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## *Analysis of the competence of the Physical Education teacher for the inclusion of schoolchildren with disabilities*

*Análisis de la competencia del profesor de Educación Física para la inclusión de escolares con discapacidad*

*Análise da competência do professor de Educação Física para a inclusão de escolares com deficiência*

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## ABSTRACT

The study is part of the competence perceived by Physical Education teachers themselves for the inclusion of primary schoolchildren with physical disabilities. The objective was to analyze the competence perceived by Physical Education teachers for the inclusion of primary schoolchildren with physical disabilities, in two municipalities in the central region of Cuba. The data come from a questionnaire completed by 40 Physical Education teachers from two municipalities in the Cuban central region (divided into two groups of 20). Theoretical methods such as the analytical-synthetic and the inductive-deductive were used; as empirical ones the interview, the observation and the survey were used; and from the mathematical and/or statistical level, the empirical frequency distribution was used. The result of the research reflected the description of the self-perception of the teachers of both populations, in the three dimensions, with more favorable results for the municipality of Cabaiguán. The most favorable self-perception of teachers in the municipality of Cabaiguán, to make specific adaptations, issue instruction to equals and security in the process of inclusion of schoolchildren with disabilities in Physical Education class.

**Keywords:** competence; Physical Education teacher; schoolchildren; physical disability.

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## RESUMEN

El estudio se enmarca en la competencia percibida por propios profesores de Educación Física para la inclusión de escolares primarios con discapacidad física. Se formuló como objetivo analizar la competencia percibida por profesores de Educación Física para la inclusión de escolares primarios con discapacidad física, en dos municipios de la región central de Cuba. Los datos provienen de un cuestionario cumplimentado por 40 profesores de Educación Física de dos municipios de la Región central cubana (divididos en dos grupos de 20). Se utilizaron métodos teóricos como el analítico-sintético y el inductivo-deductivo; y empíricos como la entrevista, la observación y la encuesta; del nivel matemático y/o estadístico, la distribución empírica de frecuencia. El resultado de la investigación reflejó la descripción de la autopercepción de los profesores de ambas poblaciones, en las tres dimensiones, con resultados más favorables para el municipio de Cabaiguán. La



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autopercepción más favorable de los profesores del municipio de Cabaiguán, para realizar adaptaciones específicas, emitir instrucción a los iguales y seguridad en el proceso de inclusión de escolares con discapacidad en la clase de Educación Física.

**Palabras clave:** competencia; profesor de Educación Física; escolares; discapacidad física.

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## RESUMO

O estudo enquadra-se na competência percebida pelos próprios professores de Educação Física para a inclusão de alunos do ensino fundamental com deficiência física. O objetivo foi formulado para analisar a competência percebida pelos professores de Educação Física para a inclusão de alunos do ensino fundamental com deficiência física, em dois municípios da região central de Cuba. Os dados provêm de um questionário respondido por 40 professores de Educação Física de dois municípios da região central de Cuba (divididos em dois grupos de 20). Foram utilizados métodos teóricos como analítico-sintético e indutivo-dedutivo; e empíricos, como entrevistas, observações e pesquisas; do nível matemático e/ou estatístico, a distribuição de frequência empírica. O resultado da pesquisa refletiu a descrição da autopercepção dos professores de ambas as populações, nas três dimensões, com resultados mais favoráveis para o município de Cabaiguán. A autopercepção mais favorável dos professores do município de Cabaiguán, para fazer adaptações específicas, dar instrução aos pares e segurança no processo de inclusão de alunos com deficiência nas aulas de Educação Física.

**Palavras-chave:** concorrência; professor de educação física; escolares; deficiência física.

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of inclusion has gained space as the right of every person to be provided with a quality education, which allows students with disabilities access to education on equal terms, greater interaction, understanding and acceptance between the different students; although attitudes towards inclusion vary among teachers. (González & Triana, 2018) and (Paz, 2020).



