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Teaching Assistant or Teacher's Assistant: How do teachers view their role as manager of other adults within the classroom?
Louise French

Abstract

A rapid increase in the employment of teaching assistants in England has resulted in teachers being thrust into the role of manager of other adults in the classroom. Teaching assistants have the capacity to be one of the most valuable classroom resources available to teachers but ineffective deployment can negatively impact upon teaching and learning. For teaching assistants to be deployed effectively, teachers must feel confident in their role as manager. This small-scale study provides an indication of how thirty teachers in the East Lindsey district of Lincolnshire view their role as manager of other adults in the classroom. Questionnaires were personally distributed to and collected from sixteen schools. Teachers were asked to complete Likert-scale responses to statements regarding working with teaching assistants and given opportunity to explain or expand on their responses; this pragmatic approach allowed for quantitative data to be used to identify trends, with qualitative data to construct meaning from evidence. The findings suggest that teachers view the personality of teaching assistants and the development of a strong working relationship to be the most important factors for effective teaching assistant deployment. Furthermore, some teachers did not feel they were completely responsible for managing teaching assistants in their class. It is recommended that further research into the relationship between teacher and teaching assistant would be beneficial. Moreover, it is also recommended that Initial Teacher Training should be revised to have a greater consideration for teachers' role as manager of other adults in the classroom.

Introduction

The number of classroom support assistants employed in England has increased significantly over recent years (DfE, 2013). Classroom support assistant roles vary greatly and include; teaching assistants, special support assistants, learning mentors and higher level teaching assistants (Goddard, 2012). For the purposes of this article and for ease of reference, the term teaching assistant (TA) will be used to refer to any classroom assistant for whom a teacher has responsibility.

Experience of work placements in primary schools found that most classes had at least one TA present. However, it became evident that teachers' approaches to deploying other adults within the classroom varied dramatically. In one class, TAs were seen to be fully engaged with the class, taking on a strong pedagogical role; these TAs seemed to collaborate closely with the teacher and a strong, goal-focused, team approach was observed. Alternatively, the TA in another class was perceived to be deployed, almost without exception, to support a group of lower ability children to complete tasks. While children were listening to the teacher or were able to work more independently, the TA was observed to be inactive, simply observing the lesson.

Another approach to deploying TAs was observed whereby a TA provided assistance to the teacher rather than the pupils, mostly preparing classroom resources and running errands. Similarly, as a volunteer in each of these classes, the way in which the teacher communicated and deployed other adults was experienced personally and the usefulness of this voluntary time was wide-ranging, from complete engagement in daily activities to little interaction resulting in a feeling of ineffectuality.

With one full-time equivalent TA for every two teachers employed in all schools in England (DfE, 2013a), teachers can expect contact with other adults in the classroom (Blatchford et al., 2009).   A literature review was undertaken to provide a greater understanding of the reasons for the increased numbers of TAs and to consider some of the resulting issues so that a considered research question and methodology could be identified.

Literature Review

The increase in TA numbers in England

TAs are an integral part of primary schools in England today; however, this has not always been the case. TAs were employed on a more informal basis and were often parent volunteers; but in 1999, the New Labour government introduced literacy and numeracy strategies in primary schools throughout England necessitating a rapid increase in support staff (Goddard, 2012; Hancock et al., 2004; Neil, 2002). The precipitous increase of TAs continued beyond 2000 as schools came under increased pressure to raise attainment; TAs were being utilised to address low attainment by working with children requiring short-term intervention (Campbell & Fairburn, 2005; Goddard, 2012; Webster et al., 2012). Furthermore, additional TA recruitment addressed the requirements of the National Agreement for Raising Standards and Tackling Workload (ATL & DfES, 2003; Goddard, 2009; OfSTED, 2005) to realise the New Labour government's vision of overhauling teachers' working practice (Atkins et al., 2002; Wilson & Bedford, 2008). Atkins et al. (2002) conducted a small-scale study and found that teachers were unable to manage their workload with the ever increasing curriculum, administrative, monitoring and assessment demands (Atkins et al., 2002), as stated beforehand by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills at that time (Morris, 2001).

However, teachers felt that increased numbers of TAs would lead to an increase in workload for little benefit and that a reduction in bureaucracy would be more beneficial (Atkins et al., 2002; Neill, 2002). However, Morris (2001) countered this and made clear the Labour government's mission to raise attainment with the requirement of accountability. As the Labour government made implicitly clear that bureaucratic formalities would not be reduced, the imposed solution was to increase additional classroom support so that teachers may focus more of their time on teaching (Alborz et al., 2009; Morris, 2001). Numbers of TAs rose from 40,000 in 1997 to 86,000 in 2004 (Cremin et al., 2007, p. 414) representing a 215% increase over a seven year period.

The impact of classroom support

Despite initial teacher reservations, TAs have the capacity to be one of the most valuable resources available to teachers, able to raise standards if their skills are utilised appropriately (Jacklin et al., 2006; OfSTED, 2002; OfSTED, 2005; UNISON, 2013; Watkinson, 2003).

The flexible nature of TAs, shared goals between TA and teacher and effective collaborative team work provide an asset to pressurised teachers freeing them to support children to reach their full potential, promoting

inclusive practice (Alborz et al., 2009; Campbell, 2005; Deveechi & Rouse, 2010; Kerry, 2001; Hall, 2005; Hancock et al., 2004; Hayes, 2012; Hayes, 2014; Jacklin et al., 2006).

As previously mentioned, the increase in TA employment was to support the delivery of numeracy and literacy strategies and raise attainment. Alborz et al.'s (2009) systematic review of literature highlighted that TAs can improve pupils' learning in literacy and language if TAs have received appropriate training and support. However, Blatchford et al. (2009) made the unexpected discovery of a direct and consistent negative correlation between pupils' achievement and TA support for English and Mathematics; the more support a pupil received, the less progress they made. This contradiction implies that, while effective TA deployment can raise attainment, inappropriate deployment produces an adverse effect. It is evident that the majority of TAs are receiving high quality and appropriate training (ATL & DfES, 2003; Blatchford et al., 2009; Blatchford et al., 2012; Hancock et al., 2002; Hutchings et al., 2009; Walton, 2012); it can therefore be assumed that there is a lack of appropriate support for TAs.

As was also identified previously, TA numbers were increased to relieve teacher stress and alleviate workload. Blatchford et al.'s (2009) vast and detailed longitudinal study found that TAs positively impacted upon the workload, stress and job satisfaction of teachers, positively affecting the quality of teaching (Alborz, 2009; Blatchford et al., 2009). Furthermore, OfSTED's (2002) large-scale independent evaluation found that TAs alleviate teacher stress by providing help in managing behaviour; organising and managing the class and discussing ideas. They concluded the overall quality of teaching was improved resulting in small but significant improvements in attainment. While it is clear that increased numbers of TAs have helped to alleviate teacher stress, the impact upon teacher workload is called into question. Extensive research carried out by Hutchings et al. (2009) found that few teachers spend less time on routine administration; this was attributed to the fact that many administrative tasks required teacher skills that TAs do not possess. Therefore, it would seem that there is an increase in management workload but a less than expected reduction in administrative workload. However, Alborz et al. (2009) found that the increase in management workload was offset by the reduction of classroom workload. Therefore, despite the heavy administrative workload, TAs have facilitated a reduction in overall teacher workload.

Teachers' responsibility for managing and deploying other adults in the classroom

OfSTED (2002, p.14) made clear teachers' responsibilities of 'managing and organising the work of the TA in their own classroom'. Likewise, the Teaching Standards sets out the expectation that teachers should 'deploy support staff effectively' (DfE, 2011, p.13). However, there is some confusion about the role of teaching assistants with limited guidance available to teachers and little realisation of the skillfulness of TAs (Campbell & Farbairn, 2005).

Richards (2006) argues that the role of TA has been evolving with progressive responsibility for pupils' learning. TAs are employed to support learning in a variety of ways, however qualitative research found that, despite

the broad scope of the TA role, almost all were employed to work with 'individual pupils, small groups and pupils with special needs' (UNISON, 2013, p.4). Primary schools were consistently found to be employing this strategy (Blatchford et al., 2009) with most teachers considering this approach to be the greatest significant benefit of having TAs in the classroom (Neill, 2002). However, as explored earlier, TAs offering alternative support consequentially provide support for all children. Concern is raised, therefore, that the full scope of TA impact is not being exploited and that teachers may not be effectively deploying TAs.

A unanimous and seemingly unchallenged theme emerged; for TAs to be effective in their role, teachers need to communicate clearly their expectations of the TA ensuring clarity of roles (Blatchford et al., 2009; Campbell, 2005; Crowther, 2012; DfES, 2000; Hall, 2005; Hayes, 2012; Kerry, 2001). Kerry (2001) expanded on this by identifying the reciprocal nature of the TA/teacher relationship recommending that TAs should feedback pupil involvement to the teacher. However, Kerry (2001) went on to argue that teachers were responsible for ensuring this; demonstrating how teachers are ultimately accountable for the interactions between TA and teacher.

