

**A rock or a hard place? Teaching Assistants supporting physically disabled pupils in mainstream secondary school Physical Education: the tensions of professionalising the role.**

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## ABSTRACT

As a Physical Education (PE) teacher in both special and mainstream schools over a 15 year period, I witnessed the use of the teaching assistant (or Learning Support Assistant as they were known) for purposes which might be deemed to be related to a medical/welfare/care-giver role. In addition, previous small-scale research into the experiences of secondary-age disabled pupils in mainstream as opposed to special school PE showed that their experiences in an inclusive setting were restricted and that the presence of a TA did little to rectify this situation (Farr, 2005). Recently, the professionalisation of the role of the TA may have created a '*teacher-in-waiting*' (Neill, 2002) and thus the nature of the TA's role in PE, and the ability of the specialist teacher to work collaboratively with them is complex.

This mixed methods study, inspired by critical ethnography (Thomas, 1993, 2003) incorporated five techniques of enquiry initially based on the work of Giangreco and Broer (2005). In keeping with a constructionist paradigm and integrating what I have termed a *distorical* theoretical perspective, I counted the interaction between people and the social structure in which they operated as important (Crotty, 1998, Broido, 2002) and drew on dominant participant voices (Lincoln and Guba, 2003). Adopting a theoretical perspective grounded in disability studies, I explored the perceptions of the role of the TA in inclusive PE through qualitative and quantitative data and presented a role definition which combines the humanistic with the instructional (or professional) after Reiter, 2000. I argued whether responsibility for the child's learning should be devolved through the TA. Do we use the TA to make the teacher's life easier or to support, collaboratively, the inclusion of the disabled pupil?

The impact of this study on professional practice relates to the clarity of role definition for TAs generally and for TAs specifically who work in PE; the collaborative nature (or otherwise) of the TA/teacher relationship and the implications of these findings for the future training and deployment of teaching assistants in PE with a physically disabled pupil in a mainstream secondary school. This study found that TAs in PE share many traits or characteristics with those TAs working in other subject disciplines, or across subjects. However, in PE they were inclined to rate a willingness and ability to 'join in' and participate in practical activities alongside pupils *above* pedagogical knowledge. Training either reinforces an instructional or coaching role, or it focuses on the caring or medical aspects. The reality for the TA in this study however, is that they neither define themselves as one or the other but see themselves as drawing on their own skills, empathy and initiative to facilitate a positive, inclusive environment, with or without the input of the PE teacher. They deem themselves to be both care-givers where appropriate as well as supporters of autonomous *participation* (as opposed to *learning*). That the professionalization of their role moves them towards the pedagogical places the TA between a rock and a hard place.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### ABSTRACT

### CONTENTS

### APPENDICES

### FIGURES and TABLES

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
Bifurcation of roles	2
Professional background	4
Making an original contribution	5
Disabled young people: on the receiving end	5
Defining my terms: the use of language in this study	6
An international perspective	7
Summary	10
<b>CHAPTER 1: PRELUDE</b>	<b>11</b>
Reviewing the discourses	11
Disabled young people as receivers of services: squaring this with a disability paradigm	11
Theories or models of disability	12
The rhetoric of disability: clarification of terms	14
Hegemonic discourse	15
Hegemony, hagiography or unreasonable men?	17
Summary	20
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>22</b>
Introduction	22
<b>PART I: Mainstreaming: a generic view</b>	<b>24</b>
What is inclusion?	24
A deficit model: 'segregated inclusion'	26
Ideology vs. reality	27
The impact of legislation and policy	28
<b>PART II: The Curriculum: some factors affecting the     delivery of an inclusive curriculum for PE</b>	<b>30</b>
The NCPE: an overview	30
A Foucauldian perspective	32
A Bernsteinian perspective	34
Tensions of re-professionalisation or de-professionalisation	35
The Activist PE professional: working collaboratively	37

<b>PART III: The TA: role definitions, training, competency and relationships</b>	<b>40</b>
TAs – their emerging role	40
Dependency culture	40
What’s in a name?	41
Clarifying the role	42
The growth of a profession	44
Defining the role	46
Previous research: claiming originality	48
The role of the TA: threatening the role of the teacher?	50
<i>Subdoceo</i> : The TA as teacher	53
The TA in Physical Education	55
Training and Continuing Professional Development	57
Conclusion	60
Representing the emergent themes	61
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>63</b>
Introduction	63
The research question	63
Subsidiary research questions	63
Professional background as ontological reality	65
Sarah’s story	65
Theoretical perspective: hegemonic ontology	66
A broad ethnographic approach	68
Critical theory	68
Mixing the methods: a justification	69
Methodological pragmatism	70
Triangulation or crystallisation?	71
Using qualitative and quantitative data	72
The process of data collection	73
Justifying the habitus and sample	74
An impairment specific focus	75
A focus on mainstream provision	76
A focus on the voice of the TA	78
Ethical considerations	79
Delimitations of this study	80
Transition to the data analysis and interpretation phase	81
<b>CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION AND DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>82</b>
Introduction	82
Pilot studies	84
Representing the data	84
Documentary analysis	86
Situational analysis	88
Lead schools and Local Learning Networks	89
Laying the foundations: interviews with key informants	91
KCC Advisory Team	91

<b>Narrative interviews: the procedure for data collection</b>	<b>93</b>
Sample: limitations and reliability	95
Interviewer or facilitator?	97
Interview scripts	97
First Pilot: Advisory teacher interview	98
<b>The Survey Questionnaire</b>	<b>102</b>
Revealing the broad contours of the field	102
Design, procedure and data collection	104
A pilot study to test the survey instrument with data stakeholders	105
Procedure for implementing the survey	106
Efforts taken to maximise the return	107
Preparing the survey	108
Data reduction	109
Strengths and limitations of return sample size	111
Analysis of 'backgrounding' questions	113
Women's work? The mum's army	115
Age range of respondents	115
The duration of TA's employment	116
Summary	117
<b>CHAPTER 5: DATA COMPARISON, CORRELATION AND INTEGRATION</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>Research question 1: What is the macro construction of the role of the TA in PE?</b>	<b>120</b>
Naming the profession	120
Job descriptions	125
The quotidian role	126
Roles and typologies of TAs in PE	131
Converging roles: The TA as a teacher or carer?	133
<b>Research question 2: How do TAs construct and play out the various relational processes within the context of the PE workspace</b>	<b>141</b>
The workspace: understanding inclusion in PE	141
• Working arrangements	142
• A safe haven: manifestations of inclusive practice	143
• Returning to the mothership	145
The TA's perception of her status	147
Opportunities for collaboration	148

<b>Research question 3: How does any existing training for TAs confirm or deny an instructional role?</b>	<b>152</b>
The educational background and aspirations of TAs	152
Previous employment	153
Training to work in PE; ‘always room for more’	155
Opportunities for training	156
The TA’s experience of PE	161
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>165</b>
Between a rock and a hard place	165
Who is the TA in the context of PE?	165
Relating the discussion to a disability paradigm	169
The TA as a collaborative liberator	170
<b>Recommendations for professional practice</b>	<b>175</b>
1. Clarity in naming the profession	175
2. The voice of the TA in the management of the role	176
3. Collaboration: co-constructing teaching and learning	176
4. Redressing the gender bias	177
5. Training: the TA as a ‘buddy’	178
<b>Recommendations for future research</b>	<b>178</b>
1. The study of other stakeholders	178
• Child’s voice	178
• Researching the teachers’ views and attitudes	179
2. The deployment of a subject-specific TA	180
3. Researching the TA’s role in PE in special schools	181
4. The impact of the 2007 curriculum on inclusive practice	181
<b>EPILOGUE</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>212</b>
1a    The macro-construction of the generic TA’s roles and attributes from the literature	212
1b    Typologies of the TA against themed attributes from Appendix 1a	213
1c    Attributes from the literature and this study	214
2    Matrix showing research questions and techniques of enquiry	215
3    Interview script	216

4	Participant information sheet	217
5	Matrix of survey questions derived from the literature	218
6	Questionnaire	220
7a	Chi-square analysis of the questionnaire	225
7b	Summary of chi-square analysis	228
8	KCC 'Need Type' statistics (2008)	231

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

1	Between a rock and a hard place	62
2	Sarah's story	65
3	Field Notes, 2010	145
4	Field Notes, 2010	147

## **LIST OF TABLES**

1.	E-government register and ONSS (2009)	89
2.	Thematic representation of the survey questions	111
3.	Survey responses by background variable	114
4.	TAs' previous employment	154



## Introduction

The professional and academic focus of my research is concerned with the experiences of disabled children in mainstream secondary schools:

*'... at the most ordinary level, disabled students continue to be singled out for specialised attention, are segregated from their non-disabled peers through the presence of non-disabled adult supporters...'* (Goodley, 2007:319).

In particular, I am interested in representing the way in which disabled young people receive support for learning in the context of Physical Education (PE) through the role of the Teaching Assistant (TA) or Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA). Specifically, this study will address the perception of their role by TAs working in PE in mainstream schools in Kent. My claim for originality lies in there currently being no other study of TAs working in a single specific subject, or of them working in the context of PE. I am guided by the following research question:

***How do TAs in mainstream PE explain or describe their own experiences of a series of practices which have been identified in the literature as areas of concern or further study?***

The notion that a disabled person requires assistance in order to engage with a society which, some have contended, is structured by and for non-disabled people, would appear to reinforce a medical or tragedy model in which an individual is seen to have needs which must be met, problems which require solutions. This *'helper-helped'* relationship (Finkelstein, 1981) is at the heart of my study; it has also been a feature of the work of disabled researchers and academics in the broad area of *'disability studies'* (Oliver and Barton, 2000, Priestley, 2003).

I argue that whilst the hegemonic theoretical perspective from disability studies can certainly inform those who undertake such supporting roles, it appears almost to prevent an acknowledgement of the nature of impairment itself and denies the reality of physical difference. This in itself is not an original argument. However, its application to the role of the teaching assistant in PE is. I explore therefore, the theories of disability which have emerged as important aspects of any research undertaken with and for disabled people. I also draw attention to the fact that studying the role of the TA (in effect a supporting adult) requires us to unpick a complex thread: that a rights-based discursive model of practice may deny a relationship which could also be founded on a symbiotic or humane basis. Further, that the professionalising of the role since 2003 may have shifted these posts towards an instructional role.

### **Bifurcation of Roles**

It is possible, taking a Foucauldian perspective, that the identity of the TA has been shaped by discourse; that their inherent and arguably instinctively 'supportive' role' or one of 'care-giver', within the school relates to the way in which regulations governing their deployment have shaped them. In other words, as in disability studies, a discourse of power relations appears to delineate the ability of a TA to be anything other than a respondent to a contractual obligation on the one hand, whilst retaining some intrinsic, caring qualities on the other, which may, for example, have influenced their decision to take on such a role (Sikes *et al.*, 2007). Sikes *et al.*'s research revealed that

there were tensions between the political and the personal (from Morris, 1993) when respondents were talking about inclusion (2007:359).

It is these intrinsic qualities which I believe must be specifically accounted for as part of the holistic view of the role of the TA in PE and which may not be factored in as part of the emerging professional role. However, another aspect arises from reviewing comparative roles in other professions in which 'caring' is seen to be an intrinsic part of the job. Campbell (1998), reports on motherhood and nursing as two areas particularly in which a bifurcation of roles, after Smith's theoretical feminist standpoint (1999, 2005), appears evident. I take this to mean, for example, that nurses can 'know' their patients both bodily and professionally (1998:59) in the same way that a TA might understand the needs of a disabled pupil from a welfare-medical-humanitarian stance (Reiter, 2000) as well as a professional one. O'Connor's study of nurse education revealed that a Bernsteinian interpretation could mean that *'professional identity is both internally constructed and externally directed'* (2006:749). In the primary sector, Logan found this role to be one of both education *and* care (2006:92). This dichotomy, however, is not necessarily celebrated by the mainstream advocates of an emancipatory model of what we might generically term 'assistance'.

Furthermore, studying the role of a TA in the context of a subject which is about physical or motoric competence, health and physical activity, offers another dimension. If a disabled person, particularly perhaps, a disabled child, evokes in others (peers, teachers, observers, TAs) strong feelings such as

sympathy - in effect, the tragedy model - and where we would work with these children in their inclusion in a subject which causes them to confront their physicality, how difficult is it for the TA to be both a respondent to a contractual obligation, a supporter of learning needs and an empathetic and emancipatory professional?

### **Professional background**

At an early stage in my deliberations over the nature, purpose and intent of this study, I found it difficult to remove myself from a discourse firmly rooted in a disability rights perspective. As a teacher in a residential special school for nine years and as a development officer and coach of disabled athletes for many more, I have 'grown up' professionally with such a discourse. It has, in fact, shaped my understanding of the nature of disability in society and provided me with insight into the meaning of disability. I began working in this field in 1993 at exactly the same time as a political discourse of disability was gaining ground but, in addition to such rhetoric, my understanding was also influenced by working with talented, funny, individual young people who moved or communicated differently to others. I observed that the meaning they attached to disability was not always the same as that which was being created by the adults who supported or taught them or those represented by the disability rights movement. I was always conscious that this rights-based (or 'social') model was removed somewhat from the experiences these young people had, particularly in accessing practical subjects like PE in which impairment and embodiment seemed to be the mainstay of whether formalised physical activity (in the curriculum) could be successful or not.

## **Making an original contribution**

This study is important in that it responds to recurring themes in the literature and investigates a group of professionals in a relatively contemporary role with a specific group of pupils in a specific location. My claim for originality is two-fold. Firstly, I adopt the framework of an emerging theoretical perspective and locate my findings within the broader social and cultural context of the field of disability studies. Secondly, I research the role of the TA in supporting physically disabled pupils in mainstream secondary schools in a specific subject: Physical Education. Specifically, I consider the tensions which may be present in a role which is recently professionalised beyond an original role definition into one resembling that of a teacher. In 2009 no similar studies had been undertaken. I will show through the review of literature that there exists a dearth of research involving the TA in a particular subject area where most of the studies are generic or cross-phase. There are though, specific situational and person-specific parameters to this study which have contained it as a 'case' and which have ensured that whilst the final results pertain to one local authority, *'the findings have the generalisability of making sense and look right to others in the field'* (Knight and Saunders, 1999:153).

## **Disabled young people: on the receiving end**

The extent to which a disabled (young) person is able to function within the structures of an essentially 'able-ist' environment appears rooted in a historical perception of what it means to be disabled. As a society, we have not always considered that disabled people have a voice to influence their own lives and, more importantly, a voice in the conduct of research about their

lives. When political activism in the 1990s exposed this inequity, agendas shifted and the negative connotations of a disabled person being 'done to' or 'for' rather than 'with' became a significant point for discussion. An emancipatory research agenda, backed up by theories or models of disability, encouraged a discourse which saw society and its structures as the barrier to inclusion in general and influenced much of the policy and practices in a wide range of services, including education, thereafter.

The Teaching Assistant is, effectively, the embodiment of someone who is 'doing to' and as such, may have (unwittingly) embraced this approach in one or a number of roles in their work with a young disabled person. Either they will have been affected by training which encourages an emancipatory stance rooted in the social model of disability or they will bring personal and experiential knowledge of disability to their role in perhaps a caring facility: indeed, this may even be a motivating factor. Finally, they may demonstrate other motives for taking on this one-to-one relationship in a school setting. Regardless of the TA's motive and motivation, however, their role and perhaps their relationship with the pupil may have been increasingly shaped by political and educational discourse at the expense of what has been termed a '*sociology of acceptance*' (Bogdan and Taylor, 1989).

### **Defining my terms: the use of language in this study**

I adopt, for the purposes of this study, the current recommended use of the language of disability. This language has influenced the field formally through the work of the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP) in 1992, and

informally, has been gleaned from the writings in the discipline and from current policy documents. The term 'disabled young people' or 'disabled pupils' will be used consistently throughout and similarly, where necessary, the use of the term 'non-disabled' is preferred over terms such as 'able-bodied', although not all documents contained in the literature review necessarily adhere to this.

Furthermore, the likelihood of a shift towards different language and terminology during the lifetime of this research must also be accounted for. Indeed, between my initial discussions with Kent County Council (KCC) during the summer of 2008 and meetings held early in 2009, a decision to adopt the term 'physical impairment' as opposed to 'physical disability' was taken by the advisory team<sup>1</sup> empathetic to the social model. This subtle and yet political change in terminology strengthens the need for this research being underpinned by a thorough understanding of the existing discourse in disability studies.

### **An international perspective**

It is also worth noting that not only may terminology change in the lifetime of this research, but that the language of disability is culturally and geographically located. In Australia, for example, research has occasionally adopted the term '*motor learning difficulty*' (for instance, Hands and Larkin, 2006), abbreviated to MLD, which, in England, is currently an acronym for 'moderate learning disability'. Clearly the researcher needs to consider the

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<sup>1</sup> The role of KCC's Advisory Team for Physical Impairment is outlined briefly on page 91

implications of misreading the work of others and must continue to recognize and acknowledge culturally-located nuances.

Similarly, whilst 'inclusion' seems to be a relatively uncontentious term, and has similar cross-cultural meanings and significance, a 'student with a disability' can be a generic term, depending on the country from which the research emanates. In studies which looked at teacher attitude to inclusion in Palestine for example, the students under discussion encompassed medical and health diagnoses, behaviour, speech and language impairments (Opdal & Wormnaes, 2001). In studies from the United States, 'disabled students' in any one study included those with attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), learning disability, muscular dystrophy and cerebral palsy (Hodge, Ammah, Casebolt, Lamaster and O'Sullivan, 2004). Further, some studies do not define the popular UK term 'Special Educational Needs' (SEN) or disability at all in the course of reporting their research, nor distinguish between them (for example, Batsiou, Bebetos, Panteli and Antoniou, 2008).

In an analysis of special needs education in the United Arab Emirates, Arif and Gaad noted the use of negative or 'disabling' language which was recognized by the authors as outdated and insensitive. They suggested, as a result of their research, the need to create more *'positive terminological attitudes'* (2008:116). Later, I will draw on the work of North American researchers to inform one aspect of my methodology and thus the importance of establishing the nature of culturally-located language at an early stage,



serves to clarify my position. I explore the nomenclature of the 'Teaching Assistant' profession as part of the literature review on page 41.

In addition to the debate around generic disabling discourse, there are also further issues with educationally-specific language, in particular, perhaps, regarding our perception of 'needs' (Swain, French and Cameron, 2003:13) and '*special*' in the term '*Special Educational Needs*' (SEN), in use since 1978 (DES).

*'Used as a euphemism, 'special' serves as a gauze curtain behind which the word 'disabled' resides' (Connor and Ferri, 2007: 64).*

In several studies and policy documents, the terms SEN and disability are either separate or interchangeable (for example, DES, 2001, Morley, Bailey, Tan and Cooke, 2005, OfSTED, 2004). Again, this is a particular feature in the UK literature although evidence from Europe indicates similar conflation (Liasidou, 2008). Indeed, there is an overlap between those who are deemed 'disabled' under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA, 1995) and those with SEN as defined by the Education Act (1996). Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) also noted this semantic connection in relation to the 1996 Education Act and SENDA (2001). Both SENDA and the amended DDA (2005) were further supported by the addition of the Disability Equality Duty (2006) in which schools were required to demonstrate their efforts to reduce opportunities for treating disabled pupils less favourably.

The power of language to affect the conduct of both organisations and individuals, and to create perceptions which may be unhelpful in moving a

postmodern agenda forward, is a dominant and recurring theme throughout the literature review and there is an expectation that the research itself will shed light on this perception. Where the language used in some studies reviewed does not relate to current thinking, this will be justified in a historical context.

### **Summary**

This thesis blends two distinct and arguably inseparable concerns: firstly, the intention of the research to reveal the perceptions of the role of the emerging professional that is the TA; secondly, an acknowledgement of the tensions inherent in any professional role with disabled people where a hegemonic discourse has prevailed. The research is thus conducted and interpreted against a backdrop of a socio-political theoretical perspective.

## CHAPTER 1: PRELUDE

### Reviewing the discourses

Generally, and within disability studies in particular,

*'Discourses are about what can be said and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority.'* (Ball, 1994:21).

As a prelude to this study, I argue that the reader needs to have an awareness of the cultural and political nuances inherent in any research which has involved the study of the lives of disabled people particularly when such research has a focus on how support for disabled people has been provided and received. Indeed, powerful political debates have influenced research design, driven policy and law, affected educational change, informed media representation and ultimately shaped the role of any non-disabled person finding themselves in a professional role working alongside disabled people.

Within this, I separate the formal and informal discourses (Piantanida and Garman, 1999) as opposed to the academic and scholarly literature which features as the formal literature review from page 22. In particular, a discussion now follows which serves as *'academic throat clearing'* (Wolcott, 2009:34) in order to lay the foundation for this thesis (Burgess, Siemanski and Arthur, 2006:24).

### **Disabled young people as receivers of services: squaring this within a disability paradigm**

I contend that disabled young people, working with a teaching assistant in the context of a curriculum subject, may be *receivers* of support rather than

democratic partners in the support process. This view would align itself to the hegemonic view within what has become known as disability studies of Finkelstein's *'helper-helped'* relationship (1981) and, might illustrate that, despite much theorizing at a political level, the education process seems still to be rooted in an individual or medical/welfare model.

A rights perspective for instance, might not allow for an exploration of what Reiter identifies as three praxes for 'assistance': medical, custodial-welfare and humanistic (2000). My approach will be to acknowledge, with sensitivity, the views held by significant or prolific academics in the field (Mills, 1978, in Hart, 2005) or 'disability scholars' (Gabel and Peters, 2004, for example) whilst retaining the right to draw conclusions about how to interpret theory into meaningful research which addresses real issues and conveys a strong sense of justice and empowerment.

### **Theories or models of disability**

The emergence of disability studies as a branch of social science from the early 1990s has resulted in a theoretical and ideological positioning of a researcher's 'right' to investigate disabled people's lives. There has certainly been controversy, conflict and debate over the validity of particular standpoints and methods although whether this resulted in the production of data which reflected ideology is open to interpretation. Thus, in distinguishing between approaches to researching and writing about disability, the emergence of ideological standpoints such as the social model (the 'right' way

according to some) as opposed to a medical model (the 'wrong' way) warrants clarification.

Prior to the 1990s, disability research centred on the 'medical', or on methods of alleviating disability; what Dewsbury *et al.* (2004:147) refer to as '*Parsonism*'. Indeed, in nineteenth century England, industrialization and social reform resulted in disabled people being institutionalized for long periods, thereby affording the medical profession, the predominant researchers of the time, a captive audience. Thus, a medical model categorises and groups, labels and homogenizes; a social model, on the other hand, locates the cause of disability in the structures of society and does not connect it with the impairment. Indeed, research about (rather than with) disabled people in sport and physical activity until the 1990s, or what Williams (1994:14) terms '*indiscriminate fact-gathering*', reflects this quantitative approach.

It is hardly surprising that, in a political climate of equal opportunities which included the burgeoning work of disability activists, policies and practices evolving in parallel would reflect the then newly emerging dominant orthodoxy of a social model of disability. In ensuring an inclusive curriculum, one such development, the 1999 National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE) may have reflected a social model perspective. In addition, much was written about the *process* of research and substantially less on outcomes of actual research projects although several authors noted the potential value of

research to raising consciousness or, to '*cognitive emancipation*' (Barnes, 1990, Brittain, 2004b and Macbeth, 2008).

### **The rhetoric of disability: clarification of terms**

Historically, definitions of what it means to be disabled have focused on the language of loss and tragedy and were symbolic of suffering and bravery. Media representation tells of triumph over adversity and courage in the face of extreme hardship or 'handicap' (*sic*). Stories in the media which perpetuate the hegemony of the '*super-crip*' are noted for example by Hockenbury (1995), Harnett, (2000), McCarthy and Hurst, (2001) and Magasi, (2008).

*'The insistence on disabled people's bravery in 'overcoming' their disabilities places them in an heroic category which many find offensive, as it suggests that non-disabled society's expectations are so low that to manage to live an 'ordinary life' is seen as a wondrous achievement'* (Ross, 1997:670).

Central to the tragedy view, or heroic narrative, is the notion that impairment renders an individual powerless, with a focus on inability and deficiency. Historically, images of passivity and helplessness reinforced an inferior status and charitable campaigns would use perceived human tragedy to great effect. The athlete Tanni Grey Thompson, writing in her autobiography in 2001, reported the following exchange:

*'A journalist from The Guardian, whom you might have expected to know better, said to me recently, 'It must be really tragic being in a wheelchair.' My first reaction was it must be really tragic working for The Guardian'* (2001:100).

Legislation relating to disabled people in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in England served to categorise on the basis of the medical condition or impairment. The eugenics model of the 'management' of disability was about

surveillance, the application of therapies, doing 'to' rather than 'for'. This normalising culture created opportunities for segregation and, as Snyder and Mitchell (2006) observe, led to a form of social obedience or, in education, towards a deficit model of disability (Ainscow, 1999), hitherto referred to as a medical or tragedy model.

### **Hegemonic Discourse**

Definitions of what society understands disability to mean are to be found in a range of places and I present several here, spanning the period which arguably saw the most rapid growth in our understanding of what came to be called disability studies. Notably, the change in meanings reflects attitudinal changes in wider society. It could be said that terms such as '*defective*' or '*cripple*' and even '*feeble-minded*'<sup>2</sup> (Borsay, 2005:107), viewed as derogatory in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, limited the perception of disability to the impairment. Negative connotations of words such as 'invalid' or 'handicap' have been highlighted by the disability movement. For example, one interpretation of the word *handicap*<sup>3</sup> is that it derives from the phrase 'to go cap-in-hand', in other words, to seek assistance or to beg for alms. The shift in the use of language is apparent from early Acts of Parliament through to post-modern policy relating to equity and the nature of oppression. Words such as 'lack' or 'need', identified as applying to the tragedy/medical model are often replaced, but still at times pervade 21<sup>st</sup> century discourse.

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<sup>2</sup> The Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act; The Central Council for the Care of Cripples (1919) for example (Borsay, 2005:276-7)

<sup>3</sup> There are several derivations: the disability movement cite one which relates to begging – to go 'cap-in-hand' – and thus reinforce a tragedy model

Sensitivity over language, so rooted in emotive historical interpretations, was at the heart of writing and research in disability studies during the 1990s.

Disabled people have rejected the use of what they now deem to be disablist language (Barnes, 1992) and clarified their preferred terms in recommendations to the media through the work of Barnes and the BCODP in 1992. In a move towards using other, seemingly more empowering terms, Lunsford (2005:330) warns against reverting to *'hegemonic unawareness'* in which the new language becomes trite and thus renders the object once more invisible.

The negative language associated with loss or tragedy was beginning to be re-considered by the time the World Health Organisation (WHO) published its definition of disability in 2001. Whilst this definition is founded on a medical model perspective which we have been encouraged to move away from in more recent years (Clapton, 2003), it is the first time that both environmental and functional concerns are addressed. Reconsidering both the environment and negative attitude – taking from inclusion and disability studies (Baglieri and Shapiro, 2010) – is noted by Schalock who interprets the greater capacity to include *'contextual'* factors such as environmental barriers (2004:206) in this definition.

The power of language to influence professional roles as well as policy is clear (Barton, 1997, Oliver, 1996). Indeed, Barton noted that our definitions may influence not only our understanding of disability but our expectations (in Clough, 1998). Generally, however, it is agreed that:



*'... even the tiniest and most inconsequential linguistic utterance conveys the subjugating effects of discourse'* (Janks, 1997 in Liaisidou, 2008:484).

So, broad discussions of the use of appropriate language are firmly located in the wider political debate. Furthermore, allied to this and emerging in the early 1990s, a theoretical perspective adopted by disabled academics and researchers, known as the social model, underpinned the work of various structures and organizations, driven by an emancipatory agenda, which found it useful to adopt 'terms of reference' for disability. Indeed, these definitions themselves may have played their part in shaping both policy and practice related to disabled people. Again, this is explored more fully at a later stage in this thesis.

Indeed, a politicized agenda, driven through a new disability studies model or paradigm (Oliver and Barton, 2000), could be said to have influenced policy and practice in the development of roles for people who act on behalf of or alongside disabled people. Thus, the role of the TA for example, is not only one with, increasingly, a set of prescribed skills, attributes and competencies, but one whose existence is at odds with a social model, placing them between a rock and a hard place.

### **Hegemony, hagiography or 'unreasonable men'?**

*'The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man'* (Shaw, 1903)

Much of the writing of the period in which disability studies was gaining ground in the 1990s portrays disabled people as a homogenous group: they

are clearly not (Barnes, 2001). Hurst (2000) supports the observation that many of the authors are male, a significant number, including Oliver and Finkelstein, are wheelchair users (Walmsley, 2001); several write from the perspective of having acquired a disability later in life and bring an individual philosophy and interpretation to the main issues perceived as causing oppression. Shakespeare (2006), himself a disabled academic, notes that the disability of a researcher is likely to shape their perception of oppression; indeed, Oliver frequently wrote about access to the built environment during the period immediately prior to the successful implementation of the DDA (Part 1) in 1995.

Chappell (2000) contends that these disability scholars appear committed to a social model discourse both from a personal and an intellectual perspective but warns of the *'dangerous ground'* between research and political activism (2000:41). The notion of 'standpointism', which is inferred here, and noted by Dewsbury *et al.*, warns that there are fundamental differences in *'experiencing the experience'* as opposed to *'understanding the experience'* (2004:146). In the emerging, contemporary social model debate, the validity of any approach other than the social model is discredited (Shakespeare, 2006:15); the involvement of anyone other than a disabled person as the researcher (or researched) negates the findings.

Furthermore, the extent to which research has been ignored, misjudged or rejected because it hasn't allied itself to a clear social model discourse is discussed by Shakespeare. He noted that Barnes's review of North American

disability research critiqued and rejected some studies because they adopted the World Health Organisation's classification that was apparently based on a medical/impairment model and thus a perspective closely aligned to positivist approaches to disability studies (2006). Indeed, use of the term 'disability' alongside 'illness' in several pieces of literature appear predominantly in North American work (Cardillo, 2004) and appear to sit comfortably together without fear of the imminent arrival of the 'social model police'. Clearly, it is important to acknowledge a culturally determined theoretical perspective, although Shakespeare (2006:11) argues that disability scholars in other countries did not take such a dogmatic stance on the interpretation of the social model as those in the UK.

The ideology which has so far been described as a social model theory may now be becoming largely obsolete or replaced with new models or perspectives according to a number of authors (Gabel and Peters, 2004, Low, 2006, Swain and French, 2000, Terzi, 2005, Reindal, 2009). This has been referred to as '*chronological shift*' (Hart, 2005:43) in which writings are located in time. Nevertheless, an adherence to the social model perspective continues to pervade training and policy; it has been of significant influence, possibly a distraction, although it was certainly a powerful and most positive tool to ensure equality in the 1990s. Barnes (2006:2) goes as far as to suggest that a social model approach is '*now enshrined in national policy statements...*'.

## Summary

Through the work of the so-called '*social oppression theorists*' (Clapton, 2003), we are conscious that to interpret disability as a *brave struggle* causes offence. We are careful in our use of language in researching and theorizing about any aspect of disabled people's lives. The importance, therefore, of presenting this debate is in order to ensure the reader of this study locates this research agenda, that of investigating the perception of the role of the Teaching Assistant in working with a disabled pupil in mainstream PE, in terms of critical theory, in which language is seen to be a powerful tool in the inclusion, exclusion or defining of disabled people's lives. For the purposes of my research, I also contend that this use of language has pervaded the construction of the roles of *all* those who find themselves in an assisting or supportive position in the lives of disabled (young) people. The very nature of the role of the TA, which I shall explore later, is grounded in a notion that, in order to be included in mainstream education, a physically disabled child needs some sort of additional assistance.

Too much theory, however, can constrain the process of research as Thomas and Loxley (after Foucault), note:

*'... the conclusions which one draws thus emerge from a disrespectful tossing around of the grand theory builders. They cannot emerge ... from the very architecture of the theorists' palaces'* (2001:10).

In fact, Foucault found that when social theories have been used as explanatory frameworks, they have proved '*a hindrance to research*' (1980:81) and I remain cautious as to the outcomes of this study in relation to a distorical perspective (a full explanation of this term appears on page 20).

This prelude has provided the reader with a review of the theoretical underpinning of this study and is complemented by the review of literature which now follows. In the methodology chapter (from page 63), I elaborate on previous research which justifies my choice of both techniques of enquiry and research population. In doing so, I am able to establish a rationale for the research question. Thus, I present this research against a political, social, educational and cultural backdrop where:

*'Disability ... is a socially constructed response to the physical difference that is impairment' (Howe, 2009:29).*

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

Thus far I have noted that the use or apparent misuse of language in disability studies is contentious. Further, that an adherence to an imposed discursive framework for policy and provision in the lives of disabled people may prevent freedom in responding to genuine need which has neither political motivation nor oppressive overtones.

The developing role of the TA in supporting a disabled child in mainstream schools seems to be shaped by such a discourse: as in disability studies, a discourse of power relations may cause the TA to be both a respondent to a contractual obligation on the one hand whilst retaining some intrinsic, personal qualities (Sikes *et al.*, 2007) and motivation (Pugh, 2007) on the other. In discussions about teaching, this is referred to as a humanistic approach or as '*emotional practice*' (Hargreaves, 1998:825, Reiter, 2000, Sutton and Wheatley, 2004). I have touched on the nature of this discourse in the introduction and prelude to this study and will later contend that the role definitions, such as they are, of anyone working with disabled people may well be structured in line with a dominant orthodoxy, having less and less to do with the personal, the social, the moral or the humanistic.

The research question, theoretical perspective, methodology and techniques of enquiry for this thesis have emerged from a study of the literature which is both substantive and conceptual. I have begun to layer my understanding of what can be described as the key or recurring themes, political standpoints

and significant concepts (Clough and Nutbrown, 2004, Hart, 2005) in keeping with Burgess *et al.*'s notion of providing the reader with a '*guided tour*' of the subject to be studied (2006:22). I present these in three sections, providing a conceptual framework for the development and application of techniques of enquiry, elaborated on page 82 (after Wright, 2007).

Part I considers inclusion and equity in education and the notion of mainstreaming; Part II is a pedagogical discussion of some factors affecting the delivery of an inclusive curriculum for Physical Education whilst Part III outlines the role of the TA within a broader community of professional practice in schools which encompasses the role of the teacher, the teaching assistant, training, competency and relationships.

## **PART I**

### **Mainstreaming: A Generic View**

It makes sense to locate a discussion of a specific case, that of PE, within a broader context: that of including disabled young people in mainstream schools in general. There is a plethora of research into how this works in theory and how the 'professions' work to provide meaningful experiences. Previous research ranges from the logistics of inclusion (physical access, staff training and awareness: Avramadis and Norwich, 2002, Smith, 2004) to the benefits of special schools over mainstream provision (Davis and Watson, 2001). Subject-specific teachers' views are sought (Brent, 2005, Morley et al, 2005, Smith and Green, 2004, Vickerman and Coates, 2009), as are those of the parents (Sloper, Rabiee and Beresford, 2007, Yssel, Engelbrecht, Oswald, Eloff and Swart, 2007); some consider the views of disabled young people (Davis and Watson, 2001, Fitzgerald, Jobling and Kirk, 2003, Kelly, MacArthur and Gaffney, 2008, Morris, 2003), a few studies consider the views of TAs or 'paraeducators' (a term found in North American literature which is briefly elaborated on page 41), while fewer still look at peer relationships (Allan, 1997, Blackmore, 2008, Shelvin and Moore, 2000). The apparent dearth of studies which focus specifically on the personal narrative of the TA is noted by several authors internationally (Bourke and Carrington, 2007, Lawson et al, 2006).

