



**Perceptions and
Practices of Inclusion in High School
Physical and Health Education: Insights
from Two Teachers and a Principal**

A Qualitative Study Through Interviews

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Uppfattningar och praktiker för inkludering i gymnasieskolans idrotts- och hälsoutbildning: Insikter från två lärare och en rektor

**En kvalitativ studie genom intervjuer
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Abstract

This qualitative study examines what educators think about the implementation of inclusion practices within the Physical and Health Education (PHE) curriculum at a high school renowned for its commitment to physical education. This School is renowned for its commitment to physical education, a distinction earned through a sustained dedication to fostering environments where physical activity is not just encouraged but woven into the very fabric of student life. The school's approach according to the principle is characterized by a diverse array of programs that not only prioritize physical health and wellness but also champion the values of teamwork, perseverance, and inclusivity. Such commitment is manifested in the development of a curriculum that caters to a wide spectrum of abilities and interests. Through semi-structured interviews with two PHE teachers and the principal, the research aims to uncover the specific strategies employed to foster an inclusive learning environment, identify the challenges faced by educators in this endeavor. Grounded in Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and Slee's inclusive education framework, the study offers insights into the adaptability of teaching methods, the necessity of specialized training for inclusion, and the educators' commitment to addressing the diverse needs of students, including those with gender dysphoria. The specific mention of gender dysphoria underscores the recognition of the nuanced challenges certain students may face in physical education environments. By identifying and addressing these challenges head-on, the school tries to craft an inclusive space that respects and accommodates the diverse identities of the student body. This commitment to inclusivity is not merely about compliance with nondiscrimination policies but is rooted in a deeper understanding that every student's experience is unique. The findings reveal a significant discrepancy between the principal's perception and teachers' experiences regarding inclusion training, underscoring a need for clearer communication and targeted professional development. The research contributes to the discourse on effective inclusion strategies in PHE, suggesting avenues for future research and policy development to enhance inclusivity across educational settings.

Sammanfattning

Denna kvalitativa studie undersöker vad lärare tycker om implementeringen av inkluderingspraxis inom ämnet idrott och hälsa på en gymnasieskola som är känd för sitt engagemang för fysisk utbildning. Denna skola är berömd för sitt engagemang för fysisk utbildning, en utmärkelse som tjänats genom ett ihållande engagemang för att skapa miljöer där fysisk aktivitet inte bara uppmuntras utan är invävt i själva studentlivets väv. Skolans tillvägagångssätt enligt principen kännetecknas av en mångfald av program som inte bara prioriterar fysisk hälsa och välmående utan också främjar värden som lagarbete, uthållighet och inkludering. Ett sådant åtagande manifesteras i utvecklingen av en läroplan som tillgodoser ett brett spektrum av förmågor och intressen. Genom semistrukturerade intervjuer med två lärare i idrott och hälsa samt rektorn, syftar forskningen till att avtäcka de specifika strategier som används för att främja en inkluderande lärmiljö, identifiera de utmaningar som lärare står inför i detta strävan. Grundad i Vygotskys sociokulturella teori och Slee's ramverk för inkluderande utbildning, erbjuder studien insikter i anpassningsbarheten av undervisningsmetoder, nödvändigheten av specialiserad träning för inkludering, och lärarnas engagemang för att tillgodose de mångfaldiga behoven hos elever, inklusive de med könsdysfori. Det specifika omnämnandet av könsdysfori understryker igenkännandet av de nyanserade utmaningar som vissa elever kan möta i idrottsundervisningen. Genom att identifiera och direkt ta itu med dessa utmaningar, försöker skolan skapa ett inkluderande utrymme som respekterar och tillgodoser de mångfaldiga identiteterna hos elevkroppen. Detta åtagande för inkludering handlar inte bara om att följa icke-diskrimineringspolicys utan är rotat i en djupare förståelse för att varje elevs upplevelse är unik. Resultaten avslöjar en betydande skillnad mellan rektorns uppfattning och lärarnas erfarenheter gällande inkluderingsutbildning, vilket understryker ett behov av tydligare kommunikation och riktad professionell utveckling. Forskningen bidrar till diskursen om effektiva inkluderingsstrategier i idrott och hälsa, och föreslår vägar för framtida forskning och policyutveckling för att förbättra inkluderingen över utbildningsinställningar.

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1. Introduction

In the evolving landscape of education, the principle of inclusivity stands as a vital area of focus, particularly within the realm of Physical and Health Education (PHE). The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) mandates that teachers work inclusively, aiming to ensure all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, have equal access to education. This directive places a significant responsibility on educators to implement strategies that accommodate the diverse needs of students within their classrooms. The scientific problem arises in translating this policy into effective practice, addressing the gap between the theoretical framework of inclusivity and its practical application in educational settings. The transition from theoretical frameworks of inclusivity to their practical application within educational settings presents a notable scientific challenge. This gap is further exacerbated by teachers' experiences, many of whom have previously encountered substantial difficulties in creating genuinely inclusive environments. Educators often report a lack of resources, insufficient training, and the complexity of meeting diverse student needs as significant barriers to effective inclusion. By highlighting these challenges, the study tries to shed light on the real-world complexities of implementing inclusion policies. This problematization not only brings to the forefront the urgency of developing more practical strategies for inclusion but also situates the research within the broader conversation about the gap between policy and practice. It underscores the necessity for a deeper investigation into the conditions that enable or hinder the realization of inclusive education, thus grounding my study in the lived experiences of educators who strive to navigate these challenges daily. This study seeks to explore these challenges, particularly within the context of Physical and Health Education, to contribute to the ongoing discourse on creating equitable learning environments for all students.

My study focuses on a particular high school distinguished by its exceptional dedication to physical education, a commitment that is tangibly demonstrated through its significant investment in resources and a staffing model that includes a higher-than-average number of Physical and Health Education (PHE) teachers. This school, serving 250 students with a dedicated team of five PHE teachers, boasts facilities and equipment that comprehensively support an inclusive PHE program. According to the principal, the school is equipped with amenities designed to meet every student's needs, including a beach volleyball court for team sports, kayaks for water-based activities, and an assortment of winter sports gear such as skates

and cross-country skis. The presence of a gym and versatile indoor and outdoor spaces facilitates a wide range of physical activities. Moreover, the proximity to a nearby island enables the school to offer unique camping experiences, effectively combining adventure with education. The principal underlines that these facilities play a crucial role in upholding the school's commitment to inclusivity by ensuring that students of all abilities find engaging and valuable opportunities in the PHE curriculum. This exceptional resource allocation, coupled with the PHE teachers' adaptable and inclusive teaching methods, exemplifies the school's comprehensive approach to fostering an environment where every student is empowered to thrive. This singular focus provides a unique opportunity to explore how inclusivity is practiced and understood in a setting where physical education plays a central role. The study ambitions to offer insights into the implementation of inclusive practices in PHE, drawing on interviews with two teachers and the principal to understand the nuances of inclusivity in this particular educational environment.

2. Purpose and Research Questions

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the implementation and interpretation of inclusive practices within the Physical and Health Education (PHE) according to the educators at a specific high school known for its exceptional emphasis on physical education. This investigation hopes to shed light on the concrete inclusion strategies employed by educators, the challenges they encounter in their efforts to create an inclusive learning environment. Through a focused case study approach, the research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on educational inclusion, offering insights that may inform future pedagogical strategies and policy formulations aimed at enhancing inclusivity in schools.

2.2 Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of this study, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What specific inclusion practices are implemented by Physical and Health Education teachers at the selected high school?

2. What challenges do PHE teachers and the principal face in implementing these inclusion practices?
3. How do educators perceive the impact of these inclusion practices on student well-being and engagement in Physical and Health Education?

3. Knowledge overview

The pursuit of inclusivity in educational settings, particularly within Physical and Health Education (PHE), represents a significant area of focus within contemporary educational research. This overview synthesizes existing literature related to inclusive practices in PHE, highlighting the themes and gaps that this study aims to address. The literature reviewed herein draws upon foundational theories, empirical studies, and methodological approaches relevant to the study's objectives, specifically examining how these elements frame the research questions, inform the methodology, and contextualize the findings in a practical setting.

3.1 Inclusive Practices in Physical and Health Education: A Closer Look at Challenges and Opportunities

The study by Qi & Ha (2012) conducted a comprehensive review over a period of 20 years, examining 75 research-based articles focused on inclusion in physical education (PE). This systematic review aimed to analyze empirical studies, categorizing them by geographic distribution, research theme, research method, and the effects of inclusion on students with and without disabilities. The findings highlighted stakeholders' perspectives on inclusive PE, effective practices for inclusion, and the impacts of such practices, offering valuable insights for future research in the field.