As well as making clear expectations, teachers must develop an understanding of an individual TA's areas of limitation, capability and expertise and use them to the advantage of teacher and pupils (Deveechi & Rouse, 2010; Hayes, 2003; Hayes, 2012; Jacklin et al., 2006; James et al., 2006). Careful planning for delegating tasks is required so that TAs are being fully employed and are not being left idle or as a passive observer (Hall, 2005; Richards, 2006). Such planning may be difficult and time-consuming but Jacklin et al. (2006) argued it to be worthwhile. It is important that all support staff's paid time is being used efficiently so as to maximise value for money (DfE, 2013; OfSTED, 2005); between 14% and 18% of a schools budget is spent on employing TAs (DfE, 2013). Deveechi & Rouse (2010) argued that TAs should be involved in the decision-making process so that TAs knowledge is shared for planning to be more effective. However UNISON (2013) found that only 50% of school leaders reported that their teachers and TAs planned and prepared lessons together, similarly, Blatchford et al. (2009) found that the majority of teachers did not have time available to plan alongside their TAs. So while joint planning is ideal, budget and time constraints render this impossible; teachers have Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time made available to them so must take the responsibility and relay plans to their TA appropriately.

Teachers must also take responsibility for developing strong, positive relationships with support staff, treating the relationship with respect and sensitivity, striving to avoid conflict (DfES, 2000; Hall, 2005; Hayes, 2012; Kerry, 2001; Jacklin et al., 2006). However, each relationship is unique, takes time to develop and, for an agreeable relationship to be realised, the teacher must possess the necessary personal and social skills which may only develop with experience and confidence (Jacklin et al., 2006; Sage & Wilkie, 2003).

Neill's (2002) small but in-depth survey found that teachers considered the abilities of TAs to vary greatly stating that it was unfair to give TAs responsibilities that were beyond their role and pay (Neill, 2002). Yet all

classroom staff will share the goal of meeting the needs of all children; shared goals are a vital element of team development (Furnham, 2005).

Implications for teachers

In addition to their role as educator of children, teachers have had to acquire a 'second layer' of new management skills for working with other adults in the classroom (Hall, 2005; Richards, 2006). Ample training opportunities have been made available to TAs to develop a more skilled workforce (ATL & DfES, 2003; Blatchford et al., 2009; Farrell et al., 1999; OfSTED, 2002). However, the role of the TA is entirely dependent on the teacher (Hall, 2005; Kerry, 2001; Sage & Wilkie, 2003; UNISON, 2013) yet teachers receive very little or no training on managing and deploying other adults within the classroom (Blatchford et al, 2009; Farrell et al., 1999; TDA, 2008; Wilson & Bedford, 2008). Instead, the ability of the individual teacher to deploy support staff effectively is relied upon which, as identified throughout the literature review, varies greatly.

OfSTED (2002) considered teachers' opinions on the usefulness of TAs and Neill (2002) examined how teachers view the teacher/TA working relationship. However, both studies are over a decade old with little evidence of more contemporary research. Current practice necessitates teachers' confidence in managing other adults in the classroom yet there is no identifiable research in this area. The literature review raises an abundance of different areas for further research. However, as an aspiring primary school teacher it is considered important to identify, through research, teachers' role as managers of other adults within the classroom. Effective deployment of TAs can add value to learning; however, measuring success is subjective since it is difficult to measure how learning is enhanced (UNISON, 2013). Therefore seeking opinions can provide the most useful method for assessing the impact of TAs on pupils learning thus influencing the research question:-
'How do teachers view their role as manager of other adults within the classroom?'

Methodology

Before research could begin, a Research Ethics Student Form was completed and approved by a representative of Bishop Grosseteste University. All research was carried out with due consideration of clear ethical frameworks (BERA, 2011; BGU, 2014). Although considered a small-scale social research project, with a sample size of between 30 and 250 (Denscombe, 2010), a relatively large number of participants in various locations was identified. It was therefore decided that to answer the research question, empirical data collection would take the form of self-completion questionnaires (Cohen et al., 2007; Denscombe, 2010; Sharp, 2009).

Ninety-nine questionnaires were delivered to sixteen schools in the East Lindsey District of Lincolnshire to provide 'as representative a range of responses as possible' (Bell, 2010, p.122; Sharp, 2009). Questionnaires can incur printing and delivery costs as well as being time consuming (Cohen et al., 2007; Denscombe, 2010). However, on balance, the minimal costs incurred and time spent were considered necessary and appropriate for this type of research.

The front page of the questionnaires explained the purpose of the study for particants and outlined the ethical implications of carrying out such research (BERA, 2011; Blaxter, 2010; BGU, 2014; Thomas, 2009). Teachers were asked to complete questionnaires only if they had time or wanted to ensure voluntary informed consent (BERA, 2011; BGU, 2014; Thomas, 2009).

The layout of the questionnaires was designed to be clear and easy to follow to ensure participants' engagement and understanding (Bell, 2010; Cohen et al., 2007; Thomas, 2009). It was deemed necessary to pilot the questionairre, making sure they were simple and easy to use with no ambiguity to ensure appropriate responses (Bell, 2010; Cohen et al., 2007; Sharp, 2009; Thomas, 2009). Fellow students' feedback determinined the final questionairre which, on reflection was clear and facilitated an adequate response rate. The questionnaires first of all sought to gain some basic, factual information about the respondants' role within their school. This allowed for responses in the remainder of the questionairre to be considered within context from a post-positivist perspective whereby contstructivist and interpretive worldviews are combined to construt meaning from evidence (Blaxter et al., 2010; Wisker, 2009). The main body of the questionnaires asked respondents their opinions of structured statements using a five-point, Likert Scale rating from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Cohen et al., 2007; Sharp, 2009; Thomas, 2009). The Likert Scale was chosen as it is useful when seeking to measure a belief or attitude (Thomas, 2009). Furthermore, closed questions ensure that results are uniform and quantifiable for easier analysis (Cohen et al., 2007; Denscombe, 2010; Sharp, 2009; Thomas, 2009). However, a disadvantage of this method is the restrictiveness of responses that may not truly reflect the respondants' feelings (Cohen et al., 2007; Denscombe, 2010; Sharp, 2009; Thomas, 2009). For this reason, each statement provided opportunity for further comments to expand on or explain responses; this enabled a pragmatist approach to gathering data so that quantitative data could be used to identify trends but qualitative data could also be used to give meaning to responses (Cohen et al., 2007; Denscombe, 2010; Thomas, 2009; Punch, 2014; Wisker, 2009).

Thirty of the ninety-nine distributed questionnaires were completed providing a 30% return; this is considered a successful response rate, particularly as impersonal self-completion questionnaires often result in a low rate of response (Blaxter et al., 2010; Gray, 2004). One school chose not to complete the questionnaires as being a small school they felt it inappropriate to complete questionnaires with such sensitive questions should a TA happen upon them.

While anonymity was possible once all questionnaires were returned, it was not possible while they were still on the school site; the confidentiality of all participants must be respected and all participants were given the right to withdraw by way of refusing to complete the questionairre (Bell, 2010; BERA, 2011; Blaxter et al., 2010; BGU, 2014; Sharp, 2009; Thomas, 2009).

All questionnaires were received before analysis of data began to give a clearer understanding of how best to record the results (Bell, 2010). Responses from each of the questionnaires were coded, by allocating a number

to each response (Gray, 2004), and recorded in a spreadsheet so that any anomalies or trends could be identified more clearly. A tally chart was used to collate responses to each of the sixteen questions and the written responses were listed below those. Pie charts were generated but not considered necessary for inclusion within this article. Results from the questionnaires were triangulated with observations at a small Lincolnshire village primary school so that an alternative perspective could be observed to confirm or challenge findings (Denscombe, 2010; Laws, 2003 as cited in Bell, 2010).

Results and Analysis of Findings

As examined in the literature review, the purpose of TAs is to provide support for teachers to alleviate their workload and to raise general attainment for all pupils (Farrell et al., 1999). The first three statements sought to ascertain teachers' opinion of how TAs meet needs within the classroom. If practice reflects the purpose of TAs then it is expected that all teachers should strongly agree with all three of the statements.

All of the respondents agreed to some extent that TAs are important for meeting the needs of individuals in the classroom (table 1) corroborating findings in the literature review. Written feedback suggested that some teachers find the help of TAs in meeting individual needs as being 'vital' and that teachers would be '[unable to] meet all SEN needs without [TA support]'.

TAs are important for meeting the needs of individuals in the classroom.		
	Total	**%**
Strongly agree	27	90
Agree	3	10
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Chose not to answer	0	
Table 1		

All respondents seemed to highly value the individual support a TA can provide. Concern is raised here that too much focus could be placed on this area of support negatively impacting upon attainment, as considered during the literature review. However, written responses suggest that teachers would disagree, viewing individual support as being of utmost importance for meeting varying individual needs in the classroom.

All respondents felt that TAs were important for meeting the needs of the whole class (table 2). One respondent felt that regardless of the focus of TAs support it always reaches the whole class in some way, reaffirming the previous point.

TAs are important for meeting the needs of the whole class.		
	Total	%
Strongly agree	20	67
Agree	10	33
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Chose not to answer	0	
Table 2		

Likewise, this belief echoes the OfSTED (2002) report as discussed in the literature review; TA support in varying areas, pedagogical, behavioural, etc., impacts upon and enhances teacher performance.

One respondent disagreed that TAs are important for meeting the needs of the teacher, although the majority felt that they were (79%, n = 23) (table 3).

TAs are important for meeting the needs of the teacher.		
	Total	%
Strongly agree	14	48
Agree	9	31
Neither agree nor disagree	5	17
Disagree	1	3
Strongly disagree	0	0
Chose not to answer	1	
Table 3		

Written feedback from one respondent suggested that such support for the teacher was necessary in preparing resources, whereas two other respondents felt that TAs should support the teacher to meet the needs of the children, not just prepare resources. This highlights the apparently diverse approaches to deploying and managing TAs and demonstrates how TAs can be considered 'teacher's assistant' or 'teaching assistant'.