In order to achieve inclusion of students with special educational needs, it is necessary for the related professional to consider the need to develop a group of competences that guarantee this process, who have a correct pedagogical capacity, theoretical and practical knowledge, a flexible, open, permanent, tolerant and respectful attitude with the diversity and have adequate resources to carry out inclusion. This is one of the main challenges in educational systems today (Campos, *et al.*, 2021).

However, on several occasions PE teachers are perceived as not viewing this process as a problematic aspect, for which the authors consulted consider that the most important factor for inclusion in Physical Education to occur is the attitude and perception of competence that teachers have of themselves, since in their studies, professionals do not feel prepared and consider their training lacking in this field (Nieva and Lleixà, 2018).

The initial and ongoing training to address diversity must be conditioned on how the teacher perceives the degree of difficulty to carry out the inclusion process, which allows them to demonstrate inclusive skills in the general Physical Education class (Abellán and Sáez, 2019).

For Physical Education to be inclusive (EFI) it must be a philosophy and practice that ensures that all individuals, regardless of their age and ability, have an equal opportunity to practice; where there is no lack of success factors such as the assurance of material resources; accessibility to the environment, adaptations to activities, supports and relationships, services, organizational systems and policies; as well as positive attitudes.

Perceived self-efficacy in the educational context is based on how teachers perceive themselves, with respect to their skills and abilities to structure academic activities in their classroom effectively. Taking into account that not all teachers experience high levels of self-efficacy, an alternative would be the introduction of inclusive strategies from initial and permanent teacher training.

Studies related to the beliefs, perceptions and positive attitudes of teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in Physical Education, correspond to authors such as: Marín and Ramón (2021); Rhenals -Ramos and Arango -Paternina, (2022). Among their



findings, they declare: the need to modify beliefs to initiate a positive behavior and to maintain it over time; attitudes as barriers or facilitators of inclusion; the inclusion of adapted or inclusive PE programs in initial training, which improves the perception of self-efficacy.

The mentioned authors also refer that the educational quality of a program should start from the perception of the people involved in its development; the significant relationship of self-efficacy with the inclusive strategies of teachers in training; and the importance of providing them with preparation, tools, knowledge, to be able to undertake the role that corresponds to them in an inclusive context.

Some authors, such as Nieva and Lleixá (2018), agree in considering the study of professional Physical Education (PE) competences opportune, during their permanent training, since it allows knowing and reflecting on their beliefs in relation to participation and inclusion, of students with special educational needs, suggest guidelines for action in pedagogical and didactic aspects.

However, in the last two decades, proposals for a field of competence in adapted Physical Education and intervention programs to favor them have emerged with great force, such as that of Valencia, *et al.* (2020) and Jiménez & Cuevas (2013), in this lastly, the author establishes a profile of skills in Adapted Physical Activity for the professional of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences.

Among these competences, that author declares: showing sensitivity and a positive attitude towards people with disabilities; apply valid techniques and instruments to assess specific needs and prepare the environment beforehand; demonstrate basic knowledge of terminology, legislation, and characteristics of people with disabilities; design, program and carry out the necessary adaptations for students with different abilities in the levels of concretion of their direct competence.



Other competences are: propose individual inclusive physical activities; show ability to create, adapt and appropriately use materials; learn about adapted sports, promote and teach its modalities; and communicate effectively with the person with a disability.

However, Reina, *et al.* (2019), consider that despite the positive evolution that has occurred in recent decades, the training received by Physical Education (PE) teachers in the treatment of people with SEN, still continues to show deficiencies in what affects their professional development before this group of students. In this sense, the study presented aims to analyze the perception that PE teachers have about their competence for the inclusion of primary schoolchildren with physical disabilities in the Physical Education class.

## *MATERIALS AND METHODS*

The design used was exploratory/descriptive, using observation, interviews and questionnaires as a technique for collecting and analyzing information. Descriptive statistics through the distribution of frequency and percentage was used to present the results obtained from the teachers to the research questions.

