

KNOWLEDGE AND OPINIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS ON PHYSICAL EDUCATION COURSE

CONHECIMENTOS E OPINIÕES DE PROFESSORES DE EDUCAÇÃO ESPECIAL NO CURSO DE EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA

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ABSTRACT

In order to offer the physical education, course in a sound manner, which should be planned according to individual needs in schools where special education is offered, the knowledge and opinions of the teachers of this course are very critical. Therefore, in the study, the knowledge and opinions of the special education pre-service teachers about the physical education course offered in special education schools are revealed and evaluated. In the study which included 80 teachers studying in the field of special education, it has been revealed that the physical education course in these schools cannot be conducted in the desired way today, and recommendations have been developed for improvements. This study employs the phenomenological design. A seven-question questionnaire was used to obtain the data. According to the study results, more time should be devoted to physical education lessons in schools and the lesson should be planned in a qualified way.

Keywords: Special education. Special needs. Special education pre-service teachers. Physical education course. Sports for everyone.

RESUMO

Para oferecer o curso de educação física de forma sólida, que deve ser planejada de acordo com as necessidades individuais nas escolas que oferecem educação especial, o conhecimento e a opinião dos professores desse curso são muito importantes. Portanto, no estudo, são revelados e avaliados os conhecimentos e opiniões dos pré-professores de educação especial sobre o curso de educação física oferecido nas escolas de educação especial. No estudo que incluiu 80 professores que estudam na área de educação especial, foi revelado que o curso de educação física nessas escolas não pode ser conduzido da maneira desejada hoje, e foram feitas recomendações para melhorias. Este estudo emprega o delineamento fenomenológico. Um questionário de sete perguntas foi usado para obter os dados. De acordo com os resultados do estudo, mais tempo deveria ser dedicado às aulas de educação física nas escolas e a aula deveria ser planejada de forma qualificada.

Palavras-chave: Educação especial. Necessidades especiais. Professores de pré-serviço de educação especial. Curso de educação física. Esportes para todos.

Introduction

One of the most important functions of education, which is considered as a social phenomenon, is to prepare the individual for life by ensuring his/her socialization through transfer of culture. The education system of each country is unique, and by shaping individuals with the cultures of their societies, it enables them to grow up as individuals open to innovations, who can think critically and inquire.

Education systems are shaped by the cultures of the individuals and the behaviors that are aimed for acquisition. In addition, it is necessary to keep up with new paradigms in science, technology and art and to educate individuals who are open to innovations, inquiring, inquisitive and tolerant (SARIBAŞ; BABADAĞ, 2015, p.19).

The developing technology in the 21st century affects physical education and sports together with different fields of education. As a result, physical education and sports play a very important role in meeting the social needs of individuals. "Today, sports have expanded its scope in order to respond to the different expectations of individuals and have begun to function as a powerful educational instrument in solving social problems" (GÖKSEL et al., 2017, p. 124). Physical education and sports are very important elements in maintaining a healthy existence for individuals and societies. The physical, social and mental development of the members of the society is directly related to the fact that they take physical education courses properly throughout their education life and they perform physical education and sports

regularly within a certain plan throughout their lives. For this reason, the teachers of this course contribute to the physical, cognitive and mental development of the students throughout their education life (KARAÇAM; PULUR, 2019, p. 211). In addition, studies have revealed that the physical activities of children in primary education continue in parallel in adulthood, and that physical education courses attended as a student are very important in order to understand the benefits of sports in life.

As with normally developing individuals, it is extremely important that all educational requirements of individuals with special needs are provided regularly, in appropriate educational environments and with a view to ensure their conscious reintegration into the society. Defining the specific requirements of individuals with special needs plays a very important role in providing a healthy and regular education. As it is known, the effectiveness of the education to be offered is directly related to knowing the individual well.

Knowing the disability type and characteristics of a individuals with disabilities is important in terms of spiritual rehabilitation as well as in every other aspect, as offering them various opportunities will only be possible by getting to know them. Opportunities to be offered according to their characteristics will also serve to eliminate their disabilities. Such a situation will result in everyone benefiting from education, rehabilitation and spiritual rehabilitation as much as they want (ÖZDEMİR, 2017, p. 156).

