
The attitude of Physical Education teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities

Atitudes de professores de Educação Física em relação à inclusão de alunos com deficiência

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Resumo

The current research aimed to investigate the attitudes of Physical Education teachers in the last years of elementary school in the municipal education system in Manaus regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities. The methodology used is characterized as descriptive research with a qualitative and quantitative approach and included the participation of 102 Physical Education teachers from the last years of elementary school in the Municipal Education Department of Manaus (Secretaria Municipal de Educação de Manaus - SEMED) who answered the PEATID III questionnaire. The analysis of the results was performed using descriptive statistics, with the median as a measure of central tendency. The results indicate that, in general, teachers (52.9%) have favorable attitudes to the inclusion of students with disabilities in Physical Education classes. However, 47.1% were neutral to this process.

Keywords: Attitude; Physical Education; Inclusive Education.

Resumo

A presente pesquisa teve como objetivo investigar as atitudes dos professores de Educação Física dos anos finais do ensino fundamental da rede municipal de ensino de Manaus em relação à inclusão de alunos com deficiência. A metodologia utilizada caracteriza-se como pesquisa descritiva com abordagem qualitativa e quantitativa e contou com a participação de 102 professores de Educação Física dos anos finais do ensino fundamental da Secretaria Municipal de Educação de Manaus (SEMED) que responderam ao questionário PATID III. A análise dos resultados foi realizada por meio de estatística descritiva, tendo a mediana como medida de tendência central. Os resultados indicam que, em geral, os professores (52,9%) têm atitudes favoráveis à inclusão de alunos com deficiência nas aulas de Educação Física. No entanto, 47,1% foram neutros a esse processo.

Palavras-chave: Atitudes; Educação Física; Educação Inclusiva.

Introduction

By signing the Salamanca Declaration, Brazil committed itself to transform Brazilian education into an inclusive system that aims to develop education for all (UNESCO, 1994). As a result, in recent years, Brazilian schools were challenged to reorganize themselves in favor of expanding access and democratization of education (ROSIN-PINOLA; DEL PRETTE, 2014). Although the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular school system is already guaranteed by law (BRASIL, 1996) there are still a series of difficulties to be overcome in practice, thus requiring full collaboration of those involved in the inclusive process, attracting collective efforts to build a school that encompasses all school diversity.

However, despite efforts to ensure quality inclusive education, in practice, it is possible to find teachers unprepared for the inclusive process, in addition to the lack of a support network to develop their work (BRIANT; OLIVER, 2012). It is important to note that the performance of teachers is permeated by different conceptions, with a highlight on their training not only in content and concepts, but also in skills, interpersonal relationships, and even their attitudes (ROSIN-PINOLA; DEL PRETTE, 2014).

Considering the relevance of the teacher's attitudes in the classroom and the importance of their role as an agent of change, it is essential that these attitudes are presented positively in the face of the inclusion process, otherwise there are high chances that the inclusion will not take place as expected and provided by law. It is important to mention that the teachers' attitudes have been studied in recent decades, being conceptualized as an acquired internal predisposition and understood as a way of acting and a way of thinking of the different subjects, which is linked to a set of factors, which can be modified (CARVALHO, 2011).

When dealing with the attitudes of teachers of Physical Education (PE), which is a mandatory curricular component of basic education (BRASIL, 1996), it must be emphasized that throughout its history, in Brazil, people with disabilities have lived on the margins of practical activities in this area because they do not have certain skills, acting as mere spectators, and being ignored in the educational context by the teachers themselves, who should act in a way to favor the development of the potential of all students (DARIDO; SOUZA JUNIOR, 2007). Thus, PE has assumed a character that is often exclusive, but, if on the one hand it is presented as a segregator, on the other it presents itself as a promising discipline for school inclusion (FIORINI, 2011; GUTIERRES FILHO et al., 2011).

In this way, PE is at a crossroads between the enormous possibilities of contributing to the inclusion process and the difficulties arising from a practice traditionally linked to the competitive values of sport (RODRIGUES; RODRIGUES, 2017). In addition to the exclusionary practices of PE, inherited over the years, it is possible to find other problems that hinder the strengthening of this curricular component, which is so valuable in education, which is the lack of investment in this component in schools.