There is an assumption that employing a TA to prepare resources is not fulfilling their role. However, as highlighted through the literature review, support for the teacher alleviates teacher stress and provides opportunity for sharing ideas. Furthermore, TA support provides greater opportunity for reflective practice (Castle & Goddard, 2012; Watkinson, 2003), all of which consolidate to impact upon the quality of teaching.

Having since examined the role of the TA further and reflected upon the design of the questionnaire, it has been realised that meeting the care and welfare needs of children and supporting the curriculum (Birkett, 2004; Watkinson, 2003) were not considered. If the research were to be repeated then the questionnaires

would be redesigned to include teachers' opinions on these areas of TA support. Additionally, rather than using a Likert Scale to ascertain teachers' opinions on the role of the TA, a more interesting approach might be to ask teachers to rank the roles of the TA in order of importance.   There is considerable ambiguity over TAs responsibilities (Blatchford et al., 2012); asking for a rank ordering would challenge teachers to consider how important each of the TAs roles are and would provide enlightening responses for analysis.

As teachers are ultimately accountable for teaching and learning, it is they who must determine the work of the TA; it was expected that the majority of respondents would strongly agree that 'TAs require lots of guidance from the teacher. However, only 11% (n=3) agreed, and the remainder disagreed or could neither agree nor disagree (table 4).

TAs require lots of guidance from the teacher		
	Total	**%**
Strongly agree	1	4
Agree	2	7
Neither agree nor disagree	17	61
Disagree	7	25
Strongly disagree	1	4
Chose not to answer	2	
Table 4		

This may reflect the strong and collaborative teacher/TA relationship based upon mutual respect and clear shared goals, as discussed during the literature review. Such strong working relationships do not require the teacher to overtly direct the TA. However, without formal direction, poor practice may develop going unnoticed and unchallenged. Interestingly though, four respondents considered the amount of guidance TAs required from the teacher depended on the task. This demonstrates teachers' ability to understand their TA's strengths and weakness, as explored during the literature review. In order to make their expectations clear to TAs, teachers must incorporate the role of the TA into their lesson plan; it is recommended that assistants are provided with copies (Asprey et al., 2002).

All respondents agreed to incorporating the role of the TA into their lesson plan (table 5) although only 70% (n = 21) strongly agreed with the statement intimating that the TA is not always included in planning. If this is the case, then some teachers are failing to meet their management responsibility of communicating their expectations clearly to the TA.

The role of the TA is incorporated into my lesson plans.		
	Total	**%**
Strongly agree	21	70
Agree	9	30
Neither agree nor disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Chose not to answer	0	
Table 5		

One teacher responded that the role of the TA is incorporated into their lesson plan 'to ensure fluidity in lessons and guided work if needed'. Farrell et al. (1999) remarked that the introduction of TAs into the classroom forced teachers to plan lessons properly. However, as discovered during the literature review, teachers and TAs have little non-teaching time available to allow them to discuss plans and expectations (Farrell et al., 1999). As a way of overcoming this, an observed local primary school demonstrated how the teacher outlined expectations and lesson plans in a weekly timetable / diary for the TA which the TA also used to provide feedback to the teacher.

Written responses to the statement 'TAs are involved in the planning of lessons' indicated that TAs involvement was informal, giving some explanation for the broad ranging responses (table 6).

TAs are involved in the planning of lessons.		
	Total	**%**
Strongly agree	5	17
Agree	10	34
Neither agree nor disagree	5	17
Disagree	9	31
Strongly disagree	0	0
Chose not to answer	1	
Table 6		

One teacher responded that they could involve their TA more with another respondent corroborating literature review findings that there is just no time to include TAs during PPA.

Statements 7 and 8 considered the impact that TAs have on freeing up teachers time, as identified through the literature review to be one of the main reasons for the rapid increase of TAs in the classroom. The majority of respondents agreed that having a TA in the classroom gives them more time to spend with the children who need their time (table 7). However, 7% (n=2) disagreed with this statement.

Having TAs in the classroom gives me more time to spend with the children who need my time.		
	Total	**%**
Strongly agree	15	50
Agree	12	40
Neither agree nor disagree	1	3
Disagree	2	7
Strongly disagree	0	0
Chose not to answer	0	
Table 7		

One respondent who disagreed justified their answer by stating that 'all children need my time but it offers two adults to challenge and extend at one time'. This comment supports the notion that TAs are able to enhance learning, as identified in the literature review, albeit in a less direct way than expected.

Only 24% (n=7) of respondents agreed that having a TA in the classroom gave them more time to spend on planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) (table 8).

Having TAs in the classroom gives me more time to spend on planning, preparation and assessment.		
	Total	**%**
Strongly agree	2	7
Agree	5	17
Neither agree nor disagree	6	20
Disagree	14	47
Strongly disagree	3	10
Chose not to answer	0	
Table 8		

Written responses suggested that PPA is restricted to allocated time only. One teacher responded that having a TA 'takes more planning, however they are vital', reflecting the literature review findings.

There was a very broad response to the statement 'to what extent do you agree that the effectiveness of TAs in the classroom is dependent on the leadership of the teacher?' (table 9). Written feedback was also varied; three respondents claimed it was dependent on a team effort; whereas five respondents felt it was more dependent on the attributes of the TA.

The effectiveness of TAs in the classroom is dependent on the leadership of the teacher.		
	Total	%
Strongly agree	7	25
Agree	8	29
Neither agree nor disagree	8	29
Disagree	4	14
Strongly disagree	1	4
Chose not to answer	2	

Table 9

The key theme with all responses though was that the teacher must understand the ability of the TA and alter their relationship accordingly, corresponding with the literature review findings. The variance of responses would suggest that either relationships between teacher and TAs are widely different or maybe implies that teachers' assume their TAs are capable of effectual autonomous working.

One respondent to the statement 'the involvement of the TA varies from TA to TA' links to the previous statement; TA involvement is dependent on 'how much they are involved by the teacher'; 79% (n=23) agreed with the statement (table 10).

The involvement of the TA varies from TA to TA		
	Total	%
Strongly agree	13	45
Agree	10	34
Neither agree nor disagree	2	7
Disagree	4	14
Strongly disagree	0	0
Chose not to answer	1	

Table 10

It could be argued that if a teacher is effectively leading their TA then the TA's involvement would be consistent from TA to TA. The fact that teachers view TA involvement as variable suggests that teachers may not consider their management skills to be as vital as literature proposes.

As highlighted throughout the previous two responses, to effectively lead their TA, teachers must know their TAs strengths and weaknesses and utilise them accordingly; 87% (n=26) agreed with this statement (table 11).

I know my TA's strengths and weaknesses and utilise these accordingly		
	Total	%
Strongly agree	14	47
Agree	12	40
Neither agree nor disagree	4	13
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Chose not to answer	0	
Table 11		

Two respondents did highlight that they had not being working with their TA for long so were only just getting to know them, supporting literature review findings that these unique relationships take time to develop. One respondent declared that their TA 'has no weaknesses'; while this is a rather supportive sentiment, it is a concern that the teacher is unable to highlight any weaknesses that could enable support for the TA to develop their role. It was highlighted in the literature review that inappropriately trained TAs can have a negative impact upon attainment; it is therefore imperative that teachers consider any areas for development so that TA involvement can be most effective. Upon further exploration of the results, it was revealed that respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed were newly qualified teachers (NQT). Jacklin et al. (2006) found that younger NQTs tended to lack confidence in managing TAs. This would suggest that NQTs may require focussed support from school leaders so that a good working relationship can be established quickly.

Only 10% (n=3) of respondents disagreed that 'the teacher is responsible for ensuring strong working relationships between all staff in the classroom', although those respondents did not expand on their reasons (table 12).

The teacher is responsible for ensuring strong working relationships between all staff in the classroom.		
	Total	%
Strongly agree	8	28
Agree	13	45
Neither agree nor disagree	5	17
Disagree	2	7
Strongly disagree	1	3
Chose not to answer	0	
Table 12		

One respondent did declare that 'management should take some responsibility' with another proclaiming that 'this is difficult due to management arrangements'. Three respondents claimed that it was the responsibility of the whole team. Although teaching is no longer considered a profession, professionalism is expected (DfE, 2011). To this end, teachers should foster strong, positive relationships, as identified in the literature review. However, some teachers either feel unable to ensure strong working relationships or believe it to be the

responsibility of others. As there is an expectation that teachers should be leading in this area, these results demonstrate some failure in practice either as a result of teachers not possessing appropriate skills or a lack of training.

Respondents found it difficult to agree or disagree that 'it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure TAs are given additional responsibilities' (60%, n=18); not one respondent had a strong opinion to this statement (table 13).

It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure TAs are given additional responsibilities.		
	Total	%
Strongly agree	0	0
Agree	8	27
Neither agree nor disagree	18	60
Disagree	4	13
Strongly disagree	0	0
Chose not to answer	0	

Table 13

The written responses suggest that this is a complicated issue and is dependent on the aspirations of the individual. Other comments give the impression that the teacher does not feel it is just their responsibility but also that of the TAs and wider school management. As already explored, teachers should understand their TAs strengths and limitations and maximise the usefulness of their TA. However, one respondent makes a pertinent point and cautions that '... [teachers should be] careful not to give tasks above their [the TA's] job description'. TAs can be in danger of being overworked and given responsibilities they may feel are beyond their capabilities (Hutchings et al., 2009). The majority of respondents (96%, n=28) agreed that they 'feel confident in resolving issues with their TAs' (table 14).

