

"What Makes a Good PE Teacher?": Perspectives of Bachelor of Physical Education Students on Inclusive Teaching

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Abstract: Physical Education (PE) provides an important environment for developing physical skills, teamwork, confidence, and social values. This study explored the perspectives of Bachelor of Physical Education (BPEd) students on the qualities of effective PE teachers and practices that promote inclusion. A qualitative phenomenological design was used, with semi-structured interviews conducted with eleven BPEd students. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Five themes emerged: (1) characteristics of an inclusive PE teacher, (2) teaching practices that promote meaningful participation, (3) safe and supportive learning environments, (4) strengthening inclusive pedagogical practices, and (5) building confidence through practice and feedback. Findings showed that effective PE teachers should be inclusive, fair, patient, flexible, and responsive to diverse learner needs. Inclusive practices promote participation, confidence, and belonging. The study recommends strengthening teacher education through practical experiences and continuous training.

Keywords: Physical Education, inclusive teaching, PE teacher qualities, BPEd students, learner diversity,

1. Introduction

Physical Education (PE) supports students' physical, social, and emotional development while promoting teamwork, confidence, and respect for diversity. As classrooms become more diverse, PE teachers are expected to use inclusive practices that address different abilities, backgrounds, and learning needs (Saiz-González et al., 2025). Inclusive and student-centered approaches can improve participation, confidence, and learning experiences (Stride et al., 2022; McRoy, 2022).

Effective PE teachers demonstrate fairness, empathy, flexibility, respect, communication skills, and adaptability to meet diverse learner needs (Guerrero & Guerrero, 2023; Meier et al., 2022). Inclusive pedagogy can also reduce participation barriers and promote student empowerment, autonomy, leadership, and self-confidence (Pestano et al., 2024; Santos, 2026a).

Despite growing research on inclusive PE, limited studies have examined how BPEd students view the qualities of effective inclusive PE teachers. Therefore, this study explores the traits, teaching practices, and inclusive approaches that BPEd students consider important in promoting fair and meaningful participation.

This study aimed to investigate how Bachelor of Physical Education students perceived the qualities of an effective PE teacher in the context of inclusive teaching. In particular, it aimed to pinpoint the traits, methods of instruction, and inclusive approaches that students valued in encouraging fair engagement among students

2. Methodology

Research Design

This study will employ a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of BPEd students regarding the qualities of an effective PE teacher in an inclusive learning environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Participants

The participants were 11 BPEd students, consisting of five males and six females, enrolled at a higher education institution in the Philippines. Purposive sampling was used to select students who could provide relevant experiences regarding inclusive teaching and effective PE teachers.

Data Collection

Data were gathered through semi-structured individual interviews using open-ended questions focused on teacher effectiveness, participation, confidence, inclusivity, gender sensitivity, classroom management, and challenges in PE. Interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent, and follow-up questions were used to clarify responses and encourage deeper reflection.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis: familiarization, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and reporting. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded, and organized into themes representing students' perspectives on effective PE teachers and inclusive teaching practices.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were followed throughout the study. Participants provided informed consent and could withdraw at any time. Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, while data were securely stored and used only for the study. All participants were treated equally and respectfully, with findings reported accurately and sources properly acknowledged.

3. Result and Discussion

Characteristics of an Inclusive PE Teacher

Theme 1: Understanding and Recognizing Learner Diversity

The students described an inclusive PE teacher as someone who understands and recognizes that learners have different abilities, skills, strengths, and limitations. They emphasized that not all students can perform physical activities in the same way, so an inclusive teacher should be aware of these differences and consider the needs of each learner in PE class.

