

**LET THE CHILDREN HAVE THEIR
SAY:
EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN WITH
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN
PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements of Liverpool John Moores University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

Dr Seuss (1971), from *The Lorax*

There are so many people who have cared enough to help me through my research and in so many ways. Firstly, I would like to thank my partner, Simon, for listening to my rants, calming my nerves, humouring my ideas, and making me laugh. Without his support, patience and undying humour I could not have got this far. Thank you!

I would also like to thank my family – Mom, Chris, Nick, Jason and Chrissy; and my friends, especially Roselle, Rachel, Rachel, Erin and Bec; for sticking by me, and for always keeping faith that I could do this, particularly at times when I did not.

Huge thanks must go to my supervisor and mentor Professor Philip Vickerman for the advice, guidance and constant encouragement given to me throughout this study. Without this, I may have fallen at the first hurdle. I would also like to thank him for the many research, learning, and networking opportunities he has provided me during my time at Liverpool John Moores University. Thank you - I really could not have asked for better mentor, and for this I am truly grateful!

Thanks must also go to the many people who have helped me throughout the research. In particular, I would like to thank Lizzie Smears for her support and guidance throughout my PhD, and for always believing in me. I would also like to thank Matt Reeves and Rachel Darling for helping with the transcription of my data. This help was hugely appreciated.

I would like to thank Liverpool John Moores University for the funding of my PhD, and for their continued support throughout my studies – particularly the Faculty of Education, Community and Leisure.

Finally, I must thank all of the schools who took part in my research. The SENCO's and Head Teachers were invaluable to my research getting off the ground. Most importantly, however, I would like to thank all of the children who participated in my research. Without their honesty, their stories, and their genuine enthusiasm for taking part, there would be no thesis. I cannot thank them enough.

ABSTRACT

The study examined the perspectives of children with special educational needs (SEN) relating to their experiences and perceptions of physical education (PE). To do this, children with a range of different SEN in both mainstream and special schools were consulted with, in order to empower them to give voice about their experiences. The study was qualitative in nature and followed a social constructionist, phenomenological design, embracing the experiences of the children and allowing them to give meaning to these experiences. Its originality came in the way of attempting to encapsulate the experiences of children with a variety of diverse SEN, from different education contexts as a means of presenting a holistic perspective of children with SEN's experiences of PE.

Arising from the evident importance placed on meeting the needs of children with SEN within political and statutory documentation, as well as the increasing political agenda surrounding PE and sport in the United Kingdom (UK), this study set out to examine how effectively children with SEN were being included in PE lessons from their perspectives. Moreover, it set out to understand the experiences of mainstream and special school children with SEN, between the ages of 7 and 14, relating to their experiences of other people in their lessons, difference from others and their accessibility and opportunity to participate in sport outside of school.

Arguing from a social constructionist point of view, the study found that children with SEN's experiences and perceptions of PE are constructed through their experiences of other factors related to PE. These constructs formed the four main themes which were developed through the research, and relate to children's understanding and experiences of PE lessons, their experiences of sport outside of school, their experiences of other people in their PE lessons, and finally, their experiences of difference and empowerment in PE. Moreover, it was found that generally, the children with SEN in this study had positive experiences of PE, and that their experiences were often similar to the experiences of children who do not have SEN, when examined against previous literature.

As such, the study concludes by presenting both practical recommendations relating to teacher training, personalised learning and empowerment and consultation. It also presents suggestions about how about the research can be taken further, in the pursuit of pupil voice, participation, and empowerment.

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And that Yopp...

That one small, extra Yopp put it over!

Finally, at last! From that speck on that clover

Their voices were heard! They rang out clear and clean.

And the elephant smiled. "Do you see what I mean?..."

They've proved they are persons no matter how small.

And their whole world was saved by the Smallest of All!"

"How true! Yes, how true", said the big kangaroo.

"And from now on, you know what I'm planning to do?..."

From now on I'm going to protect them with you!"

And the young kangaroo in her pouch said,...

"ME, TOO!"

Dr Seuss (1954) from *Horton Hears a Who!*

PREFACE

Background and Personal Interest for the Study

The initial interest in this study originated from a personal and professional interest in SEN, inclusion and meeting the needs of children who have SEN. Coming from a family in which my siblings were identified as having SEN during their school years, my interest and understanding surround SEN arose, in particular through observing the experiences of education from my siblings perspectives. This understanding was further developed through a number of voluntary and professional roles, working primarily with children who have autistic spectrum disorders. This firsthand experience both living with, and working with children with SEN provided extensive knowledge of the experiences children with SEN have at school and in the community, and how these needs are met in education. I became interested in discovering what the children perceived about their experiences, how they coped with inclusion/ exclusion, and what they understood about themselves.

In addition to this, following an examination of literature, it was apparent to me that children with SEN were rarely asked about their experiences of school life, and this was more so when examining PE and sport. In addition to this, policy documents expressing the need for teachers to be inclusive in their practice in PE (DfES/ QCA, 1999; DfES, 2002b; DCSF, 2008; QCA, 2009), as well as legislation stating that children should be consulted with about their education (DfES, 2001a, 2005), indicated that there was a need to consult with children about PE in order to understand inclusion from their perspectives, therefore integrating these two elements. As a result, the current study was embarked upon with the aim of adding to the dearth of literature, in order to gain a fuller understanding of children's personal experiences of PE. This was intended to illustrate the need to listen to the voices of children (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a, 2003b) to understand more deeply their own perceptions of the world in which they live, which could ultimately be used to gain a better insight into children with SEN in order for all stakeholders involved in the provision of needs, to better appreciate their views.

The forthcoming chapters, outlined below provide an overview to how this study will be disseminated:

Chapter One - Context for the study: This chapter establishes the framework for the study, and identifies the key policy documents, and theoretical models underpinning

SEN and inclusive PE. It also identifies the purposes of the research and the research questions for the study.

Chapter Two - Special Educational Needs and Inclusive Practice in Physical Education: This chapter gives an overview of the training available to PE teachers relating to inclusive practice, through Initial Teacher Training (ITT), and continuing professional development (CPD). It also introduces concepts surrounding adapted physical education (APE). The chapter goes further to examine the views and perspectives of training providers and of student, newly qualified and experienced teachers about their experiences of inclusive teaching and the training they receive, in order to gain insight into teachers preparedness and confidence in teaching children with SEN in PE lessons.

Chapter Three - Children with Special Educational Needs Perspectives of Physical Education and Sport: This chapter begins with an analysis of the different methodologies used by researchers to consult with children with SEN. This is followed by an in-depth, critical analysis of existing literature which examines the perspectives of children with SEN in PE and sport. It highlights the key issues brought forward by children with SEN about their experiences of PE and sport, relating to their perceptions of themselves and their direct experiences of PE and other people in PE lessons. Not only this, but it examines the role of empowerment and consultation for children with SEN, and the barriers they face in participating in PE and sport outside of school.

Chapter Four - Methodology: This chapter provides a rationale, critique and thorough analysis of the chosen research methods used within the study. It examines each of the stages followed during the investigation and also discusses the analysis of the data.

The **results** section of the thesis is broken into four chapters based upon the four key themes which were developed from the data. These themes were “understanding and experiencing PE”; “experiences of sport outside school”; “experiences of other people in PE”; “difference, empowerment and change”. Each chapter draws upon the research findings from the study, and analyses their impact on practice for children with SEN, while focussing upon factors relating to consultation and empowerment of children with SEN.

Chapter Five – Understanding and Experiencing PE: This chapter examines children with SEN's abstract conceptions relating to how they understand PE, its purposes and its benefits; before examining children with SEN's perceptions and experiences related to their PE lessons and refers to matters such as the activities participated in during PE, time spent in PE and assessment.

In terms of understanding PE, findings suggested that children with SEN understood PE in terms of its role in improving fitness and reducing weight gain. Conceptualising PE in this fashion was deemed detrimental to the experiences of children with SEN, as it resulted in discrimination for some children, and reduced willingness to participate in PE. As such, the sub-theme argues for more focus on physical literacy over physical fitness in PE lessons.

In discussing experiences of PE lessons, the findings and analysis suggest that children with SEN need to be consulted with in order to understand how their needs can be more fully met within particular activities, and through assessment. Moreover, children, particularly primary and special school children, should have more time in PE, as currently it appears standards are not being met in terms of the number of hours per week spent doing PE.

Chapter Six – Experiences of Sport Outside School: This chapter provides a critical discussion surrounding findings relating to the opportunities children with SEN have to participate in sport outside of school. Three levels of physical activity outside of school are presented, and it was found that while all children took part in some form of informal activity, more could be done by schools and the community to break down barriers which prevented further participation in more formal activities outside of school. This was also true for leisure centres, for which children identified a number of potential barriers restricting their use of such facilities for informal physical activity.

Chapter Seven - Experiences of Other People in PE Lessons: This chapter provides a critical overview of children with SEN's experiences of their PE teachers and their classmates within PE lessons. It was found that the person who teaches PE, as well as the role which the PE teacher adopts in lessons, contributed to children's positive and negative experiences of PE. Similarly, positive and negative experiences of classmates were also found to influence the ways in which PE was experienced and perceived by children with SEN.

Chapter Eight – Difference, Empowerment and Change: This chapter draws on findings to critically assess children’s feelings of difference in PE lessons, as well as their ideas surrounding empowerment, and disempowerment in PE. It also examines children with SEN’s perceptions about how they would change PE lessons to better meet their needs, if given the opportunity.

In terms of difference, it was found that children experienced difference both positively, through effective lesson differentiation; and negatively, through discrimination by others. Suggestions are made about how to promote positive difference over negative difference and discrimination.

Empowerment was explored in terms of whether or not children with SEN are consulted with about their PE lessons, and how this contributed to their experiences of PE. It was found that most children were not consulted with about PE and this was perceived as detrimental to experiences and perceptions of PE. When children were consulted with, they presented more positive perceptions of PE and reported feeling in control of their education. Moreover, it was found that children want to be consulted with more about their PE lessons.

Finally, the findings indicated that children with SEN if given the opportunity, would change PE by incorporating more varied activities, having more time in PE, have more qualified PE teachers, and being consulted with more. Recommendations are made related to how these changes could be implemented and how children can be empowered more in PE through consultation.

Chapter Nine – Final Conclusions and Recommendations: This chapter draws together the conclusions and recommendations from the research to provide an overview of the findings from the study in terms of the way they are used to respond to the research aims and questions. It attempts to synthesise concepts surrounding social constructionism as a method for understanding the experiences of children with SEN in PE, and makes key recommendations related to teacher training, personalised learning and empowerment and consultation, which are drawn from the findings and discussion. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research and a personal reflection on the research study.

CHAPTER ONE: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 Defining Special Educational Needs

This study sets out to examine the perspectives and experiences of children with SEN within a PE context, in an attempt to answer the question *“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”* As such, it is primarily necessary to understand what is meant by SEN.

SEN has been an issue at the forefront of national education policy and research in the United Kingdom (UK) from as early as the 1970s (Warnock, 1978, Farrell, 2001). The term SEN, coined in the Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978) to eliminate the use of the term ‘handicap’, and refocus attention on educational needs (Bines, 2000; Alcott, 2004,), refers to children who have any *“learning difficulty which call for special educational provision to be made for them”* (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2001a:6). Children are, in current UK policy, defined as having SEN if their difficulties greatly hinder their ability to make use of educational facilities; or if their academic development is significantly less than children of the same age, and would remain so if educational provision was not made for them (DfES, 2001a). This refers to children who have physical, sensory, intellectual, medical, or communication difficulties, and therefore encapsulates a broad sphere of individuals. However, the definition of SEN varies between authors and in legislation (Farrell, 2001; Kugelmass and Ainscow, 2004; Fredrickson and Kline, 2005). It is a fluid term, and according to Beveridge (2002), is socially constructed, and changes over time depending on the expectations for children with SEN, as well as political and economic concerns.

Moreover, Evans (2007) notes the vocabulary used when referring to SEN, can be ambiguous and somewhat confusing. He indicates that a child with SEN is a child with some form of learning difficulty, whereas a child with a disability, may have some physical difficulty accessing education facilities. As such, it is argued that not all pupils with SEN are disabled, and vice versa (Evans, 2007). Despite these differences, the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a) includes children with physical disabilities (PD) under the umbrella term of SEN. Evans (2007) therefore argues that the vocabulary used to define SEN and disability needs to be consistent in order for laws and policies to be more concrete in their aims. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, the terms SEN and disability are used interchangeably to refer to all children who might

have some difficulty accessing education, whether physically or cognitively, as defined within the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a). This will be explained further on in this chapter.

Despite inconsistency in the terminology used to define SEN, the social construction of definitions reflects a 'social' model of SEN, which seeks to explain disability in terms of the restrictive and disabling perceptions and practices of non-disabled people (Allan et al, 2005). Previously, as well as in the most recent SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001), however, SEN was considered in terms of pathology (Bailey, 2005), and was examined using a 'medical model'. The use of this model makes use of categories and classifications to define specific disorders (Farrell, 2001), in order to determine effective interventions and treatment for that disorder (Bailey, 2005).

Definitions of SEN underpin every aspect of SEN policy, from assessment through to funding. They provide insight into SEN provision and therefore, the experiences of the children who have SEN. As such it is necessary to gain a full understanding of the assets and deficits of both the medical and the social models for defining SEN, in order to gain a more holistic understanding about the way in which SEN is defined and therefore understood by inclusion and SEN practitioners. This can give insight into the ways in which children with SEN are educated in the UK, and therefore has an impact on the direct experiences of the child.

1.1.1 The Medical Model of SEN

The medical model of SEN conceptualises disability as a number of deficits and functional limitations resulting in disadvantages which can only be rectified through treatment (Farrell, 2004). The model is reductionist and pathologises disability by seeking to explain SEN in terms of aetiology, diagnosis and cure (Reed and Watson, 1994; Bailey, 2005). The assessment of SEN using this model compares the individual against a set of norms, which results in people with SEN and disabilities being perceived as 'abnormal' (Brisenden, 1986). Moreover, the categorisation of individuals using medical labels may suggest that any difficulties or problems lie within the child, and excludes any influence the child's educational circumstances and social environment might have on their difficulties (Farrell, 2001). As Farrell (2001) further points out, children's difficulties often lie on a continuum, either improving or deteriorating with time. The use of categorisation, however, implies that the child will have the problem throughout life, which, in some cases is relevant. However, in other

cases, this leads to the normalisation of difference for some children, whereby they are referred to in terms of their inabilities rather than their abilities and individual characteristics (Connors and Stalker, 2007). This can impact on the social, educational and psychological well-being of the child, resulting in lowered expectations, and a desire to be perceived as 'normal' (Brisenden, 1986; Farrell, 2001).

Despite the negative outcomes of disability labelling using a medical model, categorisation is still used frequently in policy to describe the difficulties a child may present with (e.g. SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a)). The use of categories in such a way can be advantageous in providing a clear set of criteria to help practitioners gain an overall perspective of the child, presenting, in some cases, an overview of the areas which the child may require additional support (Farrell, 2001). This is particularly relevant for children whose difficulties stem from medical, physical or sensory difficulties (Farrell, 2001). Moreover, current policy states that children may fall within several SEN categories (DfES, 2001a), otherwise defined as a spectrum of needs (Vickerman, 2007b), which aids the breaking down of these medical barriers, and allows for a more 'whole-person' approach to assessment procedures for SEN. This reflects the aims of the Every Child Matters Agenda (DfES, 2005), which seeks to embrace personalised services for all children, not just those with SEN. This is further encapsulated in the recent revisions to the key stage three National Curriculum (NC), which allows for increased flexibility and personalisation of programmes to meet the needs of children, and ensure all children are able to access a full and varied curriculum (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), 2007b), and is evidence of the diversion from a medical model, to a more social model of education, and more so, SEN.

Nevertheless, the use of categories in assessment procedures provide a point from which the parents of children with SEN may improve their own knowledge of their child's needs, and seek support from appropriate voluntary and statutory agencies (Farrell, 2001). However, this can also limit access to support for children who fall into less stringently defined categories, such as those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, who may not benefit from a medical classification of needs, given the social dimensions of their difficulties (Farrell, 2001). As such, it is clear that, while medical models of SEN may be useful in the assessment and identification of needs, given the social models of SEN emphasised in policy, and the evidence of a spectrum of needs (DfES, 2001a; Vickerman, 2007b), that this model is outdated and, perhaps even unnecessary, when seeking to address the needs of the children who have SEN.

Nevertheless, Low (2007) argues that this individual dimension set out in medical model could not plausibly be removed, given the individual nature of the needs of the children whom these models address.

1.1.2 Social Models of SEN

Social models attempt to explain SEN in terms of the social construction of disability by non-disabled people, or in terms of the physical, material or economic barriers faced by people with disability (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Allan et al, 2005; Armstrong, 2005; Connors and Stalker, 2007). Social models challenge the view that disability should be defined using medical explanations and instead theorists argue that disability and SEN must be understood in terms of exclusion from social norms, rather than pathologising SEN and attributing failure to the inabilities of the child (Shakespeare and Watson, 1997; Evans 2004). Unlike the medical model, social models of SEN state that the problems exist in society, not in the individual (Low, 2007). As stated by Jones (2005:378), *"disability is becoming a social phenomenon, owned by society as a group rather than an individual person"*.

The social model advocates inclusion, and has greatly influenced inclusion policy and disability legislation. It has seen strategies emphasising the empowerment of people with SEN and disabilities through the removal of barriers to inclusion and by encouraging consultation with those who have SEN (e.g. DfES 2001a; 2001b; 2004). Examples of this are in the improvement of access to community facilities and schools for those with PD, and by encouraging different learning styles for those with learning difficulties. As such, social models acknowledge that once assessed, a child's learning needs must be met through schools and teachers responding accordingly (Vickerman, 2007b). This is made possible through increased provision for children with SEN in mainstream schools, and has provided a starting point for promoting acceptance among non-disabled children and adults. However, like Evans (2007), Armstrong (2005) claims that the language of SEN located in inclusion policy is a social construction by adults, which fails acknowledge that this language presents challenges to inclusion, as evidenced in, for example, the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a), which uses a categorisation system for identifying SEN. As such, not only must provision for children with SEN be improved to achieve an inclusive education system, but the language used about SEN must be altered to promote social understanding rather than difference. This could be achieved through the removal of labelling when referring to SEN, and utilising personalised learning in schools (Miliband, 2004;

Robinson et al, 2008), thereby addressing the needs of all children individually, rather than focussing upon those children who may present with some deficit, identifiable though medically-defined classifications of need.

Currently, 18.8% of all children attending schools have SEN (including those with and without statements of SEN) (DfES, 2007), and increasing numbers of children with SEN are expected to attend mainstream schools, with only 1.1% of those with SEN receiving special school provision (DfES, 2004a, DfES, 2007). As such, there improvements to inclusive education have been made, such as increased provision for SEN in mainstream schools, and developments in school-parent partnerships (Farrell, 2001). Nevertheless, there has been rising interest in the impact this has on children with SEN. Results have been promising, suggesting that children with SEN are benefiting from inclusion and acceptance. Connors and Stalker (2007), for example showed that, while the children in their study were still labelled by others in terms of their difficulties, their perception of themselves were generally positive, and children often viewed themselves in terms of their similarity with others rather than difference. The findings suggest that a social model, when applied to education, can be beneficial to children with SEN, but they also show that categorisation of SEN is still taking place, despite inclusive values. It is evident that a medical model of SEN is difficult to diversify from, even if the alternative favours the individuals with SEN. Moreover, Farrell (2004) states that examining provision for SEN using social approaches removes the child with SEN from the equation. Instead, provision for those who require additional support is viewed in terms of a policy power struggle, rather than a “rational response to any real need” (Farrell, 2004:83). In addition to this, according to Low (2007), inclusive education, whilst promoting the ideal in special needs education, may not be the answer for all children with SEN. He states that while the social dimension may be beneficial for children with, for example, behavioural needs, it does not apply to children with more complex learning needs who may need individual attention (Low, 2007). It can therefore be argued that social models of SEN simplify need in the search for political-correctness (Low, 2007). On the other hand, social models provide a definition for SEN which encapsulates social construction within inclusive policy and practice, and seeks to ensure the needs of those with SEN are taken into account.

1.1.3 Integrating the Models

An alternative to the use of social and medical models is through the synthesis of the two models of SEN and disability, to develop a bio-psycho-social model of disability

(Finkelstein, 1998). This model has been used to explain health and illness since the 1970's (Ogden, 2004), and has recently been assimilated to education, through the use of the Interactive Factors (IF) Framework (Fredrickson and Cline, 2005). Both the bio-psycho-social model and IF Framework seek to integrate biological, psychological and social causes (referred to as environmental, biological, cognitive and behavioural factors in the IF Framework) for explaining disability, and have been applied to specific SEN, such as dyslexia (Frith, 1995). Frith (1995) continues by providing causal links between biological factors, such as brain abnormality, environmental factors, such as the teaching environment; and psychological factors, such as poor memory, as a method for explaining and defining dyslexia. Through the use of bio-psycho-social models, SEN and disability can be viewed as an interaction between biological factors, such as genetics or structural defects; psychological factors, such as emotions and behaviour; and social factors, such as norms and stereotyping (Ogden, 2004). The use of this model fits in well with current SEN policy, such as the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a), which appear to integrate both medical and social models of SEN by advocating inclusion and the removal of social barriers, and through continued use of SEN categorisation.

Although there is conflict in the models used to explain SEN, contemporary definitions of SEN tend to imply a large proportion of children will at some point have SEN (Beveridge, 2002). The distinction, however, lies in the provision made for those with the most profound difficulties – those, as government definitions state, who would be significantly disadvantaged in education, if provision is not made for them (DfES, 2001a). It is only possible, however, to provide SEN provision if schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) are aware of the children who are in need of that provision. The majority of children with SEN are educated in mainstream schools (DfES, 2004a) with provision through School Action, and School Action Plus (DfES, 2001a); while places in special schools reserved for those with the most complex needs (DfES, 2004a). It is through referral and assessment of needs by teachers, parents and other adults involved in the education of children, that children with SEN are able to gain additional support. Despite the desire by politicians, researchers and individuals directly involved in the lives of those with SEN to break down barriers, and include children with SEN without focusing on disability; it is necessary to categorise SEN in order to understand the specific needs of children with SEN, so that provision can be made to meet these individual needs (Allan et al, 2005). As such, it is in the practice of professionals to ensure that the use of these categories goes no further than the assessment documents required for provision to be made. In defining SEN, it

is therefore necessary to acknowledge the individual rights and needs of the child without differentiating them from other children. In doing so, importance should be given to understanding the effects that medical model 'labelling' and social model 'inclusion' has on the experiences of the children with SEN, and in doing this, consultation with children who have SEN is necessary.

1.2 Segregation, Integration, and Inclusion

In order to understand the aims of inclusion policy it is essential to understand what is meant by inclusion, integration and segregation in terms of SEN, as well as the evolving context of terminology. This provides the basis for understanding the types of provision available to children with SEN, and the ways this provision is implemented. This can be used to provide further understanding about the nature of the experiences of children with SEN, and the contexts in which they take place.

1.2.1 Segregation

Prior to the push by the government for inclusion, seen in the 1960's and 1970's segregated schooling was considered the norm (Fredrickson, and Cline, 2005). Children with SEN were allowed the opportunity to be educated, however this was often away from their peers in special schools for the handicapped (Fredrickson and Cline, 2005). This segregated schooling occurs when children with SEN are taught separately from same-age peers (Vickerman, 2007b). This includes children who attend special schools, or those that are excluded from mainstream schools, and follows a medical model perspective of SEN.

1.2.2 Integration

The 1970 Education (Handicapped Children) Act (Department for Education (DfE), 1970), saw a change in momentum from segregated education for children with SEN, to integrated education. Integration refers to education whereby children with SEN are educated in the same facilities as their same-aged peers. Along with the move from segregation to integration, the terminology of SEN changed from handicap to SEN, focusing on educational need rather than deficit (Bines, 2000).

According to Warnock (1978), integration falls into three categories: location; social; and functional integration. Location refers to children being educated on the same site

as their peers. This is the most common type of integration according to Warnock (1978). Social integration, on the other hand, occurs when children are both educated on the same site as their peers, but also interact with them during playtimes and extra-curricular activities. Finally, functional integration is most similar to inclusion as children with SEN are given the opportunity to study with their peers as well as take part in social interaction together. The difference between functional integration and inclusion, however, is in the way in which the curricula and programmes are taught. Integration requires the child to make personal changes to the ways they learn, rather than changes at a curricular level, for example. As such, Farrell (2001) argues that integration, as opposed to inclusion, can result in the child being isolated and excluded from many school activities, due to an inability to participate.

The introduction of an integrated education system saw less focus given to medical classifications of SEN, and presented an initial move towards social models of SEN, through the incorporation of environmental factors; however emphasised change within the child rather than within educational practice, and so does not move far enough away from medical models of SEN.

1.2.3 Inclusion

Since the publication of the Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978), there has been a push for inclusive education, culminating in current policy, such as the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) (DfES, 2001b) – discussed later in this chapter. These policies emphasise the need for children with SEN to be educated in mainstream schools, alongside their peers, using a curriculum suitable to meet the needs of all pupils (DfES, 2004a). Inclusion refers to the modification of school programmes, curricula, and material resources to meet the needs of the child. It requires change at a policy and practical level (Booth et al, 2000). As such teachers need to adapt their teaching practices, and there is a call for political and educational bodies to revise legislation and implement strategies to meet the needs of the individual children. Therefore, inclusion requires radical restructuring of schools in order for them to embrace all children, regardless of their diverse needs (Vickerman, 2007b).

Inclusive education emphasises change at a social policy and practice level, and therefore follows the social model of SEN. It takes responsibility away from the individual child for adapting their learning styles, and calls for education providers to

encourage diverse learning and provide provision to promote the abilities of all children. This differs vastly, however, to both integration and segregation, which support the medical models of SEN. They view any problems or difficulties as being located within the child, calling for the child to make changes to fit in with existing provision, or to attend special, segregated schools. Inclusion, on the other hand, advocates social models, and promotes structural change in education provision, and as such, is the preferred context for educating children with SEN, advocated by the UK government (DfES, 2001a, DfES, 2005) and academics alike (e.g. Ainscow et al, 1999b; Farrell, 2000; Norwich, 2002; Low, 2007, etc).

It is worth noting here, however, that inclusion is not a concept limited to a UK context. It is a notion utilised internationally, with a number of countries embracing the inclusion philosophy in order to meet the needs and rights of all children to be educated (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). Moreover, worldwide agencies, such as the United Nations (UN) have developed specific international legislation to ensure all children, including those with SEN and disabilities have equal access to education (UN, 2006). In addition, when examining legislation from countries around the world, it is highlighted that several share similar policies to the UK system, and some are considered to be more progressive in terms of their SEN inclusion movements, when compared with the UK (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). The United State of America (USA), for example, is considered to be one of the most progressive in terms of inclusive education, given their active promotion of inclusion and disabled person's rights (Block and Obrusnikova, 2007; Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). Furthermore, while they have their No Child Left Behind strategy (U.S Department of Education, 2009), the UK has the Every Child Matters strategy (DfES, 2005). Similar legislation, policies and strategies can also be found in Australia, Asia and Africa. As such, it is apparent that inclusion is not only an issue situated within the UK, it is a philosophy which is globally sought after. Nevertheless, within any research study, it is necessary to contextualise, and as such, the policies and government documents discussed within this thesis will focus upon SEN and inclusive education within the UK context, despite recognition that this is an international concept.

1.3 Inclusive Policy: Pre-1997

Special Education policy has been delivered from as early as the 1944 Education Act (DfES, 1944), which saw policy put in place to provide segregated schooling for children who fitted into medically defined categories of handicap (Fredrickson and

Cline, 2002). Those with severe handicap were, however, excluded from education and considered uneducable (Alcott, 2004). This remained the case until the implementation of the 1970 Education Act, which saw all children with SEN being given the opportunity and the right to be educated, regardless of the severity of their needs. After the policy was implemented, all children were given the opportunity to attend schools, which saw the development of a number of special schools to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of pupils with SEN entering education. The 1970 Act also shifted responsibility for SEN from health authorities, to LEAs (McKenzie, 2001), placing more emphasis on the education of children with SEN, rather than the treatment of them. This highlights an initial move away from medical models of SEN, presenting a starting ground for understanding SEN in terms of socialisation, rather than medicine. However, this Act aimed to educate children with SEN in segregated special schools, rather than in inclusive settings, which resulted in protesting by the parents of SEN children (Alcott, 2004). Remedial departments were set up in mainstream schools (Luscombe, 1993), but arguments for the integration of children with SEN in mainstream schools were further exacerbated by a fundamental policy report – the Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978), which provided an in-depth review of SEN provision, and emphasised the need for SEN integration in mainstream schools. The Warnock Report is therefore a key stepping-stone for the inclusion agenda, providing the foundations by which current SEN policy is based.

1.3.1 The Warnock Report (1978)

The Warnock Report provides detailed guidelines relating to the provision of education for children with SEN, and sets out several recommendations for curriculum and policy developments. Important areas of concern highlighted in the report include the following, which will be discussed in more detail below:

- The extent and different forms of SEN
- The replacement of SEN categorisation
- The assessment of SEN
- Integration and the role of special schools
- Curriculum considerations

The extent and different forms of SEN:

The Warnock Report (1978) acknowledged that in 1977, 1.8 per cent of school populations in England and Wales attended special schools or remedial classes; were placed in independent schools which catered wholly for children with 'handicap'; were home-schooled, or were awaiting admission to special schools. However, using criteria examining intelligence, physical difficulties, psychiatric disorder and behavioural problems, the report states that approximately 18 per cent of the school population would be identified as having SEN at some point in their school life. Moreover, the report states that educational needs provision are likely to take the form of one or more of the following:

- The provision of access to the curriculum through modifications to physical environments or teaching techniques,
- The provision of a special or modified curriculum
- Attention to social and emotional climates in which education occurs.

These forms of SEN provision are similar to the current definition of SEN, seen in government policy (e.g. DfES, 2001a), in that it calls for provision to be made for any children with SEN who require specific provision. Furthermore, it emphasises inclusive practice through the modification of curricular, and therefore goes some way to paving the way for social model explanations and interventions for SEN.

The Replacement of SEN Categorisation:

The Warnock Report encouraged a shift away from the use of medical labelling of SEN, with particular emphasis on the disuse of the terms 'educationally sub-normal', or 'mentally handicapped' (Warnock, 1978). The term SEN was therefore coined in the Warnock report, and it encouraged the use of the terms, such as 'learning difficulties'. This refocused attention on educational need (Bines, 2000); however, the report does not move far enough away from the use of labelling. It essentially replaces one category with another, but does aim to move away from labelling the child as having some sort of inherent deficiency.

Despite the attempt to move away from categorising children with SEN as handicapped, the report continually uses this term throughout when referring to the children with SEN. So, while in principle the aim to remove negative labels is honourable, the author has not reinforced this change in the writing of the report, which seems quite contradictory. Perhaps, this was due to imbedded stereotypes surrounding SEN being present at the time the report was written, but nevertheless, it seems the social models presented and advocated within the report were not fully embraced, with

even Warnock herself accepting that the well-intentioned aims of the report were not achieved, even decades later (Warnock, 2007).

The Assessment of SEN:

The Warnock report emphasises the need for early identification and assessment of SEN, and highlights parents as key stakeholders in the early discovery of any signs of unusual development and in the assessment of SEN. It is suggested that the assessment of needs, following identification of SEN, should occur over a period of time to determine the ways in which a child learns and responds. The report states that a child should be observed, as well as complete assessment tests. Moreover, in the instance that the child's difficulties stem from behavioural problems, an assessment of the learning environment must also be assessed. A five-stage assessment framework was developed within the report, which highlights the need for multi-agency co-operation in the assessment of SEN.

Stages 1–3: School-based assessment. This involves the teacher highlighting problems to the head teacher. Following this, the difficulties must be discussed with a teacher who has training in SEN, who may then carry out further assessment, alongside the development of a special teaching programme for the child. If the child does not respond to these changes, referral for professional assessment is made at Stage 3.

Stages 2-4: Multi-professional assessment. This involves the assessment of needs by professionals outside of the school setting, such as medical officers and educational psychologists.

Stage 5: District handicap team assessment. This is more specialised assessment of needs, by individuals with specialisms in the particular area of needs identified in earlier stages.

Integration and the Role of Special Schools:

Warnock (1978) provides statistics which show that in the space of four years, SEN integration into designated special classes in mainstream schools rose from 6.8% in 1973 to 12% in 1977. The report proposed that more provision for integration be made in mainstream schools in order to increase these numbers, and allow children with SEN to be educated on equal terms with their peers, although it is acknowledged that this was a long-term goal. In line with this, current statistics indicate that more and more children with SEN are being included in mainstream education (DfES, 2007). According to the report, however, for children with SEN to be educated on equal terms as their

peers, teachers must plan effectively; there must be extra provision from support services, as well as close involvement from parents and the setting of effective curricula targets. This further supports the social model of disability, and in many ways, laid the path for integration in education to become inclusion.

Despite this, the report does note the important role special schools play in providing short-term, specialist support for children with SEN. However, it does argue that provision in special schools should be kept for individuals with more severe needs, however, these children should have the opportunity to take part in social interactions with other children, and that links should be formed between special and mainstream schools. This further reflects current SEN movements (DfES, 2004a), which are seeking to reserve places in special schools for children with the most complex difficulties, whose needs could not effectively be met in mainstream provision.

As such, the report values the need for special schools in providing support to children with complex SEN, as well as those children with SEN educated in mainstream schools - a factor which is echoed in current SEN policy (e.g. DfES, 2004a). Therefore, it is evident, not only from the Warnock Report, but from current policy, that, despite the move towards an era of inclusion, segregated education is sometimes the best option for certain children.

Curriculum Considerations

In response to observations made in schools, where the quality of education available for children with SEN was deemed unsatisfactory, the Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978) presented a number of considerations to be made when developing and delivering the school curriculum. The report claimed that the general aims of education are the same for all children, but argued that different curricula should be developed to meet the needs of children with varying SEN. For example, it is stated that a curriculum for hearing impaired children, which focuses on communication and language skills, should be developed. The reason for this, as opposed to one curriculum for all children, is to ensure the different learning needs of children with SEN are met, and this reflects recent moves towards personalised learning, reflected in both policy (DfES, 2005) and research (Miliband, 2004; Robinson et al, 2008). The report also calls for regular reviewing of the curricula, continuity in teaching practice, as well as regular monitoring of individual progress, in order to assess whether objectives are being achieved.

1.3.2 Policy Impacts of the Warnock Report

It is clear, from the developments highlighted in the Warnock Report, that the integration of children with SEN in mainstream schools was considered to be of great importance in policy, as well as presenting future directions for SEN practice in mainstream and special schools. The Warnock Report, therefore, had a fundamental impact on the 1981 Education Act (Department for Education (DfE), 1981), which saw the enhancement of LEA role in the services available for meeting the individual needs of children with SEN, and introduced statementing. The 1981 Act, however, has been criticised for focusing too much on the identification of children whose development is less advanced than their peers, through the use of SEN Statements (DfE, 1981; Smith, 1992). Moreover, teacher training for the education of children with SEN was not addressed in line with changes to educational provision in this policy, demonstrating a lack of co-ordination in terms of provision and practice (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2008).

Nevertheless, the 1988 Education Reform Act (DfE, 1988) built on the criticisms of its predecessor, to provide a policy which sets out more of the aims of the Warnock report. The reform Act introduced the NC, providing a curriculum which is balanced and is relevant to all pupils. It was proposed that the NC will consist of core subjects, including mathematics, English and science; and foundation subjects, including physical education (PE), music, art, and humanities subjects. For each of these subjects there will be attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment arrangements, which must be appropriate for pupils of different abilities and maturities (DfE, 1988). Four education Key Stages (KS) were proposed in the 1988 Act, which were defined by age. These include:

- KS 1 – 5 to 7 years
- KS 2 – 7 to 11 years
- KS 3 – 11 to 14 years
- KS 4 – 14 to 16 years

The KS are used to determine development targets for children, and are a measure of educational attainment (Russell, 1993), and as such, testing is introduced at KS2 (7 years). According to Russell (1993), this is disadvantageous, as it ignores the progress of younger children, who might require additional support earlier. Moreover, after its introduction, several children with SEN were excluded from the curriculum, or provided with a modified curriculum, as it was deemed inappropriate for their needs (Alcott, 2004). This challenges the proposal of a curriculum relevant for all pupils, but does go

some way in delivering a structured framework for educational curricula in schools across England, allowing scope for revisions to further accommodate the needs of children with SEN. It also paves the way for more inclusive curricula, representative of social models of SEN.

Building on the recommendations in the Warnock Report, the 1981 Education Act and the 1993 Education Act, which emphasised the education of children with SEN in mainstream schools (DfE, 1993), the 1994 SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 1994) was developed. This fundamental piece of legislation saw guidelines put in place for LEAs to provide the best possible provision for children with SEN. Similar to principles stated in the 1994 Salamanca Statement (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 1994), that all children have the fundamental right to be educated, the Code of Practice states that mainstream education for children with SEN should be a priority, and places importance on the early identification and assessment of SEN, preferably before the child starts school. Furthermore, the 1994 Code of Practice introduces the role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). It states that all mainstream schools must have a designated teacher responsible for the coordination of provision for children with SEN. This represents a major step forward in inclusion, embracing the social model. It demonstrates the preliminary stages of school restructuring and adaptation for children with SEN. Moreover, the 1994 Code of Practice introduced a 5 stage model for the identification and assessment of children with SEN.

The model places all responsibility for children with SEN with either the school (Stages 1 to 3), or the LEA (Stages 4 and 5). This advocates of the social models of SEN, as it removes all responsibility from the individual, and places responsibility within the social sphere. Moreover, it ensures provision is made for children from the initial identification of educational difficulties, through to statutory assessment at stages four and five. In addition to this, the Code of Practice encouraged child participation in the decision making process. Consultation with the child is argued to contribute to “improved self-image and greater self-confidence” (DfE, 1994:26), and should be undertaken through goal-setting, the child’s agreement with strategy, and in the involvement of implementing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) (DfE, 1994). The empowerment of and consultation with SEN children has featured in policy since the implementation of the 1994 Code of Practice, and has become an important research tool for assessing the successes of inclusive policy and practice (Farrell, 2000). As such, consultation with children who have SEN is a significant focus of this study.

1.4 SEN Inclusion Policy – 1997 onwards

While SEN has been a key feature of educational policy since the 1970s, the return of the Labour Government in 1997 has seen inclusive education rise up the political agenda, deeming 1997 as “a turning point for ‘inclusive education’” (Armstrong, 2005:136). New Labour’s inclusive ‘third-way’ policy has represented SEN as a responsibility shared by all teachers of children with SEN (Armstrong, 2005). This has been exemplified through current legislation such as the SENDA (DfES, 2001b), the revised 2002 SEN Code of Practice (DfES 2001a), and the Every Child Matters Agenda (DfES, 2005). These policies highlight the overall aim of the government to ensure the needs of all children are met, as well as the target to include more children with SEN in mainstream education.

1.4.1 SENDA

Following a social model, and advocating inclusion, SENDA places the mainstream education of children with SEN at the top of its priorities, stating that any child with SEN must be educated in a mainstream setting unless it is against the wishes of the parent, or the provision of the specific needs of the child is incompatible in a mainstream school, similar to the aims set out in the Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978). The LEA has responsibility for taking every step to prevent incompatibility with mainstream schooling, and ascertains that special school placement will be reserved for those whose needs cannot be met in mainstream schools. The intention of SENDA is to prevent exclusion and segregation of children with SEN, and as such the purpose of the anticipatory policies found in SENDA is to facilitate schools, LEAs and governing bodies in their goal for achieving inclusion (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2008). In relation to social models of SEN, this places emphasis on provision and support. Nevertheless, Low (2007) and Fredrickson and Cline (2007) indicate that, while the intentions of such policies which seek to educate all children in mainstream provision might be beneficial for some, for other children this may not be the case, particularly is the support they receive in the mainstream setting is inadequate. Moreover, it could be argued that in doing this, the needs of some children who require more personal and individual attention could in fact be ignored in the pursuit of social equality for all (Low, 2007; Fredrickson and Cline, 2007). Despite this, provision is still available for children in special schools, yet it seems responsibility is placed with the parents of the child to access this provision.

In addition to promoting inclusive education, the Act adds to the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (updated and extended in 2005) (Her Majesty’s Stationary Office

(HMSO), 2005a), making it unlawful for schools to discriminate against and/or exclude pupils from school due to their SEN. Despite this, Audit Commission research has shown that children with physical difficulties, learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties were the least likely to be admitted into, and most likely to be excluded from mainstream schools (Audit Commission, 2002). This highlights the need for further scrutiny of schools who knowingly exclude pupils on the grounds of their SEN.

1.4.2 The 2002 SEN Code of Practice

The revised SEN Code of Practice “promotes a consistency of approach to meeting children’s SEN and places the rights of children with SEN at the heart of the process, allowing them to be heard and to take part in decisions about their education” (DfES, 2001a:i). Consolidating policy from the 1993 and 1996 Education Acts, as well as SENDA, it provides a framework for developing strong multi-agency partnerships, crucial in removing barriers to inclusion. Five general principles are highlighted in the policy document, designed to ensure that all children’s needs are met:

- “A child with SEN should have their needs met
- The SEN of children will normally be met in mainstream schools or settings
- The views of the child should be sought and taken into account
- Parents have a vital role to play in supporting their child’s education
- Children with SEN should be offered full access to a broad, balanced and relevant education, including an appropriate curriculum for the foundation stage and the NC.”

(DfES, 2001a:7)

The identification, assessment of and provision for SEN is referred to widely within the 2002 Code of Practice, introducing current SEN interventions – School Action (SA), and School Action Plus (SA+). These have replaced the 5-Stage Model presented in the 1994 Code of Practice. The use of more school-based interventions – essentially, the removal of Stages four and five in the 5-Stage Model, reduces bureaucracy in SEN provision, as seen in the 5-Stage Model (Williams and Maloney, 1998; Tutt, 2007).

SA provides additional interventions, different to the school’s usual differentiated curriculum for children with SEN. It is targeted at children who make little or no progress on the differentiated curriculum, or despite the provision of specialist equipment. SA+ results in assistance from external agencies, for example educational psychologist services, in the educational support of a child with SEN who has not

responded to interventions put in place through SA. If a child's needs cannot be met through SA, or SA+, then the decision to make a formal Statement of SEN will be taken. Statistics from 2007 (DfES, 2007), show that 54.6 per cent of all primary school children with SEN, and 39.7 per cent of all secondary school children with SEN receive provision through SA and SA+. Within this, only 2.8 per cent of children with SEN have formal SEN Statements (DfES, 2007). These findings suggest effective interventions are available through SA and SA+, which has limited the number of Statements given to children with SEN.

Under the 2002 Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a), all children receiving SEN provision require IEPs to be drawn up. The IEP sets short-term targets and criteria for success. It provides a framework of individual provision for the child, and allows for the recording of outcomes of SEN interventions. The strategies put in place on an IEP must reflect the individual needs of the child, and so must be reviewed on a regular basis. Given the recent movement towards personalised learning (Miliband, 2004; Robinson et al, 2008), it is possible that the future of education could see all children, not just those with SEN, having IEP-like plans for their education. This could prove a positive step forward in meeting the needs of all children, not necessarily just those with SEN.

In addition to revisions regarding interventions and assessment of SEN, the 2002 Code of Practice highlights the rights of the child in participating in, and making decisions about their education and needs. Pupil involvement in contributing to assessment, targets set in IEPs, and choice of schools is encouraged in the revised Code of Practice, and it is stated that children should feel confident that they are being listened to, and that their views are being valued. It is further noted that the perceptions of the child are important in understanding their experiences, in order to make judgements about interventions. However, as May (2004) points out, the Code of Practice does not define what is meant by 'pupil participation', and therefore leaves the interpretation up to professionals. This can result in schools believing they are adhering to the Code of Practice, without actually valuing the perceptions of the child. Nevertheless, child participation and consultation is recognised as an important feature of inclusive education, as indicated in the 2002 Code of Practice, and this will be explored within the current study.

The 2002 Code of practice, while advocating and encouraging inclusion, and so appearing to follow a social model perspective, also presents five medically-defined categories of SEN for assessment and provision purposes. These are:

- Communication and interaction needs
- Cognition and learning needs
- Behaviour, emotional and social development needs
- Sensory and/or physical needs
- Medical conditions

In continuing to make use of categories for defining and assessing SEN, the SEN Code of Practice fails to meet the requirements of social model perspectives (Shakespeare and Watson, 1997; Evans 2004; Low, 2007). It implies deficit in the child, but as stated previously, this is required for making judgements about the appropriate provision and interventions for children with SEN. Armstrong (2005) argues that in doing this, New Labour have reconstructed SEN in a traditional policy framework, emphasising pathology. Nevertheless, by placing emphasis on inclusion, while still characterising SEN using categorisation, it appears that the Code of Practice makes use of a bio-psycho-social models perspective in addressing SEN. It takes into account fully the need for social interventions, but accepts that in order to address the specific needs of children with SEN, it is necessary to take into account the individual nature of their SEN.

1.4.3 Every Child Matters

First introduced in 2003, and revised in 2005, the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2005) builds on previous policy, such as the 2004 Children Act (DfES, 2004c), and places outcomes for children and young people at the centre of the process. In doing so, five targeted outcomes are outlined, which will be achieved through whole-system change. These are for children to:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

These outcomes were decided upon through discussion with children and young people, and so take into account the values of the children for which policy was developed. Within the front-line delivery of whole-system change, the intention is to further integrate children's services, allowing children to receive effective help if they experience difficulties, and have better opportunities to reach their potential. With

specific regard to SEN, the Every Child Matters framework highlights the need to reduce reliance on Statementing, reduce bureaucracy, ensure appropriate provision, and to improve specialist advice for schools and support for parents. These goals seem to be consistent with social model philosophies (Shakespeare and Watson, 1997; Evans 2004; Jones, 2005; Low, 2007), proactively altering the ways in which education is provided to children with SEN.

As a result of the reforms suggested in Every Child Matters, the Government SEN Strategy, *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (DfES, 2004a), was developed. The strategy states that the number of children educated in special schools should fall over time and that special school provision must be maintained for children with the most severe and complex needs (DfES, 2004a). It emphasises the need for early intervention in SEN provision, and promotes a multi-agency approach to inclusive education. Moreover, it aims to take measures to remove barriers which hinder inclusive education to ensure the majority of children with SEN are educated in mainstream settings. In order to achieve these ambitious goals, the SEN strategy indicates that resources will be developed and made available to schools, to assist them in making adjustments to their policies and teacher practice. Moreover, they aim to work with the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) (now known as the Training and Development Agency (TDA) for schools, as of 2005) and ITT providers to encourage continuous professional development and training for teachers in SEN, stating that “all teachers should expect to teach children with SEN” (DfES, 2004:56).

Similar to previous policies, *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (DfES, 2004a) highlights the importance of the child's contribution, promoting personalised learning for children with SEN through their involvement in their own learning. It expects professionals to have high expectations for all children, despite their difficulties, and to help children with SEN become confident learners. This can be achieved not only through consultation with children, but through the development of curricula accessible to all children, and through continued support for and development of an inclusive education system.

1.5 National Curriculum Inclusion

The NC, first introduced in 1989, has two interdependent aims. The first is to provide learning opportunities for all pupils to learn and achieve; and secondly, to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all pupils for opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. This can be achieved through schools

working collaboratively with families and the local community; and allows schools to modify the curriculum to meet the needs of children within that particular school. In line with government policy, the NC has sought to provide curricula accessible to all pupils, and as such has delivered an inclusion statement (QCA, 2009). The NC Statutory Inclusion Statement presents guidelines for teachers about how to modify teaching programmes to ensure all children have effective learning opportunities. It presents three core principles, believed to be essential to developing a more inclusive curriculum:

- A. Setting suitable learning challenges** – teachers should aim to give every pupil opportunities to succeed, through the differentiation of programme content and teaching styles to meet the requirements of the child.
- B. Responding to pupil’s diverse needs** – teachers should set high expectations for all children, and respond to diverse needs by creating effective learning environments, securing motivation and concentration, using appropriate assessment approaches, promoting equality, and setting targets for learning.
- C. Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils** – teachers must take into account the specific needs of the child, and make provision to support individuals to enable effective participation. Teacher must also provide access to learning for all pupils by providing help for those with communication or language difficulties; planning to develop pupils understanding and for full participation in physical or practical activities; and by helping pupils manage their behaviour and emotions.

The four main purposes of the NC include establishing standards and entitlement to education, promoting continuity and coherence, and the promotion of public understanding of the role of compulsory education. It is stated that while these purposes will not change; the curriculum itself is responsive to societal and economic changes. As such

“Teachers, individually and collectively, have to reappraise their teaching in response to the changing needs of their pupils, and the impact of economic, social and cultural change. Education only flourishes if it successfully adapts to the demands and needs of the time.”

(DfES/QCA, 2004:13)

Teachers are therefore encouraged to modify the ways in which they teach, and the content of their programmes to not only meet the changing requirements of society, but also the specific needs of individual children. This presents a challenge for schools, and teachers in particular; but if managed effectively, can make inclusion in mainstream education meaningful for all pupils (Byers and Rose, 2004).

1.6 Achieving Inclusion in PE

This study aims to examine the perspectives of children with SEN in PE. As such, it is necessary to understand how inclusive education works within a PE context, and more so, gain an understanding of the PE curriculum, utilised by both mainstream, and many special schools.

As inclusive education is rising further up political and academic agenda through the development of inclusive curricula and education policy (Vickerman, 2007a), it is important to highlight inclusion within PE as well as in more academic subjects, such as mathematics and literacy. Despite it being a foundation NC subject, PE is often marginalised both in research and, until recently, in school SEN policy (Penney and Harris, 1997; Fitzgerald et al, 2003a; Morley et al, 2005); while other academic subjects, such as mathematics and literacy acquire an air of higher importance, receiving more support and provision (Morley et al, 2005). It is evident that, while Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) have an important role in supporting children with SEN in mathematics and literacy, for example, less importance is given to supporting PE teachers to deliver inclusive lessons (Smith and Green, 2004; Morley et al, 2005).

Moreover, during recent years, moral panics regarding the obesity increases in children across Britain, and the decline in physical activity among individuals in the UK, and the effect this has on the health of the population, have been highlighted (Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 2001). In addition to health benefits arising from physical activity, physical activity in children with SEN has been shown to increase their psychological, social and physiological well-being (Kristen et al, 2002). As such, the inclusion of children with SEN in PE lessons is fundamental to their mental and physical development, and so should gain the same precedence as other subjects in the school inclusion practice. Nevertheless, Sport England (2001) highlight that young children with disabilities take part in a narrower sphere of PE activities compared with their non-disabled peers, and highlight that 10% of their sample of children with disabilities had not taken part in any sport as part of the school curriculum over the

previous year. These statistics, while somewhat outdated, highlight concern about the state of inclusion in PE. The Physical Education National Curriculum (NCPE) (DfES/QCA, 1999), and the Physical Education and School Sport Club Links Strategy (PESSCL) (DfES, 2002b), later revised as the Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People (PESSYP) (DCSF, 2008) have, however, gone some way to ensuring children with SEN are fully included in PE and sport outside of school, by establishing minimum requirements for schools related to curricula and extra-curricular physical activity.

1.6.1 NCPE

The NCPE (DfES/QCA, 1999; Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2007b) provides a framework for PE teachers to teach children how to benefit from physical activity. It states that PE provides opportunities for children to be creative, competitive and promotes healthy lifestyles. The NCPE adheres to the National Curriculum Inclusion Statement, allowing teachers to modify the ways in which PE is taught, so that the needs of individual children can be met. Prior to the 2007 revision for KS3 (QCA, 2007b), however, teachers were required to follow the programme of study set out in the NCPE. This is still relevant for KS2 (although changes will be implemented in 2011 to increase teaching flexibility (Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), 2009b), while revisions made to the ways in which KS3 PE is delivered, has resulted in increased teaching flexibility.

The 6 activity areas from which KS2 teachers (and previously, KS3) are required to teach from are:

- Dance activities
- Games activities
- Gymnastic Activities
- Swimming
- Athletics
- Outdoor and adventurous activities

The aim is to build knowledge, skills and understanding of the activities, and as such an eight-point attainment target is put in place. Revisions of the secondary (KS3) curriculum in 2007 (QCA, 2007b), were implemented in September 2008, and altered the guidance from which KS3 PE is taught. From 2008, it was determined that secondary PE would become less prescribed and more flexible, allowing for teachers to “personalise the curriculum, designing learning experiences to meet individual needs and engage all learners” (QCA, 2007b:5). The primary (KS2) curriculum, however has

remained unchanged, requiring teachers to teach from at least 5 of the 6 curriculum areas, of which games activities, dance and gymnastics are compulsory. For special schools, this differs. Special schools are not bound by the NC, but rather, are disapplied, allowing them the freedom to develop their own curriculums relevant to the needs of the children they are teaching (DfES, 2006).

Despite the differences in delivery for the two curricula, teachers are required to make judgements about pupil's performance at the end of KS 1, 2 and 3, based on a series of levels which remain consistent throughout the key stages. As such, it is expected that, for example, by KS3 (age 14), children will be achieving between a level 3 (level 4 in the 2007 revision) and level 7 (level 8 in the 2007 revision) in PE. This means that children should be able to, at a minimum, be able to

“Select and use skills, actions and ideas appropriately, applying them with co-ordination and control...understand tactics and composition by starting to vary how they respond... give reasons why warming up before an activity is important, and why physical activity is good for their health.”

(DfES/QCA, 1999:43)

This has been criticised, however, for making it difficult for teachers to accurately assess children with SEN performance, as many are unable to meet the assessment criteria in the NCPE (Smith and Thomas, 2006). As such 'P' scales were developed by the QCA to record the attainment of children with SEN working towards Level 1 of the NC (QCA, 2007a). Nevertheless, these are often not used, or not known to exist in secondary schools (Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), 2003), and so have only a limited impact on the assessment and recording of attainment for children with SEN in PE. As such, it is stated that the structure of the NCPE serves to exclude many children with SEN and disability (Smith and Green, 2004).

1.6.2 PESSCL and PESSYP

The PESSCL Strategy launched by the British Government in October 2002 was intended to transform PE and sport across England as well as improve sport facilities. It states that “all children, whatever their circumstances or abilities, should be able to participate in and enjoy PE and sport” (DfES, 2002b:1). In doing so, it is intended that improvements will be made in:

- Pupil concentration, commitment and self-esteem; leading to higher attendance, better behaviour and improved attainment.

- Fitness levels; reducing and preventing obesity in childhood and related diseases in adulthood.
- Success in international competition by talented young people.

In achieving these goals, all children, regardless of any additional needs, must take part in at least 2 hours of high quality PE and school sport each week. High quality PE and school sport is demonstrated by children having the confidence and skills to take part in PE and sport; and as such it is stated that no children will be excluded, or should have to avoid taking part in PE and school sport (DfES, 2002b; DfES, 2004d). In the revised PESSYP (DCSF, 2008) strategy, it is proposed that children should be encouraged to participate in sport for five hours per week, and in doing this, have provided funding to retrain PE teachers and other sports professionals, as well as set up multi-skill clubs for children with disabilities (DCSF, 2008). Moreover, in line with the original PESSCL strategy, professional development programmes have been implemented to ensure teachers are able to gain the support and expertise they need to be able to deliver PE and sport programmes to better meet the diverse needs of all pupils. The PESSCL/ PESSYP partnership places a strong emphasis on pupils with SEN and adopts an inclusive approach, however, has been criticised for not developing appropriate identification standards for children with SEN and disability who might be gifted and talented at sport (The Loughborough Partnership, 2006). In an evaluation of PESSCL, The Loughborough Partnership interviewed a number of individuals involved in the development of PESSCL, one of whom stated, "We know what the standards are for a non-disabled child but have no idea for individuals with special needs and we need more advice" (The Loughborough Partnership, 2006:4). Therefore, while PESSCL/ PESSYP aim to be inclusive, it is not yet prepared fully for the comprehensive inclusion of children with SEN in PE and school sport strategies. Nevertheless, given the funding provided by government sources to reach the aims of the newly revised PESSYP, it is possible that in the coming years, inclusive sport in the community and within school PE will improve vastly. These factors will be explored in detail throughout this study, by exploring children with SEN's participation in both PE lessons and sport outside of school.

1.7 The Importance of Consultation

Definitions of SEN, inclusion and factors impacting upon inclusion within the PE context have been discussed. As such, the importance of consultation with children who have SEN will now be considered. This is a key component of the current study, given the exploration of children with SENs perspectives and experiences of PE. This will give a

brief overview of why consultation with children with SEN is necessary, and will be followed by an examination of the research questions proposed for this research as a result of the factors discussed within this chapter.

Recent policy, such as the 2002 SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a), emphasises the need to consult with children with SEN in order to determine the most effective interventions and provision for that child. In adopting a social model (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Allan et al, 2005; Armstrong, 2005; Connors and Stalker, 2007), these policies place onus on schools and LEAs to ensure children have their needs met and are able to have their views heard in order to achieve this. A consultation paper, entitled *Working Together: Giving Children and Young People a Say* (DfES, 2003), on pupil participation was therefore developed by the DfES to provide guidance to LEAs and schools for promoting pupil participation. In the paper, pupil participation is defined as “adults, working in partnership with children and young people and valuing their views” (DfES, 2003:3). It states that through this, children can be encouraged to:

- Become active participants in their education.
- Participate in building and improving services.
- Make a difference in their schools.
- Develop the knowledge, understanding and skills they will need in adult life.

In providing children and young people with the opportunity to give voice, the 2003 consultation paper states that children and young people involved in the consultation process have experience a number of benefits in education, including:

- Developing new skills, such as debating and negotiating
- Recognise that they are taken seriously
- Receive services more responsive to their needs
- Become motivated to get involved in their school and wider community (DfES, 2003)

For children with SEN, consultation with them about their beliefs and opinions, and giving them the opportunity to make important decisions regarding their education can result in empowerment, and feelings of being valued in society (Hutzler et al, 2002, 1Voice, 2007). Moreover, consulting with children with SEN can provide important information about how well they feel they are being included in mainstream education (MacConville, 2007), which should be considered in the planning, delivery and evaluation of inclusive practice (Vickerman, 2007b). According to Arnot and Reay

(2008), consultation can therefore be a means of improving children's individual learning.

Not only can student voice bring about improvements at a school level, Arnot and Reay (2007) state that they can provide insight into the organisation of teaching and can highlight social inequalities associated with learning. Theorising this in terms of the social construction of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), and applying it to pupil voice, can also allow for the examination of the ways in which voice is constructed in pedagogical contexts, and relayed in the messages children express through the medium of voice (Arnot and Reay, 2007). This is particularly useful in understanding the importance of pupil voice within SEN, as it can highlight student both experiences of inclusion and participation, and the ways in which these experiences are constructed and influenced by factors within the child's contextual environment (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Moreover, it provides insight into the ways in which pupil voice and consultation can be utilised within pedagogy in order to bring about improvements in learning and teaching (McIntyre et al, 2005). SEN and PE researchers have noted, however, that "practitioners within PE and sport have been particularly slow to acknowledge the importance of engaging with young disabled people in order to inform future practice and provision" (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a: 123), and as such, this research will attempt to engage with children with SEN, through consultation.

In understanding the way in which student voice can impact upon school organisation, and the experiences of the children who are consulted with, Arnot and Reay (2007) have therefore developed a model outlining four types of pupil talk, and the different forms of information these produce. This model will be utilised within this research in order to understand more fully, the types of talk used by the participants, and the ways in which their messages are constructed and interpreted. The four types of talk are as follows:

- Classroom talk – this relates to language and communication which reflects the way in which lessons are taught and interpreted. It can provide insight into differences in academic achievement between students.
- Subject talk – this refers to communicative competence relating to specific subjects, and can present information about the level of competency in a lesson.

- Identity talk – this refers to the pupil's social identity in specific pedagogical contexts, and can be used to assist pupils in coping with inequality in the classroom.
- Code talk – this refers to the ways in which pupils understand their identities, and reflects their views about inclusion and an evaluation of their own knowledge.

As such, in consulting with children, and those with SEN in particular, it is possible to gain considerable insight which can assist in analysing inclusive practice, and the child's experiences of inclusion. However, social research examining SEN has done little to understand the experiences of the individuals involved in inclusive education (Allan et al, 2005). Often, it is the adults involved in inclusive education, such as teachers or parents, that have their perspectives heard, and very little emphasis is given to hearing the views of children with SEN, particularly regarding their perceptions and experiences of PE (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a; 2003b). As such this is an area which requires further examination. Therefore, this research aims to add to under-researched area by examining the perspectives of children with SEN in mainstream schools about their experiences of inclusion and participation in PE. As such the main research question will be:

“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”

This research will examine this question by focussing on four sub-questions, examining their personal perceptions of PE, their perception of others in PE, difference, and participation in sport outside of school. In examining these sub-questions the four types of talk highlighted by Arnot and Reay (2007), will be examined, and the ways in which children's experiences are constructed will be explored. The sub-questions are as follows:

- ***“How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?”***

This sub-question will seek to explore children's perceptions about their ability to participate and achieve in PE lessons, as well exploring their experiences of the accessing the NCPE. It will attempt to explore their beliefs and opinions surrounding their SEN, and the impact this has on their performance in PE.

- ***“How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?”***

This sub-question will examine the child's experiences of prejudice and discrimination from other people in PE lessons, and how this may affect the child's ability to participate and be included fully in PE lessons.

- ***“How does the child feel he/she is treated differently to other children?”***

This sub-question will explore notions of difference. It will examine how the child feels they have been treated differently from other children in PE lessons, and the impact this has on the child's personal experiences of PE.

- ***“What opportunity does the child have to partake in extra-curricular sport, or sport in the community and are these accessible to the child?”***

This sub-question will investigate the child's participation in extra-curricular sporting activities, and sport outside of school. It will also examine any barriers the child might face in accessing sporting facilities both within and outside of school.

1.8 Summary

SEN policy and curricula has been advocating the inclusion of children with SEN for the last three decades. A number of inclusion targets have been set in government legislation, for example in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a), and the government SEN Strategy (DfES, 2004a). These include changes to be made in the way the NC is taught, and through the ways in which SEN are identified and in the provision provided in mainstream schools.

Despite moves to provide a more inclusive education system, discrepancies exist between policy targets and the ways in which inclusive education is delivered. This is particularly evident in PE strategy and curricula. While policy and curricula documents state that PE must be inclusive, and that teachers must provide curricula broad and balanced enough to meet the needs of all pupils, researchers have stated that this has not been achieved (Smith and Green, 2004).

Policy further emphasises the need to consult with children with SEN in order to address their personal experiences of education, and provide the most effective interventions and provision in mainstream settings. These can contribute to the planning and delivery of inclusive education, and so require attention. In addressing pupil participation, the government aims to provide improved services for children

reflecting their particular needs, as well as improving the education experience for children (DfES, 2003). Research has shown that through consultation with children, it is possible to gain a fuller understanding of inclusive practice, and pupil competency (Arnot and Reay, 2007). These are important factors in determining effective methods for improving the educational experience for children, and are particularly vital for understanding how children with SEN perceive inclusion.

However, it has been noted that often children with SEN do not have their perspectives heard, and it is often left to adults to make judgements for the child (Fitzgerald, 2003a; 2003b; Allan et al, 2005). This is particularly evident when examining children with SEN perspectives of their inclusion and participation in PE. In determining issues relating to the inclusion and participation of children with SEN in PE lessons, it is therefore necessary to explore the perspectives of children with SEN in order to gain a fuller understanding of inclusive PE, and assess areas for improvement.

As such, an in depth analysis of the perspectives of children with SEN will be undertaken within the context of the chapters outlined in the Preface and the research questions reiterated below:

Main Research Question:

“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”

Sub – Questions:

- ***“How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?”***
- ***“How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?”***
- ***“How does the child feel he/she is treated differently to other children?”***
- ***“What opportunity does the child have to partake in extra-curricular sport, or sport in the community and are these accessible to the child?”***

CHAPTER TWO: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

With the prevalent move towards a more social model of special needs education highlighted in SEN policy (Farrell, 2001), there has also been deviation away from the emphasis of deficit within the child (Low, 2007). SEN is more frequently now seen as a response to unsuitable and restrictive teaching styles (Clark et al, 1999). Statutory and professional agencies, teacher training providers, schools and teachers need to respond effectively to this increasing agenda in order to ensure the most appropriate opportunities are provided for children with SEN, so that all their learning needs are met (Vickerman, 2007b). As such it is necessary to understand the perspectives of such bodies when contemplating SEN and inclusion practice. Within PE particularly, there has been widespread national and international interest focusing upon the views and perspectives of government and professional agencies, initial teacher training (ITT) providers and PE teachers about the inclusion of children with SEN in NCPE, and the training available to teachers to support inclusion (Vickerman, 2002, Morley et al, 2005; Smith and Thomas, 2006; Vickerman, 2007a, TDA, 2008a). It is therefore necessary to examine these in order to understand the kind of educational experience children with SEN are receiving in PE lessons.

As such, this chapter will explore the training PE teachers receive with regard to inclusion, through ITT and CPD. This will give a deepened understanding of the preparation teachers' gain to teach in inclusive environments, which in effect influence the quality of education children with SEN receive. This will be followed by a look at the perspectives of both training and qualified PE teachers about their experiences of teaching inclusively, presenting further insight into the success of inclusion training programmes for PE teachers, and highlighting the barriers they face in teaching inclusively. This too will have an impact on the education children with SEN receive in PE, given the assumption that positive experience of inclusive training and teaching for teachers, will result in positive outcomes for children with SEN, and vice versa. This assumption will be examined in more detail within the current study.

2.1 Inclusion Training and CPD for Teachers of PE

"Inclusion must be regarded as a never-ending process, rather than a simple change of state, dependent upon continuous pedagogical and organisational development in response to pupil diversity"

This statement, located in a summary of research findings for the DfEE regarding a LEA Review Framework (Ainscow et al, 1999b) emphasises the process involved in creating inclusive education. Ainscow et al (1999a) go on to highlight the need for multi-agency co-operation in delivering inclusive practices, between both policy and practice. Within this they claim that specific stakeholders, namely the teachers delivering inclusive programmes, to some extent become policy makers, developing their own understanding of government policies and adapting these into their teaching (Ainscow et al, 1999a). As such, inclusive education becomes a challenge for the teachers to ensure quality and participation in learning to meet the diverse learning needs of all pupils (Nind and Wearmouth, 2006), and in order “to develop inclusive pedagogy, teachers need access to good information” (Nind and Wearmouth, 2006:116). This highlights the importance of SEN training both in ITT and CPD so that teachers are able to provide a high quality learning environment suitable for the needs of all pupils. With particular reference to PE, and the PESSYP strategy, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) (2009a) state that in order to ensure high quality learning, high quality teachers must be appointed. In terms of this they define high quality teachers as those who are enthusiastic, listen to their pupils, and provide positive role models (DfES, 2004d; QCDA, 2009a). The criteria for high quality teaching relates both to teacher competence and subject expertise, yet little is said about inclusive teaching in this particular case. By addressing this, and other PE teaching policy, it is anticipated an overview of current training available to both student, newly qualified and experienced teachers will be gained with the intention of evaluating its effectiveness in preparing teachers to deliver inclusive PE lessons.

2.1.1 SEN Training in PE ITT

As policies for SEN and inclusion change, so do the requirements for trainee and qualified teachers in interpreting and delivering the policy targets. Teacher training elements of SEN can be traced back to the Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978). The report stipulated that there must be elements of SEN training in all teacher education courses, which should be recognised in their qualification as teachers. This has been further reflected throughout the development of the TTA (currently known as the TDA) – the governing body responsible for teacher training. Since its development in 1994, the TTA has devised standards which teachers must meet if they are to be awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Despite this, and the ever increasing political debate regarding SEN and inclusive education, to date there are no mandatory qualifications

required by teachers to teach children with SEN, with the exception of the compulsory specialist qualifications required to teach children with hearing, visual and multi-sensory impairments (TTA, 1999).

Currently, it is necessary for trainee teachers to display an ability to prepare for and differentiate methods, or seek guidance about children with SEN in order to receive QTS (ibid S3.3.4, TDA, 2006). To do this, student teachers must demonstrate the ways in which they plan and modify programmes to meet the needs of children with SEN. This is often, however, based on in-school practice, which is often ad hoc, and as such experience with a number of different children with SEN and familiarity with a range of SEN is limited (Golder et al, 2005). Furthermore, a student teacher can meet this mandatory requirement by simply discussing with a more experienced member of staff, the ways in which the child's needs might be met, so no assessment on practical lesson planning for children with SEN is required to obtain QTS. Similarly, Vickerman and Coates (2009) indicate that assessment on inclusive practice is irregular, with only 27% of their trainee teacher respondents stating they had any specific SEN assessment as part of their training. Morley et al (2005), however, argue that the assessment of knowledge, understanding and application of inclusion is necessary for PE ITT providers to make sound judgements about the ability of trainee teachers, and their awareness of SEN.

