

TEACHER AND STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON A PHYSICAL EDUCATION INCLUSION PROGRAMME AT A COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The Tomlinson Report has increased attention on inclusion in Further Education. Action research was used to investigate a Physical Education inclusion programme at a College of Further Education in South-West England. The students (class n=14, students with disabilities n=9) participated in structured interviews. The teachers (n=6) completed the Teachers Integration Attitudes Questionnaire. Teachers and students responded positively to the programme. All students were positive about the integrated nature of the course. The students with disabilities expressed concern about the length of time they spent at college as compared with other students. The teachers were concerned about the resources available to support the course. They believed they could cope but were willing to undertake further training to improve their teaching. Further research is needed in the areas of health and safety and the vocational value of such courses for students with disabilities.

Introduction

The area of inclusion has created much educational debate (Sherrill & Williams, 1996). Even definitions of the term have created discussion (Dendy, 1994; Lindstrom, 1994). In Further Education (F.E.) a greater emphasis has been placed on inclusion since the publication of the Tomlinson Report recommendations (Further Education Funding Council, [FEFC], 1996). Issues raised relate to human rights choices, financial concerns and pedagogical aspects (Draper, 1994).

The terms integration, mainstreaming and inclusion have been used interchangeably to describe the process of educating students with disabilities with their typical peers (Lindstrom, 1992; Steadward, Nelson & Wheeler, 1994). At different times and contexts the words have become tainted (Dendy, 1994; Lindstrom, 1994). The difficulty as Sherrill and Williams (1996) indicate is the "meaning of terms like integration and inclusion are socially constructed and thus vary by individual, time and context" (p.43).

In light of this debate, the term inclusion is used in this paper to reflect the language of the Tomlinson Report, the stimulus for this research (FEFC,

1996). The Report called for a review of inclusion in F. E. Colleges to improve the quality of experience for students. The Committee believed concern should move on from language and locational debate to focus on the match or fit between the "individual learners requirements and the provision made for that" (FEFC, 1996, p.26). Students should not be taking part in an activity merely to satisfy the letter of the law regarding inclusion. They should be fully engaged and included in the learning situation (FEFC, 1996).

The findings of the Tomlinson Report led to a review of policy in F. E. Colleges. As part of this the College of Further Education in this study developed a new inclusion programme in the Physical Education Department. The purpose of this study was to investigate the development of this inclusive course for students at the college. Action research was used to study the implementation of the new course and its quality for students with disabilities and their typical peers. It was designed to improve practice and to reflect on a new educational programme. The research being based in an area where there has been a call for further research (FEFC, 1996; Sherrill & Williams, 1996; Chandler & Green, 1995; Block & Vogler, 1994).

Method

Site and Participants

The study took place at a College of Further Education located in South-West England. It offers a wide range of courses to a large community of over 10,000 students. Findings in the Tomlinson Report led to policy changes at the College and the development of a new Inclusive Physical Education Course which began in September 1996.

The teachers expressed concern about providing an enjoyable and successful experience for the students. It was decided to instigate action research to monitor the programme. Kirk (1995) advocated the use of action research for this type of course development.

Action research does have the potential to bring about educational reform which incorporates a concern for more effective teaching and learning, deepens and broadens practitioners' understanding of their work and the subject matter they work with, and contributes to more socially just, equitable and caring forms of Physical Education (Kirk, 1995, p.4).

The participants comprised of 14 students (nine students with disabilities and five typical peers) and six teachers. The mean age of the students was 22.2 years. The mean age of the students with disabilities was 25.4 and for their typical peers 16.4 years old. This difference occurred because the students with disabilities were attending the college for longer durations than their typical peers. The students with disabilities (M = 3.25, range 5 years) had been attending the college for longer than their typical peers (M = 1, range 0). The students consisted of 12 males and two females.

The mean age of the teachers was 34, with a mean teaching experience of six years. All the teacher respondents were male.