It is extremely important for special education teachers to diagnose the students with special needs early, to organize the education they will offer in general, and to respond to personal needs through this education. Physical education course has not been given enough importance historically by normally developing students (GÜNEŞ, 2016, p. 311). Planning this course according to the personal requirements of students with special needs is necessary in order for the course to be efficient and to provide benefit to the student concerned. "A curriculum should be developed to meet the physical, mental, behavioral and social requirements of children with special education needs" (ORHAN et al., 2021, p. 29).

As it is known, teachers are fundamental elements of education activities who pay effort to make contribution to their students in accordance with their

knowledge and skills and improve them in every sense. Therefore, a favorable and beneficial physical education course that will prepare individuals with special needs for life and develop them physically, spiritually and emotionally is directly related to the success and talents of a teacher. When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that there are several studies that relate individuals with special needs to physical education in recent years (YAŞIN; İLHAN, 2021; DÜLGER, 2019; KOŞAR, 2021; YILDIRIM, 2022; NALBANT; IZGAR, 2018). However, the aforementioned studies mostly focus on physical education pre-service teachers. In the literature review, no study was found that included the opinions of special education teachers or pre-service teachers about the physical education course applied in schools where students with special needs are educated. As mentioned above, the opinions and knowledge of special education teachers on the subject are extremely important in the healthy handling and planning of physical education courses for students with special needs. In this context, it is aimed to reveal the knowledge and opinions about physical education course of future special education teachers who are supposed to be in constant interaction with students with special needs in the future.

Methodology

This study, which discusses the knowledge and opinions of special education pre-service teachers about the physical education course, employs the phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research designs. The phenomenology design focuses on phenomena that we are familiar with, but do not have a detailed understanding of. Phenomena can appear in different forms such as experiences, perceptions, orientations, concepts and situations. Data sources in phenomenological studies are individuals or groups that experience the phenomenon which the research focuses on and can express or reflect it (TEKINDAL; ARSU, p. 2020).

The sample of the research consists of 80 special education pre-service teachers studying at Northern Cypriot universities. Convenience sampling, one of the purposive sampling types, was used in the selection of the participants.

Purposive sampling allows for in-depth study of situations that are believed to have rich information. In this sense, purposive sampling methods are useful in discovering and explaining facts and events. In the convenience sampling method, the researcher chooses a situation that is close and easy to access, which adds speed and practicality to the research (YILDIRIM; ŞİMŞEK, p. 2008).

A questionnaire form consisting of 7 questions was used to obtain the data that would form the basis of the research. In order to determine the reliability and validity of the questionnaire used, the related questions were first asked to 3 special education teachers. After the necessary corrections were made based on the opinions of these teachers, the opinions of two experts (special education teachers) were obtained. These steps were believed to be satisfactory for validity and reliability. It was thought that the questionnaire form consisting of 7 questions and developed by the researchers would be adequate to reveal the knowledge and opinions of the special education pre-service teachers as regards the physical education course.

Results

In this study, which aims to reveal the knowledge and opinions of special education pre-service teachers about the “physical education” course offered to students with special needs, interesting findings that should be taken into consideration have been reached.

Table 1 - Distribution of the opinions of pre-service teachers on whether physical education courses are necessary for children with special needs

	f	%
It is an absolutely necessary course, and it should be taught taking into account the individual circumstances of the children.	60	75
The special education teacher can decide on the necessity of the course in line with the requests of the students.	11	13.75
No, physical education course is not a necessity for children with special needs.	5	6.25
It is not very necessary, but can be offered from time to time for entertainment purposes.	4	5

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In Table 1, pre-service teachers were asked whether physical education courses are necessary for children with special needs. It was seen that 75% of the pre-service teachers who participated in the questionnaire gave a positive answer to this question. 75% of the participants stated that physical education course should be taught in line with the requirements of children with special needs. Only 6.25% of the participants did not see the relevant course as a necessity for children with special needs, 5% thought that it could be offered for entertainment purposes, and 13.75% left the choice to the special education teacher and children with special needs.

Table 2 - Distribution of the opinions of pre-service teachers on whether students with special needs find the physical education courses they are offered in schools satisfactory in general

	f	%
I definitely think it's not satisfactory.	51	63.75
I think it's more than satisfactory.	14	17.75
Although it seems to be satisfactory in terms of quantity, I think it is not satisfactory in terms of quality.	8	10
Although it seems satisfactory in general, physical education courses are not given the necessary importance in some schools.	7	8.75

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In Table 2, the participants were asked whether the physical education course offered to students with special needs was satisfactory. Based on the answers given, it was observed that 63.75% of the participants did not find the course satisfactory. While 17.75% of the participants think that the physical education course applied in the schools is more than satisfactory, 8.75% of the participants think that the physical education course is not given the necessary importance in some of the relevant schools. One of the remarkable responses in Table 2 is that 10% of the participants found the physical education course to be unsatisfactory in terms of quality.

