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Including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in mainstream secondary physical education: A revisit study

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Abstract

Our research used an innovative methodological approach by revisiting an original study conducted 15 years previously (Morley et al., 2005). A purposive sample of 31 secondary school teachers in the UK were interviewed to explore their perceptions of including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in mainstream secondary physical education (PE). All interviews were transcribed verbatim and texts analysed thematically. Findings suggest that, despite significant policy developments, little has changed in teachers' perceptions of their ability to include pupils with SEND in PE and there remain significant challenges to them achieving this. Some exceptions were documented, most notably an increased and positively received focus on inclusion within PE initial teacher education. The article concludes with recommendations for future practice, particularly in terms of teacher education and professional development, as well as the need for effective dissemination of research findings to key stakeholders.

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Introduction

Over 15 years have passed since 'Inclusive physical education: Teachers' views of including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in physical education' (Morley et al., 2005) was published in *European Physical Education Review*. The findings of this study were used to develop the following recommendations: support staff need physical education (PE)-specific practical training; PE teachers and key support staff need to work together to foster an inclusive culture in PE; PE teacher education should focus more on teaching pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); and all pupils, including those with SEND, should experience high-quality individual, self-paced activities, while being appropriately supported in team-based activities (Morley et al., 2005).

Since then, there have been several significant changes and developments, both nationally and internationally, in policies related to teacher education, pedagogy and supporting pupils with SEND. Internationally, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), reframing the needs and concerns of persons with disability in terms of human rights (Kayess and French, 2008). The most noteworthy examples in the UK include: revisions to the National Curriculum and its associated Inclusion Statement (DfE, 2013); the construction of standards used to judge pre- and in-service teachers' performances, some of which focus specifically on pupils with SEND (DfE, 2011); a new framework to inspect schools that places greater emphasis on the educational experiences of pupils with SEND (Ofsted, 2019); and the SEND Code of Practice, which gives guidance to schools on the legal duties they have to pupils with SEND (DfE/DoH, 2015). These policies have influenced the way local authorities and schools develop and implement provision aimed at facilitating the inclusion of pupils with SEND in mainstream educational settings (Vickerman and Maher, 2018).

The contribution of academics to the wider debate about issues associated with teaching PE to pupils with SEND has also increased since the publication of Morley et al.'s (2005) study. The article has been cited on 267 occasions (Google Scholar, 2020), which is significant given the paucity of research within this field, and aspects of its research design, findings and recommendations have been used in numerous other studies. Indeed, there is now an ever-growing body of literature in the UK focusing on the inclusion of pupils with SEND in mainstream PE from the perspective of prospective teachers (Maher and Morley, 2019), preservice teachers (Vickerman and Coates, 2009), special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) (Maher and Macbeth, 2013), learning support assistants (LSAs) (Maher, 2016) and pupils with SEND (Fitzgerald and Stride, 2012). This line of inquiry has since spawned research focusing on PE in special school contexts. For instance, Maher and Fitzgerald (2020) explored the nature, purpose and value of special school PE according to the teachers, LSAs and senior leaders working in those settings. Others have explored how key socialising agents such as parents and former teachers during primary socialisation, and colleagues and pupils as part of organisational socialisation, influence the pedagogies of special school PE teachers (O'Leary et al., 2014, 2015).

Despite the perspectives of mainstream school PE teachers initially being a key source of information relating to educational inclusion (see also Smith, 2004), their voices have largely

remained silent, in research terms at least, over the past 15 years. It is because of the notable dearth of research about inclusion in PE from the perspective of mainstream school teachers, that our research aims to explore in-service mainstream PE teachers' perceptions of including children with SEND in PE, to allow for an understanding of how these perceptions have changed, or otherwise, since Morley et al.'s (2005) original study.

Methodology

Philosophical position

Methodologically, we had to consider how our research approach could fundamentally affect our ability to explore essence and nuance in how PE teachers articulated their perceptions in the current teacher education and school landscapes. Our research was underpinned by an interpretivist ontology, meaning that we were interested in making sense of the socially constructed, mind-dependent realities (Sparkes and Smith, 2014) of mainstream secondary school PE teachers. We did not attempt to establish a universally fixed reality of including pupils with SEND in PE among our participants that could be compared to those from Morley et al.'s (2005) study because that would be incompatible with our philosophical position. To ensure philosophical alignment (Tracy, 2010), our aim was instead to explore the views and experiences of our participants so that others could reflexively consider how wider socio-political developments may have shaped the experiences of PE teachers vis-a-vis teaching pupils with SEND.