One of the teachers was also a paralympic athlete. The students took part in structured interviews with questions being focused on their enjoyment of the course, feelings and reactions to activities and suggestions for the future. As part of the research the teachers completed the Teacher Integration Attitudes Questionnaire (Sideridis & Chandler, 1997).

Instrument

The Teacher Integration Attitudes Questionnaire (TIAQ) contains statements designed to evaluate teachers attitudes with regard to inclusion (Sideridis & Chandler, 1997). The TIAQ is made up of 11 statements covering four aspects relating to inclusion; teachers perceived skills, benefits, acceptance and support for inclusion. The questionnaire had been evaluated for internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha = .77, (Sideridis & Chandler, 1997).

Skills - Questions in this area relate to teachers perceived skills and effectiveness. Benefits - Refers to the benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities and their typical peers. Acceptance - Identifies the teachers views about the acceptance of students with disabilities by their typical peers. Support - This defines the availability of support personnel, funding and materials for teaching students with disabilities.

Each of the statements is designed to be scored as for a Likert scale with 1 = strongly agree; 2 = mildly agree; 3 = mildly disagree; and 4 = strongly disagree. The statements can be seen in Table 1. Each related to one or more of the four constructs (skills, benefits, acceptance, support). Statements 1, 5, 6 and 10 relate to skills, statements 2, 3 and 5 to benefits, statements 4, 5, 7 and 8 to acceptance and 9, 10 and 11 to support. The results were compiled then analysed using the final structural model advocated by Sideridis and Chandler (1997).

The Course

Two educational courses were run as part of the programme. One was a National Vocational Qualification level one course in Sport and Recreation. Alternately, students could enrol for a Skill Power qualification. The nine students with disabilities enrolled for this qualification. The Skill Power qualification was validated through City and Guilds. It is a basic skills course open to any student aged 16 years or older and focuses on numeracy, literacy, oral skills, problem solving and personal development. Successful students could then move on to NVQ1 or GNVQ in subsequent years.

The course length was one academic year from September 1996 to June 1997. The students met as a whole group three times a week for the practical sports options. A major focus of the course was developing the skills required to work in a sports or leisure centre. Students studied health and

Table 1. Teacher Integration Attitudes Questionnaire Statements (Sideridis & Chandler, 1997, p.54).

NO	ITEM
1	I can cope with the instructional needs of students with disability
2	Students with disabilities will benefit from the interaction with typical peers
3	Typical students will benefit from the integration of students with disabilities
4	Students with disabilities are socially accepted by typical students
5	I can remediate the learning deficits of students with disability
6	I have the skills to manage the behaviours of children with disabilities
7	I like having students with disability in my classroom
8	Students with disabilities are humiliated by their typical peers
9	I have adequate instructional materials for teaching students with disabilities
10	Adequate support services are readily available to me
11	I have a budget to obtain resource materials for teaching students with disability

safety, sports equipment, facility use, rules of games, appropriate sporting dress, the supervision of players and a variety of practical activities.

Results

Student Responses

Questions initially referred to issues concerning enjoyment of the course. After this questions were directed towards issues relating to disability and inclusion. Both sub-groups responded very positively to the course. They reported that the most enjoyable aspects of the course were the practical activities. One student with a disability remarked that the "Boccia sessions were the best because we all joined in together, and I won the tournament!" (Student One, 1997). One of the typical peers said "I enjoyed very much the experience of having people with disabilities in the class. The most positive experience of this course was being involved with people in chairs" (Student Ten, 1997).

The most popular of the practical activities were the adapted games where there was full inclusion. These included Boccia, wheelchair rugby and seated volleyball. None of the students had played any of the adapted games before the course. "These different games gave me new experiences and it was better when everyone joined in. We could learn from each other for all our benefit" (Student Twelve, 1997).

The students with disabilities were very positive about the value of

taking part in sporting activities with their typical peers. "It was good to get them (the typical peers) involved. At first we did not know them. Then we played games like Boccia and it was great" (Student Three, 1997). The inclusion of a paralympic athlete in the teaching team was beneficial for all students. Seven of the students with disabilities mentioned how positive it was to have a teacher who had been to the Paralympic teaching them. Two of the typical peers felt the presence of a Paralympic athlete helped them to overcome their initial concerns regarding the inclusion programme.

