

ABSTRACT

Inclusion of students with disabilities is one of the major school reform movements of the XX century in many countries around the world (Zollers et al., 1999 in Panagiotou, Kudlacek & Evaggelinou, 2006). Policies of inclusion are regarded as a major requirement for implementing change in schools. Physical Education (PE) lessons contributed more than other lessons for the inclusion of children with disabilities into general school community as they add to the development of in all three recognised domains: cognitive, affective and psychomotor. The success of inclusion depends to a great degree on the quality of regular Physical Education programmes and the extent to meet individual differences (Sherrill, 1998).

The main purpose of this study was to assess the attitudes and possible change in attitudes in students of grade 9 towards the inclusion of students with disabilities before and after the implementation of the Adapted Physical Education week, where Paralympic sports activities were performed in PE class, as well as to determine the influence of "gender", "exposure to family members/close friends with disabilities", "presence of peers with disabilities in regular PE class" and "competitiveness level" in global attitudes; in specific attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular PE class; and in attitudes towards the change of sports' rules.

The study involved 156 students attending the 9th grade. The instrument used was the questionnaire CAIPE-R (*Children's Attitudes Toward Integrated Physical Education-Revised*), (Block, 1995) translated and adapted for Portuguese population by Campos & Ferreira (2008). Students answered the questionnaire twice, before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the implementation of the Adapted Physical Education Week. Results showed that, in general, the attitudes of students without disabilities towards the inclusion of peers with disabilities in PE classes, albeit being already mildly positive before the test, were significantly higher in the post-test.

Unfortunately there are in Portugal no other studies on this subject that we could compare our results with, reason why we believe that our study can be a key tool to indentify problems and even start actions to avoid less positive attitudes of the students, as well as to draw some conclusions about the attitudes of students without disabilities towards the inclusion of peers with disabilities in PE classes. This could be a crucial contribution for future action in this scope, as well as for the success of consolidation of the process of inclusion in schools in Portugal.

Key-words: Attitudes, Inclusion, Disability, Physical Education