Nevertheless, it is stated throughout legislation (DfES, 2001a; 2004) the importance of teachers having the confidence and understanding to deliver inclusive education - something that cannot be achieved unless more rigid standards are introduced to ensure training and recently qualified teachers are knowledgeable about a range of SEN. Moreover, that they have the practical expertise to implement inclusive programmes in the school. Similarly, as stated by Robertson (1999:171), the current standards for QTS, "are too simple, slight, procedural and compliant in design to be of great value, and they are unlikely to further the long-term development of inclusive education". Robertson (1999) goes further to express the fear that training and recently qualified teachers are required to be compliant too much with standards, which, he claims, may lead to neglect in the understanding and developing skills pertinent to inclusive education. Nevertheless, the requirement for more standardised practical SEN elements in ITT has been recognised. The DfES highlight the need to work alongside the TDA and ITT providers to ensure teachers have core skills and knowledge about SEN, and to develop specialist qualifications in SEN (DfES, 2004).

In addition to the requirements for QTS (TDA, 2006), the National Special Educational Needs Specialist Standards have been developed to provide guidance to teachers and schools on effective SEN practice (TTA, 1999). According to these standards, a SEN specialist is any teacher who works directly or indirectly with children who have severe or complex SEN. With the increasing numbers of children with diverse SEN entering mainstream schools, and the move to close more special schools across the country; all teachers, according to this definition, therefore become 'specialists' in SEN. These standards, however, "do not constitute a training syllabus" (TTA, 1999:2). Instead, they set out the core, extension and role-based expertise required, from which ITT and CPD programmes can be developed. The core standards outline the professional knowledge, understanding and skills required by teachers to be able to teach across a broad range of SEN, as such this is the standard to which all training teachers should achieve. Moreover, in the DfES (2004) document *Removing Barriers to Achievement*; it is stated that all teachers in all schools must possess core skills in SEN. However, it is worth emphasising that it is not mandatory for training teachers to have specialist SEN training, despite recommendations by the government for more newly qualified and trainee teachers to take placements in special schools (DfES, 2004). Instead, teachers must only display an ability to differentiate their teaching for children with SEN, and have an understanding of identification processes in assessing SEN (TDA, 2006), which as mentioned previously, is often not formally assessed (Vickerman and Coates, 2009). On the other hand, a recent TDA (2008c) statement indicates that more is being done to improve the training of student teachers with regard to SEN. Within the statement it is stated that:

"Specialist resources for primary undergraduate ITT courses and induction have been developed and piloted with teacher training providers, along with a scheme of extended placements for trainees in special schools or specially resourced mainstream schools"

(TDA, 2008c:5)

Despite this, currently teachers are still not fully trained to include the increasing numbers of children with SEN placed in mainstream schools (Vickerman and Coates, 2009), with statistics showing that the number of children with SEN placed in mainstream schools has increased from 14 per cent in 2003 to 16.4 percent in 2007 (DfES, 2007). As such CPD for recently qualified and experienced teachers has become ever more important over recent years (Morley et al, 2005; TDA, 2008a).

2.1.2 SEN Training through CPD

“High quality professional development is a central component in nearly every modern proposal for improving education”

(Guskey, 2002:381)

CPD refers to reflective activity undertaken by teachers, designed to improve their individual attributes, understanding, knowledge and skills (TDA, 2008b). This involves attending internal and external conferences and courses, taking part in peer observations, and reflecting on working practice. CPD promotes lifelong learning (TDA, 2007) among teachers and educational professionals, and therefore is important for both experienced and newly qualified teachers. As such, the TDA (2008b) have identified three National Priorities for CPD, to help CPD providers plan and deliver a range of high-quality programmes for teachers. These are:

- Pedagogy – covering behaviour management, subject knowledge and curriculum change.
- Personalisation - covering equality and SEN.
- People – covering school leadership and team working.

However, the most recent strategy for CPD, entitled Learning and Teaching, developed by the DfEE in 2001, states that funding will be available for CPD which teachers “see as important” (DfEE, 2001:3), and that “they can select activities that are likely to have the greatest impact on their teaching” (DfEE, 2001:5). Moreover, that it is the responsibility of individual schools to interpret and deliver CPD to their teachers (DfEE, 2001). As such, teachers and schools are free to decide upon the professional development they wish to take part in. Therefore, if a teacher or school does not give precedence to SEN training in CPD, there is no compulsory need for them to take part in such training, unless it is part of a contractual agreement with the school (Guskey, 2002).

Nevertheless, while some teachers are required by their contract to attend some form of CPD, the majority of them report that they do so because they want to become better teachers; and are therefore attracted by the belief that through CPD, they will further their knowledge and skills, and enhance their teaching effectiveness with their students (Guskey, 2002). Moreover, a recent TDA (2008c) annex indicated that improvements have been made in CPD for teachers of children with SEN. Currently an Inclusion Development Programme is being developed alongside the Department for

Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (previously DfES) to develop CPD materials relating to SEN.

Despite this, PE teachers traditionally engage in very little CPD compared with teachers of other subjects (Armour and Yelling, 2004). This is because PE has been viewed as a low status subject, and as such provision for CPD within PE has, in the past, been hard to secure (Armour and Yelling, 2004). Moreover, when CPD is available, Armour and Yelling (2004:104) state that it was limited, and that teachers were often unable to perceive CPD “beyond sport-specific update courses”, and CPD patterns were somewhat ad hoc. In response to this Armour and Yelling (2004) argue that CPD should be viewed as an everyday practice of observing pupils, but not something adjacent to teaching practice. Furthermore, by adopting this stance, teachers would be in control of their professional development, through the continuous study of the pupils’ specific learning needs, seeking expert guidance to assist in the development of appropriate practices (Armour and Yelling, 2004).

As such, CPD programmes should be improved, both in general, as is currently occurring according to the TDA (2008c), but more specifically in PE, in order to give teachers the opportunity to enhance their understanding and skills relating to SEN - whether this occurs as part of the working day, or in out-of-hours conferences and meetings. This is even more important given the current strategies, such as PESCCL/ PESSYP, which further raise the profile of PE and school sport, providing funding for teachers to gain further training in these areas (DCSF, 2008).

CPD is highlighted as an important component, and a necessity for recently qualified and experienced teachers, who often find it difficult to include children with SEN due to a lack of expertise, or a disbelief in the inclusion agenda (Smith and Green, 2004; Morley et al, 2005; Smith and Thomas, 2006). Therefore, as Guskey (2002:383) points out:

“The crucial point is that it is not professional development per se, but the experience of successful implementation that changes teachers’ attitudes and beliefs. They believe it works, because they have seen it work”.

2.1.3 Adapted Physical Activity and its Application in PE

Through analyses of the training teachers receive regarding SEN inclusion, and the NC Inclusion Statement, the differentiation and modification of PE programmes is evidently

a recurring theme. Modification and differentiation of programmes is a key factor in Adapted Physical Activity (APA) theories, and as such this should be defined and understood in terms of its application in PE lessons. APA refers to differentiation of physical activity programmes for individuals with disabilities; however it is important to note that this does not only refer to individuals with PD (Reid, 2003). When applied to PE, APA becomes known as Adapted Physical Education (APE), and this is associated with the modification of instruction, objectives or equipment to meet the needs of the individual children with SEN, in order to enhance their enjoyment, learning and practice in a given activity within PE (Reid, 2003). In addition to this APE is a tool for empowerment of children with SEN and disabilities, promoting lifelong activity, allowing the child to make choices and facilitating self-actualisation (Reid, 2003; Sherrill, 2004). A recurrent theme in APE theory is that students must be given the opportunity to make their own decisions regarding their abilities (Sherrill, 2004), and while this might make assessment and recording the child's progress difficult for the teachers, it allows the child to progress at their own speed and develop an enjoyment for activities rather than being expected to meet targets on a continuous basis, which is important for lifelong physical activity.

APE requires teachers to adapt current programmes, rather than providing a separate activity (Reid, 2003), and as such APE encapsulates inclusion. The success of APE rests on teachers adopting an inclusive teaching style, which allows for flexible rules; allowing children to find their own way in lessons, and focusing on individual competencies rather than expecting all children to reach the same goals (Sherrill, 2004). Moreover, Sherrill (2004) argues that teachers involved in APE should adopt attitudes conducive to encouraging learning, and this includes teachers being confident about what they are teaching. This, according to Sherrill (2004) can be developed through pre-service and in-service APE training. Additionally, Kasser and Lytle (2005) argue that training is important for enhancing teachers' perceived competency, which is vital for ensuring individuals are not excluded from PE programmes. As such, including APA/APE components in PE teachers training would encourage more inclusive thinking, and provide teachers with an opportunity to develop the necessary skills for adapting and modifying lessons to ensure all children are included. Moreover, it is stated by Sherrill (2004:10) that "all quality physical education is adapted physical education", and as such APE should be the benchmark for delivering quality PE to all children, and therefore is a necessity for PE teacher training. Therefore, it is important to determine the extent to which teachers are adopting differentiation within PE

lessons, and this can be analysed through their personal experiences of inclusion within the context of PE.

2.2 PE Teachers Perspectives of Including Children with SEN

Accessing the perspectives of teachers (see for example, Hodge et al, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Smith, 2004; Morley et al, 2005; Lambe and Bones, 2006; Vickerman, 2007) has provided an insight into their readiness and competence to teach children with SEN, reflecting the quality of SEN training in both ITT and CPD; as well as highlighting the challenges faced by teachers in including children with a diverse range of SEN. Key findings from research by Green, 2000; Hodge et al, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Smith, 2004; Morley et al, 2005; Lambe and Bones, 2006; and Vickerman, 2007 amongst others, indicate a number of core themes arising from the perceptions of education providers on the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream PE and sport. These are:

- Attitudes Towards Inclusion
- Unrealistic Targets
- Insufficient SEN training
- Constraint Caused by LSAs
- Extra Curricular Physical education

2.2.1 Attitudes towards Inclusion

Teachers' perceptions about inclusion are fundamental to understanding their experiences of teaching children with SEN, as well as their attitudes and practices surrounding inclusion and children with SEN. Literature has, however, indicated that teachers are not fully aware of what inclusion is (Smith, 2004), and how to achieve it successfully (Smith, 2004; Hodge et al, 2004; Morley et al, 2005). Smith (2004) indicates that while teachers were able to give solid definitions of inclusion when asked, several perceived inclusion as integration of students into current curricula, and therefore did not adapt programmes to meet the needs of children in their class. Moreover, Lambe and Bones (2006) indicate that student teachers adopt an integrative approach when discussing SEN, despite their inclusive ideals. When asked, the student teachers stated that withdrawal classes for children with SEN would be a more acceptable method for supporting children with SEN. As such, Wilkins and Nietfield (2004:116) point out that, "teachers are generally fearful of inclusion because of their lack of knowledge or fear of little support", and this can have detrimental effects on the

experiences all children in the class – both those with and without SEN (Morley et al, 2005).

There is a general feeling among teachers that including children with SEN in PE lessons will be disadvantageous to other children in the class (Smith and Green, 2004; Smith, 2004; Morley et al, 2005). Morley et al (2005), for example, show that teachers' conceptions of inclusion were somewhat negative due to the effects inclusion has on other children in the class who do not have SEN. Teachers in their study stated that non-SEN children in their classes could become frustrated and lose spirit; and as such it was felt that including children with SEN could sometimes be disadvantageous to the other children in the class, resulting in them not getting the most out of their PE lessons. Similarly, Smith (2004) indicates that some teachers in his study indicated that they perceived inclusion as detrimental to other children in the class, and expressed concern about ensuring that it was not. The teachers in this study therefore felt that inclusive PE lessons required more planning, which places constraint on the teacher. Despite this, research with non-disabled children has shown that including children with SEN in PE lessons has proven beneficial for children, resulting in them gaining enjoyment from interacting with the child with SEN (Slininger, et al, 2000), as well as improving general attitudes towards inclusion amongst non-disabled children (Block and Zeman, 1996; Slininger et al, 2000). Moreover Block and Zeman (1996) indicate that inclusion of children with SEN has no significant effect on the skills gained by non-disabled children in a basketball PE module. This is, however, dependent on the inclusion being planned effectively, and support being available (Block and Zeman, 1996). As such, while it seems that the fears of PE teachers about the effects of inclusion on children without disabilities seem somewhat unfounded, there is an apparent need for schools to spend more time planning inclusion and ensuring that support is available for PE teachers when including children with SEN. This could potentially improve teachers' overall perceptions and expectations regarding inclusion and its effects on other children in lessons.

In addition to teachers' perceiving inclusion as detrimental to the experiences of other children, inclusion is often perceived as a challenge for teachers. Smith and Green (2004), for example, indicate that some teachers feel inclusive policies within the NCPE are constraining for their practice, and so adaptations made to lessons to promote inclusion were a response to policy rather than any real desire to make lessons inclusive. This was highlighted by one teacher in particular who suggested that prior to stringent SEN policies and inspections being put in place by the NC and the Office for

Standards in Education (OFSTED) regarding SEN, the needs of children with SEN were simply “brushed under the carpet” (Smith and Green, 2004:600), and consequently, several children with SEN experienced limited inclusion in PE lessons (Hodge et al, 2004). OFSTED inspections, however, have evidently had the desired effect, placing inclusion at the front of teacher’s minds (Smith and Green, 2004). OFSTED carry out school inspections approximately every three years, dependent on the effectiveness of the school (OFSTED, 2007). Inspectors report on the quality of education provided to children within each school, and this assesses the extent to which schools are meeting the needs of the range of pupils at the school. In addition to this, inspections take place at short notice so that inspectors can observe the school in its true state, without to any unnecessary pre-inspection changes being made (OFSTED, 2007). In a report published by OFSTED (2003) it was concluded that mainstream schools were providing effective education for children with SEN, however, little mention is given to PE within this report and so it is unclear whether mainstream PE is being delivered to and received effectively by students with SEN.

Despite stringent inspections, research indicates that for children with more complex difficulties, teachers perceive inclusion as problematic (Hodge et al, 2004), which results in limited inclusion in PE for some children. Teacher’s attitudes about inclusion, and its effects on non-disabled children, therefore, have unfavourable effects on children with SEN participating fully in PE, which suggests a call for attitude change amongst PE teachers regarding children with SEN – a view supported by academics such as Avramidis et al (2000) and Sherrill (2004). This can be targeted in training and CPD schemes and through increased contact with children with diverse SEN throughout ITT.

Nevertheless, regardless of a general lack of support for the practicality of inclusion, PE teachers are supportive of the inclusion philosophy (Hodge et al, 2004; Lambe and Bones, 2006). Both experienced and training PE teachers have indicated that they are aware of the benefits inclusion has for the child with SEN. Lambe and Bones (2006) illustrate that the trainee teachers interviewed believed inclusion benefited children by promoting equality, promoting social integration, and building self-esteem. Similarly, experienced teachers in Hodge et al’s (2004) research state that inclusion has social benefits for children with SEN, as well as improving the child’s self-esteem. Despite this, there does appear to be some imbalance between teacher perceptions about the benefits of inclusion for the child with SEN, and their general feelings about inclusion, and so their inclusive practices. When reflecting on experiences of inclusion, teachers

often indicate that the challenges faced by them in including children with SEN are dependent on them receiving more support, additional resources, further training, and curriculum alterations (Hodge et al, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Morley et al, 2005; Lambe and Bones, 2006). This suggests a shift in responsibility from the teachers to external individuals and agencies – the LSA, the school, the government. Avramidis et al (2000) argue that teachers who take responsibility for teaching children with SEN can be successful in implementing inclusion programmes in mainstream schools. However, primarily, teachers need to internalise and understand inclusion philosophies, and have a desire and enthusiasm to teach and meet the needs of children with SEN (Avramidis et al, 2000); thereby improving their own practice for children with SEN. Positive perceptions about inclusion is a key factor for improving practice, promoting more successful inclusion and ensuring more positive experiences for the child (Wilkins and Nietfield, 2004). According to Avramidis et al (2000), positive attitude change can be achieved through improvements in ITT, ensuring that student teachers receive early and continuous contact with pupils who have SEN; which will in turn improve their confidence about SEN teaching, and therefore improve practice with children with SEN. Therefore, as indicated by Sherrill (2004: 249) “*Attitude [is] the key to behaviour change*” (emphasis added).

Wilkins and Nietfield (2004), however, state that altering the attitudes of teachers about inclusion is dependent on positive previous experience, and they indicate that positive perceptions of inclusion and improved levels of expertise alone will not determine effective classroom practice for teachers of children with SEN. As such it would be necessary for training programmes to invest time, and resources to SEN training, in order to implement attitude change and instil positive perceptions about inclusion in teachers from the outset. In addition it would be necessary for teachers to interact with children with SEN in the classroom throughout training to ensure teachers are both aware and have an understanding of the difficulties faced by children with SEN. This would allow them opportunity to determine effective methods of delivering PE programmes to these children, providing positive experiences for both the child with SEN and other children in the lessons. This could be done by ensuring opportunities are made for teachers to consult with children about their experiences of having SEN, giving them the opportunity to understand needs from the child’s perspective, and therefore take a more proactive approach to meeting these needs. The implementation of a more personalised curriculum (Miliband, 2004; Robinson et al, 2008), as seen in the new NCPE (QCA, 2007b) may in fact pave the way for this to happen. If teachers are required by the curriculum to consult with and address the needs of individual

children, there may be a natural progression towards more positive personal perceptions of inclusion. Moreover, schools must ensure the materials and support are available to teachers (Block and Zeman, 1996), so they can effectively plan and deliver PE lessons which are equally beneficial to both children with and without SEN.

2.2.2 Unrealistic Targets and Constraints on Practice

Teachers of PE in several research studies have highlighted a number of challenges in making mainstream PE inclusive (Hodge et al, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Smith, 2004; Morley et al, 2005). Teachers have indicated that while there is support for the inclusion philosophy, there is a general feeling that achieving full inclusion in schools is an unrealistic target (Morley et al, 2005; Smith and Thomas, 2006). Morley et al (2005), for example, examined teacher's perceptions of inclusion in PE, and found that teachers tended to feel that they could not adequately provide for children with SEN, because they did not know how to provide the best support to children with SEN, despite wanting to be able to help and support them. This is an opinion also held by student teachers. Lambe and Bones (2006) indicate that student teachers perceive inclusion as an ideal, but they question how it can work in reality. The main reasons given by teachers for not fully including children with SEN in PE included a lack of adaptive equipment (Morley et al, 2005), the location of activities (Smith, 2004; Hodge et al, 2004; Morley et al, 2005), class size (Hodge et al, 2004; Smith, 2004; Lambe and Bones, 2006) the nature of the NCPE, and the activities within it (Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Smith and Thomas, 2006); and the diverse range of SEN pupils present in lessons (Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Hodge et al, 2004; Morley et al, 2005) . Each of these constraining factors will be discussed in turn in order to determine the importance of differentiation in the classroom and the factors which are limiting this.

Inadequate adaptive equipment

In order for teachers to adapt PE programmes to meet the requirements of children with SEN, it is necessary to have access to adapted equipment to allow for changes to be made. These include, for example, different height pull-up bars, clearly marked out areas for exercise, or bell balls for children with visual impairment (Sherrill, 2004). Morley et al (2005) state that it is often the PE departments who have to bear the burden of finding finances to purchase the equipment. This places constraint on the development of an inclusive environment, and as such was frequently reported by teachers to challenge inclusive practice. In addition to this, Hodge et al (2004) report that only a small proportion of their teacher participants made efforts to adapt

equipment for children with SEN, and this was understood in terms of their preparedness to do this. Hodge et al (2004), therefore argue that more training needs to be given to teacher to show them how adaptations can be made. Morley et al (2005) do, however, show that teachers do find creative ways of adapting the environment for children with SEN, by using softer balls, and easier to handle equipment. Nevertheless, if provision is not made for PE departments to purchase inclusive equipment, teachers will not be able to adapt lessons, and therefore include children with SEN in PE lessons – particularly those children with physical and/or sensory impairments.

The need for suitable provision to adapt learning environments is something which has been highlighted by SEN policy, in particular the Government's Strategy for SEN (DfES, 2004a:28), which states that "difficulties in learning arise from a unsuitable environment", and as such the DfES aim to "provide a resource bank of practical ideas, strategies and training materials for schools to help them make reasonable adjustments to their policies and practice" (DfES, 2004a:29). Despite this strategy addressing SEN as a whole, and not focusing directly on PE, it is clear that similar strategies should be implemented on a subject-specific basis, to allow teachers to understand and implement practical adaptations to resources in order to meet the needs of individual children. Teacher's are clearly already undertaking some creative adaptations of resources, which is evidence of the high quality teaching proposed within strategies, such as PESSYP (DCSF, 2008); but also of the inclusive teaching guidelines within the NC (QCA, 2009), which state that teachers must be open, flexible and responsive to the individual needs of children. This is further indicated in the research by Morley et al (2005), who demonstrates that some teachers do adapt resources to meet the needs of children, however this needs to be on a much larger scale, and as such nationwide provision for adapted PE resources should be made. Nevertheless, as Avramidis et al (2000) point out, the provision of adaptive resources will not ensure inclusion, because inclusion is about values. Therefore teachers will only be able to include children with SEN if the education of these children is deemed to be a moral-ethical obligation, as it is for so many other disadvantaged groups (for example, minority ethnic groups). As stated in their paper:

"If student teachers see the problem in terms of skills deficits and resource issues rather than social-ethical requirements, there will always be some marginalised groups who are deemed uneducable"

(Avramidis et al, 2002:290).

Location of activities

In addition to poor resourcing for inclusive PE, teachers often report that access to facilities for certain PE activities is difficult for children with SEN, especially those with PD (Smith, 2004; Hodge et al, 2004; Morley et al, 2005). In order for children to take part fully in PE, they must be able to access the facilities, as well as be able to use the spaces effectively, and according to Morley et al (2005) this places further constraint on teachers. The authors argue that most teachers in their sample found it easier to include children in PE when activities took place indoors, as this was perceived to give the teachers more control over their class. However, this was only the case when children were able to access indoor facilities, and in some schools disabled access to PE facilities was not present. This is supported in research by Goodwin and Watkinson (2000), who further indicate that even when physical access to facilities is present, other factors can have detrimental effects for inclusion. These factors include, for example, the length of grass on playing fields (Goodwin and Watkinson (2000), and the size of the playing field (Hodge et al, 2004). While teachers feel including children with SEN in indoor activities is 'easier' (Morley et al, 2005), it is necessary for children to experience a range of different activities, both indoors and out. This is vital for children to develop skills in a number of activity areas, and develop skills in varying environments. As such, it is necessary for teachers and schools to ensure suitable access to PE facilities, and to adapt environments to ensure children are experiencing a range of activities, not only those in which the environment meets the needs of the teacher to be able to control the class with ease. This can, however, only be done given sufficient provision and resources to do so. In a 1997 Green Paper, the government set out to ensure children with SEN's needs could be met in inclusive environments and as such provided funding to LEAs in order to improve physical access to buildings (DfEE, 1997). However, it seems that this perhaps is not being done, or that some schools have not had the necessary funds made available to them to ensure suitable access to buildings. LEA's and schools must, therefore work together to rectify this. Nevertheless, as Penney (2002) points out, the provision of accessible facilities alone will not ensure all pupils will be able to access activities on offer, and as such other factors must be taken into account.

Class size

Class size is an issue which can have negative repercussions for all children (see Blatchford et al (2007) for example), however Sherrill (2004) argues that class size is a particularly important factor in ensuring the needs of children with SEN are met in PE lessons. She claims that classes consisting of over 30 pupils make adaptation in PE

difficult. This view is one shared with teachers of PE, who claim that the large class sizes, and the increasing numbers of children with SEN included in their lessons results in increased demands on teachers (Smith, 2004; Hodge et al, 2004). One teacher in Smith's research stated that:

"It's inappropriate to expect one member of staff to teach 28 students of which one or two are disabled or a special needs student...to cater for those students is a lot more difficult."

(Smith, 2004:45)

Large class sizes is also a concern for training teachers, who state that class sizes would have to be smaller to allow teachers to focus more attention on the individualisation of programmes for children with SEN (Lambe and Bones, 2004). In order for this to occur, however, more provision would have to be made by schools and LEAs to employ extra support staff, to provide assistance to teachers in PE; or employ more teachers, to reduce class sizes on the whole. Given the increasing numbers of children with SEN in mainstream schools (DfES, 2004a), extra provision for staff should therefore be a priority, as a method for ensuring the needs of all children are being met. Furthermore, given the emphasis placed on personalised learning for children with SEN in mainstream schools (DfES, 2004a), reducing class sizes and improving staffing becomes more a necessity than a priority, in order to meet the targets of SEN inclusion strategies.

NCPE and types of activities

Researchers often argue that the nature and structure of the NCPE, and the activities within it serve to exclude rather than include children with SEN (Penney, 2001; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Smith and Thomas, 2006). In particular, they criticise the emphasis on competitive and team games within the NCPE, claiming that these are often unsuitable for children with SEN, and this is something teachers highlight to be constraining for their practice (Smith and Green, 2004; Smith, 2004). Despite the constraint caused by the emphasis of team games in PE, Smith and Green (2004) report that often PE teachers are reluctant to give up this sporting tradition (Smith and Green, 2004), and therefore they, too, place focus on achieving and performing in traditional competitive sports. Teachers consequently report that including children with SEN fully into team games can prove difficult and unrealistic activities, as children are required to recognise and understand rules, as well as have awareness for positioning and tactics – something which some children with SEN find particularly difficult (Smith,

2004). In addition to this, Smith (2004) indicates that when teachers do find difficulty in including children in team games, they often attempt to find some other activity for the child with SEN to participate in, and this will often be a more individualised activity; or will exclude them from the lesson (Smith and Green, 2004). Nevertheless, some teachers are able to adapt the game rules so that the child can be included; however, this seems to be dependent on the nature of the child's SEN, and the ability of the teacher to modify the activity (Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004). Kasser and Lytle (2005) argue that it is common for teachers to feel unprepared when addressing the needs of children with diverse SEN, but they support the view that some practitioners are able to do this effectively. For those who are not, however, this is put down to a lack of perceived professional competency, which can be resolved through experience with children with SEN, and further training (Kasser and Lytle, 2005).

In the defence of PE teachers, however, it is clear that the NCPE has previously done little to promote inclusion, and encourage adaptation in PE programmes. This, in many ways, has contradicted the goals of the NC Inclusion Statement, which aim to provide a broad, balanced NC accessible to all children regardless of their diverse needs (QCA, 2009). Penney (2002) argues that the NCPE does little to prompt a shift away from the domination of team games within PE, and as such the NCPE's focus on performance, skills, knowledge and achievement acts in the interest of only a minority of children who perform highly in these sporting areas (Penney, 2002; Smith, 2004). Moreover, with this increasing emphasis on team games in preference for individual activities, such as dance or gymnastics, which are often more conducive to inclusion (Penney, 2002; Smith, 2004), children will not have maximum opportunity to become fully involved in PE within mainstream schools. As such, in the past, the NCPE has done little to represent inclusion as presented in the NC inclusion statement (DfEE/QCA, 1999). As such, the structure and aims of the NCPE would have to change in order to support inclusion, and this may result in more emphasis being placed on health, fitness, social interaction and physical literacy (Whitehead, 2001), rather than competition. Moreover, teachers too need to embrace inclusion, and use PE as a method for the promotion of positive values and diversity (Vickerman, 2007b). A new curriculum, introduced in 2008 might go some way to achieving this, by allowing for more flexibility in the teaching of PE, therefore allowing for personalised teaching and learning. However, these changes in the NC alone may not be enough to alter the perceptions and attitudes of teachers, and therefore enhance their inclusive practice.

Nevertheless, placing more focus on the personalisation of curricula may go some way towards challenging the universally system currently enforced through the NC. Personalised learning calls for individualisation and flexibility in teaching and learning, and is considered to be the route required to raise the quality and equity of the British education system, tailoring curriculum content to meet the needs, interests and skills of each individual pupil (Miliband, 2005). However, in order for personalised learning to be effective in PE, firstly, PE teachers must place less importance on competitive and team games, focusing more on the individual talents of their pupils. This will require teachers to consult with and listen to their pupils in order to become knowledgeable about the views, opinions and interests of their pupils, making PE as enjoyable as possible for every child (Miliband, 2004). Moreover, and in many ways, more importantly, resources must be made available to make personalisation possible. This does not necessarily only refer to the provision of equipment, but to the knowledge and understanding of teachers about how to implement personalised learning strategies. As Miliband (2004) argues, however, this is not a process which can be enforced from above. It is something which must be adopted school by school, with the intention that in the long-term, children of all needs and abilities will be receiving "the education they deserve" (Miliband, 2004:1).

Type of SEN

Despite political and theoretical shifting from medical to social models of disability, teachers frequently report the types of SEN children have as constraining on their practice and perceptions towards these children (Hodge et al, 2004; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Morley et al, 2005; Smith and Thomas, 2006). Often teachers will judge the child's ability to participate in PE on the types of SEN they have, and this in many ways determines the teachers attitudes about their own ability to support the child and include them in the lessons (Morley et al, 2005). In particular, teachers in Morley et al's (2005) study indicated that children with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties (EBSD) were the most difficult to include in PE lessons, as teachers feel unable to control and manage the child's behaviour in the lessons. This was also reported by teachers in Smith's (2004) research, one of whom stated that inclusion worried him as already teachers had difficulty coping with children who have behavioural problems. Pupils with PD were also perceived to make inclusion difficult, whereas some teachers felt confident teaching pupils with learning difficulties (Morley et al, 2005).

Hodge et al (2004) argue that PE teachers often perceive including children with SEN in lessons as more difficult according to their level of professional preparedness, which relates to their perceptions of behavioural control over a class. As such pupils with EBSD present the greatest challenge to teachers because they reduce the teachers' perceived ability to control behaviour in the lesson. This explains the common attitudes teachers appear to have about including children with behavioural problems being more problematic than those with other kinds of SEN. Moreover, the kinds of SEN children have determined the extent to which teachers adapt and modify lessons for the children (Hodge et al, 2004). It is easier for teachers to include a child with physical and sensory impairment due to the observable nature of their difficulties (Morley et al, 2005), and the requirement for physical resources to adapt activities to include the child (Sherrill, 2004). However, including children whose difficulties relate to behaviour is more difficult as teachers are required to have an understanding of individual motivations, needs and interests, and as such adapting lessons requires more planning on the part of the teacher to ensure effective behaviour management techniques and lesson structure are applied (Sherrill, 2004).

These five factors common in the perceptions of teachers indicate that while teachers believe in the inclusion ideology, they do not perceive inclusion in PE as a realistic target. As such, the success of any inclusion strategy will be somewhat limited by the teachers disbelief in its success. Teachers perceive inclusion as something which cannot be achieved (Hodge et al, 2004; Smith; 2004; Smith and Green; 2004; Morley et al, 2005) and as such, it seems that several teachers are reluctant to attempt to meet these goals. This self-fulfilling prophecy seems to have resulted in children with SEN not being fully included in PE lessons. In order for a change to occur, however, SEN provision in mainstream schools needs to improve to ensure teachers have access to appropriate resources and materials needed to adapt lessons for children with SEN (Hodge et al, 2004). In addition to this, teachers need to adopt the social model of SEN, and embrace diversity within their lessons. At present, teachers are too focused on the specific nature of a child's difficulty, and it seems that the category of SEN in which the child falls is determining the effectiveness of inclusion in PE. The result of this is integration rather than inclusion (Smith and Thomas, 2006), and children are still expected to adapt themselves in order to participate in lessons. Nevertheless, some teachers have adopted a social model approach to inclusion and are adapting their programmes to include children with SEN in their lessons (Hodge et al, 2004; Smith, 2004). However, in order to encourage more teachers to adapt and modify PE curricula

to meet the needs of children with a diverse range of SEN, teachers must have effective training to do so.

2.2.3 Insufficient SEN Training

The amount and quality of SEN training provided to both student, and experienced teachers, is something which has received widespread attention amongst researchers. As indicated previously, academics frequently argue that much can be done to improve SEN training at both ITT and through CPD, in order to ensure inclusion targets are met, and the children's needs are being met (Robertson, 1999; Guskey, 2002; Armour and Yelling, 2004; Vickerman, 2007a; 2007b). This concern is further raised when examining teachers' perceptions of their own training and preparedness to teach the increasing numbers of children with SEN placed in mainstream schools. It seems apparent within research examining perceptions of inclusion, that there is a widespread shortage of training and professional development opportunities available for teachers in mainstream schools, particularly within PE (Smith and Thomas, 2006). This comes from the perspectives of training, recently qualified, and experienced teachers (Morley et al, 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2006; Vickerman and Coates, 2009) as well as from ITT providers (Vickerman, 2007a).

Limited formal SEN training received at both ITT and during CPD is construed to be one of the most constraining influences on teaching practice (Smith and Green, 2004). Morley et al (2005) found that some teachers within their study had not had any formal training to work with children with SEN, while a few had had opportunities to attend limited and generally ad hoc training sessions. These informal sessions were described as "very informal conversations" with colleagues about particular children, and as such are unlikely to be effective (Morley et al, 2005:100). Moreover, Hodge et al (2004) indicated that teachers required more training to teach children with SEN, and this was particularly important for modelling methods for adapting lessons for children in order to meet their needs in PE. This is further reflected in the work of Smith and Green (2004) who state that teachers are often unable to meet the needs of children in lessons through the adaptation and modification of activities, and that this is often a consequence of the insufficient training they receive.

The dearth of SEN training was also noted when teachers reflected upon their ITT. Morley et al (2005) noted that the majority of responses from teachers stated that the teachers had not had any SEN training during ITT. Moreover, Lambe and Bones (2006) emphasise that training teachers, too, feel that their training in SEN is insufficient and

state that they will require a lot more training in order to cope with SEN children in mainstream schools, and that this training must be ongoing. In addition to this, Vickerman and Coates (2009) show that only minimal time is spent during ITT on issues relating to SEN, and as a consequence of this the vast majority of respondents within this study (84%) reported that they did not feel prepared enough for the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream PE. Moreover, Vickerman (2007a), in research examining the views of ITT providers, found that only minor importance is placed on providing student teachers with knowledge and understanding of SEN in ITT; which is often not deemed priority given the short amount of time given for training, particularly on the one-year postgraduate (PGCE) courses (Vickerman and Coates, 2009). This further highlights the considerable lack of available training to student teachers.

The evident lack of training, according to Morley et al (2005:100) has “serious repercussions for the quality of support experienced by children with SEN”. This is because, teachers often lack the confidence and preparedness necessary to fully encourage the child, as well as adapt resources and activities to meet the needs of the children with SEN (Smith and Green, 2004; Morley et al, 2005). The result of this lack of confidence is a general fear about inclusion (Wilkins and Nietfield, 2004), however teachers are willing to participate in and desire further SEN training, because they want to include children with SEN (Morley et al, 2005). As such, several teachers report that gaining more hands-on experience of working with children with SEN would boost their confidence and improve their skills (Morley et al, 2005; Lambe and Bones, 2006; Vickerman and Coates, 2009). Therefore, more importance needs to be given to inclusion matters within ITT and CPD, and this should provide substantial hands-on training with children who have SEN, however it is also important to note that theoretical knowledge and skills should also be gained. Although government strategy is aiming to improve the quality of training available to teachers both at the ITT level and through CPD (DfES, 2004), it is clear that this training is currently not meeting the contextual requirements of teachers, in particular PE teachers; and secondly is not accessible enough to teachers to ensure and encourage further SEN training. Consequently, Morley et al (2005) argue that by providing training in the imbalanced, ad hoc fashion it appears to currently be provided; will have implications for the quality of support experienced by children with SEN. In addition, it is unlikely to provide teachers with a full understanding and practical knowledge of how to meet the needs of children with SEN, and this is clearly reflected in the perception that inclusion is desirable but unobtainable.

2.2.4 Constraint Caused by LSAs

With increasing numbers of children with SEN attending mainstream schools, there has been an influx of LSAs to assist teachers in supporting these children (Farrell et al, 1999). The LSAs role is often considered interchangeable with the teachers' role, and as such LSAs are involved in most aspects of a teachers' work, from planning lessons, through to the assessment and monitoring of children, however this varies from school to school (Farrell et al, 1999; Lacey, 2001). Nevertheless, the growth in the number of LSAs being placed in schools has raised concern for PE teachers, who state that LSAs increase the constraints in everyday practice (Morley et al, 2005; Smith and Green, 2006). They have also been criticised for reducing teacher effectiveness in the classroom (Farrell, et al, 1999). Smith and Green (2006) indicate that these restrictions are due to a lack of PE training for LSAs, resulting in LSAs being regarded as "more of a hindrance than a help" (Smith and Green, 2004:601), and as such, academics such as Farrell et al (1999) and Lacey (2001) argue that it is important for LSAs to specialise in one subject area and attached to certain departments in schools, so that skills and knowledge of that subject can be acquired and applied, making support in that subject more effective. LSAs themselves desire specialism in a specific subject areas, as Lacey (2001:165) indicates in her research with LSAs, some of whom indicated that it is necessary for them to "have knowledge of all subjects". This has the potential of reducing the effectiveness of support from LSAs in some subjects, particularly PE, as highlighted by PE teachers (Smith and Green, 2004; Hodge et al, 2004; Morley et al, 2005).

Nevertheless, teachers also believe LSAs should have training in specific areas, or that they should be provided training which covers both classroom topics, as well as more practical, PE topics (Morley et al, 2005). Teachers in Morley et al's (2005) study, for example, state that LSAs rarely support SEN children in PE lessons, and this increases demand on PE teachers who are therefore not able to elicit support in the lessons. In addition to this, PE teachers indicate that LSA support in PE lessons is perceived as necessary, however they feel that they need to fight to get the support in PE, which is so often readily available in other curriculum areas (Morley et al, 2005). When they are present in lessons, teachers stated that they were not much of a help, and would be "better off elsewhere" (Morley et al, 2005:93). Communication between teachers and LSAs is, however, key for ensuring lessons are planned and delivered effectively to children, and it seems that communication between LSAs and teachers is not present (Lacey, 2001). Several LSAs in Lacey's (2001) study therefore noted that they often did not know what to expect from lessons until they arrived, and felt that they were a

burden on teachers when planning lessons together. This is perhaps more so for PE teachers due to the apparent absence of LSAs in PE lessons. As such, it is not only necessary for LSAs to receive subject-specific training, but that more must be done to improve relationships between LSAs and teachers to ensure they are working together towards the same targets. This is the only way to ensure all children in the lessons are receiving quality teaching and support.

Although PE teachers interviewed in research have tended to point out the negative effects of learning support assistance, they do indicate that when present, LSAs take the pressure off teachers, allowing them to focus more on the lesson and other children in it (Smith and Green, 2006). Moreover, teachers in other curriculum areas are highly encouraging about LSAs and note their importance in making inclusion work (Farrell et al, 1999). As such, LSAs are a key part of lesson success, and potentially provide a source of great support to both teachers and children, enhancing their PE experience. This is only possible; however, if strategy is put in place to ensure LSAs are able to become as useful a part of PE lessons, as they are in other lessons.

Farrell et al (1999) do indicate that there are several accredited and non-accredited training courses available to LSAs, provided in Further Education (FE) and by LEAs; however, it is unclear whether any of these courses provide subject-specific training. As such, it would be necessary for training to be given on-site to LSAs, by experienced members of PE departments to ensure LSAs have an awareness of the PE curriculum, so that they can support children following the curriculum. In addition to this, it would be necessary to ensure LSA attendance in PE lessons, perhaps by attaching certain specialist LSAs to the department. Moreover, communication between teachers and LSAs needs to be improved, allowing more opportunity for joint-planning of lessons. This would require further provision in the school, however would prove beneficial for children with SEN, allowing them the opportunity to experience high quality teaching and support, and could potentially improve the relationships between LSAs and teachers.

2.2.5 Extra-Curricular Physical Education

Extra-curricular PE refers to the provision of physical activity outside of the PE curriculum, most often provided in after-school clubs, at lunch times and in some cases, at weekends (Penney and Harris, 1997). It is not compulsory for pupils to attend these activities – there are optional in nature, however often spaces are often reserved for those good enough to play for the school team (Penney and Harris, 1997). Despite

it being non-compulsory, Green (2000) indicates that, without fail, all of the teachers in his study felt that extra-curricular PE was an extension of curricular PE. This in many ways might represent teachers' interpretations of government targets to improve PE and sport in schools, such as the PESSCL and PESSYP strategies. These strategies state that children should receive at least two hours of high quality PE and sport at school, as well as an extra three hours of physical activity outside of school, and as such extra-curricular PE plays a fundamental part in achieving this goal (DfES, 2002b; DCSF, 2008). Moreover it is proposed that CPD courses will be provided to PE teachers, in order to provide "inclusive high quality PE and school sport provision within and *beyond the curriculum* [emphasis added] to raise pupils' attainment" (DfES, 2002b:12), with extensive funding provided to retrain and develop PE teachers (DCSF, 2008). Despite this it seems that these goals, currently, are only being met for a minority of children who are able to access extra-curricular activities (Penney and Harris, 1997; Green, 2000; Smith, 2004)

It is evident that teachers feel unable to achieve these goals for children with SEN through extra-curricular PE and sport. Smith (2004) reported that nearly all of the teachers in his study stated that few, if any pupils with SEN took part in extra-curricular sporting activities. This included sport at a competitive and recreational level, and was particularly true for pupils with PD. Reasons given for the absence of SEN pupils in extra-curricular sport were accessibility (not having transport to get to where activities were played); time available, in that children with SEN may require extra time to get changed, and confidence. It was believed children with SEN were more self-conscious and therefore opted out of extra-curricular activities (Smith, 2004). Moreover, Green (2000) illustrates that teachers emphasise performance nature of extra-curricular PE, and as such, teachers were reported to express concern about increasing elitism in extra-curricular PE. Nevertheless, they also expressed opinions about extra-curricular PE needing to be more about competition with other schools, rather than developing elite athletes (Green, 2000). Penney and Harris (1997:43) further point out that extra-curricular activities, similar to activities in the NCPE, tend to be 'traditional team games' with 'a competitive focus'. Although Penney and Harris' (1997) were examining gender bias in extra-curricular PE, the indication that activities tend to be more conducive to competition extends the bias to include ability. This is further detailed by Green (2000), who notes that activities which are generally favoured for children with SEN during curricular PE lessons, such as gymnastics, are made competitive activities in extra-curricular PE, and as such, less able children, such as those with certain SEN, might

not be given the opportunity to fully experience these activities recreationally, due to the high importance placed on competition.

The emphasis on performance, competition and elitism in extra-curricular sport, as indicated in strategies such as PESSCL and PESSYP, does nothing to encourage the majority of children with SEN, who may be of lower ability, from taking part in these activities, and as such does little to encourage inclusion in extra-curricular activities. Despite this, Green (2000:188) indicates that teachers believed they were providing 'sport for all' by having 'open practice' sessions, whereby any child could come and take part, yet there was still some preoccupation towards performance, and as such the very nature of the activities presented, and the attitudes towards competitive, team games from teachers, extra-curricular PE does not appear to facilitate inclusion at present. This is further indicated by statistics provided by Sport England (2001) which show that only 40% of children and young people with disabilities take part in extra-curricular PE, compared with 79% of children without disabilities. Smith (2000), however states that teachers are not constrained by any legal framework to provide inclusive extra-curricular PE, and as such it may be necessary in the future for policy to be drawn up which ensures extra-curricular sport is inclusive. Moreover, teachers should place less emphasis on competition and performance, and instead focus on sporting activities as a tool for fitness and enjoyment; which may be more favourable for inclusion.

2.3 Summing up the Findings

The perceptions of teachers about inclusive PE have fundamental impacts on the quality of education experienced by children with SEN. The findings of research examining these perceptions, however, appear to view inclusion somewhat negatively. While teachers support the inclusion philosophy, many agree that achieving the adventurous targets set by the government, are perceived as unrealistic (Smith and Green, 2004; Morley et al, 2005). Teachers do not believe, given current SEN provision, that including all children with SEN is possible in mainstream education, and this can have repercussions for government strategy which seeks to include more and more children with SEN in mainstream schools, whilst closing special schools (DfES, 2004a). As such, in order to achieve these goals, teachers state that more provision needs to be made for resources, staff and support (Morley et al, 2005). In addition to this, teachers and academics alike, argue that the LSAs who support teachers in mainstream schools require specialist training in PE in order to have more impact on PE lessons, and provide more effective support to both teachers and children in the

lessons (Lacey, 2001; Smith and Green, 2004; Hodge et al, 2004; Morley et al, 2005). An over-arching theme throughout the literature, however, is that teachers, and specifically those who teach PE, need more SEN training to be able to cater for the increasing numbers of children with SEN in mainstream PE lessons. Currently, many teachers feel that their SEN training at ITT and through CPD has not been adequate, and in many cases not given at all (Smith and Green, 2004; Morley et al, 2005; Lambe and Bones, 2006; Vickerman and Coates, 2009). As such, teachers need to be trained effectively in order to provide the high quality inclusive PE government policy states they must; and this training should occur from ITT right through to in-school CPD. Moreover, the training should be continuous in order for teachers to keep up-to-date with developments in SEN policy and literature.

In addition to enhancing training for teachers and LSAs, as well as increasing SEN provision; steps must be taken to develop teachers overall understanding of inclusion and improve their attitudes towards children with SEN. Research indicates that while teachers have a general understanding about what inclusion stands for, few actually practice inclusion in their teaching (Smith, 2004; Hodge et al, 2004; Morley et al, 2005). As such children with SEN continue to have their abilities judged on the basis of their difficulties. Therefore, teachers are failing to adopt a social model of disability, and as such are failing to be inclusive. As Davis and Watson (2001) point out, children educated in inclusive settings tend to be viewed in terms of their difficulties, leading to the normalisation of labels used both by teachers and other children. The consequence of which is the creation of social distance between children, decreasing social skills, and lowering self esteem; therefore leading to less successful inclusion in education (Davis and Watson, 2001; Kasser and Lytle, 2005). This indicates the sheer impact teachers attitudes has on successful inclusion, and the effects it can have on children's' experiences of inclusive education.

However, changing teachers attitudes about inclusion can be rectified, again, through effective SEN training. Nevertheless, this raises the question about what to include in this training. Teachers tend to indicate that they would feel more confident teaching children with SEN if their training is more practical and hands-on with children with SEN (Morley et al, 2005; Lambe and Bones, 2006; Vickerman and Coates, 2009), and as such training should, where possible be practical, allowing teachers to demonstrate their newly acquired skills, and develop ideas from the demonstration of others. Adaptation, according to social models of disability, is the key factor in making inclusion effective (Fredrickson and Cline, 2002), and therefore, any training should focus on

methods for adapting programmes for children with SEN. Due to this, providing training which covers concepts of APA would be beneficial for lesson adaptations to be as effective as possible in order to ensure children with SEN receive high quality PE lessons which promote both learning and enjoyment.

In addition to APA providing a valuable tool for the training of PE teachers to include children with SEN, its emphasis on empowerment and student choice (Reid, 2003; Sherrill, 2004) highlights the need to communicate with students to discover their own perceptions of PE, and determine methods of making PE more beneficial to the students from their own ideas about adaptation. In determining the perspectives of children with SEN, it is possible to examine areas which need improving for the child, and discovering what works for children with SEN in PE in order that children with SEN are fully able to access the high quality PE which they are entitled to.

CHAPTER THREE: CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PERSPECTIVES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT

An examination of the perspectives of PE teachers, both student and qualified, showed that the inclusion of children with SEN is often perceived negatively, impacting on the quality of PE received by these children (Hodge et al, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Smith, 2004; Morley et al, 2005). This was often attributed to the lack of formal training opportunities available to student and qualified PE teachers in ITT and through CPD (Smith and Green, 2004); as well as limited resources available to adapt curricula to meet the needs of children with SEN (Morley et al, 2005). Although this is clear in various research studies surrounding SEN in PE, what is less clear is how children with SEN perceive their experiences of PE (Fitzgerald, 2005).

The SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) states that children with SEN should have the right to make their views heard with regard to any decisions made surrounding their education. This highlights not only the empowerment agenda, but also emphasises the personalisation agenda for all children, not just those with SEN. To date, however, only a limited amount of research has been undertaken examining the perspectives of children with SEN specifically relating to their experiences of PE and sport participation in general (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson 2000; Hutzler et al, 2002 Fitzgerald et al, 2003a, 2003b; Fitzgerald, 2005). A review of research examining children with SEN perspectives of PE and sport between 1997 and 2008 was undertaken (see Coates and Vickerman, 2008 for article published from this chapter), and utilising this, as well as other relevant literature, six recurring themes were identified.

This chapter will therefore review these themes in relation to the existing literature in order to provide a comprehensive grounding in understanding the perspectives of children with SEN on their experiences of PE. In order to do this, however, it is necessary to primarily understand the methods undertaken by researchers to complete research which seeks to give voice to children with SEN; and the implications this might have for the current study. This will be followed by a review of the findings of research specifically examining pupil voice of children with SEN in PE.

3.1 Methods used to Access Pupil Voice

A number of sources were examined by Coates and Vickerman (2008) when reviewing methods employed to access the perceptions of children with SEN. Not all of the reviewed studies examined experiences of PE. Instead, it was decided that some more general pieces of research would be reviewed in order to generate an overall understanding of the types of methods used, as well as the kinds of participants engaged with, and their effectiveness in accessing pupil voice.

It is necessary to contextualise pupil voice with children who have SEN outside of the PE arena in order to highlight that consultation and empowerment are factors which exist away from this particular context. As such, while this literature review chapter does focus on pupil voice in PE, it is worth noting that other researchers have addressed this matter in other contexts. Armstrong et al (1993) for example, address pupil voice in terms of SEN assessment for children with EBSD. In addition, both Connors and Stalker (2007) and Woolfson et al (2007) examine consultation and children's contribution to research within a whole-school context. These are just a small selection of papers examining pupil voice away from the PE context, but they have been included in this review in order to provide insight into the ways in which pupil voice is examined in other educational contexts, and the commonalities in methods used across these context. Moreover, it is felt that including more general pieces of research adds depth to the discussion undertaken in this review, given the dearth of research available examining consultation with children who have SEN within the PE setting (Fitzgerald, 2005).

In total, methods from 15 different research studies were examined, and these are shown in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1 Methodologies used in existing research studies

Author and Date	Participants	PE/ Sport Specific?	Methods Used
Armstrong et al (1993)	Pupils with EBSD in SEN assessment	No	Observations, interviews
Blinde and McCallister (1998)	Pupils with PD in mainstream schools	Yes	Interviews
Goodwin and	Pupils with PD in	Yes	Focus Groups, drawings,

Watkinson (2000)	mainstream schools		field notes
Davis and Watson (2001)	Pupils with PD in mainstream and special schools	No	Ethnography
Goodwin (2001)	Pupils with PD in mainstream schools	Yes	Focus groups
Hutzler et al (2002)	Pupils with PD in mainstream schools	Yes	Semi-structured interviews
Kristen et al (2002)	Pupils with PD in a sports programme	Yes	Semi-structured interviews
Fitzgerald et al (2003a)	Pupils with severe learning difficulties in a special school	Yes	Participatory – task-based activities
Fitzgerald et al (2003b)	Pupils with PD a special school, and pupils with a range of SEN in a mainstream school	Yes	Participatory research – activities, interviews, observations, questionnaires
Fitzgerald (2005)	Pupils with a range of SEN in mainstream schools	Yes	Questionnaires, activity diaries, focus groups
Lewis et al (2006)	Pupils with a range of SEN	No	Interviews, observations
Connors and Stalker (2007)	Pupils with PD in mainstream and special schools	No	Semi-structured interviews, activities
Fitzgerald (2007)	Pupils with severe learning disabilities in a special school	Yes	Participatory research - drama
Woolfson et al (2007)	Pupils with SEN in mainstream or special school	No	Questionnaires, focus groups
Medcalf (2008)	Pupils with EBSD in mainstream schools	Yes	Interviews, photo elicitation, observations

The table above indicates that all of the reviewed studies implemented some form of qualitative methodology, primarily focussing around the use of interviews and focus

groups with the children (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2005, for example). Roberts (2000) indicates that in order to really listen to the views of children, it is necessary to adopt a narrative tradition, moving away from traditional quantitative methods. Moreover, as indicated by Woolfson et al (2007), some quantitative methods, such as questionnaires, may not be suitable for children with complex learning and communication needs. The authors state that they believed the task of completing a questionnaire too demanding for such children, and so opted for focus groups. The accessibility and demands of completing questionnaires may contribute, in part, to the reasons why more qualitative methods were utilised. However, according to Stafford et al (2003), children with SEN prefer survey research as a method of consultation with them, however, questionnaires must be made interesting, not overly complicated or lengthy, and administered by “outsiders” (Stafford et al, 2003). Moreover, participants of their study stated that they thought questionnaires should be designed and worded with the help of young people to aid their accessibility (Stafford et al, 2003). This may be difficult to achieve for small scale research projects and often adult agenda’s are prioritised over the views of the child (Roberts, 2000). Nevertheless, it is possible to design questionnaires suitable for children with complex needs, and this is illustrated by Fitzgerald et al (2003b), who through participatory research with children with SEN were able to design questionnaires alongside the children to be administered to their peers. In their research, participants indicated the desire for “pictured surveys” stating that “If we have sports as big pictures everyone will see, know what we’re talking about” (Fitzgerald et al, 2003b: 183). In designing methods with the target sample in mind, it is clear that it is possible to be inclusive regardless of the methods used; creating something that will be accessible for all participants. Perhaps this was overlooked by Woolfson et al (2007) whose participants required adult support in completing the questionnaire. Moreover, they indicate that they had a low response rate, with participants taking offence at questions asked, or not being able to place themselves within the scales provided. It is possible, however, that Woolfson et al (2007), with better questionnaire design, may have elicited a more positive response to their questionnaires, if tailored more towards the needs of the child.

Nevertheless, while quantitative methodological designs are limited in use within consultation research, it could be argued that the use of qualitative methodologies, too, may not be accessible to children with severe communication difficulties - Blinde and McCallister (1998), for example, excluded children with severe communication difficulties from their research in which children were interviewed. While this decision is

not explained, the requirement for verbal responses may have been a participating factor. This can be difficult for researchers in terms of both understanding their participants as well as communicating with children who may not communicate using verbal responses. This is illustrated in this short excerpt from Davis et al (2000:208) regarding problems relating to communication with some children with SEN:

“Unfortunately, I could neither understand the words of the children who spoke to me nor communicate with those children who did not employ the spoken word as a means of communication. I had to rely on the staff to explain what the children said or signed.”

Davis et al (2000:208)

This in itself poses complications when conducting interviews with children with SEN - is it viable to have teachers or other staff member present, and still obtain honest and uncensored responses? Stafford et al (2003) suggest it is not. According to their research, children want discussions about their education to take place in a private place, away from teachers, and led by someone not associated with the school (Stafford et al, 2003). This is because children felt it was easier to talk to someone they did not know and would not see again about issues they felt strongly about, and so would not speak up when a teacher was present. Therefore, the presence of a teacher might jeopardise the quality of the research in terms of its reliability and validity (Robson, 2006). On the other hand, it may well be that staff presence does not always impact on the quality of the data collected. Fitzgerald (2007) demonstrates that the inclusion of LSAs in the research process, while risking influence over the responses gained, is a useful way of understanding the ways in which children with diverse communication needs actually communicate. She embraces the relationship LSAs have with the children, and their day-to-day understanding of how the children prefer to communicate, and uses this as a means of accessing the voices of children researchers might not traditionally be able to include in consultation research.

An alternative to interviewing / focus groups or questionnaires is observation. This is a method adopted by some researchers examining the perspectives of children with SEN (Armstrong et al, 1993, Davis and Watson, 2001, Medcalf, 2008), and has the advantage of being less intrusive in terms of questioning, yet still remaining flexible for other methods to be employed, such as *in situ* interviewing (Cohen et al, 2005). Observation requires researchers to immerse themselves in the natural day-to-day settings of children and this can therefore generate the most truthful understanding of

the world in which they live. However, this method cannot escape the risk that participants may alter their behaviours in the presence of a researcher (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2000). Moreover, while observation is beneficial for understanding behaviour, it is difficult to generate an understanding of the thoughts, feelings and opinions of the children they observe, and this is where interviewing and, to an extent, questionnaires excel. This is evident in the work of Davis and Watson (2001:672) who conducted an ethnographic study to gain “insights into the diverse everyday perspectives and practices of teachers and children”. Indeed, they are able to represent the ways in which their ethnographic observations of school life gave insight into practice, however, in their results it is evident that any indication of the perspectives of children and teachers were generated through direct interaction with the researcher, for example, they state, with regard to one participant “*When asked by the researcher [emphasis added]... Becky suggested that she would like to go out in the playground if action was taken to control the boys*” (Davis and Watson, 2001: 675). As such, it appears that when attempting to seek out the perspectives of individuals, the most effective method for doing this is to simply ask the participant what their perspectives are.

This need not be limited to questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, however. Fitzgerald and her colleagues (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a; Fitzgerald et al, 2003b; Fitzgerald, 2007) provides a vast amount of evidence suggesting the use of participatory methods may be more suitable for drawing out the perspectives of children with SEN, particularly those with more complex communication and learning needs. Making use of drama (Fitzgerald, 2007), activities (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a, 2003b) and student-led research (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a, 2003b), it is shown that participants themselves can become a part of the research, providing insight into the methods used, helping to design tasks and becoming an active part of the research process. Participatory methods allow for the issues pertinent to the needs of the child to come to surface, empowering them to take control of the research process and become active agents in their environments. However, in undertaking such methods, the researcher diminishes their control within the research context, and as such it may be difficult to, firstly, keep a track on the direction in which research is taking, and secondly, understand and categorise findings once collected. Moreover, it appears that this type of research, presently, is useful for understanding the vastness of research design and methodology in SEN consultation and empowerment, rather than generating findings symbolic of the perspectives and experiences of children with SEN. This is evident through the reflective processes undertaken by participatory researchers like Fitzgerald and colleagues, as well as the limited discussion of actual

research findings resulting from such research (see Fitzgerald et al, 2003a, 2003b; Fitzgerald, 2007).

Other researchers, however, have overcome these problems by implementing aspects of participatory research in their designs. For example, Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) made use of drawing activities to get their participants thinking about the subject in their focus group studies, and used this as a point of discussion. Medcalf (2008), too, employed some aspects of participatory research, asking participants to take photographs of their activities and discussing these in interviews. In doing this, researchers are able to both empower the participant, whilst keeping focus on the research topic through greater researcher involvement.

The use of questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observation and participatory research has evidently been useful for ascertaining the perspectives of children with SEN. The research (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2005, Woolfson et al, 2007 for example) indicates that qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups) work better than others, such as questionnaires or observation, yet each of the methods used have their own merits and were suitable for the contexts of the research in which they were used. It is clear however, that in order to access the voices of children with SEN, it is necessary to ask them, and empower them through participation to have their views heard. In addition to this, it is worth noting that the majority of research seeking the views of children with SEN has focused upon children with PD (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Davis and Watson, 2001; Goodwin, 2001; Hutzler et al, 2002; Kristen et al, 2002; Fitzgerald et al, 2003b; Connors and Stalker, 2007), while others have focused upon EBSD (Armstrong et al, 1993; Medcalf, 2008) or severe learning difficulties (Fitzgerald, 2007). Few researchers have sought the views of all children with SEN as a group, regardless of their specific difficulties, and as such it is less clear how effective the reviewed methods are at accessing pupil voice with a more diverse range of needs. Therefore, further examination of this is required, which will be sought in the current research. Moreover, few researchers have investigated the perspectives of children with SEN in special schools. With the exception of the two studies carried out by Fitzgerald et al (2003a, 2003b), all other research has focused on understanding perceptions surrounding inclusion in mainstream PE. While this is an area which needs attention, it is unfair to dismiss the perspectives of children in special schools, and their experiences of PE. Fitzgerald (2003a, 2003b) suggests through her research, that perhaps new methods for consulting with children in special schools need developing for the research context,

or that perhaps current methods are, at present, not refined enough to be able to engage properly with children in special schools who may require more creative data collection techniques. As such, this study will attempt to engage with children in special schools, and allow them the opportunity to also give voice.

Nevertheless, in order to understand the perspectives of children with a range of SEN regarding their experiences of PE, it is necessary to review the findings of existing literature which has sought to understand the experiences of children with SEN in PE.

3.2 The perspectives of Children with SEN in PE

Extensive searches of literature published between 1997 and 2008 illustrated that there was a general dearth of research examining the perspectives of children with SEN (Fitzgerald, 2005; Coates and Vickerman, 2008). However, of the literature which is available, it is evident that the findings of these studies complement each other. As such, these findings were themed, representing the common and often similar perspectives voiced by children with SEN. Six themes were identified (Coates and Vickerman, 2008, see Appendix 10.1) as follows, and will be discussed individually:

- Experiences of PE
- Experiences of PE teachers
- Discrimination by others
- Feelings of self-doubt
- Barriers to inclusion
- Empowerment and consultation

3.2.1 Experiences of PE

Literature illustrates that children with SEN have positive experiences of PE when they are fully included in lessons by their teachers and peers (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000, Hutzler et al, 2002). Hutzler et al (2002) indicate that when peers were perceived as being supportive and encouraging participation, children with SEN felt like they were part of the group, demonstrating feelings of inclusion. Moreover, they indicate that children wanted to be included in lessons giving them a sense of being like other, non-disabled children. They give statements from participants such as "It's important for me to participate" and "I want to be like everybody else" to support this (Hutzler et al, 2002:313). Similarly, Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) stated that children with SEN had good days in PE when they felt they had skilfully participated in the activities, when they had a sense of belonging amongst their peers, and when they were able to share

in the benefits of the activities. Positive perceptions of PE tended to resound from feelings of acceptance in the activities to which the child is taking part, which resonates from the PE teacher and other children in the class welcoming the child and assisting them in fully including into the lesson. According to Hutzler et al (2002), this not only improves the general PE experience, but also empowers the child, allowing them to interact with classmates, and make their own decisions regarding participation.

Bad days, however, tended to be caused by feelings of social isolation, restricted participation and when the child had their competence questioned (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000). The negative experiences of PE for these children often resulted from bullying in the lesson, or from the child's inability to take part fully due to a lack of lesson adaptation to suit the needs of the child. Hutzler et al (2002:312), for example, illustrate that peers teasing their participants would often lead to negative emotions ("I hate it", "I cry"), and equally, Blinde and McCallister (1998) report their participants feeling sad or angry when excluded from lessons based on their disabilities. These findings emphasise the need for teachers to modify lesson plans to accommodate the needs of the child (QCA, 2009), as it is evident that without this, the child is unable to wholly enjoy and participate in lessons.

However, literature (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000, Hutzler et al, 2002) gives little evidence about how children with SEN experience PE, and as such, further examination into the perspectives of this group should be sought. Of the literature which is available, it is clear that children with SEN in special schools recognise the need for support in their lessons (Fitzgerald, 2007), and perceive other people as having a "problem" when determining that a child can't or shouldn't participate in PE (Aspley Wood School, 2009). This indicates that children in special school environments are also aware of, and possibly experiencing, exclusion in PE, similar to the experiences of children in "inclusive" mainstream environments. Nevertheless, these findings are subject to interpretation and therefore further research would be required to qualify them.

Children with SEN not only enjoy being a part of PE lessons, but also acknowledge the physiological and psychological benefits of participating. Kristen et al (2002), found that children with SEN reported getting to know friends, learning about the world and strengthening their physique as important factors related to taking part in integrated PE and sports. Similarly, Fitzgerald et al (2003a) and Aspley Wood School (2009) indicate that children with SEN in special schools enjoy taking part in PE, and highlighted a

number of activities which were favourites, including team sports such as basketball (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a), and more disability friendly sports such as table cricket and bowling (Aspley Wood School, 2009). Moreover, within mainstream environments, the benefits of PE were also acknowledged, with PE being considered a method for improving fitness, developing skills and forming positive social relationships (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000). Medcalf (2008) also indicates that for children with EBSD, PE can be a form of escape from lessons which are more restrictive, such as maths. However if children with SEN are unable to participate in PE due to exclusive practice by teachers or peers (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2005), they are unable to enjoy these benefits.

It is clear that children with SEN in both mainstream and special school environments want to partake in PE, and reap the benefits of doing so. Sport England (2001); however, report that only 20 percent of young people with disabilities participate in two hours worth of PE per week, compared with 33 percent of non-disabled children. This can be attributed to the lack of confidence and experience PE teachers have in including children with PE in their lessons (Morley et al, 2005; Vickerman and Coates, 2009). As such PE practitioner's, must firstly seek out the training necessary to include children with SEN – particularly PE teachers in mainstream schools. This could be achieved through CPD training courses and it is clear from research that teachers themselves feel they would benefit from this (Smith and Green, 2004; Morley et al, 2005; Smith and Thomas, 2006). Moreover, all teachers must also to acknowledge the importance of engaging with children about their own experiences in order to improve their own practice and provision for children with SEN (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a). It is too often assumed by adults that children with SEN do not have the ability to participate fully, which can in negative experiences of PE. Therefore, significant education and awareness-raising processes must occur to change adult views and opinions related to children with SEN lived experiences of PE, whilst improving PE provision for children with SEN.

3.2.2 Experiences of PE Teachers

With government education and children's policy, such as the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2005), directing moves towards education becoming an inclusive environment for all children, teachers are becoming the key stakeholder in delivering this inclusivity (Ainscow et al, 1999a). In addition to this, PESSCL (DfES, 2002b), PESSYP (DCSF, 2008) and particularly, the NCPE have followed these government initiatives and introduced a more inclusive curricula, with the goal of providing a more

accessible education to children with SEN within the PE framework. Moreover, the National Curriculum inclusion statement draws attention to the need for teachers to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, accessible to all pupils (QCA, 2009). As such teachers are responsible for the diversification of teaching programmes, ensuring that they set suitable learning challenges; respond to the diverse learning needs of the child, and overcome potential barriers to learning (DfEE/QCA, 1999). Furthermore, PESSCL / PESSYP states that all children, including those with SEN, must receive at least two hours of high quality PE and school sport per week (DfES, 2002b; DCSF, 2008). This consolidates the need for inclusive practices in schools and highlighting the expectation that teachers must vary their teaching practice to include all children regardless of how diverse their needs are (Penney, 2002).

While these policies conceptualise inclusion in PE and across the curriculum as a whole, research has shown that in the classroom, these expectations are not being maintained, nor are they fully understood by teachers (see Hodge et al, 2004; Smith, 2004; Morley et al, 2005; Lambe and Bones, 2006). As such, while teachers appreciate the inclusion philosophy, they lack the necessary training and knowledge to teach inclusively with confidence (Morley et al, 2005, Vickerman, 2007, Vickerman and Coates, 2009). Additionally, Smith and Thomas (2006) indicate that some PE teachers anticipate that pupils will be able to adapt to existing programmes, rather than seeking the resources to modify programmes to meet the needs of the child, resulting in some children with SEN co-existing separately from their peers, despite being in the same lessons (Hodge et al, 2004).

This is further echoed in research examining the perspectives of children with SEN, who state that some experiences of PE are minimal to non-existent (Blinde and McCallister, 1998). The children in Blinde and McCallister's (1998) study experienced exclusion on a number of occurrences, and this was often attributed to teacher practice. It is noted that some teachers of PE did not modify their lesson plans to include the children with SEN, which in turn resulted in negative experiences and/or complete exclusion from lessons (Blinde and McCallister, 1998). They state that some children, whilst present in the lessons, were not given the opportunity to take part, rather providing an audience for other pupils participation. Blinde and McCallister (1998) give the example of a child who would sit and watch his PE lessons, not taking part, and another who said "I just sit and watch them and clap and stuff" (Blinde and McCallister, 1998: 65). This is similar to the perceptions participants in Goodwin and Watkinson's (2000) study. They indicate that some children experienced PE in terms of

limited participation, whereby they would be called upon for menial tasks. One child stated: '[The teacher]'s like go pump up the balls in the storage room. And they're playing volleyball and I'm like – grrrr!' (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000:152). The experiences experienced by these children with SEN reflect the perspectives of PE teachers who lack the necessary training to prepare and deliver PE lessons inclusively (Vickerman and Coates, 2009). It is apparent that training programmes and standards developed by policy-makers, are either inaccessible to teachers, or are ineffective in fully preparing and training teachers for inclusive education (Hutzler et al, 2002). Blinde and McCallister (1998) state that focussing on individualised outcomes for PE rather than emphasising team sports would allow teacher to adapt curricula to meet the needs of individual children more effectively. This could be achieved through the new National Curriculum (QCA, 2007b), which states that subject content will be less prescribed, and will allow for teachers to personalise the curriculum, providing experiences more relevant to individual children. This will allow teachers more flexibility in their teaching, allowing them to alter the content and delivery of lessons to meet the needs of individual children, rather than being required to teach from specific activity areas (QCA, 2007c). As such, children will have the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in lessons more suited to their needs, allowing more scope for their success in PE lessons.