Therefore, understanding the importance of PE in schools and based on the premise that the PE teacher constitutes a possible facilitator in the process of inclusion in education, the current study aims to investigate the attitudes of Physical Education teachers in the last years of elementary school in the municipal education system in Manaus regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Methodological Procedures

The study is descriptive research that aims to observe, record, analyze, and correlate phenomena or facts in a context, seeking to discover, with the greatest possible precision, the frequency with which they occur, without the researcher interfering in them (LIBERALI, 2008). The study also presents a qualitative and quantitative approach, as it is understood that in this way subjectivity is minimized and, at the same time, brings the researcher closer to their object of study, providing greater credibility of the data and enabling the understanding of the agents involved (PASCHOARELLI; MEDOLA; BONFIM, 2015).

The current research included the participation of 102 teachers, belonging to 75 schools, from six District Zonal Divisions (DZD). The participating teachers were selected based on the inclusion criteria: to be working, in 2018, in the last years of elementary school at SEMED and agree to participate in the research. The following exclusion criteria were adopted: teachers who gave up participating in the research; who missed the second data collection attempt; left any question on the questionnaire blank; or the ones located in the rural area.

For data collection, the questionnaire PEATID III (Physical Educators' Attitude toward Teaching Individuals with Disabilities-III) was used, designed by Terry Rizzo in 1993 and translated and adapted by Campos, Ferreira and Block (2014). The PEATID III contains two sections. The first consists of 12 questions regarding teaching attitudes towards people with disabilities, where participants have to express their levels of agreement or disagreement in relation to four conditions of disability: physical, visual, auditory, and intellectual (OLIVEIRA;

The attitude of Physical Education teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities PEREIRA; PINTO, 2017). The second section consists of 12 questions and assesses the participants' demographic and descriptive attributes. In total, the questionnaire consists of 24 questions relevant to the topic, which should be answered according to the opinion and view which the participant considers most appropriate.

Regarding the first section of the questionnaire, six items are positive phrases (1, 2, 3, 4, 11, and 12) and six items are negative phrases (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). As a way of valuing the validity of the mean score of the scale, the points for the negative sentence items were reversed. The statements in the first section are listed in conjunction with a score on the Likert scale ranging from one to five (1-completely disagree; 2-disagree; 3-neither disagree nor agree; 4-agree; 5-completely agree).

To classify the attitudes of Physical Education teachers towards the teaching of students with disabilities, the scores of all statements were added together to produce an overall result. Therefore, the scores that could theoretically be considered as favorable, neutral, and unfavorable were established, distributed as follows: from 48 to 86 very unfavorable; from 87 to 125 unfavorable; from 126 to 164 neutral; from 165 to 202 favorable; and from 203 to 240 very favorable (PINTO et al., 2014), with greater results indicating a greater perception in relation to the teaching of individuals with disabilities (OLIVEIRA; PEREIRA; PINTO, 2017). For each disability, the sum can range from 12-60, with the following score established: from 12 to 21 very unfavorable; from 22 to 31 unfavorable; from 32 to 41 neutral; from 42 to 51 favorable; and from 52 to 60 very favorable (PINTO et al., 2014).

The second section of the PEATID-III consists of open and closed questions in which participants are filled in blanks, by marking an "X" next to the most appropriate responses, or to categorize an attribute. These items are intended to obtain demographic information about the subjects, such as: sex, age, year of graduation, academic education, training/course in inclusive education area, perceived competence, and quality of experience.

To conduct out the data collection, we requested authorization from the Manaus Municipal Education Department (SEMED) and later mapped out Physical Education teachers working at SEMED. We initially applied the questionnaire to the teachers present in the continuing education courses. However, this form of collection did not seem very efficient, given the small number of teachers participating in the training courses.

Thus, we conducted the collection in 27 schools in the municipality that we identified as having Physical Education teachers through the mapping. After the teachers' voluntary

agreement to participate in the research, they signed the informed consent form - IC and then completed the questionnaires, which took an average of 10 minutes. It is important to note that data collection only took place after the project had been approved by the Research Ethics Committee under opinion: 2,868,575. For reasons of lack of teachers in continuing education, absence of teachers in schools, and following the suggestion of some DZD advisors who suggested that it would be possible to carry out the collection online, in an attempt to cover the largest number of teachers, we used three methods of data collection: collection in the Professional Development Division of the Teaching Profession (DDPM), collection in schools, and collection through the online questionnaire.