### *Population and sample*

The population consisted of 40 PE teachers from primary schools that include students with physical disabilities, in the Santa Clara and Cabaiguán municipalities of the Central Region of Cuba. For the comparative purposes of the authors, they were divided into two groups, 20 from each municipality. The questionnaire was answered by the 40 teachers.

### *Instrument*

A part of the instrument was used: teacher self-efficacy scale for the inclusion of students with disabilities in Physical Education.

It is a scale that consists of four parts and three subscales. To assess the competence to conduct a fitness test; for teaching sports skills, and games.





The questions formulated are grouped in situations where the teacher must pay attention to the inclusion of a student with intellectual disability (first part), physical disability (second part) and visual disability (third part), specifically about the evaluation of physical abilities, teaching motor skills, and organization of collective sports games. In this study, only the second and fourth parts were used, since it is physical disability that characterizes the included schoolchildren cared for by the selected teachers.

The *second part* refers to the inclusion of a student with *physical disabilities*, on what the teachers must answer 12 questions about if they feel capable and confident for the inclusion of the student in the class. For this, a text describing a student with physical disabilities is presented. After the text, there will be a series of questions about how competent/capable he/she feels about how to make different accommodations for the student.

The teacher must answer a series of questions as if the student was going to be in his/her Physical Education class during the next week.

Description of a student with a physical disability:

Javier is a 6th grade student with a spinal cord injury. He can't walk, so he uses a wheelchair. Javier likes to play the same sports as his equals, but he doesn't do too well when faces with the game situation. Although he can propel his chair, he is slower than the others and gets tired after propelling the chair for 1-2 minutes. He can pass and take the volleyball serve, but not far enough to go over the net. He can pass balls that are thrown directly at him. However, he does not have the upper limb strength to throw a basketball high enough to make a basket. Because he can't use his legs, he can't kick a soccer ball, but he can push it forward with his chair.

The questionnaire used Likert scale questions with values ranging from 5 (complete competence) to 1 (no competence), which allowed to evaluate how confident teachers feel in carrying out the aspects described as items.





The *fourth and last* part of the questionnaire collects demographic data of the participants such as age, years of work experience, training in adapted Physical Education and previous experiences in this field. To evaluate previous training experiences in relation to the object of study, the question was included: " *Have you taken any course or training in activity/adapted/inclusive Physical Education before?* ", having to answer "yes" or "no". In addition, to find out the degree of previous experience or contact with people with disabilities, the question " *Have you previously been involved in any adapted/inclusive sport/Physical Education situation* " was included? ", must also be answered as "yes" or "no".

To achieve the objective of the study, the data obtained allowed the description of three study dimensions and their corresponding variables (Table 1).

*Table 1.- Variables and dimensions*

<b>1st Dimension: perception of competence for specific adaptations</b>
a How competent do you feel to create individual goals for Javier during the endurance test?
b How competent do you feel to modify the test for Javier?
c How competent do you feel to teach classmates how to help Javier?
d How competent do you feel to make the environment safe for Javier during the resistance test?
<b>2nd Dimension: perception of competence for Peer Instruction</b>
e How competent do you feel to make modifications to sport skills if Javier cannot perform like his equals when teaching sport skills?
f How competent do you feel in making the environment safe for Javier when teaching the skills of the sport?
g How competent do you feel to modify the material to help Javier when teaching the basic skills of the sport?
h How competent do you feel to teach classmates how to help Javier when teaching sports skills?
<b>3rd Dimension: perception of competence for Safety</b>
i How competent do you feel to modify the rules of the game for Javier?
j How competent do you feel to modify material to help Javier during the game?
k How competent do you feel to make the environment safe for Javier during the game?



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1 How competent do you feel to teach your teammates how to help Javier during the game?

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Other variables studied: age; work experience years; EFA training and previous EFA experience

### *Ethical considerations*

The teachers surveyed were informed about the purpose and particularities of the study. The anonymity of the instrument was fulfilled and all the participants provided their consent for the disclosure of the results.