I feel confident in resolving issues with my TAs		
	Total	%
Strongly agree	10	34
Agree	18	62
Neither agree nor disagree	1	3
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Chose not to answer	1	

Table 14

One respondent, a school head, highlighted that 'not all teachers do / have the leadership skills / experience' to resolve issues.

Furthermore, one respondent said that they were confident in resolving issues with one TA but not the other, highlighting the delicate nature of the relationship between teacher and TA and the importance of effective team working explored throughout the literature review.

A minority (41%, n=12) agreed that 'initial teacher training prepared me for working with other adults in the classroom' yet 51% (n=15) disagreed (table 15).

Initial Teacher Training prepared me for working with other adults in the classroom.		
	Total	**%**
Strongly agree	1	3
Agree	11	38
Neither agree nor disagree	2	7
Disagree	12	41
Strongly disagree	3	10
Chose not to answer	1	
Table 5		

Interestingly, having examined the responses more closely it was revealed that those who had been working as a primary school teacher for the longest, and therefore completed their ITT some years ago, were more likely to disagree with the statement.

The Professional Standards for Qualified Teacher Status and Requirements for Initial Teacher Training (TDA, 2008) outline that trainee teachers should possess professional attributes for communicating and working with others. However, having spoken to a PGCE course leader, it is clear that there is little reference during ITT to managing other adults in the classroom. One respondent did remark that the teaching standards outline the expectations for working with other adults in the classroom supporting the teaching standards expectations outlined in the literature review. Concern is raised that, while expectations are outlined in the teacher standards, ITT fails to address this appropriately, as illustrated by teacher responses here.

The majority (86%, n=25) responded that they had not attended specific training regarding working with other adults in the classroom. Although teachers felt confident working with TAs, many felt that their teamwork skills needed developing (Farrell et al., 1999).

Conclusion and recommendations

It is evident from these research findings that there is disparity in teachers' view of their role as manager of other adults in the classroom. However, this is a small-scale study and so findings cannot be used to generalise.

The research has revealed that teachers view the role of TA primarily to meet the needs of individuals, but teachers understand how TAs can meet varying needs in the classroom. From this research, there is evidence that not all teachers are planning for and directing TAs to an extent considered necessary for efficient and effective deployment. However, it has also come to light through this research that the strong, individual relationship between teacher and TA inspires a more relaxed managerial approach since a directive approach may be inappropriate. Teachers reported to fully understand their TA's strengths and weaknesses; however, the close relationship between teacher and TA may make it difficult for teachers to be impartially critical, as was evidenced by a teacher's response that their TA 'has no weaknesses'. Crucially, it was identified during the research that teachers felt that the personal attributes of the TA were the most important factor for their effective deployment. However, as identified in the literature review, teachers are ultimately responsible for the effectiveness of TAs in their class so this teacher perception is a grave cause for concern. It is therefore recommended that further research into this area should be undertaken. Although most teachers felt that they were able to resolve issues with their TA, not all teachers believed they were responsible for other adults in the classroom. Feedback suggests that some teachers feel that TAs should take individual responsibility for their place in the classroom and that school leaders should provide a greater management role.

Teachers' responses suggest that there have been improvements in management training during Initial Teacher Training (ITT) but it is still insufficient; ITT should provide opportunity for trainee teachers to develop the vital management skills required when working with other adults in the classroom (Farrell et al, 1999; Kerry, 2001; Wilson & Bedford, 2008). The reliance upon appropriately skilled teachers means that school managers should consider this when recruiting and provide training opportunities where necessary (Kerry, 2001; OfSTED, 2005).

It is apparent that there is a gap in research which could provide an opportunity to develop a greater understanding of teachers' ability to effectively deploy TAs. Given the large numbers of TAs employed in England, and subsequent cost, the desire to raise attainment and the need to meet the needs of all individuals in education so that they may reach their full potential (Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009), it should be high on the political agenda to investigate this subject further.

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Media coverage of the Paralympics: Podiums or pedestals?
Alistair Guest

Abstract

This article discusses and explores the discourse which surrounds media coverage of the Paralympics and its effect on individuals with physical disabilities. Whilst London 2012 is widely perceived as the best Paralympic games in the history of the sport, due to the amount of coverage, reception and perceived shift in societal attitudes; critics suggest that coverage of the games, like previous events, were detrimental to the disabled by reinforcing existing ideologies and constructing unfair expectations of individuals. To investigate these claims, a small scale research project was be undertaken, using semi-structured interviews with university students to assess individuals' views regarding Paralympic coverage and its effect on individuals with physical disabilities. Research highlighted that coverage can be considered as both empowering and detrimental to individuals with physical disabilities by providing positive coverage which captivates and inspires, whilst also relying on historical clichés which misrepresent the disabled.

Introduction

From the origins of the Salamanca Statement in 1994 disability has become a political and educational priority within contemporary society and as a result is a topic of contention within literature and debate (Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009, p. 74; Rayner, 1994, p. 169). This contentious nature could also be applied to the prevalence, power and influence of the media within contemporary society, and its effect on individuals and ideologies (Davidson, 2011, p. 7). It should then come as no surprise that when these contentious topics intersect in the portrayal of the Paralympics, the pinnacle of disability sport, discussion and debate will arise.

Heralded as a "seminal moment" for Paralympic sport, London 2012 has been widely praised as the best Paralympics of all time due to the scale, reception and coverage of the event (Hudson, 2012; University of Worcester, 2012). With an estimated 2.7 million tickets sold and 40 million television viewers, the event is believed to have positively influenced the profile and perception of Paralympians and the landscape of Paralympic sport (Hudson, 2012; University of Worcester, 2012). However, these claims are disputed as the event and its coverage are argued to be detrimental for individuals by reinforcing negative stereotypes of disabilities and the disabled, thus perpetuating inequality (Brittain, 2009, p.73; Disability Planet, 2012; Riley, 2005; Shakespeare, 2015).

A literature review was undertaken to establish how the Paralympics have been portrayed by the media historically and contemporarily, and to develop an understanding of some of the issues that arise as a result. This is so that a considered research question and methodology could be identified.

Literature Review

The Paralympics began as an event for a small number of injured ex-servicemen and women, held on the day of the Opening Ceremony of the London 1948 Olympic Games and has since evolved to become a world-wide phenomenon (Paralympic Movement, 2015a). Athletes within the event have a range of physical disabilities and are classified according to 10 impairment categories established by The International Paralympic Committee (IPC). This is to determine the range and extent of individual's impairment within the sport to promote fair and equal competition (Paralympic Movement, 2015b).

Unlike other sporting events, broadcasting and coverage of the Paralympics is often a source of controversy and debate, with broadcasters' in the past often prioritising programming coverage and resources to Olympic coverage in comparison to the Paralympics (British Library, 2015; Burrell, 2012; Brittain, 2010, p. 74). Schantz & Gilbert (2001) augment this fact and proposed that the extent of media coverage of the Paralympics is often an indicator of public attitudes and acceptance toward disability sport (Brittain, 2010, p. 74). Consequently, the London 2012 Paralympics could be considered a major turning point for the movement.

Media rights to broadcast the event in the UK were fiercely contested by leading broadcasters wanting to showcase disability sport within the country (British Library, 2015; Burrell, 2012). The winning broadcaster, Channel 4, initially committed 500 hours of coverage to the event, but upon record ratings and exponential demand, the channel was forced to clear popular programming in order to make space for more coverage (Burrell, 2012). Traditional media appeared to follow suit on the level of coverage with many newspapers dedicating front page coverage to the event and Team GB daily. The level of media presence is also thought to have increased the popularity of the event on social media, with the Paralympic Games Facebook site quadrupling its members from the beginning of the opening ceremony (Burrell, 2012). Upon the closing of the event the IPC noted that media coverage within the UK and around the world had greatly exceeded expectations (British Library, 2015; Burrell, 2012).

Lord Sebastian Coe, chairman of the Olympic committee, remarked that the games sign-posted an irreversible shift in public attitudes towards disability and sport (Hudson, 2012). Marc Woods, four-time Paralympic swimming gold medallist, reinforced this by suggesting that despite imperfections, attendance, alongside listening and viewing figures, indicated a positive reception by the public and thus a positive influence on disability sport (Hudson, 2012). Research by Government outlined in *Inspired by 2012: legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic legacy* appears to have supported these views (HM Government & Mayor of London, 2013, p. 698). The report proposed that high-profile sporting events are essential in helping shift societal perceptions of disability. It considered this possible by utilising positive coverage to celebrate the achievements and abilities of the disabled as a way to promote debate surrounding inclusion within society and ultimately shifting perceptions (HM Government & Mayor of London, 2013, p. 69).

Independent research published in the extensive report found that 81% of people interviewed thought the games had a positive effect on how disabled people are viewed by the British public (HM Government & Mayor of London, 2013, p. 71). Furthermore, 53% of participants admitted that the Paralympics had a positive impact on how they viewed disabled people (Office for National Statistics, as cited in HM Government & Mayor of London, 2013, p. 71). Participation statistics published in the report also found that whilst there is still a large disparity between the number of disabled people and non-disabled people playing sport, the Paralympics have influenced participation rates of disabled people playing sport, with an estimated increase of 46,600 between 2012 and 2013, particularly sports represented in the games (HM Government & Mayor of London, 2013, p. 68). It is worth noting that, whilst the report highlights positive influences of the Olympics and Paralympics, a potential caveat of using government sources within research is that data may be misrepresented in order to portray a specific view or as propaganda. As a result, this may not be representative of views (Babbie, 2007, p. 334; Harrison, 2013, p. 69).

