

Teacher training of physical education in consideration to diversity in elementary education

Formación del profesorado de Educación Física en atención a la diversidad en Educación Primaria

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Resumen

La educación tiene el duro desafío de proporcionar una enseñanza de calidad para todas las personas y, en este sentido, no se puede desarrollar la educación a la diversidad como un componente más de las realidades educativas, sino como el motor de cambio en torno a las escuelas inclusivas. Los principales protagonistas son los maestros y maestras y sus actitudes, por lo que el objetivo de este estudio es analizar la formación del profesorado especialista en Educación Física en la etapa de Educación Primaria en cuanto a la atención a la diversidad e inclusión. Se trata de un estudio cualitativo que utiliza la entrevista personal en profundidad como herramienta para la obtención de datos, recogiendo la opinión de 4 especialistas en centros educativos públicos de Galicia. Los resultados nos muestran la escasa formación de estos docentes en el ámbito de la atención a la diversidad durante su etapa formativa en la universidad, paliada en gran medida por la iniciativa personal de formación continuada y reciclaje en este ámbito. La conclusión de la investigación indica que la actitud del docente es fundamental para intervenir con éxito en cualquier ámbito, y más en el de la atención a la diversidad e inclusión, más sensible de por sí y para la que el profesional debe prepararse a conciencia y, a donde no llega la educación formal, la formación continua y actualización del conocimiento se hacen imprescindibles.

Palabras clave

Inclusión; atención a la diversidad; Educación Física; Educación Primaria; actitudes y valores.

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Abstract

Education has the hard challenge of providing teaching with quality to all and, therefore, education for diversity cannot be treated as another component of the realities of education but as the driving force in terms of inclusive education. The main protagonists are teachers and their attitudes, so the aim of this study is to analyze the teacher training specialist in physical education at the stage of elementary education in terms of attention to diversity and inclusion. It's a qualitative study that used the personal interview in depth as tool for the obtaining of data, collecting the opinion of 4 specialists in educational public centers of Galicia. The results show us poor training of these teachers in the field of attention to diversity during its formative stage in the University, largely alleviated by the personal initiative of ongoing training and recycling in this area. Our experience tells us that the attitude of the teacher is fundamental to intervene successfully in any field, and more in the diversity and inclusion, more sensitive awareness of itself and for which the professional must prepare thoroughly, and where does formal education, continuous training and updating of knowledge are essential.

Keywords: Inclusion; attention to the diversity; physical education; elementary education; attitudes and values.

1. Introduction

The current educational model in our country proposes an open and flexible curriculum in order to provide an answer to the students' different individual special educational needs. Due to that, attention has to be paid to an aspect of the education that is increasing since 1990 with the implantation of the General Organic Law of the Educational System (LOGSE), that is, the inclusive school and the attention to diversity.

In this law it's indicated that the educational system, by means of the resource disponibility, should allow students with specific needs with educative support to reach inside the educational system the proposed objectives with a general character for everyone. Even though at the end, due to lack of resources, specially related to the teachers' training, it was reduced to a declaration of mere educative hypothesis and to a structural and formal transformation "of the system that, essentially, continued being the same, with the aggravating circumstance of asking to the teachers for some functions for what they were not prepared and they had void possibilities of success" (Pumares, 2010, p.234).

It was in 1994, in Salamanca, due to the World Conference about “Special Educational Needs. Access and Quality”, when the necessity to print out a change shows up, in a radical way, to the orientation of the educational system regarding its capacity to answer with equity to the students’ diversity who have the right to a quality school education without discrimination or exclusions. This vision of the school education, has been called bit by bit as “inclusive”, because of the contrast with the approaches based on dual educational systems and supported by the students’ exclusion that is considered “special” (Parrilla, 2002), trying to move along more cohesive and fair societies.

One of the factors that is essential for the development of the integrating process is “the teachers’ attitudes towards the integration” (Medina, 2006, p.87), due to the fact that, the first important step that is facilitating the integrating school is a positive attitude as regards teachers; attitude that is constructed as a result of a process of initial and lifelong training that contemplates its necessity.