### **What is inclusion?**

The terms 'inclusion' and 'integration' can be conflated although to most researchers and policy makers, there are clear and different connotations;



indeed, the features of what constituted an inclusive school were recognized in The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). By 2010, we would probably understand the term 'inclusion' to be a broad-brush catch-all for economic and social disadvantage in most areas of society, not least education. In recent literature, this is occasionally covered by the wider term 'diversity' (for instance, Frederickson and Cline, 2002). In Lawson, Parker and Sikes' study (2006) inclusion in action was, effectively, the opposite of exclusion and the local school-based understanding of the term related more to those who were at risk of being excluded rather than to inclusive practice in the context of supporting a disabled child. The DfES noted that inclusion was:

*'... about much more than the type of school that children attend: it is about the quality of their experience; how they are helped to learn, achieve and participate fully in the life of the school' (2004:25).*

Inclusion is certainly, as several authors have suggested, a political process (Barton, 1997, Moran, 2009). Moran observes, for instance, that policy related to teacher competency may equate *inclusion* to matters of faith in Northern Ireland, or language in Wales (2009): clearly, and once again, cultural differences are important nuances. Indeed, the conceptualization of 'inclusion' is a confusing one (Thompson, 1997, Evans and Lunt, 2002) with an inherent conflict or tension between policy and practice. For this study, however, I use the term 'inclusion' to relate specifically to the practice of 'including' a disabled child in a mainstream educational setting.

Some authors (Ainscow, Farrell and Tweddle, 2000, Connor, Gabel, Gallagher and Morton, 2008, Swain and Cook, 2001) have noted the parallels between the disability rights movement and education in that striving for

inclusion seems more and more to be concerned with the *right* of an individual to be educated alongside his or her peers. This view is also supported by Curtin and Clarke, although the latter also noted that the human rights argument, whilst persuasive, may be somewhat naïve (2005:196).

### **A deficit model: 'segregated inclusion'<sup>4</sup>**

The idea that disabled young people may be conditioned into dependency and passivity within an educational context is reproduced by several authors in the field of disability studies. Davis and Watson, for instance, describe this as a '*normalising discourse*' (2001:675) in the context of their investigation into inclusive versus special schooling. Indeed, a reinforcement of medical model values appears to be implicit in policy from Warnock (1978) to SENDA (2001). The discourse of inclusion is still rooted in the language of dependency and may create an environment which does not necessarily advance inclusive education with integrity. Ainscow (2007) contends that this deficit model detracts from the real issue: that disabled children are not adequately served in apparently inclusive schools.

Ferguson (2008:114) notes that through strategies in school, such as personalised learning, the curriculum could be said to be becoming '*more engaging*' for individual pupils. Curriculum design and the application of principles of differentiation should ensure that learning is both the focus and the result. Lloyd, however, argues that the current system of education still constructs difference '*as a negative condition*' in which a child with SEN can

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<sup>4</sup> Goodwin in Fitzgerald (ed), 2009:57

only achieve success with assistance (2008:234). However, whilst the notable differences may be regarded negatively, I resist, for the time being, the perception that all forms of support or assistance are somehow disempowering.

### **Ideology versus Reality**

The transformation of mainstream schools into inclusive schools should not, as Slee suggests, merely require the transfer of special school philosophy.

*'... the inclusive schooling narrative is not enlightenment writ grand. Nor is the voice of inclusion an act of special educational ventriloquism'* (2001:395).

However, the rather mechanistic way in which standards and targets in all schools are measured suggests that a concept of a truly inclusive school is clearly both a major philosophical and pedagogical leap for education. Lloyd talks about *'compensatory normalisation'* which derives because the education system of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is set up to be target-driven and *'standards-saturated'* (2008:228). A focus on additional teacher training, resources (both physical and human) or access, for example, has ensured a culture which never really looks beyond these targets and standards (Rose, 2001). Schools, I would contend here, have never been enabled to move towards a truly inclusive curriculum and, therefore, all staff involved in curriculum decisions and delivery, TAs included, are unlikely to be afforded the time to explore new practices which may support a truly personalised agenda. Indeed, there is an argument here that this perpetuates a simplistic view of a medical model whereby pupils are fitted into an existing structure

through a process of adaptation and modifying activities (Smith in Fitzgerald (ed), 2009:32).

### **The impact of legislation and policy**

Swain and Cook (2001) note that the process of changing provision for disabled young people is a current feature of education policy at a local level although this shift in policy can be tracked back to the Warnock Report with its three-way model for inclusion and continuum of need (DES, 1978, Shah, 2007). The prevailing term 'special educational needs' emanated from Warnock (1978) and despite corresponding debate during the same period about appropriate use of the language of disability, (see Barnes, 1992, for instance) this idea of 'special need' appears not to have been similarly challenged. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA)(DfES, 2001) further confirmed the desire and will of policy makers to continue with an inclusive programme for young disabled people within education. Whilst 'programme' seems a useful term, Honda urges us to consider mainstreaming as an *approach*, or perhaps a *philosophy* rather than a programme or project (2009:11). Indeed, what Avramadis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) term a 'reductionist' approach, in which there is a concentration on resources and equipment for instance, or, indeed, physical access requirements in particular, dominates the agenda and removes us further from a social model by conferring an implicit mythical set of barriers.

In a climate of equity and equal opportunity, and with political aspirations to make society more inclusive, the education system changed and evolved to incorporate a shift in attitude. An altruistic version of educational change

would be rooted in the application of human rights, although Slee suggests that educators don't yet recognize disablement as '*cultural interplay*' (2001:386). He contends that disability is still presented from an impairment or medical model perspective:

*'... rather than a signifier of more complex sets of relationships between institutions and individuals'* (2001:386).

Recent commentary on the value or otherwise of an inclusive mainstream setting for disabled young people urges reconstruction of a system which is currently two-dimensional. Blending and blurring the boundaries between special and mainstream schools with greater flexibility for inter-agency collaboration and support, for example, could create a more inclusive, holistic education system. Rethinking the way in which curriculum design *causes* inaccessibility to learning and reconsidering the way in which schools and teachers must measure success are examples of the potential for a more wide-ranging perspective of inclusive education which is located within the meta discourse of disability (Hemingsson, Gustavsson and Townsend, 2007, Lloyd, 2008). Indeed, a two-dimensional or binary system is too simplistic a model for such a complex range of processes and this results in potential conflict or tension for all those who participate in such a structure. It is this polarity which leads to my adopting the metaphor of the TA finding themselves between both a rock and a hard place.

## PART II

### **The Curriculum: some factors affecting the delivery of an inclusive curriculum for PE**

The value of physical activity, and by default, physical education, for *all* young people is unchallenged at a fairly simplistic level in the literature in this field (Bailey, Armour, Kirk, Jess, Pickup and Sandford, 2006, Fairclough and Stratton, 2005) and includes social and affective aspects of learning leading to the production of social capital (Bailey *et al.*, 2006, Capel, 2007). Consequently, the perceived value to young disabled people of engaging in PE is also a consideration in the literature (Coates and Vickerman, 2008). For instance, it can be a significant normalizing experience (Taub and Greer, 2000) and might facilitate students to '*background their disability*' (Brittain, 2004a:86). Notwithstanding this however, several authors have attested to the view that, despite schools in general and perhaps PE specifically, being more accessible to disabled young people, whether the experiences these students have within them is valid or valuable is of concern (Penney and Evans, 1995). Houlihan reported on a survey which found that whilst 79% of PE department heads in 38 mainstream schools claimed an inclusive or 'suitable' curriculum, physically disabled pupils in particular '*did not have access to the full range of activities*' (2003:111). So, what type of inclusive PE curriculum access are we considering here for disabled young people?

### **The National Curriculum for Physical Education: an overview**

Since 1992, a standardised curriculum has existed in English schools in which Physical Education appears as a foundation or compulsory subject, if not

throughout the school life of a child, certainly for part of it. Tungatt (1992) considered that, pre-national curriculum, there were severe limitations for secondary-age disabled pupils, albeit in a small number of schools in the north-east of England. Frequent subject exclusion seemed to be the norm and lack of training figured significantly in responses to questionnaires targeted at teachers. Of concern, recent and current research in PE reveals almost identical issues where lack of or inadequate training is deemed by teachers and trainees to preclude successful inclusive practice (Morley et al, 2005, Vickerman and Coates, 2009).

The evolution of the National Curriculum for Physical Education (NCPE) between 1991 and 2000 also corresponded to the rise in the number of disabled pupils attending mainstream schools; by 1999, the then DES was beginning to recognise the subsequent need for flexibility within the programmes of study. However, by the time the first NCPE texts were written and published, Barton observed that the new curriculum's emphasis on games and performance '*would not easily accommodate pupils with physical disabilities*' (1993:51). This was supported by research undertaken by Fitzgerald (2005), further corroborated by Vickerman (2007), who found that pupils' perception of difference or lack of ability centred on an ideology focused on either the teacher or the existing curriculum promoting competitive or team games. This 'privileging' of games over other activities was noted as a feature of the 1999 NCPE (Penney and Evans, 1999) and Penney would later note that the so-called 'marginalised' activities such as dance and swimming were, in fact potentially more inclusive (2002).

A games-centred approach to teaching aspects of the NCPE, however, reflects a move away from a *'hierarchical determination of skill sets'* (Wright and Forrest, 2007:279) towards an implicit recognition of a pupil's prior experiences and their ability to reflect, adapt and assimilate learning in the context of PE.

With the introduction of further substantial revisions to the NCPE in 2007, the potential for the teacher to plan for learning *through* activities rather than by participation in *set* activities could, in theory, support an inclusive approach by default. At the time of writing, however, no research is yet forthcoming as to the impact of the new curriculum on the inclusion of physically disabled pupils in mainstream PE. However, the value orientations of the teaching profession (Ennis, 1992) may well be at odds with the new approach unless, perhaps, we witness a move away from a disciplinary-mastery focus towards that of self-actualisation (Silverman and Ennis, 2003).

### **A Foucauldian Perspective**

The dominant physicality of the Physical Education curriculum, at face value, and certainly in the eyes of some teachers, seems to dictate the perceived lack of ability with which a *physically* disabled child might engage with content. Barton, adopting a Foucauldian stance, notes that *'... physical education is the creation of and for able-bodied people'* and that it gives priority to certain types of human movement (1993:49).



Armour (1999) and later Jerlinder, Danermark and Gill (2009) however, have also articulated that an embodiment discourse for PE appears not to be compatible with the inclusion of a physically disabled young person. This is aligned to an emerging post-modern disability perspective in which impairment is seen as part of the disabling process (Corker and Shakespeare, 2002). A sociology of impairment would indeed consider the body as central to this disabling process (Hughes and Paterson, 1997). Bailey *et al.* note that PE is:

*'... a subject where pupils' bodies and physical abilities are uniquely visible and pupils are made vulnerable as they demonstrate their abilities and skills (or lack of them) to classmates'* (2006: unpaginated).

Teachers in Morley *et al.*'s (2005) study observed the limiting effect and therefore greater degree of challenge apparent in a programme of physical activity for the physically disabled child. They perceived this as one of the factors which created a barrier to successful inclusion. The view from disability studies, however, might be that this represented a fairly clear example of the 'problem' occurring as a result of the impairment and not, as a social model perspective would suggest, that the curriculum is the barrier. Penney and Evans (1995). noted the NCPE's efforts to distance itself from labelling children as having (and therefore being) a problem Evans (in *Ibid*) notes that whilst laudable points are made about the concerns with labelling, definitions and descriptors are then used which serve to emphasis difference which, he perceives, could lead to stereotype and prejudice.

## **A Bernsteinian Perspective**

Although the views of PE teachers are not widely sought in the context of this research, explaining the context of the role of the TA in PE requires some consideration of the nature of the professional role of PE teachers, with whom TAs share a work space. Whilst Bernstein may not have included PE as one of the 'pure' subjects, nevertheless, the content of the curriculum in terms of subject knowledge and, indeed, the characteristics of those delivering it, may well be deemed to be sacred or valid. Bernstein's notion of 'framing' in fact relates specifically to the *relationships* inherent in the learning process (Bernstein in Scott, 2003:251, Penney and Chandler, 2000). Perhaps also, the notion of teacher training (or professional training) contains much that is standards - or competency - driven (Yandell and Turvey, 2007). Garner's remark about the '*deceit of initial teacher training*' (in O'Brien and Garner, 2001) is reiterated by Beck and Young:

*'... trainees [are denied] access to the forms of knowledge that permit alternative possibilities to be thought' (2005:193).*

Recent debate regarding the changing nature of the PE profession contains all the elements of Downie's seminal discussion on the generic nature of professionalism (1990). Morris (2001:21) defines the '*modern profession*' using a number of characteristics including a standards framework, a body of knowledge, management of staff, effective use of resources, incentives and rewards and constant performance assessment. One might argue that this is an outcome-orientated view of a profession as a service with a politically-motivated need for a focus on measurement and accountability and lacks what others (including Downie, 1990 and Sachs, 2003a) might recognise to

be 'client' centred. The model described by Morris is regulatory and may thus inhibit the opportunity for independence noted by Downie (1990:153). Indeed, moral legitimacy, he contends, is only achieved in the eyes of wider society through such independence.

### **Tensions of re-professionalisation or de-professionalisation?**

Houlihan and Green (2006) observe that, during the 1960s and 1970s, educational debate centred on secondary school structure rather than curriculum concerns or subject-specific discourse. They also attest to the lack of belief by the PE profession in their subject at this time following earlier remarks of Peters who discussed the value of any subject for inclusion in the curriculum and concluded that games was not a '*serious pursuit*' and that it '*throws very little light on much else*' (Peters, 1966:159, in Houlihan and Green, 2006). Through a critical review of journal articles from that point onwards, Houlihan and Green present clear evidence for an insecurity within the profession (2006:75).

Furthermore, Game Plan (DCMS, 2002) followed closely by the Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL), (Youth Sport Trust, 2003) and the more recent Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People (PESSYP),(Ibid, 2008) ostensibly threatened the nature and delivery of PE as a curriculum subject and provided the potential for other professionals from the wider field of sport and sports coaching to provide physical activity in schools (Houlihan & Green, 2006, Keay, 2006). Beck (2009) discusses what are deemed to be the competencies of the teaching profession (as set out by

the Training and Development Agency for Schools) and includes the observation that the 2007 document 'Professional Standards for *Teachers*' (emphasis added) has recently:

*' ... enlarged at both ends ... to include ... developing national occupational standards for teaching/classroom assistants and professional ... standards for higher level teaching assistants'* (Beck, 2009:7).

Thus tensions between a range of professional bodies responsible for both the development and delivery of school sport and physical education resulted in a general perceived lack of clarity and focus according to Houlihan & Green, 2006:84) or of '*pedagogical authority*' (Harjunen, 2009:109). More significantly, it is the impact of policy in terms of the growing and changing role of the Physical Educationist<sup>5</sup> in schools which appears to give rise to the concept that the teacher's role has been de-professionalised.

Lately, there appear to be similar arguments put forward in respect of changes in the roles of health workers. In identifying the potential challenge, or indeed threat, to the deprofessionalisation of teachers' roles '*in the guise of re-professionalisation*' (Beck, 2008:119), a comparison could be made with the shift in roles in the medical profession where nurses increasingly take on tasks previously undertaken by doctors. (Morris, 2001, Neill, 2002). That is not to say, however, that there are negative aspects to widening the scope of the role or the subject. It may well be that teachers are both protective of their subject knowledge and threatened by change. However, an activist teacher (Sachs, 2003b), or Thorburn's 'new professional' (2005), embraces change,

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<sup>5</sup> This is a widely adopted term: see for example: Armour, 1999, Evans and Penney, 1995, Hendry, 1973, Whitehead, 2006

responds positively to engaging with other professionals: many hands make light work, perhaps.

Representing change and innovation within any profession as threatening may in fact indicate inherent weaknesses in the character of that profession. Thorburn (2005) promotes 'new' versus 'old' professionalism in his discussion of an 'activist' future for the professional status of PE teachers. He notes the emergence of a generic new professionalism which relates to those people who are 'change-makers' in society – those who transform the life chances of others. Given the breadth of the opportunities now afforded by PE through curriculum innovation and social policy, Thorburn concludes that there has rarely been a better time to be a teacher although Moran warns that teachers should be attempting to recapture '*status and dignity*' (2009:59) as opposed to being reactive to external agenda.

### **The Activist Physical Education Professional: working collaboratively**

If the 'new' professionalism embraces the concepts outlined by Thorburn (2005) such as more professional dialogue, creating environments of trust (Frowe, 2005) and restructuring time and space, how does this relate to the 'old' model which, he alleges, has been slow to change or reactive and has had exclusive membership?

*'If you are non-reflective, you may allow others to make your curriculum decisions'* (Hellison and Templin, 1991:3).

Sachs (2003b) notes the requirement for the activist (or reflective) teacher to work collectively and collaboratively with others. Risk-taking is deemed

worthwhile in order to improve learning opportunities for all involved in the education process. Lawson (1988) felt that the profession was socialised into either 'school' or 'sport' and that professional practice thereafter by some teachers would only reproduce the dominant hegemony (in Laker, 2002). Alluding to his own stance as being somewhat conservative in nature, and writing at the start of a period of innovation in schools in general, Lawson's view goes some way to explaining the difficulty with which the PE profession has engaged with change. At the heart of this, it is possible that change and innovation has challenged the educational value of the subject. Armour and Jones (1998:141) call for more empirical research into PE in order to substantiate subject knowledge claims, a common thread throughout the literature in terms of the academic validity of the knowledge base (Houlihan and Green, 2006, Kirk, 1988, Siedentop, 1994).

Using Wenger's concept of mutual engagement (2000), Sachs (2003a) notes that the contribution and knowledge of others is deemed significant in promoting an activist profession which is both effective and which builds on social capital. In supporting this transformation and moving towards communities of practice she challenges the whole notion of teacher identity and thus provides us in Physical Education with a tangible model on which to build successful partnerships with every professional body or individual with an interest in physically educating young people. Clearly, the relationship between the teacher and the TA is one such partnership.

Additionally, the TA's relationship may be with the subject as much as the pupil and the teacher and therefore the TA's understanding of the nature of that subject might also be important. Furthermore, it may be that the pupil's learning is directly affected by the ability of the TA to engage fully with the subject knowledge in situations where the teacher devolves responsibility for delivery to the TA.

## PART III

### **The Teaching Assistant: role definitions, training, competency and relationships**

#### **TAs: their emerging role**

Here, I begin to consider whether the relationship between a TA and pupil is increasingly constrained and regulated by the professional structures created by an education system and a curriculum designed in the name of inclusion. I have argued that the origin and development of a social model approach to research, theory and policy development in disability and PE impacts upon professional practice. Oliver has contended that, in particular, adopting this model:

*'... has profound implications for those professions whose practice is based upon one-to-one interventions' (1999:2).*

This would certainly seem to include the emerging professional role of the Teaching Assistant.

#### **Dependency culture**

Whilst Oliver notes that disabled people should continue to seek the most appropriate and professional *'intervention'* (1999:6) from the construction of mutually dependant relationships, the transformation of disabled people's lives, in his opinion, has been facilitated through social and political activism and not through any equivalent transformation of professional practice. It may be that the construction and perception of the TA's role is, indeed, bounded by a model of disability which, it is contended elsewhere, is somewhat outdated. In turn, this may reinforce a dependant or passive acceptance on the part of the disabled pupil who receives support shaped by adult discourse.



Indeed, Allan (1996) and, to an extent, Sebba and Sachdev (1997), noted the clarity with which we might understand these pupils' experiences as resulting from studying how such discourses are constructed to medicalise or marginalise. This notion of dependency through a disabling discourse will be further explored later in the research study.

### **What's in a name?**

If the language of disability studies is hazardous (see pages 6 and 15), so too is the language surrounding the titling and naming of the educational support staff who work in this emerging profession as well as the naming of the profession itself. Studies in Europe, the USA and Australia often use the term 'paraeducator' or 'paraprofessional'. There may be obvious reasons for this in that in these countries, a 'teaching assistant' is more likely to be a graduate, working alongside a professor in a college or university (in, for example Diamond and Gray, 1987, and Marincovich, Prostko and Stout, 1998). Giangreco et al used the term '*instructional assistants*' (1997:7) whilst further studies consider the therapists' contribution to collaborative and inclusive classroom learning (for example, Hemmingsson *et al.*, 2007). The latter is, however, largely concerned with medical or physiotherapy support rather than support for learning *per se*.

Bedford et al note the negative impact of terms such as 'support staff', 'adults other than teachers' and 'non-teaching staff' (2008:8). Indeed, in their reporting of a study into teachers' relationships with TAs, one sample school had noted a *positive* impact on relationships between TA and teacher when

the TA was renamed '*assistant teacher*' (2008:21). Ghre (2003) notes that it was legislation in 1997 in the US which first used 'paraprofessional' as a preferred term; in the UK, the DfES encourages the use of 'TA' as a '*preferred generic term*' (2000:3). Despite this, however, it is still common to see the term Learning Support Assistant (LSA) in recent research and policy documents in the UK (Smith in Fitzgerald (ed), 2009:33, Veck 2009).

One wonders at the inconsistency of terminology, particularly with the shift from 'learning' support to support for 'teaching'. Kerry argues that the label 'TA' reinforces the idea that *teaching* is the central component in education as opposed to *learning* (2005:375). For the purposes of this study, however, I use TA and LSA interchangeably to reflect the literature. However, in my data collection, presentation and analysis I adopt DfEE's and KCC's preferred nomenclature of 'Teaching Assistant' throughout.

### **Clarifying the role**

Naming the profession is one thing, interpreting the nature of the role is quite another and authors are agreed on the importance of role clarity:

*'The key to effective support appears to depend on a clarification of the assistant's role'* (Jerwood, 1999:128).

The literature calls for a clarification of TA roles as one of the most regularly cited issues or recommended outcomes from research (for instance, Clayton, 1993, Kerry, 2005, Minondo, Meyer and Xin, 2001, Moran and Abbott, 2002). In Jerwood's small-scale study of seven TAs (1999) it was noted that they themselves were unclear about their role and had specific concerns about

their interaction with the teacher. Egilson and Trausdottir's respondents relied on their '*own knowledge, skills or initiatives*' in the absence of role definition (2009:23). Of interest were Jerwood's findings which noted the strength of a 'faculty-based' TA, one attached to a subject rather than a pupil (supported by Lacey, 2001). When the case study school moved to adopt this model, TAs found their roles easier, clearer and were generally more positive about their positions. Other partners in the process (teachers, parents, pupils) were also clearer about the nature of the TA's duties. In particular, pupils' perceptions shifted to a position where they viewed the TA as a resource rather than a '*minder*' for particular children (Jerwood,1999:128).

O'Brien and Garner (2001) noted the more receptive shift in staff attitude when a peripatetic LSA change her job title on a name badge to 'Behaviour Support Team'. Prior to this, the LSA in question had never shared that she was a trained counsellor and thus more legitimately able to deal with behavioural problems in the classroom than perhaps the teacher. Once retitled, however, her credibility and likewise both the perception of her role by others and her status increased. Implicit in this example is the potential difficulty teachers may have in deferring to a person in a role they might deem to be inferior.

Studies by Kerry (2005) and Kessler, Bach and Heron (2007), for instance, attempt to create a typology of assistant roles, the former for TAs specifically, the latter for assistants across education and social welfare. These typologies appear hierarchical in construction: in the case of Kerry, from '*dogsbody*'

(2005:376) incorporating the infamous phrase '*pig-ignorant-peasant*'<sup>6</sup>, to mobile paraprofessional and teacher-support staff. Kessler *et al.* (2007) identify an 'apprentice' who, as an assistant, is preparing for a move into the 'profession'. The assumption here of course, is that this is an upward move, with higher status. This caste-like system applied to evolving professions is likely to ensure that the subject of the assisting (in this case, the disabled pupil) is at the bottom of the pile rather than being a central focus.

A similar perspective is gleaned from Bedford, Jackson and Wilson's research into relationships between teachers and TAs (2008). According to the authors, the perception of terms such as 'support staff' is that they have negative connotations. This reinforces a 'them' and 'us' relationship where the qualities inherent in one profession seem to be of higher value (professionally) than those of someone in a supporting or assisting role (2008:8).

### **The Growth of a Profession**

I cite, in particular, the work of Giangreco with others (1997,1999, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005, for example) who used both qualitative and quantitative data over a period of time to assess the growth and impact of the role of this person who supports disabled pupils in mainstream (or 'general'<sup>7</sup>) as opposed to special education. In particular, Giangreco, Edelman, Broer and Doyle's extensive review of the US literature and Pivik, McComas and Laflamme's in Canada, both conducted in 2002, revealed that it was case law and parental

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<sup>6</sup> This was allegedly said by Nigel de Gruchy of the NASUWT during a so-called 'paranoic period' in which the teaching professions felt somewhat threatened by the emerging role of the TA (in Kerry, 2005:376).

<sup>7</sup> In the USA, a 'general' education setting is the equivalent term to the UK's 'mainstream' school

choice which had originally determined the need for paraprofessional support in North America as far back as 1975. Biklen and Kliewer (2000) trace the work of the parents' movement in this regard as far back as the 1940s in the US; the latter's efforts to secure improved educational opportunities and conditions in care were unmatched by equivalent moves in science and medicine with their focus remaining on eugenics and their perception that a disabled child was *'not capable of being educated'* (Kennedy, 1942:13 in Biklin and Kliewer, 2000:193).

In the UK, however, central policy has determined the rise in TA deployment. Since 1997, figures presented in Morris (2001) show the rapid growth of support staff in schools in a variety of roles, mostly to support or release teachers from administrative tasks. In a four year period, by 2003, the number of TAs had risen by over 50% (Kessler *et al.*, 2007:1648). Writing in 2007, for instance, Callaghan bases his assertion (that the number of TAs had tripled in 10 years) on Parliamentary figures and indeed, Moran and Abbott (2002) trace the beginning of this rise to the 1981 Education Act with its focus on integration. Indeed, in the early years of the developing role, Clayton noted that, traditionally, these assistants undertook housekeeping or caring roles, they were in fact seen as 'domestic helpers' (1993). Meyer refers to these, and similar roles as *'paid caregivers'* (2001:24) but according to Kerry the role remains undefined (2005:375). That these roles may also be gender-biased is a feature of literature and previous research:

*'The majority of assistants in schools are mums ... it is not a good idea to have your mum with you always, even if she is not really your mum.'*  
(O'Connell, 2005:17)

It is acknowledged that, in the primary sector of education, there is a dearth of male role models (Carrington and McPhee, 2008, Cushman, 2005, Skelton, 2003) and recent research indicates the predominant gender-bias in the employment of TAs in both primary and secondary provision (Blatchford, Basset, Brown, Martin, Russell and Webster, 2009). Indeed, Estelle Morris coined the term 'mum's army' in her description of the TA workforce (2001). Dew-Hughes, Brayton and Blandford (1998) noted that 96% of respondents to their large scale survey across 62 local authorities were women.

### **Defining the role**

According to the literature, TAs in the UK appear to play an increasingly instructional role in the classroom and there is some evidence to suggest that the training and job descriptions for example do, in fact, reinforce that an instructional role is the appropriate one, particularly with regard to Physical Education. Palladino, Cornoldi, Vianello, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1999) reported that in Italian schools, where inclusion has prevailed for over 30 years (a similar length of time to both the US and the UK), instruction is exclusively the remit of the teacher, whereas matters of personal care or mobility, for example, are the domain of the TA: a clearer delineation of roles, which, I will argue, appears not to be so straightforward in the UK. Indeed, increasingly, there is a notion that the TA is re-imaged as a teacher in all but name (Quicke, 2003).

Early papers (such as Farrell, Balshaw and Polat, 1999, Lacey, 2001) in the study of the TA's generic role noted lack of training and preparation of the TA

themselves, others point to the lack of training of teachers to manage the engagement of the TA in a mainstream class (Dew-Hughes *et al.*, 1998). This is without considering the very real concerns over the training of teachers to work with disabled pupils, leaving out the intermediary or mediator, the TA. In a truly emancipatory paradigm however, I might argue the need for the *pupil* to receive training to work with their TA.

Callaghan (2007) identifies class size as a significant factor in increasing the need for adult classroom support and notes particularly the use of TAs in increasing numbers with disabled pupils. The growth in the deployment of TAs to support individuals, particularly in secondary schools, is further supported by the research of Neill (2002) who found that the existence of more 'specialist' TAs in the secondary sector matched the higher level of academic functioning as opposed to similar roles in primary schools. Dunne and Goddard's research into the perceptions by TAs of their role also noted the 'specific' nature of this role in secondary schools whereas primary TAs retained one which was more holistic (2004:7). Their study into the perception of 90 TAs on what constituted good practice elicited feedback which, when analysed, revealed that secondary TAs appeared better able to exercise initiative than their colleagues in the primary sector. TAs in this study also placed importance on being able to plan lessons or undertake evaluation, monitoring and assessment, tasks which do not feature in either the DfES Good Practice Guide (2000) or the Standards for Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) (DfES, 2003b).

Moran and Abbott (2002) researched the specific roles of the TA in Northern Ireland but used a sample which represented both special and mainstream provision which was cross-phase and spanned a wide range of impairments. More importantly, the semi-structured interviews conducted by the researchers were with the Heads of each of the sample schools or units (2002:164) and related to the management view of the TA's role and not to any view expressed by the TA themselves. However, they did conclude by noting the importance of teacher and TA working collaboratively, a view supported by Smith and Green (2004) and identified by Giangreco (1997) as an important factor in successful inclusion. In particular, the need for the teacher to be trained to manage the TA effectively (Farrell *et al.*, 1999) was highlighted and this is reinforced when, from 2005 onwards, the DfES identified the TA's professional role as being commensurate with a need for dedicated and continuing professional development (CPD), (Groom, 2006).

### **Previous research: claiming originality**

Studies generally seem to be related either to a senior management or policy-led view of the TA's role (Bedford *et al.*, 2008, Moran and Abbott, 2002, Moyles and Suschitzky, 1997, Pugh, 2007) or, occasionally, to a middle-management view, perhaps that of the SENCo (Cole, 2005, Gerschel, 2005, Pearson and Ralph, 2007). Several studies also reflect on the TA's role from the teacher's perspective (Morley *et al.*, 2005, Rose, 2001). Some are cross-phase (e.g. Smith, Whitby and Sharp, 2004) with fewer focussing on a specific impairment, a specific age or, importantly for this study, a specific subject. Indeed, at the time of writing, no studies exist which investigate the perception



of the TA of their role in inclusive Physical Education. There are limited studies on the TA's voice: those that do focus on the voice of the TA in UK schools (such as Dew-Hughes et al, 1998, Mansaray, 2006, Sikes, Lawson and Parker, 2007) and their perceptions of their role have provided valuable methodological insights into the construction of each phase of this research and this will be consolidated in the methods chapter of this thesis.

In particular, O'Brien and Garner's edited personal narratives of LSAs (2001) is a rare and recent attempt to '*validate their voices*' but without what the authors deem to be '*academic violation*' (2001:5). They recognised the failure of existing published work to incorporate the LSA's critical reflection about their role and that there existed a dominant discourse through which the LSA was an object to be 'used' effectively:

*'It was as if we were reading the instruction manual for a useful household tool ...'* (2001:2).

In terms of the research method adopted, the editors wished only to reveal *stories* without critical or thematic analysis, with the reader making the inferences and the informant's voice the sole agent for this. An eclectic mix of stories, from men and women across phases, working with pupils with a wide range of impairments, this study has a clear intent – the empowerment of the LSA.

Neill's study (2002), referred to earlier, notes that teachers' expectations are clear: they perceive the role of the TA to be that of supporting *pupils* rather than to support *teachers*. (2002:40). Respondents to Neill's research noted how difficult the classroom became when the TA was not present to support a

child with more complex or challenging learning needs; this was previously noted by Ainscow et al (2000:220). A more recent Swedish study found that the majority of teachers sampled did not consider it their responsibility to either guide or supervise a disabled child (Hemingsson et al, 2007:390). Not only was it found that differences *did* exist between teachers and so-called paraprofessionals which had their roots in societal or institutional issues but that physically disabled students were, in fact, found to be receiving ‘*suboptimal participatory arrangements*’ (Ibid, 2007:383). Conversely, whilst Evans and Lunt (2002) reported that the presence of LSAs (sic) tended in fact to work *against* inclusion, Corbett noted that:

*‘LSAs are increasingly seen as integral to successful inclusion. Theirs is no longer a peripheral, supporting role but a key teaching and learning collaboration.’* (2001:88)

### **The Role of the TA: threatening the role of the teacher?**

Workforce reform illustrates a more recent challenge to the teaching profession in general. For Physical Education, it came at a time when the profession was already being asked to adopt and adapt to government policy and initiatives arising out of concerns for health, fitness and participation in physical activity. A number of authors attest to the notion that whilst priorities have shifted over time, the result has not necessarily been change in practice or in real innovation (Kirk, 1988, Penney and Evans, 1995).

Embodied in the overall aims of public sector reform, the DfES White Paper (2005b) identified that devolving responsibility to ‘front-line’ professionals was a key aspect in remodelling the workforce or in ‘modernisation’. In locating the teaching profession within the wider public sector, commitment was made to

raising standards through well-rehearsed rhetoric such as testing, key skills, leadership or collaboration. More significantly, the concept of professional 'devolution' in order to enable teachers to develop a service relating to individual needs was presented. Whilst the Paper has, at its core, the improvement of standards, it sought largely to address the increasing concerns expressed by teachers' representatives regarding ever-increasing workloads and administrative duties which detracted from planning for teaching and learning.

Morris (2001) had presented an argument not only for modernisation of teaching but for redefining the teaching profession, and outlined a number of characteristics which, it was attested, defined the 'modern profession'. The generic regulatory body for teachers, the General Teaching Council (GTC) was deemed to be pivotal in this redefinition, as was the government. The agenda outlined by Morris is underpinned by the notion that the teaching profession must constantly shift to meet ever-changing socio-economic demands (2001:9). Teachers of Physical Education however, in responding to the increasing demands of the school sport agenda together with the obesity and healthy lifestyles debate, were urged by Capel not to '*sway with the wind*' (Capel and Piotrowski, 2000:217).