However, research undertaken by Bournemouth University Media School in partnership with Channel 4 appears to highlight similar results (Channel 4, 2012). Interviews with a representative selection of non-disabled and disabled individuals prior to and concluding the games found that during coverage, viewers' attention quickly moved away from the disabilities to the excitement of the sport (Channel 4, 2012). Additionally, 91% of viewers believed disabled athletes were just as talented as their counterparts (Channel 4, 2012). Moreover, 83% of viewers suggest that coverage of the event improved society's perception of disabled individuals; 74% of young viewers (aged 12-16) and 56% of all respondents felt more comfortable talking about disabilities; 64% of viewers felt more positive towards disabled people as a result of coverage (Channel 4, 2012). These findings indicate evidence of perceptual changes.

Upon examination, it appears both government and independent research suggest that media coverage of the Paralympics have been influential in promoting positive public attitudes towards disability and motivation within individuals. However, despite this evidence, opposition is apparent.

Opposition disputes that public perceptions of disabilities have been changed by the way in which disabled athletes are portrayed by the media (Hudson, 2012; Ryan, 2012a). Ryan (2012), proposes that Paralympic coverage often portrays disabled athletes as inspirational due to the trials and tribulations they have overcome in order to reach their goals, rather than on their abilities and achievements like athletes within the Olympics (Ryan, 2012). Ryan further suggests that this ideology causes a narrative which infers only the most motivated individuals can overcome disabilities. Therefore, the Paralympics are depicted less as a sporting event and more about individual courageousness with an adversity back-story as reinforcement (Ryan, 2012).

Shakespeare (2015) expanded this view by outlining "supercrip" tropes, which stem from media coverage of disability that portrays Paralympians as inspirational figures and superheroes. The inspirational figure stereotype is expected to act as role models, particularly those with similar disabilities, by succeeding within

sport and other aspects of life, despite disabilities, prosthetics or impairment whether they wish to or not (Shakespeare, 2015, p. 215). Shakespeare (2015) cites how this trope not only places pressure on athletes, but creates a paradox for Paralympians. Athletes achieving beyond the expectations of event organisers, administrators and wider society may call into question their disability; such individuals may appear to undermine deficiency models which are often associated with disability (Shakespeare, 2015, p. 215).

The second stereotype, a trope largely made popular by superhero fiction, proposed that extraordinary will or ability, and in some cases heroism, can be used as compensation for trauma, injury or impairment, which helps an individual achieve great feats (Shakespeare, 2015, p. 215). Shakespeare suggests that these representations provide the media with archetypal clichés which can be used to reinforce views of disability. For example, superheroes are often used as a "funhouse mirror" for the assumptions made about disabilities within reality TV and the Paralympics (Shakespeare, 2015, p. 215). In turn, these stereotypes, often perpetuated by the media, create unfair realities and expectations for individuals with disabilities, impairments and illness (Shakespeare, 2015; Riley, 2005).

Earlier work by Brittain (2009), shows that the lack of understanding in media coverage is not restricted to disability sport, but to disability as a whole (Brittain, 2009, p. 73). Brittain attributes this trend to a lack of disabled representation within influential media outlets and thus representations of disabilities and the disabled may be unwillingly constructed by institutions with little knowledge on the issue (Brittain, 2009, p. 73).

The findings in this literature review examining the contentious nature of the media's portrayal of Paralympians have influenced the research questions:

1. Do individuals find coverage of the Paralympics empowering or detrimental to individuals with physical disabilities?

2. Do individuals identify with the stereotypes outlined in literature surrounding disability in the media?

Methodology

Overview and Sample

Research was undertaken in a period of one week within a specialist University in the East Midlands where 20 participants (11 males and 9 females) ranging between ages 19-28 participated. Research was conducted in one week in order to access a range of participants from different subjects and age groups. Convenience sampling was used in the form of selecting participants based on their availability in the library and other social study spaces.

This is beneficial in small-scale research as it offers accessible and economical opportunities to interact with the target population (Ellison et al., 2009, p. 198). Convenience sampling entails recruiting participants as a result of their availability in lieu of random participants from a cross-section of society (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 155; Ellison et al., 2009, p. 198). In the instance of this research, participants were selected based on their willingness to engage with research within the university campus rather than a mixture of participants from across the County. However, convenience sampling has been critiqued as research may only capture the opinions of a specific group rather than the whole population, and thus may lack representativeness (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 156). A potential caveat of undertaking a small research project is that it is difficult to generalise results to a wider population due to its reduced scale and sample size.

Post-positivist researchers propose that it is essential to consider the values, background, and knowledge of both the researcher and participants when undertaking research as these factors may influence what is observed, recorded or disclosed during research (Ryan, 2006, p. 12). Upon consideration, the researcher undertaking a degree which focuses on Special Educational Needs and Inclusion could influence research as prevalent ideologies may influence the way in which research is conducted and how responses are perceived/recorded. The context of further education may also influence participant responses, as they may give a higher rate of informed, academic or socially acceptable answers in comparison to research undertaken in wider society. Whilst these influences would be practically impossible to remove due to human nature, they are imperative to consider when examining ethical considerations and designing collection methods.

Research would align with a constructivism/interpretivism paradigm in that both the researcher and participants are interpreting the event based on their own established reality (Mack, 2010, p. 8; Wisker 2009). Participants interpret their own meaning of research questions, whilst the researcher interprets their meaning in order to generate a new concept from results (Mack, 2010, p. 8; Wisker 2009).

Ethics

To ensure research was safe and ethical, the guidelines produced by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and Bishop Grosseteste University were examined and maintained throughout research. Before research could be undertaken, discussions were held between the researcher and supervisor to refine the methodology of research in order to maximise its effectiveness and to ensure participants were safeguarded from distress (Bishop Grosseteste University, 2013, p. 3; BERA, 2011, p. 9).

Upon performing research, a small brief regarding the topic, research method and confidential and anonymous practise was given to participants so they were able to make an informed decision regarding their consent when asked within the first question of the interview (Bishop Grosseteste University, 2013, p. 4; BERA, 2011, p. 7). On receiving appropriate consent, participants were assured that they could withdraw both themselves and their responses from research at any time (Bishop Grosseteste University, 2013, p. 4; BERA, 2011, p. 7). All data collected during research was collected confidentially and anonymously in order to protect

the identities of respondents, with only participants' age, gender and subject of study present within results (Bishop Grosseteste University, 2013, p. 6; BERA, 2011, p. 7). Despite anonymity, data must be stored securely at all times in line with the Data Protection Act (1998). To comply with these guidelines, data was stored securely within a locked room and password protected personal computer (Bishop Grosseteste University, 2013, p. 6; BERA, 2011, p. 7; HM Government, 1998). All data will then be disposed of upon completion.

Semi-Structured Interviews

To collect qualitative data for analysis, semi-structured interviews were used within research. Semi-structured interviews are advantageous when collecting information as they offer a structure which can be used to explore participants' responses, whilst offering flexibility should an interesting discussion arise, thus increasing the validity of results (Bless et al., 2006, p. 119; Walsh, 2001, p. 65). However, a limitation of interviews is the influence of bias. Participants may compromise the validity and reliability of results by providing answers which they think researchers want to hear, rather than their own original thought (Bless et al., 2006, p. 119; Walsh, 2001, p. 65). Researcher's personal bias may also influence results by obscuring participants' responses. To avoid this, interviews were recorded so that responses could be clarified.

Data and Analysis

The first question asked respondents to offer information regarding their Paralympics viewing preferences. However, no identifiable themes emerged from these responses and as a result have been omitted from this analysis.

Do you think media coverage of the Paralympics have changed public attitudes towards people with physical disabilities?

Research discussed within the literature review found that 81% of participants perceived the games to have a positive effect of public attitudes towards physically disabled individuals (HM Government & Mayor of London, 2013, p. 71). Results from conducted research appear to align with this statistic, as upon being asked if media coverage of the Paralympics had changed public attitudes towards people with physical disabilities, 90% of participants (n= 18) believed that coverage had shaped public beliefs positively. Participants attributed this shift to a number of factors, for example, 67% of the group (n= 5 males and 7 females) expressed that Paralympic coverage had shaped public perceptions positively by showcasing the ability of disabled individuals and demonstrating that disabled individuals can be independent, participate and succeed both within sports and wider society:

> *I do think they've changed public attitudes more in a positive light … as it does show that those who are not fully bodied or may have a disability can still perform at the same level as those who are fully bodied* (male, age 20)
>
> *I think it has because it's allowed people to realise that just because you have a disability doesn't mean you can't do anything. It's kind of shown that they're winning medals and it just says you don't have to think they're dependent on everyone else but can be independent people and that anything can be possible* (female, age 20).

A number of participants extended this view by proposing that by positively promoting individuals, coverage fosters respect and admiration for those with physical disabilities:

> *I think it's made people have more respect for them and admire them a bit because they understand what they've gone through and how much effort they've had to put in to compete and generally live day-to-day* (male, age 20).

Whilst the participant may have been referring directly to Paralympian, their response proposes a change in public attitudes towards physical disability. One participant highlighted a number of the traits above as being positive influences on public attitudes, but was unsure if they had actually changed attitudes towards physical disability. The statistics and testimonies raised by this question appears to suggest that by promoting the disabled as individuals, who are talented, successful and in some cases, independent, is essential in constructing positive public ideologies. Work by the International Labour Organisation (2010) reinforces this belief by submitting that portraying a disability with dignity and respect within the media is essential to underpinning and constructing tolerant societies (International Labour Organisation, 2010, p. 5). However, it is worth noting that whilst two participants within this category felt that media coverage had positively influenced public perception, they commented that the level of Paralympic coverage was still not enough in comparison to the Olympics.