A note of caution was mentioned by the students with disabilities regarding progression. It was felt that the wide ability range in the group might mean that students could not learn at their own level. All the students with disabilities expressed concern about holding other members of the group back.

Three of the typical peers mentioned concerns about the registration procedures for the course. As part of the registration procedures the students with disabilities were made aware that they were going to be involved in an integration programme. However, the students' typical peers were not informed that it was an inclusion course. Initially this was reported as a concern for the students without disabilities. One student said "at first I did not understand why the people in chairs were with us. That was bang out of order they have got to do something about that" (Student Eleven, 1997). The students felt it would have been better if they had been able to spend time with the students with disabilities at the induction. Consequently, a consistent issue at the start of the course was initial fear and misunderstanding of what disability meant to the typical peers.

Five of the nine students with disabilities discussed the issue of length of college life. As mentioned earlier the mean age of the students with disabilities was 25.4 years of age. The mean length of time the students had been at the college was three and a quarter years. Whereas for their typical peers the mean age was 16.4, and length of time at college 1 year. The students with disabilities, aware of these differences, believed they related to differences in opportunities for employment. They wanted courses that would be beneficial vocationally as well as being enjoyable.

Teacher Responses

The maximal agreement with the statements concerning skills and acceptance would be a total of four, the maximal disagreement with the statement would produce a score of 16. The maximal agreement with the statements concerning benefits and support would be a total of three, the maximal disagreement with the statement would produce a score of 12. Thus the higher the score in each case the stronger the feelings of disagreement with the construct. The group responses can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Teacher Integration Attitudes Questionnaire Results. (Note: The numbers in brackets refer to statements comprising each construct)

TeacherNo./ Statement No.	Skills (1, 5, 6,10)	Benefits (2, 3, 5)	Acceptance (4, 5, 7, 8)	Support (9, 10, 11)
1	9	4	7	8
2	9	5	11	11
3	10	6	8	9
4	12	5	11	12
5	9	4	7	8
6	11	5	7	12
Means	10	4.8	8.5	10

The mean for skills was 10 (from a possible maximum of 16) indicating that staff felt neither prepared or unprepared to teach most students with disabilities. Three of the teachers felt slightly underprepared, while two believed they were fairly prepared and one recored the mean score. The mean for benefits was 4.8 which indicated a high degree of agreement over the benefits of inclusion for all the students. There was a fairly positive reaction by the staff over the acceptance of students with disabilities by their typical peers (M = 8.5). With a mean of 10 of possible 12 support was an area of concern for teachers in the programme. These concerns related to the materials, resources and college support for the inclusion programme.

Two areas of concern, beyond the realms of the TIAQ, were discussed by teachers. These were issues related to health and safety and the vocational nature of the course. Two teachers expressed concern about health and safety during practical sessions in an integrated setting. Three teacher respondents were additionally concerned about the role of the course in the education of students with disabilities. The average college life of the students with disabilities reflected the different nature of the educational experiences for the students. There was a fear that teachers might be involved in some form of "organised crowd control" (Teacher Six, 1997), rather than vocational training.

Discussion

The most popular sessions for all the students were the adapted games sessions. These practical activities promoted inclusion in a very positive way. All students reported a high degree of enjoyment of these sessions, especially Boccia. It was of interest to note that none the students with disabilities or their typical peers had played the games before. The students with

disabilities had previously been educated in special schools within the area. As the games were accessible for all students they might usefully be included in school PE programmes in the area. However, the results appear to suggest that this was not the case. There may be need for PE curriculum review in special schools to discuss the inclusion of such activities. Sherrill (1993) and Kirk (1995) advocated the use of action research, as carried out in this study, to improve such practice.