However, organisational change is clearly challenging and may have threatened the teaching profession. A flurry of resistance reported by the national media illustrated the strength of feeling that the teachers' role was being diminished by such reform (Henry, 2004, Bright, 2004). Indeed,

Wilkinson discussed this 'erosion' in terms of a connection existing between knowledge and professional control (2005:421). O'Kane (2002) talks of the potential of the TA to undermine the professional role of the teacher and calls for the maintenance of high pedagogic and academic standards in teacher training and development and clarity in the delineation of the role of the TA, a point that is also supported by Bedford *et al.* (2008). O'Kane further hints at a nascent or emerging profession of Teaching Assistants by calling for occupational standards, a qualification framework and career structure, mirroring at least three of Downie's characteristics of a profession (1990:148). Wilkinson is also clear on the nature of the TA's role since workforce remodelling; that of a '*subordinate profession*' (2005:437) which might eventually be a factor in the realignment of professional boundaries in teaching on the grounds of economy and not ideology. Collins and Simco (2006) are also clear about the professionalisation of the role in recent years and cite Ball (2005) in suggesting that TAs should be subject to the same inspection procedures as teachers.

Within the government documentation, '*staff*' include those working under contract as part of the school workforce, whilst '*support staff*' specifically relates to those members of the workforce who are not teachers in accordance with Section 122 of the Education Act, 2002 (BAALPE, 2005:3). In 2003, the DfES identified 'specified work' or core teaching tasks and elaborated on exactly who should be responsible for planning and delivering these (DfES, 2002).

So much for the political and policy-led role definitions. Research into the management and leadership of the role of the TA seems to feature fairly frequently in the literature. However, more recently, a recognition has emerged amongst researchers that there needs to be more evaluation of the nature of the work undertaken, of all relationships in the context of teaching and learning in an inclusive setting in particular (Collins and Simco, 2006). Farrell noted that more informed discussions about inclusive practice could be gleaned through the results of further research and cited the value of investigating how *'in-class'* support could be provided for the pupil with SEN (2000:161). It was further noted that the roles, training and the nature of the LSAs' relationships with teachers was an important consideration for further research.

### **Subdoceo<sup>8</sup>: the TA as Teacher**

The National Agreement (DfES, 2003a), published shortly after Time for Standards (DfES, 2002) highlighted the contribution, deemed as *'significant'* (DfES, 2004b) and *'subtle'* (Howes, 2003:148), made by support staff to the efficient running of schools and to raising standards but makes it clear that the roles of teachers and TAs are not interchangeable. Furthermore, Howes notes that the National Agreement may fail to do justice to the complexities of this role (Ibid:152). Giangreco et al's observation (2005) supported Dew-Hughes *et al.*'s earlier claim (1998) that:

*'The least qualified staff members are teaching students with the most complex learning characteristics'* (2005:31).

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<sup>8</sup> *Subdoceo*: Latin meaning 'to teach as an assistant'

Brown et al stress the importance of recognising the challenges to learning presented by students with complex disabilities and acknowledged that they

*' ... are in dire need of continuous exposure to the most ingenious, creative, powerful, competent, interpersonally effective and informed professionals ...'* (1999: 252)

... a tall order indeed.

Generally, the literature suggests that the TA is increasingly taking on an instructional or semi-teaching role and that they often take sole responsibility for the education of more challenging pupils (Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli and Macfarland, 1997, Moyles and Suschitzky, 1997, Veck, 2009). In Herold and Dandolo's study (2009), when a visually impaired pupil was asked to say who his PE teacher was, he in fact named the LSA. Recently, Blatchford et al (2009) reported that where TAs were increasingly deployed with one child for the duration of the school day, the time spent by that child in being taught by the teacher lessened.

Whilst this is not necessarily something which the TA should be held to account for, the observation, albeit in English, Maths and Science, that teachers were not well-trained to work collaboratively with TAs is pertinent and timely. That teachers and TAs were rarely provided with opportunities for collaborative planning and feedback was also revealed through the Blatchford study.

Finally, the National Occupational Standards (2001) outlined a number of competencies relating to the TA role, one of which hinted at a completely different and somewhat utopian view of collaborative practice:

*'... sometimes, working under the direction of the teacher, teaching/classroom assistants will work with the whole class in order to free up the teacher to work with individual pupils who need special attention.'* (2001:5, emphasis added).

### **The TA in Physical Education**

In the context of PE, a higher duty of care (BAALPE, 2005) in practical lessons exists for this subject and substantial case law should alert employers or Headteachers to proceed cautiously when deploying staff. In particular, this applies when allowing inexperienced or unqualified staff to supervise activities where a higher degree of risk is involved. Since August 2003, regulations have been in place in England in which the circumstances under which support staff can undertake 'specified work' are clarified (BAALPE, 2005). Additionally, and where the regulations are also very clear, is in the context of the expectations of schools as to who undertakes more 'challenging' aspects of the specified work. What exactly is meant by 'challenging' is not elaborated but I draw from this again that either there are aspects to this subject which are sacrosanct or there are safety and risk concerns which may be presented as contrived barriers to full participation.

BAALPE's recommendation is for staff other than teachers in the context of PE to be Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) as a benchmark for ensuring appropriate supervision. Notably, the HLTA is not a separate qualification, more an upgrade in status based on experience and attaining a range of competencies. Bedford *et al.* (2008) however reported on the 'controversial' content of the standards introduced for HLTA status which, they note, were similar to those for classroom teachers. The use of the word

'controversial' in their discussion would further serve to reinforce the unease and concern prevalent amongst teachers at this time regarding the perceived status of their respective roles. It is clear from BAALPE's guidelines that the overall responsibility for *learning* lies with the qualified teacher, however, the document identifies those who may also assist and support the work of a qualified teacher, including TAs and HLTAs.

Research into the employment of TAs by Blatchford *et al.* (2007) similarly noted that the role of the teacher and the teaching assistant were not interchangeable. Delegation of duties to support staff is also deemed to be at the discretion of the teacher (or subject to a risk assessment) but the fact that BAALPE note the need for these people to be '*well informed, well qualified and well trained*' (2005:5) confers or implies an implicit acceptance of their growing professional status. Indeed, the implication of one of the research questions in Smith *et al.*'s 2004 study is of an aspiration on the part of the TA to become qualified teachers. This might presume that TAs are '*teachers in waiting*' (from Kessler *et al.*, 2007) although not all the evidence supports this (Farrell *et al.*, 1999). Conversely, Howes' (2003) review of the National Agreement highlighted a relationship between teacher and TA as being one in which the teacher leads and manages and not one of collaboration and partnership:

*'As the political commitment towards the inclusion of pupils with SEN and disabilities in mainstream PE has increased, there has emerged a correlative increase in the emphasis placed upon the role of LSAs in assisting teachers'* (Green and Hardman, 2005:231).



## **Training and continuing professional development**

The DfES statutory guidance for LEAs, often referred to as the 'Framework for Inclusion' (DfES, 2001), confirmed that inclusion was a practical possibility for disabled pupils in their statement:

*'... with the right training, strategies and support nearly all children with special educational needs can be successfully included in mainstream education' (2001:2).*

So, what exactly is the 'right' training? Who has shaped this professional development, on what agenda is it based and where are the other voices in the development of such training?

Interestingly, Blatchford et al (2007) highlighted the difficulties (due to lack of funding) or barriers presented by the professional body (the school in this case) to continuing professional development for the TA. Since membership of the professional body, the Association for PE (AfPE) is also open to TAs, then so, one would expect, is full access to the Association's programme of professional development, thus enabling the teaching assistant to access exactly the same courses as the PE teacher. Indeed, Bubb and Earley (2006), cited in Bedford *et al.* (2008) noted that CPD for TAs was, in the main, focused on subject knowledge. For example, Northamptonshire County Council's guidelines for schools using AOTTs (adults other than teachers), includes the requirement for TAs and HLTAs to demonstrate competence in activity-specific areas, recommending attendance at Level 1 or equivalent coaching courses (2006:10). There is, perhaps, a presumption here that specified training for this role must be activity-specific. Does the training match the needs of the job? Quite possibly, yes, but does it also match the

needs of the child? Headteachers in Smith et al's study (2004) anecdotally cited the lack of uptake of CPD opportunities as being linked to the 'family commitments' of TAs, perhaps implying a gender-bias and thus confirming the concept (rightly or wrongly) of Morris's 'mum's army' (2001).

School-based professional development in PE was the focus of discussion and research by Keay (2006) and Keay and Lloyd (2008) particularly regarding the significance of communities of practice in relation to subject-focused CPD in PE . They noted, in relation to teachers, the process whereby an individual (despite being a 'professional') had first to become an accepted member of the 'group' before others were willing to engage in reciprocal learning. This collaborative model, however, is only presented in relation to teachers and does not include other staff involved in the wider subject community. Keay's work (2006) found that new entrants to the profession, having become socialised into the department, then developed individual (or 'artisan') methods for advancing their knowledge.

On a micro level, within a school setting, the emerging community of practice of the teaching assistant or paraprofessional is not always systematically integrated into the school. Indeed the traditional and often hierarchical nature of staffing may even reinforce the perception of the status of the TA in an inclusive classroom. Wenger and Snyder (2000) argue that organizations should be considering, in a more practical way, merging and synthesizing these communities to better affect the whole organisations' outcomes for pupils. Hemingsson *et al.* also note the necessity to create more inter-

professional working practices, greater co-operation and communication with each party gaining insight into the other's practices and perspectives (2007:395).

Several studies note the significance of the content of training for teachers, particularly pre-service (Morley *et al.*, 2005, Smith and Green, 2004, Vickerman, 2007, Vickerman and Coates, 2009). Generally, there is agreement that trainees would value more practical than theoretical input although of course, the 'degree-ness' of this is always a consideration for ITT providers. The luxury of pre-service training is denied to the TA who mostly learns '*on the job*' (Balshaw, 1999, Morley *et al.*, 2005) and undertakes training after they have found themselves thrown in at the deep end.

The broader nature of professional development for PE occasionally encompasses the opportunity for teachers to gain coaching awards from National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) by way of demonstrating the acquisition of subject knowledge. If attaining these awards denotes a professional level of subject engagement, then it follows that a TA or HLTA could access exactly the same courses and be perceived by the school to demonstrate thereafter the required level of competence, as suggested by BAALPE, to supervise the delivery of the subject. A PE 'professional' in Thorburn's or Downie's terms, may well question the pedagogic authority of an individual who has received such a short subject encounter.

## Conclusion

So far I have considered how, in the last 10-15 years, the role of the TA has been packaged and professionalised, brought into the structure and fabric of the school without, perhaps, the necessary or most appropriate support. This competency-driven and skill-based role is one half of a dichotomous construction. Tickle's (1999, in Korthagen, 2004) qualities of empathy and compassion, for instance, are not included in any assessment of TA competence although, of course, any assessment of a value-laden perception of a role is fraught with difficulty. These qualities are not particularly easy to align with a contemporary disability discourse which has made it difficult to view the impairment as central to a process. This stance was critiqued by Lindsay and others (Shakespeare, 2006, for example) who argued that there was room for both an impairment-focused view and one which accounts for barriers caused by society, systems or structures, both of which were to be considered in constructing the 'needs' of the disabled pupil (2003:5). The definition of the role of the TA may be increasingly shaped by a discourse which, in response to a politically-driven societal agenda for disability, has moved so far away from a humanistic construction as to have rendered itself sterile and functional and this may even be at odds with the personal or vocational motivation of the TA themselves. Thus, I contend, the TA struggles to please all masters and appears to have a role which requires an:

*'... interface between aspects of one's personal virtues and one's professional life, between personhood and teacherhood'* (Tickle, 1999 in Korthagen, 2004:123).

Indeed, public sector reform, along a competency-based model of performance, (Coffield, Edward, Finlay, Hodgson, Spours, Steer and

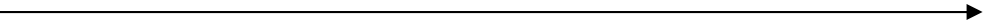
Gregson, 2007), may not be helpful in retaining or reinforcing the qualities of a role which is based on relationships. In this regard, are there tensions in the dichotomous role of the TA as instructor and care-giver, for instance? Does the existing training *per se* move the TA towards an instructional model and away from a humanistic one? There are indeed, '*contradictory demands*' for the TA (Hem and Heggen, 2003:101).

Whilst Nevin, Smith and McNeill (2008c) use a disability rights perspective to call for a move *away* from a deficit model, I use the same agenda to value the *needs* of disabled pupils and, indeed, to suggest that these needs are just one aspect of a holistic view of the support required in order to integrate with integrity, the '*responsible inclusion*' of Evans and Lunt (2002:1). They cannot, I contend, easily be removed from consideration as to what will constitute effective and successful inclusion. Requiring a TA to undertake PE-specific training, for example, is, I argue, one-dimensional. How can we deny the diversity of ability in every disabled child by suggesting that a generic role delineation, leading to a one-size-fits-all training package, can enable such inclusion? Do we use TAs to make the teacher's life easier or do we use them to ensure an individual child is successfully included in a mainstream setting? It is the latter with which this research is concerned.

### **Representing the emergent themes**

At this stage, I make no claims as to how the TA's role should be defined or how they should relate to the pupil or the teacher for example. I have merely presented, from the literature, some influential themes which surround the construction of the role that is the TA in 2010. The macro-construction of the

role and attributes of the generic TA has been derived from the literature with NVivo qualitative analysis software support and appears as Appendices 1a and 1b in order to address the guiding research question for this study. These are coloured to demonstrate more clearly the shift in role construction since the mid-1990s; they also serve to support the thematic re-organisation of the survey questions post-completion which appears on page 111. Summarising these themes below shows a continuum of change for the generic TA in schools from a pupil-centred role to one of instructing and pedagogy (see also Appendices 1a and 1b):

		
<b>1996 (Fox)</b>	<b>2003 (Workforce remodelling)</b>	<b>2009 (Bedford et al.)</b>
<p>Supporting learning; individualized and personal relationship; motivator; creating environments of trust</p>	<p><i>Factotum</i> – TA has a range of tasks to support teaching and learning; ‘<i>Jill of all trades</i>’ (Moyles and Suschitzky, 1997)</p>	<p>Supporting teaching; TA takes on a semi-instructional role; some collaboration required</p>

**Figure 1: ‘Between a rock .....and a hard place’.**

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

There are four parts to this chapter. Firstly, I outline the main research question and subsidiary questions. Next, I present a discussion of the theoretical perspective informing the design of this research. Thirdly, I discuss the nature of the sample, its location and limitations. Finally, I summarise the five techniques of enquiry used here as part of a mixed methods approach.

### The research question

This is a mixed methods study framed within an interpretive paradigm to examine the following research question:

***How do TAs in mainstream PE describe or explain their own experiences of a series of practices which have been identified in the literature as areas of concern or further study?*** (from Giangreco and Broer, 2005:11)

### Subsidiary research questions

Within the broad contours of interpretivism, I adopt the role of '*passionate participant*' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:112) and seek to portray the depth and diversity of the experience that is 'being a TA in PE'; where the interaction between people and the structure in which they operate is important (Crotty, 1998, Broido, 2002); where structure may mean a physical environment or a curricular location and where the voices of the participants are dominant (Lincoln and Guba, 2003). From this general aim, the research has been operationalised into two sections, the first of which was addressed through the review of discourses (page 11) and the review of scholarly literature (page 22). Developing themes from the literature review, according to Smith, is a

feature of a sequentially designed mixed research approach (2010:194) and thus the following questions emerged from a reflection on the political disability movement as well as the study of inclusive practice, the PE curriculum and the role of the TA and have been addressed in the first three chapters of this study:

1. What is the nature of disability and disabling discourse?
2. What do we understand by inclusive practice generically and in PE?
3. What is the nature and content of the PE curriculum particularly as it applies to the education in mainstream schools of a disabled child?
4. What are the professional roles of some of the stakeholders in the inclusion of a physically disabled child in PE?
5. How has the role of the TA and the TA in PE emerged in the last 10 years?

Specific research questions were then generated to address what I considered to be the most revealing outcomes from both the reviews:

1. What is the macro construction of the role of the TA in PE?
2. How do TAs construct and play out the various relational processes within the context of their workspace in PE?
3. How does any existing training for TAs confirm or deny an instructional role?

I present these questions and their relationship to the methods adopted as Appendix 2. This table demonstrates how each research question was



addressed with between three and five methods being adopted for any one question. A full discussion of the subsidiary questions appears from page 120 onwards.

### **Professional background as ontological reality**

In presenting the theoretical backdrop to this research, I elaborate on a model from disability studies and consider whether a 'disability paradigm' has resonance within the context of this particular study. Of note, as a researcher, I have been influenced throughout my career by the impact of the political disability rights movement both philosophically and in practice, through training and professional requirements for example. As a researcher, therefore, there are aspects of my own personal and professional experience which will have shaped my view of the field of study. Indeed, I consider autobiographical details to be of relevance: the reader needs to have an understanding of the writer's attitudes, values, beliefs and experiences (Burke Johnson and Onguewbuzie, 2004, Woods, 1999). Some of this has already been considered and I offer one final anecdote which has influenced my stance.

**Figure 2. Illustrating a dominant narrative: Sarah's story**

*I recall attending a sports equity training session during the 1990s with a colleague who had a congenital physical disability resulting in very short stature with all four limbs affected but who was able to walk. For the purposes of this study I shall call her 'Sarah' and relate, anecdotally, the events as I recall them.*

*The training was being delivered by a person who 'ticked more boxes' (Sarah's words) than my colleague in that she was a powered wheelchair user who also, she told the audience, experienced oppression in her personal life as a result of her sexuality. My colleague observed quietly that she felt unable to challenge or question the speaker since her own experience of disability might be construed as less 'disabling' than that of the speaker. Indeed she spoke of feeling 'disenfranchised' in the context of the course.*

This was an epiphany for me, as I began to consider the rules of engagement in doing disability research. I began to question the nature and hierarchy of the discourse which appeared to me to be prevalent in the disability rights movement and felt that this 'politicisation' of some disabled people (by dominant others) may, in fact, be marginalising other impairment groups. Indeed, Friere (1970) has observed that if struggle is to be meaningful, then the oppressors must not become similarly oppressive. Shakespeare (2006:195) considered this perspective to be '*dangerously existentialist*'

To the reader, this may not immediately resonate with a study of those who act in a professional role with and for disabled people. However, I consider that researchers can draw from the epistemological and methodological debates within disability studies and relocate them to the study of those who are in professional supporting roles with and for disabled people.

### **Theoretical perspective: hegemonic ontology?**

My contention is that any theoretical perspective in studies of this nature has, in part, been determined or influenced by the emergence of the social model approach in disability studies, a 'disability paradigm': one in which the disabled person should be central but not problematic; one in which it is society or its structures rather than an impairment which are deemed to create 'disability' *per se*. In PE, the nature of the curriculum may be one such structure: the knowledge base of the subject may be deemed to be inaccessible and thus the TA is used to mediate between a hostile curriculum and the pupil. Adoption of the social model, as an apparent pre-requisite to successful research in disability studies, is a widespread contention (Bricher,

2000:781, Chappell, 2000:39, Stone and Priestley, 1996:26-7). Indeed the extent to which researchers use this model has been seen to be almost a *'litmus test for the subsequent worth and value of their deliberation'* (Shakespeare, 2006:15).

This research is particularly inspired by critical theory and institutional ethnography (Campbell and Gregor, 2002, Smith, 2005), effectively, a critical ethnography (Anderson, 1989, Thomas, 1993, 2003) in which the theoretical perspective is both substantive (see review of scholarly literature) and conceptual (see review of discourses) and the researcher takes account of the social significance of the findings.

I also make the case for adopting a *'disability paradigm'* (Schalock, 2004) as my dominant theoretical stance. I create the term *'dis-torical'* to portray the **historical** and cultural influences of the **disability** movement in affecting research, influencing policy and constructing professional identity in roles which support disabled people. My own interpretation and analysis of literature and discourse may have been influenced by such a debate and I draw on this perspective throughout the discussion which follows. There is a precedent for the data analysis to be grounded in a theoretical perspective allied closely to disability studies. For instance, Brittain investigated the perceptions of remembered school experiences by elite disabled athletes. His analysis was centred on a clear social versus medical model debate and he referred to a *'dominant medical model discourse'* (2004b:75) prevailing in schools with regards to impairment and inclusion.

## **A broad ethnographic approach**

Ethnographic methodology investigates the user's perspective. It can help in eliciting the point of view of users of a system, structure or service and may also draw out knowledge which may have been taken for granted. The literature indicated that there was a dearth of research which revealed the TA's own perception of their role; ethnography allows for that revelation whilst enabling aspects of their role to emerge which may so far have been overlooked. Goodley explains ethnographic research as aiming to '*look again at the cultures we may feel we already know so well*' (2003:4) and, whilst we would understand a traditional ethnography to be concerned with immersion in a culture or society, an ethnographic stance for this study allows the researcher to:

*'(turn) ... a critical eye onto practices, dynamics, policies and meaning making within familiar cultures'* (2003:4).

## **Critical theory**

Critical theorists, according to Broido (2002), challenge the notion that current structures in society are inevitable and that the dynamics of professional relationships, for example, can be just as easily socially *deconstructed* as constructed. Again, issues of power and representation are dominant: certain societal groups have more power than others. In PE perhaps, the perceived hierarchical nature of the teacher versus the TA is under scrutiny. The researcher is also obliged to question whose interests are served by research from this perspective. How are respondents represented? How is power considered as part of the methodology or, indeed, within the research site?

This study becomes a critical ethnography inasmuch that its direct subjects (the TAs) appear to experience a degree of 'professional repression' or constraint (Anderson, 1989). A critical ethnography, according to Thomas, speaks 'on behalf' of the subject as a means of empowering them and giving them voice (1993). However, according to Thomas, the researcher takes account of the reflectiveness required in terms of their own ideology and perspective, a view supported by a number of researchers who discuss the importance of a reflexive account in the reporting of ethnographic research (Goodley, 2003, Halfpenny, 1984).

In terms of the choice of method in conducting educational or pedagogical research, Trifonas observes that

*'If the research is to have any practicable effects on the everyday realities of teachers and learners, the main purpose here would be to make research reports of pedagogy-related phenomena less specialised and more accessible ... by discursively accommodating ... the details of educational experience into the narrative structure of critical ethnographies' (2009:305).*

A decision to report the TA interviews as conversations, and adding '*naturally occurring talk*' (Silverman, 2006:202) and field notes to the methods and subsequent analysis, relates directly to the need for this research to be both accessible by the respondents and of professional impact.

### **Mixing the methods: a justification**

I have already stated my intention to use the backdrop of a socio-political disability perspective from which to discuss the role of the TA in supporting a disabled child in mainstream PE. I contend that the debate surrounding appropriate research methods to be adopted when working to reveal the lives

and voices of disabled people, also applies to research about those working *for* and *with* disabled people. Thus I present an argument for the adoption of a mixed methods approach which reflects current and enduring discussions in disability studies, particularly as a non-disabled researcher, working predominantly with non-disabled TAs:

*'At an ontological level, reality is located within historical, political and cultural settings ... At methodological level, mixed methods are seen as an appropriate (but not obligatory) way to address research problems relating to diverse groups'* (BERA, undated).

Mixing the methods appears to be closely related to the technique of practitioner research and, to adopt a cliché, as a *researching professional* rather than a *professional researcher*, I claim an approach which has resonance with my own day-to-day work. Brannen notes the advantages to the researcher of this approach as being closely connected to personal growth in the *craft* of research (2005a:6). Furthermore, a mixed method approach may also, in fact, 'speak' to policy and strategy makers and thus impact on professional practice in the field (Hammersley, 2000).

### **Methodological Pragmatism**

The importance of research questions being framed by both philosophical and pragmatic concerns was noted by Bryman (1984) and, more recently, Smith (2010) and elaborated on in Brannen (2005a), all of whom remind the researcher that it is the research *questions* which should guide the research. Turner discusses '*methodological pragmatism*' as a focus for theory and epistemology, with the method to be determined by the nature of the problem (1992:57). Furthermore, Burke Johnson and Onguewbuzie describe a paradigmatic pragmatism whereby a mixed methods approach could be

presented as the third paradigm alongside qualitative and quantitative perspectives (2004:14). In adopting this alternative paradigm, the researcher may find herself at any one time on a continuum between qualitative and quantitative data. In this case, whilst initially drawing on a quantitative analysis of the survey data, the research is aligned more closely with the qualitative end of the spectrum. Furthermore, pragmatism places a high regard on knowledge being constructed from the observable world and the inner experiences of people in that world. This 'middle ground' approach assumes that the researcher is moving towards the answers she seeks but cannot claim to be able to present a definitive answer.

### **Triangulation or crystallisation?**

Using a range of methods, therefore, drawn from a number of paradigms, will enable the researcher to represent the research question *'like light hitting a crystal'* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:8) or, as Silverman suggests, viewing the problem through a kaleidoscope (2000). This notion of *'crystallisation'* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:67) rather than triangulation (Richardson and St Pierre, 2005) infers an understanding that it is the methods themselves which, when mixed, allow the confirmation or validation of a particular viewpoint. In this study, I am influenced by the interpretation provided by Denzin (1978) and recently by Hammersley (2005) in which the same observations are gathered (in this case, using conversations or interviews) but in different locations.

## Using qualitative and quantitative data

I acknowledge a tension between collecting quantitative data and providing qualitative evidence for what is essentially a study of identity and role definition. The self-completion survey (after Bryman, 2001) seeks to reveal how the TA constructs *practices* and not how they *feel* (either professionally or personally). Whilst quantitative analysis can consider relationships between variables or groups, for example, it cannot help the researcher with questions about relationships between people (Elliott, 2005). Furthermore:

*'Identity is not to be found inside a person ... (like a kernel within a nutshell) but rather it is relational and inheres in the interactions a person has with others.'* (Elliott, 2005:124)

Silverman discusses the value of incorporating quantitative data within a qualitative framework. Of particular relevance to my own research is the notion that an initial quantitative study (in this case, the survey questionnaire) can serve to identify the *'broad contours of the field'* (Silverman, 2006:48, Miles and Huberman, 1994:41). Indeed, the approach, in a sequential design, enables the identification of outliers (Smith, 2010:196) which are further explored during subsequent data collection.

Adopting a constructivist approach thus involves, in this case, understanding how an *individual* constructs the world under investigation; this method would not normally be statistically focussed and is grounded in an assumption that it is difficult to adopt a scientific approach to the study of people, feelings or behaviour. Indeed, in constructivism, as Thompson and Perry note, *'meaning is valued over measurement'* (2004:401).



## **The process of data collection**

Following the convention of ethnography, I identify a guide question and have already outlined subsidiary questions. I initially use semi-structured interviews or conversations with 'key informants' (Gilchrist, 1992, in Creswell, 1998) using my own 'social ties' in order to gain access to the research site (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). I follow this with a small-scale survey questionnaire to TAs identified as working specifically with physically disabled young people in mainstream secondary school PE in Kent: a complete population. To further enhance the research process, and to provide clear links to the literature, I present the survey questions as Appendix 5 which demonstrates the range of literature influencing the survey construction. I am guided by Ghore and York-Barr's study which adopted protocols to determine research questions from the literature and also, in this case, the discourses (2003). The content of the questionnaire was informed by Giangreco and Broer's work (2005), whilst the method was influenced by several research projects conducted by Brannen. She has typically used surveys followed by interviews of a sub-set of the sample in a number of studies with the survey providing '*...a sampling frame for the interview studies*' (2005b:178).

The analysis of the questionnaires led to the identification of two schools (or cases) which self-selected from the original sample in which I adopt an approach using protocols for effective case study research, namely, documentary evidence and interviews (Stake, 2000, Thomas, Nelson and Silverman, 2005, Yin 2003).

Finally, one-to-one semi-structured interviews or *'focused conversations'* (Clough and Nutbrown, 2008:88) were conducted with a number of TAs (n=12) working in PE in 2 schools from the original sample. Korthagen (2004) notes the prominence of biographical narrative research in teacher education: I note its dearth in the study of TAs. Indeed, the use of a narrative approach can be helpful in exploring a specific set of circumstances which may or may not help in revitalising a service (Owens, 2007, Susinos, 2007) and thus is a pertinent approach in a study which seeks to inform professional practice. The interviews with TAs represented a cluster sample in that schools were able to identify a complete group of TAs working within the context of the parameters of this study.

### **Justifying the sample and habitus**

The literature confirms and justifies my decision to focus this study on the physically disabled child's teaching assistant in a mainstream school secondary physical education curriculum. I now outline a justification for the choices I have made regarding the sample and the location.

In rich data generated in an Economic & Social Research Council's (ESRC) study of the lives of disabled children (2000), it was found that these young people needed to negotiate *'more intensive, interdependent'* relationships with teachers and other adults, the quality of which impacted significantly on the overall, educational experience (2000:32). The ESRC subsequently found the dynamics and effect of these relationships to be worthy of further research, something which was supported by Prout (2001). Indeed, Howes (2003) suggests that, where support is complex, as in the case of a child with

a physical disability, the researcher should take account of all those central to the process. Thus I limit my research in this study to the voice of the TA.

### **An impairment-specific focus**

Research which explores the voice of people with learning disabilities, both as adults and in the context of school, appears to be more prolific than work carried out with people with physical disabilities (for example, Williams and Downing, 1998, Richardson, 2002). However, it is interesting although unsurprising, to note that much of the research which has been undertaken with people with physical disabilities appears to have a predominantly physiological or impairment focus and is often quantitative in nature. These papers are frequently published in the health or medical journals, they relate to physiotherapy, to alleviating 'problems', to health and to measurement of function (Gowland *et al.*, 1993, Jette, 1994, Lightfoot, Wright and Sloper, 1998). It is also significant that the range of publication dates for a significant number of these papers falls largely between 1990 and 1995, the very period when the challenge to the dominant medical model was perhaps at its height. The challenge to the researcher may appear more straightforward when considering the person with a physical disability and thus, qualitative studies with those for whom communication or sense-making are not straightforward are *more* prolific. However, this would serve to support the focus of my research in terms of considering the views of pupils with physical disabilities.

Further evidence exists to support an impairment-specific focus. Croll and Moses's (2000) research with over 300 teachers and head teachers about the

future of special schools revealed that only 25% of respondents believed physically disabled children should be educated in special (or separate) schools (2000). Clough and Nutbrown (2004) noted the apparently less challenging nature of the inclusion of physically disabled pupils as opposed to, say, pupils with emotional and behavioural disabilities (EBD). Indeed, respondents in Dew-Hughes *et al.*'s (1998) study of 274 LSAs found that they did not prioritise training to work with physically disabled or sensory impaired pupils. Respondents to Evans and Lunt's research (2002) across England and Wales noted that, in general, it was deemed easier to include physically disabled pupils in a mainstream setting. Indeed, plenty of similar examples support this (Hodge *et al.*, 2004, Morley *et al.*, 2005 and Smith, 2004).

In the wider sporting context, physically disabled young people are less likely to participate in physical activity (Finch, Lawson, Williams and Sloper, 2001, Low, 2006). This lends weight to my decision to study the TA working with the physically disabled pupil: if the challenges are *perceived* to be not so great, have these pupils needs been met successfully? One might assume that inclusion has been successful for these pupils merely because of the dearth of material. However the lack of evidence suggests that the field of enquiry relating to physically disabled children is under-researched.

### **A focus on mainstream provision**

A limited number of previous studies have sought to investigate and present the experiences of physically disabled children in mainstream schools. Some are generic and relate to curriculum subjects in general, several relate particularly to Physical Education and sport. Many, however, are quantitative

and relate to participation: they tell us what activities are done by whom, where and for how long. Some work had been carried out under this remit in the late 1980s with National Demonstration Projects being introduced by Sport England to provide working models of good practice in disability sport. One of these, the Everybody Active project, found that there was an urgent need to improve the quality of the physical education experience for pupils with disabilities in both mainstream and special schools (Tungatt, 1992). Additionally, this project acknowledged the value of providing activities after first consulting with the 'target group', in short, *'getting away from the position where able-bodied people make all the decisions'* (1992:338) – a reference to a social model perspective.

Lightfoot *et al.* (1998) conducted a qualitative study of 33 physically disabled pupils in mainstream schools who had additional or associated health needs. Only three of this sample conveyed that participation in PE was straightforward, with a general consensus that inclusion was made easier (and more enjoyable) when lessons were initially adapted by *teachers*. Indeed, qualitative studies which focused on physically disabled pupils' Experiences were also dominant in Coates and Vickerman's review of PE related literature (2008).

The notion that research was frequently designed and conducted by adults – often adults without disabilities – prevailed during the early 1990s, with academics arguing for a more emancipatory research agenda. Much more recently, both Kelly *et al.* (2008) and Blackmore (2008) demonstrated the difficulties expressed by disabled young people when they were subject to an

adult-imposed exclusionary discourse apparently prevalent in mainstream provision. Particularly, counteracting imposed master identities was considered a significant concern in the support of these pupils by Kelly *et al.* (2008) who also concluded that self-esteem and self-identity were important enough to warrant consideration (Wilde, 2008). If the disabled child is to be supported to function independently, clearly their emotional needs cannot be removed from their whole educational experience. How can this support be provided and, more particularly, who is to provide it?

### **A focus on the voice of the Teaching Assistant**

Internationally, the voice of the TA in research which claims to bring about policy change in inclusive education, for example, is limited (Logan, 2006, Bourke and Carrington, 2007). Additionally, the view that it is staff (or adults) in schools that hold the key to move forward inclusive practice is posited by Ainscow:

*'... enlarging their capacity to imagine what might be achieved, and increasing their sense of accountability for bringing this about.'* (2007:6)

Relating to my decision to study TAs in secondary schools I draw on Smith *et al.*'s research into the employment and deployment of teaching assistants in 318 primary and secondary schools in England and Wales (2004). This revealed that primary schools employed fewer TAs than secondary schools with an average of six in primary as opposed to ten in secondary. Furthermore, a number of studies have already been conducted in the primary sector which explore the TA's role (Hancock and Eyres, 2004, McVittie, 2005, Logan, 2006, Blatchford *et al.*, 2007).

Curtin and Clarke's study of inclusive education and physical disability, which adopted a biographical perspective, (2005) noted that, absent from an extensive literature review carried out by Giangreco *et al.*, were *'the perspectives of students who receive paraprofessional supports'* (2005:197). Furthermore, Giangreco *et al.* (in *ibid*) observed that there was a lack of research into the effectiveness of this type of intervention:

*'In general terms the evidence ... suggests that the success of inclusion stands or falls on the availability and expertise of in-classroom support'* (Farrell, 2000:159).

### **Ethical considerations**

I consider that there are two broad ethical concerns which arose prior to conducting this research. These emerged from the fact that my work is guided by both philosophical deliberations or reflections and institutional requirements.

Firstly, within disability studies, there is some ambiguity in the pursuit of an appropriate, ethical research agenda and, in particular, agreement as to who is 'allowed' to research (Bricher, 2000, Humphrey, 2000, Kitchin, 2000). However, most authors are agreed about the intent and impact of the research itself, regardless of the method, in so far as it must benefit the researched and not the researcher. Revealing the TAs' perceptions of their role may ultimately help reveal the pupils' view of their TA – a subject for further research. Perhaps returning unfettered to a research environment where we are unafraid to take account of all significant voices might reveal the subtleties and strengths of all those working in an inclusive educational setting.