## **RESULTS**

The result of the data obtained from the methods: interview, observation and survey were analyzed and processed statistically; indicators such as age and work experience; the items of the main instrument used training and experience in Adapted Physical Education; representation of perceived competences for specific adaptations, peer instruction, and safety. These are represented in graphs and tables below (Figure 1).

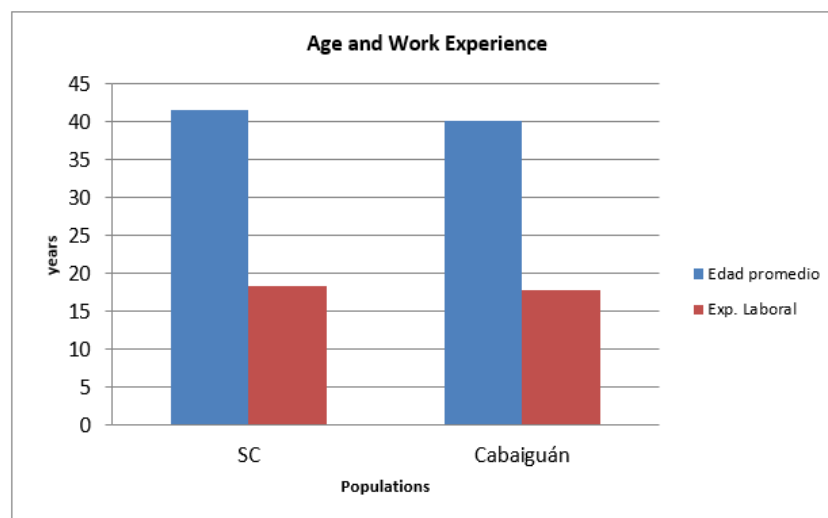


Fig. 1. - Age and work experience



With the first part of the instrument, some sociodemographic characteristics of the teachers were obtained. Related to age, the average was slightly higher in the population of Santa Clara at 41.6%, followed by 40 % of the population of Cabaiguán. The work experience indicated an average of 18.4 years SC and 17.8 in the population of Cabaiguán (Figure 2).

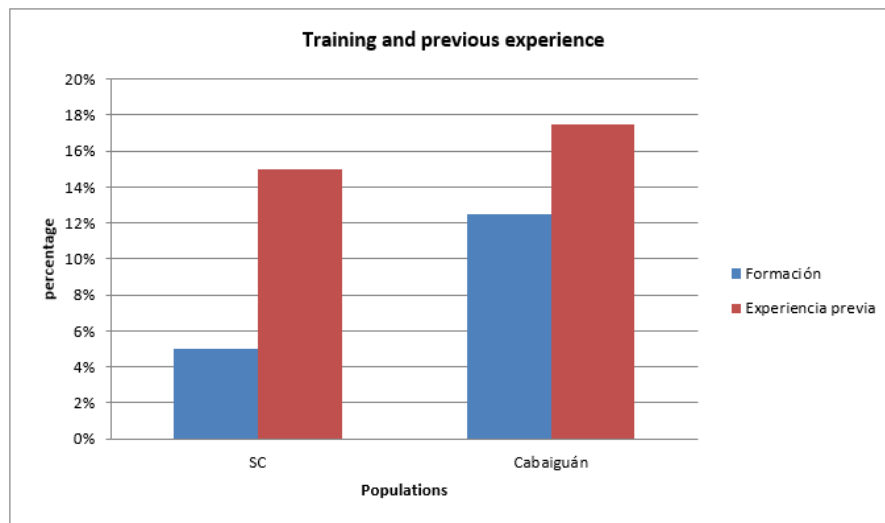


Fig. 2. - Training and experience in Adapted Physical Education

Regarding the training of the participating teachers, 5 % of the population of Santa Clara managed to receive some training activity in EFA during the Degree in Physical Culture or in continuous training; while in the Cabaiguán municipality, 13 % reached it. On the other hand, the teachers of Cabaiguán have a greater number of previous experiences, specifically 17.5 %, however, only 15 % of the population of Santa Clara previously experienced work in EFA (Figure 3).