Hutzler et al (2002) support this view, but indicated that the child's experiences of PE teachers have limited impact on their emotions and behaviour, stating that whether the child is included or excluded, children with SEN want to "be like everyone else". This counters arguments brought forward by Blinde and McCallister (1998) and Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) who suggest exclusion and limited participation can and does in fact lead to negative emotional responses, such as anger. Blinde and McCallister (1998), for example, state that their participants reported feeling like outsiders due to limited participation, resulting in feelings of sadness and anger. Moreover, Goodwin and Watkinson (2002) indicate that some children with SEN are merely "endured" in PE lessons as their participation was not deemed essential to the outcome of the activities participated in. It is understandable how these experiences can lead to negative emotions.

On the other hand, Fitzgerald (2005) shows that positive experiences of PE teachers can lead to positive emotional responses. She notes that inclusive gestures by PE teachers, such as providing activities which can be practiced on a waking frame, result in children with SEN having positive feelings and experiences of PE. One participant in

her study states "When I go to PE and see Mr Jones I know I'm okay and have a good time. He makes sure I'm doing something and so I like PE with Mr Jones" (Fitzgerald, 2005:53). Moreover, when children are able to form a positive relationship with their PE teacher, this can result in a positive attitude towards participating in PE, which can be achieved through supportive teaching (Fitzgerald, 2005). As such, it is evident that, while the perspectives of children with SEN towards their PE teachers vary, positive experiences of PE teachers are more likely to result in positive experiences of PE. Negative experiences of PE teachers tend to centre on exclusion and limited participation, and as such, steps must be taken to ensure teachers are capable of teaching inclusively, which can be achieved primarily with more stringent inclusion training. What is less clear, however, is the perceptions children in special schools have regarding their PE teachers. Existing literature (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2005) does not give much indication about the ways in which children in special schools experience their PE teachers, focusing instead on the perspectives of mainstream pupils. As such, this is something which requires further examination, and will be addressed within this study.

3.2.3 Discrimination by Others

Several research studies indicate that children with SEN, particularly those with PD, are often victims of discrimination within PE settings (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2005; Connors and Stalker, 2007). Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) state that children with SEN have 'bad days' in PE when they feel socially isolated by their classmates, which is often characterised by rejection, neglect and bullying by peers in the lesson. Instances of these discriminatory behaviours stem from peers laughing and criticising the child's performance, physical bullying, such as tripping the child up, or through communicatory discrimination, such as ignoring the child. Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) claim that bullying in the PE environment, particularly for children with PD can be attributed to the inability of the child with the disability to disguise their impairment. Fitzgerald (2005) noted that it is not only children with PD who are discriminated against in PE. In a study including children with PD, sensory impairment as well as those with learning difficulties, unfair behaviour from peers was raised as an issue which confused and upset the children. Actions such as not being passed the ball in the lesson, or feelings of not being welcome in the lesson resulted in children comparing themselves to an assumed norm established within the class as an attempt to understand the reasons behind their exclusion. For these children, it was not plainly obvious why others behaved this way towards them. However, more overt forms of discrimination were also addressed, such

as name calling, and this resulted in the children developing coping methods to deal with the behaviour – “Yeah I get it and ignore it. Let ‘em think you can’t hear. Let ‘em think you’re not bothered” (Fitzgerald, 2005:52).

These findings are indicative of the kinds of discrimination children with SEN face in their lessons from their peers. It is evident that children with SEN are aware that they are treated differently to their peers, and as suggested by Fitzgerald (2005), for children with less obvious PD, some children are unable to determine why this behaviour occurs. While children develop coping mechanisms to deal with such negative behaviour enacted towards them, Slininger et al (2000) indicate that such behaviour can be curbed through increased contact with children with more severe SEN in the mainstream school. They show that sensitizing non-SEN students to those who do have SEN within their regular school life through increased contact with these pupils through peer interaction can result in more positive attitudes towards peers with SEN. Moreover, Townsend and Hassall (2007) note that younger children have more positive attitudes towards peers with SEN, and that state that this may be due to the limited amount of stigma attached to disability which they will have come into contact with at such an age. As such, it might be possible to reduce the discrimination experienced by children with SEN through inclusive schooling. Schools need to embrace inclusion, not only from a teaching point of view, but from a social point of view, encouraging non SEN pupils to interact with pupils with SEN in order to break down negative preconceptions. Moreover, if this is done from a younger age, this might reduce the likelihood of stigma being learned and attached to pupils with SEN.

Nevertheless, it is not only other children who discriminate against children with SEN. Adults too have been reported to discriminate, albeit in less obvious ways. Connors and Stalker (2007), for example, report that some children with PD will avoid particular social situations for fear of being stared at or patronised as a direct result of having a PD. Moreover, one child stated that even a police officer questioned the reliability of her statements because she was “special needs” (Connors and Staler, 2007: 28). This type of indirect discrimination is also experienced by children with SEN in schools, by teachers. Fitzgerald (2005) notes that some children are aware of their perceived difference to other children in school and report being made to feel invisible by some PE teachers, particularly those with a lack of SEN experience. One child in her study stated “I know, I think Mr Clarke doesn’t see me”. (Fitzgerald, 2005: 53). This type of behaviour from teachers can result in children having a lower perception of self within PE. Through normative conceptions of ability, children will compare themselves to

others who are treated positively, and often the child will attribute deficit within themselves to the treatment they receive from others (Fitzgerald, 2005).

Moreover, Connors and Stalker (2007) indicate that the labelling of children with SEN by teachers and peers has led to an over-emphasis of difference between children. The authors state that when this 'difference' was badly managed by teachers, the child's feelings of being excluded were increased. Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) further state that teachers are the stakeholders responsible for using these situations to educate and redirect behaviour in order to minimise the hurt felt by students with SEN experiencing discrimination. It is evident from research, however, that a lack of SEN training has hindered the experiences of children with SEN as a result of such discrimination. More surprisingly, however, as indicated by Connors and Stalker (2007), it is not only other children who discriminate, but the teachers' themselves, which further limits the potential success of inclusion policy.

According to Barton (1993) PE promotes physicality which in many cases is not obtainable for children with certain SEN, particularly PD. This relates to work surrounding the concept of physical literacy (Whitehead, 2001); Evans (2004), however, suggests that PE does little to promote these aspects of education, but rather "relates to the interests of health and sport" (Evans, 2004:97), which may limit children's ability to succeed. This is further emphasised by the precedence traditional sports play in PE lessons, and in the NCPE (Penney, 2002). A child should have every opportunity to succeed in education regardless of their ability, and this is re-emphasized within SEN strategies across the United Kingdom (e.g. DfES, 2004), yet evidently, at present, this is something which requires improvement. While teachers may believe in the inclusion philosophy (Hodge et al, 2004; Lambe and Bones, 2006), it is evident that stigma surrounding disability still shrouds inclusion practice. As such, it is necessary for improvements to be made within SEN training (Vickerman, 2002), in order to minimise this stigma, and train teachers in the art of managing difference within the classroom. Moreover, in the classroom, pupils without SEN should be encouraged to interact with those who have SEN to illustrate positive difference, and generating a supportive atmosphere for all children (Slininger et al, 2000). An example of this type of practice can result in positive behaviour being displayed towards children with SEN, such as that noted by Hutzler et al (200). They indicate that some children in their study were often encouraged by peers to take part, by providing support and adapting game rules to suit the child. This not only emphasises the need for the management of difference, but also provides support for strategies which stress the

importance of lesson adaptation by teachers (Reid, 2003), such as the National Curriculum (QCA, 2007c). Not only would this enhance the experiences of the child with SEN taking part in activities, but would also provide positive role models for other children interacting with children with SEN, therefore decreasing discriminatory behaviour and feelings of difference (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Fitzgerald, 2005; Connors and Stalker, 2007).

3.2.4 Feelings of Self-Doubt

As a result of exclusion from lessons and discrimination by others, children with SEN have reported negative emotions relating to their perception of their own ability to participate in PE (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2005). Several children reported feeling embarrassed by their disability, as a direct result of the behaviour of others towards the children (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000). Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) indicate that children with PD in their study were aware of their bodies as different to others, but so understood that their bodies were “objects of attention that further isolated them from their classmates” (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000:152). They felt that at times their classmates did not see them, but rather just saw their disability. This resulted in children feeling ashamed of their personal appearance around others. Embarrassment can be a factor which limits a child’s motivation to take part in PE and as Blinde and McCallister (1998) point out, some children in their study indicated that they would prefer not to attend PE lessons due to fear of humiliation. This leads to feelings of self doubt and lowers the child’s perceived competence (self-efficacy) in the activities, which further restricts the child’s ability to perform comfortably in PE:

“Because I can’t walk well, I can’t run well, I can’t do volleyball well, I can’t do any kind of sport well... I’m just no good. I call myself a no good person, you know when I get there in the PE class.”

(Blinde and McCallister, 1998:67)

Fitzgerald (2005) also demonstrates how children with SEN can sometimes internalise disability, doubting their own performance. One child is quoted as saying “Well we’re not the best and we aren’t important in school teams” (Fitzgerald, 2005: 47). This indicates that the child had a diminished sense of self in terms of his competence and he goes on to describe his teacher’s lack of interest in his abilities as a result of this.

Self-efficacy (perceived competence) has been shown to have an effect on the likelihood of an individual continuing with a particular task (Bandura, 1977). Lavalley et al (2004) indicate that low self-efficacy, and unfavourable experiences of physical activity can result in withdrawal from sport and exercise. In order to avoid this, teachers need to set effective and attainable goals for children with SEN in order to raise their confidence in PE and encourage participation. According to Cabral and Crisfield (1996) effective goal setting can assist in improving confidence and helps to reduce anxiety and improve skills. As such, it would be beneficial for teachers to provide a personalised curriculum for children with SEN to ensure the targets set are achievable by the children (Miliband, 2004). Personalised learning calls for individualisation and flexibility in teaching and learning, and is considered to be the route required to raise the quality and equity of the British education system, tailoring curriculum content to meet the needs, interests and skills of each individual pupil (Miliband, 2005). However, in order for personalised learning to be effective in PE, teachers should focus more on the individual talents of their pupils, which can be achieved through consultation with their pupils in order to become knowledgeable about the views, opinions and interests of their pupils, making PE as enjoyable as possible for every child (Miliband, 2004). Teachers should also ensure children are aware of their talents, providing positive reinforcement, to make certain that all children build the confidence and self-esteem necessary to become successful participants. Children with SEN too often compare themselves to a normalised ideal, whereby the child believes they should be able to be and do the same as other children (Fitzgerald, 2005). This needs to be challenged and should be encouraged to acknowledge what they can do as opposed to what they are unable to achieve, and this can be done through effective goal setting, and suitable lesson management.

3.2.5 Barriers to Inclusion

Removing Barriers to Achievement, the government strategy for SEN (DfES, 2004) identifies a number of targets and methods for ensuring children with SEN are fully included in mainstream education across all curriculum subjects. However, research indicates children with SEN are still encountering a number of barriers which restrict their participation in both PE as well as sporting and leisure activities outside of school. Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) indicate that while for regular PE lessons, taught in either a gym or sports hall, physical access to facilities was suitable; for special activities, there were often physical barriers to inclusion. These barriers ranged from a lack of ramps for wheelchair users to the length of grass on playing fields (Goodwin

and Watkinson, 2000). Moreover, inclusion in outdoor education, a national curriculum activity area (DfEE/QCA, 1999), was limited due to inappropriate access and facilities, particularly for children with PD (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000). In addition to this, Woolfson et al (2007) stated that physical barriers were of the greatest concern for children with PD. They argue that children with PD were often segregated from the rest of the class, and that the use of equipment such as badminton shuttlecocks and hurdles, was troublesome. Similar to Goodwin and Watkinson (2000), Woolfson et al (2007) also found that the physical environment in which children with PD find themselves is in itself become a barrier to participation. For example, one child in their study stated "The playground is uneven and my wheelchair tips easily on it" (Woolfson et al, 2007:45). It is evident from these studies, however, that these barriers tend to be representative of the difficulties faced by children with PD, rather than other SEN. As little research has investigated the perspectives of children with other SEN, it is difficult to assess the barriers, if any; these children may face during PE.

Nevertheless, Connors and Stalker (2007) did investigate material barriers to inclusion of children with SEN, both those with and without PD, and while they found that there were barriers to inclusion for children with PD, this was less evident for those who had learning disabilities. Barriers experienced by children with PD included inaccessibility to extra-curricular activities and leisure services, as well as transportation difficulties. Transport to leisure facilities was highlighted as limiting children's ability to take part in activities outside of school (Connors and Stalker, 2007). They state, with regard to the children without PD or sensory impairments; that these children may have been less affected by material barriers to inclusion, or simply less aware that barriers exist. However it would be necessary for further evidence to confirm or deny these claims.

Gaining access to facilities and areas where lessons are being conducted is vital for positive experiences of PE and sport outside of school (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000), and if not addressed results in limited participation in PE, and lowered physical activity outside of school. Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) point out that a number of the children in their research preferred swimming to other sports due to its accessibility for the children, and because it allowed children an equal playing ground to other children, allowing them to excel. Moreover, Fitzgerald et al (2003a) indicate, children with SEN in their study tended to opt for sedentary activities in their free time, which could indicate the impact material and physical barriers have on their ability to attend and participate in sport outside of school. As such, it is evident that the facilities available and the nature of the surfaces on which PE and sport are played, has a

profound impact on the likelihood of children with SEN participating in, and enjoying PE and sport outside of school. Therefore, it is vital to remove as many barriers as possible both in the community and in schools, to ensure children with SEN have the best possible opportunity to participate in physical activity, both in school and outside of school in the community.

3.2.6 Empowerment and Consultation

A significant element of children's policies is the precedence placed upon consulting with children by listening to their perspectives, understanding them and responding to what children say, effectively (DfES, 2005). This is echoed within inclusion policy, with focus placed on the empowerment and consultation of children with SEN, ensuring their views are considered within "planning, delivery and evaluation of inclusive practice" (Vickerman, 2002:116). As such individuals and agencies involved in inclusion practice should seek to remove barriers to inclusion erected in all subject areas (Vickerman, 2002). However, in attempting to remove barriers to inclusion, certain strategies have effectively introduced barriers to teaching in subject areas such as PE. The use of LSA's, for example, has increased in the number constraints on PE teacher's everyday practice, due to inexperience in the subject area (Smith and Green, 2004). Furthermore, there is a general feeling among PE teachers that there is a lack of support from LSA's in PE, compared with other subjects, such as English and Maths (Morley et al, 2005). Some children with SEN also feel that the support they receive from LSA's can in fact restrict their independence in lessons. Woolfson et al (2007), for example indicate that children with SEN can sometimes receive too much help, yet they nevertheless appreciate that when help is needed is made available, and feel that the support they receive, when needed, is often helpful. Despite this, children pointed out that their teachers did not seek their perspectives about the support they received, and whether they felt it was adequate and suitable for their needs (Woolfson et al, 2007). This is similar to findings supported by Goodwin (2001), who note that peer support in PE can result in loss of independence and threats to self esteem. Children with SEN in her study appreciated that some support was positive, in terms of assistance with equipment and encouraging participation, however this type of support was also often consensual, in terms of the child with SEN agreeing that support was needed. On the contrary, some support was deemed to be negative, threatening independence and self-esteem. This type of support was based on an assumption that the child could not succeed on their own and so needed support, without consulting with the child first. Goodwin (2001) indicates that this type of support can result in children feeling inadequate, rejecting help, or having negative experiences in the PE

lesson, such as limited participation. These findings indicate the need for children with SEN to be consulted with about the type of help they receive in lessons. Both studies showed that children with SEN wanted to be autonomous in their lessons, receiving help only when needed, and only when asked for. As such, teachers, LSAs and classmates should consult with children with SEN rather than assume that they require assistance based on their assumed needs within that lesson (Goodwin, 2001, Woolfson et al, 2007).

It is the right, and entitlement of all children to participate in high quality PE lessons (DfES, 2004d; DCSF, 2008). PE, therefore, is a subject in which children with SEN should be welcomed and encouraged fully, given the physical, social and psychological benefits of PE (DfES, 2002; Kristen et al, 2002; Fitzgerald et al, 2003a). Children with SEN, however, while appreciating the perceived benefits of taking part in PE, have also indicated feelings of difference and alienation, from other students and teachers (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald et al, 2003b, Connors and Stalker, 2007). It is evident that, given these findings, children with SEN are failing to be fully included in their lessons, but rather that inclusion has been misinterpreted as integration with children being present within their lesson, but not participating on the same level as their peers. This highlights the need to address consultation within inclusive practice further. By involving the child further in decision-making and planning, it may be possible to limit discrimination, and heighten positive experiences of PE. This would, in turn, allow for key objectives within PE strategies to be met, for example, those stating that children should enjoy PE and sport; have the confidence to get involved; and to not sit on the sidelines (DfES, 2002).

Moreover, children and young people with SEN want to have their views heard. Lewis et al (2006), like Goodwin (2001) and Woolfson et al (2007), showed that children in their study valued their independence and autonomy. They were aware of what their needs are and wanted to be able to make their feelings heard. This was often, however, overridden by the perspectives of adults who made assumptions about the needs of pupils without consulting directly with the young person (Lewis et al, 2006, Woolfson et al, 2007). This can often lead to exclusion from regular lessons, as indicated by Blinde and McCallister (1998). The role that teachers take by making uninformed choices about children with SEN is in effect a method of disempowerment. By removing choice and making decisions without first consulting the child, teachers are ignoring the importance of children's lived experiences of their own difficulties, which limits teacher's understanding of that child's needs, and essentially restricts

successful inclusion (DePauw and Doll-Tepper, 2000). Furthermore, Hutzler et al (2002) indicate that children with SEN who experience exclusion, or only limited inclusion in PE lessons, report feelings of disempowerment. The authors state that a child requires the chance to fail in order to feel empowered by a situation. This allows the child the opportunity to learn to cope with the situation, and assess their own ability to participate in certain activities (Hutzler et al, 2002). These perspectives are similar to those presented by Goodwin (2001) regarding help in PE lessons. Findings suggest that help was only deemed to be useful when it was required by the child, and in particular, older children preferred to independently assess their needs prior to help being offered. As such, children with SN should be given the opportunity to make decisions regarding their education. Providing children with the opportunity to decide about particular elements of their education is a form of empowerment which should be embraced by adults.

According to the DfES (2003), consultation not only empowers but can result in skill development, such as debating and negotiating, as well as encouraging children to become active agents in their education. Fitzgerald et al (2003b) illustrates how consultation can be used in this manner, through research which sought to empower using student-led methods. Their study encouraged children with SEN to take the lead in designing and implementing the research, and it was noted that, given extra responsibilities, the children in their study flourished. They were encouraged by the positive remarks of the researchers and teachers, and therefore were motivated to participate. Moreover, the children were able to develop suitable methods to elicit responses from their peers, to successfully reflect on what they were doing, and, over time, build confidence in themselves (Fitzgerald et al, 2003b). This provides evidence for the impact power consultation can have on empowering children. By allowing children with SEN to take on challenges, and encouraging them to participate, children will succeed. As such, the consultation and empowerment of children with SEN with regard to their education is of great importance. It allows the child a chance to accept and cope with their disability, as well as providing fundamental information to adults regarding the child's experiences. This is central in understanding the successes of inclusive practice in PE lessons, and can be used as a method of developing and delivering strategies intended to increase and improve inclusion in mainstream schools, whilst empowering children with SEN both in mainstream and special school environments.

3.3 Summing up the Findings

This chapter set out to examine and review existing literature regarding the consultation with children with SEN, both in mainstream and special education, with a specific focus on their experiences of PE. The aim was to determine, firstly, which methods were utilised by other researchers when consulting with children, and which of these were most effective. However, the focus of this chapter was the perceptions of children with SEN in PE, examining available literature, and assessing emerging themes arising from consultation with children SEN about PE attending both mainstream and special schools.

Existing literature indicates that the majority of research carried out to consult with children who have SEN, has focused on one particular group or SEN, rather than examining a breadth of different SEN. In particular, the majority of research has sought the perspectives of children with PD (see Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000, Goodwin, 2001; Hutzler et al, 2002). In addition to this, little research has examined the perspectives of children in special schools, nor have many researchers attempted to draw similarities or differences between the experiences of children in mainstream and special schools. While it is difficult to compare the experiences given the different contexts in which these children are educated, these children are all labelled as having SEN, and as such, this point of commonality should allow for their opinions and perspectives to be respected on the same level.

Additionally, it is evident that in seeking the perspectives of children with SEN, whether in mainstream or special schools, a range of different methods can be used, however, qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups tend to be used more frequently (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Fitzgerald, 2005; Connors and Stalker, 2007; Woolfson, 2007). Questionnaires were used by some, and while these produced valid findings, their use in really accessing pupil voice is unclear, as the use of questionnaires can be restrictive and reductionist. Moreover the need for support in completing questionnaires (Woolfson et al, 2007) was highlighted and this may act as a form of disempowerment. As such it would be necessary to develop methods which both empowered children with SEN to communicate their perspectives whilst allowing them the opportunity to provide rich data. Participatory research may be a method to do this, and researchers such as Fitzgerald et al (2003a, 2003b) and Fitzgerald (2005) have used this form of research to encourage children with SEN to become active in the research process, empowering them to communicate in ways which suit their own needs.

In addressing the findings of research exploring the perspectives of children with SEN in PE, it was evident from the dearth of literature available that more research needs to be done to assess children's experiences of PE, as well as their accessibility to relevant extra-curricular activities. Despite this, research which has examined children with SEN perspectives of PE has highlighted a number of areas which impact upon the experiences of children with SEN.

The literature indicates that children enjoy PE when they feel they are making a valuable contribution to lessons, however, discrimination by both their classmates and by adults in the school setting is jeopardising children's ability to become fully included in PE lessons. Additionally, it is evident that children with SEN are not being fully included in their PE lessons, but rather, are often segregated from their peers, or restricted in how much they can participate (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2005). Furthermore, physical and material barriers to inclusion have been shown to have a limiting effect on the participation of children with SEN in PE, and sport outside of school (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2001; Woolfson et al, 2007). This has a damaging effect on physical well-being (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000), and leads to emotional distress due to exclusion from lessons, bullying, and a poor self-image (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000). As such, it is necessary to educate non-disabled children about SEN in order to break down normalised behaviours, and encourage social inclusion, as well as physical inclusion. In addition, schools and communities must continue to remove barriers to inclusion; ensuring children with SEN are able to access PE and sport outside of school. This will, not only, promote confidence in children with SEN and motivate them to participate in PE more willingly, but will assist in the development of life-long physical activity.

In addition to this, it was made clear that children with SEN are empowered through consultation (Lewis et al, 2006; Woolfson et al, 2007). They embrace the opportunity to make their own decisions regarding their participation in PE. Disempowerment stems from teachers, parents and other children removing options for the child with SEN, resulting in exclusion (Hutzler et al, 2002). Moreover it is evident that children with SEN want to be a part of the consultation process in terms of making decisions about their education. Consultation and empowerment work hand-in-hand, and both can have beneficial effects on the child's ability to cope with their disability, and develop mechanisms to overcome difficulties. As such it is necessary to include the child as

much as possible in all areas of their education. Children should be allowed the opportunity to fail, and judge for themselves where their abilities lie. Furthermore, it is not possible for teachers to personalise PE programmes without knowledge of the child's needs and abilities, and it is the children themselves who know these needs and abilities better than anyone else. As such, it is necessary for researchers, teachers and schools to continue to consult with children with SEN about their experiences of PE, and school life in general, because without doing so it will not be possible to gauge the successes of inclusive policy and practice.

In response to the findings of previous literature, this research aims to examine the perspectives of children with a range of SEN, rather than one specific group, in order to determine if the data reviewed here is representative of children with SEN on the whole. This would give a more holistic understanding of the experiences of children with SEN within PE, with the intention of empowering children to give voice about matters which concern them. This in turn may determine areas for development and/ or improvement in order to ensure children with SEN are having their needs met in PE.

As such, this study will not be limited to examining only one type of SEN, nor will it be restricted to one type of school. It will embrace the perspectives of children with a range of different SEN, both in mainstream and special schools. The aim of this is to understand the perspectives of children with SEN without restriction. It removes the need for the categorisation of children into distinct medically-defined groups, and embraces the social model, seeking to include all children with SEN, giving them equal opportunity to give voice. As such, the research will attempt to understand their experiences of PE in a holistic, social manner, drawing similarities and differences in experience between different school types rather than labelling children in terms of their SEN categorisation.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Background and context

This research study examined the perspectives of children with SEN related to their experiences and perceptions of PE by answering a primary question of ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”*** Within this the following sub-questions were explored:

- ***“How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?”***
- ***“How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?”***
- ***“How does the child feel he/she is treated differently to other children?”***
- ***“What opportunity does the child have to partake in extra-curricular sport, or sport in the community and are these accessible to the child?”***

These research questions were developed based on findings from previous literature (see Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald et al, 2003a, 2003b; Fitzgerald, 2005) which examine this topic. However, the study builds on this research by removing the focus on a specific SEN, and in particular PD, broadening it to examine the views and perceptions of children who lie on the broad spectrum of SEN. In addition to this, it examines the perspectives of children in both mainstream and special schools in order to gain insight into children’s experiences of PE in the different education settings.

Research can be defined as the systematic study of a given topic in order to add to current knowledge (Theodorson and Theodorson, 1969). It requires the researcher to understand the interrelated components of research design, which refer to the *purpose* of the research, and the *theory* which surrounds it; as well as the development of suitable *research questions, methods and sampling strategies* (Robson, 2006). These, according to Robson (2006), provide the basis of a good research design. Consequently, this chapter reflects upon the development of the research design utilised within this study, whilst assessing the obstacles, justifications and rationales which provide the foundation for the selected methodological approaches.

The main research question for the study, ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”*** is considered by utilising a number of qualitative methods, whereby data are triangulated to determine reliability and validity (Robson, 2006). Triangulation is defined as “a research approach employing more than one perspective, participant, method or analysis” (Robson, 2006:553). The conclusions sought through the main research question were determined through the in-depth study of children with SEN perspectives and experiences of PE based on the examination of four sub-questions drawn from previous literature.

Extensive literature reviews examining the perspectives of children with SEN in PE highlighted these sub-questions as particular areas of concern for children with SEN, particularly those with PD, and as such it was deemed necessary to examine these areas in further detail within this research. The four sub-questions were examined through careful questioning within a number of qualitative methods, including focus groups and interviews with children who have SEN. Taking a phenomenological stance, the use of qualitative methodology was determined to be the most effective methodological approach for this study. Phenomenology refers to the study of direct lived experience, and is subjective in its understanding of the world (Smith et al, 2009). It is concerned with how subjects make sense of their everyday worlds, and the ways in which they come to understand their experiences, based on their reflection and consciousness surrounding those experiences (Cohen et al, 2007; Smith et al, 2009). While qualitative methods are subjective, allowing little opportunity to generalise and replicate findings (Bryman, 2001), the subjective nature of human experience justifies the need to examine the perspectives of children with SEN away from the reductionist confines of more positivist, quantitative methods (Robson,2006). Moreover, previous literature related to pupil voice in PE and SEN has illustrated that qualitative methods work best when examining children’s perspectives (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald et al, 2003b; Fitzgerald, 2005, Coates and Vickerman, 2010 amongst others).

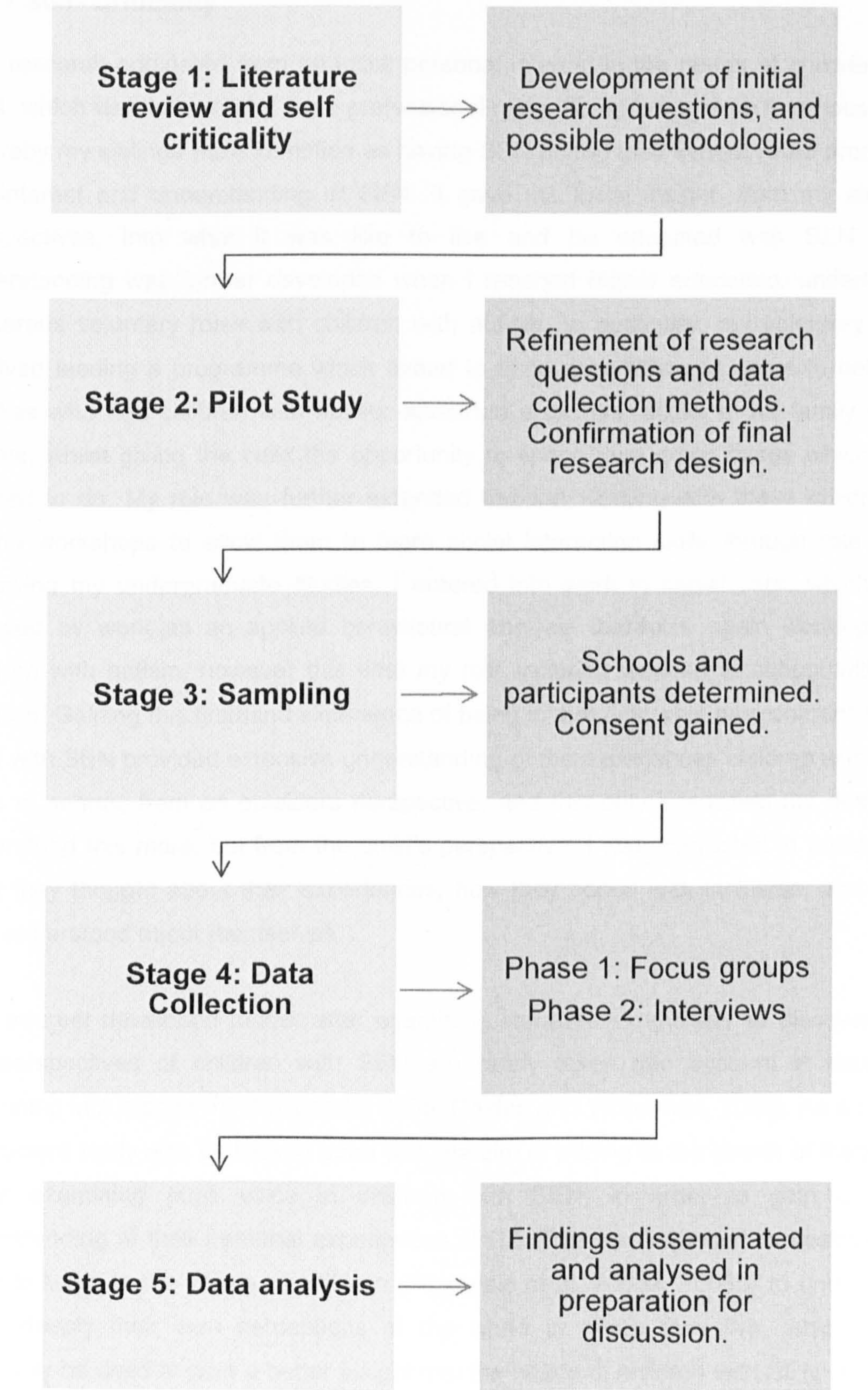
Nevertheless, in determining a desirable and effective research design for a specific study, one does not suddenly have a light-bulb moment whereby all the characteristics of the research appear suddenly in perfect form. Instead research can be described as a journey (Moore, 2006), with several changes in direction. This is true of the current research, and self-critical reflection on this journey was necessary to understand the

study's origin, its direction and its destination, as well as the personal and professional experiences gained through the journey. This was important as it helped to chart the research process aiding in the clarification and contextualisation of the emerging research. This research, therefore, arose by journeying through five interdependent stages, which ultimately led to the development of the final research design, allowing for the analysis and dissemination of findings. The stages were as follows:

- **Stage 1:** Literature reviews and self criticality
- **Stage 2:** Pilot Study
- **Stage 3:** Sampling
- **Stage 4:** Data Collection
 - Phase 1: Focus Groups
 - Phase 2 Interviews
- **Stage 5:** Data Analysis

The journey through these stages is illustrated in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Research Journey



4.2 Stage 1: Rationale and Self-Criticality on Developing the Research Design

4.2.1 Self- Criticality

The research originated from an initial personal interest in the needs of children with SEN, which was followed by more professional roles. Being brought up in a household whereby my siblings were identified as having SEN during their school years prompted my interest and understanding of SEN. It gave me initial insight, from my siblings perspectives, into what it was like to live and be educated with SEN. This understanding was further developed when I reached higher education, undertaking numerous voluntary roles with children with autism. In particular, my voluntary work involved leading a programme which aimed to encourage fellow students to befriend families who had children with autistic spectrum disorders, allowing the family some respite, whilst giving the child the opportunity to spend time doing things which they wanted to do. My role was further extended through working with these children in drama workshops to allow them to learn social interaction skills through role play. Following my undergraduate studies, I entered into work in social care, which was followed by work as an applied behavioural analysis therapist, again working with children with autism, however this time my role included working at school with the children. Gaining this firsthand experience of being in a mainstream environment with a child with SEN provided extensive understanding of the experiences children with SEN have at school, from an outsiders perspective, and this only intensified my desire to understand this more, but from the child's perspective. I was interested in finding out what they thought about their experiences, how they coped with inclusion, and what they understood about themselves.

This interest developed further after examining literature extensively to discover that the perspectives of children with SEN are rarely taken into account in research examining inclusion in PE (Fitzgerald, 2005, Coates and Vickerman, 2008). As a result, the current study was embarked upon with the aim of adding to the dearth of literature, whilst examining pupil voice in children with SEN, in order to gain a fuller understanding of their personal experiences of PE. This was intended to illustrate the need to listen to the voices of children (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a, 2003b) to understand more deeply their own perceptions of the world in which they live, which could ultimately be used to gain a better insight into the needs of children with SEN. In doing this, it might be possible for other stakeholders including other academics, parents, and teachers to better appreciate the views of these children. The research can also be

used to inform PE teacher practice, aiding the development of more personalised learning, providing teachers with insight into how their pupils experience education, and encouraging them to consult more frequently with their pupils. Moreover, the study aimed to develop methodologies suitable for harnessing pupil voice from children with a diverse range of SEN, so that future researchers could utilise the tools presented within their research with children who have SEN.

In determining methodologies suitable for answering the primary question, ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”*** a number of specific methodological factors were taken into account. These were:

- The theoretical position of the research
- The research sample
- Available methodological approaches
- Research ethics

4.2.2 The Theoretical Position of the Research

This research is set within a social constructionist theoretical position (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), employing a phenomenological philosophy. Social constructionism explains phenomena, or experience, in terms of their relation to the external world. It examines how meanings are placed on everyday experience as a social construct determined by human action, interaction and thought (Crotty, 2009). Concepts surrounding the social construction of the world arose from postmodern thought, and were highlighted by Berger and Luckmann (1966) in their book *The Social Construction of Reality*. In addressing the ways in which social phenomena and social thought were constructed, Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that the ways in which social groups to make sense of their worlds (externalisation) is through the construction of their reality. This construction is developed through the objectivation of constructs into socially real ideas, which is then internalised and understood by individuals through socialisation. These three “moments” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:78) constantly interplay in a cycle. In explaining this, Berger and Luckmann (1966:78-79) state that “man and his social world interact with each other... *Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product*”. As such, in applying this standpoint to the current research, it is expected that factors in the social world of children with SEN will influence the ways in which their perceptions are constructed and internalised within the context of PE.

Similarly, phenomenology, first introduced by German philosopher Edmund Husserl in the early 20th century, seeks to examine experience in terms of context in which it occurs (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), and in doing so encourages a person to identify essential qualities of that experience (Giorgi and Giorgi, 2008; Smith et al, 2009). Phenomenology encourages researchers to not stray from the context which is being researched and to stay true to the original meaning of the data, rather than reducing the data to a number of measurable, and controllable variables (Giorgi and Giorgi, 2008). It allows both the participant and the researcher to reflect, therefore developing their own personal meaning or 'perception' related to that experience (Smith et al, 2009). Both constructionism and phenomenology are based on the concept of "intentionality", which explores the relatedness of human consciousness to an 'object' (Crotty, 2009; Smith et al, 2009). Intentionality is simply defined by Smith et al (2009:13) as "the relationship between the process occurring in consciousness and the object of attention for that process... experience or consciousness is always consciousness of something – *seeing is seeing of something, remembering is remembering of something, judging is judging of something*" [emphasis added].

As such, the current research aims to understand children with SEN's experiences (consciousness) of PE (the object), resulting in their current perspectives, or understanding related to PE lessons. This is based on the notion that their perceptions have been constructed through their experiences, and their experiences constructed through the social world in which they exist. In order to understand the meaning that the child has placed within these experiences, it is necessary to consult with the child and embrace personal narratives regarding their experiences. Moreover, this research goes further than just understanding what the perspectives of children with SEN in PE are. It aims to empower the children to give voice, to reflect on their own experiences, and to speak up about the issues that affect them.

In adopting a phenomenological position, a reflective and reflexive attitude was assumed by the researcher (Smith et al, 2009), and so, in order to implement this, reflection was carried out throughout the study by way of a research journal. This allowed for the appraisal of research design, methodology and analysis at all points throughout the data collection process. Moreover, as a researcher, I was able to think reflexively about the position I assumed within the study, allowing for reflection and personal feedback on my own assumptions and the subjective nature of the investigation and its interpretation. Through this, it was intended that personal beliefs and expectations would be identified, so as to not impede on the meaning which the

children place on their own experiences. Therefore, efforts were made to ensure that all interpretation of the data remained as close to the spoken word of the children, rather than paraphrased interpretations based on the pre-existing knowledge, understanding and beliefs of myself as academic, researcher and self-proclaimed advocate for children with SEN. In doing this, the research process was flexible, in order for the needs and opinions of the individual children to shine through, making use of their language rather than my own, and by not over-analysing the data to reflect my beliefs.

4.2.3 Research Sample

The study examined the perspectives of children with SEN within a large Metropolitan county in the North West of England. The decision to use convenience sampling and not extend the research to other areas in England was taken primarily due to time constraints, which according to Bell (2004) have great influence on data collection. Convenience sampling involves selecting a sample from a readily-available population, and while it limits the generalisation of results, according to Bryman (2001), it provides a springboard for further research to take place. The use of convenience sampling in choosing the geographical boundaries of the research was not seen as detrimental, because it would still allow for a large number of the proposed population of children with SEN in the county to be invited to take part, and given the qualitative nature of the research, this would not affect the subjective understanding sought through the investigation (Smith et al, 2009). Moreover, the research does not seek to generalise, and so the limits in terms of generalisation within non-probability convenience sampling (Bryman, 2001) were not considered to be disadvantageous.

The county is separated into five Local Authorities (LA) and when designing the research it was decided that each LA would be examined separately, anticipating that the approach to SEN in each LA would be different. However, after examining the education policies of the five LA's it was discovered that each follow similar guidelines regarding SEN, using the *Every Child Matters Agenda* (DfES, 2005) to formulate local education policy. As such, no distinction was made between the LA's in the final data collection and analysis. Nevertheless, care was taken to ensure schools in all five LAs were given the opportunity to be a part of the research, and as such schools in each of the five LA's were written to regarding the research (see Appendix 10.2 for consent forms and letters).

Following the decision to base the research in the on North West County, including the five LA's, it was decided that contact would be made with children with SEN through their schools, and as such it was necessary to identify suitable schools, which were likely to have a variety of children with SEN in attendance. Schools were selected purposively, using selection criteria (Silverman, 2005). The selection criteria were developed to determine which schools to invite to take part in the research. Selection criteria ensure the inclusion of participants best suited to the aims of the research, however, result in findings being specific to the groups selected, which can threaten the generalisability of the research (Robson, 2006). While this was a concern, qualitative research by nature is difficult to generalise due to its subjectivity, and as such, validity of the research was determined through the triangulation (Robson, 2006), by including more than one of each school in the research, and through the triangulation of the data collected from these schools.

Three types of school were invited to take part in the research. These were mainstream primary, mainstream secondary and special schools. The three types of school were included in the research in order for a broad range of perspectives to be examined, and to allow for comparisons to be made between mainstream and special schools. In addition to this, it was decided that both primary and secondary schools would be invited to take part to allow for an analysis of experiences of children who are new to NC PE (primary) compared to those with more experience of NC PE through secondary school. Therefore, a comparative research design was implemented, allowing for distinctions to be made between the experiences of children with SEN educated in mainstream settings, and those educated in 'special' schools; as well as distinctions between primary and secondary education. Comparative research designs allow for the analysis of differences and similarities between two or more groups (Silverman, 2005). This is preferable for the proposed research, as it will highlight differences in inclusion experiences encountered by children in the two different types of school. The selection criteria for schools are displayed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Selection Criteria for Schools

Primary School	Secondary School	Special School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools must have a pupil roll of over 300 students. • Schools must be community schools funded by the LEA. • Schools must be co-educational (mixed gender). • Schools must have a statemented SEN population of 10% or more. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools must have a pupil roll of over 700 students. • Schools must be community schools funded by the LEA. • Schools must be co-educational (mixed gender). • Schools must have a statemented SEN population of 10% or more. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The schools must be LEA maintained / funded. • The schools must be inclusive of ages 7 to 14.

The research focused on larger, LEA maintained community schools. The inclusion of larger schools with a higher SEN population was decided upon in anticipation that they would produce increased response rates, with more diverse groups of children with a variety of SEN. This was done to improve the representativeness of the sample (Cohen et al, 2007). Similarly, it is for this reason that only co-educational schools were invited for participation in the research. It was decided that only community schools funded by the LA would be invited to participate. This ensured that each school followed the set NC, as privately funded schools and academies are not bound to teach from the NC. Although special schools may be disapplied from teaching the NC (DfES, 2006), it was deemed necessary to include special schools in the research despite this, in order for the perspectives of these children to be taken into account. Nevertheless, the special schools who were involved in the research did teach from an adapted NC suited to their pupils, making the experiences of the different types of school comparable to a degree. This may be attributed to policy stating that state-maintained schools who are disapplied from the NC are still required to “retain pupils’ access to a broad and balanced curriculum or learning programme, including as much of the NC as possible” (DfES, 2006:2). As such, within these special schools, PE remained a compulsory subject for all pupils.

Following the development of selection criteria for schools, it was possible to identify suitable schools for the research. Head teachers from the identified schools were

written to once, and telephoned a maximum of three times to confirm consent. In total 63 schools were invited to take part, and of these 63 schools, 14 schools gave consent to take part in the research, producing a response rate of 22%. Table 4.3 presents a breakdown of responses for each type of school. It is possible that the schools that did consent to the research were schools who were confident with their SEN policies and inclusion practice, or that they were secure in their teaching of PE. This may have impacted on the perspectives of the children attending these schools, and as such the kinds of schools which consent is a consideration in the research. However, it is not possible to determine why the schools agreed to the research, and despite the reasons for their participation, the perspectives of the children within that school are still important, whether their experiences of PE and/or inclusion are positive or negative.

Table 4.3 Response Rate by School Type

School Type	Number of schools written to	Number of responses	Response rate
Mainstream Primary	24	4	16%
Mainstream Secondary	28	5	17%
Special School	11	5	45%

Children were recruited for the research using purposive sampling techniques. Purposive sampling refers to seeking out “groups, settings and individuals where...the processes being studied are most likely to occur” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 370). As such, participant selection criteria were developed. All children with SEN at each school were given the opportunity to take part in the research. The only requirement for participants was that the child had to be registered at either SA, SA+ or stated on the schools SEN register, and that the child had to be aged between 7 and 14 years, therefore at either KS2 or KS3, at the point which the research was completed. This was determined in order to ensure the children included in the research were bound by the NC to take part in PE. Moreover, it was decided to exclude KS1 and KS4 as it was felt that PE for children at KS1 was focussed too much on early exploration and development (DfEE/QCA, 1999), and KS 4 PE was much broader and linked to lifelong learning (DfEE/QCA, 1999). While these are useful and important stages in PE, it was felt that more general PE experiences would be explored in order to gain an understanding of children’s perspectives of PE which is more focused on overall skills acquisition and consolidation (DfEE/QCA, 1999). Moreover, this age group would allow for comparisons to be made between primary and secondary children’s experiences of PE through these two key stages, gaining perspectives on both the

early childhood experiences of primary children once they have settled into education through to secondary children who have several years experience of schooling. It is worth noting, however, that once the sample population was identified, random sampling of this group was used to identify individual participants for the research.

4.2.4 Available methodological approaches

When determining the design of suitable research methods to employ within this study, it was primarily decided that a mixed methodology approach would be applied, making use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The purpose of this was to triangulate findings, whereby the quantitative findings corroborated with the qualitative findings (Silverman, 2005). As the research focused on allowing children to 'have their say', notions of consultation and empowerment were stressed (Hutzler et al, 2002; Fitzgerald et al, 2003a, 2003b; Fitzgerald, 2007). As such, the methods for generating data would need to encapsulate this notion, allowing children the utmost opportunity and freedom to express their views. As such, a number of possible methods were proposed, and these will be evaluated briefly:

Self-completion questionnaires: These would collect quantitative data through the use of closed questions. Questionnaires would be distributed to all children on the SEN register at the appointed schools. They have the advantage that they can collect a large amount of data in a relatively short space of time. Due to their quantitative nature, they produce highly valid and reliable results, which allows for greater generalisability of results, given that a representative sample is acquired (Robson, 2006). Moreover they do not require the presence of a researcher reducing the probability of social desirability of the responses (Bryman, 2001). However, questionnaires do run the risk of increased likelihood of missing data (Bryman, 2001). They also generate lower response rates and do not allow the researcher to probe respondents to elaborate on responses (Robson, 2006). While the advantages of generalisability, validity and reliability of quantitative data generated through self-completion questionnaires are undeniable, the use of this method for accessing pupil voice may well be limited. Self-completion questionnaires ordinarily do not allow for the collection of rich, detailed data, without the use of open-ended questions, whereby the respondent is expected to have the literacy skills necessary to complete such requests. This may well not be suitable for this research given the wide range of SEN the participants may have. Moreover, the sole use of closed questioning, which in essence may be more suitable for the sample group, might not allow for the range of questioning necessary to generate in depth responses. As such, it was felt that this method requires further

investigation regarding its suitability for the current study, and this was examined in the pilot study, discussed later on in this chapter.

Focus groups: Focus groups refer to group interviews or discussions initiated by the researcher, which generates and analyses the consensus and interaction of that group of individuals (Barbour, 2007). Focus groups require the participants to have something in common in order to reach a consensus within their interaction (Barbour, 2007), and so within the current study, the commonality between participants was their participation in PE at the school they attended, as well as being identified as having SEN. The use of focus groups present opportunity for participants to have more control over the discussions undertaken, allowing them to lead the direction of the conversation. They also allow for inter-participant interactions, and therefore the construction of group meaning regarding a specific topic, whilst remaining open for debate (Bryman, 2001). As such, it was felt focus groups may provide a forum for empowerment, allowing participants the freedom to discuss their experiences with like-minded peers, and removing some control from the researcher. As such, the possibility for new and unexpected topics to be discussed is presented. Moreover, this method has been used by Goodwin and Watkinson (2000); Goodwin (2001); and Fitzgerald (2005), showing its suitability for the research.

Within the pilot study, it was determined that the self-completion questionnaires and the focus groups would be piloted. This was decided due to the opposite ends of the methodological poles that these methods position themselves. While questionnaires would be quantitative with sole researcher control over the types of data collected, the focus groups would provide more freedom for the participants, empowering them to explore their experiences. As such, it was intended that the results of the questionnaires would provide an outline of the issues to discuss in the focus groups, using a method known as progressive focussing (Cohen et al, 2007). Progressive focussing ensures early commencement of data analysis, allowing for significant characteristics of the research to emerge, and subsequent theory generation to take place (Cohen et al, 2007).

Focus groups generate large amounts of qualitative data about the real-life experiences and opinions of participants, and therefore are high in ecological validity (Bryman, 2001, Goodwin, 2001). Moreover, they are useful for engaging with marginalised groups of individuals, allowing the participants to discuss issues which they share in common (Barbour, 2007), in this case SEN. On the other hand, as focus

groups generate qualitative data, results are difficult to generalise and are low in validity and reliability. Moreover, there is increased chance on socially desirable responses being generated due to the presence of a researcher (Bryman, 2001). In response to this, however, Scott (2000) notes, children may be less susceptible to social desirability bias, and so this may not be detrimental to the results gathered. Nevertheless, precautions were taken to limit the risk of social desirability, by ensuring all participants were aware of their right to confidentiality, and to withdraw their data, and by not having teachers present during the focus groups. Moreover, any questions the participants had regarding the research were responded to prior to data collection and every attempt was made to make the participants feel at ease, building a level of trust between the participants and the researcher. For example, children were eager to find out whether their teachers would be told about their responses, and were inquisitive about the video recording equipment. Children were allowed the opportunity to look at the video recording equipment, and I showed them how they would look on the tapes as this interested them. They were also told that their teachers would not know what they had said and all responses would be kept private. Moreover, participants who did not want to say their responses out loud to their peers were allowed to write or draw their responses on paper, adding a further aspect to confidentiality.

Interviews: One-to-one qualitative, semi-structured interviews were used to generate further elaboration on topics discussed within the focus group, and to examine more personal experiences of inclusion in PE. Semi-structured interviews allow for participants to discuss anything they may not wish to discuss in a group forum, with the added advantage that the interviewer is able to use an interview schedule which is flexible, allowing for further questions to be asked given significant responses from the children (Bryman, 2001). Similar to focus groups however, qualitative interviews result in data which is difficult to generalise due to lowered validity and reliability (Cohen et al, 2007). Nevertheless, they present the participant with the opportunity to explore their experiences, providing the researcher with insight into real-life experiences.

Video diaries: Video diaries would involve the participant producing personal diaries of their experiences in PE soon after completing a PE lesson. The participant would be expected to journal their thoughts and feelings on video which would then be analysed qualitatively. This would provide insight into the participants' experiences while it is fresh in the mind, allowing reflection on participation. However, video diaries are costly, and require technical expertise, of which the participant would have to be taught in

order for them to produce a diary. An adult assistant could be asked to help the participant; however the presence of an adult may alter what the participant records on the video, therefore increasing the chance of social desirability (Robson, 2006). In addition to this, the researcher would have no control over what was recorded and as such the quality of the data would be difficult to assess.

Natural observation of PE lessons: Natural observation would involve the researcher being present during PE lessons and observing the participant during their PE lessons. This would allow the researcher to observe the participant in a natural, real-life setting, which would allow for judgements about their participation to be made (Robson, 2006). However, observation is extremely time-consuming and would require data to be collected on a number of occasions to ensure behaviours and incidents have not occurred as a one-off (Robson, 2006). In addition to this, as observations would take place during a PE lesson in which a number of non-participant children were taking part, analysis of interactions would be difficult. Moreover, ethical implications would require consent to be sought from all parties involved in that lesson, due to the age of the individuals involved. This would be highly difficult to achieve. In addition to this, the presence of a researcher observer may affect the outcomes of the observed lesson (Robson, 2006).

After considering the advantages and disadvantages of each proposed method, as well as the methods used by other researchers in the field of SEN consultation (e.g. Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2005; Woolfson et al, 2007), it was decided that questionnaires, focus groups and interviews would be most suitable for this research, given the research questions identified for the research. While video diaries and natural observations would be useful, given the time constraints of PhD research and the requirement for data which can be collected and analysed within these time constraints, it was determined that these methods would not be economical.

4.2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical consent was sought and granted by the University Ethics Committee (see Appendix 10.2.1) in the primary stages of the research. In gaining this consent, certain obstacles in completing the research were highlighted. In particular, a requirement of the ethical approval was that consent would have to be gained on three levels. Firstly, by the head teacher of each school, secondly, by the parents/guardians of the child participants and finally consent from the child was required. It was decided that consent would be necessary from the child, in order to empower them to be a part of the research.

Archard (2004:55) states that a child who “lacks the capacity to exercise choice, it does not follow that they lack rights”. Nevertheless, in the event that the child is unable to make an informed choice, their rights are then protected by their representatives (Archard, 2004), and therefore parental consent was also necessary. This is in line with the ethical guideline set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2004). In addition to this a witness signature was needed on each consent form. The need for such stringent ethical guidelines was understandable given the vulnerability and age of the child participants. This did however increase the paperwork sent to each school and parent, as participant information (PI) sheets (see Appendix 10.2.5) were also required detailing each stage of the research to the parents/guardians and the children.

The increased amount of paperwork may have reduced the response rates gained. Several schools who were invited to participate were interested in the research, however, after examining the consent forms and PI sheets stated that these were too lengthy and complex for some of the parent/guardians, and it was highlighted to me that this might result in a non-response from some. Nevertheless, this was an obstacle which could not be avoided as it was necessary, given the ethical approval, that this information was provided to parents. Moreover, in order to ensure no psychological harm came to the child during data collection phases, the use of PI sheets allowed the child to be fully aware of what would be expected of them, allowing them the opportunity to withdraw if necessary, prior to the data collection taking part.

Nevertheless, in order to overcome communication barriers with parents, highlighted by some points of contact at the schools, the information was simplified as much as possible for parents, without losing its content (see Appendix 10.2 for letters and PI sheets), and as an additional source of information, SENCO's at each school agreed to be a point of contact, in addition to the researcher, to answer any queries the parents may have had.

4.3 Stage 2: The Pilot Study

A pilot study was designed with the intention of assessing the suitability of the data collection methods available for the research (see Coates and Vickerman, 2010. Full article in Appendix 10.1.2). As such, self-completion questionnaires and focus groups were designed to generate data in response to the primary research question ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and***

sport outside of school?" These methods were piloted as it was felt that there may be some difficulties in utilising them, such as communication and access barriers specific to the SEN of the child participants, given the requirement for written and verbal communication needed for these methods. Moreover, for the focus groups, it was felt necessary to assess group interaction with children who have SEN. Therefore, it was necessary to ensure these difficulties would not hinder the quality of data collected, whilst taking the children's needs into account. Interviews were not used in the pilot phase as it was felt that these would be suitable for the research, given the one-on-one nature of interviews, and the flexibility of semi-structured interviews to meet the needs of the individual interviewee. Moreover, this method has been extensively used in previous research (e.g. Hutzler et al, 2002; Lewis et al, 2006; Connors and Stalker, 2007) and as such it was felt that they would be suitable for the research.

As previous research had used predominantly qualitative methods (see Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald et al, 2003a; 2003b; Fitzgerald, 2005), it was intended that piloting would focus on the use of a questionnaire as a suitable method of data collection, while the piloting of the focus groups were intended to assess the suitability of a participatory research style (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998) for children with SEN.

Piloting was conducted within four schools in one North West LA in England. This LA was different to the location of the main research study, but shared similar education policies to the main LA used for this study. The schools included one mainstream secondary school, one mainstream primary school; and two special schools. One special school specialised in educating children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD), while the second educated children with moderate to profound learning difficulties (M/PLD), ranging from profound, multiple learning difficulties, through to ASD and Downs Syndrome. Table 4.4 shows the number of participants taking part from each school:

Table 4.4 Pilot study school responses

School	School Type	Number of respondents	Response rate (%)
A	Special school (ASD)	5	17.8
B	Special school (M/PLD)	13	52
C	Mainstream Primary School	14	25.9
D	Mainstream High School	51	34
		Total: 83	Ave. response rate: 29.9

The numbers shown above represent the total number of participants taking part in the self-completion questionnaire; however, these participants include the few that took part in the focus group activity as well.

Consent was gained from each school, as well as from the parents of the children involved in the research. The children themselves also consented to the research and were made fully aware of their right to confidentiality, and to withdraw at any stage during the research, in line with the University Ethics Committee guidelines.

4.3.1 The Pilot Questionnaire

The initial questionnaire design was developed with children with SEN in mind, and as such made use of imagery. Images of various sports were used, as well as smiley faces to indicate “yes”, “no” and “maybe” responses (see Appendix 10.3.1 for questionnaire). Scott (2000) notes the importance of using visual stimuli for questioning children as it makes concepts more concrete to aid the child’s understanding, and as such, given the communication difficulties experienced by many children both in the special and mainstream schools, it was important to ensure the greatest level of understanding within the questionnaire.

To achieve this, prior to beginning any data collection for the questionnaire, a number of meetings were set up between myself and speech and language specialists at the two special schools involved in the piloting of the research, in order to determine the accessibility of the original design. One of these specialists in particular, who worked for the LA, but was based in the ASD school, pointed out that children who have severe communication difficulties, particularly those with ASD, would be unable to access a questionnaire as they would not recognise words. In addition, she indicated that many of the children did not have the cognitive ability to read and understand written text. As

such, she recommended converting the questionnaire using the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) for use with children with severe communication difficulties, and ASD. This conversion was successful, and was approved by the speech and language specialist at the ASD school. Moreover when piloting with the children at the ASD school, it was evident that they were more able to respond when the PECS pictures were presented rather than just the questionnaire and verbal recitation of the questions to the child. Due to the nature of the SEN experienced by the children in this, as well as those in the second special school, it was determined that the researcher would need to be present for the questionnaire to verbally iterate the questions and prompt the child giving the response options when required. This was necessary for both children requiring the questionnaire in the PECS format and those able to access the questionnaire in its original format. As such, the questionnaire, for the special schools, took on the form of a formal interview.

The use of this format proved successful for ensuring children could understand and respond effectively to the questions. However issues concerning standardisation of the questionnaire were raised, as the questions had to be read verbally to each child, and re-worded depending on the cognitive ability of the child. Moreover, for some children, particularly those with ASD, it was necessary for the class teacher to be present. This was to ease the child's anxiety about being with someone they did not know, but raised concerns about the validity and reliability of their responses whilst the teacher was present, as it was feared the child would respond in a socially desirable way. However, as Scott (2000:109) notes, children may be less susceptible to social desirability bias, claiming it is an "adultcentric" concept. Nevertheless, every attempt was taken to insure no extra demands were placed on the child throughout the questioning process, and children were not probed to answer any questions they did not want to answer. Moreover, prompts to give answers were only given a maximum of two times before moving onto the next question in the instance that the child did not initially respond to a question.

For some children, however, it was evident that despite adapting the questionnaire to suit the needs of the child, even a simplified version of the questionnaire appeared too cognitively demanding, and as such some could not respond at all to questions, or responded only "yes" to all questions, even if an answer conflicted with the last. Again, this raised questions about the validity and reliability of the questionnaire results (Cohen et al, 2007). In order to determine methods to rectify this, discussions were taken up with the class teachers of the children. The teachers indicated that several of

the children who responded “yes” to all questions had extremely poor communication and as such would usually respond “yes” to any question, regardless of what it was. Due to the effect this data could have on the results, it was decided that these questionnaire results would be omitted from the final data analysis, and that more effective methods would be required in order to not exclude these children from the research as a whole. Therefore, the use of short activities was added to the focus group schedule to be piloted, a method also used by Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) and by Fitzgerald et al (2003a, 2003b). This would involve activities in which the child could use multiple methods to respond, including drawing pictures. Moreover, it was felt that less structured questioning in the focus groups would remove restrictions in place in the questionnaire, which required the child to respond either yes, no or maybe to each question. As such, it was intended that children would then be able to give responses in a way suited to their abilities rather than being expected to respond in the ways necessary to complete the questionnaire. Furthermore, it was felt that this would allow more opportunity for the children to give voice, therefore getting to the core of what the research is about.

While methodological challenges were discovered whilst piloting the questionnaire in special schools, piloting in the mainstream schools went smoothly. Children were able to understand and respond to the questionnaire items effectively without the requirement for the researcher to be present. However, some with literacy difficulties did request teachers to read the questions aloud for them in order to aid their own understanding of the questions. As a teacher was present for the completion of several of the questionnaires, this again may lead to an increase in socially desirable responses (Bryman, 2001), rather than reflecting the child’s true beliefs, particularly as one questionnaire item referred directly to the child’s’ feelings about their PE teachers.

Do Questionnaires Work?

Due to the methodological implications faced in special schools, and to a certain extent, mainstream schools, regarding the accessibility and standardisation of the questionnaire across different settings, it was determined that a quantitative questionnaire format was not suitable. This was particularly true for children with complex SEN attending special schools. Therefore, it was decided that for the main study, predominantly qualitative methods of data collection, which allow the child to explore their own beliefs and perspectives within the confines of their own abilities (Fredrickson and Cline, 2002) would be used, and the use of a questionnaire would be removed from the research methodology. While this would reduce the generalisability

of the results (Bryman, 2001), qualitative methods allowed for the collection of rich data, giving potential to provide insight into the real-life experiences (Silverman, 2005) of children with SEN, and this, in essence, is what this research is about. While the use of positivist, quantitative models might prove useful to gain an overview of experiences, relating to a larger population of participants, therefore providing an objective analysis of experiences (Robson, 2006); it was felt that this was not necessary when examining children's perspectives in depth. Moreover, given the implications of using this methodology with children with SEN, it is deemed unsuitable due to the restrictions the use of questionnaires has on communication; and its standardisation across the different types of school. Therefore questionnaires were not used in the main study.

4.3.2 Focus Groups

Two focus groups were conducted for the pilot stage of the research. These included one within a special school, with three children, while the second focus group was conducted within the mainstream primary school, also including three children. Table 4.5 shows the gender, age and SEN of each of these participants.

Table 4.5 Focus group participant details

School	Gender	Age	SEN as stated on SEN register
Mainstream Primary	Female (R)	8	General learning difficulties (GLD), PD
Mainstream Primary	Male (C)	8	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
Mainstream Primary	Male (J)	8	Dyslexia, speech and communication difficulties
Special	Female (K)	13	Down's Syndrome
Special	Female (A)	12	Physical; sensory; learning and interaction difficulties
Special	Male (J)	14	ASD; learning and interaction difficulties; medical difficulties

*Initials in brackets denote participant identification within focus group transcriptions.

(taken from Coates and Vickerman, 2010)

Focus groups had participatory elements (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998), giving the child participants freedom to decide upon the types of activities included, however some structure was kept in order to guide the children. A number of non-verbal activities were

presented to the children in order to present different methods for the child to illustrate their perspectives. This was particularly useful for children whose communication skills were less developed. Tasks given in the focus groups included drawing pictures (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000) relating to their ideas surrounding PE, filling in thought bubbles about themselves using descriptive words presented on a list, as well as completing activity sheets relating to PE and self-perceptions (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a) (See Appendix 10.4). The children were given the option of completing as many, or as few, activities as they wanted, and were also given the opportunity to ask each other questions regarding PE. This was intended to empower the children allowing them to explore their own curiosities about each other, whilst providing the researcher with insight into the significance of certain topics brought up by the children themselves (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a). Structure was kept within the focus group through the researcher asking pre-determined questions relating to PE, and then allowing the children to explore their perspectives using the questions as a starting point. The focus group was facilitated by the researcher, and prompting was given only when necessary. This gave the child space and time to formulate their responses, within their own abilities and limited the pressure placed on them. This seemed effective, and for some participants gave them the opportunity to open-up, empowering them to communicate their views un-interrupted.

The qualitative nature of the focus groups allowed freedom in the children's responses, empowering them to respond in ways which reflected their capabilities (Robson, 2002). It was found, however, that the differences in abilities for both the mainstream and special schools required some fluidity in the ways in which each focus group was conducted. The mainstream group, for example, were more empowered by the decisions they took within the research, directing the researcher as to what could and could not be filmed, deciding amongst themselves what they wanted to do next, and encouraging each other to ask and respond to questions. This focus group was much more student-led (see Fitzgerald et al, 2003a). The special school group, however, required more direction from the researcher. The children were not eager to ask each other questions, however they did encourage and prompt each other during the drawing activities, asking each other questions about what was being drawn. During more verbal activities, the children in this group required more prompting from me to extend their responses, and it was evident at several points during the focus group, that communication difficulties experienced by one child in particular were hindering his ability to respond effectively to any verbal cue. Nevertheless, his peers were able to prompt him into responding, using one word answers. From a researcher point of view,

it was difficult at times to get audible and consistent responses from some of the children, as they would sometimes go off the point, or their speech would become slurred. This was a problem also encountered by Fitzgerald (2007), who made use of LSAs to aid with understanding what her participants were communicating. I was eager to not involve teachers or LSAs in the research process to limit their influence over the children's responses, and as such, for special school attendees in particular, it was deemed necessary to examine alternative methods of data collection, which move away from a sole focus on verbal responses. As Robson (2002) states, it can be difficult to ensure all participants within a focus group get equal chance to contribute, and as such it is felt that the inclusion of short activities which deviate from verbal communication, would be useful in including children less able to communicate verbally.

It's All Riding on the Ping Pong Balls

The focus groups were a useful tool for facilitating discussion with children with SEN, providing them with a forum to explore their thoughts and opinions regarding PE. Children in the special and mainstream schools enjoyed the drawing and thought bubble activities, and were able to respond to these in an effective manner. As such, these modes of non-verbal data collection were further developed for the main study based on short motivating activities, such as drawing, which allowed creativeness from the child without pressuring them to speak out loud (Goodwin, 2001). An implication of this, however, was for the dissemination and analysis of such data, as it would rely on the subjectivity of the researcher (Bryman, 2001; Robson, 2002). Moreover, the use of focus groups and interviews reduces the generalisability of results. Nevertheless, it allows for a more diverse group of participants, and due to the subjective nature of qualitative research (Bryman, 2001), should not inhibit the results, but will add to the richness of understanding surrounding the experiences of children with SEN in PE. Therefore, the focus groups were further developed to include more non-verbal activities, such as drawing and cut-and-paste activities to ensure no child need be excluded from the research due to communication boundaries.

In addition to this, on reflection of the pilot study focus group recordings, it was noted that at times, the children appeared bored, and this was often when being asked questions by the researcher. The participants, were however, much more enthusiastic and appeared more empowered when they had more control over what was being asked, or the activities being completed. In response to this it was determined that the structure of the focus groups needed to change to be more motivating and exciting for

the young participants. As a result, ping pong balls were introduced for the main study. The ping pong balls had topics relating to PE written on them in marker pen, while activities were denoted by gold starred balls. These were placed in a bag for participants to choose from, therefore placing more control in their hands about how the focus group activities and topics were ordered, and also allowed more spontaneity, providing an element of excitement. It was also decided that participants, as a group, should be given the opportunity before beginning the focus group, to decide how it was conducted. This, according to the DfES (2003) is important for empowering children to make decisions, motivating them to become more involved in the consultation process. As such, four options for the participant were developed regarding how to structure the focus group. The participants could:

- a) Use the ping pong balls
- b) Let the researcher ask questions/give activities from the structured focus group schedule
- c) Write down important issues on post-it notes, which could then be drawn from a hat one-at-a-time and discussed
- d) Choose any other method they thought suitable to discuss PE.

The intention of these options was two-fold. Firstly, to increase the participatory nature of the focus groups, and secondly, to empower the participants to make decisions about how they wanted to participate. These methods were employed in the main study.

4.3.3 Pilot Study Results and Implications

Pilot study data was analysed using both quantitative analysis techniques, using SPSS v14 (for the questionnaires), and qualitative analysis techniques, using NVIVO v2 (for the focus group data). For a full report of the pilot study analysis, findings and discussions please see Coates and Vickerman (2010) (Appendix 10.1.2).

In brief, the pilot study findings were categorised under the following themes:

PE activities

Results showed there was an overall preference for athletic and games activities, with games activities such as basketball, and "jail" being listed as favourites, similar to findings presented by Fitzgerald et al (2003b). Dance, however, tended to be disliked by the majority of participants (45%). This was also indicated within the focus groups. Dance was not considered to be enjoyable, and was thought to be a stereotypically

female activity. This counters arguments presented by Penney (2001) who states dance and gymnastics activities are more conducive to inclusion.

As such, these findings indicate that more needs to be discovered in terms of activity preferences, and the types of activities participated in during PE. Therefore, within the interviews and focus groups within the main study, children were asked about their likes and dislikes in PE, and asked to explore reasons for these choices. Moreover, it was anticipated that this would allow for more investigation into how children felt they were included in the activities they took part in during PE.

Feelings about PE

The findings indicated that the participants enjoyed PE and, for mainstream children, saw it as an opportunity to vent negative emotions such as anger and nervousness which were produced in other school activities. Moreover, children were able to identify the positive outcomes of taking part in PE, such as social interaction and improving fitness, similar to findings from Kristen et al (2002).

Participants were less positive about PE when they felt there was unfair competitive disadvantage, particularly in the mainstream schools, where it was felt that some children were naturally better at PE. This resulted in participants questioning their own competence in PE, findings which were also presented by Goodwin and Watkinson (2000).