Secondly, the methods used focus entirely on the TA's perception and are therefore not as contentious as a study which focuses on the child's voice. Anonymity was assured for those involved in both the survey pilot and the survey questionnaire itself. Schools were contacted prior to the commencement of the research with some initial information about the nature, intent and timescale of the study, noting the support of the advisory team. This endorsement of gatekeepers and third parties is critical to gaining and maintaining access to the research site and has been a consideration throughout the data collection (Shenton and Hayter, 2004). No visual record was made of the visits or interviews nor were individual schools, pupils or members of staff identified by name in the final analysis: this is further elaborated in the participant information sheet (see Appendix 4). Informed consent was sought with the opportunity for participants to withdraw at any stage without prejudice. Finally, this study was accepted by the University of Greenwich's Ethics Committee and, in addition, the researcher holds a CRB enhanced disclosure from the University of Greenwich enabling access to schools and this was presented to each school prior to arranging the visits.

### **Delimitations of this study**

I share here the potential question that may arise from a reader of this study regarding the sample size. By definition, when discussing people with physical disability, we are not only talking about a 'minority' group (disabled people in general) within a whole population, but a minority group *within* a minority group. The sample for this study is finite in that at the outset it represents TAs from all known schools in one county who support a physically disabled pupil.



That this number is, in itself, relatively small, and, indeed, eventually becomes smaller as the research progresses, does not, I believe, indicate that the research is any less valid than any other research into a complete population in a specific location.

### **Transition to the data description, analysis and interpretation phase**

I present the data and its analysis using a thematic framework which has been constructed both through reflection and reading coupled with the use of Nvivo8 data analysis software to code emerging themes. Since this is a mixed methods study, I make both descriptive and analytical observations related to the findings of all data collection methods which are then synthesised against the discourses, the literature and previous research. In doing so, I reflect on the validity of both the outcomes and the methods adopted before concluding with recommendations for future work.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION AND DESCRIPTION

### Introduction

I am influenced in particular by Stone and Priestley's (1996) recommendation that research should adopt a plurality of methods for data analysis in response to changing needs. I also treat the data analysis and interpretation as two separate concerns (Wolcott, 2009) in that, for instance, I *analyse* quantitative responses to the questionnaire and *interpret* open responses to this and the subsequent interviews. I use five techniques of enquiry throughout the data collection stage of this research, namely: documentary evidence (policies, statistics and job descriptions, for example), interviews with key informants (initially and ongoing), a survey questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, naturally occurring conversations and field notes. These are a feature of Woods' description of effective interactionist research (1999). Chronologically, the data was gathered in the following order over a period of 20 months between August 2008 and February 2010:

1. Documentary analysis and preliminary interviews with key informants prior to ethics approval
2. Survey questionnaire
3. Further interviews or conversations with additional key informants
4. Semi-structured interviews with TAs, naturally occurring conversation and observations and field notes in school P
5. Semi-structured interviews with TAs, naturally occurring conversation and field notes in School M

Generally, the documentary and policy analyses inform several stages of the data collection and thus are reported when relevant. Initially however, I expand on the rationale behind the selection of the research site and its parameters. I then reduce some of the demographic and general data about the TAs from the survey and later, synthesise or confirm it using data from interviews and conversations. Finally, I move on to address the subsidiary research questions through more rigorous presentation of what I deem to be revealing or rich data: the semi-structured interviews in sample schools with a range of data stakeholders. Research questions aligned to methods used in this study appear as Appendix 2.

I deemed an interactionist perspective to be worthy of replication in that I would follow the conventions mentioned by Woods (1999) and use documentary evidence, interviews with key informants, unstructured interviews and field notes through which to elicit a picture of the school prior to considering the TA's perspective through a narrative approach and to discuss the role with some teachers or local gatekeepers. I choose to narrate the 'story' of my visits to schools (Polkinghorne, 1995:5) from early email and phone conversations, to arriving at school, interruptions to the day, naturally occurring talk (Silverman, 2006) and field notes. I did this in part to reveal more of the habitus of the TA and to convey a sense of the environment in which they were working. Verbatim transcripts of the audio taped interviews were made post-interview with follow-up participant validation both through revisiting the schools and through key informant meetings following various data gathering stages. Data were coded using both manual and computer-

assisted methods through NVivo8 and SPSS. Welsh (2002) notes that the search facility in NVivo can support claims for rigour and validity or trustworthiness. However, with a relatively small number of cases, manual scrutiny of the transcripts and field notes has also served to ensure themes or outliers are not overlooked. Importing quantitative and demographic data from the survey via SPSS enabled, where possible, exploration of *all* data: an important element of synthesising a mixed method study (Bazeley, 2007). I am guided by recommendations that this thesis should present method, analysis and discussion with rigour and thus spend time throughout justifying choices that have been made, contexts and professional integrity:

*'Rigour is the means by which we show integrity and competence: it is about ethics and politics, regardless of the paradigm'* (Tobin and Begley, 2004:390).

### **Pilot studies**

Additionally, there were two pilot phases to this study: an initial conversation with one of the County's Advisory teachers and a pilot for cognition of the survey instrument. These are reported separately since they demonstrate both that this study is deemed by others to have professional impact and that the survey instrument was a credible procedure which had been carefully constructed and would be circulated and collated with rigour.

### **Representing the Data**

In reporting the research, a more detailed rationale for the methods or techniques of enquiry is outlined in this chapter, the data is presented and then analysed or interpreted in light of both the literature and any findings emerging as the study progresses (Wolcott, 1994, Seibold, 2003).

Horizontalisation (Creswell, 1998) of the data to describe and group together common meanings or 'threads' has been a feature of the review of discourse and literature and remains an important technique throughout the data presentation and interpretation which now follows. In exploring ways of representing data in mixed methods research, I have drawn to an extent on Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie's process model for data analysis (in Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003) and the work of Onwuegbuzie and Dickinson who offer researchers the '*conceptually ordered matrix*' (2008:208) as a model for representing both qualitative and quantitative data. I talk about data reduction, correlation, comparison and integration in the discussion which follows (from Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie, 2003).

Finally, in presenting this analysis, I note the delimitations of this study. This research was conducted in a particular place at a particular time and under particular circumstances, all of which I discuss and justify. Some aspects may well render this study atypical. However, limited generalisation might be justified, based on the similarities of the original sample size to other geographical areas and other studies (Wolcott, 2009). This is expanded on page 89 in relation to two other similarly sized local authorities, Essex and Hampshire. Thus, this study is represented in the way I, as the researcher, experienced it, although I consider that my own professional background in the field justifies the integrity of both my desire to undertake this research and my ability to do so successfully.

## **Documentary Analysis**

The research conducted by Swain and Cook (2001) includes an examination of policy statements from the local authority and this similarly proved to be a useful starting point for this study. Using official documentation and carrying out interviews with policy-makers (2001:188) were central to their research and this has been replicated in my own.

A study of the databases and other documentary and statistical evidence provided by KCC which indicate the location (but not identity) of physically impaired pupils in mainstream schools revealed data which has not only informed my discussion but enabled me to identify a purposive sample. Using statistics provided by the Advisory team in mid-2009, I was able to identify all 36 (of a total of 98) Kent secondary schools that are currently being supported to achieve the inclusion of a physically impaired pupil identified as having specific support needs. Giangreco (1997) had noted that individual TAs were most frequently assigned to work with students with more complex support needs including those of personal care or behaviour management and KCC confirmed this was indeed the nature of the data which I would use for selecting the sample.

The figure of 36 schools represents 36.73% of the total number of secondary schools in Kent (n=98) however, it does not include those secondary schools (n=3) in the Unitary Authority of Medway. In total, at the end of the 2008-9 academic year, the advisory team identified 88 physically impaired pupils who were being actively supported. A percentage of these, (10.86% (n=10)), are

in the county's grammar schools, whilst 53.26% (n=49) are in KCC's 'lead' schools for physical impairment. Furthermore, 26.08% of these pupils are in the three 'First Phase' schools identified from 2008-10 (this is further explained on page 90). I consider that the researcher's job is made much easier when access to the site in terms of data for selecting the sample is as open as I have found it to be in this case. For instance, Lacey (2001) had to conduct a telephone survey of 60 schools, prior to the commencement of research, in order to establish the exact location of TAs working with students with severe learning disability. However, whilst the researcher's job is made more straightforward by being able to access this information from a central and non-anecdotal position, it clearly makes sense for local authorities (LAs) to compile such data as a matter of course. Indeed, The Children Act (1989) requires LAs by law to research and maintain such data on disabled children, with the forthcoming 2011 School Census requiring information against a new disability-specific question.

However, of note regarding the number of disabled students in total is the fact that the advisory team only formally support students against certain criteria and this has rendered the sample an incomplete one in terms of a county's perspective. In October 2009, KCC's advisory teacher estimated the total number of *all* disabled pupils in Kent mainstream schools to be in the region of 800. The criteria for supporting a smaller number relates to those with degenerative or medically debilitating impairments, those with complex needs and those identified by the teacher or parent, for example, as having access difficulties with the curriculum or those at the transition stage between Key

Stage 2 and 3. It is possible, then, that these TAs will also have a caring or welfare role in terms of the specific and identified or associated medical requirements of some of these pupils. In fact, the county's statistics presented in Appendix 8 should perhaps acknowledge those pupils with medical needs beyond or in addition to a physical impairment. Clearly, pupils with other impairments (or other 'need types') may well also have medical/health issues necessitating support. Those with what we might term an unchanging or stable disability may well be the majority of the estimated 800 pupils in all Kent schools with a physical impairment. The lack of corroborative statistics or evidence makes it difficult to proceed with a claim pursuant to this.

### **Situational Analysis**

According to KCC's Standards and Achievement Division and the e-government register (2009), Kent is the largest local authority in the United Kingdom with a population of 1,318,000 (2009). Of relevance to this study, 30 of the 98 secondary schools are selective/grammar schools. In total, there are 52 special schools or learning support units of a variety of designations; the county also has 41 independent secondary schools. It is, educationally speaking, a diversely served authority in terms of provision for a disabled pupil.

There are two other comparable local authorities in England with similarly large populations of over 1,200,000 and not dissimilar demographic and geographical features. All three LAs, presented below, share features of being



adjacent to the capital and having a mix of urban, rural and coastal communities.

<b>Local Authority/County Council</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>No of Secondary schools</b>
Kent	1,318,000	98
Essex	1,295,000	79
Hampshire	1,249,000	71

Table 1: A comparison of geographically similar local authorities (*e-government register, 2009; Office for National Statistics, 2010*)

### **Lead Schools and Local Learning Networks (LLNs)**

In terms of political structure and demographic representation, there are ten local authority areas (LAs) in Kent, all coming under the education services directorate of Kent County Council. Medway is a Unitary Authority and, as such, funds its own provision for both special and mainstream education for physically impaired pupils. Thus this study will be contained, for practical and political reasons, within the ten Kent LAs (not including Medway), clustered into nine Local Learning Networks (LLNs).

In 2008, mainstream schools in Kent underwent a process which identified 9 so-called 'lead' schools for the inclusion of physically disabled pupils.

Additional funding and resources were attached and these schools are being supported to become centres of good practice across all subjects in relation to the inclusion of physically disabled pupils. Clusters of schools in each LLN, served by this lead school would potentially receive dissemination and sharing of good practice in much the same way that the Specialist Sports

Colleges<sup>9</sup> operate. Lead schools were then grouped into three phases for the implementation of this process, with so-called 'Phase 1' schools being supported from 2008-2010; it is the Phase 1 schools which feature later in this study. It has not been deemed as appropriate or necessary to the research process to identify any of these schools by name although, clearly, some readers of this study might be aware of the identities. Indeed, in the data analysis stage, these schools (and all others who responded to the survey) are only identified by a letter allocated to them from the *entire* county schools' database of secondary and primary schools (see also page 109).

The final part of the research, which is aligned to a case study approach (Yin, 1989) gathers data in the natural context and presents the perspective of those 'in the case' (Gall, 1998, in Gratton and Jones, 2004). Qualitative researchers writing about this particular method agree that defining and describing the context of each case is an important feature in setting the scene. Interviews with TAs in two Phase 1 schools were conducted following the return and analysis of the surveys. Geographically, the schools were in different LLNs and did not share any specific features such as similarity of the size of the catchment area, for example. One was in a coastal town whilst one was more urban and certainly multi-ethnic. The size of the schools was similar, with a similar number of teachers and TAs or other ancillary and support staff. All were mixed, wide-ability schools likely to share a particular curricular approach influenced by current educational policy. In addition, both schools (named here as School P and School M) had put teachers in place

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<sup>9</sup> Specialist Sports Colleges are overseen by the Youth Sport Trust and form the centre of a partnership or 'family' of geographically-networked schools for the purposes of sharing and disseminating good practice in PE and school sport.

with a responsibility for the oversight of physically disabled pupils from 2008 onwards; coincidentally, both of these post-holders were current or former practicing PE teachers. Their comments, not identifiable to a specific school, are attributed to 'Lead Teacher'; their perspective however is rooted in their professional expertise in PE.

### **Laying the foundations: Interview with key informants**

Gilchrist (1992) in Creswell notes the use of '*key informants*' in ethnography – individuals used at the start of the data collection process because they are well-informed and can provide leads about other information (1998:247). The interview with a lead officer within KCC helped justify and contextualise my research, acting as a pilot to identify whether my proposal would be perceived to have professional impact and contribution to knowledge in the field. Thus, through the use of the first of several such unstructured or informant interviews (Gratton and Jones, 2004), my intention was to gain the respondent's perception of a particular situation or context in order to help confirm my hypothesis, consider the sample and confirm that this study was both professionally and academically important.

### **KCC Advisory Team**

The role of the Advisory Teacher in supporting the education of the disabled child in the county is critical although this service in general is constantly subject to review and cutbacks. In partnership with schools, advisory staff work to six broad intentions. Of relevance to this study and serving to reinforce the importance of my early collaboration with these 'key informants'

is the notion that advisory staff:

*“... support school setting leaders to develop the workforce, so that staff are skilful, knowledgeable and confident about how to provide excellent learning opportunities...”* (KCC Standards and Achievement Division, accessed online 27/04/09).

Furthermore, KCC has committed to achieving the targets set out in the charter attached to ‘Every Disabled Child Matters’ (2007) by December 2009 thus indicating an intention to continue to deliver high-quality educational provision for each disabled child.

Currently, the county employs staff to work with schools in an advisory capacity but with an impairment-specific remit. The facilitation of my own research process has been through the advisory teachers for pupils with a physical impairment, although others have also supported the work throughout, including those with responsibility for sensory impairment. The names of all KCC officers interviewed have been changed.

The intention of the first interview, which took the form of a preliminary or pilot investigation, was to investigate whether there was, indeed, an opportunity for localised, widespread purposive sampling in conducting my proposed study and whether, just as significantly, there were both local gatekeepers and respondents and relative ease of access to both. Field notes from this conversation are reproduced here, whilst particular responses are woven into the presentation of data from page 118 onwards.

I approached Kent County Council (KCC), with a view to conducting an unstructured interview with their advisory teacher for physically disabled

pupils, 'Jenny'<sup>10</sup>, then in a county-wide role supporting all children of both secondary and primary age who are included in mainstream schools. The timing of this discussion (June 2008) was interesting since it followed immediately after a full review of inclusive provision in the county and was carried out during an apparent period of transition and change. A subsequent meeting with the lead advisor and two other advisory teachers for physical impairment served to confirm the detail of this designation process and of my conversation with Jenny and marked the start of receiving full support for this research from KCC. The first of many semi-formal meetings, these also served to authenticate data through '*respondent validation*' (Woods, 1994:4) as the research progressed. I have continued to liaise with the advisory team throughout the process of applying for ethics approval and leading up to the start of the research in schools in autumn 2009 and again between December 2009 and March 2010.

The advisory team proved to be highly co-operative and collaborative gatekeepers, without whom the breadth of this study would not have been possible. I was also able to access very recent statistics (at various meetings in 2008 and 2009) which clarified the range of educational provision for physically impaired pupils in Kent as well as some data on the number and 'need type' of children in the county who attend a mainstream school mentioned previously (see also Appendix 8).

### **Narrative interviews - the procedure for data collection**

I allowed the final stage of the research to evolve in a less structured way

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<sup>10</sup> The name has been changed

than previous aspects of the data collection strategy. An approach to all nine lead schools (in three clusters) was made after the return of the survey questionnaires. I received two responses, both from so-called phase one schools and made follow-up phone calls and sent a second letter to the remaining seven with no response in the time frame deemed workable. I decided that I would report on all the interfaces with the schools – from correspondence via emails, telephone conversations and so on, together with informal conversation in naturally occurring contexts and my own reflexive field notes. This was in order to maintain an alignment with a broad ethnographic approach although my primary aim was to gather data related to conversations with TAs working in PE with a physically disabled pupil.

Through the SENCo, the Head teacher and the Heads of PE of each of the schools identified for this phase of the research, permissions were gained to proceed with one-to-one semi-structured interviews with all TAs in the sample schools working with physically disabled pupils in PE. The strong intention to remain within the boundaries of the subsidiary research questions prevailed in my approach, but I endeavoured to facilitate these conversations in order to allow the voice of the TA to be heard with minimal interruption and prompt. Rejecting perhaps more formal techniques of interviewing results from being mindful of Cohen, Manion and Morrison's contention that an ethical interview would display an:

*'... ability to catch what respondents want to say rather than to promote the researcher's agenda' (2000:246)*

Notwithstanding this, the researcher should acknowledge that interview questions are not the gateway to the authentic account but rather part of a

holistic process whereby we reveal a ‘bricolage’<sup>11</sup> (Silverman, 2006).

### **Sample: limitations and reliability**

The sample size for the TA interviews was restricted to a complete population in two mainstream secondary schools identified as ‘lead’ schools for physical disability. Studies which have previously investigated the TA’s role and which have used similar methods draw from typically similar small numbers. Indeed, in these studies, and even where interviewing forms the main method of data collection, the total number of interviewees remains small: in most cases, less than 20 (for example, Howard and Ford, 2007, Jerwood, 1999, O’Brien and Garner, 2001). In extensive research, Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) concluded that where interviews are conducted, saturation was reached after six cases and identified 12 cases as an appropriate number for any analysis to be reliable.

The Phase 1 schools had all responded to the survey within the timescale and accounted for a large proportion of the known number of physically disabled pupils placed in mainstream schools in the county (n=24). Their willingness to be involved in further study was revealed when two of the three schools contacted me directly as a result of the survey to ask to be more involved and, in one case, to ask for help in supporting a particular pupil with whom they had difficulty, although this was not within my remit. This school’s email to me read:

*“We need all the help we can get. We have willing LSA’s [sic], and a willing teacher. It is just having the training to move forward in a*

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<sup>11</sup> From the French ‘bricolage’

*realistic way to find some level of inclusion without jeopardising the teaching of the whole group. All help much appreciated.” (PE teacher)*

This particular comment was followed up through the advisory team in order that the school’s specific needs could be addressed. Clearly it was not within my remit to address or trouble-shoot individual school concerns regarding pupils’ curriculum access. Further, I note the use of language which is indicative of a sense of exclusionary practice, probably an unwitting one: the teacher here considers that the act of inclusion might ‘jeopardise’ the teaching for the majority. I accept, however, in this example, the possibility that this was not an exclusionary stance but perhaps related to practical concerns: nevertheless, the comment reveals a perspective which is developed further in this study.

In 2009-10, these three schools were over a year into their ‘specialist’ designation and thus may well reflect a more inclusive philosophy and be able to evidence more thorough and inclusive planning for collaborative practice. Additionally, KCC were approaching their own deadline of December 2009 by which time they had committed to achieving the charter targets of Every Disabled Child Matters. Indeed, having discussed with KCC the activity of these three schools in terms of their perceived commitment to the designation ‘specialist’ process, positive outcomes for the year 2008-9 were forthcoming from two of the three whilst there were some sensitive issues regarding the operating practices of one of the schools. Thus a decision, based on ethical and political reasons, was made to proceed with working more closely with



two of the lead schools until such time as the third school was in a position to engage with the research.

### **Interviewer or facilitator?**

In conducting these interviews or conversations, I was able to draw on many years of experience as a professional facilitator of sports equity workshops and training with a diverse range of organisations and individuals over a 12 year period. In research methodology terms, the notion of the interviewer as facilitator is considered by Rapley (2001) who argues that the interviewer should not only encourage talk without 'leading' the topic but also should be mindful of the collaborative process through which the data emerges.

Furthermore, whilst it is difficult to present a 'right' or better way to conduct and analyse interviews, data is ultimately localised in the context of the interview situation (Rapley, 2001, Widdowson, 2007). The analysis of the social encounter which the interview represents is always dependent on the way in which all parties construct their role and conduct themselves during the interview: *'the talk of both speakers is central to producing the interview'* (Rapley, 2001:306). In the transcription of the recorded interviews, I note my own use of language and my own attempts to reduce the impact of my role as a researcher on the responses.

### **Interview scripts**

In order to answer the research questions, I converted them into open-ended prompts for conversation and built in at the start what these TAs thought PE was as a subject, drawing on their personal experiences, and secondly, what they thought 'mainstreaming' meant for disabled pupils. This approach

acknowledged in particular that not all respondents would attach the same meaning to their experiences as others (Gubrium, 1997 in Silverman, 2000:32). In this regard, I wanted to find out what TAs thought that the subject 'PE' meant, what their own experiences were, indeed what they brought to the work-space. This essentially inductive approach to the start of the conversations took account of personal history in order to understand educational events (Bullough, 1998 in Kridel (ed)). From then, the questions were not always ordered in the same way for each interview. Devising an interview 'script' (Sturman and Taggart, 2008) in this way would enable an element of consistency in the interview process:

*'The script decreased the risk of interviews inadvertently providing cues or supplementary information to the interviewees' (2008:118-9).*

These prompt questions are shown as Appendix 3 in relation to the original research questions and included an opportunity for TAs to tell me anything else about their role.

Finally, I use what might be termed conventional methods of analysis (Baker and Johnson, 1998). I use open-coding to look at the '*consistency of the interview as a whole*' (Boeije, 2002:391) and then continued to follow Boeije's development of the constant comparative model (Ibid) which, whilst originally a feature of grounded theory, lends itself to these conversations and to this study.

### **First pilot: Advisory Teacher Interview**

Jenny was already known to me since we had taught in the same special school for eight years although we had not worked closely since the late

1990s. I knew she would not be hesitant in her sharing of ideas (Creswell, 1998:124) and arranged to meet with her in a neutral setting which was quiet and free from distractions (Ibid). We initially discussed the purpose of our meeting although I had already obtained consent from her via email correspondence in which I expanded my proposed research to her.

Although Jenny was due to leave the advisory service to relocate to another part of the country in August 2008, she shared the content and outcomes of our discussion with her immediate line manager (effectively a form of respondent validation) who was supportive of the comments made and very interested in the potential of the proposed research. Subsequently, I worked closely with Jenny's successors in the design and delivery of this research, and in its analysis and reporting. I was therefore not concerned that, as a person about to leave a service she was discussing, Jenny would be presenting anything other than a factual account which conveyed her feelings and thoughts amassed from many years of experience in the field. Ethical concerns connected to her imminent departure were thus considered and deemed not to be of significance.

In analysing the transcript and field notes of this unstructured interview, I was mindful of ensuring reliability of the data through adopting a thorough analytical process whilst remaining creative in the way in which the interview proceeded. Themes emerged and relationships were identified where appropriate until a small set of generalisations (Miles and Huberman, 1994) could be discerned. However, I also knew that this interview, whilst informative, did not represent the main body of data and I was therefore

pragmatic in terms of the level of analysis required. From a research point of view, I also learnt how to handle discursive data and this informed the process for the more detailed interview schedule later in the study.

Initial evidence from the conversation suggests that some of the key themes which emerge from contemporary literature and political ideology are, in fact, also demonstrated anecdotally 'at the coal face', as it were. It was clear from the start that both the timing and the content of my study were exciting to Jenny in her current role. In particular, there was a strong indication that the inclusion of physically disabled pupils in PE in mainstream schools in Kent was particularly problematic, especially, apparently, with regard to the availability of suitable training. The results of this interview determined a clear professional focus and relevance for the study in two ways: firstly, that the needs of physically disabled children in PE in the county were being neglected and secondly, that there was a precedent for conducting research with TAs alone and without the dominant voices of others: I present these here.

From the documentary evidence, I noted that KCC have adopted the term 'need type' to determine range of disability and outcomes of the statementing process – this expression was also used by Jenny, although a critical discourse analyst may identify overtones of oppression and power dynamics in having the language of dependency applied to the way in which a service is provided. Nevertheless, the interview determined a very clear rationale, from the perspective of a service provider, for considering the further study of physically disabled young people as opposed to KCC's five other 'need

types'. Jenny's use of the abbreviation 'PD' when discussing this impairment group was common to other respondents in this study:

*'PD is a need type that should be looked at in terms of building resilience, autonomy and independence in these children'.*

However, where these children are in receipt of a very high level of support in some subjects, one would imagine that their ability to become autonomous learners or to be independent reduces incrementally and this is borne out in the literature (in particular, Blatchford *et al.*, 2009 and Veck, 2009).

The authority had recently been engaged in cross-county research with physiotherapists who studied concerns about posture management in relation to the role of the TA. This had, in part, been in response to health and safety legislation regarding manual handling. However, what was noted as a feature of this project was the very rich data gleaned from TAs when the researchers were able to interview them alone, without teachers or others present. They found the data revealed to be both rich and honest. This supported my decision to conduct narrative conversations solely with TAs at a later stage. Anecdotally, Jenny reported that the TAs in PE were actually concerned about a role context in which they recognised and needed support with the emotional strain of working with physically disabled pupils – an insight which had not occurred to me but had resonance with what I was learning about the emotional context in which a TA operates overall. Both the evidence from documentation sourced locally and the interviews, conversations and meetings with Jenny and, later, with her colleagues over a ten month period confirmed the direction and potential sample for the research.

Additional key informant interviews are included in relation to how they informed the data collection or confirmed the analysis and interpretation. In particular, the targeting of specific schools or locations for a pilot of the survey questionnaire was agreed as a useful first step in that there were already courses planned which would allow me access to a sample of TAs. This was further clarified in late 2009 when the redrafting of the initial survey from the pilot study was complete and ethical approval had been granted. From this point, I produced a summary sheet of my proposed research which was circulated to all head teachers, heads of PE and staff identified as taking a PD lead in the sample; this is reproduced as the Participant Information Sheet in Appendix 4. I believe this acted as the 'oil for the gate hinges' and enabled a smooth transition to the next phase of the study.

### **The survey questionnaire: revealing the broad contours of the field**

The questionnaire design was informed by the work of Giangreco and Broer (2005) who conducted a study in the USA using a data gathering instrument which collected descriptive, quantitative data from TAs in a general education setting throughout the whole school community and across phases or sectors (ie primary and secondary). At the time of starting this research, neither the Giangreco study nor any others have specifically addressed the issues of TAs working in a specific subject, nor have they addressed the concerns emerging from a study of literature which relates solely to the UK perspective.

Additionally, their study, conducted with 737 individuals in a range of roles in schools included only 20.75% who were identified as 'paraprofessionals'

(n=153) of which 96% were women (2005:12). Some evidence regarding the role of the TA in inclusive PE may be forthcoming from Vickerman's current study (2009) of ITT providers' perspectives on the relationship between teachers, TAs and pupils. This research will specifically report on training and is intended to lead to the development of resources for ITT providers to use with trainee PE teachers.

A number of academics undertaking survey research within the same environment have used a set of questions to determine the social and demographic variables of the research participants (Avramadis *et al.*, 2000, Downing, Ryndak and Clark, 2000, Giangreco and Broer, 2008, Howard and Ford, 2007, Nevin *et al.*, 2008a/b). This type of question is also adapted for my own survey together with those that explore issues such as length of time the respondent has been employed as a TA, whether the TA brings experience of parenthood to their role, and whether or not they have received additional or specific training (from Bedford *et al.*, 2008, for example). These variables appear to me to reflect some of the issues arising from the literature in terms of a gender-bias in the profession and the apparent 'caring' nature of the TA role. They also inform the narrative conversations with respect to the training of TAs to fulfil their role with a physically impaired pupil in PE.

Whilst I adopt one of Giangreco *et al.*'s research questions (2005) as my 'guiding' question, the remainder of their research was quantitative in nature. In particular, their study focused almost exclusively on the percentage *time* that five groups of respondents allocated (or thought were allocated) to a

range of practices (clerical, welfare and so on). Thus relationships could be statistically tested between groups (parents, teachers, TAs) and responses. As I have mentioned, there may be a tension between the collection of quantitative data and the need for qualitative data to inform what is effectively an investigation into individual identity. However, at this stage, the purpose of the survey was to explore what a finite number of TAs who share particular features in a particular location felt about *practices* and thus could consider what their role looks like.

### **Design, procedure and data collection**

I adapted one of Giangreco and Broer's (2005) original research questions to incorporate practices emerging from UK literature which I had identified as important (where Giangreco and Broer's related to literature from the US). The research question itself (one of five posed by the authors), remains unchanged but for the addition of a subject specific reference. However, I adapted some elements of their original questionnaire, re-working them to fit an 'anglicised' view of both disability and the role of the TA and making them specific to Physical Education. This ensured that the results related directly to a cultural setting and curricular location; in addition, it enabled a claim for originality to be made for this research as there was, at the time of writing, no other such study to my knowledge.

Much of the justification for the content of the survey appears as part of the review of discourse and literature. Additionally, of Giangreco and Broer's original questions, 13 of those in the pilot survey, were re-worked with an



additional 25 questions added which, I believe, reflected the current themes emerging from my own study of the literature. For example, using 'typologies' of teaching as a reference point I included a question based on Kessler *et al.*'s notion (2007) that a TA may be an apprentice teacher. To further clarify this, I have presented as Appendix 5 a matrix of the survey (after Redmond, 2004, in Burgess *et al.*, 2006:87), showing the questions grouped thematically and indicating the influence of the literature in including them.

### **A pilot study to test the survey instrument with data stakeholders**

The self-completion survey questionnaire (Bryman, 2001), was piloted for cognition in the Spring term, 2009, at a one-day generic training course for TAs initiated by KCC as part of their ongoing commitment to support lead schools to include physically impaired pupils. Attendees were drawn from schools across the county and not necessarily confined to one geographical location, thus fulfilling the criteria for a random sample. The purpose of the pilot exercise prior to the research proper was outlined and supported by the advisory teachers present. All 16 of the TAs attending completed the survey, a return rate of 100% although they could be deemed as being 'captive participants' (Ferguson *et al.*, 2004:8). The TA, as a data stakeholder, was thus afforded input into the final layout and content of the questionnaire.

Following the pilot, changes were made to take into account the ease or otherwise with which the respondents had completed the survey and to remove or amalgamate some statements which were duplicated and those which had appeared ambiguous. Respondents took between 11 and 18

minutes to complete the pilot survey, including three questions of clarity from two participants. In future, being in a position to inform participants about the likely time needed to complete the survey may be helpful in both planning the interview structure and visits to schools and determining a positive return to the final survey. In addition, several questions were altered or removed when they were found, in an initial pen and paper analysis, not to reveal usable data or to be ambiguous or repetitive. The final survey thus contained 31 questions reduced from 39 in the pilot. An analysis based on descriptive statistics was also conducted to determine how the pilot study could inform the parameters of the final survey. As a result of the pilot, and having gained ethical approval from the University of Greenwich, the reworked questionnaire was circulated in late 2009 with the full endorsement of KCC's advisory team. The final version appears in full as Appendix 6.

### **Procedure for implementing the survey**

The survey was circulated to all 36 mainstream secondary schools identified as having one or more physically disabled pupils in need of TA support and who were referred through the formal systems of the education authority: a complete population. In all, KCC identified 84 pupils in 36 schools as having a physical disability, receiving TA support and being known to the advisory team. Whilst this gave me an element of control, in that the sample represented a finite number of schools, it did not necessarily mean that there would be an equivalent number of TAs per school since some schools had up to 11 pupils and, consequently, dependent on the support required, the ratio of TA to pupil could be higher or lower. A decision to send approximately 50%

more surveys to each school than the number of identified pupils was therefore taken and 150 surveys were prepared.

### **Efforts taken to maximise the return**

I have drawn on studies which reviewed methods taken to increase the response rate to postal surveys or questionnaires across a range of disciplines. In particular, positive response rates are associated with pre-notification and follow-up, providing opportunities for making the return straightforward and prompting non-respondents. Furthermore, response to research emanating from Universities (as is the case here) proved more successful than otherwise (Edwards *et al.*, 2002, Frohlich, 1998 and Hoffman, Burke, Helzlsouer and Comstock, 1998).

Copies of the questionnaire were sent to the SENCo or Inclusion Manager of each school. In addition, an amended copy of the initial information sheet discussed in early 2009 was attached as a participant sheet as required by the ethics committee: this appears as Appendix 4. Options either to return the completed questionnaires via the internal courier to be held for collection at the local education office or to post direct to me were provided.

Furthermore, it was agreed that advisory staff would, on their visits or calls to schools within the time period specified, endeavour to remind them of the need to complete and return the questionnaire. I also put in place a prompt letter which was sent to Heads of PE and SENCos two weeks into the survey

The survey was posted to the 36 schools in the sample with a four week return period allowing for a further three weeks leading up to the end of term for any follow-up with specific cases. The timing of the circulation was important – making sure the questionnaire didn't arrive during the half term break, when post can get mislaid, for instance. Addressing the mailing to the appropriate contacts was considered important in ensuring a response. I used the named SENCo or Inclusion Manager as the initial contact since the TA, according to KCC, is usually line-managed by that individual. I had already decided however, that I would send a letter after two weeks addressed to both the named Head of PE and the SENCo. This might prompt the PE department to follow-up the request for the questionnaire to be completed since they might be in regular contact, in lessons, with the relevant TA. All participants had effectively been notified in advance of an impending research project via the circulation of an initial letter of introduction to schools as reported on page 98.

### **Preparing the survey**

Using KCC's database of schools identified as having physically disabled pupils (n=36), schools were coded with a number 1-36 so that results could be anonymised and the questionnaires similarly labelled. This ensured that, even if the school had to photocopy a questionnaire for any reason, the data returned would still remain site-specific. It would also allow me at a later stage (although not necessarily within the scope of this study), to consider relationships between types of school (for instance, selective, wide ability, specialist Sports College). In addition to the school code corresponding to the

county database number, a number was included to enable analysis to reflect return. For example, School A, number one on the database, with 11 physically disabled pupils, was sent 20 questionnaires to reflect the possible number of additional TAs in school. This reflects the notion that any one pupil may be in receipt of more than one TA's support, particularly if the TA is part-time. Thus School A's coding would read 1/1/20 and a questionnaire to School B, numbered two on the database and with one disabled pupil would read 2/2/1. Furthermore, assigning a letter to each school (A-T for respondents, AA-PP for non-respondents) following the deadline for return enabled consistency throughout the data analysis and interpretation which follows. Hereafter, schools are known only by the letter assigned to them at the start of the coding process (eg School A, School M etc) and any parity with assigned codes and exact school names is coincidental.