Questionnaire responses were tabulated on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Descriptive statistical analysis was performed using the minimum, maximum, median, frequency, and percentage.

Results and discussion

Through the data provided by Municipal Education Department (SEMED), 508 Physical Education (PE) teachers working in the municipal network of Manaus were identified, divided into Early Childhood Education, Early Elementary School years, last Elementary School years, and Special Education. Of this total, only 233 teachers work in the last years of elementary school and are assigned to seven District Zonal Divisions (DZD), being: DZD south (24), DZD center-south (22), DZD north (37), DZD west (28), DZD east I (42), DZD east II (49), and DZD rural (31). Teachers allocated in the rural area (31) were excluded because they are geographically distant from the headquarters of SEMED/Manaus, which would make access to them difficult, and thus, the expected number of PE teachers working in the last years of elementary school in Manaus for the research was 202 teachers. However, this study included the participation of 102 teachers, which represents 50.5% of the possible total, from 75 schools.

The 102 PE teachers were characterized according to in their demographic and descriptive attributes related to their training. Table 1 presents the profile of teachers regarding sex, age, year of graduation, Physical Education discipline focused on working with people with disabilities during graduation, extracurricular training, place of extracurricular training, experience in teaching students with disabilities, presence of family members or acquaintances with disabilities, and quality of experience in teaching students with disabilities.

The attitude of Physical Education teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities

Table 1 - Characterization of Physical Education teachers.

	Sex	Male (n=54)	Female (n=48)	Total
		%	%	%
Age	20-30 years	8.8 (n=9)	3.9 (n=4)	12.7
	31-40 years	29.4 (n=30)	26.5 (n=27)	55.9
	41-50 years	13.7 (n=14)	12.7 (n=13)	26.4
	51-60 years	1.0 (n=1)	3.9 (n=4)	4.9
Year of graduation	2001-2005	2.0 (n=2)	9.8 (n=10)	11.8
	2006-2010	17.6 (n=18)	15.7 (n=16)	33.3
	2011-2015	29.4 (n=30)	14.7 (n=15)	44.1
	Before 2000	3.9 (n=4)	6.9 (n=7)	10.8
Discipline during graduation	Yes	48.0 (n=49)	40.2 (n=41)	88.2
	No	4.9 (n=5)	6.9 (n=7)	11.8
Extracurricular training	Yes	26.5 (n=27)	20.6 (n=21)	47.0
	No	26.5 (n=27)	26.5 (n=27)	53.0
Place of training	SEMED	2.9 (n=3)	2.9 (n=3)	5.8
	UFAM	2.9 (n=3)	1.0 (n=1)	3.9
	PROAMDE	2.0 (n=2)	2.0 (n=2)	4.0
	Specialization	1.0 (n=1)	1.0 (n=1)	2.0
	Libras	4.9 (n=5)	4.9 (n=5)	9.8
	Other	9.8 (n=10)	4.9 (n=5)	14.7
	Did not answer	29.4 (n=30)	30.4 (n=31)	59.8
Experience with students with disabilities	Yes	39.2 (n=40)	35.3 (n=36)	74.5
	No	13.7 (n=14)	11.8 (n=12)	25.5
Family or acquaintance with a disability	Yes	30.4 (n=31)	21.6 (n=22)	52.0
	No	22.5 (n=23)	25.5 (n=26)	48.0
Experience rating	Very positive	11.8 (n=12)	5.9 (n=6)	17.7
	Positive	32.4 (n=33)	28.4 (n=29)	60.8
	Not positive	1.0 (n=1)	6.9 (n=7)	7.9

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

According to table 1, we found that the largest number of participants in the research are aged between 31 and 40 years (55.9%), trained between 2011 and 2015 (44.1%), and are male (52.9%). Male participants also represented the majority in the research results of Greguol, Malagodi and Carraro (2018). Although the results show that most teachers

participating in the research are male, it is possible to state that women already represent a very significant part of PE in terms of numbers and performances. In the beginning of its history, in Brazil, PE was a discipline designed for men, but today it is possible to identify that these barriers have been broken and both sexes occupy similar positions.