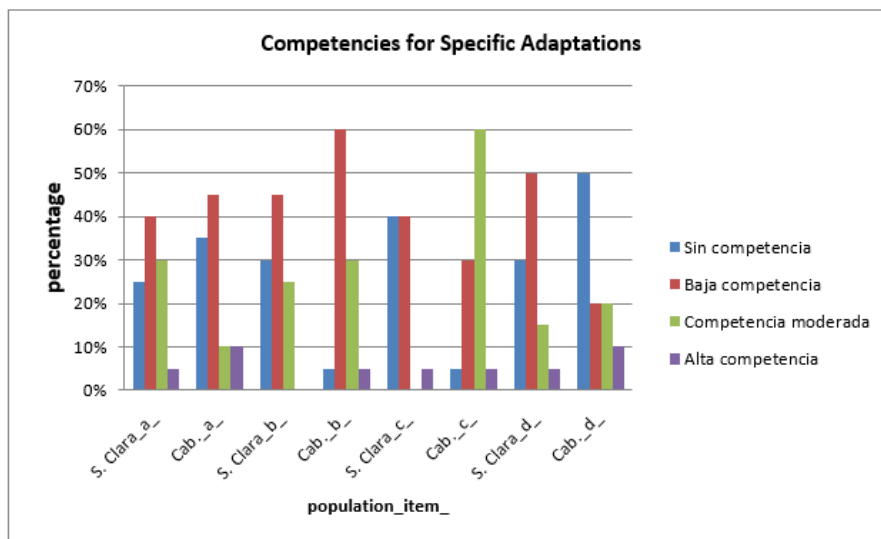


Fig. 3. - Representation of the perception of competences for specific adaptations (CAE) (ITEMS A, B, C and D)

Figure 1 shows how 40 % of SC teachers perceive themselves as *lacking competence* for Specific Adaptations, in items (a, b and c); 50% of the population of Cabaiguán is significant in item (d), for this reason they are characterized by not showing confidence or security to carry out the task with Javier; they do not ensure the environment, do not modify the equipment, nor do they set individual objectives for it, during the physical condition tests.

With *low competence*, SC teachers stand out especially for the 60.0% in item (h), who show little confidence and security to ensure the environment to some extent, they empirically modify the test, but do not set individual objectives for it in depending on your physical condition.

The *moderate competence* is awarded mainly to the population of Cabaiguán, 60.0 % in item (c) teach classmates how to help Javier. They show confidence but present insecurity to carry out some tasks with the student; they secure the environment, modify the physical fitness test and set individual objectives for him/her.



Regarding those who are considered to have High Competence for Specific Adaptations, the population of Cabaiguán stands out, with six teachers, they refer to making modifications in sports skills in case Javier cannot act like his classmates; they secure the environment and modify the material to help Javier (Figure 4).

