

## ARTICLE REVIEWED

### Perspectives of Students With Disabilities Toward Physical Education: A Qualitative Inquiry Review

Haegele, J. A., & Sutherland, S. (2015). Perspectives of students with disabilities toward physical education: A qualitative inquiry review. *Quest*, 67(3), 255-273.

#### THE PROBLEM

Research on physical education for individuals with disabilities has typically focused on the perspectives of others rather than the individuals with disabilities. The core issue centers on the inadequate implementation of inclusive physical education for individuals with disabilities. While legislative changes have aimed to include students with disabilities alongside their peers, many schools fail to provide necessary accommodations. This leads to feelings of isolation and exclusion, as students with disabilities are often either ignored or even bullied by their peers and inadequately supported by their educators. The lack of proper modifications and teacher training further exacerbates these issues, thus preventing students with disabilities from fully engaging in PE activities, limiting their potentials, and creating a non-welcome learning environment.



#### Research Summary

The article reviews qualitative studies examining the perspectives of students with disabilities toward physical education. It highlights challenges such as social isolation, bullying and discrimination, particularly due to poorly implemented inclusive practices. The review identifies three key themes: interactions with typically developing peers, the role of physical educators, and perspectives on inclusion and exclusion. Positive experiences arise from supportive teachers and modified activities, while negative experiences stem from lack of accommodations and peer acceptance. The study stresses the importance of physical educators' attitudes in shaping the learning environment for students with disabilities.

#### Conclusion

The review highlights the need for better physical education teacher education training and more flexible, adaptive PE practices to ensure that students with disabilities have meaningful, positive experiences. The importance of creating inclusive physical education environments that go beyond mere integration, emphasizes the need for thoughtful adaptations and educators' supportive attitudes. It highlights the challenges faced by students with disabilities, but also points to opportunities for improvement through better teacher training, increased peer support, and better learning experiences. By addressing these factors, schools can foster a more positive and meaningful participation for all students with and without disabilities.

#### Key Takeaway

The most critical factor for positive experiences in inclusive PE is the attitude and approach of the physical education teacher. A supportive, accommodating educator can create an environment where all students with and without disabilities can thrive. This means providing appropriate modifications, fostering peer support, and ensuring that students with disabilities are fully included. The research highlights that poor implementation of inclusive practices, lack of accommodations, and negative attitudes from both peers and educators result in harmful experiences for students with disabilities. It also emphasizes the necessity for a more thoughtful and intentional approach to inclusion in PE. Ultimately, understanding how individuals with disabilities perceive physical education can help teachers identify strategies to improve instruction and foster a more inclusive environment.

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Spencer-Cavaliere, N., & Watkinson, E. J. (2010). Inclusion understood from the perspectives of children with disability. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 27, 275–293