"They should be more understanding. For example, not all students have the same abilities." – P1

"One of the characteristics I look for in a PE teacher is being fair and recognizing that students have different abilities." – P4

"They understand that not everyone has the same strength and skills. Therefore, they adjust their teaching to accommodate everyone." – P7

"They know how to adjust activities and understand that every student has different abilities." – P8

These statements highlight the importance of recognizing learner diversity in inclusive PE, as students have different physical abilities, skills, strengths, and limitations. Teachers should consider these differences and provide appropriate activities and instructions rather than expecting all students to perform at the same level. This is supported by Miller (2026), who emphasized that inclusive PE environments can promote students' confidence and skill development.

Theme 2: Fairness, Equality, and Respect

The students are described as an inclusive PE teacher as someone who treats all learners fairness, equality, and respect. No matter what their physical abilities or level of performance might be, they stressed that inclusive teachers should avoid showing favoritism, give all students equal opportunities, and ensure that each student feels accepted and valued in PE class.

"By treating everyone fairly and not showing favoritism." - P1

"Based on what I have seen, PE teachers do not choose favorites among students. They treat everyone equally."
- P4

"All students are treated equally." - P10

"A good PE teacher should treat students equally even though they have different skills and abilities" - P3

"They should be treated with respect, understanding, and equal opportunities. They should not be compared with their classmates because this can sometimes discourage them." - P11

These responses show that fairness, equality, and respect are essential qualities of an inclusive PE teacher. Teachers should provide all students equal opportunities to participate, regardless of their skills, backgrounds, or confidence levels, while avoiding favoritism. This is supported by Antalan (2026), who found that gender-related barriers can affect students' participation and enjoyment in PE. Thus, fair and respectful treatment is essential to effective and inclusive PE teaching.

Theme 3: Adapting Teaching to Learner Needs

The Students designed the P.E teacher who fosters inclusivity by adapting their teaching methods to accommodate the varying abilities and needs of their students. They emphasized that not all students can engage in the same activities at the same level since some students struggle with specific tasks while others can perform well, so teachers should offer adjusted activities that match students' abilities.

"A teacher should always have patience and respect." - P1

"Students should still be treated equally, but when it comes to those who need adjustments because they cannot perform an activity, the teacher should also be considerate." - P2

"An inclusive PE teacher should treat students with diverse abilities equally and with respect." - P5

BPEd students believe that an inclusive PE teacher should be adaptable, patient, respectful, and responsive to students' different abilities, skills, and confidence levels. Teachers should modify activities and teaching strategies to ensure meaningful participation rather than expect all students to perform equally. This is supported by Peromingan et al. (2026), who identified adaptability, empathy, communication, safety awareness, assessment, and resilience as important competencies for implementing adapted PE.

Theme 4: Ensuring Inclusive Participation

The students emphasized that an inclusive PE teacher should ensure that all learners are given equal opportunities to participate in physical activities regardless of their abilities or skill levels. They described inclusive participation as making sure that no student is excluded or overlooked during PE activities.

"For me, an inclusive PE teacher makes sure that all students have the opportunity to join the class and perform the same activities as their classmates." – P6

"They do not choose favorites and do not leave anyone behind." – P7

"A good PE teacher gives everyone an equal chance and does not focus only on students who are fast or skilled in sports." – P11

These responses show that inclusive participation is a key quality of an effective PE teacher. Teachers should provide all students with equal opportunities to participate, regardless of their physical abilities or skill levels. This can encourage greater involvement in physical activities. Martin et al. (2016) and Martin et al. (2017) found that perceived competence and motivation were associated with physical activity participation, supporting the importance of creating opportunities for meaningful participation in PE.

Theme 5: Providing Support and Encouragement

The Participants emphasized that a good and inclusive PE teacher should provide continuous support, guidance, and encouragement, especially to students who experience difficulty in participating in physical activities. They believed that positive feedback, patience, appropriate assistance, and motivation can help students become more confident and willing to participate.

