# Including pupils with special educational needs in mainstream secondary physical education: the perspectives of special educational needs coordinators and learning support assistants in North-West England

by

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# Student declaration

I declare that while registered for the research degree I was, with the University's specific permission, an enrolled student for the following awards:

Postgraduate Certificate in Business and Management Research Methods (University of Central Lancashire, 2009-2010)

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I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submissions for an academic award and is solely my own work.

The following peer-reviewed publications arose from the thesis:

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# Abstract

The Code of Practice (DfE, 1994) established the role of SENCO to assist the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools. Nearly a decade later, SEN generally and the work of LSAs in particular, gained more political and academic attention after the government of Britain announced that schools of the future would include many more trained staff to support learning to higher standards (Morris, 2001). SENCOs and LSAs, thus, should form an integral part of the culture of all departments, including PE. The thesis uses Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony to explore how the educational ideologies and experiences of SENCOs and LSAs influence the extent to which they shape the (inclusive) culture of PE. A web survey and follow up interviews with SENCOs and LSAs were used to explore the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary school PE in North-West England. All quantitative data were analysed using Survey Monkey whilst qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis using NVIVO. The research discovered that the role of SENCO and LSA are diverse and depended largely on the SEN needs of the school. For both, access to, or influence over, positions of authority were limited, thus making it more difficult for them to shape the inclusive culture of PE. The majority of SENCOs and LSAs have not received PE-specific training, which casts doubt over their ability to contribute to the development of an inclusive culture in PE. The findings also highlight the hegemonic status of English, maths and science when it comes to SEN resource distribution, which most SENCOs and LSAs support and often reinforce. PE was found to be especially disadvantaged in this hierarchy of subject priority, the implication again being that this further limits the ways and extent to which an inclusive PE culture can develop.

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# Glossary of key terms

| | |
|---|---|
| BCODP | British Council of Organisations of Disabled People |
| BESD | Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties |
| CAQDAS | computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software |
| CCW | Curriculum Council for Wales |
| CONRAD | Committee on the Restrictions Against Disabled People |
| CPD | Continual professional development |
| DCMS | Department for Culture, Media and Sport |
| DCSF | Department for Children, Schools and Families |
| DDA | Disability Discrimination Act |
| DES | Department of Education and Science |
| DfE | Department for Education |
| DfEE | Department for Education and Employment |
| DfES | Department for Education and Skills |
| DPI | Disabled People International |
| DRC | Disability Rights Commission |
| EFDS | English Federation of Disability Sport |
| EHRC | Equality and Human Rights Commission |
| ITT | Initial teacher training |
| LEA | Local Education Authority |
| LSA | Learning support assistant |
| NCC | National Curriculum Council |
| NCPE | National curriculum physical education |

| NDC | National Disability Council |
|---|---|
| NDSO | National Disability Sports Organisation |
| ODI | Office for Disability Issues |
| OFSTED | Office for Standards in Education |
| PE | Physical education |
| QCA | Qualifications and Curriculum Authority |
| QCDA | Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency |
| SEN | Special educational needs |
| SENCO | Special educational needs coordinator |
| SENDA | Special educational needs and disability act |
| SMT | Senior management team |
| TDA | Training and Development Agency for Schools |
| TDM | Tailored design method |
| TTA | Teacher training agency |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UPIAS | Union of the Physical Impaired Against Segregation |
| YST | Youth Sports Trust |

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A. J. Maher

*For Caleb*

# Introduction

*Research context*

For centuries, the British Government placed a large number of disabled people in segregated institutions such as special schools and hospitals (Barnes and Mercer, 2003; Goffman, 1963; Oliver and Barnes, 1998). However, the passage of the 1944 Education Act marked what is now considered a watershed in education provision for disabled pupils by providing a 'special needs' education system (DoE, 1944). One consequence of the Act was the establishment of a medically defined system, separate from mainstream educational institutions, with different types of schools for pupils in each of eleven classified 'handicaps' (Dyson and Millward, 2000; Thomas, 2007). This system was well entrenched in what is commonly referred to in academic literature as the 'medical model' of disability, which assumed, amongst other things, that the impairments of people can be treated and cured through medical intervention (Oliver and Barnes, 1998). Over the next 30 years or so, however, this purview was challenged in tandem with a cultural shift away from medical model explanations and definitions of disability, towards the 'social model' view of disability. This conceptual and cultural shift emerged mainly from resistance to the medical model by disabled people, disability activists and academics within disability studies. Social model explanations of disability challenged hegemonic ideologies, which assumed that it was the individual with the impairment that had or was the 'problem' and, instead, suggested that many of the barriers that disabled people have to overcome are the result of social practices, organisational structures, established ideologies and policies (Finkelstein, 2001; Tregaskis, 2004).

A social understanding of disability has subsequently been criticised by some academics and disabled people for failing to acknowledge the role that impairment plays in the lives of disabled people (Thomas and Smith, 2009). To overstate social and cultural explanations can perhaps disguise the fact that impairment and disability – two terms which are often used interchangeably – are experienced differently as interdependent facets of disabled people's lives (Thomas and Smith, 2009) and, accordingly, cannot be easily compartmentalised into dichotomous classes of medical or social model explanations. Nevertheless, despite recent academic criticisms of the social model of disability (see, also, Gabel and Peters, 2004; Shakespeare and Watson, 2001; Terzi, 2004; Thomas, 2004a; Thomas, 2004b), it has influenced policy developments and cultural change in a range of areas (e.g. employment, education and sport) and, concomitantly, a general trend towards endeavouring to integrate disabled people, to varying degrees, into all aspects of 'mainstream' society and culture. To illustrate, the thesis shall now briefly outline policy developments in education in general and PE in particular in order to provide a backcloth for the key research questions.

In an educational context, the late 1970s and early 1980s saw several important policy developments that reflected wider cultural changes. The Warnock Report (DES, 1978) introduced the concept of SEN (which replaced traditional categories of handicap) and identified as many as 20 per cent of mainstream school pupils as having a SEN of one kind or another (DES, 1978). Three years later saw the passage of the 1981 Education Act (DES, 1981), one outcome of which was the start of a gradual and, in some cases, partial transference of pupils from special to mainstream schools. It was partial insofar as it involved mainly those pupils who were categorised as having 'less severe' impairments such as

physical mobility issues. Many of those pupils deemed to have 'more severe' multiple impairments such as profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD), more often than not, remained in the special school sector (Halliday, 1993; Thomas, 2007). Thus, for the first time, mainstream school teachers were expected, through policy developments, to provide an inclusive environment for all pupils, most notably, those who required support additional to that usually offered their age-peers. The extent to which this expectation has been achieved has attracted much interest, both from government policy-makers and academics. In the context of this study, for example, there is a large corpus of literature which examines, from the perspective of PE teachers, the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream school PE (see, for example, Hodge, Ommah, Casebolt, LaMasters and O'Sullivan, 2004; Morley, Bailey, Tan and Cooke, 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004). Attempt has also been made to understand the views and experiences of the pupils themselves *vis-à-vis* mainstream PE (see, for example, Atkinson and Black, 2006; Brittain, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2005; Fitzgerald, Jobling and Kirk, 2003a, 2003b; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000). It is worth noting, however, that little attempt has been made to examine the process of including pupils with SEN in mainstream PE from the perspective of SENCOs nor, for that matter, LSAs, both of whom have become an integral part of the relation network of PE teachers and pupils with SEN since the publication of the Warnock Report in 1978 (DES, 1978). This is despite the fact that a key issue to emerge from the literature currently available highlights a perceived constraining influence that PE teachers believe SENCOs (in the form of information and resources) and LSAs (many of whom do not undertake any form of PE training) have on their ability to include pupils with SEN (Audit Commission, 2002; Hodge *et al*., 2004; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Smith and Thomas, 2005).

## Research rationale and questions

There are three main shortcomings of the research currently available in Britain that relates to SEN and inclusion in PE (see Chapter Two): first, with the exception of Vickerman and Blundell (2012), the research relating to the inclusion of pupils with SEN in PE largely neglects the perspective of SENCOs and LSAs; second, that relating to the role of SENCOs and LSAs in mainstream schools is generic and neglects PE; and, third, of all the research available in this field hardly any (Fitzgerald, 2005; Smith and Green, 2004 are two notable exceptions) has been conducted from an explicitly sociological perspective. More specifically, there is a dearth of research using a theoretical model that offers an adequate understanding of the ways in which education policy, process and practice shape the experiences and ideologies of SENCOs and LSAs (and vice versa) and, ultimately, the extent to which they shape the (inclusive) culture of PE. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to suggest that the use of a sociological model is required because without 'an uninterrupted two-way traffic' (Elias, 1987: 20) between a theoretical model and empirical data, the collection of information relating to the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream PE will be of little value. Indeed, according to Dopson and Waddington (1996: 533) 'it is only by the use of theoretical models that we can generalize from one situation to another, and only by means of constantly checking against empirical results can we test the adequacy of our theoretical models' (see Chapter Four). The importance of focusing on PE as a more physically-orientated learning environment, separate from classroom-based subjects, is clear if we remember that SEN is a contextual concept insofar as an individual may have a SEN in PE but would not necessarily have one in a classroom-based subject (DfES, 2001). Therefore, SENCO and LSA ideologies and experiences of PE may be quite unique to that context. The importance of exploring SENCO views and experiences of PE is clear if it is remembered

that many hold positions of power within school hierarchy thus meaning that they are able, by degrees, to influence PE policy and pedagogy *vis-à-vis* SEN. While LSAs are not a part of the upper hierarchy of schools, they can and often do play a key role in shaping an inclusive culture in schools as key facilitators of inclusion at the level of curriculum delivery.

In light of the aforementioned parochial understanding of SENCOs and LSAs, the thesis aims to provide a broader and more balanced examination of the extent to which SENCOs and LSAs are *willing* and *able* to cultivate an inclusive culture in mainstream secondary school PE for pupils with SEN. To achieve this, the key concepts and assumptions of cultural studies (see Chapter Three) will be used to answer the following research questions: (1) How do SENCOs and LSAs conceptualise their role generally and as it relates to PE in particular?; (2) Does the training of SENCOs and LSAs facilitate an inclusive culture in PE? (3) How do SENCOs and LSAs conceptualise an inclusive culture in PE, and to what extent do they believe an inclusive culture exists in PE?; and (4) How are SEN resources allocated and information disseminated, and what impact does this have on PE? Before explaining the structure of the thesis, it is important to briefly examine, first, the concept of SEN and, second, the role of SENCOs and LSAs in mainstream schools to aid clarity.

*Conceptualising special educational needs*

To clarify, the term SEN refers to those pupils who:

> possess a learning difficulty (i.e. a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of the children of the same age, or a disability which makes it difficult to use the educational facilities generally provided locally); and if that learning difficulty calls for special educational provision to be made for them (i.e. provision additional

to, or different from, that made generally for children of the same age in local schools) (DfEE, 1997: 12).

It incorporates, moreover, pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) such as autism and Asperger's Syndrome and those pupils who are deemed to be 'gifted' in some way (Audit Commission, 2002; DES/WO, 1991a). Throughout the thesis, the term 'pupils with SEN' refers to those pupils (some of whom may be categorised as disabled), who have learning needs stemming from physical, cognitive, sensory, communicative and/or behavioural difficulties (Audit Commission, 2002). The working definition omits 'gifted' pupils because they are beyond the scope of the thesis apart from, of course, those 'gifted' pupils who experience physical, cognitive, sensory, communicative and/or behavioural difficulties (Audit Commission, 2002). At this juncture, a caveat must be noted: conceptualisations of SEN depend on educational context and the culture of specific subjects insomuch as an individual may have a SEN in a classroom subject but would not necessarily, nor predominantly, have a SEN in PE. To illustrate, consider an individual who has dyslexia. They may require educational provision additional to that afforded their age-peers within a mathematics lesson but they may not necessarily require additional support in a practical PE lesson. On the other hand, a pupil who requires the assistance of a wheelchair for mobility would not necessarily have a SEN in a mathematics lesson but may require support additional to that afforded their age-peers if team games were being delivering in PE (DfEE, 1997).

In England, the needs of most pupils with SEN are met through either School Action or School Action Plus (DfES, 2001). When the support given through School Action Plus is not sufficient the school, in consultation with parents, can ask the local education authority to initiate a statutory assessment and, if necessary, supply a statement (DfES, 2001). The

proportion of pupils with statements in England stood at approximately 2.8% (224,210 pupils) of the school population in 2011 (DfE, 2011a). However, differences in the organisational and operational structure of education systems, national legislation, how SEN is conceptualised, assessment strategies, financial support and provision will influence the number of pupils with SEN educated in mainstream schools in other countries (EADSNE, 2003). Nevertheless, all mainstream schools in Britain are expected to cultivate an inclusive environment for those with SEN.

## *The proposed role of SENCOs and LSAs*

It was the Code of Practice (DfE, 1994) that established the role of SENCO in order to help facilitate the inclusion of pupils with SEN into mainstream primary and secondary schools in Britain. A SENCO is an educational specialist whose remit involves liaising with and advising teachers, parents, senior management team (SMT) and external agencies *vis-à-vis* the inclusion of pupils with SEN. They are also charged with the task of inclusion training of staff, managing LSAs, assessing pupils with SEN, and managing the records and statements of pupils with SEN (DCSF, 2009). In small schools (i.e. those with fewer pupils and staff) the head teacher or deputy may take on this role, whereas in larger schools there may be a SEN coordinating team. In short, the role of SENCO was created and is maintained to ensure that an inclusive culture develops in schools. Although LSAs have formed an integral part of the culture of some schools in Britain ever since the Plowden Report in 1967 (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967), they gained much more political and academic attention nearly 35 years later after the British Government announced that schools of the future would include many more trained staff to support learning to higher standards (Morris, 2001)

through facilitating the inclusion of pupils with SEN. The Department for Education and Skills (2000) identified four key strands to the role of LSA: (1) supporting pupils; (2) supporting teachers; (3) supporting the school; and (4) supporting the curriculum. It is clear that LSAs are employed in an auxiliary capacity in schools but it is not clear what this, specifically, should and does entail. That is why part of Chapter Five aims to clarify the role of LSAs and explore what they do in PE. It is duly acknowledged that the section does not do justice to the true diversity of the role and remit of SENCOs and LSAs. However, it will serve for now as a general introduction. The role and responsibilities of SENCOs and LSAs will become much more apparent during the review of literature and findings and discussion chapters.

*Structure of thesis*

In endeavouring to answer the key research questions, Chapter One examines the historical context by providing a detailed, critical account of the development of disability policy in relation to education and, subsequently, the implications of such policies for secondary education and PE in order to provide a backcloth for the research. It is difficult to gain an adequate understanding of established educational ideologies, practices and experiences without first knowing how they have, over time, shaped the culture of education generally, and PE in particular. Chapter Two reviews the secondary literature relating to the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools generally and PE in particular in order to identify gaps in current knowledge and, thus, strengthen the rationale for this study. Chapter Three provides an analysis of, and critical justification for, the use of the key concepts and assumptions of a cultural studies perspective as the most adequate theoretical framework for

answering the proposed research questions. Chapter Four explains and justifies the use of a mixed method approach – that is, the combination of web surveys and individual interviews – as the most appropriate methods for gathering the data required to answer the research questions. Chapter Five, which is the first of four findings and discussion chapters (chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight), analyses the role of SENCOs and LSAs generally, and as it relates to PE in particular in order to discover the extent to which PE is a part of their educational experiences. Chapter Six explores the training and qualifications of SENCOs and LSAs to assess how this enables and/or limits their attempts to cultivate an inclusive culture in PE. Chapter Seven conceptualises an inclusive culture in education and, subsequently, analyses the extent to which the culture of PE is inclusive according to SENCOs and LSAs. Chapter Eight examines the development and distribution of SEN resources and information in order to understand how this influences the (inclusive) culture of PE. Finally, the Conclusion provides a summary of the main themes and issues of the research project and draws together the key findings. The potential implications that the findings of the research may have on future policy and research relating to education generally and special education and physical education specifically are then discussed. Recommendations that aim to assist those who are committed to ensuring that an inclusive culture develops in PE are also offered.

# Chapter One:

# The development of disability as a social, political and educational issue

*Introduction*

The chapter aims to analyse the development of disability as a social and political issue in Britain in order to contextualise the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary school (physical) education in North-West England. A developmental approach to contemporary social phenomena such as inclusion in PE is vital because all aspects of social life are rooted in the socio-political and economic events of the past (Jarvie, 2006; Sugden and Thomlinson, 1999). That is to say, yesterday's socio-political and economic developments form, to degrees, today's circumstances of social life. That is not to say that a causal relationship exists between past, present and future; only that it is important to trace back long-term complex social, political, cultural and economic process in order to gain a more informed understanding of the present (Elias, 1978). In short, it is difficult to gain an adequate understanding of established educational ideologies, practices and experiences without first knowing how they have, over time, shaped the culture of education generally and PE in particular.

*The early development of disability as a social and political issue*

In ancient Greece and Rome people with physical and/or mental impairments of one kind or another often had to endure harsh social and physical conditions. With war an integral part of the culture of both civilisations, the social value of most male citizens was largely determined by their physical and mental capabilities because a strong body and mind was viewed as a prerequisite of a good soldier (Depauw, 2009). One consequence of an apparent commitment to the concept of 'survival of the fittest' and a reliance on the military apparatus was that many children born with impairments were killed. Early Christians were one group who helped to decrease instances of infanticide in some cultures because of established religious ideology; taking a life was considered sinful (Depauw, 2009), which is perhaps somewhat ironic given that Saint Augustine, the man often credited with the dissemination of Christian ideology in Britain, claimed that 'impairment was a punishment [from God] for the fall of Adam and other sins' (Ryan and Thomas, 1980: 87). Indeed, the birth of a disabled child was widely viewed as a consequence of sinful practices (Barnes, Mercer and Shakespeare, 1999), thus causing many parents to ask God how they had offended Him (Haffter, 1968). There was also a shameful social stigma attached to having a disabled child, which often resulted in social isolation, ostracism and even persecution of both parents and child (Haffter, 1968).

Monasteries and royal courts gradually became protective environments for some disabled people, which greatly improved their quality of life – when compared with earlier periods, at least (Depauw, 2009). From around the sixteenth century, some people with mental impairments were placed in closed institutions designed for their specific needs (Goffman, 1963) or, at least, that is how the institutions were justified by those who initiated their

establishment. Here, attempts were made to understand people with mental impairments from a psychological and educational perspective despite the prevalence of a hegemonic ideology which largely viewed 'mentally retarded' people as 'idiots' and 'simpletons' (DePauw, 2009: 14). Mostly, people with mental impairments were segregated from society; some were employed in workhouses but most found it difficult to sell their labour and were, according to Finkelstein's (1980), Oliver's (1990) and Gleeson's (1999) Marxist-inspired historical materialist analysis, widely viewed as an economic burden on society. High rates of unemployment meant that many disabled people were dependent on altruistic individuals and organisations such as philanthropists and charities for economic support (Stone, 1985). In England, the gradual decline in the power of the Church, together with a vagrant population that was increasing with particular rapidity because of poor harvests, plagues and immigration from Wales and Ireland, meant that the government felt the need to take much more of an interventionist approach into the lives of England's poorest people (Stone, 1985). The English Poor Law of 1601 provided official recognition of the need for the government to intervene in the lives of disabled people. Here, disabled people were explicitly highlighted as part of the deserving poor and, thus, entitled to public assistance.

The early development of the industrial revolution and the associated rise of capitalism during the eighteenth century placed many disabled people at a severe disadvantage when compared with non-disabled members of society (Finkelstein, 1980; Oliver, 1996a), mainly because of the increased dependence of workers on their capacity to sell their labour in exchange for wages. Hitherto, the agrarian mode of production had been much more conducive to the inclusion of disabled workers, partly because it allowed for slower, more self-determined methods of work (Finkelstein, 1980). However, with a heavy focus on

worker productivity and the maximization of profit many disabled people found it difficult to gain employment in factories which used machinery requiring speed, dexterity and enforced discipline (Drake, 1999; Ryan and Thomas, 1980). Moreover, as intra-national migration became for some a prerequisite for success in the labour market, those disabled people who found it difficult to relocate to another part of the country faced further barriers to employment (Barnes, *et al*., 1999). In short, a change in the mode of production, work processes and the division of labour were reasons why some disabled people found it difficult to gain employment and, as a result, became more dependent on public assistance.

The passage of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834 aimed to alleviate the economic burden that those excluded from the capitalist mode of production placed on the taxpayer. The Law suggested that public assistance led to state dependence and, therefore, called for families to take responsibility for disabled people (Thomas and Smith, 2009). Dedicated institutions were established for those economically unproductive disabled people whose families could not, or would not, provide the necessary assistance (Oliver, 1993). The process of institutionalising disabled people was one manifestation of scientific developments occurring in the medical profession. Segregated institutions such as asylums, hospitals, residential and educational facilities aimed at 'rehabilitating' and 'curing' disabled people proliferated. Asylums for those people deemed to have a mental illness were the first to be built, closely followed by educational and residential facilities for those with visual and hearing impairments (Barnes *et al*., 1999). Thus, by around the beginning of the twentieth century a focus on the ways in which physical and mental 'abnormality' can 'cause' disability pervaded medical ideology.

The advent of World War One and Two saw hundreds of thousands of disabled people, most of whom were previously excluded from the capitalist mode of production, join the industrial workforce (Humphries and Gordon, 1992). A culture of cooperation and collaboration, rather than competition and economic productivity, was cultivated in many factories, thus allowing some disabled people to hold influential positions as supervisors and managers (Humphries and Gordon, 1992), together with more menial jobs. However, the end of both wars saw a return to competition and the maximisation of profit, which meant that many of those disabled people included in the workforce during the war efforts again found themselves unemployed (Oliver, 1996a). A reversion to the capitalist mode of production also meant that most of those disabled people whose impairment had been created by the wars could not obtain employment either (Oliver, 1996a), thus resulting in a higher number of people dependent on family and public assistance. From the battlefields of World War One alone there returned around 41,000 amputees and 272,000 men with other physical injuries such as wounds to the head and eyes (Bourke, 1996). The government responded through various policies aimed at compensating those disabled servicemen who fought for their country. For example, the passage of the Disabled Men (Facilities and Employment) Act 1919 aimed to, amongst other things, help disabled ex-servicemen gain employment. One consequence of the 1919 Act was that those people who were disabled before the wars found themselves displaced by the priority given to disabled ex-servicemen in the search for work (Drake, 1999). Nevertheless, the subsequent formulation of the British welfare state would highlight an apparently increasing commitment by the British Government to the welfare of *all* disabled people.

*British welfare state and social policy*

The economic recession which followed the end of World War Two partly stimulated the establishment of the British welfare state. The welfare state includes both 'direct provision of welfare benefits and services by public agencies, and the subsidy and regulation of occupational, for-profit, voluntary, charitable, informal and other forms of private welfare' (Ginsburg, 1992: 3). Here, a paternalistic and holistic approach to social policy developed which aimed to provide, *inter alia*, lifelong support to all British citizens in order to avoid a recurrence of the social unrest that followed the so-called Great War (Oliver and Barnes, 1998). This more interventionist approach manifested in increased monetary expenditure in employment, health, social security and, of particular pertinence to this study, education. Hitherto, disabled people were mostly incorporated in policies designed for the entire population of Britain; however, one outcome of the welfare state was that disabled people were explicitly identified and targeted as a group who required specific social provision (Oliver and Barnes, 1998). One seemingly unintended consequence of these changes to social policy was that disabled people were publically and politically identified as 'different' because they required additional support and provision, which may have exacerbated their stigmatization and subordination (Goffman, 1963).

The 1944 Disabled Persons Employment Act was one of those Acts that directly focused on disabled people as a distinct social group. Its aim was to establish rights for disabled people in the workplace. However, according to Lonsdale (1986) the 1944 Disabled Persons Employment Act was more concerned with the attitudes of employers than the rights of disabled people seeking work, which may have restricted the extent to which disabled people

were provided with more equitable opportunities in a capitalist society. The Act also recommended the cultivation of an inclusive mainstream education culture through an acknowledgement that disabled pupils should be educated in mainstream schools (Tomlinson, 1982). However, this educational ideology would not secure the social and political support required for another 35 years or so, partly because of the subordinate status of many disabled people at the time. That is to say, because many disabled people had very little political influence and economic power within the relational networks they were a part, their views and experiences were not of social or political concern. Nonetheless, just two years later the British Government provided more evidence of an apparently increasing commitment to the welfare of disabled people through the passage of the National Assistance Act (1948), which created the expectation that local authorities should arrange community services for disabled people (Oliver, 1996b; Oliver and Barnes, 1998). A paternalistic ideology underpinned this Act in that local authorities were expected to 'arrange services' for disabled people, rather than enabling disabled people to meet their own needs. Moreover, the Act did not place a legal duty on local authorities to provide services for disabled people, thus leaving many of them with the choice of either going into residential care or living in mainstream communities with limited social, medical and economic support (Oliver and Barnes, 1998; Thomas and Smith, 2009).

The British Government also released the National Health Service (NHS) Act in 1948 which, amongst other things, provided long-term care, largely through hospital-based treatment, for disabled people. At the time much government policy was underpinned by the ideological view that disability was a biological problem of the deficient individual, for which the 'victim' of the disability could possibly be rehabilitated and cured by medical professionals

(Davis, 1996; Oliver, 1996a; Oliver and Barnes, 1998; Runswick-Cole, 2008). When the disability cannot be cured, so-called medical 'experts' develop treatments which aim to minimise the negative consequences of an individual's impairment (Barnes *et al*., 1999). Here, disabled people have very little influence over key decisions that affect their lives. They are, in effect, expected to accept hegemonic ideologies which may not be in their best interests. This ideology of disability, which emphasises impairment, is deeply entrenched in what is often referred to as the medical model of disability. The medical model of disability is built on the idea that many of the problems that disabled people encounter are the consequence of their own mental or physical impairment(s) (Brittain, 2004; Hahn, 1986). A medical model ideology supposes that impairment is the root cause of disability when, according the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS, 1976:14):

> disability is the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes little or no account of people who have impairments and thus excludes them from participating in the mainstream of social activities.

Disability, for some, is much more than biological; rather, it is a manifestation of the unequal distribution of power between disabled and non-disabled people (Thomas and Smith, 2009). A medical model ideology of disability can neglect the fact that disability is socially constructed, and ignores the complex ways in which perceptions and experiences of disability can change over time and vary between cultures (Barnes and Mercer, 2003; Barnes, *et al*., 1999; Thomas and Smith, 2009). Notwithstanding its many criticisms, a medical model ideology continued to underpin government policy, particularly education policy.

For centuries, the British Government had often used its power as national policy makers to incarcerate many young disabled people in closed institutions such as 'special schools', which were often miles away from their family home (Barnes and Mercer, 2003; Oliver and Barnes, 1998). Once there, many struggled to adapt to the sparse and isolated surroundings which were often poorly heated (Campling, 1981). The education on offer was basic and mostly dominated by religious education because many of these schools were established by the Church (Macfarlane, 1996). However, the introduction of the Education Act in 1944 marked a watershed in education provision. Much the same as the 1944 Disabled Persons Employment Act, the Education Act suggested that, where possible, disabled pupils should receive a mainstream school education. However, despite this ostensibly radical shift in education ideology, in practice, the Act encouraged local education authorities to make separate provision for pupils with specific impairments (Tomlinson, 1982).  Thus, a medically defined 'special needs' education system was developed with different types of schools for pupils in each of the identified 'handicaps' (Dyson and Millward, 2000; Halliday, 1993; Thomas, 2007). A medical or psychological assessment determined the category of each pupil, which included: 'physically handicapped, blind, partially sighted, deaf, partial hearing, speech defect, epileptic, maladjusted or educationally sub-normal, whether mildly or severely so' (Halliday, 1993: 205).

The new educational infrastructure was still steadfastly entrenched in the hegemonic view that many of the impairments of disabled people could be treated and cured through medical intervention. It was a combination of a commitment by the health profession, government and service providers to the medical model of disability, together with an expressed desire to meet what *they determined* were the needs of each disabled pupil, that partly ensured the

establishment of a 'segregated infrastructure' (Oliver and Barnes, 1998: 8). On this point, however, Halliday (1993) suggests that those who initiated these educational developments did not actually consider the pupils' specific needs because few attempts were ever made to investigate whether the support given to disabled pupils was adequate, effective or what they really wanted or needed; there was not, in short, any consultation (Barnes *et al*., 1999; Oliver and Barnes, 1998). Few disabled people were given the opportunity to voice their own views about services which directly affected their lives, mainly because of the limited social, economic and political power they had. Indeed, during this time the established public perception of disabled people covered 'imaginative concern, mawkish sentimentality, rejection and hostility' (Thomas, 1982: 4). To have a disability was considered a 'personal tragedy' (Barnes *et al*., 1999: 10), a view which united many policymakers, service providers and the wider British public. Hegemonic perceptions relating to the limitations of disabled people, the education process generally, and an ideological commitment by the government, policy-makers and service providers to a medical model of disability meant that disability as a social issue gained little political interest or support. However, from around the 1960s a grievance at the level of social disadvantage in all aspects of society, particularly in employment and education, unified and mobilised many disabled people. Hence, there began a 'new social movement' (Oliver, 1990, 1996b) or a struggle for liberation (Shakespeare, 1992); in short, the 'disabled people's movement' was born.


*Political mobilisation of disabled people*

Through mass demonstrations and the formulation of disability activist groups, disabled people began to challenge dominant medical model ideologies much more effectively than

was possible hitherto. Previously, disabled people were much more autonomous than they are today. So, when they did endeavour to contest exclusionary practices and discriminatory incidents, attitudes and policies, they typically did so separately through single cases of discrimination (Barnes *et al*., 1999). They often found themselves in power struggles with much more dominant groups such as local authorities and service providers. However, through the formulation of disability activist groups, disabled people were able to pool their resources and increase their political influence to argue that they were 'often subjected to a plethora of disabling attitudes and barriers, from housing to transport, through to employment and education' (Barnes *et al*., 1999: 11). One central objective of the disabled people's movement was to empower disabled people by helping them gain more influence over their own lives (Leach, 1996). To achieve this, disabled people had to first organise their own campaign groups and organisations. Previously, organisations for (not of) disabled people comprised of salaried non-disabled professionals who offered their own 'expert' views of what disabled people needed (Drake, 1994, 1996). Here, very few, if any, of the key decision making positions were filled by disabled people. Hence, many organisations for disabled people lacked any direct input from its disabled members (Drake, 1994, 1996). By demanding the right to control their own lives and those organisations charged with the task of representing their needs, disabled people were, in effect, challenging the dominant position of medical and other disability-related professionals.

The first activist groups established *by* disabled people mainly had those with physical impairments in key decision-making positions. Therefore, it is perhaps of no surprise that one of the main concerns of the disabled people's movement was physical access (to buildings, for example) and this meant that the requirements of people with other impairments

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(cognitive and learning, for instance) were not a priority of the campaigns of the disabled people's movement. That is to say, within the heterogeneous group of disabled people, those with physical impairments had a greater degree of economic power and political influence, which they often used to further their own interests. More recently, the disabled people's movement has been criticised because of the degree to which gay and lesbian disabled people, black and minority ethnic (BME) disabled men and women, and disabled women more generally, are adequately represented and feel part of the movement (Morris, 1991). Much the same as society more generally, white men dominate key decision making positions in those organisations that are a part of the disabled people's movement (Drake, 1999).

The formulation of the Union of the Physical Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in 1974, amongst other things, played a significant role in the campaign for equal rights for disabled people. It was often the UPIAS – who, it is worth noting, were the first organisation in Britain established and controlled by disabled people – who were at the vanguard of many campaigns for social and political change because they argued that disabled people were in a better position than so-called medical and other able-bodied professionals to contest the myriad of discriminatory practices and attitudes that disabled people had to overcome (Leach, 1996; Swain, French and Cameron, 2003; Thomas and Smith, 2009). Much of the work of the UPIAS was underpinned by the ideological view that the correct way forward for all disabled people to achieve equal access and opportunities was through a political and wider social struggle for the right to full inclusion in all facets of mainstream society, especially employment and education (UPIAS, 1976). In attempting to achieve this overarching aim, various disability representative groups, including the UPIAS, became involved in local authority equal opportunity initiatives because 'there was a perception [amongst many of

those involved in the disabled people's movement] of a chance of access to power and resources on terms of their own making' (Leach, 1996: 89). In reality, however, it seems that disabled people actually had little success from their participation in these initiatives when it came to improved services, employment opportunities and physical access, mainly because they were unable to gain positions of political influence (as councillors, for instance) in an often hostile town hall environment (Leach, 1996). According to Leach (1996), one potential unintended consequence of the involvement of disabled people in equal opportunities initiatives was that their political influence declined because elected officials, many of whom did not want to share their power with disabled people, actively attempted to restrict their political influence.

One manifestation of the campaigns undertaken by the disabled people's movement was The Chronically Sick and Disabled Person Act of 1970, which suggested that those responsible for public building, including schools, should make provision for disabled people if it is reasonable and practical (Barnes *et al*., 1999). Topliss and Gould (1981) have since proclaimed the Act as a charter of rights for disabled people. In reality, however, the 1970 Act is merely an extended version of the needs-based welfare provision set out in the National Assistance Act (1948) (Keeble, 1979) analysed earlier. It gave disabled people no new rights and placed added emphasis on the role of so-called professionals in assessing the needs of disabled people despite the fact that many disabled people have criticised the adequacy of professional assessment procedures for identifying their needs (Borsay, 1986; Morris, 1989; Oliver, Zarb, Silver, Moore and Salisbury, 1988). Thus, rather than improving the social situation of disabled people, The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act perhaps did more to strengthen the dominant position and power of medical professionals in

the lives of many disabled people. Nevertheless, in 1975 the power of many disabled people received a boost through the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Disabled Persons, which stressed the right of disabled people to be self-reliant, to live independently if they choose, and to participate in the social activities of their communities, all of which had formed an integral part of the campaigns of the disabled people's movement (Morris, 1993). However, French (1993a) criticises the taken-for-granted assumption that all disabled people want to become independent by suggesting that independence can lead to frustration, low self-esteem, isolation and increased stress for the individual. Independence, for example, could leave a person taking more time to undertake menial tasks such as washing, dressing and preparing and eating food – time which could be used more productively (French, 1993a). Notwithstanding these criticisms, it should again be noted that disabled people are not a homogenous group. Hence, their specific needs, requirements and capabilities may be extremely diverse. It is, therefore, perhaps more adequate if the individual assesses the degree of independence that serves them best and, in turn, the level of support they require and desire.

In order to stimulate the formulation of legislation and policies which gave more power and independence to disabled people, the medical model of disability and associated paternalistic state provision had to be challenged (Davis, 1996). Following a debate with the Disability Alliance, who are a national registered charity working to relieve poverty and improve the living standards of disabled people (Disability Alliance, 2012), UPIAS published its manifesto document Fundamental Principles (UPIAS, 1976), which presented for the first time a social conceptualisation of disability. Here, UPIAS placed the responsibility for disability solely on what they deemed as society's failures:

In our view it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairment by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society (UPIAS, 1976: 14).

To support this assertion, UPIAS also differentiated the concepts of impairment and disability, which were often thought synonymous and used interchangeably. The former, which is deeply rooted in traditional medical ideology, related to an individually based biological condition, while the latter related to the relative exclusion of disabled people from mainstream society and its associated cultural resources (UPIAS, 1976). Deafness, for example, is a biological impairment. However, the inability of a school to provide audio technology, someone to 'sign' and/or to take notes disables individuals. In a similar vein, the inability to walk is an impairment but a lack of mobility is a disability, which is socially created because it could be overcome through the greater provision of wheelchairs, electronic doorways, wider tables and the instillation of ramps and lifts. Thus, disability 'stems from the failure of a structured social environment to adjust to the needs and aspirations of citizens with disabilities rather than from the inability of a disabled individual to adapt to the demands of society' (Hahn, 1986: 128). It must also be noted here that because disabled people are not a homogenous group, factors such as age, gender, sexuality, social class and ethnicity will further influence difficulties and responses associated with being disabled (Barton, 1993).

It is worth highlighting at this juncture that the UPIAS's conceptualisation of impairment referred exclusively to those people with physical impairments. So, when the British Council of Organizations of Disabled People (now the UK's Disabled People's Council) – Britain's national umbrella for organisations controlled and run by disabled people – and the Disabled

People's International (DPI) – the international umbrella for organisations such as BCODP – adopted these conceptualisations, they extended them to include all mental, sensory and physical impairments (Oliver, 1990). This definitional change was part of an attempted conceptual transference from the hegemonic view that it is the individual with the impairment that has, or is, the problem, towards the view that the problems that disabled people encounter are determined by social and economic structures, government policies, institutional and cultural exclusion, and dominant ideologies of disability (Finkelstein, 1980, 2001; Oliver, 1996b; Reeve, 2002; Thomas, 2007; Tregaskis, 2004).

Despite its apparently axiomatic benefits, the social model has been criticised for failing to acknowledge the centrality of impairment to disabled people's lives (Birkenbach, 1990; French, 1993b; Imrie, 1997; Shakespeare, 2005; Shakespeare and Watson, 2001; Terzi, 2004; Thomas, 2004a; Thomas, 2004b; Thomas and Smith, 2009). While agreeing with the basic tenets of the social model of disability and considering it an important vehicle for tackling oppressive conditions, French (1993b) suggests that some of the most acute problems experienced by people with impairments are difficult, perhaps impossible, to surmount through social change. For instance, French (1993b) rejects the view that her visual impairment generates a disability which is wholly socially constructed. She suggests that her visual impairment 'disables her from recognising people and makes her unable to read non-verbal cues or emit them correctly' (French, 1993b: 17). Changing the physical and social environment would not necessarily mean that she, or many other people with impairments, are no longer disabled (French, 1993b), a point which has led some (see, for example, Crow, 1992) to maintain that the social model should fully integrate the experience of impairment with that of disability. In response, Oliver (1996b) readily admits that the social model has

made no attempt to address the personal restrictions of impairment because, according to Shakespeare (1992: 40), 'to mention biology, to admit pain, to confront our impairments, has been to risk the oppressors seizing on evidence that disability is 'really' about physical limitations after all'. Notwithstanding justifications and criticisms of the social model, it seems that a perceived over-reliance on social explanations perhaps ignores that impairment and disability can be experienced differentially as independent aspects of people's lives (Thomas, 2004a; Thomas, 2004b), which perhaps cannot and should not be divided into the binary of medical or social model explanations. Nonetheless, one consequence of the social conceptualisation of disability was that much of the work of the disabled people's movement became geared towards contesting the hegemonic ideologies of medical professionals and non-disabled people through a struggle for social and cultural change. Achieving anti-discrimination legislation and inclusive education for disabled people was seen as an integral part of the fight for social change. It is, therefore, to an analysis of the first of these objectives that this chapter now turn.

*Campaign for anti-discrimination legislation*

When disabled people first campaigned for legal equality, they often mimicked the approaches of other oppressed groups such as women and black people whose long and drawn out contestation of hegemonic ideologies had eventually resulted in the passage of the Sex Discrimination (Stationary Office, 1975) and Race Relations (Stationary Office, 1976) Acts. The disabled people's movement, therefore, had a ready-made blueprint to follow, which had already achieved anti-discrimination legislation. Despite the numerous campaigns of UPIAS, amongst others, the first steps towards putting anti-discrimination legislation on

the parliamentary agenda were taken up by the Committee on the Restrictions Against Disabled People (CONRAD) (Davis, 1996). Established towards the end of James Callaghan's term as British Prime Minister in 1979, CONRAD was the consequence of increasing pressure from disability activists groups on the outgoing Labour Government. The Committee were charged with the task of considering 'the architectural and social barriers which may result in discrimination against disabled people and prevent them from making full use of facilities available to the general public; and to make recommendations' (Large, 1982: 1). According to Johnstone (2001: 107), CONRAD's 1982 report included 'substantial evidence of prejudice, discrimination and lack of access and rights [for disabled people] in public institutions'. The first of the Committee's 42 recommendations suggested that there should be legislation to make discrimination solely on the grounds of disability illegal (Large, 1982). However, Margaret Thatcher's incoming Conservative Government did not accept the findings and recommendations of CONRAD's report (Drake, 1999). Perhaps, the new government did not want to act on the findings of a report commissioned by their political opponents, or maybe their political objectives did not include provision for disabled people (Maher, 2010a). Whatever the reason, it seems that a change in public political opinion and the ensuing instillation of the Conservative Government may have delayed the attainment of anti-discrimination legislation for disabled people. Nevertheless, strides were being made to improve the educational opportunities for young disabled people through the work of disability activist groups.

*1978 Warnock report and 1981 education act*

There was increasing concern, mainly amongst disability activist groups, that the segregated medical model dominated system of special education was limiting the educational and social development of some young disabled people. In response, the British Government established a committee chaired by Lady Mary Warnock to consider the matter. The Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People deliberated for over three years before producing their report in 1978 (DES, 1978). One recommendation of the Warnock Report was that medical categories of 'handicap', which had dominated education policy, discourse and ideology, should be abolished and replaced by the concept of special educational needs (SEN), while those classified as educationally subnormal should be viewed as having learning difficulties (DES, 1978). Coming into force on 1 April 1983 and based largely on the recommendations of the Warnock Report, the Education Act supplanted the categories of 'handicap' with the concept of SEN and the process of 'statementing', which entails pinpointing, assessing and developing educational provision to support a pupil with SEN (DES, 1981). A statement of SEN describes the specific provision (technical aids and hours of LSA support, for example) given to an individual so that they can achieve success in the mainstream education system (see Chapter Eight). These statements have legal status as a contract between the local education authority (LEA) and individual pupils. Usually, statements are developed by LEA employed special education professionals for those pupils with the most complex learning requirements. Moreover, whilst those pupils with less complex needs are unlikely to have specific provision lay on, schools have a legal duty to ensure that pupils' needs are identified, assessed and met (DES, 1981).

One consequence of the conceptual shift to SEN was the identification of a far greater number of pupils thought to require additional education provision. While long established categories of 'handicap' related to approximately two per cent of pupils, a large proportion of whom were educated in special schools, the much more expansive concept of SEN (see Introduction) gave rise to the recognition of as many as 20 per cent of pupils considered to have some form of SEN (DES, 1978). The formation of the 1981 Education Act, together with increasing political and social pressure on the Conservative Government for a greater amount of pupils with SEN to be educated in mainstream schools, fuelled a gradual shift of pupils from special to mainstream schools – and, thus, mainstream PE – over the coming years (Smith and Thomas, 2006). The transference included mostly those pupils who were considered to have 'less severe' difficulties (physical impairments, for instance), though many of those pupils with 'more severe' difficulties (multiple impairments, for instance) stayed in the special school sector (Halliday, 1993; Thomas, 2007). However, it would be misleading to suggest that there was little movement between special and mainstream schools prior to the 1981 Education Act. In fact, pupils with medical difficulties such as asthma, diabetes and cystic fibrosis were at the vanguard of movements from the special to mainstream education system, in part because they required little additional provision or economic support from the LEA or school to access the mainstream curriculum (Halliday, 1993). So, the 1981 Education Act did not mark the genesis of a movement of pupils from special to mainstream school but it did stimulate an exponential increase.

Various reports were published towards the end of the 1980s, which focused on the effectiveness of provision for specific groups of pupils with SEN (see, for example, DES, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c, 1989d, 1989e). However, it was the Education Reform Act of 1988

which marked a significant change in mainstream school education provision, particularly for those pupils with SEN. Passed in response to an apparent decline in educational standards in many state-maintained schools (Penney and Evans, 1999), the Act of 1988 resulted in the creation of the National Curriculum in 1992 which specified the 'core' and 'foundation' subjects to be taught to all pupils aged 5-16. In this new curriculum PE was identified as a 'foundation' subject, not a 'priority' subject, perhaps reducing the power of PE teachers *vis-à-vis* teachers of core subjects. One consequence of the 1988 Act was that the National Curriculum authorised the government to have greater influence over the actions of teachers and the school experience of pupils. Hitherto, teachers had more influence over curriculum organisation, content and delivery in their schools (Penney and Evans, 1999). Working groups were formed to advise government on the structure and content of curriculum and targets of attainment (DES/WO, 1991b). It is interesting to note that the working group for PE did not include 'inclusion experts' such as special school teachers or representatives from national disability sport organisations (NDSO) (British Blind Sport, for example), nor did it include mainstream school PE teachers. Therefore, it seems that the inclusion of pupils with SEN in the NCPE 1992, or, for that matter, any of the other subjects, was not a priority issue for the British Government because none of the working groups included people who may have offered a valuable insight into inclusion (Maher, 2010a).

The PE Working Group's Interim Report recommended that there should be three attainment targets, 'participating and performing' being the most essential component of attainment in PE (DES/WO, 1991b). This may have been an attempt by the group to safeguard the government's sporting objectives, while attempting to ensure that the NCPE would be inclusive (Maher, 2010a). The Interim Report also recommended that pupils should receive a

PE programme 'which is differentiated to meet their needs' (DES/WO, 1991a: 5). Yet, pupils with SEN are seemingly not the central focus of this policy; rather, together with performance in elite sports, the ideology of 'equal opportunities', which was considered to involve 'treating all children as individuals with their own abilities, difficulties and attitudes' (DES/WO, 1991b: 16), pervaded the expectations of the working group for PE. It is easy to understand the emphasis here when considered against the backcloth of an education system that had been influenced significantly by the equal opportunities movement that swept across much of Europe and North America during the 1970s and 1980s (Maher, 2010a).

Upon receiving the PE Working Group's Interim Report, the British Government instructed the group to 'reconsider the structure [of the NCPE] with the view to their being a single attainment target for physical education which reflects the practical nature of the subject' (Clarke, 1991: 88). In spite of concerns that a single target would focus solely on performance in PE, thus potentially disadvantaging some pupils with SEN because of their perceived inferior physical capabilities (DES/WO, 1991a), the working group incorporated all three targets into a single 'End of Key Stage Statement (the level of knowledge and performance expected from a particular age group) in their Final Report (DES/WO, 1991a). The next step was for the National Curriculum Council (NCC) and the Curriculum Council for Wales (CCW) to discuss the PE Working Group's Final Report. The resulting NCC Report increased the emphasis placed upon sport and team games in PE, perhaps because the ideologies and objectives of the NCC – a group comprising people selected by the government – were more compatible with the government's hegemonic view of PE (Maher, 201a). The NCC argued that the Programme of Study was flexible enough to include most pupils; schools were given the task of developing provision for those pupils who find it

difficult to 'fit in' to the curriculum as it is planned for the majority of pupils (NCC, 1991). From this process of 'integration', it appears that pupils with SEN were not the central focus of attention for the government or NCC; rather, the development of elite sports performance seems their main objective (Maher, 2010a). Upon receipt of the Consultation Report, Draft Orders for the NCPE were produced, finalised by government and presented to parliament. The NCPE was subsequently introduced in 1992. By the mid-1990s the assurance towards developing an inclusive education culture and the debate regarding its viability was further intensified by a number of important developments in national and international policy, possibly the most noteworthy to British education being the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act, the Salamanca Statement and a revision of the NCPE.