What is important in PE?

Participants agreed that teamwork was important in PE lessons, to ensure all children were equal, taking part, respecting each other and learning. These findings were in line with previous literature stating that good days in PE resulted from sharing the benefits of PE, which included enjoyment, physical well being and good sportsmanship (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000). The benefits of PE expressed by the children in this study are reflective of the experiences of children with PD; however it is evident from the current study, that similar feelings are expressed by children who have SEN in general, and not specifically PD.

Other people in PE lessons

The findings indicated that other people in the PE lessons influence the child with SENs' experiences of the lesson. Participants tended to perceive their PE teachers as helpful and friendly, resulting in more positive experiences of PE. Moreover,

questionnaire data showed that 75.4% of the sample felt that their teachers helped them enough in PE lessons, with a majority stating that they thought their teachers perceived them as good at sport. These results were interesting because they countered results in existing literature which present pupil perceptions of their teachers more negatively, with pupils feeling singled out, bullied and excluded (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Fitzgerald, 2005).

The pilot study data also indicated that participants had more negative perceptions about their classmates, reporting incidences of bullying, and negative emotional responses as a result of this. These incidences tended to be related to the child's SEN, and as such indicate feelings of difference from others. Connors and Stalker (2005) specify that children with PD are often aware of their bodies as objects of curiosity for others, and Fitzgerald (2005) further states that children with PD are conscious of their perceived difference to others. It appears that these statements are not only true of children with PD, but also those with other, less physical SEN.

What I'd like in PE

Participants were able to identify strategies they felt would improve their experiences of PE, and these ideas generally centred on the structure of lessons and the types of activities available. Children wanted more opportunities to try different activities stating that repetition of current activities became boring, resulting in a loss of interest. Moreover they suggested having separate lessons for girls and boys for particular activities such as dance and gym so that boys and girls are both able to enjoy the activities more tailored to their gender. These gender-specific comments are representative of the views of children who do not have SEN when referring to PE. Lee et al (1999), for example, stated that students have preferences for gender-appropriate activities in PE in terms of perceived motivation and competence. Moreover, the findings indicate that children with SEN are aware of what they feel might benefit them in PE, making their experiences more positive, and these suggestions do not appear to only emulate the perspectives of children with SEN, but could be located within the perceptions of any child participating in PE.

Implications for the Main Research

The themes arising from the pilot study analysis were interesting in terms of their relation to existing literature (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2001; Hutzler et al, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2005). While some findings mirrored the findings of other researchers, for example understanding the benefits of PE; and feelings of

difference from peers; other findings were unexpected, and presented a new way of thinking about the research. The positive perceptions about teachers, for example, indicated that perhaps children with SEN are increasingly being properly included by their teachers (Coates and Vickerman, 2010). Additionally, the suggestions regarding change, which could quite easily be mistaken for suggestions from any child participating in PE, rather than just one with SEN, led to new ideas being formulated about the direction the main research project could take.

As such, a review of the subjects to be covered in the focus groups and interviews was undertaken and, moreover, reflection on my position within the research was reviewed. The unexpectedness of the findings symbolised my sub-conscious expectation that certain results would be found, and reviewing the pilot study results indicated this to me. According to Smith et al (2009:12), researchers can be too quick to “fit ‘things’ within our pre-existing categorisation system”, and therefore we should endeavour to examine each individual aspect in its own right, rather than faltering to our pre-existing beliefs. As such, in continuing on to the main research study, it was realised that anything could be discovered and rather than expecting findings to “fit-in” with previous research, the unexpectedness, and newness of the data I may come upon was embraced. In this, I tried to remove myself as a critic and in doing so, remove my preconceived expectations; and encompass my role as a phenomenological researcher, embarking on an exploration into uncharted waters.

Reflection was carried out, not only on my approach to the research, but on the ways in which it was conducted. As such, the methods of data collection were further evaluated. In analysing the findings, it was recognised that the main bulk of the findings representing the child’s actual experiences of PE came out of the focus group data. While the questionnaire data, undeniably, was useful for gaining an overall overview of the types of experiences children with SEN had in PE, it did not add to the richness of the data, nor did allow for the exploration of thoughts, feelings and reasoning associated with the lived experience (Smith et al, 2009) sought in this research. This further aided the decision to remove the quantitative aspects of the research.

Additionally, it was the findings from the pilot study that led to consideration about the kinds of topics to be covered in the main study. As such, it was decided that children would be asked about the kinds of activities they participate in during PE; their likes and dislikes; their perceptions of others; their perceived benefits of PE; their perceptions of the self in PE; difference; their experiences of sport outside school;

empowerment and change. These topics are in line with the pilot study findings, as well as adhering to the four research sub-questions regarding the child's perception of their own performance and inclusion; their perceptions other children and/or teachers and their perceptions of difference from other children, as well as their opportunities to take part in sport outside school.

4.4 Stage 3: Sampling for the Main Research

Sampling for the research took place in two separate stages. Firstly, school selection was completed. This was followed by participant selection and sample generation. These will be discussed in turn:

4.4.1 Schools

School selection involved contacting all schools in the denoted LA which matched the set schools selection criteria. Selection criteria remained unchanged following the pilot study, and as such, it was larger schools with SEN populations above 10% that were invited to participate in the research. In total 29 schools were contacted via letter to the head teacher. Schools were then telephoned a maximum of three times to gain consent. Of these 29 schools, 14 responded giving consent (response rate = 48%). Consenting schools included 5 primary schools, 5 secondary schools and 4 special schools.

Initially it was anticipated that 15 schools, including five from each type of school would take part in the research. Despite being just short of this target after seeking consent from schools, this number was reduced to a total of six schools, including 2 mainstream primary schools, one of which housed a separate unit for children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD), 2 mainstream secondary schools, 1 special school and 1 hospital school (with special school status). The decision to reduce to this smaller number of schools was taken after a number of schools pulled out of the research during the beginning stages, stating that they were too busy to participate. This was particularly true of primary schools, and therefore, in order to keep the number of each type of school equal, the six schools were selected randomly from the list of schools that had consented. Following this, it was confirmed with each school that they were happy to continue with the research. In the case that a school pulled out at this stage, another school of the same type was randomly selected, until a total of six schools were gained. Information about the schools who participated can be found in Table 4.6 and Table 4.7.

Table 4.6 Schools Involved in the Research

	School Type	School pupil roll	% SEN in school	SAT pass rate (%)	Additional Information
A	Mainstream Primary	375	34.4%	79†	School houses separate SEN unit for children with SEN
B	Mainstream Primary	404	19.2%	82†	
C	Mainstream Secondary	1033	37.9%	61.3‡	Specialist Sports status
D	Mainstream Secondary	1212	28.7%	53‡	Specialist Technology status
E	Primary SEN Base Unit	16	100%	Data not available	Segregated SEN unit within school "A" for children with MLD
F	Special School	78	100%	0	Caters for children with PD, MLD and PMLD
G	Special School	83*	100%	Data not available	Hospital school for pupils disengaged from mainstream school

*School population numbers vary throughout year. Number given is pupil roll in 03/2009

† Average of Level 4 and above Maths Science and English results at KS2

‡ Average of Level 5 and above Maths Science and English results at KS3

Table 4.7 OFSTED Description of School and School Location

School	OFSTED Description (from Inspection Reports, available at www.ofsted.gov.uk)*	
	Date of last inspection	Description of school
A	07/02/2007	The school is much bigger than most primary schools and serves an area of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils taking free school meals and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above average. A very small number of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds but none are at the early stages of learning English. Attached to the school are three learning resource-based units for junior and infant pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
B	07/02/2006	Situated in a suburb. The school is larger than average. About a quarter of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above average. Very few pupils are of minority ethnic origin or have English as a second language. Four pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school has a few pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
C	09/01/2009	Average size school in an urban area of very challenging social and economic circumstances. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is very high. Nearly all students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is average.
D	28/04/2008	This larger than average school serves an area of considerable social and economic deprivation. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is higher than average, as is the proportion that has learning difficulties or disabilities. Slightly more than 10% of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. In addition to being a specialist

		college for technology, the school has two special units on site - one for deaf students and one for students who have PD.
E	07/02/2007	See School "A"
F	07/12/2005	Designated as a school for pupils with PD. However, it caters for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and those with moderate learning difficulties with additional PD. All learners have a statement for their learning difficulties. The proportion of learners eligible for free school meals is significantly above the national average. All pupils are white British.
G	16/02/2006	Provides part time education for pupils between the ages of 10 and 16 who have difficulties, such as school phobia, emotional insecurity, or eating disorders. Most pupils have been reluctant to attend their mainstream schools. All pupils remain on the roll of their original school as the main aim is for them to return to mainstream education. The ability level of pupils is wide, but when they enter the school many are underachieving because of disrupted education. There are a small percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need.

*Specific Inspection Report details not given to protect school confidentiality

The schools included in the research represented a range from the schools meeting the selection criteria (as stated on page 125) for the research in terms of size, specialist status and socio-economic area. Initially there was concern regarding the reasons why some schools consented to the research whilst others did not, and there was a fear that only schools that were positive their PE resources or inclusion strategies were sound would choose to participate. However, it is not possible to determine the reasons for particular schools participating, and others not, which could have detrimental effect on the validity and reliability of the results. Nevertheless, it was felt that, due to the vast differences between the schools taking part in the research, that validity and reliability would not be impacted upon.

4.4.2 Participants

Following initial meetings with either the head teacher or SENCO from each school, letters were sent out to children with SEN. A total of 10 children per year group (year 3 to year 6 for primary schools, and year 7 to year 9 for secondary schools), who were on the SEN Register at either SA, SA+ or statemented at each school were selected to receive a letter to their parents/guardian requesting consent for the research. Sampling was done in this way as the SENCO/ head teacher for some schools were not happy to send letters out to all children, feeling that this would be difficult to achieve, whereas 10 children from each year would be more manageable. As such, in order to standardise the sampling technique, this strategy was used for all schools. Attempts were made to ensure the sample would be representative of the different types of SEN categorised in the SEN Code of Practice (2001a), and as such sampling was purposive (Cohen et al, 2007). Therefore, where possible, participants were selected to represent a range of SEN, although this was difficult for schools F and G, as the types of SEN at these schools tended to be less varied. School F had higher numbers of children with PD, and School G represented more pupils with EBSD.

Letters were only sent once (see Appendix 10.2.3 for letter), with verbal follow-ups from the SENCO or class teacher to a maximum of 2 times. Parents were given two weeks to respond. The consent was based on the parent/ guardian and the child consenting to the research. This was done to ensure the child was aware of the research and to empower them (Hutzler et al, 2002) to make a decision about whether to participate. Consent for the research was confirmed through a consent form sent to parents/ guardians which was also signed by the child (see Appendix 10.2.4 for consent forms), and was also re-established verbally prior to beginning data collection. In addition to this, children were made aware of their right to withdraw at any point, and that their information and responses would be kept in the strictest of confidentiality. This was also stated on the letters sent out to the children, alongside a participant information sheet detailing the research for both the child and their parent/guardian.

The response rates for the research were relatively low. Response rates are shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Participant Responses

School	Number of Letters Sent Out	Number of Returns	Percentage Response Rate (%)
A	30	5	16
B	30	8	26
C	30	4	13
D	30	3	10
E	12	5	41
F	20	3	15
G	20	4	20
Total	162	32	Average response rate: 20

On average, there were just under 10% fewer responses compared with the pilot study. However, it is worth noting that the pilot study sought more responses due to the use of the quantitative questionnaire being used. Therefore, as the main stage of research was seeking participants for a qualitative study, only a small number of participants were required. Initially it was hoped to have 5 participants for the focus group, and an extra two participants for interviews. Due to the lower-than-expected response rates, it was decided that the two participants for the interviews would be drawn from the focus group sample.

All of the children who gained consent for the research were used, with the exception of two. In School C, one child was withdrawn from the research as he was not available in school at the time the research was conducted due to disciplinary action being taken by the school; and in School B, one child was on long term absence from the first day of data collection.

An overview of the participants can be found in Table 4.9, with more detailed information about each participant in Table 4.10.

Table 4.9 Participant Overview

Number of Participants	30
Average Age	10.3
% at SA	23
% at SA+	40
% Statemented	37
% Communication and interaction needs	10
% Cognition and learning needs	76
% Emotional behavioural, and social development needs	17
% Sensory and/or physical needs	17
% Medical Conditions	13

This table shows broad percentages about the types of SEN the participants of the research were registered as having at their schools. It appears that a large proportion of participants (73%) are categorised as having cognition and learning needs, but it is worth noting that several children, whilst having cognition and learning needs, did not only fit into this category of SEN, but had other needs as well. This fits in with Vickerman's (2007b) concept of a spectrum of needs; whereby children with SEN cannot be placed simply in one category of needs, but rather, that they will often represent a number of different needs, making distinct categorisation difficult. As such, Table 4.9 attempts to illustrate the different categories into which each child fits, based on the information available on the SEN register at each school. Moreover, detailed information about each participant is given, as well as the phases of data collection they took part in.

Table 4.10 Research Participants – Detailed Information

School	Participant*	Gender	Age	School Year	SA/ SA+/ Statement	SEN as stated on school SEN register	SEN Category in Code of practice (DfES, 2001a)	Interview (I), Focus Group (FG)
A	LA	Female	8	3	SA+	Dyslexia	Cognition and learning needs	FG
	OA	Female	11	6	SA	EBSD, Global Learning Difficulties (GLD)	Emotional, behaviour and social development needs, Cognition and learning	FG, I
B	AA	Female	9	4	SA	GLD, Medical needs	Medical conditions, Cognition and learning needs	FG
	KA	Female	9	5	SA	Dyslexia	Cognition and learning needs	FG
	MA	Male	11	6	SA	Dyslexia	Cognition and learning needs	FG, I
	SB	Male	10	5	Statement	Cerebral Palsy (CP), Medical (epilepsy)	Physical needs, Medical conditions, Cognition and learning needs	FG
	MB	Male	9	5	SA	Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) (Literacy)	Cognition and learning needs	FG, I
	BB	Male	9	5	SA	Concentration difficulties, possible dyslexia	Cognition and learning needs	FG

C	DB		Male	9	5	SA+	Literacy, Gross and fine motor skill difficulty	Cognition and learning needs	FG
	FB		Female	8	3	SA	Literacy difficulties	Cognition and learning needs	FG, I
	AB		Male	8	3	SA+	Medical, Learning delay	Medical conditions, Cognition and learning needs	I
	NB		Female	10	5	SA+	Dyslexia	Cognition and learning needs	I
	AC		Male	12	8	SA+	SpLD (Dyslexia)	Cognition and learning needs	FG, I
D	NC		Female	13	9	SA+	SpLD (Dyslexia), SI	Sensory needs, Cognition and learning needs	FG, I
	DC		Female	12	8	SA+	MLD	Cognition and learning needs	FG
	JD		Male	12	7	SA+	Speech and Language difficulties	Communication and interaction needs	FG, I
	MD		Male	12	7	Statement	ASD, Dyspraxia	Communication and interaction needs	FG, I
	LD		Female	14	10	Statement	GLD	Cognition and learning needs	FG
E	PE		Female	10	5	Statement	MLD	Cognition and learning needs	FG, I
	AE		Male	10	5	Statement	ASD	Communication and interaction needs	FG, I
	CE		Male	9	5	Statement	MLD	Cognition and learning needs	FG

	DE	Male	10	6	Statement	MLD	Cognition and learning needs	FG
F	SE	Male	7	3	SA+	MLD	Cognition and learning needs	FG
	AF	Female	12	8	Statement	Developmental Delay (DD)	Physical needs, Cognition and learning needs	FG, I
	KF	Female	13	9	Statement	DD	Physical needs, Cognition and learning needs	FG
	AAF	Male	13	9	Statement	CP	Physical needs, Cognition and learning needs	FG, I
G	CG	Female	12	8	SA+	EBSD	Emotional, behaviour and social development needs	I
	LG	Female	14	9	SA+	EBSD	Emotional, behaviour and social development needs	I
	TG	Male	13	9	Statement	BESD, Medical needs	Emotional, behaviour and social development needs, medical conditions	I
	JG	Male	13	9	SA+	EBSD	Emotional, behaviour and social development needs	I

*Initials denote participant identification within focus group transcriptions.

4.5 Stage 4: Data Collection

Data was collected in two phases. The first phase involved a focus group with a maximum of five participants per school, and these were followed up by interviews with two children in each school. Originally, it was intended that the two children interviewed would be separate from the focus group sample, however due to the lower than expected response rates, the interviewees were selected from the focus group sample, with the exception of School B, and School G. The higher response rates from School B allowed for two interviews to take place separately from the focus group sample; however two interviews were also completed with two children from the focus groups, to ensure the methods were standardised across the schools (Robson, 2006). This resulted in four interviews taking place at this school. In School G, the EBSD experienced by the pupils required a more sensitive approach, and as such, participants were asked individually if they would prefer to be interviewed individually or partake in the focus group activity. All participants opted to speak with the researcher on a 1:1 basis rather than in a group. This decision was respected and as such a focus group did not take place at this school. The implementation of these methods will be discussed in turn.

4.5.1 Phase One: Focus Groups

Focus groups took place at each school, with the exception of School G. In total six focus groups were conducted and 24 children with SEN across these schools took part. Of these 24 participants, 46 per cent were female and 54 percent were male. As such the gender split for the focus group sample was relatively even. The average age of the focus group participants was 10.5 years. Overall, the majority of the focus group participants were in primary education (62%), with 38% coming from secondary education. This is representative of the lower response rates at the secondary schools, and of the average overall age of participants.

Prior to starting the focus groups at each school, participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the research and informed that the intention of the focus group was to find out about their experiences of PE, and their perceptions about how they thought PE could be improved for them. They were also informed that all data collected would remain confidential, and that their teachers would not be informed about what they had discussed. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions relating to the research to ease any concerns they might have. This was in line with ethical

guidelines set out by BERA (2004), and acted as a starting platform to build trust between participants and the researcher (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2000).

Following this, participants were asked how they would like to partake in the focus group. They were presented with four options, which were voted upon. The options were designed to give flexibility in the ways in which the focus groups were conducted, allowing for participants to choose between methods which would be completely student led (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a), or methods whereby the researcher had more control over the direction of the focus group. The intention of this was to introduce a participatory angle to the research, empowering participants to make decisions about how to express their perspectives and discuss their experiences (O'Kane, 2000). The sphere of options given (ranging from researcher controlled to student led/participatory), allowed for participants to decide which method they felt suited their needs best (DfES, 2003), and as such took into account the differing needs of participants at different schools.

The options available were that participants could:

- a) Use ping pong balls, with pre-determined topics written on them. This is semi-student led. Participants draw balls from a bag, and decide whether or not to discuss the topic/do the activity. The researcher acts as a facilitator.
- b) Let the researcher ask questions/give activities from the structured focus group schedule. This is researcher led, whereby participants respond to questions asked by the researcher.
- c) Write down important issues on post-it notes, which could then be drawn from a hat one-at-a-time and discussed. This method is student led, allowing participants to determine topics they feel are important to the research.
- d) Choose any other method they thought suitable to discuss PE. This method is fully student-led, placing all responsibility on the participant to lead the focus group activities and topics for discussion.

Despite offering a number of options about how to do the focus groups, all participants at each school unanimously chose to use the ping-pong ball method. This method offered control to both the researcher and to the participants, whereby the topics discussed were pre-determined, however the participants picked out the balls from a bag at random, and decided the direction to take once a discussion was started. Moreover, the inclusion of the gold-starred balls gave opportunity for non-verbal

activities, and participants were given freedom to interpret the activities (see Appendix 10.5 for a list of ping-pong ball topics and activities).

As such the focus groups were somewhat participatory (O’Kane, 2000), with some researcher control. The benefit of this as the method of data collection was that the way in which the focus groups were conducted remained consistent throughout the data collection phase (Cohen et al, 2007). This increased the standardisation of the methods across all settings, whilst still remaining flexible to the needs of the participants. This resulted in each focus group being conducted in the same way, increasing the transferability and conformity (otherwise known as reliability) of the research (Robson, 2006), yet the outcomes were tailored to the needs of the children participating, through the decisions they made during the data collection (DfES, 2001). Nevertheless, the use of the ping-pong ball method throughout the focus group phases led to extensive reflection about the use of this method. It appeared motivating to the child participants, and the children seemed to enjoy the opportunity to pick out a ball. There was excitement surrounding this, which in itself was positive to the research, and successful to the initial aims of introducing the ping-pong balls as an outcome of the pilot study. However, as the method itself had not been piloted, it required slight alterations after the first two focus groups were conducted using it. Initially seventeen balls were put in the bag to choose from including twelve topic balls and five activity balls. The topics and activities were an outcome of the thematic findings of the pilot study, as well as the themes derived from literature reviewing. However, the first two focus groups showed that some of the topic balls were not required as they were covered through the interpretation of other topics, for example “sports clubs” tended to be covered in “activities outside of school”. As such five topic balls were taken out for the last four focus groups and two activity balls were removed (for example, “PE poster” – this was included as a group activity, however participants preferred drawing their own poster, and so the “PE drawing” activity ball was kept in its place, with the option of working as a group). While the adaptation of the research design during data collection may affect the validity of the research design, Robson (2006) argues that adaptiveness and flexibility are skills needed in qualitative research designs, and that researchers should “be willing to change procedures and plans if the unanticipated occurs” (Robson, 2006:169). As well as a number of other skills, Robson (2006) claims that this in fact improves the validity of qualitative data. Therefore, it is felt that the changes made were not detrimental to the research, but rather, that the changes allowed more opportunity for participants to interpret the topics and activities themselves, improving the richness of the data. Moreover, it is felt that the triangulation

of the focus group data with the interview data will ensure a degree of validity required for the research (Silverman, 2005).

4.5.2 Phase Two: Interviews

While focus groups sought to gain a group perspective (Cohen et al, 2007), interviews were used to elicit more personal reflections on experiences of PE. A minimum of two interviews took place at each school. In School B, and School G, four interviews were conducted. In total 18 one-to-one, interviews took place, which included 10 with male participants (55%), and 8 with female participants (45%). The average age of the interviewees was 10.3 years, and overall 45 per cent of interviewees were in primary education, with 55 per cent coming from secondary education.

A semi-structured approach to interviewing (Robson, 2006) was adopted in order to allow children the opportunity to explore their perspectives and experiences in a less formal manner, providing the researcher the opportunity to facilitate this exploration in order to draw out richer data. While an informal interview would have been more beneficial for these purposes (Robson, 2006), Scott (2000) notes that children as interviewees may require more guidance in responding to interview questions, and as such an informal interview was deemed unsuitable for the purposes of the research.

As a result of this, an interview schedule containing eight items (see Appendix 10.5 for interview schedule) was devised. The interview items took into account the four sub-questions set out at the outset of the study, and included one extra sub-question exploring empowerment in PE, based on the findings of the pilot study. All interview items were open-ended, and in most cases allowed for conversation to be generated between the interviewer and interviewee. This was done in order present the interview in a less formal fashion, to therefore redress the power balance in the interview setting (Cohen et al, 2007), with the intention of making the child feel more comfortable.

All interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder. The average length of the interviews was approximately 15 minutes. The shortest interview lasted 8 minutes 21 seconds, while the longest lasted 30 minutes 10 seconds. Interviews were kept relatively short, as children have a somewhat short attention span (Cohen et al, 2007). As such, it was felt that the flexibility and open-endedness of the eight item interview schedule allowed the children to say as much or as little as they wanted and felt comfortable with, whilst still collecting rich and detailed data in a short space of time.

All interviews took place at the child's school. Scott (2000) notes that school and home settings for children are the two most important social worlds for children, and as such conducting an interview in one of these settings may influence the kinds of responses gained. Specifically, for school settings, Scott (2000) states that children may be biased by the responses of their peers or the proximity of their teachers. In order to overcome this, all children were interviewed away from their peers and teachers in a private room or empty classroom on school premises. Children were informed prior to starting the interview that all responses would be kept in the strictest of confidence and that only the researcher would listen to any recordings made. They were reminded that their teachers would not be told what they said, and that the intention of the interview was to find out their personal feelings about and experiences of PE at school, as opposed to the group discussions had in the focus groups (the children who had not been a part of the focus groups were informed that the intention was to find out their feelings about and experiences of PE to discover how PE could be made better for them). Children were informed that the interview was "all about them, and what they wanted to tell me". This was done to reduce feelings of self-consciousness and encourage the children to be open and honest about their personal feelings (Scott, 2000).

Although an interview schedule was used, in the instance that a child did not respond to an item, or did not understand what was meant, questions and items were paraphrased. For example, in several interviews, when children were asked if they used local leisure centres, several responded "no", yet if asked if they went swimming at the local swimming baths, nearly all children had experience of this and could give detailed responses about their experiences. Paraphrasing was also used when it was felt that the child could explore a previous response in more detail, and as such a question would be asked again using different language to elicit more detailed responses; or aspects of the previous response would be explored through questioning from the researcher. Scott (2000) states that this is often necessary for child respondents as it is vital to ensure the language used by the researcher is fully understood (Cohen et al, 2007).

As with all interviewing techniques, interviewing children runs the risk of social-desirability biases. However, as mentioned before, Scott (2000) notes that social desirability bias tends to be more prevalent in adults, making it an "adultcentric" concept. As such, this, while still being of concern, was not thought to disadvantage the

data to a large extent. Furthermore, careful questioning, and the acceptance of “I don’t know” responses, limited the chance of children feeling pressured to just give any response. In addition to this, children’s responses were taken at face value. Scott (2000) claims that in doing this, data is made more reliable, as research has proven that children give highly reliable testimonies. Validity was generated in a similar fashion, by ensuring that the direction of conversation throughout the interview was relevant to the topic at hand, and if the child did become distracted or move far from the point they were discussing, that they were promptly reminded about what the discussion was about. Nevertheless, the child interviewees were given the space and freedom to explore their perspectives unhindered, but within reason.

4.6 Interpretation and Analysis of Data

Interpretive phenomenological analysis was undertaken for this research, which in its nature does not pertain to one specific analysis strategy (Smith et al, 2009). Rather it is flexible, presenting an approach which focuses analytic attention on the participants, in an attempt to make sense of their experiences. As such, in analysing the data from this study, great attention was paid to understanding the meaning participants placed on their own experiences as a means of addressing their perceptions of PE, but focussing upon their own explanations and descriptions, provided through a flexible research approach. In addition to this, it was vital to not, as a researcher, place my own personal interpretation on the children’s experiences. Therefore, throughout the analysis process, every attempt was made to keep as close as possible to the spoken word of the child, from transcription through to theme development. This was done through careful use of language, ensuring that where possible, the child’s own words were used. When further interpretation and structuring was required, this was done with the context of the study and the process of data collection in mind. In addition to this, all interviews and focus groups were recorded to aid with the transcription and analysis process, and these were referred to in order to ensure all analysis was kept within context. NVIVO v2 was used throughout the analysis process.

Four stages were followed in the data analysis the process, similar to the interpretive phenomenological analysis processes outlined by Smith et al (2009). Smith et al (2009), however note that these processes are merely a guide to analysis, and therefore flexible to be interpreted for the purposes of any research study. The stages followed for this research were as follows:

- Stage 1: Reflective data collection

- Stage 2: Transcription
- Stage 3: Understanding the data
- Stage 4: Theme development

4.6.1. Stage 1: Reflective data collection

The research process as a whole was reflective. All processes involved in the data collection were evaluated and reflected upon throughout the study and this aided with data collection. Throughout the data collection period, field notes, in the form of a research journal were kept. Notes were taken after each interview and focus group, and key points arising from the data were noted down alongside any situational factors thought to have influenced responses, for example, participant attention, changes in interview/ focus group format, environmental factors. In doing this, opportunity to reflect upon the research design was embraced. This resulted in continual evaluation of the methods, allowing for any discrepancies to be removed, and for example, resulted in certain ping-pong balls being removed from the topic selection due to repetition in responses.

Moreover, reflecting on the data directly after each interview and focus group, allowed for initial ideas about themes and key points to be drawn out. These were noted down, and formed preliminary ideas about findings. Smith et al (2009:82) state that it is important for phenomenological researchers to enter “a phase of active engagement with the data”, and through the research journal, it is felt that I was able to re-connect with the participant via this means to ensure that any contextual meaning was not lost in the analysis process.

Moreover, through the process of reflection, it was determined that the hospital school data would be analysed separately from the other data. It was intended that this data would be included in the analysis of special school data, however, following data collection at this school, realisation that this type of school was in a sense an anomaly in terms of its type. While it is classed as a special school for OFSTED purposes, the pupils at this school are still enrolled in their mainstream school, and received education at their mainstream school prior to being referred to the hospital school. As such, these pupils did not have comparable experiences of PE compared with either special or secondary schools, but rather had experiences of both. Therefore, this group was analysed separately, providing opportunity for direct comparison to be made between their experiences of PE in both mainstream and special education.

4.6.2. Stage 2: Transcription

Following the completion of the data collection, all focus groups and interviews were transcribed verbatim. On completion of this, transcripts were read, whilst listening to original recordings to ensure the accurateness of the transcriptions. All transcriptions were then grouped by school type (primary, secondary, special and hospital school), and re-read together as groups, in order to gain an understanding of the kinds of data collected in relation to the context in which it was collected. The data was at this point deemed ready for analysis.

4.6.3. Stage 3: Understanding the Data

To begin understanding and interpreting the data in relation to the research questions, all interview transcripts were summarised. This involved reducing down the verbatim transcripts into more understandable narratives. The participants own words were used in the summaries, and every effort was made to not paraphrase responses. As such, summaries reported findings in an understandable and readable format, allowing for findings to be understood fully, without the messiness of verbatim transcripts. Notes were taken during this process about the potential themes (Smith et al, 2009), and summaries were grouped and read in terms of the type of school the participants attended (primary, secondary, special and hospital), in order to understand the similarities and differences in PE between the different school types.

4.6.4. Stage 4: Theme Development

Once the data had been accurately transcribed, summarised and understood, thematic analysis was undertaken. Separate analysis took place for special, mainstream, special and the hospital schools, using pre-determined categories, based on the themes covered in the interview questions (developed from previous literature and the pilot study findings). These categories related to the PE lessons and activities outside of school, perceptions of PE teachers and classmates, perceptions of the self, difference and empowerment. Responses were grouped by category for each type of school, allowing for similarities and differences in responses from different participants in the same type of school to be ascertained, as well as highlighting emerging themes arising from within the pre-determined categories.

The interview data was triangulated with the focus group data (Robson, 2006). The focus group data was analysed using the same categorisation system, with flexibility for

new themes to emerge. This was then cross referenced with the interview data to determine reliability in thematic analysis.

In doing this, four main themes were noted, each containing sub-themes. Triangulation of the data showed consistency in responses between primary, secondary, special and hospital school settings, as well as between mainstream and special school settings.

It is with this in mind that the findings are now presented and discussed under their thematic titles in the following respective chapters. Consideration will be given to addressing the perspectives of children from each of the three types of school, and similarities and differences in perspectives between the different types of school are drawn out. Key recommendations and outcomes from the thematic findings are addressed and summarised at the end of each chapter in order to understand the experiences of children with SEN in PE, the impact this has on future research, and the outcomes of this in terms of empowerment, consultation and teacher practice.

INTERLUDE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following four chapters will present the findings and discussion of the research data. The chapters were developed from the thematic findings of the research, and as such each chapter attempts to respond to the research-sub-questions relating to each theme. This is achieved through the discussion of the sub-themes which emerged through examination the four core themes. The four core themes were as follows:

1. Understanding PE
2. Experiencing PE and sport outside of school
3. Experiences of other people in PE
4. Difference, empowerment and change

Each chapter will therefore present the arguments supporting the research and with develop recommendations which have emerged from the discussion. Finally, these recommendations will be drawn together, and presented within the final chapter of the thesis which will give an overview of the conclusions and recommendations which have resulted from the examination and discussion of the data.

CHAPTER FIVE: UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCING PE

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into children with SEN's perceptions and experiences of participation and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons, in response to the main research question ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”***. However, in understanding children's with SEN's experiences and perceptions of PE, it is first necessary to recognise the ways in which they understand PE, the purposes of the subject, and the benefits it has for their learning and well being. As such, this chapter will address the core theme “Understanding and Experiencing PE”, through the findings relating to two sub-themes, notably “Understanding PE”, and “Experiencing PE lessons”.

The first part of this chapter aims to address children with SEN's understandings of why they participate in PE, and the perceived benefits of participation. As such, thematic findings from the research relating to children with SEN's perceptions of the purposes and benefits of participating in PE will be analysed and discussed in relation to existing literature. This is in order to determine the ways in which children's conceptions surrounding PE as a subject are constructed and act as an influence on the ways in which they experience PE. This will provide insight into children's abstract constructions of meaning surrounding PE, and therefore, in part, responds to the main research question ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”***

The second part of this chapter examines the thematic findings from the research relating to children with SEN's *experiences* of how PE is taught, and specific activities participated in within PE. These themes arose as a result of examining the research questions in relation to the data, and as such the sub-themes; “Experiencing PE lessons” was developed. This sub-theme will focus upon children's understandings of *what* they do in PE lessons. Their experiences of the activities in which they participate are investigated, as well as a number of issues which arose relating to the ways in which PE is organised and delivered. This sub-theme therefore refers to the research sub-question ***“How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?”***, as well as giving insight into children's overall experiences of PE, which goes some way to answering the main research question ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and***

inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?"

Primarily findings for both sub-themes were analysed within the different school contexts in which they occurred, however, through triangulation, commonalities were discovered and as such, findings from each sub-theme are drawn together to present a holistic perspective representative of perspectives of the children involved in the study, across the different school contexts. Triangulation of the data was used to determine reliability and validity of the results of the study (Robson, 2006). The findings are discussed in relation to existing literature and the research questions, in order to determine conclusions and recommendations which emerged from the research.

'Types of Talk'

Arnot and Reay (2007) explored the types of talk children use when they are consulted with about their education (see p48). In examining findings related to the sub-theme "Understanding PE", and in examining children's understanding of why they do PE, Arnot and Reay (2007:317) would argue "the student voices heard in process of consultation are not in fact independently constructed "voices" rather they are "the messages" created by particular pedagogic contexts". In other words, children's conceptions about why they participate in PE are constructed by the pedagogical context in which they occur. Therefore, by understanding children's understanding of why they do PE, we are more able to determine the constructed meaning influencing their experiences of the subject.

In applying this to the current research findings, it is possible to assess the types of talk used when examining children with SEN's understandings about why they do PE. For this particular theme, especially when referring to the reasons why they participated in PE, it was clear that children used 'code talk'. In defining this type of talk Arnot and Reay (2007) argue that it is often difficult for children to use, yet the findings of this research suggested many children were able to use code talk when addressing the perceived benefits of PE. This type of talk refers to the ways in which children are able to evaluate their own knowledge, and this is symbolised through the ways in which they construct meaning surrounding the purposes of PE and why they participate in it.

Discussion about the purpose of PE also utilised 'subject talk' and this reflected in the ways in which children understand the benefits of PE in relation to the activities in which they participate. It was evident, however that children were able to assess and

evaluate their own comprehension of the reasons why they do PE, therefore applying these types of talk. This was taken into account when analysing the findings, and is represented through discussion of children's perceptions about the purpose of PE and the benefits of participation, and how this influences their personal reasons for participating in PE, as well as perceptions surrounding their experiences of PE activities.

Moreover, in analysing the sub-theme "Experiences of PE Lessons", it was evident that the descriptive experiences of children also represented 'subject talk', which highlighted the child's understanding of competence within PE, for example knowing the rules of certain games, and communicating this using appropriate, subject specific language. However, evidence of 'classroom talk', relating to the ways in which lessons were taught, as well as some aspects of 'identity talk' referring to children's identities in the activities in which they participate (Arnot and Reay, 2007) were also discovered within children with SEN's descriptive accounts of general PE lessons, and more specifically, the PE activities in which they participated. This represents the child's ability to cross reference their experiences with subject knowledge, their understanding of the politics of the classroom, as well as reflecting on their personal identities within the lessons and activities; and is symbolised through their discussions surrounding preferences and expectations. This is important for practitioners to determine the effectiveness of lessons by evaluating the ways in which children are able to conceptualise the experiences they have, by understanding the ways in which their subject knowledge and understanding of why and how certain activities are performed affect these experiences. As such, consideration for 'types of talk' were taken into account both when analysing the data and through the discussion. This is reflected through discussion relating both to the contextual organisation of PE lessons and sport outside school, and through children's personal perceptions relating to their participation.

In addressing these two sub-themes, an attempt is made to demonstrate the ways in which children with SEN's experiences of PE and sport outside of school are constructed through teaching; through their expectations; and through external influences such as the media and stereotyping.

5.1 Understanding PE

The theme, 'understanding PE' was developed after asking children with SEN in both the focus groups and the individual interviews about their perceptions surrounding the

reasons they do PE and what they believed to be the benefits of doing PE. While this theme does not relate directly to the sub-questions set out at the start of the research, it does provide opportunity to better understand children's conceptions about why they do PE, and this in turn can be utilised to further comprehend children's perceptions and experiences relating to PE. As such, this theme relates to the main research question ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”***, as it facilitates knowledge and understanding surrounding the reasons children with SEN partake in PE. Therefore, it goes some way to explaining children's perceptions and experiences of PE, which are addressed in the forthcoming chapters, and the way these may be constructed through their understanding of why they participate.

It was evident through analysis of the findings, that the school context in which the children were educated did not produce different responses. Moreover, children with different SEN did not provide different responses. In fact, through triangulation of the data (Robson, 2006), it was discovered that children's perceptions of the purposes and benefits of PE were similar regardless of the type of school they attended, or the type of SEN they presented with. As such, where relevant, findings are drawn together to represent the perspectives of all of the children with SEN in this study.

This sub-theme provides a context for conceptualising children's perceptions of what PE is about, their reasons for doing it and the ways in which they understand its benefits. In addressing these factors, reference is made to the main research question ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”***. It is anticipated that, by acknowledging the ways in which children with SEN's perceptions surrounding the purpose of PE, more insight can be given to the ways in which they experience PE lessons and sport outside of school, people in PE and themselves in PE, which are addressed in the forthcoming chapters.

While there are differences in the NCPE for both KS2 and KS3 (DfES/QCA, 1999; QCA, 2007c), the over-arching aims of PE regardless of key stage are to teach children physical literacy – the notion that PE provides opportunity for children to master the skills of movement, reading the environment and responding to it effectively (Whitehead, 2001, 2005), whilst developing their understanding about physical fitness and lifelong physical activity (DfES/ QCA, 1999; QCA, 2007c). In assessing children

with SEN's understanding about what they perceived the purpose of PE was, it was evident that their interpretation of PE and its benefits differed from those aims seen within the NCPE. In particular, it was clear that children conceptualised PE in terms of physical fitness benefits, rather than skill development, and this was true for children in each type of school..

5.1.1 Physical Literacy versus Physical Fitness

Within both interviews and focus groups, the children with SEN in this study were asked to explore ideas about why they do PE and what they perceived the benefits of PE to be. These questions were asked in order to assess children's understanding about the purpose of PE as a means of gaining further insight into their experiences. For all children who responded to these questions, ideas surrounding fitness were discussed. Statements such as "cos you can stay fit"; "to keep us fit", "fitness, strength, stamina", "because it's like, good exercise", were commonplace, standard responses to the question "Why do you do PE?". When asked to explore this further, by addressing the benefits of PE, again children made reference to factors relating to physical fitness, such as growing muscles, increasing energy, and losing weight. This is illustrated in the following excerpts:

(Children pick ping-pong ball labelled "benefits of PE")

I: This is about the reasons why you think PE is good for you.

AE: exercise.

DE: exercise, yeah.

AE: muscles.

DE: To get all the fat off ya.

AE: And grow taller.

SE: And get the fat off your legs.

[School E Focus Group]

M: [PE] Make sure you get enough exercise.

I: OK why do you think we need to do exercise?

L: To loose some weight.

J: And stay healthy.

M: It makes you feel good after you exercise.

[School D Focus Group]

MA: Well, the fact is when you get fit, you have, like, more energy, so you won't, like be, like, just droopy on the couch... So, say like, you're puffed out and you need a break, if you stop, that energy could go to waste, so you could, like, you would be able to, like, keep on going forward with the energy you've still got left.

[Interview with MA, School A]

The above statements indicate that the children with SEN in this study tended to believe the main benefits of PE were to get fit, lose weight, and increase energy, and it is worth noting that the above comments were similar for children in each school and of each type of SEN. It was therefore evident that these perceptions about the benefits and purposes of PE were not limited to any group of children in this study, but, rather, were representative of the sample as a whole. The comments all related to PE as a method for improving physical fitness. These findings are supported by Kristen et al (2002), who also found that children with SEN determine one of the benefits of PE to be in the strengthening of their physique. However, few children discussed the role of PE in developing new skills (Kristen et al, 2002), otherwise known as physical literacy (Whitehead, 2001, 2005). According to Whitehead (2005:5):

“An individual who is physically literate moves with poise, economy and confidence in a wide variety of physically challenging situations. Furthermore the individual is perceptive in ‘reading’ all aspects of the physical environment, anticipating movement needs or possibilities and responding appropriately to these, with intelligence and imagination”.

While it is understandable that this definition might be difficult for school-aged children to grasp, it was apparent notions of physical literacy – skill development, creativity, knowing the environment; were rarely accounted for by the children in this study. Rather, their understanding about why they participated in PE, and its benefits, tended to encapsulate constructs surrounding physical fitness. As such, in terms of the NCPE (DfES/QCA, 1999; QCA, 2007c), it was clear that the children were not aware of, or did not comprehend the purpose of PE in improving their physical literacy, or becoming physically educated (Evans, 2004). The idea that children are unaware of the education aspects of PE was further highlighted in one focus group in this study. A child in School B asked the researcher *“What does PE stand for?”*, to which he was told *“Physical Education is what PE stands for”*. The child’s response to this was one of shock, when he exclaimed *“What? Physical Education!”*. This indicates that children are perhaps not aware that PE is to educate children in their physicality, a notion which is grounded in physical literacy (Whitehead, 2001, Evans, 2004), and rather children perceive PE as a lesson for becoming fit. Similarly, Evans (2004) argues that constructs surrounding the notion of education in PE have been somewhat lost within ITT, and more so, that “talk of ‘education’ and ‘educability’ [has been driven] from the language of PE” in the interests of health and fitness (Evans, 2004:97). As such, it could be argued that the conception of these children that PE is only about physical

fitness, could in fact be constructed through their teachers, and society, who, according to Evans (2004) may misconstrue the purpose of PE themselves, in place of a prominent values for physical health and fitness.

Ideas surrounding physical fitness and physical health are emphasized even further by physical activity and healthy living campaigns set up by government departments, which engage children in concepts surrounding physical fitness and health, and particularly obesity (Evans, 2003, Evans et al, 2004). An example of this in current media is the Change4Life campaign set up by the National Health Service (NHS), which aims to raise awareness amongst children and families to eat healthily and exercise more frequently in order to “live longer” (NHS, 2010: online). Moreover, the campaign states that “9 out of 10 kids today could grow up with dangerous amounts of fat in their bodies” (NHS, 2010: online). The media attention drawn by such campaigns could further influence the ways in which children understand and conceptualise ideas surrounding PE and exercise, which could contribute to their understanding that PE is about becoming physically fit. This is supported by findings within the current study.

In exploring the reasons why children perceived physical fitness to be a main aim and benefit of PE, weight loss, and the reduction of fat seemed to be a main concern for several children. This is demonstrated below:

DA: If you're sitting all day and you don't do any exercise, you get fat.

[School A Focus Group]

DC: [If you didn't do exercise] You'd like be quite fat like , because all you're doing is eating like junk food and you're not burning it off by doing PE.

[School C Focus Group]

AA: [Do exercise] so you don't get fat ...

MA: Because say like you never exercise at all and you need to get rid of some of the sugar, but you need to like jog to get flab away.

[School A Focus Group]

MD: [Do PE] Cos otherwise we'd just be like dunno, we'd just be like unfit I suppose cos, and you get like fat.

I: And what do you think about getting fat?

MD: I think I'm fat so I dunno. I'd say I don't like it.

I: Do you think that you can change that by getting fit?

MD: Yeah by like exercising and going on a diet.

[Interview with MD, School D]

In analysing these responses, it was evident that the children with SEN in this study understood the relationship between diet, exercise and fitness. In particular, children were able to articulate their understanding that excess food, and too little exercise would result in weight gain. Moreover, weight control and reducing the likelihood of becoming “fat” appeared to be a main influence on children’s participation in PE, and this seems to reflect the ideas circulated in healthy living campaigns such as Change4Life (NHS, 2010). Evans (2003) further argues that healthy eating aims have become more widespread within the teaching of PE, and that teachers are being encouraged to include this as part of the PE curriculum, and this is clearly indicated through the perceptions of the children with SEN in this study who state that their understanding of PE is one which encapsulates healthy eating and physical fitness. Yet, Evans (2003, 2004) argues that in raising awareness of obesity and healthy lifestyles through PE, educators are ignoring the other, fundamental aims of PE as a method for educating children about their physicality.

In addition to this, it is possible that, in a bid to decrease obesity numbers in the UK (Evans, 2003) through awareness-raising in PE, some teachers are taking this a step further, and discriminating against children who might be overweight, which results in unfavourable experiences for the child and decreased participation in PE. This was an issue raised by two girls in this study who stated they were bullied by their PE teachers for being fat, and is illustrated below:

CG: I didn't really do PE [in mainstream school], cos the PE teacher used to bully me, used to call me fat and that to make me feel bad, and that happened at primary school as well.

[Interview with CG, School G]

LG: The teachers were nasty and because of me size very nasty about that as well, erm and they sort of overworked ya, that kind of thing like they worked you over what your limits are.

[Interview with LG, School G]

Both of these participants indicated that they were discriminated against by their teachers for being overweight, and in both cases, attributed their movement to the hospital school to their experiences of PE in the mainstream schools. What is clear for both of these participants was that they perceived their teachers to be concerned with their size and therefore, both girls limited the amount of time they spent in PE to reduce their feelings of insecurity and embarrassment around their PE teachers. As such, it is evident that an over-emphasis on weight could be detrimental to the experiences of children, not just those with SEN, in PE. Evans (2003) supports this argument, stating that constructs surrounding obesity and being overweight result in perceptions that

these are “very bad things” (Evans, 2003: 94). This could go some way to explaining the behaviour of the teachers in the two cases above. Moreover, in understanding the relationship this has with PE, and children’s perceptions that without PE they will become “fat”, as noted earlier, Evans et al (2004) argue these constructs can lead to children striving to fit in with the norms of a slim society. It appears, from the findings of this study, that in PE embracing notions of fitness and weight loss, over concepts surrounding physical literacy, children are not necessarily experiencing the fundamental core outcomes that PE lessons should promote, such as self-confidence, esteem and competence of movement (Whitehead, 2001; Evans, 2003; Evans et al, 2004). Moreover, in examining the current findings, it is evident that this has resulted in children misunderstanding some of the core aims of PE (DfES/ QCA, 1999; QCA, 2007) in educating them about their physicality. Rather, it is apparent that children’s conceptions about PE are constructed around physical fitness.

In understanding these perceptions, it is anticipated that insight into the experiences of children with SEN can be addressed, through thorough analysis of their perceptions surrounding their lived experiences of PE lessons, which are covered in later chapters. However, this has also brought to light the depth to which social understanding surrounding obesity, weight, exercise and diet have become deep-rooted in the perceptions of children with SEN in this study when understanding why they do PE. This needs to be readdressed, in order to limit the development of negative self-perceptions surrounding food and exercise, which according to Evans (2003) can damage the health of children in schools. Moreover, in relation to the research question ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”***, it is evident, as illustrated in this study, that an overemphasis on weight, can lead to detrimental effects on participation in PE. As such, it is recommended that government educationalists address this, ensuring it is clear in both policy and the curriculum, that PE is not only about getting children fit (Evans, 2003, Evans, 2004), but that it is about making children aware of how they can use their bodies, teaching them the skills and competencies to be physically literate (Whitehead, 2001). In doing this, teachers should also address the ways in which they approach their teaching, ensuring they teach inclusively and without discrimination, in order to ensure children, both those with, and without SEN, leave school educated about their own physicality and needs; rather than the socially constructed perception that they should use exercise and food in order to control weight (Evans et al, 2004).

5.1.2 Understanding PE - Conclusions and Recommendations

This preliminary findings and discussion chapter set out to determine how children with SEN understood the purpose and benefits of PE, in order to provide some insight into how they might experience PE. This chapter's findings therefore go some way to responding to the main research question for the study *“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”*. It was found that the children with SEN in this study, regardless of the type of school they attend, or the types of SEN they had, all perceived PE as a method for improving physical fitness (Kristen et al, 2002), with its main benefit being weight loss and reduced risk of becoming fat. This was conceptualised in terms of physical literacy versus physical fitness (Whitehead, 2001; Evans 2004), where it was determined that aims surrounding the education of physically literate children was being overlooked in terms of producing physically fit children, reducing obesity and raising awareness about healthy eating (Evans, 2003; Evans et al, 2004). It was evident, however, through the findings of this study, and the work of Evans (2003), and Evans et al (2004), that approaching PE solely in terms of weight management and fitness was detrimental to the children who take PE. For some children in this study, it resulted in feelings of discrimination, and was attributed to a limited desire to participate in PE. Moreover, Evans (2003) indicated that over-emphasis on exercise and fitness in a bid to reduce obesity could damage self-esteem and competence in PE.

As such, it was recommended that concepts surrounding physical literacy need to be factored more forcefully into the PE curriculum and embraced by teachers. In doing this, children should be educated about how they can use their bodies and learn about their environment, so that PE becomes more about the education (Evans, 2004) of physicality, rather than about producing physically fit children.

Moreover, this theme and its findings give an indication about the ways in which children's ideas about PE are constructed by the society in which they live (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), with external influences, such as the media, and teachers impacting on the ways in which they construct meaning in PE lessons (Evans et al, 2004). As such, this provides insight which may allow for a richer understanding of the ways in which children perceive and experience their PE lessons. It is with this in mind that the thesis now addresses children's experiences and perceptions surrounding PE lessons,

and the ways in which these experiences have been constructed through teaching, gender stereotyping and other factors which have influenced their experiences.

5.2 Experiencing PE Lessons

This sub-theme relates to the research sub-question *“How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?”*. It assesses children with SEN’s experiences of the NCPE and their perceptions surrounding the curriculum, the activities in which they participate, as well as other factors surrounding the teaching of PE.

Despite differences in the delivery of the PE curriculum for KS2 and KS3, one factor which binds all three contexts is the notion that children must receive at least 2 hours of high quality PE per week (DfES, 2002b). In assessing the experiences of children with SEN in PE, it was evident that PE guidelines were interpreted and delivered differently in each school context. Nevertheless, it was possible to categorise findings to demonstrate general issues relating to experiences of PE. The categories were as follows:

- PE activities:
 - Games
 - Dance and gymnastics
- Other factors in PE:
 - Time spent in PE
 - Assessment

These will now be discussed in relation to existing literature and the research questions.

5.2.1 PE Activities – an overview

The activities in which the children with SEN in this study participated in was explored in both the focus groups, and in the individual interviews. Children were asked questions relating to the activities they participated in, their preferences and dislikes, and their perceptions relating to the activities. The data were analysed in terms of the different schools contexts, due to differences in the delivery of the NCPE for KS2 (primary), KS3 (secondary) and special schools. Nevertheless, commonalities in the experiences and perceptions surrounding specific activities were discovered.

The following table illustrates the different types of activities participated in PE listed by participants in each type of school. The activities talked about by pupils in the hospital school were separated into those participated in whilst at their mainstream school (included in the mainstream school list), and those participated in at the hospital school (included in the special school list):

Table 5.1 Activities in PE

School Type	Activity type	Examples of activities
Primary	Games	Dodgeball, football, bench ball, rounders, tag rugby, cricket, hockey
	Athletics	Races, running around, jogging, triple jump
	Gymnastics	Using mats and apparatus
	Dance	
	Swimming	
Secondary	Games	Dodgeball, football, rounders, basketball, netball, rugby
	Dance	
	Swimming	
	Gymnastics	Trampolining
	Athletics	Running
Special	Games	Football, tennis, hockey, basketball, netball, badminton, dodgeball, "rabbit hole and fox"
	Athletics	Running
	Disability specific	Boccia, curling, parachute games
	Gymnastics	Using apparatus (climbing frames, benches, etc)
	Dance	
	Swimming	Hydro-pool and swimming games (shark game)
	Other	Boxercise, kick-boxing

The activities primary school pupils were participating in during PE are in accordance with the 1999 NCPE, whereby children must be taught from at least 5 activity areas, of which games, dance and gymnastics are compulsory. Of the 5 activity areas, however, games activities were listed more frequently, particularly ball games, such as football, bench ball and rounders. Dance and swimming were the least mentioned PE activities,

and no children stated that they had partaken in OAE activities. While these activities are representative of the NCPE, the inclusion of a number of different activities is also indicative of high quality PE (QCDA, 2009a). In reference to high quality PE, teachers must implement the curriculum effectively, and it is evident from the activities listed by pupils, that this is, to some degree, occurring (DfES, 2004d; QCDA, 2009a). However, according to Penney (2002), activities such as dance may be more conducive to inclusion, and researchers such as Goodwin and Watkinson (2002) note that swimming is often a preferred activity for children with SEN, due to its accessibility. Yet, the findings suggest that perhaps PE lessons for children in primary schools are not embracing inclusivity, by allowing more opportunity for these types of activities. In relation to the research sub-question ***“How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?”***, it could be suggested that children in primary schools are not being given enough opportunity to take part in activities which are more conducive to their inclusion in PE. As such, it could be recommended that more opportunity is made for children in primary schools to participate in activities more evenly, rather than one type of activity, namely games, being played on a more frequent basis.

Similarly, children in secondary schools were also able to list a number of activities participated in during PE, reflective of the activity areas designated in the 1999 NCPE. According to the 1999 NCPE, children at KS3 must be taught from at least 4 activity areas, of which games is compulsory as well as either, dance or gymnastics. Of the 5 activity areas children were taught from, games activities were listed the most, particularly ball games, such as football, netball/basketball and rounders, with dance also being frequently mentioned. OAE and athletics were the least mentioned activities. Only one pupil talked about taking part in athletics activities, and again one pupil mentioned OAE activities being available but had not actually participated in them himself. Despite the new recent changes made to the KS3 NCPE, introducing more flexibility in the way in which PE is delivered, it appears from the activities listed by children in secondary school that the 1999 NCPE is, to a degree, still being followed, with the key curriculum activities being taught. Given that the previous curriculum has been taught for a decade with no change, it is likely that it will take some time for more personal approaches to curriculum delivery to be introduced into secondary school PE lessons. Nevertheless, the secondary school pupils, although discussing certain activities as participated in more often, did seem to have more equal opportunity to participate in other activities. Therefore, with the recent changes in the NCPE (QCA,

2007) being implemented, it is expected that children will continue to have opportunity to participate in the activities which best suit their abilities and needs.

Special school PE activities were the most diverse straying away from the prescribed NCPE activity areas. Special schools were the only schools in which disability specific activities were participated in, such as boccia, curling and parachute games (Schools E and F). While the hospital school pupils had not taken part in disability specific activities, they had been given the opportunity to participate in other activities such as boxercise and kick-boxing, which do not appear in the NCPE. Given that special schools are disapplied from the NCPE (DfES, 2006), this may allow them more opportunity to provide varied and diverse activities to their pupils. Moreover, these activities can be tailored freely to meet the needs of the children attending these schools, in line with the NC disapplication (DfES, 2006). As such, in relation to the research sub-question *“How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?”* it seems that special schools are providing activities which are potentially more accessible for children with SEN's participation. Moreover, the special school activities seemed to be more imaginative, especially for School E, in which participants were of primary school age. The pupils at this school described taking part in games-type activities, such as “rabbit hole and fox”. The following piece of discussion from school E focus group explains this game:

PE: You used to get to a point and if you were a rabbit then you had to go around then Miss is the fox and if you miss your hole then miss gets you

AE: And she call you “mmmmmm”...

PE: “Bacon and sausages”

AE: No, and she says “mmmm scrumptious honey pie”...

PE: It's fun, yeah, and Miss eats you all up

[School E Focus Group]

Similar imaginative games were played during swimming, such as “the shark game” (School E focus group), in which pupils took the role of either shark or dolphin in a chase game, with the shark chasing the dolphin.

Of the types of activities discussed, throughout the research three types of activity were talked about more often than others. These were games activities, gymnastics and dance. As such, these activities will be discussed in depth. Dance and gymnastics will be discussed together in line with arguments that these activities are the most conducive to inclusive PE (Penney and Harris, 1995; Smith, 2004).

5.2.2 Games

The activities participated in within all three school types tended to represent more games-type activities than any other. These games are defined by their competitive edge, whereby participants play on teams against each other, relying on teamwork and strategy. As described by the NCPE games activities have the aim of teaching pupils to:

- a) Play *competitive* invasion, net and striking/ field games [emphasis added]
- b) Use principles of attack and defence when planning and implementing complex *team* strategies [emphasis added]
- c) Respond to changing situations in the games

(DfEE/ QCA, 1999)

Penney (2002) argues that the prescriptive nature of the NCPE, as well as the preference of teachers to teach from games activities, results in children with SEN being less able to access the curriculum. Moreover, Smith and Green (2004) note that PE teachers tend to follow a sporting tradition, emphasising performance in competitive games, and they further state that some teachers are reluctant to divert from this. While the findings of this study indicate that children participated in games activities more often, they did experience other NCPE activities, gaining experience of a wide range of activities. Moreover, particularly for the special school group, it appears that games activities specific to the needs of the children were included, such as boccia and curling for the PD pupils, and imaginative games for the primary school children in School E. Nevertheless, Penney and Evans (1995) claim that activities which focus on games and performance are less conducive to inclusion, particularly for children with PD. There was no evidence of this within the findings of this study. All of the children, even those with PD, who participated in the study appeared to be included in games activities, and no children indicated that they were at any point excluded from these lessons. Moreover, several children enjoyed the competitiveness of team games activities. The opportunity to win, score and get others “out” appeared to be a motivating factor. The following excerpts illustrate this:

SB: once we played this tag rugby, attackers versus defenders and we, um, got into an attacking team and played against a defending team. When the defending team have the ball, they turn into attackers. When the attackers have the ball, they have to go score a try. But erm, attacking mean like we're getting tackled but we're just like attack off them

I: What do you like about it?

SB: Well, erm, the thing about it is I love when they score tries and they get their tackle away from them.

[School B Focus Group]

I: What kinds of activities do you prefer?

MA: Erm, well, basketball.

I: What's good about that?

MA: Well, you could get cornered, couldn't you, in the basketball, and then you could like throw it to someone and they could score for you

[Interview with MA, School A]

DE: I like to play football... [because] yeah, you can kick the ball and score it in the goal

I: How do you feel when you score a goal?

DE: Happy

SE: I like the dodgeball... because when you, when you throw it, if you throw it, and then they're out

I: How do you feel when you get somebody out?

SE: Happy

[School E Focus Group]

JD: Err, [competitions are] quite good because you knock the other team out if you win, and no-one likes losing

[School D Focus Group]

These findings go some way to answer the research sub-question ***“How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?”*** by illustrating motivational factors relating to participation in games activities. The findings indicate that children were motivated by the opportunity to score and win in competitive games activities. This is similar to findings from non-SEN pupils, and Groves and Laws (2000) illustrate how children will create competition even when it does not necessarily exist in a PE activity, and that this competition, when negotiated well, was often non-threatening. With regard to children with SEN in this study, there was no evidence that any of the children were excluded from taking part in these activities; yet Penney and Evans (1995) suggest games activities may not aid inclusive participation due to its competitive nature. Nevertheless, they do indicate that in their survey, a majority of children with SEN were in fact “integrated in their PE” (Penney and Evans, 1995:9). However, Smith (2004) illustrates that some PE teachers did not feel that their pupils with SEN were able to fully access the NCPE, particularly due to its emphasis on team games. He goes on to argue that the individual nature of children with SENs needs determines the activities in which they are able to participate, and that the social relationships required in complex, physically vigorous team sports makes inclusion in these activities difficult. However, Smith (2004) does point out that this is not the case for all children with SEN, but that teachers are able to modify activities resulting in full inclusion depending upon the nature of the SEN, and of the game. This suggests that

teachers should perhaps be better trained to provide inclusive activities (see Morley et al, 2005; Vickerman and Coates, 2009, for example), and it is recommended that this training emphasised strategies for including children with different and diverse SEN. While the children in this study did not indicate they were excluded from these activities, it is still vital for teachers, new and experienced, to continue their development through training, and given the increasing numbers of children with SEN attending special schools (DfES, 2004), it is expected that demand for this type of training, particularly in PE, will be high.

Nevertheless, by consulting with the children who experience these activities, it is clear that, not only are competitive games enjoyed due to the opportunity to win, but that the children embraced the opportunity to be more active. This is illustrated below:

BB: My best lesson would be when we do lots of active stuff

I: What do you mean by active stuff?

BB: Like running around and throwing the ball to each other

[School B Focus Group]

MA: You can get fit from it [PE], say like in football, you can get fit from running around

[Interview with MA, School A]

I: Did you enjoy PE at your mainstream school?

JG: Er, I did, yeah

I: What did you enjoy about it?

JG: Erm, the physical side of it, cos we played rugby, it was contacting. I enjoyed being able to take shots.

[Interview with JG, School G]

While teachers may have difficulty in fully including children with SEN in games activities, from their perspective (Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004), the experiences of children with SEN in these activities appears to suggest that they do not feel they are being excluded, or being restricted in their participation. In fact, it is evident that children with SEN enjoy these activities, recognising their benefits in increasing fitness, and motivating children through competition. It is worth noting that male participants tended discuss these activities more than the female participants, however, when asked what games the females preferred, many did say they preferred playing games activities, such as football (NC, School C), netball (DC, School C), curling (AF, School F), bench ball (NB, School B), "rabbit hole and fox" (PE, School E), amongst others. As such, the findings indicate that perhaps games activities may, in fact, not inhibit inclusion. Children take pleasure in participating in these activities and

as such should not be restricted from participation. As suggested by Hutzler et al (2002), children are empowered by the opportunity to fail and understand their own needs, and therefore, perhaps by embracing the child's perspective in terms of their desire to participate in such activities, we will in turn empower them to discover where their abilities lie. Therefore, it is suggested that PE teachers empower their pupils to participate in a wide range of activities and consult with their pupils about how these activities can be modified to meet their individual needs.

5.2.3 Dance and Gymnastics

Penney (2002) argues that children with SEN are more easily included in activities which are frequently being marginalised within the NCPE such as OAE and dance, and Smith (2004) further suggests that dance and gymnastics are activities more conducive to inclusion. He states that these types of activities focus more upon the individual, embracing their personal abilities through moderate, rhythmic physical activity. In addition to this, Smith and Green (2004) state that teachers who have difficulty differentiating more competitive activities to meet the needs of children with SEN, will often opt for individual activities such as this (Smith and Green, 2004). Despite this, findings from this study indicate that not only do children with SEN enjoy active and competitive games activities, but it appears that, particularly for secondary school pupils, dance and to a lesser degree, gymnastics, were the least preferred activities. These findings are further corroborated by the pilot study findings (see Coates and Vickerman, 2010) which show that a majority (47.4%) of pupils with SEN liked games activities most, and least liked dance (45%) and gymnastics (21.4%) activities. These findings relate to the research sub-question ***"How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?"*** with specific reference to participation in specific activities. Moreover, the findings provide scope for teachers to give greater consideration to the perspectives of the children in their lessons, to determine factors which may influence this dislike for these activities.

Despite the general dislike for these types of activities, however, there were differences in perspectives about dance and gymnastics for each type of school. These perceptions will now be discussed by type of school. Secondary school dance and gymnastics will, however be discussed as separate activities due to the level of discussion undertaken about them by the participants.

Primary School Dance and Gymnastics

In the primary schools, female participants tended to participate in dance and gymnastics outside of school, and as such enjoyed these activities. Similar to the perceptions of non-disabled male children (see Lee et al, 1999), the male participants in this study had negative perceptions of these activities. The excerpts below illustrate this:

I: So what kinds of things don't you like doing in PE?

BB and MB (together): Gymnastics!

DB: Dance

BB: I don't like dance

SB: It's for girls. I watched Boogie Beebies one time and there was belly-dancing and I saw a boy doing belly-dancing

MB: I get embarrassed

SB: I hate ballet! I'd sort of do it if I had a sister. I don't know why girls just do ballet all the time.

FB: I don't like playing football because it's for boys.

DB: I don't like gymnastics, because, erm, I don't know.

[School B Focus Group]

This short passage indicates how all four boys in the focus group (BB, MB, SB and DB) stated their dislike for dance and gymnastics. Main reasons given for this dislike related to gendered stereotypes that these activities inherit. For example, within Lee et al's (1999) study including 50 primary school-aged children (not specifically with SEN); the male participants made very similar comments to the males within the current study, with one boy saying about dance "It's too girly and sissy for guys" (Lee et al, 1999:169). For female participants, such as FB, however, football was considered as a boys sport, but for all of the boys, dance in particular was disliked because it was considered a girls activity, which replicates the perceptions of children in other studies relating to gender stereotyping in PE (see Lee et al, 1999; Frömel et al, 2002). Moreover, similar responses were given in School A:

MA: We do football, some, like, games to warm us up, erm, some exercise, and sometimes dance.

I: Why do you pull that face when you say dance?

MA: I'm a boy and I don't like dance!

I: You don't like dance? Why not?

MA: It's more of a girly thing.

[Interview with MA, School A]

MA: Well, they should have, like, a girl [teacher] for dance and girly stuff, and a boy [teacher] for boy stuff, so the girls could do one PE with a girl coach, and the boys can

do one PE with a boy coach, and we could be doing, like, basketball, football; and they could be doing dances, or, erm, doing the splits or whatever.

[Interview with MA, School A]

The perception that gymnastics, and more frequently, dance are considered to be a 'girls' activity is one which is not limited to children with SEN. Lee et al (1999) indicate that children will stereotype activities in terms of their masculinity and femininity. Within this, competitive team sports which require strength and power are considered to be masculine, whilst those requiring graceful movement are considered to be feminine-type activities. As such, the authors state that dance is socially constructed as a feminine activity, and this may explain the perceptions held by the male primary school participants within this study (Lee et al, 1999). Therefore, it seems that socially constructed conceptions of masculinity and femininity determine whether a child's motivation to participate in a particular activity, whilst having a SEN did not appear to be a determining factor in this matter. Nevertheless, because of this, it can be recommended that teachers consider stereotyping when preparing to deliver lessons which could be considered feminine or masculine, as suggested in this study and others (Lee et al, 1999; Frömel et al, 2002), and take steps to reduce, rather than reinforce these stereotypes. In relation to dance, this could be achieved by providing opportunity to pupils to participate in less gendered forms of the activity which may be more desirable to males, like break dancing (Coates and Vickerman, 2010), or by teachers altering the language they use in PE to break down these stereotypes (Lee et al, 1999)

Special School Dance and Gymnastics

For special school children, however, reviews about dance and gymnastics were more diverse. In fact, the majority of the special school children – both male and female, who had participated in dance or gymnastics tended to enjoy these activities. The comments below illustrate this:

PE: Oh, erm, I like the mats... well you can do loads of things on them

I: like what?

PE: Apparatus. You could do apparatus on them. Or you could just do your shapes

I: What kinds of shapes do you do?

PE: Well, we always do a triangle or a star one

I: and what does that teach you about PE?

PE: Showin' us how to get our balance... because if you don't get your balance, then if you fall, if you don't get your balance and you're wobbling then if you fall or hurt yourself, that's why.

[Interview with PE, School E]

SE: I like to dance, I like to do everything

I: what do you like about dance?

SE: you can do anything in dancing

I: how does it make you feel?

SE: happy

[School E Focus Group]

DF: I'd just like doing gymnastics

I: Why would you like to do gymnastics?