### **Data reduction**

The reduction of data gathered from this exercise provided descriptive statistics in respect of the frequency of respondents who affirm or deny a particular role. The survey would not, however, be likely to reveal the richness or depth of the respondents' experiences (Clough and Nutbrown, 2008:144) or of their perceptions of the role beyond the occasional brief comment in the column provided for this purpose. Thus content analysis of the open-ended questions was also conducted (after Avramadis *et al.*, 2000) and these data were eventually added to NVivo during the final stage of data analysis.

Giangreco and Broer's study (2005), on which this survey was based, asked respondents from various groups (TAs, parents, teachers for example) to estimate in percentage terms the amount of time spent on certain tasks or practices. They were then able to explore differences between respondent groups using statistical methods. Theirs was a large scale study with 67% return rate across all groups (n=737, 2005:13). In this smaller scale study, which adapted only one of their five research questions, I adopt their own method for the content analysis of particular questions – a largely narrative one with the analysis centering on agreement and disagreement responses but with considerable attention paid to the discourse and the literature.

Thus, the data reduction and correlation of the survey involved considering frequency responses in addition to a chi-square analysis to determine whether factors such as age, gender or level of education, for example, were significant in determining the response. Appendices 7a and 7b show a chi-square analysis and summary of such factors. The smaller number of responses in some cases ( $\leq 5$ ) relates to the overall sample size and this has been considered earlier. In these instances, reference has been made solely to descriptive statistics to validate any claims made for this data set.

In constructing the survey, I had not grouped similar questions together in order that respondents were not unduly influenced by the thinking behind their response to one question which may influence them to answer a directly following, and similar question. Following the survey return, and for the purposes of analysis against emergent themes from the literature, questions were therefore collapsed to reflect the themes referred to in Appendix 1b:

Theme	Survey questions	Addresses subsidiary research question
<i>The perception of the meaning of inclusion in PE</i>	8,17,23	1
<i>The TA as an instructor, coach or teacher</i>	1,2,6,12,16,19,29, 30,31	1
<i>The TA as a carer/friend</i>	4,5,7,10,13,20,27,28	2
<i>The opportunity for collaboration with the PE teacher and other Stakeholders</i>	3,9,11,14,15,18,21,22,26	2
<i>Generic and PE/sport related training</i>	24,25	3

*Table 2: Thematic representation of survey questions*

Finally, then, I present an overview of the limitations of the sample for the survey and return statistics and a justification of the method adopted for data analysis and interpretation. I move freely between using data gathered at interviews to triangulate with (or crystallise) the survey data and vice versa and use the open survey responses to inform and supplement the interpretation of the interviews; indeed, I use *all* discursive data (textual and oral) in this way.

### **Strengths and limitations of the return sample size**

Twenty schools (55.55%) responded to the survey request with the majority of responses (n=19) being received within the original timescale. However, these schools accounted for 64 of the total of 88 disabled pupils (72.72%) and as such were deemed to be representative of the population and therefore generalisable to other similar populations. The lack of response from 16 schools, whilst accounting for 44% of the total school sample, only related to 27.27% (n=24) of all known disabled pupils with the majority of these 16 schools (n=10) having only one disabled pupil. Of the 16 schools not responding, only School DD had been identified as a phase two lead school from September 2010 whilst the others had no similar future designation.

However, five of these 16 schools, whilst not providing returns to the survey, responded via letter or email along a similar theme:

*“We have no PD students in PE”* (from a school identified as having three such students)

*“We do not support students in PE at the Xxxx School”*

*“None of our TAs support pupils in PE”*

There was an overall lack of response from the county’s grammar schools contained in this sample. However, whilst these schools were in effect almost 20% of the sample, they were only responsible for the inclusive education of 7.1% of the total number of disabled pupils in the study. One selective school responded by email, for example, without the survey and stated that they *‘did not support disabled students in PE’*. Another responded:

*“The pupil support team are not timetabled to cover or support students during PE”*

It may be, for instance, that particular pupils needed no support in PE, that they were beyond KS4 and thus perhaps took part optionally, that a grammar school curriculum may ‘deny’ the value of PE for its pupils or that the constraints of an exam-heavy curriculum for all these pupils rendered the school less able to give time to PE. In effect, is this lack of response related to an exclusion issue in general, notwithstanding the significant political dimension of a selective education? This complex discussion is not within the remit of the research reported here but may well be of interest to other researchers.

In the initial exercise to code and transcribe the data from the survey, six questionnaires from four schools were deemed to be unusable since the



respondents, whilst completing the survey, stated that they did not work in PE and therefore their responses were not in line with the original and requested intention to analyse responses from TAs working in PE specifically. The social and demographic data from these six responses were also ignored. In all, therefore, 36 surveys were deemed to contain complete responses which pertained to the original brief and related to the perception of the TA whose role it is to support a physically disabled pupil in PE. This number is both coincidental and unrelated to the identification of 36 schools as the sample and thus each survey response cannot be attributed to each school.

Finally, some similarities here in both sample size and response are worth noting in relation to Avramadis *et al.*'s study into the attitudes of mainstream teachers towards inclusion (2000). Their survey questionnaire, with demographic variables, involved 23 mainstream cross-phase schools in one Local Authority in England and elicited a 50.6% return from the 16 schools of the original sample.

### **Analysis of 'backgrounding' questions**

Descriptive statistics provided frequency tables of the numbers of respondents agreeing or disagreeing with the statements which defined their broad role in schools, their general feelings about inclusion and disability (questions i-vii) and their specific role in PE (questions 1-31). Beyond the demographic information provided, some general questions acted as 'backgrounding' and were intended in part to provide a snapshot of TAs' understanding of inclusion, their job satisfaction and status. A very high number of TAs expressed satisfaction that their role was as they had

expected it to be (n=30) and furthermore, were happy with their workload (n=34). TAs tended to work with one student across the curriculum as the literature confirms and there was also evidence to suggest that a subject – specific role was uncommon (n=23). If this were the case, additional data gathering in the case study schools might confirm or deny this practice and, further, might reveal the efficacy of it.

Characteristics represented in responses to questions about personal background and deemed relevant to this study appear below. Survey data were subject to a descriptive statistical analysis through SPSS and have been mentioned as appearing in full in Appendices 7a and 7b:

Background variable		Frequency	Valid %
<b>Gender:</b>	Male	4	11.1
	Female	32	88.9
<b>Age:</b>	16-20	0	0
	21-30	8	22.1
	31-40	7	22.1
	41-50	13	36.1
	50+	7	19.4
<b>Children under 18:</b>	Yes	14	46.7
	No	16	53.3
<b>Years as a TA:</b>	0-5	19	52.8
	6-12	10	27.8
	13-20	6	16.7
	21+	1	2.8
<b>Level of education:</b>	GCSE equiv.	20	57.1
	A' level	9	25.7
	Degree	4	11.4
	Postgrad.	2	5.7
<b>PE/sport specific Qualifications:</b>	Yes	3	8.3
	No	33	91.7

*Table 3: Survey responses by background variable*

I reserve the full use of these data for the section from page 120 which addresses the subsidiary research questions. However, some initial considerations are presented here because they helped to shape the direction of the interview scripts and enabled an approach for this part of the data collection process which was informed by observations from the survey and

developed further elsewhere.

### **Women's work? The mum's army**

Descriptive statistics revealed that 88.9% of the workforce of TAs who responded were women (n=32) and this is supported by all the evidence from the literature to date (for instance, Giangreco *et al.* 2002, Giangreco and Broer, 2008, Nevin *et al.*, 2008b and Howard and Ford, 2007). All these studies showed a very high percentage of women in TA roles (100% of respondents in Nevin *et al.*'s findings for example, 2008:8). In particular, to cite very recent research, support staff were found to be mostly female and aged 36 or over (Blatchford *et al.*, 2009). Jenny had earlier noted that:

*'TAs are ignorant in the sense that they are mums and have been hauled off the streets. They might not even like the subject'. .*

I was mindful of this evidence in constructing the scripts for the TA interviews in as much as the use of narrative conversation is verified in more general terms by researchers working with women. For instance, Nutbrown used '*focused conversations*' with women because, in her own words:

*'I wanted to know how they worked, what informed their thinking, what they brought to their role...'* (Nutbrown, 1999 in Clough and Nutbrown, 2008:84).

### **Age range of respondents**

The age of the respondents was varied with the majority in the 31- 50+ age groups (n=28) and a peak in TA age after 40. There were no TAs in the 16-20 age group, assuming perhaps the need for a TA in a secondary school to already be beyond the level of education of their prospective pupils. Male TAs however, were generally in the younger age bracket. Older TAs, and those

with younger children, reported that they had more of a relationship with parents of the pupils they worked with than, perhaps, the teacher. Older TAs were also likely to supervise personal care and changing before and after the PE lesson ( $\chi^2=7.630$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.054$ ) although this could also be related to the length of time in post and the nature of their supporting role in schools, all of which are explored in the interviews.

### **The duration of TA's employment**

There was little difference in responses to questions that aimed to discover the length of time a TA had been in post in relation to workforce reform.

Collapsing the age groups into pre-2003 ( $n=17$ ) and post-2003 ( $n=19$ ) appointees for data analysis enabled any statistically significant observations to be made. This is of interest in that age bands had already been constructed to account for periods of time during which political or professional changes impacted on the role of the TA: this has been elaborated from page 44. That a small majority of TAs in this study were appointed post-2003 should mean that their perception of the role, definitions, expectations and so on have been shaped by concurrent educational shifts.

Entrants to the profession pre-2003 were found to bring some personal experience of disability with them to the role ( $\chi^2=7.034$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.008$ ) although this could well relate to the age of this group and the possibility that they were also carers for older relatives, for example. Generally, they also reported their role to be one of interacting with small groups of pupils rather than one in which they had a one-to-one relationship ( $\chi^2=5.546$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.019$ ).

## Summary

So far, a picture emerges from the survey data which demonstrates in this sample that the vast majority of TAs in PE tend to be women, with diverse employment histories but who have perhaps considerable experience in raising a family. Additionally, these TAs have often been in post for long periods of time, certainly prior to workforce remodelling, and thus may have a particularly entrenched perception of their role which has either been perpetuated by the school, or has evolved to suit the establishment perhaps rather than the child or the subject. The role is more often titled using the words 'welfare' or 'support', neither of which are problematic until one applies a perspective from disability studies, from which point of view the role is clearly aligned to a pre-emancipatory model and does not, perhaps, reflect a recognition for the post to be an empowering one (in a social model climate).

Finally, generally low level of education combined with a lack of experience or expertise in Physical Education warrants more detailed investigation. Firstly, is this an issue at all? Does this lack of TA expertise in terms of subject knowledge or content signify that it is purely the teacher's expertise that is needed? Secondly, does it mean that that the devolution of instruction to an unqualified and inexperienced individual in the case of a subject with additional health and safety concerns is not appropriate? The fact that the TAs in this sample appear to make curricular decisions (see page 127) signifies that an increasingly instructional remit is a feature of the TA's role definition in PE.

## CHAPTER 5: DATA COMPARISON, CORRELATION AND INTEGRATION

The guiding research question for this study is repeated here:

**How do TAs in mainstream PE describe or explain their own experiences of a series of practices which have been identified in the literature as areas of concern or further study?**

This, and the subsidiary research questions are now considered in light of, in the main, the interviews conducted with TAs who work in PE in two Phase 1 schools in Kent. Other conversations with gatekeepers add to the discussion which follows, for instance, those with teachers or senior management. I do not identify any respondents by name or school, merely quoting them as 'TA', 'PD Lead Teacher', Deputy Head' and so on. I use 'KCC' when including comments from key informant interviews.

Having constructed the survey from the literature to reveal what I considered to be the most significant emergent themes, and having utilised an NVivo text search to create both free and tree nodes I found there to be outliers in the data which the narrative survey responses alluded to but which neither the literature nor other data had revealed fully. These were firstly, the views of the other professional involved in the classroom – the PE teacher for instance – and secondly, a more detailed consideration and discussion of the training available, anticipated or required. A decision was therefore taken to include additional gatekeepers' comments in the data gathering exercise with identified schools and their comments are referenced by a general job descriptor. Further, the NVivo node summary revealed a clustering of references namely, and presented in order:

1. The nature of inclusion (n=43)
2. Comments made specifically about roles and attributes (n=39)
3. Collaboration (n=31)
4. Training (n=28)
5. The TA as a teacher (n=21)

Concerns within the literature related to the way in which the TA's role is constructed in an increasingly professionalised workspace. In PE, they were deemed to receive a particular kind of training; politically, comments about their efficacy often related to status, family commitments or gender-bias. So, who is the TA in PE in this study? What are their characteristics? What is their background? More importantly, do these factors shape their construction of their day-to-day role with a physically disabled pupil in PE?

## **Research question 1: What is the macro construction of the role of the TA in PE?**

### **Naming the profession: *'This is a welfare job'***

The variety of titles for this person in a school who acts in a role which should support the inclusion of a disabled child has already been discussed. Whilst this role title (and definition) is culturally located in terms of there being differences in the nomenclature from one country to another, the preferred or recommended term in England since 2000 is 'Teaching Assistant' (DfEE, 2000). The literature is inconsistent in the recognition of this insofar as a range of titles from 'LSA' to 'assistant teacher' are used and this has been briefly discussed on page 41 of the literature review. Clarity in terms of role definition is highlighted as a concern by a number of researchers (Hammett and Burton, 2005) although the latter's study specifically used the term 'LSA' and not the, by then, preferred term 'TA'. Certainly, the confusion was apparent in my research findings. Having provided an opportunity for respondents to state their job title and also to indicate if they were known by any other title within the school, the range of job descriptors was as wide as the literature had revealed, if not more so.

Considering here Giangreco et al's *'proliferation of models'* (2005b:24) it is easy to see where confusion stems from. With inconsistency in nomenclature there is little room for role clarity and thus for representing the role clearly to other stake-holders such as pupils, parents and teachers, for example. If a pupil is assigned a 'welfare support worker' how does this affect the pupil's relationship with both this individual and with his or her peers? If a parent



learns that their child will be supported by a 'teaching assistant', what greater expectations might they put on that relationship, perhaps that aren't commensurate with the TA's training or competency? Furthermore, do parents have a right to understand the nature of this professional role in as much as they would already have fairly clear and perhaps traditional expectations of a 'teacher'? Finally, if a school attaches a name to a role (and we discover that there are not only discrepancies from school to school but within the same establishment) then that may subsequently impact on their preferred model for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Indeed, assumptions may be made about the role which may render some training out of reach to the TA and thus hinder a positive pupil-teacher-TA relationship, both pedagogical and personal.

However, there is another aspect to this discussion: the advisory team had been open about the fact that many of these pupils were also those with medical or complex support needs and thus the deployment of a TA could include tasks related to the administering of physiotherapy support, toileting, rest and so on. Whilst it might therefore be expected that this role would have a label attached to it which could include the words 'welfare' or 'support', my contention here is that this does not adequately portray a role which increasingly also relates to teaching or instructing, nor should it perhaps:

*'Some of them are calling themselves welfare TAs and you can see that they're still firmly in a caring welfare role but they're also taking on quite an instructional role so they're toileting and changing and all those things but they're also adapting activities and tasks in lessons so they've got this range of skills ... and in PE .. it's more complex, it highlights it more I think' (PD Lead teacher).*

Responses revealed that whilst a minority referred to themselves, or have the official title 'TA' (n=7) with an equally small number calling themselves 'LSAs' (n=6), the majority were known either by a job title which had the word 'welfare' in it, for example, welfare assistant, welfare officer, assistant welfare officer or student welfare support or by a job title which included the word 'support' (n=14). Indeed, the word 'support' featured strongly: pupil support officer, pupil support team, specialist support system and so on. Furthermore, those titles which had the words 'PD' prefixed to it (whether that be a PD TA or PD welfare support) was also high (n=13). Overall, the percentage of respondents where there was parity in role definition against the current preferred titling was only 19% (n=7).

Furthermore, there were some discrepancies between individual responses from the same school. Where one respondent used the term LSA for example, this was not always shared by all other respondents in that school. Thus, out of all responses to the question related to nomenclature, the job title 'TA' was mentioned by seven respondents, a job title which incorporated 'TA' in the title by 17, LSA by six and titles with 'welfare' or 'support' cited by 15 (41.66%). Several respondents from the same school were known as 'PD TAs' - referencing the impairment of the child to whom they were assigned; presumably, other impairments might be similarly identified within a job description. Indeed, where the prefix PD was added to the role descriptor, there were also references within the responses to the 'PD department' indicating that a separate unit existed for physically disabled students within the mainstream setting (see discussion on page 145). However, none of these

labels takes into account the shift towards using 'physical impairment' as opposed to 'physical disability' by the authority which was reported on page six. Indeed, throughout the responses to the survey and within the interviews, TAs and others abbreviated a child with a physical disability as 'a PD', or even, 'the Duchennes', 'the wheelchairs' and 'palsied'. BCODP would reject the objectification of disability and have done so in their recommendations for preferred language in the past. Attaching an impairment-loaded label to a pupil defines them by that impairment first and as we have seen, disabled children do not necessarily attach such meaning to themselves (Neill, 2002) indeed, Jenny had noted that '*some kids are very determined that they aren't different*'.

Notwithstanding the issue that schools could be deemed as being non-compliant with government (and therefore presumably OfSTED) preferred terminology, clearly, without a consistent job title, the interpretation of the actual role is likely to be similarly inconsistent from school to school. If, as seems to be the case in this study, the majority of respondents (or indeed, the respondents' schools) consider their role to be one of pupil welfare, the connotations for the child and their parents, notwithstanding the teacher, are that this is a role which is removed from instruction and removed from the learning process *per se*.

A discussion of titling of these roles would not be complete however without acknowledging the very real and sensitive nature of attaching labels to roles within the broad field of disability studies. A 'welfare' or 'support' role reminds

us of both a medically defined era and an embodiment discourse, both of which were discussed earlier in this study. That this role continues to be viewed by most schools in this study as one of 'welfare support' places it firmly in a pre-emancipatory era. Whilst political interventions have moved the disability rights agenda beyond this, and into a more empowering period, naming the TA in this way does not promote this perception. These are value-laden titles which evoke responses both professionally and personally and are evocative of Finkelstein's doing 'to' rather than 'for' (1981). They perpetuate the need for assistance in order for the disabled child to be successfully included in mainstream education and may well reinforce an impression of a role in the eyes of the disabled pupil and their peers. This is unlikely to be helpful in enabling the social independence and peer-group interaction which might be a desirable outcome of inclusion, and which is indeed mentioned as a positive role descriptor by respondents to questions 13 (n=35) and 14 (n=33).

Conversely, in order to receive a secondary education alongside their peers, there are very good reasons why a child with a physical impairment and associated medical needs should require additional support which is neither politically motivated nor ethically unsound. Indeed, the nature of illness and physical disability was explored by Lightfoot *et al.* (1999). However, where this becomes complex is when the TA is expected (or assumed) to be able to fulfill both roles adequately. This is further discussed on page 133.

## **Job descriptions**

In determining the way in which a TA constructs their role, it is useful to consider other documentary evidence such as job descriptions, for example, to illustrate how this role is shaped and defined in the local context either of the school or within an LLN.

Some LLNs advertise centrally for some posts: one LLN produced a job description for 'Teaching Assistant' in the 'Learning Support' Department in which the main purpose of the job was deemed to be 'to assist and support the class teachers in meeting the needs of the students'. Of interest, out of five survey respondents from this LLN, only one referred to themselves as a 'TA', the others adopted titles which included the word 'welfare' (this range of responses regarding job descriptors is briefly discussed from page 120).

One school had prepared sample interview questions, relating to the job description for a TA in that school, which whilst generic, also considered specific issues relating to PE. The proforma also included model answers

(MA):

*Q. If you were to take part in PD students' swimming lessons ... How would you be prepared to help...?*

*MA. Help with changing (dressing, undressing). Go in the water with them, do any physio that is written into their physio programmes.*

And...

*Q. What could you do to improve the PE session for each individual student?*

*MA. Speak to the teacher beforehand to see what said student would be doing and what they have in mind for them. Assess the students' capabilities. Ask them for their contribution to what would be expected of them and adapt the lesson accordingly.*

Both these passages assume a separate curricular provision, the idea that

physiotherapy can replace PE on the one hand and yet, on the other hand, taking on this 'PD Welfare' role also involves the ability to differentiate and adapt activities.

In the role definition and job description from another school, job titles are differentiated and there is no mention of 'TA' *per se*:

*PD provision in school (should include):*

- *Qualified and trained welfare staff (training, moving and handling, first aid, catheterisation, diabetes and epilepsy)*
- *Plus trained LSA support*

(Job description, January 2010, School M)

Furthermore, the term 'key worker' is also used with a varied administrative role which includes '*differentiating work where necessary*' (Ibid).

### **The quotidian role**

Warnock (2005) noted that disabled students in mainstream schools are almost entirely taught by teaching assistants whilst MacBeath *et al.* (2006) observed '*a tendency for teaching assistants to isolate 'their' child from group learning activities*' (in Shah, 2007:430). Giangreco *et al.* (1997) and Block (1999) talk about teaching assistants '*hovering*' around the disabled child, thereby socially isolating them from the peer group whilst occasionally authors describe the assistant as being '*velcroed at the hip*' (Meyer, 2001:17 and Sikes *et al.*, 2007). Farrell *et al.*'s definition of good practice for the role of the TA noted that they should be neither 'glued' to the child nor present a barrier between the child and the teacher (1999). Lacey (2001) found that the

literature reflected the view that the assignation of an LSA to *one* child was detrimental and could lead to what Seligman (1975) had earlier termed '*learned helplessness*'. Evidence from O'Connell's research (2005) reinforced the 'mum' metaphor first adopted by Morris (2001) in relation to the TA. This dependence or professional focus on the impairment can, as Brittain suggests, create an environment in which:

*'... disability ... often becomes the dominant feature, as perceived by those around them'* (2004b:449).

Whilst it was reported through this study's survey that 60.6% of TAs felt it was the teacher's job to plan for and teach all pupils in the class, TAs also reported that removing the pupil from PE or temporarily separating them from their peers was a frequent occurrence. 69.4% of TAs in the survey said they made many decisions on their own and were free to remove a pupil from the lesson if they deemed the lesson inappropriate for the pupil (Question(Q)2):

*'It's very, very common that a TA pretty much runs the programme for disabled children'* (KCC).

Individual narrative responses to questions which related to a close relationship with the pupil in terms of proximity or separation (Q28) further indicated that this was never a straightforward agree/disagree statement, although 63.6% noted that they were, indeed, usually in very close proximity for most of the lesson.

Regarding whether they separated the child physically in some activities, one TA responded:

*'The majority of times, yes – with wheelchair students space is a[n] issue and safety'*(TA)

*'... once the lesson starts we do our own version of whatever it is ... obviously we can't do, like, what they're doing...'* (TA)

Further responses to a range of questions within this broad theme confirmed an affinity with this sort of relationship:

*'I can always justify why a PD student should not do a certain activity'*

*'... the disabled pupils are included where possible but sometimes it is just not an option to include them for their own and others' safety'*

*'I am always very close to xxxxx during PE lessons'*

*'If the activity was beyond xxx she would not take part'*

*'The limited ability of disabled pupils means you have to discuss things with them'*

*'Health and safety comes into this one!'*

Concerns over health and safety also dominated the open-ended responses to questions in the survey regarding close supervision. This may be a particular feature of the PE curriculum and also with other practical subjects although it is difficult to suggest that disabled pupils would need to be excluded on the grounds of health and safety in Design Technology, for example. Interestingly, and allied to concerns over safety, TAs and others mentioned First Aid training as important in their role. Whilst this discussion is elaborated on in the section about training (see page 155), it is relevant to include here. In particular, TAs who, in both schools, were also named as welfare assistants, factored this into their perception of the role:

*"Well, what the welfare ones have to do is that, we're the ones that would always cover PE cos we're First Aid trained ..." and "...it will always be a welfare that gets put with a disabled child in PE" (Two TAs in different schools),*

... as did other members of the teaching or leadership team of the school, one of whom said proudly:

*'We're putting all our TAs through training, every TA, and there are about 30 of them, will all be First Aid qualified by next year' (Deputy Head)*



It appears to be all too easy for adults supporting physically disabled pupils in PE to impose an exclusionary discourse on the child's learning and specifically, on the location of that learning:

*'... and we have a lot of responsibility for safety. I do have quite a lot to say about fire exits and safety and evacuation actually' (Line manager, TAs).*

Whilst TAs responding to the survey were divided on the issue of whether external factors such as weather, inappropriate facilities and so on affected participation, with 54.3% agreeing that that these acted as barriers, interviewees reinforced the fact that there were problems with this aspect. Referring, for instance, to the effect of weather conditions on disabled pupil's participation:

*'Cold weather is particularly hard for disabled pupils to work in as they are more vulnerable...'*

And,

*'You just need one of those cosy-toes you know? To protect them...'*

PE in poor weather conditions can be a wretched experience for everyone; in one school however, a TA observed that if the weather was too cold, PE would take place indoors for all pupils.

TAs reported that they, as adults, sometimes found the facilities and weather conditions difficult or obstructive in relation to PE, with occasional lack of consistency or forward planning in relation to where an activity would take place, and, indeed, its perceived suitability for the disabled pupil:

*'... and I'm thinking, right, what's happening, and so I go along to PE and take my football boots, my coat, my scarf, my gloves, all ready to go down to the (facility name) ground cos that's where they were last week and then find they're doing gymnastics ... or it can work the other way, you can turn up for gymnastics and you haven't got your coat... so it sounds like silly stuff but if you knew all this beforehand...'*

However, this is not all about negative intervention. As far as some PE teachers were concerned, TAs used their one-to-one relationship to strengthen rather than weaken the learning environment for the pupil, particularly where there were associated issues with anxiety about the subject or lack of self-esteem:

*'The TA ... is kind of like a safety or comfort blanket ... and manages to get them to work in a much more positive way than perhaps we can with 30 other students.'* (PE Teacher)

The same teacher identified that pupils attending this particular school also had frequently disrupted lives or came from unstable home environments. With the added dimension of a disability, and then being required to take part in a challenging activity such as PE, one teacher identified that the TA acted as a 'constant', someone who was reliable and who cared: *'an incredibly important part of their role'*.

Furthermore, TAs, whilst formally constructing their role as a one-to-one support, also understood how that support could be withdrawn from the pupil to foster independence and reduce over-reliance:

*'... and he'll get kicked the ball and if he's having a lazy day he'll sit there and look and somebody'll go and get it for him and I'll say 'no, he can do it' ... and once he realises that they're not going to pick it up for him then he'll go and get it' (TA).*

Indeed, the survey revealed that 97.2% of TAs felt their role was to support the pupil to become more independent (Q13) and that 91.7% adopted a role which, whilst supportive of the teacher, enabled the disabled pupil to interact with his or her peers. Indeed, there was hope that in the current educational climate, the dynamics of the TA/pupil relationship had changed and that this over-reliance or dependency on the TA was diminishing. Notwithstanding

this, however, Goodwin had found that pupils exhibit ‘*self-regulated dependency*’ (2008:172) through which a co-constructed role with the TA was enabled. When the curriculum was expanded for some pupils to incorporate more challenging aspects of physical activity, the excitement portrayed by one animated TA was palpable:

*‘.. we had this free-running (parcour) thing and they (an external provider) came in and they were brilliant with the lad I work with because when he’s out of his wheelchair he crawls on the floor at home and they kept bringing him up as an example because he was moving in the correct way, and they made a lower course for him and so he absolutely loved that.’ (TA)*

The claim from one senior manager, however (which may well be a performative one) is nevertheless reflected in TAs’ responses to the interviews (although not the questionnaire):

*‘Well, I’d like to think we’ve moved on ... when I came here three years ago, it was the case that the TAs would keep ‘their’ (gestures) pupil in a bubble, or they would choose to remove them from lessons, taking a decision away from both the teacher and the pupil’.*

### **Roles and typologies of TAs in PE**

*‘You have so many hats as a TA and sometimes you just don’t know which one you’re supposed to have on’ (TA).*

The literature revealed a number of studies which sought, from a range of sources (SENCOs, parents, pupils, head teachers and so on), to identify specific roles of a generic TA:

*‘The difficulty in reaching a consensus on appropriate roles and responsibilities for teacher aides has made it difficult to develop job descriptions that reflect the skills and competencies necessary.’ (Howard and Ford, 2007:38)*

Coding of these studies through NVivo also served to validate the themes which had emerged from the survey questionnaire. Against these roles, I

present those that were exemplified through the data for this study. In addition, several sources had attempted to construct 'typologies' of teaching assistants and these are also presented as Appendix 1. An attempt is made during the discussion which follows to identify a typology for the TA in PE.

What emerged with clarity was the view that the role had somewhat shifted concurrently with the move towards formalizing the status of the job:

*'My conception (sic) about what's happened like a lot of things in school, changes happen to every role, like Head of Year is now called something else but the job role is pretty much the same and the teaching assistant ... from that kind of caring, nurturing place but not necessarily with a coaching sort of perspective, so it's kind of working alongside a teacher ...'* (PD Lead teacher).

That the role is more complex perhaps in this subject than in others was noted by one teacher:

*'... they've got this range of skills which they're expected to be able to do in PE ... it's more complex, it highlights it more I think...'*

In their generic study of relationships between teachers and TAs, Bedford et al (2008), asked *teachers* to name the skills or personal attributes of an effective TA/teacher relationship. These were identified as: respect, trust, patience, communication, listening, organisational skills, understanding and flexibility. When *TAs* self-report such qualities, the literature confirms a similar set of personal attributes. However, no previous study relates to attributes or roles of TAs in PE and thus more detailed discussion is warranted. A table showing attributes from the literature and those reported by TAs in this study appears as Appendix 1c.

In this study, and in line with the literature, roles remained defined by the TA as almost entirely child-centred, with scant acknowledgement of pedagogical knowledge in respect of attributes. TAs named common sense, a positive attitude, desire, willingness to *'pitch in and have a go'*, and being patient as qualities necessary to work successfully in PE. Most seemed able to sideline their own personal experiences of PE in order to motivate the pupil; indeed, being able to motivate a child was a feature of eight of the responses in the interviews. *'Learning to adapt activities'* and *'constantly thinking about what to do'* demonstrated the TAs ability to think on their feet, since the majority reported that they did not necessarily know learning outcomes in advance. Downing *et al.*'s study confirmed this as being able to *'meet students' needs at any moment'* (2000:178). Through the survey in fact, 80.6% of TAs felt that they were more knowledgeable about the pupil's specific learning needs than the teacher (Q12), with 71.4% commenting that teachers also saw them as having this knowledge (Q3).

Uniquely to this study, however, was the frequency of TA's responses relating to the need to 'join in' the physical side of the lesson: pitching up and pitching in. This level of engagement with the actual lesson content may or may not be seen in other practical subjects and may be of interest in terms of further research.

### **Converging roles: the TA as a teacher or a carer?**

The idea that a TA's role could be a bifurcated one was introduced earlier in this study; the idea that this role in fact converges and becomes both

instructional and yet informal is an observation from the interviews and the survey:

*'... that caring nurturing side plus that teaching side ...'* (PD lead teacher)

TAs in this study reported adopting a role which saw them as having a semi-informal relationship with the pupils with 94.4% agreeing with the statement that they had a social relationship with the pupil (Q5). Furthermore, 35 respondents to the survey felt their role was broadly emancipatory in that they agreed a need to support pupils to gain independence (Q13): *'My role is also to develop xxx's confidence and her social skills with her peers.'* Some TAs also identified or knew when this support should or could be withdrawn:

*' Well, because the kids are getting a bit older now, they don't want to be seen with me, so I'm there in the background and I'm there if they need me...'*

Importantly, LSAs in O'Brien and Garner's (2001) narrative accounts were seen to 'quantify' success in their roles in an intuitive and personalised manner in which a child demonstrated steps towards mastering independence or social skills for example. Lacey's study of the same year found that the facilitation of social interaction was deemed as one of the most valuable roles recognised by teachers and parents of the pupils supported by the TA. Moran moves beyond a competency, utilitarian model when she contends that the way in which someone learns to *teach* is:

*'...bound up with a set of unique biographies, personal values, opinions, beliefs, personalities and life experiences'* (2009:47).

We could add to this the notion or contention that a hegemonic discourse of disability, significantly patriarchal in construction, as has been argued earlier,

may create a contradiction in the reality of the role of the TA. It may even have moved us away from a model of professionalism which, contentiously, works well for inclusion but is not allowed to work well when impositions of policy and structure and adherence to politically-motivated discourse are present. Adams and Sydie consider this to be the:

*'... contrast between rational, conceptual, theoretical words and the world of experiences of ordinary subjects – part critique of social theory, part critique of male-dominated and organised structures'*  
(2001:214).

The idea that the TA plays a role in *'mediating'* or *'connecting'* with the child, and with different or other children and the teacher is explored by Howes (2003:150). He notes those studies which have sought to explain how *'paid adult support'* connects to a child through a shared socio-cultural experience (Monzo and Rueda, 2001, Rueda and Monzo, 2002). The collaborative nature of relationships – a Vygotskian stance (1978) - in an inclusive setting was explored by Bennet, Rowe and Deluca (1996) whose case study of an autistic girl noted a relationship between the paraprofessional and the child based on trust and personal knowledge:

*'When paid adult support staff have detailed, personal knowledge of the pupils they support ... they have a clear and positive impact'*  
(Howes, 2003:150).

Perhaps when TAs do not exhibit this depth of knowledge, or, indeed adopt a stereotypical or generalised view of what a pupil can do, particularly with regard to physical competency in PE, the potential for positive impact may be diminished. This would support Finkelstein's administrative model of intervention (in Swain *et al.*, 1993):

*'There is a tension whereby paid adult support behaviours which lead to short-term effects seen to represent learning (being on task,*

*completing coursework etc) have a potentially negative effect on participation and, perhaps, on long-term construction of learner identities' (Howes, 2003:151).*

This is an important perspective and indeed Howes' comments have recently been confirmed by Blatchford *et al.* (2009). We are provided here with a view that contends that a personal and human interaction is valuable; that knowledge and acknowledgement of impairment are important ; in fact, that a semi-medical model approach could be a complementary one. Conversely, without possessing subject knowledge, the TA may not be equipped to promote autonomous learning but adopts a facilitative role in terms of promoting independence and peer-interaction. The existence of this close relationship appeared to support an environment in which the pupil was able to achieve some learning outcomes; as one TA in this study commented, *'... my role is really James-led<sup>12</sup>.'*

Responses to survey questions regarding the TA's instructional role, or the frequency of their independent intervention in curricular decisions, would lead me to identify here a role which embraces teaching and learning although remains professionally identifiable through a welfare label. This is further developed in the discussion which follows in terms of whether TAs themselves construct their role as that of a carer/support worker or that of an instructor or teacher.

If individual TAs are employed to facilitate the learning of a pupil on a one to one basis, it is interesting to note the responses to those questions

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<sup>12</sup> Name has been changed



relating to the TA having an instructional role. Whilst 69.4% of TAs said that they made independent curricular decisions (Q2) and worked in separate activities during the lesson (58.3%), they did not feel they provided most of the instruction; yet a high proportion of TAs (n=30) had a close working relationship with the pupil in the PE lesson in order to achieve directed tasks.