## *Disability Discrimination Act, Salamanca Statement and NCPE 1995*

The emergence of BCODP as a credible national umbrella body of organisations controlled by disabled people marked a significant development in the campaign for anti-discrimination legislation. Established by members of UPIAS in order to bind the rising consciousness of disabled people, and to provide a platform to articulate the problem of disability (Oliver, 1996b), representatives from only seven national disability groups attended BCODP's inaugural meeting in 1981 (Campbell and Oliver, 1996). However, BCODP quickly became a national voice of disabled people in the struggle for political recognition and rights. At the 1991 general meeting of the BCODP a formal campaign was launched to make it illegal to discriminate against a person because they have an impairment (Davis, 1993). There was, in fact, thirteen unsuccessful attempts between 1985 and 1995, some spearheaded by BCODP, to get anti-discrimination legislation into the statute books (Barnes, 1991). However,

successive Conservative Governments had prevented the passage of these bills by insisting, firstly, that there was little, if any, widespread discrimination against disabled people (Oliver, 1996b). When the Government finally appeared to accept the view that disabled people had to overcome a plethora of barriers to participate in mainstream society, including education, they then insisted that legislation was not the way to tackle the problems that many disabled people face (Oliver, 1996b). Up until 1995, then, it was legal to refuse someone a job or promotion because they were disabled. However, the increasing influence of the disabled people's movement, particularly the BCODP, helped to stimulate the first DDA ever produced in Britain.

The 1995 Act aimed to establish additional legal rights for disabled people in relation to the provision of goods and services, buying and renting property, employment and education (Stationary Office, 1995). According to Swain *et al*. (2003: 158) the 1995 Act provided the most 'comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in Britain'. However, the Act does little to challenge hegemonic ideologies of disability or the subordination of disabled people because it gives only limited protection against direct discrimination. Not all disabled people were covered by the 1995 Act and unlike the Sex Discrimination (Stationary Office, 1975) and Race Relations (Stationary Office, 1976) Acts, employers and service providers were exempt from complying to the DDA if they can show that it would damage their business. Hence, discrimination against disabled people was only illegal if it was 'unreasonable'. A growing concern with the various perceived inadequacies of the 1995 Act resulted in an extended DDA in 2005. The new, revised Act placed greater pressure on public organisations and bodies such as local authorities to promote equal opportunities for disabled people (Stationary Office, 2005). Criticism notwithstanding, the 1995 DDA is viewed by some (see,

for example, Drake, 1999; Walmsley, 1997) as an important step in the context of the long-term campaign by disabled people for equal access and opportunities to education, for instance, because the Act represents an acknowledgement by government that disability is on the political and educational agenda and is perhaps a social construct.

The Salamanca Statement placed further political pressure on the British Government to ensure that an inclusive education culture develops. Created by those who attended the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain, the Statement encouraged all national governments to enrol all children into mainstream schools where it is feasible to do so (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca Statement expressly entreats national governments to 'adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular [mainstream] schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise' (UNESCO, 1994: ix). The cultivation of an inclusive education system, the delegates of the World Conference insisted, would 'provide the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all' (UNESCO, 1994: ix). The guiding principle of this ideology focused on providing the same education for all children with supplementary provision developed for those pupils who needed it. The British Government made more definite its commitment to developing an inclusive culture in mainstream schools by adopting the Salamanca Statement to align itself to the United Nation's human rights agenda. One consequence of the British Government's pledge to providing more equitable opportunities for pupils with SEN was the release of the Code of Practice in 1994. The Code laid out guidelines for schools for the management of, amongst other things, individual education

plans and assessment procedures (DfE, 1994). In short, the Code of Practice aimed to establish 'good practice' in the management of provision for pupils with SEN.


At a similar time to when the 1994 Code of Practice was released, a revision to the National Curriculum was called for because many policy-makers and educationalists thought that the first curriculum was unmanageable (Penney and Evans, 1999). A reduction in content was said to be required for all subjects (Dearing, 1993a). Once again, working groups were created for each subject, this time giving representation to teachers who now had experience implementing the National Curriculum and its assessment arrangements (Patten, 1993). Once more, though, the working group for PE did not include disability specialists, again highlighting the limited power and subordinate position of disabled people and specialists when it comes to the formulation of education policy. Nonetheless, it is notable that PE teachers were included in the working groups as this may have promised much for pupils with SEN. These teachers were now able to discuss their opinions and experiences of the NCPE, particularly in relation to pupils with SEN because, by now, many had experience endeavouring to facilitate inclusion. However, the excerpt that follows may raise doubt about the extent to which the British Government were prepared to acknowledge and act on the views and opinions of teachers: 'the task ahead is to identify a slimmed down statutory content for each subject... it will not involve the introduction of new material' (Dearing, 1993b: 35). This restriction was perhaps placed on the PE Working Group to thwart attempts to introduce material that was not compatible with the government view of PE, which still focused mainly on elite sports performance.

It was decided that each area of activity, besides games, would be divided into 'half units' (SCAA, 1994); the prominence of games was 'non-negotiable' (Penney and Evans, 1999: 65). In reply to the Draft Proposals, the then Secretary of State for Education, John Patten, praised the PE Working Group for the distinction given to competitive games (Patten, 1994) despite earlier suggestion that competitive team games were activities in which PE teachers would 'especially experience difficulty fully integrating children with SEN' (DES/WO, 1991a: 36). Thus, notwithstanding the presence of equal opportunities rhetoric in both the PE Working Group's Interim (Dearing, 1993b) and Final Report (Dearing, 1993a), the salience of games to the PE curriculum increased because they were part of the Conservative Government's agenda for sport (Maher, 2010a).

One issue to transpire from the consultation with PE teachers was that some pupils, especially those with SEN, were working on Programmes of Study that were set, by law, for their age but which were sometimes unsuitable for their ability (Dearing, 1993b). To resolve this, the Interim Report suggested changing to a grouping system, which is founded solely on attainment rather than age to ensure that pupils were not studying material that is below or above their capabilities (Dearing, 1993b). Dearing's Final Report argued that National Curriculum levels should be expanded to include level one at Key Stage Two and level one and two at Key Stage Three so that teachers can offer work in line with their pupils' needs and capabilities, especially those with SEN (Dearing, 1993a). In the Final Orders 'End of Key Stage Descriptions' were developed relating to the type and range of 'performance' that 'the majority' of pupils should be able to demonstrate by the end of each key stage (DfE, 1995: 11). It was argued that these descriptions were flexible enough to allow for educational provision to be developed for pupils with SEN to allow them to evidence achievement (DfE,

1995). Pupils with SEN were, hence, required to assimilate in to the arrangements made for the majority of pupils because specific educational provision was not made for them. Despite these criticisms, disabled people generally, and pupils with SEN more specifically, would receive much more government attention from the incoming Labour Government because of their focus on facilitating social inclusion.

## Social inclusion agenda and NCPE 2000

In 1997 there was a change in political opinion which manifested in a land-slide victory for the Labour Party. Upon entering office, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was established to examine how government could achieve its social inclusion objectives, which had formed an integral part of its political campaign. The SEU established the Policy Action Team (PAT) 10 Working Group, amongst others, to determine the potential of using sport and the arts as vehicles to facilitate social inclusion (DCMS, 1999). The findings of this report, which have been analysed in greater detail elsewhere (see, for example, Collins and Kay, 2003), provided the basis for a focus on social inclusion in subsequent sport policy (Houlihan and White, 2002). A Sporting Future for All, for example, which was Labour's first policy statement on sport, suggested that sport could 'make a unique contribution to tackling social exclusion in our society' (DCMS, 2000: 39). In relation to education, A Sporting Future for All (DCMS, 2000: 31) suggested that:

> All pupils should have access to physical education and disability should not be a barrier to inclusion in sport programmes. Appropriate arrangements, including teacher support and development if needed, should be in place to support young people with physical and learning disabilities to have good access to physical education and sport, in both mainstream and special school settings.

Against a backdrop of an increasing emphasis on facilitating social inclusion, a third revision of the National Curriculum was required so that Labour could mark an education system that was a central focus of their political campaign (Houlihan and Green, 2006). The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) detailed its initial recommendations on an upcoming review of the National Curriculum (QCA, 1999). The Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, having received the QCA's advice, published his proposals from the review which lay out a vision for compulsory education (Blunkett, 1999a). The main objectives of the proposals were to elevate standards in education, whilst ensuring that all pupils fulfil their potential, especially those with SEN (Blunkett, 1999a). The government proposed a more flexible curriculum and the introduction, for the first time, of a 'detailed, overarching statement on inclusion' (DfEE/QCA, 1999a: 3). This statement was influenced, to some degree, by the increasing emphasis placed on social inclusion, the 1994 Salamanca Statement – to which government had promised its commitment (DfEE, 1997) – and the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act, which increased the onus on educationalists, policy makers and government to give a mainstream education to all pupils with SEN. Much more of the NCPE 2000 and its associated consultation materials, consequently, focused on providing a more inclusive curriculum, particularly for pupils with SEN, than did previous NCPEs (Maher, 2010a).

The QCA were compelled to consult interest groups mainly decided by the British Government (for instance, universities, local education authorities, schools and sports organisations) on curriculum content, within a rigid timeframe (13 May until 23 July) (Blunkett, 1999a). The QCA disseminated an information booklet summarising the government's proposals. Here, it was the responsibility of the aforementioned interest groups

to contact the QCA with any problems they had with the proposals. Focus groups and surveys were also employed to collect primary data (DfEE/QCA, 1999b). Some of those consulted were SENCOs and teachers who had experience teaching pupils with SEN in mainstream PE, thus adding an interesting insight into the potential implications of the proposals for SENCOs, PE teachers and pupils with SEN (Maher, 2010a). The involvement of these groups may act as evidence that SEN was now a more salient feature of the government's education agenda.

Support for a broad statement of inclusion was uncovered through consultation; however, a 'large majority' of those consulted suggested that 'it would be helpful to have individual subject statements' of inclusion (QCA, 1999, annex 1: 5) to allow teachers to tackle the subject-specific issues they must address when teaching pupils with SEN. Furthermore, some PE teachers and SENCOs felt that some pupils were being directed towards unattainable targets (QCA, 1999). In reply, the QCA's report laid out a malleable, nine-stage plan called 'Level Descriptions', which define the types and range of performance that pupils working at a certain level should be able to demonstrate. Such a malleable, subject-specific scale, it was reasoned, would give all teachers something to assess pupil progress against, especially those who cannot perform at the level expected for their age-group (DfEE/QCA, 1999c). Here, it seems that the success of a PE lesson is gauged by the level of performance reached. Nonetheless, the establishment of these Level Descriptions is one example of how the actions of teachers and SENCOs – who have ostensibly minimal political influence – can challenge the QCA – a group with seemingly far greater political influence – to change the NCPE's assessment arrangements.

The British Government's pledge to ensuring 'equal opportunities' resulted in a statutory inclusion statement being included in the NCPE 2000, which intended to provide effective learning opportunities for all pupils by delineating 'how teachers can modify, as necessary, the National Curriculum programmes of study to provide all pupils with relevant and appropriately challenging work at each key stage' (DfEE/QCA, 1999a: 28). The NCPE 2000, however, included a generic statutory inclusion statement despite many of those consulted suggesting, and the QCA advocating, that subject-specific inclusions statement would be more beneficial. This approach may have been adopted because PE was not a core subject and, hence, the inclusion of pupils with SEN in PE was not necessarily a priority of the British Government (Maher, 2010a). The addition of a generic statutory inclusion statement in the NCPE 2000, furthermore, is another example of the British Government rejecting the opinions of those consulted, and the recommendations offered by the QCA, to advance its own interests. Nonetheless, further policy developments would soon mean that SEN became a more prominent feature of the educational agenda.

*SENDA, revised Code of Practice and NCPE 2008*

The 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) (Stationary Office, 2001) advanced the government's ostensible commitment to the cultivation of an inclusive education culture by ensuring a legal right and entitlement to all pupils with SEN to a mainstream education. Mainstream schools were no longer able to refuse a pupil with SEN admission because they cannot meet their needs. In line with SENDA, the government also revised the SEN Code of Practice. Taking effect in 2002, the new Code reflected new rights and duties established in SENDA and provided practical advice to LEAs and state-maintained

schools on undertaking their statutory duties to identify, assess and cultivate provision for pupils with SEN (DfES, 2001). Within the Code 'stages of action' are also outlined. Here, mainstream schools can place pupils on the SEN register if they require provision (School Action) which is different from, and additional to, that made for the majority of pupils. If pupils fail to make what is rather ambiguously termed 'adequate progress', additional educational provision is to be developed (School Action Plus). Where the pupil's educational needs are more severe or complex the LEA may issue a statement of SEN detailing the 'exceptional provision' to be made for the pupil (DfES, 2001). One potential limitation of the revised Code is that, while LEAs and maintained schools 'must fulfil their statutory duties towards children with special educational needs… it is up to them [LEAs and schools] to decide how to do it' (DfES, 2001: iii). So, despite the revised Code appearing to be an explicit statement of intent to improve the educational experiences of all pupils with SEN, no national framework was established. Rather, guidelines were provided which largely gave LEAs and schools the power to determine the extent to which they dedicated their resources to the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools, thus potentially resulting in a fragmented system of inclusive education with inclusion provision differing from school-to-school. However, to ensure that the Code was being adhered to, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) was charged with the task of analysing the SEN policies and practices of all schools (DfES, 2001).

As part of its commitment, OFSTED published a report in 2004 entitled: Special Educational Needs and Disability: Towards Inclusive Schools, which was based on an analysis of the extent to which the inclusion guidelines set out in SENDA and the revised Code of Practice

had an impact on the capacity of schools to cater effectively for a wider range of educational

needs (OFSTED, 2004). An excerpt of the report by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) reads:

> Many of those in mainstream schools could do better, provided that the curriculum, teaching and other support were better adapted to their needs and greater rigour was applied to setting and pursuing targets for achievement. Until more is expected from the lowest-attaining pupils, improvement in provision for pupils with SEN and in the standards they reach will continue to be slow (OFSTED, 2004: 23).

In short, OFSTED's report suggested that, although progress had been made in the relatively

short period since the Code had been revised, much more could be done to improve the

educational experiences of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools. This message also

encompassed a core part of Removing Barriers to Achievement (DfES, 2004b) which builds

on proposals for the reform of children's services in Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004a) by

setting out the government's vision for giving pupils with SEN the opportunity to succeed in

education.

Following the findings of Removing Barriers to Achievement, which drew particular

attention to the perceived fragmented nature of SEN provision in many mainstream schools

in Britain (DfES, 2004b), the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (2006: 9)

was established to give 'careful consideration to where the SEN system is failing and

consider how the government can improve outcomes for all children with SEN'. Amongst its

many recommendations, the Committee called for government to clarify its position on SEN

by providing a realistic national strategic direction for the future that everyone involved in

SEN can work towards (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2006).

According to the Committee, the Warnock SEN framework, which had dominated SEN

ideology, discourse, provision and strategic planning for the past 25 years or so, was no longer fit for purpose. Thus, government needed to develop a new system that placed the needs of the pupils with SEN at the centre of provision (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2006). In other words, it was suggested that a radical restructuring of the SEN system was required across all schools in Britain. However, despite a seemingly rhetorical commitment to improving SEN provision in all schools, there has thus far been little government action to bring SEN into the mainstream education agenda, which is perhaps further evidence that it is not a government policy priority. It was against this backcloth that the government called for a new National Curriculum.

The NCPE 2008 (QCA, 2007) was introduced to ensure that all young people had access to high quality PE and school sport. The new PE curriculum aimed to deliver the 'five hour offer' (Sport England/ YST, 2009). This represents the minimum period of time that young people aged 5 to 16 should spent doing physical activity each week. In a similar vein, young people aged 16 to 19 should take part in physical activity for a minimum of 3 hours per week. Achieving these targets depends to a large extent on organisational partnership. The Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department for Culture, Media and Sport, for example, worked alongside Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust (YST) in order to identify how government can best help local partners offer young people the support needed to actively partake in physical activity. By encouraging schools to provide more challenging, inspiring and flexible approaches to PE, the NCPE hoped that young people may be able to develop skills and an interest in sport, thus enabling them to make informed choices about adopting a physically active lifestyle (Johnrose and Maher, 2010). The NCPE 2008 works towards preparing young people for lifelong participation in physical activity by

endeavouring to provide a more accessible, attractive, varied and appropriate PE curriculum, due perhaps to an ostensible mismatch between the dominant sport-based PE programmes and the participation tendencies of adults (McPhail, Kirk and Eley, 2003). Some secondary schools are aiming to develop a new PE culture by incorporating activities such as hiking, walking, kickboxing and martial arts, amongst others, which may increase the number of young people continuing their physical activity participation into adulthood (Johnrose and Maher, 2010).

Notwithstanding attempts to provide a more flexible and varied NCPE, there was still particular emphasis placed on competitive sport and team games. Indeed, the 'Range and Content' section of the NCPE 2008 suggests that teachers should use invasion, net/ wall and striking/ fielding games to allow pupils to outwit opponents in face-to-face competition (QCA, 2007). There is also emphasis placed on encouraging pupils to 'perform at maximum levels' whereby success can be measured by 'personal best scores and times, and in competition by direct comparison with others' scores or times' (QCA, 2007: 194). Moreover, the NCPE 2008 highlights competence, performance, active lifestyles, creativity and healthy as key concepts that should underpin the study of PE. Here, performance entails 'having a desire to achieve and improve… [and] being willing to take part in a range of competitive, creative and challenge-type activities, both as individuals or as part of a team or group (QCA, 2007: 191). Despite the NCPE 2008 Programme of Study and its associated attainment targets having no reference to pupils with SEN, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), which is responsible for developing the curriculum and associated assessments and qualifications, does suggest that an inclusive curriculum is one where 'all pupils, regardless of ability, have sufficient opportunities to succeed in their

learning at the highest standard' (QCDA, 2011). Again, the QCDA devolve power to mainstream schools by encouraging them to consider their own equity plans and pupils' needs so they can develop a useful framework for curriculum review (QCA, 2012). Thus, many mainstream teachers are able, by degrees, to determine the extent to which many pupils with SEN are included in PE lessons. Perhaps in an attempt to empower some pupils with SEN, the QCDA (2012) also suggests that schools will be able to involve learners themselves in the identification of suitable educational provision. Whether this move goes some way to improve the education experiences of pupils with SEN in PE will depend upon the extent to which the pupils are consulted, a point that is difficult to analyse here because of a paucity of data thus far.

*Conclusion*

The chapter analysed the development of disability as social and political issue in Britain in order to contextualise the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary school (physical) education. In doing so, the chapter suggested that the power and influence of some disabled people rose exponentially from around the 1960s onwards, with the campaigns of the disabled people's movement contributing significantly. Of fundamental importance to the increasing power and influence of some disabled people, particularly those who were physically impaired, was a conceptual shift and, to some extent, a change in practice by policy makers and the general British public from the medical to the social ideology of disability. That is to say, some policy makers, service providers and sections of the wider society began to slowly acknowledge, over time, that it was the ideologies and actions of employers, service providers, policy makers, to name a few, that 'disabled' people and not

their impairments. Through this medium, the disabled people's movement campaigned to ensure that, amongst other things, disabled people benefitted from the same educational opportunities as everyone else in Britain. The next chapter will review the literature relating to the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream PE, which was partly initiated by the Education Act of 1981 (DES, 1981).

# Chapter Two:

# Review of literature

## Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to review the secondary literature relating to the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream school PE. The first section analyses conceptualisations of inclusion by differentiating it from integration because this will enable an insight into the ideological basis of attempts to cultivate an inclusive culture (Elias, 1978; Mannheim, 1936) within school generally, and PE specifically. Indeed, it is important to first understand what those who play a key role in shaping the (inclusive) norms and values of PE consider inclusion to entail. Next, literature that analyses the inclusivity of the NCPE and extracurricular physical activity will be explored with particular emphasis placed on the suggested impact of: (1) team games and competitive sports on the PE experiences of pupils with SEN; and (2) attempts to promote inclusion in PE on the experiences of pupils without SEN. Then, the chapter assesses the extent to which PE teachers believe they are adequately trained to create an inclusive PE environment. The final sections will review literature relating to SENCOs and LSAs in PE in order to identify gaps in current knowledge and, thus, strengthen the rationale for analysing the educational ideologies and experiences of SENCOs and LSAs.

## Conceptualising inclusion and integration

The concept of 'integration' is often considered, by academics, as a process whereby pupils with SEN are required to accede to the dominant culture by espousing the established arrangements of PE lessons that are intended for those without SEN (Barton, 1993; Corbett

and Slee, 2000; Fredrickson and Cline, 2002; Smith, 2004; Smith and Thomas, 2005). That is

to say, integration involves educating pupils with SEN together with pupils without SEN in a

relatively unchanged PE lesson and, therefore, appears to be entrenched in a medical

ideology of disability (Finkelstein, 2001), which suggests that some pupils cannot access the

mainstream PE curriculum because of their SEN. On the other hand, there is little consensus

regarding the process of 'inclusion', especially among policy makers, academics and

education professionals, perhaps mainly because of the many diverse and contrasting

conceptualisations (Smith and Thomas, 2005). An academic conceptualisation of inclusion,

which is entrenched in the social ideology of disability, can lie on a spectrum ranging from

planning for PE lessons that suit the needs and requirements of all pupils (Barton, 1993),

including those with SEN, to radically restructuring the culture of schools through policies,

learning, teaching and assessment so that pupils with SEN can be fully included (Ballard,

1997; Fitzgerald, 2012). Here, it seems that a pupil's SEN is the consequence of a seemingly

rigid mainstream school environment; if PE lessons were inclusive from the outset then

pupils would not require educational provision additional to that afforded their age-peers. In

national and international policy terms, inclusion is said to involve the development of

policies and practices that aim to 'bring about a genuine equalization of opportunity'

(UNESCO, 1994: 11) for all pupils.


The findings of a number of studies conducted in Britain suggest that while there appears a

rhetorical vow by many teachers to the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream PE, in

practice, there seems to be a discrepancy between the experiences shared by pupils with and

without SEN. Some pupils with SEN spend less time in PE lessons and often participate in a

restricted PE curriculum *vis-à-vis* their age-peers (Atkinson and Black, 2006; Fitzgerald,

2005; Fitzgerald *et al*., 2003a, 2003b; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Sport England, 2001). In endeavouring to explain these disparate experiences, Smith (2004: 45) suggests that many of the PE teachers he interviewed claimed to use their influence as deliverers of the PE curriculum to provide 'as much opportunity as possible' in order to meet their legal obligation to include pupils with SEN. Such a commitment to the concept of equal opportunities is perhaps unsurprising when considering that equal opportunities rhetoric has been a prevalent feature of educational policies since the inception of the NCPE in 1992 (Maher, 2010a). From this evidence, it could be argued that the British Government has successfully used their dominant position and greater power, which they receive through their ability to cultivate policy, *inter alia*, to ensure that PE teachers adopt an equal opportunities ideology as a way of aligning their practices to the inclusion framework laid out by the government.

When analysed, however, it seems that the way many of the teachers in studies undertaken by Morley *et al*. (2005) and Smith (2004) conceptualised inclusion, and what they said they actually did in practice, was actually more indicative of educational integration. Indeed, the everyday practices of many PE teachers appeared similar to a process whereby the onus was on the pupils with SEN to integrate themselves into lessons which the PE teacher had planned for the ostensibly more-able pupils (Smith, 2004). This finding throws into sharp contrast the limited power that pupils with SEN often have when it comes to their influence over the structure and content of PE lessons. It is also important to note, here, that despite the British Government being the dominant group in the policy process, they have been unable or perhaps unwilling to control some of the educational outcomes generated from the NCPE (Maher, 2010a). Instead, it appears that some PE teachers are using the influence they have as

deliverers of the NCPE to challenge their subordination by deciding, to varying degrees, the extent to which pupils with SEN are included in PE lessons.

With the aim of casting more light on the 'integration' process, both Morley *et al.* (2005) and Smith (2004) asked the PE teachers in their studies to differentiate integration and inclusion. While most of the teachers found it difficult to distinguish between the two concepts, one teacher offered the view held by many: 'they [integration and inclusion] are virtually the same thing' (Smith, 2004: 46). Vickerman (2002) argues that academics and policy makers contribute to this conceptual ambiguity by using the terms integration and inclusion synonymously, while Dyson and Millward (2000) suggest that much of the inclusion and diversity rhetoric, especially within an educational context, is mercurial and confusing. Official education documents such as National Curriculums and associated teacher handbooks (see, for example, DfEE/QCA, 1999d) use the terms mainstreaming, inclusion and integration interchangeably. One possible unintended consequence of such conceptual ambiguity is that it may result in 'potential confusion in the interpretations of values and principles relating to inclusive education' (Vickerman, 2002: 79). Indeed, all of those involved in shaping the (inclusive) norms and values of PE may need to understand the conceptual differences between inclusion and integration if they are to develop and implement a curriculum that facilitates, rather than hinders, the government objective of ensuring meaningful educational experiences for pupils with SEN. Nonetheless, it is perhaps unsurprising that PE teachers experience difficulty differentiating between inclusion and integration when many others (policy makers, academics and education professionals, for instance) who are enmeshed in a teacher's relational network also find it difficult agreeing on what inclusion may involve. Therefore, while it is challenging to establish consensus among

education professionals, academics and policy-makers regarding the ambiguous concept of inclusion, its interpretation may be determined by those involved in shaping inclusive PE lessons, which may inform the ways in which they endeavour to include pupils with SEN. In short, it is PE teachers' conceptualisations of inclusion that may determine the extent to which pupils are provided with meaningful and challenging experiences of PE (Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004). It is noteworthy that much of the research relating to conceptualising inclusion is from the perspective of PE teachers. Therefore, this study will analyse how SENCOs and LSAs conceptualise an inclusive culture in education and, subsequently, the extent to which the culture of PE is inclusive (see Chapter Seven). Concomitant with an opaque conceptualisation of inclusion, much of the available research has pointed towards the unplanned outcomes of the NCPE because it is inappropriately structured and delivered to meet the needs of pupils with SEN.

## *National curriculum physical education*

Many have argued (see, for example, Green, 2008; Maher, 2010a; Penney, 2002a; Penney and Chandler, 2000; Penney and Evans, 1994, 1997, 1999; Roberts, 1996a, 1996b) that since its inception in 1992, one salient feature of the national curriculum physical education (NCPE) has been its prioritisation of competitive sport and team games. It may be of particular interest to note that team games have formed an integral part of the culture of many British schools for many years; figurational sociology together with archival research have been used to argue that the roots of team games in PE far exceed the genesis of the NCPE and can be traced to the early nineteenth century in English public schools (Dunning, 1971, 1977; Dunning and Curry, 2004; Dunning and Sheard, 2005). Nonetheless, other studies have

suggested that one consequence of the emphasis placed on performance and achievement in competitive sport and team games has been that many, but not all, pupils with SEN have been and continue to be excluded, by degrees, from the same opportunities and experiences provided for some of their age-peers in curricular PE (Maher, 2010b; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Smith and Thomas, 2006). Through the use of a survey, research undertaken by Sport England (2001) suggests that 64 per cent of pupils with SEN in England had participated in PE 'frequently' – defined as on at least 10 occasions in the last year – in school, whereas during the same period 83 per cent of all pupils had participated in PE on at least 10 occasions. Similarly, Atkinson and Black (2006) suggest that only 50 per cent of the 170 pupils with SEN in their study received the government-recommended two hours or more curricular PE. What these two studies do not do, however, is explore the reasons underpinning differential experiences of PE. Notwithstanding concerns about the inequality between the opportunities available for pupils with and without SEN in mainstream PE, it is perhaps more noteworthy that young disabled people in special schools were more likely to participate in PE than those attending mainstream schools, both 'at least once' (93 per cent and 89 per cent, respectively) and 'on more than 10 occasions' (69 per cent and 64 per cent, respectively) (Sport England, 2001). Again, Sport England (2001) do not go far enough to explore why participation figures differ so much from the perspective of those involved in attempts to develop inclusive policies, processes and practices in PE. Nonetheless, it appears that even with incessant calls for pupils with SEN to be educated in mainstream schools in order to increase their power and, perhaps, challenge dominant ideologies and traditions, one reported unanticipated outcome of mainstreaming education is that the opportunities available to pupils with SEN – in PE, at least – have reduced when compared to their age-peers in special schools. In short, it seems that the mainstream

education system has done more to reinforce, rather than challenge, the subordination of pupils with SEN.

Research by Fitzgerald (2005) and Smith (2004) suggests that it is common for some pupils with SEN to be withdrawn from a PE lesson (especially if it was a team game or competitive sport) and, perhaps more importantly, their age-peers, to do separate activities if the pupil was unable to integrate themselves into what had been planned for the rest of the class. Similarly, some of the pupils with SEN interviewed by Fitzgerald *et al*. (2003a) acknowledged a tendency for them to be involved to a much lesser degree when the activities delivered in PE were team games. When pupils with SEN do participate in the same activities as their age-peers, some are often excluded, by degrees, from fully participating in the activity by the actions of some of the ostensibly more able peers. For instance, using the theoretical tools of Bourdieu to analyse embodied identities, Fitzgerald (2005) discovers that pupils with SEN have experienced processes of peer-led exclusion whereby they were bypassed in certain activities, particularly in team games (during a passing move, for example) because of their seemingly inferior ability. Hence, it seems that some pupils without SEN are using their dominant position and greater power, which they receive because of their *apparently* superior capabilities – in PE, at least – to constrain, intentionally or otherwise, the extent to which some pupils with SEN can actively participate in the lesson. Conversely, although some of the participants in a study conducted by Brittain (2004), which examined the educational experiences of a group of Paralympians, revealed that they were bullied by their non-disabled peers, some reported experiencing success in school sport, thus resulting in the acceptance of their ability and an increase in their self-confidence. Mainstream PE, it appears, does have the potential to go some way to challenge dominant

ideologies, which view some pupils with SEN as a subordinate group in terms of their physical and mental capabilities.

For some pupils with SEN their restricted experiences of the scale of activities offered to all pupils, together with negative perceptions that both they and their age-peers have about their bodies and capabilities, is said to have a ruinous impact on their self-esteem and confidence in school life generally and PE more specifically (Fitzgerald, 2006; Fitzgerald *et al*., 2003a, 2003b). Many of the pupils involved in research by Blinde and McCallister (1998) and Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) reported being embarrassed by their impairment, which was a direct result of the behaviour of their age-peers. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Fitzgerald (2005) some of the pupils with SEN suggested that they frequently experienced social isolation in PE when they participated in separate activities, which often had a detrimental impact on their social interaction with pupils without SEN. In a similar vein, while some of the participants in a study by Pitt and Curtin (2004) reported having a small group of friends at school, most experienced varying degrees of social isolation; all reported being both overtly and covertly bullied while at mainstream school, thus resulting in many feeling lonely and depressed (see, also, Carter and Spencer, 2006; Dorries and Haller, 2001; Llewellyn, 2000; Monchy, Pijl and Zandberg, 2004). Thus, for some pupils it seems that mainstream PE lessons, especially those that are team game- and competitive sport-orientated, are doing more to normalise segregation and fortify, rather than change, discriminatory attitudes.

It is noteworthy that those more individualised activities that are often at the margins of PE curriculum, notably, badminton, tennis, dance, gymnastics, swimming and outdoor and adventurous activities (Penney, 2002b; Waddington, Malcolm and Cobb, 1998; Waddington *et al.*, 1997) have been singled out as especially suitable for facilitating the full inclusion of pupils with SEN in PE (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; DES/WO, 1991a; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Meek, 1991; Morley *et al.*, 2005; Smith, 2004). In other words, individualised activities are often more inclusive by design and, thus, perhaps less likely to require significant modification in order for pupils with SEN to be included (Meek, 1991). In summary, the further schools move away from individualised activities towards team games and competitive sport, there seems to be an associated increase in the possibility that some pupils with SEN will be excluded from PE (Smith, 2004).


Maher (2010a) uses the key concepts and assumptions of figurational sociology and draws on arguments offered by Waddington (2000) to attempt to explain why some pupils with SEN become isolated in mainstream PE lessons by analysing the differing patterns of social relations and dynamics that may be involved in individual activities *vis-à-vis* team games. While involved in an individual activity (long distance running, for instance) a pupil with (or without) SEN can regulate the intensity and duration of their physical exertion because their actions are not dependent on the actions of others. However, this control can diminish significantly when participating in team games. That is to say, when competing against or with other individuals – pupils without SEN, for example – the pupil with SEN has to instigate moves and react to moves in relation to the moves of others (Waddington, 2000): the pupil with SEN is only one person in a complex interweaving of a number of people who are both reacting to and dictating the actions of each other. When participating in team games,

thus, the pupil has far less influence over the duration and intensity of the activity than they have during individual activities. Accordingly, it has been reasoned that PE teachers find it less problematic to fully include pupils with SEN in individual activities because they are easier to adapt in ways that best suit the individual's abilities and needs without other pupils restricting their involvement (Maher, 2010b; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004; Sugden and Talbot, 1996; Wright and Sugden, 1999). In short, individual activities allow all pupils to perform at their own level. The issues identified here are not unique to curricular PE. Extra-curricular physical activities are also identified in literature as being exclusive to pupils with SEN in their current form.

## *Extracurricular physical activity*

Extracurricular physical activity, which encompasses those activities outside of the PE curriculum – mostly undertaken at lunchtime, weekends and before and/or after school – is frequently viewed as an essential link between curricular PE and young people's involvement in sport and physical activity in their leisure time (Smith, Thurston, Green and Lamb, 2007). Involvement in extracurricular physical activity is often seen as playing a significant role in laying the foundations for lifelong participation in sport and physical activity among young people (Bass and Cale, 1999; Cale, 2000; Fairclough, Stratton and Baldwin, 2002; Kirk, 2005). Much the same as curricular PE, research suggests the competitive sport and team games dominate extracurricular physical activity in many schools in Britain (Armour and Jones, 1998; Bass and Cale, 1999; Green, 2000a; Mason, 1995; Penney and Harris, 1997; Roberts, 1995, 1996a, 1996b; Smith, 2004). Perhaps one consequence of the prioritisation of competitive sport and team games in extracurricular physical activity is that only 40 per cent

of young people with impairments – some of whom, although it is not specified, have SEN – participated in extracurricular physical activity, compared to 79 per cent of their age-peers (Sport England, 2001). Moreover, Atkinson and Black (2006) suggest that only 15 per cent of pupils with SEN in their study participated in sport at break-time and only 29 per cent at lunchtime. In fact, almost all of the teachers interviewed by Smith (2004) suggested that very few, if any, pupils with SEN participated either recreationally or competitively in extracurricular physical activity. It could be tentatively concluded, therefore, that extracurricular physical activity offers 'limited opportunities to only a minority of pupils' with sporting ability (Penney and Harris, 1997: 42) at the expense of, among others, some pupils with SEN.

Many extracurricular programmes entail training and competition for school sports teams. PE teachers and other deliverers of extracurricular physical activities are often constrained – sometimes wilfully, it should be noted – by school governors, head teachers, senior managers and heads of PE to produce successful school teams in order to reinforce the sporting culture and prestige of the school, and its standing in the local community (Green, 2000a; Smith and Green, 2004). Additionally, some pupils with SEN find it difficult to participate in physical activities outside of school because of 'transport issues' (Connors and Stalker, 2007; Smith, 2004). That is to say, on the one hand some pupils with SEN require specialist transport to travel to leisure facilities outside of the school premises whilst, on the other hand, some pupils get picked up at an allocated time by community transport. Hence, some pupils with SEN are not receiving the same extracurricular opportunities that they might have done had they had been educated in the special school sector (Thomas and Green, 1995). The chapter shall now briefly examine why many schools and PE teachers continue to advocate and

prioritise the seemingly more exclusive competitive sport and team games over more inclusive individual activities.

*Competitive sport and team game ideology*

As noted above, team games have comprised an integral part of the culture of many schools for some time now, thus resulting in those schools developing team game traditions (Kirk, 1992, 1998; Mangan, 1983, 1998). One outcome of this long-term process has been that some PE teachers are being constrained by school governors and head teachers to prioritise team games in order to maintain and even perpetuate the sporting culture of the school (Green, 2000a; Smith and Green, 2004). However, it could be naive to conclude that PE teachers are stoically facilitating the sporting, rather than inclusion, objectives of the schools in which they work. Rather, many teachers prioritise competitive sport and team games because they have a deep-rooted emotional devotion to these activities; they form, according to Smith and Green (2004) who borrow Freudian and Eliasian concepts, an integral part of a teacher's 'habitus', 'second nature' or 'personality-structure'. The cultivation of habitus is a life-long process, which is shaped by our experiences as individuals who are part of dynamic social networks. Habitus develops with particular rapidity during childhood and adolescence; however, the older an individual becomes the more deep-rooted and more difficult to extricate their ideologies become (Elias, 1978). The social conditions of mainstream schools may strengthen a habitus of PE provision, which may not be conducive to the learning of *some* pupils with SEN.

Following this mode of thinking, the ideologies of an individual may be firmly established by the time they become a PE teacher. This point, if accepted, is particularly significant because it suggests that the early sporting experiences of PE teachers socialise them into the nature and purpose of their subject (Placek, Dodds, Doolittle, Portman, Ratcliffe, Pinkham, 1995). It is perhaps noteworthy, in this regard, that many of the teachers interviewed by Green (1998, 2000a, 2000b) and Smith and Green (2004) stated that they came from a traditional sport and games background. For many, teaching PE was identified as a 'natural progression from *enjoying*, and being *successful* at, sport whilst at school' (Green, 2000a: 191 emphasis in the original). Competitive sport and team games, it therefore seems, form the cultural and ideological basis of many PE teachers' lives and, hence, their view of what the NCPE *should* entail. Consequently, PE teachers may be continuing to preserve and protect competitive sport and team games – and, as a result, isolate some pupils with SEN in PE – over more inclusive individual activities such as swimming, dance, gymnastics, tennis and badminton because they have and still do form an integral part of their culture. However, what must not be overlooked is the specific nature of a pupil's difficulties and level of support those difficulties necessitate, in tandem with the nature of the activities being delivered, which can also determine the extent to which pupils with SEN can participate with their age-peers in PE (Smith and Thomas, 2006). For example, there appears to be a growing consensus among many teachers that pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) pose the biggest challenge to inclusion (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Croll and Moses, 2000; Evans and Lunt, 2002; Gardner and Dwyfor-Davies, 2001; Morley *et al*., 2005; OFSTED, 2003; Smith, 2004). Pupils with learning difficulties and those whose difficulties are more physical and sensory are, on the other hand, viewed more favourably by many PE teachers (Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004), possibly because they restrict, to a lesser degree, the teachers' ability to teach the rest of the class. Again, much of this research in this regard has been conducted

from the perspective of (PE) teachers. Therefore, this study will explore the nature of a pupil's difficulties and level of support those difficulties necessitate from the perspective of SENCOs and LSAs given that SENCOs develop SEN support mechanisms such as specific inclusive provision and LSAs are involved in implementing support mechanisms (DfES, 2001).

*Impact of pupils with SEN on pupils without SEN*

Thus far, the chapter has examined the perceived consequences of a mainstream education for pupils with SEN. Among some PE teachers, however, concerns have been expressed that including pupils with SEN – especially, those with BESD – in mainstream PE can have a detrimental influence on the educational development and learning experiences of other pupils with SEN and their age-peers without SEN (Heflin and Bullock, 1999; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004). The nub of these concerns are articulated by a PE teacher in research conducted by Morley *et al*. (2005: 92) 'you have to be careful you don't negate the point of it for the more able pupils, so that they're bringing the level of their play down to include others'. Here, it seems that the success of the lesson is gauged by the level of *performance* accomplished and not the extent to which it is inclusive (Maher, 2010b). Discussions relating to the nature and purpose of PE aside, these comments were made despite research which suggests that the mainstreaming of education has little to no detrimental impact on the academic achievement of pupils without SEN (Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson and Kaplan, 2007; Peltier, 1997; Salend and Duhaney, 1999; Staub, 1996; Staub and Peck, 1994). Social benefits such as increased tolerance to individual differences, greater awareness and sensitivity to human diversity and the needs of others were also

suggested in many of these studies. Nevertheless, these comments highlight the fact that teachers are constrained, in their practice, to achieve conflicting objectives in PE. That is, teachers must simultaneously promote the inclusion of pupils with SEN and sports performance (Maher, 2010a; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004) in PE specifically, and academic achievement under the standards agenda more generally (Florian and Rouse, 2001; Hamilton, 1998; Kalambouka et *al*., 2007; McKay and Neal, 2009; Vulliamy and Webb, 2000) as part of the objectives set out by government. Furthermore, some PE teachers have suggested that they find it difficult to include some pupils with SEN – in team games or otherwise – because of their lack of inclusion training (Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004). Therefore, it is to an analysis of PE teacher training on inclusion that this chapter now turns.

## *PE teacher training on inclusion*

> We will work with the Teacher Training Agency [the organisation responsible for teacher training programmes] and higher education institutions to ensure that initial teacher training and programmes for continuous professional development provide good grounding in core skills and knowledge of SEN; and work with higher education institutions to assess the scope for developing specialist qualifications (DfES, 2004a: 18).

Despite the above claims, much of the available research emphasises a perceived failure – expressed, it should be noted, mainly by academics and PE teachers – of the British Government to develop educational policies to ensure that teachers are provided with training that enables them to include pupils with SEN in PE. Specifically, there has been growing criticism of initial teacher training (ITT) and continual professional development (CPD) programmes and opportunities because of their perceived inability to equip PE teachers with

the knowledge, skills, experience and confidence to fully include pupils with SEN in their lessons (Ainscow, Farrell, Tweedle and Malkin, 1999; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Coates and Vickerman, 2008; Farrell, 2001; Morley *et al*., 2005; OFSTED, 2003; Smith and Green, 2004; Vickerman, 2002, 2007). Many of the teachers interviewed in the above studies suggested that they had received very little training that entailed the planning and implementation of adapted, inclusive activities. Rather, the dearth of inclusion training they had received was largely theoretically-based in the form of university lectures (Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith and Green, 2004). Research undertaken by Vickerman (2007) found that 37 per cent of trainee teachers were afforded the chance to teach pupils with SEN during their ITT. Experience of developing and delivering provision for pupils with SEN would come, according to many of the universities that train teachers, in schools on an *ad hoc* basis. Furthermore, few trainee teachers were formally examined in the practice of cultivating an inclusive PE lesson, thus making it difficult to assess their ability to support the individual needs of pupils with SEN (Vickerman, 2007). Moreover, in the same study 50 per cent of teacher trainers suggested that they were unable to dedicate specific time to SEN because it was just one of around 60 standards that ITT providers must address in order to prepare trainee teachers for their work in schools (Vickerman, 2007).

Seemingly, some ITT providers are finding it difficult to give inclusion issues the attention they perhaps deserve because they are constrained, by government, to cover a broad and crowded programme as a legal requirement. This point is of particular interest given that teachers have suggested that practical experience of teaching pupils with SEN helped them to gain the knowledge, skills and confidence required to cultivate an inclusive PE environment (LeRoy and Simpson, 1996; Morley *et al*., 2005; Rizzo and Vispoel, 1992). While an

understanding of the theoretical issues involved in inclusive education may help to identify some of the challenges that trainee teachers may have to overcome in mainstream schools, it alone, perhaps, cannot prepare them adequately for the broad range of practical difficulties which many pupils must endeavour to overcome to participate in PE. Indeed, the teachers in research undertaken by Smith and Green (2004), who used figurational sociology to analyse the influence of a PE teacher's relational network on inclusive pedagogy, reported that the lack of SEN training they received during their ITT and as part of their opportunities for CPD was one of the most constraining influences on their teaching. Without the knowledge or experience of developing and implementing inclusive provision, some PE teachers felt that they were often unable to include pupils with SEN in their lessons, especially if it was team game- or competitive sport-orientated (Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith and Green, 2004), thus highlighting the constraining influence that ITT providers can place upon the everyday practices and experiences of PE teachers. It is worth noting also that 37 per cent of ITT providers in research undertaken by Vickerman (2007) suggested that none of their staff had any direct SEN qualifications or experience, which draws further attention to the potential inadequacy of teacher training programmes. So, while the British Government explicitly pledged its full commitment to the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools (DfEE, 1997; DfEE/QCA, 1999a; Stationary Office, 2001), it has seemingly failed to ensure that inclusion issues are embedded in ITT programmes. Here, there appears to be a 'distinct lack of coordination and multi-agency work' (Vickerman, 2007: 11). Nonetheless, it may be somewhat misleading to assume that revised ITT policies would, alone, generate more inclusive pedagogical experiences. Instead, the level of success may depend, to some degree, upon the extent to which they were accepted by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) (formerly the Teacher Training Agency).

Much of the above research supports doubts raised by Vickerman (2002) about whether trainee teachers can shape an inclusive PE culture. Hence, it is perhaps unsurprising that many academics and PE teachers have insisted that inclusion issues should become a central focus of the culture of teacher training (Morley *et al*., 2005; Robertson, 1999; Robertson, Childs and Marsden, 2000; Vickerman, Hayes and Whetherly, 2003; Vickerman, 2007) as a way of ensuring that PE teachers are able to achieve the government's inclusion objectives. Against the background of what is perceived as the 'impoverished nature of special educational needs and inclusive education provision' (Robertson *et al.*, 2000: 61), Vickerman (2002) has called for the establishment of a clear and consistent approach to inclusive PE provision and practice. At present, research suggests that the provision of teacher training – in the form of ITT and CPD – is often inaccessible, ephemeral, superficial and inconsistently delivered (Coates and Vickerman, 2008; Morley *et al*., 2005; Vickerman, 2002). Much of the formal training that teachers do receive is said to relate mainly to general inclusion issues, which are not always relevant in a PE context (Coates and Vickerman, 2008; Maher, 2010b; Morley *et al*., 2005). When PE teachers do receive training that they consider to be suitable, it tends to be delivered in-house via informal conversations with PE colleagues (Morley *et al*., 2005; Vickerman, 2002). One potential unplanned outcome of this approach is that many PE teachers may be receiving conflicting messages and advice, which could potentially further restrict the extent to which they can develop inclusive practices and procedures in PE. Hence, a more standardised approach at the level of ITT may be required, as well as on-going, tailored support through CPD.