Whilst longitudinal qualitative research aims to explore the same participants' experiences over a fixed, typically short, period of time (Thomson and Holland, 2003), our study aimed to analyse change within a landscape over 15 years and could not rely on revisiting the same participants as the original study. To our knowledge there are no studies that adopt this approach, with similar research re-focussing more on a field of study than trying to use specific research processes that mirror an original study. For example, Haycock and Smith (2011) relied upon the work of Penney and Harris (2001) a decade before as a framework to analyse how the provision of extra-curricular PE was accessed by children with special needs and disabilities. Our adoption of a 'revisit' study emerged as we began to search for answers as to whether change had occurred since, and in many ways as a result of, what was originally found by Morley et al. (2005). To increase rigour, achieve philosophical alignment and effectively respond to the research question, we felt the need to blend and intertwine our semblance of research design to effectively reflect on, and account for, change between the previous study and this one. To achieve this, we replicated certain research processes from the Morley et al. (2005) study – namely, (1) design of the interview schedule, (2) sampling and (3) data analysis. The interview schedule was replicated to ensure full thematic coverage within and across our research and that of Morley et al.'s (2005) for comparative purposes. The same sampling strategy was utilised so that the heterogeneity of Morley et al.'s (2005) population of participants, which was identified by them as something that enabled a comparison between teachers of varying professional experiences, was a key feature of our research. Finally, the analytical phases outlined by Morley et al. (2005) were followed in order to mimic the analytical journey while acknowledging that the thematic outcomes may be different.

Design of interview schedule

A team of seven researchers met at regular intervals prior to the beginning of the interviewing process to discuss the appropriateness of the schedule used by Morley et al. (2005). We made some

minor changes to its format and clarified any ambiguities with the proposed content, terminology and interview structure (Bryman, 2015). Most of the changes were made to ensure that the schedule considered the SEN Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2015), which has resulted in changes to: (1) the mechanisms for identifying pupils with SEND; (2) the ways in which pupils with SEND are categorised; and (3) the role and responsibility of LSAs and SENCOs, all of which have shaped the culture of mainstream school PE (Vickerman and Maher, 2018). Given the study's aim of exploring changes over time between the two studies, we were also interested in asking the more experienced PE teachers about their perceptions of changes to the landscape of teaching pupils with SEND throughout their career.

The final interview schedule comprised the same four sections as Morley et al.'s (2005) study. The first, *Inclusive PE, definitions and purpose*, was designed to investigate the participants' views on the benefits of PE and to explore the ideologies held by the individual teachers when it came to including pupils with SEND in mainstream PE. An example of a question asked in this section was 'What do you think the purpose of PE is for children with SEND?'. The second section, on *Teacher education and professional development*, sought to explore the initial teacher education (ITE) and in-service professional development opportunities relating to teaching pupils with SEND. An example of a question asked in this section was 'What strategies do you use to assess the learning of children with SEND in PE?'. The third section investigated *Resourcing and support*, with reference to the use of, and relationships with, key support staff such as LSAs and SENCOs. An example of a question asked in this section was 'What training have you had in teaching children with SEND?'. The fourth and final section, on *Contextual elements*, sought to examine teachers' assessments of their own confidence in teaching children with SEND. An example of a question used in this section was 'Are there any particular issues regarding the inclusion of children with SEND in PE that are different to those in other curriculum areas?'. Towards the end of the interview, we asked teachers two questions that we felt would empower participants to speak freely about their perceptions, unconstrained by the structure of the sections we had designed; these were (1) 'Is there anything you would like to add about the issues we have discussed?' and (2) 'Is there anything else that you feel may be of value to our research?'.

The research team continued to meet at regular intervals to discuss aspects of the interview schedule throughout the research window as part of an iterative process of reflection to share thoughts and ideas around interview structure, the use of probes and to capture a general sense of participant responses to date. Each author was responsible for conducting approximately four interviews, with interviews lasting 45–60 minutes. Using multiple interviewers improved the trustworthiness of the study by reducing the potential researcher bias created by an individual conducting all of the interviews (Korstjens and Moser, 2018).

Sampling

A total of 31 PE teachers from 28 state secondary schools across three cities in the north of England agreed to be involved in the research as a part of a purposive, convenience sample (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Whilst participants came from one large city in the north of England in the original study, our research involved teachers from three cities. In this respect, the geographical location of participants and the schools in which they taught were not identified by Morley et al. (2005) as an influential factor in this field of study. As witnessed in the original study, a high level of interest was evident and this may, as speculated by Morley et al. (2005), be indicative of a wide-scale perception among teachers that this subject warranted study (Croll and Moses, 2003). All

interviews were conducted with the teachers at their respective schools over a 10-week period between April and July 2019.