2. Attention to Diversity and Inclusion

UNESCO (2016) defines the inclusive education as “a process orientated to answer to the students’ diversity increasing their participation and reducing the exclusion inside and from the education. It’s related to the presence, the participation and the achievements of all the students, with special emphasis placed on the one that, due to different reasons, is excluded or in risk of being discriminated”.

Authors such as Del Pozo (2011), Escarbajal et al. (2012) or Martínez (2011) point out that diversity should be appreciated in a very positive way and that is present at all the societies nowadays. It should be seen as a opportunity of improvement, learning and incitement for everyone, offering the students the possibility to develop their aptitudes to the maximum. Each person learns based on his own characteristics, that are bound to his genetics (González, 2001, 2008) and, due to that fact, diversity should be seen as something that is rewarding and natural (Pujolàs, 2004).

The Decree 105/2014, September 4th, that establishes the Elementary Education curriculum in the Autonomous Community of Galicia, in chapter II (*organisation and functioning*), the article 11 (*cross curricular elements*) points out that:

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The competent department in educational subject will encourage quality, equity and educative inclusion for people with disability, equality of opportunities and non-discrimination due to disability, flexibility measures and methodological alternatives, curricular adaptations, universal accessibility, designed for all the people, attention to diversity and all the measures that are necessary to attain that disabled students can access to a quality education with equal opportunities (Decree 105/2014, September 4th, that establishes the Elementary Education curriculum in the Autonomous Community of Galicia, p. 37419).

The inclusion is related to the equity term or equality of opportunities (Bolívar, 2012), to the access, the participation and the achievements of all the students, with special emphasis on those who are in risk of being excluded or discriminated, being its main concern to transform the culture, the organization and the educational school internship in order to consider the diversity of the students' educational needs (Arnaiz, 2012; Echeita, 2012).

UNESCO (2016) states that, in the inclusion, the key element is the diversification and non-individualization of the educational offer, as well as, the personification of the ordinary learning experiences with the purpose of promoting to the highest grade of participation of all the students, taking into account their individual needs.

According to Bolívar (2012), it's necessary to progress towards universal projects, where both curriculum and teaching consider from the beginning the diversity of the students' needs, instead of making a planning for the "average student" and later develop individual interventions in order to fill up the needs of certain male and female students or groups that have a place inside an educational purpose which is noted down in a homogeneity and non-diversity reasoning.

3. Adapted Physical Activity and Inclusive Physical Education

The adapted physical activity, in its broadest sense, is that speciality that works for a solution and establishing of the individual inequalities in physical activity, adjusting them to the context where they are developed (Pérez, Reina & Sanz, 2012). It intervenes in different fields (educative, sporting, leisure and precautionary) and it can give therapeutic, educative, competitive and recreational solutions among disabled people (Reina, 2012). It's just that

adapted Physical Education is essential to avoid social exclusion situations, causing a loss of opportunities for the people who need them, instead of improving their life and learning quality.

The school is, for boys and girl, a dynamic and entertaining space, all the subjects awaken interest in them in a greater or lesser extent. However, if we talk about removing inhibitions, dynamic game, cooperation, motor experiences and development of emotional, attitudinal or social competences (González & Portolés, 2014; Peña & Peña, 2014), the Physical Education subject is the most appreciated by the students (Reguero, 2015). In this area, we can see how, bit by bit, the students develop their corporeality and as they grow they acquire knowledge that contributes to their training as people.

In the school period, boys and girls spend most of the day in an educational centre; and this fact emphasises the importance of the teacher's work (Mendoza, 2009; Sánchez, 2007), who is the responsible for teaching a quality education for everyone, transmitting knowledge, attitudes, values and norms to the students which will contribute to their development as people and for the society that surrounds them (Arnáiz, 2012; Echeita, 2012).

The Physical Education session is presented as an opportunity to reveal the possible problems that can be found in the students or group; hence, the importance of the training of a Physical Education specialist teacher, who is a professional that must have the capacity to detect risk situations and tackle them immediately before they get worse and can come to a counter-productive end, causing negative attitudes, insecure students who have problems to adapt to and manage in the society (Molina, 2015).