The discourse on inclusive education within the domain of Physical and Health Education (PHE) has garnered increasing attention, reflecting a concerted effort to ensure that PHE curricula are accessible and beneficial to all students, including those with diverse abilities and needs. The research conducted by Qi & Ha (2012) emphasizes the critical need for physical education programs to incorporate modifications in physical activities, the use of adaptive

equipment, and the fostering of cooperative learning environments. These modifications aim to support and encourage the full participation of all students, thereby promoting an inclusive educational ethos within the PHE setting. This aligns directly with the study's focus on identifying specific inclusion practices, highlighting the gap between theoretical inclusivity goals and their practical application, a central theme of the study's inquiry.

Despite these progressive strides, the literature consistently identifies persistent challenges that hinder the full realization of inclusive practices in PHE settings. Among these challenges, teacher preparedness emerges as a significant concern. The discrepancy between the aspirational goals of inclusive education and the tangible application of these principles within the structural and operational confines of existing educational frameworks is noteworthy. This gap points to a broader issue within the educational system, where the ideals of inclusivity often outpace the practical capabilities of institutions and educators to implement these ideals seamlessly into their pedagogical practices (Qi & Ha, 2012). This observation informs the study's exploration of the challenges faced by educators, underlining the necessity for my research.

The research by Block and Obrusnikova (2007) in the *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly* critically examines the impact of adapted physical activities (APAs) on inclusivity and student engagement in physical health education (PHE). Published in a journal indexed across prestigious databases, their study shines a spotlight on the importance of integrating APAs to foster an inclusive environment for students with and without disabilities. By systematically reviewing literature from 1995-2005, their work sets a foundational basis for understanding how APAs can enhance engagement and inclusivity within PHE settings, demonstrating its significance in advancing adapted physical education.

Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson's (2006) work, "Improving schools, developing inclusion," presents a comprehensive analysis of inclusion strategies within the educational system. Their findings suggest that successful inclusion is not solely about placing students with special needs within mainstream classrooms but involves a fundamental transformation of school cultures to embrace diversity at all levels. The study highlights the importance of leadership in fostering an inclusive culture, advocating for a distributed leadership model where teachers, administrators, and even students share the responsibility for creating an inclusive environment.

This approach requires a shift in the perception of inclusion from a challenge to be managed to an opportunity for enhancing the learning experience for all students. The authors also emphasize the significance of collaborative practices among educators, suggesting that teamwork and shared experiences among staff are pivotal in overcoming the barriers to inclusion. Their research advocates for an ongoing process of reflection and adaptation, where schools continuously seek and implement strategies to improve their inclusivity.

Tant and Watelain's (2016) systematic literature review offers a historical perspective on the evolution of inclusion in physical education, marking significant shifts in attitudes and practices over four decades. Their study uncovers a growing acknowledgment of the necessity for inclusive PHE practices that cater to a diverse student population, including those with disabilities. The review identifies a critical need for PHE teachers to receive specialized training that prepares them to address the varied needs of their students effectively. Key findings include the identification of best practices for inclusion, such as differentiated instruction, the use of adaptive equipment, and the development of a curriculum that values student diversity as a strength rather than a limitation. Furthermore, Tant and Watelain highlight the importance of positive teacher attitudes towards inclusion, pointing out that teachers' beliefs significantly influence the implementation and success of inclusive practices in PHE. Their review calls for further research into effective strategies for preparing future educators to foster inclusive environments in their classrooms.

This study builds upon existing research in the field of inclusive education within Physical and Health Education (PHE) at the high school level. Previous studies, such as those by Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson, and Tant and Watelain, have highlighted the critical role of cultural transformation, leadership, and the evolution of inclusive practices in shaping educational environments. These insights form the backbone of the theoretical framework employed in this research, emphasizing the importance of understanding both the opportunities and challenges in implementing effective inclusive practices.

The current investigation explores the practical application of these theories in a high school renowned for its dedication to physical education, providing a unique perspective on the realities of fostering an inclusive environment. Through semi-structured interviews with PHE teachers and the principal, the study delves into the strategies that educators employ and the systemic barriers they encounter. This approach highlights a significant gap between the ideals

of inclusivity and their practical execution, underscoring the need for enhanced professional development and better communication within educational institutions.

In summarizing the state of research and its relevance to this study, it is evident that while theoretical foundations provide a robust outline for inclusive practices, there is a pressing need for research that bridges these concepts with tangible educational outcomes. This study's ambition is to contribute to the discourse by offering detailed insights into the specific practices and challenges of implementing inclusion within PHE, advocating for a holistic approach that not only accommodates physical diversity but also addresses the broader socio-emotional dimensions of student development.

3.2 Bridging Theory and Practice

Through the lens of qualitative research, this study's ambition is to bridge the gap between the theoretical ideals of inclusion and the practical realities faced by educators in PHE. Creswell's emphasis on the importance of context in qualitative research underlines the need for studies that are deeply rooted in the specificities of their educational environments. By adopting a qualitative approach, this research seeks to provide an understanding of how inclusive practices are implemented and experienced according to educators within a high school setting known for its dedication to PHE. This approach aligns with my objective to explore the nuanced realities of practicing inclusivity, emphasizing the relevance of Creswell's framework to my study's goals.

3.3 The study's contribution to the field of research.

The incorporation of Creswell's methodological perspectives into the literature review highlights a critical gap in the current body of research on inclusive education in PHE: the scarcity of qualitative studies that focus on the lived experiences of PHE teachers and principals. This study, by employing a qualitative methodology as advocated by Creswell, aims to fill this gap by offering a context-specific exploration of inclusivity within the PHE curriculum. This methodological focus is intended to complement the existing research, which has predominantly utilized quantitative measures to assess the outcomes of inclusive practices. This directly addresses my study's aim to uncover the lived experiences and challenges of educators in implementing inclusive practices, thereby enriching the literature with context-specific insights.

Reflecting on the challenges identified in the literature, such as teacher preparedness and the availability of resources, Creswell's work also supports the argument for more comprehensive qualitative studies to inform the development of targeted professional development programs.

3.3.1 Gaps in the Literature

Despite the considerable body of research on inclusive education, there is a distinct lack of detailed studies focusing on the intricacies of implementing inclusive practices specifically within the Physical Health Education (PHE) curriculum at the high school level. This gap becomes even more pronounced when considering the unique challenges and opportunities that the subject of physical education and health presents. Block and Obrusnikova (2007) underscore this point by reviewing literature from a decade and highlighting the scarcity of studies that delve into inclusive practices within physical education, suggesting a need for further research in this area.

The exploration of inclusivity within Physical and Health Education (PHE) presents a nuanced landscape marked by both progress and persistent challenges. While the literature underscores a concerted effort towards making PHE accessible to all students, it also reveals significant gaps, particularly in the practical implementation of these inclusive practices at the high school level. The discrepancies between theoretical aspirations and practical realities highlight a critical need for further research, especially studies that delve into the experiences and strategies of PHE teachers and principals in fostering inclusivity.

Physical education, with its emphasis on physical activity, health, and wellbeing, operates within a unique pedagogical context that significantly differs from more traditional academic subjects. It requires a dynamic and adaptable approach to inclusivity, acknowledging the diverse physical and psychological needs of students. However, the current literature often overlooks how inclusivity within this context can be effectively achieved, neglecting the specific strategies, adaptations, and pedagogical methods that can foster a more inclusive environment. Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson (2006) highlight the importance of developing inclusion in educational settings, emphasizing the need for research that explores how these practices can be applied within the distinct context of physical education.

Moreover, there is a notable scarcity of research that delves into the experiences and perspectives of those directly involved in the delivery of inclusive PHE - the teachers and school principals. Their insights are crucial for understanding the practical challenges, benefits, and the impact of inclusive practices on the school community. By focusing on their experiences, we can gain a deeper understanding of the barriers to inclusivity in PHE and identify effective strategies for overcoming them. Creswell (2013) supports the use of qualitative research designs for such exploratory studies, emphasizing the value of capturing the nuanced perspectives of individuals directly involved in the educational process.

Despite the strides toward a more inclusive educational landscape, significant gaps persist within the literature, particularly in the application and effects of inclusive practices in Physical and Health Education (PHE). While many studies discuss the theoretical underpinnings and potential strategies for inclusion, fewer delve into the tangible outcomes these practices have on students and educators within the PHE context. This section aims to clarify the contributions of key studies to our understanding of inclusion in PHE, shedding light on the nuanced findings of their research.