Participants were selected using the following criteria and given a pseudonym within the data analysis to protect their identities:

- Least experienced female teacher within the school (Gail, Trish and Kate)
- Least experienced male teacher within the school (Brad, Leslie and Paul)
- Female teacher with three–seven years' experience (Isla, Susan and Diane)
- Male teacher with three–seven years' experience (John, Peter and Caleb)
- Most experienced male teacher within the school (Eric, Thomas, Samuel, Frank, Chris, Norman, Richard, Ryan, Callum and Phil)
- Most experienced female teacher within the school (Lisa, Terri, Anya, Rachael, Harriet, Chloe, Charlotte, Fiona and Sarah)

The participation of all teachers was voluntary, with all being made fully aware of the study's focus, the procedures that would be undertaken, the nature of their contribution and the confidentiality of their responses. They were also made aware that they could end the interview and/or withdraw from the study at any time and that there would be no implications for their school or themselves if they did so. The access to and sharing of data was confined to the research team and managed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations, using an approved data management plan. Ethical approval was granted by Sheffield Hallam University's ethics committee (ER13499520).

Data analysis

All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim by a third party. The authors then listened to the recordings of the interviews they conducted and scrutinised the transcriptions in order to verify their accuracy. Data management was facilitated using a standard word-processing package (Microsoft Word) and all transcripts were anonymised to ensure confidentiality. The interview transcriptions were analysed by the last author using a process of selective coding; the same technique used in the original study. At the start of this process, instances were identified within the text where respondents had talked about issues pertinent to the project's aims and in relation to the themes articulated within the interview schedule. In accordance with procedures outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998), these individual units of meaning were then initially represented by a short phrase. Once the last author had completed this initial analysis, the first and last author met to reflexively consider (Smith and McGannon, 2018) the themes and units of meaningful essence that were constructed.

Following the discussion, the last author designed thematic descriptors and articulated the essence that he felt was contained within each theme. For example, a theme of 'conceptualising inclusion and inclusive PE' was designed with a thematic descriptor of 'responses that refer to beliefs and ideas that teachers used to describe inclusive PE'. This allowed for a rich, interpretative dialogue to ensue so that the themes could be interrogated further. Some themes were re-positioned, and higher order themes developed to encapsulate the meaning of lower-order themes. For example, an initial theme of 'limited time to plan inclusive lessons' was subsumed within the theme of 'inclusivity of curriculum activities'. This clarification of themes and associated thematic descriptors allowed us to conduct axial coding more accurately to avoid

duplication and further substantiate areas of deep interest to the field of study. Concurrently, once higher and lower order themes had been assigned, they were designated as branches within the NVivo software system for qualitative data analysis and a further process of cross-analysis was conducted. A comparison of themes facilitated by NVivo was conducted at both the initial and post-analysis stages allowing units to be merged or split appropriately.

Findings

The six themes constructed during data analysis were: (1) the influence of including pupils with SEND on other pupils in PE; (2) conceptualising inclusion and inclusive PE; (3) the influence of type of SEND on inclusion in PE; (4) inclusivity of curriculum activities; (5) ITE and continued professional development; and (6) working with LSAs and SENCOs. These have been used to structure the findings presented below. Findings are represented through thick textual descriptions that engender honesty and transparency as hallmarks of quality in qualitative research (Tracy, 2010). Here, we 'show' the data and invite readers to construct their own knowledge and explore the ways and extent to which these data resonate with them (Smith, 2017), before we move onto the analytical 'tell' in the Discussion.

The influence of including pupils with SEND on other pupils in PE

All the teachers interviewed, without exception, claimed that the schools and PE departments in which they worked aspired to include pupils with SEND, whilst acknowledging that this was often difficult to achieve:

> We are trying to deliver the same PE programme to a large group of kids, some with significant impairments, and that can be a challenge, but this should never be a reason why we can't. (Norman)

> I think we should include pupils with SEND. It's not easy but it can be done. Fair enough, there might be some activities that somebody with SEND might think, I can't do that, but that's where staff need to adjust things so that they can be involved as much as possible. (Isla)

While there was a definite commitment among teachers to inclusion, some questioned whether a mainstream school context was the most appropriate for some pupils:

> I think we can include 99.9% but it depends on the needs of the kids. There might be some students where you would struggle in a mainstream setting to get the best for them. I'm not saying they can't be included, just you would struggle to get the best outcomes for them or the best experience for them. For some, special school might be best. (Eric)

> I question whether some kids would get more benefit going to our local support unit, you know, mentoring sessions on other subjects or extra time for other subjects, whether that would be more beneficial. For them, it would depend on the individual. (Charlotte)

Often, discussions about the appropriateness of mainstream contexts led some teachers to consider the impact of including pupils with SEND in PE on others:

> It's a difficult one, inclusion. If it's at the detriment of the rest of the class, I think then you've got to look at what's the greater need and the greater good. I'm thinking particularly of a child that we have

> that has severe emotional and social anxiety. We try and include her, but sometimes it's too much. She can disrupt the lesson. (Fiona)

> They [pupils without SEND] do accept that we modify some activities, but they are not happy because ultimately it takes away from their learning time sometimes and that's challenging as a teacher. (Frank)

Conversations about the influence of pupils with SEND on the learning and development of other pupils were overwhelmingly negative. Two teachers, however, did identify positives:

> I think it's massive for able-bodied students to learn how to work with students with SEND, and to realise that they're not that different. As much as inclusion is important for the SEND students, it's as important for your mainstream students. (Susan)

> I'm very much open to inclusion. I'm an advocate for it. In fact, the school that I work in, we have links with a special school, where their students come into our school to have experience in a mainstream school. They're integrated into PE and they absolutely love it, and our kids, as well, love it, and you see a different lovely side to the kids. Our kids are very caring, very empathetic and very inclusive. (Sarah)

Conceptualising inclusion and inclusive PE

When it came to teacher views on the concept of inclusion, and what an inclusive PE lesson entailed, there were nuanced differences. Some focused on issues akin to 'equality', 'access', 'opportunities' and 'sameness'. This point is articulated best by Caleb:

> Inclusion relates to a sense of equality ensuring that children with SEND have the same access to sport and an active lifestyle that mainstream able-bodied students would have. It is about having the same opportunities to learn the same skills, but in a differentiated way.

Like Caleb, other teachers suggested that an inclusive PE lesson should involve adaptation and differentiation:

> An inclusive PE lesson is one that was differentiated for all levels of ability. It is a lesson that is engaging, where activity levels were relatively high obviously taking into account differentiation and the needs of the students and adapting to those needs. (Rachael)

> In an inclusive lesson they've [pupils with SEND] probably got their own objectives, their own outcomes, different to that of the class, but they are fully immersed. They're making progress and they're enjoying their learning. (Terri)

While discussions about inclusive PE were mostly tied to activity modification, adaptation and differentiation, other teachers talked about the importance of pupils with SEND 'feeling' included:

> [Inclusion is] where every single person is involved. It's about teamwork and not leaving anybody out. So, whenever students are getting into small groups, bigger groups, etc. everyone must be looked after. That, for me, is a huge part of inclusion, so not having somebody isolated or not getting picked. It's making everyone feel included; everyone feeling welcome. (Sarah)

This point was extended by Paul, who connected the removal of pupils with SEND from PE lessons to issues of access and feelings of inclusion:

> You see some students go off on one to one, with a TA [Teaching Assistant], and how must that make them feel? They can't feel included. If those students had stayed in a whole class they'd be learning how to communicate with other students, they're learning how to interact with different students and different opinions and different views. If they're one to one with a TA, taken out of the PE lesson, they're not getting access to everything. (Paul)

The influence of type of SEND on inclusion in PE

Another key theme constructed during data analysis related to teacher perceptions on 'type' of SEND as a challenge to inclusion in PE. Many suggested that pupils with social and emotional needs were the most difficult to include, especially when they exhibited disruptive behaviours:

> The ones that are most challenging are the students with social problems, because a lot of what we do in PE is about group work. The students that have social difficulties often fall out with each other, which can be disruptive. (Chloe)

> I personally find that the students with the social and emotional the most difficult, because they can't deal with losing games. For example, if they play a badminton match, or if we have an element of competition, they will argue with the referee and say that they're cheating. Those are the students that need the most careful attention, and if there's one of you and there's 23 students, and maybe four or five of them have got a few social difficulties, it can be quite challenging. (Diane)

For Caleb, the challenge related to difficulty in planning for and controlling some pupils. He compared pupils with physical disabilities to those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to illustrate:

> Those with physical disabilities are the students that you can control before the lesson in that you can plan for, whereas ADHD you are reactive and that's the difficulty. You can never fully guarantee that this lesson will happen the way that you planned it because of those specific needs whereas if you're looking at physical disability, you can certainly plan whatever you want and there is a very good chance that that will happen because their behaviour would be fine. (Caleb)

Interestingly, Diane had a very different take on pupils with behavioural difficulties in PE:

> We tend to find that the ones with behaviour problems absolutely love PE, because it's not always writing. They like the practical, the verbal feedback, the interaction. We have very few problems with anybody that's got behavioural or social needs. (Diane)

It is noteworthy that for a few of our teachers, pupils with physical disabilities posed the greatest challenge to inclusion in PE:

> The physical impairment is where we obviously have to tailor a little bit more and tweak, in terms of differentiation, tweak the equipment that we use and the task that we set and that can be hard. (Caleb)

> If you had a student who needed a wheelchair it would be quite tough in a mainstream setting. You would need to provide specialist support in terms of teaching assistants, you probably would not be able to include them in your normal lesson. They would probably need to be given other opportunities to do something with somebody else because you would struggle to have 20 students and then them. (Lisa)

Inclusivity of curriculum activities

For the PE teachers in our study it was apparent that the curriculum activities that were taught influenced, by degrees, the extent to which pupils with SEND were included in lessons. All of our teachers, without exception, suggested that competitive activities and team games were most challenging, although the reasons for this sometimes differed. John, for instance, suggested:

> Football is harder to include I think because there is so much with [children with] SEND that you've got to think about. You have got to be careful not to overload them cognitively, to give them too much to think about, too much to perform.

For Terri, it was the notable differences in ability that made competitive team games the most difficult to include some pupils with SEND:

> We are a big rugby school. The level that the boys play at is very high and therefore that obviously prompts a bit of an issue between the differences in ability. It's hard to ensure that our SEND students get something out of it.

Most of the challenges experienced by teachers in this respect were tied to difficulty in modifying, adapting and differentiating these types of activities:

> I struggle to adapt team games. I had this student in a wheelchair, and I coned off one area of the pitch. I put cones across and she's in her wheelchair, she went up and down the side. But I didn't really feel like she found it competitive because she wasn't being challenged. No one was marking her, and it was just about passing it to her and passing it out. I think she enjoyed it, but I felt she wasn't making much progress. It was just more keeping her involved. (Chloe)

Conversely, many of the teachers identified individual activities, such as dance, gymnastics and swimming, as being easier to include pupils with SEND. Again, reasons for this differed. For example, Anya and Sarah talked about the importance of pupils being able to self-pace their own movements:

> Probably dance, gymnastics are easier just because they're [pupils with SEND] managing their own bodies aesthetically and therefore can probably join in at whatever level or whatever speed is best for them and there's no time pressure or pressure from other students. (Anya)

> Swimming is a solo thing so they're not relying on anybody else, they can just go and do their own . . . well, not their own thing because you tell them what to do, but they're not affected by anyone else. (Sarah)

For others, paired, as well as individual, activities were easier to modify and adapt to suit the needs and capabilities of pupils with SEND:

> I like teaching badminton because you have different size rackets, so you can give them a tiny racket, closer to their hand, easier for hand/eye coordination. I lower the nets, it makes it more accessible for them, and things like that, so they can be more engaged. (Paul)

> I'd say tennis can be easy to change to give them [pupils with SEND] structured sort of skills and tailored success criteria. They can be paired with others of similar ability and can move at their own rate. (Peter)

ITE and continued professional development

Many of our teachers had received some training on inclusion and SEND as part of their professional socialisation. Some had experiences of a placement in a special school:

> When I trained I did 'schools direct' . . . so I spent time in a special school. I was given the opportunities which were extremely beneficial to me. I was given knowledge and experiences that other teachers didn't get. (Brad)

> I was on a four-year QTS [qualified teacher status] course. We had quite a long placement at [Brough Hill[1]], which is obviously a SEND school with children with some major kind of special needs and disabilities . . . it wasn't necessarily training as such but in terms of experience it was very useful. (Kate)

Other teachers had experienced specific modules dedicated to including pupils with SEND as part of their undergraduate studies:

> When I was at university, I did a module on SEND and PE, and I think it's a module everybody should do. But I think there should be further modules; because now kids with SEND are being integrated into schools, teachers don't receive much training. (Harriet)

> We had loads of SEND training at university. A module. A lot of workshops, seminars and lectures about teaching pupils with SEND and we did a lot of practical activities where we were put into the situation and things like that. (Isla)

Despite studying a module relating to SEND and PE, Isla was sceptical about the usefulness of the knowledge and skills developed for teaching in schools:

> I don't think the university brings into account as much about the behavioural, emotional and the social needs of the children, which is what teachers really need. That is important in my school anyway. It was more about physical and sensory.