In that sense, authors such as Díaz (2009) and Silva, Duarte & Alemeida (2011) show us their investigation results that are based on some teachers' experiences who have taken part in inclusion situations of disabled students in Physical Education lessons, observing the difficulties, barriers, doubts and lack in which they are involved facing diversity and they state that these are due to the insufficient training received, damaging the students with special needs.

On the previous theoretical basis, we consider as the objectives of this work:

- To analyse the Physical Education specialist teacher's initial training as regards the attention to diversity and inclusion, provided during his/her academic training.

- To analyse the Physical Education specialist teacher's lifelong training regarding the attention to diversity and inclusion, throughout his/her personal initiative.
- To study the Physical Education specialist teacher's attitude facing the attention to diversity and inclusion.

4. Material and method

4.1. Sample

This study sample is composed of 4 Physical Education specialist teachers in 4 Elementary Education Centres in the Province of A Coruña (Galicia) who have been working for more than 10 years as civil servants. The selection of these four informants was based on the knowledge of cases of students with specific needs with educational support in these centres.

4.2. Instrument

The interview is deeply used as a tool in order to obtain data (Flick, 2012, 2014; Vargas, 2012); it's structured in order to maintain a better control on itself and where the attention is focused on clarifying the interviewees' human (subjective) experiences about a specific theme.

4.3. Procedure

The interviews were made individually and sound recorded. The planning guide was the following one:

- Choice the educative centres, under the premise of having enrolled students who require attention to diversity.
- Choice the informants, with verified experience (10 or more years as a teacher).
- Access to the informants, by means of a previous visit in order to decide their voluntary participation in the study, their involvement, motivation, intention to help and so on.
- The interviews were prepared, with a predetermined outline, structured, in order to have a greater control on itself. However, we were conscious of this type of

interviews' results, where the rhythm is developed according to the answers, where the order and the questions are modified, adding new ones if it is necessary, where the questions and answers are repeated and so on and so forth.

The interview was prepared structured in three levels: the first one is in an introductory way, the second contains a block of questions about their knowledge as Physical Education professionals, and the third one is based on the topic itself, using more specific questions about the Physical Education specialist teacher's training with regard to attention to diversity, inclusion and their attitude towards this theme.

- Development of the interview, in the centre itself, in the place determined by the teacher, where he/she was comfortable and where interruptions had no chance (or as less as possible).
- Transcription of the interviews.
- Treatment of the data in a qualitative way, to order and manipulate the gathered information in the analysis, with the aim of establishing links, elaborating deductions and creating conclusions by means of the interpretation of the meanings obtained (Schettini y Cortazzo, 2015). A qualitative reduction of data was proceeded, the units of information were identified and assembled, they were regrouped by themes and finally it was proceeded to the definition of the corresponding categories regarding the investigation object (see table 1).

Table 1. Category of analysis

PE teachers' initial training as regards attention to diversity and inclusion	Degree
	Subjects
	Competences
	Deficit
PE teachers' lifelong training as regards attention to diversity and inclusion	Aptitudes
	Professionalisation
	Obstacles
	Speciality
Teachers' attitude facing diversity and inclusion	Internship
	Awareness
	Commitment
	Understanding
	Respect
	Acceptance

5. Results and discussion

Category 1. Physical Education specialist teacher's initial training as regards attention to diversity and inclusion

The teacher's initial training is that which is received academically and didactically during the degree studied. This category emphasises the perspectives the interviewees have about the received training regarding the inclusion in the Physical Education lessons. The opinion that everyone possesses in that sense is unanimous, because they coincide in the fact that their knowledge when they leave the faculty, in this field, is scarce and *“even more dealing with the Physical Education speciality”* (Subject 2)

“Based on my experiences as a Physical Education teacher along these 15 years, and as an internship tutor of the Faculty of Education students, I can claim that the Physical Education teachers have a clear deficit regarding the initial training and attention to diversity” (Sujeto 1)

Those teachers think that, when carrying out an inclusive educational purpose, for one or several male and female students in particular, it's a tough task, but it's even more difficult if the necessary knowledge isn't possessed (Subject 3). This low vision of capacity establishes one of the conclusions of the analysis developed in order to observe the self-valuation that the active teachers make of their faculties when developing one lesson in which some student presents some type of special educational needs (Díaz, 2009; Peña & Peña, 2015).