Table 3 - Distribution of the opinions of pre-service teachers on whether there are sufficient sports facilities-materials in special education schools

	f	%
No	58	72.5
Yes	12	15
Although some schools seem to be satisfactory in numbers, the individual needs of students with special needs were not taken into account, especially when the facilities were under construction.	10	12.5

Source: Prepared by the authors.

It was observed that a significant portion of the participants (72.5%) gave a negative answer to the question of whether the sports facilities and equipment in special education schools were sufficient. As can be seen in Table 3, only 15% of the participants found the sports facilities and materials in the schools sufficient. One of the most interesting answers to this question is that 10% of the participants think that the sports facilities in schools are not designed for students with special needs.

Table 4 - The reasons preventing physical education course to be conducted in the desired way according to special education pre-service teachers

	f	%
General inadequacy of schools in terms of infrastructure	60	75
Teachers' lack of knowledge about physical education	8	10
Teachers' reluctance to teach physical education courses	6	7.5
Children's reluctance towards physical education course	4	5
The fact that teachers and most families have different academic concerns	2	2.5

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In Table 4, certain options were presented to the special education pre-service teachers and they were asked why the physical education course in schools could not be conducted as desired. While 75% of the pre-service teachers who participated in the questionnaire found the infrastructure in schools insufficient, 10% stated that the teachers did not have enough knowledge about physical education course. Answering the same question, 7.5% of the participants found teachers and 5% students unwilling in this sense. A very low percentage of participants (2.5%) stated that both teachers and families had different academic concerns.

Table 5 - What should be included in the content of physical education course according to special education pre-service teachers?

	f	%
Activities that will ensure the physical development of students	47	58.75
Activities that can meet the requirements of students with special needs	15	18.75
Sports branches of interest to students	9	11.25
Fun games that several students can play together	6	7.5
Games that will highlight the creativity of students	3	3.75

According to Table 5, a majority of special education pre-service teachers (58.75%) stated that physical education course should include activities that will ensure the physical development of students. However, one of the most impressive answers to the same question was "activities that can meet the requirements of

students with special needs” with a rate of 18.75%. While 11.25% of the participant pre-service teachers stated that sports branches that might attract the attention of the students should be included in the content of the physical education course, 7.5% said that the course should include entertaining games. On the other hand, 3.75% of the participants wanted games that would highlight the creativity of children to be included in the physical education course.

Table 6 - Recommendations of special education pre-service teachers for conducting the physical education course purposefully

	f	%
In special education schools, necessary infrastructure should be provided for the healthy conduct of the course.	48	60
Special education teachers should gain awareness about physical education course.	12	15
Children with special needs should be encouraged to enjoy the course.	10	12.5
Special education and physical education teachers should teach physical education courses together.	8	10
Families should also be more willing in this regard and demand this course from teachers.	2	2.5

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In Table 6, the recommendations of pre-service teachers in order to carry out the physical education course purposefully are presented. According to this table, it is necessary to provide the required infrastructure (60%) so that physical education course can be offered vigorously in special education schools. In addition, special education teachers should gain awareness for the physical education course and children should be able to enjoy it. While some participants (10%) suggested that physical education courses should be conducted together by both physical education teachers and special education teachers, very few participants (2.5%) thought that families should demand this from teachers.

Table 7 - Distribution of the opinions of pre-service teachers on the contribution of physical education course to the socialization of students with special needs

	f	%
Physical education and especially sports activities are the most important instruments for the social cohesion and socialization of students with special needs.	70	87.5
Physical education and sports can be partially considered as a socialization instrument for students with special needs.	6	7.5
Physical education and sports cannot be considered as a socialization instrument for students with special needs.	4	5

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In Table 7, the contribution of physical education course to the socialization of students with special needs is revealed depending on the answers given by pre-service teachers. According to 87.5% of the participants, physical education courses and sports activities are the most important instruments for the social cohesion and socialization of students with special needs. While 7.5% of the pre-service teachers who participated in the questionnaire saw the related course as a means of socialization, the rate of those who thought that the course had no benefit in terms of socialization remained at 5%.

