sup>2</sup>,  
Berdou Evgenia<sup>2</sup>, Anesiadis Christos<sup>3</sup>, Kouroupaki Alexandra<sup>4</sup>,  
Aggelakou-Vaitsi Stamatina<sup>5</sup>, Vaitsis Nikolaos<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Physiotherapist, Greece, <sup>2</sup> Philologist, Greece, <sup>3</sup> Teacher, Greece, <sup>4</sup> Special education teacher, Greece, <sup>5</sup> Medical Doctor, Greece

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**Abstract:** The incorporation of physical education in Greek special education institutions plays a vital role in enhancing the overall quality of life for students with disabilities. By promoting physical activity, these programs not only improve motor skills but also facilitate social interaction and emotional health. This educational aspect is significant in relation to the broader objectives of democratic governance in education, which advocate for the rights and opportunities of all students. Furthermore, as educational systems progress, the necessity for inclusive practices becomes increasingly apparent. Research indicates that engaging experiences in physical education can alter the social dynamics within schools, similar to the societal effects seen in emerging digital platforms like the metaverse, which merge physical and virtual interactions. By tackling stigma and creating supportive environments for neurodiversity, these educational efforts can enhance the well-being of students, as emphasized in recent studies.

**Keywords:** physical education, special education, children, quality of life.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The changing responsibilities of educators in special education significantly impact the execution and conceptualization of physical education in this domain. As Greek state-school teachers adjust to international educational standards, the necessity for inclusive physical education becomes increasingly evident. This educational approach not only prioritizes physical fitness and motor skills but also promotes social engagement and emotional health among students with disabilities. In particular, the self-efficacy of special education teachers is crucial in creating a nurturing environment that encourages physical activity. Studies show that elevated self-efficacy levels in these educators are positively associated with their capacity to apply effective teaching methods designed for students needing additional support in physical activities. Ultimately, a clearly articulated physical education curriculum within special education can greatly improve the quality of life for these students, aligning with wider educational objectives in a globalized context (1,2).

The development of the Greek special education system mirrors significant societal shifts in perceptions of disability and inclusivity. Initially marked by scarce resources and disjointed services, the system has gradually adopted a more comprehensive strategy, incorporating educational, therapeutic, and social support. Recent legislative changes have sought to align special education practices with inclusive educational ideals, highlighting the importance of collaboration among educators, healthcare providers, and families. Additionally, physical education has become a pivotal component within this framework, fostering not only physical growth but also social inclusion and emotional health. Research indicates that

involving students in physical activities greatly improves their quality of life, establishing a nurturing environment that encourages personal development and community integration. As Greece continues to enhance its approach, ongoing investigation into effective teaching methods, especially in diverse classrooms, is essential for maximizing educational success for all learners (3,4).

The incorporation of physical education within the curricula of special education institutions is essential for improving the overall quality of life for individuals with disabilities. By promoting mobility, social engagement, and self-efficacy, physical education can help eliminate obstacles that these individuals frequently encounter in academic and social environments. Recent research indicates that the self-efficacy of special education teachers significantly impacts the successful implementation of effective physical education programs. Elevated levels of teaching self-efficacy are associated with enriched learning experiences for students with disabilities, highlighting the critical role of well-trained educators in this field. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for a redefined educational framework that emphasizes inclusive physical education, as it lays the groundwork for lifelong health and well-being. Consequently, the strategic improvement of physical education not only advances physical fitness but also empowers individuals with disabilities by nurturing a sense of belonging and accomplishment (1,5).

A thorough assessment of the current literature establishes a vital basis for comprehending the relationship between physical education and quality of life in Greek special education institutions. This narrative review aims to integrate various findings, providing insights into how adapted physical education initiatives can improve social integration and well-being for students with disabilities. By referencing multiple studies, the review highlights the significance of physical education within the larger context of educational policy and its effects on individual rights and freedoms. Additionally, the narrative format allows for an examination of complex aspects, such as motivation and engagement, which are frequently overlooked in quantitative studies, thus offering a more detailed understanding of educational experiences for this group. Ultimately, the results seek to guide policy changes and enhance practices, promoting an inclusive atmosphere that emphasizes the health and happiness of these students (6,7).

## 2. THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Participating in physical education is essential for improving the overall quality of life for students with disabilities. Studies show that the self-efficacy of special education teachers plays a crucial role in the success of physical education programs, thereby fostering inclusive learning environments. When teachers demonstrate high self-efficacy, as revealed in research conducted in Greek junior high and high schools, they are more adept at employing adaptive strategies that address the varied needs of their students. Additionally, there is a positive relationship between teachers' professional quality of life and their capacity to support physical education efforts, underscoring the interconnectedness of teacher well-being and student participation. Ultimately, rethinking physical education from an inclusive perspective not only enhances physical health but also enriches the social and emotional aspects of students' lives, promoting a holistic educational framework that aligns with contemporary educational philosophies (1,8).