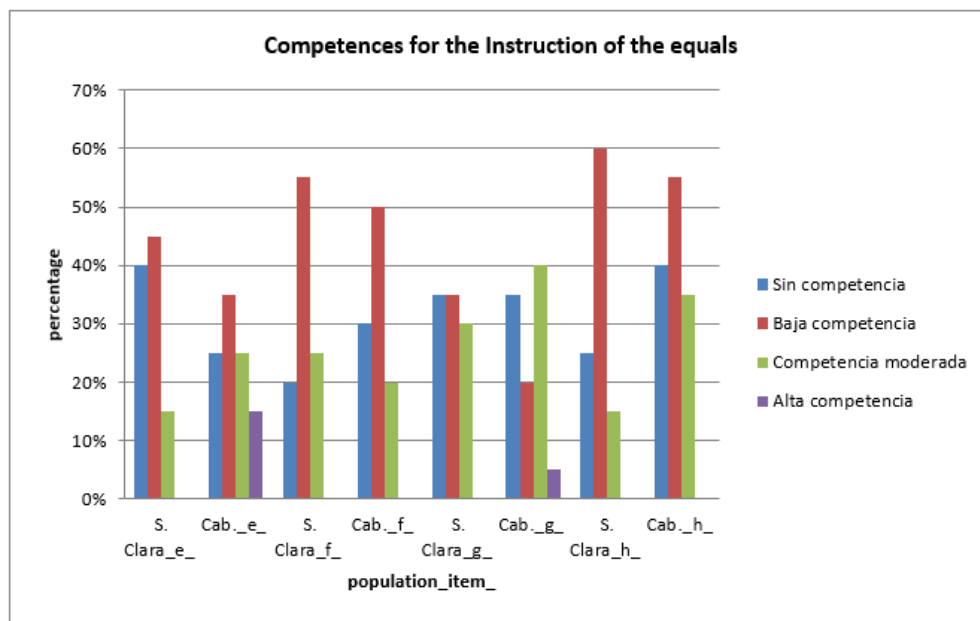


Fig. 4. - Representation of the perception of competences for peer instruction (CII) (ITEMS E, F, GYH)

The instruction of equals is perceived by the teachers of both populations *without competence*, with a predominance of 40 % of the Cabaiguán population in item (h) and the same percentage in SC, in item (e); therefore, they do not show confidence or security to make modifications in the sports skills if Javier could not do it like his equals in learning the skills of the sport, they also fail to make the environment safe, modify the material, or teach their equals how to help him. in the homework.

In the criteria of Low competence for Peer Instruction, SC teachers stand out, especially by 60.0 % in (h), who show little confidence and security to make modifications in the skills of the sport or rules of the game; they do not involve groupmates in the task. And those who report moderate competence stand out in the population of Cabaiguán, (40 % in item g) these, although show confidence, present insecurity to carry out some tasks with Javier; they



secure the environment, make some modifications to the skills of the sport, and sometimes encourage the help of Javier's group mates.

The criterion of high competence stands out in the population of Cabaiguán, with four teachers, three of them (15 %) in item (e), who consider that they make modifications in sports skills in the event that Javier cannot act as his equals when skills are taught; and 1 (5 %) in item (g) where they report that they modify the material to help Javier (Figure 5).

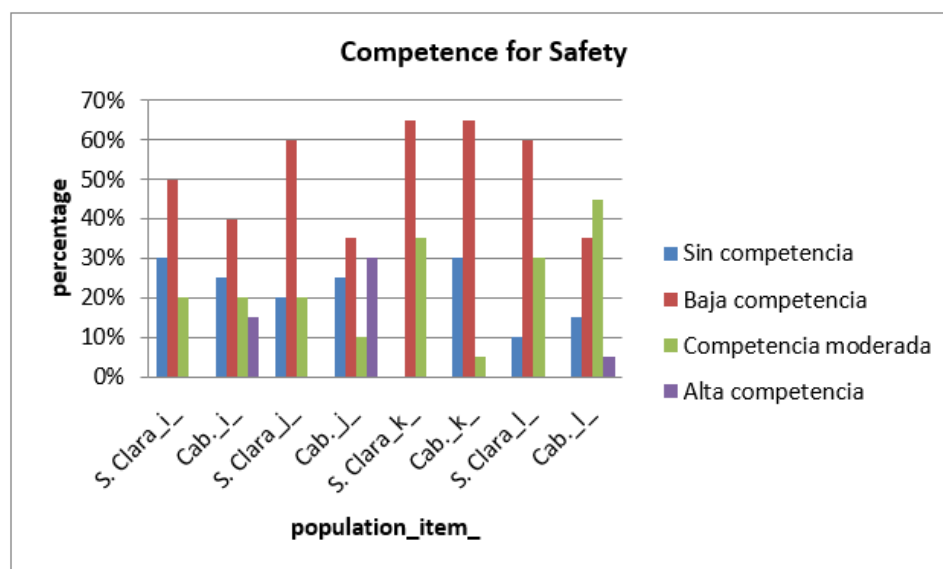


Fig. 5. - Representation of the perception of safety competence (CPS) (ITEMS I, J, KYL)

In figure 3, both populations declare the criterion: no competence for security, so they do not show confidence or security to modify material to help Javier during the game; make the environment safe for Javier during the game. 30% of teachers are highlighted in the items (i) Cabaiguán and (k) SC, they do not modify the rules of the game for Javier, nor do they involve their classmates in the task.