This point was also suggested by Paul, who claimed:

> I think we had a module at university. But, again, it was students in wheelchairs and doing wheelchair sport, it wasn't looking at students with autism, the real-life issues that are going on today. And, students with Down Syndrome and Asperger's. You're thinking, we've only just scraped the top of what's going on in PE.

Conversations centred on ITE developed into discussions about the continuing professional development (CPD) of PE teachers. Some of our teachers had not experienced any CPD relating to including pupils with SEND:

> As a teacher, I have had zero training on SEND. I assume that's because of a lack of funding. I've never done any sort of training in that respect. Now that there's no money, there's no chance. (Sarah)

> I wouldn't say I had any official training relating to pupils with SEND . . . we've got a growing number of students as well when it comes to the emotional and mental health. I don't feel like we've had specific training that would allow me to feel more confident in that area. (Rachael)

Other teachers had experienced some CPD relating to pupils with SEND. None of it, though, focused on PE:

> There is training on SEND but it is very general. It wasn't very useful though because PE is so different. In school they're [pupils with SEND] going from classroom to classroom, for PE you will be going to a sports hall with fuzzy lights, balls being bounced off walls, sound going everywhere, and they're [pupils with SEND] not used to that environment. If we do have training, it's very reading and writing things like that; it's not PE based. (Paul)

> We've had workshops from the learning support team, who just meet with us at the beginning of the year and give us strategies. I wouldn't say specific training relating to PE, but they go through a range of methods that they think can help us throughout the year. (Isla)

Working with LSAs and SENCOs

The final theme constructed during data analysis related to the relationships between our PE teachers, LSAs and SENCOs. Many teachers said that PE received limited support from LSAs, in comparison to other subjects:

> We've never had any PE lesson support really . . . . It's interesting that SLT [senior leadership team] are from a PE background as well and that just shows that academic subjects are a priority in this school. (Thomas)

> There are more TAs in classroom lessons than there are in PE and obviously you can argue that pupils with SEND need more support in PE than in a classroom. I think they [senior managers] prioritise more academic subjects like maths, English, science. If they can't get the results from students, it's going to look bad on the school. (Trish)

Despite claiming that PE received limited LSA support, many teachers talked about the important role that LSAs can, and sometimes do, play in PE:

> Without the support of TAs, it would be tough to keep students on task and give them the support that they need. TAs are crucial to PE, perhaps more than other subjects. (Eric)

> I just learned how important TAs are if I'm honest in lessons generally not just in PE. Just how much a student can progress because you have one-to-one assistance rather than one TA to deal with six or seven students that have needs. (Trish)

For many of our teachers, the usefulness of LSAs increased notably if they had knowledge and experience of PE and/or sport and demonstrated enthusiasm during lessons:

> If you are gonna have a TA in PE you need someone with enthusiasm for sport and who's been around sport, not necessarily training, you just need enthusiasm and a little bit of knowledge. (Eric)

> Some TAs are better than others. You'll get some TAs that love PE and they'll come out and they'll really enjoy it and they will get massively engaged in the lesson and it has a knock-on effect. The students love it. Other TAs don't like PE and that's noticeable. (Brad)

Discussion

Like those in Morley et al.'s (2005) study, most of our PE teachers appeared ideologically committed to including pupils with SEND in mainstream schools. This is significant given that ideologies influence action, if given the expressive freedom to do so (Elias, 1978). Thus, those teachers who believe and value inclusion are more likely to endeavour to develop inclusive pedagogies (Vickerman and Maher, 2018). This ideologically framed perception was often challenged when teachers began to detail some of the barriers they faced in delivering to this frame of reference. This type of dilemma has been reflected upon internationally, whereby language and discourses used in policy might express the collective commitment of a country rather than the country's capacities to provide the desired educational experiences, in practice (Peters, 2007).