In previous discussions, particularly in section 3.1, the research contributions of Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson (2006), as well as Tant and Watelain (2016), were detailed to outline the evolution of inclusive practices in education and Physical and Health Education (PHE). These studies have been instrumental in identifying the critical factors and challenges associated with inclusivity in school settings and PHE specifically. As such, this section will focus on integrating their findings into the broader narrative of this study without repeating the specific results and methodologies previously discussed. This approach ensures a cohesive exploration of how their insights underpin the theoretical framework and inform the practical applications examined in our investigation of inclusive practices in PHE.

By acknowledging the foundational role these studies play in understanding inclusivity, this research builds on their theoretical and empirical contributions to address the current gaps in practice and policy. The focus now shifts to how these insights can be effectively applied to enhance inclusivity strategies within the specific context of the high school examined in this study, aiming to provide actionable recommendations that address the nuances of implementing inclusive education in real-world settings.

This study tries to bridge these significant gaps by conducting an exploration of a high school renowned for its emphasis on physical education and health. By examining this institution as a case study, the research will provide valuable insights into the specific practices and challenges of implementing inclusion within the PHE curriculum. Through qualitative interviews with PHE teachers and school principal, this study will shed light on the nuanced ways in which inclusivity can be promoted within the context of physical education and health. This approach not only addresses the general lack of research on inclusivity in PHE but also offers a examination of the subject matter, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of inclusivity in education. Tant and Watelain (2016) call for such detailed examinations, noting the evolving nature of inclusion in physical education and the ongoing need for research that reflects current practices and challenges.

4 Concepts, Theories, and Models in the Study of Inclusive Practices in PHE

Concepts

In the realm of education, particularly within the context of this study focusing on Physical and Health Education (PHE), it is imperative to clearly define and distinguish between the terms "inclusivity" and "inclusion." These concepts, while interconnected, serve different roles in the discourse on creating educational environments that are accessible and beneficial to all students.

Inclusivity is a broad philosophy or goal that underpins efforts to create environments that are welcoming and accommodating to all individuals, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or needs. It embodies the principle that every person should have the opportunity to participate fully in educational, social, and community activities. Inclusivity is about valuing diversity and ensuring that no one is excluded or marginalized. It calls for a proactive approach to designing systems, policies, and practices that consider the widest range of people from the outset. This overarching goal of inclusivity aims to foster a sense of belonging and respect for all individuals, promoting an environment where differences are not just acknowledged but celebrated Ainscow, M., Booth, T., & Dyson, A. (2006).

Inclusion, on the other hand, refers to the specific, practical methods and strategies employed to realize the goal of inclusivity within educational settings. Inclusion involves the implementation of teaching practices, curricular adaptations, and educational policies that ensure students of all abilities and backgrounds can learn together in the same classroom or educational environment. It focuses on removing barriers to learning and participation, adapting educational content and delivery to meet the diverse needs of all students. Inclusion is action-oriented, detailing the ways in which educational institutions and educators actively modify their approaches to teaching and learning to accommodate everyone, especially those who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized Ainscow, M., Booth, T., & Dyson, A. (2006).

In the context of this study, understanding the distinction and interplay between inclusivity and inclusion is crucial. The focus on PHE presents unique challenges and opportunities for fostering an inclusive learning environment, given the physical nature of the subject and the diverse abilities of students. By defining these terms clearly, the study sets the foundation for an exploration of how inclusivity and inclusion are implemented and understood in the context of PHE according to educators at the highschool, contributing to the broader discourse on creating more inclusive educational environments for all students.

Inclusive Education is conceived within this study as a strategic approach aimed at fostering an educational environment that accommodates all students, transcending physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional barriers. Drawing from Slee (2011), inclusive education is not merely about physical integration into mainstream settings but about reshaping educational practices to meet the diverse needs of all learners. This concept is critical for examining how Physical and Health Education (PHE) can be made accessible and beneficial for every student, recognizing the varied abilities and interests that students bring to the PHE classroom.

Physical and Health Education (PHE) serves as the focal point of my investigation, defined as the curriculum component dedicated to enhancing students' physical competencies, health literacy, and overall well-being through active participation. PHE is particularly pertinent for exploring inclusion due to its potential for promoting social integration, self-esteem, and healthful habits among students with diverse backgrounds and abilities.

4.1 Inclusive Education: Theoretical Foundations

The concept of inclusive education has evolved significantly over the past few decades, transitioning from a focus on integrating students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms to a broader understanding of inclusivity that encompasses all learners, regardless of their diverse needs. Slee (2011) articulates inclusive education as the endeavor to augment the participation of all students within the educational and communal frameworks of mainstream schools. This comprehensive approach posits that educational environments should be designed and managed to accommodate a wide spectrum of student abilities and backgrounds, ensuring equitable access to learning opportunities and participation in school life for everyone.

The theoretical underpinnings of inclusive education find resonance in Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory of learning, which emphasizes the pivotal role of social interaction in cognitive development. Vygotsky's theory posits that learning is inherently a social process, shaped through interactions within the cultural context of the learner. From this perspective, the classroom becomes a microcosm of society, where diverse interactions and shared experiences are central to the educational process. Vygotsky's emphasis on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) — the difference between what a learner can do without help and what they can achieve with guidance and encouragement from a skilled partner — underscores the importance of adaptive and responsive educational practices that cater to the individual needs of students. This principle is fundamental to inclusive education, as it advocates for teaching strategies that are flexible and differentiated, enabling each student to learn within their own ZPD.

The selection of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory as the foundation for exploring inclusive practices in PHE is deliberate and significant. This theory offers a robust framework for understanding how social interactions and cultural contexts influence learning, making it particularly relevant for examining inclusive education. The socio-cultural theory's focus on the social nature of learning aligns with the principles of inclusivity, which prioritize creating educational environments that are responsive to the diverse needs and backgrounds of all students. By emphasizing the importance of social interaction and the cultural context in learning, Vygotsky's theory provides a theoretical basis for developing and implementing pedagogical strategies that are inclusive and equitable. This is especially pertinent in PHE,

where the physical and social dynamics of the classroom play a critical role in shaping students' learning experiences.

Moreover, Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) has direct implications for inclusive teaching practices in PHE. The ZPD highlights the potential for learning that occurs when students are provided with support that is tailored to their individual levels of development. This concept underlines the importance of differentiation and adaptability in teaching methods, ensuring that each student's unique needs are met. In the context of PHE, where students' physical abilities and comfort levels can vary widely, applying the ZPD concept means creating a learning environment where all students are challenged yet supported appropriately. This approach not only fosters individual growth and development but also promotes an inclusive classroom culture where every student feels valued and empowered to participate fully.

Furthermore, applying Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory in the analysis of inclusive practices in PHE allows for a deeper examination of how social interactions within the classroom can facilitate or hinder inclusivity. The theory suggests that learning is a collaborative process, where knowledge is co-constructed through interactions among peers and between students and teachers. This perspective encourages the exploration of how collaborative learning strategies, peer support mechanisms, and teacher-student relationships in PHE contribute to creating an inclusive learning environment. It also prompts consideration of how cultural norms and values within the school and wider community impact the implementation and effectiveness of inclusive practices in PHE.

Furthermore, the socio-cultural theory advocates for the inclusion of all students in meaningful educational activities, positing that learning is most effective when students are active participants in a community of learners. This aligns with the inclusive education mandate to create learning environments that are not only physically accessible but also pedagogically responsive and emotionally supportive of all students. By fostering an educational culture that values diversity and promotes the participation of all students, schools can become more inclusive, thereby enhancing learning outcomes for everyone.

The application of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory within this study primarily serves as a theoretical lens through which to analyze and interpret the findings related to inclusive practices in Physical and Health Education (PHE). The theory's emphasis on the social nature of learning and the critical role of cultural and social interactions in cognitive development offers a robust framework for understanding the dynamics of inclusion in educational settings. Specifically, the concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and "artifacts" become instrumental in dissecting the strategies educators employ to foster an inclusive environment and to address the diverse needs of students.

In this study, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory provides a valuable framework not as an analytical tool per se, but rather as a means to enhance the interpretation and discussion of findings related to inclusive practices in Physical and Health Education (PHE). While the initial intention might have been to apply these theoretical concepts throughout the analytical phases, they have been most effectively utilized in the discussion to deepen understanding of the results.

The concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and "artifacts" from Vygotsky's theory have been instrumental in interpreting the strategies employed by educators to foster an inclusive environment. For instance, the use of ZPD helps to analyze how teachers structure physical education activities to bridge the gap between what students can do alone and what they can achieve with guidance, thereby accommodating a broad spectrum of abilities and promoting inclusivity. Similarly, the concept of "artifacts" has been pivotal in discussing how tools such as diagrams, videos, and step-by-step guides not only make learning more accessible but also actively reduce barriers to participation for all students, particularly those who might struggle with conventional instructional methods.