The highest percentage for security is concentrated in the criteria of low and moderate competence. The 65 % of SC teachers with low competence in item (k) are highlighted, who show little confidence and security to ensure the environment, modify the material, set individual objectives for it during the physical condition tests, nor are they able to perform modifications in the skills of the sport or rules of the game; nor do they involve groupmates



in the task. And those evaluated with moderate competence in both populations, show confidence, but present insecurity to carry out some tasks with the student with Javier; they ensure the environment, modify the material, set individual objectives for the physical condition test, although they do not make changes to the skills of the sport, nor to the rules of the game; sometimes they involve groupmates in the task.

The 10 (%) teachers who are considered highly competent are from the population of Cabaiguán, they show confidence and security to carry out the task with the student with AcD, 1 (5 %) specifically in item (l) teaches the companions how to help Javier during the game; 6 (30 %) in items (j) modify the material, although they do not make modifications to the sports skills, and 3 (15 %) in item (i) involve group mates in the task (Table 2).

Table 2. - Statistical data on the behavior of the mode in the evaluated competences

Mode	SC	Cabaiguan	SC	Cabaiguan	SC	Cabaiguan	SC	Cabaiguan
	CPAE-a	CPAE-a	EPAC-b	EPAC-b	CPAE-c	CPAE-c	CPAE-d	CPAE-d
<b>valid</b>	twenty	twenty	twenty	twenty	twenty	twenty	twenty	twenty
<b>Mode</b>	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	1
	CII-e	CII-e	CII-f	CII-f	CII-g	CII-g	CII-h	CII-h
<b>Mode</b>	2	2	2	2	1(a)	3	2	2
	CpS-i	CII-i	CII-j	CII-j	CII-k	CII-k	CII-l	CII-l
<b>Mode</b>	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3

*CPAE: competence to make specific adaptations.*

*CII: competence for the Instruction of Equals.*

*CpS: competence for security.*

The mode reflects the predominance of low competence to make specific adaptations in both populations (items a, b, c and d), which indicates that teachers do not feel confident or secure in creating individual objectives during the development of the endurance test and modify it, to the detriment of those from SC who report no competence to teach colleagues how to help Javier (c), and those from Cabaiguán to ensure the environment (d). The Cabaiguán teachers were moderately competent in teaching classmates how to help Javier, which places them in better conditions than the Santa Clara teachers (Table 2).





Table 2 reflects a low competence as mode, for the Instruction of the Equals (CII) in both populations (items e, f, g and h), which indicates that the teachers have deficiencies to make modifications in the sports skills, to make the safe environment for Javier; to the detriment of those from SC who report no competence to modify the material to help Javier when they teach basic skills (g). In the Cabaiguán teachers, the criterion of moderate competence prevailed to teach classmates how to help Javier, which distinguishes them as more competent for the Instruction of equals, than the teachers of Santa Clara.

The mode reflects a low competence for safety (CpS) in both populations, (items e, f, g and h), which indicates that teachers feel with little confidence and security to modify rules of the game for Javier, modify material for help Javier during the game, or teach the teammates how to help Javier (c). The Cabaiguán teachers were moderately competent in teaching classmates how to help Javier, this denotes greater competence for safety than the Santa Clara teachers.

## *DISCUSSION*

The study was carried out with teachers from primary schools that include schoolchildren with physical disabilities in two municipalities of the Central Region of Cuba: Santa Clara and Cabaiguán.

In the variables age and work experience, the group of teachers in Santa Clara exceeds that of Cabaiguán in average years. However, although all teachers from both populations have general training in Physical Culture, the percentage of teachers from Cabaiguán who received some specific training activity in Physical Education adapted during their training is higher, which is justified to some extent by the results in the rest of the dimensions. This result coincides with that of Bermúdez & Navarrete (2020), where teachers who had had some contact or relationship with people with disabilities in different environments were more akin to inclusion processes.