Some of our teachers did question the appropriateness of mainstream schools for pupils with more complex learning needs. This perspective is perhaps unsurprising given that academics, including Baroness Mary Warnock, whose report resulted in the mainstreaming of education (DES, 1978), have also added their voices to debates about whether some pupils would be better served in special school settings (Maher and Fitzgerald, 2020). For our teachers, concerns about inclusion were often tied to perceptions that it may have a negative impact on the (physical) learning and development of other pupils, something that was reported by Morley et al. (2005). In a PE setting, given the lack of research to allow us to conclude that this perception is evidence-based, we can only assume that it is ideologically premised. What we do know from the limited and often dated research available is that 'inclusion', if poorly facilitated by the teacher, can have a negative impact on the time pupils with and without SEND are physically active during PE lessons (Lieberman et al., 2004). Like one of the teachers in our study intimated, though, research does suggest that including children with SEND in lessons can improve attitudes towards inclusive education among pupils and help to develop social and emotional skills (Kalambouka et al., 2007). There may be a trade-off here for PE teachers in that inclusion may impact negatively on the development of physical skills but enhance learning tied to social and affective domains. Therefore, different pedagogical strategies will be needed depending on what is being learned and by whom.

Teachers in our study often equated inclusion to equality of access and opportunities. While this perspective may seem progressive, given that it aligns with discourses underpinning national policy (e.g. DfE/DoH, 2015), it is noteworthy that giving pupils equal access to a PE lesson does not necessarily mean that inclusion is achieved. Indeed, this way of thinking and doing is tied to individual ideologies of disabilities (Oliver, 2013), whereby pupils with SEND are expected to assimilate into the established arrangements of PE, which were constructed by educators for pupils without SEND. Often, PE like this does not cater for the needs and capabilities of pupils with SEND (Maher, 2018). When it came to an inclusive PE lesson, our teachers emphasised the

importance of activity modification, adaptation and differentiation. This did not come through in the research conducted by Morley et al. (2005) and is significant in light of claims by Overton et al. (2017) that adapting activities to levels of ability can facilitate authentic participation and learning in the PE curriculum.

Whilst most discussions about inclusive practices related to environmental and social factors, some of our teachers talked about the importance of pupils with SEND 'feeling' included. Again, this did not come through interviews with PE teachers in Morley et al.'s (2005) study, but is anchored in philosophical understandings of inclusion, which advocate pupils with SEND feeling a sense of belonging and value within mainstream schools (Spencer-Cavaliere and Watkinson, 2010).

Another key theme constructed during data analysis related to teacher perceptions that pupils who experience social and emotional difficulties were the most difficult to include in lessons. This was particularly challenging when disruptive behaviours manifested, something that was also reported by Morley et al. (2005) and broader international studies at that time (Hodge et al., 2004). This ties to teacher concerns that inclusion may have a negative impact on other pupils in that research suggests that learning and progress can be constrained if negative behaviours disrupt the learning climate (Reyes et al., 2012). It could be argued, however, that this way of thinking aligns with deficit ideologies of disability (Oliver, 2013), in that it casts the pupil and their SEND as the problem. Some of the teachers said that pupils with physical disabilities were the easiest to include because they could plan lessons that were tailored to needs, something that was difficult when working with pupils with social and emotional difficulties because their behaviours were more difficult to predict and control. Teachers being able to respond to the needs of the learner during lessons is identified in the teachers' standards (DfE, 2013) as best practice but something that our teachers struggled to do. For some of our teachers, there was an acknowledgement that teaching pupils with physical disabilities required more activity modifications and adaptations, but this depended on the type of activity being taught.

Overwhelmingly, competitive team games as an activity area were identified as the most challenging to include pupils with SEND in PE because of the notable differences in 'ability' between those with and without SEND. In this respect, it is noteworthy that our teachers often equated 'ability' to normative notions of what the physical bodies of pupils should be able to do. This normative perspective is tied to Shilling's (2016) work on embodied capitals, wherein PE is seen as a context in which normative hierarchies of 'ability' are legitimised and reproduced, which often situates the embodied PE abilities of pupils with SEND as inferior (Fitzgerald and Hay, 2015). There was also concern again, among our teachers, that attempts to adapt team games would impact negatively on those pupils not identified as having SEND. Here, it was individual and paired activities that were deemed easier to modify because they could be tailored to the needs and capabilities of the pupils without them having a negative impact on the 'progress' of other pupils. It is interesting to note the absence of narrative related to the use of self-paced activities and, specifically, whether teachers were able to afford opportunities for pupils with SEND to self-pace within activities that teachers perceived as more challenging for inclusion, such as games.