The teachers were asked whether during their undergraduate period they received disciplines related to inclusive practices as part of the curriculum component. According to the data, it was found that 88.2% received classes related to the theme of inclusion, with the discipline of Adapted Physical Education cited by most teachers. Similar results regarding the Adapted Physical Education discipline were reported in the study by Ferreira and Pereira (2016) which showed that the variable referring to training in special education is directly related to attitudes, pointing out that teachers who report the inclusion of this discipline during their undergraduate classes present significantly more positive attitudes towards teaching students with disabilities in regular classes.

This discipline provides for the performance of PE teachers with students with special educational needs and other needs (FIORINI, 2011). However, it is important to highlight that it is not possible to encompass the entire teacher training focused on inclusion in only one subject; it is necessary that this theme be present in other subjects of the course to be worked on in different ways in to form a qualified teacher to serve all groups.

When questioned about extracurricular training, it was noted that the majority (53.0%) did not participate in courses that promote inclusion and of those who participated only 2.0% had specialization in the area. The other teachers indicated that they participated in courses offered by the Municipal Education Department (SEMED), Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM), Motor Activity Program for the Disabled (PROAMDE), and in Libras courses.

Although it is understood that the teacher should assume a commitment to his own pedagogical practice and his continuous and permanent training, through the results of the research it is clear that in practice this is not happening. Training of PE teachers does not stop with the end of the undergraduate course. It is known that teaching knowledge is not only formed through the accumulation of knowledge, but especially through the interface between knowledge and lived experiences, that is, as the teacher acts, this interface reflects on his actions and reorganize them (MARTINS; DIAS; MARTIN FILHO, 2016).

The attitude of Physical Education teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities

It is then up to the teacher to seek academic, theoretical, and practical knowledge, through courses, specializations, master's degree, and doctoral degree, among others. The teacher needs to be committed to his own pedagogical practice, concerned with continuous and permanent training, participating and acting in a way that can promote pedagogical discussions in schools with students, parents, and the pedagogical staff. To achieve this, participation in extracurricular courses should not start only after graduation, it is necessary that PE students also participate in courses that promote their training and improve their pedagogical practice. According to Tardif (2014), there are at least three types of teaching knowledge: professional training (acquired in the training course), curricular (obtained through school programs), and experiential (comes from personal, social, and professional experiences), which should all be valued.

According to studies by Oliveira, Pereira and Pinto (2017) academics and PE teachers who undergo extracurricular training in the area of inclusive education demonstrate more positive attitudes in relation to those who did not have this possibility. The authors also point out that the combination of these two training courses, a discipline in the PE course with extracurricular training, can contribute so that students and professionals in the field have theoretical and practical knowledge, as well as favorable attitudes toward students with disabilities.

Regarding the experience of teachers when working with students with disabilities, it was found that most teachers (74.5%) have already worked with students who have some type of disability. These results are in line with the results of Ferreira and Pereira (2016) who point out that more than half of the interviewed teachers reported some type of experience during their practice as a teacher. These data reinforce the findings of Fiorini (2011) who pointed out that working with students with disabilities in PE classes is not an option but a reality, as students are being enrolled and are already part of the school context.

In relation to the family environment or social circles, it can be observed that 52.0% of teachers report that they have some acquaintance or family member with a disability. These results are similar to the studies by Ferreira and Pereira (2016), showing that teachers who have contact with people with disabilities may demonstrate more positive attitudes, influenced by a favorable context for inclusion. When investigating the quality of the teaching experience for students with disabilities, it was noted that 60.8% of the teachers said they had positive experiences related to inclusion, this percentage represents 62 teachers. According

to Fiorini and Manzini (2016) daily experience enables the PE teacher to find more suitable practices for students with disabilities. However, Greguol, Malagodi and Carraro (2018) point out that the simple exposure of the teacher to an inclusive classroom can lead to negative experiences due to the lack of support to make the experience positive. The authors also point out that negative and frustrating experiences towards students with disabilities can lead to reduced competence, which can be a detriment in the inclusion process, since teachers tend to avoid situations in which they do not feel competent.