This theoretical grounding is crucial as it provides insights into how educators leverage socio-cultural tools and interactions to support diverse learning needs. By focusing on these aspects, the study highlights the importance of adapting teaching methods and resources to address the varied needs of students within the PHE curriculum. Therefore, while the socio-cultural theory may not have been explicitly reiterated as an analytical tool in the results section, its concepts underpin the discussion of the findings, offering a richer, more nuanced understanding of inclusivity in educational practices.

5. Method

5.1 Methodological Framework and Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design, specifically a case study approach, to delve into the implementation of inclusive practices within the Physical and Health Education (PHE) curriculum of a single, purposively selected high school. This design is grounded in the principles outlined by Creswell (2013), who advocates for qualitative methods as effective in exploring complex phenomena within their natural settings. The case study method, detailed by Yin (2018), was chosen for its strengths in facilitating an exploration of particular instances within their real-life context, thereby allowing for a nuanced understanding of the dynamic interplay between inclusive educational practices and the specific institutional setting of the high school.

Employing a qualitative research methodology, this study engages in a targeted examination of inclusion within PHE of a selected high school. This methodological choice facilitates exploration of inclusion practices, enabling an understanding of the strategies employed and the challenges encountered. The research is intentionally narrowed to focus on this specific educational setting, providing a concentrated examination from the perspective of key educational figures involved in PHE.

5.1.1 Justification for Qualitative Approach

The qualitative approach was selected to capture the depth, complexity, and contextual nuances of implementing inclusive practices in PHE, which quantitative methods might not fully reveal. This approach supports the generation of rich, data that reflect the perspectives, experiences, and challenges faced by PHE teachers and the school principal in fostering an inclusive learning environment.

The application of qualitative research methodologies in the study of inclusive practices within Physical and Health Education (PHE) presents a unique opportunity to delve deeper into the complexities and nuances of inclusivity. Creswell's (2013) work on qualitative inquiry and research design offers valuable frameworks for understanding how qualitative approaches can illuminate the subjective experiences of educators and students within inclusive PHE settings.

Creswell advocates for a nuanced exploration of educational phenomena, suggesting that qualitative methods are particularly suited to capturing the depth and diversity of experiences in educational contexts. This methodological choice is crucial for my study, aiming to bridge the theoretical and practical aspects of inclusion in PHE, providing an understanding that quantitative methods might not capture.

5.2 Participant Selection and Sampling Methodology

The school, serving 250 students with a team of five dedicated PHE teachers, is richly equipped for an inclusive Physical and Health Education program. According to the principal, its amenities aim to cater to every student's needs, featuring a beach volleyball court for team sports, kayaks for water-based activities, and various winter sports gear including skates and cross-country skis. The gym and versatile indoor and outdoor spaces support a wide array of activities. Additionally, the nearby island offers unique opportunities for camping, blending adventure with education. The principal emphasizes that these facilities are central to the school's commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that students of all abilities are engaged and valued. according to the principal this approach is echoed by PHE teachers' flexible and inclusive teaching methods, demonstrating a unified effort to foster an environment where every student can thrive.

Following Patton's (2002) recommendations on purposeful sampling, participants were selected based on their potential to provide insights into the research questions. This sampling strategy led to the inclusion of two PHE teachers and the principal, chosen for their direct involvement in and influence over PHE teaching strategies, curriculum development, and overall school policies on inclusivity. This section will elaborate on the criteria used for participant selection, including their roles, experience, and contributions to PHE and inclusive education, and discuss the rationale behind focusing on a small, targeted sample to achieve depth over breadth in data collection.

Using a purposeful sampling strategy (Patton, 2002), the study selects participants who are deeply involved in the school's PHE curriculum, namely two PHE teachers and the principal. This selection aims to capture an understanding of inclusion practices within the context of this particular high school, emphasizing the lived experiences and challenges faced by educators in implementing these practices.

The participant selection for this study was strategically chosen to encompass diverse perspectives within the school setting, focusing on one principal and two Physical and Health Education (PHE) teachers. This decision was made to capture a holistic view of inclusivity practices in PHE, where the principal's insights into school-wide policies, resources allocation, and teacher training initiatives provide a macro perspective of inclusion. In contrast, the experiences shared by PHE teachers offer a micro view, highlighting the day-to-day strategies and challenges encountered in implementing these inclusive practices in their classrooms.

Different sets of interview questions were prepared for the principal and the teachers, tailored to their specific roles and expertise. For the principal, questions were centered around policy formulation, resources provision, and the overall strategy for teacher training in inclusivity. Conversely, teachers were asked about their practical approaches, classroom strategies, and personal experiences with inclusivity, allowing for a detailed exploration of inclusion from both the policy implementation and the front-line execution angles.

The choice of this particular school as the study's focal point stems from its well-documented commitment to physical education and inclusivity, making it an ideal case for examining effective inclusive practices. The school's reputation for a well-resourced PHE program and its proactive stance on inclusive education aligns with the study's objective of uncovering successful strategies and potential challenges in fostering inclusivity. This purposeful selection underscores the school's unique position as an exemplary model for exploring inclusivity within the PHE curriculum, providing valuable insights into the enactment of inclusive practices in a supportive educational environment.

This narrowed scope helps the study remains focused and manageable, allowing for an exploration of inclusion practices within a specific educational setting. By limiting the research to a single high school and a small number of interviews, the study maintains a tight focus, ensuring that the findings are both relevant and deeply informed by the participants' experiences and perspectives.

To gain a deep understanding of inclusive practices in Physical and Health Education (PHE), I embarked on qualitative research, conducting detailed interviews with both PHE teachers and the school's principal. Initially, I selected educators deeply involved in the PHE curriculum, aiming for a diverse array of insights from those with firsthand involvement in inclusivity strategies. Following the interviews, I transcribed the discussions verbatim, ensuring accuracy and authenticity in capturing participants' viewpoints. This transcription paved the way for a methodical analysis, where I organized the responses into thematic categories, distinguishing between common and unique perspectives on inclusivity. Through this thematic analysis, I was able to examine the inclusivity practices and challenges within the school's PHE program, categorizing responses to draw significant insights into the implementation of inclusion. This stepwise approach allowed for an exploration of the state of inclusivity, guided by the direct experiences and contributions of the educators involved.

5.3 Data Collection: Interviews

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, a method that balances the need for structured inquiry with the flexibility to explore emerging topics in depth. This method, endorsed by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), is particularly suited to eliciting rich, descriptive accounts of experiences, perceptions, and practices related to inclusivity in PHE. The interviews, lasting 25-35 minutes, were conducted following a guide developed from the study's research questions, with open-ended questions to facilitate detailed narratives and follow-up probes to clarify and expand upon key points.

5.4 Analytical Strategy: Thematic Analysis

Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was employed to systematically code and categorize the data into themes that represent the collected narratives and observations. This analytical approach was chosen for its flexibility and compatibility with the qualitative case study design, allowing for a detailed and nuanced interpretation of the data.

The thematic analysis process in this study involved several steps to try to ensure depth and accuracy in interpreting the interview data. Initially, I immersed myself in the data, thoroughly familiarizing myself with the content by reading and re-reading the transcribed interviews. This familiarization allowed me to generate initial codes, identifying significant phrases, ideas, and

patterns related to inclusivity within the PHE context. Following code generation, I grouped these codes into potential themes, reflecting broader patterns in the data. These themes were then reviewed and refined, to try and guarantee that they accurately represented the data set and addressed the research questions. This iterative review process involved comparing themes against the dataset to confirm their validity and refining them for coherence. Through this analytical process, themes were finally defined and named, encapsulating the core insights into inclusivity practices and challenges identified in the study.

5.5 Ethical Considerations and Rigor

Adhering to the highest ethical standards, this study follows the guidelines proposed by the Vetenskapsrådet (2002), ensuring informed consent, participant anonymity, data confidentiality, and the right to withdraw. To uphold ethical standards, this study closely followed protocols for participant engagement, including clear explanations of the study's purpose, obtaining informed consent, and reassuring confidentiality. Consent forms detailed participants' rights and the use of their data. To protect privacy, all identifying information was removed or altered. Regarding reliability and validity, the study employed a transparent, methodical approach to data collection and analysis. Regular reflections and checks ensured interpretations remained true to participants' perspectives, enhancing the study's credibility without overstating the scope of its findings.