Unlike teachers in Morley et al.'s (2005) research, whose ITE did not entail the study of SEND and inclusion, the teachers in our research reported that their ITE focussed, to varying extents, on teaching pupils with SEND. A number had been placed in a special school, which they found beneficial, something that had not been reported by Morley et al. (2005). This development is perhaps promising given that special school placements have been found to improve empathy with and attitudes towards (Maher and Morley, 2019), and competence and confidence when teaching

(Maher et al., 2019), pupils with SEND. Interestingly, some of our teachers had experienced bespoke modules during their undergraduate studies that centred on SEND and inclusion. Here, occasionally, there did appear to be a disconnect between the focus of such modules and the 'realities' of working in mainstream schools in that teachers were struggling to include pupils with social and emotional difficulties while the modules focused mostly on those with physical and sensory disabilities. While it is encouraging to hear about SEND and inclusion seeping into undergraduate curricula, we support the claims of Maher et al. (2019) who encourage us to (re)consider the usefulness of undergraduate PE modules for aspiring inclusive educators.

Most of our teachers had received no professional development experiences relating to pupils with SEND. The few who had received in-house 'training' that focused on SEND questioned its appropriateness given that it was not PE-specific. Here, it seems that the concept of SEND is contextual and situational in that a pupil may require support additional to their peers in a practical PE lesson but not during a classroom-based subject, such as maths. Thus, many of the challenges in including pupils with SEND are tied to the corporeality of the subject and the changing and uncertain nature of learning environments, particularly when PE is taught outdoors, all of which are unique to PE and will not be experienced by classroom-based teachers (Vickerman and Maher, 2018). Therefore, despite over 15 years elapsing, it appears that Morley et al.'s (2005) call for PE teachers to receive contextualised professional development training and support has not been realised.

Most of the teachers in our study suggested that they received limited LSA support, in comparison to other subjects. For our teachers, there was a clear and obvious hierarchy of subject priority relating to LSA support, with English, maths and science dominating because of the national standards agenda and league tables. This is perhaps unsurprising given that SENCOs and LSAs have also identified this issue (Maher and Macbeth, 2013) and hierarchical subject imbalances were also highlighted in the previous study (Morley et al., 2005). Despite the often-limited support, many PE teachers acknowledged the value of LSAs, particularly those who had knowledge of PE and/sport because they could take a more active role in PE. While some talked about the importance of LSAs being PE trained, something that is rare but nonetheless useful to LSAs (Smith and Thomas, 2006; Vickerman and Blundell, 2012), others were content to have an LSA that was enthusiastic and willing to support the lesson.

Conclusion and recommendations

The aim of our research was to explore PE teachers' perceptions of including pupils with SEND in PE to understand differences and similarities to a study by Morley et al. (2005). Employing an innovative methodological approach that revisits an original study, mirroring research design processes whilst retaining philosophical alignment to the elicitation of teachers' perceptions, presented challenges to the research team not normally experienced within qualitative research. These methodological challenges were not insurmountable and have provided a useful platform for approaches to our understanding of the field for future research and practice within this and broader areas of study.

Given our aim of exploring the differences found within the PE landscape to include children with SEND in PE over a significant period of time, the stark reality is that very little has changed. There remains a clear juxtaposition between teachers feeling compelled and ideologically motivated to include pupils with SEND in PE and their actual ability to deliver the meaningful experiences they so crave. It seems that whilst there have been evolving policies to support

teachers, teachers still report feeling ill-equipped to effectively include pupils with SEND in PE. Whilst the findings of this study are, in the main, as negative as they were in the original study, there are some positive signs. Most notably, recent developments in ITE with the inclusion of placement opportunities in special schools seem to be preparing students more effectively for teaching pupils with SEND in PE. Support assistants, generally, seem more prepared than they did in the original study and teachers believe that they offer a more positive contribution to lessons.

Looking to the future, our recommendations are two-fold: firstly, to re-emphasise the original recommendations made by: Morley et al. (2005), that practice is changed by (a) providing contextually relevant opportunities for PE teacher CPD; (b) increasing teachers' understanding of the use of differentiation strategies to include children with SEND in PE; and (c) training LSAs to specifically support children with SEND in PE. Secondly, given the limited impact that the findings of the original study had on practice, we as researchers need to more effectively disseminate research findings to key stakeholders, particularly those responsible for policy development at a macro level, ITE and teachers' CPD. Moving these stakeholders closer to the research, through an integrated knowledge translation (IKT) (Gagliardi et al., 2016) design that inculcates them into the establishment of the research question right through to the presentation of recommendations, is a potential solution to this issue that has been successful in other domains (Keown et al., 2008). Using IKT has the potential to increase the awareness of stakeholders as to the underlying issues that affect teachers' perceptions of including children with SEND in PE and allowing them to search for supportive solutions in more creative ways.

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