Whilst these responses indicate a fairly large degree of autonomy for the learning process being devolved to the TA, it seems clear that the TAs' interpretation of a close working relationship as depicted in the responses to Question 30 relate to their attempts to create a positive learning environment which is unconnected to whether or not the teacher actively 'devolves' this responsibility to the TA. Indeed, 91.7% thought it was their job to support the teacher to deliver the curriculum so that pupils could work alongside their peers.

Indeed, and despite the literature to the contrary, there was little evidence from the interviews to suggest that the teacher subconsciously devolved learning totally to the TA in this study; it was, in fact, a conscious decision. In other words, teachers, according to TAs, appeared not to deliberately absolve themselves of their responsibility to all learners. Nor did they abrogate their 'duty of care' in terms of safety and risk (as represented in questions 18 and 19). It is therefore interesting to consider the perception of the TA's role through the survey as being semi-instructional but yet collaborative. In other words, there is no agenda as far as the TA is concerned that they fulfil a role which is inappropriate or unexpected, particularly given that 85.7% of survey

respondents thought their role was exactly as they had expected it to be (Qii). TAs in this study almost expects to occasionally take on a role in the learning process, expects to receive this support from the teacher and then expects to be allowed or trusted to get on with it. In the literature, and the key informants' interviews, however, the converse was true: the language used conveyed a sense that there was blame to be apportioned to the teacher for evading their responsibility to all learners.

Jenny had perceived that many teachers devolved the responsibility of learning across a range of practical subjects (including PE) to a TA, who didn't necessarily have a competence level commensurate with the complexity of the environment, or the '*chaotic space*' referred to by one Lead Teacher:

*'It's very, very common that a TA pretty much runs the programme for disabled children. The feeling is that with PD children your main concern is with personal care and not about differentiating the curriculum' (KCC).*

And,

*'For the teachers there's nothing – in most schools they are happy to hand over to the TA. It's a mixture of fear and guilt. TAs are ignorant in the sense that they are mums who have been hauled off the streets.'*

In PE specifically, albeit anecdotally, Jenny had observed that children often say that they would rather go off and do something on their own than undertake a task provided by the teacher which has (according to Jenny) limited educational relevance such as to referee or sort the kit out. Whilst one could present a fairly robust argument that *refereeing* in terms of leadership development and skills related to organisation and group management is occasionally a worthwhile activity (from Seidentop's Sport Education model, (1994) and perhaps more recently, from the revised NCPE, 2007), the fact

remains that this type of activity is often used for 'non-doers' and may lack structure, learning objectives and outcomes. In effect, it is potentially an excuse for not providing any real learning activity although it could have value if adopted with real integrity. Indeed the ability of a TA to deliver such parallel activity is an inferred deficit in the local authority's view of their capabilities.

If this perspective is accurate, and I note Jenny's comment was made anecdotally, then it could be argued that these pupils are almost colluding with poor practice at times and may certainly be subjugated in the context of a lesson which deems it acceptable to plan for *exclusion*, something which Smith and Thomas refer to as an '*unintended consequence*' (2006:81) and which Veck (2003) alludes to in his discussion of exclusionary practice.

Giangreco and Broer (2005) noted that individual TAs are, most frequently, assigned to work with students with the most complex needs including those involving personal care or behaviour management. KCC had confined their database to include only those pupils with high support needs (and, in this case, a physical disability). The responses to the survey would therefore reflect this population and thus inform an interpretation that this 'caring' role was very important. Assumptions that this role was constructed as a caring-medical-welfare one were reiterated by a number of respondents including KCC:

*'... people think that the only thing you have to do (for PD children) is their personal care but not curriculum differentiation';*

and,

*'The view of working with physically disabled children is that it's a warm bath caring for the child scenario and not a serious learning environment'.*

The survey had revealed discrepancies in the naming of the profession and I consider that any discussion of whether the TA has a caring role is constructed in the job title and, indeed, the initial job description. For instance, in responding to Question 13 in the survey which asked whether a TA felt their role was connected with supporting independence and personal care, 35 of 36 TAs agreed with additional comments posted such as:

*'My role is to develop xxxx's confidence and her social skills...'* and,

*'I am more [working in] a role of physical needs than learning'*

One respondent differentiated her role specifically from that of another: *'This is not a TA's job, it is a specialist welfare'*. Indeed, another response to the question regarding whether or not the TA worked to specific targets in PE (Q11) was an emphatic *'I set the goals'* (emphasis added); this respondent had titled herself as a 'welfare officer'.

## Research question 2: How do TAs construct and play out the various relational processes within the context of the PE workspace?

### The workspace: understanding inclusion in PE

In defining and describing how this 'PE workspace' is constructed by schools, teachers, TAs, pupils and others, I considered whether there was an implicit understanding of what inclusion in PE meant to the TAs. Additionally, through the interviews, whether there were opportunities to interpret responses to other questions, not directly related to inclusion as such, in the light of the political and educational discourse. Whilst this does not immediately address the research questions, it emerged as an additional insight into the working practices of the TA in both the schools and therefore I include it here by way of 'setting the scene'.

In fact, the construction of the meaning of inclusion seemed to be a concern which barely featured as part of the TAs' reflections and it is this very observation that I deem important. The socio-political discourse as far as education policy is concerned has this debate at its heart. TAs in this study however, constructed 'inclusion' and 'inclusive practice' pragmatically, with a humane and caring stance, but most of all as realists:

1<sup>st</sup> TA: '*... when I first started it wasn't inclusion ... what was it? What was it called?*' (looks at colleague)

2<sup>nd</sup> TA: '*Inclusion ... hmmm ... begins with 'd' ... my mind's gone blank.*'

1<sup>st</sup> TA: '*But what that meant was that **we** (emphasis added) were allowed to do things with them, take them swimming... When kids were coming to mainstream school before they didn't have to be in the lesson and then when inclusion came in it was almost like overnight, they were meant to be in the lesson with their peers, they were meant to be doing the same thing, and, um, you know, I think maybe it was a little too fast.*'

And in PE specifically, supported by Tungatt's research (1992):

*'... when I first came here, PD students wouldn't do PE, they worked in the library or played Monopoly, you know ...'* (TA).

58.3.% of survey respondents (n= 21) claimed they spent most of their time in PE in separate activities *'because they often can't do the activity'* or *'only if there is running involved'*. Both these statements attest to specific curricular barriers which might not be relevant in other subjects.

Where 47.3% of TAs had been in post since before workforce remodelling, they occasionally seemed to be able to say when inclusion started – almost as if inclusion was a 'thing', an object, a separate entity, rather than perhaps a philosophical sea-change. An understanding of what inclusion in practice means (as opposed to inclusive practice) was also a feature of discussions of what they thought their role was and thus is included later in this chapter.

- **Working arrangements**

In terms of the way in which schools employed TAs, respondents conveyed through the survey that, generally, they did not work in specific subject departments (n=23) and that, overall, there was a tendency for over 60% of TAs to work with one or more pupils across a range of subjects. However, teachers noted that a department-specific TA would be helpful, a notion that is reflected in the literature (including Jerwood, 1999, Lacey, 2001):

*'I think there are certain students who clearly have to have one to one support regardless from a specified teaching assistant but talking across the whole school generically, I think that a male and a female PE teaching assistant with us (emphasis added) the whole time would be extremely beneficial'* (PD lead teacher)

and,

*'... it's almost a full-time post that could be created because of the students we have here'* (PD lead teacher)

In considering evidence from the interviews, however, TAs in both the lead schools were actually attached or employed within an entirely separate department – in both schools this was named as a ‘welfare department’. TAs and LSAs (who were identified as separate ‘types’ of support) gave the impression that this was some sort of separate hub from which they would be deployed to classes with pupils and to which, frequently, they would return either with or without their charges.

- **‘A safe haven’<sup>13</sup>: manifestations of inclusive (or otherwise) practice**

The idea that an inclusive school is not necessarily an emotionally or physically safe space for a disabled young person arises from TAs consistently reporting health and safety as overriding concerns. Furthermore, one of KCC’s advisory teachers had noted:

*‘...well, some schools are like Dante’s inferno ... I wouldn’t want to get knocked over.’*

It might be argued that the over-reliance on a social model, through which society is seen to create disability, has exaggerated physical access issues (for instance, the DDA, 1995) at the expense of social and emotional equity, and rendering debate about pedagogical access superfluous.

Jenny had noted that:

*‘... the feeling that since schools are accessible (with ramps and toilets) then that’s all that matters. This idea that physical accessibility means that schools have done all they need to tick the inclusion box...’*

This is similarly reflected in the literature: Avramadis *et al.*’s (2000)

reductionist approach is confirmed by Knowles who noted that where the

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<sup>13</sup> Howard and Ford, 2007:34

disability was 'caused' by a physical impairment, the pupils may:

*'... only require appropriate access to educational facilities and equipment' (2006:130).*

In other words, this refers to the notion that if buildings are accessible and physical resources in place, inclusion is the immediate result although TAs were quick to illustrate occasions when unsuitable or inappropriate locations for PE were created:

*'The far field over the way from school is not really appropriate' (TA)*

This notion that somehow inclusion is achieved by addressing issues of physical access was certainly prevalent in all the data and is supported by the literature. In a Canadian study, Pivik *et al.* noted that 'a good first stage' in evaluating whether a school is inclusive is 'the assessment of structural environments' (2002: abstract).

There is much to report from this study on the continued default setting of many teachers, TAs, heads and others in the education and physical education of a disabled child: the issue of access, equipment and resources.

*'I truly believe that the kids leave here disadvantaged ... we do all the ramps, all the doors, all the exits and entrances, but other than that they just get on with it.'* (PD lead teacher)

This leads me to wonder at the 'mythical' barriers created firstly by a school setting, secondly by physical education teachers and thirdly by the PE curriculum which continues to deny the greatest possible level of integration of a physically disabled pupil.



In addition, the notion of a 'safe haven' is also deemed to relate to the construction of close relationships with a TA, particularly one-to-one contact, through which, I might argue, there is less opportunity for autonomous learning and for fostering independence both within PE lessons and beyond. These two aspects are further developed as follows.

- **Returning to the 'Mother ship'**

***Mother ship** noun 1 a spaceship which acts as a service and supply base and used as a launch base for one or more smaller craft. 2 a ship that provides supplies and facilities for a number of smaller craft. (Allen (ed) 2003:904)*

On arriving at the school I'm told that (they) will be meeting me in the Welfare Department. When I am taken into this area, which is separate to the rest of the school although close to the main offices, I notice immediately a strong smell of 'medical', it looks, feels and smells like a sick bay and there are curtained cubicles, clearly for those in genuine need of toileting or changing help throughout the day. It is almost lunchtime and pupils come and go from this central 'hub'

Figure 3: Field notes, 2010

The physical location of a separate unit or department, almost a 'hub' from which pupils would gather and disperse and TAs would be deployed and return, was a feature of several schools in the survey. Although a percentage of schools did not respond to the questionnaire, their responses invited me to follow-up my request with a specific department. This was frequently a separate unit, often one which had a separate identity or was attached to the school. In new designs of buildings in a number of schools, the creation or continued incorporation of this separate facility, largely for physically disabled students with associated medical or support needs, appears to work against the social model of a truly inclusive setting:

*'As you know, we don't like to call ourselves a Unit but we're a separate department really and sometimes they need the LSAs down in PE to help with the PDs in like a physical subject you know.'* (Line manager, TAs),

and,

*'Well, I like to call it a base where they can come if they want and actually the parents like it and ask for it. We're a department now though, not a Unit any more'* (Line manager, TAs).

This last comment is an important one insofar that it is very typical for schools to have separate departments for subjects – languages, maths and so on, indeed, re-titling the Unit in this way appears to give it status in the respondent's view. What is not typical, however, is to have separate locations for individualised pupil-centred concerns such as disability. How far the TA and the pupil were socialised into seeking out this safe space both physically and emotionally became a feature of some of the interviews. So much so that it was reported:

*'One kid said to me not so long ago 'will I get an LSA when I go to work?' And I'm like, what...? Of course you won't ...'* (Line manager, TAs).

In one school, policy documents indicated that this base was for 'personal needs, toileting, shower, physio area and mentoring'. Pupils and TAs appeared to use it for much more than this: *'some students stay in the PD Unit for lunch along with the others'*. Field notes remind me that this Unit in one school included an area which acted as a cloakroom or reception area and I observed pupils and TAs using this space for informal meetings, administrative work, and the general collecting of bags and equipment on several of my visits to the school. The pupils also appeared to keep their personal possessions here:

There are plenty of bags and coats piled up in a corner of the unit, behind where I am meeting with and talking to the members of staff. In conversation, the head of the welfare unit mentions the sporting achievements of one pupil with genuine pride: *'we've got this one lad who's in a wheelchair ... double amputee ... he'll be down in a minute .. you'll maybe meet him ... and he's really good at basketball, got a proper chair, and he'll come back here, get his stuff and be off to practice at lunchtime...'* I meet the boy, shake his hand, mention that I've heard he's a bit of a star while he does 'wheelies' talking to me. Later, I ask the staff why he leaves his stuff in the unit, why doesn't he have a locker with all his mates?

Figure 4: Field Notes, 2010

In concluding this section, I draw the reader's attention again to the idea of a 'mother ship'. Whilst this may be clear in terms of the existence of some sort of hub for pupils to move to and from, it can also serve to represent the very real demographics of the TA population, both in this survey and in the literature: that the TA is predominantly female, of a particular age, and with family responsibilities which does indeed make her part of the 'mum's army'.

### **The TA's perception of her status**

*'Well, I do think the teacher is much more important than me anyway, I don't know, they have a high status you know.'*

It is possible that teachers in this country would continue to view the role of what I am calling a TA as that of a subordinate professional; in the US, for example, where TAs are known as *paraprofessionals*, there appears to be an implicit understanding by the very nature of the job title that these are professional people working alongside another professional. Although this role may well be a broader one than our existing TA, the 'label' helps our perception of the status of the post. It is, I argue, status that may well help the TA connect to a positive role identity with clear expectations and true evidence of collaboration with other professionals in the education of the

disabled pupil. There were occasional views through the interviews which reinforced a perception of inferiority in terms of the TA's standing:

*'... when you're working with a teacher and everything, you're just a TA and like they know everything and they're hovering behind you and it can make you feel very uncomfortable and you lose your own confidence in what you're doing.'*

I believe the disabled child and their family may well be similarly affected by the title. Whilst TAs might construe an inferior status in the context of teachers, lead teachers in this study did not necessarily share a view of there being a significant hierarchical difference in status in their interactions with TAs in PE:

*'I hope that our TAs don't feel that way because we see them almost on a par with us' (PD Lead teacher).*

Rewarding TAs in terms of status however, needs to be addressed through the material gains of professionalising the role. Jenny had noted that:

*'... they're not paid anything like teachers are ... the TA has a lot to do but maybe doesn't get paid beyond 3:30, sometimes not even for lunch breaks and so there's a lot expected of them but they're not rewarded.'*

Calls for Senior Management Teams in schools to address areas of concern such as career development, role definition and training for TAs were highlighted, for example, by Hammett and Burton (2005) and reinforce a chronological shift in role definition through professionalisation from welfare and caring to pedagogical.

### **Opportunities for collaboration**

Results pertaining to the opportunity or otherwise for a TA to collaborate with the teacher indicated that 66.7% of TAs in the survey felt that they and the PE teacher were a strong team although only 14.3% said they were regularly

involved in planning and setting learning outcomes. Giangreco's study (1997) which considered characteristics of successful inclusion, noted collaboration as a significant feature.

A decision to use narrative conversation as a method to reveal more about the perceptions the TAs had of their role relates specifically to the realisation, through earlier data, that TAs felt they were *not* included or given the time for adequate consultation and collaboration. In the survey, for instance, 90.9% of TAs said they were not included in or invited to subject specific (PE) department meetings; a sense that they were somehow unimportant prevailed and yet at no time was this expressed in negative terms. In Barton's (1997) discussion of the complexities and constraints of providing an inclusive education, he notes the importance of whole-school policies, created to respond to this apparent challenge. In particular and writing long before workforce remodelling, he posits that collaboration is crucial:

*'It is a learning process for all those involved and this should include all support staff. It entails discussion and debate between staff, learning to listen and respect one another'* (1997:234).

Balshaw (1999) had also recommended that LSAs' training should be *in situ* or collaborative. TAs reported that they welcomed such opportunities but there was very little time for carrying this out. The TA's contractual hours for example, do not allow such flexibility:

*'... there's no time to talk to each other and our lunchtimes are spent dealing with toileting and the welfare needs of pupils'*

Bedford *et al.*'s research noted the '*changing nature of the relationship*' (2008:23) between teacher and TA and that there was an opportunity to

strengthen this professional collaboration particularly in the areas of planning and preparation for example. Earlier research, however, by Howes on the impact of the National Agreement (2003), did not highlight partnership but noted relationships which were constructed by the teacher, in which the teacher leads and manages. Collaboration is also a two-way process, a feature of '*proper collaboration*' as one TA noted with '*respect*' being a feature of that relationship. However, TAs often reported that the PE teacher seemed at a loss to know exactly how to work with the TA, a reflection of unawareness rather than unwillingness or resistance:

*'I remember a teacher saying am I allowed to tell the TA what to do? You know, asking the SENCo, am I allowed to tell them what to do, do they join in or what? They just didn't know what to do I think, working with other people.'*

That there was merit in teachers receiving more formal support to work collaboratively, with the onus squarely on this to be driven from teaching, was also observed:

*'I think generally, teachers need to be taught how to use their support staff and I think sometimes they're embarrassed about talking to us.'*

Another dimension to the collaborative process was also revealed from the TA conversations: that the *pupil* does in fact co-construct the relationship and indeed, the actual role of the TA working with them. This was evidenced in several of the TA conversations where respondents considered that, where a pupil was intrinsically motivated, their ability to include themselves was apparent, and did not rely on any specific intervention from either the teacher or the TA.

*'... they are fantastic, they just get on with it. The majority of lessons they're typical boys, go off and do their own thing ...'*

And,

*'I mean, he's visually impaired, apart from having the palsy (sic), he gets stuck in ... it makes it easier for the teacher to include him'.*

TAs further mentioned drive, enthusiasm, interest and peer-supportive relationships as factors in ensuring a more included pupil in PE.

### **Research question 3: How does any existing training for TAs confirm or deny an instructional role?**

#### **The educational background and aspirations of TAs**

Respondents to this survey completed tertiary education at Level 1 or 2 although, of course, age may not be a factor here, since many adults take GCSEs or A levels or the equivalent later in life. Cumulatively however, the level of education of TAs in this role was at a similar level to their pupils in that 82.9% held Level 1 or 2 qualifications. Four respondents had first degrees, with one of the women holding a post-graduate qualification to teach in the primary sector. Nor were TAs in this study anticipating training to teach at any time; 80.6% of respondents said this was not a consideration for the future and thus their aspirations beyond their quotidian role cannot be over-estimated or predicted on the basis that they may well be using the role as a stepping stone to develop a different career.

Since there is no real doubt that TAs in PE are taking on a semi-instructional role, as indeed they seem to be across the curriculum, there may be useful discussions about a profession which is comprised of adults whose education finished before level 3:

*'Do we really want a model that may be inadvertently perpetuating low expectations...? Do we really want a model where if you are not disabled you receive your instruction from a highly qualified teacher and if you have a disability you receive the bulk of your instruction from paraprofessionals, with no guarantee of their qualification?' (Giangreco, Yuan, McKenzie, Cameron and Fialka, 2005b: 24).*

This comment would certainly be valid if we were to adopt the model which only deems knowledge in the context of competency to be a TA in PE as that which is acquired traditionally, which is measured against standard



examination benchmarks and which does not account for professional, workplace skills, initiative and intuition.

Thus it might follow that the role of the TA is created and defined beyond that of a traditional education qualification pre-requisite. In other words, that there are other competencies which must be deemed as important and which the TA uniquely brings to their role. Downing *et al.* (2000:178) noted that '*neither years of experience ... nor educational degree seemed to make a difference...*' in their study of 16 TAs. Furthermore, these qualities may not be easily measurable and are thus difficult to set out in job descriptions, for example. Notwithstanding this, however, and in comparison with some studies from the USA and Australia for example (Ghere and York-Barr, 2003, Hands and Larkin, 2006), the UK TA appears to be less well-educated in the formal sense than his or her contemporaries abroad. However, the catch-all pre-requisite that TAs and HLTAs should be '*well-qualified*' (see page 56) for the job begs the question 'what does well-qualified mean'? This is further discussed on page 156. There are, however, limitations to these observations in that the sample size across one county may not reflect the entire population. Howard and Ford's small-scale study noted similar limitations (2007).

### **Previous employment**

There can be few other professional roles in schools where the post-holders have such a rich and diverse employment history and life experience prior to taking up their current role as TAs. Certainly, in the main, career-teachers

move from school to university to the workplace and alongside family and voluntary commitments, perhaps, do not always bring other workplace experience to bear on their interactions with young people at school. I asked survey respondents to describe previous employment but factored in 'homemaker' as a valid response to the question, thereby attaching value to the skills acquired in the home and indeed, their transferability. Broadly categorised, previous employment is displayed below:

<b>Employment by genre</b>	<b>Typical job descriptors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Sales, merchandising, retail	Sales assistant, shop assistant, checkout operator, retail management, warehouse operative	6
Caring, health, medical	Homemaker, care assistant, health care worker, playgroup leader, child minder, social worker, auxiliary nurse	21
Clerical, finance	Accounts clerk, general clerical, secretarial	5
Education	Primary school teacher or LSA, classroom volunteer, lunchtime supervisor	7
Other	Photographer, catering	4

*Table 4: TAs' previous employment*

Several respondents had named more than one previous role and thus there are more responses than respondents in this case. However, the high number of respondents who broadly named the caring professions or education as their previous occupation signifies parity with the so-far assumed nature of the role – one in which a pre-requisite exists to define the role of the TA (with a disabled child) as pertaining to the empathetic and intuitive rather than to the existence of specific knowledge, skills and measurable competencies: the personal versus the political (from Morris, 1992).

In PE, specifically, we are certainly looking at a TA workforce which is child-centred. We would hope that the teaching profession is similarly constructed

however, the distraction of the subject-knowledge debate and the status of PE itself is again an important consideration (as was discussed on page 28). If we are unclear about delivering a curriculum to the disabled child generally in our subject, or we are wrapped up in delivering ‘skills and drills’ – the ‘what’ of the subject and not the ‘how’ – it is unsurprising that the TA’s role lacks clarity of definition in this context.

### **Training to work in PE: *‘always room for more’***

Only three respondents stated that they held PE or sport-specific related qualifications, of which two were male TAs. However, the survey’s limitations were that it firstly presumed that a ‘PE and Sport qualification’ would be understood by TAs in the same way as I, as the researcher, understood it. In other words, where I may construe such a qualification to be connected with a specific activity-focused or pedagogical delivery, TAs may consider that First Aid or lifting and handling would be relevant. The question was therefore both assumptive and presumptive and thus was developed for further clarification during the interviews with TAs.

Since only one of these three respondents identified himself as a HLTA, it follows that, again, there is some discrepancy over the intention of the formal training to enable TAs to take on a greater responsibility within PE. However, there was no real consensus from TAs in general about whether or not they had received enough training for their role in PE or indeed, what the nature of that training should be:

*‘You see there’s so much we don’t know that we could do with knowing about.’*

## Opportunities for training

Morley *et al* (2005) considered that the support TAs were able to give was limited by their training which was largely 'on the job' and not always pedagogically grounded. Head teachers in Rose's study called for whole-staff training, with inclusion seen as '*multi-dimensional*' (2001:152) whilst a variety of sources note the need for professional development (such as Avramadis *et al.*, 2002) although rarely define 'professional' in doing so. In general, training to work effectively in PE with disabled pupils was also a concern of KCC officers who worked closely with many schools across a wide geographical area.

*'The main question I'm asked, at meetings of teachers, at training or over the phone is how do we include physically disabled children in PE. It does concern me that, even with the current debate about lead schools no-one in PE departments is coming up with good practice for including these young people in meaningful ways.'* (KCC)

Questions 24 and 25 in the survey related to the TAs' perception about the training available to them. Whilst they noted that schools were able to provide regular generic training (67.6%), TAs neither significantly agreed (n=16) nor disagreed (n=19) with the statement about whether they had received enough training in PE. This was still not enough information to debate the validity of any training delivered in the name of inclusion and this question was thus worthy of further study through the interview process. The interviews proved more revealing; in considering the type of training some TAs had been able to attend which specifically related to PE, one TA noted the following:

*'I went on a course up to London about including disabled pupils in PE and when I came back 'G' said how did you get on, and I said I didn't learn anything cos all they said was basically all stuff I'd done before and it was just basically saying adapt what you know (pauses) well if you don't know what you know I'm afraid you can't adapt it (laughs).'*

There is no evidence to suggest that the construction of training courses for inclusive PE relates to the prior experience of the TA, or to the understanding they already have of their role or of the child. TAs spoke about having ideas of their own in terms of adapting activities, often doing this 'on the spot'. They also said they would like to go:

*'...somewhere to get ideas from other people, to see if there's anything else.'*

One TA particularly coined a useful term:

*'There could be community brainstorming where we all have these ideas...'*

It may be that adopting a community brainstorm approach to training is enough to support the TA; they may not need the theoretical perspectives, the impairment-specific descriptors for example; they may continue to work very well in the context of PE through the sharing and collation of workable and practical examples of adaptation. Indeed, this also reflects a collaborative approach in the sense that the TAs themselves form a community of practice within which expertise is shared. Another TA, having also attended apparently PE-specific inclusive training observed:

*'I've been on one of those and the chap that was taking it had no experience and then when I was saying about ideas they were like, wow, and I ended up telling these people the strategies ... and I'm like, hang on, I've paid out of my own money to come on this ... and actually I'm helping you...'*

The nature of training to date for many TAs in this study, with a welfare role, had been about specific aspects of impairment rather than pedagogical concerns within the subject as the latter was deemed to be the responsibility of the physiotherapist or occupational therapist (OT). This reflects a medical model, one in which the impairment of the child dictates their perceived

educational need and leads to a process whereby teachers and others work towards alleviating issues concerned with impairment and not with the curriculum itself. Narrative responses to the survey questions 24 and 25 which asked the TA whether they had received enough or regular training reflected this somewhat:

*‘Yes – physiotherapist visited school to train LSAs...’*

and

*‘chiefly from OTs and Physios’.*

However, if, as we contend, the TA is taking an increasingly pedagogical or teaching and instructing role, might this training also be about aspects of PE? Previously, adequate or suitable training was deemed to include perhaps basic signing instruction, or manual handling, for example. Indeed, training would still seem for some to encompass medical and physiotherapy concerns whilst also including specific communication strategies and so on:

*‘I’ve had like manual handling and that side of it, which is useful in PE’.*

(TA)

Specific TA comments alluded less to formal training and more to personal qualities:

*‘I don’t think it’s about training, as much as who you are, you have to feel up for it, you must want to do it ...*

*‘I think it’s more intuition, in training they tell you where the equipment is and where everything is but that’s not all you need’.*

Training which enabled a TA to effectively deliver aspects of the curriculum was rare and indeed only three respondents had identified that they had any PE or sport-specific training in preparation for their role in supporting a disabled child in PE, two of whom were male respondents. One might argue

that if the TA is making frequent independent decisions, with sporadic input into outcomes or, indeed, limited pedagogical understanding, the subsequent educational benefit to the pupil is questionable.

The nature of training in relation to PE teachers either pre or in-service has been discussed in Part II of this study. There was agreement in the literature and from previous research that this training should be grounded in a practical domain rather than a theoretical one. Similarly, in nurse education (and as alluded to earlier regarding parity between these professions), O'Connor (2006) noted the move towards more clinical practice as a direct reaction to the increasingly academic nature of nurse training.

KCC felt that *teachers* considered that they have very little training to deal with the levels of PD coming into mainstream schools. Teachers thought that they 'should know'. Anecdotally, there was deemed to be a distinct difference between young and older teachers, with the younger teachers feeling guilty that they should be more knowledgeable about strategies for inclusion. This was thought to relate in part to the lack of training, something which was observed in Morley et al's research into teacher's views of inclusion in PE (2003). It was validated by a lead teacher:

*'... it's a massive area that most of our colleagues won't have thought about in our training ... I think for some of us there's this element of guilt, you know, are we including them properly, are we including the TA properly, are we ensuring this child is being educated to the best of our ability, that they're not missing out ... but I know that colleagues in other schools that I've spoken to, older colleagues ... tend to say they shouldn't be here, they should be somewhere else, I shouldn't be teaching them ... it's a generation thing ..'*

This goes some way to confirm the concerns discussed earlier over the 'state'

of the PE profession and the willingness or ability of PE teachers to successfully engage with other adults in the context of delivering the PE curriculum, notwithstanding any apparent lack of empathy or understanding of inclusion in action.

In terms of collaborative training, in fact, TAs had a view on the nature of training that *teachers* may or may not have received:

*'They're just not trained to work in this way, they come here as games players or whatever ... but they struggle with differentiation.'*

One solution to overcome this lack of experience was to provide teachers with experience in special (or segregated) education:

*'I think in an ideal world, I think the teachers could do with spending time in a special school.'*

Teachers themselves shared the view that their training did not prepare them adequately for inclusive practice and this is a feature of recent research by Vickerman and Coates (2009).

The apparent requisite knowledge for being an effective TA generically and in PE specifically is presumed to be related to a caring or welfare role and the data gathered so far continues to support this view:

*'What needs to happen to their profession ... all the things that mean being well-qualified as a TA are about going on coaching awards, removing them from the caring role, self-esteem and communication, you know, the specific needs of the child which the TA might know...'*  
(PD lead)

The research revealed that none of the TAs held HLTA status. This had been identified earlier as a benchmark or aspirational status for TAs working in PE by BAALPE (see page 55). In ensuring that TAs are adequately prepared to supervise small groups of pupils independently of teachers, as was



sometimes the case in these research findings, one would expect or hope that HLTA would confer this level of professional expertise on the TA and that they would, aligned to this, be recognised within the school. Perhaps, as Egilsson and Trausdottir (2009:23) noted, with lack of clarity in role definition, TAs relied '*on their own knowledge, skills and initiative*'.

So what is deemed to be the knowledge base for TAs in PE? What is it exactly that they should know? Firstly, perhaps, what do they bring to the subject in terms of their own pre-conceptions and experiences?

### **The TA's experiences of PE**

In ascertaining whether TAs felt positively towards this subject, semi-autobiographical questions at the start of each interview enabled the TA to share their perceptions. TAs in this study expressed varied views of PE but none were ambivalent: either they had strongly disliked the subject or, in the main, they had enjoyed it; in fact, views are best summarised in a way which presents the feeling of all TAs in this study – honest and open:

*'... I didn't mind the activities, the actual PE was fine ... but the showers ... (Pause and shakes head)';  
'I've got no heebie-jeebies with regards to PE at all', and  
'Hmmm, well personally I'm a lazy person ...'*

TAs generally described their own experiences as being games or skill-dominated, as might have been expected, although they acknowledged the range and breadth of activity now available to all pupils:

*'It had to be hockey in the winter and tennis in the summer and that was it, but there's so much going on now with trampolining ... the girls do all sorts you know.'* (TA)

and,

*'Cos when we were at school it was all games, games, games and we didn't do a lot of other stuff...' (TA)*

Thus the TA brings a certain perception of the subject to their role through personal experience or perhaps, experiences with their own children. However, the knowledge base of TAs is disputed in that the role has been historically constructed as that of a carer and it now appears to be demonstrably pedagogical at times:

*"There's never been that understanding about the level of knowledge and understanding that is necessary for PD children – just that it's about personal care, feeding, changing – things like that..." (KCC)*

Similarly perhaps, there was a lack of clarity about the nature and construct of PE as a curriculum subject. TAs presented their own perceptions of what they thought PE meant for disabled pupils and, in doing so, often revealed something of their own philosophy and experience. If a TA works with one pupil across the curriculum, as has been indicated in this study, then they may well bring personal negative (and positive) experiences to bear on the pupil's inclusion. They may also make impairment-related curricular choices on behalf of that pupil which relate to the perceived challenge, difficulty or safety of the activity. Clearly (one would hope), PE teachers do not articulate a negative stance in their attitude towards the subject, although may not indicate a positive one in relation to the inclusion of a physically disabled pupil:

*'... colleagues in other schools who have a very sort of 1970s - dare I say it - approach to teaching tend to say they shouldn't be here, they should be somewhere else, I shouldn't be teaching them, which I find personally quite difficult to accept' (PD lead).*

Thus there remains an adult-imposed exclusionary discourse at times, without the philosophical leap which results in integration becoming *'received*

*educational wisdom*' (Oliver, 1996:85). If a prevailing attitude is that teachers struggle to find meaningful ways to plan for the inclusion of a pupil with different abilities, then the TA is surely caught between a rock and a hard place.

### **Original contribution to professional knowledge**

In concluding and making recommendations for future research and in considering the originality and impact of this study on professional practice in mainstream secondary schools in general, I consider that the findings presented here may be helpful to both the Teaching Assistant *and* the Physical Educationist. At the time of writing, no similar such findings and recommendations had been made for PE specifically.

The tension inherent in the TA's role, in which they find themselves caught between a rock and a hard place, is not necessarily helped by the ever-increasing standards and targets dominating professional practice. Whilst the TA may act as a 'rock' or supporter for the disabled pupil, there are considerable resource and attitudinal barriers which may render their role a 'hard place'. Effective pedagogic inclusion in PE is not the same as effective, emancipatory social inclusion. TAs in this study reported satisfaction and understanding of their role as a facilitator and collaborator with the pupil: that they found this collaboration difficult with teachers was also evident. Thus the TA is trapped between understanding their role in a generic, inclusive *process* in a mainstream school, and being able to articulate how they achieve this, yet

they lack the pedagogical understanding to adopt an increasingly instructional role and all its associated tensions.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Between a rock and a hard place**

The intention of this study was not to create new typologies for the TA, as such, although it has been possible to identify particular attributes of a TA who works in PE with a physically disabled pupil. The intention was to present, largely through the voice of the TA and some others, a view of their role in a specific subject (PE): what they bring to that role; what they think that role is and what they expect that role to be. As a result, a number of recommendations can be considered which relate to current professional practice and to future research. This study's findings are in line with other studies of the generic TA role in a mainstream secondary school although no other such study yet addresses the specific role of a TA in PE to my knowledge.