To further address the ethical considerations of this study, detailed measures were taken to ensure the protection and privacy of participants. Informed consent was meticulously obtained through a dual approach: verbally and in writing. Before the interviews, participants were thoroughly briefed on the study's aims, procedures, and their rights as participants. This briefing was both read aloud and provided in a written agreement, which they signed to indicate their consent. Additionally, the data collection process involved recording interviews with a voice recorder, with explicit permission from the participants.

I assured participants of the strict confidentiality measures in place, explaining that the audio recordings and data would be securely stored in my iCloud, accessible only by me for the duration of the study. Furthermore, participants were informed that the completed study would be accessible through Diva, a digital academic repository, increasing the reach of the findings while maintaining the anonymity of the participants. The data is slated to be stored securely for

10 years in a password-protected file, ensuring long-term confidentiality and compliance with ethical standards for data protection. This comprehensive approach to ethical considerations underscores the study's commitment to upholding the dignity, privacy, and rights of all participants throughout the research process.

6. Results and analysis

In the results section of this study, the findings are organized to systematically address the research questions posited at the outset. Section 6.1 delves into the specific inclusion practices implemented by Physical and Health Education (PHE) teachers, providing detailed insights into the strategies that facilitate inclusive teaching and learning environments. Following this, Section 6.2 explores the challenges these educators face in implementing inclusive practices, highlighting the obstacles encountered and the measures taken to overcome them. Finally, Section 6.3 examines the perceived impact of these practices on student well-being and engagement, offering a comprehensive view of the effectiveness of inclusivity strategies in the PHE context. This structured approach ensures a coherent presentation of the study's findings, guiding the reader through the intricacies of implementing, navigating, and assessing inclusivity in PHE.

6.1 Strategies and tools

6.1.1 Tailoring Activities to Foster Inclusion

Teachers' dedication to adapting their teaching methods is evident in their efforts to tailor activities that accommodate the wide range of students' physical capabilities and learning preferences. A poignant example comes from a teacher who shared, "It's about the feeling of being able to participate and that there is an opportunity to participate". "*(Det handlar om känslan att kunna vara med och att det finns en möjlighet att kunna vara med)*" This sentiment captures the essence of the inclusive philosophy, highlighting the importance of making every student feel valued and included in the classroom activities.

To further illustrate the application of tailored activities within Physical and Health Education, the teachers talked about one innovative example involves the modification of a climbing activity to suit varying levels of student ability and confidence. This activity was designed with

three different "difficulty levels," each marked by a set point on various ropes. Some ropes had higher set points requiring more complex climbing skills, while others were positioned lower, making them more accessible for those less confident in their climbing abilities. This approach not only accommodates the diverse physical capabilities of students but also encourages them to challenge themselves according to their comfort level, embodying the inclusive philosophy of allowing all students to participate and feel valued in the activity, regardless of their starting point.

The strategy of customizing exercises extends beyond mere participation. It involves creating an environment where students are not only physically engaged but also emotionally and mentally invested in the activities. Such an environment promotes a sense of belonging and community among students, which is essential for their overall development and well-being.

6.1.2 Individual Solutions and Alternative Activities

Recognizing the unique needs of each student is a cornerstone of the teachers' approach to inclusion. As one educator explained, "We try to find individual solutions... it can be on an individual level for some goals". "*(Vi försöker hitta individuella lösningar... det kan vara på individnivå för en del mål)*". This approach underscores the necessity of personalizing educational experiences to ensure that every student can achieve their potential. By considering individual needs and preferences, teachers are able to design activities that are both accessible and challenging, thereby fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

Alternative activities play a critical role in this personalized approach. Teachers actively seek out or create alternative exercises that align with the lesson's objectives but are tailored to suit the needs of students who may not be able to participate in the standard curriculum activities. This flexibility ensures that all students have the opportunity to engage in meaningful physical education, regardless of any physical or cognitive limitations they may face.

6.1.3 Engaging Students in the Learning Process

A significant aspect of the adaptable teaching method is the active involvement of students in their learning process. Teachers encourage students to express their preferences, concerns, and suggestions, which are then incorporated into the planning and execution of PHE activities.

This participatory approach not only empowers students by giving them a say in their education but also enhances their engagement and motivation to participate in physical activities.

Furthermore, according to the educators this collaborative process between teachers and students facilitates the development of trust and respect. Students feel that their voices are heard and that their individual needs are considered, which contributes to a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere.

The incorporation of visual aids into Physical and Health Education (PHE) emerges as a pivotal strategy for fostering an inclusive learning environment. This approach is particularly instrumental in addressing the diverse needs of students, especially those with learning differences, ensuring that all students have equitable access to the curriculum.

6.1.4 Diverse Visual Tools for Enhanced Understanding

The use of various visual tools by teachers showcases their deep understanding by addressing the diverse ways students comprehend and retain information. By employing diagrams, guides, and videos, teachers can meet the specific learning needs of each student, ensuring the material is accessible to those who may struggle with traditional verbal instructions. This adaptability reflects an awareness of the different learning styles present in their classroom and a commitment to making learning engaging and effective for all students. A teacher's reflection, "The use of visual aids like diagrams and step-by-step guides helps students understand movements better". "*Användning av visuella hjälpmedel som diagram och steg-för-steg guider hjälper elever att förstå rörelser bättre,*") underscores the significance of these tools in making complex physical movements and concepts more accessible and less intimidating for all students.

According to the educators this strategy not only aids in the comprehension of physical activities but also plays a crucial role in reducing anxiety and uncertainty among students. By providing visual representations, students can visualize the activity before attempting it, which may help build confidence and encourages participation.

6.1.5 Tailoring Communication to Support Diverse Learners

According to the educators the strategic use of visual aids is complemented by tailored communication techniques that further enhance inclusivity. Recognizing that verbal instructions alone may not meet the needs of all learners, teachers employ a combination of verbal, visual, and sometimes tactile cues to try to ensure comprehension across the board. This modal approach to communication tries to ensure that instructions are clear, reducing the possibility of misunderstanding and increasing student engagement.

Furthermore the interviewed PHE teachers also mentioned the focused use of visual aids is especially important for students with learning differences, such as dyslexia or ADHD, who may find traditional verbal instructions challenging to follow. By presenting information in a visual format, teachers can try to cater to these students' strengths, enabling them to participate fully in lessons. This method acknowledges the unique learning styles of each student, aiming to promote a sense of belonging and validation.

6.1.7 The Role of Visual Aids in PHE

Moreover, the interviewed educators highlight how visual aids facilitate a degree of independence among students. With clear, visual instructions available, students can self-direct parts of their learning, revisiting the visual aids as needed without requiring constant teacher intervention. This not only fosters a sense of autonomy but also allows teachers to dedicate more personalized attention to students who may need additional support, thereby optimizing the learning experience for everyone involved.

The application of visual aids in PHE is an ongoing process of adaptation and improvement. The interviewed teachers continuously seek feedback from students about the effectiveness of these tools and make adjustments to try and ensure that they remain relevant and supportive of the learning objectives. This iterative process is indicative of the commitment to creating an inclusive and responsive educational environment where all students can thrive according to the educators.

6.1.8 Collaborative Efforts for Inclusion

According to the educators collaborative efforts involving teachers, school administrators, students, and their families are crucial in developing comprehensive strategies for inclusion. Such collaboration ensures that educational practices are informed by a range of perspectives and that the specific needs of students with gender dysphoria are met with empathy and understanding.

6.2 Challenges and solutions

6.2.1 Addressing the Complexities of Gender Dysphoria and Fluid Gender Identities in PHE

The challenge teachers address involves accommodating students with gender dysphoria in Physical and Health Education (PHE), necessitating a nuanced and sensitive approach to inclusion. According to the educators gender dysphoria, the distress caused by a discrepancy between a person's gender identity and their sex assigned at birth, presents specific challenges in PHE settings where activities and spaces are traditionally gendered. This situation demands educators to adapt teaching strategies, environments, and interactions to support each student's unique identity and needs, ensuring a respectful and inclusive educational experience.

The challenge of accommodating students with gender dysphoria in Physical and Health Education (PHE) underscores the need for a nuanced and sensitive approach to inclusion. Gender dysphoria, characterized by a conflict between an individual's assigned gender at birth and their identified gender, presents unique challenges within the educational context, particularly in environments like PHE where gendered activities and spaces are common.

Educators are required to exhibit a high degree of flexibility and understanding as they navigate the fluid and evolving nature of students' gender identities. One teacher highlighted the complexity of this task, stating, "Navigating fluid and evolving gender identities requires constant adaptation on the part of teachers". "*(Navigeringen av fluida och utvecklande könsidentiteter kräver ständig anpassning från lärarnas sida)*". This observation reflects the dynamic aspect of gender identity and the continuous effort required from educators to support each student effectively.