DF: It'll keep me fit

[School F Focus Group]

These findings relate to factors surrounding inclusion and accessibility within PE, and therefore go some way to answer the research sub-question ***“How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?”*** Findings indicate that the special school pupils, particularly those in the primary school base unit (School E) had positive perspectives of gymnastics, and to a certain degree, dance. While only one participant (SE) expressed a fondness to dance, it is worth noting that none of the other participants, in either School E or School F had participated in dance as part of the PE curriculum. Nevertheless, in terms of gymnastics, reviews were positive. This may be due to these activities, in fact, being more conducive to inclusion as suggested by Penney (2002) and Smith (2004). However, there is also the possibility that some pupils in these schools had limited access to other areas of the curriculum. In School E some participants stated that they had not done any other activities other than gymnastics (apparatus, and mats), apart from playing games such as “rabbit hole and fox” and doing swimming. Moreover, in School F, pupils had had access to a wide range of activities, focusing on disability games, such as boccia and curling, but had not participated in gymnastics, and this may explain DF’s desire to do more gymnastics activities in PE. Nevertheless, it is evident from these results that gymnastics and dance may in fact be more suitable for the needs of pupils with more complex needs. This is further suggested by the perceptions of one child in School B – a primary school. AB, an 8 year old boy with complex medical and cognition needs, expresses his preference for gymnastics activities, despite being included in a number of other PE activities. He says:

AB: Right, I can jump off the apparatus

I: What kind of apparatus do you use in PE?

AB: The big ones

I: What kinds of jumps do you do?

AB: Forward rolls.

I: What other things have you done in PE?

AB: Batting... erm jumping, that's my favourite one.

...

I: Do you like PE?

AB: yes

I: Why do you like PE?

AB: Because of the apparatus

[Interview with AB, School B]

For children in the primary schools, reference to apparatus referred to gymnastics activities, and the use of mats and benches. As such, this short piece of conversation indicates AB's preference for gymnastics activities, stating this as the reason he likes PE. While AB did not attend a special school, of the primary school children, he had the most complex difficulties. He was also the only male to perceive gymnastics favourably. This suggests that, perhaps Penney and Evans (1995) and Smith (2004) were correct in their assessment of gymnastics and to a degree, dance activities in relation to inclusion. While the findings about gymnastics from the special school children and AB might not necessarily indicate that these activities are more conducive to inclusion, they may be more suitable for the needs of children with more complex difficulties. This might explain the positive perceptions relating to these activities from special school pupils and those with more complex needs, such as AB. Nevertheless, more focused research into the accessibility of, and children's participation in these activities, whether within a special school context, or for children who do present with more complex needs, should be carried out in order to further substantiate these findings.

Secondary School Dance

The perceptions of primary and special school participants differed invariably from the perceptions of secondary school participants when related to dance. For these participants dance was perceived as a particularly unfavourable activity. In the secondary schools, dance had only been participated in by two of the male participants, one in School D, and one in School G. Other male participants had not participated in dance as part of the KS3 PE curriculum, but some felt that they may do dance in the future at school. The two males who had done some dance in PE gave similar views on these types of activities when asked, as seen below:

JD: I don't like it [dance]

I: Why don't you like it?

JD: Because I can't dance

I: What do you think you need to be able to do to dance?

JD: Er, you just do practice or something, or training. But I don't wanna do it.

I: You don't want to do dance?

JD: No

I: Do you do dance a lot here?

JD: Yeah

[School D Focus Group]

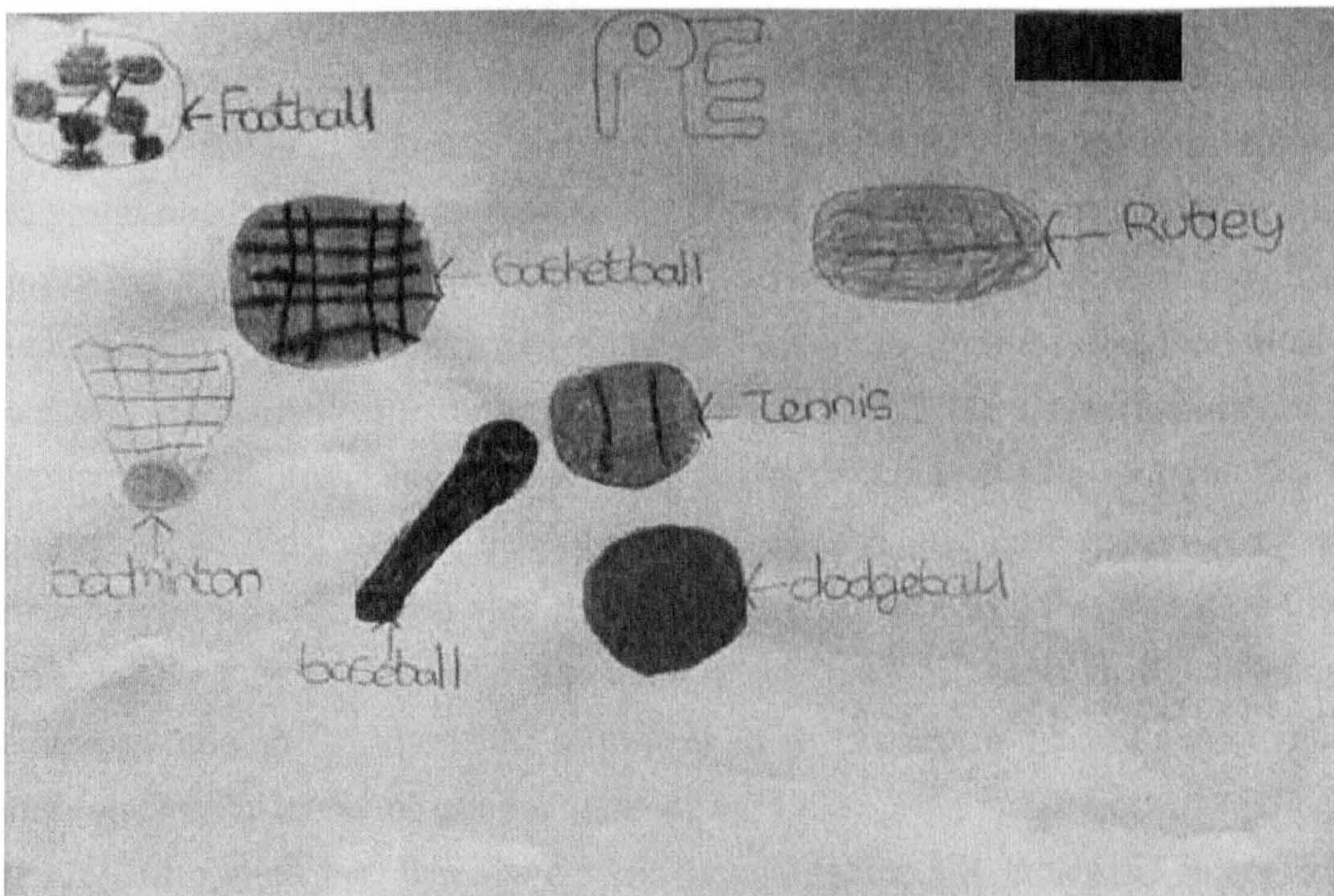
I: Which ones [activities] were your least favourite?

JG: Erm, probably dance because there wasn't much moving going on, really. I'd rather just be running round.

[Interview with JG, School G]

These results indicate that neither of the males who had participated in dance at secondary school enjoyed the activity. While their responses in terms of the reasons behind this dislike are limited, JG indicates that that he prefers activities in which there is more physical activity, such as running around. Moreover, when asked, JD also indicated that he prefers activities which are more physically vigorous, such as football, basketball, and tennis. This was further confirmed in a drawing activity in which children completed a drawing about PE during the focus group (see Image 5.2).

Image 5.2 JD PE Drawing



When asked to explain why he had drawn what he had, JD says “because, erm, I like these sports”. In light of this, it appears that for male pupils in the secondary school preferred activities which were more active and physically engaging. Lee et al (1999)

confirms this, indicating that boys tend to be more motivated by activities such as basketball, perceiving themselves as more competent in this activity as well, when compared with dance. In addition to this, Frömel et al (2002), who studied activity preferences in secondary school-aged pupils, indicated that boys tended to prefer activities which were dominated by fitness and performance orientations, while aesthetic activities were least preferred. Both Frömel et al (2002) and Lee et al's (1999) studies were not SEN specific, and as such it appears that, like in the primary school group, male participants dislike dance activities due to gender differences, rather than any specific reason relating to their SEN. As suggested earlier, it is, therefore recommended that teachers take gender stereotyping of activities into consideration when delivering programmes to ensure that both males and females are equally motivated to take part, and this could include different types of dance, which might be preferred by boys. Given that the NCPE is becoming more flexible (QCA, 2007b), teachers should be able to introduce such changes in order to more fully meet the needs of their pupils. In order for this to happen, however, teachers must first consult with their pupils, both male and female, to determine how their needs can be met, and to discover what will motivate them to participate in lessons they may not like.

As a result of the evident difference in preference for particular activities, Frömel et al (2002) suggest that this be used to design gender orientated curricula for PE, whereby males potentially participate in activities suited to their preferences, and females, theirs. However, Frömel et al (2002) and Lee et al (1999) indicate that females are more likely to prefer aesthetic activities such as dance, but the findings from this study suggest this is not the case. For the female secondary school participants in this study, dance was perceived in a particularly negative fashion, with much discussion concentrating on this activity, particularly for one participant in School C. Nevertheless, for female participants in both the secondary schools (School C and School D), and one participant in the Hospital School (School G) who had participated in dance at her mainstream school, dance was the least preferred activity. This indicates the need to take account of the multiple identities which children have in PE lessons, so for example seeing children in terms of their individual differences, rather than stereotyping in terms of gender (Lee et al, 1999). This is suggested by Flintoff et al (2008), who state that there is a need to understand the individual reasons for these perceptions and that we need to move away from single-issue stereotyping which propose dance as a more gender-appropriate activity for girls (Lee et al, 1999), or that dance is the more inclusive activity for children with SEN (Penney, 2002). The introduction of a personalised curriculum (Miliband, 2004; 2005; Robinson et al, 2008)

could go some way to ensuring this happens. In reference to the research sub-question ***“How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?”***, through the implementation of changes to reduce gender stereotyping in PE activities, children should have more opportunity to become motivated to participate in activities which they find accessible.

Nevertheless, Flintoff et al (2008) indicate that gender in PE is often examined as a single issue, and as such little research has examined gender differences in children with SEN in PE lessons. As such, the research conducted by the likes of Lee et al (1999) and Frömel et al (2002) may not apply because it does not recognise the multiple identities adopted by children with SEN. These studies may in fact ignore that these children are not just boys and girls, but that they are boys and girls with SEN. The recognition of this additional identity may alter the ways in which stereotyped activity preferences are applied, and as such, it is also recommended that research is done to more concretely determine how children with SEN perceive activities in terms of gender stereotypes, as this will allow more opportunity for individual differences to be taken into account within this context.

Despite this, evidence from this study indicates that dance was neither more appropriate for the secondary school females, nor was it perceived as the most inclusive activity. In fact, dance was perceived as an activity which threatened self esteem. Participants made comments relating to their physical appearance, the perceptions of others about them in dance, and the way dance made them feel as reasons for disliking this PE activity. The comments below illustrate this:

LD: We do gymnastics, gym, dance, races as well.

I: Ok, so thinking about dance, you said before you don't like it. Why don't you like it?

LD: I don't like being in front of people.

[School D Focus Group]

CG: I was like the tallest and like, I wasn't the fattest, like but I am fat and like I'd notice that and like they'd point it out to me like, "oh my God why can't you dance, is it cos you're fat?" And I was like, "no, it's just that I'm not joining in cos I don't want to".

[Interview with CG, School G]

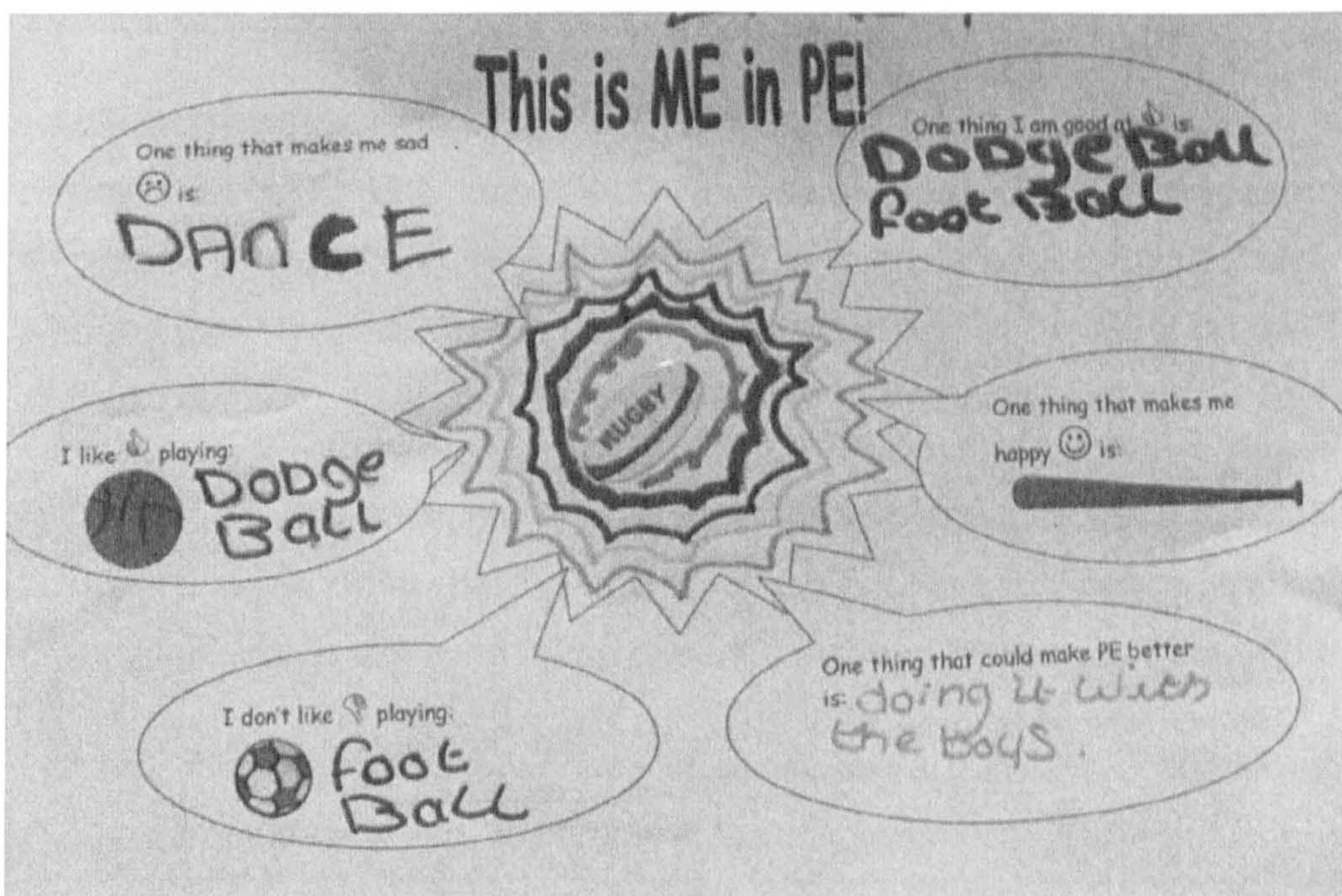
NC: I'm really sporty and I can do all the things. It's like, I hate netball but I'll do netball any day instead of dance, because it's different when you go out with your mum and dad on holiday, and you know, you're doing all those weird dances when everyone's up, but it's just some of the things they want, like, it's like when you're not comfortable with how you look and that and you can see yourself in the mirror, and you look, like, how the other girls are doing it, you know you just don't feel comfortable doing it.

[Interview with NC, School C]

It appears from these excerpts that self-perceptions impact on females' motivation to participate in dance activities. For all three of these participants, the reactions of others, and the ways in which they perceived themselves determined the extent to which they wanted to participate in dance. Existing literature, whilst examining how children with SEN perceive different activities, tend to attribute feelings of self-consciousness to feelings of being different (Fitzgerald, 2005) or social isolation (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000) relating specifically to having a PD in PE in general, rather than specific activities. However, for the secondary school girls in this study, feelings of self-consciousness seemed to stem from body-consciousness ("I wasn't the fattest, but I am fat", "when you're not comfortable with how you look"), and a lack of self-confidence ("you look, like, how the other girls are doing it, you know you just don't feel comfortable doing it" "I don't like being in front of people"). More so, these feelings were limited to dance, and were not expressed when discussing other activities.

While all three of these participants indicated a dislike for dance activities, the responses of LD and CG following these comments were limited. LD, in particular seemed reluctant to discuss her dislike for dance, coming across as relatively reserved, and as such opted for writing several of her responses, rather than engaging in the focus group discussions. This might be due to the presence of two male participants in the group. Nevertheless, during one written activity given to the whole group, LD noted that one thing in PE which made her sad was in fact dance (see Image 5.3), although she does not explain the reasons for this.

Image 5.3 LD Me in PE Activity



Nevertheless, NC, one female participant in School C, was far more forthcoming with her thoughts and feelings about dance. For her, dance encapsulated a number of negative experiences, provoked feelings of inferiority, resulted in her challenging gender stereotypes surrounding dance, as well as challenging its use in later life. While it is impossible to generalise the perspectives of one individual to a whole population (Robson, 2006), the views given by NC about her experiences of dance provide deep insight into her thoughts and feelings. As such, given the purposes of this study to examine pupil voice and empowerment, NC's experiences and perceptions of dance will be examined separately as a case study. The views of NC, and all other children in this study, whether examined separately or as a whole, are a response to the research questions posed in this study. In particular they answer the main research question *"What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?"*, allowing for rich insight into their experiences, their feelings, and the meaning they construct while understanding the world around them. In doing this, it is hoped to deepen our understanding of children with SEN's personal experiences, and demonstrates the insight that can be gained from listening to just one child. Moreover, it highlights that the perceptions and experiences of children cannot be generalised, that each child is an individual, and should therefore be treated as such. By examining this case study, recommendations for personalised learning (Miliband, 2004), goal-setting and for differentiated teaching (Cabral and Crisfield, 1996) are suggested.

Case Study: Dance

Participant information: NC is a 13 year old female who is on her schools SEN register at SA+. She has SpLD (dyslexia) and a visual impairment (Earlings Syndrome). In addition to this, NC has a mild deformity on her feet, resulting in webbed toes; however this is not recognised as part of her SEN on the school's SEN register. NC attends School C, which is a specialist sports college.

Findings: NC was both interviewed and took part in the focus group discussion at her school. She reported having negative experiences of dance, and much of her discussion revolved around these experiences, and her perceptions of dance.

For NC, her negative experiences in dance were primarily a consequence of other pupils' perceptions of her, in particular making comments about her webbed toes. This

is illustrated below:

DC: You have to take your socks off in dance.

NC: And I get "Eee look at her toes" because I've got stuck together ones

DC: She's got odd feet. I saw them in skiing

I: Who says that to you?

NC: Anyone, you know when they've never seen your toes before they go "eee look at her toes" and I'm just like "oh, yeah, thanks". Makes me feel so comfortable [said sarcastically]. You know people just staring at your toes; you're just like, I don't stare at yours...

I: How does that make you feel?

NC: It doesn't actually bother me that much but I don't like it when there's a big group of them going "eeee look at her toes" "Look how weird they look" and you just thinkin' I don't stare at your toes and point, yours are different to mine.

I: Does that change how you feel about PE?

NC: Yeah, it doesn't make me wanna dance.

[School C Focus Group]

Dance for NC was different to other activities, because pupils had to remove their shoes and socks, making her deformity visible, which resulted in commenting by others. NC reported feeling different to her peers in this sense, as illustrated by the comment "yours are different to mine". Moreover, while NC indicates that the comments do not bother her, she does state that she does not like other people pointing out her toes to her, and the effect of this is in her not wanting to participate in dance. This is similar to the perceptions of children with PD, who have feelings of difference from their peers in PE lessons (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Fitzgerald, 2005, Connors and Stalker, 2007). Blinde and McCallister (1998) indicate that some children with PD become embarrassed by their bodies, and by the hurtful comments that non disabled classmates make. For some pupils this resulted in lowered self-efficacy and reduced desire to participate in PE lessons (Blinde and McCallister, 1998). Moreover, Fitzgerald (2005) and Connors and Stalker (2007) notes that name-calling can emphasise otherness and difference for children with PD, which further reduces self-efficacy. Similarly, for NC, the comments made by peers about her physical deformity were hurtful, emphasising her difference, and leading to a lack of desire to participate in dance. This is further emphasised in the following statements:

"I've got webbed toes and the first time when you go in there with bare feet, "eeeeee look at her toes" and you're just like "I can't help it". So I don't feel comfortable with that and then you just feel really awkward with everything, because the other girls, like the popular ones in a way, you know, they can, they'll have their friends with their laugh and all that and then you see us, and there's the middle group and all that, and you just think, I can't do that, because I know I can't because I don't feel comfortable and I tell myself "you can't do it" because I don't want to get made a fool of in front of them."

[Interview with NC, School C]

This comment, and in particular, the final section saying "you just think, I can't do that,

because I know I can't because I don't feel comfortable and I tell myself "you can't do it" because I don't want to get made a fool of in front of them" indicates the effect bullying can have on a pupils self-efficacy (Lavalley et al, 2004). Moreover, this comment from NC is very similar to the comments of children with PD who experience lowered self-efficacy as a result of bullying in lessons. For example, a quotation from a participant in Blinde and McCallister's (1998) work states:

'Because I can't walk well, I can't run well, I can't do volleyball well, I can't do any kind of sport well... I'm just no good. I call myself a no good person, you know when I get there in the PE class'

(Blinde and McCallister, 1998:67)

There are vast similarities between Blinde and McCallister's participants' comments and NC's. It is evident that physical difference has a significant impact upon a child's self-confidence to participate in an activity. However the difference between NC and the participants in previous literature (e.g. Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Fitzgerald, 2005; Connors and Stalker, 2007), is that NC's difference was only apparent in dance when she was required to remove her shoes. Therefore, for her, dance was the only activity in which her self-efficacy was affected. NC, for example states:

"I hate netball but I'll do netball any day instead of dance"

[School C Focus Group]

NC: I know I'm not good at dance but you know, if I go onto something different, and I'm good at it.

[Interview with NC, School C]

This indicates that NC's motivation and self-efficacy to participate is only affected in dance, and not other activities, even ones she does not particularly enjoy. This can be attributed to her ability to hide her physical deformity during other activities. For the participants of previous studies who had PD, their difference was, assumedly, evident in all PE lessons, resulting in an unwillingness to participate in PE in general, as indicated by Blinde and McCallister (1998).

Nevertheless, while NC's webbed toes provided some reasoning towards her dislike and unwillingness to participate in dance, NC provides other reasons for this, which centres on feelings of inferiority, as a product having SEN.

I: Why didn't you want to be a part of it [dance]?

NC: Because I reckon it just makes you feel stupid in a way, and I feel stupid as it is, so there's no point in me making myself feel worse.

I: Why do you feel stupid as it is?

NC: I'm dyslexic and I have Earlings Syndrome, and English

I: So is it just in English that you feel that way or...

NC: most of my classes

[Interview with NC, School C]

NC: I just sit out because it's like I feel stupid anyway, I don't like making, it's a stupid dance so it just makes me feel like I look retarded basically.

[School C Focus Group]

I: So how does it make you feel when people say that you're stupid?

NC: You start believing it, because I actually think I'm stupid

[School C Focus Group]

For NC, she felt that participating in dance made her feel more stupid than she already felt. She makes reference to her SEN, stating that she feels stupid as a result of these, and doing dance only makes this worse for her. In some ways it seems that NC prefers to sit out in dance rather than participate as a method for protecting her self-esteem. This could be attributed to her feelings surrounding her webbed toes – NC feels uncomfortable and awkward as a result of having her feet visible in dance, but having SEN only emphasises this for her, which is illustrated by her stating “there’s no point in making myself feel worse”. This reduces her self-efficacy (Lavalee et al, 2004) in participating in dance activities, resulting in her internalising the label of “stupid” which further exacerbates her feelings of being inferior in dance. This is similar to the findings of Blinde and McCallister (1998), whose participants also internalised labels, resulting in feelings of not being able to participate rather than reflecting any real inability to participate.

As such, in this case, it is evident that the behaviour of others has an impact on the perceptions of children with SEN, their confidence and their belief in themselves to succeed. While for NC, this was only in dance, other literature indicates that for children, particularly those with PD, that bullying in lessons can impact on a child's self efficacy, resulting in them not believing that they can succeed in an activity (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Lavallee et al, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2005). As such, teachers need to be aware of discrimination in lessons, even if this is not as a direct result of SEN, as in NC's case, and measures must be taken to ensure bullying and emphasised difference in lessons is reduced. This can be done in the form of further training for teachers surrounding behaviour management, but not necessarily behaviour management surrounding the treatment of children with SEN, as suggested by Hutzler et al (2002). Rather, generic behaviour management could see incidences

of teasing, as that experienced by NC regarding her feet, being reduced, resulting in more positive experiences.

Moreover, the utilisation of personalised curriculum could see that individuals such as NC are able to have their needs more fully met in particular activities (Miliband, 2004), which an IEP might miss. For example, the use of a personal plan developed through consultation with NC, could result in effective goal setting, increasing her confidence in activities such as dance (Cabral and Crisfield, 1996), and moreover, highlight the issues NC has within dance to ensure she is comfortable with participation. By simply differentiating the rules surrounding dress in dance, and allowing NC to keep her shoes on for dance, her teachers might encourage her to participate in lessons more often, rather than sit out, allowing her to improve her skills and potentially her self-efficacy in dance activities.

In relating these findings to the main research question ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”***, and sub-question ***“How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?”***, NC’s experiences demonstrate that specific experiences of an activity can determine motivation for participating in it. Moreover, the recommendations suggested for NC, could in fact be applied to all children in PE lessons. As such, it is recommended that teachers, firstly, consult with their students to determine why motivation levels might be low for a particular activity. Secondly, children should be empowered to participate through this consultation, by providing suggestions about how to improve their motivation through differentiation– in NC’s case, keeping her shoes on for dance. The implementation of the personalised curriculum provides a solid grounding for this to occur (Miliband, 2004; Robinson et al, 2008). Moreover, students and teachers should become more involved in effective goal-setting (Cabral and Crisfield, 1996), ensuring goals are suitable for the needs of that individual child; and that children are aware of what is expected of them, and how they might achieve these goals. In doing this, it is expected that an overall better experience of PE could be achieved.

Gymnastics

Within the secondary schools, the main gymnastics activity tended to be trampolining, and this was commented on quite frequently, with few mentioning other gymnastics

activities. Similar to dance, the males in the secondary school did not like gymnastics activities; however these reasons differed to the reasons for disliking dance. For those male participants who had participated in gymnastics, the difficulty of the activities was cited for their dislike.

MD: I, I don't like, like Gymnastics and that

I: Why don't you like Gymnastics?

MD: Well like I dunno like it might be hard cos I've got like dyspraxia and it might be hard I dunno just cos like dunno it's just, just hard.

[Interview with MD, School D]

AC: I hate trampolining

I: why do you hate it?

AC: I don't know, I just find it a bit boring

NC: when you get to do front somersaults it gets more fun

AC: I can't!

[School C Focus Group]

While the mainstream primary school males, too, did not show any preference for gymnastics, their reasons for this surrounded the perception that these types of activities were too feminine (see Lee et al, 1999). However, there was no indication that this was a factor influencing the perceptions of the secondary school males. Instead, the perceived difficulty of the activities appeared to be a motivating factor for disliking gymnastics. For MD, the difficulty he had was attributed to his SEN, dyspraxia. By exclaiming "I can't", AC implies that he finds this type of activity beyond his capabilities. Perceptions such as these relate to the child's self-efficacy in an activity, relating to their confidence and self-belief that they can succeed in a given activity (Bandura, 1977). This is similar to the perceptions illustrated by children with PD in previous research (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2005), whereby children with SEN presented with lowered self-efficacy in PE, often as a result of having PD. Moreover, Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) indicate that children will use self-appraisal (e.g. AC saying "I can't") to determine their competence in participating. However, they note that often the competence of children with PD is questioned by others in lessons, while the child with the PD will use self-appraisal as a method for determining that they are able to participate despite what others might say. For the boys in the secondary schools, however, their perceptions about finding gymnastics difficult seemed to be related to perceptions related to themselves, rather than their competence being questioned by others. Similar to NC and her dislike for dance, this may be related to the internalisation of the SEN as a factor with intensifies feelings of inferiority in particular activities. This is evident from

MD explaining that gymnastics was hard for him because of his dyspraxia – a difficulty affecting finer movement and co-ordination (Dyspraxia Foundation, 2009), which are necessary for success in gymnastics (DfES/QCA, 2004). As such, in relation to future practice, the use of effective goal-setting, differentiation of the activities and the use of a personalised curriculum (Cabral and Crisfield, 1996; Miliband, 2004) may benefit children with SEN who have lower self-efficacy in particular activities as a result of their SEN. This could, in turn, result in increased confidence and self-esteem – evidence of the success of high quality PE programmes expected from the PESSCL/ PESSYP strategies (DfES, 2002b/ DCSF, 2008)

Conversely, for female participants in the secondary schools, opinions about gymnastics, particularly trampolining, were mixed. The girls in School C enjoyed trampolining:

NC: I like trampolining when we do that because it's just something that I'm good at and, because I've been a bit like trained in a way but then I gave it up because all that and I feel quite confident in it because, you know, I know what to do and I can have a laugh because your teacher sort of puts you with people who's in your group in a way. Like you've got friends in all areas.

[Interview with NC, School C]

DC: erm, we do trampolining don't we?

NC: yeah I like that

AC: I do that

DC: trampolining's good... I like going to trampolining.

[School C Focus Group]

DC: I like, erm, I like messing around

I: messing around, doing what?

DC: like on the trampoline, like I was messing around trampolining going "I'm a little teapot short and stout" because that's what everyone else was doing

[School C Focus Group]

For these girls, trampolining was an enjoyable activity. For both girls in School C, trampolining was perceived as an activity in which they could "have a laugh" or "mess around" with peers. Moreover, for NC, trampolining was viewed as an activity in which she was confident as she had previous experience of it outside of school. She goes on to illustrate how this can help her to assist others in her lesson:

NC: I know what to do in it [trampolining]. I go "point your toes, point your toes, look at the man, no don't look at me" but you know, like that, but you can't do that in other things.

[Interview with NC, School C]

For the female participants in School C, trampolining was a positive experience, allowing them the liberty to participate freely and enjoyably, whilst for NC, also presenting the opportunity to succeed at something she felt she was good at, and to express this by helping others. This is similar to the positive experiences of PE experienced by the children in Goodwin and Watkinson's (2000) study. Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) indicate that children with SEN have good days in PE when they have a sense of belonging in the lesson, are able to share the benefits and participate skilfully. In reference to the sub-question ***"How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?"*** participants NC and DC in this study were able to share in the enjoyment of the activity with their peers (*"I can have a laugh because your teacher sort of puts you with people who's in your group"; "because that's what everyone else was doing"*). Moreover, for NC, she was able to share her skills with others, and participate confidently, which she felt she could not do in some other activities. Goodwin and Watkinson (2002:156) indicate that "an opportunity to demonstrate superiority over classmates was especially highly valued" by participants. This too may have contributed to NC's preference for trampolining, as she felt competent in her ability due to her extra-curricular trampolining training.

As such, PE teachers should take into account the competencies pupils have and harness them, encouraging participants to share these skills. Moreover, the sharing and evaluation of skills is a target of the NCPE, which states that pupils should be taught to "take initiative to analyse their own and others work" (DfES/QCA, 1999:120). This relates to the research sub-question ***"How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?"***, whereby evidence from the perceptions of NC, that sharing skills builds confidence when participating in an activity, and could perhaps motivate pupils to participate more confidently in other activities in which further skill development and self-confidence is required – in NC's case, dance. As such, it is recommended that PE teachers consult with their pupils to discover preferences and reasons for these. Moreover, when assessing PE, perhaps teachers could take note of areas in which children present themselves more confidently and encourage them to use their skills in these areas to support their peers. This could lead to a more beneficial PE experience for all children, and encourage a supportive environment.

Alternatively, the female participants in School G, who had participated in trampolining as part of their mainstream PE lessons, perceived it as unfavourable:

LG: Trampolining for girls wasn't good at all.

I: OK what was it about the trampolining that you didn't like?

LG: The trampolining, erm, we were put in a room, we were split up from the lads but on like most of the days of trampolining the lads were in the sports hall with us while we were trampolining and that made me feel quite weary you know because I was sort of being watched by a couple of the lads and being the way I am I felt really uncomfortable with that.

[Interview with LG, School G]

CG: you just, you didn't feel safe or anything doing, because in trampolining, we had to do trampolining and like the trampolines are about 4 foot off the floor, and you had to run and jump onto them, and some of us couldn't do that but we were made to, and like one of the girls actually fell and hurt herself, and they were like "oh well you didn't do it properly" but like there was no like ladders to get up there so you just had to run and jump and some of us didn't feel safe doing that, but you still had to do it

[Interview with CG, School G]

For LG, the fact that male pupils could watch the girls doing trampolining made her feel uncomfortable. Moreover, LG regularly referred to herself as self-conscious during her interview, indicating that she had some self-esteem issues. For her, lowered self-esteem did not appear to be a result of her SEN (EBSD), but rather about her physical appearance and bullying from teachers in the mainstream school which contributed to this:

LG: The [mainstream] teachers were nasty and because of me size very nasty about that as well.

[Interview with LG, School G]

It is worth noting that LG had only participated in rugby and trampolining at her mainstream school and she had negative perceptions of both, because she felt that these activities were not appropriate for her needs, as a female. It is probable that these perceptions were a result of the negative experiences she had during her PE lessons, in particular bullying by teachers and peers. Blinde and McCallister (1998), Goodwin and Watkinson (2002), Fitzgerald (2005) and Connors and Stalker (2007) all report similar findings, whereby bullying and negative experiences in PE lead to negative perceptions of PE, whereas positive experiences result in positive perceptions.

For CG, on the other hand, her dislike of trampolining came from her perception that it was not safe. Moreover, her teachers did not seem to take into account the difficulty some pupils had in getting up onto the trampolines and this further reduced CG's preference for this activity. Although CG's SEN (EBSD) did not affect her ability to participate in trampolining, the lack of differentiation for pupils who might find

accessibility to the equipment difficult regardless of SEN seemed to be a determining factor in CG's dislike of this activity. As such, a key outcome of this research would recommend more attention should be paid to differentiation of activities (Reid, 2003), not necessarily just in line with specific SEN requirements, but in order to ensure all children are able to participate in PE activities skilfully and confidently, without fear for safety.

5.2.4 Other Factors in PE

In addition to the activities participated in during PE lessons, participants discussed other factors regarding the ways in which PE was delivered in their particular schools. Notably, the amount of time spent in PE, and the ways in which PE was assessed were issues discussed by the participants of this study.

Time spent in PE

According to PESSYP (2008), children should be taking part in at least 2 hours of high quality PE per week, whereby children are allowed the opportunity to build confidence and participate skilfully. However, it is evident from the findings of this research, that for the children with SEN who participated, this target was often not being achieved, at least in terms of the amount of time spent doing PE.

It was found within this study, that children in primary and special schools only took part in PE lessons once a week, and for less than one hour. As a result of this, children wanted more time in PE to do activities as they felt their teachers spent too much time giving instruction.

OA: [I want] to have more time, because most of the time we doing PE, the teachers are mostly talking to us instead of doing it

[School A Focus Group]

FB: [I'd like] more time to play

BB: erm, it's erm, just that they [teachers] talk more, they talk a lot

I: the teachers talk a lot. Do you want them to talk more or to talk less?

BB: yeah, talk less

I: why do you want them to talk less?

BB: so we can get more done in the lesson

[School B Focus Group]

Similarly, children in special schools only took part in PE lessons once a week:

I: How often do you do PE?

PE: We do it on a Thursdays.

[Interview with PE, School E]

AF: [We do PE] only on a Monday.

[Interview with AF, School F]

In the primary and special schools, it was clear that not enough time was spent doing PE, as per the requirements of PESSCL/ PESSYP (DfES, 2002b/ DCSF, 2008). As such, more stringent guidelines regarding PE should be issued, and schools should ensure they are meeting the targets set for PE in order to ensure all children receive at least 2 hours of PE per week. It is clear that children, particularly those in the primary schools want to have more time in PE, and given the benefits of physical activity (Kristen et al, 2002), this is a target which should not be overlooked. However, the primary curriculum, in particular, is too full and prescriptive, and this is "leaving teachers with insufficient time to enable children to engage adequately with every subject required by law" (DCSF, 2009:37). As such, unless drastic changes are made to the curriculum to allow room for teachers to give an adequate amount of time towards the teaching of PE, it is unlikely primary school pupils will receive the required amount of time in PE. Nevertheless, for both primary and special schools, it is important that PE is taken seriously, and given its due considering the implicit benefits (Kristen et al, 2002) it has, particularly for children with SEN.

Assessment

Formal assessment of PE was carried out within the secondary schools, whereby children were summatively assessed in PE lessons and given levels relating to the NCPE attainment guidelines (DfES/QCA, 1999), or completed coursework in PE, to gain a grade and formal qualification. Children in the primary and special schools did not refer to assessment in relation to PE, which may be a result of these children not perceiving assessment as an issue pertinent to their experiences of PE, or because they were not aware of any assessment taking place. Moreover, James et al (2009) indicates that many PE teachers often do not utilise assessment due to the perception that it is not necessary in PE.

Nevertheless, the NCPE (DfES/QCA, 2004) does provide attainment targets for KS2 (primary) PE, yet evidently the guidelines provided regarding assessment in PE are somewhat ambiguous. For KS2, guidelines indicate that assessment is based on teacher judgement, that judgements must be evidenced, but this evidence can be

collected both in and outside of lessons, and finally that there is no formal requirement outside of an individual schools' policy to provide explanations about why a particular level has been awarded (QCA, 2009). Penney et al (2009), therefore, argue that criteria and standards for the assessment of PE need to be made explicit, and as such, perhaps, given more stringent guidelines relating to the assessment of PE, it would be possible to understand the extent to which children meet the proposed targets more clearly.

For KS3 (secondary) PE, there is more of a focus on student feedback, with guidance for teachers to communicate their judgements with pupils, with scope for discussing outcomes (QCA, 2009). Despite this, evidence from this study suggests that while these guidelines are being followed, pupils do not respect assessment in PE, and find fault in how it is carried out. This is reflected below:

DC: I'm not really bothered what I get. I just laugh at it when I get it, say, say everyone else got a [level] five, I just say "I got a three". It doesn't really bother me anymore

I: Do your teachers tell you, like say you got a three, do they tell you how you can get up to a five?

DC: Yeah but like, you have to have your straight arms and put work on, and you do but, they just don't, they just don't look at it. Like when you do dance, yeah, and you've done it perfectly, and she doesn't even watch you, you just stand there and it's like I can't be bothered doing it again.

[School C Focus Group]

While her teacher suggested how to improve her level in PE, DC indicates that this was not followed up and as such any improvements made were not accounted for in the assessment. This reduced her willingness to repeat her movements for assessment. Moreover, she did not appear to be bothered by the assessment level she received, indicating that she will laugh when she receives her assessment. This reflects the perceptions of the students in James et al's (2009) study. These pupils, too, did not perceive assessment in PE as accountable, and did not recognize assessment as an important part of PE. Moreover, they suggest that students are more likely to be motivated by feedback from peers rather than comments from their teachers. As such, a recommendation from this study, in relation to the main research question for this research, regarding children with SEN's experiences and perceptions of PE, would be that perhaps the use of peer assessment in PE could be an option to stimulate pupils to improve their skills within PE, rather than, as in the case of DC, becoming dismissive about making improvements in skills due to the perception that these improvements will not be recognised. This might improve children's perceptions of assessment in PE.

In addition to accountability factors in PE assessment, assessment also appeared to be a factor which negatively affected their perceptions of PE. For CG in School G, this was due to the likeness of PE assessment to formal testing, and the pressure this placed on her to perform. This is illustrated below:

CG: In mainstream school, you done it to get a mark and to get all the stuff for it so it was like you had to do it, it was like a test. So it'd stress you out even more.

I: So, do you think by making PE like a test, it does anything to the enjoyment of PE?

CG: Yeah, because erm, most kids don't really like tests and that's how it feels, for like cos you don't, it gets you against PE because they, you know, you've got to be marked on it, and if you're feeling insecure and that and you won't join in that you know, that you're going to get a low mark, or you won't get marked for anything, and then like it'll just, it just makes you feel dead bad if it's like a test because you're worried then to do PE, cos you've got to do your best to get a good mark.

I: And how did that make you feel when you were in the other school, the fact that you had to get a mark?

CG: Dead insecure and like worried, when it'd be time for PE, and like basically like insecure round doing PE there.

[Interview with CG, School G]

For CG, being assessed in PE made her feel insecure and increased her anxiety within the lesson. This differs somewhat from the perceptions of other children, who may not necessarily have SEN. James et al (2009) indicate that their participants, pupils in a secondary school in the United States of America (USA), did not perceive assessment in PE as something to be anxious about. For example one participant states "I don't get nervous with assessment because I know this well and have done it a lot and it is easy to do." (James et al, 2009:329). However, within this study, perceptions were related to the teaching and assessment styles of the PE teachers, and in this case, the teacher's personal philosophy was one in which pupils were assessed to improve their skills, rather than to provide a grade, stating "I am against skill testing as a means for grading" (James et al, 2009:329). For CG, however, the emphasis she places on receiving a "mark" for PE indicates that this was potentially the focus of her PE assessment, and a mediating factor in causing anxiety surrounding PE. When comparing her perceptions about being assessed in mainstream school, to her experiences in the hospital school where PE was not formally assessed; CG states:

CG: Cos it's like here, you do PE cos you enjoy it, and because, not just you have to, but you do it because you enjoy it here.

[Interview with CG, School G]

Evidently, given the perceptions presented by James et al (2009), and through the examination of CGs' perceptions, it could be stated that the perceptions children have relating to assessment in PE, depend upon a number of factors. Firstly, the purpose of

the assessment seems to influence perceptions of PE. For James et al's (2009) participants, assessment was about improving skills, with little focus on attaining grades; however for CG, assessment was related to grading which resulted in anxiety. Moreover, the way in which PE is delivered has an impact on perceptions of PE. For CG, when PE was based upon assessment, she reported unfavourable perceptions. Yet, when PE was about student enjoyment, she reported taking part more often, enjoying lessons, and having more confidence. As such, it is evident assessment can have an effect on perceptions of PE, as well as overall enjoyment of PE lessons. Thus in the context of this study's research sub-question, "***How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?***" it is evident that assessment can have a negative impact on children with SEN's experiences and perceptions. As such, one recommendation resulting from this could be that, perhaps by adopting a more formative approach to assessment, whereby children are given constructive feedback, rather than being graded summatively, more positive outcomes of assessment in terms of pupil motivation and enjoyment can be developed. This could be factored into the revised NC (QCA, 2007b), which allows for more flexibility in teaching. However, perhaps a more personalised approach to assessment would also be beneficial.

Similarly, for participants in School C, assessment was perceived as detrimental to overall perceptions of PE. One participant in particular (NC), who was completing a PE qualification early, felt that this type of assessment altered her perception to PE. The reasons for this related directly to her SEN (dyslexia). The qualification required the production of a portfolio of work for assessment, which involved a large amount of writing, and as such NC found this difficult due to her dyslexia. She explains:

NC: [The coursework is] hard. The writing and typing and all that and reading and stuff and spelling and all that, makes it hard for me.

I: Do you feel that that has an effect on what you think about PE?

NC: Yeah, you know because I love PE and all that, it's just like the English part is coming into it... Like I wanted to do music but I couldn't because there's too much writing and I wouldn't be able to keep up with everyone else. So that's what it's doing really. I want to do it earlier, it's just I can't keep understanding it because it's getting harder and harder and harder, and I can't keep up with everyone else because I'm not as fast typer as all of them. I can be a fast typer, it's just I won't have spelt all the words right

[Interview with NC, School C]

Notably, School C is a specialist sports college, and, while NC indicates that she wants to do her qualification early, it is unclear whether pupils are expected to complete this qualification at an early stage. The time allocated to produce the coursework, according

to NC, was during regular PE lessons with some out-of-school-hours assistance from teachers. Nevertheless, despite getting help from teachers to complete the coursework, NC indicates that written aspect of this assessment makes PE harder for her. Moreover, while NC states that she likes PE, she indicates that she prefers her out-of-school sporting activities more because they do not involve writing, stating:

NC: I like them [sport outside of school] better than when I go to PE I guess because there's no writing to do.

[Interview with NC, School C]

As such, it is apparent that this type of assessment in PE was detrimental to NC's perspectives about PE, resulting in her preferring her activities outside of school. While this type of assessment for NC was presumably optional, it nevertheless raises issues about inclusive assessment. The NCPE states that "all pupils, regardless of ability, [should] have sufficient opportunities to succeed in their learning at the highest standard" (QCA, 2009), it does not give guidance about how assessment can be tailored to meet the needs of pupils with SEN, in order for them to succeed at the highest standard. Therefore, it is possible that while teachers may be delivering inclusive programmes, if the assessment of pupils within these programs is not inclusive, there is not opportunity for children to succeed, which in turn can lead to reduced enjoyment and confidence in succeeding. This is evident for NC, who evidently believes she is good at PE, yet has decreased confidence about her success in this assessment due to the expectation that she must present her coursework in a form which emphasises her difficulties in writing. As such a recommendation based upon this study's findings would suggest inclusive assessment in PE should be further examined to ensure that children of all abilities, as stated by the NCPE, are able to succeed at the highest standard, such as in completing qualification at earlier-than-expected stages. This could perhaps be achieved applying the notions surrounding personalised learning (Miliband, 2005) to curriculum assessment strategies, therefore presenting opportunity for children to be assessed using methods which best meet their needs. This type of strategy has already been rolled out for 14 – 19 education for GCSE and A-Level assessments (HMSO, 2005b). However, through the implementation of inclusive assessment strategies at an earlier stage will ensure that children with SEN may have more opportunity to achieve at these stages and therefore progress further in their education.

5.2.5 Experiencing PE Lessons – Conclusions and Recommendations

This discussion set out to examine children with SEN's experiences of the PE curriculum, relating to the research sub-question *“How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?”* Activities, time spent in PE, and assessment, were identified as core sub-themes relating to children with SEN experiences of inclusion and accessibility to PE lessons.

Findings indicated that children with SEN in all three types of school were experiencing a wide range of PE activities and were apparently included in all PE lessons. There was no indication that any participants in mainstream schools were being excluded as a result of having SEN, nor for any other reasons. These findings challenge previous literature which indicates that often children with SEN experience exclusion from PE lessons due to their SEN (Blinde and McCallister, 1999; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2005), and instead, present evidence which could suggest that children with SEN are experiencing inclusion in their PE lessons. In addition to this, findings from this study show that, while children with SEN in all three types of school participated in a variety of PE activities, they tended to enjoy games activities most, whilst perceiving dance and gymnastics activities as least favourable. Games activities were relished due to their scope for competitiveness, the opportunity to win, as well as them being more physically vigorous. On the other hand, dance and gymnastics, for boys were considered too “girly” and not active enough, and for girls, were perceived as unfavourable due to self-esteem issues, bullying and not feeling safe or comfortable. Special school children and those with more complex difficulties did, however, enjoy gymnastics activities. Penney (2002), and Smith and Green (2004) argue that dance and gymnastics may be beneficial for inclusive PE, while games activities may not be, however, the findings of this research indicate that from the perspectives of children with SEN, this may not be the case. Instead, what was apparent is that, firstly, gender role stereotyping, as presented by Lee et al (1999) and Frömel et al (2002) was a factor in determining preferences about activities, particularly for males, which was similar to the perspectives of non-SEN children. Secondly, confidence, the judgements of others, and self-efficacy played important roles in children's perceptions of activities, which highlighted the need for differentiation (Reid, 2003), and this may not necessarily only be in reference to SEN, but apply to all children in PE (Groves and Laws, 2000). Finally, personalised learning (Miliband, 2004) in PE is necessary to ensure children's individual needs are met, even if their needs are not related to their SEN.

It was also found that children in primary and special schools are not accessing enough PE, in line with government strategy (DfES, 2008), participating in PE only once a week for one hour at most. As such, PE in these areas need stricter guidance to ensure children are accessing at least 2 hours of high quality PE per week, and perhaps by including more flexibility in the primary curriculum, which is currently over-prescribed (DCSF, 2009), this could be achieved.

Finally, in terms of assessment, only children in secondary schools were being formally assessed for PE, and the children who were assessed appeared to have negative perceptions of this. Perceptions related to the lack of accountability of assessment, the pressure this placed on pupils to perform, and the lack of inclusive assessment strategies. As such, it is recommended that assessment strategies in PE are re-examined, giving teachers more guidance about how to carry out assessment. Moreover, guidance should be made available about how assessment can be done inclusively and in such a way that children are still able to enjoy participating in PE, in order for "all pupils, regardless of ability, [to] have sufficient opportunities to succeed in their learning at the highest standard" (QCA, 2009).

CHAPTER SIX: EXPERIENCES OF SPORT OUTSIDE SCHOOL

This theme, 'Experiences of Sport Outside School' relates to the research sub-question *"What opportunity does the child have to partake in extra-curricular sport, or sport in the community and are these accessible to the child?"* It examines the extent to which sport outside school is accessible, and the degree to which children with SEN participate in sport outside of the school setting. Moreover, it examines children's experiences and perceptions about the activities they partake in outside of school. The term 'sport outside of school' is used to describe any physical activity participated in which is not part of school PE lessons and is undertaken outside of normal school hours.

In attempting to respond to the main research question, this chapter examines children with SEN's experiences of sport outside of school. It explores children's perceptions of the sports they participate in outside of school, the barriers they face in accessing leisure facilities, and the kinds of activities they participate in.

Through the triangulation of the data (Robson, 2006), it was evident that there were few differences in the perceptions of children with SEN in this research, when discussing activities outside of school. Nevertheless, findings were primarily analysed by type of school in order to understand any subtle differences in the ways in which activities were experienced outside of school. These findings were then drawn together and are discussed in relation to existing literature, and the research questions in order to establish conclusions and recommendations as they emerged from the research.

'Types of Talk'

When considering types of talk, as proposed by Arnot and Reay (2007) in consideration of the experiences of children with SEN's experiences of sport outside school, it was evident that the codes they utilised when discussing this theme were similar to those used when discussing their experiences of PE, as discussed in the previous chapter. As the findings of this theme represent the descriptive experiences of children in activities outside of school, the predominant type of talk utilised was 'subject talk'. This related to the kinds of activities the children participated in outside of school, and their perceived competence in these activities. However, children also used 'identity talk', which allowed insight into children's personal identities and the constructs involved when examining their personal preferences and identities (Arnot and Reay, 2007) developed within the particular activities in which they participated.

The types of talk utilised by children when discussing their participation in activities outside of school is reflected through their understanding of the barriers they face in accessing activities, their preferences for taking part and their contextual understanding related to the different activities in which they participate.

In addressing this theme, an attempt is made to demonstrate the ways in which children with SEN's experiences of sport outside of school are constructed through their experiences of PE, the barriers they face, and the activities which are available and accessible to them. This will be considered through discussion of children's experiences of sport outside of school.

6.1 Experiences of Sport Outside of School

The PESSCL / PESSYP strategies (DfES, 2002b/ DCSF, 2008) state that children of all abilities must partake in at least five hours of physical activity per week, including at least two hours of high quality PE. As such, this indicates that children should be partaking in at least three hours of physical activity and sport outside of school. In order to achieve this goal, funding has been set aside to engage young people who do not participate in sport outside of school, by providing more attractive sporting activities; as well as developing multi-skill clubs for children with disabilities (DCSF, 2008). The real outcomes of any potential success from this strategy, however, may not be evident until 2011. Nevertheless, given that these strategies have been implemented since 2002, it can be expected that some impact has been made. As such, an examination of physical activity participated in by children with SEN outside of school was undertaken within this study and findings indicated that children with SEN in this study participated in sport outside of school on three levels, which ranged from most frequently participated in to least frequently participated in. The levels of activity are listed below, from most popular, to least:

- Level 1: informal physical activity
- Level 2: formal sports club
- Level 3: extra-curricular sports at school

These criteria were determined through and examination of the findings which showed that children with SEN in this study participated in a range of different types of activities which could be categorised in terms of their formality. As such, it was evident that the

most popular activities participated in outside of school, suggested by the frequency they were discussed, was informal physical activities; whilst the types of activities least participated in, that being ones only discussed briefly and by only a few of the participants, was extra-curricular sports played at school. These will now be discussed separately.

6.1.1 Informal Physical Activity

'Informal physical activity' refers to activities undertaken outside of school which were for purely leisure purposes, and were not formally organised as part of a community sports club, or by the school as an extra-curricular sporting activity. This therefore refers to activities such as playing outside with friends, going to the park, and leisure swimming. The table below shows the kinds of informal physical activities children in the study participated in outside of school.

Table 6.1 Informal Physical Activities

Type of activity	Example quotes	Primary, secondary or special school participants?
Play in garden at home	<i>"I play with my dog in the back garden"; "I play on me trampoline with me toys"; "Sometimes I might just play football in the back yard"; "I like to jump on my trampoline"</i>	Primary, secondary, special
Informal ball games	<i>"my friends knock for me and play football outside by my house"; "we'll all play rounders or like we've got cages by ours and play football or basketball"; "[I play] cricket, rounders and erm, football, like in me spare time with me mates"; I do cricket because erm, my friend came over once and he said we go to the park to play cricket"</i>	Primary, secondary, special
Walking or running	<i>"I go on walks"; "I run on, I run with my, on the fields with my cats; "we just walk around along the road"</i>	Primary, secondary; special
Leisure swimming	<i>"I go swimming sometimes"; "I just go swimming with me mates"; "we go to the"</i>	Primary, secondary, special

	<i>wave pool"</i>	
Use of a gym or gym equipment	<i>"I don't go to clubs because I have a gym room in my house"; "I've got one of those exercise machines at home"</i>	Primary
Use of a games console (Nintendo Wii)	<i>"I play on the Wii, there's this game where you play baseball and tennis on, and there's boxing and bowling"; "other exercise what I've got at home, it's a Wii"; "I just play on the Wii for a bit"</i>	Special, primary

The table above illustrates the kinds of informal activities children with SEN in this study were partaking in. The most popular kinds of informal activities were those done at home in the garden, such as playing on a trampoline, and informal ball games played with friends and family outside the house. These findings respond to, and go some way to answering the research sub-question ***"What opportunity does the child have to partake in extra-curricular sport, or sport in the community and are these accessible to the child?"*** Findings demonstrate that all the children in this study had opportunity to and were undertaking some form of physical activity outside of school, despite the fact that this activity was informal, and so may not necessarily have been of high quality (DfES, 2002b; DCSF, 2008). Nevertheless, previous findings have suggested that children with SEN opt for sedentary activities in their spare time, such as watching television (Fitzgerald, 2003a), and that these types of activities are often preferred. This was not the case for the children in this study. While some children in this study did say that they partook in sedentary activities - *"I bake cookies"; "I play on Fifa 09"; "watch a little bit of TV"; "listen to music"* - all of the children also participated in informal physical activities. Moreover, most children were aware of the benefits of keeping active, and as such when discussing activities which would ordinarily be considered as sedentary, like playing on video games, examined how these could facilitate their fitness. For example, the children who did discuss playing on video games, often used a Nintendo Wii console, which they believed aided their fitness, due to the physical nature of the games and game play:

DE: If you play boxing or do play on Wii fit, can make yourself strong
[School E Focus Group]

AA: Other exercise what I've got at home, it's a Wii.

I: Do you play on the Wii to keep yourself fit?

AA: yeah

[School A Focus Group]

While literature relating to the physical benefits of playing active video games, such as the Nintendo Wii, is limited, Mark and Rhodes (2009) indicate that such games do have physiological benefits comparable with regular exercise, such as greater energy expenditure, and increased heart-rate. Although it is unclear at present whether these benefits equal those from taking part in regular exercise, it seems promising that children, particularly those with SEN, who opt to for free-time sedentary activities (Fitzgerald, 2003a), such as playing video games, will be able to maintain some degree of fitness from participation in these activities. However, this is only the case, if children have access to active games consoles such as the Nintendo Wii (Marks and Rhodes, 2009).

Nevertheless, aside from playing on games consoles to aid physical activity, children participated in a variety of other activities in their leisure time, ranging from playing ball games with friends and other people in the community, through to using gym equipment, swimming, and even just taking walks. While little research has examined leisure time activities of children with SEN, instead focusing on the inclusion of children with SEN in extra-curricular activities (Penney and Harris, 1997; Green, 2000) or sports clubs (Kristen et al, 2002), nevertheless, Sport England (2001) indicate that 40% of children with a disability or severe illness partake in physical activity outside of school, with swimming being the most popular leisure time activity for children with disabilities, closely followed by football. This was similar to the results found in this study, in that all children at some time participated in swimming as a leisure time activity, and many played football, or other team ball games, on a regular basis. Moreover, while Fitzgerald et al (2003a) found that the group preference for leisure time activities in their sample were more sedentary in nature, there is the indication that on an individual level, participants did partake in an array of free-time physical activities similar to the participants of this study. As such, it is evident that children with SEN do partake in a range of informal physical activities, and this appeared to be consistent for pupils of different school types, genders and SEN. However, it is worth stating that the qualitative nature of the findings, results in them not being of a measurable nature, and as such it is unclear to what extent and how frequently these activities are participated in. While no clear differences in the informal physical activity uptake for the participants was visible for this study, Longmuir and Bar-Or (2000) indicate that

differences between the leisure time activity of children with a range of PD, and sensory difficulties are evident. They suggest that children with PD and visual impairment are habitually less physically active compared with hearing impaired children and those with medical conditions; although their study does not include children with other SEN, as within this study. Nevertheless, it cannot be stated from this study that all children with SEN are physically active in informal physical activities outside of school. It is, however, evident that some physical activity was being undertaken by all of the children, and this contributes towards ensuring that all children partake in at least three hours of physical activity outside of school (DCSF, 2008). Despite this, however, PESSCL/ PESSYP (DfES, 2002b; DCSF, 2008) does indicate that schools should be the primary stakeholder in ensuring children are participating in physical activity outside of school, and as such children should not be left to their own devices to undertake this activity. It is therefore recommended that more be done by schools to ensure children have the opportunity to take part in more formal physical activities outside of school, to contribute towards their three hours of extra-curricula activity. This could be achieved through the PESSYP Strategy through the promotion of club links between schools and community sports clubs (DCSF, 2008), and access for children with SEN should be encouraged.

In addition to discovering that children with SEN partake in a range of informal physical activities outside of school, including swimming, it was found that the use of leisure centres was limited and children discussed a variety of barriers they faced in using local leisure facilities. Leisure centres were mainly used for swimming, and many children indicated that there were specific barriers which restricted them using these facilities more often. Barriers included physical obstacles for children with PD and more complex difficulties:

I: Do you ever go to like your local leisure centre?

DF: Erm no cos basically they are not suitable for me. Well I can go to the leisure centre swimming pool but not on my own, only with my dad.

I: When you say that they are not suitable what do you mean?

DF: It's got no hoist, that's what she meant.

I: OK so do you think if there were hoists in the swimming baths you would be able to use them more?

DF: It would be a bit easier for me then cos it's hard for me dad getting me in and out

[Interview with DF, School F]

AF: Me dad goes in with me [swimming baths] and then me mum helps me get dressed.

I: Do you think you need more help from the other people at the swimming baths?

AF: There's a lot of like guards - I can swim.

[Interview with AF, School F]

I: Do you ever go swimming to the leisure centres?

AB: No I need help with swimming. I love going down the big slides.

I: When you're at the swimming baths does anyone help you to swim?

AB: Me mum does

I: Do you think you need more help to swim?

AB: Yeah

I: Who do you think should give you that help?

AB: Mum... because I'm really dangerous... I'm really scared going down the erm slides... no not the slides; I'm really scared to duck under the water.

[Interview with AB, School B]

These three children, two of whom had PD (DF, AF), and one of who had complex medical and learning difficulties (AB), all illustrated the need for help when using leisure facilities, particularly swimming pools. For DF, he did not use the swimming baths due to accessibility, and the lack of a hoist. Similarly, for AF, she required help getting into the pool, and getting dressed afterwards, and for AB, he needed general help swimming, based specifically around issues of safety. As such all three of these participants needed a family member present to assist with swimming, and therefore stated that they often did not use these facilities as a result. This is unfortunate, because for these three participants, swimming during PE lessons was stated as a preferred activity, and similarly, Sport England (2001) indicate that swimming is the favoured leisure time activity for children with PD and medical conditions. Moreover, Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) note that swimming is a favourable activity for children with PD, because they perceived it as accessible. While this did not seem to be the case for the children with such difficulties in this study, the implications of the inaccessibility and difficulty for some children using swimming baths, was for them to undertake other activities. Consequently, and in response to the research sub-question ***“What opportunity does the child have to partake in extra-curricular sport, or sport in the community and are these accessible to the child?”*** it seems apparent that, given the preference for swimming, and the evident accessibility obstacles faced by children with these SEN in making use of the facilities, steps should be taken by local councils to ensure that leisure facilities are fully accessible to children with PD and other SEN to ensure they can access the activities they prefer. Moreover, given the necessity for parents to be present during swimming, perhaps this provides scope

for leisure facility staff to be brought in who specifically aid children who have difficulty accessing facilities, to ensure all children have equal opportunity to use and benefit from local leisure facilities.

While barriers were faced by the children with PD and more complex needs which directly related to their SEN, the other participants more commonly children listed issues such as the cost of using facilities as a main limiting factor to them using leisure centres more often:

I: When you're outside of school do you go to any leisure centres like swimming pools?

AC: Yeah

I: What do you think to them?

AC: Fun

I: Do you go often?

AC: When its half terms and that it's free swimming. I get up early in the morning and go swimming with my brother.

I: Do you only do that in half term?

AC: Yeah because that's when it's free.

[Interview with AC, School C]

I: What about leisure centres near to where you live, do you use any of those?

TG: I don't but there is a leisure centre but I think you have to pay a charge.

I: OK, why don't you do sport outside of school or use the leisure centres?

TG: Well I kind of like have a few problems I don't really like going outside and especially in my local area, it's quite full of people.

I: OK, is there anything you think you could change in either the local area or in the leisure centres that would make it easier for you to use them?

TG: Erm probably, not really unless they got rid of the charges in the leisure centre.

I: Do you find that the charges are too expensive?

TG: Erm kind of I just don't think there should be a charge like in any sport.

[Interview with TG, School G]

I: What do you think could be done to help you to use the leisure centres more?

JD: Erm, probably like, like when it's half term do like, you can, in half term you can join like, erm, come to this swimming lesson for free for half term

[Interview with JD, School D]

I: Ok. Do you go [swimming] often?

NB: No, only if we've got money and it's the weekend or something

[Interview with NB, School B]

These findings indicate that the charges for using swimming baths and leisure centres are a barrier for some children in using these facilities. Moreover, this consequently

leads to children only using the facilities when they are free to use, for example, during half terms. As such, it is clear that, in order to increase participation in swimming activities, in particular, there is the need for funding to be made available for free swimming at other times outside of the school holidays, and the findings from this research suggest that, given this, children will use leisure facilities more often. At present there is a scheme in England, entitled the Free Swimming Programme (Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) (2009), which has these targets in mind; however, currently, funding is only available to 200 local councils across England for free swimming for under 16 year-olds, and councils have to apply and bid for this funding. Therefore, it seems apparent that not all children will be able to benefit from this programme, and as such, it would be necessary for provision to be made available to all local councils so that all children, not just those with SEN, are able to benefit from the programme and enjoy free swimming.

Other factors which also resulted in limited use of leisure centres and swimming baths were:

- Age limits for use of facilities (*"I'm not allowed because I'm not sixteen and all that so you were limited to all the stuff you could do"; "I think the hours that the junior, the people like under 18 in the gym should be allowed to go, need to be extended, because you can't really go in that often"*).
- Advertising of facilities (*"I don't really have any like adverts for it I just seen it on like you know when it has like a rota of all the stuff they do like and I seen it on there so I suppose they could like advertise it a bit more"*)
- The other people using the facilities (*"Like there's lads there sometimes, that like shout stuff to people, or they'll be messing around at like the swimming pool water, and all, everything, and like it may, it puts other people off from going there"; "[I don't go swimming because the people that go there]"*)

These barriers also need addressing in order to ensure children with SEN, and all children for that matter, are able to access the facilities at times which suit them, are aware of what is on offer, and finally, feel safe and secure when they are using facilities. As such, in terms of the research sub-question ***"What opportunity does the child have to partake in extra-curricular sport, or sport in the community and are these accessible to the child?"***, it is evident that while children with SEN may have the opportunity to partake in informal activities outside of school, accessibility to these may present a barrier. Therefore, it is recommended that, in addition to improving access for children with disabilities and complex needs, and increasing provision for free swimming; that councils also address the age restrictions they place on using

facilities, where possible; that they improve advertising targeted at young people, and finally that they address negative behaviours and disruption effectively when it occurs. By addressing these barriers to participation in activities in leisure centres, it is likely that there will be increased usage of the facilities by children with SEN, as indicated by the responses of the participants of this study.

6.1.2 Formal Sports Clubs

'Formal sports clubs' refers to activity undertaken as part of a formally organised sports club in the local community, which children attended on a regular basis, and in many cases these were competitive in nature. Below is a list of the kinds of sports clubs children in this study said they were involved in, which were external from the schools they attended:

Table 6.2 Formal Sports Clubs

Club	Participant	Type of School
Football club	SB, NC; JD; MD	Primary; secondary
Badminton club	JD; NC	Secondary
Trampolining club	OA; NC	Primary, secondary
Multi-sports club	AF	Special
Boccia club	DF	Special
Rugby club	JG	Special
Cricket club	JG	Special
Dance club	FB	Primary
Rock-climbing club	NC	Secondary
Racquetball club	JG	Special

The above table shows the range of different sports clubs participants in this study were a part of. Participants attended these clubs at least once a week, and some participants were part of several sports clubs outside of school. Moreover, children in each type of school participated in these types of activities, but participation in formal sports clubs was less popular than informal physical activity, with fewer participants undertaking this type of activity outside of school. Moreover, only the special school children attended sports clubs specifically for children with disabilities (boccia club and multi-sports club).

For those who attended a sports club, perceptions were positive:

I: What about the kinds of sports you do outside of school?

NC: I like them better than when I go to PE I guess, because there's no writing to do, it's all about when, if you want... with football, there's nothing, just how you can play and all that, and with rock-climbing it's, you know, you have to get the choice like that, and with sports and all that it's easier than, you know, doing it. Because you don't need to do anything like that with badminton, it's just fun because...you're there with your friends, you're having games, and now we've moved up with the grown-ups and we're making friends with more of the grown-ups. And you know, you get to play better and all that, and it's nothing to do with school in a way and it's just, because I hate school, all completely together, because I just don't like school at all.

[Interview with NC, School C]

I: What do you think about the trampolining club?

OA: S'good.

I: What do you like about it?

OA: Just gets me up in the air. It's just fun.

[Interview with OA, School A]

JD: I do badminton on Sundays and football on Saturdays... It's [doing sport outside school] good because teachers don't, because there's no teachers to shout at you or anything and you can make up your own rules

I: Ok, how does that make you feel that there's nobody there to shout at you?

JD: It's good

[School D Focus Group]

DF: Erm what it's [boccia club] really, it's really good cos I can't, it's something for me to do if know what I mean?

[Interview with DF, School F]

For NC, and JD, who were both secondary school pupils, participation in their respective sports clubs were perceived as positive because it was dissimilar to their PE lessons. The ability to make up rules, and the expression that it was fun, indicates that these children felt they had more freedom in these activities compared with their PE lessons. This was also true for some children who discussed informal activities, for example:

LD: It's better than in school cos the teachers can't shout at you like "you've done that wrong, start again", like you can like just play and be happy.

[School D Focus Group]

This suggests that perhaps differentiation of activities to include these children was more achievable given the freedom children felt they had within these out of school activities. In addition, children perceived their participation in sports clubs as "fun" or "good", and this was often related to making friends and being social ("*I'm talking to people a bit more*"; "*you're there with your friends*"; "*you can meet new people there*

*and it's quite a social like environment"). Sport England (2001) state that sports clubs can be vital for children with disabilities, particularly for promoting social inclusion in the community. The importance placed on making and being with friends indicates that social interaction and inclusion was a primary outcome of participating in sports clubs for these children. As such, it seems clear that children with SEN should be encouraged to take up membership of sports clubs, due not only to the social benefits of doing so, as discussed by the participants, but also to give children opportunity to try new sports in a supportive environment whereby they do not experience the pressures of performing, as experienced in school. Moreover, this further indicates that children with SEN have both opportunity to participate in these activities, and that these activities are accessible to them, in response to the research sub-question "**What opportunity does the child have to partake in extra-curricular sport, or sport in the community and are these accessible to the child?**". As such, it is recommended that community sports clubs continue to support children with SEN in their activities. This can be achieved through partnership with schools, as proposed in the PESSYP strategy (DCSF, 2008), by setting in place club links, which will promote these activities to children, encourage them to join, and support them in their participation in activities outside of school.*

In addition to promoting social inclusion, findings from this study suggest membership of sports clubs can increase children's confidence and self esteem. For DF, his participation in boccia club was perceived as something he *could do*, because he often felt restricted in other activities, such as swimming as explained earlier. Moreover, participation in this club resulted in him being able to try out for and participate in the Special Olympics. He explains what this means to him:

DF: We are going to Leicester [with boccia club] to compete in the Special Olympics.