Evans, Davies and Penney (1996) and Green (2002b) adopt a more critical perspective by querying the penchant of overemphasising the significance of training programmes because they reason that ITT and CPD processes may only impact to a limited degree upon the ideologies and practices of trainee teachers. Green (2002b) in particular suggests that PE teachers may conceal and only superficially modify their ideological inclinations in order to achieve the award of qualified teacher status (QTS). Once QTS has been gained and, perhaps, employment secured, PE teachers may revert back to their former ideologies because, as noted above, they are already so deeply-entrenched in their habitus they are not easily displaced (Green, 2002b). That is to say, Evans *et al*. (1996) and Green (2002b) suggest that even if the British Government were able to ensure that ITT and CPD programmes are aligned to its inclusion objectives, PE teachers may still use their position as delivers of the NCPE to further their competitive sport and team game objectives. This is not to say that endeavouring to cultivate an inclusion culture in ITT and CPD programmes is a fruitless endeavour; rather, it is perhaps a safeguard against the assumption that placing inclusion issues at the vanguard of teacher training will work as some kind of panacea for the barriers that some pupils with SEN face in mainstream PE. Whilst it is important to understand the training needs and experiences of PE teachers, it is notable that little – only Vickerman and Blundell (2012) – of the research currently available analyses the training or qualifications of SENCOs and LSAs as it relates to PE. Therefore, Chapter Six assesses the extent to which SENCOs and LSAs perceive their own training and qualifications to equip them with the knowledge, skills and experience to cultivate an inclusive culture in PE.

In addition to the perceived inadequacy of teacher training, some qualified teachers have suggested that learning support colleagues such as SENCOs and LSAs have constrained

them, to varying degrees, in their endeavour to include pupils with SEN in PE. This chapter will now to turn to an examination of the relationships between PE teachers, SENCOs and LSAs to consider the local infrastructure for supporting teachers in the school setting.

*Special educational needs coordinators*

One outcome of an increase in the number of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools is that SENCOs are now much more a part of the culture of many mainstream schools and, thus, mainstream school PE (Maher, 2010b). The SENCO has been given much more academic attention recently in part because of their apparently integral role in SEN policy and practice. It was the Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs (DfE, 1994) that established the role of SENCO into mainstream primary and secondary schools in Britain. There is a statutory obligation for schools to identify a specialist teacher to undertake the role of SENCO (DfES, 2001). In some schools external appointments are made but in others an existing member of staff is appointed SENCO in tandem with existing duties (Derrington, 1997). The role was created in spite of some critics arguing that teachers would now be able to effectively exclude some pupils from their planning and teaching by devolving responsibility for pupils with SEN to the SENCO (Layton, 2005). To recapitulate, a SENCO is an educational specialist, whose *proposed remit* involves liaising with and advising teachers, parents, senior management and external agencies in relation to inclusion issues for pupils with SEN. They are also involved in managing LSAs, staff inclusion training, assessing pupils with SEN, and managing the records and statements of pupils with SEN (DfE, 1994; DfES, 2001; TTA, 1998). Chapter Five of this study explores SENCO and

LSA conceptualisations of their role – that is, what they claim they actually do – and how it relates to PE.

The role of SENCO was created and is maintained to enable all teachers to include pupils with SEN in their lessons. Much of the albeit limited research available suggests that the ability of PE teachers to include pupils with SEN has been constrained, to some extent, by the propensity of many SENCOs to neglect PE teachers in terms of support, resources and information, especially when it comes to the allocation of LSAs and the guidelines included in Statements of SEN, prioritising English, maths and science (Audit Commission, 2002; Morley *et al.*, 2005; Smith and Green, 2004). Many Statements of SEN, teachers in research conducted by Smith and Green (2004) argue, which report the pupil's specific learning needs and the support they should receive to ensure they are included in mainstream education (DfES, 2001), relate more to classroom-based subjects such as English, maths and science and, thus, do little to advise teachers about the learning needs and capabilities of pupils in PE. The onus, therefore, is often on PE teachers to judge the abilities of these pupils and, in turn, try to develop suitable provision to meet their particular needs. The existing whole-school process of identifying and assessing pupils with SEN, thus, may need to be changed because of the different type and level of challenges that PE teachers must attempt to overcome *vis-à-vis* teachers of other subjects, an issue that will be explored in Chapter Eight of this study.

According to Smith (2004), Smith and Green (2004) and Thomas and Smith (2009) many PE departments must also try to overcome financial constraints. While much equipment necessary to support the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools (for instance,

hearing aids and computer software packages) can be bought using SEN funds and used effectively across most curriculum subjects, much of the equipment required in PE is subject-specific; brighter, softer and/or larger balls, for instance. The financial burden, therefore, often lands, according to Thomas and Smith (2009), squarely on the PE department, which may impact negatively on attempts to develop an inclusive PE culture. It may first appear, therefore, that some SENCOs are using their influence over SEN information and resources to further the government's educational objectives for English, maths and science. In turn, some PE teachers feel unable to deliver the government's inclusion objectives because of the lack of support they receive from SENCOs when developing and delivering their curriculum. This is perhaps unsurprising given policy concerns regarding the availability of resources and specialist expertise to facilitate inclusion in mainstream schools (DfES, 2001). Chapter Eight will explore SENCO and LSA views and experiences of SEN resource allocation to see if this claim is corroborated because the picture painted thus far in the research currently available is from the perspective of PE teachers and, thus, parochial, incomplete and perhaps misleading.

A lack of time to undertake the role of SENCO, largely because of administrative duties and teaching responsibilities, has been highlighted by SENCOs themselves as one of the most notable restrictions on their day-to-day activities (Cole, 2005; Cowne, 2005; Crowther, Dyson and Millward, 2001; Lingard, 2001; Lewis, Neill and Campbell, 1997; Szwed, 2007a). It is particularly noteworthy that the time available to SENCOs to fulfil their role decreased between 1997 and 2001 despite an increase in the number of pupils registered as having a SEN of one kind or another (Crowther *et al*., 2001; Vickerman, 2007). A report by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Cabinet Office Regulatory Impact Unit (2004) offers over 30 recommendations to reduce bureaucratic policies, procedures and

practices in order to try and free up some time for SENCOs. Notwithstanding these recommendations, some 88 per cent of SENCOs in research undertaken by Cole (2005) felt that there had not been a reduction of bureaucracy in their job. In fact, there had been a perceived increase in workload because of growing legislation such as the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) (Stationary Office, 2001), which provides a legal right to all pupils with SEN to a mainstream education. Similarly, although 45 per cent of SENCOs in a survey conducted by the National Union for Teachers (NUT) (2004) reported that the revised Code of Practice was more manageable than its predecessor, 74 per cent of SENCOs reported that it had *not* led to a reduction in workload. This was attributed to an expansion of the role during recent years, which had further negated the time available to SENCOs during school (NUT, 2004). Given the above research, it is perhaps unsurprising to hear that a heavy workload was the most significant factor influencing the desire of many SENCOs to move away from the role in their school (Pearson, 2008).

The fact that many SENCOs are not a member of the senior management team (SMT) – despite the government recommending that they should be (DfES, 2004a; House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2006) – has also been highlighted, by SENCOs, as another major constraint on their role and, thus, their ability to coordinate whole-school developments (Cowne, 2005; Gerschel, 2005; Layton, 2005; Szwed, 2007b). Many of the SENCOs in a study conducted by Weddell (2004) suggested that, because they were not a member of the SMT, they were rarely allowed to manage the SEN budget and, as a result, were unaware of how much money was allocated to SEN in their school. In summary, it seems that those who control the economic resources can determine, to varying degrees, the extent to which pupils with SEN are included in mainstream schools. Therefore, Chapter

Eight of this study will analyse the distribution of SEN resources and how it influences attempts to cultivate an inclusive culture in PE. When SENCOs are part of the SMT and have no teaching responsibilities, they typically report having few difficulties managing their role effectively (Szwed, 2007b); they have more time to implement curriculum interventions and consult with and train colleagues. For those SENCOs who are not a member of the SMT, having supportive managers was highlighted as one of the most important elements of their role (Cowne, 2005). Where SMT support is given, SENCOs are generally given more time, space and status (Cole, 2005).

According to Cowne (2005: 67), 'the modern SENCO has to be master of many trades', possibly because of the wide and diverse nature of SEN policy, processes and practice. Training, together with professional experience, can help to equip SENCOs with the knowledge, skills, experience and confidence that their role demands. SENCOs in a study conducted by Cowne (2005) suggested that the training that they had undertaken, which was an outreach version of the London Institute of Education's Graduate Diploma in Special and Inclusive Education, helped to clarify the remit of their role. The most commonly mentioned benefits of the training, included: learning how to liaise with and train LSAs; how to organise and support pupils with SEN; how to work with other staff, professionals and parents; and gaining confidence in the role. However, with the exception of Cowne (2005), few studies have examined the CPD experiences of SENCOs, which is one reason why this study aims to explore the training processes of SENCOs from their own perspective (see Chapter Six).

In many schools, the management of LSAs has increasingly become a dimension of the role of SENCO, which often involves their recruitment, appointment, deployment and monitoring (Mackenzie, 2007). The specific responsibilities of the SENCO in managing LSAs were outlined in the revised Code (DfES, 2001); they entailed: managing all SEN support staff; managing the day-to-day resources for SEN, including the deployment of LSAs; liaising with and advising LSAs on meeting the requirements of pupils with SEN; and taking responsibility for the induction and training of LSAs. Despite their clear remit, however, research conducted by Gerschel (2005) and Szwed (2007b) suggests that, in practice, it is often unclear who is managing, working with, or supporting LSAs. More often than not, these responsibilities are divided, not necessarily uniformly, amongst SENCOs, senior management and the subject teachers themselves, which can lead to confusion due to a lack of coherence and communication across schools (Szwed, 2007b). Although not yet evidenced in the available research, one potential outcome of an inconsistent and incoherent support mechanism in some schools could be that some pupils with SEN will not get the support that their specific needs require. Therefore, the role and responsibility of all those involved in the inclusion of pupils with SEN, which was clearly outlined in the revised Code of Practice (DfES, 2001), needs to be understood and performed by each member of staff, to ensure that there is no neglect nor duplication of tasks. It is, therefore, to an analysis of research relating to LSAs that this chapter now turns.

*Learning support assistants*

According to Alborz, Pearson, Farrell and Howes (2010), the increase in the number of pupils identified as having SEN since the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) has resulted in a correlative

increase in the number of LSAs in mainstream schools to help facilitate inclusion. LSAs became the focus of much debate after the former Secretary of State for Education, Estelle Morris, announced that schools of the future would include scores of trained staff to support learning to higher standards (Morris, 2001; cited in Kerry, 2005). However, the idea of support staff working together with teachers is not a contemporary development; it had formed an integral part of the Plowden Report (1967). Nonetheless, the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream PE has allegedly been compromised further, according to some PE teachers, by the tendency of many LSAs, who are ostensibly there to assist the inclusion process, to place varying degrees of constraint upon the everyday activities of PE teachers (Hodge *et al.*, 2004; Maher, 2010b; Smith and Green, 2004; Smith and Thomas, 2005). For example, many of the LSAs who work in mainstream schools are more classroom-based assistants and their lack of specialist PE training or experience has meant that some teachers consider LSAs 'more of a hindrance than a help' when it comes to what bearing their presence has on the effectiveness of their teaching (Smith and Green, 2004: 601). Some PE teachers and, for that matter, some pupils with SEN view the presence of LSAs in PE lessons as having a detrimental impact on the learning and social interaction of pupils with SEN (Atkinson and Black, 2006; Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2003a, 2003b; Morley *et al.*, 2005; Smith and Green, 2004), which may be important given that many pupils with SEN consider the social element of PE as being one of the main reasons for taking part (Atkinson and Black, 2006). Therefore, despite the fact that LSAs are employed as a conduit to the inclusion of pupils with SEN, one unintended consequence of their presence in PE lessons is that they could do more to fortify, rather than breakdown, barriers between pupils with and without SEN, thus resulting in the further subordination and stigmatisation of pupils with SEN. It is in light of these comments, and the fact that there is little research available at present, that this study

aims to examine LSA experiences of training processes generally, and the extent to which PE was a part of the training they have undertaken in particular.

Alborz *et al*. (2009), Causton-Theoharis and Malmgren (2005), Harris (2011) and Pitt and Curtin (2004) suggest that for some pupils with SEN the physical proximity of LSAs could militate against social processes of acceptance by the teacher and among other pupils in the class, whilst a report by Reform, an independent non-party think tank, suggests that LSAs have a negligible impact on educational outcomes (Bassett, Haldenby, Tanner, & Trewhitt, 2010). One potential consequence of an LSA being assigned to a single pupil – known as the Velcro model (Gerschel, 2005) – is the potential for a culture of dependency: the pupil may become emotionally, physically and socially dependent on the LSA, which may result in the pupil becoming further isolated from their age-peers. On the other hand, research conducted by Gerschel (2005) suggests that when pupils and LSAs are rotated, some of the more vulnerable pupils are not sure who to turn to when they required advice and support because there are different support staff in different lessons. The study also suggests that the rotation system meant that no single LSA had an overview of each pupil's progress as far as support was concerned (Gerschel, 2005).

Teacher criticisms of LSAs aside, some of the PE teachers in a study by Smith and Green (2004) cast light on the pragmatic benefits of having LSAs support. Often, the presence of LSAs meant that the teacher could 'get on with teaching the other pupils' (Teacher; cited in Smith and Green, 2004: 601). In other words, the teacher could assign a LSA to give individual support to a pupil, leaving the teacher to deliver the learning activity they had

planned for the rest of the class. A report by MENCAP (1999) also found that many classroom-based teachers delegate responsibility for pupils with SEN to the LSAs and often have little interaction with the pupil, or involvement in developing and delivering differentiated learning activities. Isolation processes may, however, do more to erect barriers between pupils with and without SEN and, perhaps, between PE teachers and pupils with SEN. It means, also, that some pupils with SEN are being taught by LSAs who are not qualified teachers, while pupils without SEN are taught by the teacher (Giangreco, Yuan, McKenzie, Cameron and Fialka, 2005). This could arguably impact negatively upon their academic attainment and, in turn, their chance of going further in education or gaining employment. Research conducted by Alborz *et al*. (2009) suggests that LSAs enable teachers to spend more time working with small groups and individuals, which can result in the teacher feeling supported and under less stress. LSAs can also act as an intermediary between teachers and parents, thus encouraging parental contact, involvement in school life and, where appropriate, in learning activities (Alborz *et al*., 2009). It has also been argued, moreover, that teachers perceive the presence of LSAs as an integral feature of a successful policy for dealing with Pupils with BESD (Guetzloe, 1994; Shanker, 1995).

## *Conclusion*

The aim of this chapter was to review secondary literature relating to the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools generally and PE in particular in order to identify gaps in current knowledge and, thus, strengthen the rationale for analysing the educational ideologies and experiences of SENCOs and LSAs. It was evident from the chapter that much of the PE-specific research available has been conducted from the perspective of teachers and pupils

with SEN. There is a distinct lack of research relating to: (1) SENCO and LSA conceptualisations of their role as it relates to PE; (2) the training of SENCOs and LSAs and if it helps them to cultivate an inclusive culture in PE; (3) SENCO and LSA conceptualisations of an inclusive culture in PE and if this exists in their school; and (4) SENCO and LSA views on and experiences of the dissemination of SEN resources and information, and its impact on PE. Moreover, it was clear that there is little published material that uses sociological theory as an analytical tool, and none at all that uses a Gramscian lens to explore the social and educational issues that are generated from the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream school PE. The review of literature provided here, and the key research questions guiding the study, informed the research methodology explained in Chapter Four. Before the research methodology is justified, however, Chapter Three provides an analysis of and rationale for the use of the key concepts and assumptions of a cultural studies perspective as the most adequate theoretical framework for answering the proposed research questions.

# Chapter Three:

# Cultural studies

## Introduction

The purpose of the chapter is, first, to analyse the theoretical perspective that underpins the research, cultural studies. In particular, the chapter briefly introduces the cultural studies approach analysing, developmentally, the genesis and propagation of cultural studies as an academic endeavour in order to provide a backdrop for the chapter and locate cultural studies within socio-political and economic events of the past. Hegemony, ideology and power are then examined as central concepts of cultural studies. At the same time, the chapter endeavours to demonstrate the particular productiveness of cultural studies for analysing the research questions outlined in the introduction of the thesis. The final section of this chapter, which is entitled: Cultural studies: an academic endeavour, analyses the sociological position guiding the research in order to smoothen the transition to an exploration of the philosophical position at the beginning of Chapter Four. Before attempting to achieve these tasks, the chapter will briefly analyse the use of theoretical frameworks in general, and socio-developmental approaches more specifically, to social and cultural research.

## Why are theoretical frameworks required?

Researchers draw upon theoretical frameworks such as cultural studies to analyse education, culture and society because, firstly, theory can help illuminate certain cherished myths, which

are often taken for granted without being tested (Elias, 1978; Jarvie, 2006). What may first appear to be axiomatic or common sense in education may, instead, be no more than, in the context of this study, the established educational ideologies and cultural practices of dominant groups. Indeed, only through painstaking research can the researcher unearth unreliable impressions of common sense and, subsequently, learn more about the social world (Durkheim, 1938; Goudsblom, 1977; Park and Burgess, 1921) of SENCOs and LSAs. Once these ideologies have been identified, the researcher must attempt to expose and disprove them through empirical data and, if possible, correct or erase them. This is because, according to Elias (1978), one of the fundamental functions of the sociologist is to destroy myths and fantasies in order to add to the reality-congruence of knowledge in areas such as education.

Secondly, theoretical models allow researchers to generalise from one situation to another (Jarvie, 2006; Dopson and Waddington, 1996). This is not to say that the cultural studies theoretical frame, or any of the numerous theoretical models that litter the already congested terrain of sociological enquiry, for that matter, will enable researchers to uncover or establish universal, law-like, facts about the culture of *all* SENCOs and LSAs. Indeed, it is noted, from the outset, that learning support staff working in different societies (the United States, for example) will, no doubt, experience a way of life that learning support staff working in England might consider anything ranging from vaguely familiar to alien. The cultural studies perspective, instead, will allow the researcher to analyse a heterogeneous group of SENCOs and LSAs, working in secondary schools in North-West England, and make generalisations regarding their shared educational ideologies, symbols, rituals and experiences; their shared culture. Indeed, when exploring the culture of SENCOs and LSAs attention is given to those educational ideologies, symbols and rituals that are known and have been experienced so

often by the majority of SENCOs and LSAs that they have become a part of the way things are, in an educational context at least (Barker, 2008). For SENCOs and LSAs: (1) ideology refers to an established web of educational ideas and values that often influence what they do in practice (Mannheim, 1936); (2) symbols refer to the established verbal and non-verbal forms of communication that SENCOs and LSAs use as a basis for interacting within an educational context (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934); and (3) rituals are the socially agreed collective activities (Clarke, Hall, Jefferson and Robert, 2006) of SENCOs and LSAs within the culture of education.

Finally, theory can be useful insofar as it can help to generate new ideas for further study (Jarvie, 2006). In this regard, however, a caveat must be noted: theoretical thinking is not antithetical to empirical enquiry; they are actually interdependent. In fact, Auguste Comte (1798-1857) – a French philosopher who is widely regarded as the person who coined the term 'sociology' and responsible for its early development – stressed the interdependence of theory and method back in 19th century (Comte cited in Elias, 1978: 34):

> For, if on the one hand a positive theory must necessarily be based on observations, it is equally true that, in order to make observations, and in consequence to make any sense of them, our minds require a theory of some sort. If, in considering phenomena, we did not relate them immediately to some principles, not only would it be impossible for us to connect these isolated observations, and in consequence make any sense of them, but we would be quite incapable of remembering them; and, most often, the facts would remain unperceived.

In short, theoretical thinking should always be informed by empirical observations whilst, at the same time, researchers must employ a theoretical framework so that they know where to look and what to look for. Without a continual interdependence or 'an uninterrupted two-way traffic' (Elias, 1987: 20) between empirical data and a theoretical model, the collection of

detailed knowledge in relation to the culture of SENCOs and LSAs will be of limited use. This is because, to extend Comte's argument, it is only by the use of theoretical models that researchers can generalise from one situation to another, and only by constantly checking against empirical results can researchers test the adequacy of theoretical models (Dopson and Waddington, 1996). It is, in fact, the interdependence and continuous interchange between theory and data which distinguishes the work of theoretical-empirical social scientists from non-scientific attempts at accumulating knowledge (Elias, 1987). In this regard, however, a further caveat should be noted: researchers must never interpret their findings to fit their theoretical framework; rather, they must endeavour to *test* their theories. That is, they must cast their theories into forms which are actually testable, and if the theories do not correspond with their empirical data, they must either modify or scrap them. It is only through this painstaking process that sociologists can increase the adequacy of theoretical frameworks.

*Developmental approaches*

A developmental approach to contemporary social phenomena is vital because all aspects of social life and cultural traditions are rooted in the socio-political and economic events of the past (Jarvie, 2006; Sugden and Thomlinson, 1999). That is to say, yesterday's socio-political and economic developments form today's circumstances of social life and cultural experiences. However, when we talk of the political, economic, religious, and so on, the division is merely a conceptual one because these processes are, actually, nothing more than the individual acts of a myriad of people, or, to use a term coined by Blumer (1969), 'collectivities'. Political and economic processes are, in fact, all *social* processes, a purview which can prevent reification. For example, academics often talk of the 'effects of the

economy' as if it has a life of its own when it is nothing more than the individual actions of a myriad of people; bankers, traders, employers, workers, to name a few.

Developmental approaches do not merely provide a chronological, fragmented, 'list' of historical events; rather, theoretical issues relating to the research are posed and examined in historical contexts, and long-term social, cultural, political and economic processes are examined as they interweave with the area of study. This is because, it is argued, social and cultural issues and problems cannot be adequately formulated, examined or explained without reference to wider social processes and networks. Therefore, in order to truly understand the values, traditions and discourses of SENCOs and LSAs, and the enabling and constraining influences on their cultural practices and educational experiences, researchers must aim to examine how the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools became first a social issue and, subsequently, a political objective (see Chapter One). By mapping social, political *and* economic developments, in particular, the researcher will be able to see how these interdependent processes have shaped the profession and culture of SENCOs and LSAs, thus avoiding 'historical and cultural sensibilities' (Giddens, 1982: 26) and the parochial view which assumes that all educational practices and discourses are contemporary and ephemeral, and that the present is an autonomous creation.

Going beyond a contemporary, isolated view, by adopting a long-term perspective which firmly grasps the relationship between the history and biography of SENCOs and LSAs (Mills, 1959) demands a greater capacity for distancing ourselves as researchers from the subject and situation at hand (Elias, 1987). The achievement of this cognitive process, if

successful, can pave the way towards greater detachment from the wishes and fears of dominant groups and time-bound common senses. In a nutshell, a developmental analysis can shed light on the sometimes uncritical acceptance of established educational customs, identities and ideologies, which may serve to maintain the position of dominant groups, thus increasing the prospect of a more fact-orientated analysis. Now that the use of a theoretical framework has been justified, the next section will discuss the genesis and propagation of cultural studies as an academic endeavour.

## *The genesis and propagation of cultural studies*

Over the years there have been numerous attempts made, particularly by academics, politicians and the media to uncover and explore absolute starting points to complex social and cultural processes. However, this study will not follow this traditional and futile route because it rejects the possibility of discovering absolute beginnings and ends to long-term social and cultural processes, such as the genesis of cultural studies or the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary schools. Rather, it is argued that all such processes have roots that can be traced back to earlier processes. For example, it is generally suggested, mainly by English academics, that cultural studies originated in England and developed from the theories formulated and research conducted during the late 1950s and 1960s. However, it must also be noted that many of the theories cultivated by English academics during this period developed primarily out of the work of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), amongst others, and that many of Gramsci's theories, in turn, developed out of the work of Karl Marx (1818-1883), and so on. Mills (1959: 127) adequately illustrates this conceptual thinking when he comments on the development of scientific endeavour:

> Scientific advance is... not the creation of one man [*sic*] but the work of many men [*sic*] revising and criticizing, adding to and subtracting from one another's efforts. For one's own work to count, one must relate it to what has been done before and to other work currently in progress.

Nevertheless, since this is a study conducted in England, by an English researcher, the development of cultural studies in England will serve as a useful starting point for this analysis.

Historically, the dominant middle and upper classes in England monopolised the concept of culture to include their own favourite cultural practices of art, literature and opera; in short, all those customs and experiences that the middle and upper classes considered 'high' culture. During this time, the traditions and rituals of the working classes (such as sport) were largely ignored and rejected as insignificant by the dominant middle and upper classes. However, several publications during the late 1950s and 1960s, particularly from authors within 'The Birmingham School' – that is, The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) – began to challenge this historically rooted and dominant hierarchal conception of culture. In particular, Hoggart's (1957) *The Uses of Literacy*, which provides a detailed historical and comparative study of the character of English working-class culture, and Thompson's (1963) *The Making of the English Working Class*, which focuses on the lives, experiences, ideologies and practices of working people, both contributed to more generalised definitions of culture. So, through the work of a number of pioneering academics, cultural activities such as sport and popular music gradually began to be seen as worthwhile; just as important, if not more important, than art and opera.

Williams (1958) protested against the reduction of culture to a set of artefacts, particularly those viewed as being part of 'high' society (paintings, for example), insisting, instead, that culture is much more than a body of intellectual and innovative work; it is also a whole *way of life*. More specifically, it can be said that one or two, or even a myriad of people can belong to the same culture; for example, the culture of SENCOs or LSAs. The kernel of this mode of thinking is that these interdependent people understand the world in largely the same ways and can articulate their thoughts and feelings about the world in ways that will be understood by people from their culture (Hall, 1997; Hargreaves, 1986). Thus, this study analyses the culture, that is to say, the educational ideologies and shared way of life of SENCOs and LSAs working in mainstream secondary schools in North-West England. Despite there being a multitude of concepts that those from the cultural studies tradition utilise in order to study culture, it is Gramsci's concept of hegemony that is an enduring features of much research conducted by cultural theorists. Therefore, it is to an analysis of this and associated concepts that this chapter now turns.

*Hegemony, ideology and power in education*

Gramsci's departure from classical Marxism – that is, the work based primarily on the founding principles of Karl Marx (Hargreaves, 1986) – was due largely to his rejection of determinism and reductionism of any kind, particularly that relating to social class or economic processes. What characterises Gramsci's theories of culture is a concern with problems of cultural relations of domination and resistance (Jarvie and Maguire, 1994). In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci argues that in many Western nation-states the power of the dominant group (the British Government, for example) rests not on coercion through the use

of the means of violence (such as police and/or military apparatuses) but, instead, on ideological leadership facilitated through a matrix of cultural institutions that pervade Western societies (Hargreaves and MacDonald, 2000; Ingham, 2004) such as political parties, the media, the labour market, the family and, of particular relevance to this study, the education system. In other words, despite the fact the British Government have, through a long-term process, monopolised the means of violence and, for that matter, taxation (Elias, 1994), it is their influence over, first, the apparatus of cultural production (such as educational institutions) and, second, the distribution mechanisms for cultural (re)production (such as education policy and funding) that has meant that it is able to maintain its ideological beliefs and values, its dominant position, and influence significantly the (inclusive) culture of education (Barker, 2008). Education policy such as the national curriculum is considered a mechanism of cultural (re)production because it is developed by government as a standardised guide to be implemented by teachers in all state-maintained schools (DES/WO, 1991a). The policy details *the way things should be* in mainstream schools which influences, by degrees, *the way things are* – the traditions, rituals, ideologies and experiences of those people who come together to create the education system, such as SENCOs and LSAs. Funding is another important mechanism of cultural (re)production because the resources that schools have available can influence school policies, practices, pedagogy and, thus, the extent to which an inclusive culture does or does not develop.


One outcome of the dissemination of the dominant group's seemingly ubiquitous hegemonic ideologies through mechanisms of cultural (re)production is that many cultural perspectives, practices, experiences and institutions become skewed to favour the dominant group. Accordingly, what often appears to be common culture in education is, in fact, no more than

an indication of hegemony (Hall, 1981). In this regard, however, the following caveat must be noted: hegemony is not a static concept or practice, it is processual and dynamic insofar as subordinate groups such as SENCOs and LSAs are not simply wilfully obedient to dominant groups such as the British Government; they are often recalcitrant to dominant control. Instead, dominant groups must win the consent of subordinate groups, a process that involves – often uneven – contestation, struggle, resistance and negotiation and is, therefore, an ever changing process that holds the possibility of significant tactical victories for subordinate groups (Hargreaves and MacDonald, 2000). To illustrate, take, for example, the focus of this study, namely, the education system. A Gramscian examination serves as a useful critique of education as an area of exploitation and social control whilst being, at the same time, an arena for counter-hegemonic movements in which subordinate groups, such as pupils with SEN, can liberate themselves and challenge dominant ideologies. By considering the education system as a context of contestation, resistance, struggle and negotiation, the researcher is able to see it as an aspect of an overall conflict of position in establishing hegemony (Jarvie and Maguire, 1994) and recognise that all those who are part of the education system, including SENCOs, LSAs, teachers and pupils with SEN, can become active agents struggling for better opportunities in education and society within a system that aims to (re)produce a hierarchal system of domination and subordination. So, whilst SENCOs and LSAs may be actively involved in reinforcing established educational ideology, as an essential part of SEN delivery they can challenge or reject to varying degrees the wants and wishes of the more powerful groups of their relational network such as those who develop national policy and those who hold positions of power in their school such as head teacher or senior managers.

The concept of hegemony allows researchers to conceptualise power – that is, the capacity to influence people's actions through coercion, persuasion and/or ideological leadership – not as a property that dominant groups possess and subordinate groups do not, but rather as a structural characteristic of *all* human relationships and a central dynamic of social life (Elias, 1994, Giddens, 1982; Hargreaves, 1986), fundamental to any analysis of cultural practices, discourses and experiences. Balances of power are not only to be found between nation-states, they also form an integral part of the relationship between all individuals. People depend on each other; insofar as if we are more dependent on another person or group, more directed by their actions, they have power over us (Elias, 1978). The term power, however, sometimes has negative connotations. This is possibly because, over time, dominant groups have sometimes used their power to exploit subordinate groups in order to achieve their own objectives. It must be noted, however, that power is not exclusively 'good' nor 'bad'; it can, more accurately, be both. Dominant groups can use their power to both restrict *and* enable the actions of subordinate groups. Subordinate groups, however, should never be viewed as effete; power should be considered as neither an absolute possession nor deprivation of any single agent or groups such as the capitalist class or the political elite (Hargreaves, 1986; Murphy, Sheard and Waddington, 2000). It has, in fact, been argued that in Western Europe in particular, the balance of power between dominant and subordinate groups such as men and women, ethnic groups, social classes and disabled and non-disabled (see Chapter One) has become *more* equal, but by no means equal, over a long period of time, a process that was coined 'functional democratization' (Elias, 1978). Conceptualising power in a relational and dynamic way enables researchers to explain how individual agents and subordinate groups can resist and transform oppressive conditions. Nevertheless, despite the ability of subordinate groups to pool their power (in the form of political movements such as the disabled peoples' movement (see Chapter One)) and challenge established traditions, power

is distributed differentially and unequally. So much so, in fact, that the British Government, for example, have the capacity to structure the NCPE in preferred ways, select sporting traditions in PE and define the range of 'legitimate' meanings associated with dominant PE practices (Gruneau, 1988).

Hegemony in (physical) education refers to the ways in which some individuals and groups gain positions of authority thus enabling them to maintain power, influence and engineer consensus (Sissel and Sheard, 2001) over: (a) the nature and purpose of SEN and PE; (b) the importance attributed to SEN and PE in an educational context; (c) how SEN resources are distributed across subjects in schools; (d) attention to PE and SEN in training; and (e) the legitimisation of discourse underpinning SEN policy and practice, all of which ultimately shape the extent to which an inclusive school and PE culture develops. An inclusive PE culture refers to policies, learning, teaching, and assessment being developed and implemented in ways which ensure that all pupils can have meaningful experiences in PE and achieve success, rather than the process whereby pupils with SEN are expected to assimilate into the structure of the National Curriculum Physical Education (NCPE) and the established arrangements of PE lessons that are intended for those pupils without SEN (Fredrickson and Cline, 2002). With the above concepts borne in mind, the chapter will now analyse the cultural studies approach as an academic discipline to strengthen the theoretical rationale for its use and smoothen transition to the research methodology by exploring the ideological position of research that uses cultural studies.

## *Cultural studies: an academic endeavour*

There are many difficulties in endeavouring to situate cultural studies within a clearly demarcated sociological tradition. This is because, unlike most other sociological perspectives, cultural studies draws upon such diverse academic discourses as history, politics, philosophy, communication studies and film theory, together with sociology, to systematically explore the social significance of cultural practices, experiences and institutions (Giulianotti, 2005; Hargreaves and Macdonald, 2000). In fact, many cultural studies researchers have actively opposed demarcating disciplinary boundaries for the field because they suggest that one of the many strengths of the multi-disciplinary cultural studies perspective, or any other multi-disciplinary approach for that matter, is its inherent flexibility to engage with, and be receptive to, different theoretical traditions (Barker, 2008; Mills, 1959), a point which has been used, conversely, to question whether cultural studies constitutes a discipline at all. Nevertheless, Elias (cited in Giulianotti, 2004) – the person from whose work developed the figurational perspective of which some of the main critics of cultural studies claim allegiance – himself suggested that the superficial barriers that demarcate disciplines must be broken down by social scientists in order to examine how the various biological, psychological and sociological aspects of human life interweave. Accordingly, Elias himself attempted, with varying degrees of success, to achieve this task by adopting a cross-disciplinary approach in his study of human emotions (see Elias, 1994).

Despite theoretical criticisms it is difficult to ignore the fact that those researchers within the cultural studies tradition have produced a plethora of research that has increased our fund of social knowledge by *critically* examining the relations of culture and power in society (see,

for example, Hargreaves, 1986). Indeed, much the same as Marxist and feminist theory, 'critical theory' (Birnbaum, 1971) pervades cultural studies. It is critical of how dominant groups such as the political elite and capitalist class use cultural resources to define societal norms and values in order to sustain their influence, dominance and achieve their objectives. Those cultural researchers who employ a critical perspective, and it is suggested that all such scientists would benefit from such a purview, must aim to unmask and expose the 'ambiguities, misinterpretations, distortions, and even falsehoods in competing explanations for a particular social phenomena' (Willis, 1996: 83). In a PE context, for example, a cultural studies researcher could critically examine how the British Government use the National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE) as a mechanism of cultural (re)production (Barker, 2008) to maintain their ideological beliefs and educational objectives, which focus on achievement, skill and elite performance in competitive sports and team games (DES/WO, 1991a; Green, 2008; DfE, 1995; DfEE/QCA, 1999; Penney and Evans, 1997, 1999). This is despite the fact that several studies (see, for example, Atkinson and Black, 2006; Maher, 2010a, 2010b; Morley *et al.*, 2005; Penney and Evans, 1995; Penney and Harris, 1997; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Sport England, 2001) have suggested that one outcome of an apparent emphasis on achievement, skill and performance in PE is that some pupils with SEN are being excluded, to varying degrees, from the same opportunities and cultural experiences provided for their age-peers in compulsory PE and extra-curricular physical activity.

Once the processes of domination and subordination have been identified and explored, a cultural studies approach has the potential to help us influence policies and practices to ensure that all pupils with SEN are provided with the same opportunities and experiences as their age-peers in mainstream schools. The cultural studies perspective views the generation

of theoretical knowledge as a political practice (Barker, 2008). Indeed, cultural researchers often draw upon their ideological beliefs in order to ameliorate the world or, in this instance, the culture of (physical) education, from how things are, to how things 'ought to be'. The very word 'critical' assumes that there is some kind of yardstick or utopian ideal against which to compare the object of study. This allows researchers to envisage how PE could look and compare that to the way it currently is. Without such a utopian ideal, any cultural analysis can fail to find the future potentialities of the cultural phenomena it examines (Inglis, 2004). In this regard, however, it must be noted that a utopian ideal can mean different things for different people. Furthermore, from this vantage point critics have argued that, by undertaking an interventionist approach, the cultural studies researcher can never achieve what Parsons (1951) coined 'affectivity' or, to use a more traditional concept, 'objectivity'. However, despite the fact that critical theorists use the knowledge generated to change the world, their researchers can still endeavour to ensure that the *research process per se* is conducted from a highly-objective or, perhaps more adequately, relatively-detached position (Elias, 1987). Scientists who are engaged in the study of nature (biologists, physicists and chemists, for example) are also, to varying degrees, prompted in their research by the personal wishes and wants of their own and, at other times, the group to which they belong (for example, their desire to find a cure for lung cancer). Whilst they may hope that their research results are compatible with the theories they have cultivated and the objectives of the group to which they identify, institutional procedure such as professional standards and safeguards compel scientists to detach themselves from their wishes and wants (Elias, 1987). This is because any research that breaches institutional procedures will be deemed inconclusive and useless. In order to ensure that their personal ideologies do not pervade their research, then, cultural theorists should ensure that when they devise the hypothesis, develop the research methods, collect and analyse the empirical data, write up the results, and draw

conclusions, they attempt to distance themselves from any moral obligations and emotional ties they may hold in regard to the area they are studying (Elias, 1987; Goudsblom, 1977). Concomitantly, they must provide a balanced analysis of the research area and ensure that they do not select data or draw conclusions on the premise that they are compatible with their hypothesis and/or ideologies. If the researcher follows this process then the results generated can be said to be no more subjective or involved than is possible for a human-being researching the cultures or society *in which they, themselves, have developed*.

This last point is crucial and, therefore, requires further examination: social scientists develop in the societies and cultures that they research and, as a result, cannot cease to be affected by the social, cultural and political affairs of their time (Elias, 1987). An implication worthy of note, here, is that social researchers can, realistically, only seek to develop explanations and draw conclusions that have a greater degree of congruence with the available evidence than previous explanations (Elias, 1987). Uncovering 'ultimate truths' and achieving 'objectivity' or 'complete detachment' are viewed as impossible tasks (Murphy *et al.*, 2000) because a researcher's ideological beliefs and emotional partisanship will always, to varying degrees, spill over into their work. That is, their unconscious will, indirectly, stir their conduct. To tackle this, cultural researchers must aim to maintain an appropriate balance between being an everyday participant in cultural practices and discourses, and a scientific enquirer, whilst endeavouring to ensure the uncompromising dominance of the latter (Murphy *et al.*, 2000). Both Emile Durkheim and Max Weber (two of the three sociologists, together with Karl Marx, regarded by many as the fathers of contemporary sociology (Giddens, 1971)), for example, were often involved in the political arena and social movements of their time. Yet, despite their political ideologies and cultural experiences they actively endeavoured, in their

role as sociologists, to reach a level of detachment at which their conclusion would remain valid (Goudsblom, 1977). In summary, just because the researcher uses the knowledge generated to achieve a political objective, does not mean that the knowledge itself is riddled with ideology.

Despite concerns that a researcher's involvement in the area in which they study may invalidate the data they collect and the conclusions they draw, the involvement of researchers in society can be, itself, *conducive* to comprehending the problems they try to solve as scientists (Elias, 1987). In order to understand the ideology and culture of SENCOs and LSAs researchers must know, from the 'inside', their way of life; in short, researchers need to see the culture of SENCOs and LSAs as they themselves see it (Blumer, 1969). By identifying with the 'we-perspective' (Elias, 1978, 1991) of SENCOs and LSAs, researchers may be able to understand 'something of the sense in which certain actions and objects are meaningful' to these groups (Goudsblom, 1977: 180). At present, however, there is some neglect of we-perspectives among social researchers; many believe that expertise in research methodologies, concomitant with a theoretical framework are enough to study an unfamiliar social phenomena. No theorising, though, no matter how original or adequate, can alone replace the development of a familiarity with what is actually going on in the culture or society under study (Blumer, 1969). In the same vein, while 'we-perspectives' are crucial in social research, so are 'they perspectives' (Elias, 1978, 1991) because they can show, from a greater distance, the relational network of SENCOs and LSAs. That is, in short, their interdependence with each other, pupils with and without SEN, PE teachers, teachers of other subjects, and senior management, thereby offering 'a fuller view of how the intentions and actions of the various groups are interlocked' (Goudsblom, 1977: 181).

*Conclusion*

The purpose of the chapter was to analyse the key concepts of cultural studies and provide a rationale for its use as an analytical tool to explore the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary school PE. It is willingly acknowledged that the foregone analysis cannot do justice to the theoretical complexity of the cultural studies approach. It will, nonetheless, serve in this case as a general introduction to the key concepts that will be used throughout the research. The next chapter explains and justifies the use of a mixed method approach – that is, the combination of web surveys and individual interviews – as the most appropriate methods for gathering the data required to answer the research questions for this study.

# Chapter Four:

# Research methodology

*Introduction*

The aim of this chapter is, first, to analyse the ontological and epistemological considerations guiding the research. Then, a critique of what are traditionally said to be quantitative and qualitative research methods is provided in order to justify the use of a mixed method approach – that is, the combination of web surveys and individual interviews – as the most appropriate methods for gathering the data required to answer the following key research questions: (1) how do SENCOs and LSAs conceptualise their role generally and as it relates to PE in particular?; (2) does the training of SENCOs and LSAs facilitate an inclusive culture in PE? (3) how do SENCOs and LSAs conceptualise an inclusive culture in PE, and to what extent do they believe an inclusive culture exists in their school?; and (4) how are SEN resources allocated and information disseminated, and what impact does this have on PE? Once the research methods have been justified, the chapter will analyse the processes undertaken to gather and analyse the data, whilst paying attention to some of the limitations of the research approach, design and methods used.

*Ontology, epistemology and research approaches*

In the classical period of philosophical development the aim of research in the physical sciences, in particular, was to change process-orientated phenomena into something static and

immutable (Elias, 1978). This tradition, however, appears to obscure the ostensibly obvious fact that the scientific study of (education) culture and social groupings (of which SENCOs and LSAs are a part) makes different demands of their researchers than researchers studying lifeless matter such as atoms and molecules. Nevertheless, a philosophical theory of science and knowledge subsequently adopted and sanctioned this static, immutable, process-reducing tendency, as the ideal model for discovering fact-orientated knowledge in the social sciences. This approach may have been adopted by social scientists as a way of drawing upon the prestige associated with physicists and biologists. Nonetheless, the process-reducing approach manifested itself most significantly, in the social sciences, in the form of ontological and epistemological dichotomies.

When talking about social research projects such as this it is traditional to explore the ontological and epistemological considerations guiding the study (Bryman, 2012) to ensure that the theoretical rationale for choice of method(s) is well established (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007; Creswell, 2009). Ontology refers to a theory of the existence and 'nature' of reality or, at least, our perceptions of the way things are (Spratt, Walker and Robinson, 2004). In the context of this study, ontological considerations relate to SENCO and LSA perceptions of cultural traditions, rituals, customs and experiences. On the other hand, epistemology refers to the methods of procedure leading to knowledge, or the 'nature' of knowledge; how we know what we know (Crotty, 1998; Scott and Marshall, 2009) about, for example, the culture of mainstream schools generally, and PE in particular. Ontologically, there is often said to be an unbridgeable contrast between a belief that there is a social world and established culture waiting to be uncovered and analysed by research, existing externally to social actors such as education policy-makers,

head teachers, SENCOs, LSAs, teachers, pupils, and so on. Conversely, there is said to be a social world that is in a continuous process of creation and recreation by all those individuals who are a part of it (Bryman, 2009). Easterby-Smith *et al.* (2002) claim that an understanding of the two main philosophical epistemologies – that is, positivism and interpretivism – can help researchers to select the most adequate research design and method(s) for projects. If this is to be accepted, it seems axiomatic that all researchers should make their philosophical position and ideas explicit within their work in order to further explain and justify their choice(s) of research design and methods (Creswell, 2009).

Positivism – a philosophy that is often said to have developed out of the work of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) (Elias, 1978; Scott and Marshall, 2009) – is based on the ontological notion that there is an 'objective' reality to be investigated in cultural discourses and the social world (Bryman, 2012; Punch, 2005). The aim of this position is said to be the collection of detailed, objective data. That is to say, the data gathered and, indeed, the data collection process *per se*, is said to be value-free because the researcher is nothing more than an 'objective analyst' (Remenyi, Williams, Money and Swartz, 1998: 33) of established cultural rituals, customs and representations in education. The positivist approach, moreover, suggests that researchers can observe human behaviour and measure 'facts', allowing so-called 'laws' of human behaviour and cultural practices to develop (Bryman, 2012; Elias, 1978; May, 2003; Punch, 2005). These laws, the discovery of which have been viewed for a long time as the absolute endeavour of natural and, subsequently, social scientists, can then be applied and tested in other cultural contexts in order to control and predict social processes and future human behaviour (Mills, 1959).

One critique of the positivist approach that has direct relevance to this thesis, however, is that PE culture is a socially constructed phenomenon; therefore, those individuals who are involved are acted upon by a number of social constraints (Barker, 2008; Jarvie and Maguire, 1994). When examining cultural practices and experiences in PE, or any other social phenomena, it cannot always be predicted that 'X' will always cause 'Y' because, unlike the subject matter of the natural sciences, all humans have, to varying degrees, the power to act in a number of different ways and to reject attempts to orchestrate their actions (Elias, 1978; Hargreaves, 1986). In short, the positivist approach is rejected in this study because it is mono-causal, deterministic, and fails to take account of the power of individual agency.

Interpretivism, the philosophical position that does underpin this research, suggests that not all knowledge, especially within the social world, is, or can be, for that matter, objective. Rather, this philosophical position views human culture, associations and knowledge as complex, dynamic and ever changing. From this purview, there is a 'subjective' ontology to be investigated in the social world (Bryman, 2012; Punch, 2005; Snape and Spencer, 2007). Generalisations are not easily made; instead, the focus is on considering how SENCOs and LSAs interpret, construct and reconstruct cultural practices and experiences in education (Bryman, 2012; Hammersley, 1992; Punch, 2005). An interpretivist approach is, therefore, extremely relevant to this study as it can guide research on how SENCOs and LSAs make sense of and give meaning to the world around them, view human culture as socially constructed, and concern itself with generating meanings and gaining insights into the ways in which SENCOs and LSAs interpret their profession, everyday practices and experiences.