In contrast, the remaining 33% of participants within this group (n= 5 males and 1 female) appeared to support the earlier view proposed by Schantz and Gilbert (2001) by suggesting that the amount of build-up, promotion and coverage of the event showcased an accepting view by making disability accessible, and potentially de-sensitise viewers to the oddity of disability (Brittain, 2010, p. 74):

> *There's been a lot more hype about it and the shows that kinda ran alongside it, like The Last Leg[1] and stuff have kinda brought it more into an accepting view rather than a pitted view* (female, 21)
>
> *Yeah I would say it has … getting shown on TV is publicity, and any publicity is good publicity … it's just like they're just being de-sensitised and seeing them as them athletes* (male, age 21).

[1]*The Last Leg* is a programme hosted by physically disabled comedians, which originally ran alongside coverage of the Paralympics in an attempt to offer a different view on the event (Ryan, 2012, p. 6).

"The Last Leg" is believed to be a prime example of supportive disability programming, as whilst not perfect, the show's light tone and use of humour is perceived to have helped break down barriers surrounding disability by making it accessible and enjoyable for audiences unfamiliar with the issues (Carter, 2013; Ryan, 2012b).

However, a male within the remaining 10% of the study disagreed with this group by proposing that coverage had negatively affected public perceptions, despite commenting that the amount of coverage of the event had been good:

> *The Paralympics gives people a distorted view of people with disabilities ... I think it's influenced public attitudes towards ... narrowing what it means be disabled rather than widening ... I would perceive it to be fairly negative* (male, age 22).

Sutherland (1993) validates this view by stating that historically, representations of disability within the media have often been narrow, confused and unimaginative, resulting in the misrepresentation (as cited in Disability Planet, 2012). However, Sutherland believes that this theme within the portrayal of the disabled provides room for innovative writers and film makers to improve and challenge pre-existing norms (as cited in Disability Planet, 2012).

The remaining female participant on the other hand, felt that whilst attitudes may have shifted during the event, long term public perceptions had not changed as a result of the event:

> *Not in the long term ... because people go back to normal and get on with their lives ... it's not something you need to think about on a daily basis* (female, age 19).

The participant's response may suggest that increased consideration towards physically disabled individuals during the event is comparative to a "novelty" in that public interest swiftly shifts back to issues and injustices which affect their everyday lives once the event is over. This potentially highlights the key role which legislators, media and other organisations play in supporting and sustaining emergent perceptions long after the closing ceremony (HM Government & Mayor of London, 2013, p. 71).

Respondents' mixed reception towards the effects of the media may be indicative of work by Dixon and Gibbons (2014), which explores that the way events are promoted, supported and portrayed and are integral in influencing public views on disability (Dixon & Gibbons, 2014).

Did media coverage of the Paralympics change your perception of individuals with physical disabilities?

In contrast to research by the Office for National Statistics and Channel 4, which uncovered that 64% and 53% of respective participants' perceptions had been influenced positively by coverage (HM Government & Mayor of London, 2013, p. 71; Channel 4, 2012), interviews with participants highlighted that 70% of participants (n= 7 males and 7 females) believed Paralympic coverage had little to no impact on their perception of individuals

with physical disabilities. Whilst this percentage may appear stark at first, upon analysis, a positive trend appears to have arisen.

Many interviewees proposed that the reasoning behind their response was that a significant number already held positive belief systems regarding individuals with physical disabilities, with coverage often reinforcing their ideology:

> *Not really, because I kinda had like a positive thing about them anyway with having family members with disabilities* (female, age 21).
> *Not really because I've always been pretty accepting of children with Special Educational Needs and adults, obviously working in schools with children with Special Educational Needs is kinda just second nature, but I can imagine for a lot of other people it would change their minds* (male, age 21).
> *I think perhaps as a SENI student maybe less so because I'm quite aware of it through university … but maybe … made me recognise more how these people are able to compete the same as people who are abled bodied* (female, age 21).

Whilst it is difficult to determine how each participant within this group developed these positive belief systems, the comments displayed above indicate towards education and personal circumstances as the sources of their ideology.   Therefore, relating to an earlier theory, outlined within the methodology, proposed that results may have been influenced by participants' position within education. Work by Watermeyer (2012) and Michalko (2002) reinforces this belief by proposing that individuals' personal and educational experiences play an integral role in constructing personal ideologies of disability (Watermeyer, 2012, p. 176; Michalko, 2002, p. 65). Therefore, by offering individuals opportunities to engage with disability organisations, workshops and individuals, they may develop positive ideologies through empathy, which enables individuals to challenge injustice within their daily lives, the media and wider society (Cole, 2009; Tew et al., 2007).

The remaining 30% of participants (4 males and 2 females) believed that Paralympic coverage had changed their perception of individuals. Respondents within this category attributed their shift in perception to a number of intertwining influences. A prevalent theme within participant's answers appeared to stem from the amazement of seeing disabled individuals displaying remarkable levels of determination and effort:

> *I was amazed that individuals could participate at such a high level within sport; I was surprised by how fast they could run* (female, age 21).
> *It made me realise … how much effort they've had to put in and how determined, how much general work they have to put in* (male, age 21).

Others found Paralympic coverage thought provoking in an aspirational, motivational and admiring way:

> I think that the fact that you see all these people taking part and achieving so much … it just makes you think if they can anybody can achieve what they want … I think it's quite a common thing to look at someone with a disability as less able but if anything sometimes you know that drive makes them more able (male, age 21).

The selection of extracts provided appears to highlight that it is essential that coverage utilizes Paralympians and their achievements to educate, challenge stereotypes and promote positive societal attitudes regarding physical disabilities. Similar research undertaken by Jackson et al. (2014), advocates this view by captivating audiences using the emotive and thrilling nature of athleticism is essential in challenging negative perceptions (Jackson et al., 2014, p. 176). The responses discussed above appear to submit that Paralympic coverage can not only reinforce positive views, but can also positively influence individuals by provoking emotion and offering insight into the issues surrounding disabilities. However, as highlighted by one respondent and by Hudson (2012), coverage is still not perfect and could have a detrimental effect depending on its interpretation.

Do you feel Paralympic coverage affects an individual with a physical disability in any way?

Similar to results found in *Inspired by 2012* (HM Government & Mayor of London 2013) all participants within research believed that Paralympic coverage affected disabled individuals positively. Participants outlined a range of positive influences which they believed affected those with physical difficulties. For example:

> *If you've got someone who's feeling like odd or anything like that because they have a disability they can see something and think actually I can do that because they're participating in sports that we have in the normal Olympics it shows that they can do what everyone else can do, that they're not odd or anything like that for having the disability* (female, age 21).
> *I think it has a positive effect on an individual … if they maybe do see themselves not as able as others and they see someone else achieving then that's going to drive them on and hopefully pick up their own morale really and make them see that they're not as less able as anyone else* (male, age 21).

The responses above align with the views of Richard Whitehead, a gold medal winner at the games, who citied that a key message of London 2012 was the value that disability should not prevent anyone from achieving, in an attempt to inspire disabled individuals (as cited in Scope, 2013). Further positive effects un-earthed by research included representation for the disabled and the promotion of diversity:

> *It would affect positively because it creates the sort of role model perception, especially for athletes and those with similar disabilities obviously can look up to* (male, age 21).
> *It puts the message out there that everyone is completely different* (female, age 19).

Whilst the topic of Paralympians as role models and the surrounding contentious discourse will be explored further within the context of the final interview question (Shakespeare, 2015), it would appear that individuals believe that Paralympians as role models can be empowering or those with disabilities. The scale of positive responses from participants would suggest that Paralympic coverage can positively benefit the lives of individuals by offering inspiration and promoting diversity.

However, in contrast to research cited within the report, in which no-one interviewed felt that the Paralympics had had a negative impact on disabled people (HM Government & Mayor of London, 2013, p. 71), 35% of participants (n= 3 males and 4 females) also referred to negative side effects of coverage within their responses. Three participants believed that Paralympic coverage could distress/upset those with disabilities:

> *People with similar disabilities may feel upset because they can't, so it may demotivate them* (female, age 21).
> *It could kinda upset them they're not able to do it as well* (female, age 21).
> *I suppose it can have a negative impact … if you see somebody in a similar situation doing it and you think I really can't do that or there might be reasons why you can't, say you have a certain disability, it could have a negative impact* (male, age 21).

Upon interpretation of these responses, coverages that perceived the tendency to focus on individuals' disability could be detrimental to some disabled viewers by making them inadequate or disengaged (factors which are counterproductive to empowering individuals with physical disabilities). Work by Scope (2013) with Sophie Christiansen, a gold medal-winning Paralympian, develops this view by submitting the challenge of bridging the gap between the disabled community and Paralympian's by promoting that since not all able bodied individuals are capable of running as fast as Usain Bolt, not all disabled people can be Paralympians, to which there is nothing wrong with (as cited in Scope, 2013). However, it could be argued that feelings of inadequacy experienced by members of the audience may be impossible to prevent due to the nature of coverage of a competitive event. One female participant continued the theme of inadequacy by commenting that the segregated nature of the event was damaging towards individuals:

> *Negatively, because it is "the Paralympics" it might leave people feeling excluded from mainstream society* (female, age 21).

This comment is similar to claims by Ryan (2012), who claims that the lack of integration between the Paralympics and the Olympics promotes the sense that disabled athletes are inherently different to their abled-bodied counterparts. Heath Francis, retired Paralympic athlete and commentator, however, disagrees with claims about merging the events by arguing that despite impossible logistical issues of merging the two, the Paralympics being a stand-alone event demonstrates that disabled athletes can be valued at both a personal and entertaining level without being part of another event (as cited in Young, 2012).