I: You're going to compete in the Special Olympics? Wow that's such a big achievement. How do you feel about that?

DF: Me and Brendan were actually interviewed by Radio City. It's boccia, more boccia and more boccia

I: How does that make you feel?

DF: Erm, I love it

I: Is that why you do it a lot?

DF: Because erm, the special... sorry if I'm going on, we do like I said we're going in the Olympics in Leicester, and if we qualify for that we going to the Para-Olympics, and we're going in the track-suit, you know the err British one and even the jacket, the pants, the shirt..

I: So how will you feel if you get to wear those British clothes?

DF: To be, to be honest I just want to concentrate a bit more about what I'm doing, erm, and erm, erm, what it does with this training I feel like I'm getting more independent,

erm so what we do is we go erm to Leicester. We had an interview by Radio City about what we're doing in the Olympics because we erm we actually had an Olympic star in Brookfield!

[School F Focus Group]

DF: All I think it's [boccia club] a really good experience for me

I: How do you feel about yourself?

DF: I think I must have worked hard to get where I am now

[Interview with DF, School F]

DF joined the Boccia club after being given a letter about it at school, and had been participating for two years. It is evident his achievements not only made him feel proud, but he indicated that through his involvement in the boccia club, he had become more independent. DF's story not only encapsulates the philosophy behind the PESSYP strategy (DCSF, 2008) relating to encouraging the participation of children of all abilities in high quality sport, but also emphasises the importance of all children, particularly those with SEN, participating in sport activities in which they are able to achieve and reap the benefits of that participation.

Sport England (2001) further point out that more male children participate in formal sports clubs, compared with females, and this was evident within this study. Of the nine children who participated in formal sports clubs outside of school, only three of these participants were female. As such, given the positive perceptions of children regarding participation in sports clubs, and the evident benefit this has on social inclusion, self-esteem, and the potential for achieving at a high level, sports clubs should continue to encourage membership by children with SEN, perhaps with a more of a focus on female participation. This could be done through engaging with children at school, and raising awareness about the availability of such activities, as it was evident in the findings of this research that schools did little to promote sporting activity outside of school.

In relation to questions surrounding influences on participating in sports clubs outside of school, in direct relation to the research sub-question "***What opportunity does the child have to partake in extra-curricular sport, or sport in the community and are these accessible to the child?***", several children noted that their teachers did not help them to do sport outside of school, and that they did not feel they needed help from their teachers. Instead, children in this study often stated that they joined sports clubs as a result of encouragement from family members.

I: So how did you come to do all these different sports outside of school?

NC: My mum. She's a football fan ... It's mostly to do with my mum why I reckon I like sports because she used to play football, she was a referee. She played badminton, she plays squash, she's a runner, she's doing the marathon now, and all that and you know it's just like when you're near my mum and all that, you can tell it's, you can tell she's the one I got the football thing off... because my mum could tell when I was younger like, you know she'd play football with you, with me and my brother and I liked football more than my brother, I think, and then I started to play it when I was like, for the team when I was like eight.

[Interview with NC, School C]

I: How did you get into the cricket and rugby?

JG: Er, well my older brother did it, and my dad's a keen rugby and cricket fan, so I sort of suppose I inherited it, really.

[Interview with JG, School G]

JD: Badminton, one of me cousins joined so then I just joined.

[Interview with JD, School D]

For many of the children, the influence family members had in determining the nature of the sports they participated in outside school in formal clubs was evident, and often this was a result of the sporting preferences and interests of specific family members. This was also the case for the informal physical activities, in particular ball games and swimming, whereby family members were frequently quoted as participating in these activities with the child, assisting them in their participation, and encouraging this participation. This may suggest that perhaps schools are not doing enough to encourage children with SEN's participation in sport outside of school, as recommended in the PESSYP strategy (DCSF, 2008). The findings are supported by Fitzgerald et al (2003a) who found similar patterns of familial influence; and Wold and Anderssen (1992) state that the activities in which family members partake contribute to the physical activity of children, and this was evident within this study. However, Smith (2003) noted that more research must be carried out to examine the influence of significant others as a determinant for sports participation. Moreover, it is evident that while research in this area is limited (Smith, 2003). Of the research which has been carried out, much explores the role of friendship in and outside of PE lessons, and its influence on physical activity (see Place and Hodge, 2001; Smith, 2003; Butler and Hodge, 2004; Seymour et al, 2009). Nevertheless, Fitzgerald et al (2003a) indicates that findings, such as those found in this study, which highlight the role of family on physical activity, illustrates the restricted social interactions children with SEN have during activities outside of school. As such, it is clear that more research must be carried out to examine the role family members have in encouraging physical activity

for children with SEN, and the effect this may have on social inclusion, interaction and friendship.

Despite this, it is clear that, while family members have a direct influence on the activities undertaken in formal sports clubs and informal physical activity, an outcome of participating in formal sports clubs is the opportunity it presents children with to interact socially with others, as expressed by the participants of this study. This therefore re-emphasises the need for sports clubs to further encourage participation by children with SEN, in order to widen social interaction, perhaps in the pursuit of social and psychological development, as well as friendship - factors which influence participation in physical activity (Seymour et al, 2009).

6.1.3 Extra-curricular Sports at School

'Extra-curricular sports at school' refers to activities organised by the school and held on school grounds, outside of normal school hours or during break times. Children in each type of school had participated in extra-curricular sports, but these children were in a minority, with few children having experience of this type of activity outside of school. The table below illustrates the extra-curricular sports clubs children had participated in:

Table 6.3 Extra-curricular Sports Clubs

Club	Participant	Type of School
Multi-sports club	NB, DB, DF, AF	Primary, special
Basketball club	AC	Secondary
Judo club	OA, SB, MB, NB	Primary
Gymnastics club	OA	Primary
Netball club	DC	Secondary

Only seven children had participated in extra-curricular activities organised by their school, and the majority of these children were from the primary schools. This echoes the findings of Sport England (2001) who state that 85% of children with disabilities had not taken part in extra-curricular sporting activities. Moreover, the most popular extra-curricular sports clubs for children with SEN in this study were the multi-skills clubs and the judo clubs, and unlike results for the informal activities and formal sports clubs, ball games were the least frequently participated in, with the exception of gymnastics. This finding was of particular interest given the preference shown for ball games in all other areas of PE and sport outside of school, as noted in the previous chapter.

It is worth noting that the two participants who did participate in extra-curricular ball-orientated sports had SpLD (dyslexia), whereas participation in other extra-curricular activities was spread between children with physical and non-physical SEN. Literature (Penney and Harris, 1997; Green, 2000; Smith, 2004) indicates that children with PD are often not included in extra-curricular sports activities, because the teachers who run these activities tend to place more emphasis on competitive games rather than recreational activity (Green, 2000; Smith, 2004), and this effectively results in a minority of children having the opportunity to participate in such activities (Penney and Harris, 1997). In addition to this, Smith (2004) reveal that often children with PD are not present in competitive games activities as part of extra-curricular sports clubs, whereas children with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, are. This might explain the absence of children with other, more physical SEN, from these types of extra-curricular activities. Moreover, the two participants provide evidence for the relative competitive nature of these activities:

AC: It's [basketball club] good because you against others. The only downside is that you don't get to play any basketball [inter-school] matches

I: Why don't you get to play basketball matches?

AC: Because there's not many schools that play basketball

I: Have you played in any matches before?

AC: We played in a school match, like every single night we play in a school match.

[Interview with AC, School C]

DC: I like to do netball

I: Why do you like netball?

DC: I like the fact that you get a chance to get the ball and all that, and a chance to get the ball and shoot and all that, and it's just dead good and you get to go to other places like other schools and that.

{School C Focus Group}

These quotes not only support the competitive nature of these activities, but also indicate that the children enjoy the competitiveness of the activities, and playing in matches against other schools. Moreover, the competitive nature of these activities was often quoted as a reason for preferring these types of activities within PE, so perhaps there are other reasons why only a limited number of children were involved in games-type extracurricular activities. Penney and Harris (1997) suggest that one reason might be that competitive extra-curricular tend to be geared towards coaching those who are gifted in sports, rather than gearing extra-curricular activity towards the enjoyment of participation. Similarly, Green (2000) indicates that teachers in his study

felt that extra-curricular sports were an extension of curricular PE, whereby the targets and skills were set higher, which in essence eliminates pupils who may not be able to reach these extended targets from participating in these activities. As such, Penney and Harris (1997) indicate that focussing upon the recreational nature of extra-curricular activities is more likely to ensure inclusive participation, and this explanation could be used to interpret the popularity of the multi-sports and judo clubs for the majority of other pupils who participated in extra-curricular sports clubs at school. The multi-sports activity clubs the children in this study participated in tended to be extra-curricular clubs tailored for children with SEN, and ran for only a short time, for example, one term. In addition to this, both the judo and the multi-sports clubs were run by either teachers from other schools, or by specialists. Moreover, there did not appear to be any focus on competition, but rather on developing skills in a variety of different sports, and enjoying those activities:

I: What kinds of sports do you do at the after school club?

AF: All different.

DF: We do football.

CF: Football.

AF: And whatcha call it... curling.

DF: Curling, Javelin, Discus err what else do we do..

AF: Tennis

DF: Oh and tennis

AF: Badminton

[School F Focus Group]

AF: Wednesday [afterschool club] we do boccia, curling any sport we want.

[Interview with AF, School F]

DB: Well this person, it's a man, and erm I forgot his name but we do like loads of activities like hurdles and basketball.

[Interview with DB, School B]

Similarly, the judo extracurricular clubs that the children attended did not seem to be competitive in nature, but rather the children perceived it as a chance to play new games and a different context, as well as an opportunity to learn different ways to express emotions:

SB: Tomorrow, and at our last judo and erm, before last judo we played sumo wrestling and I dunno, it's like judo but it's different.

DB: It's like wrestling.

SB: Yeah but its' about me and but I dunno what we'll be playing tomorrow but erm, we played like this rugby game as well you know.

[School B Focus Group]

I: What do you think about judo?

OA: *It's good.*

I: What's good about it?

OA: *Cos instead of fighting with people you get to express your anger in a nice way. So say you get a bit mad, you'd like ... you know that you're going to go to judo and you can, like you can do that but not in a horrible way, in a way that's a good way.*

[Interview with OA, School A]

The children who attended the multi-sports and judo extra-curricular clubs displayed a wider range of different SEN, including PD, EBSD and SpLD in literacy, and as such, it can be suggested that these particular clubs appear to be more inclusive of a range of SEN compared with the more competitive ball-orientated extra-curricular clubs. Moreover, from the perspectives of the children, it is evident that these activities are for enjoyment, skill development, as well as allowing opportunity for more personal outcomes, such as that apparent with OA, who utilises judo as a method for developing strategies to deal with her anger (OA has EBSD, and as such this outcome, for her, was positive and considered worthwhile). As such, it seems clear that Penney and Harris's (1997) statement that a focus on the recreational rather than competitive aspects of extra-curricular activities can in fact encourage inclusive participation. Therefore, it seems necessary, in terms of children with SEN participating in these activities, that schools and the teachers who run these extra-curricular clubs allow more focus on recreational skill development in the more traditionally competitive extra-curricular sports clubs, such as ball games - which are evidently preferred activities for these children; and so encourage participation from a wider range of children.

In addition to this, based on the findings of this study, schools and teachers must be more pro-active in alerting children to the availability of these clubs, and this too could promote participation. Of the children who participated extra-curricular clubs, and those who didn't, many, especially those children in primary schools, were unaware of all of the available opportunities. Moreover, the primary school children in particular, felt teachers could do more to present those opportunities to them. It was clear that the use of letters sent out to parent was a determining factor in children joining extra-curricular clubs, and for those who did not, it was stated, that a letter about a club would encourage them to join:

I: *How did you get into the judo?*

SB: *Got a letter.*

MB: Well you got a letter and then it was the first something or fifteen or something to bring it in.

[School B Focus Group]

I: How did you start doing judo?

NB: Because there's a letter going home so I just did it...

I: What do you think they [teachers] should do [to help you do more sport outside school]?

NB: Like bring letters and see who can, and tell you where you can really go and stuff

[Interview with NB, School B]

DB: well the teacher, Mrs C give me a letter and if I wanted, then my mom has to sign it and then I wanna go, if I wanna go, erm like do activities

[Interview with DB, School B]

FB: There's a tennis club and I was going to go but my mum didn't get the letter

[School B Focus Group]

I: Is there anything that the school could do to encourage you to do football [club] again?

MA: Well, like in assembly, they could tell you to get out more, play more, do more sports, erm, sign up on the letter, saying such and such can do this and that, blah-de-blah.

[Interview with MA, School A]

While the primary school pupils felt that a letter to parents was the most appropriate method for encouraging participation, the secondary and special school pupils did not appear to perceive this as an issue. However, the secondary school pupils tended to partake in formal sports clubs and this might be a factor in their relative absence from, and lack of discussion surrounding extra-curricular sports. Nevertheless, Smith (2004) indicates that teachers believe the absence of children with SEN from extra-curricular activities is due to a lack of self-confidence, barriers, such as transport issues, or a disinterest in PE. However, it is clear from these findings that, children with SEN, of all ages enjoy physical activity outside of school, and many wanted to take part in more activities. This is evident in the number of pupils undertaking informal and formal physical activities, as well as those utilising school extra-curricular clubs. It is clear, nevertheless, that schools must make an effort to ensure children are aware of the opportunities available to them to participate in sport outside of school. Without a knowledge of what is available and how to access these opportunities, children may not be able to reap the social, psychological and physiological benefits (Goodwin and

Watkinson, 2000; Kristen et al, 2000) of physical activity outside of school, therefore not achieving the intended 5 hours-a-week intended by PESSYP (DCSF, 2008).

6.1.4 Experiences of Sport Outside of School – Conclusions and Recommendations

This discussion set out to examine children with SEN's experiences of the PE curriculum, relating to the research sub-question *“What opportunity does the child have to partake in extra-curricular sport, or sport in the community and are these accessible to the child?”*. Three levels of physical activity participated in outside of school were discovered, and these were:

- Level 1: informal physical activity
- Level 2: formal sports club
- Level 3: extra-curricular sports at school

Findings relating to informal physical activities showed that all children participated in some form of informal activity outside of school, and this was often in the form of playing ball games with friends, or playing in the garden at home. Few children claimed to be sedentary in their activities, and it was evident that the participants considered exercise when opting for traditionally considered sedentary activities, such as video games, choosing a more active game play experience (Marks and Rhodes, 2009), for example using a Nintendo Wii console.

Nevertheless, similar to Connors and Stalker (2007), and Goodwin and Watkinson (2000), in reference to the use of leisure centres, there appeared to be a number of barriers limiting their use. These ranged from access barriers for children with PD, to the cost, age restrictions, lack of advertisement, and the behaviour of others using the facilities. As such, it is recommended that:

- Barriers restricting access for children with PD and more complex needs are removed; ensuring children are allowed equal opportunity to use facilities. This can be in the form of providing access equipments, such as hoists, as well as ensuring staff are made aware of how they may aid children with SEN to use the facilities, in order to reduce the pressure placed on family.
- Funding for the Free Swimming Programme (DCMS, 2009) be extended so that more councils can provide free swimming for all children under the age of 16, therefore providing equal opportunity to all children to make use of facilities.
- Re-consider age restriction places on the times children and young people can use facilities, ensuring they are available at the same times that children are.

- Advertise facilities more clearly so children are aware of what is available.
- Ensure staff deal with disruptive behaviour promptly so as to not discourage children from using facilities.

With the exception of the first point, all others, if dealt with effectively, could benefit all children, not just those with SEN, and as such, it is felt that necessary changes must be made within leisure centres to remove barriers to participation, and therefore encourage children to use them more frequently, and as a result maintain a healthy and active lifestyle.

In terms of formal sports clubs, it was found that several children with SEN in this study participated in them, however, the majority of participants undertaking this form of activity outside of school were male. Nevertheless, perceptions of these clubs were positive. Children embraced the dissimilarity to PE lessons, perceiving the formal clubs are providing more freedom. Moreover, children appeared to appreciate the social nature of these clubs, which can aid social inclusion, as suggested by Sport England (2001). Not only this, but in competitive clubs, psychological benefits such as pride and increased independence were noted. It was also found that family tended to be the main influence in taking up sport in a formal club, and this resembled the work of Wold and Anderssen (1992) and Fitzgerald et al (2003a), however, Smith (2003) indicated that research relating to the role of family members in influencing sport uptake was limited, and as such, it is recommended that more work be done in this area to examine the influence family members have in encouraging children with SEN to take up sport outside of school. Moreover, it is encouraged that sports clubs further engage with children with SEN and promote membership as the social and psychological benefits of participating in a formal sports club was evident in this study.

Finally, with regard to extra-curricular sports at school, it was found that few children with SEN in this study participated in these types of activities, and of those who did, the most popular activities tended to be those which were more recreational in nature. Penney and Harris (1997) suggests that recreational factors may promote more inclusive participation compared with the traditional competitive games usually undertaken in extra-curricular clubs, and Smith (2004) suggests that this may be due to teachers preconceptions. As such, it is advised that schools and teachers emphasise the recreational nature of extra-curricular sports, allowing children to enjoy the activities, and it is hoped that by doing this, more children, particularly those with SEN, will participate in extra-curricular sports clubs.

It was also found that children may not be aware of the extra-curricular activities available, and so it is suggested that schools make these opportunities more apparent to children, perhaps through letters to parents, in order to ensure that they have knowledge of the activities they can become involved in.

CHAPTER SEVEN: EXPERIENCES OF OTHER PEOPLE IN PE

This chapter examines the thematic findings from the research relating to children with SEN's experiences of other people in their PE lessons. The core theme 'Experiences of Other People in PE' arose from direct questioning of the children in both the focus groups and the individual interviews about their perceptions of their classmates and their of their PE teachers. As such, this theme was split into two sub-themes; *experiences of PE teachers*, and *experiences of classmates*; which are explored separately within this chapter.

Despite being discussed separately, both of these sub-themes relate to the research sub-question *"How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?"*. As such, this chapter aims to respond to this question by, firstly, exploring children with SEN's perspectives and experiences of their PE teachers. This will give insight into who teaches PE within each school context; children with SEN's opinions about their PE teachers, as well as their direct experiences surrounding their PE teachers. Following this, an examination of children with SEN's experiences and perspectives of their classmates will be given. This sub-theme will explore children with SEN's positive and negative experiences of their classmates within a PE setting, and the ways in which this has influenced their experiences and perceptions of PE.

In responding to the research sub-question *"How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?"*, and exploration of children's perspectives of their PE teachers and classmates will contribute to answering the main research question *"What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?"*

As with previous themes, the findings for this core theme were originally analysed within the different school contexts in which they occurred. While some perceptions were restricted to the types of schools in which they occurred, specifically for experiences of PE teachers, common perspectives and ideas were discovered when triangulating the data (Robson, 2006). As such, where relevant, findings are drawn together to represent the overall perspectives of children within this study. Moreover, the findings are discussed in relation to existing literature, whilst attempting to answer the research questions, in order to arrive at conclusions and recommendations which have emerged from this core theme.

'Types of Talk'

When examining the data relating to this theme, it was evident that the perceptions of children in this study which related to their experiences of other people in PE lessons, was a mixture of both 'classroom talk' and 'identity talk', as discussed by Arnot and Reay (2007). 'Classroom talk' refers to children's interpretations about the ways in which lessons are taught. Arnot and Reay (2007) argue that this type of talk provides insight into children's perceptions relating to the differences in academic achievement in lessons, and this type of talk was most often reflected in children's experiences of how their teachers included them, and the ways in which they experienced their peers. 'Identity talk' was used by participants too, when discussing social interaction, and their concepts surrounding friendship in PE. This type of talk refers to the ways in which children perceived their PE teachers as someone who was more than just a teacher. By addressing the different types of talk, this research not only provides insight into children's experiences of other people in PE, but demonstrates that children with SEN are able to use a variety of different codes in their discussions, demonstrating their ability to communicate effectively and appropriately within an education setting. As such, this highlights to practitioners the suitability of using methods of consultation with children with SEN, in order to determine factors which are both beneficial and detrimental to their education, whether in mainstream or special school settings. Therefore, types of talk were taken into consideration when analysing the findings and this is expressed within the discussion. It is considered through discussion relating to both children's experiences of their PE teachers and their classmates; as well as in their perceptions relating to how these people impact on children's constructed meaning (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) surrounding the ways in which they experience PE lessons.

7.1 PE Teachers

This sub-theme relates to the research sub-question "*How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?*" It assesses children with SEN's perceptions and experiences of their PE teachers. As such, it addresses children's personal views about their PE teachers and the ways in which this influences their enjoyment and participation in PE lessons.

In assessing children with SEN's experiences of their PE teachers, it was evident that there were differences in who taught PE within the various types of school. However, factors relating to children's personal perceptions about their PE teachers and the varying positive and negative roles the teachers undertook in PE, presented both

similarities and differences between the different children and school contexts. Nevertheless, it was possible to develop categories under which these different factors could be discussed. These are:

- Who teaches PE?
- The role of the PE teacher
 - PE teacher as a helper and a friend
 - PE teacher as a manager of behaviour
 - PE teacher as an inhibitor of activity
 - PE teacher as a bully

These will now be discussed in relation to existing literature and the research questions, in order to understand the role teachers play in influencing the experiences children with SEN have in PE lessons.

7.1.1 Who teaches PE?

During focus group data collection, children were asked about their perceptions of their PE teachers. It was evident through their discussions, however, that the person who taught PE impacted upon children's perceptions of them in a PE context, and of PE lessons in general. This was particularly true for the primary school-aged children, who tended to be taken for PE by their class teachers, with the exception of a few children in School B, who had a specialist PE teacher from a local high school who came to take them for PE lessons. In School A and School E, however, all of the children had PE lessons delivered by their class teacher. The differences in provision between these two schools allowed for comparisons to be made between the perceptions of those who had specialist PE provision, and those who were only taught PE by their class teacher.

For the children, particularly those in School A, who were taken for PE by their class teachers, comments tended to explore ideas surrounding the knowledge their teachers had specific to PE. This is demonstrated in the excerpts below:

MA: Well, we don't have PE teachers; we just have, like, our regular teachers.

I: What do you think about that?

MA: Well, sometimes they, like, forget what they're supposed to do and we could, like, pull a muscle... [They're] erm, not really up to PE, to like step forward and help us out with the PE lessons and that.

(Interview with MA, School A)

OA: We normally have Miss O [class teacher], which is good, but I'd rather have a professional teacher, cos they'd know more what they were doing and they can do better - then they know what like what's right for you.

(Interview with OA, School A)

The children in School A stated that they would prefer to have a professional coach or teacher for PE, who might know the sports better and be able to teach them more effectively. The primary reasons for this appeared to be due to the perception that class teachers were not skilled enough in PE to provide effective and suitable support to aid skill development. Hopper et al (2000) provide some explanation for this. They state that during ITT less time is allocated to PE for primary school teachers due to the demands placed on other subjects such as mathematics and English. Furthermore Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) (2001) offers statistical evidence which indicates that only 30% of primary school PE programmes were rated as 'good' during inspections. In addition to this, Morgan and Bourke (2008), from an Australian context, argue that within primary schools, non-specialist PE teachers lack confidence in teaching PE, and further to this, are critical of the training they receive to teach PE. Armour and Duncombe (2004) support this, indicating that the PE co-ordinator who participated in their research was not even required to have any formal extra PE training in order to achieve the role. As such, it is evident that PE as a subject is not only marginalised during ITT, but that it is not meeting standards of attainment set by the government – particularly in primary school settings. This has implications for the quality of PE experienced by children in primary schools (Armour and Duncombe, 2004; Morgan and Bourke, 2008), and more so, is clearly having an effect on the outcomes for children (DfES, 2004d), as evidenced by their perceptions of their PE teachers and lessons. Moreover, this is a factor which could equally affect other children who do not necessarily have SEN. Due to this, it seems necessary that more training is given to primary teachers, in providing effective, safe and appropriate PE lessons for children. This could be done effectively, by ensuring teachers are aware of the outcomes and qualities necessary for high quality PE teaching (DfES, 2004d; QCDA, 2009a), such as improving their own subject expertise, and listening to the values of their pupils (DfES, 2004d). It is, therefore, recommended that primary school teachers are given opportunity to attend CPD courses providing specific guidance on PE (Armour and Duncombe, 2004) as a means of presenting opportunity for them to improve on their subject knowledge. In addition to this, PE should be given equal importance in curriculum structuring and timetabling within schools. This could be done by highlighting the importance of PE for young children, therefore ensuring teachers are aware of the benefits PE has for lifelong health, fitness, and mental well-being

(HMEI, 2001); and also through teachers' awareness of the perceptions of their pupils, and how these can be used to achieve high quality outcomes in PE (DfES, 2004d). This is particularly important as HMIE (2001) state that staff development in PE at primary schools showed important weaknesses, and this evidently, and in relation to the research sub-question *"How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?"* has an effect on the experiences of children in PE lessons. In employing these recommendations, it is expected that primary schools can raise the quality and outcomes of PE for their pupils (DfES, 2004d).

In addition to this, specialist PE provision should be made in primary schools, to ensure equal opportunity is available for children to be taught by a skilled professional (HMEI, 2001). The children in School B who had this opportunity, commented on their own preference for having a specialist PE teacher and the opportunity to be taught by someone who had the knowledge and skills to assist them in not only enjoying PE, but acquiring the skills needed for success, and motivating children to take up sports outside of school.

SB: We have this cricket man [for PE], and his name is Colin and he plays at [name] Cricket Club. I was saying that I'd like to join his team.

[School B Focus Group]

I: What do you think about Mr H and Miss M?

NB: They're very... They teach you stuff and you get to do stuff that's really fun

I: Do you think they're good at teaching PE?

NB: Yeah... They know what kids like...because when they were little they probably played the same games, probably played lots like we play in PE.

[Interview with NB, School B]

I: What do you think about having a teacher from [high school] come in and teach you PE?

DB: Great because that means you can know like other people from different schools.

I: What is like when it comes to teaching PE?

DB: Well erm, he, he's erm, he like picks like loads of activities what we haven't done like.

[Interview with DB, School B]

The children in School B who had the opportunity to be taught PE by a professional PE teacher/ coach discussed the range of activities they participated in, opportunities to participate in sport outside school, and their enjoyment of the lessons. As such, it was evident that these children felt they benefited from having this kind of specialist teacher in their lessons. In addition to this, children in the special schools (School F and School

G) also had access to specialist provision during PE. In School F this was in the form of physiotherapists, while children in School G had opportunity for specialist coaches to deliver specific lessons. These participants had sports coaches deliver a diverse range of activities to them on a termly basis. They, too, highlighted the perceived benefits of having this provision:

LG: I think it's a good idea because its different then isn't it and you sort of learning to work with other people.

[Interview with LG, School G]

LG: All the teachers that they bring in are nice and they sort of treat ya at a level of, sort of treat us like adults instead of kids and its fun.

[Interview with LG, School G]

TG: Erm every like term there is a different teacher comes in like instructor and does something like boxercise or hockey is good.

[Interview with TG, School G]

HMEI (2001) argue that specialist provision, particularly of secondary school PE teachers, to primary schools in some LA's has reduced, yet, having a specialist teacher available is considered to be one of the best forms of staff development, providing teachers with support and resources to deliver effective PE lessons. This further emphasises the need for specialist provision to be made available, especially to primary schools, in order to ensure teachers have the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge of teaching PE, but more importantly, to ensure children have the opportunity to participate in PE lessons which are well-structured, well-planned, and beneficial to their needs (HMIE, 2001).

As stated by Hopper et al (2000), primary teachers are under pressure to deliver a number of lessons to children. While the current NC for primary schools (DfES/QCA, 1999) is still prescriptive in terms of what teachers must teach; changes are being implemented in 2011, which will allow more flexibility in how the curriculum is structured (QCDA, 2009b). Nevertheless, it seems that currently, PE is a marginalised subject. The QCDA (2009b) consultation report showed that PE needs to feature more prominently within the curriculum, and as such the changes being implemented in 2011 might go some way to reducing the marginalisation of PE, and ensuring that the current goals towards the 5-hour policy (DCSF, 2008) are achieved. Nevertheless, within this study it was shown that at present this is not being achieved, and that PE remains marginalised. The primary school children in this study were aware of the diverse range of subjects their teachers were expected to teach, and for them, PE was sometimes perceived as a lessons considered by their teachers to be "a waste of time" (MB,

School B). They discussed factors which restricted PE due to teachers' perceived preferences for teaching other subjects:

MB: Some people think its [PE] a waste of lesson time.

DB: Like the teachers.

[School D Focus Group]

BB: Mr G. He didn't do, he did done PE but not a lot.

I: Why do you think he didn't do a lot of PE?

BB: Because he's more into art. Mr G liked to read books.

DV: Or do songs.

BB: He plays the guitar.

[School D Focus Group]

OA: You want to have a fun lesson as well when you're doing all the hard lessons and Miss never makes you miss them but sometimes you have to miss PE. We miss them [PE], say like we have do drama one day when people are coming in or something like that, they can never be moved to maybe missing literacy instead.

[Interview with OA, School A]

These children believed, not only that their teachers thought PE was unnecessary in light of the other lessons which needed to be taught, but also considered their teachers as having preference for other subject areas, which they felt limited how much time they participated in PE. This relates directly to the amount of time children spend in PE, as discussed in Chapter 5. The DCSF (2009) accept that the primary curriculum is too full, which results in teachers not having the time to ensure each subject they are required to teach is given adequate occasion to be engaged in. It is possible that this is resulting in the marginalisation of subjects, such as PE (Penney and Harris, 1997; Fitzgerald et al, 2003a; Morley et al, 2005). However, it is expected that if the changes suggested by the DCSF (2009), relating to increased flexibility of teaching, cross-curricular links, and the increased prominence of PE in the primary curriculum; PE will become less marginalised, and play a more wholesome part in the education of children.

As such, with regard to the perception of children that their teachers marginalise PE, it seems necessary for restructuring of the curriculum to take place, or more so, the ways in which it is understood and delivered by teachers and schools. More space needs to be made available to ensure adequate time is given to the delivery of PE, and this could be in form of cross-curricular links with PE, whereby children not only acquire the skills necessary for success in PE, but also learn subject knowledge required in other lessons (HMIE, 2001). This could be achieved by the new primary curriculum (QCDA,

2009b). Nevertheless, it is felt that, in addition to curriculum changes, the provision of further training for teachers, whether at CPD, or ITT, needs to be made available specifically with regard to PE, to ensure teachers are aware of the purposes and benefits of providing appropriate PE lessons. This could be linked with inclusive PE, or APE training to ensure that teachers are not only aware of how to deliver effective and appropriate PE lessons, but that they are also able to achieve this with children who have SEN in mind.

Therefore, in relation to the research sub-question *“How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?”*, it is evident that the teachers who deliver PE influence the ways in which they are perceived within a PE context, as well as the experiences that children with SEN have in PE, and therefore by providing teachers with necessary training and support to deliver valuable PE lessons is considered of key importance to ensuring children with SEN, and without, have positive experiences of PE.

7.1.2 The Role of the PE Teacher

In analysing the findings of this research in relation to the research sub-question *“How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?”* it was evident that PE teachers took on different roles in different contexts when considered from the perceptions of the children in this study. This was similar to Fitzgerald’s (2005) research, which presented findings to illustrate the ways in which children with SEN consider their teachers in the specific contexts in which they see them. It was found that children with SEN’s attitudes towards their teachers had a positive influence on experiences of PE; particularly when relationships with teachers were nurtured and perceived positively. The findings from this research illustrated a similar argument. They showed that children with SEN in this study considered their PE teachers according to the different roles they adopt in lessons, and it was evident that when this role was positive (a helper and friend, or the person to manage disruptive behaviour) experiences of PE were, too, considered in a positive light. However, when teachers adopted a negative role, such as one who inhibits participation, or a teacher who is also a bully, perceptions of PE, were also, negative. The different roles that the children with SEN in this study perceived their teacher as adopting are now discussed in detail to assess the impact these different roles have on children with SEN’s experiences of PE lessons.

The PE Teacher as a Helper and a Friend

When asked about their perceptions of their PE teachers, many children in this study used words such as “helpful”, “funny” and “friend” to describe how they perceived their teachers. This was often considered in terms of the support the teacher gave the child in lesson; but was also used to refer to the way in which teachers helped the children to learn through instruction.

FB: They [PE teachers] tell you what we're going to be doing, how you play and what sort of things you play with

I: So what are your feelings towards your PE teachers?

FB: They're good and they're helpful. Because if we, if we're struggling then we help, they help us, um, carry on.

[Interview with FB, School B]

AC: Like in rock climbing when you don't know how to, like cos we're learning how to do a double figured reef knot, I couldn't do that, they helped me, teach me how to do it.

I: Do they help you in any other ways?

AC: They give you more confidence in doing some stuff.

I: How do they give you more confidence?

AC: They cheer you on and, and let you, let you go at your own pace.

[Interview with AC, School C]

DF: Err [PE teachers are] really good help actually... Well we help them actually, and they help us.

[Interview with DF, School F]

JD: Sometimes when the team loses he [PE teacher] helps out to help them win the team and like, erm, and sometimes get the PE equipment and to get ready what we're doing.

[Interview with JD, School D]

These statements illustrate the children's positive perceptions of the help they received from their teachers in PE, which was often associated with positive feelings, such as increased confidence, and feeling encouraged and supported, and this is further substantiated by the pilot study findings (Coates and Vickerman, 2010). Moreover, it is clear that these positive perceptions had a beneficial influence on the ways in which PE was perceived. For these children, perceptions of PE were generally good, and children used words such as “fun”, “exciting” and “good” to describe their PE lessons. As such, these findings illustrate that positive perceptions of PE teachers can result in positive perceptions of PE lessons, and this does not only reflect the perceptions of children with SEN (Groves and Laws, 2000). Within their study, Groves and Laws (2000) examined the perceptions of children who do not specifically have SEN, and

discovered that their experiences and perceptions of PE are constructed by a number of different factors, similarly found in this research. Examples of these factors relate to activity preferences, and other people in PE. With specific reference to PE teachers, however, it was found that perceptions surrounding children's teachers influenced the ways in which they considered their lessons. As such, negative perceptions of the PE teachers resulted in negative opinions about PE lessons, while positive relationships with teachers resulted in positive perceptions of PE lessons (Groves and Laws, 2000). Therefore, the findings from this research do not only relate to children who have SEN. Moreover, when examining literature which seeks to explore children with SEN's experiences of PE, again, similar findings suggest that positive teacher-student relationships can be beneficial to the ways in which PE is experienced by children with SEN (Fitzgerald, 2005, Coates and Vickerman, 2010). However, much research specifically looking at the views of children with SEN, suggests that the positive relationships with PE teachers were inhibited through exclusion from PE lessons, or restricted participation (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Hutzler et al, 2002). As such, in reference to the research sub-question "*How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?*", it is clear that when children have positive perceptions of their PE teachers in relation to the support and help they receive in lessons, experiences of PE are also positive. However, given the findings of previous research (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Hutzler et al, 2002), it seems that this is only possible when children are included in their lessons, as were the children with SEN in this study. In terms of ensuring children are included in lessons, reference is made to the use of appropriate lesson differentiation, the development of supportive environments, by both peers and the PE teachers, and by allowing children to participate in all activities, providing them the opportunity become empowered by both success and through learning to cope with failure (Hutzler et al, 2002). Moreover, teachers need to make opportunities available to consult with their pupils about their needs, and in doing this, an inclusive environment where all children's needs are met, can be achieved (Hutzler et al, 2002; Stafford et al, 2003; Woolfosn et al, 2007; Connors and Stalker, 2007). Therefore, a recommendation as a result of these findings is that PE teachers are made aware of the role they have in influencing positive experiences of PE by adopting a supportive role. Moreover, teachers must ensure they are inclusive in their teaching. As such, inclusion training which informs on matters relating not only to practical considerations surrounding inclusive programme delivery; but to the conceptual ideas regarding inclusive philosophy and student-teacher relationships, is vital. This can be achieved through reform at ITT, by ensuring student teachers have formal opportunities to learn

about the inclusion of children with SEN (Morley et al, 2005; Lambe and Bones, 2006; Vickerman, 2007), as well as the importance of providing supportive environments for children to learn in, therefore embracing positive student-teacher relationships. For qualified and experienced teachers, this training can be delivered through formal CPD (Guskey, 2002).

In addition to this, however, teachers need to be aware of the ways in which their students perceive them and the roles they adopt. A common conception from some of the secondary school children in this study was that their PE teachers were not considered to be conventional teachers, but someone who they could “have a laugh with”, someone who encouraged them, and someone who was like a friend. This was similar to perceptions of non-SEN pupils, particularly those who were older (Groves and Laws, 2000). These conceptions were related to feelings of trust and security within PE lessons, and were of particular importance to some children who had negative experiences of school and, more specifically, PE, in the past. The following excerpts illustrate this.

MD: They're [PE teachers] good.

JD: I think Mr W is funny.

MD: Mr W, yeah he's funny.

...

LD: You can like have a laugh with them. In maths you like say something to the teacher and everyone burst out laughing and the teacher will just send you out like that, and it's like the rest of the class was laughing so why can't you have a laugh.

MD: Sometimes I don't even see them as teachers; they're like people who like doing sport.

LD: I see them as like mates like.

[School D Focus Group]

LG: Erm they are a laugh, it's nice to be taught by them... Erm we know them other than just for PE, like [PE teacher], he'll talk to us and he will treat us like a student but as a friend as well you know, like pally teacher, it's nice to be taught by someone you know and can trust... He's fair with everyone and he treats everyone the same.

[Interview with LG, School G]

DF: Well the PE teachers are really nice

AF: Really, really nice

I: What makes them nice?

DF: They actually listen to what we're saying

AF: Because some PE teachers just ignore you

[School F Focus Group]

In relation to the research sub-question *“How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?”*, it was clear that for these students, the PE teacher was considered as someone they could talk to, someone who would listen to what they had to say, and someone they could trust. In addition to this, they were considered to be more than just a teacher, but also as a friend. For the pupils in the Hospital School (School G), this was of particular importance as these pupils had had negative experiences of PE and their PE teachers whilst at mainstream school, and so having a PE teacher they could trust resulted in increased participation, but more importantly, increased confidence, self esteem, and reduced levels of insecurity. Moreover, for children in the other schools, having a PE teacher who was also considered to be a friend, improved experiences of PE, eliciting a greater sense of belonging in the lessons (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000), and increasing enjoyment of the lessons. These findings reflect the findings of Fitzgerald (2005), who confirmed that strong relationships with PE teachers “can nurture a more positive disposition towards participating in PE” (Fitzgerald, 2005:54). However, again it seems that these findings are not reflected in other research. Hutzler et al (2002), for example, states that children with SEN, rather than approaching their PE teachers, felt more confident raising issues with other teachers or staff members. This was not the case for some children in this study, who appeared to see their PE teachers as a confidant and someone they could go to in times of need. This was especially the case for the children in School G, and can be considered as a tool for empowering children to seek out assistance from their teachers and therefore ensure their needs are met (Hutzler et al, 2002). As such, it is recommended that teachers reflect on their own disposition in PE lessons. Teachers should nurture their relationships with pupils (Fitzgerald, 2005), providing a supportive and encouraging environment for all children, not just those with SEN, and perhaps consult with their pupils more frequently in order to develop a trusting relationship whereby children feel confident enough to approach their teachers. This is especially true for teachers of children who have had negative experiences of PE in the past, as it is evident that a supportive and trustful teacher can encourage participation in PE, and increase children's confidence in participating.

The PE Teacher as a Manager of Behaviour

In addition to perceiving their PE teachers as helpful, supportive, and friendly; several children with SEN in this study commented on the role their teachers took in managing disruptive behaviour in PE lessons, and the strategies they used to do so. Children

assessed their teachers' ability to disperse disruptive behaviour in order to reduce detriment to other children's experiences of lessons:

LD: When you're like playing football they [boys] just kick the ball at you and they kick ya, and when you're doing swimming, and you get out of the pool, they just dive at the deep end and come up and just push you.

I: what does the teacher do when this happens?

LD: Shout at them... If they push you more than once then they sit out for like ten minutes and then they come back in.

[School D Focus Group]

JD: They [PE teachers] sometimes, when someone's naughty tell them to have a time out

[Interview with JD, School D]

AC: You're meant to sit still and listen to the teacher and he [a classmate] starts tickling you in the back.

I: And how does that make you feel?

AC: Unhappy and because I was sitting next to my friends.

I: So what does the teacher do when this happens?

AC: Either he just tells them to stop it now, and he tells them to sit out for a bit.

[Interview with AC, School C]

It was evident that the most commonly used strategy for managing disruptive behaviour in PE lessons was for the teacher to either shout at the offending pupil, or to exclude them from the lesson for a short period of time ("*tell them to sit out*"). These strategies seemed to be used together, with exclusion being the final step towards reducing disruption. Moreover, in response to the research sub-question "*How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?*", in relation to children's experiences of PE and their PE teachers as a result of this, the use of these strategies was deemed to be beneficial when behaviour was managed effectively within lessons, particularly when this behaviour was directed towards them.

These findings, therefore, emphasise the need for teachers to manage negative behaviour effectively in lessons in order to ensure children have equal opportunity to benefit from PE lessons. This is something recognised frequently by other authors (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Hutzler et al, 2002). As such, it is recommended that teachers reflect on the social dynamics of the classroom in order to continue to develop methods for dealing with disruptive behaviour. While the methods of teachers explored here appeared to be effective in managing behaviour, perhaps further training in behaviour management would be beneficial to PE teachers

to develop other methods for dispersing inappropriate behaviour, particularly as some children in this study perceived shouting in lessons negatively (*"I just don't like to see people get shouted at"; "They go to shout at someone else, and you go on the trampoline like dead frustrated"*). Behaviour management is also noted as an area for development in CPD for teachers (TDA, 2008b), and as such it is further recommended that CPD providers develop training packages for teachers which address methods for behaviour management. These packages might address different strategies teachers can employ to deal with disruptive behaviour, as well as the development of environments in PE which might restrict or limit incidences of disruptive behaviour through differentiation, personalised teaching and learning strategies and suitable support for those children who might become disruptive. In doing this, all children should have opportunity to benefit from PE lessons free from disruption, whereby non-participation in PE is not perceived as the most suitable punishment, not does it detract from meeting the needs of other children in the lesson, as found in this study.

The PE Teacher as an Inhibitor of Activity

Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) discuss the ways in which restricted participation in PE lessons can have a negative effect on children with SEN's experiences of PE lessons, contributing to what they term to be 'Bad Days' in PE. These incidences of restricted participation, however, were often related to the children's SEN, and exclusion as a result of having SEN. However, within this study, incidences of restricted participation in PE tended to be due to factors unrelated to the child's SEN, such as forgetting their PE kit:

DB: Well if you don't bring you're PE kit in she [PE teacher] like, she tells you to sit out.
[Interview with DB, School B]

However, more commonly, the behaviour of classmates which disrupted lessons, and resulted in the whole class missing PE lessons rather than any individual child; or when other lessons were given precedence over PE, tended to be quoted as leading to restricted participation. The following statements illustrate this:

OA: When you're doing all the hard lessons and Miss never makes you miss them but sometimes you have to miss PE... like we have to do drama one day when people are coming in or something like that, they can never be moved to maybe missing literacy instead. **[Interview with OA, School A]**

OA: My worst PE lesson was with Miss K and all the people were talking so she just took us up and we didn't get to do it. [I felt] gutted because it wasn't, I dunno, like

disappointed because some of the other people, they weren't talking and didn't get to do it either.

[School A: Focus group]

MA: You know like, there's naughty people in your classes, and there's good people. Well, it's not fair on the good people when the mean people, like, get you out of PE cos they might be talking to their friends and our teacher might be strict, and they go, that's it, off to class now, get changed, we're doing work.

[Interview with MA, School A]

Incidences whereby children would miss PE either due to children being disruptive, or because of forgetting a PE kit was limited to the primary school children, and no similar incidences were discovered in the special or secondary schools. This could therefore reflect the marginalisation of PE (Penney and Harris, 1997; Fitzgerald et al, 2003a; Morley et al, 2005) in primary schools, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Moreover, it seems that teachers in these primary schools, particularly School A, used the restriction of PE for a whole class as behaviour management strategies for disruption by one or two children. In terms of the consequence this has on children with SEN's experiences of PE, relating directly to the main research question ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”***, it is argued that this has detrimental effects on the experiences of all children in PE, and could perhaps contribute to perceptions that PE is a treat, or optional, which could affect sporting uptake in later life; rather than portraying PE as a necessary and important lesson, aiding the development of children's mental, physical and social well-being (HMIE, 2001; Kristen et al, 2002). As such, it is recommended that teachers, especially primary school teachers who may not have specific PE training, seek out and attend training courses to improve their knowledge and understanding of PE. This should be encouraged by schools, and suitable provision for attending such courses should be made available. Moreover, courses should be facilitated by higher education institutions that provide ITT courses (Vickerman, 2007), who therefore might have specialism in providing this type of support and training to teachers. In addressing this, training at both ITT and CPD should therefore provide practical resources relating to effective behaviour management within lessons (Hutzler et al, 2002), so that no child is restricted from participating in PE, nor is non-participation used as a punishment for disruption of lessons, as discussed earlier.

The PE Teacher as a Bully

The role of the teacher as a bully was only evident from the exploration of experiences from the two female participants who attended the hospital school (School G), and only in reference to their mainstream school PE teachers. These two girls attended different mainstream schools before being referred to the hospital school, yet their experiences of their mainstream school PE teachers were similar. For both girls, their mainstream PE teachers were considered to be bullies. Moreover, this bullying contributed to their absence from their mainstream school, and subsequent referral to the Hospital school. These findings are illustrated in the following excerpts:

LG: The [mainstream PE] teachers were nasty and because of me size very nasty about that as well, erm and they sort of overworked ya, that kind of thing like they worked you over what your limits.

[Following a discussion about a situation which occurred in the changing rooms]

LG: I went and told the teacher and the PE teacher was horrible to me over everything in the changing rooms and then she was making a show of me in front of the group who were in and stuff like that so that was my worse PE lesson.

LG: They [PE Teachers] sort of put you into a group and it wasn't like a group as in you were set in that group I think it was what they thought of you and they would let you know that as well. I think they were, over a like I say over my size they were bad over that and everything like that and that's why I didn't like mainstream teachers... There were people in my group I would tend to find that they were sort of like that with them and they would tease us in front of a group of people. You would see them you know jabbing at little things but you know that's not good for students to see and they think they can do it and you know that's what can cause stuff.

[Excerpts from Interview with LG, School G]

CG: I didn't really do PE, cos the PE teacher used to bully me, used to call me fat and that to make me feel bad, and that happened at primary school as well ... In mainstream school, like the [PE] teachers, they'll get away with saying anything to you, because they just like call you fat and that, pass comments about your weight and how you look and everything, when you were doing PE. And like if you'd say anything they'd be like yeah but we're trying to make you better at PE but it doesn't, it just hurts your feelings more than anything.

I: So how did it make you feel when you say it hurt your feelings?

CG: Like, I didn't want to do PE anymore because I just felt embarrassed and insecure because like everyone'd laugh when the teacher would do that.

I: Did you ever tell anybody about what the teacher was saying?

CG: Yeah. But they didn't believe me because they don't think teachers'd do that.... It's like, some people are here because they've got no confidence, and like the [mainstream] PE teachers'll bring them down ... Cos in mainstream school they don't really care if they hurt your feelings or not, they don't put that into consideration when they talk to you, the way that they do.

[Interview with CG, School G]

These two female participants were on their school's SEN register for EBSD, however, when examining the discussion about their experiences, it was evident that, from their perspectives, the treatment they received from their PE teachers at their mainstream schools, was unrelated to their SEN. Instead, both of these participants believed their treatment was due to their "size", and as such, related this to perceptions of self-identity and image, rather than SEN. Moreover, LG indicates at a later point that she believed the perceptions of teachers (*"their personal opinion"*) was a factor attributing to their treatment in PE lessons. It is not clear if these are isolated cases, however, it is evident that the behaviour of the PE teacher in both of these cases was detrimental not only to the girls participation in PE, but also affected their confidence, self esteem, and feelings of security in a school setting, and both participants contributed these factors to them leaving mainstream school. Twemlow et al (2006) support this, stating that bullying by teachers can result in "vulnerable children suffer[ing] significant trauma" (Twemlow et al, 2006:197). While their findings related more to violence from abusive teachers, it is evident from the findings of this study in relation to the research sub-question ***"How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?"***, that bullying by teachers can have a significant effect on the ways children with SEN not only experience PE, but experience school life in general. As such, it is recommended from these findings that schools investigate bullying by teachers, perhaps through peer observation of teaching on a regular basis (TDA, 2008b), and review behaviour from teachers which might be interpreted as inappropriate. Moreover, these findings indicated that these pupils did not feel that, if reported, their experiences would be believed, or taken seriously. As such, it is recommended that schools develop support systems, whereby students can confidentially report incidents, and be counselled appropriately to limit the distress and trauma caused. This not only applies to PE, or just to children with SEN, but could benefit all children in all subject areas.

7.1.3 PE Teachers – Conclusions and Recommendations

This discussion set out to examine children with SEN's experiences and perceptions of their PE teachers, in response to the research sub-question ***"How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?"***. Factors relating to who taught PE, and the role which the teacher adopts in lessons were explored in order to understand the ways in which children with SEN's experiences and perceptions relating to their PE teachers influenced the ways in which they experienced PE.

Findings indicated, firstly, that the person who taught PE, and the training they had specific to PE impacted on the ways in which children with SEN experienced PE. In particular, it was found that primary school pupils, who are taught PE by their class teacher, perceived their lack of specific PE subject knowledge as detrimental to their experiences of PE. Moreover, those children who were taught by specialist PE teachers or sports coaches indicated that they preferred being taught by these people. As such, it is recommended that more training is provided to primary school teachers to ensure they have the knowledge and understanding necessary to deliver effective PE lessons. Moreover, in line with HMIE (2001) statements regarding the provision of PE specialists, it is recommended that more provision is made to ensure teachers have opportunity to develop their subject knowledge of PE, its delivery and its outcomes for children, with the support of a qualified PE expert. This would therefore ensure more effective delivery of PE lessons.

It was also discovered that children sometimes believed their teachers considered PE to be a 'waste of time', and other lessons considered more important. Again, this was specifically for the primary school children who were taught by their class teachers. This was further reflected in statements by the DCSF (2009) who accept that the primary curriculum is over-prescribed, and that the demand placed on teachers is high. As such, it seems that PE is becoming marginalised as a subject (Penney and Harris, 1997; Fitzgerald et al, 2003a; Morley et al, 2005), particularly within primary school settings. As such, it is recommended that primary school teachers receive further training both at ITT and through CPD about the benefits and importance of PE (HMIE, 2001; Kristen et al, 2002), as well as being given practical instruction about effective delivery of PE lessons. This will not only ensure that children with and without SEN are receiving a balanced curriculum (DfES/QCA, 1999) including high quality PE (DfES, 2004d; DCSF, 2008), but it could also address inclusion, ensuring children with SEN receive PE lessons differentiated to meet their needs. In approaching this, teachers should ensure children are included in lessons, through appropriate lesson differentiation. Differentiation can be in the form of modified assessments, adapted lesson goals and outcomes, as well as through the modification of game rules (Reid, 2003). Moreover, teachers must strive to provide supportive learning environments, ensure children are able to participate in all activities, therefore encouraging empowerment through both success and failure (Hutzler et al, 2002). Finally, teachers must consult with their pupils about their individual needs, and in doing this, it is anticipated that the quality of PE will improve for all children, resulting in the

achievement of goals set out by the government to develop high quality PE in schools (DfES, 2004d).

The roles which teachers adopt in PE lessons were also explored and four roles were found. Positive roles referred to teachers being a helper and a friend; and the teacher as a manager of behaviour. It was found that children with SEN's experiences of PE were positive when teachers were considered as adopting a positive role. However, negative roles included the teacher as an inhibitor of activity, and the teacher as a bully. Negative teacher roles appeared to contribute to negative experiences of PE, and particularly in the case of the teacher as a bully, appeared to have severe impacts on the psychological well-being of the child, and was deemed detrimental to future participation in PE (Twemlow et al, 2006). As such, in terms of the role the teacher adopts in lessons, it is recommended that teachers undertake reflective practice in order to assess their own role and the impact this has on the child's learning. This can be done through peer observation of teaching (TDA, 2008b), in order to encourage teachers to evaluate the teaching of others as a means of prompting them to think about the ways in which they teach. In addition to this, further training, in both behaviour management and effective delivery of PE lessons in order to ensure that children are not restricted from participation in PE due to disruptive behaviour and inefficient lesson delivery. Moreover, schools should ensure regular observation and review processes are implemented to avoid bullying in lessons. In addition to this, it is recommended that schools develop support systems, so that pupils can confidentially report incidents, and be counselled appropriately to limit psychological distress caused by bullying incidents, whether from peers or teachers.

In conclusion, this sub-theme has explored children with SEN's experiences of their teachers in response to the research sub-question ***"How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?"***. Findings have indicated that the ways in which children experience and perceive their PE teachers appears to impact on the ways in which they experience PE, whether this is due to the person who teaches PE or the role in which the teacher adopts. Nevertheless, it is only through consultation with children that we can understand the impacts that teachers have on their pupils, and it is clear that the student-teacher relationship plays an important role in the learning experiences of children with SEN.

7.2 Classmates

As with the previous sub-theme, PE teachers, this sub-theme, in part, responds to the research sub-question *“How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?”* This sub-theme, however, assesses children with SEN’s perceptions and experiences of their classmates within the PE setting, in an attempt to understand the ways in which children with SEN’s perceptions and experiences of their classmates’ influences and impacts on their experiences of PE.

Similar to Goodwin and Watkinson’s (2000:151) notion of ‘good days’ and ‘bad days’ in PE; in exploring children with SEN’s experiences of their classmates, it was apparent that children with SEN had both positive and negative experiences of their classmates, and this was true for all types of school. Children with SEN’s experiences of their classmates were positive when their classmates were considered to be ‘friends’ and this was the most common perception amongst the participants of this research. However, there were incidents in which classmates were perceived negatively, and this was generally attributed to bullying behaviour from classmates within PE lessons. As such, the positive and negative perceptions and experiences of classmates will be examined separately, under the sub-headings of “Friends” and “Negative Experiences of Classmates”, and discussed in relation to existing literature and the research questions, in order to understand the ways in which classmates’ impact upon the experiences of PE for children with SEN.

7.2.1 Friends

When asking the children in this study about their classmates, it was evident that generally other children in PE lessons were considered in a positive fashion, and often referred to as friends, findings which are supported by Seymour et al (2009). The following examples exemplify this:

PE: They [classmates] make me feel happy because when I’m left out they always cheer me up.

[School E Focus Group]

AC: We all best mates and we all know each other... They’re fun... Some can do stuff better and they’re nice friends.

[Interview with AC, School C]

I: What about your classmates. What are they like in PE?

LD: Funny, sound and amazing, good cos you have a laugh with them.

[School D Focus Group]

LG: We are all friends

[Interview with LG, School G]

These examples, similar to the findings of Seymour et al (2009), illustrate children with SEN in this study's perception that their classmates in PE were also often considered to be friends. This relates to what Goodwin and Watkinson (2000:151) refer to as having a 'sense of belonging' in lessons, whereby the child considers their classmates to be companions, who contribute to the supportive PE environment. Similarly, Hutzler et al (2002) indicates that their participants sometimes considered classmates to be friends, however, in line with other literature (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Fitzgerald, 2005) positive perceptions of classmates were often limited, or overlooked, due to more considerable data to indicate that children's experiences of peers were negative, stating that children with SEN were often socially isolated in PE lessons (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Place and Hodge, 2001; Hutzler et al, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2005). Nevertheless, many of the children in these studies had PD, and it is possible that this may have contributed to their experiences of their peers due to the nature of their SEN. This might be due to the physical nature of these impairments, as Connors and Stalker (2007) indicate that the experiences of children with PD and sensory impairment are often significantly different to those with less apparent difficulties. In addressing this, teachers and schools should encourage peer support and contact with children with different SEN (Slininger et al, 2000) in order to promote positive experiences of classmates in PE lessons.

However, it is worth noting that within this study, for the children who had PD, experiences of classmates were generally positive, and as such did not reflect the degree of negative experiences found by other researchers (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Place and Hodge, 2001; Hutzler et al, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2005). This could be explained by Seymour et al (2009) who state that the development of friendships can be an outcome of inclusive education, and as such, it is possible that the children, particularly those in the mainstream schools, were experiencing positive relationships with their peers as a result of successful inclusion in PE lessons. Moreover, they argue that friendship in PE lessons was shown to improve children's perceptions of themselves, of the support and guidance they received and of their enthusiasm for the subject (Seymour et al, 2009).

In support of Seymour et al 's (2009) suggestion, when asked to explain what they thought about having friends in lessons, the children with SEN in this study discussed how friendship with classmates positively impacted on their lessons, improving motivation, supporting each other and developing skills, which goes some way to understanding the impact classmates have on children with SEN's experiences of PE in relation to the research sub-question "***How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?***". This is illustrated below:

AC: If you do something good then all your mates will cheer you and clap you and help you.

I: How do you feel when all your mates are cheering you and clapping you?

AC: Happy and excited. You want to do it again.

[Interview with AC, School C]

I: what about the other children in your class? Can you tell me about them?

FB: Well, erm, they see me, if I'm struggling and they see me they come over to help and I think that's really nice.

I: How do they help you when they come over?

FB: Well if we're playing tennis they would help me like, tell me, um, which way to hold the racquet and stuff, and um how like Mrs E or Miss P said to do, they tell me again, just so, just to make sure I know.

...

I: Why is it important [to have friends in PE]?

FB: because if you didn't have anybody in PE with you then you would struggle a very lot.

[Interview with FB, School B]

MB: [Having friends in PE lessons is important] because then you can go and you can co-operate with the team.

[School B Focus Group]

These examples indicate that the children with SEN in this study generally felt that having friends in their PE lessons, and considering their classmates to be friends, was beneficial to their participation in PE. This was not only in terms of social support, as illustrated by AC, but also in terms of skill development – another important aspect of PE, as shown by FB and MB. Moreover, one child stated that it was important to resolve arguments before PE to ensure the best outcomes for the lesson:

OA: It [being friends] helps you work better together, then, cos if you've just had a fight with someone when you're about to do PE, maybe they wouldn't work as well with you, and say if you said like pass the ball to me, if you're working as a team with a ball, then like they might not pass to you because you've had a fight... Anyway I always sort it out before we do PE, just by saying sorry.

[Interview with OA, School A]

Evidently, therefore, children with SEN perceive friendship in PE as important, not only for social purposes, but also for practical reasons related specifically to successful participation in lessons, as well as psychological purposes such as increasing motivation within lessons. This supports Seymour et al's (2009) research, which also discovered that friendship in PE plays a role in supporting children with SEN, not only in their social interactions, but in guiding them and supporting them in participating in PE. While their research examined children with PD, it appears that these statements are also true of other children with different SEN, as illustrated in this research study. Moreover, it could be argued that the findings are not only limited to children with SEN. Smith (2003) argue that, while friendship in PE has not been examined extensively, peer-relations in physical activity can improve motivation, competence and self-esteem. As such, it is possible that research examining perceptions of classmates in PE for non-SEN children would yield similar results. Nevertheless, as Smith (2003) argues, more research is required in this area in order to substantiate the claim.

Nevertheless, given the current research and findings relating to children with SEN's perceptions and experiences of their classmates, it is evident for children with SEN in this study, that friendship in PE played an important role in social, and psychological well-being; as well as providing support to children for participation and skill development. As suggested by Seymour et al (2009), it is possible that this could be an indication of successful inclusion in PE lessons. As such, it is recommended that teachers continue to promote inclusive interactions in PE lessons, providing an environment in which friendship can develop, through the provision of suitable activities (Smith, 2003), and by ensuring children with SEN are included and experience meaningful participation within PE lessons (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Seymour et al, 2009). In doing this, children with, and potentially those without SEN, will have opportunity to develop friendship which will enhance their experiences of PE. Nevertheless, more research is required on the topic of friendship in PE, in order to understand more fully the role that friendship plays for children with and without SEN (Smith, 2003; Seymour et al, 2009).

7.2.2 Negative Experiences of Classmates

Whilst in general, experiences and perceptions of classmates in PE were positive for the children with SEN in this study, some children did indicate that they had negative experiences relating to their classmates bullying behaviour. These seemed to be

limited to isolated incidences, yet they did appear, for some children, to impact on overall experiences of PE, which not only relates to the research sub-question *“How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?”*, but also responds to the main research question *“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”*.

Bullying in PE was not a common finding in this research, but was experienced by some of the secondary-aged pupils in both the mainstream and special schools. When discussing experiences of bullying, the participants who had been bullied tended to describe isolated incidences in which bullying took place, or one person perceived to be a bully; and as such it did not appear to be widespread, as suggested by other research (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Hutzler et al, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2005). Nevertheless, it was apparent that while generally perceptions of peers were positive, bullying was still a barrier, which was detrimental to positive experiences of PE. Examples of bullying experienced by the children in this study were both verbal, such as name calling and teasing, as well as physical, such as stealing and throwing items at the child, and comparable findings to this were presented by Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Hutzler et al, 2002 and Fitzgerald, 2005, indicating that these types of bullying were not only representative of the participants in this study. Moreover, Glover et al (2000) present similar findings which further demonstrate that these findings are not limited to children with SEN. Remarks relating to bullying in this study are illustrated below:

LD: [Classmates say] like “oh my God you just thick, you done it wrong” “Oh god, get off the team” and all that

I: How does it make you feel when they say that?

LD: “Miss I’m not playing” and I sit on the bench

[School D Focus Group]

DF: There’s, there’s a kid called Andrew

AF: Andrew is really annoying

DF: Because he goes, be’s dead naughty

AF: He’s really, really, really naughty

AF: He calls everyone nasty names

I: what kinds of nasty names does he call you?

AF: Retard

DF: He swears and that

AF: Pulls tongues, makes funny faces, telling us to go away, telling us to shut up and everything.

[School F Focus Group]

LG: Well once I got me pants robbed and I know they were robbed like this, somebody came in from another group and they were all standing on one side of the changing room laughing at me and I was running round crying and they was horrible so I hated that.

[Interview with CG, School G]

CG: They were like, "oh well you just can't do it cos you're fat" and like "oh my God why can't you run, is it cos you're fat?" And like all stuff like that, and they like don't take into consideration of people's feelings in mainstream school.

[Interview with CG, School G]

NC: I, I've had a carton, you know a box and it had juice in it, and hurled it at my head, and it hit me and split and went all over me.

[Interview with NC, School C]

Although bullying for the participants of this study tended to be quite isolated, it still occurred in the PE lessons, and this was true for both special and mainstream pupils who were of secondary age. Bullying was not as evident within the primary aged participants, and it was less common for the male participants. Glover et al (2000) indicate the females are more likely to become victims of bullying, due to their non-retaliatory nature, and this may explain why incidences of bullying were more common for the female participants. Nevertheless, more research would have to be conducted to examine fully gender and age differentials in bullying during PE, perhaps specifically looking at children with SEN, in order to further substantiate this.

Nevertheless, Glover (2000:148) does point out that 'being different' accounts for 13% of bullying and this seemed to be the main motivator of bullying incidences for the participants of this study. In particular, children in this study indicated they were bullied for "being stupid", "dressing differently" or "being fat". Few comments related directly to specific SEN, and as such, it is probable that perceived difference (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2005; Connors and Stalker, 2007) was not limited to the SEN children had, but to other factors which presented opportunity for other children to discriminate.

Despite this, however, these findings are supported by other research examining the experiences of children with SEN in PE, which suggest that bullying in PE lessons negatively impacts on the experiences of children with SEN's experiences of PE (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Hutzler et al, 2002;

Fitzgerald, 2005). This is particularly evident from the comments of LD, LG and CG, who all stated that they preferred to not take part in PE when bullying occurred. This is further supported by Glover et al (2000) who indicate that bullying can result in children having reduced self-esteem and increased insecurity, and this was reflected in the perceptions of the children in this study who experienced bullying. Moreover, children in this study who were victims of bullying did not believe their teacher's interventions were particularly effective, often indicating that their teachers did not punish the bully, or that they instead were punished by their teacher. This further negatively impacted on their experiences of PE. As such, in relation to the research sub-question ***“How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?”***, it is evident that negative experiences of classmates can be detrimental to experiences of PE, and in addition to this, the interventions of teachers can further impact on experiences if these interventions are not perceived to be effective. Glover et al (2000) argue that there is still confusion in schools surrounding what constitutes bullying, and as such, more concrete definitions need to be determined in order for effective intervention to take place. Nevertheless, it is recommended that schools and teacher initiate and support anti-bullying campaigns which provide counselling to victims in order to reduce the long-term impact that bullying can have (Glover et al, 2000). Moreover, teachers need to be tactful in their approach to dealing with bullying in the classroom to reduce its impact, and as Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) point out, this requires sensitivity in order to reduce feelings of 'otherness' (Fitzgerald, 2005:52). Finally, teachers should be encouraged to undertake CPD training courses directly linked to the management of behaviour, in order to determine methods for coping with bullying in the classroom, with scope to prevent and reduce bullying incidences (Hutzler et al, 2002).

7.2.3 Classmates – Conclusions and Recommendations

This discussion set out to examine children with SEN's experiences and perceptions of their classmates in PE lessons, in response to the research sub-question ***“How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?”***. Findings indicated that children had both positive and negative experiences of their classmates, and this was explored in terms of “friends” and “negative experiences of classmates”. The purpose of this was to understand the impact that classmates had on children with SEN experiences of PE in relation to the main research question, ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”***

Findings showed that generally, perceptions and experiences of classmates were positive and many children stated that they considered their classmates to be friends. This finding was not reflected in much other research (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Place and Hodge, 2001; Hutzler et al, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2005), yet Seymour et al, (2009) did present comparable findings and indicated that friendship in PE was a goal, and an indicator of inclusion. Moreover, when examining the role friendship played within PE lessons, it was discovered that peer relations contributed to children's social and psychological well-being in lessons. This was supported by Seymour et al (2009), and Smith (2003) noted that non-SEN children also benefited from friendship in physical activity. As such, in relation to these findings it was recommended that teachers endeavour to provide a suitably supportive environment which encourages the formation of friendship within PE. Moreover, in specific relation to children with SEN, teachers should ensure that lessons are inclusive and that children are able to participate meaningfully (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Seymour et al, 2009) in order to encourage friendships to develop for children with SEN. Nevertheless, it was also determined that further research be done which examines more fully the role of friendship in PE, in order to understand the full extent to which friendship positively impacts on experiences of PE for children with and without SEN, and methods for encouraging the formation of friendship in this context.

It was also found that, while generally perceptions of peers were positive, isolated incidences of bullying had a detrimental effect on the experiences of PE. This was particularly true for secondary aged females within this study. These findings more closely mirror those of previous researchers (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Place and Hodge, 2001; Hutzler et al, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2005), who indicated that bullying of children with SEN was a regular occurrence in PE lessons, yet Glover et al (2000) indicate that these findings may not just be representative of children with SEN. Difference appeared to be a determining factor leading to bullying incidences and this was, again, not limited to SEN, but to appearance, weight and the ways in which the children dressed. Moreover, the children in this study did not believe their teachers' interventions were effective in reducing or controlling bullying. As such, it was recommended that anti-bullying protocols are supported in schools and that teachers are made aware of what constitutes bullying (Glover et al, 2000). In addition to this, teachers should undertake further training in behaviour management (Hutzler et al, 2002) in order to ensure that strategies they employ are effective in preventing and reducing the impact that bullying has on the

children who experience it. In doing this, it is expected that children will have more positive experiences of PE lessons, and that the harmful long-term effects of bullying can be minimised.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DIFFERENCE, EMPOWERMENT AND CHANGE

This final findings and discussion chapter explores the thematic findings from the research in relation to children with SEN's personal understanding of their difference from other children; their experiences of empowerment in a PE setting; and their desire for change in PE. While previous chapters have explored concepts external to the child as a means of influencing their experiences, this chapter's core theme, 'difference, empowerment and change', encapsulates these concepts, as a way of gaining further understanding about how children with SEN's experiences of PE influence their personal perceptions about themselves (difference), the ways in which PE can empower children with SEN (empowerment), and finally the ways in which children with SEN feel their needs could be met more effectively in a PE setting (change). In addressing these, it is anticipated that a complete view of the children with SEN who participated in this study can be arrived at.