The objective and subjective dichotomy, it has been argued, is characterised by an unacceptable binary between ontology and epistemology, and involves an inadequate conceptualisation of the development of theoretical frameworks and human knowledge (Elias, 1978; Loyal, 2003). In endeavouring to depart from this inadequate theoretical apparatus, Dunning (1992) argues that there is an indivisible interdependence between epistemological concerns and questions of an ontological nature. In other words, you cannot have one without the other because they are interdependent and part of the same process. Thus, a perhaps more adequate way to consider concepts of epistemology and ontology is not as a mutually exclusive dichotomy, but, rather, as a broader discussion of the *development* of human knowledge, which is an on-going process that is cultivated and learned by people bonded together as social groupings (Dunning, 1992; Elias, 1978; Kilminster, 1998). Conceptualising knowledge in this way enables researchers to appreciate, more adequately, its social nature and character without reinforcing the view that all knowledge must be considered as either 'true' or 'false' (Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998). It is, instead, perhaps more productive to view human knowledge as being on a continuum ranging from degrees of objectivity and subjectivity, and to conceptualise explanations based on such knowledge in terms of varying degrees of what Elias (1987) termed reality-congruence; sociological knowledge becomes *more* extensive and *more* adequate based on conventions of the time rather than true or false.

The research approach denotes the (sociological) theory that is utilised in a particular project. Traditionally, there are said to be two research approaches; deductive and inductive. A deductive approach is said to involve the development and/or use of a (sociological) theory (usually, but not exclusively, in the form of a hypothesis) at the outset of the research

process. Then, in turn, researchers design their strategy and choose their methods on the basis that they form the most adequate apparatus for testing the (sociological) theory (Gratton and Jones, 2010; Saunders *et al*., 2007). Conversely, however, an inductive approach is said to involve the collection of empirical data on the premise that (sociological) theory will develop or emerge from these data (Gratton and Jones, 2010; Saunders *et al*., 2007). Often, it is said that the deductive approach is closely associated with positivism, whereas the inductive is associated with an interpretivist epistemology (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Saunders *et al.* (2007), however, suggest that such a dichotomous distinction is, potentially, deceptive and impractical. To suggest that quantitative and qualitative approaches to research have to be inductive or deductive respectively and, thus, separated into those that prioritise (sociological) theory over method and *vice-versa*, is, according to Elias (1978: 58), based on a misconception: 'people's conception of the subject matter is… inseparable from their conception of the method appropriate to the investigation'. Indeed, as noted in Chapter Three, theoretical thinking should always be informed by empirical observations whilst, at the same time, researchers must employ a theoretical framework so that they know where to look and what to look for. Without a continual interdependence between the findings of research relating to inclusion in PE (empirical data) and the use of the key concepts of cultural studies (theoretical model), the collection of detailed knowledge in relation to the culture of PE, and the cultural practices and experiences of SENCOs and LSAs, will be of limited use because it is only by the use of theoretical models that researchers can attempt to generalise from one situation to another, and only by constantly checking against empirical results can researchers test the adequacy of theoretical models (Elias, 1978). In other words, whilst the use of cultural studies may enable a more generalised discussion of the shared culture of SENCOs and LSAs, it is essential that the discussion is supported by the findings of the SENCO and LSA web surveys and interviews to ensure credibility and validity. It is, it must be

remembered, the interdependence and continuous interchange between theory and data which distinguishes the work of theoretical-empirical social scientists from non-scientific attempts at accumulating knowledge (Elias, 1978). With a brief introduction to ontology, epistemology and research approaches now complete, the chapter will analyse research methods and provide a rationale for the use of mixed-methods research.

## *Mixed-method research*

Research methods, it is to be argued, cannot simply be divided statically into the mutually exclusive categories of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Rather, all research entails, to varying degrees, a particular blend of both quantitative and qualitative models of analysis, with the relative balance depending upon the research question(s) (Alasuutari, 2000; Brannen, 2005; Harden and Thomas, 2005; Mason, 2006). Consider, for example, studies whereby the researcher codes transcripts in order to count the amount of times key words or phrases are used during interviews. Here, the sole purpose of the method is statistical analysis and, therefore, a quantitative analysis of qualitative data. In this vein, Silverman (1985) analysed studies where percentages and statistical relations between variables were used together with qualitative analysis in drawing conclusions from data. Similarly, Alasuutari (2000) talks about his experience applying various kinds of methods, including, qualitative analysis of quantitative data. The aforementioned research, then, cannot be called qualitative simply because of the mode in which the data was collected. With this borne in mind, it is perhaps theoretically more adequate to conceptualise research methods as being underpinned by a number of assumptions that lie upon a continuum along which degrees of 'quantitative'

and 'qualitative' judgements are located, rather than in terms of polar opposites or separate entities (Alasuutari, 2000).

It is often argued that the most adequate format for undertaking any particular research project is to select a method, or a variety of methods, that form the most appropriate apparatus for accumulating data that helps explore the research problem (Bryman, 2012; Mason, 2006; Punch, 2005). Indeed, the researcher must consider which methods – for example, whether surveys, interviews, observations, to name a few – are best suited for generating the relevant data relating to the educational ideologies and experiences of SENCOs and LSAs. Research methods, however, are simply instruments designed and employed to analyse the empirical world and, therefore, their value exists only in their suitability to achieve this task (Blumer, 1969). Researchers, moreover, must also ensure that their choice of method(s) is founded on the principle that they form part of the theoretically-guided and empirically-grounded research (Alasuutari, 2000; Elias, 1987). It is the theoretical framework (cultural studies, in this instance) which should determine what type of data to collect, what questions to ask and what method(s) to use when analysing data (Alasuutari, 2000; Blumer, 1969; Jarvie, 2006). It is because of the crucial role that (sociological) theory plays in scientific inquiry that it must be subjected to scrutiny in order to see if it matches with the empirical world it is assumed to refer (Blumer, 1969) Further, the research method(s) should be determined by the question(s) posed and 'considered against the background of the context, circumstance and practical aspects of the research project' (Punch, 2005: 58), rather than by the personal preferences and/or inadequacies of the researcher. Researchers should not, for instance, choose to conduct interviews simply because they are uncomfortable with using computer software packages such as SPSS or Excel to analyse data.

When endeavouring to explore the shared ideologies, rituals, symbols and experiences of SENCOs and LSAs generally, and the (inclusive) culture of PE specifically, it is important that methods are chosen that allow these areas to be analysed.

As noted above, there are traditionally said to be two types of methodological approaches used to gather data; quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative methodologies – which are often said to be underpinned by a positivist epistemology – involve the use of numerical measurement and analysis; these are used when the data collected can be converted into a numerical format for statistical analysis (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Usually, the data units are assigned values in different variables, tabulated, and then analysed in order to discover statistical relationships between the variables (Alasuutari, 2000). On the other hand, qualitative approaches – which are said to be underpinned by an interpretivist epistemology – aim to discover data that is too complex to be quantified; for example, feelings, thoughts, perceptions and emotions (Gratton and Jones, 2010). That is not to say that these two methodological approaches are mutually exclusive. However, it is often the case that researchers select research methods on the basis of an 'ideological commitment to one methodological paradigm or another' (Hammersley, 1996: 162). In fact, most objections against the use of a mixed-method approach – that is, the integration of what are traditionally said to be quantitative and qualitative methods within a single project – tend to be based on the argument that research methods are underpinned by irreconcilable epistemological differences. However, as explained earlier in this chapter, the research rejects this point by arguing that quantitative and qualitative methods are not epistemologically incompatible because traditional conceptualisations of positivism and interpretivism, and, indeed, objectivity and subjectivity, are based on false dichotomies. Theoretical justifications aside,

Gill and Johnson (2010) take a much more pragmatic view when they advise a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods if both are suitable for a project. Bazeley (1999) and Robson (2011), moreover, support the opinion that employing a variety of methods may allow researchers to approach a project from different angles and, therefore, gain an advantage rather than a disadvantage. Thus, while an ideological commitment to one methodological paradigm will determine and limit the range of problems that are researchable, a mixed-method approach may allow researchers to provide a broader and more holistic analysis of the educational ideologies and experiences of SENCOs and LSAs. The next section of the chapter will justify the use of web surveys as one of two methods used to gather the data required to answer the key research questions.

*Stage one: web surveys*

Web surveys direct participants to a website in order to answer a variety of research questions, rather than an electronic questionnaire being e-mailed directly to them (Bryman, 2012). Web surveys have important advantages over postal and e-mail surveys. One such advantage is that the web survey has a much wider variety of features to improve appearance and control responses. For example, radio buttons prevent multiple answers when only one is desired. Filter questions (for example, 'if no, go to question 20; if yes, go to question 25') can also be implemented, thus allowing the participant to automatically skip to the next relevant question. Design and format benefits aside, web surveys are often much cheaper to develop and administer. Fortunately, the researcher was able to use their university's subscription to Survey Monkey free of charge. Compare this to the cost of paper, envelopes and postage to send to participants and for self-addressed return purposes (Bachmann and Elfrink, 1996;

Bryman, 2012; Dillman, 2007; Llieva, Baron and Healey, 2002; Neuman, 2011). Moreover, web surveys allows for faster responses: researchers receive responses as soon as the participant clicks 'submit' at the end of the survey. Indeed, some internet-based surveys had received the majority of their responses within 1-2 weeks of posting them (Anderson and Gansneder, 1995; Mehta and Sivadas, 1995; Miller, Daly, Wood, Brooks and Roper, 1996; Roselle and Neufeld, 1998). Another strength of the web survey – and, indeed, online communications more generally – is that it allowed for participants to be accessed directly once their e-mail address had been obtained, which may allow the researcher to establish a relationship and develop rapport with the participant, potentially increasing the chance that they will complete the survey. Otherwise, a hard copy of the survey would have had to have been sent to the school administration office for them to forward to the appropriate person.

Together with the more pragmatic benefits of web surveys, their use allowed for the gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data from a relatively large sample of SENCOs and LSAs working in North-West England. In fact, as noted below, the web surveys allowed for *all* SENCOs and *all* LSAs working in *all* mainstream secondary schools in North-West England to be targeted for inclusion in the study as this may enable a more rounded and balanced examination of the educational ideologies, practices and experiences of two groups who share an albeit broad geographical location. The data gathered using the web surveys were used as indicators, pointing to specific variations in the way SENCOs and LSAs are caught up in a complex network of relations (Elias, 1978) with each other, teachers, senior management, parents, pupils with and without SEN, and so on. The web surveys and sampling strategy aimed, moreover, to help gather baseline data to generalise findings to a wider population (Bryman, 2012) of SENCOs and LSAs who are part of the same

educational system but work outside North-West England. Finally, but by no means lastly, the web surveys helped to identify areas and key themes for further, more in-depth exploration during the interview of SENCOs and LSAs.

## *Development and piloting of web surveys*

One SENCO (see Appendix Four) and one LSA web survey (see Appendix Five) were developed using Survey Monkey, which is a web survey generating computer software program. These surveys aimed to gather the educational ideologies, practices and experiences of SENCOs and LSAs *vis-à-vis* the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary school PE in North-West England. Having reviewed the literature relating to the inclusion of pupils with SEN in PE in Chapter Two, the following key themes emerged as warranting a more in-depth investigation: (a) role and responsibilities; (b) support; (c) training and qualifications; and (d) SEN resources, each of which formed a section of the web surveys distributed to SENCOs and LSAs. The web surveys did not provide a working definition of SEN, thus leaving its interpretation to SENCOs and LSAs. Both open and closed questions were used throughout both surveys to ensure that, whilst a richness of data could be gathered, the surveys were not too time consuming (Lewin, 2011; Neuman, 2011). Indeed, it is important that surveys strike a balance between open and closed questions because, whilst too many open questions may increase the amount of irrelevant data generated, make the coding of responses and statistical analysis more difficult, and increase the chance that participants will abandon the surveys before completion because of the amount of time, thought and effort required (Couper *et al*., 2001), they do allow an unlimited amount of possible answers, permit creativity, self-expression and richness of detail, allow participants to qualify and clarify

answers, permit adequate answers to complex issues, and reveal participants' logic, thinking process and frame of reference (Neuman, 2011). Therefore, each theme had a number of open questions to enable SENCOs and LSAs to expand on answers, which gave richer information (Bryman, 2012) that allowed for the identification of points of interest to be explored in even greater depth during the interviews. Before the web surveys could be administered, they were piloted in order to identify unnecessary, ambiguous or difficult to answer questions, identify logistical problems of the proposed method, and to assess the balance between open and closed questions by ensuring that the questions allowed for a range of responses and are able to elicit the information required (Bryman, 2012).

Five SENCOs and 10 LSAs were purposely selected (Silverman, 2011) for the piloting of the surveys on the basis that, first, they were currently working in a mainstream secondary school *outside* of North-West England; and, second, that they were willing to participate in the research. These SENCOs and LSAs were accessed via a gatekeeper who worked as, and was part of, a network of SENCOs in North-East England. SENCOs working outside of North-West England were targeted to ensure that none would be excluded from the research when the survey was distributed to wider populations. The piloting process uncovered a few minor issues in relation to the order and wording of some questions, which were duly amended before distribution to wider populations of SENCOs and LSAs.

*Recruitment of SENCOs and LSAs*

In order to gain access to SENCOs and LSAs, the researcher contacted, via telephone, all of the 41 city/borough councils in North-West England (Directgov, 2011) in order to, first,

explain the purpose and rationale for the research; and, second, to try and encourage the councils to support the research by distributing a hyperlink to the web surveys to all schools under their control. Of the 41 contacted, only four councils agreed to post the hyperlink on their Intranet (the network they use to communicate with schools). In each of these four cases the researcher cannot know the overall number of SENCOs and LSAs who actually saw the surveys – that is, of course, assuming that the councils fulfilled their promise to post the surveys – but only the number of people who responded (Miller *et al*., 1996; Walsh, Kiesler, Sproull and Hesse, 1992). Most of those who would not distribute the survey suggested that they do not contact schools on behalf of an agent external to their organisation. Many, however, did send the contact details of each mainstream school under their control, which is public information that can be found on all council websites. In short, the recruitment of councils as gatekeepers to SENCOs and LSAs was not a very fruitful endeavour. So, in order to gain access to SENCOs and LSAs for the web survey's wider dissemination, the researcher obtained the contact details of each mainstream secondary school in North-West England from council websites. From this, the telephone number and email address of the entire sampling frame of 414 schools was acquired. Next, a telephone call to each of the schools secured either the SENCO's direct email address (n = 246; 59%) or the school email address, together with the name of the SENCO and the promise that the email would be forwarded to them (n = 168; 41%). Once the information had been secured, the next step was to ensure that a good response rate was achieved.

*Response rate, contact strategy and dissemination of web surveys*

One of the most commonly cited limitations of web surveys is that they yield lower response rates than comparable postal surveys (Bryman, 2012; Couper, Traugott and Lamias, 2001; Hayslett and Wildmuth, 2004). This is despite some studies suggesting that response rates in web surveys are equal to, or better than, those for traditional postal surveys (Mehta and Sivadas, 1995; Thompson, Surface, Martin and Sanders, 2003). Nevertheless, there are a number of issues that had to be considered to increase the response rate, one of the most important being whether or not to tell SENCOs and LSAs how long it may take them to complete the web survey. In a study by Crawford, Couper and Lamias (2001) some of the participants were told that the web survey would take between 8-10 minutes to complete when, in fact, it would take considerably longer. Another set of participants were told that it would take 20 minutes to complete. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those told that the web survey would take 20 minutes to complete were less likely to accept the invitation to complete the survey, thus resulting in a lower rate of response from this group. However, together with ethical considerations regarding the decision to 'lie' to or deceive participants, this approach may also prevent the establishment of trust and rapport between the researcher and SENCOs and LSAs, which may have a negative impact on the research given that the web survey is also used in this study to recruit participants for interview. With this in mind, the decision was made to not reveal how long it may take to complete the web surveys (both surveys were timed at between 20-25 minutes to complete depending on the level of detail provided in the open questions) in order to potentially increase the response rate. In hindsight, it may have been useful to attach a progress indicator – a diagrammatical representation of how far the participant has progressed through the web survey – because they have been shown to reduce the number of people who abandon web surveys part of the way through (Couper *et al.*,

2001). Nonetheless, the researcher would still be able to use the data from those SENCOs and LSAs who exited the web survey part of the way through because the responses they did provide are still registered. Compare this to those people who abandon the completion of a postal survey part of the way through and decide not to return it, thus potentially resulting in a wealth of data being lost, and a lower response rate.

A modified version of Dillman's (2007) tailored design method (TDM) participant contact strategy was used to yield higher response rates. TDM is a multiple contact strategy based upon consideration of 'social exchange'. That is, 'how to increase perceived rewards of responding, decreasing perceived costs, and promoting trust [trust that the benefits will outweigh the costs] in beneficial outcomes from the surveys' (Dillman, 2007: 5). Originally, TDM had four stages of contact: a brief pre-notice letter, a mailed questionnaire, a thank you postcard, and a replacement questionnaire (Dillman, 1978). However, time constraints meant that the research could only manage three stages of contact. Indeed, because the first stage of contact did not begin until during the last school term of the academic year, the researcher only had six weeks to implement the contact strategy. After that, the school holidays were due to begin which may have decreased the chances that the researcher could contact SENCOs and LSAs and/or motivate them to complete the surveys, thus potentially resulting in a poor response rate. Another potential limitation of the contact period is that the end of the academic year is often when school staff have increased administrative responsibilities such as marking coursework and preparing for exams. On the other hand, the teaching timetables of many staff are usually reduced towards the end of the academic year because, in many schools, year 11, 12 and 13 pupils are on independent study leave. In short, it was useful to

focus on known characteristics of the target group when planning a contact strategy because they can impact on response rates (Dillman, 2007).

Phase One of the contact strategy involved the sending of two e-mails to each of the 414 SENCOs working in mainstream secondary schools in North-West England. The first e-mail contained a cover letter and hyperlink to the SENCO web survey (see Appendix One), whilst the second e-mail contained a cover letter and hyperlink to the LSA web survey (see Appendix Two). The latter e-mailed asked the SENCO to forward the cover letter and LSA survey to all LSAs working in their school. The initial intention was to access LSAs directly. However, a telephone call to each school revealed that schools were either unwilling or unable to give the e-mail address of each LSA working in their school. Even if this information was readily available, the contacting of LSAs would have been a very time consuming process given that secondary schools can have between two and over 20 LSAs depending on the number of pupils with SEN attending their school. Nevertheless, there are obvious limitations of using SENCOs as conduits to LSAs. For example, researchers are unable, in the first instance at least, to build rapport and possibly trust with the LSAs, which may decrease the chance that some will complete the survey. It is also possible that some SENCOs did not forward the e-mail to any or some of their LSAs, which could potentially result in some sections of the targeted population being unable to participate in the study. So it is difficult to say with any certainty how many LSAs received the email, only how many participated in the study (n = 343). In retrospect, it may have been useful to also leave contact details with school offices so that LSAs could reply voluntarily rather than relying solely on SENCOs as gatekeepers.

Following suggestions made by Dillman (2007), the cover letters that were sent to SENCOs and LSAs included: (1) a request; (2) an explanation of why they were selected; (3) the usefulness of the survey; (4) a promise of confidentiality; (5) a promise to answer questions; (6) a statement of thanks; and (7) personal contact details. Despite being an extremely time consuming and tedious process, each e-mail was personalised and sent individually; that is, each prospective participant receiving the e-mail could see only their own name and e-mail address in order to avoid compromising other participants' privacy and to increase the response rate (Anderson and Gansneder, 1995; Dillman, 2007).

After 7-10 days a 'thank you' and reminder e-mail was sent (see Appendix Three) to all those contacted during Phase One of the contact strategy. The reminder e-mail was sent not to overcome resistance to the initial e-mail but rather to 'jog memories and rearrange priorities' (Dillman, 2007:179) because when the survey is not immediately completed and returned, it is often laid aside by the participant. As each day passes without the survey being completed, it becomes a lower priority, until it is completely forgotten (Dillman, 2007). In fact, a study by Dillman, Christenson, Carpenter and Brooks (1974) suggests that a thank you message and reminder can produce a response burst nearly equal to that which followed the first stage of contact over a week or so earlier. For Phase Three of the contact strategy a final reminder and hyperlink to the web surveys (see Appendix Three) was sent two weeks after Phase Two for those who may have lost or deleted the original e-mail. This approach was adopted because research has suggested that multiple contacts are more effective than any other technique for increasing response to surveys by post (Dillman, 1991; Linsky, 1975) and by e-mail (Shaefer and Dillman, 1998).

Of the 414 SENCOs contacted via email, 135 (33%) started the web survey, with 90 (22%) following it through to completion. The contact strategy also resulted in 343 LSAs starting the web survey, with 154 (45%) following it through to completion. Data from those who partially completed the survey was used together with data from those who answered every question. The number of women SENCOs who started the web survey (n=119; 88%) far outweighed the number of men (n = 16; 12%). The gender balance was similar for the LSA survey where the number of women who started the web survey (n = 309, 90%) far outweighed the number of men (n = 34, 10%). The following tables provide some further biographical information of SENCOs and LSAs who started the web surveys:

**SENCOs**

|  | Frequency | Mean* | Standard Deviation* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 135 | 46.82 | 9.75 |
| Experience (Years)* | 112 | 8.33 | 7.77 |

**LSAs**

|  | Frequency | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 335 | 42.86 | 10.82 |
| Experience (Years)* | 274 | 7.18 | 5.20 |

*Less than one full year of employment was assigned a 0 value

Survey Monkey was used to analyse the quantitative data gathered from the use of closed questions. The purpose of these descriptive statistics was to identify recurring themes and patterns present in the data (Bryman, 2012; Saldana, 2009) that indicate specific trends and issues worthy of further exploration during individual interviews with SENCOs and LSAs. The qualitative data gathered via open questions were imported into NVIVO and subjected to thematic analysis (Spencer, Ritchie, Ormston, O'Connor and Barnard, 2013). This entailed reading and coding responses, something that will be explained in much more detail when focus turns to the analysis of interview transcripts.

*Stage two: individual interviews*

While Stage One of the research methodology aimed to survey *all* SENCOs and LSAs working in mainstream secondary schools in North-West England in order to generate baseline findings, the individual interviews conducted during Stage Two aimed to explore in much more detail the most prominent issues to emerge from the findings of the web surveys. It is that individual interviews allow a rich, detailed exploration of cultural norms, values and experiences (Alasuutari, 2000) that makes them so appealing. Indeed, this method was employed to enable SENCOs and LSAs to discuss their own educational ideologies and experiences in their own words and in much greater depth than is feasible when using surveys (Bryman, 2012; Gratton and Jones, 2010). In turn, this may enable researchers to understand the culture of special education and PE from the perspective of two groups who play an integral role in its development (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). It is the flexibility afforded by many interview formats that makes this method of gathering data so attractive. Traditionally, interviews are demarcated into four categories: structured, semi-structured, unstructured, and

focus group. A semi-structured format was chosen for the research because, although a predetermined list of questions can ensure that all areas pertinent to the research are covered (Bryman, 2012), it is useful to have the flexibility to alter the sequence, order and wording of the questions, or develop new questions to probe for more information (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Open questions were used to encourage SENCOs and LSAs to explore issues relating to the topics in great detail. According to Yeo, Legard, Keegan and Ward (2013) the initial response to a question, no matter how expertly it is constructed, is often superficial. Therefore, probe questions – which often cannot be adequately planned for because of the dynamic nature of interviews – are essential to gaining a deeper understanding of SENCO and LSA educational ideologies and experiences of SEN and PE. In short, a semi-structured interview format allows the researcher to identify and explore those serendipitous areas that have not been planned for as they emerge from the dynamic verbal interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. To ensure that serendipitous opportunities are exploited, it is important that the interviewer has a theoretically-prepared mind (Merton, 1949) in that they have an excellent knowledge and understanding of SEN and PE, and the theoretical framework guiding the research (cultural studies in this instance). Otherwise, the significance of the points that emerged from the SENCO and LSA interviews can be missed. Further, when discussing SENCO and LSA educational ideologies and experiences it is important to adopt a more flexible approach so that the participants can take the lead and shape their own narrative to minimise bias (Arthur, Mitchell, Lewis and McNaughton-Nicholls, 2013) and, as mentioned above, allow SENCOs and LSAs to explore issues germane to them. 'Rambling and going off at tangents' (Bryman, 2008: 437) is often encouraged because it may allow an insight into personal ideologies and it means that SENCOs and LSAs are exploring issues that are important to them *vis-à-vis* their lived experiences of education.  It is important to ensure, however, that the interview does not diverge beyond the scope of the research

questions to ensure that a wealth of irrelevant data is not generated. The role of interviewer-as-facilitator and, if necessary, guide is thus important.

To ensure that the interviews had a degree of structure, and that the discussion was germane to the research questions, initial guides – aide-memoires (Marshall and Rossman, 2011) – were developed (see Appendix Eight and Appendix Nine). A guide helps to ensure a degree of consistency during the data gathering stage while also permitting flexibility to explore issues of salience for SENCOs and LSAs (Arthur *et al.*, 2013). The questions selected emerged from the review of literature and findings of the web surveys. According to Lewis and McNaughton-Nicholls (2013) interview questions should be informed by and connected to existing research and theory in order to avoid replication and ensure that they fill a gap in existing knowledge. Before the interviews were conducted, the questions were sent to members of the research supervisory team to ensure that they were clear, intelligible and unambiguous (Lewis and McNaugton-Nicholls, 2013); in short, that they could be interpreted by, and illicit the necessary information from, SENCOs and LSAs. The next section focuses on the SENCOs and LSAs who were selected for interview, and the data gathering process.

*Participants and interview process*

All of those who agreed, in the web survey, to participate in Stage Two of the research were contacted via e-mail for interview (see Appendix Six). This form of purpose sampling (Webster, Lewis and Brown, 2013), sometimes referred to as convenience sampling (Bryman, 2012), is strategic rather than simply pragmatic because it is criterion-based in that people are recruited for interview who share characteristics that are relevant to the research

questions (Mason, 2002; Patton, 2002). The criteria for recruitment of participants were that the SENCOs and LSAs: (1) had to be currently working in a mainstream school in North-West England; (2) had to have experience supporting pupils with SEN in PE; and (3) had to have completed the web survey. The inclusion of these three criteria meant that both groups would be able to discuss their educational ideologies and experiences of SEN and PE in North-West England. A sample size was not considered at the start of the research; instead, it was decided that all those who agreed to participate in Stage Two (SENCO n=36; LSA n=54) would be interviewed until saturation was achieved. There comes a point when additional interviews yield little new knowledge (Kvale, 2007; Webster *et al*., 2013) and, thus, becomes a fruitless endeavour. It was felt that saturation for SENCO interviews came during the twelfth interview because no new information of significance to the central themes of the research was gathered, and the decision was made to interview twelve LSAs for consistency despite LSA interview saturation being achieved earlier (at the tenth interview). By this time, patterns and relationships across interview data were evident (Bryman, 2012; Charmaz, 2000; Saldana, 2009) because a detailed tapestry of SENCO and LSA educational ideologies and experiences had emerged which allowed for a detailed analysis of the (inclusive) culture of PE. Before proceeding to an exploration of interview recording and data analysis, it must be noted that small-scale samples such as this should not be generalised from a single case to a larger population (Tenenbaum and Driscoll, 2005). However, the issues raised and data collected from the interviews, when combined with the baseline findings of the web surveys, can add to the stock of reality-congruent (Elias, 1987) knowledge and thus make a contribution to the greater debate of SEN and inclusive (physical) education.

## Interview recording and transcription

It is simply not possible to rely on human recall alone (Heritage, 1984); therefore, an interview must be recorded in some way. The interviewer can either choose to record their interview via written or typed notes, audio recorder, or video camera (Gratton and Jones, 2010). An audio recorder was used to ensure that SENCO and LSA responses were captured as they intended because note taking involves a greater degree of interpretation (Bryman, 2012). It was decided that additional notes would not be taken because it can impact on the dynamics of the discussion and, perhaps, the rapport between interviewer and participant. The maintenance of eye contact, open body language and displaying a degree of interest in the educational ideologies and experiences of SENCOs and LSAs aimed to encourage them to be more open, honest and frank (Bryman, 2012). It also allowed the interviewer to identified non-verbal cues that may indicate a level of unease with a question asked or topic suggested for discussion. Non-verbal cues were not formally recorded but instead influenced the mood and direction of the discussion (Gratton and Jones, 2010).


All SENCOs and LSAs agreed in writing (see Appendix Seven) for the interviews to be recorded using an audio recorder. It was explained to each participant that once the audio files were uploaded to a passcode file on a personal computer to which only the interviewer would have access, they would be deleted from the device to ensure data protection. The aim and purpose of the research was again (also explained during Phase One) explained to the participants to ensure that they were able to make an informed choice about whether or not to participate in the study (Kvale, 2007; Webster *et al*., 2013). Participants were free to pause or cease the interview without being expected to explain their decision. In short, all measures

were taken to ensure confidentiality and that SENCOs and LSAs felt comfortable during the interview. The interviews typically lasted between 30 and 120 minutes, and were undertaken at the school in which the SENCOs and LSAs worked. Only the participant and interviewer were present at most interviews and, perhaps fortunately, at no point did anyone enter the room, or disrupt the interview in anyway, which may have added to the reliability of the data because interviewees may not divulge information, especially confidential information, if other people are present (Bryman, 2012). However, for two of the SENCO interviews their assistant was also present at the request of the SENCOs.

After each interview the audio recording was transcribed verbatim at the earliest possible opportunity to allow the researcher to immerse themselves in the data and to ensure that any ambiguous terms, phrases or points present in the recordings could be accurately interpreted through recall of the interview situation. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the school, the participant, and any other individuals named (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Once transcription had occurred, the text was emailed to the participant to seek corroboration between the textual interpretation of the interview and SENCO and LSA educational ideologies and experiences. None of the SENCOs or LSAs disputed the textual interpretation of their interview. This process of correspondence is called respondent or member validation, and is a measure used to increase the reliability and validity of research findings (Bryman, 2012). Indeed, it is worth stating again that the research aimed to discover SENCO and LSA interpretations, rather than an absolute account, of social reality (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Therefore, respondent validation is important because it enabled the researcher to ensure that SENCOs and LSAs can reveal their social world as they

experience and give meaning to it. Once transcription and validation had occurred, the textual transcripts were analysed to uncover prominent themes.

*Interview data analysis*

One of the problems with transcribing interviews verbatim is that is generates a large, often cumbersome, set of data. One way of managing this large body of textual data is to use computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). NVIVO was used because it allowed for the storing of all data files (interview transcripts) within one place of a research project (Spencer *et al*., 2013). It is important to note that NVIVO, or any other CAQDAS for that matter, cannot help with decisions about the coding or grouping of data, nor can it assist the interpretation of findings or the inferences made (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Flick, 2009; Kvale, 2007; Sprokkereef, Larkin, Pole and Burgess, 1995; Weitzman and Miles, 1995). Instead, NVIVO helps researchers to manage the data by allowing marginal codes to be assigned and by 'cutting out all chucks of text relating to a code and pasting them together' (Bryman, 2012: 565) so they are easily defined and accessible. Through the systematic filtering and ordering of data, NVIVO can help increase the rigour of analysis (Flick, 2009) because analysis will have occurred across all data, not just those that support the researcher's interpretation (Seale, 2010).

Once the transcripts were uploaded to NVIVO, they were read over and over again so that, coupled with the transcription process, the researcher was immersed in the data (Bryman, 2012). Next, the transcripts were coded in order to identify reoccurring themes. Initial, open coding occurred which involved the systematic analysis of (textual) data and the giving of

labels to sections of the text that are of theoretical significance and of salience to the culture of PE and the social world(s) of SENCOs and LSAs (Bryman, 2012; Charmaz, 2000; Saldana, 2009). Therefore, it is important that the researcher had a theoretically-prepared mind (Merton, 1949) in order to identify points of significance evident in the transcripts during coding. Once open coding had occurred, axial coding was performed to identify relationships between the initial codes so that they could be organised into themes (Bryman, 2012; Charmaz, 2000; Saldana, 2009). A small sample of the data and key codes to emerge from the use of NVIVO can be found in Appendix Ten and Appendix Eleven. The SENCOs and LSAs did not compartmentalise their responses into neat categories of convenience. Therefore, given that 'meaning is an ineradicable dimension of the social world' (Goudsblom, 1977:183), the analysis – which unavoidably involved the researcher interpreting, to degrees, the educational ideologies and experiences of SENCOs and LSAs – involved the use of existing literature (see Chapter Two), the findings from Stage One, and key theoretical concepts of cultural studies. The following key concepts informed the coding of data: hegemony, power, ideology, culture, cultural norms and values, and institutions and mechanisms of cultural production. The key themes to emerge from the coding were: SENCO and LSA educational ideologies, experiences and role conceptualisation; SENCO and LSA training and qualification; SENCO and LSA conceptualisations of inclusion and the (inclusive) culture of physical education; the development and distribution of SEN resources and information. The findings and discussion chapters of the thesis analyse the key issues that emerged from the web surveys and individual interviews under the above thematic headings. SENCO and LSA responses from the survey are numbered (SENCO 1-135; LSA 1-343) while those who participated in the interviews have been assigned an alphabetical letter (SENCO A-J; LSA A-J) to differentiate data gathered at Stage One and Stage Two of the research.

## *Conclusion*

The aim of the chapter was to analyse and justify the ontological and epistemological considerations guiding the research. A critique of traditional research dichotomies of induction and deduction, and qualitative and quantitative, emphasised the importance of theory-guided empirical research, and provided a rationale for the use of a mixed-method – web survey and individual interviews – approach to gathering data relating to the educational ideologies and experiences of SENCOs and LSAs. The data gathered during Stage One and analysed using Survey Monkey and NVIVO helped identify issues for further exploration during the individual interviews of Stage Two. The findings that are presented and analysed in the next four chapters are organised and discussed under the key themes that emerged from the coding of the interviews: SENCO and LSA educational ideologies, experiences and role conceptualisations; SENCO and LSA training and qualification; SENCO and LSA conceptualisations of inclusion and the (inclusive) culture of physical education; the development and distribution of SEN resources and information. Before moving onto the findings and discussion chapters, it is important to state again that while each of the methods used in the research may raise methodological difficulties of one kind or another, the fact that the study was not reliant on a single method may help to increase the validity of the findings (Bryman, 2012).

# Chapter Five:

# Educational ideologies, experiences and role conceptualisation

*Introduction*

The aim of this chapter is to explore SENCO and LSA conceptualisations of their educational role generally, and as it relates to physical education more specifically. In order to achieve this aim, the chapter will first explore the lived educational experiences (Williams, 1981) of SENCOs and LSAs in order to gain a more adequate understanding of how their personal ideologies and wider social network influenced: (1) their choice of occupation; and (2) the decisions they make when endeavouring to cultivate an inclusive culture in schools generally, and PE in particular. Indeed, it has been argued (see, for example, Elias, 1978; Manheim, 1936) that ideology does, to varying degrees, stir conduct if given the expressive freedom to do so by other individuals and groups in cultural formations such as schools. Therefore, SENCO and LSA PE and SEN ideologies – that is, their view of the nature and purpose of PE, and the education of pupils with SEN – will influence, by degrees, the extent to which these two groups endeavour (or not) to shape the inclusive culture of PE. Next, a detailed role analysis will be provided in the form of a critical comparison of government, school, and SENCO and LSA conceptualisations of the roles. In short, the section will synthesise: what the government say SENCOs and LSAs should do; what they actually do; and what SENCOs and LSAs say their role should involve. This will enable the identification of the individuals or groups who have the most influence over shaping the roles of SENCOs and LSAs and, perhaps, school and PE culture. It will also allow for an analysis of the extent to which the

roles are part of a contested cultural terrain amongst key decision makers involved in (inclusive) education. Before continuing, it must be noted that very few of the questions relating to this theme were geared specifically towards PE as a unique learning environment. The rationale here was to determine if SENCOs and LSAs consider PE an important part of their role.

*Educational experiences and ideologies of SEN*

Socialisation is a lifelong process of social learning and cognitive development. Through socialisation, human beings learn the cultural norms and values of the social networks they are a part of (Elias, 1978). For SENCOs and LSAs, it involves learning and shaping the hegemonic cultural ideologies, behaviours and practices associated with their occupation specifically, and their school, the education system, and society more generally. The culture of special education in schools is not something SENCOs and LSAs simply assimilate into; instead, they are actively involved, to varying degrees, in shaping the norms and values of this cultural formation (Barker, 2008; Hall, 1981). Therefore, an understanding of their lived educational experiences and role is a prerequisite to a broader understanding of the extent to which SENCOs and LSAs are able and willing to cultivate an inclusive culture in PE and, thus, provide meaningful educational experiences for pupils with SEN in PE.

The reasons for becoming a SENCO or LSA were many and often quite diverse. However, a number of key themes did emerge when the interviews were coded. Many of the SENCOs, for instance, expressed the desire to work with pupils with SEN in order to increase the educational attainment and life chances of those pupils: 'It was just the need for all children

to be included and to have a right and to have an education; for somebody to actually care about them. I thought I could do that' (SENCO A). SENCO F substantiated their claim that they *can* influence the educational experiences of pupils with SEN thus: 'Previously, I have worked in a special school. I wanted to bring the knowledge, skills and experience of special school to the mainstream school sector to make a difference' (SENCO F). For SENCO F, their power and influence over the cultural experiences of pupils with SEN is legitimised through reference to their own previous lived experiences of special school education. In a similar vein, SENCO L expressed the view that their previous lived experiences would enable them to shape the inclusive cultural norms and values of SEN: 'The fact that I'd been head of year for a long time was good because I thought the two roles [head of year and SENCO] went together to be perfectly honest'. The position of head of year, which does carry a degree of influence as a decision making position within the power structure of schools, may have gone some way to prepare SENCO L for the managerial demands of SENCO. What can be said with more certainty is that SENCO L, like many other SENCOs, sought the role in order: '… to be there to help and support; that's why I wanted to become a SENCO' (SENCO L). For SENCO H, one of the main reasons for seeking the role of SENCO was a desire to challenge what they perceived to be an established educational ideology which has resulted in others subordinating pupils with SEN:

> I wanted to make sure that these children, who are disadvantaged, who don't have the ability which you and I were born with, actually get something that is worthy of them. So that people aren't just tossing them to one side and saying: well, they're thick. That way, they aren't going to learn anything… I'm very much into fairness and justice and equality of opportunity (SENCO H).

While an educational ideology underpinned by inclusive concepts such as fairness, justice and equality seems prevalent, comments made by SENCO H are perhaps paradoxical in that

they also appear to be underpinned by and ideology that subordinates pupils with SEN when they make the generalised claim that these pupils are of low ability. By emphasising what pupils with SEN cannot do, whether an inaccurate generalisation or not, these comments perpetuate a more individualised ideology (Finkelstein, 2001) of SEN by drawing attention to the *perceived* inferior capabilities of *all* pupils with SEN. It is, of course, a generalisation to claim that all pupils with SEN are less able than all pupils without SEN when it comes to PE. Nevertheless, the ideology is present here and was identified elsewhere (see, for example, Fitzgerald, 2005) despite no attempt made by SENCOs, teachers and pupils to justify such a claim or even conceptualise the often contested idea of 'ability' in PE.

Whilst a lack of information *vis-à-vis* the early lived experiences of SENCOs makes it difficult to determine how these social and educational ideologies gained salience, it can be said that the desire to ensure that students have meaningful experiences of education may inform what SENCOs endeavour to do in practice. Indeed, once an ideology forms part of an individual's habitus, personality structure, or second nature, it informs actions (Elias, 1978; Mannheim, 1936). However, ideologies are not permanent regardless of how firmly established they are. The formation of webs of ideas and beliefs relating to education, special needs and PE, for example, is a dynamic and continuous process that lasts the life course (Elias, 1978). The educational ideologies of SENCOs and LSAs are shaped by their experience of being bonded together with others who are part of their social network such as government policy makers, senior management, teachers, pupils, and each other. The extent to which SENCOs and LSAs have the power to accept, modify or reject the ideologies, common sense assumptions, and the wishes and wants of other individuals and groups who are a part of the means (government and schools, for example) and mechanisms (education

and school policy, for example) of cultural (re)production (Barker, 2008) will feature later in this chapter and is a prominent aspect of later chapters.

In contrast to many of the SENCOs, none of the LSAs interviewed explicitly mentioned a desire to help pupils as their motive for becoming a LSA. Justification was more pragmatic and often related to how the role would help them to achieve a further career ambition, or because it was compatible with personal circumstances: 'I came… to do a bit of voluntary work for my CV. I've been full-time here since May 2012 so, like, a year full-time now... I will move on in the future because I did a communications course' (LSA C). LSA F was more specific when they discussed how the cultural experience of a LSA would contribute to their career ambitions: 'I finished university and I knew I was applying for a PGCE to go into teaching. So, to strengthen my application, I thought it would be useful to get myself into an academic environment, and the best way to do that was to become a teaching assistant'. Similarly, LSA I, who desires to be a PE teacher, reasoned: 'I'd just finished college and I had a decision to make as to whether to go to university or not. I've always had a long-term ambition to become a teacher, whether that be PE teacher or primary teacher, and I thought working as a LSA would be a perfect way of getting started'. Many of the younger LSAs were interested in experiencing the culture of mainstream schools generally, and special needs education in particular, in order to strengthen their application to undertake teacher training. This is perhaps unsurprising given that competition for teacher training courses at universities and in schools has become much fiercer as a result of government funding cuts (Ward, 2013). One consequence of being socialised into the culture of special needs education before teacher training is that there may be an increased number of trainee teachers who already have the knowledge, skill, experience and confidence to cultivate an inclusive

learning environment for pupils with SEN. This may go some way to challenging the established common sense arrangements (Giroux, 1999) of teacher training programmes which do not adequately prepare PE teachers in particular for their role as inclusive educators (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Coates and Vickerman, 2008; Farrell, 2001; Morley *et al.*, 2005; Smith and Green, 2004; Vickerman, 2002, 2007) despite the ideology and discourse pervading government policy claiming training would (see, for example, DfES, 2004b). The adequacy of training courses and opportunities, as cultural mechanisms designed to ensure that teachers and LSAs are prepared for their role, will be analysed in much more detail in Chapter Six.

Another prevalent and again perhaps more pragmatic justification for becoming a LSA was explained by LSA J: 'I had two young children and I wanted the school holidays. I'll be honest it was the holidays that interested me' (LSA J). Similarly, LSA L revealed: 'I've got two young kids so I wanted to get a job that fitted in with that. Plus, when I did go in and volunteer it was fun'. For older LSAs, most of whom are women, the part time hours and holidays meant that they could sell their labour as LSAs whilst still fulfilling their seemingly patriarchal, gendered, parental duties (Hargreaves, 2002). In the case of LSA G, it was their cultural experiences of parenting that stimulated the move to become an LSA:

> One of the reasons I did become a teaching assistant is because I have a son who has ADHD, so I understand ADHD a lot more than the average person because I have to deal with it at home. I think having that expertise of living with someone with ADHD can be used in the workplace.

Despite an obvious commitment to the role by some LSAs, it does appear that others see it as either a stepping stone to further ambitions or a convenient way of gaining additional money

in a way that is compatible with other priorities, which is at odds with what SENCO H wants from their LSAs:

> People who come into education because they think it's an easy ride because you get six weeks summer holidays and you get all your weekends, or think I'll go in and be an LSA because that's compatible with the times that my children are at school so I can drop my children off and go to school and do my job, and I'll just sit in a classroom and do nothing; well, I'm sorry but I don't want that type of person. I want somebody who is going to make a difference to those children. I want somebody who is going to support their learning, both educationally and their life skills learning, and is going to move those children on.

It appears that SENCO H conceptualises the ideal LSA as someone who is wholly committed to the social and academic development of the pupils they work with. It is worth noting, however, that their comments appear to be entrenched in an ideology that assumes that motive influences ability and willingness to perform the role of LSA; that LSAs will be less able or even less willing to shape an inclusive education culture if they are motivated by money or because the role is compatible with their position in other cultural formations such as the family unit.

Given that the research uses PE as a case study, and that positive cultural experiences can influence ideology and evocate an emotional attachment to PE and sport (Placek *et al*., 1995; Smith and Green, 2004), the surveys asked SENCOs and LSAs about their previous experiences of PE, and previous and current sporting experiences. When asked if they enjoyed PE whilst at school, 84 SENCOs (62 per cent) said yes and 51 SENCOs (38 per cent) said no. When LSAs were asked the same question, 207 (60 per cent) said that they did enjoy PE whilst they were at school and 139 (40 per cent) said that they did not. Next, SENCOs and LSAs were asked if they are currently involved in sport in any capacity; for example, as a

participant, spectator, volunteer or administrator. In response, 77 SENCOs (57 per cent) stated that they were involved in sport whilst 58 SENCOs (43 per cent) suggested that they were not involved in sport in any capacity. Sporting involvement for LSAs was less than that of SENCOs with 198 LSAs (58 per cent) not being involved compared to 145 LSA (42 per cent) who are currently involved in sport. To summarise, more than half of the SENCOs and LSAs who responded suggested that they enjoyed their experience of PE whilst at school. For SENCOs, this enjoyment during their early years seems to have continued through to adulthood with the majority continuing to be involved in sport in some capacity. The picture for LSAs, however, is slightly different with just over 40 per cent continuing their involvement in sport. Thus, the available data suggests that a large number of those surveyed have had positive cultural experiences of PE and sport which may inform the extent to which their educational ideologies and priorities include PE (Elias, 1978; Mannheim, 1936). A more rounded picture of the extent to which SENCO and LSA educational ideologies and priorities include PE will emerge throughout the rest of the findings and discussion chapters.

Now that the ideological basis for becoming a SENCO and LSA has been explored, the next section will analyse their role and responsibility by comparing what government suggest SENCOs and LSAs should do (DfES, 2001) with what they claim to do. This will enable an understanding of how the cultural experiences and ideological justifications outlined above inform what SENCOs and LSAs do in practice (Elias, 1978). Indeed, ideology should not be analysed abstractly; that is, autonomous of the cultural context in which they are formed and they contribute to shaping (Barker, 2008; Hall 1981; Mannheim, 1936). The tendency to separate ideologies from the people who hold them and the social networks that influence

them can be 'artificial and deceptive' (Elias, 1994: 51). Thus, an understanding of the role and responsibility of SENCOs and LSAs within their cultural formation is essential.

## *Conceptualising the role of SENCO*

It was the Code of Practice (DfE, 1994) that established the role of SENCO in order to help to facilitate the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools in Britain. The role can be varied and diverse and will depend on the culture of the school and specific issues such as the proportion of pupils at School Action, School Action Plus, or Statement of SEN; assessment strategies; organisational size and structure; resource availability; financial support and provision. The diversity of the role is explained to some extent below:

> … the role has become a lot more diverse. It's encompassed in being an inclusion manager, so SENCO is only a small part of the role. I am also child protection officer; I do attendance; I work with any vulnerable groups that are identified as well as the ones on free school meals, looked after children, etc. They all come under the umbrella of inclusion so the role has broadened. It's not just dealing with students with academic disadvantages or any other need (SENCO B).