"By giving them knowledge and motivation." –P3

"They give students easier tasks and more time. They encourage them patiently and do not embarrass them when they make mistakes." – P7

"For me, they can help students who have difficulty participating through encouragement, guidance, and modifying activities according to their abilities." – P8

"They help students who have difficulty with the activity by giving those easier tasks, proper guidance, and enough time so they can learn more." – P9

"They help students who are having difficulty by breaking the activity down into simpler parts, providing guidance, and always giving positive encouragement, which sometimes helps boost their confidence." –P11

These statements show that support and encouragement are important qualities of an inclusive PE teacher. Students who struggle with physical activities may feel embarrassed or less confident, so teachers should create a supportive environment where mistakes are treated as part of learning. This finding is supported by Manalad et al. (2026), who found that low motivation can affect students' engagement and participation in PE. Encouragement, guidance, patience, and positive support can help students feel more confident and willing to participate.

Teaching Practices that Foster Meaningful Participation

Theme 1: Adapting and Differentiating PE Activities

The students emphasized that an inclusive PE teacher must know how to adapt to the diversity of students, especially their abilities, which is why he must also implement different physical education activities that suit the students' abilities and needs.

"The alternative activity should be based on the student's abilities and on the available equipment." - P2

"PE teachers can adapt activities by modifying the space, equipment, rules, and pace so that all students can participate safely and meaningfully regardless of their abilities." - P3

"They can remove the parts of an activity that a student cannot perform or replace them with another activity."
- P4

"The teacher can modify the rules or simplify the activity. For instance, if a game is too difficult, the difficulty level can be lowered, or equipment that is easier to use can be substituted. The important thing is for the student to remain involved while the activity is taking place." -P5

"First, the teacher should assess the abilities of the students. Once they have done that, they can think of activities that students with different abilities can perform." -P6

These responses show that adapting and differentiating PE activities is an important characteristic of an effective PE teacher. Teachers should adjust activities according to students' abilities while maintaining the same learning goals. This finding is supported by Durden-Myers (2023), who emphasized proactive planning and modifying space, equipment, and rules to provide students with equal opportunities for safe and meaningful participation.

Theme 2: Using Collaborative and Participatory Teaching Strategies

The students described the collaborative and participatory teaching strategies that can encourage meaningful participation by allowing the learners to work with others, support their classmates, and become actively involved in PE activities. They emphasized the use of group activities, peer support, group work, peer teaching, demonstrations, and other strategies that give students opportunities to participate rather than simply receive instructions from the teacher.

"Methods such as group activities, modified games, demonstrations, and peer support can help encourage student participation." — P5

"For me, group activities, peer support, differentiated teaching, demonstrations, and modified activities are good ways to encourage meaningful student participation." — P8

"For me, teaching methods such as group activities can be effective. For example, when we had dancing activities with Sir Voltaire, it encouraged the students to become more active in PE."
— P9

"Differentiated activities, group work, demonstrations, peer teaching, and positive feedback are effective." — P11

These statements show that collaborative and participatory teaching strategies help create an inclusive PE environment. Group activities, peer support, demonstrations, and positive feedback encourage students to interact, cooperate, and actively participate. This finding is supported by Pestaño et al. (2024), who found that participative approaches can enhance students' self-confidence and self-efficacy by involving them actively in the learning process.

Theme 3: Providing Guidance, Encouragement, and Positive Reinforcement

Giving guidance, encouragement, and positive reinforcement is important for teaching practice that helps the students overcome the difficulties and become more confident in participating in Physical Education. It is emphasized that the teachers should patiently guide the students, to provide clear instructions, and give sufficient time to practice, and use positive encouragement to help learners to improve.