The findings relating to this core theme arose through the exploration and interpretation of children's voice, as well as from the responses to questions relating to the three sub-themes examined within this chapter – **difference, empowerment and change**. These sub-themes will be deconstructed separately within this chapter.

In responding to the research questions, the sub-theme 'difference' responds directly to the research sub question "***How does the child feel he/she is treated differently to other children?***". This sub-theme explores children's conceptions of difference in PE lessons as an attempt to understand whether the child feels they are different to others in their lesson, and if so, why. In addition to this, it aims to investigate whether children with SEN feel they are treated differently to their peers, and in doing this, examines how differential treatment can affect the ways in which children feel about themselves and PE.

The sub-themes 'empowerment' and 'change' do not relate to any of the research sub-questions, but rather provide a final insight into children with SEN's experiences of PE in terms of their feelings of being empowered in PE lessons, and changes they would make to current PE programmes to ensure their needs are better met. These two themes are interrelated; in that empowering children to have their voices heard can result in the implementation of changes to better meet their individual needs (Hutzler et al, 2002; Stafford et al, 2003). The importance of empowerment and change for

children with SEN is also highlighted in both literature (Hutzler et al, 2002; Reid, 2003; Sherrill, 2004; Vickerman, 2007b; Woolfson et al, 2007) and SEN policy (DfES, 2001a; 2001b; 2004a), and is considered to be a key outcome of consultation. Therefore, as this research has sought to consult with children with SEN about their experiences of PE, including these sub-themes was considered to also be of importance. In assessing these sub-themes, the research will be concluded with summary recommendations relating the importance of consultation in meeting the needs of children with SEN in PE lessons. As such, these sub-themes respond, in part, to the main research question ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”*** as they provide scope towards understanding how children with SEN’s experiences of PE can be improved through empowerment, consultation and change.

As with previous chapters, the findings for this core theme were primarily analysed within the different school contexts in which they were collected. It was found, however, that perceptions of children with SEN in this study in relation to the theme ‘difference, empowerment and change’ were coherent across the different types of schools, and range of SEN. As such, triangulation of the data (Robson, 2006) allowed for findings to be drawn together and commonalities and differences highlighted. Findings will therefore be discussed in relation to existing literature and the research questions, and conclusions and recommendations will be given.

‘Types of Talk’

In examining the findings relating to the theme ‘difference, empowerment and change’, it was clear that children were consistently using ‘identity talk’ and ‘code talk’ (Arnot and Reay, 2007). ‘Identity talk’ refers to the ways in which the children in this study were able to conceptualise feelings of difference, articulate perceptions of being empowered and disempowered in PE, and through their ideas relating to the ways in which PE could be changed to better meet their needs.

In addition to this, ‘code talk’ was utilised when children attempted to understand their identities in terms of the ways in which other people and experiences influenced their perceptions, as well as the ways in which children attempted to conceptualise, analyse and understand the ways in which they felt and the reasons for these feelings. While this type of talk is considered to be the most complex for children to employ (Arnot and Reay, 2007), it was evident that the children in this study were able to use it in order to find meaning in their experiences (Smith et al, 2008). In addressing these types of talk,

it is possible to understand the ways in which children place meaning on their experiences and the ways in which factors and constructs (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) can influence the way perceptions are formed. As such, these types of talk were taken into consideration when analysing and contextualising the findings for this core theme.

8.1 Difference

During the one-to-one semi structured interviews, children were asked if they experienced any feelings of difference from their classmates in PE, or if they felt they were treated any differently by their PE teachers. This was in order to allow children opportunity to explore potential experiences and feelings associated with having SEN, in a way which would not directly label the child as having SEN. The decision to do this by focussing on difference was as a result of exploring existing literature which indicated that some children with SEN feel different to their peers and are treated differently by their PE teachers because of having SEN (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Goodwin, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2005, Connors and Stalker, 2007). Most children in this study, however, responded to this question by saying "no", that they did not feel different to other children in their class; and they felt everyone is treated the same in PE by their PE teachers.

Despite this, it was evident when analysing the data that some children were experiencing feelings of being different from others. Experiencing difference in many cases was not understood in terms of being different or having a SEN, but was instead recognised as an inherent part of school life. Moreover, it was evident that difference could be experienced both positively and negatively. Positive difference was perceived as experiences whereby being treated differently was deemed to be beneficial for the child and resulted in positive feelings of difference. Negative difference, however, emphasised the child's dissimilarity to others in a detrimental way, resulting in less favourable feelings. It can also be noted that these experiences of positive and negative difference were not attributed to any particular type of school, or SEN, but were evident across the range of children who participated in this study. These two perspectives will now be explored.

8.1.1 Positive Difference

In exploring experiences of positive difference for the children with SEN in this study, it was apparent that favourable feelings of difference resulted from successful and

beneficial differentiation of PE lessons to meet the individual needs of the children (DfES, 2001a; Reid, 2003; QCA, 2009). Differentiation came in the form of modified work and learning objectives, adapted assessment techniques, and individual support during lessons. This is evidenced in the following excerpts:

OA: Erm, I did, I do dancing [outside school]... It's good to get, to be able to do something else cos if you do like say you learn to do the splits in dancing, that'd be good for you also in gymnastics, cos then you don't have to practise for the next thing [in PE], you can say I know how to do that. You show it to them [PE teachers] so you don't have to take longer, and then you miss like most of the lessons, like you don't, you could spend one week trying to do the splits when you could have been doing other things.

I: So if you'd learnt the splits in dance tonight and tomorrow in gymnastics, they were teaching you the splits, what would you say to your teacher?

OA: I can do them and then I'd have to show them and maybe do the thing that we're supposed to do next week, maybe they'd teach me that week, so I could practice while they were doing the splits.

I: How does that make you feel?

OA: Proud.

[Interview with OA, School A]

AE: They [other children in the class] don't do the same because they're younger and they're not tall. [Classmates do] easy ones like roll over and like do cartwheels and in the mats.

I: Would you like them to do the same things as you?

AE: No, because they're younger and they might hurt themselves because their legs are not that tall and they like break their backs. They fall over.

I: So would you like to do the same things that they do on the mats?

AE: Uh-uh. It's too easy. I done it before when I was in year two... [I feel different from others in PE] because I know more than them. Because I go to mainstream classes. So they do different work and, and I get different work. [I feel] quite good because I've got different work and the work's harder.

[Interview with AE, School E]

In analysing the data, it was evident that differentiation of PE lessons for the children with SEN in this study resulted in positive feelings of difference. In the two cases above, for example, the children experienced feelings of pride in their ability as a result of this differentiation. As such, it is apparent that differentiation allowed for the child's needs to be met appropriately within the lesson, resulting in positive emotional responses, giving the children a sense of belonging in their lessons (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000). Furthermore, Hutzler et al (2002) indicates that the use of differentiation in PE lessons can empower children to participate. In support of Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) and Hutzler et al (2002), differentiation, as expressed by the children in this study, appeared to encourage participation and inclusion in

lessons by emphasising children's abilities in the lessons, for example OA having the opportunity to learn new skills rather than practicing ones already mastered. The SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a: 47) states that "all schools will through their cycle of observation, assessment, planning and review make provision for increased curriculum differentiation, curricular adaptations, and pastoral or disciplinary procedures dependent on the individual child's strengths and weaknesses. A variety of approaches should be employed to maximise the achievement of all pupils". It seems apparent that for some children with SEN in this study, successful differentiation was being utilised in order to maximise the child's individual achievements in PE, and as such, children were experiencing positive difference. Moreover, this gave the children a greater sense of skilful participation in their PE lessons (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000), and provided the children with the opportunity to progress in PE, achieve more, and highlighted their individual strengths. This, therefore demonstrates the ways in which teachers can utilise difference appropriately within PE lessons in order to provide the best opportunities for their pupils, and this is not only applicable to children with SEN (DfES, 2001a).

In addition to this, the study found that differentiation was also used as a method for encouraging children to participate in activities they were not as confident in, resulting in increased participation in those activities. This is illustrated below:

NC: On Wednesday we had PE and because the other group is doing dance and Miss said, "just sit down and remember the beginning of the dance" and, you know and when, you know I went "do I have to show it to anyone", she went "no, just as long as I can assess you on it" so it wasn't like, I didn't have to go on the DVD that the others have to go on and all that... I feel better about it [not going on the DVD] because I don't show anyone up, and no-one shows me up.

[Interview with NC, School C]

As discussed earlier, NC perceived participation in dance as unfavourable due to having webbed toes, and feelings of inferiority resulting from her perceptions relating to her SEN. The above quotation, however, illustrates how the use of differentiated assessment encouraged participation in this activity, reducing anxiety relating to taking part. In line with APE theories, the use of inclusive assessment techniques are considered to foster enjoyment in PE activities, resulting in a increased likelihood that the child will participate and progress successfully at their own pace (Reid, 2003; Sherrill, 2004). This further emphasises points raised earlier. It was discovered that for several children in this study – particularly those of secondary school age, over-emphasis on assessment to grade children appeared to be a factor perceived to be

detrimental for children with SEN achieving success in PE. As such, this called for better guidelines to be produced to ensure teachers are aware of the techniques they can employ to deliver inclusive assessment alongside their successfully differentiated and inclusive PE programmes. Inclusive assessment need not be difficult to achieve. Rather, it can be achieved by allowing children the opportunity to be assessed separately, as in NC's case, or through the differentiation of assessment criteria to represent the specific needs and strengths of the individual child. Moreover, through flexible curricula (QCA, 2007b), and the implementation of personalised learning (Miliband, 2004), inclusive assessment could become commonplace, allowing teachers to address the learning needs of all children.

It is evident from the results disseminated here, that differentiated assessment can result in increased participation in PE lessons (Reid, 2003; Sherrill, 2004), and as such, it is recommended that this is utilised more often to promote activity in PE. As such, it is recommended that inclusive assessment training is developed for both experienced, newly-qualified and student teachers. This could be achieved through formal inclusive assessment modules incorporated into ITT, as well as specific, focussed training sessions delivered through CPD for in-service teachers.

Moreover, the use of personalised, flexible curricula (Miliband, 2004, Miliband, 2005, QCA, 2007b, Robinson et al, 2008) for all children, not just those with SEN, may encourage the use of differentiation in order to promote positive difference in PE lessons. Through improved SEN training (Slininger et al, 2000; Vickerman, 2002, Morley et al, 2005), it is possible for teachers to learn how to manage difference positively in lessons, providing supportive and engaging environments for participation. This could result, not only in increased participation in PE, but also highlight children's abilities, allow them to build on their strengths, promote a sense of belonging in their PE lessons, and empower children to participate (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Hutzler et al, 2002; Reid, 2003). As such, in response to the research sub-question ***"How does the child feel he/she is treated differently to other children?"***, it was clear that yes, some children did feel different to others in their lessons. Moreover, they were also treated differently to their peers; but when this difference was managed appropriately by teachers, taking the form of lesson differentiation to meet the needs of the child, difference was perceived as positive, and as such, this should be harnessed and utilised by PE teachers in order to promote skilful participation and empower their pupils (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Hutzler et al, 2002).

8.1.2 Negative Difference

Negative difference was experienced by some children in this study. While positive difference tended to be associated with successful and beneficial differentiation, negative difference tended to be attributed to feelings of insecurity and unfavourable personal characteristics being emphasised within PE to highlight difference from others. For secondary aged pupils, this tended to be related to experiences of bullying, as discussed in the previous chapter. This is illustrated below:

CG: I was say one of the oldest there, so I was like the tallest and like, I wasn't the fattest, like but I am fat and like I'd notice that and like they'd point it out to me like, "Oh my God why can't you dance, is it cos you're fat?" And I was like, no, it's just that I'm not joining in cos I don't want to, and they'd like they'd pass comments about that type of thing.

[Interview with CG, School G]

LG: I am still self conscious in every lesson I am but more in PE because of what happened in mainstream and also like I said with me being bigger its sort of harder ... [In mainstream school] I was, erm, withdrawn but when I was asked to do something I would do it, the kind of thing I was never in a group if anyone ever wanted a partner I was either last to be picked or I done it on my own. [It made me feel] sad.

[Interview with LG, School G]

Both of these excerpts relate to the child's experiences of PE in their mainstream schools prior to moving to the Hospital School. It was evident that bullying in PE lessons relating to the child's weight and size, emphasised their negative feelings of difference. Moreover, this resulted in harmful emotions related to PE, such as insecurity, self-consciousness, embarrassment and sadness. It is worth noting that this might not necessarily only affect children with SEN, but may in-fact be a broader issue affecting many children in school PE lessons. Nevertheless, these feelings of difference were increased through the behaviour of others, and these findings are supported by a number of previous studies into children with SEN's perceptions of PE (see Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Hutzler et al, 2002, Fitzgerald, 2005; Connors and Stalker, 2007). These studies indicated that discrimination by other people in PE lessons can result in social isolation (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000), as evidenced by LG above, who states that she would often be last picked in PE or participate alone. Moreover, bullying in PE lessons resulted in children comparing themselves against others in an attempt to understand their difference, which further emphasised feelings of difference in the lessons (Fitzgerald, 2005). However, within these studies, children were discriminated against in PE lessons because of their SEN (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2005), while in the current study; SEN did not appear to be a significant

factor leading to discrimination in PE lessons. Rather, some children in this study believed discrimination occurred due to physical appearance, rather than SEN. This is evident above, and may also go some way to explaining the results of previous studies, such as that by Blinde and McCallister (1998) and Goodwin and Watkinson (2000), who found similar results for children with PD. It can be argued that the physical nature of some disabilities, and in the case of the children in this study, their own physical presence, is a more prevalent factor in determining discrimination in PE lessons, compared with other SEN which may not be as evident in the PE context. Evans (2003) supports this view, further arguing that the contextualisation of PE as a tool for producing physically fit children could further exacerbate this type of discrimination. As such, it is recommended that teachers move away from concepts of physical fitness, and focus upon producing physically literate children (Whitehead, 2001; Evans 2003), thereby shifting the focus away from appearance and ability (Evans, 2005). Moreover, teachers must learn to effectively manage difference and bullying in lessons, in order to limit the negative emotional impact it has on children with SEN, and those who may be discriminated against for other reasons, such as appearance and size. Given the findings of this study, it is clear that negative difference as a result of discriminatory behaviour can result in lowered participation and enjoyment of PE lessons, and as such does nothing to contribute to the aims of the NCPE (QCA, 2009) in ensuring children have the opportunity to participate successfully in PE lessons.

In addition to this, while some negative feelings of difference were attributed to discriminatory behaviour of others, some children indicated that difference was a result of not being popular. This is indicated below:

MA: Well, I'm not popular, and there's loads of people who are popular. And the people that aren't, like me, just tend to like sit back and watch the rest, and it's not really fair, cos you don't get to see what they're doing, they like kick you out and stuff.

[Interview with MA, School A]

I: Why don't they pass the ball to you?

NC: Because they think you can't get it, you know because you're not the best. They always think that because I'm different, that you know, I'm not going to like it so I'm not going to help them, you know what I mean. You can do it and score because like I play basketball, and it's just like, why don't they trust you to do it, so you know they'll give it to the popular ones...

I: When you said they won't pass you the ball in netball because you're different, what do you mean by that?

NC: They think that because you're not one of the popular ones, I have friends who are in the popular ones so it's like ok for me but you know when you first start at school, if you don't straight away get into the popular groups, everyone outcasts you in a way.

[School C Focus Group]

While Bryan (1976), in an out-dated study examining social rejection and social acceptance of children with learning disabilities by their peers, found these children were in fact less popular than non-disabled classmates, Seymour et al (2009) disagree with this. They provide evidence to suggest that children with SEN are not necessarily socially isolated, but do have more limited social networks compared with other children. However, within these studies, results tended to be closely related to the child's SEN, yet within the current study, children with SEN who participated did not appear to relate their unpopularity to their SEN. Rather this was due to the social groups they were a part of, who were collectively considered to be unpopular. This is further qualified by NC who distinguishes between two social groups at her school - "the moshers" with whom she associates herself with, and "the chavs" whom she considers to be the popular group, who are also considered to be more aligned with PE. In defining these groups, she refers to dress, behaviour and appearance as a method for distinguishing between the two groups, rather than SEN, and this is supported by Merton (1997), who studied popularity in an American high school. Merton (1997) suggests that popularity is determined by physical attractiveness, dress and the activities in which an individual might participate. Moreover, popular individuals identified by Merton (1997) were considered to be feared by others, and this seems to apply to NC's understanding of popularity. For NC, the "chavs" were often associated with bullying in and outside of lessons. As such, while evidence from studies, such as Seymour et al (2009) might suggest that children with SEN have smaller social networks, it seems apparent that there are other factors at play which determine popularity, which may not be related to SEN. Nevertheless, popularity in PE appeared to be an issue which resulted in negative feelings of difference. While it would be difficult to break down the boundaries of popularity in schools in order to reduce feelings of difference, effective class behaviour management by teachers (Hutzler et al, 2002) could go some way towards reducing the negative implications of being considered unpopular. Nevertheless, it is recommended that more be learned about popularity in terms of its influence on children with SEN's perceptions and experiences of PE, as currently this appears to be a relatively under-researched area (Smith, 2003 Seymour et al, 2009).

Nevertheless, some children felt that they were intrinsically different to other children in their lessons, and this was attributed to the way they felt about themselves, which is also evident in CG's understanding of her difference from others, "*I wasn't the fattest, like but I am fat and like I'd notice that*". However, there was the indication that other

people's behaviour contributed to these personal feelings. This is explored further by one participant, NC, who considered her reasons for feeling different from others in her lessons:

I: Why do you feel that you're different to other children in your class?

NC: Because of how I look and how I act and like how I just seem in a way. Because like, I can be loud, and I can have no shame sometimes, and then I can be really, you know, weird, and then I can be shy and all that, and it's just weird in a way how I don't do everything [in PE] because I'm just a bit different to the other people in like, my brain. For one reason is like I read things backwards and stuff like that and then you've just got like, you feel different too, but you don't know why you feel different, you just know that there's something different about you to the other people

I: What do you think about feeling different?

NC: I don't know. Sometimes when you look at other people and think "yeah" and then you just feel sad, and other times you'd think "I don't care" and all that, and like you never know really because everything changes. It depends what mood you're in, it depends how you feel, and how you've been treated and how you've reacted and all that. It all depends.

[Interview with NC, School C]

In attempting to understand and conceptualise her feelings of difference, NC relates these feelings to her own opinion of self, referring to her SEN (dyslexia), "*I'm just a bit different to the other people in like, my brain. For one reason is like I read things backwards*"; to her opinions of herself, "*I can be really, you know, weird*"; and to the behaviour of others, "*[it depends] how you've been treated*". It was evident that NC's perceptions of herself as being different to others were deep-rooted. This was clarified in an activity where she was asked to show how she thought others felt about her (see image 8.1). The image shows that NC felt that others perceived her as a "weirdo", as a "mosh", and she also makes reference to her webbed toes. As such, this seems to encapsulate experiences of bullying about her webbed toes in dance lessons, her feelings surrounding being unpopular, and being considered a "mosher", as well as her perceptions surrounding herself and her SEN. Moreover, when asked to draw a picture relating to PE, NC drew a picture of her webbed toes (see image 8.2).

Image 8.1 NC Thinking Heads Activity

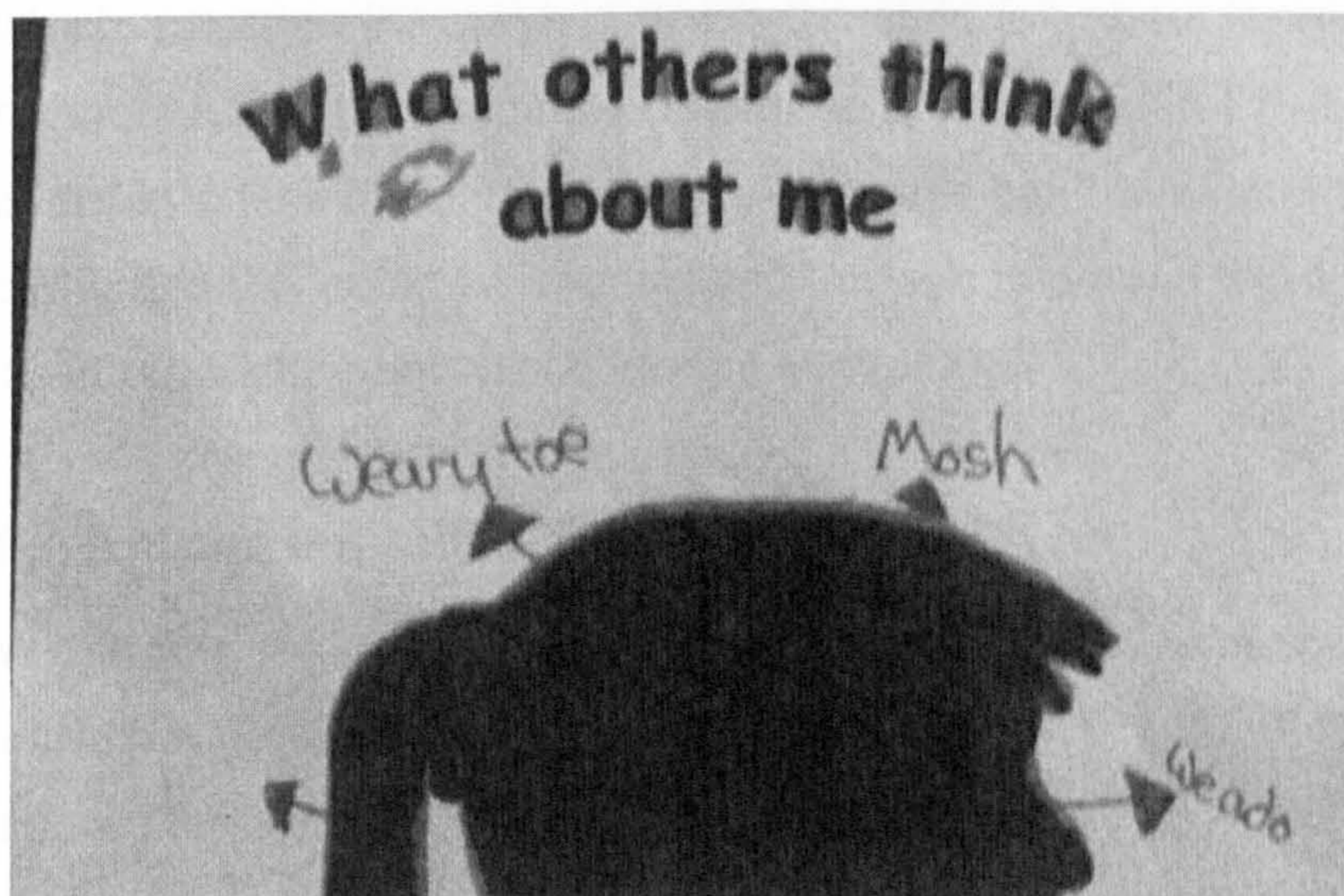
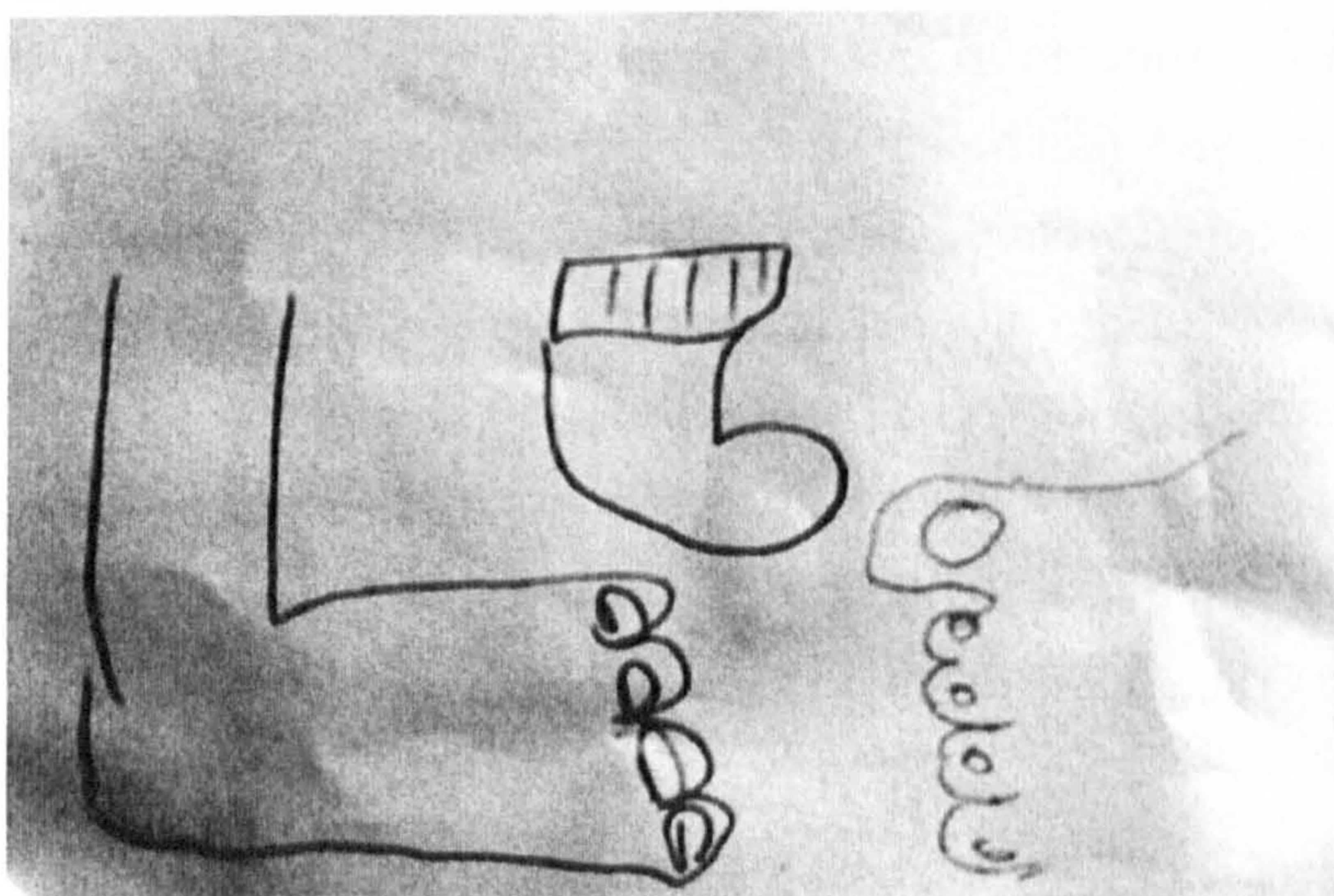


Image 8.2 NC PE Drawing Activity



As such, it is evident that negative feelings of difference can be a direct result of the child's perceptions about how others perceive them, whether this is related to physical features, popularity or SEN. Moreover, it is clear that NC attempts to rationalise her feelings, stating that sometimes she thinks "I don't care". This finding is supported by Hutzler et al (2002) Fitzgerald (2005) who indicated that children with SEN develop methods for coping with difference through resistance. Hutzler et al (2002) suggests that this can be a form of empowerment, allowing children to learn how to cope with their differences by developing mechanisms to deal with the remarks and behaviour of others directed at them. Nevertheless, it is evident that, in terms of the research sub-question "**How does the child feel he/she is treated differently to other children?**", that in terms of negative difference, children with SEN sometimes experience difference which can be detrimental to their participation and experiences of PE. This

difference was found to be in the form of bullying, popularity and self-perceptions, all of which influence the ways in which the child felt about themselves in PE. As such, it is recommended that negative difference is managed in PE lessons (Hutzler et al, 2002) in order to limit the unfavourable effects this can have on children both with and without SEN, and this could be encouraged through improved training for teachers (Slininger et al, 2000; Vickerman, 2002, Morley et al, 2005).

8.2 Empowerment

Within this study, empowerment was considered in terms of the ways in which children with SEN were consulted with (Stafford et al, 2003; DfES, 2005; Woolfson et al, 2007) about their PE lessons, and the beneficial effects this might have on their participation, perceptions and experiences of PE (Hutzler et al, 2002). Therefore, during the semi-structured interviews, the children with SEN in this study were asked if they were consulted with about PE by their PE teachers, and what this meant for them in terms of their perception and experiences of PE. In response to this, several children in each type of school, and with different SEN stated that they were often not asked about what they wanted in PE lessons. Moreover, within the focus groups, it was evident that children felt that they were not consulted with enough in PE, nor given enough freedom make decisions about their education. This was also found by Stafford et al (2003) and Woolfson et al (2007) who note that several of their participants reported not being consulted with about their education. This appeared to act as a method for disempowering the children (Hutzler et al, 2002), and is illustrated in the following excerpts:

NC: I reckon we should get a bit more freedom in that way... like you know if you like something so much, like a move or something and your group likes it as well, you should be able to practice more on that or do something more on that

I: and how would that make you feel in PE if you had that freedom?

NC: better

DC: better and some people don't look forward to PE but if you had like, if you were allowed to do like a certain routine, it be better if you could practice a bit more before moving on and let people start liking it, like in dance or netball or something.

[School C Focus Group]

I: Do any of your PE teachers ever ask you what you would like to do in PE?

FB: No, she just decides herself.

I: What do you think about that?

FB: It's ok but sometimes we could like say what we want to do in PE

I: And how would it make you feel if you got to choose what you wanted to do in PE?

FB: Erm, excited because it was our choice and it was up to us what we done.

[Interview with FB, School B]

I: Does your teacher ever you what you'd like to do in PE?

AE: No

I: How does it make you feel that she doesn't ask you what you'd like to do?

AE: Angry because I don't get to play with the stuff I want to.

I: Would you feel differently about PE if you got to choose the stuff you wanted to do?

AE: Yeah, like I can get more exercise and do different stuff.

[Interview with AE, School E]

In examining the above conversations, it is evident that some children with SEN do not feel that they are being consulted with enough in PE. Moreover, when asked how they would feel if they were consulted with, they state that they would feel more positively about PE, and potentially have the opportunity to try more activities or practice activities they feel skilled in more often. Consulting with children about what they would like to do in PE can be a tool for empowerment (Hutzler et al, 2002, Woolfson et al, 2007). Moreover, similar to Stafford et al (2003); Lewis et al (2006) and Woolfson et al (2007), it was clear that children in this study wanted to be consulted with about PE. They wanted the opportunity to express their preferences, to try new things, and to practice skills, and it is suggested that by giving children the opportunity to make decisions about their education, we can empower them to become more confident and develop mechanisms for assessing their own abilities (Hutzler et al, 2002).

Moreover, it is clear that, through empowerment and consultation, children with SEN have the opportunity to develop positive experiences and perceptions of PE. This was evident in the current study, which showed that those children who were consulted with about their PE lessons stated that they had increased feelings of control and responsibility, and this acted as an empowering tool for the children. This illustrated below:

MD: You can sometimes choose what sports you want to do, so you can say "I want to do basketball" or you want to do handball or something

I: Do the teachers ask you if you want to do these different sports?

JD: Yeah sometimes

I: How do you feel when you get the choice?

JD: Great

MD: Good

JD: In control

[School D Focus Group]

MD: You feel in control of what you're doing and you're like doing the stuff that you like but you're learning as well on like, on like how to do these things.

[Interview with MD, School D]

I: How does that make you feel you get to choose your own shapes [in PE]?

PE: Happy.

I: Would you like your PE teachers to ask you what you'd like to do in PE more?

PE: Yeah. It would make us be all more better and then the children'd decided what activity they would like to do because it saves doing the same one each day and it gets boring and the kids say, ooh, bored, so they say ... we might as well ask Miss if we could choose our own activities.

[Interview with PE, School E]

DF: They actually listen to what we're saying

[School F Focus Group]

The above examples illustrate how consultation with children with SEN about their PE lessons can be empowering, encouraging children to have their voices heard (Stafford et al, 2003), make decisions (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a) and promoting positive perceptions of PE (Hutzler et al, 2002). As such, it is recommended that teachers and schools encourage consultation in lessons in order to promote the positive effects of empowerment in terms of children's experiences and perceptions of education. This could be done by asking children about their preferences in PE, allowing them the opportunity to choose activities, and giving them the chance to make decisions about how PE is organised. Nevertheless, consultation alone is not enough. Stafford et al (2003) indicate that children can become disempowered if they are consulted with but their views not accounted for. As such, teachers must not only consult with their pupils, but they are encouraged to include children within decision making processes, as recommended by the Every Child Matters policies (DfES, 2005). As such, it is further recommended that children are given the opportunity to become involved in curriculum planning processes within the school year, and that they are made aware that their opinions are being taken into account. In doing this, it is expected that children will not only be empowered to participate and make decisions (Hutzler et al, 2002, Stafford et al, 2003; Woolfson et al, 2007), but that they will have the opportunity to develop new skills and apply them to situations which affect them in life (DfES, 2003).

By consulting with children in this study, it was apparent that a lot can be learned about the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN relating to their participation in PE. Moreover, in terms of the children's perceptions of consultation in PE, children were able to articulate different methods which could be used in PE lessons in order to encourage consultation between them and their teachers, therefore providing the

children with more responsibility for making decisions in the lessons. It was clear that for some children, the prospect of having responsibility for choosing PE activities might lead to feelings of being pressured, yet when they were encouraged to explore the concept further several children suggested diplomatic solutions which could result in them having more say about their PE lessons, whilst taking into account the perceptions of others in the lesson. Examples are as follows:

MB: We might have a vote on what to do next

[School B Focus Group]

NC: I think it would be better if we all like, I know this sounds weird, but like have a hat or something and have dodgeball, football, netball and all that, and you know everyone put one of the things down that they like, and then one of the teachers pick it out and then we do that no matter what instead of one picking something, it can never be really unfair because it's the luck of the draw in a way.

[Interview with NC, School C]

MD: I reckon we should have like on the first day you come back from like half term or change years have things where you go, with the PE like what are the things you want to do next erm term and you all write it down and then like we pick it and say like "let's do your thing", and like go by that

[School D Focus Group]

It is clear from the suggestions made, that the children in this study understood that consultation could sometimes be constraining, particularly in attempting to meet the needs and preferences of everyone at once. Yet, they make suggestions which are mature and attempt to allow for everyone's perceptions to be accounted for. Stafford et al (2003) agree with this argument, stating that children and young people have considerable understanding about the use of different consultation methods, and they further indicate that some participants of their study were interested in a voting system as a means of consultation, as further suggested by the participants of this study. As such, it is recommended that teachers, schools and professionals consider different forms of consultation, and perhaps also consult with children about how they feel they are best consulted with. Moreover, in light of the suggestions made by the participants of this study, in terms of being consulted with in PE, it is recommended that teachers provide opportunities for their pupils to make decisions in PE, as it is evident that children are able to develop methods for consultation which will not advantage one group over another. This could be made possible in the new, flexible NCPE (QCA, 2009), which allows for less prescriptive delivery of PE lessons, and encourages flexibility in teaching techniques to meet the needs of all pupils, but could also be achieved, as mentioned before, by allowing children to take part in curriculum planning

procedures. Moreover, within lessons, teachers should be aware that children are able to make mature choices related to having their and their classmates needs met, and this, too, should be taken into account.

Nevertheless, in response to the research question *“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”* it is evident from this study, and others (e.g. Hutzler et al, 2002; Stafford et al, 2003; Woolfson et al, 2007) that children with SEN's perceptions and experiences of PE can be improved if they are empowered in their lessons to participate and make decisions about their education.

8.3 Change

Within the focus groups, children were given the opportunity to discuss any changes they would make to their current PE lessons, if given the chance. The types of suggestions made by the children are illustrated in Table 8.3 below:

Table 8.3 Change in PE

	Type of Change	Transcript Evidence	Type of School
PE Lessons	Different/ more varied activities	<i>“I’d change so we do good stuff”; “put all different games in”; “have a change to the curriculum in a way, like have more stuff”</i>	Special, Secondary
	More time in PE	<i>“To have more time”; “[If] it took over two lessons, because sometimes when we’re playing cricket everyone only gets one go and we could have like two goes”; “More time to play”</i>	Primary, Secondary
Teachers	Better teaching	<i>“[To have] expert coaches”; “the teacher could like see us all like individually”; “I think people maybe should get more encouraged to join in”</i>	Primary, Hospital School
Consultation and Empowerment	Choice	<i>“If we finish we might have a vote on what to do next”; “You should be able to have choice”; “Have a choice in what you want to do that day”</i>	Primary, Secondary, Hospital, Special

In examining the types of changes children with SEN in this study would make to their PE lessons, it is evident these reflect the different aspects of PE which children feel could be improved on. In particular, it was clear that children with SEN in each type of school wanted changes made to the ways in which PE lessons are organised. Moreover, children in the primary and hospital schools indicated that they would like teaching of PE to be improved, and, finally children from each type of school wanted to be consulted with more about their PE lessons. These perceptions on change reflect the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN discussed earlier in this thesis, therefore qualifying the recommendations made. As such, these will now be summarised and discussed in relation to children with SEN's perceptions on change.

8.3.1 PE Lessons

When asked what they would change about PE, if given the opportunity, many of the children with SEN in this study indicated that they would make changes to the ways in which PE lessons were organised. In particular, children stated that they wanted to be able to participate in a wider variety of PE activities. While it was evident in earlier chapters, that children with SEN in this study were already taking part in a wide range of PE activities, these all arose from the guidelines set out by the NCPE (DfES/ QCA, 1999), and as such tended to be more traditional activities, such as football, dance and swimming. However, in stating that they wanted to participate in more varied activities, children made reference to activities not commonly found within the PE curriculum, such as aqua-balling, skateboarding and mountain boarding. While Donnelly (2006) argues that these alternative sporting activities are generally researched in terms of sub-culture analyses, she does note that they have, in recent years, increased in popularity amongst youths – however, her study focuses particularly on snowboarding. Nevertheless, it is evident that little research has been conducted examining the place of such alternative activities, such as those suggested by the participants of this study, within PE lessons. As such, it is recommended that more research is conducted, or that pilot trials are made prior to introducing such PE activities into the PE curriculum. Potential alternative activities could be skateboarding, cycling /BMXing, or even break dancing. Trialling such activities carries the potential for allowing children to try varied activities which may interest them outside of school, as well as presenting the chance to learn new and varied skills. This was evidenced within this study, by pupils of the Hospital School, who were given the opportunity to try different activities not commonly found on the PE curriculum, such as kick-boxing and boxercise. It was apparent that the inclusion of such activities was favourable for the children in this school, who indicated the prospect of learning new skills, and trying different activities as

advantages of taking part in these activities at school. However, it is essential for schools to carry out necessary health and safety checks before implementing any new activity, as it is possible that some alternative activities carry risks not often associated with PE (for example, ensuring the use of safety equipment such as helmets). It is anticipated that, in doing this, children might be empowered to take up activities outside of school, therefore promoting physical activity outside of school.

In addition to wanting more varied PE activities, the children indicated that they wanted more time in PE. It was found, within this study, that primary school children in particular were not getting the full two hours of PE recommended by the PESSYP strategy (DCSF, 2008). Moreover, children within the study complained that during their PE lessons, their teachers spent too much time explaining the activities rather than allowing the children to learn during participation. As such, it is recommended that teachers, particularly those in primary schools, receive further training to ensure their subject knowledge is sufficient enough for them to deliver effective PE lessons. Moreover, this training could be used to demonstrate effective learning and teaching strategies to be used within PE lessons, which could provide specific guidance on inclusion and differentiation, so that children with SEN can have their needs met in lessons. Moreover, guidelines surrounding the amount of time children have in PE should be more strictly followed, and teachers made aware of their requirement to provide at least two hours of high quality PE (DCSF, 2008). Finally, it is recommended that teachers encourage and support children in taking up activities outside of school and play more of a role in motivating children to seek out the activities they enjoy, whether this is through formal sports clubs, extra-curricular activities, or informal activities.

8.3.2 PE Teachers

In addition to suggesting changes about how the PE curriculum could be improved, children with SEN in this study, particularly the primary school children, felt that the ways in which PE is delivered by teachers could be improved. In particular, they felt that their teachers needed more training to teach PE, that they should be more encouraging and supportive of children, and that they should attempt to meet individual children's needs more effectively. In examining these perceptions in relation to teachers perceptions about including children with SEN in their lessons (e.g. Hodge et al, 2004; Morley et al, 2005; Lambe and Bones, 2006; Vickerman and Coates, 2009), it seems that children and teachers want the same thing. Teachers in these studies expressed a desire to improve their inclusion knowledge and skills, which can be

achieved through adequate SEN and PE training (Morley et al, 2005), and it is evident that the children with SEN in this study agree with this perspective. One child (MA, School A) in this study, for example states “[Teachers] could go on a course and train about PE”. As such, it is recommended that teachers are given effective and adequate training at both ITT and through CPD in order to ensure that their knowledge about inclusive teaching and the delivery of appropriate and suitable PE lessons is up-to-date and relevant for the children they are teaching (Smith and Green, 2004; Morley et al, 2005; Lambe and Bones, 2006; Coates and Vickerman, 2008, Vickerman and Coates, 2009). It is expected that in doing this, children with SEN will have improved experiences of PE, and the opportunity to participate in well-structured and high quality PE lessons (DCSF, 2008), where every child’s needs are met.

8.3.3 Consultation and Empowerment

A final change children with SEN in this study suggested was one of more choice. Children felt that they were not consulted with enough in PE lessons and wanted more opportunity to make decisions about what to do in their lessons. As discussed earlier in this chapter, consultation with children, both those with and without SEN, is an important tool for empowering them to not only participate in PE, but also to actively engage in decision making, learn new skills, and develop more favourable perceptions of PE (Hutzler et al, 2002; Stafford et al, 2003; Woolfson et al, 2006). As such, it is recommended that teachers utilise consultation within PE lessons to engage with their pupils, learn more about their specific desires and needs, and provide a more flexible PE programme which adapts itself according to the needs of the children who participate in it.

Alterations which could be made to the current PE curriculum are not limited to the suggestions of the children in this study. Rather, they are continuous, on-going developments which can only be understood if practitioners, schools and teachers take the time to listen to children about their needs. As such, a final recommendation is for adults in general, to hear the voices of all children, including those with SEN, to make informed decisions about their needs, rather than assuming what is best for the child through the eyes of an adult. The world that a child lives in can only be understood through the eyes of a child, and as such, it is up to us, as adults to attempt to enter their world and provide an education which is appropriate and suitable to their specific individual needs. In doing this, it might be possible to implement a curriculum personalised to meet the needs of that individual child (Miliband, 2004), therefore

breaking down the constructed barriers surrounding SEN and disability, and perceiving each child – SEN or not, as an individual. In doing this, we might enter a world whereby education can effectively meet the needs of its consumers (Vickerman, 2007) – the children.

8.4 Difference, Empowerment and Change – Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter set out to examine the perceptions and experiences of children with SEN regarding their conceptions surrounding difference, empowerment and change. In doing this, it preliminarily set out to respond to the research sub-question *“Does the child feel he/she is treated any differently to other children?”*. This related directly to the sub-theme difference, which sought to examine children with SEN's experiences of difference and differential treatment in PE lessons.

Findings relating to the sub-theme 'difference' showed that children with SEN experience both positive and negative difference during PE lessons. Positive difference was often associated with differentiation, which was deemed appropriate and effective in meeting the individual needs of the child. As such, it was recommended that schools and teachers move towards the use of a personalised curriculum, which encourages differentiation in terms of meeting the needs of individual children (Miliband 2004; Miliband, 2005). This could result in difference being used positively in PE lessons, resulting in favourable experiences and perceptions of PE, such as those found in this study. Moreover, it was recommended that teachers attend appropriate SEN training in order to acquire the skills necessary to use difference positively in their PE lessons (Slininger et al, 2000; Vickerman, 2002, Morley et al, 2005). It was anticipated that this could result in the empowerment of children to participate skilfully in PE lessons, develop a sense of belonging, and build on their strengths and abilities (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Hutzler et al, 2002; Reid, 2003).

On the other hand, negative difference was found to be detrimental to the perceptions and experiences of children with SEN in their PE lessons. Negative difference was often found to result from discriminatory behaviour of others, perceptions of being unpopular, and negative self-perceptions relating to having SEN. Nevertheless, it was also discovered that children empower themselves by learning to cope with this difference (Hutzler et al, 2002). It was evident that negative difference did result in unfavourable experiences of PE, and as such it was recommended that teachers seek

out training, particularly in behaviour management (Hutzler et al, 2002), which limit incidences of discrimination in lessons, in order to restrict negative perceptions of difference being formed. Moreover, it was suggested that further research is conducted in order to understand the effects of popularity in PE for children with SEN.

This chapter also explored concepts surrounding the empowerment of children with SEN, through consultation about PE lessons. It was found that when children are consulted with about PE, they have better perceptions and experience feelings of being in control. In addition to this, children who are not consulted with about their PE lessons, state that they want to be. As such it was recommended that teachers take the time to consult with their pupils about PE, in order to empower them (Stafford et al, 2003). Moreover, teachers should include children in decision making processes (DfES, 2005) so that children are aware that their perceptions count.

It was also found that children with SEN are aware of methods to use during consultation, and suggestions made were often diplomatic, requiring some form of vote or draw. As such, it was evident that children understood that sometimes their desires in PE might not be suitable for others, and that everyone had a place in making decisions about PE. This was supported by Stafford et al (2003) who also found that children were aware of different methods of consultation, and that they considered consultation as a serious issue. As such, this further emphasised recommendations to consult with children, allowing them to make decisions about PE, and it was suggested that this could be achieved through the new, flexible NCPE (QCA, 2009).

Finally, children with SEN's perceptions about what they might change in PE were explored. Findings showed that children, if given the opportunity, would include more alternative activities in PE lessons; have more time to do PE; have more skilled teachers, and finally be consulted with more about their PE lessons. In addressing these changes, it was found that the recommendations of the children, often ran parallel with earlier recommendations from this study, and previous ones (e.g. Morley et al, 2005; Vickerman and Coates, 2009), particularly those calling for more effective training for teachers relating to PE and SEN. In addition to this, it was recognised that the suggestions made by the children in this study were limited to the schools in which they were discovered. As such, it was recommended that teachers, schools, professional and other adults consult with children about their education in order to best understand how their individual and specific needs can be met. It is expected through this, that personalised curriculum in schools in the UK can be developed,

whereby the needs of individual children, including those with and without SEN, can have their needs met effectively and appropriately.

CHAPTER NINE: FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The previous four chapters of this thesis have provided insight into the ways in which children with SEN's perceptions and experiences of PE have been constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) through a number of different factors which each influence and guide children towards understanding their experiences. These factors have included understanding and experiencing PE, experiences of sport outside of school, experiences of other people in PE, and finally, experiences of difference, empowerment and change. Each of these individual themes was explored separately, and as such, specific conclusions and recommendations relating to the themes were presented in response to the research sub-questions to which they related. Attention will now be turned, therefore, to understanding how the findings, discussion, conclusions and recommendations can be drawn together and understood in response to the main research question ***“What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in, mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”***

In addressing this, however, reference must be made towards recognising how responses to each of the sub-questions have contributed to generating a full understanding of the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN in PE and sport outside of school. As such, concluding comments relating each of the four research sub-questions will be given, prior to presenting a final discussion of the conclusions, limitations and recommendations in response to the main research question.

9.1 “How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?”

This research sub-question was primarily addressed under the theme ‘understanding and experiencing PE’. However, elements relating to participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE were also addressed in other themes. Generally, it was found that the children with SEN in this study all experienced inclusive PE lessons. In reference to mainstream schools, lessons were considered to be inclusive because children indicated that they were able to participate in all activities offered. Moreover, there was evidence to show that some PE lessons were differentiated to meet the children's individual needs in terms of assessment, modified work, and adapted lesson expectations. This appeared to make the lessons accessible for most children in this study, and there were few instances where children indicated that their participation

was restricted or that they were excluded because of having SEN. These findings challenge previous literature, which provide evidence to suggest the opposite – that children with SEN in mainstream schools tend to experience limited participation in PE, or that they are excluded from PE lessons as a direct result of having SEN (Blinde and McCallister, 1999; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2005).

There are a number of possible explanations for the anomaly. Firstly, it is possible that in the years since the previous literature was completed, inclusive practice has improved, resulting in children with SEN having more access to the curriculum, and experiencing less exclusive practice from teachers. This could be indicative of the NC inclusion guidelines (QCA, 2009) being closely followed by teachers and schools due to the ever-increasing numbers of children with SEN being included in mainstream education (DfES, 2004a).

The second possibility is that the children in this study did not experience exclusion in PE because their SEN did not inhibit participation. The majority of previous research in the area has examined the perspectives of children with PD, whose disabilities seemed to be a focal reason for teachers and classmates not including these children fully in their lessons (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000, Blinde and McCallister, 1999; Davis and Watson, 2001; Goodwin, 2001; Hutzler et al, 2002; Kristen et al, 2002). However, the majority of children in this study did not have PD, and as such it is possible that their experiences were more positive because their disabilities were not directly related to movement and physicality required in PE lessons. Nevertheless, those participants who did have PD within this study, too, did not report to be in any way excluded from their lessons, and as such it is unclear whether the specific SEN of children does have a direct effect on their experiences of inclusion. It is possible that children did not wish to disclose negative experiences relating to exclusion, and as specific questions relating to the child's SEN were not asked unless the child had offered such details themselves, perhaps if children had been directly asked about their experiences of inclusion in PE, more insight may have been given. Nonetheless, further research relating to the differences in experience in PE, with SEN and inclusion as direct variables would have to be conducted in order to determine this.

Finally, it could be that the experiences of inclusion in PE experienced by these children are a result of the schools of which they attended. It is possible that given the voluntary nature of the research, and the fact that schools had to opt-in to be involved, that these schools represent ones who have confidence in their inclusion strategies.

Moreover, it is also possible that the children who volunteered to participate happened to be the ones with the most inclusive experiences of PE. While it is impossible to account for those who did not participate, it cannot be ignored that, potentially, these are the children who we as researchers might be most interested in speaking to, given that their experiences might present an image of inclusion which has not yet been captured. As such, methods of investigation should seek to engage with these children and the schools who do not readily participate in such research, however difficult this may be.

Nevertheless, in response to the research sub-question **“How does the child perceive their participation, inclusion in and accessibility to PE?”**, it can be said that, for children in this study, perceptions of participation, inclusion in, and accessibility to PE were generally positive for most children. However, it was evident that there were specific factors which contributed to the construction of these perceptions and experiences (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). In particular, elements such as the organisation and delivery of PE, the activities available, the amount of time spent in PE, and assessment, were all found to influence the perceptions and experiences of PE. For example, it was found that assessment in PE resulted in less favourable perceptions; whilst the opportunity to participate in activities which were preferred, resulted in more favourable perceptions of PE. As such, it was evident that the interplay of different factors in the social worlds of the children impacted on the ways in which they perceived and experienced PE. This interplay will be explained in more detail later in this chapter.

9.2 “How does the child perceive other children and/or teachers, with regard to PE?”

Within this study, perspectives of both teachers and classmates were explored and discussed, particularly through the research theme ‘experiences of other people in PE’. However, evidence of the ways in which children experienced both teachers and classmates featured within most themes, as these people appeared to be key stakeholders in children’s constructions surrounding the ways in which they experienced PE. Therefore, it was apparent that both teachers and classmates played an important role in determining whether perceptions and experiences of PE were either positive or negative, and within this study, evidence of both positive and negative experiences were discovered. However, it seemed that both teachers and classmates for the children in this study were perceived positively most of the time, and that negative perceptions and experiences tended to be restricted to isolated incidents, or

individual people. For instance, classmates were generally perceived as supportive and friendly, however particular classmates were discussed as being annoying, or nasty, which impacted on the ways in which lessons were experienced when that person was present or being disruptive. Nevertheless, it was evident that classmates and teachers, in general, played a positive role in ensuring the children with SEN in this study had positive experiences of PE.

The following diagram illustrates how both teachers and classmates, and the roles which they adopted in PE lessons, contributed to the construction of either positive or negative experiences and perceptions of PE.

Figure 9.1 The Construction of Negative Experiences of PE (Other People)

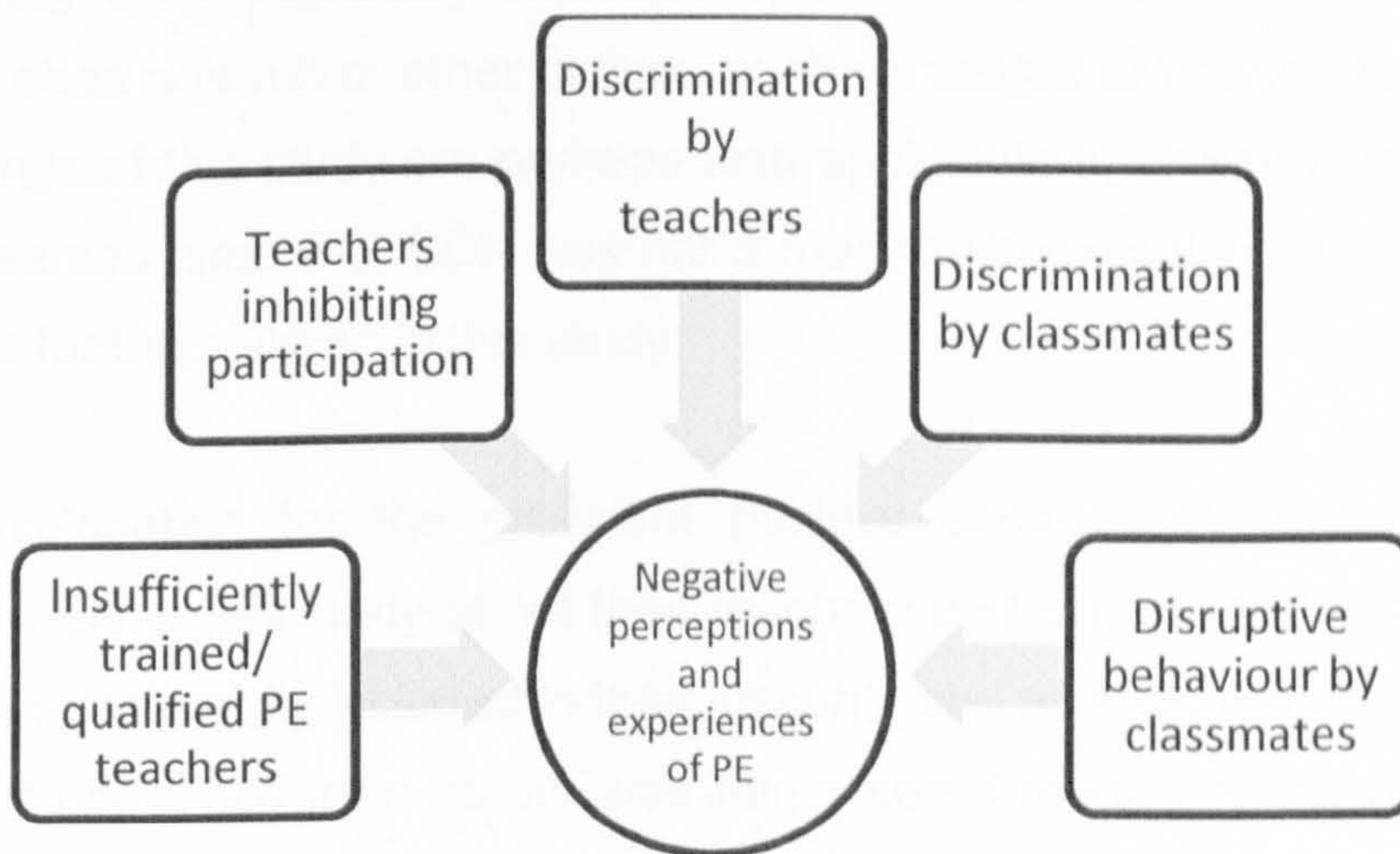
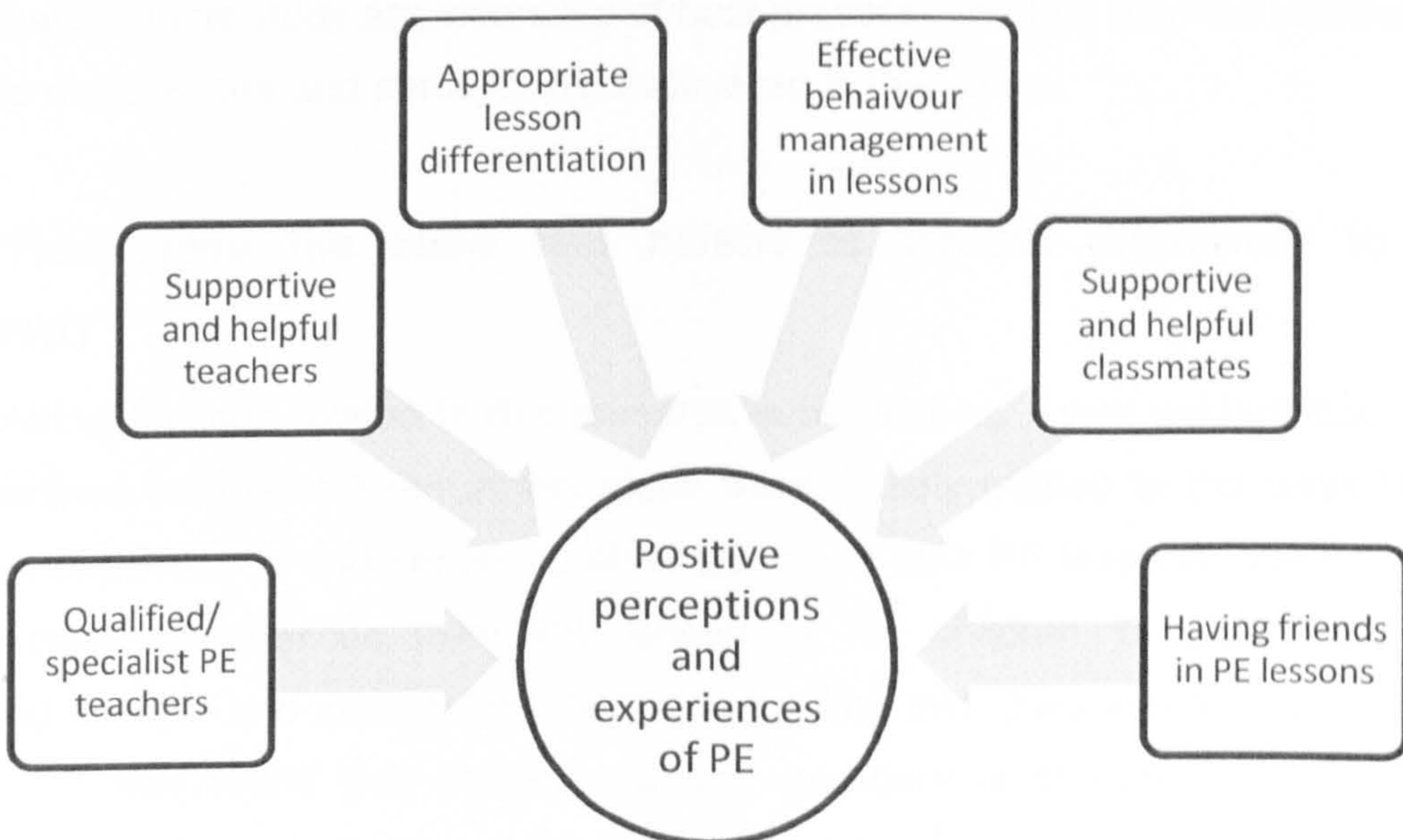


Figure 9.2 The Construction of Positive Experiences of PE (Other People)



These findings both support and challenge previous literature (for example Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Place and Hodge, 2001; Hutzler et al, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2005). In support of the literature, these findings showed that when children with SEN are restricted from participation, discriminated against and bullied, children report this as being detrimental to how they experience and perceive PE. However, unlike the previous literature, this study did not find that these negative experiences of stakeholders in PE were directly linked to the child having SEN, as it was in other studies (for example Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Place and Hodge, 2001; Hutzler et al, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2005). As mentioned earlier, this might be due to a number of factors, including several children in this study not having PD, and their SEN might not have been as evident in PE lessons. This was confirmed by several children in this study, who stated that they did not feel having SEN negatively impacted upon their PE lessons; and further, that bullying was often a result of other factors, such as weight or image. As such, it is felt that the findings of this study are perhaps also applicable to children who do not have SEN, as it seemed clear that SEN was not a major factor resulting in the construction of experience for the children in this study.

A second explanation for the prevalent positive experiences and perceptions of children with SEN in this study about their teachers and classmates, could be that the children were successfully included in their lessons, and as such were treated in such a way that their difference from others was minimised through contact (Slininger et al, 2000), differentiation (Reid, 2003) and the development of a supportive and nurturing environment for the children to succeed in (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2005). Nevertheless, it is also possible that if this is the case, that the schools who participated in this study are examples of best practice, and that this has resulted in the positive experiences and perceptions discovered in this study.

9.3 “How does the child feel he/she is treated differently to other children?”

In exploring findings related to this research sub-question, it was evident that feelings of difference for the children in this study were closely related to the ways in which children experienced and perceived other people in their PE lessons, and the ways in which these experiences were internalised by the children, in order to construct meaning (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) surrounding their personal perceptions of self in PE. It was found that perceptions and experiences of other people could be interpreted and internalised in both positive and negative ways, and that this could

therefore be used as a means of understanding the ways in which PE was experienced for the children.

In terms of positive difference, it was found that positive experiences of inclusion in PE by PE teachers, resulted in positive feelings of difference in PE lessons. This was associated with lesson differentiation, which was considered, by the children to be meaningful in determining their success and achievement in PE lessons. For example, in the case of differentiated assessment strategies, this allowed one child to be assessed in an environment more suited to her particular needs, reducing negative feelings associated with the more common forms of assessment for that particular lesson.

Negative difference, on the other hand, was found to not only be influenced by the behaviour and experiences of PE teachers, but of classmates as well. In particular, it was found that children experienced difference negatively when they were discriminated against by peers or teachers, when they perceived themselves as unpopular, or when they perceived their SEN as having an effect on the ways they felt about certain PE activities. The influence of perceptions surrounding SEN, however, appeared to have only a minor effect on reducing enjoyment and creating detrimental perceptions of PE. Instead, it seemed clear that other factors, such as weight, and social grouping, played a more crucial role in determining whether a child was discriminated against in PE, and this led to more negative experiences of difference. As such, it seems that these findings relate to other children as well, not just those with SEN

Moreover, this further indicates that children's conceptualisation of difference is determined by more than simply having SEN, as suggested by other research (for example, Connors and Stalker, 2007). It is evident that children with SEN are affected by similar social constructs which affect other children in general school settings, such as popularity and social status in school (Merton, 1997). The findings of this study suggest that perhaps these social constructs play a more crucial role in determining feelings of difference compared with SEN. However, given the broadness of the current study, it is not suggested that these are the only factors which determine difference within PE. As such, more focused research, examining the role of social constructs on determining difference for children with SEN would have to be conducted to clarify this.

9.4 “What opportunity does the child have to partake in extra-curricular sport, or sport in the community and are these accessible to the child?”

This final research sub-question was aimed at exploring children with SEN's participation in sports outside of school, their accessibility to these types of activities and whether sport outside of school was deemed accessible by children with SEN.

The findings indicated that children participated in sport and physical activity outside of school on three levels – informal physical activity; formal sports clubs, and extra-curricular sports at school. Generally, it was found that all children participated in some form of informal physical activity outside of school, and this was often in the form of playing ball sports with friends at a park or at home. The use of leisure centres, however, presented a number of barriers, which restricted their accessibility and use, such as cost and lack of disabled facilities. Some children participated in formal sports club activities, and these were not only accessible to the children, but often preferred over PE activities as they presented more freedom to the child. Finally, a small number of children participated in extra-curricular sports, however, many were unaware of extra-curricular sports taking place in school, and felt teachers could do more to promote this type of activity. As such, in response to the research sub-question, it was clear that children with SEN did have opportunity to participate in sports outside of school, but this was mainly in the community, rather than in extra-curricular sports held at school.

The most accessible activities were those taking place in formal sports clubs. This could be attributed to the freedom these allowed children, giving them opportunity to take part in activities suited to their own needs and preferences, and allowing the child opportunity to differentiate as necessary. Moreover, the role parents and family played in contributing to engagement in these activities may also have contributed to their accessibility. On the other hand, the least accessible activities appeared to be the use of leisure centres, and extra-curricular sports at school. These activities appeared to present the greatest barriers in terms of encouraging participation for children with SEN, and these findings support the work of previous researchers, who too, found that extra-curricular activities (Penney and Harris, 1997; Smith, 2004) and leisure centres (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Connors and Stalker, 2007) were often not accessible for children with SEN.

In addition to this, when examining the findings, it was evident that a number of key constructs were prominent in influencing or inhibiting activity outside of school. These are displayed in the table below:

Table 9.3 Opportunity and Accessibility in Sport Outside of School

	Opportunity		Accessibility		
		Influences	Inhibitors	Influences	Inhibitors
Informal Physical Activity	✓	Can be done anywhere	Unclear advertising (Leisure centres)	✓	Family participation Barriers restricting use of leisure centres (cost, disabled access, age restrictions)
Formal Sports Clubs	✓	Family members/ friends participation		✓	Freedom to differentiate
					Non-restrictive activity
Extracurricular Activities at School		Multi-sports clubs targeted at children with SEN	Children not made aware of opportunity		Recreational activity Children unable to access due to lack of opportunity
		Letters sent to parents for permission			Multi-sports clubs targeted at children with SEN

(✓ symbolises activities high in opportunity or accessibility)

This table illustrates the constructs prominent in determining participation in different types of physical activity outside of school. It is evident that informal physical activities (with the exception of leisure centre use) and formal sports clubs provided the most opportunity for participation as well as the most accessible activities. Moreover, it is

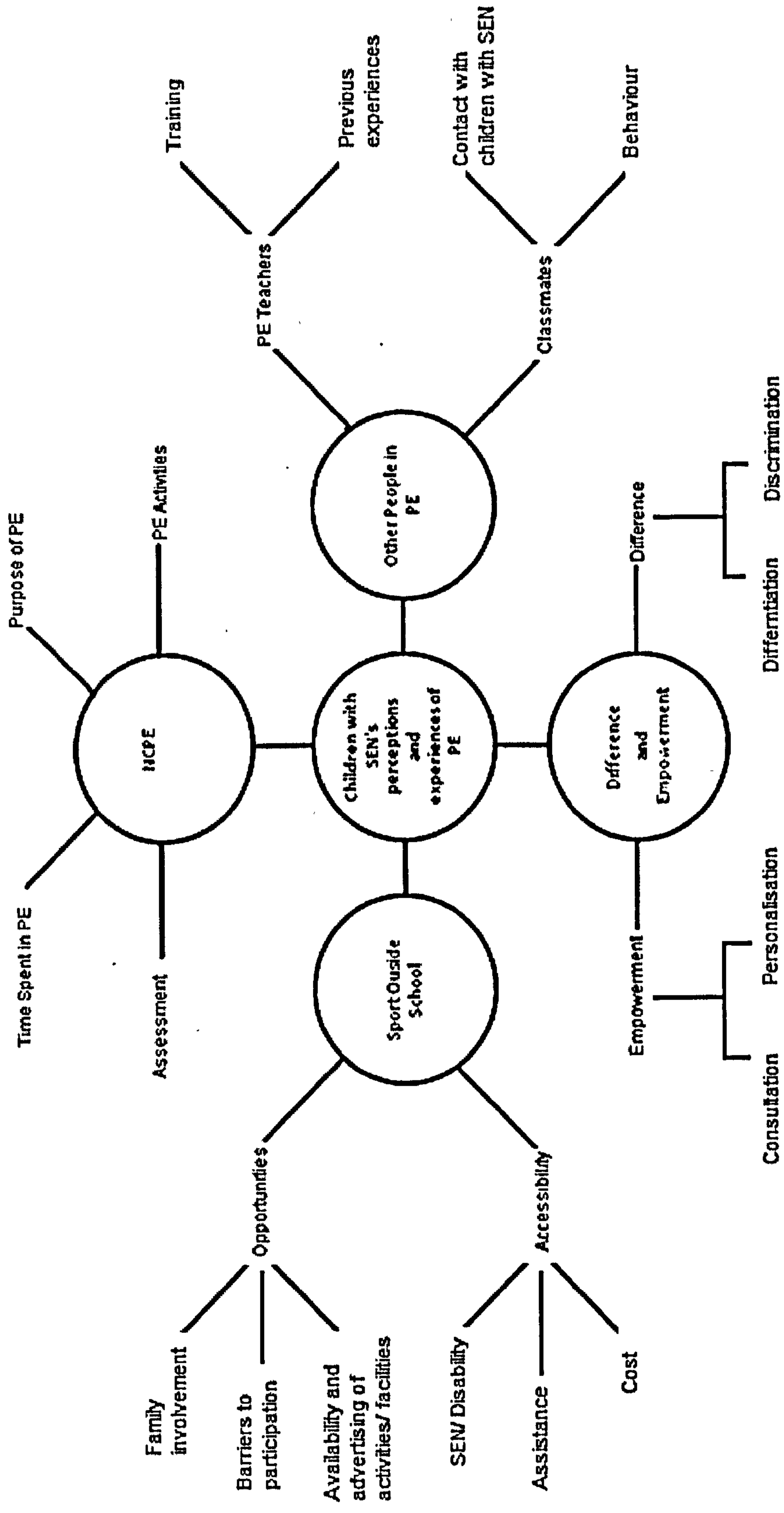
apparent that family played a key role in influencing activity on all three levels. In particular, they provided opportunity to participate in formal and extra-curricular sports clubs; and ensured accessibility to participation in informal physical activities. As such, it can be argued that family members play a crucial role in contributing to children with SEN's physical activity outside of school, ensuring both accessibility to activities and opportunity to participate. Family members should therefore be targeted as stakeholders for ensuring children with SEN are participating in sport outside of school. However, there is a dual role here between the school and the family. Schools should encourage education about being active outside of school by not only providing more opportunity for children with SEN to participate in extra-curricular physical activities, but by ensuring they make families and children aware of the opportunities available to participate in sport outside of school. This could be achieved through greater links with community sport partnerships, improved advertising, and the removal of barriers to participation as found in relation to leisure centres. Moreover, in terms of formal sports clubs, it was evident that the freedom and flexibility they offered, ensured accessibility to activities, and as such, it is argued that these values should be applied to other activities both inside and outside of school, in order to promote positive experiences and perceptions related to physical activity as a means for encouraging lifelong physical activity (Reid, 2003; Sherrill, 2004).