### **Who is the TA in the context of PE?**

Teaching Assistants in this study working in Physical Education in a mainstream school demonstrated similar characteristics found in the generic, multi-subject, cross-phase studies previously referred to. In particular, features such as age, gender and level of education were shared traits across this growing profession. Furthermore, these similarities extended to the notion that TAs perceive themselves as having both an instructional *and* an intuitive role although, whilst 'knowing' the child, they do not necessarily 'know' the subject (PE). Clearly, this intuitive role relates to some of the more humanistic claims made for Physical Education and, might be argued, cannot be easily or satisfactorily dealt with in recognized or prescribed training as it has more to

do with tacit knowledge (Schön, 1983), or emotional and bodily intelligence (Goleman, 1996). TAs in this study take on a role of 'activator' or perhaps 'mediator'; indeed, the TA has a potential emancipatory role in helping to create situations where autonomous learning, peer interaction and self-esteem for example are significant outcomes and of direct relevance to pedagogical claims made for PE. Notwithstanding this, TAs could equally and unwittingly suppress these outcomes through the way in which they interact with both the pupil and the teacher. More positively, as a direct observation from face-to-face interviews, TAs in this study demonstrated energy, enthusiasm and animated responses when they described situations where disabled pupils, through their support, had been enabled to be engaged in independent learning in PE. Moreover, they enjoyed this aspect of their role. Many TAs also reported on the need for them to be engaged on a practical level with aspects of this subject and rarely let personal negative experiences in PE affect their decision or willingness to do so.

However, and in relation to PE specifically, TAs were frequently deployed in what might be termed an 'instructional' or 'coaching' role. In one sense this is an acceptable additional role for any other adult involved in the PE lesson. Through PESSYP (2008) for example, and PESSCL prior to this (2003), teachers have been increasingly encouraged to work collaboratively with external agencies and individuals to deliver high quality PE and school sport. That they do this with difficulty has been suggested by others and mentioned earlier in this study. However, the perceived preparation of TAs to fulfill such a role is clearly inadequate according to the results of this study. The first

concern arising then seems to be the efficacy of the existing training to fulfill the TA's semi- instructional role in PE with a disabled pupil. Furthermore – who defines and decides what training is required? So far, there would appear to have been only three responses to fulfilling the training needs of TAs from policy-makers such as the professional association for PE or disability organizations for example. Firstly, to provide them with fairly low-level coaching awards; secondly, to provide them with specific disability sport packages and thirdly to focus on training to undertake medical or physiotherapeutic tasks.

The issue remains that we still do not agree on what constitutes basic competencies (and subsequent training needs) for the TA working in PE. If TAs see themselves as mediators or welfare support assistants, then they might struggle to fulfil an instructional or coaching role – and indeed, vice versa: *between a rock and a hard place*. The TA in this study appears in fact to be a '*factotum*' (Kerry, 2005): a person employed to carry out many types of work.

The second concern arising from the study is the issue of collaboration: collaboration between the TA and the child and between the TA and the teacher – *between a rock and a hard place*. I recognise the need for the pupil eventually to play a part in constructing the collaborative process. Johnston (1996) was criticised for individualising the relationship between a professional and a disabled person (in Shakespeare and Watson, 1997) and whilst trying to avoid falling into the same trap, and adhering to the spirit of the

social model, I saw no evidence of prejudice or stereotype amongst any respondents – in fact it was lack of awareness, for example, often on the part of the teacher, rather than unwillingness that appeared to be the dominant barrier.

It is worth considering whether the PE profession is ill-equipped through existing preparation or even at fault for resisting change (in terms of professional PE teachers being willing or able to work collaboratively with others) through inherent subject scrutiny and perhaps disenfranchising the 'new' professionals. If we were to uphold the spirit of a community of practice amongst all professionals involved in the education of a disabled pupil (the concept of an activist profession) we would, perhaps, be beginning to have found ways to incorporate all those who are now involved in the delivery of school sport and PE to *all* pupils. Indeed, ensuring the overall responsibility (and accountability) of the teacher whilst allowing greater flexibility in the deployment of other adults in pupils' learning may well strengthen the PE profession. Examples of this approach were evident in both the schools' PE departments where this research was conducted and where it was possible to demonstrate examples of innovative practice in PE, that was self-reported by TAs.

As a subject, claims for the value of Physical Education are well-documented; that it offers to pupils more than just a set of skills through which to perform a variety of structured physical activities; that it also provides opportunities for autonomous learning, understanding performance, facilitation of social



interaction and improvement of self-esteem, for example (Bailey *et al.*, 2006). If participation in PE does all these things, and we then effectively exclude a physically disabled pupil on the grounds that the learning environment is the barrier, are we not disenfranchising these pupils? Similarly, if an unqualified or inadequately trained TA, receiving training in 'skills and drills' or safety and first aid as they mostly do, is responsible for the devolved learning of this child, then we may, similarly, find it a challenge to promote and achieve true integration.

Conversely however, if we believe that PE is so much more than a skill-focused games-dominated subject, and we have frequently, as a profession, been happy to argue this in our attempts at justifying its continued curricular inclusion, then actually, TAs, with their holistic and caring approach, their concern for pupil independence and autonomy, their desire to support students in developing self-esteem, have a very pivotal and complementary role to play in balancing pedagogical concerns with other outcomes. Recognition that this caring model was worthy of celebration was a feature of Logan's study in mainstream primary schools (2006).

### **Relating this discussion to a disability paradigm**

So, how might the theoretical constructs from disability studies facilitate or shed light on the emerging professional role of the TA in PE?

A paradigm shift in education policy towards the inclusion of disabled pupils into mainstream schools has already been considered earlier in this study.

However, I remain unsure as to whether the influence of the theoretical backdrop (how disabled people 'should' be 'treated') has affected the resulting relationship that is the TA and the pupil. Can a model for inclusion dictate what is essentially a set of inter-personal relationships? Additionally, the notion that pupils are separated out into a '*sub-group*' (Norwich, 2009:466), which caters for a specific set of needs but denies those needs which disabled young people have in common with all other young people, is perpetuated by the existence of a department or hub within an otherwise intentionally inclusive setting. Furthermore, TAs in this study tended to disregard the dominant discourse from disability studies and neither mentioned nor alluded to preferred language or philosophy.

### **The TA as a collaborative liberator**

Relatively recent debate (Dewsbury *et al.*, 2004, Shakespeare and Watson, 2001 for example) within the field of disability studies has begun to challenge the success or impact of the social model and to contend that there is value in identifying impairment as significant in presenting and understanding disability. Similarly, a move towards an emancipatory paradigm has been prevalent and was referred to in the review of discourses. Disability scholars, including Shakespeare (2006) note the failure of the social model to illuminate the lived experience of disabled people and contend that the writings of the early political activists in the late 1980s and beyond centre around ideology and the uses and intent of research rather than findings and recommendations (Kitchin, 2000).

The emergence of post-modernist and post-structuralist scholarship as described by Shakespeare and Corker (2002) deepens the political understanding of disability whilst acknowledging the problematic nature of the original social model. However, any suggestion of what Simonsen describes as '*chronological imperialism*' (2005:140) is unintended. Indeed, post-modern disability theory embraces such warnings and moves for a more diverse paradigmatic representation (Swain *et al.*, 2003, Gabel and Peters, 2004).

The idea that a 'new' model, which takes less account of discriminatory practice and more account of the impact of impairment emerges whilst acknowledging the incredibly successful outcomes of the disability movement in areas such as access to the built environment and human rights. Challenges to policy and provision have, however, been shaped by the hegemonic discourse of the social model and, as I have suggested, this model has also impacted on professional practice to such an extent that roles such as the TA are in danger of becoming too one-dimensional, too prescriptive.

If, as this study suggests, the role of the TA in PE is to be celebrated as both instructional *and* humanistic, then the 'new' paradigm requires us to reconsider what a powerful rights-based model of viewing 'disabling practices' (such as, here, the intervention of specialist support to include disabled pupils) has achieved. I contend that the role, in its' professionalisation, has been shaped by political disability ideology as much as by educational

philosophy. However, TAs construct their role in PE in this study to be as immersed in a caring or welfare role as in instructing and teaching.

In so doing, they acknowledge, albeit unwittingly, the necessity to adopt a model for the role of the TA that embraces emancipatory and empowering individual support that is additional to but not altogether separate from the largely instructional, pedagogic role of the teacher. Indeed, Veck posits that the TA is in a position to make a *'unique'* contribution to an inclusive educational setting (2009:41). This is closely allied to the *sociology of acceptance* described by Bogdan and Taylor (1987) which suggests that in certain relationships, those who are not the 'deviant' (or atypical) partner, do not attribute any significance to the lesser capabilities, for example, of the other. They accept without question that differences exist but that they are secondary to the creation of a solid relationship based on mutual respect and trust. Bogdan and Taylor further note that the theoreticians of some trends – and I consider inclusive education to be one such trend for the purposes of this discussion –

*'... develop plans of what not to do rather than of how acceptance is accomplished'* (1987:39, emphasis added).

In this study therefore, the TA becomes a 'collaborative liberator', and, framed within an emancipatory paradigm, moves away from a deficit model to that of a strengths-based perspective in which the pupil is seen as the expert and with whom the TA conducts a collaborative relationship (Reiter, 2002).

My warrant is that a return to a needs-led model for the TA is not as negative an interpretation as some would suggest (for instance, Nevin *et al.*, 2008). I

have considered whether the responsibility for instruction should rest with the teacher and that the intrinsic value of the TA's role is to support both the inclusion of the child with integrity and to prepare effectively in collaboration with the teacher. On the surface, this appears to place the TA between a rock and a hard place – neither collaborating solely with the teacher nor acting as a substitute carer to the child. In professionalising the role of the TA to such an extent that, to all intents and purposes their role is very close to that of a teacher in all but name, do we dismiss the real value of one-to-one intervention, carefully planned, creatively delivered? There are, in fact '*contradictory demands*' on the TA (Hem and Heggen, 2003:101).

The TA in PE in this study largely constructs their role as one of an *advocate* whose relationship with the 'atypical' partner (in this case, the disabled pupil) is accepting and supportive and whose motivation for being in this role is in order to facilitate an inclusive process despite TAs in general being undecided about what such a process looks like. In other words – this role is intuitive, responsive and reflective. It is shaped as much by personal as professional experience although increasingly, the personal is removed from training and accreditation. Clearly one cannot quantify characteristics which defy quantification. There is no formula for creating the perfect job description for the TA: I have presented here the 'feeling' that a TA is an individual with a particular 'sense' of the role who constructs it somewhat haphazardly dependent on the strength of the relationship with the teacher and the pupil and their own level of confidence in the subject matter. Conversely, in becoming more professional, I argue that the TA's role may have become less

'organic', less humanistic (Reiter, 2000) and perhaps less connected to the child. There is a tension, too perhaps, between the professional and the vocational as revealed through this study and in the words of a Lead teacher:

*'It's the vocational side that's missing, it's all about standards and ticking boxes .... there's a detachment from the vocational side.'*

This tension, or polarity, seems to be captured in the expression 'caught between a rock and a hard place'.

To draw from nursing, as I have done several times during the course of this investigation, O'Connor (2006) uses a Bernsteinian analysis to propose that whilst professionalism and vocationalism might be conceptualised separately, caring is in fact a central tenet to nursing and cannot be factored out in a professional context. This is difficult to do in both education *and* nursing: I apply O'Connor's claim about nurses to the TA's role in that they

*'... engage in a unique range of caring activities because they have first developed an inner dedication or vocational commitment to care for others.'* (2006:750).

Other professions, aside from nursing but allied to medicine in general, or perhaps social work for example, also provide exemplars of working with an individual on a one-to-one basis. These relationships are increasingly constrained and regulated and occasionally have an inherent hierarchy (doctor-nurse, nurse-patient, doctor-patient, for example). Whilst disability scholars have resisted a medical model, or a helper-helped relationship, and we recreate and constitute this model in the 21st century, are we really any further forward in the emancipation of disabled people? Disabled *young* people, who may appear to define themselves by nothing more complicated than their hair colour for example, or their allegiance to a football team than

by their impairment, are perhaps 'disabled' firstly, by an imposed adult and curricular discourse and secondly, by the professional relationships and roles created in the name of supporting them, constructing '*profoundly different subjective worlds*' (Goodwin in Fitzgerald (ed), 2009:53).

## **Recommendations**

There are five recommendations from this study for professional practice and a further four suggestions for the development of future research.

### **For professional practice**

#### **1. Clarity in naming the profession**

Studies are not specific about the naming and titling of the TA's role. The apparent known numbers of TAs as reported by researchers (using government statistics for example) varies considerably but this could, in part, be attributed to what the TA self-reports their title to be or to the school's definition of their role, for example. It is perhaps the status of the TA in the context of a mainstream school which is in need of revisiting. Whilst there has been a rapid evolution in the TA's role since 2003, it appears to still be dependent on a role definition which relates to a different era – indeed as far back as post-Warnock. Professionalising the role has moved it well beyond 'bottle washer and bottom wiper' so, adopting a unified title which is recognised by all parties might support the professional status of the TA or at least make role boundaries clearer for all concerned: teacher, parent, pupil as well as TA.

## **2. The Voice of the TA in the management of the role**

The voice of the TA appears to be lost in an inclusive process despite their varied role and widespread deployment: are TAs ever asked to feed back on learning outcomes, pupil performance at assessment points, possible ways of working to adapt the curriculum? A greater opportunity for valuing the voice and expertise of the TA is a recommendation for future practice. Additionally, TAs require clarity of role supervision as well as role definition. In some schools, they are managed by the SENCo, in others, by lead teachers, otherwise they may report to a Head of Welfare and so on. Where a TA is increasingly required to consider curricular outcomes as part of their role, then this reporting and managing process should, in part, also be conducted in partnership with a subject teacher. Both these observations ultimately support the philosophical change required in the perception of the status of the TA in mainstream secondary schools in general, and in PE in particular. Both clearly require significant policy change and investment beyond a local arrangement.

## **3. Collaboration: Co-constructing teaching and learning in PE for disabled pupils**

This study's findings demonstrate a real need for collaborative practice.

Goodwin (2009:65) noted that the employment of TAs:

*'... to meet the ideology of inclusive education outpaced the conceptualization of team roles and responsibilities'* (in Fitzgerald (ed).

PE teachers (and, perhaps, teachers in general) are not necessarily trained to work well, if at all, with other adults despite ITE standards. In this respect, I am returning to concerns raised in the literature review regarding a perceived



demise of the PE profession and PE teachers' subsequent unwillingness to engage in reflexivity at times. Initial Teacher Education could support this process more. However, the concern is an ongoing one rather than one which relates specifically to a pre-service period of training: in particular, specific planning time needs to be factored in contractually for all parties.

There is a recognition that teachers need more support to work collaboratively but that there are too many demands already. Since this is the case, where do our values lie in schools? If we believe in inclusive practice we should perhaps rethink how we are dividing the time to enable this collaboration. There are clear professional implications from this study for the professional development of TAs and for the strengthening of relationships between TAs and PE teachers. Indeed, synthesising communities of practice, through which each party gains insight into the other (Robertson, 2002) is a way forward for local working practices, professional development and training.

#### **4. Redressing the gender bias**

Women have emerged in this study as the dominant workforce; paradoxically, disability studies have been shaped largely by a group of disabled men; there are concerns about male role models in some phases of education. How, therefore can a challenge to models of intervention not take account of the feminine perspective? Might disabled boys (or girls for that matter) in secondary schools be more amenable to male TAs on occasion? The only male TA interviewed noted:

*'Well they're very keen that I'm a role model, a sporty bloke so Joe can identify with that, and we've got the football in common. They've got a*

*TA they can talk about football with and you see them rise a bit in the chair, you know.'*

The study of the deployment of both the male TA in a generic role and that of a male TA working in PE is worthy of further consideration.

### **5. Training: The TA as a 'buddy' for other TAs in training**

How might we enhance the training available to acknowledge this caring/welfare role as well as an instructional one? Is there a tension in the dichotomous construction of the TA role? Does existing training move them closer to an instructional model and deny other qualities and attributes?

Examples of innovative practice were gleaned from the interviews, particularly in situations where the TA had been given the opportunity to prepare the adaptations to the PE lesson in advance. One TA described how she used an 'Action Man' figure to demonstrate body actions in gymnastics to a year 7 male student – a visual aid to understanding performance which was also in tune with the pupil's interests. TAs who demonstrate good or innovative practice could be deployed in a training role with other TAs in the same way that, in the lead schools, teachers are being asked to visit other schools to train staff: TAs in PE could do the same. Where the traditional model is to release teaching staff to undertake 'outreach' work, why not similarly fund the release of TAs? In part, this system in the context of a professional community of learning was explored in Keay and Lloyd's research (2008).

### **Recommendations for future research**

#### **1. The further study of other stakeholders: pupils, teachers, parents**

##### **a. The Child's Voice**

Further research into the pupil's own perception of their relationship with the TA (Lindsay, 2007) and the subsequent impact of the child's voice on, for example, policy decisions (Davis and Watson, 2001:685) and the desire to involve students in determining their own needs (Giangreco *et al.*, 2005) is called for in the literature and existing research. In PE in particular, disabled pupils and non-disabled pupils may construct their values of and meanings of PE differently. The idea that an adult constructs the meaning of PE for the child and therefore imposes a support model on that child may warrant consideration. Indeed, this holds with a truly emancipatory perspective mentioned earlier and is an important tool for schools. It was mentioned by Jenny in my initial interview:

*'Everyone seems to be flagging up the child's voice ...' and, 'Listening to the child's voice and developing autonomy is another angle that we have to work very hard on in our lead schools'*

KCC's strategy 'Positive About our Future' (2006-9) prioritises seeking and taking account of the child's voice, in common with emerging research methodologies which value pupil voice. The ESRC research revealed rich data in its study of over 300 disabled children. In particular it noted the *'absence of disabled voices within childhood research'* (2000:30). Reiter argued that part of the process of education for the disabled child should enable them to *'exercise their power, to be assertive ...'* (2008:xiii) and thereby take an active role in constructing and managing social processes.

#### **b. Researching the teachers' views and attitudes**

Although there have been a number of studies which investigate the perception of the TA's generic role, there is scope for further research within PE specifically. This could also include the training teachers receive to work

with other professionals in the classroom: the notion that teachers need more support in learning to work collaboratively. Workforce remodelling did not factor this into the changes and teachers remain untrained to work effectively with other adults; the discussion earlier about the insecurities within the PE profession as a result of policy change in recent years support this. Collins and Simco (2006) argued for further research as to whether workforce remodelling had made these roles clearer. This study shows that, in fact, the roles are less clear than they have ever been.

Furthermore, and in relation to the teachers' attitudes, there is value in the exploration of models of teaching such as a games-centred approach in terms of reconstructing the way in which the curriculum is delivered to reflect the experiences of learners rather than a hierarchical set of skills (Wright and Forrest, 2007). Vickerman, in considering differentiation in relation to a social model, noted the need to:

*'... change the activity or teaching and learning style to fit the child rather than the other way round'* (2003:unpaginated).

Moving away from a deficit model of inclusion might, as Rose suggests (2001), enable the development of teaching practices, learning styles and classroom 'structures' which could be said to be truly inclusive.

## **2. The deployment of a subject specific TA**

When some TAs were working in one subject department, there seemed to be fewer problems with role clarity and with the way in which other staff (teachers in particular) constructed and understood that role. Their professional status in the eyes of others was raised. This is, however, contentious in that it moves

the TA further towards an instructional model and is likely to be accompanied by training which merely reinforces this. Indeed, it could well serve to further add to the perceived distrust of PE teachers, reported earlier in this study, which characterizes the relationships between the 'old' professional and the other adults now employed in schools who support both pupils, teachers, and, in particular, the delivery of school sport and PE.

### **3. Researching the TA's role in PE in special schools**

Is there something tangible about the deployment and attributes of TAs in PE in special schools? Is their role any clearer in this environment? Is there a model or typology of TAs in PE from these settings, particularly, perhaps, where we are seeing special schools being successful in gaining Sports College Status? Further study and comparison of the roles between mainstream and special schools is worthy of research, although very little reference has been made here to the nature of support to pupils in special education settings.

### **4. The impact of the 2007 curriculum on the inclusion of disabled pupils**

The revised National Curriculum (2007) moves away from a skill-based, games-dominated model in theory with teaching *through* activity rather than the teaching *of* activity. This model, which, at the time of writing, schools are phasing in, may have implications for the inclusion of all pupils with disabilities. Research into the impact of these changes on the perception of inclusive practice in PE may inform initial teacher education, continuing

professional development and the responsibilities of those adults acting in a supportive role in the context of PE.

## Epilogue

Some forty-five years ago, Jefferson High School in the United States undertook an innovative (at the time) adapted PE programme for 48 'severely physically handicapped' (sic) pupils in this mainstream school and reported on the findings of their evaluation of it. One feature had been (if we view it through a 21<sup>st</sup> century lens) the real breadth and depth of the programme on offer, with flexibility to add activities freely. The study's author reiterated the role of the teacher in this process but reflected a more pupil-centred perspective – one which may have been lost in the current educational climate of rigorous testing, mass-professionalisation and increasing distance from the emotional context of teaching:

*'The teacher should know all about the student – his disability, his attitude towards it, his attitudes toward life in general, his hopes and fears. Only under these conditions is the teacher in a real position to help. The willingness to help must be fortified by the knowledge of how to help' (DeBell, 1973).*

Should we return to the era pre-political correctness and revive the humanistic element of teaching and assisting to teach in the context of PE? This study would suggest that we should, whilst recognizing the need for equality and linguistic sensitivity achieved by the disability scholars through the social model.

Inclusive education, it has been said,

*'... is not merely about placing disabled pupils in classrooms with their non-disabled peers; it is not about 'dumping' pupils into an unchanged system of provision and practice. Rather it is about how, where and why and with what consequences we educate all pupils' (Barton, 1997:234).*

Writing in politically sensitive times, Barton's language is emotive and challenges us in the way that many disability scholars of this period were wont

to do. In PE in this study, TAs were conscientious and hard working, brought a great deal to the job beyond subject knowledge albeit within vague boundaries and even more vague job descriptions, lack of appropriate training and minimal opportunities to collaborate with the PE teacher. Indeed, as much as pupils were deemed to have been 'dumped' in mainstream schools, so, I would argue, have TAs in PE in this study, who are indeed caught between a rock and a hard place.



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## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

AOTT	Adults other than teachers
AfPE	Association for Physical Education
BCODP	British Council of Disabled People
BAALPE	British Association of Advisers and Lecturers in Physical Education
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DES	Department of Education and Science
DFES	Department for Education and Skills
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
EBD	Emotional and Behavioural Disability
ECM	Every Child Matters
EDCM	Every Disabled Child Matters
ESRC	English Social Research Council
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
KCC	Kent County Council
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
MA	Model Answer
MLD	Moderate Learning Disability
NCPE	National Curriculum for Physical Education
NGB	National Governing Body (of sport)
PD	Physical Disability
PE	Physical Education
PESSCL	Physical Education and School Sport Club Links (Strategy)
PESSYP	Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People
SEN	Special Education(al) Needs
SENCo	Special Education(al) Needs Coordinator
SENDA	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act
TA	Teaching Assistant
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation

**Appendix 1a: The macro-construction of the generic TAs' roles and attributes from the research literature**

<b>Fox (1996)</b>	<b>Minondo <i>et al.</i> (2001)</b>	<b>Giangreco <i>et al.</i> (2002)</b>	<b>Giangreco <i>et al.</i> (2005)</b>	<b>Howard and Ford (2007)</b>	<b>Takala (2007)</b>
Promoting independence	Instructional support	Providing instruction	Clerical tasks	Direct instructional support	Assisting the pupil
Inspiring confidence and trust	School support	Life skills	Follow up instruction/tutoring	Adapting curriculum or materials	Assisting the teacher
Valuing the child	Liaison	Behaviour management	Supervision away from lessons	Behaviour management	Teaching individual or small groups
Fostering peer group acceptance	Personal support	Peer interaction	Personal care	Working with teachers	Nurturing
Encouraging and rewarding	One-to-one classroom support	Personal Care	Facilitating social skills	Working with pupils	Teaching whole class
Enabling the child		Clerical tasks	Positive behaviour support	Working with parents	Assisting the pupil
Knowing the background				Training	Discussions with teacher
Keeping confidences				Working as part of a team	Discussions with pupil
Working in partnership with teacher				Understanding disability	Supporting behaviour
Providing feedback about child's progress				Nurturing	Waiting, observing, listening
Target setting	<b>KEY: Coloured cells indicate correlation with TA roles from the literature; to be read in conjunction with Appendix 1b</b> <b>Roles and attributes which focus on the pupil</b> 			<b>Roles and attributes which focus on the instructional or pedagogic</b> 	
Record keeping					
Working as a team					
Knowing procedures					
Training					
Using personal strengths					

Appendix 1b: Typologies of the TA against themed roles and attributes from Appendix 1a

KEY	Skär and Tamm (2001)	Hemingsson <i>et al.</i> (2003)	Kerry (2005)	Kessler, Bach and Heron (2007)
Working in a 1-to-1 support role		Stand-in assistant	Specialist delineated paraprofessional	The co-producer
Carer, friend, mentor	Assistant as a mother/father; assistant as a friend		Carer; mentor; behaviour manager	
Teacher or instructor	Professional assistant; replaceable assistant		Curriculum supporter; delineated paraprofessional	The substitute; the apprentice
Collaborative practice	Professional assistant; ideal assistant	Help-teacher; back-up resource	Teacher support or partial substitute; mobile paraprofessional	
Clerical, administrative			Routine administrator	The relief
Other			Factotum; dogsbody or 'pot washer'	

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**Appendix 1c: Attributes of the TA from the literature and self-reported from this study**

<b>Fox (1996)</b>	<b>Downing <i>et al.</i> (2000)</b>	<b>Groom (2006)</b>	<b>Howard and Ford (2007)</b>	<b>TAs in PE in this study</b>
Patience	Patient		Patient	Patience
Caring	Caring		Nurturing	Caring
Sense of fairness	Firm	Non-judgemental	Tolerance	
Flexibility	Flexible		Flexible	Flexible, common sense
Versatility	Creative			Initiative
Positive attitude		Good role model		Positive attitude to subject
Friendly	Calm	Calm		
Hard to shock				
Sense of humour		Sense of humour		
Enthusiasm	Enthusiastic	Enthusiastic		Motivator
	Good communicator	Good communicator	Good communicator	
	Well-organised	Good listener		
		Understanding disability	Understanding disability	
			Maturity	
			Willingness to learn on the job	
			Working as part of a team	
			Empathy	
				Advocate
				Willingness to join in

## Appendix 2

### Matrix showing research question and techniques of enquiry

Subsidiary research questions	Techniques of enquiry					
	Literature review and review of discourses	Documentation	Survey questionnaire	Key informant interviews	Narrative interviews	Field notes
1. What is the macro-construction of the role of the TA in PE?	Question emerges from concerns in the literature regarding specific roles and attributes for the <i>generic</i> TA	DfES; government and KCC documentation; job descriptions; individual school policies	Pilot survey and final questionnaire	Informed by KCC interviews; interviews with other local gatekeepers	Narrative interviews with heads of PE, PE TAs and SENCos or equivalent	Researcher interprets observations and conversations
2. How do TAs construct and play out the various relational processes within the context of the PE workspace?	Question emerges from concerns in the literature regarding opportunities for collaborative practice		Pilot survey and final questionnaire	Interviews in schools with adults other than teachers + SENCo, Head teacher	Narrative interviews with heads of PE, PE TAs and SENCos or equivalent	Researcher interprets observations; reveals what these interactions are
3. How does the existing training for TAs confirm or deny an instructional role in PE?	Professionalising the role; the pre-requisite for a trained workforce; training materials	EFDS training package, other training; LLN or school-based	Pilot survey and final questionnaire	Informed by KCC interviews and conversations with training providers	Narrative interviews with heads of PE and PE TAs	Revealed from the analysis of training opportunities and the perception of their success by various stakeholders

### APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Job title

Length of time as a TA

Male/Female

Age group      16-20   21-30   31-40   41-50   50+      Don't wish to answer

RESEARCH QUESTION	Prompts or subsidiary questions
<p><i>Introductory questions: can you tell me what you think Physical Education means as a subject, what are the benefits for the pupil from taking part – all pupils and also PD pupils?</i></p> <p><i>Can you tell me what you think mainstreaming means – what are the advantages or disadvantages as far as you can see?</i></p>	<p>Has PE changed since you were at school? What sort of things did you do? What sort of PE did your own children have as far as you know?</p>
<p>What do TAs think their role is in supporting a PD child in a mainstream PE setting?</p>	<p>What do you do during the normal day – what sort of things are you responsible for with your pupil(s)? Do you only work in PE or across all subjects? How would you feel about working in one subject with more pupils rather than with one pupil across all subjects? What happens when you go the PE lesson with the pupil – what do you do, what don't you do, how do you feel when you are in this lesson?</p> <p>Are these any different when you are in PE – if so, is PE the only subject where you feel you have a slightly different role? Why do you think this is?</p> <p>What are some of the skills you think you need to be a good TA in this subject?</p>
<p>How do TAs construct or play out the various relational processes within the context of their workplace?</p> <p><b>and</b></p> <p>How do TAs and teachers perceive their interactions with each other and the pupils?</p>	<p>Do you attend meetings with subject teachers in PE or in any other subject? If you did, what difference would it make? Do you want or need to? How much discussion do you have with pupils about their learning? What might you add to your day to work collaboratively – would this help the pupil achieve more?</p>
<p>How does any existing training for TAs confirm or deny an instructional role?</p>	<p>What training have you had or is there any training planned for this academic year? What sort of training do you think would be helpful for you to be able to support the PD pupil in PE specifically?</p>



## Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet

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### Information Sheet

#### ***Research project into the role of the Teaching Assistant (TA) in mainstream school Physical Education (PE) in Kent.***

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##### **Profile**

I am a Senior Lecturer in PE and Sport and an Associate Teaching Fellow at the University of Greenwich where I am also completing a professional Doctorate in Education (EdD).

I have previously researched young people's experiences of PE in school both in a mainstream and special setting and am now looking at the role of the TA in supporting the physical education of a disabled child.

I worked for 9 years as Kent County Council's Sports Development Manager for Disabled People having originally trained as a specialist teacher of PE, holding posts in three Kent schools in both mainstream and special education. I also spent several years coaching elite disabled swimmers as coach to the GB Paralympic Team. I have delivered inclusive PE training for Kent teachers and TAs during my employment as a development officer and was a lead equity and disability trainer for both Sport England and national governing bodies of sport for many years.

As part of my teaching role at Greenwich I work with our undergraduates and PGCE Secondary trainee teachers on inclusive practice in PE and Sport.. My experiences and previous research would suggest that achieving successful inclusion for a physically disabled child in mainstream schools is, in part, mediated by the presence of a TA. Academics undertaking this research across Europe, the UK and the USA support this.

##### **Research**

With the support of KCC, and the approval of the University of Greenwich's research Degrees and Ethics Committees, I am researching the experiences of TAs in some Kent schools in the context of PE; their understanding of their role, their training and training needs, their interaction with teachers and their interaction with pupils. The 1<sup>st</sup> phase, a postal survey to all Kent mainstream schools with PD pupils, is now followed by conversations with TAs in a sample of the responding schools

##### **Anticipated outcomes**

Working closely with KCC, this data will help to gain greater understanding of the nature of the TA's role in a practical subject which may be of benefit to other practical subjects being supported in this way. The ability of the teacher and TA to work collaboratively will be studied and it is likely that future training needs for both professions may be identified. There may also be some insights into the motivation and career aspirations of this emerging profession.

This project is supervised by Bill Goddard and Dr Jill Jameson at the University of Greenwich who can be contacted for further information. The researcher has a CRB check and Enhanced Disclosure from the University of Greenwich.

## Appendix 5: Matrix of survey questions derived from the literature

### Theme 1 – The TA as an instructor/teacher

<p>1. As a TA, I make curricular or instructional decisions or adaptations to activities in PE without always having the permission of the class teacher</p> <p>2. I make many decisions on my own. For example, during a teacher-led lesson I am free to remove a disabled pupil from the lesson if I think it is not appropriate or change to a different activity without needing to interrupt the teacher to check that this is OK</p> <p>6. I provide most of the instruction that a disabled pupil receives in the PE lesson (as opposed to this coming from the teacher)</p> <p>16. I am asked to provide support to pupils in activity areas of the PE curriculum in which I feel under skilled, or uncomfortable</p> <p>19. I am regularly left in charge of groups of pupils in PE</p> <p>29. I make decisions on behalf of the pupil as to the appropriateness of the task the teacher has planned</p> <p>30. I work closely with the pupil to determine whether and how a task in PE can be achieved</p> <p>31. I mostly leave it to the pupil and his or her class mates to decide on the best way to undertake a skill or practice in PE</p>	<p>Blatchford <i>et al.</i> (2009)  Dunne and Goddard (2004)  Egilsson and Trausdottir (2009)  Giangreco and Broer (2005)  Hellison and Templin (1991)  Hemingsson <i>et al.</i> (2007)  Howes (2003)  Kessler (2007)  Macbeath <i>et al.</i> (2006) in Shah (2007)  Moyles and Suschitzky (1997)  Quicke (2003)  Reindal (2008)  Smith, Whitby &amp; Sharp (2004)  Warnock (2005)</p>
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### Theme 2 – The TA as a carer/friend

<p>4. Some pupils communicate to me that they don't need or want TA support at some stages of the lesson</p> <p>5. I have a social relationship with the disabled pupil I support in which they view me as a friend and advisor as well as a classroom support</p> <p>7. Disabled pupils spend most of their free time at schools (breaks, lunchtimes etc) with me or another TA</p> <p>10. I have as much or more communication with the parents of the disabled pupil as does the teacher</p> <p>13. I think my role is to support the pupil to become more independent and more mobile as well as taking care of their personal care needs</p> <p>20. I always supervise the disabled pupil at the beginning and end of every lesson with personal care such as changing</p> <p>27. Some pupils communicate to me that they don't want or need TA support at recreational times during the day (for instance, lunch, breaks etc)</p> <p>28. I am usually in very close proximity (e.g. never less than 2 metres away) to the disabled pupil I support for all or most of the PE lesson</p>	<p>Bennet, Rowe &amp; Deluca (1996)  Block (1999)  Farrell <i>et al.</i> (1999)  Giangreco and Broer (2005)  Howes (2003)  Lacey (2001)  Lloyd (2008)  Logan (2006)  Meyer (2001)  Monzo and Rueda (2001)  Neill (2002)  O'Brien and Garner (2001)  O'Connell (2005)  Reiter (2000)  Wilde (2008)</p>
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### Theme 3 – Inclusion/integrity

<p>8. When I work with a disabled pupil in PE we spend most of our time in separate activities, removed from the rest of the class or in another location</p> <p>17. When I am absent from school (e.g. because of illness) the result is a 'lost' day at school for my pupils with disabilities because other staff don't know what to do with them</p> <p>23. Lack of or inappropriate facilities or other external factors (such as the weather) sometimes prevent the disabled pupil taking a full part in the PE lesson</p>	<p>Ainscow <i>et al.</i> (2000)  DfES (2004)  Giangreco and Broer (2005)  Moran (2009)  Shah (2007)  Slee (2001)</p>
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### Theme 4 – The opportunity for collaboration

<p>3. At reporting or assessment times, the teacher involves me in feedback about the disabled pupil because they see me as knowing more about that pupil's ability, performance and progress</p> <p>9. The PE teachers that I work with spend an equal amount of time teaching the disabled pupil as they do the non-disabled pupil</p> <p>11. I have been provided with specific goals and targets for the disabled pupil I work with and know exactly what aspects of the curriculum the pupil is expected to learn</p> <p>14. I think my role is to support the teacher to deliver the PE curriculum so that the disabled pupil can interact with his/her peers as much as possible</p> <p>15. The PE teacher and I are a strong team, working together for the benefit of all pupils in the classroom</p> <p>18. Teachers spend time doing clerical tasks while I am left in charge of small or large groups of pupils, with and without disabilities in PE</p> <p>21. I am regularly involved in planning meetings with the class teacher about the curriculum goals of the lessons I am working in</p> <p>22. Teachers I work with think it is their role to plan for the inclusion of the disabled pupil in PE</p> <p>26. I am invited to regular meetings with the PE department, I attend and my input is valued</p>	<p>Bedford <i>et al.</i> (2008)  Collins and Simco (2006)  Farrell (2000)  Giangreco (1997)  Giangreco and Broer (2005)  Harjinen (2009)  Hemingsson <i>et al.</i> (2002)  Houlihan and Green (2006)  Moran and Abbott (2002)  Robertson (2000)  Sachs (2003)  Smith <i>et al.</i> (2004)  Thorburn (2005)</p>
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### Theme 5 - Training

<p>24. I have received enough training to equip me to work with a disabled pupil in PE</p> <p>25. My school provides regular training and meetings for all TAs to support their work across the school (and not just in PE)</p>	<p>Bubb and Earley in Bedford <i>et al.</i> (2008)  Dew-Hughes <i>et al.</i> (1998)  Giangreco and Broer (2005)  Groom (2006)  Quicke (2003)  Robertson (2000)</p>
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## APPENDIX 6

### SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

#### The role of the teaching assistant (TA) in Physical Education (PE)

*This questionnaire is for completion by TAs or HLTAs who support a physically disabled pupil in PE*

This questionnaire forms part of a research project into the perception the TA/HLTA has for their role in supporting a physically disabled child in mainstream PE. We hope that the results of this research will give teachers and others a better idea of the actual as opposed to the perceived role of this emerging profession and therefore inform the development of appropriate training and working conditions. It is being sent to all secondary mainstream schools in Kent identified by KCC as having one or more physically disabled pupils receiving additional support.