"By giving them knowledge and motivation." — P3

"A teacher who is ready to assist the student by providing less strenuous activities, clear instructions, and sufficient practice time." — P5

"They give students easier tasks and more time. They encourage them patiently and do not embarrass them when they make mistakes. They gradually help them until they can keep up with others." — P7

"For me, they can help students who have difficulty participating through encouragement, guidance, and modifying activities according to their abilities. I would also give them enough time to learn and become comfortable." — P8

"They help students who have difficulty with the activity by giving those easier tasks, proper guidance, and enough time so they can learn more." — P9

"They help students who are having difficulty by breaking the activity down into simpler parts, providing guidance, and always giving positive encouragement, which sometimes helps boost their confidence." — P11

These responses demonstrate that guidance and encouragement help students who struggle with physical activities become more comfortable and confident. Participants emphasized the importance of clear instructions, manageable tasks, sufficient practice time, patient support, and positive reinforcement rather than embarrassment or criticism. This finding is supported by Treschman et al. (2024), who highlighted the important role of meaningful feedback in enhancing student learning and supporting development in Physical Education.

Theme 4: Promoting Equal Participation, Belonging, and Meaningful Roles

The students emphasized that promoting equal participation, belonging, and meaningful roles in PE requires more than just activity design; it depends on qualities such as fairness, recognition, inclusive grouping, and a genuine understanding of every student's right to be seen and valued.

"They should always recognize every student and should not make them feel left out just because of a certain limitation..." - P2

"Teachers should give every student the opportunity to take on a role in the activity; it should not always be just the highly skilled students who get to play..." - P5

"Always include everyone in every activity. Praise their effort, not only their skills. Make them understand that their participation is important even if they are not the best. Do not let anyone be left on the sidelines." - P7

"The teacher should treat students fairly based on their performance, effort, and improvement." - P9

"We should promote belonging by building trust, creating group activities where everyone can join, and valuing participation above performance." - P10

These responses indicate that equal participation and belonging depend not only on teaching strategies but also on teachers' values and commitment to fairness, respect, and inclusion. Inclusive PE teachers should recognize individual efforts and respond to diverse learner needs. This is supported by Narciso (2026), who emphasized that rigid gender divisions, limited representation, and instructor silence can hinder participation, while flexible curricula, safe spaces, supportive cultures, and inclusive practices promote meaningful participation.

Theme 5: Creating a Safe, Respectful, and Supportive Learning Environment

The students described meaningful participation as being supported by a PE teacher who creates a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment. They emphasized that teachers should make students feel accepted, provide proper guidance, prevent bullying and discrimination, and encourage students to support one another during physical activities.

"The PE teacher should establish classroom rules about respecting one another and treating others well." – P3

"There must be mutual respect within the class, and students should be taught to support one another." – P5

"Bullying and judging classmates should not be allowed. Teach students to help and respect one another. Make sure that the place and equipment are safe." – P7

"I think positive reinforcement, clear instructions, teamwork, respect, and anti-bullying practices can help make everyone feel safe and comfortable in PE class." – P8

"Establish rules about respect, teamwork, and safety so that everyone feels safe and comfortable." – P11

These responses show that a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment encourages meaningful participation in PE. Students are more comfortable joining activities when they feel accepted and free from bullying or discrimination. Teachers should provide clear instructions, guidance, and support while promoting teamwork and respect. This is supported by Santos (2026), who emphasized inclusive participation, safe and flexible spaces, supportive school cultures, and participatory teaching practices.

Strengthening Inclusive Pedagogical Practices

Theme 1: Providing Practical and Experiential Teaching Opportunities

The students described the teacher education programs can be strengthened in inclusive teaching by providing BPEd students with practical and experiential learning opportunities. They emphasized that future PE teachers need more than theoretical knowledge because actual teaching experiences, hands-on activities, demonstrations, simulations, and field experiences can help them apply what they have learned and become more prepared to handle students with different abilities.