9.5 “What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in, mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”

In attempting to answer this main research question, a number of different themes, relating both specifically to this question, as well as the four research sub-questions, has determined that understanding the perceptions and experiences of children with SEN is not a straightforward task. Rather, it is a complex analysis, encapsulating several constructs and ideas, all of which interplay in determining how children with SEN experience PE and sport outside of school. In general terms, it was found that children with SEN's experiences of PE, whether in primary, secondary or special school were overall positive in comparison with other literature suggesting the opposite (for example, Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Hutzler et al, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2005). However, there were factors which resulted in less favourable outcomes, particularly when related to specific events, persons, or self-perceptions. In addition to this, in terms of mainstream participants, it was found that generally, the PE lessons experienced by these participants were inclusive; and that

participants in all three types of school had participated in a wide range of PE activities. Moreover, overall, it was discovered that several experiences and perceptions of the children with SEN in this study, were comparable to those of children who do not have SEN, when examined against existing literature (for example, Lee et al, 1999; Groves and Laws; James et al, 2009). However these general findings are just that – general. In providing an overview of the findings of research such as this, the complexities of the individual and personal relationships between the children with SEN, their experiences, the people they encounter, and the ways in which they feel about themselves - these are completely ignored, in place of perhaps attempting to generalise (Robson, 2006) the ways in which children with SEN experience and perceive PE. So, rather than attempting to give a concrete response to the research question “What are the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN about their participation, and inclusion in, mainstream and special school PE lessons and sport outside of school?”, attention is instead drawn toward understanding some of the social constructs (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), which play a part in determining the ways in which children with SEN *may* experience and perceive PE. However, these constructs are for illustration purposes. They by no means demonstrate how every child with SEN’s perceptions and experiences are formed, and the ways in which different elements of a child’s experience are influenced, are not limited to the constructs discussed here. Instead, they provide an example of the types of influences which interplay in the social worlds of children with SEN, in relation to their perspectives and experiences of PE. These constructs and their relationship with children’s experiences of PE are illustrated in the following diagram:

Figure 9.4 The Construction of Perceptions and Experiences of PE for Children with SEN



In terms of the social constructionist viewpoint in which this study is based, it can be argued that experiences both inside and outside of PE interact with each other in such a way as to construct children's everyday realities of that subject. That said, Berger and Luckmann (1966) might argue that the ways in which the elements which influence children with SEN's perceptions of PE are grounded in habituation (repeated action), and institutionalisation (collective histories). In applying these concepts to the argument that, for example, assessment results in less favourable perceptions and experiences of PE, it could be stated that the underlying emphasis of assessment within the NC, not just within PE, has resulted in children becoming anxious and fearful of prospects surrounding assessment which is then applied to the PE setting, resulting in unfavourable experiences for children. This was further indicated in the narratives of the children in this study, who related assessment in PE to unfavourable assessment experiences in other lessons, which often were further related to their SEN, and feelings of inferiority and insecurity. As such, it is clear that there is a relationship between the different factors related to education and, more specifically, PE, which influence the ways in which the children with SEN in this study constructed their perceptions of PE. In addition to this, it was evident that constructs within PE, for example, the behaviour of teachers, influenced the ways in which children experienced and perceived sports outside of school. The above diagram, therefore attempts, very simply, to illustrate the interplay between these constructs as a means for children placing meaning on the ways in which they perceive and experience PE. It shows how various constructs, such as the NCPE, and PE teachers not only influence how children with SEN experience PE, but how they might determine how children perceive PE. In addition to this, the ways in which children perceive and experience PE, impacts on the ways in which children perceive and experience the various different constructs. Moreover, the relationship between these elements result in either positive or negative perceptions and experiences, depending on the ways in which children experience the world around them, the meaning they place on these experiences (Smith et al, 2009), and how this is used to construct their subjective reality in PE (Berger and Luckmann, 2006). As such, the constructs and variables illustrated within this study are not expansive. In fact, it is expected that any of these individual constructs could be examined further to determine the ways in which they were formed – for example the role of the teacher might have been constructed by their previous training, and that decision to train as a teacher, constructed by their previous experiences in education, and so forth. However, in doing this within the current study, focus would be taken away from the child's individual perceptions and experiences of PE, and as such, the study has limited itself to the constructs which directly influence children with SEN's

perceptions and experiences of PE, and the ways in which these children give voice to those experiences.

Nevertheless, in understanding these, it is possible to determine methods for improving the experiences and perceptions of children with SEN with regard to PE and sport outside of school. As such, in assessing the perceptions and experiences of children with SEN, with regard to their experiences of PE and sport outside school, three key recommendations relating to the improvement of experiences for children with SEN have been determined. These have been drawn from the findings and discussions formulated from this study, and represent an overview of the key recommendations which have developed through the discussion of the results. These are teacher training; personalised learning; and consultation and empowerment, and each will be discussed in turn.

9.5.1 Teacher Training

Teacher training, and the requirement for reform in the training that both students, newly qualified and experienced teachers with regard to the education of children with SEN in PE is not a new concept. It has been explored in depth in terms of how much teachers feel prepared and confident enough to teach children with SEN (Avramidis et al, 2000; Morley et al, 2005, Lambe and Bones, 2006; Vickerman and Coates, 2009); and as explored in Chapter Two, it is evident that, from the teacher's perspective that training has been highlighted as a constant area for improvement. This argument has been carried further throughout this study, when exploring the perceptions and experiences of children with SEN in PE, as it has been found that children's experiences of PE are influenced and constructed through their experiences of other people, within which, PE teachers are included. Moreover, specific factors related to the practice of PE teachers in PE lessons towards children with SEN, were shown to impact on the ways in which children experienced and perceived PE – whether positively or negatively, and it is from these findings that recommendations for the improvement of teacher training are made, with specific reference to the ways in which improved training for teachers might result in improved experiences for children with SEN.

Differentiation and Inclusion

This study has found that children with SEN have more positive experiences of PE when their lessons are inclusive and differentiated to meet their individual needs. Inclusive lessons are those whereby the child feels they are able to participate in all

lessons skilfully, and where they feel they are supported and encouraged by both their peers and their teachers (Reid, 2003; Sherrill, 2004). Differentiation is used to refer to the modification of lesson organisation, objectives, and game rules in order to ensure the child is able to participate to the best of their ability in a supportive and unrestrictive nature (Reid, 2003). While the majority of the children who participated in this study did not appear to be excluded from their lessons, it is possible that the schools utilised were examples of best practice, and as such it is not possible to determine whether or not advancements in the inclusion of children with SEN have been made. Moreover, given the findings of other studies, such as that by Blinde and McCallister (1998), Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) and Fitzgerald (2005), which suggest exclusive practice from teachers results in detrimental effects on the experiences of children with SEN in PE; and the findings of this study which suggest that inclusive practice has the opposite effect, it is therefore recommended that continual reform is made to ITT and CPD courses to ensure that teachers have up-to-date, current theoretical and practical knowledge on how to cater for the needs of children with SEN in PE settings.

Therefore, in terms of ITT, it is recommended that HE institutions introduce formal, *compulsory* SEN and inclusion modules to their teacher education courses. According to previous research by Vickerman and Coates (2008) and Morley et al (2005), amongst others, it is apparent that current ITT courses provide optional SEN training, and that specific inclusion training is often ad-hoc or informal and given whilst on placement when a child with SEN is present which included practical information to teachers about how they might differentiate in lessons so that the needs of children with SEN are met (Hodge et al, 2004). In particular, inclusive assessment strategies and the differentiation of lesson objectives for different children should be explored within these courses, as these were highlighted by the children with SEN in this study as being important factors influencing positive experiences of PE. This practical training should be reinforced with theoretical knowledge and understanding which underpin inclusive education. Moreover, it would be beneficial if teachers are formally assessed on the practical demonstration of inclusive skills during placements, in order to ensure they are receiving hands-on experience of applying these skills. This could be achieved during observation sessions, so as to not generate more workload for the already full schedules of student teachers, particularly for those on post-graduate courses (Coates and Vickerman, 2009).

It is also recommended that this type of training is frequently kept up-to-date through CPD courses and training. Therefore, schools should put in place compulsory training

schemes for recently qualified and experienced teachers, relating to inclusive practice. This should be subject specific and monitored in order to ensure that PE teachers are able to provide inclusive lessons for their pupils, and that they have the knowledge and understanding to deliver inclusive PE lessons.

In addition to addressing SEN-specific training, inclusion training at ITT and CPD could also be used to promote flexibility of teaching as emphasised within current changes made within the NCPE for both primary and secondary education (QCA, 2007b; QCDA, 2009b). While changes to the secondary curriculum have only recently been implemented, and with changes to the primary curriculum being implemented in the forthcoming year, it is expected that some student teachers might require guidance on implementing a flexible curriculum, and as such, this could be addressed through differentiation training. Moreover, in applying the training to changes in the curriculum, benefits may not just apply to children with SEN, but also to those who do not have SEN (Morley et al, 2005), as they too will be able to profit from having their needs met through flexibility of teaching.

Behaviour Management

The second theme which has run through recommendations for reformed and improved teacher training is that of behaviour management. This study has found, as in previous studies (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Hutzler et al, 2002; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2005), that the behaviour of other children in PE lessons can have an effect on the ways in which children with SEN experience their lessons. In particular, this study found that disruptive behaviour from other children often resulted in PE lessons being cut short or the quality of the experience for the child being negatively impacted by the disruption. Moreover, it was found that the children with SEN in this study did not perceive the strategies used by teachers to deal with disruption as effective. These strategies included PE lessons being cancelled as punishment for the poor behaviour of some children. Other strategies included making the disruptive child sit out of the lesson for a few minutes, or in some cases, the teacher was perceived to not deal with the disruption at all, further impacting on the experiences of some children. Moreover, disruption was seen to shift attention away from teaching, resulting in some children feeling that their needs were not effectively met in the lessons. As such, a key recommendation from this, in terms of teacher training, is to ensure that both student and qualified teachers are given guidance and advice on how to best deal with disruptive behaviour in lessons. This can be achieved at both ITT and through CPD, and can come in the form of behaviour management

training. It is suggested that institutions or schools providing this training examine preventative measures and strategies for limiting disruptive behaviour occurring in the first place. This can be achieved through assertiveness training for teachers, providing them with the skills and confidence to make children aware of the 'classroom rules', and the effects disruption can have on their peers. Moreover, teachers should be given practical advice on how to deal with disruption when it occurs. In particular, and in the case of primary teachers, PE should not be seen as a treat, which can be taken away as a form of punishment for disruptive behaviour. As such, focus should be on developing suitable strategies to use during the lessons which will deal with the behaviour without inhibiting other children from participating. In this study, it was found that children perceived the method of making the disruptive child sit out for a short amount of time as effective in most cases, however, it is necessary for other methods to be developed, as it was evident that this was not effective in all cases, and children were still negatively impacted by the behaviour of their peers. It is suggested, therefore, that schools and HE institutions that provide training to teachers, seek advice from, perhaps behaviour management practitioners or psychologists, and work with these experts to develop training suitable to teaching, which can be applied in a PE setting.

Moreover, behaviour management training should also incorporate methods for reducing discrimination in lessons, whilst promoting positive difference. These concepts could form part of the theoretical and practical nature of such training, and teachers should be encouraged to reflect on their own practice and how this might affect their pupils. It is expected that, in doing this, teachers will be encouraged to promote supportive and inclusive environments in their lessons, which in turn might also result in a reduction in disruptive behaviour, therefore benefitting all children, not just those with SEN.

Physical Education

The final form of training for teachers arising as a recommendation from this study is that of PE specific training, and this recommendation is targeted primarily at primary school teachers. This study has found that the primary school children who participated perceived the lack of PE training and knowledge their teachers had as detrimental to their experiences of PE, and made their own recommendations for the provision of, for example, expert coaches, or PE training for their teachers. Moreover, it was found that those children who did have specialist PE teachers come into school to take them for PE, had more positive perceptions about this teaching when compared with PE

teaching from their class teachers. As such, it is recommended that primary school PE teachers undertake formal PE training in order to ensure they are not only aware of the benefits and necessity of PE for children, but that they also have the practical know-how, when it comes to delivering effective, and appropriate lessons to their pupils. This should be targeted at both ITT for student primary teachers; as well as regular refreshers provided through CPD. Within such training, aspects concerning theoretical knowledge and understanding of PE should be given, which should cover concepts surrounding the benefits of PE for children's mental and physical well-being, as well as providing comprehensive insight into policy surrounding PE, such as the PESSYP strategy, and the requirement for children to participate in at least two hours of high-quality PE per week (DCSF, 2008). Notions surrounding what high-quality PE looks like should also be covered, in order to ensure teachers are aware of the standard of PE they should be delivering. In addition to this, practical demonstrations of PE activities and effective PE teaching should be given to ensure children are gaining the most they can from each lesson, rather than much of lesson time being used for verbal instruction – an issue highlighted by the children in this study.

As well as addressing PE-specific training for primary school teachers, it is recommended that all PE teachers attend training sessions relating to the philosophy of PE. What is meant by this is that teachers should be reminded that PE is about educating children about their physicality, rather than solely producing physically fit children (Whitehead, 2001; Evans, 2004). It was found in this study, that most children perceived PE as a lesson within which they could get fit, lose weight, and reduce the likelihood of getting fat; rather than a lesson where they learned to use their bodies, assess their environments and develop skills relating to their physicality. As such, it is recommended that within ITT, PE teachers are taught about physical literacy and the importance of developing physicality in children as a main aim of PE. This should also be reflected in CPD courses for experienced teachers, in order to ensure that the focus of PE is shifted from physical fitness, toward physical literacy, as it was found that a sole focus on physical fitness can be detrimental to the experiences of some children, and according to Evans (2004), harmful for the future physical activity and self-perceptions of others.

9.5.2 Personalised Learning

Personalised learning is a concept which has been examined at various points throughout the research; and as such, is believed to be one of the core recommendations resulting from the study. It is linked with notions of inclusivity and

differentiation in terms of meeting children with SEN's individual needs, however, it is evident from the results of this study, that perhaps personalised learning is not only suited to meeting the needs of children with SEN, but to meeting the needs all children (Miliband, 2004;DCSF, 2010). Personalised learning refers to the personalisation of the curriculum in terms of assessment, outcomes, and teaching styles to meet the needs of individual learners (Miliband, 2004; Robinson et al, 2008; DCSF, 2010). Moreover, it incorporates concepts surrounding inclusion, as well as embracing national strategies, such as the Every Child Matters Agenda (DfES, 2005). In particular, however, Miliband (2004) argues that personalised learning embraces children's motivations and needs, and it promotes the enjoyment of education by supporting children both in, and outside of the classroom. This is not a recommendation unique to this study, however. Rather, it has been previously addressed in both research and policy (e.g. Miliband, 2004; Sebba et al, 2007; Robinson et al, 2008; DCSF, 2010), and is currently forming part of changes which have been made to the NC, in terms of increased flexibility of teaching within a less prescribed curriculum (QCA, 2007b, QCDA, 2009b). As such, it is recommended that teachers and schools embrace these changes and develop their flexibility and personalisation within the programmes they teach. It is also suggested, as mentioned earlier, that perhaps teachers expand their knowledge and understanding of flexible teaching in order to ensure that they are able to teacher in a personalised manner, taking into account the needs of all children. While improvements in the flexibility of the NC are still in their inception, it is hoped that as time goes on, personalisation of learning will become more prominent in school life. Moreover, that in the future the notion of IEPs only for children with SEN, will be forgotten, and rather that all children, with and without SEN, will have their IEP tailored to their specific learning needs. It is anticipated that, in doing this, and in all children being educated according to their needs, that education can become more inclusive, because all children will be educated as individuals, with individual requirements, motivations and desires. This is expected to reduce incidences of difference between children, as well as help to remove negative connotations associated with disability and SEN. Rather, all children, with and without SEN will be considered able according to their own individual strengths, and it is expected that through personalised learning, that these strengths will be given the opportunity and support needed to develop and grow.

9.5.3 Consulting with and Empowering Children with SEN

The final core recommendation resulting from this study relates to consultation and empowerment. This is a theme running throughout this study, in terms of accessing

children's voice and empowering them to speak up about the issues that affect them in PE. It was found within this study, that when children are empowered to participate in consultation processes, such as research, by making decisions and being given the opportunity to speak about their experiences in ways which suit their particular needs, researchers can discover a plethora of new insight and information relating to the ways in which children with SEN experience, understand and perceive their education, and in this particular case, PE. Specifically, it was found, when reflecting on the pilot study focus groups, and the more participatory nature of the main study's focus groups, that when children are given more power to control the ways in which they are consulted with, the depth of that consultation is increased, and children seem more willing to give voice about their experiences. As such, it is recommended that researchers attempt to develop new methods for consulting with children, which should include participatory elements, empowering children to make decisions and discuss the issues which affect them. Examples of this are in the work of Fitzgerald and her colleagues (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a; 2003b; Fitzgerald, 2007) who have used student-led participatory methods to empower children with SEN to give voice. However, this work needs to continue, so that methods can be refined, and possibly transferred to a school setting therefore facilitating empowerment both in research, and in schools.

In addition to this, the research found that those children who were consulted with about PE, presented more positive perceptions about PE and consultation, compared with those who were not. It was further discovered that children with SEN want to be consulted with about their education, findings supported by the work of Lewis et al (2006), and Stafford et al (2003). As such, it is recommended that teachers and schools support consultation in lessons, allowing children to make decisions about their learning and take control of their education. It is with this in mind that teachers and schools are encouraged to make their pupils active in their education, rather than passive actors who do as they are told, instead of challenging the decisions made for them. Government strategies advocate this kind of thinking, indicating the breadth of skills and benefits related with consultation (e.g. DfES, 2001a, 2004b, 2005), and moreover, researchers have indicated that children perceive consultation positively, and want to actively engage in decisions made about their education (e.g. Stafford et al, 2003; Fitzgerald, 2005; Lewis et al, 2006; Woolfson et al, 2007). Improved consultation and empowerment can form part of personalised learning and teaching, as in order for personalisation to work, schools and teachers would need to be aware of the specific needs of the child. However, in the process of this being implemented, schools are encouraged to promote consultation in lessons. This study has discovered

that children are able to make informed decisions about how to be consulted with, and that they are able to use talk to convey messages about a range of different matters (Arnot and Reay, 2007). As such, this should be embraced, and taken forward, so that children of all abilities are encouraged to have their say about their education.

9.6 Personal Reflections and Suggestions for Future Research

This study arose out of an interest in pupil voice, the experiences of children with SEN, and the evident dearth of research examining these factors in relation to PE. I feel it has successfully given insight into what children with SEN's experiences of PE are, and how we, as adults, might work together to try and improve the experiences of these children. However, this does not come without its limitations. In reflecting on the journey which this research has taken me, it has occurred to me that perhaps the aims of this research were perhaps too broad or ambitious. In many ways it feels like the research may have attempted to encapsulate too much in an effort to understand children's experiences, however, it is within in this where the originality of this project lies. This study has tried to examine children with SEN's perceptions and experiences of SEN in a way which other researchers have not done before. It has, firstly, examined the perceptions of children in three different types of school – mainstream primary; mainstream secondary; and special schools. Moreover, it has included children with a diverse range of SEN. Rather than choosing to focus upon one specific type of SEN, it has included the perceptions of any child who is recognised as having SEN, and has therefore attempted to pursue a holistic examination of the perceptions of children with SEN, by breaking down the barriers that specific SEN labels put in place. While it is believed that the aims of the study and the reasons behind the decisions made regarding its breadth are justified, it is felt that perhaps in trying to *do* so much with this study, that some of the richness of the data in relation to specific themes may have been lost. As such, it is felt that any one of the themes, or in fact, the aims of this study in relation to the research sub-questions, could have formed its own individual study examining that aspect alone, and it is recommended that researchers use this study as a platform for further research examining the perceptions of children with SEN with regard to their experiences of PE. Perhaps in doing this, a more complex, in-depth understanding of that theme in relation to the experiences of children with SEN could have been sought. Additionally, in maybe exploring just one type of school, but keeping the original aims, more time could have been spent understanding the specific experiences related to that context. Nevertheless, in doing this, it is felt that some of the uniqueness of what has been discovered here may have been left undiscovered.

Moreover, it has been interesting, and encouraging to find that the experiences of the children who participated in this study have not only on the whole been positive, reflecting inclusivity, but that in many cases, their perceptions could have been the perceptions of children who do not have SEN. Many of the perceptions and experiences of the children in this study have been related to the experiences of those who do not have SEN, and it is evident that there are distinct commonalities between these two groups. However, this needs further examination, and as such it is recommended that researchers interested in the experiences of children with SEN take this idea further and conduct comparative studies including both children with and without SEN, in order to understand the similarities and differences between their experiences. It is expected that, in doing this, more can be learned about inclusion, and how the needs of individual children can be met.

In addition to continuing in the examination of children's experiences of PE, it is also recommended that researchers continue to explore opportunities for participatory research with children who have SEN. While this study attempted to incorporate some participatory aspects within the focus groups, the nature of the research was by no means fully participatory. This too can be related to the broadness of the research aims, in that perhaps the study tried to do too much, and so fully participatory research could not be realised within the confines of this PhD. Researchers are therefore encouraged to take this further, and perhaps in following the work of Fitzgerald et al (2003a, 2003b; Fitzgerald, 2007), focus on smaller scale studies to begin with, gradually developing ways in which to extend participatory research to larger studies incorporating several schools and participants.

A final reflection relates to the use of social constructionism as a model for understanding the construction of experience for children with SEN. This study has used social constructionism and the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) relatively simply as a method for understanding how children's perceptions and experiences are constructed, but the study has suggested that there are more constructs relating to children's experiences which are yet to be explored. These constructs seem to sprawl out and away from PE and the child, such as influences related to the experiences of teachers and their training, and within the time constraints experienced in completing a PhD study, it was not possible to explore all of these avenues. As such, it is recommended that any researchers interested in applying social constructionism to children with SEN's experiences of PE or education, attempt to map out these

constructs and perhaps relate them to the influences of wider society. In doing this, it is anticipated that more insight can be gained into inclusion in society, which not only relates to the experiences of children with SEN in mainstream schools, but can be used as a method for explaining the similarities and differences in experience for children with SEN in special schools as well.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- APA – Adapted Physical Activity
- APE – Adapted Physical Education
- ASD – Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- CPD – Continuing Professional Development
- DCMS – Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- DCSF – Department for Children, Schools and Families
- DfE – Department for Education
- DFEE – Department for Education and Employment
- DfES – Department for Education and Skills
- EBSO – Emotional, Behavioural and Social Difficulties
- HMIE – Her Majesties Inspectorate of Education
- HMSO – Her Majesties Stationary Office
- IEP – Individual Education Plan
- IF Framework – Interactive Factors Framework
- ITT – Initial Teacher Training
- KS – Key Stage
- LEA – Local Education Authorities
- LA – Local Authority
- LSA – Learning Support Assistant
- M/PLD – Moderate to Profound Learning Difficulties
- NC – National Curriculum
- NCPE – National Curriculum for Physical Education
- NHS – National Health Service
- OFSTED – Office for Standards in Education
- PD – Physical Disability
- PE – Physical Education
- QCA – Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
- QCDA – Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency
- QTS – Qualified Teacher Status
- SA – School Action
- SA+ - School Action Plus
- SEN – Special Educational Needs
- SENCO – Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator
- TDA – Training and Development Agency for Schools
- TTA – Teacher Training Agency
- UN – United Nations

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

USA – United States of America

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APPENDICES

APPENDICES

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10.1.2 Empowering Children with Special Educational Needs to Speak Up: Experiences of Inclusive Physical Education

Coates, J. and Vickerman P (2009) Empowering Children with Special Educational Needs to Speak Up: Experiences of Inclusive Physical Education, Disability and Rehabilitation (in press)

Empowering Children with Special Educational Needs to Speak Up: Experiences of Inclusive Physical Education

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Abstract:

The inclusion of children with special educational needs (SEN) has risen up the political agenda since the return of the Labour Government in 1997. This has seen increasing numbers of children with SEN being educated within mainstream schools. This study examines the perspectives of children with SEN attending mainstream schools in relation to their experiences of Physical Education (PE). Findings demonstrate children with SEN in mainstream schools enjoy PE, although issues were raised regarding bullying and the appropriateness of activities in PE lessons. The findings also show how children offered suggestions about how to improve PE and make it more beneficial. The findings identify how children are empowered through consultation, and are aware of their needs and abilities. As such it is evident schools and those supporting inclusive physical activity for children with SEN must use consultation as a tool for empowering pupils as a means of providing them with choices whilst gaining a rich insight into their lived experiences of PE.

The context for empowering children to have their say in physical education

The growing inclusion agenda within education policy in Britain (Armstrong, 2005) has seen special educational needs (SEN) provision increase in momentum, placing the needs of all children, regardless of the diversity of their individual requirements at the top of the educational priority list. This has become evident in political documents in which the needs of children with SEN are met through the SEN and Disability Rights Act (SENDA) (Department for Education and Skills (DFES), 2001) Every Child Matters Agenda (DFES, 2005), and the National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE) (Qualification Curriculum Authority (QCA) 2007).

Physical activity has shown to benefit children with SEN psychologically, socially and physiologically (Kristen et al, 2002). Therefore, including children with SEN in Physical Education (PE) lessons is fundamental to mental and physical development and promoting lifelong physical activity. Sport England (2001); however, indicate children with disabilities participate in a narrower sphere of PE compared with their non-disabled peers. Moreover, 10% of their sample of children with disabilities had not taken part in any sport as part of the school curriculum over the previous year.

The revised NCPE (QCA 2007) allows more flexibility in programme delivery whilst providing a framework for PE teachers to teach children how they can benefit from physical activity by providing opportunities for children to be creative and competitive whilst promoting a healthy lifestyle. This is achieved by teachers of PE being cognisant of the need to set suitable learning challenges; respond to the full diversity of pupils; and differentiate learning teaching and assessment.

This paper aims to assess the views of children with SEN related to their inclusion and experiences of PE. It will embrace the perspectives of children with SEN in mainstream schools as a means of understanding the experiences, barriers, challenges and opportunities provided through PE. A recent systematic review of literature (Coates and Vickerman, 2008) highlighted six key themes relating to their experiences of PE in order to establish the issues and challenges children with SEN face in accessing PE. These themes comprise of experiences of PE; experiences of PE teachers; discrimination by others; feelings of self doubt; barriers to inclusion; and empowerment and consultation.

In summary the six themes report children with SEN having positive experiences of PE when they are fully included in lessons and also having a sense of belonging in the lesson (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000; Kristen et al, 2002; Fitzgerald et al, 2003a). However, despite this, children with SEN often report negative experiences of PE, which frequently result from bullying by peers, or when the child feels they are restricted from taking part fully in the lesson as a result of limited programme differentiation from the teacher (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000). Furthermore, some children stated that teachers of PE did not modify their lessons to accommodate their needs, resulting in negative experiences of PE and/or complete exclusion from the lessons (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000).

Despite moves by the British Government to encourage the removal of barriers to participation for all children with SEN within education (DfES, 2004) research has shown (Goodwin and Watkinson 2000 and Fitzgerald 2005) that children's inclusion in mainstream PE and sporting activities is being restricted by a number of obstacles encountered whilst in and outside of school. In addition to this, a lack of support provided by Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) in PE lessons perceived by PE teachers can be a restricting factor in them being able to provide inclusive lessons (Smith and Green, 2004; Morley et al, 2005). Often, within research, very little importance is given to hearing the perspectives of children with SEN, particularly

regarding their perceptions and experiences of PE (Fitzgerald et al, 2003a; 2003b). Too frequently it is the adults involved in the lives of these children who give voice on their behalf, however qualitative evidence indicates children with SEN want to give voice and have their opinions heard as part of valuing their independence and autonomy (Fitzgerald, 2003a, Lewis et al, 2006).

Methodology

The study used mixed methods incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis. In doing so self-completion, closed question surveys were completed by 65 children with SEN in mainstream schools in one North West County Local Authority (LA) in England, which were followed up by a focus group within one mainstream primary school in the same LA.

Self completion surveys were administered to children with SEN between the ages of seven and fourteen in two schools, one mainstream primary school, and one mainstream secondary school. All children on the SEN register between these ages were invited to take part. A response rate of 29.95% was gained from the surveys however this was much lower for the focus groups with only three pupils from the mainstream primary school consenting to participation in the research. Overall, more males (69%) took part in the survey stage of the research, and the focus group (75%). The participation of more males in the survey can be justified within SEN as a whole as males tend to outnumber females (Fredrickson and Cline, 2002).

The questionnaires used were predominantly image based to aid accessibility for the diverse SEN encountered during the research. Scott (2000) notes the importance of using visual stimuli for questioning children as it makes concepts more concrete to aid the child's understanding, given the communication difficulties experienced by many children both in the special and mainstream schools. In addition, prior to administering the questionnaire, the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator in each school was allowed the opportunity to determine the questionnaires' suitability for the children.

It was determined for the primary school participants that the researcher would be present during the completion of the questionnaire to provide support in reading and understanding the questions. As such, in the primary school setting, questionnaires were administered in small groups, with the researcher present. Whilst this may raise concerns about the social desirability of responses given, as Scott (2000:109) notes, children may be less susceptible to social desirability bias, claiming it is an "adultcentric" concept. Nevertheless, every attempt was taken to ensure no extra

demands or prompts were given to the child other than reading the questions aloud when requested, particularly for children with literacy difficulties and/or dyslexia.

University ethical approval was gained for the study, and in accordance with this written and verbal informed consent was sought at all stages. In the initial stages of the project, verbal consent was sought from the head teacher of each school, and this was followed by written consent from parents and children. When working directly with the children in the focus groups, further verbal consent was sought and the child was given the opportunity to decline participation prior to any focus group discussions taking place. In addition to this, participants were made aware of their right to withdraw at any point during the research.

The survey data was coded and analysed using the Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v14). The data was used primarily for descriptive purposes, examining frequencies and cross-tabulations for questions. The intention of this was to gain a broad overview of the views of children with SEN about their participation in PE, which allowed for progressive focussing (Cohen et al, 2007) in determining the direction of focus group design.

The focus group involved three children comprising two males and one female. The SEN of these children were noted and can be found in Table One. All focus group participants were aged 8 years, and were in Year 3 of primary school (Key Stage 2). Participants were in receipt of regular PE lessons as part of the NC, provided by their class teacher.

Table one:

Participant	Gender	Age	SEN as stated on SEN register
R	Female	8	General learning difficulties (GLD); physical difficulties (PD)
C	Male	8	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder; behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
J	Male	8	Dyslexia; speech and communication difficulties

The focus group was participatory in nature (Alderson, 2000), allowing children the opportunity to determine the direction of the discussion, and the activities completed. The participatory nature of the research was initially determined by ensuring children

consented to taking part in the research themselves. Letters were sent out to the children's parents including an information pack and consent forms for both the child and the parent/guardian to complete. It was necessary to seek parental consent due to the vulnerability and age of the children involved.

Within the focus group, children were given the opportunity to ask each other questions, complete both written and drawing activities and answer pre-determined questions relating to their experiences in PE. The children determined the order in which activities were given and the researcher acted only as a facilitator directing/prompting discussion only when necessary. Children were not expected to give responses verbally, but to communicate in whichever way they felt most comfortable with, and as such the focus groups were video-recorded. Allowing children the opportunity to decide how to communicate and what to communicate about is a valuable method of empowerment (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998), and according to Alderson (2000: 243) "rescue[s] them from silence and exclusion, and from being represented as passive objects". This was significant for this research, due to the emphasis placed on consultation within UK education policy, and the desire for children to be empowered expressed by children with SEN in previous research (Fitzerald 2005; Coates and Vickerman 2008).

Focus group data was transcribed and coded using NVIVO. Primary themes relating to the literature reviews (Coates and Vickerman, 2008) were used, and emerging themes from the data were also drawn out and analysed. The focus groups provided rich insight into the perspectives of children with SEN in PE and about their inclusion in PE in a mainstream setting.

Table Two: Activities

	Type of Activity									
	Games (%)	Swimming (%)	Dance (%)	Gymnastics (%)	Outdoor and Adveturous activities (%)	Athletics (%)	Other / Disability Specific (%)	Average (%)		
PE Activities Experienced	63.6	14.6	41.3	45.4	3.4	81.4	7.8	36.8		
Extra Curricular Activities Experienced	44.2	36.5	28.3	27.4	19.5	49.5	16.1	31.6		
Activities Liked Most	47.4	30.3	27.7	35.9	11.5	45.2	15.6	30.5		
Activities Liked Least	19.3	13.6	45.0	21.4	32.1	8.8	38.6	25.5		
Activities Wanted More	51.0	30.6	22.8	44.1	13.7	46.5	14.0	31.8		

Results

Table Two presents figures to indicate the types of activities children with SEN in the mainstream schools participate in during PE lessons and the activities they undertake in extra-curricular time. The results show children's likes, dislikes, and activities they would wish to engage in during PE. The activities are categories under the six areas of activity within the NCPE. The results show athletics and games activities are more commonly participated in during both PE (81.4% and 63.6% respectively) and in extra-curricular sports (49.5% and 44.2% respectively). Outdoor and adventurous activities were participated in the least for both PE (3.4%) and extra-curricular (19.2%) activities. Moreover, the results show that the participants preferred games (47.4%) and athletics activities (45.2%), yet disliked dance (45%) the most.

Table Three: Questionnaire Responses

Question		% Response
Do you enjoy PE in school?	Yes	86.2
	No	9.2
	Not Sure	4.6
Do you think your teachers help you enough in PE lessons?	Yes	75.4
	No	3.1
	Not Sure	21.5
Do you think you are good at sport in school?	Yes	55.4
	No	9.2
	Not Sure	35.4
Do you feel your teachers think you're good at sport?	Yes	46.2
	No	4.6
	Not Sure	49.2
Do you think your teachers could do more to make PE enjoyable for you?	Yes	63.1
	No	15.4
	Not Sure	21.5
Do you think other children think you're good at sport?	Yes	40
	No	18.5
	Not Sure	41.5
Do you take part in any sport outside of school?	Yes	73.8
	No	23.1
	Not Sure	3.1
Do you think it is easy to get to sport centres near to where you live?	Yes	66.2
	No	10.8
	Not Sure	23.1

Do you get any help to play sport outside school?	Yes	53.8
	No	38.5
	Not Sure	7.7
Do you think you need more help to play sport outside school?	Yes	18.5
	No	60
	Not Sure	21.5

Table Three presents responses to the final ten questions asked on the self-completion survey. These questions examined children's perceptions of themselves, their teachers, their classmates, PE, and extra-curricular sport. Results indicate the majority of children with SEN in mainstream schools enjoyed PE (86.2%). Moreover, the majority (55.4%) felt that they were good at sport in school, but were unsure whether their teachers and classmates perceived them as being good. A large proportion (73.8%) of the participants engaged in sport outside of school, and felt they received enough help to do so.

The qualitative focus group data were analysed, and five themes were generated. These are:

1. PE Activities
2. What is important in PE?
3. Feelings about PE
4. Other people in PE lessons
5. What I'd like in PE

The above themes form the categories under which the qualitative and quantitative results were generated will now be discussed below.

Discussion

PE activities

Results indicated an overall preference for athletic and games activities, yet dance activities were shown to be disliked by the majority (45%) of children with SEN. A dislike for dance activities was also reported in the focus group. This is noted in a short excerpt of conversation:

R: "Erm well, I'd have to say [my favourite PE activity] that it's not dancing, because dancing..."

C: "Is sorta rubbish"

R: "It's kinda rubbish because you have to remember it for the next time and the next and the next and the next when you can actually enjoy yourself with like... I like jail (a games activity)."

J: "I don't like to do like dancing, and er girl dancing, because you feel stupid and you're not allowed to do er break dancing and that."

This passage indicates that the children felt that dancing was not an enjoyable PE activity whilst male participants believed it to be a female-centred activity. However, according to Penney (2001), activities such as dance and gymnastics are deemed to be more conducive to inclusion, whereas games activities which focus upon competitiveness and team morale serve to exclude rather than include. It is evident, examining the perspectives of children with SEN in mainstream schools though that this is not necessarily the case. The children with SEN who took part in the research were clearly motivated by team games, as evidenced by the survey data. Furthermore, when asked about favourite PE activities in the focus group, the children unanimously chose a games activity, "jail", which involved two teams competing to eliminate members of the opposite team using a ball, similar to dodgeball. Participants stated:

"I like to do jail"

"I like jail. Yeah. And there's this game where the hoola hoops on your arm and you have to step through the hoolahoop and it goes onto the next person. I like that game too."

"Sometimes [in "jail"] I win other people because I'm good, I'm, I'm faster doing er like I throw it really fast"

Similarly Fitzgerald et al (2003b) found that 57% of their sample enjoyed basketball – a highly competitive games activity. Often, however, children with SEN are excluded from more competitive activities out of concern from teachers about their ability to participate (Blinde and McCallister, 1998; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000), and it is evident that this is not necessary. Children with SEN want to be included in these activities because they enjoy them, and teachers should therefore develop learning, teaching and assessment strategies that provide opportunities to gain full access and entitlement to the NCPE.

Feelings about PE

Findings indicate children with SEN in mainstream schools enjoy PE. This is confirmed by the survey data showing 86.2% of the sample enjoyed PE. Additionally the focus group participants reported positively about PE, with statements such as:

"I feel like ... I'm in heaven because it's so lovely"

"Well it's like say, say you was in a dream, feels like you're in a dream but you're not, it's really, it's nice and you feel dead happy"

These feelings about PE were expressed due to PE being perceived as an opportunity to vent negative emotions in a friendly and social atmosphere, as expressed in the following quote:

"A lot of people are dead helpful in PE and you get the chance to get all your nerves out and all your anger"

Similar to the findings of Goodwin and Watkinson (2000), this study shows children enjoyed PE when they had feelings of social support and were accepted by their peers. This, according to Huzler et al (2002) is a tool for empowering and motivating the child to seek out and interact with their peers, which encourages fun and enjoyment. Moreover, the evidence supports that of Kristen et al (2002) who show children with SEN are able to identify the positive features of physical activity, such as social enjoyment and improving fitness.

However, similar to previous findings (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000), the children in this study felt less positive about PE when they felt they were at an unfair competitive disadvantage. This is represented in the following piece of discussion between the three children in the focus group about a PE activity (jail):

C: "There's a lot of running about but I keep getting caught most of the time..."

Sometimes I do get really angry and start shouting when I get in Jail."

J: "I let C get me on jail because he doesn't get anybody"

R: "So he acts dead nice for you doesn't he?"

C: "No no... I don't I don't cos everyone else cos 'R' he, he's like this, he's like stood up like that, he's like that (demonstrates stance) with his hands there and then he just goes "look, look, come get me" and then he just goes (demonstrates hand movement) like that so you can't hit him... he never even gives me a chance to get him. No-one does except J and R."

By questioning his competence and ability to participate in PE (*"I keep getting caught most of the time"*), child C reports negative emotional responses, such as anger. However, as the discussion illustrates, the children develop methods for overcoming this imbalance in ability. The children with SEN report assisting each other in ensuring activities are fair and inclusive. They provide support for each other and have evidently developed mechanisms for reducing the chance that peers of similar ability have

negative experiences. This differs from results reported by Fitzgerald (2005) who notes how non-disabled children were reported to express feelings of unfairness at the SEN children being excluded from lessons, when they themselves did not want to compete. The current study however indicates that the SEN children felt inclusion led to unfairness in ability, and as such developed mechanisms to overcome this, such as assisting each other to succeed.

What is important in PE?

In addition to PE being perceived as a method for emotional venting, children in the mainstream schools listed a number of other benefits relating to skilful participation, and social interaction in PE (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000). These included seeing friends, getting exercise, having fun and teamwork. All three children in the mainstream group perceived teamwork as especially important in PE, ensuring all children were equal, taking part, respecting each other and learning. This is indicated in the following extracts:

“Um, that it’s not all about playing, it’s about learning”

“It isn’t about like, it’s about having fun, and er it’s about joining in, and about not sulking”

“Well, we get to do fun things and we’re also getting exercise”

“The benefits of PE is that you’re not all rubbing it in other people’s faces and you’re just having a go and its working together as a team”

“I like joining in... sometimes I don’t really join in because everybody rubs it in your face sometimes like “we win”... that’s why I sulk because everybody rubs it in your faces sometimes”

Similar perspectives were reported by Goodwin and Watkinson (2000), where children with physical disability (PD) stated that good days in PE resulted from sharing the benefits of PE, which included enjoyment, physical well being and good sportsmanship. Sharing in the benefits of PE gives children a sense of belonging in the lessons (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000). The benefits of PE expressed by the children in this study are reflective of the experiences of children with PD; however it is evident from the current study, that similar feelings are expressed by children who have SEN in general, and not specifically PD.

Furthermore, findings of this study correspond with those of Kristen et al (2002), who show children with disabilities in their study were aware of the physiological (exercise), social (friendships and teamwork) and psychological (learning) benefits of taking part in

PE. Nevertheless, one participant did indicate that there are disadvantages to taking part in PE, which stem from competitiveness of other children.

Other people in PE lessons

Findings show other people in the PE lessons influence the child with SENs' experiences of the lesson. In particular the PE teacher and classmates can have an impact on the child's perspectives relating to their enjoyment of the lessons. Focus group data indicated both within the special and mainstream schools; that children perceived the PE teacher as helpful and friendly, improving their experiences of PE.

This was further validated in the survey data which showed that 75.4% of survey respondents felt that their teachers helped them enough in PE lessons; and a further 46.2% and 66.7% respectively, felt that their PE teachers thought they were good at sport. These positive perceptions of PE teachers give some indication that inclusive practice is being followed in the schools examined. This contradicts previous literature which tends to illustrate more negative opinions of PE teachers. Blinde and McCallister (1998) indicate that some of their PD participants reported *feeling singled out by teachers and excluded due to their difficulties*. This was also echoed in the work of Fitzgerald (2005) who notes that some of her participants felt excluded by teachers due to their SEN. Nevertheless she goes on to suggest that a "strong relationship can be formed with pupils and this can be nurtured in a way that contributes to a more positive disposition towards participating in PE" (Fitzgerald, 2005:54). It seems probable that the participants in the current study have formed positive relationships with their PE teachers and as such are motivated to participate in PE. They feel that their teacher helps them to participate by ensuring they are safe during lessons whilst ensuring all children are included.

However, the children in this study had more negative experiences of the other children in their lessons. Children reported being bullied in lessons by their non-SEN classmates, resulting in negative emotional responses:

R: "It [the other children] makes me feel different, like I don't want to do any PE anymore when if they're gonna act like this. I think, say, I be mean or anything, I think I be changing other people's feelings but as people be mean to me it's changing my feelings how I used to feel about PE. But I used to love PE, now I'm getting on the other side of PE because people are picking on me, saying that "you can't run" and sometimes in PE they talking behind me back about me and saying "R can't run, R can't play football.""

R: It [being picked on] makes me feel angry and it makes me want to just scream and run out of the hall and go home. Sometimes I just feel like grabbing my bags and running home because people are picking on me so much."

This child felt bullied because she is not as physically able as other children, therefore feeling negative emotional responses to this behaviour. Connors and Stalker (2005) indicate that children with PD are often aware of their bodies as objects of curiosity for others, and Fitzgerald (2005) further states that children with PD are conscious of their perceived difference to others. However, it was not only the young girl with PD who experienced bullying in the mainstream school. In fact all three children involved in the mainstream group reported being bullied at some point in their PE lessons as a direct result of their SEN, and were aware that other children may perceive them and behave differently towards them due to this:

J: "Everybody really picks on me... Picking on my about like er my language cos I go to the speech therapy"

C: "[The other children do things like] pushing you, tripping you up and all that, especially to me"

Moreover, 55.4% of children with SEN in the surveyed schools perceived themselves as good at sport, while 40% believed other children perceived them as good at sport. This data indicates that the children with SEN in the mainstream schools have a harder time accepting their own abilities in the lessons, and this could be attributed to the behaviour of others towards them, evidenced by the lower percentage of children who believe others think they are good at sport. Furthermore, children in the focus groups noted difference between themselves and others in the lessons. The resulting negative responses suggest that the children desire normality, and wish to be viewed as similar rather than different to their peers. Davis and Watson (2001) note that children with varying SEN have similar perceptions of themselves, not necessarily in PE, but nevertheless, the authors report that the actions of others can result in children being labelled as "different", and therefore normalised into perceiving themselves as different.

It is evident from the focus group results children with SEN have positive experiences of their PE teachers and of PE in general, but that the behaviour of other children is restricting their enjoyment of lessons, resulting in lower perceptions of their own abilities. Therefore, with more direct management of bullying in lessons, these negative experiences can be limited to ensure children with SEN in the mainstream school have positive, fulfilling experiences of PE. This can be achieved through management by

teachers of difference and bullying in lessons to ensure the promotion of a more inclusive environment – perhaps by instating peer support in lessons and encouraging support from non-SEN pupils for SEN pupils.

What I'd like in PE

The children in the focus group indicated areas they felt would result in more positive and beneficial experiences of PE, which generally centred on the structure of lessons and the kinds of activities available. In addition children stated they wanted more variety by focusing on several activities in a week. Children felt that focusing on only one activity at a time was “boring” and as such they lost interest easily. They also commented about having separate lessons for girls and boys for particular activities such as dance and gym so that boys and girls are both able to enjoy the activities more tailored to their gender. These gender-specific comments are representative of the views of children who do not have SEN when referring to PE. Lee et al (1999), for example, showed that students have preferences for gender-appropriate activities in PE in terms of perceived motivation and competence. This is similar to the perspectives revealed in this study as the male pupils tended to use words such as “stupid” and “rubbish” to describe female-orientated activities such as dance, whereas the female participant had similar gendered opinions of football stating, “*boys are good at football but the girls ain't, so the worst part about it is the girls can't play football*”. These perceptions can have an effect on the competence of the child in a given activity, reducing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), and as such Lee et al (1999) argue that these barriers must be broken down by teachers, and this can be achieved through more selective use of language surrounding activities which can be perceived as gendered.

While it is sometimes difficult to turn good intentions into good practice (Armstrong et al, 1993), working alongside children to develop strategies has been suggested to improve learning outcomes and as such schools should implement programmes to allow children to give voice about their preferences and desires for particular subjects. This is of particular importance for children with SEN in mainstream schools to ensure their needs are being met within the inclusive environment, particularly in PE lessons where the child's abilities and participation may be overlooked (Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000). As such, in line with government legislation (e.g. DfES, 2003) which calls for improved consultation with children in schools to determine effective interventions and become active in their education, it is recommended that teachers

take more interest in the opinions of their students and use these perspectives in developing PE programmes, because who knows a child's needs better than the child itself?

Concluding comments

This paper has examined the perspectives of children with SEN in mainstream schools in order to ascertain their perceptions of PE. The findings both support and contradict previous research regarding SEN and PE. Penney (2001) stated that games activities were less conducive to inclusion due to their competitive nature however findings indicated that within mainstream schools, a large proportion of pupils enjoyed games more than other NCFE activities. Moreover, dance activities, deemed to be favourable for inclusion (Penney, 2001), were the least favourite activity for the children with SEN who took part in the study. As such, children with SEN should be given the opportunity to experience all areas of the NCFE, including more physically demanding and competitive games activities as they evidently benefit greatly from participation in these activities.

In addition to this, findings indicated that children with SEN in mainstream schools enjoy PE, gaining social benefits from participation. Moreover, children in the mainstream schools reported psychological benefits of participating in PE, using it as a mechanism for releasing negative emotions, such as anger resulting from bullying. A sense of belonging in PE lessons is supported by Goodwin and Watkinson (2000), and this is further illustrated in the findings by the supportive network developed between children with SEN in PE lessons.

However, teachers need to manage bullying and difference in lessons more effectively (Connors and Stalker, 2007). Findings indicated that while children with SEN in mainstream schools had positive opinions about their PE teachers, they were less favourable about their classmates, reporting bullying as a result of their SEN. This resulted in feelings of difference, similar to findings in previous research (Davis and Watson, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2005; Connors and Stalker, 2007). As such, more needs to be done by schools to manage bullying. Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) argue that teachers are the stakeholders responsible for managing these situations, and as such should educate non-SEN children and redirect negative behaviours to minimise feelings of distress.

Finally, the research indicated that children with SEN are empowered by the opportunity to propose ways to improve PE. Similarly, Huzler et al (2002) and Lewis et al (2006) indicate that children with SEN are empowered by the opportunity to have their opinions heard and taken seriously. Findings showed that suggested changes were not SEN specific, but could be representative of all children. Armstrong (1993) argues that while it is sometimes not possible to implement changes, it is important for schools to work alongside children to develop strategies to improve learning. This emphasises the importance of consultation with children with and without SEN, which is often quoted in education policy (e.g. DfES, 2003). Therefore, teachers and schools should harness pupil voice from children with SEN as this provides fundamental information about the needs of the children and what can be done to make their experiences more inclusive and beneficial.

Moreover, it is recommended that researchers and academics develop new methods for engaging with children with SEN, particularly those who are less able to verbally communicate. In summary this research only examined the voices of children who were able to communicate fluidly, and as such there is a sphere of children who are yet to have their opinions heard. This is particularly relevant for children with complex needs who may not be able to communicate verbally or in written form and this is an area in need of further examination in the future. Particularly as these children also have voices, which must be heard if we are to develop a truly inclusive education system.

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Appendix 10.2 Ethical Approval; Letters to Schools and Parents; Consent Forms; and Participant Information Sheets

The following documents were utilised to ensure the research followed educational research ethical guidelines (for e.g. British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2004), and the Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) Research Committee ethical guidelines (LJMU, 2009).

10.2.1 University Ethical Approval Certificate

Ref.: 07.196

Janine Coates
Room B010A
IM Marsh Campus

Tuesday 29th January 2008

Dear Janine,

With reference to your application for Ethical approval titled:

Let the children have their say: Experiences of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) In 'Mainstream School Physical Education (PE)

Thank you for correspondence responding to the proviso and I am happy to confirm your application is fully approved.

The Ethics Committee approval is given on the understanding that:

- (i) any adverse reactions/events which take place during the course of the project will be reported to the Committee immediately;
- (ii) any unforeseen ethical issues arising during the course of the project will be reported to the Committee immediately;
- (iii) any change in the protocol will be reported to the Committee immediately.

Please note that ethical approval is given for a period of five years from the date granted and therefore the expiry date for this project will be **December 2012**. An application for extension of approval must be submitted if the project continues after this date.

I am enclosing form EC5 and would be grateful if you could spare the time to complete the questionnaire and return it to me.

Yours sincerely

Jo McWatt
Graduate Research Administrator
Tel: 0151 231 3119
E-mail: j.m.mcwatt@ljmu.ac.uk

CC: Supervisor

Research and Graduate School Office

Top Floor, Rodney House, Liverpool. L3 5UX Facsimile +44 (0) 151-231-3742 http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/research_and_graduate/

10.2.2 Letter to Schools



From: Janine Coates,
Liverpool John Moores University,
IM Marsh Campus,
Liverpool,
L17 6BD

To: [insert school details]

Dear Head Teacher,

I write to you in connection with my PhD research, which I am currently undertaking at Liverpool John Moores University, under the supervision of Dr. Philip Vickerman.

I am examining the perspectives of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) with regard to their participation in mainstream Physical Education (PE) and sport in the community. As part of this research, I wish to engage with children who have SEN, in order to allow them to 'give voice'. Within this process, it is intended that children will complete a simple questionnaire*, and take part in small group discussions, and one-to-one interviews. The aim of my research is to examine the perspectives of the child in order to assess their views and feelings about inclusion in PE, and community sport.

I have a specific interest in this subject area as I have been working with children with SEN for several years, and currently work as an Applied Behavioural Analysis tutor/therapist in the Merseyside area.

I anticipate that this research will offer something significantly different to what is presently a limited area of research, and it is with this in mind that I write to you along with other schools in Merseyside. I am currently completing the pilot stages of my research, and am seeking schools in the Merseyside area to take part in the formal research stages. It is planned that the research will commence in September 2008.

I would like to invite any children with SEN at [school] to take part; and as such would greatly appreciate your consent in involving your school in this research. In doing so, I will also be seeking consent directly from the parents of any children to be involved in the research, in accordance with ethical considerations. If you are happy to proceed, due to the nature of the research, I would be grateful if you could contact me.

I realise that I am asking for a lot, but would sincerely appreciate your assistance with my request. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or my supervisor using the contact details following. We will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Kind Regards,

Janine Coates

10.2.3 Letter to Parents



From: Janine Coates,
Liverpool John Moores University,
IM Marsh Campus,
Liverpool,
L17 6BD

Dear Parent/Carer,

I write to you in connection with my PhD research, which I am currently undertaking at Liverpool John Moores University, under the supervision of Professor Phillip Vickerman.

I am looking into the perspectives of children about their participation in Physical Education (PE) and sport in the community. As part of this, I want to engage with children including those need additional help at school, in order to allow them to 'give voice'. This will give me the opportunity to assess their views and feelings about their participation in PE, and community sport; as well as giving your child the opportunity to discuss their experiences of PE.

I believe that this research will offer something significantly different to what is presently a limited area of research, and it is with this in mind that I write to you along with other parents. I would like to invite your child to take part in my research by participating in a focus group including some other children from the school, which will be held at the school during normal school hours. There is also the opportunity for your child to participate in a one-to-one interview regarding their experiences of PE.

I have gained consent from the school Head Teacher, and as such all research will be taking place in the school, during normal school hours. Your child's views and feelings about PE are valuable in determining the effectiveness of PE programmes for children with SEN, and so I would greatly appreciate your consent in involving your child in this research.

Please find enclosed a consent form and participant information sheet for both your child and yourself. Your child will be able to opt out of the research at any point and will not be pressured to continue against their wishes. Their views will remain confidential at all times, and no names will be used in any research publications.

If you would like your child to be involved, please complete the enclosed consent form, and return it to the school, care of [SENCO], or directly to me in the enclosed stamped, addressed envelope. Please return forms by [date]

If you require any of the information in a different format, please do not hesitate to contact me. I realise that I am asking for a lot, but would sincerely appreciate your assistance in my research.

Kind Regards,
Janine Coates

10.2.4 Consent Forms



**LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY
FORM OF CONSENT**

**Let the children have their say: Experiences of children in mainstream school
Physical Education (PE).**

I, the undersigned
being

(Carer/parent/guardian's full name)*

the carer/parent/guardian for *..... having
read and

(Child's full name)*

understood the Participant Information Sheet presented to me, hereby give consent for
the child named above to take part in the research as described in the Participant
Information Sheet. I consent for my child to participate in (please tick):

Interviews

Focus Groups

Signed
Carer/Parent/Guardian**

Date.....

Witness full name:..... **Witness**
signature:.....

If you would like an abstract of the findings once research is complete, please tick here

I, have read the
(Child's full name)*

information sheet / have had it explained to me, and I am happy to be a part of this
research.

Signed.....**Date:**.....

Please tick here if you have signed on behalf of your child:

I, Janine Coates certify that the details of this research have been fully explained and described in writing to the carer/parent/guardian** and the child named above; and have been understood by him/her.

* please print in block capitals

** delete as appropriate

10.2.5 Participant Information Sheets



Parent/Carer Information Sheet:

Name of researcher: Janine Coates
Supervisor: Professor Phil Vickerman

Title of study: Let the children have their say: The experiences of children in mainstream Physical Education (PE).

Purpose of study: To investigate the perspectives and opinions of children about their experiences of PE, and sport outside of school.

Focus Groups

Procedures and Participants Role: Your child will be invited to take part in a focus group including four other children from their school. Focus groups will last a maximum of one hour per session, and a maximum of two focus groups will take place. These will be facilitated by myself.

Children will be asked to take part in discussions about PE lessons and about their feelings of being included in them. They will also be asked about participation in activities outside of school and any barriers they face in taking part in extra-curricular activities. Your child will also have the opportunity to express their views more creatively through drawing and collage making. I (the researcher) will act only as a facilitator. The children will be invited to say as much or as little as they wish, and will not be pressured into speaking.

Please note that your child may be asked about their views regarding how well they feel they 'fit in' at school, and how well they are included.

The focus groups will be recorded using a digital recording device and videotaped. This will be for the purposes of data collection and transcription only. Video recording of focus groups is necessary to ensure all data is transcribed reliably and suitably in the context in which it is set. It also allows children to use both verbal and non-verbal communication when presenting their opinions and feelings. During this process, all videos and recordings will be kept under lock-and-key, and only I will have the access to them. Once data is transcribed, all videos and recordings will be destroyed. Your child's confidentiality will be maintained at all times and no names will be reported in any research publications.

Interviews

Procedures and Participants Role: Your child will be invited to take part in a one-to-one interview. The interview will last a maximum of one hour, and will be conducted by myself.

Your child will be asked about their experiences of PE lessons and about their feelings of being included in them. They will also be asked about participation in activities outside of a school and any barriers they face in taking part in extra-curricular activities.

Your child will be invited to say as much or as little as they wish, and will not be pressured into answering any questions they don't want to.

The interviews will be recorded using a digital recording device. This will be for the purposes of data collection and transcription only. During this process, all recordings will be kept under lock-and-key, and only I will have the access to them. Once data is transcribed, all videos and recordings will be destroyed. Participant confidentiality will be maintained at all times and no names will be reported in any research publications.

Please Note:

All children have the right to withdraw from the study at any time during the research without prejudice or discrimination. No child will be pressured to continue.



Participant Information Sheet



Hello, my name is Janine.

I would like to find out your views and opinions about PE at school and sport outside of school.

Focus Groups

I would like you to take part in a small group discussion with four other people from your school. This will only take about an hour per session, and at the most 2 sessions will take place.

I will ask you to share your experiences of PE in school, and sport outside school. I will also ask you about your thoughts and feelings about other children, and teachers at your school and how much you think you 'fit in'. You can tell me as much or as little as you want ...it's up to you what you tell me. You will also have the chance to show me your views more creatively through drawing or writing, but you don't have to do the activities if you don't want to.

Interview

I would also like you to take part in a one-to-one talk with me. This will only take about an hour.

I will ask you to share your experiences of PE in school, and sport outside school. I will also ask you about your thoughts and

feelings about other children, and teachers at your school and how about how you feel about yourself.



I will be recording and videoing the group discussions and recording the interview. This will help me to remember what you say. No-one will be shown these or told about what answers you have given – not even your teacher; and when I am finished with them, I will get rid of them safely so no one can find out what you have told me. I will not use your name when I write up my research.



If you decide at any point that you don't want to carry on with the discussion or interview, please tell me. If you don't want me to use your answers, that's ok too. You don't need to tell me anything you don't want to. You can stop at any time.

10.3 Pilot Study Questionnaire and Focus Group Schedule

The following questionnaire and focus group schedule were used for the pilot study conducted prior to the main research taking place.

10.3.1 Sports Questionnaire



Sports Questionnaire

Thank you for taking part in this questionnaire.

All of your answers will be kept private.

Please try and answer all of the questions.

How old are you?:

Are you in (please tick):

Primary school

Secondary school

Special school

Are you (please tick):

Boy

Girl

Please turn over.

About Sport:

1. Which of these activities have you done during PE? (Please tick any you have done. You can tick more than one):


a.  Basketball / netball

j.  Athletics / running

b.  Football

k.  Skateboarding

c.  Tennis

l.  Ten-pin Bowling


d.  Dance

m.  Boccia

e.  Swimming

n.  Rock Climbing/
Climbing

f.  Rounders /
Cricket

o.  Trampolining

g.  Gymnastics


h.  Sailing /
canoeing

p.  Rugby

i.  Horseriding

q. Other: _____

2. Which of these activities have you done outside school or in after-school clubs? (please tick any you do. You can tick more than one.):

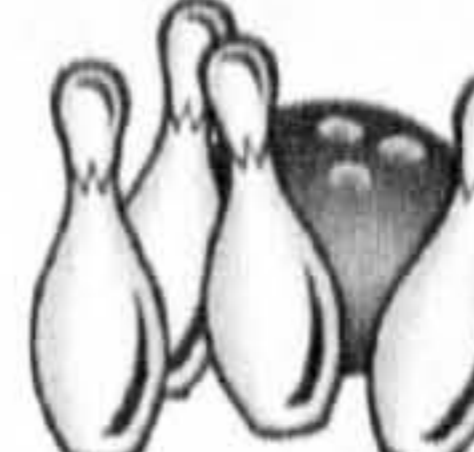
a.  Basketball / netball

j.  Athletics / running

b.  Football

k.  Skateboarding

c.  Tennis


l.  Ten-pin Bowling


d.  Dance

m.  Boccia


e.  Swimming

n.  Rock Climbing/
Climbing

f.  Rounders /
Cricket

o.  Trampolining

g.  Gymnastics


p.  Rugby

h.  Sailing /
canoeing

q. Other: _____

i.  Horseriding

3. Which of these activities do you like doing most (😊)? (Please tick. You can tick more than one):


a.  Basketball / netball

b.  Football

c.  Tennis

d.  Dance

e.  Swimming


f.  Rounders / Cricket


g.  Gymnastics

h.  Sailing / canoeing

i.  Horseriding

j.  Athletics / running

k.  Skateboarding

l.  Ten-pin Bowling

m.  Boccia

n.  Rock Climbing / Climbing

o.  Trampolining

p.  Rugby

q. Other: _____

4. Which of these activities do you like doing least (☹️)? (Please tick. You can tick more than one):


a.  Basketball / netball

b.  Football

c.  Tennis

d.  Dance

e.  Swimming


f.  Rounders / Cricket

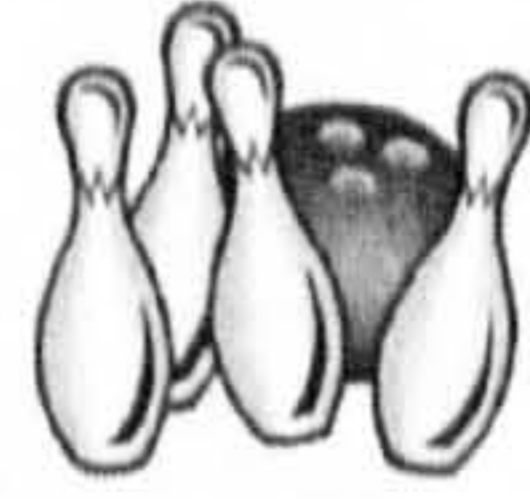
g.  Gymnastics

h.  Sailing / canoeing

i.  Horseriding

j.  Athletics / running

k.  Skateboarding

l.  Ten-pin Bowling

m.  Boccia


n.  Rock Climbing / Climbing


o.  Trampolining

p.  Rugby

q. Other:

5. Which of these activities would you like to do more during PE?
 (Please tick. You can tick more than one):


a.  Basketball / netball

j.  Athletics / running

b.  Football

k.  Skateboarding

c.  Tennis

l.  Ten-pin Bowling

d.  Dance

m.  Boccia

e.  Swimming

n.  Rock Climbing/
Climbing

f.  Rounders /
Cricket

o.  Trampolining

g.  Gymnastics

p.  Rugby

h.  Sailing /
canoeing

q. Other: _____

i.  Horseriding

About Me:

6.) Do you enjoy PE in school? *(Please tick one):*

 yes  not sure  no

7.) Do you think your teachers help you enough in PE lessons?
(Please tick one):

 yes  not sure  no

8.) Do you think you are good at sport in school? *(Please tick one):*

 yes  not sure  no

9.) Do you feel your teachers think you're good at sport? *(Please tick one):*

 yes  not sure  no

10.) Do you think your teachers could do more to make PE more enjoyable for you? *(Please tick one):*

 yes  not sure  no

11.) Do you feel other children in your class think you're good at sport? *(Please tick one):*

 yes  not sure  no

12.) Do you take part in any sport outside of school? (Please tick one):

 yes  not sure  no

13.) Do you think it is easy to get to sport centres near to where you live? (Please tick one):

 yes  not sure  no

14.) Do you get any help to play sport outside school? (Please tick one):

 yes  not sure  no

15.) Do you think you need more help to play sport outside school? (Please tick one):

 yes  not sure  no



Thank you for answering my questions!



10.3.2 Pilot Study Focus Group Schedule

Focus Group Questions/ Topic Areas:

- What would you like to find out from each other about PE?
- Think of some questions to ask each other – (each asks questions to highlight what they find significant, then I will lead on from this, or continue questioning below).
- What is important to you in PE?
- What do you feel about PE?
- What kinds of activities do you prefer?
- Is there anything you don't like to do?
- What are the benefits of PE?
- Is there anything you would change?
- Tell me about your PE teachers.
- Does your teacher treat everybody the same in PE lessons?
- What do you think about other children in your PE lessons?
- Does their opinion of you change the way you feel about PE?
- Would you change anything about PE? What? Why?
- Do you do any sport outside school? If so what?
- Would you change anything so you could do more sport outside school? If so, what? Why?

Activity A – Draw picture – “what I think about PE”

Activity B – This is me in PE sheet

Activity C – What others think about me/ I think about me (perceptions heads)

10.4 Activity Sheets used in Pilot Study and Main Research Study

The following activity sheets were used in the pilot study and the main research study.

10.4.1 This is Me in PE Sheet

This activity sheet was given to children to explore their perceptions of PE. Children were told they could write, draw or use stickers to express their answers.

This is ME in PE!

One thing that makes me sad
☹️ is:

One thing I am good at 🏆 is:

I like 🏆 playing:

One thing that makes me
happy 😊 is:

I don't like 🏆 playing:

One thing that could make PE better
is:

10.4.2 Thinking Heads Sheet

The following sheet was given to children containing the title “What others think about me” and “What I think about myself”. Children were asked to use words or drawings to describe how they felt about themselves and how they thought others perceived them.

What I think about myself



10.5 Main Study Focus Group Topics and Interview Schedule

The following lists the topics used on the ping-pong balls within the focus groups, and the interview schedule for the one-to-one interviews in the main study for this research.

10.5.1 Ping Pong Ball Topics



This image shows the ping pong balls used within this study.

The topics and activities on the balls are as follows (not every ball was picked out and used in each focus group):

- Activities outside of school
- Sports clubs
- I like
- I don't like
- Teachers and classmates
- Change
- Benefits of PE
- Me at home
- Activities in PE
- Best Lesson
- Worst Lesson

Activities (balls with stars):

- PE Poster
- PE drawing
- Role Play
- Thinking Heads
- Me in PE

10.5.2 Interview Schedule

The following questions were used as a guide for the one-to-one interviews

1. Tell me about yourself in PE.
2. Tell me about your PE teachers.
3. Tell me about your classmates in PE.
4. Tell me about what you do outside school.
5. Tell me about what help your teachers give you.
6. Do you feel different to other children? If so, why?
7. Do you get treated differently to others in your class?
8. Does your teacher ever ask you what you would like to do in PE?