Discussion

Physical education as a course contributes to the development of individuals in every sense (affective-psychomotor-cognitive, etc.) from a young age. It is highly important for people to lead a regular and healthy life in the future. Physical education course makes a very important contribution to the success and physical development of individuals with special needs, who constantly encounter certain obstacles in their lives. Physical education course, which is of vital importance for students with special needs who cannot use their muscles and joints at the desired level, is also a very critical element that enriches their lives. Basically, it is observed that some students with special needs lead a happy life as productive individuals in the society by minimizing or even eliminating their obstacles through physical education, physical therapy and sports.

It can be claimed that the special education pre-service teachers who participated in the questionnaire are also aware of this issue. 75% of the participants who contributed to the study stated that physical education course is extremely necessary for children with special needs and emphasized that the course should be taught by taking into account the unique characteristics of the students. Karahan and Kuru, in their article titled “The Study of Developing Attitude Scale for Physical Education and Sports Courses for Students with Orthopedic, Visual and Hearing Disabilities”, stated that sports are extremely necessary and important for a healthy and happy life in parallel with the findings of this study. In the same paper, researchers concluded that sports have a unique importance for disabled individuals and that it contributes to their affective and psycho-motor development (KARAHAN; KURU, 2015, p. 37).

Special education pre-service teachers who participated in the research found the physical education course offered to students with special needs in schools inadequate in general. Participating teachers indicated that the most important reason for this was the infrastructure deficiencies in schools. 10% of pre-service teachers emphasized that special education teachers do not have enough knowledge about physical education course. In the study conducted by Orhan, Uzunçayır and İlhan, a similar finding was reached. Physical education and sports teachers participating in the relevant study stated that physical education and sports courses are insufficient for inclusive students and that they do not have the necessary material support for students (ORHAN et al., 2021, p. 40).

Physical education and sports play a very important role in the socialization of students. Physical education and sports are extremely essential for individuals with special needs to gain a sense of self-confidence, take part in social life and socialize. Sports and physical activities performed by means of physical education courses should be given importance in terms of contributing to the emotional and mental development of individuals with special needs, as well as their adaptation to social life. 87.5% of the pre-service teachers who participated in the questionnaire stated that physical education courses and therefore sports should be seen as a means of socialization for special education students. In their study titled “A Scale

Development Study on the Attitudes of Physical Education Pre-service Teachers towards Mentally Handicapped Children”, Süngü et al. emphasized that, compared to other courses, physical education more important in terms of inclusive education that enables students to interact more and explore different aspects of each other. Researchers also emphasized in their aforementioned article that physical education course can contribute to a meaningful interaction between children with special needs and other children (SÜNGÜ et al., 2020, p. 12). Karataş et al., in their study titled “The Impact of Physical Education, Sports and Play on Socialization”, concluded that, in parallel with the findings of this paper, physical education and sports are effective and sound means of socialization in changing the individual’s behaviors positively (KARATAŞ et al., 2021, p. 13).

Conclusions

Physical education and sports have a special place because they contribute to all development areas of individuals with special needs and enrich their lives. Individuals with special needs, who acquire their physical development through physical education and sports activities through this course, are also more easily integrated into social life. Thanks to physical education and sports activities, some characteristics such as helping individuals with special needs, acting together, sense of responsibility and being respectful develop rapidly.

This study reveals that special education pre-service teachers generally know the importance of physical education course for children with special needs. In the study, special education teachers stated that the physical education course was not paid due attention in schools in general, and they emphasized that the infrastructure and materials in most schools were insufficient for a qualified physical education course. From this point of view, it is clear that the knowledge of both teachers and students on this course should be improved, and the lack of infrastructure and materials in the relevant schools should be urgently addressed. In addition, pre-service teachers who participated in the questionnaire stated that it is important for these individuals to include more activities that can meet the physical development and needs of individuals with special needs in the content of

the physical education course. We are of the opinion that the preparation of a more detailed physical education curriculum for a qualified physical education course that can integrate children with special needs into life and improve their quality of life will also help teachers in this field.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that the physical education course is of vital importance in the socialization of children with special needs and their acceptance by the society. For this reason, more time should be devoted to physical education courses in schools where students with special needs receive education, and the course should be planned in a qualified manner according to the needs of the children concerned.

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