Several of the students with disabilities talked of concern about holding back their typical peers. This issue which relates to equality would be addressed for future courses. Students need to feel comfortable within the PE environment and feel of equal worth (Winnick 1995; Dunn & Fait, 1994). This issue could be better managed in the future by establishing clear individual goals for the students and making time for all students to work at their own levels. This would be in line with the findings of the Tomlinson Report where a need to improve quality of education for students with disabilities was identified (FEFC, 1996). The use of peers tutors, as recommended by Webster (1987) might also serve to allow students to focus on their own goals within an integrated environment.

An organisational concern for the typical peers related to course registration. The student with disabilities were informed prior to the course that it was an inclusion programme. However, this was not the case for the typical peers. In future years this oversight would need to be positively addressed. It would be possible for the students to have an informal meeting as part of the registration where they could all meet for the first time. Course graduates could return to talk to students about the course in the previous year and their experiences. This would, additionally, provide an opportunity to gain further feedback from students. A more open and relaxed registration for all students would further promote the positive benefits achieved in the course.

The results of the TIAQ were interesting and also matched very closely comments made by the teachers during the programme. Teachers had mixed views concerning their preparedness to teach all students. This finding was reflected in conversations held with teachers throughout the year as all expressed a desire for further training in Adapted Physical Education. This raises issues related to the quality of educational provision for students with disabilities. Further training for staff would enable improvements in service delivery. This has greater significance in light of the Government's recent Green and White papers which may lead to increases in inclusion at all levels of education (DFEE, 1997a, DFEE, 1997b)

Students and staff concurred over the benefits of the programme. Such a reaction is particularly beneficial for the development of inclusion. Much work relating to inclusion has indicated that the attitudes of those involved are fundamental to the chances of success (Sherrill & Williams, 1996; Chandler &

Green, 1995; Steadward, et al., 1994; Aloia, Knutson, Minner & Von Seggern, 1980).

Teachers believed there to be a positive acceptance of the students with disabilities by their typical peers. This reaction could be further improved by making the changes already mentioned with regard to registration procedures. Improvements in communication between staff and students concerning the nature of the course could help any fears the students may have regarding inclusion.

An area of concern for the staff in this programme was that of resources. This included concern over finances and the availability of equipment for adapted games and support within the College over inclusion. To promote quality education for all in an inclusive setting resources must be made available. This is highlighted in the findings of the Tomlinson Report and is fundamental for colleges (FEFC, 1996).

Generally the TIAQ performed well in this study with regard to highlighting teacher concerns. As mentioned above, two additional concerns were health/safety and vocational training. In the future teachers believed there was a need for further health and safety training for practical sessions. This was to be addressed for the next academic year.

A serious concern for the students and staff was the role of the course vocationally for the students with disabilities. This is especially poignant in light of the findings of the Tomlinson report (FEFC, 1996). The report committee found there was a need for more vocationally related training for students with disabilities. This issue was reflected in the results of this study. It might be that the whole college needed to review its policy relating to vocational training. Few if any of the students with disabilities moved in to careers in the leisure or recreation industry.

Conclusion

There were some very positive aspects that arose from the first year of this programme. The students found communality in their desire to succeed in the course. The students were less concerned about disability or inclusion and more with the rigours of course success. The use of the adapted games was an excellent springboard for the involvement of all students. Having a paralympic athlete among the teaching staff had a positive effect on the students. The students with disabilities and the typical peers appeared to benefit from this aspect of the programme. It could be possible for other F. E. Colleges to arrange visits by paralympic athletes to focus abilities and the achievements of people with disabilities.

To build from this year this faculty will have to focus on a number of areas. There is a need to address the real educational needs of the students with disabilities. Health and safety issues were raised through the study and

required an extension of training for staff. The use of peer tutors could be developed to promote the individualisation of teaching and more openness relating to registration procedures.

There are a number of areas that could be successfully studied in future research. These relate to health and safety issues, pre-screening procedures exit routes for students with disabilities, curriculum content in special schools and training related to Adapted Physical Activity on offer at universities and by local education authorities.

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