The teachers who were interviewed state that there is a problema in the teachers' future and current training system. Even though a teacher defends that *“the students finish with a basic training, it hasn't got to be the best or the worst, but they possess that training, it's just a matter of fostering it bit by bit, we aren't experts just after finishing the degree”* (Subject 4). All the teachers coincide in the fact that attention to diversity and inclusion must be present at every subject in the teachers' degree of Elementary and Infant Education, *“the inclusion should be cross-curricular”* (Subject 3).

They defend that it's necessary to increase considerably the personalised attention training, proving that *“they should know how to fulfill those children's needs who require a personalised attention”* (Subject 4). A training about the people's needs is required in order

for the pupils to understand the necessity of transforming the reality and not adjusting to it, but they have to be conscious of the change the school requires (Subject 2)

On the other hand, when we talk about the initial training obstacles, one of the teachers states that one of the most important limitations to enrich the initial training is that “*there is a lack of social awareness as regards the attention to diversity topic*” (Subject 1). Taking into account that it has been more than 20 years since the Law for Integration inside the ordinary Educational System was enabled, by means of the LOGSE, we can say that this is surprising.

We know that the law can facilitate the change, but “the teachers who form the institution must want to change” (Villagra 2008, p.70). Our interviewees emphasise that some colleagues aren’t conscious of the importance of carrying out integrating strategies and that the student don’t pay attention to the theme, they feel that it’s not related to them provoking rejection (Subject 2), reaffirming, thus, the lack of social awareness.

The insufficient training hours, as it’s been mentioned different times, are scarce, transforming it in an obstacle and a reality. Nevertheless, there is a greater agreement indicating that it’s more prominent the scarcity of specific didactics and the lack of relationship with the reality of people with special educational needs and their link with the Physical Education.

Category 2. Physical Education specialist teachers’ lifelong training as regards attention to diversity and inclusion.

All the domains of knowledge fit within a complex information factor that progresses continuously, producing modifications in all its aspects. For this reason, every professional needs an initial training and, a posteriori, an updating of the competences by means of the lifelong training. Thus, the teachers must update themselves as regards current knowledge related to all the fields and speciality that concern them both directly and indirectly (Fuguet, 2007).

We have observed that three out of the four interviewees have chosen the lifelong training. The teacher who hasn’t done it declares that “*I, sincerely, preferred to make use of*

class experiences, for me the most important is to learn and there is no better way than doing it from the own experience” (Subject 1).

“The lifelong training, normally, is described as vital, beneficial, rewarding, indispensable, etc., but the most important to be a good teacher is the motivation and to enjoy your profession” (Subject 1).

Everybody agrees that the lifelong training is important but they also coincide in the fact that the most significant training is the internship. *“The internship is the most significant in our learning process, it is always full of experiences which can enrich us both as teachers and as people, we learn a lot from the children and from the colleagues, you mature as a person” (Subject 3).*

“The internship period has to be longer and, if it’s necessary, remunerated. Here, the internship student comes to the school with fresh and new ideas, learned in the faculty and meeting, thus, with veteran teachers who possess a lot of experience and wisdom, provoking a mutual enrichment, progressing in that way in the teaching and becoming the teacher a professional” (Subject 1)

On the other hand, the educational centre also exerts a fundamental role in the teachers’ learning process, due to the fact that there are many schools which offer a training choice for the teachers, improving the education quality. In that case, we find that not all the teachers belong to centres that offer didactic courses and they have to train themselves by their own during their free time: *“the lifelong training hasn’t got a difficult access, but I only can take advantage of it in my spare time, thus I do it when I willingly can” (Subject 4).*