Teaching experience is fundamental for gaining confidence in working with students with disabilities, however, although necessary, it is not defined as sufficient for confident and competent inclusion (FIORINI, 2011). According to Briant and Oliver (2012) the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education will depend a lot on how the school community promotes their participation in activities. In this sense Silva and Volpini (2014) point out that it is necessary to provide opportunities to students with disabilities so that they can develop their skills, be respected, and have the same rights and duties as the other students.

In relation to the identification of the attitudes of PE teachers working in a regular classroom, whether or not they have students with disabilities in their classes, table 2 presents the results regarding teachers' attitudes towards the different conditions of disability, showing the score for each disability, and a general attitude to all of them.

Table 2 - Classification of the Attitudes of Physical Education Teachers.

General	Very favorable	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Min	Max	Median	Classification
Attitudes	8.8%(n=9)	44.1%(n=45)	47.1%(n=48)	-	128	214	168	Favorable
Disability	Very favorable	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Min	Max	Median	Classification
PD	8.8%(n=9)	52.9%(n=54)	38.2%(n=39)	-	32	54	43	Favorable
VD	7.8%(n=8)	42.2%(n=43)	49.0%(n=50)	1.0%(n=1)	30	54	41	Neutral
AD	7.8%(n=8)	52.0%(n=53)	40.2%(n=41)	-	33	54	43	Favorable
ID	7.8%(n=8)	39.2%(n=40)	49.0%(n=50)	3.9%(n=4)	27	55	41	Neutral

Legend: Caption: PD = Physical Disability; VD = Visual Disability; HD = Auditory Disability; DI = Intellectual Disability.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

According to the data and using the median as a parameter for classification, the teachers surveyed were, in general, in favor of inclusion, with a median of 168. Adding the percentages of "very favorable" and "favorable" gives a total of 52.9% of teachers who identify themselves as having favorable attitudes and 47.1% neutral attitudes.

The attitude of Physical Education teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities

Regarding each disability, teachers were favorable to physical and auditory disabilities and neutral to visual and intellectual disabilities, with intellectual disabilities receiving the lowest research score, a minimum of 27, which is classified as unfavorable to inclusion. Physical disability received the greatest results in relation to favorable attitudes, with 8.8% of teachers “very favorable” and 52.9% “favorable” to the inclusion of students with these disabilities. In relation to those less favorable to inclusion, it was observed that 3.9% of teachers pointed out that the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in regular classes is unfavorable, with this disability receiving the most negative expression in the current research. Studies by Greguol, Malagodi and Carraro (2018) highlight that the type and severity of students' disabilities can influence the teacher's attitude towards the inclusion process. According to the authors, students with more severe conditions and which involve behavioral disorders and demand greater attention, such as individuals who are intellectually and visually impaired, elicit more negative attitudes on the part of teachers.

Thus, from our results and the statement of the aforementioned authors, we can infer that people with physical and hearing disabilities are seen as “easier” to work with since they do not have an intellectual impairment and can understand commands better. A person with auditory impairment can perform any activity without major alterations in the class (as the person has no motor impairments) and a person with physical impairment may have a motor impairment, but because the person has no intellectual impairment they will be able to perform other tasks requested by the teacher (which usually happens), such as assisting in the organization of material or in the actions of colleagues, that is, participating in the class even if in a tangential way (participates in the class, but not in Physical Education activities). In this case the exclusion is masked.

The same may not occur with a student with intellectual impairment who does not understand commands and will need more attention from the teacher, or a student with visual impairment who will also need greater adaptations to participate in activities. This reality is highlighted in the research by Alves and Duarte (2005) when interviewing visually impaired students about their participation in PE classes. The authors point out the lack of adaptation of games and materials, in addition to the lack of support from the teacher during classes, causing exclusion of the students because they feel unable to participate autonomously and independently in the activities.

The lack of adaptation for the participation of students with disabilities in PE classes leads to social isolation, which according to Alves and Duarte (2014) is pointed out by the students themselves as one of the main causes for exclusion from PE classes. What we want to emphasize here is that the problem is not in the presence of these students at school, but in the attitude of the teacher and not only related to inclusion, but to education as a whole. We had already realized this at the time of data collection when we faced the lack of interest of the teachers in participating in continuing education, or not wanting to participate in the research, as they did not want to stop to answer a questionnaire.