6.2.2 The Importance of Sensitive Communication

Sensitive communication emerges as a crucial element in addressing the needs of students experiencing gender dysphoria. Teachers must engage in open and affirming dialogues with students to understand their preferences and comfort levels, especially concerning participation in gendered activities and use of facilities another educator emphasized "Creating a dialogue with students to understand their needs and comfort levels is crucial". "*(Att skapa en dialog med eleverna för att förstå deras behov och komfortnivåer är avgörande.)*" In theory this approach fosters a supportive environment that acknowledges and respects the student's gender identity.

6.2.4 Professional Development and Support

The complexity of addressing gender dysphoria in the educational setting highlights the need for targeted professional development for teachers. "We need more education and support to best meet the needs of these students" remarked another teacher "*(Vi behöver mer utbildning och stöd för att kunna möta dessa elevers behov på bästa sätt.)*". This call for enhanced training underscores the necessity of equipping educators with the knowledge and skills to navigate the challenges of gender dysphoria sensitively and effectively.

One of the teachers also mentioned that tailoring activities to meet every student's needs, while a cornerstone of inclusive education, presents its own set of challenges. This process requires educators to have a deep understanding of each student's unique physical and psychological profile, which can be a daunting task given the diverse classroom population. The challenge is compounded when trying to accommodate students with specific needs, such as gender dysphoria, where sensitivity and a nuanced approach are paramount. Teachers must continuously adapt and reassess their strategies to ensure they are inclusive, which demands ongoing professional development and support. This complex interplay between strategy and challenge underscores the dynamic nature of inclusive education, where solutions themselves necessitate careful consideration and adaptability.

Practical adaptations to facilities and activities are necessary to work on inclusivity for students with gender dysphoria. This might involve offering gender-neutral changing facilities or

allowing students to participate in activities that align with their gender identity. A Teacher noted "Adapting facilities and activities to include all students is an essential part of our work". "*Anpassning av faciliteter och aktiviteter för att inkludera alla studenter är en viktig del av vårt arbete*". According to the teacher such adjustments are vital in creating a physically and emotionally safe space for all students.

6.2.5 Bridging the Gap in Teacher Training for Inclusive Education

The issue of teacher training for inclusive education in Physical and Health Education (PHE) highlights a significant discrepancy between the perceptions of school leadership and the experiences of the teaching staff. This mismatch points to a broader challenge within the educational system: ensuring that all educators are adequately prepared to implement inclusive practices in their classrooms.

From the principal's viewpoint, the school has made concerted efforts to integrate inclusive education principles into its overall professional development strategy. According to the principal, "Teachers have been exposed to various improvement programs that implicitly include elements of inclusive education". "*Lärarna har exponerats för olika förbättringsprogram som implicit inkluderar element av inkluderande utbildning*." This statement suggests an assumption that general improvement programs also improves the teachers way of working with inclusivity.

However, contrasting with the principal's perspective, teachers articulate a clear need for more targeted training focused on inclusion. a teacher highlighted, pointing out the absence of dedicated inclusion training "We have not received specific training focused solely on inclusion". "*Vi har inte fått specifik utbildning fokuserad enbart på inkludering*," This sentiment is echoed across both interviewed PHE teachers, indicating possibly a widespread feeling of unpreparedness in addressing the diverse needs of students within an inclusive framework.

6.2.6 The Importance of Specialized Inclusion Training

The call for specialized training underscores the complexity of inclusion in education, which requires more than a one-size-fits-all approach. Another teacher emphasized "To effectively implement inclusive practices in teaching, we need training that specifically addresses inclusion". "*(För att effektivt kunna implementera inkluderande praktiker i undervisningen behöver vi utbildning som specifikt adresserar inkludering).*" This highlights the necessity for training programs that delve into the specific strategies, challenges, and opportunities associated with inclusive education.

6.2.7 Aligning Educational Objectives and Professional Development

The discrepancy in perceptions about inclusion training points to a larger issue of alignment between educational objectives and the content of professional development programs. A faculty member remarked "There is a gap between school leadership's perception and teachers' experiences of inclusion training". "*(Det finns ett gap mellan skolledningens uppfattning och lärarnas erfarenheter av inkluderingsutbildning).*" Bridging this gap requires a concerted effort to ensure that professional development initiatives are clearly communicated and that they explicitly address the principles and practices of inclusive education.

6.3 Effects of inclusivity and inclusion practices

6.3.1 Towards Comprehensive Inclusive Education Training

Addressing this discrepancy necessitates a collaborative approach involving teachers, school administrators, and perhaps external experts in inclusive education. Developing a comprehensive training program that offers both theoretical knowledge and practical skills in inclusion can empower teachers to meet the diverse needs of their students more effectively.

According to the educators the successful implementation of inclusive practices within Physical and Health Education (PHE) has significantly enhanced the overall well-being of students, underscoring the crucial role that a supportive and adaptive educational environment plays in fostering a sense of community and individual value.

The interviewed teachers have observed a tangible improvement in the atmosphere of their classrooms, compared to earlier years attributing this to the deliberate efforts to make every student feel included and respected. "Creating an inclusive environment where differences are recognized and respected contributes to a sense of safety and belonging among students". One educator noted, emphasizing the foundational importance of acknowledging and respecting differences to foster a welcoming environment. "*Skapandet av en inkluderande miljö där olikheter erkänns och respekteras bidrar till en känsla av säkerhet och tillhörighet bland eleverna*).

Prior to the observed improvements, the interviewed teachers have always endeavored to foster inclusivity within their classrooms, consistently aiming to respect and include every student. However, they acknowledge that despite their efforts, there is always room for enhancement. The educators emphasize that the journey towards creating a fully inclusive environment is ongoing, with continuous opportunities for refinement and growth in their practices. This perspective underlines a commitment to perpetual improvement and adaptation, highlighting an awareness that achieving inclusivity is a dynamic process that evolves alongside educational practices and understanding.

6.3.2 The Role of Empathy and Understanding

The commitment to inclusivity extends beyond mere participation in activities. Teachers strive to cultivate an empathetic understanding among students, encouraging them to support one another. "By encouraging students to support one another, we build a stronger community where everyone feels valued." Another teacher remarked, highlighting the community-building aspect of inclusive practices "*Genom att uppmuntra eleverna att stötta varandra, bygger vi en starkare gemenskap där alla känner sig värderade*).

According to the educators the inclusive environment has not only improved how students interact with one another but has also led to increased engagement and participation in PHE activities. The interviewed teachers also highlighted that students who might have previously felt marginalized or hesitant to participate are now more likely to join in, knowing they will be met with understanding and support. "We see an increase in participation from all students, especially those who previously felt excluded". shared a PHE teacher, pointing out the inclusive

practices' role in boosting participation rates. "*Vi ser en ökning i deltagandet från alla elever, särskilt de som tidigare kände sig exkluderade.*"

6.3.3 Benefits on Student Development according to the educators

According to the educators the impact of these inclusive practices on student well-being extends beyond the physical education class. They contribute to the holistic development of students, equipping them with life skills such as resilience, empathy, and self-esteem. "Inclusive education contributes not only to physical well-being but also to social and emotional development". A teacher reflected, underscoring the comprehensive benefits of inclusivity. "*Inkluderande utbildning bidrar inte bara till fysiskt välbefinnande utan också till social och emotionell utveckling.*"

Continuous Improvement and Reflection

Despite the positive outcomes, teachers recognize the importance of continual reflection and improvement in their approach to inclusivity. "There is always room for improvement. We strive to listen to students' feedback and adapt our methods accordingly". commented a teacher, highlighting the adaptive nature of their teaching philosophy. "*Det finns alltid utrymme för förbättring. Vi strävar efter att lyssna på elevernas feedback och anpassa våra metoder därefter.*"

7 Discussion

The exploration of inclusive practices within Physical and Health Education (PHE) at a high school renowned for its commitment to physical education has provided a view of the multifaceted efforts by educators to foster an inclusive environment. This discussion aims to delve deeper into these practices.

By understanding the specific needs, challenges, and strategies of PHE teachers through qualitative research, educational institutions can better tailor professional development initiatives to address the gaps in teacher training and resource provision identified by Tinning and Fitzclarence (1992) and others. This underlines the practical implications of my findings, suggesting pathways for improving the inclusivity of PHE through targeted teacher training and resource allocation.