However, there are educational centres that provide training constantly too, and besides they offer information about other courses that are carried out outside those schools. The aim is to obtain a quality education having the opportunity to be updated as regards the demands of the society of the time. *“The school offers us a lot of facilities in order to continue training ourselves and thus a quality education can be achieved” (Subject 2).*

In that lifelong training context, the interviewees make a reference to the more requested topics such as psychomotricity, attention to diversity, game, themes related to the specific educational needs (ADHD, ASD, etc)

In the end, in order to offer a quality education, it's necessary that itself answers to the characteristics of the society, being about, ultimately, the law of supply and demand. Thus, the teacher's lifelong training is fundamental, by means of courses, experiences, in the educative centre or by other precedures, due to the fact that the interviewed teachers state that the initial training isn't enough. The need to learn throughout the whole life has become an everyday motto.

Bit by bit, we have transformed "the pleasant experience of learning something new every day into an inexcusable principle of survival" (Zabalza 2000, p.165). In our field, the configuration and the processes that facilitate that learning take the name of training.

The lifelong training gives an answer to the current needs such as the changeable reality in the classrooms, the new technologies, etc.; it is an improvement at a personal level keeping the balance between the vocation and the everyday difficulties, offering strategies to confront complex situations; besides, it's the basis for the investigation and the innovation in education.

Category 3. Physical Education specialist teachers' attitude facing diversity and inclusion.

In this sense, the interviewees coincide in that it's an obligation to encourage the respect towards diversity and inclusion in the future Physical Education specialist teachers. Even though, for one of the experts, it's not only a matter of training the students with those values, but the attitudinal aspect has a very important role and "*redirecting the students implies a lot of time*" (Subject 3).

Nevertheless, one of the interviewed states that must be the own teachers who suggest a teaching in which the students make aware and convince themselves that it's necessary to take care of and cover their future students' educative requirements in order to promote the change as far as the attention to diversity and inclusion is concerned, improving the world (Subject 1). In the International Conference on Inclusive Education organised by UNESCO in 2008 it was mentioned that it is essential to build a new society with values and attitudes based on respect, peace and inclusion. "*In the school, diversity is present at all the aspects and at nearly all the classrooms, if not all; it's not a decision to want to face this subject, it's an obligation, due to that the teachers must be trained in order to tackle this theme*" (Subject 2).

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The fundamental is to give the future Physical Education specialist teachers demonstrations about the fact that education is universal and that everyone has the right to it. Thus, positive behaviours are developed, adds subject 1. Each educator has to assume the duty that involves his profession, *“you have to be conscious of the fact that your responsibility is to take care of your students because it’s your commitment as teachers and their right as students”* (Subject 4).

UNESCO (2016) establishes that it’s necessary a comprehensive reform of the school system, where changes in the constitutional guarantees and regulations of teachers’ training systems, the curriculum, materials, educational environments as well as methodologies among others are incorporated, in order to be able to apply to the education an orientation based on rights and bring us inclusion closer. However, the most significant, is that the indispensable of a transformation in the attitudes of people who form the educational centre is highlighted, embracing diversity and inequality, visualising them as an opportunity not as a problem.

6. Conclusions

The teachers are the responsible to give rise to the knowledge, they are the people in charge of their students build meanings related to education. As regards the interviewed teachers, they express their own idea about the meaning of inclusion and attention to diversity and what it involves. All of them believe that attention to diversity has to be tackled in every subject.

Regarding the study plan in Elementary Education Teacher Degree in the University of Santiago de Compostela, as far as attention to diversity is concerned, four specific subjects can be studied in this field. The students who don’t study this will only receive training in a six credit subject in the first grade and the ones who carry out the Physical Education degree will study another one in fourth grade (4,5 credits). This seems to be insufficient for a Physical Education specialist teacher or a Elementary Education general teacher, if the objective is an appropriate and complete training of the education professional.

Because of the shortage in the initial training, a teachers’ lifelong training is necessary, fostered by the own experience as regards the practising professionals or a longer internship period regarding the future teachers in Elementary Education.

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