We asked whether the 49.5% of teachers who did not participate in the survey by not answering the questionnaire are in favor of inclusion or at least in favor of education. What we realized is that many say they are in favor of inclusion, but in practice few want to take the time to plan a class to include a person with intellectual disabilities or even a student with physical disabilities. This fact was observed during the data collection when we did not find the teacher at the school on the day that the Pedagogical Work Time (PWT) was intended, in other words, the planning day. Many teachers understand this day as a day off, a day when they do not have to go to work. Of course, we cannot say that the fact that the teacher is not at school means they do not plan, but we put forward this discussion because the object of our study is inclusion.

Therefore, the fact is that with the current inclusion policy, nobody wants to be seen to be unwilling to participate or against it, so attitudes that are negative are masked in neutral responses. It seems to be better to be indifferent to student participation than to be declared unfavorable. The results of our study reinforce these statements, as it was possible to observe a high percentage of teachers who were neutral, both in general and to each disability (table 2), which varied from approximately 38 to 49%.

Although most teachers reported positive attitudes, this high number of neutral results needs to be changed and an inclusive culture needs to start from the speech and attitudes of teachers. Neutrality by the main agents of inclusion, teachers, can lead to greater segregation and exclusion in the school environment. To avoid these problems, we believe that it is necessary to implement a change in attitudes in the educational community by investing in the human training of teachers, who are the main actors in the inclusive process, improving the relationship so that inclusion prevails. If these actions are not taken, exclusions will continue to occur in the school environment.

The attitude of Physical Education teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities

Students with disabilities are usually excused from PE classes, and those who manage to participate in these classes are relegated and tasked with carrying out parallel activities, while the other students participate in a different activity (GORGATTI et al, 2004). In view of this, we ask ourselves: is it acceptable for a student's participation to be limited to just attending or even organizing material, or being the ball boy in soccer? Is this inclusion? Our answer is no!

To support our answer, we agree with Fiorini and Manzini (2014) who affirm that in order to consider the participation of students with and without disabilities in PE classes, it is necessary to think of a plan before the class, more precisely in the teaching of “the way” and “how” these classes will be offered, and these thoughts refer to the teacher at the time of planning, and developing strategies and good working conditions. That is, for a student with a disability to be included in PE classes, the teacher needs to make a commitment to develop activities that allow the inclusion of all students.

Conclusion

Considering the above findings, it is possible to state that, in general, Physical Education (PE) teachers present attitudes favorable to inclusion, however, this situation changes a little when we separate attitudes according to type of disability. In relation to each disability, the teachers were favorable to physical and auditory disabilities, these being understood as “easier” to work with, and neutral to visual and intellectual disabilities, as these disabilities are seen as those in which students have a greater compromise to the execution of activities, with emphasis on intellectual disabilities which were classified as unfavorable, the lowest research score.

Our findings showed that most PE teachers are receiving students with disabilities in their classes and that in their undergraduate course they had subjects focused on inclusion. However, the minority have participated in extracurricular training courses and only two of the 102 participating teachers have a specialization in the area of inclusion.

Many questions originated from this research. Although we understand that there are various barriers to overcome, the main one is in the individual himself and his attitudes. The teacher's attitude in the classroom is the main point for the inclusive process to occur effectively. There are several barriers that may hinder the inclusion of a child in PE classes. These barriers range from public policies, going through architectural issues, to the pedagogical staff, managers, educators, and schoolteachers. The challenges are numerous,

but we believe that with positive attitudes that favor inclusion, the current situation can be transformed into a better and more inclusive school environment.

It is important to highlight that during the data collection it was possible to experience some problems that hindered the execution of the research, such as: schools without PE teachers, teachers absent from schools, teachers on leave or who did not agree to participate in the research. In view of the difficulties encountered during the research, we asked ourselves: did teachers who refused to complete the online questionnaire, or refused to answer the physical questionnaire, or who were not found at the school, despite their working hours, or who did not participate in continuing education courses, lack positive attitudes to work with students with disabilities? How are students with disabilities being included in the PE classes of these teachers?

The current study raises some concerns that we believe need to be answered. Thus, we recommend that future studies should go to the locations to observe the main challenges faced by teachers and children with disabilities.

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