Addressing the gaps in teacher training and resource provision involves a multifaceted examination of existing shortcomings and how they impede the successful implementation of inclusive education in PHE. Specifically, Tinning and Fitzclarence (1992) and subsequent studies illuminate critical areas of deficiency, such as a lack of comprehensive training programs tailored to inclusive education, insufficient resources to support diverse learning needs, and an overarching need for systemic support structures that empower educators to effectively cater to the spectrum of student abilities and identities. These gaps highlight the discrepancy between the theoretical ideals of inclusive education and the practical challenges educators face in the field, underscoring the imperative for targeted professional development initiatives and strategic resource allocation to bridge these divides.

By concentrating on the lived experiences of educators, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the conditions under which inclusive practices can be most effectively realized in PHE settings. It highlights the importance of teacher preparedness, resource availability, and the adaptation of curriculum content as pivotal factors in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Ultimately, this research underscores the necessity for a multifaceted approach to inclusivity, one that encompasses both the enrichment of pedagogical strategies and the enhancement of structural supports within educational institutions.

7.1 Reaffirmation of the Study's Objective

This study embarked upon the journey to unveil the intricacies of inclusion practices within Physical and Health Education (PHE), focusing on the strategies employed by educators and the myriad challenges they encounter. My findings reveal a dynamic interplay between innovative teaching methodologies, such as tailoring activities to foster inclusion and employing visual aids for enhanced understanding, and the persistent hurdles like the need for specialized inclusion training and the adaptation to diverse student needs, including gender dysphoria. These results underscore the need to contribute to the evolving discourse on the implementation of effective inclusivity strategies in educational realms that navigate the complex intersection of physical and socio-emotional learning.

By understanding the educators' approaches to inclusivity, from the adaptation of physical activities to the strategic use of communication and visual aids, this investigation provides a foundation for the critical examination and advancement of inclusive practices in PHE. The challenges highlighted, particularly the discrepancy between the perceived and actual preparedness of educators in implementing inclusive practices, pave the way for advocating for more nuanced professional development and policy formulation. This aligns with the continued work of enhancing the discourse on inclusivity by offering insights into the multifaceted nature of implementing inclusion in educational settings where physical engagement and social interaction converge to shape learning experiences.

7.2 Comparison with Existing Literature and Theoretical Framework

The findings from this investigation resonate strongly with the principles outlined in Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, emphasizing the critical role of the social environment in learning and the necessity of tailoring educational practices to individual developmental levels. The initiative shown by teachers in adapting lessons and actively involving students in their learning processes echoes the theory's call for interactive and responsive education. Furthermore, the need for specific inclusion training among PHE teachers aligns with Slee's (2011) advocacy for structural educational reform to accommodate diverse learning needs, indicating a gap between the theoretical ideals of inclusivity and their practical application.

In addressing the integration of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory with the thematic findings of this study, it becomes essential to explicitly highlight the themes that showcase the social aspects of learning and inclusion within Physical and Health Education (PHE). The themes identified, such as "Tailoring Activities to Foster Inclusion," "Utilizing Visual Aids for Enhanced Understanding," and "Adapting Communication to Support Diverse Learners," directly reflect the social interactional essence of Vygotsky's theory. These themes illustrate how learning and development are enhanced through social interactions, where teachers' adaptations and strategies serve not only to accommodate physical diversity but also to foster a socially inclusive classroom environment. By drawing on these themes, the study reaffirms the importance of social engagement, collaborative learning, and the significant role of educators as mediators in the learning process, aligning closely with the socio-cultural theoretical framework.

Integrating the concept of "artefacts" from Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory provides a nuanced understanding of how visual tools function as mediators in the learning process. Artefacts, in the form of diagrams, guides, and videos, serve not just as aids for comprehension but as crucial intermediaries between the educator's knowledge and the student's understanding. These artefacts embody the socio-cultural principle that learning is a socially mediated activity, where tools and symbols play a central role in facilitating the internalization of knowledge. For instance, a video demonstrating a complex physical movement transforms an abstract concept into a tangible, visual example that students can mimic, analyze, and understand in the context of their own physical abilities. Similarly, step-by-step guides act as scaffolding, supporting students at various stages of their learning journey, allowing them to progress from simple to more complex movements at their own pace. This tailored approach, underpinned by the artefact concept, emphasizes not only the inclusivity of teaching methods but also the deep pedagogical understanding of leveraging cultural tools to enhance learning in diverse classroom settings.

In discussing inclusivity and inclusion in Physical and Health Education (PHE), it's essential to reflect on how these concepts influence practice and policy. The study's exploration into PHE reveals the application of inclusivity—a broad, encompassing philosophy—and inclusion, the specific practices implemented to achieve inclusivity's goals. This distinction is important for understanding the multifaceted approach required to accommodate all students' diverse needs. As the study based on the definitions by Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson (2006) shows, achieving inclusivity in PHE is not just about adopting inclusive practices but also about embedding an inclusive ethos throughout educational settings. The challenge lies in translating the overarching goal of inclusivity into concrete, actionable strategies of inclusion that try to cater to the physical diversity of students.

7.3 Insights and Surprising Discoveries

A significant insight from this study is the notable discrepancy between the principal's perceptions and teachers' reported experiences regarding preparedness for inclusion. This discrepancy underscores a critical misalignment within educational institutions in understanding and implementing inclusive practices. Additionally, the unique challenges of accommodating students with gender dysphoria in PHE settings underscore the need for

dynamic, evolving inclusion strategies that are sensitive to the full spectrum of student identities.

7.4 Methodological Reflection

Utilizing a qualitative methodology afforded me rich insights into the educators' dedication to inclusion. However, the study's limited scope, focused on a single high school, necessitates a cautious approach to generalizing the findings. Incorporating a mixed-methods approach in future research could provide a broader perspective on the effectiveness and applicability of inclusion practices in PHE across various educational contexts.

The utilization of semi-structured interviews in this study served as a critical methodological choice, enabling an exploration of educators' perceptions and practices regarding inclusion within Physical and Health Education (PHE). This approach allowed for a flexible, yet directed, dialogue with participants, ensuring that while the core questions guided the discussion, there was ample space for participants to share their unique insights and experiences. This flexibility was paramount in uncovering the nuanced strategies educators employ to foster inclusivity, as well as the challenges they encounter in doing so. The semi-structured format proved especially effective in facilitating conversations on sensitive topics, such as accommodating students with gender dysphoria, by providing an open-ended platform that encouraged candid reflection and detailed responses.

Participant selection was carefully considered to capture a comprehensive view of inclusion within the PHE context. The study focused on two PHE teachers and the school principal, each bringing a distinct perspective to the investigation. This selection criterion was based on the premise that understanding inclusion requires insights from both the strategic level, represented by the principal, and the operational level, embodied by the teachers. The right selection was crucial for ensuring that the study captured a holistic picture of the school's approach to inclusion, encompassing policy formulation, curriculum design, and daily pedagogical practices. The chosen participants' direct involvement in PHE provided invaluable insights into the practical aspects of implementing inclusive practices, as well as the pedagogical and administrative challenges that accompany such efforts.

The relationship between the interviewer and interviewees was marked by a deliberate effort to establish trust and rapport, acknowledging that the quality of data gathered through semi-structured interviews is significantly influenced by this dynamic. The interviewer's familiarity with the educational context and sensitivity to the complexities of inclusion in PHE facilitated a respectful and empathetic dialogue. This rapport encouraged participants to share openly, offering detailed accounts of their experiences and perspectives. The interviewer's role extended beyond merely posing questions, involving active listening, probing for clarity, and, when appropriate, sharing relevant research findings to stimulate deeper discussion. This interactive exchange not only enriched the data collected but also contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the intricacies of fostering inclusivity in PHE settings.

7.5 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The practical and theoretical implications of this research are grounded in the examination of inclusive practices within Physical and Health Education (PHE), particularly through the lens of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory. The study specifically highlights the critical role of adapting teaching methods to support diverse learners, including those with gender dysphoria, emphasizing the need for sensitive communication and the development of a supportive classroom environment. Theoretically, this research extends Vygotsky's framework by demonstrating how socio-emotional support and the recognition of students' identities are as crucial for cognitive and developmental learning processes as the interaction and engagement with the curriculum. This extension suggests that future educational research and practices should consider the broad spectrum of student identities and experiences as integral components of the learning environment.