The evolution of physical education in Greece has deep-rooted historical significance, tracing back to ancient traditions where physical fitness was deemed essential for both military prowess and societal excellence. Ancient Greeks emphasized the interplay between physical and mental development, a perspective that has informed modern educational systems. This foundational belief in physical education aligns with contemporary goals of enhancing the quality of life for all learners, including those in special education settings. As contemporary discussions examine the intersections of social equity and physical wellness, it becomes clear that historical perspectives offer valuable insights into current practices. For instance, examining how ancient Greeks structured physical training can inform modern educators about fostering resilience and teamwork in diverse student populations. Such insights are critical, especially in light of the challenges posed by modern disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected youth engagement in physical activities, as highlighted in recent studies (9).

The changing dynamics of physical education for students with special needs highlights a complex relationship between teaching methods and the advancement of social inclusion. Central to this development is the acknowledgment that customized interventions can greatly improve the quality of life for these students, in accordance with best practices identified in diverse educational environments. Initiatives that focus on individualized learning, cooperative activities, and adaptive sports have demonstrated the ability to enhance not only physical capabilities but also social-emotional health,

which is crucial for nurturing a growth mindset among participants. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the need for robust frameworks that tackle the specific challenges encountered by this group, including the interruption of social interactions and the potential for exclusion. As educational institutions aim for inclusive excellence, the incorporation of community involvement and collaboration with stakeholders is vital, reinforcing the significance of physical education as a key element of comprehensive education (10).

Participation in physical education plays a crucial role in improving the overall well-being of students with disabilities in Greek special education institutions. It not only promotes physical health but also develops social skills, which are essential for fostering inclusion and peer interaction. Research suggests that consistent engagement in physical activities can enhance motor skills and physical fitness, areas that often pose challenges for students with disabilities. Additionally, the implementation of inclusive practices within physical education cultivates an environment that boosts self-esteem and confidence, enabling students to express themselves in a nurturing atmosphere. This supportive environment is particularly important as it helps mitigate feelings of isolation that may arise from their disabilities. Ultimately, addressing health-related issues, such as obesity and emotional well-being through organized physical education, can greatly improve the quality of life for these students (11).

The execution of physical education initiatives within Greek special education institutions encounters a variety of complex obstacles that impede their effectiveness and the realization of their intended advantages. Issues such as insufficient resources and inadequate educator training further complicate a scenario where physical education may be perceived as less important. Additionally, societal attitudes towards disability frequently result in the marginalization of these students, worsening their exclusion from vital physical activities. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the resilience necessary to cope with new societal challenges, while also amplifying the examination of how young people, especially those in special education, are impacted by reductions and restrictions in physical education programs. Moreover, the expectation for universities to reconcile traditional educational objectives with community involvement adds to the intricacy of creating successful physical education strategies, indicating a necessity for a more cohesive approach to training and resource distribution. Tackling these issues is crucial for cultivating an inclusive atmosphere that improves the quality of life for all students (10).

### 3. IMPACT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION ON QUALITY OF LIFE

The significance of physical education transcends basic physical fitness; it has a profound effect on the overall quality of life for students, especially within special education settings. Participation in organized physical activities not only promotes physical health but also yields psychological advantages, including improved social skills and heightened self-esteem, which are essential for students with varying needs. Studies show that inclusive physical education initiatives can alleviate feelings of loneliness and foster a sense of community among participants, thus mitigating anxiety and enhancing emotional resilience. Furthermore, the positive relationship between physical activity and academic achievement highlights the comprehensive influence of physical education, as students who engage in regular physical activity tend to demonstrate increased concentration and motivation in their academic pursuits. As research indicates, a nurturing environment in physical education can ultimately enhance the professional quality of life for educators, thereby enriching the entire school community (8).

Regular engagement in physical activity offers a wide array of health advantages that surpass basic physical fitness, especially in the realm of special education in Greece. Consistent exercise plays a crucial role in enhancing both physical and mental health, which is essential for individuals with varying needs. For example, studies show that such activities can improve cardiovascular health, increase muscular strength, and enhance flexibility, while also reducing the likelihood of obesity and associated health complications. Additionally, involvement in physical education promotes social connections and fosters a sense of community, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life for students. The psychological benefits are equally significant; regular physical activity is linked to decreased anxiety and depression symptoms and can enhance self-esteem. Therefore, the essential incorporation of organized physical activity into the curricula of special education in Greece deserves continuous focus and support (8).