Despite largely positive testimonies, the mixed nature of participants' responses appears to indicate that it is difficult to assess the true effect of Paralympic coverage on individuals with disabilities, as coverage can be viewed both positively and negatively depending on individual perceptions.

Do you think the media coverage of the Paralympics portrays any of the following stereotypes?

To examine the possible tropes cited by Shakespeare (2015), which are purportedly portrayed in media coverage of the Paralympics (Shakespeare, 2015, p. 215), participants were asked if they recognised the description given for "inspirational figure" and "superhero" within media coverage.

Paralympians as Inspirational Figures Stereotype

The majority (85%) of participants recognised that coverage portrayed Paralympians as inspirational figures (n= 10 males and 7 females). Many responses within this category referred to themes in the previous question, by suggesting that Paralympians are portrayed as inspirational figures as a result of the motivational/aspirational effect they are perceived to have on individuals watching coverage. However, an interesting theme which arose within responses attributed the stereotype to the nature of the event and athletics career:

> *Because of the nature of the event … I think that's why they can be presented as an inspirational figure* (female, 21)
> *When you step up to the world stage like this people are going to be watching you, I think it can only be a positive thing when something you're doing for yourself has a knock-on effect to others* (male, 22)
> *I'd say it does that with athletes in general, but especially with the Paralympics* (male, 20)
> *I think they definitely are portrayed as role models, I mean they are celebrities at the end of the day and are treated like other Olympic athletes* (male, 21).

Unlike the approach of Shakespeare (2015) who felt Paralympians were stereotyped as a result of their disability, a significant number of responses, some of which are presented above, appear to suggest that Paralympian's are imparted the label of inspirational figures as a result of their position within sport and society. Work by Davidson (2011), sheds further insight by suggesting that coverages' perceived fascination in focusing on, and promoting individuals may be due to the prevalence of celebrity culture within contemporary media and society, which often presents idealistic images of individuals which are in-vogue (Davidson, 2011, p. 7).

One male and one female were unsure if media coverage portrayed the inspirational athlete trope highlighted by literature:

> *In a way … it motivates people to achieve their dreams, but in a way it's sort of still distinguishing them from normal athletes … but then again you do have athletes that are shown as inspirational figures … so in a way they are being shown as athletes* (female, 21)
> *Partly … in terms of promoting as an inspirational figure due to the event or the athleticism of the athlete* (male, 21).

Participants' responses appear to indicate that a lack of knowledge surrounding the issue may suggest that the line between an athlete and a Paralympian is blurred. Therefore, infers possible affirmative ideologies within participants and touches upon the earlier theme of athletes being heralded as inspirational figures as a result of sport rather than their disability. The remaining 5% (n= 1 female) believed Paralympic coverage did not portray the stereotype, but commented that she could see why Paralympians could be perceived as inspirational figures by audiences.

Superhero Stereotype

Eighteen participants (n= 11 males and 7 females) recognised the superhero stereotype within media coverage of the event, but contrasting themes emerged within participants' responses. For example, a number of respondents suggested that the stereotype was used as material to enhance and attract viewers to the event:

> *I think it does actually … I think it's bizarre that it does so but I also acknowledge why it happens because it give a lot of these events more weight* (male, age 22).
> *Yes … because they gain more attention from it, to get people to notice it* (female, age 19).
> *the media does portray it … for them to get up and go and do something is outstanding … I do think the media do play on it a lot more than what it probably should* (male, age 20).

This theme within responses appears to suggest that the trope is often used to sensationalise the event in order to make it more appealing and entertaining to general audiences, an approach which has been criticised by Hodges et al. (2014), for creating unrealistic expectations of the disabled by portraying representations which differ from the everyday reality of disability (Hodges et al., 2014, p. 4).

One participant recalled seeing a similar stereotype in advertising for the event:

> *Yeah, wasn't there that advert and it was like "the Super Humans" or something?* (female, age 21).

Upon investigation into the participant's claim, it became apparent that Channel 4 used the slogan "Meet the Superhumans" within a television advertisement for the event. Whilst the terming in the advert is "superhuman" rather than superheroes, the phrasing may still be perceived as featuring elements of misrepresentation (Hodges et al., 2014, p. 4).

The Paralympic movement on the other hand, appears to disagree with this perspective by praising the advertisement as "sensational, hard-hitting and goosebump-inducing" which offered an innovative approach that would change attitudes and a "blueprint" for how broadcasters should screen the event (Paralympic Movement, 2012). Other respondents continued this theme by believing that the device was beneficial in that it portrayed the inspirational and aspirational nature of athletes, as a result of their possible effect on individuals, similarly to how superheroes are viewed within their respective reality:

> *I think it does yeah … media often try and portray them as … if this person is disabled yet they can still carry on through, still reach this almost superhuman level of ability and it's something to like aspire to … I suppose it portrays them a bit like a superhero so more people aspire to be like them or hold them up as … hero to themselves* (male, age 20).

Research by Gilbert and Schantz (2009) with disabled athletes, sheds further insight into this theme by highlighting that whilst some distrust was raised, athletes were aware of the "supercrip" model and perceived the trope to be helpful for both disabled and non-disabled audiences by highlighting the "rugged determination" of individuals with disabilities (Gilbert & Schantz, 2009, p. 29).

Despite evidence of being used within coverage, two participants claimed to have not seen the stereotype portrayed by the media; however, this is understandable as individuals may have simply not seen the advertisement or did not perceive the theme within promotion or coverage.

Findings and Implications

Results from research appear to suggest that the majority of participants perceived Paralympic coverage to be empowering to those with physical disabilities. The majority (90%) of participants believed coverage had positively influenced public perception due to positive and accessible promotion of disability.

Coverage consolidated participants' positive beliefs towards physically disabled individuals, whilst also influencing others in a positive manner, due to Paralympians' displays of remarkable levels of determination and effort. Furthermore, evidence from research infers that coverage is beneficial towards individuals with physical disabilities, as it was perceived by respondents that it provides empowering qualities such as inspiration/motivation. Contradictory evidence (as shown above) implicates that some participants believed coverage to be detrimental through misrepresentation and a potential source of distress.

Results from research appear to align with the view of Shakespeare (2015) in that the majority of participants recognised both the "inspirational figure" and "superhero" stereotypes within media coverage of the Paralympics. Participants and supportive literature aligned with Shakespeare in the view that the presentation of archetypal stereotypes can be damaging to individuals by setting unfair expectations (Shakespeare, 2015). However, in contrast to these individuals, participants also believed that the stereotypes could also be advantageous in coverage by enthralling viewers and challenging existing norms.

This collection of mixed views is to be expected as media coverage may be classed as an art form, therefore, being open to interpretation (Solis, 2013). Consequentially, media can never be considered as perfect and so anecdotal evidence cannot be generalised to the wider population.

Whilst research aims to contribute to the discourse which surrounds the Paralympics and its presentation of the disabled and disability sport, the scale of research presents limitations. However, the media, research and discussion produced in reaction to London 2012, some of which is presented within this research, may influence upcoming coverage of the Paralympics - Rio 2016 (Paralympic Movement, 2015c).

Additionally, incorporating the views of disabled individuals would have improved the reliability of research and augmented results by providing appropriate insight into the effects of Paralympic coverage from those with disabilities. However, due to sampling methodology, accessibility, and potential ethical issues this was simply not possible.

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A contemporary insight towards the challenges of including children with Special Educational Needs in the classroom
Hayley Scott

Abstract

A number of sources have advocated the importance of unifying the ideology of inclusion with educational happenings. In particular, advocates of inclusion highlight the powerful mechanism for social and cultural empowerment it can provide for children with disabilities. Yet, conversely, teachers have frequently cited a number of barriers towards implementing inclusive policies, thus, suggesting that the ideal of inclusive educational practice has not yet been achieved. Therefore, this project considers teachers' perceptions of the barriers towards including children with disabilities in the classroom, whilst also seeking to elicit the strategies offered to overcome them. As a means of uncovering teachers' perspectives, the study obtained qualitative data from five semi-structured interviews, from a mainstream primary school. In accordance with the literature, findings demonstrate that teachers perceive a lack of time, and the often challenging behavioural needs of students, as the most prominent barriers towards achieving inclusivity. In order overcome these barriers, findings concur with the literature further, to show that the majority of teachers choose to collaborate with fellow members of staff, or make adaptations to curricular demands. However, interview findings served to highlight contradictory data in relation to collaboration with more senior members of staff. As a result, this study suggests that further research is needed in order to secure a more reliable, and accurate representation of practice.

Introduction

The importance of inclusion is a multifaceted and complex concept. Reynolds (1989), as cited in Frederickson and Cline (2009, p. 69) have aptly synthesised the ideal of inclusion with education, defining the underpinning ideals of inclusive education as 'a progressive trend for taking increasing responsibility for educating groups previously excluded from society'. In addition, an abundance of local and global initiatives have placed a further responsibility on those working within education to achieve both inclusive and equitable practice (The Education Act, 1970; The Equality Act, 2010; The Salamanca Statement, 1994). However, whilst inclusion presents a harmonious ideal, it has not been inaugurated without challenge; as within the context of education, many pupils are still challenged by issues of segregation, exclusion and marginalisation (McHatton et al., 2012). Thus, the aim of this study is to provide a contemporary insight towards the challenges of including children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in the classroom; specifically exploring the perceptions of five mainstream primary school teachers. However, due to the small sample size, and mainstream focus, findings may lack representativeness of the overall teaching profession.