This questionnaire was piloted for understanding earlier this year and, as a result, we expect it will take no more than 20 minutes to complete.

All responses are anonymous although a code number which appears on the front of the questionnaire will enable us to identify a location. However, neither personal details nor details of the school you work in will be identifiable in the final research report. Responses will be destroyed once they have been analysed and kept no later than December 2010. Any personal data relating to age, previous occupation etc which is collected during the course of the research project will be used for academic research and statistical analysis. It will be held securely according to the principles of the Data Protection Act (1998).

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at the University of Greenwich.

Jackie Farr  
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Tel.:0208 331 9221

What is your job title? .....

Does your school or do you refer to your role in any other way?

.....

*During this questionnaire, the term 'TA' is used throughout*

Male/Female                  Age group:    16-20  
     21-30  
     31-40  
     41-50  
     50+

<b>It is helpful if you can provide some personal details which are used for analysis only and relate to the findings in studies conducted by other researchers:</b>	
Do you have any children under 18?	
Which stage of education are these children at?	<i>Please tick</i>
Pre-school	<input type="radio"/>
Primary	<input type="radio"/>
Secondary/FE	<input type="radio"/>
How long have you been working as a TA?	
Do you work full or part-time?	
If you have been employed elsewhere, or had other responsibilities before becoming a TA, what type of employment was this? (Note that 'homemaker' is a valid response)	
What is your own level of education?	<i>Please tick</i>
• Levels/GCSEs	<input type="radio"/>
• A Levels or equivalent	<input type="radio"/>
• University degree	<input type="radio"/>
• Postgraduate qualification	<input type="radio"/>
• Other professional qualifications	<input type="radio"/>
Do you currently hold any specific qualifications in sport or PE such as coaching awards etc?	Yes/No

<b>SOME GENERAL QUESTIONS</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Additional information</b>
i) I have personal experiences of disability through my family and friends			
ii) The role of the TA in my school is exactly as I'd expected it to be			
iii) I am happy with my workload as a TA			
iv) I work with one pupil across all aspects of the curriculum			
v) I work with small groups of pupils across all subjects			
vi) I work in specific departments in the school (e.g. PE. Technology etc)			
vii) I am considering training as a teacher at some point in my career <i>or</i> I am currently training to be a teacher			

<b>SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR ROLE AS A TA IN PE</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Additional information</b>
1. As a TA, I make curricular or instructional decisions or adaptations to activities in PE without always having the permission of the class teacher			
2. I make many decisions on my own. For example, during a teacher-led lesson I am free to remove a disabled pupil from the lesson if I think it is not appropriate or change to a different activity without needing to interrupt the teacher to check that this is OK			
3. At reporting or assessment times, the teacher involves me in feedback about the disabled pupil because they see me as knowing more about that pupil's ability, performance and progress			
4. Some pupils communicate to me that they don't need or want TA support at some stages of the lesson			
5. I have a social relationship with the disabled pupil I support in which they view me as a friend and advisor as well as a classroom support			
6. I provide most of the instruction that a disabled pupil receives in the PE lesson (as opposed to this coming from the teacher)			
7. Disabled pupils spend most of their free time at schools (breaks, lunchtimes etc) with me or another TA			
8. When I work with a disabled pupil in PE we spend most of our time in separate activities, removed from the rest of the class or in another location			
9. The PE teachers that I work with spend an equal amount of time teaching the disabled pupil as they do the non-disabled pupil			
10. I have as much or more communication with the parents of the disabled pupil as does the teacher			

	Yes	No	Additional information
11. I have been provided with specific goals and targets for the disabled pupil I work with and know exactly what aspects of the curriculum the pupil is expected to learn			
12. I sometimes feel that I am more knowledgeable about the pupil's specific learning needs than the teacher			
13. I think my role is to support the pupil to become more independent and more mobile as well as taking care of their personal care needs			
14. I think my role is to support the teacher to deliver the PE curriculum so that the disabled pupil can interact with his/her peers as much as possible			
15. The PE teacher and I are a strong team, working together for the benefit of all pupils in the classroom			
16. I am asked to provide support to pupils in activity areas of the PE curriculum in which I feel under skilled, or uncomfortable			
17. When I am absent from school (e.g. because of illness) the result is a 'lost' day at school for my pupils with disabilities because other staff don't know what to do with them			
18. Teachers spend time doing clerical tasks while I am left in charge of small or large groups of pupils, with and without disabilities in PE			
19. I am regularly left in charge of groups of pupils in PE			
20. I always supervise the disabled pupil at the beginning and end of every lesson with personal care such as changing			
21. I am regularly involved in planning meetings with the class teacher about the curriculum goals of the lessons I am working in			
22. Teachers I work with think it is their role to plan for the inclusion of the disabled pupil in PE			

	Yes	No	Additional information
23. Lack of or inappropriate facilities or other external factors (such as the weather) sometimes prevent the disabled pupil taking a full part in the PE lesson			
24. I have received enough training to equip me to work with a disabled pupil in PE			
25. My school provides regular training and meetings for all TAs to support their work across the school (and not just in PE)			
26. I am invited to regular meetings with the PE department, I attend and my input is valued			
27. Some pupils communicate to me that they don't want or need TA support at recreational times during the day (for instance, lunch, breaks etc)			
28. I am usually in very close proximity (e.g. never less than 2 metres away) to the disabled pupil I support for all or most of the PE lesson			
29. I make decisions on behalf of the pupil as to the appropriateness of the task the teacher has planned			
30. I work closely with the pupil to determine whether and how a task in PE can be achieved			
31. I mostly leave it to the pupil and his or her class mates to decide on the best way to undertake a skill or practice in PE			

Reference: Giangreco, M.F. and Broer, S.M. (2005) *Questionable utilisation of Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Schools: are we addressing symptoms or causes?* Focus on Autism and other developmental disabilities. Vol. 20, No. 1 pp10-26



## APPENDIX 7a CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS OF SURVEY

	AGREE	DISAGREE	GENDER	AGE	CHILDREN U18	YRS AS A TA	LEVEL OF ED	PE/SPORT TRAINING
i) I have personal experiences of disability through my family and friends	41.7% n=15	58.3% n=21	$\chi^2 = 2.047$ $df = 1$ $p = .151$	$\chi^2 = 8.500$ $df = 3$ $p = .037$	$\chi^2 = 5.129$ $df = 1$ $p = .024$	$\chi^2 = 7.034$ $df = 1$ $p = .008$	$\chi^2 = 5.986$ $df = 3$ $p = .112$	$\chi^2 = .842$ $df = 1$ $p = .359$
ii) The role of the TA in my school is exactly as I'd expected it to be	85.7% n=30	14.3% n=5	$\chi^2 = .423$ $df = 1$ $p = .515$	$\chi^2 = 6.076$ $df = 3$ $p = .108$	$\chi^2 = .327$ $df = 1$ $p = .249$	$\chi^2 = .077$ $df = 1$ $p = .782$	$\chi^2 = .793$ $df = 3$ $p = .851$	$\chi^2 = .972$ $df = 1$ $p = .324$
iii) I am happy with my workload as a TA	94.4% n=34	5.6% n=2	$\chi^2 = .265$ $df = 1$ $p = .607$	$\chi^2 = 2.071$ $df = 3$ $p = .558$	$\chi^2 = .010$ $df = 1$ $p = .922$	$\chi^2 = .007$ $df = 1$ $p = .935$	$\chi^2 = .0869$ $df = 3$ $p = .833$	$\chi^2 = .193$ $df = 1$ $p = .661$
iv) I work with one pupil across all aspects of the curriculum	36.1% n=13	63.9% n=23	$\chi^2 = .241$ $df = 1$ $p = .624$	$\chi^2 = 5.742$ $df = 3$ $p = .125$	$\chi^2 = 2.010$ $df = 1$ $p = .156$	$\chi^2 = 2.210$ $df = 1$ $p = .137$	$\chi^2 = 1.613$ $df = 3$ $p = .656$	$\chi^2 = 1.850$ $df = 1$ $p = .174$
v) I work with small groups of pupils across all subjects	40% n=14	60% n=21	$\chi^2 = 2.305$ $df = 1$ $p = .129$	$\chi^2 = 9.306$ $df = 3$ $p = .025$	$\chi^2 = 2.773$ $df = 1$ $p = .096$	$\chi^2 = 5.546$ $df = 1$ $p = .019$	$\chi^2 = 2.173$ $df = 3$ $p = .537$	$\chi^2 = .972$ $df = 1$ $p = .324$
vi) I work in specific departments in the school (e.g. PE. Technology etc)	36.1% n=13	63.9% n=23	$\chi^2 = .376$ $df = 1$ $p = .540$	$\chi^2 = 4.551$ $df = 3$ $p = .208$	$\chi^2 = .067$ $df = 1$ $p = .796$	$\chi^2 = .358$ $df = 1$ $p = .549$	$\chi^2 = 3.709$ $df = 3$ $p = .295$	$\chi^2 = .011$ $df = 1$ $p = .917$
vii) I am considering training as a teacher at some point in my career or I am currently training to be a teacher	19.4% n=7	80.6% n=29	$\chi^2 = 8.867$ $df = 1$ $p = .003$	$\chi^2 = 8.525$ $df = 3$ $p = .036$	$\chi^2 = 2.712$ $df = 1$ $p = .100$	$\chi^2 = .066$ $df = 1$ $p = .797$	$\chi^2 = 8.189$ $df = 3$ $p = .032$	$\chi^2 = 13.558$ $df = 1$ $p = .000$
1. As a TA, I make curricular or instructional decisions or adaptations to activities in PE without always having the permission of the class teacher	57.1% n=20	42.9% n=14	$\chi^2 = .010$ $df = 1$ $p = .922$	$\chi^2 = .267$ $df = 3$ $p = .966$	$\chi^2 = .909$ $df = 1$ $p = .340$	$\chi^2 = .010$ $df = 1$ $p = .922$	$\chi^2 = 3.476$ $df = 3$ $p = .324$	$\chi^2 = .760$ $df = 1$ $p = .383$
2. I make many decisions on my own. For example, during a teacher-led lesson I am free to remove a disabled pupil from the lesson if I think it is not appropriate or change to a different activity without needing to interrupt the teacher to check that this is OK	69.4% n=25	30.6% n=10	$\chi^2 = 2.529$ $df = 1$ $p = .112$	$\chi^2 = 1.237$ $df = 3$ $p = 7.44$	$\chi^2 = .408$ $df = 1$ $p = .523$	$\chi^2 = 2.529$ $df = 1$ $p = .112$	$\chi^2 = .431$ $df = 3$ $p = .934$	$\chi^2 = 2.011$ $df = 1$ $p = .156$
3. At reporting or assessment times, the teacher involves me in feedback about the disabled pupil because they see me as knowing more about that pupil's ability, performance and progress	71.4% n=25	28.6% n=10	$\chi^2 = .184$ $df = 1$ $p = .668$	$\chi^2 = .875$ $df = 3$ $p = .831$	$\chi^2 = .077$ $df = 1$ $p = .782$	$\chi^2 = .184$ $df = 1$ $p = .668$	$\chi^2 = 2.720$ $df = 3$ $p = .430$	$\chi^2 = .036$ $df = 1$ $p = .849$
4. Some pupils communicate to me that they don't need or want TA support at some stages of the lesson	61.8% n=21	38.2% n=13	$\chi^2 = 1.521$ $df = 1$ $p = .217$	$\chi^2 = .654$ $df = 3$ $p = .884$	$\chi^2 = .144$ $df = 1$ $p = .705$	$\chi^2 = 1.521$ $df = 1$ $p = .217$	$\chi^2 = 4.636$ $df = 3$ $p = .200$	$\chi^2 = 1.126$ $df = 1$ $p = .289$

	AGREE	DISAGREE	GENDER	AGE	CHILDREN U18	YRS AS A TA	LEVEL OF ED	PE/SPORT TRAINING
5. I have a social relationship with the disabled pupil I support in which they view me as a friend and advisor as well as a classroom support	94.4% n=34	5.6% n=2	$\chi^2 = 1.895$ $df = 1$ $p = .169$	$\chi^2 = 1.731$ $df = 3$ $p = .630$	$\chi^2 = .010$ $df = 1$ $p = .922$	$\chi^2 = 1.895$ $df = 1$ $p = .169$	$\chi^2 = .869$ $df = 3$ $p = .833$	$\chi^2 = .193$ $df = 1$ $p = .661$
6. I provide most of the instruction that a disabled pupil receives in the PE lesson (as opposed to this coming from the teacher)	44.1% n=15	55.9% n=19	$\chi^2 = .002$ $df = 1$ $p = .968$	$\chi^2 = 3.684$ $df = 3$ $p = .298$	$\chi^2 = .480$ $df = 1$ $p = .488$	$\chi^2 = .002$ $df = 1$ $p = .968$	$\chi^2 = 1.717$ $df = 3$ $p = .633$	$\chi^2 = 2.598$ $df = 1$ $p = .107$
7. Disabled pupils spend most of their free time at schools (breaks, lunchtimes etc) with me or another TA	61.1% n=22	38.88% n=14	$\chi^2 = .071$ $df = 1$ $p = .790$	$\chi^2 = 3.297$ $df = 3$ $p = .348$	$\chi^2 = .153$ $df = 1$ $p = .696$	$\chi^2 = .071$ $df = 1$ $p = .790$	$\chi^2 = 1.991$ $df = 3$ $p = .574$	$\chi^2 = .043$ $df = 1$ $p = .837$
8. When I work with a disabled pupil in PE we spend most of our time in separate activities, removed from the rest of the class or in another location	58.3% n=21	41.7% n=15	$\chi^2 = .538$ $df = 1$ $p = .463$	$\chi^2 = .887$ $df = 3$ $p = .828$	$\chi^2 = .201$ $df = 1$ $p = .654$	$\chi^2 = .538$ $df = 1$ $p = .463$	$\chi^2 = 3.542$ $df = 3$ $p = .315$	$\chi^2 = .842$ $df = 1$ $p = .359$
9. The PE teachers that I work with spend an equal amount of time teaching the disabled pupil as they do the non-disabled pupil	45.7% n=16	54.3% n=19	$\chi^2 = .274$ $df = 1$ $p = .600$	$\chi^2 = 2.381$ $df = 3$ $p = .497$	$\chi^2 = .153$ $df = 1$ $p = .696$	$\chi^2 = .274$ $df = 1$ $p = .600$	$\chi^2 = .469$ $df = 3$ $p = .926$	$\chi^2 = .580$ $df = 1$ $p = .446$
10. I have as much or more communication with the parents of the disabled pupil as does the teacher	44.4% n=16	55.6% n=20	$\chi^2 = 2.697$ $df = 1$ $p = .101$	$\chi^2 = 10.176$ $df = 3$ $p = .017$	$\chi^2 = 3.772$ $df = 1$ $p = .052$	$\chi^2 = 2.967$ $df = 1$ $p = .101$	$\chi^2 = 5.850$ $df = 3$ $p = .119$	$\chi^2 = .164$ $df = 1$ $p = .686$
11. I have been provided with specific goals and targets for the disabled pupil I work with and know exactly what aspects of the curriculum the pupil is expected to learn	55.6% n=19	44.44% n=16	$\chi^2 = .089$ $df = 1$ $p = .765$	$\chi^2 = 7.138$ $df = 3$ $p = .068$	$\chi^2 = .475$ $df = 1$ $p = .491$	$\chi^2 = .089$ $df = 1$ $p = .765$	$\chi^2 = 3.771$ $df = 3$ $p = .287$	$\chi^2 = .655$ $df = 1$ $p = .418$
12. I sometimes feel that I am more knowledgeable about the pupil's specific learning needs than the teacher	80.6% n=29	19.4% n=7	$\chi^2 = .066$ $df = 1$ $p = .797$	$\chi^2 = 3.158$ $df = 3$ $p = .368$	$\chi^2 = 4.051$ $df = 1$ $p = .044$	$\chi^2 = .066$ $df = 1$ $p = .797$	$\chi^2 = 3.194$ $df = 3$ $p = .363$	$\chi^2 = .790$ $df = 1$ $p = .374$
13. I think my role is to support the pupil to become more independent and more mobile as well as taking care of their personal care needs	97.2% n=35	2.8% n=1	$\chi^2 = .920$ $df = 1$ $p = .337$	$\chi^2 = 1.820$ $df = 3$ $p = .611$	$\chi^2 = 1.182$ $df = 1$ $p = .277$	$\chi^2 = .920$ $df = 1$ $p = .337$	$\chi^2 = 2.974$ $df = 3$ $p = .396$	$\chi^2 = .094$ $df = 1$ $p = .760$
14. I think my role is to support the teacher to deliver the PE curriculum so that the disabled pupil can interact with his/her peers as much as possible	91.7% n=33	8.3% n=3	$\chi^2 = .253$ $df = 1$ $p = .615$	$\chi^2 = 2.392$ $df = 3$ $p = .495$	$\chi^2 = 2.449$ $df = 1$ $p = .118$	$\chi^2 = .253$ $df = 1$ $p = .615$	$\chi^2 = 1.591$ $df = 3$ $p = .661$	$\chi^2 = .298$ $df = 1$ $p = .585$
15. The PE teacher and I are a strong team, working together for the benefit of all pupils in the classroom	66.7% n=24	30.6% n=11	$\chi^2 = .000$ $df = 1$ $p = .983$	$\chi^2 = 1.911$ $df = 3$ $p = .591$	$\chi^2 = .120$ $df = 1$ $p = .730$	$\chi^2 = .000$ $df = 1$ $p = .983$	$\chi^2 = 2.804$ $df = 3$ $p = .423$	$\chi^2 = .006$ $df = 1$ $p = .941$
16. I am asked to provide support to pupils in activity areas of the PE curriculum in which I feel under skilled, or uncomfortable	20.6% n=7	79.4% n=27	$\chi^2 = .062$ $df = 1$ $p = .803$	$\chi^2 = 3.944$ $df = 3$ $p = .268$	$\chi^2 = .039$ $df = 1$ $p = .843$	$\chi^2 = .062$ $df = 1$ $p = .803$	$\chi^2 = 1.388$ $df = 3$ $p = .708$	$\chi^2 = .853$ $df = 1$ $p = .356$
17. When I am absent from school (e.g. because of illness) the result is a 'lost' day at school for my pupils with disabilities because other staff don't know what to do with them	8.6% n=3	91.4% n=32	$\chi^2 = .203$ $df = 1$ $p = .653$	$\chi^2 = .890$ $df = 3$ $p = .828$	$\chi^2 = .003$ $df = 1$ $p = .960$	$\chi^2 = .203$ $df = 1$ $p = .653$	$\chi^2 = 3.339$ $df = 3$ $p = .342$	$\chi^2 = .308$ $df = 1$ $p = .579$

	AGREE	DISAGREE	GENDER	AGE	CHILDREN U18	YRS AS A TA	LEVEL OF ED	PE/SPORT TRAINING
18. Teachers spend time doing clerical tasks while I am left in charge of small or large groups of pupils, with and without disabilities in PE	5.7% n=2	94.3% n=33	$\chi^2 = .016$ df = 1 p = .900	$\chi^2 = 3.292$ df = 3 p = .349	$\chi^2 = .967$ df = 1 p = .326	$\chi^2 = .016$ df = 1 p = .900	$\chi^2 = 1.678$ df = 3 p = .642	$\chi^2 = .199$ df = 1 p = .656
19. I am regularly left in charge of groups of pupils in PE	13.9% n=5	86.1% n=31	$\chi^2 = 1.726$ df = 1 p = .189	$\chi^2 = 5.288$ df = 3 p = .152	$\chi^2 = .107$ df = 1 p = .743	$\chi^2 = 1.726$ df = 1 p = .189	$\chi^2 = 4.874$ df = 3 p = .181	$\chi^2 = 7.622$ df = 1 p = .006
20. I always supervise the disabled pupil at the beginning and end of every lesson with personal care such as changing	52.9% n=18	47.1% n=16	$\chi^2 = 3.032$ df = 1 p = .082	$\chi^2 = 7.630$ df = 3 p = .054	$\chi^2 = .909$ df = 1 p = .340	$\chi^2 = 3.032$ df = 1 p = .082	$\chi^2 = 7.102$ df = 3 p = .069	$\chi^2 = 3.702$ df = 1 p = .054
21. I am regularly involved in planning meetings with the class teacher about the curriculum goals of the lessons I am working in	14.3% n=5	85.7% n=30	$\chi^2 = .305$ df = 1 p = .581	$\chi^2 = 1.649$ df = 3 p = .648	$\chi^2 = 4.038$ df = 1 p = .044	$\chi^2 = .305$ df = 1 p = .581	$\chi^2 = 4.080$ df = 3 p = .253	$\chi^2 = .547$ df = 1 p = .460
22. Teachers I work with think it is their role to plan for the inclusion of the disabled pupil in PE	60.6% n=20	39.4% n=13	$\chi^2 = .609$ df = 1 p = .435	$\chi^2 = 1.272$ df = 3 p = .736	$\chi^2 = .007$ df = 1 p = .934	$\chi^2 = .609$ df = 1 p = .435	$\chi^2 = 4.267$ df = 3 p = .234	$\chi^2 = .051$ df = 1 p = .822
23. Lack of or inappropriate facilities or other external factors (such as the weather) sometimes prevent the disabled pupil taking a full part in the PE lesson	54.3% n=19	45.7% n=16	$\chi^2 = .218$ df = 1 p = .640	$\chi^2 = 1.446$ df = 3 p = .695	$\chi^2 = 4.441$ df = 1 p = .035	$\chi^2 = .218$ df = 1 p = .640	$\chi^2 = 5.927$ df = 3 p = .115	$\chi^2 = 3.896$ df = 1 p = .048
24. I have received enough training to equip me to work with a disabled pupil in PE	45.7% n=16	54.3% n=19	$\chi^2 = 1.318$ df = 1 p = .251	$\chi^2 = .826$ df = 3 p = .843	$\chi^2 = .909$ df = 1 p = .340	$\chi^2 = 1.318$ df = 1 p = .251	$\chi^2 = 3.057$ df = 3 p = .383	$\chi^2 = 3.896$ df = 1 p = .048
25. My school provides regular training and meetings for all TAs to support their work across the school (and not just in PE)	67.6% n=23	32.4% n=11	$\chi^2 = .017$ df = 1 p = .897	$\chi^2 = .1445$ df = 3 p = .695	$\chi^2 = .277$ df = 1 p = .599	$\chi^2 = .017$ df = 1 p = .897	$\chi^2 = 2.625$ df = 3 p = .453	$\chi^2 = .001$ df = 1 p = .970
26. I am invited to regular meetings with the PE department, I attend and my input is valued	9.1% n=3	90.9% n=30	$\chi^2 = .112$ df = 1 p = .738	$\chi^2 = 3.681$ df = 3 p = .298	$\chi^2 = .464$ df = 1 p = .496	$\chi^2 = .112$ df = 1 p = .738	$\chi^2 = 2.575$ df = 3 p = .462	$\chi^2 = 2.347$ df = 1 p = .126
27. Some pupils communicate to me that they don't want or need TA support at recreational times during the day (for instance, lunch, breaks etc)	47.1% n=16	52.9% n=18	$\chi^2 = .002$ df = 1 p = .968	$\chi^2 = 1.387$ df = 3 p = .709	$\chi^2 = .000$ df = 1 p = 1.000	$\chi^2 = .002$ df = 1 p = .968	$\chi^2 = 3.086$ df = 3 p = .379	$\chi^2 = .249$ df = 1 p = .618
28. I am usually in very close proximity (e.g. never less than 2 metres away) to the disabled pupil I support for all or most of the PE lesson	63.6% n=21	36.4% n=12	$\chi^2 = 2.344$ df = 1 p = .126	$\chi^2 = 3.434$ df = 3 p = .329	$\chi^2 = .938$ df = 1 p = .333	$\chi^2 = 2.344$ df = 1 p = .126	$\chi^2 = 1.556$ df = 3 p = .669	$\chi^2 = 5.775$ df = 1 p = .016
29. I make decisions on behalf of the pupil as to the appropriateness of the task the teacher has planned	54.8% n=17	45.2% n=14	$\chi^2 = .682$ df = 1 p = .409	$\chi^2 = 1.005$ df = 3 p = .800	$\chi^2 = .004$ df = 1 p = .951	$\chi^2 = .682$ df = 1 p = .409	$\chi^2 = 2.851$ df = 3 p = .415	$\chi^2 = .620$ df = 1 p = .431
30. I work closely with the pupil to determine whether and how a task in PE can be achieved	88.2% n=30	11.8% n=4	$\chi^2 = .672$ df = 1 p = .412	$\chi^2 = 3.247$ df = 3 p = .355	$\chi^2 = .000$ df = 1 p = 1.000	$\chi^2 = .672$ df = 1 p = .412	$\chi^2 = .733$ df = 3 p = .865	$\chi^2 = .439$ df = 1 p = .508
31. I mostly leave it to the pupil and his or her class mates to decide on the best way to undertake a skill or practice in PE	42.4% n=14	57.6% n=19	$\chi^2 = .066$ df = 1 p = .797	$\chi^2 = .284$ df = 3 p = .963	$\chi^2 = .022$ df = 1 p = .883	$\chi^2 = .066$ df = 1 p = .797	$\chi^2 = 2.765$ df = 3 p = .429	$\chi^2 = .112$ df = 1 p = .738

## **APPENDIX 7b Summary of findings of a Chi-square analysis of the survey questionnaire**

- Qi I have personal experiences of disability through my family and friends**  
The data for Qi show that 58.3% of respondents did not have personal experience of disability. Following a chi-square analysis it was found that older TAs ( $\chi^2=8.500$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.037$ ) were more likely to have this experience as were those who had been in post for more than 12 years ( $\chi^2=7.034$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.008$ ) and those with younger children ( $\chi^2=5.129$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.024$ ). Specifically, entrants to the profession post-2003 were much less likely to bring personal experience with them ( $p=.026$ ).
- Qv I work with small groups of pupils across all subjects**  
Through a chi-square analysis, the age of the TA ( $\chi^2=9.306$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.025$ ) and the number of years experience they had ( $\chi^2=5.546$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.019$ ) was a significant factor in determining whether they were employed in a 1-to-1 role or with small groups. Thus a trend towards changed working practices seems evident since 2003 and was observed through this test.
- Qvii I am considering training as a teacher at some point in my career or I am currently training to be a teacher**  
A chi-square analysis of Qvii showed a statistical significance in responses related to gender ( $\chi^2=8.867$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.003$ ), age ( $\chi^2=8.525$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.036$ ), level of education ( $\chi^2=8.189$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.032$ ) and the amount of PE-specific training the TA had received ( $\chi^2=13.558$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Descriptive statistics confirmed that generally, 80.6% of TAs did not intend to train as teachers. The issue of educational qualification may arise because, in order to enter the teaching profession, further qualifications would need to be gained prior to embarking on a degree with perhaps time and other commitments dictating the ability to do this.
- Q3 At reporting or assessment times the teacher involves me in feedback about the disabled pupil because they see me as knowing more about the pupil's ability, performance and progress**  
A chi-square analysis showed no statistical differences between respondent variables to Q3. However, in looking at the descriptive statistics, we see that 71.4% ( $n=25$ ) of respondents were not involved in formative or summative assessment through feedback.
- Q5 I have a social relationship with the disabled pupil I support in which they view me as a friend and advisor as well as a classroom support**  
A chi-square analysis showed no statistical differences between respondent variables to Q5. However, in looking at the descriptive statistics, we see that 94.4% ( $n=34$ ) of respondents agreed that they had a friendship-based or informal relationship with the pupil.
- Q10 I have as much or more communication with the parents of the disabled pupil as does the teacher**  
A chi-square analysis showed a statistical significance in responses by TAs who were older ( $\chi^2=10.176$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.017$ ) and those with younger children ( $\chi^2=3.772$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.052$ ).
- Q12 I sometimes feel that I am more knowledgeable about the pupil's specific learning needs than the teacher**  
A chi-square analysis showed no statistical differences between respondent variables to Q12. However, in looking at the descriptive statistics, we see that 80.6% ( $n=29$ ) of respondents agreed that they sometimes felt more knowledgeable in respect of specific learning needs.

- Q13 I think my role is to support the pupil to become more independent and more mobile as well as taking care of their personal care needs**  
A chi-square analysis showed no statistical differences between respondent variables to Q13. However, in looking at the descriptive statistics, we see that 97.2% (n=35) of respondents felt they adopted a role which was emancipatory and supported independence and autonomy alongside a caring/medical/welfare role.
- Q14 I think my role is to support the teacher to deliver the PE curriculum so that the disabled pupil can interact with his/her peers as much as possible**  
A chi-square analysis showed no statistical differences between respondent variables to Q14. However, in looking at the descriptive statistics, we see that 91.7% (n=33) of respondents thought their role was to work alongside the PE teacher to achieve integration
- Q16 I am asked to provide support to pupils in activity areas of the PE curriculum in which I feel under-skilled or uncomfortable**  
A chi-square analysis showed no statistical differences between respondent variables to Q16. However, in looking at the descriptive statistics, we see that 79.4% (n=27) of respondents were not in situations in which they felt unprepared.
- Q17 When I am absent from school ... the result is a 'lost' day for my pupils with disabilities because other staff don't know what to do with them**  
Whilst a chi-square analysis showed no statistical differences between respondent variables to Q17, in looking at the descriptive statistics, we see that 91.4% (n=32) of respondents did not consider that pupils were disenfranchised through particular staff absence.
- Q18 Teachers spend time doing clerical tasks while I am left in charge of small or large groups of pupils with and without disabilities in PE**  
A chi-square analysis showed no statistical differences between respondent variables to Q18. However, in looking at the descriptive statistics, we see that 94.4% (n=33) of respondents were not left in charge of pupils where teachers left to undertake administrative tasks.
- Q19 I am regularly left in charge of groups of pupils in PE**  
Whilst a chi-square analysis of this item revealed a significant response related to whether or not the TA had specific PE or sport-related training ( $p=.006$ ), the low cell count for this variable ( $n<5$ ) renders this questionable. However, descriptive statistics revealed that 86.1% (n=31) of TAs were not left in charge in PE.
- Q20 I always supervise the disabled pupil at the beginning and end of every lesson with personal care such as changing**  
A chi-square analysis showed no statistical differences between respondent variables to Q20 although there was a trend towards older TAs adopting this role ( $\chi^2=7.630$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.054$ ). Descriptive statistics revealed that 52.9% of TAs overall tended to supervise the changing process.
- Q21 I am regularly involved in planning meetings with the class teacher about the curriculum goals of the lessons I am working in**  
A chi-square analysis revealed that some TAs, particularly those with younger families themselves ( $\chi^2=4.038$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.044$ ), were involved in planning prior to the lesson. However, descriptive statistics showed that 85.7% (n=30) were not afforded this role.
- Q23 Lack of or inappropriate facilities or other external factors (such as weather) sometimes prevent the disabled pupil taking a full part in the PE lesson**  
TAs with younger families tended to agree that this happened on occasions ( $\chi^2=4.441$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.035$ ) with descriptive statistics revealing an overall balance in agree/disagree responses.

**Q26 I am invited to regular meetings with the PE department, I attend and my input is valued**

A chi-square analysis showed no statistical differences between respondent variables to Q26. However, in looking at the descriptive statistics, we see that 90.9% (n=30) of respondents were not involved in this level of collaboration.

**Q30 I work closely with the pupil to determine whether and how a task in PE can be achieved**

A chi-square analysis showed no statistical differences between respondent variables to Q30. However, in looking at the descriptive statistics, we see that 88.2% (n=30) of respondents had a close relationship with the pupil which related specifically to achieving learning outcomes during the course of the lesson.

## APPENDIX 8

The latest review of mainstream provision (Kent County Council, 2008) has led to the concept of assigning 'lead' schools in both the primary and secondary sector which would serve a maximum of about 4 clusters of schools in any one geographical area of the county. The 1<sup>st</sup> phase (or pilot scheme) will run from September 2008-9 and serve 3 areas, NWKent (Gravesham, Dartford and Swanley North), Ashford and Shepway (Dover, Deal and Sandwich).

Figures published in February 2008 note the range of disability by primary and secondary phase, and the geographical spread of all children in mainstream schools with a statement of special educational need.

Figure 1

'Need type'	South Kent	Central	North	East	Mid	West
ASD	28	37	19	12	14	36
SLCN	17	32	53	23	20	21
SpLD	29	21	42	23	21	22
HI	8	10	2	7	5	5
VI	3	6	4	8	3	2
PD	17	16	14	19	11	12

Figure 2

'Need type'	Total for all Kent schools
ASD	146
SLCN	166
SpLD	158
HI	37
VI	26
PD	88

Figure 3

'Need Type'	Total for all Kent schools
HI and VI combined	63
PD	88

### KEY:

ASD Autistic Spectrum Disorder  
 SLCN Speech, Language and Communication  
 SpLD Specific learning Difficulties  
 HI Hearing Impairment  
 VI Visual Impairment  
 PD Physical Disability

Source: KCC Standards and Attainment Division, KCC Advisory team.