SENCO B is one of many who suggested that the role of SENCO is dynamic and ever changing in that it has broadened and become more complex over time. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this study to explore what is driving the increasing diversification of the role of SENCO and, also, the power of SENCOs to accept or reject the wants and wishes of those whose actions have stimulated changes to the role. What can perhaps be said is that an increase in responsibility and control over decision making may result in an increase in SENCO power and influence over the inclusive culture of their school (Sissel and Sheard, 2001). SENCO G is another of the many SENCOs who detail the diversity of the role:

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There are many facets that the role demands. It is having the time to identify the needs of the children; having time to plan effective interventions, which are regular, sequential, and accumulative. It's having time to have many measurement stops in that to review progress. It's managing nine staff as well; so, setting up staff to be effective in their roles and all that that demands. Keeping up-to-date with the training; making sure that everybody is constantly up-skilled. I need to keep the department moving forward (SENCO G).

From the two extracts included above, and from many other comments made by SENCOs, it is concluded that many SENCOs perceive their role to encompass managerial, administrative and external and internal (to school) partnership dimensions. Government ideology and discourse, propagated through mechanisms of cultural (re)production such as policies documents (see, for example, DfES, 2001; DCSF, 2009), suggests that a SENCO's remit involves liaising with and advising teachers, parents, senior management team (SMT) and external agencies *vis-à-vis* the inclusion of pupils with SEN. They are also charged with the task of inclusion training of staff, managing learning support assistants (LSAs), assessing pupils with SEN, and managing the records and statements of pupils with SEN. It is the control of the means (educational institutions) and mechanisms (education policy and funding) that enables those in position of authority such as government to disseminate ideology that shapes cultural norms and values and, ultimately, determine the role of SENCOs and LSAs and the extent to which school generally, and PE in particular, is inclusive (Gruneau, 1988). However, it should again be noted that SENCOs and LSAs are also actively involved in shaping cultural norms and values in SEN and PE departments specifically, and schools more generally. The power and influence these groups have, however, will depend largely on their actual role within the organisational structure and the extent to which they are part of the senior management team (SMT).

Findings from the web survey suggested that 71 per cent of SENCOs are not a part of the SMT despite the ideology and discourse pervading government policy suggesting that they should be (Education and Skills Committee, 2006). Whilst the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools is a process mediated by much of the relational network, including, amongst others, teachers and support staff, the fact that most SENCOs are not a member of a group that makes key decisions relating to mechanisms of cultural (re)production, such as school policies and resource allocation, could constrain their ability to coordinate whole-school developments and shape an inclusive culture in PE. The important point here is that the British government only 'recommended' that SENCOs form part of the SMT (Education and Skills Committee, 2006); it has not used its power as a developer of education policy and state-school funder to make it a legal requirement. This has resulted in different schools embracing the government's recommendation to varying extents, with the majority rejecting it. Instead, much of the power resides with school governors, who must determine the role of the SENCO in relation to the leadership and management of the school (DCSF, 2009).

The web survey found that 29 of the 31 SENCOs who are SMT members believed that they are able to do their job more effectively as part of the team, whilst 48 of 71 SENCOs who are not members believed that they could do their job more effectively if part of the SMT. The open questions from the survey allowed the SENCOs to qualify their responses: 'Being a part of SMT has allowed me to have a more strategic approach . . . to get things done and for SEN to be a school priority' (SENCO 10). SENCO 4, who is not a member of the SMT, suggested that they would have a 'more authoritative role in whole school policy and decisions' if part of the SMT. Similarly, SENCO 79 believed that inclusion in SMT would stop SEN being 'frequently overlooked in strategy planning'. The benefits of being a part of the SMT also

emerged as a key theme during the interview stage of data gathering. SENCO G, for instance, stressed the importance of SENCO being part of SMT and expressed awareness that the role was not an integral part of the managerial power structure in all schools: 'I know in some schools SENCOs are not part of the management. They are not included in decisions and yet they have to deal with the outcome of those decisions. I am very fortunate in this school'. For SENCO H, the rationale for empowering SENCOs through access to a key decision making position in the school hierarchy relates to their SEN knowledge and experience:

> When policies and procedures are being discussed by SMT, when new systems are being put forward, people are doing the best that they can but they haven't got the insight into SEN that I've got to say: yes, but have you thought of the impact of that policy on SEN?

The points made here support those made by many other SENCOs in this research, who suggested that being a member of the SMT would enable them to ensure that 'SEN has a voice' (SENCO 17) when it comes to whole-school strategic planning. It would also mean that they would perhaps be more able to shape the inclusive culture of SEN in their school generally, and PE more specifically, if they had more influence over mechanisms of cultural (re)production such as policy and funding. However, it is important to note that some of those SENCOs who are not a part of SMT expressed a desire for that to remain the case:

> I don't want to be part of the senior management team. I know that's recommended but no, I'm quite happy doing the job I'm doing on the scale I'm doing it without the constraints of being on the leadership group.... I know what you're thinking. You're thinking that I would have more of a voice on the leadership team, have more impact and perhaps be able to move things on, but I think we move things on fine because we've got the law on our side. We have the power that comes from the knowledge that what we are doing is right and correct in relation to all the legislation, so I don't miss being on the leadership team (SENCO J).

Interestingly, SENCO J suggested that they are able to exercise a high degree of power and influence the culture of education and SEN in their school regardless of whether they are a part of SMT or not because of the contribution SENCOs make to fulfilling the legal entitlement of pupils with SEN as it is laid out in international and national policy discourse (see, for example, Stationary Office, 2001; UNESCO, 1994). The benefits and limitations of being a part of SMT aside, it is noteworthy that, whilst the hegemonic discourse of the British government outlined in the Education and Skills Committee Report (2006: 74) points towards at least an ideological commitment to increasing the power and influence of SENCOs by stating that 'SENCOs should in all cases be . . . in a senior management position in the school . . . The role and position of a SENCO must reflect the central priority that SEN should hold within schools', many in this study support research conducted elsewhere (Cowne, 2005; Szwed, 2007b) when they suggested that their exclusion from SMT has constrained their ability to cultivate an inclusive school and PE environment.

SENCO D is another who suggested that membership of SMT is not the only way to access power:

> I think SENCOs have a very privileged position because, over time, they get to know parents, and those parents will also support you [the SENCO] and help fight your corner, and I think that's very powerful. I think, basically, senior management don't want somebody that powerful telling them where the money should be spent. Without the SENCO on the senior management they can spend that money wherever they want.

Particular emphasis is given here to the way in which parents use their influence to empower SENCOs through a collaborative and supportive relationship, which is explored to some degree elsewhere (see, for example, Parsons, Lewis, Davison, Ellins and Robertson, 2009)

and will be analysed in more depth in Chapter Eight. SENCO D also suggested that SMT were actively constraining the power of SENCO by excluded her from decisions regarding budget allocation. This finding is supported by research conducted by Weddell (2004) who found that because many SENCOs were excluded from SMT, they were rarely allowed to manage the SEN budget and, as a result, were unaware of how much money was allocated to SEN in their school or each individual department such as PE. Here, it was the SMT who monopolised the economic resources, which they were distributing in ways that facilitated the achievement of their own inclusion objectives, often without consulting SENCOs (Weddell, 2004). The table below uses data from the web survey to show the level of control SENCOs claim to have over the SEN budget:

| Wholly Responsible | Mainly Responsible | Jointly Responsible | Partially Responsible | No Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 people (24%) | 22 people (21%) | 16 people (16%) | 23 people (23%) | 16 people (16%) |

In some schools there appears to be a general lack of power for SENCOs to control the economic resources. This point is particularly interesting given that it is the SENCOs, not the SMT, who are the inclusion experts. Whilst SMT may be more adequately equipped with the knowledge, skill and experience to manage school finance, whether that includes the SEN budget or not, they are perhaps not the most appropriate group for identifying areas of educational need nor distributing SEN resources to cater for the identified need. LSAs also play a crucial role in the construction of an inclusive culture in school but, like SENCOs, their influence over the SEN budget is limited. When asked, 13 per cent of LSAs claimed to be consulted when it comes to how the SEN budget it spent, whilst the remaining 87 per cent

claimed to have no input in budgetary matters. From the evidence available it is difficult to say with confidence what specifically the consultation that does occur entails and if it informs action or is purely tokenistic. What can be said is that it appears to be common culture (Hall, 1981) for many SENCOs and LSAs, who, lest we forget, are perhaps most aware of the specific needs and requirements of pupils (DfES, 2001; Haegele and Kozub, 2010) to have limited influence over the SEN budget despite their SEN expertise. Chapter Eight will shed more light on this topic by analysing the distribution of SEN resources and its impact on attempts to develop an inclusive culture in PE.

## *Conceptualising the role of LSA*

In Britain, the term LSA has to some degree replaced the term teaching assistants (TA) as part of an attempt to reconceptualise the role by centralising the process of learning rather than teaching (Kerry, 2001). Paraprofessional and paraeducator are terms used in other countries for those whose role and responsibility is similar to an LSA. Naming the profession is one thing but pinning down the full remit of LSAs can be quite difficult given that, much like SENCOs, the role and responsibility of LSAs is multi-dimensional. The Department for Education and Skills (2000) identify four key strands to the role: supporting pupils, teachers, the school, and the curriculum. The hegemonic discourse underpinning this and other government documents (see, for example, DfES, 2001; DfES/TTA, 2003) stresses the vital role that LSAs should play in shaping an inclusive educational culture. However, there is much literature (see, for example, Kerry, 2005; Moran and Abbott, 2002) that calls for role clarification to ensure that LSAs know specifically what they ought to do because, at present, schools have the power to interpret the ambiguous guidelines offered by government.

When interviewed, LSA A saw their role as thus: 'I help the pupils to progress... You know, I help them to get ready for the adult world or whatever they go on to do whether it's college or things like that. I just get the best out of them'. Similarly, LSA B suggested: 'My day involves helping pupils with behavioural problems or SEN students who are vulnerable. All types really. Basically, I focus on the pupils who need more support'. Here, it appears that the ideological basis for the role of LSAs, according to LSAs, relates to the support they give pupils with SEN in subjects specifically and, for some, the school more generally: 'I'd define it [the role of LSA] as working with children who have social, academic, or any other problems. Not just in lesson but in general, in terms of the school as a society and in terms of what they do outside of school' (LSA E). For LSA E, the scope of the role extends much further than that of a conduit to academic development and achievement in specific subjects; they appear to conceptualise their role more holistically in that they mention social development and the school more generally. Now, whether they consider their role to involve facilitating the assimilation of pupils with SEN into the common sense cultural arrangements of the school, or actively shaping established customs and practices (Barker, 2008) to ensure that they are inclusive, is difficult to say at this stage. Chapter Seven analyses LSA and SENCO conceptualisations of inclusion generally and in PE specifically in order to assess the extent to which PE is inclusive.

During the LSA interviews there was also mention of the way in which LSAs can help teachers to cultivate an inclusive education culture through learning and teaching processes. For instance, LSA K suggested: 'We provide support for the teacher because the ability of children in the class is so varied. The TA can work with the higher ability ones whilst the

teacher works with the less able ones, or the other way round. I see us as an extra body in the class; an extra pair of eyes, and extra support for the kids' (LSA K). LSA conceptualisations of the role thus far are, perhaps, in keeping with government's attempt to reconceptualise the role of LSA through the dissemination of inclusive educational discourse that places particular emphasis on the process of learning (DfES, 2001). It is interesting to note at this stage that when LSAs were asked generic questions relating to role conceptualisation, none mentioned PE specific cultural experiences or practices. In fact, most explicitly mention their role in the 'class' and classroom based activities which may hint at where their priorities lie.

Given that SENCOs are the ones who have the power to decide, to varying degrees, the extent to which LSAs contribute to shaping cultural norms and values within education through the allocation of responsibility (DfES, 2001), the research asked SENCOs to conceptualise the role of LSA. SENCO E argued that: 'Their [LSA] role is to assist the teacher in the delivery of the content of the curriculum'. This view was shared by SENCO C who expanded thus: 'Teaching assistants are there to act as a bridge between the teacher and the child and it has to be a two-way communication. They are there in order to enable the teacher to develop the pupils'. Some of the comments appear to suggest that SENCOs see LSAs as more of a conduit between teacher and pupil rather than pupil and learning. Indeed, much of the emphasis was placed on the way in which LSAs can help the teacher to teach the pupils. Whether LSAs have intentionally rejected this educational ideology in favour of a more student-focused instead of teacher-focused ideology is difficult to say with the evidence available. Nevertheless, it does appear that there is a lack of ideological alignment when it comes to conceptualising the role of LSA, which is significant given that ideology will, to varying degrees, inform the ways in which LSAs endeavour to develop an inclusive

education culture for pupils with SEN (Elias, 1978; Mannheim, 1936). The extent to which LSAs have the capacity to shape educational norms and values as key delivers will be explored throughout subsequent chapters. However, the ideology underpinning the comments made by SENCO D in particular is one that seems to cast LSAs as a subordinate group whose actions are dictated by teachers:

> As a teacher, I expect the TA to do whatever I want them to do in the lesson. Specifically, I expect that TA to help me to make my subject as accessible as possible to that group of kids or that kid. That's what I think a TA is for. I also have TAs who will do my photocopying, will set out my stalls for the kids, who will make sure all the books are there and ready for the lesson.

Despite research claiming that the role of LSA has burgeoned and become more diverse over time (Kerry, 2005; Kessler, Bach and Heron, 2007), a couple of the LSAs interviewed during this research suggested that there has actually been a noticeable reduction in the remit of their role:

> When I first started we were pivotal to what was going on. You were given plenty of responsibility. LSAs were teaching lessons, they were taking tutor groups, we were involved in parents' evenings, after school clubs, and that sort of thing. You were encouraged to get involved in as much of the school life as you possibly could. For whatever reason, one thing led to another and they re-evaluated the whole role of the LSA and a lot of those responsibilities and roles were taken off us (LSA H).

LSA I shared this view:

> I think if I look at my time since I've been here over the 12 years, I think I'm probably doing less than I was doing 5 years ago. I think funding may have been an issue with that but they've made cut backs; they re-evaluated the role of LSA, so as part of that they've reduced the role and responsibilities.

It is difficult to say with the evidence available whether the power and influence of LSAs has diminished over time in schools. However, there is a general feeling amongst some LSAs that their role is not valued by those in key decision making positions such as senior managers, heads and governors. LSA J, for example, questioned the value of an LSA given that some had left the school and not been replaced. This, they argued, was evidence that LSAs were being 'phased out' (LSA J) through the gradual reduction of responsibility and, thus, power and influence. In contrast, research conducted by UNISON (2013) found that 95 per cent of head teachers believe that LSAs add value to the culture of the school and any attempt by government to reduce their number would have a negative impact on pupils with SEN and the smooth running of schools. It is important to note that there is no credible statistical evidence to support the claim that LSAs are being phased out; it is more a 'feeling' that this is the start of things to come. This is perhaps unsurprising given that the hegemonic discourse underpinning cultural distribution mechanisms external to education, such as the media, suggest that LSAs are being phased out as part of the government's austerity measures (see, for example, Drury, 2013; Stevens, 2013). If this claim is credible, it would mean that government have subordinated education to the needs of capital by prioritising economic interests above the interests of pupils (Giroux, 1999).

When SENCOs were asked whether LSAs are valued in school SENCO D answered:

> We want people [LSAs] to commit themselves to our academy so you should pay them decent money and you should give them a proper contract so they can feel secure to plan for the future. You know, you shouldn't treat them like the school do. You can't treat them like they are pebbles you can pick up on the beach because then you lose them.

Although the comments do not mention specifically the value of LSAs, it can be inferred that LSAs are not valued, according to the SENCO, based on the way they claim those who have access to key decision making positions in the school power structure 'treat' LSAs. For SENCO D, the worth of LSAs appears to be founded on and measured by the economic value of their labour. This ideology is shared by SENCO H who calls the role of LSA a 'dead end job' and further argued:

> It's all about money and I think that LSAs are exploited a lot, not deliberately but out of necessity. If you went into being a LSA and you did your level 3 qualification then, oh, wow, you get an extra 20 pound a month in your pay packet, and that's if you manage to get a level 3 job. You might do the qualification, you might do the HLTA qualification, but how many advertisements have you seen for HLTAs? There are hardly any (SENCO H).

Here, it appears again that LSA role value is determined by the economic exchange value of labour (Marx, 1976). It is also interesting to note that SENCO H appeared to suggest that LSAs are economically exploited by those who have the power to determine exchange value and set wages because LSAs are paid less than the SENCO suggested their labour is worth (Marx, 1976). LSA as a 'career' and pay structure were two issues explored in more detail during the interviews with LSAs. The general concern about pay relates to the way in which financial issues prevent LSAs from fulfilling what they deem to be important aspects of their job: 'We need more time to plan with the teacher, even if it was only half an hour after school each day. However, the problem is money. I wouldn't do that for free' (LSA G). This point potentially conflicts with comments made earlier by LSAs H and J who suggested that their responsibilities have actually decreased, which may intuitively mean that they are doing less than previously. There is, however, a difference between having a decreased responsibility and less work; it could mean that LSAs are working longer hours doing more menial, less influential tasks. Nevertheless, LSA J is another who mentioned the importance of LSAs

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working collaboratively with teachers to ensure that mechanism of cultural (re)production such as lesson plans are inclusive. They, too, suggested that the only feasible time for this to occur would be after school. However, unlike LSA G, LSA J suggested that they would be happy to stay after school and provide unpaid labour: 'The teacher hasn't got time to sit with me and I haven't got time to sit with the teacher [to plan lessons] unless we did it after school, which I'm willing to do but it won't be paid' (LSA J).

The above comments are indicative of concerns raised by many LSAs in that their main issue relates more to what they do – or, perhaps more important, do not – get paid for. It appears to have become a cultural norm (Barker, 2008; Hall, 1981) for many LSAs to provide unpaid labour as part of their role. Many LSAs are involved in before, during (dinnertime) and after school clubs. Others, claim to take a lot of work home with them because there is no time to plan and prepare resources during the school day because of a congested timetable: 'I need to spend time getting resources ready for some of my lessons and you just don't have the time to do it all so you end up doing loads of stuff at home' (LSA L). One consequence of doing unpaid work at home, according to LSA L, is that it constrains the extent to which she can perform the social role of mother: 'When I do stuff at home it means that my kids haven't got me because I'm doing stuff for work. Really, my kids shouldn't have to be penalised because of the job I do but that's what happens'. Whilst LSAs do have the power to reject this cultural norm because of their legal employment rights, it seems that at least some have accepted the norm they have learned through cultural assimilation so that performing unpaid labour has become a common sense part of the established arrangements in education for some LSAs (Giroux, 1999).

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*Conclusion*

The chapter sought to explore the lived experiences of SENCOs and LSAs in order to gain a more adequate understanding of how their personal ideologies and wider social network influenced their choice of occupation. The reasons for becoming a SENCO or LSA were many and often quite diverse. However, there were a number of key themes. For SENCOs, justification relates to a desire to work with pupils with SEN in order to increase the educational attainment and life changes of those pupils. In contrast, none of the LSAs interviewed explicitly mentioned a desire to help pupils as their motive for becoming a LSA, which is interesting given that many offered a student-focused perspective when discussing their role. Justification for LSAs related more to how the role would help them to achieve a further career ambition, usually a route into teaching, or because it was compatible with personal circumstances. Whilst a lack of evidence relating to the early socialisation of SENCOs and LSAs makes it difficult to determine how these social and educational ideologies gained salience, it can be said that they will inform what SENCOs and LSAs endeavour to do in practice. Once an ideology forms part of an individual's habitus it stirs, by degrees, actions (Elias, 1978; Mannheim, 1936).

A detailed role analysis was undertaken in order to identify the position of SENCOs and LSAs in the cultural formation of their schools and, perhaps more importantly, the individuals or groups who have the most influence over shaping the role of SENCO and LSA and, thus, the common sense arrangements of SEN in schools. Again, the role of both SENCOs and LSAs were found to be extremely diverse which perhaps suggests that SMT, who are the ones who determine the role of SENCOs in particular, have the capacity and

flexibility to shape the roles to meet the specific needs and requirement of their schools. Therefore, it was important to ask whether SENCOs are a part of the SMT. The survey found that the majority are not, which many believe has constrained their ability to shape SEN norms and values because of a lack of access to this key decision making position.

Despite no LSAs mentioning a desire to help pupils with SEN as the main reason for their choice of occupation, the ideological basis for the role and purpose of LSAs, according to LSAs, relates as mentioned to the support they give pupils with SEN in subjects specifically and the school more generally. There is some mention of the way in which they can help teachers to create an inclusive education culture through the learning and teaching process, but the emphasis is mostly on how they can support pupils, although the two are not mutually exclusive. SENCOs, on the other hand, see LSAs as more of a conduit between teacher and pupil rather than pupil and learning. Indeed, much of the emphasis is placed on the way in which LSAs can help the teacher to teach the pupils. It does appear that there is a lack of ideological alignment when it comes to conceptualising the role of LSA.

It must again be noted that the role of SENCOs and LSAs is extremely diverse and goes beyond the key themes selected for analysis in the chapter. The full remit of their roles, particularly as they relate to PE, will become much more apparent through an exploration of the key themes that structure subsequent chapters. Moreover, a range of implications emerged from the findings, all of which will be explored in the Conclusion and Recommendations. The next chapter will analyse the training undertaken and opportunities available to SENCOs

and LSAs in order to determine whether they are adequately equipped with the knowledge,

skills and experiences to fulfil their role as it relates to PE.

# Chapter Six:

# Training and qualifications

## *Introduction*

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the training and qualifications of SENCOs and LSAs in order to evaluate if they are adequately equipped with the knowledge, skills and experience to cultivate an inclusive culture in school generally, and PE in particular. More specifically, focus will be placed on the extent to which PE, as a relatively unique learning environment, features within the culture of SENCO and LSA training courses and qualifications as this could allow an assessment of the extent to which these two groups, who play a role in shaping the cultural norms and values of schools, are able to contribute to the cultivation of an inclusive culture in PE. The chapter will then analyse how, if at all, the training already undertaken and opportunities currently available to SENCOs and LSAs enables them to fulfil the broader remit of their role as outlined in the previous chapter.

## *SENCO training and physical education*

According to Cowne (2005: 67) 'the modern SENCO has to be master of many trades' because of the diverse nature of SEN policy, process and practice. Specific, bespoke and relevant training can thus help equip SENCOs with the knowledge, skills and professional experience to cultivate an inclusive culture in school generally, and PE more specifically. The extent to which SENCOs are trained as SEN experts will, by degrees, influence the way in

which they endeavour and, perhaps, are able to embed the values associated with SEN in the culture of PE. Indeed, those who control cultural mechanisms (Barker, 2008; Hall, 1981) such as SENCO training providers (universities, for example) are involved in the dissemination of ideology and the shaping of a SENCO's values when it comes to SEN and PE specifically, and the nature and purpose of education more broadly. Educational institutions such as universities, or other public and private organisations that have a vested interest in education, are a means of cultural (re)production where SENCOs learn the norms and values of their practice (Sissel and Sheard, 2001). This does not mean that SENCOs are passive actors who will wilfully accept hegemonic ideology and contribute to the (re)production of the status quo. Rather, they have the power to accept, modify or reject ideology based on their own values and previous experiences because power, although often distributed unevenly, is a structural and dynamic characteristic of all human relationships rather than the absolute possession of any one individual or group, regardless of their position within a social formation (Elias, 1978; Hargreaves, 1986).

Of the SENCOs surveyed, 79 per cent stated that they have undertaken some form of training, which was usually generic and classroom-based; however, 93 per cent of SENCOs suggested that they have not had any PE-specific training for their role. The fact that many SENCOs have received some form of training is perhaps unsurprising, in that teachers new to the role of SENCO must undergo a nationally-approved training course (DCSF, 2009) in an attempt to equip them adequately with the knowledge, skills and experience to cultivate an inclusive culture in their school. This compulsory training course, which is a Masters level National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination (Stationary Office, 2009), will be explored later in the chapter. Nonetheless, the findings perhaps bring into question the

ability of SENCOs to advise PE teachers, provide staff inclusion training and manage the records and statements of pupils, in a PE context at least. It cannot be assumed that the generic classroom-based training that many SENCOs and, for that matter, LSAs undertake (Vickerman and Blundell, 2012) will be relevant to a more physically-orientated subject such as PE, especially when some of those pupils who have a SEN in PE may not necessarily have one in classroom-based subjects because of its contextual nature (DfES, 2001). This issue will be explored in more depth in Chapter Eight where statements of SEN will form a key focus, together with the development and distribution of SEN resources.

Given that 'the modern SENCO has to be master of many trades' (Cowne, 2005: 67) it does not seem unreasonable to expect that SENCO training courses should focus on PE as a comparatively unique learning environment. This may help SENCOs to improve their practice and clarify their role (Cowne, 2005) as it relates to PE. A SENCO who is more knowledgeable about SEN issues in PE will be more able to shape the inclusive culture of PE unless, of course, their actions are constrained by others within their relation network such as SMT, teachers and LSAs. At present, though, the findings of the survey emphasise a hegemonic educational ideology which subordinates PE as a curricular subject by neglecting it within the cultural mechanism of SENCO training. A lack of PE focus could mean that SENCOs may not be able to cultivate an inclusive culture in PE, nor may they be able to advise or train teachers or LSAs on how to embed inclusive norms and values within the culture of PE, which could have a negative impact on the educational experiences of pupils with SEN. Indeed, this finding may go some way to explain why some PE teachers claim that SENCOs neglect them when it comes to support and guidance (Audit Commission, 2002; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith and Green, 2004).

The survey probed SENCO perspectives about their training by asking those few who had received PE-specific training what it involved. For most, the PE training was the result of the university degree they had studied as undergraduate students, rather than training designed and initiated specifically for their role. For instance, SENCO 23 suggested that they had studied a: 'B.Ed. honours degree in Physical Education part of which was around SEN'. SENCO 89 suggested that the training they had received was in-house and delivered by the school sports coordinator (SSCO): 'SSCO gave SEN department training in the use of physical activities and PE equipment to aid learning'. Whilst there are a few instances of SENCOs and PE teachers working together to ensure that both are adequately trained to cultivate an inclusive culture in PE, in most cases SENCOs question the relevance of PE-specific training to their role. When asked why they had not undertaken any PE-specific training, over one-half (57 per cent) suggested that they do not think it is germane to their role, a typical response being: 'I am not sure why I would! Why would this be relevant to being a SENCO?' (SENCO 59). Other SENCOs elaborated on this point, asserting that PE-specific training: '… has no relevance in the same way that I have not done any special training in Physics or Design or Music, etc. I seek information and specific knowledge and strategies from the experts in those departments' (SENCO 25). SENCO 36 also stressed the importance of information to an inclusive culture in PE. However, unlike SENCO 25, they suggested that they are the one who gives information to the PE department rather than the other way round: '[PE training is] not appropriate. I have provided information regarding some medical issues and limitations for some of our students with advice from professionals' (SENCO 36). Whilst the flow of SEN information across the school is something that will be analysed in Chapter Eight, it is worth noting again the prevalence of a hegemonic individual

ideology (Finkelstein, 2001) which reinforces the pupil's medical condition and their functional limitations rather than emphasising the ways in which teachers and LSAs can plan and deliver inclusive activities (Black, 2011). Moreover, it could be argued that such a response does not, again, seem to take account of PE being a physically-oriented subject and the challenges this may pose in terms of endeavouring to cultivate an inclusive PE culture for pupils with SEN.

Another common view is exemplified by SENCO 46 who suggested that: 'A couple of LSAs on my team have been trained to cater for the needs of our physically disabled pupils in PE and I just supervise them and respond to what they need'. Similarly, SENCO 50 revealed: 'I do not cover or support PE. I have teaching assistants that have taken courses', whilst SENCO 57 reasons: 'I have a teaching assistant in my team who has done various coaching qualifications and has become a valued member of the PE dept.'. The fact that such courses and qualifications may not be specific or relevant to teaching pupils with SEN aside, some SENCOs believed that it is LSAs, not themselves, who should undertake PE-specific training. The potential issue here is that, without engaging in PE-specific training themselves, SENCOs are unlikely to appreciate fully the distinct challenges that the physical and dynamic nature of PE may pose in terms of inclusion. Culturally, PE is quite different from many other subjects, especially those that are classroom-based. The historically contested nature and purpose of PE has meant that the norms and values of the subject are diverse and can include: sport for education; sport for health; sport for fun and enjoyment; sport for competition; and sport for moral and social development, to name a few (see, for example, Green, 2008). The social dynamics of team games and competitive sports, whereby pupils with and without SEN compete with and against each other, pose challenges that teachers of many other subjects do

not have to overcome (see Maher, 2010a, 2010b). PE teachers must attempt to navigate this cultural terrain and it would be beneficial for SENCOs to understand these difficulties so they can develop suitable provision and provide tailored, relevant support to help facilitate an inclusive culture in PE. What the comments by SENCO 50 and 57 do suggest, however, is that, in their schools at least, LSAs appeared to be an integral part of the culture of PE. The extent to which this point appears as common culture (Hall, 1981) in schools will be explored in Chapter Eight when the focus turns to an analysis of the distribution of SEN resources, which includes LSAs.

Although it has the potential to increase their influence over the culture of SEN in PE, there are notable limitations to empowering PE teachers and LSAs in this way. For example, the findings of research conducted by Vickerman and Blundell (2012), which is supported by the findings presented later in this chapter, suggest that many LSAs have not undergone PE-specific training, either because opportunities are not available or because they are not taking advantage of those that are. Furthermore, it is questionable to place the onus on PE teachers, given that, first, the onus is rarely placed on teachers of classroom-based subjects; and second, many PE teachers suggest that their ITT and CPD programmes have not adequately equipped them with the knowledge, skill, experience and confidence to include pupils with SEN in PE (Maher, 2010b; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith and Green, 2004). In some schools, a situation seems to be present wherein the knowledge, skill and experience of those involved in shaping the culture of PE is limited in terms of inclusion, which may restrict the development of inclusive education provision and practice that is appropriate in this subject. Nevertheless, because some SENCOs have identified the role of LSAs in shaping the

inclusive culture of PE, the next section analyses how adequately trained LSAs are *vis-à-vis* PE.

## *LSA training and physical education*

Research conducted from the perspective of PE teachers (see, for example, Maher, 2010b; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith and Green, 2004) has questioned whether LSA training is fit for purpose within the context of PE. According to the findings of the survey, 91 per cent of LSAs have not received any PE-specific training, whether that is formal training as part of national qualifications, or of a more informal nature delivered 'in house' by a SENCO or PE specialist. This is despite the fact that 88 per cent of LSAs have received some form of training as part of their role. These findings are largely consistent with research conducted by Vickerman and Blundell (2012), thereby bringing into question the ability of LSAs to challenge the common sense established arrangements in PE (Giroux, 1999) which result in pupils with SEN spending less time in PE lessons and often participating in a narrower PE curriculum when compared to their age peers (Atkinson and Black, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2005; Fitzgerald *et al*., 2003a, 2003b; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Sport England, 2001). Again, it cannot be assumed that the generic classroom-based training that many LSAs have received will be relevant to a more physically-orientated subject such as PE. This point is supported by the fact that 71 per cent of LSAs suggested that they believe they *are not* adequately equipped with the knowledge, skill or experience to include pupils with SEN in PE. When appropriate PE-specific training is received, many LSAs consider it useful (Vickerman and Blundell, 2012), which is unsurprising given that training programmes can have an emancipatory affect (Kirk, 1986) by

enabling LSAs to contribute to educational development and change. However, one consequence of a lack of PE-specific training is that some LSAs are placing varying degrees of constraint upon the everyday activities of PE teachers because most are classroom-based assistants with very little PE knowledge or expertise (Smith and Green, 2004). So, rather than helping to shape and develop an inclusive culture in PE, a lack of appropriate training could mean that LSAs are constraining the cultivation of inclusive practices and experiences.

For LSAs A, B and D the impact of a lack of PE-specific training opportunities was ameliorated by the fact that they had an undergraduate university degree relating to PE. For example, when asked about the training they had received relating to PE, LSA A suggested: 'Specifically to PE I've got to say none really. My background is in PE luckily enough so I do know a little bit about the subject'. Similarly, LSA B stated: 'Enabling factors would include my own background in sports coaching and fitness instruction because a lot of what I do is what a PE teacher would do in terms of correcting technique', whereas LSA D noted: 'On my sport development and PE course I learned how to interact with different levels and things like that'. Unlike most of the LSAs, B had: 'Attended one training programme on including pupils with physical disabilities in PE'. One point worthy of note here is that some of the LSAs had achieved a higher education undergraduate qualification, with LSAs A, B and D having degrees relating to PE. This, it could be argued, would mean that they have a high level of subject-specific knowledge, skills and experience from their undergraduate degree training, which could increase their ability to shape the culture of PE given that one of the more prominent criticisms of LSAs is their lack of PE-related knowledge and experience (Morley, *et al*., 2005; Smith and Green, 2004). This does not necessarily mean, however, that they will shape the *inclusive* culture of PE. If their personal educational and sporting

ideologies relate to performance in competitive sport and team games, they could *contribute* to the (re)production of a cultural hegemony that results in differential and uneven PE experiences for pupils with and without SEN (Maher, 2010a, 2010b; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004). It is perhaps unreasonable to expect all LSAs who are part of the culture of PE to have a relevant higher academic and/or professional qualification given the questions raised in the previous chapter, by SENCOs and LSAs, of the perceived value of the role and the pay structure. However, SENCO E suggested that some schools, including hers, will now only employ LSAs who are university graduates. She expanded on this point, thus:

> Especially the academies who [sic] have got trust boards, do not employ any classroom assistant who does not have a degree. I've got a friend who has a school and they have a trust board. He said that you wouldn't get through his gates if you haven't got a degree. He expects a certain standard of education.

Whether this point is indicative of schools generally, or the future direction of SEN, or exclusive to a small number of schools, is difficult to say because of a lack of evidence. Nevertheless, it does not require too far a stretch to reason that, as mentioned in the previous chapter, aspiring teachers are interested in experiencing the culture of mainstream schools generally, and special needs education in particular, in order to strengthen their application to undertake teacher training in light of increased competition for teacher training courses because of government funding cuts (Ward, 2013).

The SENCO survey found that 58 per cent of SENCOs claimed that the school in which they work does not provide PE-specific training opportunities for LSAs, whilst 52 per cent of SENCOs suggested that the LSAs in their school are not adequately trained to include pupils

with SEN in PE. This may at first seem somewhat surprising given that it is SENCOs themselves who are responsible for selecting, supervising and training LSAs, or ensuring that training is provided by external agents (DCFS, 2009). Nonetheless, the fact that the findings of this research and research conducted by Vickerman and Blundell (2012) support these claims gives them some credibility. So, even with National Occupational Standards being developed and a range of professional qualifications – from NVQs to foundation degrees – emerging (LSC, 2004) to ensure that LSAs in Britain are adequately prepared for their role, many in this research believe that they are unable to fulfil the full remit because PE does not constitute a significant dimension of the culture of LSA training courses. The lack of training, it is important to add, is not necessarily because of a lack of available courses because training on inclusive PE and sport activities is currently provided by the English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS), Youth Sport Trust (YST), Sports Coach UK (SCUK), and various national governing bodies (NGBs) and national disability sport organisations (NDSO) (See, for example, YST, 2013). Again, these findings emphasise a hegemonic educational ideology which subordinates PE as a curricular subject, neglects it within the LSA training programmes and opportunities provided and, in turn, constrains the potential to develop an inclusive culture in PE. All of these indicators of cultural hegemony, according to Giroux (1981), offer a paradox because schools and training providers are seen, on the one hand, to prioritise the prospect of equality and inclusion in all subjects but, in fact, operate as mechanisms of cultural (re)production that serve to maintain the existing power structure by subordinating subjects such as PE. If the neglect of PE continues to be legitimised by schools when it comes to the training of LSAs, then there is a risk that the presence of some LSAs could result in the subordination and stigmatisation of some pupils with SEN in PE (Smith and Green, 2004). This issue brings an important point into sharp focus: even though power is often distributed unevenly, LSAs are not effete (Hargreaves, 1986); rather, they do have

some influence in shaping practices and lived experiences, whether that is perceived to be positive or negative, as key drivers at the delivery level of PE.

The small amount of PE training that has been undertaken by LSAs in this research is either sport-specific (football and netball, for example) or need-specific (supporting a child with cerebral palsy, for example). None have received training that synthesises both (supporting a child with cerebral palsy in football, for example). The training received appeared to be largely 'in house' over a one or two day period: '[I have taken] Day courses looking at inclusion in PE lessons and a Boccia course' (LSA 326). A few LSAs have received some form of training in disability sports: 'Botcha, blind football and blind rounders' (LSA 324). However, this does not appear common culture (Hall, 1981) in many schools. Much of the training, moreover, is more reactive than proactive. For example, if a pupil joins a school the LSA is trained and advised by the SENCO, PE teachers and/or physiotherapist on how best to meet the specific needs of the pupil: 'When a pupil joined [the school] I was instructed by the physiotherapist in how to help the child with cerebral palsy' (LSA 33). This is, perhaps, an efficient way of spending time and money given the budget constraints of SEN departments. However, guidance initiated by the physiotherapist is, traditionally at least, rooted in the hegemonic medical ideology of disability (Finkelstein, 2001) because it may reinforce the pupil's medical condition and their functional limitations rather than emphasising the strengths of the pupils and the ways in which teachers and LSAs can plan and deliver inclusive activities (see, for example, Black, 2011).

When asked why they had not received any PE-specific training, the most frequently cited answer highlights a perceived lack of opportunity: 'I don't think anything genuinely exists' (LSA 102). In this regard, there did seem some interest in PE training: 'Never been asked nor have I had it suggested. Seems ridiculous that it has never been suggested as I am all for it' (LSA 131). Similarly, LSA 181 suggested: 'I have never been offered this. I would most certainly love the chance to have PE-specific training in my role as LSA'. Many other LSAs also note that they have never been 'asked or offered' PE-specific training, perhaps suggesting that they consider the onus to be on the school to provide opportunities, rather than the LSA to actively seek training. Only one LSA revealed that they had: 'Suggested a course but it got rejected' (LSA 106). Now, whilst there is no reason why LSAs cannot follow this lead and suggest training to the SENCO, questions must be asked of the extent to which the SENCO is fulfilling the full remit of their role, in relation to PE at least, because they are responsible for selecting, supervising and training LSAs, or ensuring that training is provided by external agents (DCSF, 2009). When asked what could be done by others to improve their ability to include pupils with SEN in PE, over half of those LSAs who responded (54 per cent) mentioned training opportunities:

> Appropriate training given to all staff who work with students who require help in PE. More generally I think all staff should be given training on how to lift correctly and how to use any necessary equipment (LSA 157).

Again, there appeared a salient desire of some LSAs to receive PE-specific training and, in turn, an acknowledgement of the importance of such training if they are to use their power and influence as key drivers of education at the level of delivery to facilitate the inclusion of pupils with SEN in PE. The above comment also highlighted a point mentioned by a few other LSAs in that some insist that all staff, not just LSAs, should be adequately trained to

cultivate an inclusive environment. Nonetheless, given that this chapter has found that PE does not form a part of the culture of SENCO and LSA training, the next sections will analyse what SENCO and LSA training actually does involve, starting with SENCOs.

*SENCO qualifications*

It may surprise some that 21 per cent of SENCOs claimed to have not undertaken any training as part of their role given that government ideology and discourse has stressed the importance of SENCO training. Legislation introduced in 2008 (Stationary Office, 2008) described the professional qualifications and experience a teacher should have to apply for the role of SENCO, whilst in 2009 it became a statutory requirement for every new SENCO in mainstream schools to study and obtain the Masters level National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination (Stationary Office, 2009). Government, it seems, has attempted to use its power and influence over the development and implementation of statutory requirements, as an ideological dissemination mechanism, to ensure that SENCOs are trained to shape the inclusive culture of schools. It is difficult to say from the evidence available how many SENCOs have actually undertaken the Masters training, only how many have received some form of training that they perceive to be relevant to the role. The interviews probed this issue further by asking SENCOs what the training they have received involved. SENCOs A, E, H, J and L were all educated to Masters Level in topics relating to their role, but only SENCO A and H mentioned the National Award. SENCO A, for example, stated that: 'It was part of the new SENCO qualification. If you are a new SENCO then you have to have this qualification. It was towards a Masters'. SENCO H stated: 'I have done the PG Cert SENCO, which then leads on to a Masters qualification. I did that in 2004. That

course went through all the different types of special educational needs, all the law, how to support, how to analyse data, all of that'. SENCO J, however, had 'a Masters… which wasn't directly to do with special needs but there were elements of special needs in that. I did that in my own time. I also did a diploma in language development as well at Sheffield' (SENCO J).

Overall, the training completed by SENCOs was quite diverse and multifaceted. Many had undertaken training directly relating to the role of SENCO, whereas others were SEN-trained in topics relating to the subject they were initially trained to teach. For instance, SENCO E was trained in teaching students with dyslexia as part of her role as, first, an English teacher, then later as head of English:

> I saw an advert and it was affiliated to Liverpool University and I went and did an advanced diploma in dyslexic teaching. After that, I got a scholarship and I went to Dallas, Texas, with the Scottish rite programme, which is the basis of all dyslexic teaching. So, that was my interest really in SEN. I was head of English because I was an English teacher… I went to Liverpool University for a year to study emotional literacy. I had already done a Masters. I did an anger management diploma so that my skills were acutely suited to the role I was going to do (SENCO E).

SENCO L had also received training relating to her role as SENCO and the subject she teaches. However, unlike others, her Masters qualification relates to teaching gifted and talented pupils who, lest we forget, also have learning needs additional to their age peers (Audit Commission, 2002):

> I did my degree and part of that degree was the social sciences; sociology, psychology and philosophy as well as English. I then did my PGCE in special needs. From that point on I did a lot of work on dyslexia and inclusion generally… I did part of a Master's degree in including gifted and talented children. I suppose a lot of it was to do with the fact that I wanted to look at differentiation and see how that worked as well in this school (SENCO L).

For many other SENCOs the SEN training they had received related to their subject specialism because 85 per cent (91 SENCOs) of those who responded to the survey had at least some teaching, with the mean number of teaching hours per week being 11.97 for SENCOs. Despite many of those interviewed suggesting that they had completed the Masters level National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination (Stationary Office, 2009), or at least components of it, others explained why they had not:

> Three or four years ago I was offered to do the national qualification but it was in the first year of this academy and I thought that year would see me off in terms of, you know, dying. It was a terrible, terrible year. There was just so much to do… I did start the course and I did the work for the first unit, but then I just said I can't do this. I cannot do all the things you want me to do (SENCO D).

SENCO D, who has been in the role for many years and, thus, chose to study for the Masters level National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination rather than it being a condition of her employment, suggested that she had to discontinue the training because of significant time constraints. This was despite a desire to continue the training and an acknowledgement of its value. The following comments highlight the diversity of her role and the obvious time-pressures such a diverse role places on some SENCOs:

> I had a bigger teaching timetable then so that didn't help. I had nineteen lessons out of a twenty-five period day so I had to prepare and mark for all those lessons. I had to manage the small learning community in a situation where I didn't really know, at that time, what they wanted. I had the SENCO job to do… I actually had an email about two or three months ago now from the university. Again, I said I would love to do it but I do not have the time. If it was a six week thing I'd probably really enjoy it but I cannot do the job and the training at once. I cannot do that. Something is always going to give because there are only so many things I can do. In the end, I said I'm not doing it (SENCO D).

Whilst this is not indicative of the views explicitly expressed by SENCOs generally, it does draw attention to a wider point: many SENCOs find it difficult to update their knowledge and

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skills because of a lack of time to engage in continued professional development activities. This is perhaps unsurprising given that 70 per cent of SENCOs surveyed claim that they do not have enough time to fulfil the full remit of their role, a point supported by research conducted elsewhere (Cole, 2005; Cowne, 2005; Szwed, 2007a). To further compound this issue is the fact that government funding for the Masters qualification has now been withdrawn, meaning that schools who have 'not been successful in securing a funded place [on the Masters] will need to fulfil their statutory obligations through exploring alternative funding mechanisms' (DfE, 2014). What these alternative funding mechanisms entail is open to interpretation and will depend on the financial activities of schools. What is clear is that government has used its power as policy makers to influence the actions of state schools by constraining them to meet their statutory obligations, first with financial assistance, but now through more autonomous economic activities. It will be interesting to see how able schools are to meet these statutory training requirements given that there is a dominant discourse in media sources, which is supported by SEN campaigners (see, for example, Murray, 2013), suggesting that budgetary cuts will impact negatively on the educational experiences of pupils with SEN. One of many consequences of an inadequately trained SENCO is that it may have a negative impact on the training of LSAs given that SENCOs are charged with the task of recruiting, managing and training LSAs, or ensuring that suitable training is provided by external agents (DCSF, 2009). Hence, the next section will analyse the qualifications of LSAs to see further how adequately they are equipped with the knowledge, skill and experience to fulfil the remit of their role as explored in the previous chapter.

*LSA qualifications*

The previous chapter found that the role of LSA can be extremely diverse. Therefore, like SENCOs, LSA must be a 'jack of many trades'. Adequate training programmes and appropriate qualifications, thus, can help to ensure that LSAs are prepared to meet the multifaceted demands of their role. It is perhaps unsurprising to find that 88 per cent of LSAs have received some training for their role, and that 77 per cent claim that their school continues to offer relevant training as part of their on-going professional development, given that government has recently attempted to use its influences over mechanisms of cultural production (Barker, 2008; Hall, 1981) such as education policy and funding to develop National Occupational Standards and a range of qualifications, from NVQs to foundation degrees (LSC, 2004), to ensure that LSAs are prepared for their role. What is perhaps surprising is that a greater percentage of LSAs have received training for their role than have SENCOs since SENCOs generally have greater access to power in the form of their influence over SEN policy, process and practice in the school cultural formation. Unfortunately, there is insufficient evidence available to determine why this is the case. Nevertheless, it *appears at first* that government are, by degrees, most able to determine the extent to which LSAs have the knowledge, skills and experience to contribute to the cultivation of an inclusive culture in schools. However, it must be noted that schools, SENCOs and LSAs also have the power to determine the quantity and quality of training opportunities LSAs are able to access.

Ultimately, the decision whether to allow LSAs to receive training is made at a school, not national, level. As noted in the previous chapter it is the SMT and, to a lesser extent, the SENCO who have monopolised the SEN budget which includes money for LSA training.

