

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine pre-service physical educators towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education classes. The PEATID III – *Physical Educators' Attitude Toward Teaching Individuals with disabilities III* (Folson-Meek & Rizzo, 1993) was used to collect the information needed. Once this approach is done by the first time in Portugal, it is considered as an exploratory study.

The sample consisted of 226 students, male and female (150 male and 76 female), with ages between 18 and 42 years old, from the first to the sixth semesters in the school year of 2008/09. From the sample, 40 have had prior experience in working with individuals with disabilities and 186 have never had prior experiences in working with individuals with disabilities. The results showed positive pre-service educators' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities. However, results revealed that attitudes towards DM, DV, DA and DI don't vary by gender, specialized preparatory course, hands-on experience, perceived competence or the presence of a familiar or friend with disabilities. We suggest that it is important hands-on experience to create awareness in order to develop positive attitudes towards students with disabilities. This effort is important to motivate the future teachers and, most of all, to easily implement the concept of inclusion in regular classes and to assure the basic needs of students with disabilities in regular classes.

Keywords: Attitudes – Inclusion – Physical Education – Disability