In the first dimension on the perception of competence to carry out Specific Adaptations, it turned out that the population of Cabaiguán predominated with greater perception in the criteria of moderate and high competence, in relation to the SC teachers. This infers that those from Cabaiguán feel safer to carry out the physical condition test in the group, which includes Javier. SC teachers were reflected as teachers who need more knowledge, preparation and confidence to make specific adaptations. To improve the inclusion process of students with needs, it is important to determine the knowledge and level of self-efficacy of teachers.

The results obtained in the second dimension: instruction of equals, it is perceived by the teachers of both populations indistinctly in the criteria of no, low and moderate competence. However, the 4 teachers from Cabaiguán, who consider themselves to be highly competent because they make modifications to sports skills, modify the material to help Javier. The coincidence of this result with what was stated by Lleixá and Ríos (2020), stating that it can be considered favorable by breaking a prejudice about the presence of students with different conditions in PE classes.

The adequate development of this competence shows a group of teachers with greater confidence to direct in the first week the teaching of basic skills of a collective sport such as volleyball, basketball or soccer in their 6th grade Physical Education class in which it is included Javier; it is necessary to intend training alternatives, instruction in the matter of educational inclusion, since in line with Collado *et al.* (2020), one of the most relevant barriers to inclusion that the teachers participating in their study have detected is the need to increase their own training in order to meet the requirements of an inclusive school system.

For safety, the highest percentage perceived to have low and moderate competence belongs to SC teachers for showing little confidence in ensuring the environment, modifying the material, setting individual objectives for it during the physical condition tests, they are also not able to make modifications in the skills of the sport or rules of the game; nor do they involve groupmates in the task.



In this same dimension, the teachers who consider themselves with high competence are the Cabaiguan population, these show confidence, security and motivation on the constant improvement to carry out the task with Javier, by teaching their students how to play sports in itself, while directing a team sport in the last week of the unit, this element agrees with the finding of Lleixá and Ríos (2020), which highlight the need for teachers to be aware of their responsibility in the development of dynamics that encourage participation, respect and inclusion.

The results of the research indicated that in the dimensions: perception of competence for specific adaptations; perception of competence for peer instruction, and perception of competence for safety to support Javier`s inclusion process, teachers perceive that their level of competence is low or without competence, especially in those in the Santa Clara municipality. From this sense, the Cabaiguán teachers would support more the development of the intrinsic interest and academic direction of their students, according to Murillo, *et al.* (2020).

In general, the results imply the adoption of training strategies to develop inclusive competences in teachers of both populations; in agreement with Lobo de Diego, *et, al.* (2022) who referred to the relationship between the educational quality of an extracurricular municipal school sports program based on the perception of the people involved in its development and its participating students.

## CONCLUSIONS

The training received and the previous experiences of both populations are insufficient to develop inclusion competences in Physical Education, so it is necessary to conceive training actions to develop such a process with students with disabilities.

The self-perception of competence that the teachers of the municipality of Santa Clara have, categorizes them with less competences than those of the municipality of Cabaiguán to make specific adaptations, issue instruction to their equals and security in the process of inclusion of schoolchildren with disabilities in the Physical Education Class.



The limitations of the study are given by the partial application of the questionnaire (1st and 4th part) which limits the result to partial knowledge of the teacher's competence. The work implies continuing with the application of new research with this same purpose, but using the second and third part of the questionnaire, which involves schoolchildren with visual and intellectual disabilities.

It should also be noted that this study is carried out considering two groups of teachers who work at the primary level of education in two different regions of residence, requiring greater knowledge of aspects, such as the number of students included, the specific type of disability, the level of improvement and adaptation of the Physical Education programs at the level. Finally, there has not been a comparison of the teachers' perception of these teachers with those of special schools.

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***Conflict of interests:***

The authors declare not to have any interest conflicts.

***Authors' contribution:***

The authors have participated in the writing of the work and analysis of the documents





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