Moreover, the discourse as laid out in various government documents (see, for example, DfES, 2001; DCSF, 2009) devolves power to SENCOs by charging them with the task of identifying and meeting the training needs of LSAs. This situation appears to cast light on an established cultural arrangement wherein the power is very much skewed towards SMT and SENCOs when it comes to LSA training. However, a comment by SENCO A highlighted the fact that LSAs are not powerless when it comes to training: 'There are brilliant training programmes out there for teaching assistants which schools will insist on. However, if people are already in the job and they are not willing to improve their skills then you can't force them to do that'. Although not a common theme expressed by SENCOs or LSAs, this comment highlighted an important point in that LSAs are not wilfully obedient to the wishes and wants of SENCOs. Rather, they do have the power to reject attempts to orchestrate their actions because, at present, a specified amount and level of training and qualifications are not statutory requirements. One way that SENCOs can increase their capacity to influence the actions of LSAs is by including minimum training and qualification requirements in the personal specification of job advertisements and in the contracts of newly qualified staff as part of a broader process of professionalization.

The interviews revealed examples of LSAs shaping their own training experiences. LSA C, for example, insisted that he was the one who found and suggested LSA training courses to the SENCO. Whilst this perhaps demonstrates the power and influence of LSAs within the cultural formation of the school, LSA G suggested that she had to seek out and pay for her own courses because the school was not meeting her training needs: 'There are people who come in to the school and give us training, outside agencies and stuff, but I've done my TA 1, 2 and 3 outside of school. I've done that off my own back… because I want to progress'

(LSA G). One problem with LSAs funding their own training is that it excludes those who cannot afford the training which, given the economic constraints of the role outlined in the previous chapter, could be a significant number. Indeed, LSA C commented on the fact that he could not undertake the NVQ level three LSA training because funding was removed and he could not afford the fee:

> It [level 3] was funded but then the funding got took away and they wanted a grand for the course. I'm on fourteen grand a year with a mortgage so I can't afford a grand for a course. I just can't do it. It's just not feasible so a lot of us pulled out the course.

What is perhaps most worrying about the comments made by LSA C and G in particular is that they feel the need to meet their own training requirements because the schools in which they work are not fulfilling this role despite SEN training being a dominant feature of discourse underpinning government policy (see, for example, DfES, 2001; DCSF, 2009).

Some of the SENCOs interviewed suggested that they devolve power to LSAs by encouraging them to identify their own training needs and find appropriate opportunities. SENCO C revealed that: 'I say to the TAs that I will support them in their training. I will also act as their mentor if they need one but I do like them to be proactive. If you want to progress as a TA and you've found a course that you want to go on then come and talk to me about it'. In this instance, it appeared that LSAs are, to degrees, able to determine the specific knowledge, skills and experiences they want to accumulate, develop and receive, which will ultimately influence the extent to which they are able to shape the inclusive culture of schools. For example, if a LSA insists on being trained in the inclusion of pupils with autism in PE, then they will be more able to facilitate that process providing, of course, that the

training is of the appropriate quality. The next question, therefore, asked the LSAs what the training they have received involved.

The LSA survey found that 76 per cent of LSAs claim to have formal qualifications relating to the role, ranging from NVQs to undergraduate degrees. Some of the LSAs interviewed had completed various national vocation qualifications relating specifically to the role of LSA: 'I've completed my level three supporting teaching and learning. I did that last year. I've done first aid. I'm a recognised first aider in school. I've done behaviour courses. I've been on quite a few of them' (LSA C). Similarly, LSA L suggested: ''I've completed an NVQ level two, NVQ level three, which was an apprenticeship as well, and I'm just starting on my level four'. Others have received in-house training which, similar to LSA C, relates to endeavouring to cultivate an inclusive culture for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). LSA I, for one, suggested that: '… [O]ver the years I have been to loads [of training courses]. You know, dyslexia training, ADHD training, autism training, access to sport training. I have had lots of training opportunities. Similarly, LSA H noted: 'I've had courses so I know what autism is, and I know strategies about speech and language, and differentiation, and things like that'. It is worth noting here that the focus of including pupils with BESD may, to some extent, increase the power and influence of LSAs by enabling them to shape the inclusive culture of PE given that research suggests that PE teachers find it most difficult to include pupils with BESD in their lessons largely because of a lack of specific training on their part (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Croll and Moses, 2000; Evans and Lunt, 2002; Gardner and Dwyfor-Davies, 2001; Morley *et al.*, 2005; OFSTED, 2003; Smith, 2004). How able LSAs are to cultivate an inclusive PE culture for BESD pupils will depend, though, on the extent to which their training was geared towards a

more physically-orientated environment such as PE. Chapter Seven will analyse, from the perspective of SENCOs and LSAs, the issues they face when endeavouring to include pupils with different forms of SEN.

Some of the LSAs interviewed questioned the value of the training received. LSA I was particularly vocal in this regard despite claiming that they have received 'lots of training opportunities' (LSA I):

> A lot of the time you're sitting there thinking: I know this, and this, and this, because I already have experience working with these pupils in school. I need to know the next step…. There never seems to be the level two of the training. You always get a few strategies to try but there is never enough. I rarely come away from a training session thinking that it was really good. Over the 12 years I can probably count on one hand the number of training course that I've actually got a lot from. So, although I've got a lot of training on paper, a lot of basic knowledge, there isn't that next step (LSA I).

For LSA I, the issue appeared to be one of quality rather than quantity in that the training they have received has focused on a wide range of inclusion issues but this has given them only a 'basic understanding' (LSA I) of dyslexia, for example. LSA I expressed an interest in increasing the depth of their knowledge and understanding of a smaller number of inclusion issues because, at present, their school considers them 'an expert in dyslexia now when you've only really got a basic understanding of it' (LSA I). They attribute this to a 'box ticking' (LSA I) exercise by the school in that the school can claim that they have someone trained to support dyslexia when, in fact, the LSA claimed to be insufficiently trained to fulfil the role. Whilst it is important to highlight LSA criticisms of the nature and purpose of training courses, it is worth noting again that 12 per cent of LSAs claimed that they have not received any training relating to their role, and 23 per cent claimed that their school does not

offer relevant training as part of the on-going professional development of LSAs. The two most frequently cited reasons for the lack of training, according to LSAs, related to a lack of money and time. Time constraints are explored to some extent in the previous chapter, and economic constraints will be part of the focus of Chapter Eight.

*Conclusion*

The chapter sought to analyse the training and qualifications of SENCOs and LSAs in order to evaluate if they are adequately equipped with the knowledge, skills and experience to cultivate an inclusive culture in schools. More specifically, focus was given to an analysis of the extent to which PE as a relatively unique learning environment forms a part of the culture of SENCO and LSA training courses and qualifications in order to assess the extent to which they are able to contribute to the cultivation of an inclusive culture in PE. The vast majority of SENCOs claimed to have received some form of training relating to their role, but only a small number suggested that part of their training was PE-specific. These findings, it has been argued, bring into question the ability of SENCOs to advise PE teachers, provide staff inclusion training and manage the records and statements of pupils, in a PE context at least, because many of the challenges that those involved in shaping an inclusive PE culture must endeavour to overcome are specific to that subject because of its more physical nature (DfES, 2001). Focusing on PE as a unique learning environment may help SENCOs to improve their practice and clarify their role (Cowne, 2005) as it relates to PE and change the established cultural arrangement which sees PE teachers neglected by SENCOs when it comes to support and guidance (Audit Commission, 2002; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith and Green, 2004).

Like SENCOs, the vast majority of LSAs have not received any PE-specific training, whether formal training as part of national qualifications, or of a more informal nature delivered by a SENCO or PE specialist. This is despite the fact that the vast majority of LSAs have received some form of training as part of their role, which brings into question their ability to challenge the common sense established arrangements in PE which result in pupils with SEN spending less time in PE lessons and often participating in a narrower PE curriculum when compared to their age peers. This point is supported by the fact that the majority of LSAs believe they *are not* adequately equipped with the knowledge, skill or experience to include pupils with SEN in PE, which may account for the fact that one consequence of a lack of PE-specific training is that some LSAs are placing varying degrees of constraint upon the everyday activities of PE teachers because most are classroom-based assistants with very little PE knowledge or expertise.

When questioned, many SENCOs agreed with the claims made by LSAs. Indeed, over half of SENCOs claimed that, first, the school in which they work does not provide PE-specific training opportunities for LSAs and, second, that the LSAs in their school are not adequately trained to include pupils with SEN in PE. This finding is quite surprising given that it is SENCOs themselves who are responsible for selecting, supervising and training LSAs, or ensuring that training is provided by external agents. Like the SENCO findings, these findings emphasise a hegemonic educational ideology which subordinates PE as a curricular subject, neglects it within the LSA training programmes and opportunities and, in turn, constrains the potential to develop an inclusive culture in PE. The next chapter will analyse SENCO and LSA conceptualisations of inclusion in order to explore the extent to which they believe an inclusive culture exists in PE.

# Chapter Seven:

# Conceptualisations of inclusion and the (inclusive) culture of physical education

## *Introduction*

The aim of this chapter is to analyse whether an inclusive culture exists in PE from the perspective of SENCOs and LSAs. In order to achieve this task, the chapter will first explore SENCO and LSA conceptualisations of inclusion because this will enable an insight into the ideological basis of SENCO and LSA endeavours to cultivate an inclusive culture (Elias, 1978; Mannheim, 1936) within school generally, and PE specifically. Then, based on these conceptualisations of inclusion, SENCO and LSA views and experiences will be explored to determine the extent to which, according to them, an inclusive culture exists in PE.

## *SENCO conceptualisations of inclusion*

There is little consensus amongst academics, policy makers and education practitioners regarding what inclusion actually entails and, thus, the role of SENCOs and LSAs in the inclusion process. Ideologically, inclusion can be said to be situated on a continuum ranging from teachers and LSAs developing and delivering PE lessons that suit the abilities and needs of all pupils (Barton, 1993), to all those involved in education using their power to radically restructure the culture of schools through its policies, learning, teaching and assessment so that pupils with SEN have the same learning experiences as their age peers (see Fitzgerald,

2012). Such ideological ambiguity (Maher, 2010b) often means that SENCO, teacher and LSA interpretations and conceptualisations of inclusion will inform the ways in which they shape the inclusive culture of schools generally and PE specifically. Therefore, SENCOs and LSAs were asked, during interview, what they believe inclusion actually entails. SENCO H, for example, suggested:

> If you were to have a fully inclusive lesson, you would know every single child's needs, every single child's starting point and every single child's learning style. You would basically have an individual lesson plan with each of your children, which would relate to the overall lesson plan.

Most of the answers provided by SENCOs were in keeping with a social ideology (Finkelstein, 2001) because they focused on how SENCOs, teachers and LSAs can make social arrangements to ensure that pupils with SEN have the same learning experiences as their age peers. Emphasis was often placed on the importance of identifying the specific needs and requirements of pupils with SEN, which justifies the focus of the next chapter where the identification and assessment of pupils with SEN will be explored. Once learning needs have been identified, teachers and LSAs can use the information as part of their endeavours to cultivate an inclusive culture. Indeed, relevant and subject-specific information and learning targets can increase teacher and LSA knowledge and understanding of how best to meet student needs (Maher, 2013). The significance attributed to relevant and subject-specific information and learning targets is also explored in the next chapter.

Like SENCO H, SENCO G mentioned the importance of catering for a diverse range of learning styles: 'Multisensory. Hear, say, see, do. If you can use those four approaches in a lesson, you are going to give the strength of every learner an opportunity to flourish because

we all have strengths; we all learn in different ways'. Again, the emphasis is placed here on the ways in which PE teachers can modify their practice to ensure that an inclusive culture develops. The previous comments also highlight the interdependent nature of social relations and demonstrate the power and influence of the pupils themselves insomuch as their learning needs and actions are influencing the actions of others within their relational network (Elias, 1978). That is to say, SENCOs, PE teachers and LSAs, it seems, are purposively responding to, and endeavouring to cultivate an inclusive culture because of, the needs and requirements of pupils with SEN. It is the dependency of individuals and groups on the actions of other individuals and groups that influences their own actions (Elias, 1978). When discussing PE specifically, SENCO A suggested that a wide range of physical activities should be provided so that pupils can participate in one or more that are most appropriate for them:

> I think that a wholly inclusive PE lesson would be when there are lots of different activities going on; where everybody is not playing football or rugby. You need to look at the skills that people have got and use them to the best rather than forcing them to do a particular sport.

The logistical problems of planning and delivering a lesson that include different pupils playing different activities aside, it is interesting to note that SENCO A seemed quite critical of teachers using their influence over the culture of PE to coerce pupils to participate in a planned activity given that it is doubtful that pupils would have the power to 'opt out' of doing algebra, for example, during mathematics. This point, perhaps, is indicative of the subordinate status, which is to be analysed in depth in Chapter Eight, of PE within the culture of schools (Maher, 2014; Maher and Macbeth, 2014). Moreover, if we are to accept that ideological leadership is a more effective means – than, say, coercion – for ensuring that aims and objectives are achieved (Althusser, 1971), those in positions of power such as PE

teachers should attempt to persuade pupils of the educational, social and psychological value of the activities delivered.

SENCO comments appeared to cast light on the power of teachers because it is their actions that determine, by degrees, the inclusivity of school lessons, PE or otherwise. One potential limitation of teachers, particularly those who teach PE, having so much influence over the inclusive culture of their subject is that research conducted elsewhere (see, for example, Maher, 2010b; Smith, 2004) suggests that despite an ideological commitment to 'inclusion', what PE teachers actually did in practice was more closely aligned to 'integration'. That is to say, the everyday practices of PE teachers resembles a process whereby pupils with SEN are expected to succumb to the dominant culture by assimilating into the structure of the NCPE and the common sense established arrangements (Giroux, 1999) of PE lessons that are intended for those pupils without SEN (Fredrickson and Cline, 2002). The continued perpetuation of this cultural norm has resulted in some pupils with SEN spending less time in PE lessons and often participating in a narrower PE curriculum when compared to their age peers (Atkinson and Black, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2005; Fitzgerald *et al*., 2003a, 2003b; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Sport England, 2001). Therefore, given that part of the SENCO role is to advise (PE) teachers on inclusion and SEN (DfES, 2001; DCSF, 2009), the onus is partly on them and partly on teacher training providers to ensure that teachers understand the conceptual basis of inclusion so that it can inform the ways in which they shape the inclusive norms and values of their subject. This will help to ensure that common sense arrangements in PE, which appear to disadvantage some pupils with SEN, can change.

Whilst many SENCOs promote the value of inclusive learning and teaching strategies, SENCO J highlights the importance of making changes to the physical learning environment: 'It's about the whole environment such as the accessibility to the classroom and where desks were placed so the students weren't excluded' (SENCO J). Although this specific comment relates to classroom teaching, the principle becomes perhaps even more relevant when applied to an analysis of physical culture and corporeal practices in subjects like PE. Indeed, PE teachers in research conducted by Morley *et al*. (2005) suggest that they are more able to facilitate an inclusive culture during indoor – which is, of course, dependent on access to appropriate facilities – activities because of the additional challenges posed by the natural physical outdoor terrain. Some teachers mentioned the so-called 'safety concerns' they had to account for, particularly when teaching pupils with physical impairments, as pupils learn how to use their bodies and what their bodies are capable of (Morley *et al*., 2005). It is important to note, however, that these findings perhaps conflict with claims made elsewhere in that outdoor and adventurous activities have been identified as being particularly inclusive (see, for example, Penney, 2002a; Waddington *et al*., 1998; Waddington *et al*., 1997). Therefore, a latter part of this chapter will explore, from the perspective of SENCOs and LSAs, the inclusivity of specific PE activities as part of a comparatively unique learning environment.

SENCO I suggested that, for them, inclusion simply involves pupils with SEN being educated in the same learning environment as pupils without SEN: 'Pupils are included by the fact that they're in a mainstream class'. This rather simplistic view of inclusion, by someone in a key decision making position within school, is criticised and extended by SENCO J who suggested that inclusion is much more than sharing a learning space. They

were particularly critical of segregating pupils with SEN from their age peers, even if it occurs within the same learning space:

> I'll tell you what it [inclusion] won't include; it would not include a special needs table where all the children sit who've got some sort of 'problem' [emphasis added by SENCO] because that's not inclusion at all (SENCO J).

Again, whilst this educational ideology is geared towards a classroom-based subject – which, perhaps, says something about the extent to which PE forms a part of the SENCO's inclusion objectives – the principle is relevant to PE. Many pupils and PE teachers have argued that the separation and isolation of some pupils with SEN is an established cultural tradition in PE, particularly when team games are delivered (Fitzgerald, 2005; Maher, 2010a, 2010b, Smith, 2004; Smith and Thomas, 2006), which can have a detrimental effect on their social interaction with age peers and confidence in PE (Fitzgerald, 2005). These studies have shown that some PE teachers, therefore, appear to be involved in the (re)production of a hegemonic education culture that normalises segregation and, thus, reinforces rather than challenges the subordination of pupils with SEN in PE despite SENCOs in the research conducted for this thesis acknowledging this as poor practice. Ultimately, segregation within a mainstream setting negates many of the perceived benefits of educating pupils with SEN in mainstream schools, which are outlined elsewhere (see, for example, Shah, Travers and Arnold, 2004) with one in particular being mentioned by SENCO D:

> I know my kids aren't frightened of people who are different. They are not frightened of those who look different or speak different. You know, they'll talk to anybody and that's what education is all about. That's the sort of society we want to live in.

This comment is, of course, based on the proposition that peer acceptance equates to educational and social inclusion.

Whilst many of the SENCOs interviewed acknowledged an ideological commitment to modifying or adjusting learning and teaching processes and practices, SENCO D offered what might be considered a much more radical approach:

> I think it [inclusion] includes every single child in that class. When you go hill-walking you set your pace by the slowest person in that group and that for me is what PE should be about. You set your lesson by the slowest person in the class, or the disabled person. If you're doing volleyball then you do it on your bum. If you're doing football and one is disabled then you should disable them all.

Developing and delivering lessons that cater for the needs and requirements of the least able, whether they have SEN or not, would perhaps help to more firmly establish 'inclusion' as a cultural norm in schools. However, with government increasingly using its power and influence over the culture of schools, as policy makers and state school funders, to increase the significance of academic attainment as part of its standards agenda (DfE, 2012a, 2012b), it is unlikely that the educational ideology outlined by SENCO D will become a common sense arrangement in schools. In fact, according to the SENCO herself, the approach is not even supported by SMT in her own school:

> I don't think they [SMT] would actively support it [the teaching approach outlined above]. I don't think they would make it non-negotiable. They actually made it non-negotiable that there should be rapid learning through the lesson. I don't think that you have to go at break-neck pace to have rapid learning but that's what is happened here all the time. It might be because it's a new academy and they've got OFSTED coming in (SENCO D).

There is an expressed concern amongst educationalists, PE or otherwise, that attempts to develop an inclusive culture by catering for the needs of the least able pupils will have a negative impact of the 'progress' of the more able pupils (see, for example, Lloyd-Smith and

Tarr, 2000; Morley *et al*., 2005; Sewell, 2004; Smith and Green 2004). This view is, to some degree, shared by SENCO G who suggested that: 'There may be a situation where you have a pupil who does have specific needs, and actually it means that the rest of that learning group never get to do certain things because that pupil can't do them. Is that inclusion?' The prevalence of this educational ideology is important because personal values will inform, to degrees, the extent to which an inclusive culture in PE develops despite the fact that research suggests (see, for example, Kalambouka *et al*., 2007; Peltier, 1997; Staub, 1996; Staub and Peck, 1994) that there is little or no negative impact on the academic achievement of pupils without SEN. In fact, social benefits such as increased tolerance to individual differences and greater awareness and sensitivity to human diversity and the needs of others were suggested in many of the studies mentioned above. There are other SENCOs who are critical of government attempts to devolve power to pupils with SEN and their parents by giving them a legal right to a mainstream education through the passage of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Stationary Office, 2001). SENCO E, for example, argued that:

> When you've got such a range of ability you cannot teach from the middle. I have done it myself but I have so much admiration for the teachers because it's so difficult teaching these groups. I think we have to look at a different school system. Special schools are perhaps a better environment for some of these kids… There are some kids who should not be in a mainstream school. This overall inclusive umbrella just does not work (SENCO E).

SENCO E is not the first person, nor probably the last, to question the ideological and practical value of mainstreaming education for those pupils with the most diverse learning needs. In fact, Baroness Mary Warnock, whose 1978 report (DES, 1978) contributed significantly to the mainstreaming of education, has since suggested that the current system is not fit for purpose and, thus, should be radically restructured (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2006). It is beyond the scope of this research to analyse the value of

the current system when it comes to how best it serves the needs of pupils with and without SEN. However, focus has been cast in this direction because SENCO and LSA perceptions of the value of the common sense arrangements of the established system (Giroux, 1999) will inform, by degrees, the way in which they endeavour to shape the inclusive culture of schools generally, and PE in particular. Regardless of ideological justification, teachers, according to SENCO H, have a 'very difficult job' because learning needs and targets can be extremely diverse. What also seems diverse is SENCO conceptualisations of inclusion generally, and an inclusive culture in PE specifically. So far, a range of perspectives have been discussed but there has been some difficulty identifying a general consensus about what inclusion in PE entails from the perspective of SENCOs. One limitation of this point is that differential conceptualisations of inclusion may lead to differential experiences of PE across schools. The next section will analyse LSA conceptualisations of inclusion because, again, these will give an insight into the ideological basis of their endeavours to cultivate an inclusive culture in PE (Elias, 1978; Mannheim, 1936).

## *LSA conceptualisations of inclusion*

Whilst many of the SENCOs expressed a hegemonic ideology of inclusion that charges teachers and LSAs with the task of developing and delivering lessons that cater for the needs of all pupils, many of the LSAs interviewed suggested that inclusion is achieved when pupils with SEN share the same learning space and interact with pupils without SEN; that is to say, when pupils with SEN have a physical and social presence within mainstream PE lessons. LSA B, for instance, argued that inclusion is: 'Having the pupil involved in the lesson with their peers. When they are separated from the lesson there's an opportunity for them to slack

off and for the work not to be challenging'. Similarly, LSA G suggested that: 'Inclusion means making sure that every child is included in the lesson. So, they're not sitting outside. We have to make sure that they can access the curriculum' (LSA G). Whilst the comments made do point towards a genuine ideological commitment by LSAs to the cultivation of an inclusive culture in schools, it must be noted that affording a pupil access to the same curriculum and learning opportunities as their age peers does not mean that the curriculum will be inclusive. The potential problems of expecting pupils to assimilate into the dominant culture and established arrangements of the NCPE are numerous and have been explored elsewhere (Maher, 2010b; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004). Nonetheless, it is perhaps unsurprising to hear LSAs promote equal access and opportunities given this discourse pervaded, by degrees, NCPE policy documents since its inception in 1992 (Maher, 2010a).

LSA C is another who reduces inclusion to: 'just giving them [pupils with SEN] the same opportunities as everyone else because in a mainstream school it's their right to be included within everything' (LSA C). Here, however, emphasis is also placed on the power of pupils because of their legal right, given by government, through legislation (Stationary Office, 2001). It would be naïve, though, to suggest that the British Government make national policy decisions autonomously; they are not situated within a political, economic and social vacuum. Instead, they are one group, albeit a comparatively powerful one, whose actions are influenced by international developments. Indeed, the move towards inclusion was significantly influenced by the human rights ideology and discourse that underpinned the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Children (UN, 1989) and the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994). This is a useful example to shed light on the fact that LSAs, SENCOs, teachers, schools and

even national governments are part of a much broader hegemonic process that influences the norms and values of established cultural arrangements in schools in Britain.

LSA H is another who criticised segregation by commenting on the benefits of pupils sharing a learning space: 'I think it's great when the teacher involves the kids with SEN in the whole class and they don't treat them separately. I'm sure the kids must look at me and the child I'm with and say: he's with him and he's different'. Here, the LSA also hints at the potential impact of their presence on the ideologies of pupils without SEN. They openly suggested that the support they give pupils with SEN could contribute to those pupils being labelling as 'different'. Now, it is axiomatic that young people generally, and pupils with SEN more specifically, are not part of a homogenous group because of their increasingly diverse identity, ideologies and experiences (Hall, 1996). The concepts of sameness and difference are influenced by historical, social, economic and political factors (Hall, 1996) such as the established cultural arraignments of the schools in which pupils find themselves. However, to be cast as 'different' by a group whose power may come from the fact that they are the majority and, thus, conform more to the hegemonic cultural arrangements in schools – pupils without SEN, in this instance – can result in outsider status (Elias and Scotson, 1994), marginalisation and, as a result, an even more unequal distribution of power (Hargreaves, 2000). Despite the potential implications of being identified as different, LSA H continued by suggesting that the identification of difference does not have a negative impact on social interaction: 'They [pupils without SEN] just accept it [difference]. They just accept that that's what happens at school… They don't treat the child I'm with as being any different because they are their mates'. For this LSA, an acknowledgement of difference does not necessarily manifest in pupils with SEN being treated differently by their age peers, whether that be in

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PE or any other subject. It is, perhaps, exposure to difference that has increased knowledge and understanding of SEN and, thus, is helping to ameliorate social barriers between pupils with and without SEN (DES, 1981).

Unlike LSA H, LSA F is more concerned by the potential impact of their presence. They openly admit to developing a support strategy aimed at ensuring that pupils with SEN are not identified as different:

> The main thing is that it's not noticeable who is deemed to have special educational needs. Even if I'm down to help a particular individual, I will never make it noticeable that I am there for them straightaway. I'll aim to help the whole class… (LSA F).

It is perhaps unsurprising to hear that LSA F is attempting to limit the impact of their presence given that research suggests that LSAs, particularly when supporting in PE, can have a detrimental impact on the learning and social interaction of pupils with SEN (Atkinson and Black, 2006; Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2003a, 2003b; Morley *et al.*, 2005; Smith and Green, 2004). However, it is also noteworthy that, by supporting all of the pupils who require additional assistance, whether they have a SEN or not, the LSA may contribute to shaping an educational culture wherein LSA support is a normative cultural process. This may, to some extent, challenge the propensity of allocating outsider status (Elias and Scotson, 1994) to those who require LSA support. It may also mean that some pupils without SEN will achieve additional success in lessons – depending, of course, on how 'success' is defined and measured – because of the additional support afforded them. From the evidence provided it is difficult to determine whether LSA F has the power to freely develop and implement this support strategy, or whether it has been initiated by the SENCO and/or teachers. What the

comments do illustrate, however, is the way in which the actions of the LSA – who some may, at first, consider to have relatively little power because they do not have access to a key decision making position within the school hierarchy – influence how an inclusive culture develops. At the same time, however, the support strategy could mean that those pupils who have a SEN and, arguably, require the most support, may not be getting all of their learning needs met despite LSA F suggesting: 'Obviously, if that individual [with SEN] needs individual attention then I'll give it to them as and when needed'. Unfortunately, the evidence available only allows for speculation regarding the extent to which the support strategy contributes to an inclusive PE culture.

While many of the LSAs interviewed were critical of the process of segregating pupils with SEN from their age-peers, others suggested that, on occasion, segregation was a necessary cultural arrangement. LSA E, for one, suggested that: 'From the kids I've worked with it might be a little too much for them to be included in a mainstream lesson. If they were to be included in a group conversation within a mainstream class, ninety per cent of them would struggle' (LSA E). It is worth noting that these comments appear to be underpinned by an individual ideology (Finkelstein, 2001) because emphasis is placed on the problems of pupils when it comes to their assimilation into the established arrangements of the curriculum and learning and teaching strategies that have been planned for the majority of pupils. When the focus shifts to PE specifically, LSA I expressed a view that is also in keeping with an individual ideology:

> In some cases, with the best will in the world, it [inclusion] still can't work; it doesn't work. For example, in a mainstream school the pupils should do a six week block of trampolining. Now, if that pupil can't do trampolining because of his disability they'll do an alternative activity.

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Here, again, the emphasis is – even more explicitly – placed on the pupil not being able to perform a cultural activity because of a perceived individual problem. The outcome of not being able to assimilate into the dominant culture of PE, according to LSA I, was a common sense process of exclusion: 'My responsibility was to remove that pupil out of the class, and I would do one-to-one sport with them. They would hardly ever take part in the PE lesson'. The process whereby some pupils with SEN are removed from the same learning environment as their age-peers appears as common PE culture in many schools (Fitzgerald, 2005; Maher, 2010a, 2010b, Smith, 2004; Smith and Thomas, 2006) and, thus, is not a unique finding. However, what is perhaps of more interest is that it is claimed that attempts have been made to challenge the established cultural traditions (Giroux, 1999) in PE:

> I think this school has come a long way in what they're trying to do [for inclusion]. We've managed to secure funding for 12 sports wheelchairs so we now have wheelchair sport as part of the curriculum. It's not until everyone is on a completely even playing field that everyone is playing the same sport. Everyone is playing wheelchair basketball the same way and there have been no modifications to the game. The pupils can then see how difficult it is to play sport using a wheelchair. It's brilliant for the kids to empathise as well (LSA I).

Whilst earlier comments appeared to be underpinned by an individual ideology, the extract above is more in keeping with a social ideology (Finkelstein, 2001) because it focuses on how teachers and LSAs can plan and deliver lessons that meet the needs and requirements of all pupils. Indeed, whilst the physical limitations of the wheelchair user are perhaps at the heart of the decision to invest in sports wheelchairs, wheelchair basketball enables young disabled people to participate with/against young able-bodied people and, especially when Inclusive Zone basketball is delivered (British Wheelchair Basketball, 2014), young people with other impairments. This pedagogical approach is conceptualised as reverse integration

by Black and Stevenson (2011) and promoted as one way in which teachers can ensure that an inclusive ideology underpins the nature and purpose of the lesson planned and delivered. Many of those traditional cultural activities that were developed by able-bodied people for able-bodied people such as football and rugby do not allow the same degree of inclusivity unless significant modification occurs (Black and Stevenson, 2011; Maher, 2010b; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004). Whilst the purchase and use of sports wheelchairs may go some way to increasing social interaction between pupils in PE, it should be noted that such specialist equipment is often expensive. The charitable organisation Motivation Sports (2014), for example, offer their most basic chair at over £450 despite attempts made to design a low cost sports wheelchair to increased awareness of and participation in wheelchair sports (IPC, 2008). Given the increasing financial constraints placed on schools generally, and PE departments in particular, it may not be feasible for other schools to invest in such expensive specialist equipment which is not as useful in other subjects.

When discussing their conceptualisation of inclusion, LSA D mentioned, amongst other things, adapting PE activities to ensure that all can participation:

> [Inclusion is]… the fact that the pupil with SEN can still do what everyone else is doing. Not like, for example in PE, saying because he can't do that he can be the referee… They [pupil with SEN] should still do the lesson just maybe adapt it a little bit so they feel involved with all the pupils just as much as everyone else and they don't look like they're getting extra help.

It may be inferred from the above comment that LSA D has experienced pupils with SEN being asked to perform refereeing or other duties associated with an activity when they

cannot assimilate into what has been planned for the majority of the pupils. If the inference is accurate, this experience would not be unique (see, for example, Fitzgerald 2005; Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2003a Maher, 2010b; Smith, 2004). What does not require inference is the explicit belief that adaptation and modification to a learning activity can help to ensure an inclusive culture in PE. The extent to which a PE activity lends itself to modification depends largely on the activity being delivered and how closely the teacher and LSA(s) want to stay to the traditional format; some activities may require significant deviation from its established structure and rules before pupils with some of the most diverse needs can participation. Individual activities such as athletics, swimming, tennis, dance and gymnastics have been identified, by PE teachers, as being easier to modify in an inclusive way than team games (Maher, 2010b; Morley, *et al.*, 2005; Smith, 2004). Nevertheless, at an ideological level, the process of modifying learning activities in PE is more aligned to a social ideology (Finkelstein, 2001) because emphasis is placed on how social arrangements can be made to ensure an inclusive culture develops in PE.

It is interesting to note that LSA I views adaptation as an identifier of difference and, thus, something that pupils with SEN view negatively:

> When you dig a little bit deeper the students [with SEN] actually hate the idea of the lesson being adapted to suit them. They become conscious that the rest of the pupils in the class don't enjoy it because their lesson becomes less fun.

Here, LSA I highlighted a point explored earlier, which relates to the potential impact of an inclusive PE culture on pupils without SEN. What is perhaps unique in this regard is the LSA is commenting on the topic from the perspective of the pupils themselves, whereas other research has analysed this from the perspective of PE teachers (see, for example, Morley, *et*

*al*., 2005; Smith and Green, 2004). Unfortunately, it is difficult to say with any degree of confidence whether this LSA's interpretation of the views and experiences of pupils with SEN is accurate. Therefore, future research will be required from the perspective of pupils with SEN. LSA I identified the culture of PE as being relatively unique in that conceptualisations of difference become more prominent: 'PE, more than any other subject, makes them [pupils with SEN] more aware of their difficulties; how different… they are to the rest of the pupils'. Difference, as a socially constructed concept (Dhamoon, 2009), is dependent on established cultural norms and values that may be unique to PE such as physical prowess and physical literacy as forms of physical capital (Evan, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2005). Therefore, those who cannot conform to the established ideologies of PE may 'become aware of their limitations [which is]… a constant reminder of how weak they are when compared to their peers' (LSA I). To summarise, the general consensus among LSAs is that inclusion is achieved when (1) pupils with SEN have a physical and social presence in a shared learning space; and (2) activities are adapted in an attempt to cater for the needs and requirements of all pupils. Now that a more adequate understanding of SENCO and LSA conceptualisations of inclusion has been achieved, the next section will explore whether an inclusive culture exists in PE, starting with the perspective of SENCOs.

## *An inclusive culture in PE: the perspective of SENCOs*

Building on conceptualisations of inclusion, SENCOs were asked specifically about inclusion in PE. In response, SENCO A suggested: 'The PE department in this school is absolutely brilliant at including everybody and they make sure that everybody has a role and that everybody is involved in the lesson'. Whilst it is perhaps encouraging to hear SENCO A

promote the inclusive nature of PE, it is worth noting again that ensuring that all pupils have a relevant 'role' does not necessarily constitute an inclusive culture in PE. For instance, although not explicitly stated by the SENCO, expecting pupils to perform duties associated with a learning activity, separate from those performed by the majority of the class, because the pupil cannot assimilate into a dominant cultural practice (Barker, 2008), can go some way to increasing marginalisation (see, for example, Fitzgerald 2005; Fitzgerald *et al*., 2003a; Maher, 2010b; Smith, 2004). It also means that they are not receiving the same learning experiences as their age peers. SENCO C went one step further in their praise of PE by claiming: 'I'd say of all the departments in the school PE is the most inclusive'. As part of their justification for such a claim, SENCO C suggested: 'They [PE] are the one department where they take the SEN registers... They cut them up and they stick the information in their planners. They read the healthcare plans and know the kids' needs inside out. They're all about inclusion' (SENCO C). What is perhaps interesting in this regard is that SENCO C stressed the importance of using SEN information – as a mechanism of cultural (re)production – to a teacher's ability to shape an inclusive culture in PE. This comment appears largely consistent with earlier conceptualisations of inclusion where the emphasis was placed on the importance of subject-specific information and learning targets to increase teacher and LSA knowledge and understanding of how best to meet student needs (Maher, 2013).

For some SENCOs there was an acknowledgement that it was not always possible to cultivate a wholly inclusive PE culture for all pupils. Some pupils, it was noted, require a bespoke timetable that does not include PE. For SENCO G, however, 'A personalised timetable is a

last resort. We do not personalise timetables easily'. First, other approaches are adopted and possibilities exhausted before pupils are withdrawn from PE:

> We do have many different approaches such as a small group. If I've got one of my staff working, they might do small group skills sets. They might do individual skill sets, then build it to 2, then build up to 3, and then build to 4. That's within the lesson and we might cordon off an area of the space, be that on the field, be that in the sports hall, so that the immediate distress of everybody being around that pupil is minimised. We do an awful lot. To be honest, you don't always have the answers (SENCO G).

Two points of particular interest emerge from comments made by SENCO G. First, importance is attributed to the cultural practice of using small groups to develop skills pertinent to a learning activity, especially when it relates to a team game: '… with the game of rugby you have to be able to walk down the pitch and that might not always be possible so we will develop coaching skills; small skills activities… every PE lesson has a small skills activity (SENCO G). These comments are supported by PE teachers in research conducted by Maher (2010b) who suggested that they found the skill development aspect of PE more inclusive because they could plan for pupils' individual needs and capabilities, and support the pupils who need it most, without it impacting upon the development and achievement of the rest of the class. The second point worthy of note is that the comment made by SENCO G echoed claims made by some LSAs earlier in that an ideology seems to persist that promotes deviating away from established cultural traditions and practices by adapting and modifying established learning activities as a way of cultivating and inclusive culture in PE. It is worth noting here that SENCO G is a qualified PE teacher – the only one of the SENCOs interviewed – so she will be more aware of subject specific issues, some of which may be unique to PE. It may also mean that because she has access to a key decision making position within the school power structure, and has a teaching timetable, she will be more able to shape the inclusive culture of PE: 'with me being the SENCO and PE specialist, as a

department we have really extended our approaches in physical education' (SENCO G). At the same time, it may also result in bias: it is unlikely that SENCO G will suggest that PE is not inclusive given that it is her subject specialism and, as SENCO, partly her responsibility to ensure that and inclusive culture develops in PE: 'Yes, PE is inclusive. It is because it is my specialism'.

Other SENCOs openly acknowledged that they have pupils in their school who do not do PE. SENCO A, for example, suggested: 'We've got a few who don't go to PE. A lot of our ASD students don't like doing PE because they don't like getting changed in the main changing rooms so we let them get changed separately' (SENCO A). Two key points here were repeated by other SENCOs: first, those with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are less likely to go to PE and, second, changing facilities often deter ASD pupils from participating in PE. SENCO B, for instance, suggested: 'A lot of our girls who have got Asperger's, well, not a lot, but it has happened a lot, they don't really like PE. There are issues around changing. Communal changing, they struggle with it' (SENCO B). In order to try and combat this issue, 'We've had to do special changing facilities' (SENCO B). The use of separate changing facilities is perhaps a minor adjustment for schools if, of course, they have the space and additional staff to supervise the arrangement. More importantly, the comments highlight the power and influence of some pupils with SEN insofar as schools, SENCOs and PE teachers have had to change established traditions relating to communal changing spaces because of the actions of some pupils with SEN.

The power of some pupils with SEN is further illustrated by the fact that some SENCOs suggested that some pupils refuse to go to PE. SENCO B, for example, suggested: 'There is one student in particular who has Asperger's and she really, really, really struggles with the changing facilities. We've battled with her to continue to do PE but it's not a battle that we are winning'. Here, it appears that some pupils are rejecting the common sense cultural arrangements set out by the National Curriculum by refusing to attend PE. This has resulted in the SENCO succumbing to the wants and wishes of the pupil, who may first appear to have less power because they do not hold a key decision making position within the organisational structure of the school, by agreeing a 'compromise':

> What you find is that she [pupil with Asperger's] will stay off the day she has PE so we've had to reach a compromise. We've said, ok, so you don't do PE but you'll come and do some other work or you'll do work from PE which is associated with sport. Otherwise, she'll miss four lessons for the sake of one (SENCO B).

It is difficult to determine whether changing facilities are the only reason why the pupil will not attend PE, or if it is because of other negative experiences of PE. Moreover, whether the power of some pupils with SEN is so great that they can, and do, refuse to go to core subjects like English, maths and science, is difficult to say with the evidence available. The SENCO's compromise may be simply indicative of an educational ideology that casts PE as a subordinate subject (Maher, 2014; Maher and Macbeth, 2014). The power and influence of the pupil is further demonstrated by the fact that it appears that they are able to determine, by degree, whether they even attend school or not. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this study to analyse the power dynamic between parents and pupils with SEN. Nevertheless, this comment is perhaps surprising given that research conducted by Fitzgerald and Kirk (2009) suggests that the lives of young disabled people in particular are subject to varying degrees of regulation and control by family.

The changing facilities were not the only issue identified by SENCOs. The more fluid and comparatively less structured nature of PE was identified as posing additional problems to developing an inclusive culture:

> When they [pupils with SEN] are in the classroom and it's very structured and formal, when there are rows of chairs and desks and everyone sits in the same place and they do not move, that formal structure which is replicated in many lessons, gives them [pupils with SEN] security. However, when it comes to unstructured lessons such as performing arts and physical education, whilst there is definite structure, you haven't got the formal structure of being still and in one place. You've also got more interaction with your peers and some pupils don't like that invasion of personal space. So that is always challenging to differentiate. For athletics it's great such as individual throwing events. There, you can space the children out so they are not near anybody (SENCO G).

SENCO B is another who mentioned interaction with peers and personal space as issues posing challenges to inclusion: 'Some of the girls who've got Asperger's don't like touch, don't like people being in their body space, so that's been quite a problem in the past'. The 'type' of activities that lend themselves more to inclusion will be analysed later in this chapter. Nevertheless, it is easy to see how the identified issues become perhaps more apparent in PE where the hegemony of cultural traditions such as team games and competitive sports (see, for example, Dunning and Curry, 2004; Green, 2008; Maher, 2010b; Penney and Evans, 1995, 1997, 1999; Roberts, 1996a, 1996b), which require and promote group interaction and degrees of bodily contact, is so well established it appears axiomatic. This point supports claims made elsewhere (see, for example, Fitzgerald, 2005; Maher, 2010a, 2010b, Smith, 2004; Smith and Thomas, 2006) suggesting that team games are more difficult to plan and deliver inclusively. The next section will explore which 'type' of PE

activities are more inclusive in greater detail from the perspective of LSAs. This will provide a foundation to analyse wider inclusion issues in PE.

*An inclusive culture in PE: the perspective of LSAs*

The web survey asked LSAs the 'type' of PE activities that they found more difficult to include pupils with SEN. LSAs, rather than SENCOs, were asked this question because they are better positioned in the organisational structure to have the experience to provide an informed answer as key delivers and facilitators of PE activities. A number of key themes emerged from the question but the most prominent related to team games and individual activities. Of the LSAs who responded to the question, 48 per cent identified team games as being the least inclusive, whilst 20 per cent identified individual activities as the least inclusive. It must be noted here that respondents were permitted to give multiple answers. Nevertheless, it is perhaps unsurprising to hear that nearly 50 per cent of LSAs consider team games more difficult to include pupils with SEN given that research conducted elsewhere (see, for example, Fitzgerald, 2005; Maher, 2010a, 2010b, Smith, 2004; Smith and Thomas, 2006) has found that many PE teachers share this ideology.

Maher (2010a) drew on the work of Waddington (2000) to attempt to explain why team games are more difficult to include pupils with SEN than, say, individual activities by examining the different patterns of social relations and dynamics. While participating in an individual activity (for example, swimming) a pupil with (or without) SEN can determine the duration and intensity of their physical exertion because they are not being constrained by any other individual. However, this control can diminish significantly when participating in

team games. When competing with or against another individual or group the pupil with SEN has to initiate moves and react to moves in relation to the moves of other players (Waddington, 2000): the pupil with SEN is only one player in a complex interweaving of a plurality of players who are both restricting and enabling the actions of each other. When participating in team games, therefore, the pupil with SEN has far less control over the intensity and duration of the activity. Consequently, it has been argued that PE teachers find it easier to fully include pupils with SEN in individual activities because they are easier to modify in ways which best suit the individual's capabilities and requirements without other pupils restricting their involvement (Maher, 2010a; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004; Sugden and Talbot, 1996; Wright and Sugden, 1999).

The theory is, to some extent, supported by some of the SENCOs in this study who, as noted above, identify interaction with peers as a particular issue. When the LSA survey asked why team games pose additional problems to inclusion, some of the replies also supported the theory: '[Some pupils with SEN]… find it difficult to keep up with their peers (LSA 82). Similarly, LSA 248 suggested that team games: '… require strong social interaction and good co-ordination skills', whilst LSA 320 argued: 'The pupil [with SEN] is often unable to keep up with other children'. It is worth noting that these comments, and many others provided by LSAs, appear to be underpinned by an individual ideology (Finkelstein, 2001) because emphasis is often placed on reasons why pupils with SEN cannot assimilate into the established cultural tradition of team games. In fact, 19 per cent of those who responded to the question did not mention a type of activity but, instead, emphasised the limitations of the pupils involved. For example, LSA 98 suggested: 'Each child is an individual and depending on their disability is to which [sic] activity is best for them', whilst LSA 153 agreed by

arguing: 'It really depends on the individual pupil and what their SEN needs are'. LSA 157 extended this point by providing a practical example: 'It depends on the needs of each individual student. If a student is in a wheelchair then things like cross country running will be impossible'. Whilst the fact that LSAs drew attention to the needs and requirements of individual pupils when discussing the development of an inclusive culture in PE is perhaps encouraging, it is worth noting again that ideologically, whether LSAs are aware of it or not, there is a common sense tradition (Sissel and Sheard, 2001) that expects some pupils to 'fit it' to established cultural arrangements, some of which are not inclusive.

The earlier comments also suggest that some pupils with SEN find it difficult to participate with and against pupils without SEN because of ostensibly inferior physical and cognitive capabilities. According to some LSAs, this has resulted in a culture of peer-led exclusion. LSA 125, for example, suggested: 'other pupils do not want them on their team'. LSA 216 expanded on this by suggesting: 'their [pupil's] differences tend to be highlighted [in team games] so they feel different. Other students are less tolerant in a team game… children with SEN don't get picked for teams by their peers' (LSA 216). These findings are supported by research conducted by Fitzgerald (2005) who found a process of peer-led exclusion whereby some pupils with SEN suggested that they were bypassed in certain activities, particularly in team games (during a passing move, for example), because of their seemingly inferior capabilities. An analysis of the power dynamic between pupils with and without SEN is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this study (see, for example, Fitzgerald, 2005). Nonetheless, the findings do appear to emphasise the power and influence of pupils without SEN over the extent to which an inclusive culture in PE develops. By legitimising and promoting an ideology of superiority in PE, the actions of some pupils without SEN are

shaping the culture of PE and, thus, the extent to which some pupils with SEN can have meaningful experiences in that subject. Ultimately, team games enable the more able pupils to experience and exercise a greater degree of power unless, of course, the teacher or LSA use the influence they have over lesson planning and delivery to modify or adapt the game to restrict the influence of the more able pupils. Little mention was made during the interviews of what is, if anything, done by PE teachers and LSAs to challenge peer-led exclusion. Future research could explore strategies that are being, and can be, used to remove opportunities for peer-led exclusion.