"By giving BPEd students more hands-on experience." — P3

"I believe this can be further strengthened by providing BPEd students with more hands-on activities and actual teaching experiences." — P5

"Teach future teachers the proper knowledge, train them well, and allow them to teach in actual classes. It should not only be about lessons but should also include real experiences." — P7

These responses show that practical and experiential teaching opportunities are important in preparing future PE teachers for inclusive education. Participants emphasized teaching practice, demonstrations, simulations, and actual classroom experiences to help BPEd students apply theory, develop teaching skills, and respond to diverse learner needs. This finding is consistent with Marcos-Rivero (2026), who found that practicum experiences can influence perceptions of inclusion and develop teaching self-efficacy.

Theme 2: Strengthening Knowledge and Skills for Inclusive Teaching

The students emphasized that future PE teachers need to develop sufficient knowledge and practical skills to teach students with different abilities. They identify workshops, seminars, training, teaching demonstrations, simulations, and actual teaching experiences, as important ways to strengthen their ability to implement inclusive teaching practices.

"Train them on how to modify and adjust activities. Let them observe how skilled teachers teach. Also, allow them to teach different types of students themselves." -P7

"I think adapted sports training, inclusive PE workshops, teaching demonstrations, simulations, and field experiences can help me learn how to teach students with different abilities." - P8

"Case studies and practicum can help by giving BPEd student's opportunities to adapt PE activities according to the needs of different students." - P9

"Microteaching, peer teaching, workshops, and creating modified physical activities can help students become more skilled at adapting activities to different abilities." -P11

These responses indicate that inclusive teaching requires more than theoretical knowledge. BPEd students need practical training to modify activities, adjust instruction, and address diverse learner needs. Through training and actual teaching experiences, future PE teachers can become more flexible and prepared. This finding is consistent with Martin (2023), who emphasized the importance of adapting teaching strategies to different learning situations.

Theme 3: Developing Inclusive Teacher Attitudes and Disposition

The students emphasized that future PE teachers need to develop positive attitudes and personal dispositions alongside their professional knowledge. They highlighted that inclusive teaching requires more than just skills; it depends on qualities such as patience, fairness, respect, empathy, flexibility, creativity, and a non-judgmental mindset, as well as a genuine understanding of learner diversity and a willingness to treat every student with dignity.

"They should understand that not all students are equal or have the same abilities. Knowledge, fairness, and responsibility." - P2

"They need to learn how to understand students' varying abilities. Patience, communication skills, creativity, and flexibility are also essential." - P5

"They should know that not everyone has the same abilities. They should know how to adjust activities according to the needs of the students. Most importantly, they should have patience, respect, and genuine concern for others." - P7

"We should understand the situation of other people and avoid being judgmental. We should increase our respect for one another because teaching inclusion always starts from within." - P10

"Patience, empathy, creativity, and flexibility are also important." - P8

This statement shows that inclusive teaching depends not only on professional training and instructional strategies but also on teachers' personal values and attitudes. Inclusive teachers need to understand differences, promote equality, and respond to diverse learner needs. Effective strategies require a commitment to respecting and valuing every student. This is supported by Navarro-Mateu et al. (2019), who found that empathy, belief in equality, and low social dominance orientation contribute to positive inclusive attitudes and supportive, equitable classrooms.

Theme 4: Learning through Professional Development and Training

The students highlighted that in order to further strengthen inclusive education, future PE teachers should continue to learn through professional development and training, because it does not mean that when you are an educator you should only be a teacher; there should also be opportunities to add more knowledge for students. As the saying goes, "Once a teacher, always a learner." This only means that personal and professional development for educators is a continuous, lifelong process.

"Attending seminars about teaching and practicing patience because students have very short attention spans." - P2

"Seminars and other activities that can help them become better and more knowledgeable about inclusive teaching." - P3

"Teaching demonstrations, workshops, seminars, and practice teaching would be helpful. Activities could also be organized where students are required to design PE activities that accommodate students with diverse abilities." - P5

"For me, this is where field study and demonstration teaching come in. This is where we can apply what we have learned from our subjects about how to teach properly and promote inclusive teaching. Through this, we can receive feedback and, with the help of that feedback, improve our weaknesses to make the setting more inclusive." - P6

These responses show that continuous professional development and training can strengthen future PE teachers' inclusive teaching skills. Workshops, seminars, field studies, and demonstration teaching help develop practical skills and connect theory to classroom practice. This supports Ackers (2018), who emphasized that effective inclusive education depends on teachers' continuous professional development and school-based practice.