Practically, the findings from this study advocate for the implementation of continuous professional development programs focused on inclusivity. Such programs should not only provide educators with the knowledge and skills to adapt their teaching methods but also instill a deeper understanding of the socio-emotional aspects of student development. The identification of a gap between the principal's perceptions and the teachers' experiences underscores the necessity for clear communication and alignment in institutional strategies for inclusion. This calls for educational policymakers to develop comprehensive strategies that ensure inclusivity practices are not just add-ons but are integrated into the fabric of educational institutions. By doing so, schools can foster environments where every student, regardless of their background or identity, feels valued, included, and supported in their learning journey.

7.6 Recommendations for Future Research

The discrepancies observed between the principal's perceptions and the teachers' experiences concerning the implementation and effectiveness of inclusive strategies in Physical and Health Education (PHE) underscore a significant area for future research. It is crucial that future studies delve deeper into understanding the gap in professional development and training for educators regarding inclusivity. This could involve exploring the specific needs for training that teachers identify, the forms of support they require to implement inclusive practices effectively, and how these needs vary across different educational settings. Moreover, research should aim to uncover the systemic barriers that prevent the effective communication and alignment of inclusion strategies between school administrators and teaching staff. These inquiries would not only contribute to the theoretical discourse on inclusion but also offer practical insights for developing targeted professional development programs that are responsive to the nuanced needs of educators in diverse contexts.

Additionally, the unique challenges of accommodating students with gender dysphoria within PHE settings, highlighted by this study, point to another critical area for future research. Investigating the experiences of these students in PHE classes, the specific strategies employed by educators to support their inclusion, and the impact of these strategies on student well-being and engagement can provide valuable insights. Such research could extend to examining the broader implications of inclusive practices for students with diverse gender identities, exploring how these practices influence their academic achievement, social integration, and long-term well-being. Through longitudinal and comparative studies across schools with varied demographic and resource profiles, researchers could gain a deeper understanding of the scalability and adaptability of inclusive strategies, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive and universally applicable framework for best practices in inclusive education.

7.7 Conclusive Reflections

In summary, this study enriches the understanding of inclusion within PHE, highlighting educators' commitment to the challenges and strategies they face and use to create an educational environment where every student is valued and supported. Despite ongoing challenges, the insights provided form pathways for developing more responsive and effective educational practices. This study hopes to have extended everyone's comprehension of inclusivity within

Physical and Health Education, emphasizing the educators' earnest efforts alongside the complexities, methodologies, and variances they confront to affirm each learner's presence and aid. It underscores the persistent obstacles and sketches pathways towards refining educational methodologies that are versatile and efficacious. In a perpetually transforming educational sphere, this research underscores the essence of ongoing ingenuity and introspection to strive toward genuinely inclusive learning junctions for all pupils. Aiming to contribute to the academic dialogue on inclusion, it aspires to provide actionable insights for educators and policy architects to foster greater inclusivity within PHE settings and beyond.

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9.1 Bilaga 1 Intervju frågor

Interview questions for the teachers

Förståelse för Inkludering:

- Hur definierar du inkludering i sammanhanget av idrotts- och hälsoundervisning (PHE)?
- Enligt din åsikt, varför är inkludering viktig i fysisk hälsoundervisning?

Inkluderingsstrategier i Praktiken:

3. Kan du beskriva några av de inkluderingsstrategier du använder i dina PHE-lektioner?

- Hur varierar dessa strategier för elever med olika behov, såsom fysiska funktionshinder eller inlärningsskillnader?

Erfarenhet och Utbildning:

5. Vilken utbildning eller professionell utveckling har du fått i inkluderande utbildning, specifikt i PHE?

- Hur har denna utbildning påverkat dina undervisningsmetoder?

Utmaningar och Anpassningar:

7. Vilka utmaningar har du stött på vid genomförandet av inkluderande strategier i PHE?

- Hur har du anpassat dina undervisningsmetoder för att övervinna dessa utmaningar?

Elevengagemang och Deltagande:

9. Hur säkerställer du att alla elever är aktivt engagerade och deltar i PHE-aktiviteter?

- Kan du dela med dig av några specifika tekniker eller aktiviteter som har varit särskilt effektiva för att främja inkludering?

Återkoppling och Effekt:

11. Hur samlar du in återkoppling från eleverna angående inklusiviteten i dina PHE-lektioner?

- Baserat på dina observationer och elevernas återkoppling, vilken inverkan har inkluderande metoder haft på elevernas lärande och välbefinnande i PHE?

Samarbete och Stöd:

13. Hur samarbetar du med andra lärare, personal eller specialister för att stödja inkluderande utbildning i PHE?

- Vilken typ av stöd anser du är nödvändigt för att effektivt genomföra inkluderande praktiker i PHE?

Personliga Erfarenheter och Reflektioner:

15. Kan du dela med dig av en minnesvärd upplevelse eller framgångshistoria relaterad till inkludering i dina PHE-klasser?

- När du reflekterar över din lärarkarriär, hur har dina åsikter eller metoder gällande inkludering utvecklats?
-

Förslag till Förbättringar:

18. Vilka förslag har du för att förbättra inkluderingen i PHE?

- Finns det några resurser eller förändringar som du tror skulle ytterligare förbättra inklusiviteten i vår skolas PHE-program?

Ytterligare Kommentarer:

20. Finns det något annat du skulle vilja dela med dig av om dina erfarenheter eller insikter gällande inkludering i PHE?

Interview question for the principal

Introduktion till Inkludering i Idrott och Hälsa:

- Kan du beskriva de nuvarande inkluderingspraxiserna i vårt gymnasiums program för Idrott och Hälsa?
- Hur definierar du 'inkludering' i sammanhanget av fysisk hälsoutbildning?

Inkluderingspraxis:

- Vilka specifika metoder finns på plats för att säkerställa inkluderande Idrott och Hälsaklasser?
- Hur är dessa metoder anpassade för att tillgodose elever med olika behov, som fysiska funktionshinder, inlärningsskillnader eller kulturella bakgrunder?

Utveckling och Implementering:

- Hur utvecklades de nuvarande inkluderingspraxiserna och vem var inblandad i processen?

Utmaningar och Lösningar:

- Vilka utmaningar har ni stött på vid implementeringen av inkluderande praxis i Idrott och Hälsa?
- Hur har dessa utmaningar adresserats?

Personalutbildning och Stöd:

- Vilken typ av utbildning får Idrott och Hälsalärare för att effektivt implementera inkluderande praxis?
- Hur stödjer skolan Idrott och Hälsapersonalen i detta avseende?

Elevengagemang och Återkoppling:

- Hur involveras eleverna i utvecklingen och implementeringen av inkluderande praxis?
- Vilken typ av återkoppling har ni fått från eleverna om dessa metoder?

Effektbedömning:

- Hur bedömer skolan effekten av inkluderingspraxis på elevernas lärande och välmående i Idrott och Hälsa?

Framtidsriktningar:

- Vilka framtidsplaner har ni för att ytterligare förbättra inkludering i Idrott och Hälsa?

Ytterligare Insikter:

- Finns det något annat du skulle vilja dela med dig om inkludering i Idrott och Hälsa som vi inte har täckt

9.2 Bilaga 2: Samtycke

Samtyckesformulär för Deltagande i Forskningsintervju

Projekttitel: "Inkludering i Skolor: En Studie av Metoder och Praktiker"

Forskare: Oscar Brigawee, Student vid Gymnastik och idrottshögskolan

Syfte med Forskningsprojektet:

Denna studie syftar till att undersöka hur skolor arbetar med inkludering. Resultaten kommer att användas för att förbättra förståelsen och praktiken av inkludering i utbildningsmiljöer.

Om Deltagandet i Studien:

Deltagandet i denna studie innebär att du deltar i en intervju som beräknas vara cirka 20-40 minuter. Under intervjun kommer frågor att ställas om din erfarenhet och syn på inkludering i skolan.

Konfidentialitet:

Din identitet och de uppgifter du ger kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt. I den slutliga rapporten och eventuella presentationer kommer alla namn att bytas ut mot alias för att skydda din anonymitet. Ingen information kommer att delas med tredje part före publiceringen av uppsatsen i DIVA.

Frivillighet och Rätt att Avbryta:

Ditt deltagande är helt frivilligt, och du har rätt att när som helst avbryta din medverkan utan att behöva ange någon anledning.

Samtycke:

Genom att underteckna detta formulär bekräftar jag att jag har läst och förstått informationen om studien och vad mitt deltagande innebär. Jag ger härmed mitt samtycke till att delta i intervjuerna och till att mina uppgifter används enligt ovan beskrivna villkor.

Kontaktinformation:

Om du har några frågor eller funderingar angående studien, vänligen kontakta Oscar Brigawee på xxxxxxxxx@hotmail.com eller mobil 07xxxxxxxx

Namn: _____

Underskrift: _____

Datum: _____