The power of some pupils is further demonstrated by the fact that their actions, whether knowingly or not, are contributing to the subordination of some pupils with SEN. According to LSA 171, some pupils with SEN are blamed 'for letting the team down' which makes them 'feel useless'. Similarly, LSA 340 suggested that some pupils with SEN 'get laughed at' because they cannot perform a physical task during a team games as well as their age peers. The use of a discourse of subordination, coupled with low social acceptance because of the prevalence of an ideology of physical and cognitive inferiority can increase the risk of victimisation and result in higher levels of bullying (Carter and Spencer, 2006; Monchy *et al*., 2004). Research by both Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) and Fitzgerald (2005) identify processes of bullying by peers, which usually manifests in name-calling and the allocation of outsider status (Elias and Scotson, 1994). The fact that some LSAs are aware of these issues is, again, further indication of the power of some pupils given that little appears to have been done to challenge the relative pervasiveness of this overt form of subordination. It could be argued that a lack of action on the part of LSAs is contributing to its legitimisation.

Another reason why some LSAs consider team games to be less inclusive is because they: 'cannot work with individual pupils' (LSA 11). LSA 15 expanded this point by explaining that team games are 'harder to control and get involved. I can't help the pupils during games because it would disrupt the flow of the game'. These findings echo comments made by PE teachers in research conducted by Maher (2010b), Morley *et al*. (2005) and Smith (2004) who suggested that they found it difficult to support those pupils who most needed it during team games without having to interrupt the game. Similarly, there was concern expressed that any intervention in team games would disrupt their flow and, potentially, have a negative impact on the development and achievement of the more able pupils (Maher, 2010b; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004). Here, teachers and LSAs appear to be prioritising those pupils without SEN, rather than those who require additional support to be included. Nonetheless, it seems that PE lessons are more inclusive when LSAs and teachers can tailor the activity to suit individual needs and requirements and can provide extra support to those who most need it.

## *Conclusion*

The aim of this chapter was to analyse the extent to which an inclusive culture in PE exists. Most SENCO conceptualisations of inclusion reflected a social ideology because they focused on how social arrangements can be made during planning and delivery to ensure that pupils with SEN have the same learning experiences as their age peers. Emphasis was often placed on the importance of identifying the specific needs and requirements of pupils with SEN as a way of ensuring that an inclusive culture develops in PE. SENCO comments cast light on the power of teachers because it is the actions of teachers that determine, by degrees, the inclusivity of school lessons, PE or otherwise. Thus, it becomes ever more important that

PE teachers understand the conceptual basis of inclusion so that it can inform the ways in which they shape the inclusive norms and values of their subject. However, there may be some degree of reluctance to initial significant structural and ideological change given that there is an expressed concern amongst SENCOs and LSAs that attempts to develop an inclusive culture by catering for the needs of the least able pupils will have a negative impact on the 'progress' of other pupils.

There was an expectation on some pupils to perform duties associated with a learning activity, separate from those performed by the majority of the class, because the pupil cannot assimilate into dominant cultural traditions and practices of PE, which can go some way to increasing marginalisation and also means that they are not receiving the same learning experiences as their age peers. For some SENCOs there was an acknowledgement that it was not always possible to cultivate a wholly inclusive PE culture. Therefore, according to SENCOs it was only when all other options were exhausted that pupils were withdrawn from PE. The power of some pupils with SEN was illustrated by the fact that some refused to go to PE. Here, it appears that some pupils are rejecting the common sense cultural arrangements set out by the National Curriculum, which has resulted in some SENCOs succumbing to the wants and wishes of the pupil. Indeed, it must be remembered that individuals are not passive actors who will wilfully accept hegemonic ideology and contribute to the (re)production of the status quo. Instead, they are able to accept, modify or reject ideology based on their own values and previous experiences because power is a structural and dynamic characteristic of all human relationships (Elias, 1978; Hargreaves, 1986). At the same time, the scope of the power of pupils with SEN was illustrated by the fact that their actions did not result in the alterations to changing room procedures that may have enticed them to participate in PE.

Many LSAs suggested that inclusion is achieved when pupils with SEN share the same learning space and interact with pupils without SEN. Whilst the comments do point towards a genuine ideological commitment to the cultivation of an inclusive culture in PE, it must be noted that affording a pupil access to the same curriculum and learning opportunities as their age peers does not mean that the curriculum will be inclusive. The process of segregated education, whether within a mainstream context or not, was something heavily criticised by LSAs because some pupils with SEN can be identified as different and assigned outsider status.

LSAs found team games more difficult to include pupils with SEN. Justification for such a claim was underpinned by an individual ideology because emphasis was often placed on reasons why pupils with SEN cannot assimilate into the established cultural tradition of team games. For some LSAs the 'type' of activity was not an issue. Instead, emphasis was placed on the limitations of the pupils. Whilst the fact that LSAs draw attention to the needs and requirements of individual pupils when discussing the development of an inclusive culture in PE is perhaps encouraging, it is worth noting again that there is a common sense tradition that expects some pupils to 'fit it' to established cultural arrangements, some of which are not inclusive. It appears that PE lessons are more inclusive when LSAs and teachers can tailor the activity to suit individual needs and requirements and can provide extra support to those who most need it. The next chapter, which is the final chapter of the findings and discussion, will examine the development and distribution of SEN resources and information in order to understand how this influences the (inclusive) culture of PE.

# Chapter Eight:

# The development and distribution of SEN resources and information

*Introduction*

The aim of the chapter is to analyse the development and distribution mechanisms of SEN resources and information to see how PE fairs in this regard *vis-à-vis* other subjects. It strives to understand the resources (for example, specialist equipment and LSAs) and information (for example, Statements of SEN and individual education plans (IEPs)) available to PE because these mechanisms of cultural (re)production can determine, by degrees, the extent to which teachers and LSAs have the support and guidance to cultivate an inclusive culture in PE (see, for example, Thomas and Smith, 2009).

*SENCO views on the allocation of SEN resources*

The web survey asked SENCOs to identify any subjects that they perceived to be prioritised in their school when it comes to the allocation of SEN resources. Sixty-seven per cent of those who responded rated English as the highest priority, 55 per cent rated mathematics as of the highest priority and 38 per cent rated science the highest priority. The disparity between science (ranked third) and information and communications technology (ICT) (ranked fourth) was notable, with only 10 per cent of SENCOs suggesting that ICT is of the highest priority in their school. Of particular interest to this study is that 8 per cent of SENCOs rank PE as

one of the highest priorities, which means that overall, SENCOs perceive PE to rank eighth out of 11 subjects in a hierarchy of SEN resource priority. Only languages, religious education and art, according to the SENCOs, receive fewer SEN resources. When it comes to SEN resources, it appears to be a common cultural tradition (Barker, 2008) to subordinate PE in favour of most other subjects in many schools. That is to say, it is part of the cultural terrain in many schools to restrict the extent to which subject teachers and LSAs have SEN resources available to cultivate an inclusive culture in PE. In turn, given that power relates to the ability of a group or individual to achieve their objectives and restrict, directly or indirectly, the actions of others (Elias, 1978; Hargreaves, 1986; Murphy *et al*., 2000), power seems to reside more with teachers of core subjects when compared to those who teach PE because they have greater control over SEN resources which will increase their chances of achieving the inclusion objectives that relate to their subject.

When asked why some subjects were prioritised over others, the most frequent response given by SENCOs casts light on the cultural authority (Jones, 2006) of government because of its educational targets and the establishment of school performance tables. One SENCO articulated a view held by many in that: 'Core subjects are prioritised, especially English and mathematics, as these are the subjects which schools are rated on' (SENCO 30). Similarly, another SENCO suggested that: 'The SMT [senior management team] will always want these areas [English and mathematics] prioritised because of the accountability of schools for exam grades in these areas and the positive knock on effect in other subjects' (SENCO 105). Whilst the first comment emphasises the power of government because of its ability to ensure that its educational objectives are achieved through the alignment of school and national targets, the second comment suggested that SMT do have some influence within the school hierarchy

when it comes to the allocation of SEN resources. The extent to which SMT has the power and cultural authority (Jones, 2006) to resist government influence and determine independently how SEN resources are allocated and why some subjects are prioritised over others may be a topic worthy of deeper research but is beyond the scope of this project. Future research will be required that poses these questions to head teachers and SMT which does, in some schools, include SENCOs. Nonetheless, even though the power to control budgets and set wages, curriculum, and performance targets has been devolved to some schools, and further plans are underway to extend this to all schools (DfE, 2011b) because of the perceived decline in educational standards in Britain (DfE, 2010), SENCOs in this research suggested that it is the British government who appear to be one of the most powerful groups insofar as it is their standards agenda that emphasises academic attainment in so-called 'core' subjects that is constraining SMTs and SENCOs to allocate resources in ways that may help them to achieve the British government's educational objectives.

Many of the SENCOs in this study suggested that a hegemonic educational ideology relating to academic achievement in English, mathematics and science pervades much of their school and SEN department, which has been diffused by government through the discourse underpinning mechanisms of cultural (re)production such as policy documents (see, for example, DfE, 2010, 2012a) and is supported and (re)produced through the actions of SMT. From the evidence provided in this section, the prioritisation of such subjects appears as common culture – the way things are (Barker, 2008) – amongst SMT and, for that matter, SENCOs. Indeed, many of the SENCOs in this study appeared to have accepted and are actively promoting this educational ideology. When asked if they agreed with this prioritisation of subjects, 78 per cent said yes, whilst 22 per cent answered no. Additionally,

the survey data provided no evidence to suggest that any of the 22 per cent of SENCOs who did not agree with this prioritisation had used their power and influence within the cultural formation of their school to actively resist it. It is only when established cultural arrangements are challenged that common sense assumptions relating to the distribution of SEN resources, for example, are questioned and have the potential to change. Thus, if it is to believed that the control and use of SEN resources is important for cultivating an inclusive culture in PE (Thomas and Smith, 2009), more needs to be done by SMT and SENCOs to ensure that teachers and LSAs have the resources required to provide meaningful experiences of PE for pupils with SEN.

In terms of explaining why they support the prioritisation of English, mathematics and science, one SENCO asserted that: 'If we do not equip students with basic numeracy and literacy skills they cannot access much of the curriculum or be prepared for the demands of adult life' (SENCO 27). These comments echo those made by many other SENCOs insomuch as the most frequently cited justification for prioritising English and mathematics related to an ideological belief that success in these subjects forms the foundation of learning and, thus, would enable access to all other areas of the curriculum. Another SENCO supported this by suggesting that: 'If you can't read and write you'll struggle to access other subjects' (SENCO 56). Again, these views appear to support the hegemonic educational ideology of the government (see, for example, DfE, 2010), which promotes attainment in literacy and numeracy. It is important to qualify that this study is not attempting to proselytise by arguing that this is an inappropriate use of resources. In fact, some SENCOs in this study argued that it is the most appropriate way of allocating scarce resources as: 'It has to happen due to limited funds' (SENCO 52), but this prioritisation of resources could have a negative impact

on the inclusion of pupils with SEN in subordinated subjects, such as PE. While much equipment designed to aid the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools (computer software packages and hearing loops, for example) can be purchased from the funds controlled and designated by the SMT and/or SENCO and utilised across most of the curriculum, much of the equipment required in PE is subject-specific; for example: larger, softer and/or brighter balls (Thomas and Smith, 2009). The financial burden, thus, often befalls the PE department, which could potentially constrain the development of an inclusive PE culture. One outcome of the financial strain placed on some PE departments was that organisations such as the Youth Sports Trust (YST) and Sainsbury's have provided PE equipment in an attempt to facilitate inclusion (YST, 2013).

Although not explicitly identified in the survey, the power and influence of parents over the allocation of SEN resources and the development of SEN provision as part of attempts to cultivate an inclusive culture in schools was a key theme that emerged from SENCO interviews. SENCO L, for instance, suggested: 'Parents are part of every decision that is made and every conversation that is had… I would never ever hold a meeting without a parent...'. While many SENCOs explicitly used the term 'consultation' when describing the relationship and power dynamic with parents, many of the comments both implicitly and explicitly indicate that the power to decide appropriate provision resides mostly with SENCOs: 'Obviously, there are times when we have to inform them [parents] as opposed to consulting with them because, at the end of the day, it's our professional judgement as to what a pupil needs rather than asking the parents what they think' (SENCO I). Similarly, SENCO K suggested: 'It might occasionally be that you have to make a decision and then tell the parents about the decision' (SENCO K). The rationale for having cultural authority

(Jones, 2006) over this important mechanism of cultural (re)production – that is, the development and implementation of SEN provision – according to SENCO K, is legitimised through their knowledge and educational experiences (Williams, 1981) of SEN. Therefore, the importance of ensuring that SENCOs understand the cultural complexities of PE becomes more apparent. One potential outcome of involving parents in every decision is that the mechanism of inclusive cultural (re)production may slow considerably thus meaning that pupils, teachers and LSAs have to wait longer for SEN provision to have a meaningful impact in lessons. Now, from the data available it is difficult to say whether the consultation that does occur informs the ways in which SENCOs endeavour to shape an inclusive culture in school, or if the consultation is tokenistic. More research is required that analyses the extent to which the wants and wishes of parents influence of the actions of SENCOs. Only then will a more adequate assessment of the power of parents over the SEN norms and values of schools be achieved.

Some SENCOs claimed that parents empower them through the freedom they are given to make decisions: 'The majority of the parents trust us as a school that we know what we're doing. They don't expect us to be on the phone all the time or saying we've had to change something slightly' (SENCO C). SENCO K echoed this claim by suggesting: 'Some of the parents that I know very well they've said to me: If you have to make a decision then do it because I know you'll do the right thing'. Here, it appears that a perception of trust vindicates the monopolisation of decision-making and thus the power of SENCOs. Therefore, if SENCOs want to continue to exercise their influence over the development and allocation of SEN provision and resources, they need to ensure that parents (continue to?) trust their judgement. The development and maintenance of a trusting relationship may also ensure that

mechanisms of inclusive cultural (re)production run smoothly because parents can actively attempt, with varying degrees of success, to influence the inclusive norms and values of school if they choose to do so.

Other SENCOs were more adamant about the importance of and justification for consulting parents. SENCO J, for example, suggested: 'If there are any concerns from parents we don't dismiss them and say it's not important. It is important to them because it is their child, and they need an answer to whatever the problem is'. This comment identified the importance of parents being a part of the mechanism through which SEN information flows so that they can ask relevant questions relating to their children. In contrast, SENCO L suggested that consultation allows parents to take a more active, than reactive, role because: [parents are the] '… people who know the child best. We have the child for 6 hours of the day whereas they have them for 18 hours a day'. From the comments made by these SENCOs, then, consultation with parents is promoted because they are the ones who best understand the needs and requirements of the pupils that SENCOs endeavour to include. Therefore, parents can – and, according to some SENCOs, should – play an important role in attempts to cultivate an inclusive culture in all subjects, including PE.

The power of parents over attempts to cultivate an inclusive culture in PE is illustrated by the following comments:

> … in the past we had a complaint [from parents] because we colour-group our students in key stage three according to ability [in PE] and our smallest group only consisted of 12 students. Here, we had parents saying, you know, when it comes to team activities it's very restricting so we've tried to address that. This year we've changed it all around so that there's more of a balance between the groups so that

team sports can take place that are more competitive rather than just you six versus us six, which was very static with the same people (SENCO B).

This comment is the only one that explicitly details how the parents have bonded together to resist the established cultural arrangements in PE. The collective actions of this group who, according to the evidence provided above, have varying degrees of influence over SEN cultural norms and values in schools, has resulted in pedagogical change in PE. Although not specific to PE, there are other examples of parents resisting established educational customs through voicing disagreement or disapproval during meetings. For example, SENCO L suggested:

> They [parents] could disagree with something at a meeting and we could discuss it and we could say: that obviously isn't the way forward so we need to change that and we need to make sure that the way forward is taking all things into consideration.

For this SENCO, it appears that the decision making process is often a collaborate effort between SENCO and parents. Unfortunately, the extent to which subject teachers and LSAs are part of this initial consultation is difficult to say. All that can be said is that they were not mentioned when the interview focus turned in this direction.

Some SENCOs were quick to mention the importance of involving the pupils themselves in meetings: 'I do have those conversations with parents but I also like to have them with the child because I think it's important that they feel listen to rather than having all these adults making decisions about their education' (SENCO C). Some attempt appears to be made here to empower pupils by involving them in the decision making process. The extent to which the

pupil can influence the course and dynamic of the meeting and, thus, the decisions that are made is hinted at when SENCO C expanded of the topic:

> Sometimes the children will disagree with what the parents want. Sometimes they disagree with what I feel is right but only by working together can we come to a compromise. Everyone's got to be on board with the education of a pupil and if anyone isn't engaged then that's where we come across difficulties.

The power of some pupils with SEN is illustrated by the claim that compromises have to be made if the pupil does not accept the decisions of SENCOs. The extent to which pupils influence the decision-making process is difficult to say with the evidence available. Perhaps, 'compromise' involves SENCOs endeavouring to minimise the level of pupil resistance so that, ultimately, their wants and wishes are achieved. Indeed, comments made by SENCO H suggested that meetings with pupils are useful in that they allow SENCOs to: 'Work out what the child thinks is best, and if what the child thinks is wrong then you have to negotiate so the child does work with the plan that you've put in place'. Similarly, SENCO K stated: 'If you want to get them [pupils] to cooperate with you they need to be involved'. For these two SENCOs, and SENCO I, ideological leadership and cultural authority (Jones, 2006) over SEN provision is maintained through ensuring that pupils accept decisions already made. In short, the extent to which the decision making process is a collaborative effort between SENCO, parents and pupil may be minimal with power skewed towards SENCOs and, to a lesser extent, parents. The next section analyses the allocation of SEN resources – which, it should again be noted, includes LSAs – from the perspective of LSAs who are perhaps more aware of the impact of resources on the experiences of pupils with SEN given that they can and often do play an integral part in shaping an inclusive culture in subjects as key deliverers.

*LSA views on the allocation of SEN resources*

When asked which subjects are prioritised in their school *vis-à-vis* the allocation of SEN resources, most LSAs confirmed the findings from the SENCO survey by highlighting the hegemonic status of English, maths and science. Sixty-eight per cent of those who responded rate English as of the highest priority, 67 per cent rate maths as of the highest priority, and 58 per cent rate science as of the highest priority. Again, the importance attributed to English, maths and science when compared to all other subjects is reflected in the fact that the disparity between science (ranked third) and information and communications technology (ICT) (ranked fourth) is notable, with only 14 per cent of LSAs suggesting that ICT is of the highest priority in their school. Six per cent of LSAs rank PE as one of the highest priorities, meaning that overall LSAs perceive PE to rank ninth out of eleven subjects, thus indicating a hierarchy of cultural values (Willis, 1980). These findings further support the claim made earlier that, according to SENCOs and LSAs, the subordination of PE is common culture in that it is part of the actual grounded terrain of practice, representation and custom (Hall, 1981) in many schools in North-West England when it comes to the allocation of SEN resources.

When asked why they thought some subjects were prioritised over others, the most frequent response echoed comments made by some SENCOs because an ideological belief relating to how English and maths in particular form the foundation of learning, which would enable pupils with SEN to access all other areas of the curriculum, was present:

> Because pupils with SEN require more support, the subjects are more important in enabling pupils to access other areas of the curriculum. For example, if they can improve their English, they will find the humanities easier (LSA 111).

Similarly, LSA 53 suggested: 'Because you need English and reading to help you in other subjects'. Again, this view appears rather student-focused because it emphasises how so-called 'core' subjects can enable pupils to develop and achieve success in other subjects, which may exclude PE because of its more physical nature. What is not acknowledged here, possibly because of a lack of awareness and/or understanding, is the role that physical movement can play in the learning process, particularly for those pupils with learning difficulties (Dennison and Dennison, 1989). Research conducted by Castelli, Hillman, Buck and Erwin (2007) suggests that a higher level of aerobic fitness has a positive impact on cognitive performance in English (reading) and mathematics, the two subjects that schools and government appear to prioritise. The increased investment of resources in PE, therefore, may help schools and government to increase the academic output of pupils with and without SEN to the levels that they so obviously desire.

The second most frequent reason stated by LSAs for prioritising English, maths and science related to external drivers in the form of government targets and league tables:

> Core subjects… seem to be deemed more important. They are very target driven and the GCSEs are needed both by the pupils to get onto a college course and for the school to maintain a place in the top 25 per cent of schools in the country (LSA 28).

Again, it appears that government is one of the most powerful groups involved in shaping SEN norms and values in schools because it is their standards agenda which is informing, to varying degrees, the ways in which schools distribute SEN resources. The extent to which the British Government has cultural authority because of its ownership and control over ideological and cultural (re)production (Jones, 2006) in schools may be difficult to say with

the evidence available. Nonetheless, it does seem that many schools are acting as cultural distribution mechanisms (Barker, 2008; Hargreaves and Macdonald, 2000), even ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 1971), by ensuring that the demands of the standards agenda are being met and the importance attributed to core subjects is firmly established and deeply rooted in school culture. This educational ideology is something that is likely to be reinforced, rather than challenged, in light of calls by the British Government to further subordinate the number of 'vocational' qualifications (BTEC PE, for example) with only the 'highest quality qualifications' included in new performance tables (DfE, 2012a). This educational reform was adopted in light of research suggesting that the take up of so-called 'non-academic qualifications' has increased from approximately 15,000 in 2004 to approximately 575,000 in 2010, which is apparently problematic as some higher education (HE) institutions and employers question their value (DfE, 2012a).

Government, HE institutions and employers are not the only external drivers who have the power to shape cultural norms and values in schools. Parents were also mentioned by LSAs as justification for their school prioritising English, maths and science: '[These subjects are] more important when it comes to analysing results with OFSTED, governors and parents' (LSA 79). Similarly, LSA 258 suggested that core subjects are given more SEN resources because of: 'Exam results, parental pressure and government targets'. The relationship between mainstream school staff and the parents of pupils with SEN is explored to some degree elsewhere (see, for example, Parsons *et al*., 2009). However, it is perhaps unsurprising to hear that family members are influencing what is delivered in schools given that research conducted by Fitzgerald and Kirk (2009) suggests that the lives of young disabled people in particular are subject to varying degrees of regulation and control by family. In light of  the

coalition government's promise to diffuse power to 'front-line professionals, parents and local communities' (DfE 2011a: 4), future research will be required to analyse the extent to which any policy intervention has empowered parents, and the consequences of this on the inclusion of pupils with SEN. Nevertheless, these findings again point towards a ubiquitous hegemonic educational ideology, valued and disseminated by many of the key cultural institutions that comprise political and civil society (Jones, 2006) such as government, HE institutions, the labour market, the family, and schools (Maher and Macbeth, 2014), which advocates attainment in literacy and numeracy, but not necessarily attainment in PE. There appears an ideological consensus (Nowell-Smith and Hoare, 1971) in many schools and SEN departments towards traditional notions of educational attainment in literacy and numeracy which is largely accepted, reinforced, and promoted by many LSAs and, as noted above, SENCOs. When asked if they agreed with the prioritisation of SEN resources towards these basic but important educational aims and outcomes, 71 per cent of LSAs answered 'yes' whilst 29 per cent answered 'no'.

In terms of justifying the hegemonic status of English, maths and science, one LSA asserted that:

> Students will need a basis of maths and English to go into further education and employment so it is good that these take priority. Also, a lot of subjects are formed around an understanding of maths and English such as sciences, languages, ICT etc. so it is important that they use this as a platform to help them in other subjects (LSA 157).

These comments are consistent with the view held by many LSAs in that core subjects should receive the most SEN resources because they will help students to gain the knowledge, skill,

experiences and qualifications to access further education in order to gain employment in what has become a highly competitive job market. Here, it appears that LSAs are, knowingly or not, involved in what Giroux (1999: 2) terms 'the subordination of education to the needs of capital' in that the interests of the economy (material production and capital accumulation), rather than of pupils, has taken precedence (Penney and Evans, 1997). Nonetheless, increasing SEN resources in core subjects may help to improve educational attainment because, at present, 20.2 per cent of pupils with SEN achieved the expected level at Key Stage 4 in 2010 compared to 66.2 per cent of those without SEN (DfE, 2011b). Moreover, the percentage of those pupils with SEN who gained five or more A-C GCSEs was lower than those without SEN. The same is true in relation to two A-levels or equivalents (DfE, 2011b). This disparity in educational attainment has contributed to young people with SEN being significantly less likely to be involved in full time post compulsory education than those without SEN (77 per cent of those with no SEN compared to 57 per cent for those at School Action, 54 per cent for those at School Action Plus, and 71 per cent for those with statements) (DfE, 2011b). Increased educational attainment can liberate pupils with SEN from the ideologies and common sense assumptions that form the core beliefs of the dominant order (Grioux, 1999) and, thus, challenge the reproduction of established economic relations which currently result in 13 per cent of those without SEN not in education, employment or training compared to 30 of those with SEN (DfE, 2011b).


It appears that the basis for LSAs supporting the hegemonic status of core subjects is student-centred; that is, geared towards the specific needs and requirements of the pupils, rather than external factors or drivers. Indeed, whilst some LSAs acknowledge external pressure from government to prioritise core subjects when asked why some subjects are prioritised, *their*

*reasons* for agreeing with those priorities are not necessarily aligned with the school in which they work nor the SENCOs that are employed to manage LSAs. Thus, it seems that LSAs have not wholly assimilated into the culture and established common sense values (Hall, 1981). In fact, only three per cent of LSAs mentioned external pressures in the form of performance tables and OFSTED inspections as their rationale for prioritising English, maths and science. Nonetheless, regardless of justification, this educational ideology seems to remain largely unchallenged because of an ideological consensus.

To repeat, this thesis is not suggesting that schools are inappropriately allocating SEN resources, rather that the prioritisation of dominant subjects may have a negative impact on the inclusion of pupils with SEN in subordinated subjects such as PE. Given the importance of resources to inclusive lessons, it appears that a quite radical ideological and structural change that sees the (re)distribution of SEN resources to subordinated subjects is required. Moreover, the onus will need to be placed much more squarely on PE teachers and LSAs to develop creative and innovative learning activities with the resources, however scarce, they have at their disposal. For this to occur, it is essential that LSAs (and PE teachers) have the required knowledge and information to develop cultural norms and values in PE that are inclusive. Therefore, the next sections analyse the extent to which SENCOs and LSAs believe that Statements of SEN contain information and guidelines relevant to PE.

*SENCO views on statements of SEN and PE*

The importance of appropriate Statements of SEN – and/ or the individual education plans (IEPs) which are used across many European countries including Britain (EADSNE, 2003) –

is obvious because they identify the pupil's specific learning requirements and the support they should receive to ensure that they are provided meaningful experiences of mainstream education. Therefore, Statements of SEN act as an important cultural distribution mechanism because the information they do (or do not) contain can influence the extent to which teachers and LSAs can develop an inclusive culture in PE. That is unless, of course, teachers and LSAs use the power they have as educators and deliverers to ignore the information and guidance provided in Statements and shape the norms and values of PE in other preferred ways. It is important to note that not all pupils with SEN have Statements. In Britain, the proportion of pupils with Statements stood at approximately 2.8 per cent (224,210 pupils) of the school population in 2011 (DfE, 2011b). Most pupils with SEN are supported through either 'School Action' or 'School Action Plus' (DfES, 2001). It is only when the support provided through School Action Plus is not sufficient that the school, in consultation with parents, can ask the local authority to initiate a statutory assessment and, if appropriate, provide a Statement (DfES, 2001). Therefore, the control that the education department of local government has over an important mechanism of cultural (re)production is apparent because, ultimately, they decide the support afforded individual pupils.

When asked whether they thought Statements of SEN are appropriate to a PE context, 75 per cent of SENCOs responded 'yes' and 25 per cent responded 'no'. Most SENCOs suggested that Statements are appropriate for all curricular subjects with PE being no different. SENCO 59 articulated a view held by many: 'If a student has severe mobility difficulties or dyspraxia, this would not just be an issue for PE but for general mobility and access around school and in classes'. It appears, thus, that many SENCOs do not differentiate between the cultural practices of classroom based subjects and more physically orientated subjects such as PE.

One potential limitation of this pedagogical ideology comes into sharp focus when considering the specific learning and support requirements for pupils with SEN in each cultural context. As mentioned above, computer software packages and reading material purchased and utilised across much of the curriculum to facilitate inclusion is not always relevant in PE. Therefore, those charged with assessing pupils with SEN, writing Statements, and endeavouring to meet the requirements detailed in Statements must appreciate that SEN is a dynamic and contextual concept (DfES, 2001) and, thus, the support and learning resources required to facilitate inclusion may be specific to the culture of PE.

Whilst the established cultural practices of the subject is important, it is also imperative to note that pupils with SEN are not a homogenous group in that the level of support that each pupil requires will depend to varying degrees on their special educational need(s), regardless of subject specific cultural issues. These specific needs and requirements, moreover, may change over time, thus meaning that the adequacy of the support provided will have to be monitored and reviewed regularly (DfES, 2001) to ensure that the needs of pupils are met. The importance of the 'type' of SEN in relation to the relevance of the Statement to PE is mentioned by SENCO 67: 'It depends on what the statement is for. If it is for a physical disability then it is entirely relevant to PE'. This point in particular is indicative of an ideology held by many SENCOs in that those Statements relating to movement and coordination difficulties are more appropriate for PE because of its physically orientated nature. An individual ideology (Finkelstein, 2001), therefore, seems present because emphasis has been given to the educational and functional limitations of the pupil, rather than the adequacy of the Statement or the way in which PE is planned and delivered. Inclusion,

here, appears to relate more to the extent to which pupils can assimilate into the established cultural customs of PE.

Of the 25 per cent of SENCOs who suggested that Statements of SEN are not appropriate for a PE context, the most frequent justification for this ideology relates to Statements not being specific enough or tailored towards PE. SENCO 13, for example, argued that: 'Statements do not explain how barriers in PE can be removed'. SENCO 58 suggested: 'Sometimes they [statements] are ok but many take little account of a student's needs in PE'. More specifically, many SENCOs argued that the information provided is not particularly useful in that it does not provide the necessary guidelines to help PE teachers or LSAs plan and deliver inclusive lessons. Moreover, some SENCOs suggested that the targets contained within statements do not relate to PE:

> Objectives are very academically based. Motor skill objectives do not make clear to PE department what they can do with the pupil in place of traditional PE. Statements are also often very unrealistic for the resources that are available for the PE department (SENCO 52).

On closer inspection, a picture appears to emerge wherein PE is subordinated as a curricular subject *vis-à-vis* so-called 'core' subjects when it comes to the information, support and learning targets identified in Statements of SEN. Comments made by SENCO 22 support this point when they suggested: 'We tend to concentrate on core subjects'. SENCO 71 offered a similar view: 'Rightly or wrongly, PE is lower down the pecking order for support than more academic subjects'. A lack of information can be a particular constraining influence in that research conducted elsewhere (see, for example, Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith and Green, 2004; Vickerman, 2002, 2007) suggests that many PE teachers do not have the knowledge, skill,

experience or confidence to plan and deliver inclusive lessons. Clear information and guidelines relating to inclusion in PE, thus, could go some way to challenge established cultural traditions by helping teachers plan and deliver differentiated lessons, which meet the specific learning needs of all pupils. Moreover, the inclusion of PE specific learning targets in Statements may help SENCOs, teachers and LSAs to monitor and evaluate the progress made by statemented pupils in PE to ensure that a culture of academic attainment of all pupils is created.

Criticisms of Statements of SEN, by some SENCOs, is particularly interesting given that it is SENCOs themselves who are largely responsible for identifying and assessing pupils with SEN, providing the local authority with the necessary information to write statutory statements, and managing the records and statements of pupils with SEN in their school (DCSF, 2009). Consequently, there may be queries regarding the extent to which some SENCOs are fulfilling the full remit of their role, particularly as it relates to PE. It could be, however, that the information that secondary school SENCOs receive from primary school SENCOs is inadequate. If this is the case, the importance of ensuring that Statements continue to be appropriate in all contexts through processes of monitoring and evaluation becomes especially apparent.

*LSA views on statements of SEN and PE*

Similar to the findings of the SENCO survey, 76 per cent of LSAs suggested that Statements of SEN are suitable for PE, whereas 24 per cent suggested that they are unsuitable. It is first important to note that many LSAs agreed with some SENCOs when they acknowledged that

Statements do not explicitly provide PE specific information. While many highlight this as a potential limitation of Statements of SEN, some argued that enough generic information is provided to *allow* PE teachers to develop an inclusive PE culture. For instance, LSA 326 argued: 'The statement gives broad guidelines of a pupil's needs and this combined with good knowledge of the pupil provides the basis for inclusion or providing an alternative curriculum'. Similarly, LSA 40 suggested: 'They [statements] explain the child's strengths and needs. Therefore, a correct PE programme could be put in place based on this'. It thus appears that the onus, according to some LSAs, is on PE teachers as developers of the PE programme to interpret the information and targets provided in the Statement in order to plan and deliver differentiated lessons, which cater for the needs of all pupils. The use of generic information will, to some degree, empower teachers because they will have more influence over how, if at all, an inclusive culture develops in PE. That is to say, it will be left to teachers to interpret what inclusion entails and, based on their ideology of inclusion, how inclusive the cultural practices of PE will be.

One possible limitation of expecting PE teachers to interpret potentially ambiguous Statements and plan inclusive lessons is that many PE teachers suggest that their ITT and CPD opportunities has not adequately provided them with the knowledge, skill, experience and confidence to include pupils with SEN in PE (Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith and Green, 2004; Vickerman, 2002, 2007). Thus, one possible reason why PE teachers are so critical of Statements of SEN (Smith and Green, 2004) is because they do not explicitly relate to PE. That is, they do not detail specifically how to include pupils with SEN, nor do they provide exact learning targets that relate to PE. Hence, a lack of information, together with inadequate

knowledge, skill and experience, may restrict the extent to which PE teachers can cultivate an inclusive PE culture, which may have a negative impact on pupil experience of PE.

Much like SENCOs, some LSAs do not differentiate between classroom based subjects and PE in that they suggested that Statements are appropriate across the entire curriculum. For example, LSA 234 suggested: 'I believe that statements are useful for every subject, including PE… For example, pupils with autism will need advanced notification of a change in sport'. Similarly, LSA 295 suggested: 'They [statements] should be suitable across the whole curriculum'. In fact, LSA 187 is more explicit than most in their inability to differentiate between the significance of context: 'I don't understand why statements would be unsuitable for PE'. These comments, again, are interesting in that some LSAs do not seem to appreciate that SEN is a contextual concept. It is worth noting, though, that the number of LSAs who did not differentiate between learning environments was far fewer than the number of SENCOs. This is perhaps because LSAs are better placed to assess the specific learning requirements of some pupils with SEN as key facilitators of inclusion at the delivery level.

Some LSAs suggested that Statements of SEN are suitable for PE simply because they identify a need for a LSA to support the pupil in that context: 'Specialist equipment can be offered and TA support offered if necessary. Then, PE teachers can plan accordingly' (LSA 240). In a similar vein, LSA 250 suggested: 'Yes [statements are suitable for PE]. If the student has physical impairments which need TA [teaching assistant] support, that is stated'. Here, it is important to note that some PE teachers and, for that matter, some pupils with SEN

view the presence of LSAs in PE lessons as having a detrimental impact on the learning and social interaction of pupils with SEN (Atkinson and Black, 2006; Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2003a, 2003b; Morley *et al.*, 2005; Smith and Green, 2004), which is concerning given that many pupils with SEN consider the social element of PE as being one of the main reasons for taking part (Atkinson and Black, 2006). Therefore, despite the fact that LSAs are employed as a conduit to the inclusion of pupils with SEN, one consequence of their presence in PE lessons is that they could do more to fortify, rather than breakdown, social and cultural barriers between pupils with and without SEN. Nevertheless, whilst LSA support may be highlighted, there appears a general perception that Statements of SEN do not necessarily help PE teachers and LSAs to plan and deliver differentiated lessons.

Similar to the SENCO findings, some LSAs suggested that Statements of SEN are not suitable for a PE context because they: 'Appear to be more tailored to classroom based subjects' (LSA 15). This point is supported by LSA 70 who argued: 'Statements are often based on the academic side of the pupil not the practical side'. Here, there appears to be an awareness of the importance of the cultural context in relation to differential learning needs and requirements, which is qualified thus:

> Many SEN statements outline the issues and problems a pupil has with understanding instructions or reading/copying information from the board or the ways a pupil can best learn. In PE the learning environment is vastly different and there are many other contributing factors that can have an effect on an individual i.e. the sports hall, swimming pool or playing fields are vastly different teaching environments with varying acoustics, weather conditions, numbers involved, seating arrangements, movement, etc. Although there may be little writing for an SEN pupil to be concerned with they still have to be able to pick up and understand instructions and then try to complete quite complex skills in front of others. Many are able to manage and can be successful but those that don't usually have no LSA support (LSA 22).

When explored in more detail, the perceived inadequacy of Statements of SEN relates again to a lack of PE specific information that can be used by both PE teachers and LSAs to plan and deliver differentiated lessons: '… [Statements] rarely offer any advice about including pupils… in PE lessons' (LSA 144). According to some LSAs, the inadequacy of Statements of SEN, together with the insufficient knowledge, skill, experience and confidence of some PE teachers, has meant that some LSAs: 'Deliver a 'mini lesson' themselves rather than the students partaking alongside their fellows' (LSA 268). This finding supports research conducted by Fitzgerald (2005) and Smith (2004) in that some of the PE teachers in their studies suggest that it is not unusual for some pupils with SEN to be removed from a PE lesson and, perhaps more importantly, their age-peers, to do other activities if the pupil is unable to integrate themselves into what had been planned for the rest of the class. The power of some LSAs is thus apparent given their influence over the lived educational experiences (Williams, 1981) of some pupils with SEN.

For some pupils with SEN their limited experiences of the breadth of activities offered to all pupils is said to have a pernicious effect on their confidence and self-esteem in PE specifically, and school life more generally (Fitzgerald, 2006; Fitzgerald *et al*., 2003a, 2003b). For example, Fitzgerald (2005) argues that some pupils with SEN regularly experienced varying degrees of social isolation in PE when they participated in separate activities, which often had a detrimental effect on their social interaction with pupils without SEN. So, for some pupils it appears that mainstream PE lessons are doing more to normalise rather than challenge segregation. What is more, some pupils with SEN are seemingly being taught by LSAs who are not qualified to do so, which may have a negative impact on their achievement in PE. Hence, the importance of ensuring that Statements of SEN clearly and

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concisely include PE specific information and targets perhaps becomes paramount if schools plan to enable pupils with SEN to achieve success across the whole curriculum.

*Conclusion*

The chapter sought to analyse the development and distribution mechanisms of SEN resources and information to see how PE fairs in this regard *vis-à-vis* other subjects. The findings highlight the hegemonic status of English, maths and science when it comes to the allocation of SEN resources, which includes LSA support. PE appears particularly disadvantaged in the hierarchy of subject priority. Whilst most SENCOs and LSAs support and often reinforce the hegemonic status of English, maths and science, their justification for an ideological consensus is not necessarily aligned with each other, or the priorities of their school. There is, nevertheless, emphasis placed by both groups on the power and influence of government, employers and parents through the pressure they place on schools to prioritise core subjects.

Most SENCOs and, for that matter, some LSAs, suggested that Statements of SEN, which are an important mechanism of inclusive cultural (re)production in schools, are appropriate for all curricular subjects with PE being no different. It appears, thus, that some of those who play an integral part in shaping the inclusive cultural norms and values in mainstream secondary schools do not differentiate between classroom-based subjects and more physically orientated subjects such as PE, which could have a negative impact on the experiences of pupils with SEN in PE because of the contextual and dynamic nature of SEN. The fact that many Statements do not provide PE specific information or learning targets which teachers

and LSAs can use collaboratively to plan and deliver inclusive lessons, and monitor and evaluate the progress made by statemented pupils in PE, is perceived as a constraining influence on the cultivation of an inclusive culture in PE, according to LSAs here and PE teachers in research conducted elsewhere (see, for example, Smith and Green, 2004).

# Conclusion and recommendations

## *Introduction*

The overall aim of the research project was to use the key concepts of cultural studies – Gramsci's concept of hegemony in particular – to analyse the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream secondary PE from the perspective of SENCOs and LSAs. This chapter provides a summary of the main themes and issues of the research project and draws together the key findings. The potential implications that the findings of the research may have on future policy and research relating to education generally and special education and physical education specifically are then discussed. Recommendations will also be offered that aim to assist those who are committed to ensuring that an inclusive culture develops in PE. It must be noted, at the outset, that the implications and recommendations are provided not from the position of what *should be done* but, rather, from *what is possible* should those who have access to key decision making positions in government, education and schools be interested in cultivating an inclusive culture in PE. The Conclusion and Recommendations is structured as follows: role conceptualisations; training and qualifications; the (inclusive) culture of PE; and SEN resources and information.

## *Role conceptualisation*

The research discovered that the reasons for becoming a SENCO or LSA were many and often quite diverse. For SENCOs, the main rationale related to a desire to work with pupils with SEN in order to increase the educational attainment and life chances of those pupils. In

contrast, none of the LSAs explicitly mentioned a desire to help pupils as their motive for becoming a LSA, which is interesting given that many offered a student-focused perspective when discussing their role. Ideological justification for LSAs related more to how the role would help them to achieve a further career ambition, usually a route into teaching, or because it was compatible with other social roles, particularly that of a parent. Whilst a lack of evidence relating to the early socialisation of SENCOs and LSAs made it difficult to determine how these social and educational ideologies gained salience, the use of the cultural studies perspective meant that an ideological commitment to endeavouring to cultivate an inclusive culture in PE from both groups was identified, a findings that is thus far absent from the literature available that analyses the views and experiences of SENCOs and LSAs. Further research is required to explore how the early socialising experiences of those involved in inclusive education has shaped their views of special educational needs and inclusion. These findings are important because those involved in recruiting and training SENCOs and LSAs such as schools and universities need to understand what motivates them so that training courses and opportunities can be developed to (1) incentivise these groups; and (2) ensure that their commitment to cultivating an inclusive culture in all subjects, including PE, has an ideological basis and is aligned to the inclusion objectives of the school to increase the likelihood that they will be achieved. Indeed, as demonstrated throughout the forgone sociological analysis, attempts to cultivate an inclusive culture in schools involves many people in different roles with varying degrees of power, and the extent to which these people are committed to, or opposed to, shaping the inclusive norms and values of education will play a crucial role in determining its success (Elias, 1978). One way in which these research findings could filter through to schools is via the benchmark standards and learning outcomes of the Masters level National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination (Stationary Office, 2009) and the National Occupational Standards (NOS) in Supporting

Teaching and Learning and the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) unit(s) drawn from those Standards (TDA, 2011).

The research further found that the role of both SENCOs and LSAs is extremely diverse within and across schools which suggests that SMT, who are the ones who determine the role of SENCOs in particular (DfES, 2001), have the capacity and flexibility to shape the roles to meet the specific needs and requirements of their schools. The inherent flexibility of the guidelines offered by government (DfES, 2001) is perhaps one useful outcome of attempts to empower schools because this research found that it allows SMTs to ensure that SENCOs and LSAs are able to address the sometimes school-specific inclusion issues, a point that is absent from the current literature relating to the deployment of SENCOs and LSAs. It could be argued that a rigid, government-orchestrated national role of SENCO and LSA that is routinely monitored would restrict the extent to which these groups could shape an inclusive culture in schools given that schools often differ in their organisational and operational structure, SEN policies and strategies, SEN resources and the number of pupils with SEN (EADSNE, 2003). Another significant finding of the research was that the majority of SENCOs are not a part of the SMT despite the ideology and discourse pervading government policy suggesting that they should be (Education and Skills Committee, 2006), which many SENCOs believe has constrained their ability to shape SEN norms and values of subjects like PE because of a lack of access to this key decision making position. This finding is important because it gives government and schools an idea of the number of SENCOs who are part of SMT and the impact of being a part of SMT on the influence of SENCOs over inclusion generally, and in subordinated subjects such as PE. If government and schools really want SEN to be an integral part of the culture of educational institutions, this research suggests that

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it is essential that SENCO is part of SMT because they are the inclusion experts and, thus, are most aware of how SEN should be considered *vis-à-vis* mechanisms of cultural (re)production such as school policy and resource distribution. It will be interesting to see if government and/or schools act on these findings and place SENCO and, thus, SEN and inclusion, at the heart of the culture of schools.

Despite no LSAs mentioning a desire to help pupils with SEN as the main reason for their choice of occupation, a cultural studies analysis found that the ideological basis for the role and purpose of LSAs, according to LSAs, related to the support they give pupils with SEN in subjects specifically and the school more generally. There is some mention of the way in which they can help teachers to create an inclusive education culture through the learning and teaching process, but the emphasis is mostly on how they can support pupils, although the two are not mutually exclusive. So, while government vaguely outline the role of LSAs (DfES, 2000), this research has discovered, for the first time, what LSAs *say* they do in PE and *their* rationale for doing it. SENCOs, on the other hand, see LSAs as more of a conduit between teacher and pupil rather than pupil and learning. Indeed, much of the emphasis was placed on the way in which LSAs can help the teacher to teach the pupils. Another unique finding of this research project is that there appears to be a lack of ideological alignment when it comes to conceptualising the role of LSA. Therefore, in order to ensure that there is clarity, this research calls for clearer lines of communication within and across schools. LSA training and departmental briefings are but two mechanisms that can be used to clarify the role of LSA, foster a collaborative relationship and align inclusion objectives. Otherwise, LSAs could use the influence they have over the culture of PE, as key drivers of the subject at

the delivery level, to shape the norms and values in ways that hinder rather than help SENCOs.


*Training and qualifications*

The research project sought to analyse the training and qualifications of SENCOs and LSAs in order to evaluate if they are adequately equipped with the knowledge, skills and experience to cultivate an inclusive culture in PE, something that has been neglected in much of the research currently available. The subordination of PE as a curricular subject is reflected in the fact that most SENCOs suggested that they have not had any PE specific training for their role despite the majority having received some form of training. In addition, a number of SENCOs seemed to be dismissive of this need, directing it towards LSAs and PE teachers. These findings build on research conducted elsewhere (see, for example, Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004) by questioning the ability of SENCOs to advise PE teachers, provide staff inclusion training, and manage the records and statements of pupils, at least in a PE context, because many of the challenges that those involved in shaping an inclusive PE culture must endeavour to overcome are specific to that subject because of its more physical nature (DfES, 2001; Maher, 2013; Maher and Macbeth, 2014). Focusing on practical aspects of PE as a unique learning environment will help SENCOs to improve their practice and clarify their role as it relates to PE and may change the established cultural arrangement which sees PE teachers neglected by SENCOs when it comes to support and guidance (Audit Commission, 2002; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith and Green, 2004). The implications here are that there needs to be a clear understanding regarding responsibility and an effective working relationship between SENCOs, LSAs and PE teachers. Convincing current SENCOs that PE is an

important part of their role that is worthy of specific training may, given the findings of this research, be a difficult task because of its subordinate status when it comes to a hierarchy of subject priority. Convincing those who have the power to influence the development and delivery of SENCO training courses such as government and universities to focus on PE as a relatively unique learning environment that requires special focus and consideration may be even more challenging. Therefore, the onus may be on schools specifically, and PE departments in particular, to actively endeavour to ensure that *they* use their influence within their school's power structure to foster a collaborative and productive relationship with SENCOs. There is a research opportunity here to explore what a PE department-initiated collaborative and productive relationship would involve.