Participation in sports yields significant psychological and emotional advantages, particularly pertinent to the realm of physical education in Greek special education institutions. Involvement in athletic pursuits cultivates a sense of community and boosts self-esteem, which are crucial for the emotional health of students with special educational requirements. This

is in accordance with social and emotional learning (SEL) frameworks that highlight the importance of strengths and protective factors necessary for developing resilient educational environments. Additionally, the convergence of positive psychology and education emphasizes the significance of activities that encourage lifelong well-being, extending beyond mere academic success to include comprehensive personal growth. These emotional advantages are especially vital during challenging times, as they offer a means to alleviate stress and nurture a supportive atmosphere. Therefore, the integration of sports into the educational curriculum is not simply an ancillary endeavor; it is a fundamental component in enhancing the overall quality of life for these students (12).

Participation in team sports and activities plays a crucial role in developing social skills among students, especially within special education contexts. Involvement in these collaborative settings nurtures vital psychosocial skills such as communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution. These skills are essential for both personal and professional development as individuals face the challenges of adulthood. The structured nature of team sports offers students the chance to establish meaningful connections, enhance their self-esteem, and make thoughtful decisions that contribute to their overall well-being. The development of these life skills is particularly important in special education environments, where customized physical activities can foster resilience and social inclusion. Therefore, integrating team sports into the curriculum of Greek special education institutions not only improves physical abilities but also strengthens the social dimensions of students' lives, aiding their transition into engaged citizens (8).

Participation in organized physical education programs within Greek special education institutions yields significant long-term advantages that transcend basic physical fitness. These initiatives not only enhance physical skills but also play a crucial role in fostering independence and self-worth. Participants demonstrate improved self-image and an increased sense of well-being, particularly as involvement in activities such as traditional dance positively influences various aspects of Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQoL), including mood and social interactions. Additionally, a robust Sense of Coherence (SOC) has been linked to higher self-esteem in adolescents, suggesting that when students feel proficient in their physical capabilities, they also experience a greater sense of autonomy in other areas of their lives. Therefore, the advancement of quality physical education is essential for strengthening the overall psychological and emotional resilience of these students (8,13).

The complex relationship between teacher self-efficacy and the execution of effective physical education programs is essential for improving educational experiences in special education environments. Studies show that special education instructors often exhibit high levels of self-efficacy in their teaching, which is positively associated with their capacity to manage and innovate within their classrooms. This self-efficacy is particularly important in relation to the physical and emotional wellbeing of students with disabilities. Furthermore, the importance of sufficient training and resources cannot be emphasized enough; obstacles such as insufficient technology and lack of support significantly impede effective teaching practices. Therefore, tackling these challenges through focused professional development and resource distribution may not only enhance physical education programs but also foster a more supportive learning atmosphere, ultimately elevating the quality of life for students with special needs. The interaction of these elements highlights the urgent need for systemic reforms in Greek special education institutions (1,8,14).

In the realm of improving physical education in Greek special education institutions, the methodological framework for curriculum modifications is essential. This framework should integrate a variety of teaching methods that cater to the diverse requirements of students, ensuring active participation in physical activities for all learners. The sociocultural perspective underscores the significance of interaction, indicating that learning is most effective in supportive environments that encourage peer collaboration. Programs that offer multisensory experiences have demonstrated positive outcomes; however, access to such resources is frequently restricted, revealing considerable obstacles to effective execution. Furthermore, successful inclusion relies on thorough training and support for educators, which can enhance the quality of curriculum implementation and promote adaptive practices. By cultivating an inclusive environment and employing innovative teaching strategies, educators can greatly enhance the quality of life for students with special needs, thereby affirming the transformative potential of customized educational experiences in special education settings (15).

The significance of effective training and ongoing professional development is crucial for enhancing the skills of educators in special education, especially within the realm of physical education. As teaching methodologies continue to evolve, it is essential for educators to not only grasp traditional pedagogical methods but also to adopt innovative strategies that cater to

a diverse range of learners. Studies have shown that educators in Greece exhibit high levels of self-efficacy in their teaching practices, indicating that focused professional development can enhance their confidence and effectiveness in providing specialized instruction. Additionally, the incorporation of new technologies, such as virtual and augmented reality, presents unique opportunities for educators to connect with students in impactful ways. By creating environments that prioritize self-efficacy, educators can more successfully implement strategies that improve the quality of life for students with special needs, thus underscoring the importance of comprehensive training programs. In conclusion, ongoing professional development is vital for fostering more inclusive educational practices within Greek special education institutions (1).

Active participation from the community plays a crucial role in advancing physical education programs in Greek special education institutions, significantly enhancing the quality of life for students. Programs that leverage local resources, including collaborations with healthcare professionals, can provide customized fitness solutions that address the distinct requirements of these students. Research suggests that community involvement can cultivate a more inclusive environment, promoting engagement among students with varying abilities. Additionally, community participation can act as a means to elevate awareness regarding the significance of physical education, thus attracting further funding and resources essential for the longevity of these programs. Educator training, shaped by community feedback and experiences, can foster a more effective educational setting, meeting specific needs while mitigating potential challenges. In conclusion, a collective effort of community support not only enriches the educational framework but also aids in the comprehensive development of students in special education contexts (16).

