

Effect of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusion on the Practice and Success Levels of Children With and Without Disabilities in Physical Education

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Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the relationship between physical education teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of children with mental disabilities in physical education settings and the amount of practice attempts performed and the levels of success attained by these students compared to their non-disabled peers.

Methodology

The study utilized a mixed-methodology and was conducted in six distinct phases:

- I: establishing inter- and intra-rater reliability, questionnaire selection, permission approval from the University IRB and school district superintendents, and the selection of the TGMD-II (Ulrich, 2000) as a reference of skill mastery levels;
- II: questionnaires from physical educators, selection of teachers who met the specified criteria and the distribution of consent forms
- III: collection of consent forms, student selection, identification of student's skill levels, and the criteria for success according to the teacher's definition and the mastery percentages presented in the TGMD-II;
- IV: verification of student skill levels and the collection of data on the number of practice opportunities and success levels;
- V: interviewing of four teachers (two from each end of the "Attitudes Towards Inclusion" questionnaire data); and
- VI: data analysis (triangulation) and interpretation.

Results

RQ1: Teacher Attitudes and Student Practice Opportunities

- Students taught by teachers with positive attitudes performed significantly more practice attempts ($F(1,18) = 9.022, p = .008$) than students taught by teachers with less positive / negative attitudes toward inclusion.
- Students without disabilities performed significantly more practice attempts ($F(1,18) = 19.841, p = <.001$) than students with disabilities.

RQ2: Teacher Attitudes and Student Success (Teacher definition of success)

- No significant findings
- The teachers' definitions of success revealed that teachers with positive attitudes had higher expectations for the motor skill performance of their students.

RQ3: Teacher Attitudes and Student Success (TGMD-II definition of success)

- Students taught by teachers with positive attitudes performed significantly more successful practice attempts ($F(1,18) = 12.305, p = .003$) than students taught by teachers with less positive / negative attitudes toward inclusion (TGMD-II definition of success).
- Students without disabilities performed significantly more successful practice attempts ($F(1,18) = 24.148, p = <.001$) than students with disabilities (TGMD-II definition of success).

RQ4 (Interview data):

- Assertion 1: Teachers with positive attitudes had multiple focus areas or objectives.
- Assertion 2: Teachers with positive attitudes developed written, in-depth lesson plans.
- Assertion 3: Teachers with positive attitudes had taken APE classes in their formal education.
- Assertion 4: Teachers with positive attitudes desired all of their students to be on-task most of the time. Teachers with negative attitudes were content if student(s) with special needs was behaving and being safe.

Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Results suggested a relationship between teacher attitude toward inclusion and teacher effectiveness.

Teachers with positive attitudes:

- Provided all students with more practice attempts.
- Provided all students with a higher percentage of successful practice attempts.
- Had higher expectations for their students motor performance.
- Engaged in more in-depth lesson planning.
- Discussed the use of multiple teaching styles.
- Identified multiple focus areas or objectives.



Dissertation Committee

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Discussion

- More effective teachers provide their students with a higher amount of successful practice attempts (Rink, 1996; Siedentop & Tannehill, 2000).
- Students with disabilities receive less practice attempts (Temple & Walkley, 1999).
- Negative attitude teachers content if child with disabilities is being "busy, happy, and good" (Placek, 1983).
- Presence of a pygmalion effect (Mavi & Sharpe, 2000; Martinek & Karper, 1983).
- Student motor performance consistent with teachers' expectations (Cousineau & Luke, 1990).