Like SENCOs, the vast majority of LSAs have not received any PE specific training, whether that is formal training as part of national qualifications, or of a more informal nature delivered by a SENCO or PE specialist. This is despite (1) a desire expressed by some LSAs to undertake PE training; (2) an acknowledgement of the importance of such training for ensuring that an inclusive PE culture develops; and (3) the vast majority of LSAs having received some form of training as part of their role. These findings are important because they bring into question the ability of LSAs to challenge the common sense established arrangements in PE which results in pupils with SEN spending less time in PE lessons and often participating in a narrower PE curriculum when compared to their age peers (Atkinson and Black, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2005; Fitzgerald *et al*., 2003a, 2003b; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Sport England, 2001). A cultural studies analysis of the findings also identified, for the first time, a seemingly ubiquitous hegemonic educational ideology which subordinates PE as a curricular subject,

neglects it within the training opportunities that schools provide LSAs and, in turn, constrains the potential to develop an inclusive culture in PE. Given that SEN is a contextual concept, and that a more physically orientated learning environment such as PE poses different challenges for LSAs and pupils than classroom-based learning environments, it is recommended that those LSAs who are expected to support pupils with SEN in PE should be trained to do so. Many generic training programmes, according to SENCOs and LSAs in this research, have been found to be irrelevant to PE. LSAs need to gain practical experience of PE generally, and working with pupils with SEN in that subject specifically. Further research is required to identify what these training programmes should entail; what, in PE, an LSA needs to know and be able to do. There are a number of PE-specific training opportunities offered by external organisations such as the Youth Sports Trust (see, for example, YST, 2013). Therefore, further research should endeavour to explain why LSAs are unable or unwilling to access these PE-specific training opportunities as this would further increase our understanding of the ideological inclinations and constraining influences of LSAs.

Given the lack of PE training it is perhaps unsurprising to discover that the majority of LSAs believed they are not adequately equipped with the knowledge, skills or experience to include pupils with SEN in PE, which may account for the fact that one implication of a lack of PE specific training is that some LSAs are placing varying degrees of restriction upon the everyday activities of PE teachers because most are classroom-based assistants with very little PE knowledge or expertise (Smith and Green, 2004). Therefore, it is important that those who have the power to determine the role and training of LSAs, whether SENCO or SMT, use their influence to ensure that LSAs are trained to fulfil the remit of their role as it relates to PE. Otherwise, LSAs may do more to hinder rather than help attempts to shape and

inclusive culture in PE because of their influence as key deliverers at the 'sharp end' of PE. Many SENCOs agreed with the claims made by LSAs regarding their training. The research discovered that over half of SENCOs claimed that, first, the school in which they work does not provide PE specific training opportunities for LSAs and, second, that the LSAs in their school are not adequately trained to include pupils with SEN in PE. This finding fills a gap in the available research and may be surprising given that it is SENCOs who *should be* responsible for selecting, supervising and training LSAs, or ensuring that training is provided by external agents (DfES, 2001; DCSF, 2009). Questions, therefore, must be asked regarding the extent to which SENCOs are fulfilling the remit of their role as it relates to PE. If SMT are not using the power they have over cultural practices to influence the actions of SENCO, then intervention may be required from the British Government, who could introduce an accreditation system for which schools must provide plans and, subsequently, evidence to show they are committed to cultivating an inclusive culture in all subjects, including PE. Again, there is an opportunity here for future research to explore what an accreditation system may involve and to assess its feasibility.

## *The (inclusive) culture of PE*

A sociological analysis revealed that most SENCO conceptualisations of inclusion reflected a social ideology (Finkelstein, 2001) because they focused on how social arrangements can be made during the planning and delivery of lessons to ensure that pupils with SEN have the same learning experiences as their age peers. Emphasis was often placed on the importance of identifying the specific needs and requirements of pupils with SEN as a way of ensuring that an inclusive culture develops in PE. SENCO comments cast light on the power of

teachers because it is the actions of teachers that determine, by degrees, the inclusivity of schools lessons, PE or otherwise. Thus, it becomes ever more important that PE teachers understand the conceptual basis of inclusion so that it can inform the ways in which they shape the inclusive norms and values of their subject. However, this thesis found that there may be some degree of reluctance to initial significant structural and ideological change given that there is an expressed concern amongst SENCOs and LSAs that attempts to develop an inclusive culture by catering for the needs of the least able pupils will have a negative impact of the 'progress' of other pupils. This often resulted in some pupils with SEN being expected to perform duties associated with an established learning activity, separate from those performed by the majority of the class, because the pupil could not assimilate into dominant cultural traditions and practices of PE.

One implication of this form of social segregation and exclusion is that it can go some way to increasing the marginalisation of some pupils with SEN through being identified as 'different' and assigned outsider status (Eilas and Scotson, 1994). It also means that some pupils with SEN are not receiving the same learning experiences as their age peers. For some SENCOs there was an acknowledgement that it was not always possible to cultivate a wholly inclusive PE culture. Only when all other options were exhausted were pupils withdrawn from PE. It is duly acknowledged that all those involved in attempts to cultivate an inclusive culture in PE face a difficult task given the diversity and complexity of pupil needs. One way of addressing this issue may be to 'group' pupils in relation to ability so that pupils can participate with and against others whose learning needs require similar provision and adaptation. It is important to note, as many of the LSAs did, that this form of 'setting' would occur within the same learning space so not to isolate the more or less able groups. It would

also require teachers to develop more bespoke, creative and innovative lessons so that all pupils can demonstrate some degree of 'progress', the conceptualisation and measurement of which was beyond the scope of this research project.

LSAs found team games more difficult to include pupils with SEN. Their rationale for such a claim was underpinned by an individual ideology because emphasis was often placed on reasons why pupils with SEN cannot assimilate into the established cultural traditions of team games. For some LSAs the 'type' of activity was not an issue. Instead, emphasis was placed on the limitations of the pupils. Whilst the fact that LSAs drew attention to the needs and requirements of individual pupils when discussing the development of an inclusive culture in PE is perhaps encouraging, it is worth noting again that there is a common sense tradition that expects some pupils to 'fit it' to established cultural arrangements, some of which are not inclusive. It appeared that PE lessons are more inclusive when LSAs and teachers can tailor the activity to suit individual needs and requirements and can provide extra support to those who most need it. The inclusion spectrum, which was developed by Black and Stevenson (2011), is a comprehensive tool that should be used by teachers and LSAs to plan and implement games that cater for the needs and *capitalise on the capabilities* of all pupils during team games specifically, and PE more generally.

*SEN resources and information*

The findings highlight the hegemonic status of English, maths and science when it comes to the allocation of SEN resources, something that has not previously been identified in research. PE appears particularly disadvantaged in the hierarchy of subject priority. Whilst

most SENCOs and LSAs support and often reinforce the hegemonic status of English, maths and science, the key concepts of cultural studies were used to uncover, for the first time, that their rationale for an ideological consensus is not necessarily aligned with each other, or the priorities of their school. Given that many SENCOs in this research are not members of the SMT, their ability to coordinate whole-school developments and develop provision and inclusive practice in PE is restricted because of a lack of access to power in the form of this key decision-making position. Similarly, there appeared to be a general lack of access to power for SENCOs *vis-à-vis* the control and distribution of economic and SEN resources because of the hegemony of the SMT. In many schools, it is the SMT who monopolise the economic resources, which they distribute in ways that facilitate the achievement of the British government's educational objectives, which relate to improving performance in core subjects as part of the Standards agenda (DfE, 2010, 2012a). When it comes to SEN provision, a hegemonic educational ideology that subordinates PE was uncovered as common culture, and seems not to be challenged by SENCOs in many schools. While some of the research that has come before this thesis (see, for example, Morley *et al*., 2005; Smith, 2004) has criticised the way in which SENCOs distribute SEN resources, the findings presented here suggest, for the first time, that in many schools it is SMT who should be held accountable for the resource restrictions placed on PE. Future research should analyse the impact of resource constraints on the inclusion of pupils with SEN in subordinated subjects, such as PE.

It is important to qualify that based on the evidence presented in this research project it cannot be assumed that a shift in power to SENCOs would necessarily have a positive impact on inclusion in PE. The extent to which greater power and influence for SENCOs, in terms of

decision-making and control of SEN resources, would result in them repositioning PE within the subject hierarchy, and redistributing resources accordingly, is difficult to ascertain. In fact, from the findings present here it seemed clear that some SENCOs do not regard PE as a priority, or even a subject that is or should be anything but peripheral when it comes to the inclusion agenda. Whether SENCO perspectives in this regard are unconsciously shaped by hegemonic ideology, processes and practices, or whether they play a conscious role in (re)producing these, is not yet clear. Future research should intend to explore this in more detail. There is, nevertheless, emphasis placed by both SENCOs and LSAs on the power and influence of government, employers and parents through the pressure they place on schools to prioritise core subjects. The sheer complexity of this power structure and, thus, the restrictions placed on the actions of SENCOs, is something that has only come to light through this thesis.

Most SENCOs and, for that matter, some LSAs, suggested that Statements of SEN, which are an important mechanism of inclusive cultural (re)production in schools, are appropriate for all curricular subjects with PE being no different. It appeared, thus, that some of those who play an integral part in shaping the inclusive cultural norms and values in mainstream secondary schools do not differentiate between classroom-based subjects and more physically orientated subjects such as PE, which could have a negative impact on the experiences of pupils with SEN in PE because of the contextual and dynamic nature of SEN (DfES, 2001; Maher, 2013; Maher and Macbeth, 2014). The fact that many Statements do not provide PE specific information or learning targets which teachers and LSAs can use collaboratively to plan and deliver inclusive practical lessons, and monitor and evaluate the progress made by statemented pupils in PE, has been identified as a constraining influence on the cultivation of

an inclusive culture in PE, according to LSAs here and PE teachers in research conducted elsewhere (see, for example, Smith and Green, 2004).

Given that plans are well underway in England to replace Statements of SEN with a supposedly streamlined 'single assessment process and Education, Health and Care Plan by 2014' (DfE, 2011a), it is recommended that the specific learning needs and requirements of pupils, which may be unique to PE, are considered and provided for if the government is truly to meet its ostensible commitment to providing inclusive education – which includes PE – for all pupils. Moreover, because the needs and learning requirements of pupils with SEN are fluid and dynamic, this research argues that schools and local authorities should ensure that the information and targets contained within education plans continue to be relevant in all contexts. If needs and learning requirements do change, it is important that these changes are reflected in the form of new information and targets: a continuous process of monitoring and evaluation is recommended as essential to ensure that pupils with SEN are fully included in all lessons.

The extent to which the Government would accept these recommendations, rather than seeing them as another layer of bureaucracy they aim to remove (DfE, 2011a), is difficult to say. What should be said, however, is that assessment and support mechanisms should be developed that explicitly differentiate between the learning needs and requirement of pupils with SEN in practical aspects of PE as distinct from classroom-based subjects. It is worth noting again that this research, and therefore the recommendations offered, relate to the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools in England. Further research in the form

of cross-cultural comparisons is required in order to gauge the extent to which these recommendations can be used, modified or ignored by policy makers and practitioners in other countries. Good practice *vis-à-vis* inclusion in PE in England may not necessarily equate to good practice in other countries because of social, cultural, ideological, political and economic differences. As already mentioned, differences in the organisational and operational structure of education systems, legislation, conceptualisations of special educational needs, assessment strategies, financial support and provision will all influence the extent to which pupils with special educational needs have meaningful experiences of mainstream PE in each country. Nevertheless, inclusive education is a universal right, which requires all countries to provide policy, support and resources to all educational centres to enable them to respond to, and secure the educational success of, all learners (EADSNE, 2010).

## *Conclusion*

Although it is duly acknowledged that the recommendations are not a panacea to all of the problems that those involved in shaping the inclusive culture of PE must overcome, it is argued that they will go some way to help them to limit the impact of the constraints placed on their day-to-day-activities, thus potentially providing more meaningful experiences of PE for pupils with SEN. Above all else, it is essential that future studies involve a continuous interplay of theory-guided and empirically-informed research to increase the stock of reality-congruent knowledge (Elias, 1978) relating to SEN and PE, something that has been neglected thus far in research relating to special educational needs, inclusive education and physical education. To end, it is hoped that by using cultural studies to gather and analyse the

educational ideologies and experiences of SENCOs and LSAs in relation to PE, this research project has (1) gone some way toward redressing this previously neglected aspect of academic research; (2) will stimulate further analysis of issues germane to the topic; and (3) has the potential to inform inclusion policy and practice, as it relates to the subject of PE.

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# Appendices

# Appendix One:

# SENCO survey cover letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently surveying special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) in North-West England as part of a Ph.D. project for the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan).

The purpose of the research is to gather data on the views and experiences of SENCOs in relation to the process of including pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools generally, and physical education (PE) lessons in particular. The findings of the survey will inform wider research on this topic area and have the potential to inform future policy.

The success of the project is contingent on the number of responses received. Therefore, I would be very grateful if you could take the time to complete the questionnaire via this link http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/8SGJ3NN. Your contribution is both greatly appreciated and vital. I would like to assure you that all questionnaires will be treated as confidential and anonymous. Thank you for supporting this very important project. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the research.

Yours faithfully,

Anthony Maher.

# Appendix Two:

# LSA survey cover letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently surveying key support staff involved in the process of including pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools in North-West England as part of a Ph.D. project for the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan).

The purpose of the survey is to gather data on the views and experiences of support staff in relation to the process of including pupils with SEN in mainstream schools generally, and physical education (PE) lessons in particular. The findings of the survey will inform wider research on this topic area and have the potential to inform future policy.

The success of the project is contingent on the number of responses received. Therefore, I would be very grateful if you could take the time to complete the questionnaire via this link [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/8WCVFVN](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/8WCVFVN). Your contribution is both greatly appreciated and vital. I would like to assure you that all questionnaires will be treated as confidential and anonymous. Thank you for supporting this very important project. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the research.

 Yours faithfully,

Anthony Maher.

# Appendix Three:

# Thank you and reminder email

Dear Sir/Madam,

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for completing the SEN and PE survey. The success of the project is contingent on people like you. Your contribution is both greatly appreciated and vital. If you have not yet participated in the study but would like to ensure that your voice is heard, please complete the questionnaire via this link: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/8WCVFVN. I would like to assure you again that all questionnaires will be treated as confidential and anonymous. Thank you for supporting this very important project. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the research.

 Yours faithfully,

Anthony Maher.

# Appendix Four:

# Paper version of SENCO web survey

**Personal Details:**

(1) Are you:        Male?  Female?

(2) How old are you in years? _____

(3) What was your favourite subject(s) whilst at secondary school? _____

(4) Did you enjoy physical education whilst at secondary school? Yes/ No

(5) Do you have any involvement in sport? (e.g. as a participant, administrator, spectator, volunteer, etc.) Yes/ No (go to question 7 if No)

(6) What does your involvement in sport entail? Please provide details. _____

(7) What is the postcode of the school in which you currently work? _____

(8) How long have you worked as a SENCO in your present school? _____

(9) On what basis are you currently employed as a SENCO? Full-time/Part-time

(10)        How many hours per week are you contracted to work as a SENCO? _____

(11)        In total, how long have you worked as a SENCO? _____

(12)        Please describe why you became a SENCO? _____

(13)        In general, how do you rate your enjoyment of your role as SENCO? (a) I enjoy it all of the time; (b) I enjoy it most of the time; (c) I enjoy it half of the time; (d) I rarely enjoy it; (e) I never enjoy it

(14)        What do you enjoy most about being a SENCO? _____

(15)        What do you enjoy least about being a SENCO? _____

**Role and Responsibilities**

(1) On average, how many hours per week are you EXPECTED to spend in the role of SENCO? _____

(2) Do you think that this is an adequate amount to fulfil the requirements of the role? Yes/ No

(3) How many hours do you ACTUALLY spend in the role of SENCO? _____

(4) How do you rate the amount of paperwork involved for your role as SENCO? (a) Too much; (b) Quite a lot; (c) A satisfactory amount; (d) Not much; (e) Hardly any

(5) To what extent do you think paperwork constrains your ability to fulfil the role of SENCO effectively? (a) To a great extent; (b) To some extent; (c) To a little extent; (d) To hardly any extent; (e) To no extent

(6) Together with your role as SENCO, do you have any teaching responsibilities? Yes/ No (go to question 8 if No)

(7) How many hours per week are you timetabled to teach? _____

(8) Are you a part of the senior management team? Yes/ No (go to question 11 if No)

(9) Do you think that being a part of the senior management team has helped you to perform the role of SENCO more effectively? Yes/ No

(10)      Please explain your answer to the above question _____

(11)      Do you think that you would be able to perform the role of SENCO more effectively as a member of the senior management team? Yes/ No

(12)      Please explain your answer to the above question _____

(13)      Please state any other roles and responsibilities you have at your school _____

**Support**

(1) How do you rate the support you receive for your role as SENCO from the senior

management team? (a) Very good; (b) Good; (c) Satisfactory; (d) Poor; (e) Very poor

(2) How do you rate the support you receive for your role as SENCO from the head

teacher? (a) Very good; (b) Good; (c) Satisfactory; (d) Poor; (e) Very poor

(3) What could be done by others to make your role as SENCO easier? _____

**Training and Qualifications**

(1) Have you undertaken any training for your role as SENCO? Yes/ No (go to question 3

if No)

(2) What did this training entail? _____

(3) Why do you think you have not undertaken any training? _____

(4) Have you undertaken any PE specific training for your role as SENCO? Yes/ No (go

to question 6 if No)

(5) What did this PE specific training entail? _____

(6) Why do you think you have not undertaken any PE specific training? _____

(7) Do you have any formal qualifications relating to your  role as SENCO? Yes/ No (go

to SEN Resources if No)

(8) Please state all formal qualifications relating to your role as SENCO _____

**SEN Resources**

(1) Do you think that statements of SEN are suitable for a PE context? Yes/ No (go to

question 3 if No)

(2) Why do you think that statements of SEN are suitable for a PE context?

_____

(3) Why do you think that statements of SEN are not suitable for a PE context?

_____

(4) To what extent are you responsible for the SEN budget? (a) Wholly responsible; (b) Mainly responsible; (c) Jointly responsible; (d) Partially responsible; (e) No responsibility

(5) Do you think that the SEN budget in your school is sufficient? Yes/ No (go to question 7 if Yes)

(6) Why do you think that the SEN budget in your school is not sufficient?

_____

(7) Which subjects are prioritised by your school in relation to the allocation of SEN resources? Please rate the following subjects.

| | Highest Priority | High Priority | Some Priority | Low Priority | Some Priority |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | | | | | |
| Physical Education | | | | | |
| Geography | | | | | |
| History | | | | | |
| Religious Education | | | | | |
| Design Technology | | | | | |
| Maths | | | | | |
| Art | | | | | |
| Science | | | | | |
| Languages | | | | | |
| Information and computer technology | | | | | |

(8) Why do you think that some subjects are prioritised over others?

_____

(9) Do you agree with these priorities? Yes/ No (go to question 11 if No)

(10)    Why do you agree with these priorities? _____

(11)    Why do you not agree with these priorities? _____

(12)    In general, how do you rate your working relationship with learning support

(13)    assistants (LSAs)? (a) Very good; (b) Good; (c) Satisfactory; (d) Poor; (e)

Very Poor

(14)    Does the school in which you currently work provide LSAs with training

opportunities that are PE specific? Yes/ No

(15)    Do you think that LSAs are adequately trained to include pupils with SEN in

PE lessons? Yes/ No

(16)    Overall, how do you rate your working relationship with the PE department?

(a) Very good; (b) Good; (c) Satisfactory; (d) Poor; (e) Very poor

(17)    Please use this space to highlight or expand on any issue mentioned earlier, or

to raise any other issues relating to your role as SENCO

_____

**Thank You**

Thank you for supporting this very important project. Please leave your contact information if

you are willing to participate in a follow up interview _____

# Appendix Five:

# Paper version of LSA web survey

**Personal Details:**

(1) Are you:     Male?  Female?

(2) How old are you in years? _____

(3) What was your favourite subject(s) whilst at secondary school? _____

(4) Did you enjoy physical education whilst at secondary school? Yes/ No

(5) Do you have any involvement in sport? (e.g. as a participant, administrator, spectator, volunteer, etc.) Yes/ No (go to question 7 if No)

(6) What does your involvement in sport entail? Please provide details. _____

(7) What is the postcode of the school in which you currently work? _____

(8) How long have you worked as a LSA in your present school? _____

(9) On what basis are you currently employed as a LSA? Full-time/Part-time

(10)     How many hours per week are you contracted to work as a LSA? _____

(11)     In total, how long have you worked as a LSA? _____

(12)     Please describe why you became a LSA? _____

(13)     In general, how do you rate your enjoyment of your role as LSA? (a) I enjoy it all of the time; (b) I enjoy it most of the time; (c) I enjoy it half of the time; (d) I rarely enjoy it; (e) I never enjoy it

(14)     What do you enjoy most about being a LSA? _____

(15)     What do you enjoy least about being a LSA? _____

**Role and Responsibilities**

(1) On average, how many hours per week are you EXPECTED to spend in the role of LSA? _____

(2) Do you think that this is an adequate amount to fulfil the requirements of the role? Yes/ No

(3) How many hours do you ACTUALLY spend in the role of LSA? _____

(4) On an average day, what does your role entail? _____

(5) Besides the role of LSA, please state any other roles and responsibilities you have at your school _____

**Support and Resources**

(1) Are you familiar with statements of special educational needs (SEN)? Yes/ No

(2) Do you think that statements of SEN are suitable for a PE context? Yes/ No

(3) Please explain your answer _____

(4) How well do you know the SEN strategy that your school has in place? (a) Very well; (b) Well; (c) Reasonably well; (d) Not very well; (e) Not at all

(5) How do you view your working relationship with the head teacher? (a) Very good; (b) Good; (c) Satisfactory; (d) Poor; (e) Very poor

(6) How do you view your working relationship with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO)? (a) Very good; (b) Good; (c) Satisfactory; (d) Poor; (e) Very poor

(7) Are you consulted in relation to how the SEN budget should be spent? Yes/ No

(8) Do you think that your school is adequately equipped with the resources to ensure that all pupils with SEN are included? Yes/ No

(9) What could your school do to ensure that all pupils with SEN are provided with more meaningful experiences of mainstream education? _____

**Training and Qualifications**

(1) Thus far, have you undertaken any training for your role as LSA? Yes/ No (go to question 3 if No)

(2) What did this training entail? _____

(3) Why do you think you have not undertaken any training? _____

(4) Have you undertaken any PE specific training for your role as LSA? Yes/ No (go to question 6 if No)

(5) What did this PE specific training entail? _____

(6) Why do you think you have not undertaken any PE specific training? _____

(7) Does the school in which you work provide any training opportunities for you as part of your professional development? Yes/ No (go to question 9 if No)

(8) What training opportunities are available? _____

(9) Do you have any formal qualifications relating to your role as LSA? Yes/ No (Go to question 11 if No)

(10)    Please state all formal qualifications relating to your role as LSA

_____

(11)    Do you think that you are adequately trained to include pupils with SEN in PE? Yes/ No

(12)    What could be done by others to improve your ability to include pupils with SEN in PE? _____

**The National Curriculum**

(1) In which subjects do you prefer supporting pupils with SEN? _____

(2) Why do you prefer these subjects? _____

(3) In which subjects do you least prefer supporting pupils with SEN? _____

(4) Why do you least prefer these subjects? _____

(5) In relation to LSA support, which subjects do you think are prioritised by your

school? Please rate the following subjects.

|  | Highest Priority | High Priority | Some Priority | Low Priority | Some Priority |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English |  |  |  |  |  |
| Physical Education |  |  |  |  |  |
| Geography |  |  |  |  |  |
| History |  |  |  |  |  |
| Religious Education |  |  |  |  |  |
| Design Technology |  |  |  |  |  |
| Maths |  |  |  |  |  |
| Art |  |  |  |  |  |
| Science |  |  |  |  |  |
| Languages |  |  |  |  |  |
| Information and computer technology |  |  |  |  |  |

(6) Why do you think that some subjects are prioritised over others?

_____

(7) Do you agree with these priorities? Yes/ No

(8) Please explain your answer _____

(9) Which PE activities are easier to include pupils with SEN? Please state activities:

_____

(10)     Why do you think these PE activities are easier to include pupils with SEN?

(11)     Which PE activities are more difficult to include pupils with SEN? Please state

activities: _____

(12)     Why do you think these PE activities are more difficult to include pupils with

SEN? _____

(13)     Do PE teachers involve you in the planning of their lessons? Yes/ No (go to

question 15 if No)

(14)     What does this involvement in the planning of PE lessons entail?

_____

(15)     Why do you think that PE teachers do not involve you in the planning of

lessons? _____

**Thank You**

Thank you for supporting this very important project. Please leave your contact information if

you are willing to participate in a follow up interview _____

# Appendix Six:

# Email to recruit for interview

Dear Sir/ Madam,

My name is Anthony Maher and I work as a lecturer and researcher at the University of Central Lancashire, Preston. You very kindly completed an online survey for me some time ago now, which focused on the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream secondary schools. During the survey you suggested that you would be willing to participate in a follow up interview to help extend my research further. Is this still the case? I appreciate that you are coming towards the examination period in school so time may be limited. However, I can work to your timetable. The research is now at a very crucial stage so your involvement would be very welcome and much appreciated.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Best wishes,

Anthony.

# Appendix Seven:

# Informed Consent Letter

Including Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Secondary School: The Perspective of Special Educational Needs Coordinators and Learning Support Assistants

Please read and complete this form.  If you are willing to participate in this study, please circle the appropriate responses and sign and date the declaration at the end. If you do not understand anything and would like more information, please ask.

1. I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me in verbal and/or written form by the researcher. **YES / NO**

2. I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time without having to give an explanation.  This will not affect my future treatment.  **YES / NO**

3. I understand that all information about me will be treated in strict confidence and that I will not be named in any written work arising from this study. **YES / NO**

4. I understand that any recorded material (e.g. audiotape) of me will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of the research.  **YES / NO**

5. I understand that aspects of data I provide may be used in publication and that my identity will be protected/concealed/anonymised. **YES / NO**

6. I freely give my consent to participate in this research study. **YES/NO**

Participant Signature: …………………………….Date: …………………………

Researcher Signature:…………………………….Date:…………………………

# Appendix Eight:

# SENCO interview guide

**General**

How long have you worked as a SENCO?

What do you enjoy most about your job?

What do you enjoy least about your job?

If you were able to design your own training programme for SENCOs, what would it involve?

**Physical Education**

In relation to PE, what does your role involve?

What do you consider to be the most significant influences on your ability to fulfil your role as it relates to PE?

- Constraining/enabling?

What do you consider to be 'best practice' in relation to a wholly inclusive PE lesson?

Are there any 'types' of special educational needs that are 'easier' or 'more difficult' to cater for in PE?

- Why is that the case?

Can you think of any circumstances where a pupil with SEN would be withdrawn from a PE lesson?

- If so, why and what would they do instead?

Are there any issues in relation to the participation of pupils with SEN in extra-curricular physical activities?

**PE Teachers**

How inclusive are PE lessons?

What support do PE teachers give you?

- What more could PE teachers do to help you in your role as it relates to PE?

What support do you give PE teachers?

**Learning Support Assistants**

How do LSAs contribute to the inclusion of pupils with SEN in PE?

In relation to PE, what support do LSAs give you?

- What more could LSAs do to help you in your role as it relates to PE?

In relation to PE, what support do you give LSAs?

**To End**

Would you like to share anything else with me relating to the issues we have discussed?

# Appendix Nine:

# LSA interview guide

**General**

How long have you worked as a LSA?

What do you enjoy most about your job?

What do you enjoy least about your job?

If you were able to design your own training programme for LSAs, what would it involve?

**Physical Education**

In relation to PE, what does your role involve?

What do you consider to be the most significant influences on your ability to fulfil your role as it relates to PE?

- Constraining/enabling?

What do you consider to be 'best practice' in relation to a wholly inclusive PE lesson?

- Are there any PE activities that you feel are 'easier' or 'more difficult' to include pupils with SEN?

Are there any 'types' of special educational needs that are 'easier' or 'more difficult' to cater for in PE?

- Why is that the case?

Can you think of any circumstances where a pupil with SEN would be withdrawn from a PE lesson?

- If so, why and what do they do instead?

Are there any issues in relation to the participation of pupils with SEN in extra-curricular physical activities?

**PE Teachers**

How inclusive are PE lessons?

What support do PE teachers give you?

- What more could PE teachers do to help you in your role as it relates to PE?

**SENCO**

How does the SENCO contribute to the inclusion of pupils with SEN in PE?

What support does the SENCO give you?

- What more could the SENCO do to help you in your role as it relates to PE?

**To End**

Would you like to share anything else with me relating to the issues we have discussed?

# Appendix Ten:

# SENCO data, codes and themes

| Themes | Codes | Data |
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| **Educational ideologies, experiences and role conceptualisation** | Reasons for becoming a SENCO | 'It was just the need for all children to be included and to have a right and to have an education; for somebody to actually care about them. I thought I could do that' (SENCO A).<br><br>'Previously, I have worked in a special school. I wanted to bring the knowledge, skills and experience of special school to the mainstream school sector to make a |

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| | | difference' (SENCO F). |
| | Managerial | 'The fact that I'd been head of year for a long time was good because I thought the two roles [head of year and SENCO] went together to be perfectly honest' (SENCO L). |
| | Diverse role | 'There are many facets that the role demands. It is having the time to identify the needs of the children; having time to plan effective interventions, which are regular, sequential, and accumulative. It's having time to have many measurement stops in that to review progress. It's managing nine staff as well; so, setting up staff to be effective in their roles and all that that demands. Keeping up-to-date with the training; making sure that everybody |

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| | | is constantly up-skilled. I need to keep the department moving forward' (SENCO G). |
| | Relationship with parents | 'I think SENCOs have a very privileged position because, over time, they get to know parents, and those parents will also support you [the SENCO] and help fight your corner, and I think that's very powerful. I think, basically, senior management don't want somebody that powerful telling them where the money should be spent. Without the SENCO on the senior management they can spend that money wherever they want' (SENCO D). |
| | Senior management team | 'Being a part of SMT has allowed me to have a more strategic approach . . . to get things |

| | | done and for SEN to be a school priority' (SENCO 10). |
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| | | 'I know in some schools SENCOs are not part of the management. They are not included in decisions and yet they have to deal with the outcome of those decisions. I am very fortunate in this school' (SENCO G). |
| | Time constraints | 'There are many facets that the role demands. It is having the time to identify the needs of the children; having time to plan effective interventions, which are regular, sequential, and accumulative. It's having time to have many measurement stops in that to review |

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| | | progress. It's managing nine staff as well; so, setting up staff to be effective in their roles and all that that demands. Keeping up-to-date with the training; making sure that everybody is constantly up-skilled. I need to keep the department moving forward' (SENCO G). |
| | Role and value of learning support assistants | 'Their [LSA] role is to assist the teacher in the delivery of the content of the curriculum (SENCO E)'.<br><br>'Teaching assistants are there to act as a bridge between the teacher and the child and it has to be a two-way communication. They are there in order to enable the teacher to develop the pupils' (SENCO C). |

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| | | 'People who come into education because they think it's an easy ride because you get six weeks summer holidays and you get all your weekends, or think I'll go in and be an LSA because that's compatible with the times that my children are at school so I can drop my children off and go to school and do my job, and I'll just sit in a classroom and do nothing; well, I'm sorry but I don't want that type of person. I want somebody who is going to make a difference to those children. I want somebody who is going to support their learning, both educationally and their life skills learning, and is going to move |

| | | those children on' (SENCO H). |
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| **Training and qualifications** | Masters level National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination | 'It was part of the new SENCO qualification. If you are a new SENCO then you have to have this qualification. It was towards a Masters' (SENCO A).<br><br>'I have done the PG Cert SENCO, which then leads on to a Masters qualification. I did that in 2004. That course went through all the different types of special educational needs, all the law, how to support, how to analyse data, all of that' (SENCO H). |
| | PE teacher training | '[PE training is] not appropriate. I have provided information regarding some medical issues and limitations for some of |

| | | our students with advice from professionals' (SENCO 36). |
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| | In-house training | 'SSCO [School Sports Co-ordinator] gave SEN department training in the use of physical activities and PE equipment to aid learning' (SENCO 89). |
| | PE training of SENCOs | '[PE specific training] … has no relevance in the same way that I have not done any special training in Physics or Design or Music, etc. I seek information and specific knowledge and strategies from the experts in those departments' (SENCO 25). |
| | LSA training | 'I say to the TAs that I will support them in their training. I will also act as their mentor if they need one but I do like them to be |

| | | proactive. If you want to progress as a TA and you've found a course that you want to go on then come and talk to me about it' (SENCO C). |
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| **Conceptualisations of inclusion and the (inclusive) culture of physical education** | Teaching and learning styles | 'If you were to have a fully inclusive lesson, you would know every single child's needs, every single child's starting point and every single child's learning style. You would basically have an individual lesson plan with each of your children, which would relate to the overall lesson plan' (SENCO H). |
| | Ideologies of inclusion | 'I think it [inclusion] includes every single child in that class. When you go hill-walking you set your pace by the slowest person in that group and that for me is what PE should |

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| | | be about. You set your lesson by the slowest person in the class, or the disabled person. If you're doing volleyball then you do it on your bum. If you're doing football and one is disabled then you should disable them all' (SENCO D). |
| | Removal from PE | 'This is a very academic school so unless they are doing GCSE PE then core PE is one of the subjects that we tend to say, right ok, we need you for this, that and the other so if there's any extra support put in place, one-to-one intervention, we'll look at PE. We'll take them out and get them to do something else' (SENCO B). |
| | Facilities and equipment | 'There is one student in particular who has |

| | | Asperger's and she really, really, really struggles with the changing facilities. We've battled with her to continue to do PE but it's not a battle that we are winning. What you find then is that she will stay off the day she has PE so we've had to reach a compromise. We've said, ok, so you don't do PE but you'll come and do some other work or you'll do work from PE which is associated with sport. Otherwise, she'll miss four lessons for the sake of one' (SENCO B). |
| | Adaptation and modification to learning activity | 'If the child for any reason physically cannot do any aspect of a PE lesson then they develop their coaching skills. So we want to develop young leaders and things like that so |

| | | that they can take a group to do an activity. If it's rugby, then they develop refereeing skills. Obviously, with the game of rugby you have to be able to walk down the pitch and that might not always be possible so we will develop coaching skills; small skills activities. Every lesson, every PE lesson, has a small skills activity. They would also develop assessment techniques so they are peer assessors' (SENCO G). |
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| | Impact of inclusion on performance and achievement | 'There may be a situation where you have a pupil who does have specific needs, and actually it means that the rest of that learning group never get to do certain things because that pupil can't do them. Is that inclusion?' |

| | | (SENCO G). |
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| | 'Type' of SEN and inclusion | 'I think that children with ADHD are quite difficult to make provision for because they can be unpredictable. See, if somebody has got a bad leg which means that they can't walk they've always got that bad leg and it always means that they can't walk. However, if you've got a child with ADHD it can just depend on what they've had for breakfast in a lot of cases' (SENCO L). |
| | Mainstreaming vs. special schools | 'None of the group says anything because one of them can't write properly. One of the students will say, Miss, and I will say ok son, and he will come down to the front of the class and get his pills. All of the kids know |

that he needs them but none of them will comment on it. It's just normal life for them and I love that. I absolutely love the normality of it and the fact that it's a day-to-day thing now. They don't even think it's different, whereas thirty years ago those children went in buses and taxis to a special school. We never came into contact with them so you did call people names when you saw them on the street and you did get frightened of them. I know my kids aren't frightened of people who are different. They are not frightened of those who look different or speak different. You know, they'll talk to anybody and that's what education is all

| | | about. That's the sort of society we want to live in' (SENCO D). |
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| **The development and distribution of SEN resources and information** | Priorities of school (head teacher and senior management team) | 'SEN is not a priority because this school, this business, is run by numbers; and in order to keep this business going, those numbers have to have those GCSEs and A Levels. Without being able to say, oh, we've had ninety-nine per cent A to G, or A to C, people won't come here. If people don't come here then you don't get the money. Special needs children take a lot of money out of an academy and academies don't like that. They want a lot for their money regardless of pupil premium. In the small learning community I think there are only |

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| | | four out of forty-two who don't have free school meals. They take a lot of money out. No, I don't think it's a priority' (SENCO D). |
| | Rationale for hierarchy of subject need | 'If we do not equip students with basic numeracy and literacy skills they cannot access much of the curriculum or be prepared for the demands of adult life' (SENCO 27). |
| | Influence of government | 'Sometimes legislation doesn't make it easier when schools are talking about looking at data and achievement because sometimes our children, who still make their levels of progress, won't achieve 8 GCSEs at A-C' (SENCO J). |
| | Influence of parents | 'If there are any concerns from parents we don't dismiss them and say it's not important. |

| | | It is important to them because it is their child, and they need an answer to whatever the problem is. However, that might not have been the case 20, 30, 40 years ago. So, if a parent comes to see me I won't dismiss them because I know it means that they have a genuine concern. The parents need answers and they need support' (SENCO J). |
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| | | 'Parents are part of every decision that is made and every conversation that is had. The child is also involved. I would never ever hold a meeting without a parent, the child, and the external agencies that may be involved' (SENCO L). |

| | Influence of pupils | 'Sometimes the children will disagree with what the parents want. Sometimes they disagree with what I feel is right but only by working together can we come to a compromise. Everyone's got to be on board with the education of a pupil and if anyone isn't engaged then that's where we come across difficulties' (SENCO C) |
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| | Statements of SEN and individual education plan (IEPs) | 'Objectives are very academically based. Motor skill objectives do not make clear to PE department what they can do with the pupil in place of traditional PE. Statements are also often very unrealistic for the resources that are available for the PE department' (SENCO 52). |

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# Appendix Eleven:

# LSA data, codes and themes

| Themes | Codes | Data |
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| **Educational ideologies, experiences and role conceptualisation** | Reasons for becoming a LSA | 'I finished university and I knew I was applying for a PGCE to go into teaching. So, to strengthen my application, I thought it would be useful to get myself into an academic environment, and the best way to do that was to become a teaching assistant' (LSA F).<br><br>'I had two young children and I wanted the school holidays. I'll be honest it was the holidays that interested me' (LSA J). Similarly, LSA L revealed: 'I've got two |

| | | young kids so I wanted to get a job that fitted in with that. Plus, when I did go in and volunteer it was fun' (LSA J). |
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| | Supporting pupils | 'I help the pupils to progress... You know, I help them to get ready for the adult world or whatever they go on to do whether it's college or things like that. I just get the best out of them' (LSA A).<br><br>'My day involves helping pupils with behavioural problems or SEN students who are vulnerable. All types really. Basically, I focus on the pupils who need more support' (LSA B). |
| | Supporting teachers | 'We provide support for the teacher because |

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| | | the ability of children in the class is so varied. The TA can work with the higher ability ones whilst the teacher works with the less able ones, or the other way round. I see us as an extra body in the class; an extra pair of eyes, and extra support for the kids' (LSA K). |
| | Changes to the remit of the role of LSA | 'When I first started we were pivotal to what was going on. You were given plenty of responsibility. LSAs were teaching lessons, they were taking tutor groups, we were involved in parents' evenings, after school clubs, and that sort of thing. You were encouraged to get involved in as much of the school life as you possibly could. For |

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| | | whatever reason, one thing led to another and they re-evaluated the whole role of the LSA and a lot of those responsibilities and roles were taken off us' (LSA H).<br><br>'I think if I look at my time since I've been here over the 12 years, I think I'm probably doing less than I was doing 5 years ago. I think funding may have been an issue with that but they've made cut backs; they re-evaluated the role of LSA, so as part of that they've reduced the role and responsibilities' (LSA I). |
| | Value of the role of LSA | 'When I first started we were pivotal to what was going on. You were given plenty of |

| | | responsibility. LSAs were teaching lessons, they were taking tutor groups, we were involved in parents' evenings, after school clubs, and that sort of thing. You were encouraged to get involved in as much of the school life as you possibly could. For whatever reason, one thing led to another and they re-evaluated the whole role of the LSA and a lot of those responsibilities and roles were taken off us' (LSA H). |
| | Pay structure and unpaid labour | 'We need more time to plan with the teacher, even if it was only half an hour after school each day. However, the problem is money. I wouldn't do that for free' (LSA G). |

| | | 'The teacher hasn't got time to sit with me and I haven't got time to sit with the teacher [to plan lessons] unless we did it after school, which I'm willing to do but it won't be paid' (LSA J). |
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| | Planning lessons | 'We need more time to plan with the teacher, even if it was only half an hour after school each day. However, the problem is money. I wouldn't do that for free' (LSA G). |
| **Training and qualifications** | Availability of PE training opportunities | 'Specifically to PE I've got to say none really. My background is in PE luckily enough so I do know a little bit about the subject' (LSA A). |

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| | | 'Enabling factors would include my own background in sports coaching and fitness instruction because a lot of what I do is what a PE teacher would do in terms of correcting technique' (LSA B). |
| | PE specific degree/ qualifications | 'On my sport development and PE course I learned how to interact with different levels and things like that' (LSA D). |
| | In-house training | '[I have taken] Day courses looking at inclusion in PE lessons and a Boccia course' (LSA 326). |
| | Importance of PE training | 'I have never been offered this. I would most certainly love the chance to have PE-specific training in my role as LSA' (LSA 181). |

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| | | 'Appropriate training given to all staff who work with students who require help in PE. More generally I think all staff should be given training on how to lift correctly and how to use any necessary equipment' (LSA 157). |
| | Funding and financial constraints | 'It [level 3] was funded but then the funding got took away and they wanted a grand for the course. I'm on fourteen grand a year with a mortgage so I can't afford a grand for a course. I just can't do it. It's just not feasible so a lot of us pulled out the course' (LSA C). |
| **Conceptualisations of inclusion and the (inclusive) culture of physical education** | Social ideology of inclusion | 'I think this school has come a long way in what they're trying to do [for inclusion]. We've managed to secure funding for 12 |

| | | sports wheelchairs so we now have wheelchair sport as part of the curriculum. It's not until everyone is on a completely even playing field that everyone is playing the same sport. Everyone is playing wheelchair basketball the same way and there have been no modifications to the game. The pupils can then see how difficult it is to play sport using a wheelchair. It's brilliant for the kids to empathise as well' (LSA I). |
| | Individual ideology of inclusion | 'In some cases, with the best will in the world, it [inclusion] still can't work; it doesn't work. For example, in a mainstream school the pupils should do a six week block of trampolining. Now, if that pupil can't do |

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| | | trampolining because of his disability they'll do an alternative activity' (LSA I). |
| | Segregated education | 'My responsibility was to remove that pupil out of the class, and I would do one-to-one sport with them. They would hardly ever take part in the PE lesson' (LSA I). |
| | 'Type' of PE activity | 'It depends on the needs of each individual student. If a student is in a wheelchair then things like cross country running will be impossible' (LSA 157).<br><br>'Other pupils do not want them on their team' (LSA 125). |

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| | | 'Their [pupil's] differences tend to be highlighted [in team games] so they feel different. Other students are less tolerant in a team game… children with SEN don't get picked for teams by their peers' (LSA 216). |
| | 'Type' of SEN | 'My day involves helping pupils with behavioural problems or SEN students who are vulnerable. All types really. Basically, I focus on the pupils who need more support' (LSA B). 'Each child is an individual and depending on their disability is to which [sic] activity is best for them' (LSA 98). |
| | Adaptation and modification to learning | '[Inclusion is]… the fact that the pupil with |

| | activity | SEN can still do what everyone else is doing. Not like, for example in PE, saying because he can't do that he can be the referee… They [pupil with SEN] should still do the lesson just maybe adapt it a little bit so they feel involved with all the pupils just as much as everyone else and they don't look like they're getting extra help' (LSA D). |
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| **The development and distribution of SEN resources and information** | Priorities of school (head teacher, senior management team, SENCO) | 'The school prioritises results. I think that's the same for every school. I suppose at the moment OFSTED focuses on literacy across the curriculum. There is also emphasis on special educational needs kids making progress. So, they do want to show that SEN kids are making progress but I think overall |

| | | the main focus is getting results for the whole school' (LSA L).

'From my experience SENCOs never get involved in PE. I'm almost sure that the SENCO has never met up with PE and asked what they are doing differently for this child. I don't think it happens' (LSA A). |
| | Rationale for hierarchy of subject need | 'Students will need a basis of maths and English to go into further education and employment so it is good that these take priority.  Also, a lot of subjects are formed around an understanding of maths and English such as sciences, languages, ICT etc. |

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| | | so it is important that they use this as a platform to help them in other subjects' (LSA 157). |
| | Influence of government | '[English, maths and science are] more important when it comes to analysing results with OFSTED, governors and parents' (LSA 79).<br><br>'Exam results, parental pressure and government targets' (LSA 258). |
| | Influence of parents | '[English, maths and science are] more important when it comes to analysing results with OFSTED, governors and parents' (LSA 79). |

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| | | 'Exam results, parental pressure and government targets' (LSA 258). |
| | Statements of SEN and individual education plan (IEPs) | 'Many SEN statements outline the issues and problems a pupil has with understanding instructions or reading/copying information from the board or the ways a pupil can best learn. In PE the learning environment is vastly different and there are many other contributing factors that can have an effect on an individual i.e. the sports hall, swimming pool or playing fields are vastly different teaching environments with varying acoustics, weather conditions, numbers involved, seating arrangements, movement, etc. Although there may be little writing for |

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| | | an SEN pupil to be concerned with they still have to be able to pick up and understand instructions and  then try to complete quite complex skills in front of others. Many are able to manage and can be successful but those that don't usually have no LSA support' (LSA 22).<br><br>'I believe that statements are useful for every subject, including PE… For example, pupils with autism will need advanced notification of a change in sport' (LSA 234). |