Theme 5: Building Confidence and Improving Through Practice and Feedback

Students emphasized that confidence in inclusive teaching develops through practice, teaching experiences, and feedback. Practical experiences help BPEd students handle real classroom situations, identify weaknesses, adapt activities, and prepare to teach learners with diverse abilities. Feedback also helps them improve their teaching strategies.

"This is where field study and demonstration teaching come in. This is where we can apply what we have learned from our subjects about how to teach properly and promote inclusive teaching. Through this, we can receive feedback and, with the help of that feedback, improve our weaknesses to make the setting more inclusive." — P6

"Truly learn and gain confidence. Actual class tells them what to do, and it's easier to understand and help each student." — P7

"Training and practical experience give confidence and actual teaching skills. They help us adjust activities and help every student participate." — P8

"Training and practical experience make future PE teachers more confident, flexible, and effective with students with different abilities." — P11

These responses show that confidence in inclusive teaching develops through continuous practice and actual teaching experiences. Participants emphasized that future PE teachers need opportunities to apply classroom learning through field study, demonstration teaching, training, and practical experiences. These experiences help BPEd students identify weaknesses, receive feedback, and improve their teaching strategies. This finding is consistent with Top and Demir (2026), who found that combining theoretical and practical training improved pre-service PE teachers' inclusive teaching competencies, self-efficacy, and attitudes toward inclusive education.

4. Conclusion

The findings of the study show that a good Physical Education teacher is not only knowledgeable and skilled in teaching physical activities but is also inclusive, fair, respectful, patient, flexible, and responsive to the diverse needs of learners. From the participants' perspectives, recognizing learner diversity, providing equal opportunities, adapting activities, ensuring participation, and giving continuous support and encouragement are important characteristics of an inclusive PE teacher. The study also reveals that creating a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment is essential because students are more likely to participate when they feel accepted and protected from bullying, discrimination, and negative judgment. The findings further indicate that teacher education programs should provide future PE teachers with practical and experiential learning opportunities. Hands-on activities, workshops, seminars, demonstrations, field experiences, microteaching, and practicum can help BPEd students develop the knowledge, skills, confidence, and attitudes needed to teach diverse learners effectively. Overall, the study concludes that an effective inclusive PE teacher creates opportunities for every learner to participate, learn, improve, and develop a sense of belonging. Inclusion in Physical Education is not simply about allowing students to join activities; it is about understanding their differences, adapting instruction to their needs, supporting their development, and creating an environment where every student is treated with dignity and respect.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, it is recommended that Physical Education teachers strengthen their inclusive teaching practices by treating all students fairly and avoiding favoritism, regardless of their physical abilities, skills, or performance. Teachers should recognize learner diversity and provide appropriate activities, modifications, guidance, encouragement, and sufficient practice time to help every student participate meaningfully. They should also create a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment where students feel accepted, protected from bullying and discrimination, and comfortable participating and making mistakes. Furthermore, PE teachers should recognize students' efforts and improvements, not only their skills and performance, and provide every learner with opportunities to participate and take meaningful roles in activities. Teacher education programs are also encouraged to provide BPEd students with more hands-on experiences, workshops, seminars, demonstrations, microteaching, field experiences, and practicum related to inclusive PE. These experiences can help future PE teachers develop the knowledge, patience, communication skills, flexibility, confidence, and creativity needed to teach and support learners with diverse abilities and needs. Finally students should also be encouraged to cooperate, respect, and support one another so that Physical Education becomes an environment where every learner has the opportunity to participate, improve, and feel a sense of belonging.

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