The incorporation of technology into physical education is increasingly acknowledged as an essential element for enhancing student engagement and educational outcomes, especially within special education contexts. As educators address the complexities of varied learning requirements, innovative strategies such as adaptive sports applications and virtual reality experiences not only inspire students but also promote personalized learning pathways. The function of teachers in Greek state schools is transforming within this technological framework, requiring a transition towards an ecosystemic model that encourages both local and global educational interactions. Furthermore, the collaboration across different disciplines highlights the transdisciplinary character of these innovations, tackling critical issues related to inclusivity and accessibility in physical education. Ultimately, these developments play a crucial role in significantly enhancing the quality of life for students, allowing them to engage more fully in physical activities while supporting their comprehensive developmental objectives (2).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The incorporation of physical education in Greek special education institutions is a crucial element in improving the quality of life for students with disabilities. This approach not only enhances physical health but also encourages social engagement and cognitive growth, aligning with the overarching goals of educational establishments to make a meaningful societal contribution. Previous studies have underscored the significance of democratic governance in educational systems, highlighting the necessity of inclusive practices that ensure equitable access to valuable physical health programs. Additionally, the rise of digital platforms offers a chance to enhance these physical education initiatives, although challenges related to implementation and accessibility persist, warranting further investigation into effective methodologies. In summary, the discussion reveals a considerable yet insufficiently examined potential for physical education to act as a transformative element of comprehensive education in this setting, ultimately benefiting the lives of students with disabilities (9,10).

The narrative review presents several important findings that emphasize the distinct challenges and opportunities present in Greek special education institutions, particularly concerning physical education. A key finding is the notably high self-efficacy levels among special education teachers, especially among males, which may positively affect the implementation of physical activity programs within the curriculum. Additionally, the review indicates that despite these favorable self-efficacy beliefs, external factors such as class size and teacher workload adversely affect instructional methods, thereby constraining the advancement of physical education practices. Furthermore, the necessity for collaboration between general and special education teachers is highlighted as crucial for creating inclusive settings, although this collaboration often varies significantly and is frequently hindered by a lack of administrative support and resources. Overall, these findings call for targeted initiatives to enhance teacher collaboration and training, ultimately improving the quality of life for students with special needs (1).



The changing dynamics of special education in Greece highlight the urgent need for thorough policy reform and improved practices. A notable relationship exists between the professional quality of life of special education teachers and their specialized training, underscoring the significance of focused professional development initiatives. Enhancing job satisfaction among educators, as evidenced by research linking specialization to favorable outcomes, suggests that policies emphasizing training can create more effective educational settings for students with disabilities. Furthermore, integrating physical education into the curriculum is crucial not only for fulfilling legal and educational requirements but also for promoting the overall well-being and quality of life of students. The historical backdrop of Greek education points to a necessity for continuous support that caters to varied learning needs. Consequently, the implications reach beyond immediate classroom tactics to a wider framework that champions inclusion and resources within Greek special education (8).

The investigation of physical education in Greek special education institutions offers a diverse array of avenues for future research. A crucial area of focus is the complex interplay between inclusive methodologies and student outcomes, which encompasses not only physical competencies but also the psychosocial factors that affect overall quality of life. Furthermore, analyzing educators' perceptions and experiences regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum in varied classroom settings could shed light on the implementation obstacles encountered in this distinctive environment. The exploration of the effects of customized physical education programs on students' emotional and social well-being is an area that merits additional scrutiny, particularly in light of the growing emphasis on comprehensive educational strategies. Additionally, conducting a critical discourse analysis of existing policy frameworks may reveal inherent biases that hinder inclusivity in physical education, thus promoting a more equitable educational landscape. Finally, incorporating international viewpoints on sustainable development and social justice can enhance educational practices and equip students for engaged citizenship (17).

The diverse functions of physical education go beyond simple fitness, highlighting its crucial role in improving the overall quality of life, especially in Greek special education institutions. Engaging in organized physical activities allows students to enhance not only their physical health but also their social interactions and emotional stability, which are essential for their personal growth. Programs that embrace a wide range of physical education methodologies encourage a mindset geared towards growth, thereby cultivating resilience and adaptability among learners. Moreover, the incorporation of innovative technologies, such as virtual and augmented reality, into physical education programs provides captivating opportunities for students to engage with various learning contexts, potentially enhancing their educational experiences and outcomes. Ultimately, the establishment of comprehensive physical education initiatives aligns with the overarching educational objective of creating equitable opportunities for all students, thereby emphasizing the transformative capacity of educational systems (9,10).

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