Literature Review

The ideology of inclusion is a rarely contested one, with many scholars viewing inclusive education as a mechanism for the restructuring of cultures and practices in order to better respond to diversity (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; DESA, 2009; Herbert, 2011). Yet, despite these ideals, Vehkakoski (2008, p. 498) contends that 'whilst inclusion receives a positive press, teachers find it really difficult in practice'. Hence, it is not surprising that the barriers teachers encounter towards implementing inclusive practice have been at the forefront of

much research (Ali et al., 2006; Chen & Miller, 1997; Shade & Stewart, 2001). When considering the literature, Salvia and Munson (1986, as cited in Morley et al., 2005, p. 91) pertinently summarise the key arguments to arise from the literature in categorising barriers as either 'teacher-related variables' or 'child-related variables'. Therefore, the next section of this review explores teacher-related variables, and then child-related variables.

Teacher-related variables

When considering the implementation of inclusive practice, it is plausible to suggest that the most prevalent barrier, as cited by teachers, is a lack of knowledge in meeting the individual needs of all students (Fuchs, 2010; Lawson et al., 2006; Rouse, 2008). A key study undertaken by Skies et al. (2007) serves to illustrate this. Through holding interviews with a range of primary and secondary school teachers in the South-West of England, Skies et al. (2007) aimed to investigate practitioners' experiences and understandings of inclusion. From their research, it was concluded that whilst the majority of practitioners (97%) were supportive of inclusion, in practice, they were ambivalent about their own competency of meeting the needs of all learners. These tensions illustrate what the researchers come to define as the 'yes... but' of inclusive practice (p. 357).

However, it should be noted that the results of this study may have been subjected to researcher-bias; as the findings were presented as autobiographical investigations (and thus were heavily subjected to the researchers' own interpretations). Nonetheless, the results of Skies' et al. (2007) research were corroborated by previously conducted studies (Mastropieri, 2001; Overton, 2006), in which a lack of knowledge/ appropriate training was the most significantly cited barrier towards attaining inclusive practice. A particularly compelling study is that of Ring and Travers' (2005), who aimed to investigate the barriers towards inclusion faced by a pupil (James), with Special Educational Needs (SEN), in a mainstream school in Ireland. Through adopting a socio-metric observational technique, and undertaking a range of interviews with four of James' teachers, it became apparent that the teachers expressed a lack of knowledge and training as the most predominant barrier towards meeting James' individual needs, and that more specifically, the participants constituted a specialist-esoteric pedagogy (however, results could have been compromised by the observer-effect). Drawing upon the previous sources, it is possible to agree with Morley et al. (2005, p. 89) who hypothesise that if a lack of knowledge of how to meet the needs of students with SEN is an issue for teachers; it is unsurprising that the greater the degree of adaption required, the greater perceived the challenge. However, such discussions may be criticised for overlooking another prominent theme across the literature, barriers that arise due to 'tensions within the classroom environment' (Clark et al., 1999, p. 163).

Educators have persistently cited a lack of time and access to resources as a barrier towards achieving inclusive practice (Leatherman, 2007; Mackenzie, 2009; Mackenzie, 2011). In a broad review of the literature, Avrarmdis and Norwich (2002, p. 141) proclaim that the most common barriers for teachers include: overcrowded classrooms, a lack of access to support, and an inadequate amount of allocated planning time. Similarly, research conducted by Mackenzie (2009) has served to augment this perspective. Through interviewing three focus groups (compiled of teachers, SENCOs and teaching assistants from London), Mackenzie (2009)

identified that the majority of participants felt that a lack of time to differentiate for the needs of all students was the greatest barriers towards achieving inclusive practice. However, whilst Mackenzie's (2009) research makes a strong case, the relatively small sample (n=33), may hinder the overall generalizability of results. Yet, in a somewhat more reliable study, transnational quantitative research conducted by Croll and Moses (2000) yielded similar findings, concluding that 'eighty-nine percent (n=571) of teachers, believed that their ability to teach other students effectively, is reduced by having a child with a disability in their classroom' (p. 6). Hence, the following paragraph will discuss the key-arguments in relation to child-related barriers.

Child-related variables

When considering child-related variables, a plethora of research suggests that teachers perceive the behaviour of children with more complex disabilities as a barrier towards achieving inclusive practice (Coates, 2012; Glazzard, 2011; Vickerman & Coates, 2009; Winter, 2006). In order to better conceptualise this argument, it is possible to drawn upon a study undertaken in Australia by Forlin (2001). Exercising a different research method than that used typically across the literature, Forlin (2001) adopted a measuring instrument in order to identify potential stressors for teachers in relation to implementing inclusive practice. From this study, Forlin (2001) was able to identify that over 70% of the teachers reported the behaviour of children with disabilities as a barrier towards achieving inclusive practice. What is more, the results of this study are particularly reliable due to the large-scale sample (a total of 571 teachers). In a similar stance, Avarmidis et al. (2000) surveyed 48 secondary school teachers from a range of school constituencies within the UK, and revealed that whilst a social-ethical discourse underpinned the teachers' support towards inclusive principles, there was a strong consensus that inclusive principles could not necessarily be applied to students with behaviour difficulties, (thus echoing Skies' et al., (2007) 'yes...but' notion). Extending this argument further, a more contemporary outlook is that of Travers et al. (2010), who articulate that teachers are challenged by a multitude of barriers in relation to students with behavioural difficulties, and that less notably; these barriers can extend to include absenteeism and non-completion of homework. However, teachers' alleged scepticism towards including children with behavioural difficulties is not without challenge. For example, through surveying both mainstream and special educational needs teachers from America, Familia-Garcia (2001) articulated that the majority of participants welcomed including pupils with behavioural difficulties, but felt that inclusive practices would not be met well by the parents of non-disabled children.

Strategies

In summary, it is clear that, although inclusive ideals have been at the forefront of many educational policies, at the micro level, teachers appear to be challenged by a complex array of barriers. However, in order to overcome such barriers, Weiner (2003) asserts that it is crucial for teachers to devise, and make use of, a range of strategies. When considering the research upon strategies, the literature has elicited persistent themes, with the most cited strategy being the importance of establishing what Sullivan (1998) has termed the: 'safe environment', and the importance of teamwork in order to achieve this (Cheminais, 2009; DuFour, 2004; Tutt, 2007).

In a more in-depth analysis, Sullivan (1998, p. 182) contends that inclusive ideologies will only be made a reality by collaborative teamwork amongst the school community, (thus, establishing a 'safe environment'). In agreement with this view, the strongest argument to date is made by Mortier et al. (2010, p. 351).

Through group-interviewing a wide range of inclusion-support teams in Belgium, Mortier et al. (2010) corroborated that the most effective strategies for meeting the inclusive needs of students, are based in real-life (local) knowledge, mutual engagement and accountability. Nonetheless, the decision to use group-interview as a method of data collection may have restricted the results of the study, particularly when considering that the participants may have given socially-desirable answers due to the sensitive nature of the research-topic. In this vein, the use of one-to-one interviews may have been more appropriate. However, whilst the preceding sources serve to make strong arguments at the structural level of schooling; they do not exemplify the necessary conditions for achieving inclusive practice at the classroom level. From this perspective, Evans (2007, p. 18) aptly emphasises that practitioners should be thinking about the pupil being disadvantaged in terms of time, effort and inconvenience needed to achieve what for others is easy. Considering this argument further, research has suggested that modifying pedagogical/ curricular demands are vital strategies towards achieving inclusive practice (Hoare & Taylor, 2005; Lawrence-Brown, 2004; Swartz, 2009). In an extended view of differentiation, a particularly interesting outlook is that of Arbouet's (2010). Throughout this study, the researchers deployed a 'project approach' to meet the needs of children in an Early Years setting. Upon reflection of the project, the authors emphasised 'the necessity of differentiating access to the curriculum from the onset, rather than making adaptations *after* the curriculum has been developed' (p. 26). Thus, the researchers came to identify inclusion as a continuous process of evaluation, rather than a series of rigid adaptations; albeit, this study should be treated tentatively, as there is no empirical evidence to ascertain the effectiveness of the project-approach.

In summary, this research aimed to offer a contemporary perspective, in critically considering whether, despite over two decades worth of inclusive legislation, teachers are still facing barriers towards including children with disabilities in the classroom. Thus, this study serves to ask: what are teachers' perceptions of the barriers towards including children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in the classroom? As a secondary question, it seeks to fill a gap in the literature through examining the strategies that teachers utilize to manage such barriers. In order to achieve this aim, this research-project partially replicates a study undertaken by Glazzard (2011), through gaining qualitative data into the perceptions of mainstream primary school teachers.

Methodology

The sample in the study was local (one mainstream primary school in North Derbyshire), and consisted of five teachers (ranging from Reception to Year Six). Approximately 80% of the participants were female, with a mean experience as teachers of 7.54 years. The sample of participants was selected via non-random 'convenience sampling' (Walliman, 2006), as certain practitioners were the most accessible within the limited

time-frame. As the study was concerned with participants' perceptions, (which each participate actively constructs and interprets); the research operated largely within the constructivist/ qualitative paradigm (Baumgarten, 2012; Kouritzin et al., 2009). From this perspective, it is plausible to agree with Poni (2014, p. 410), who notes that constructivist researchers adopt a relativistic approach, maintaining that 'there is no external reality independent of human consciousness'; hence, researchers in this paradigm seek to understand rather than explain (Mack, 2010, p. 8). Additionally, the method used within the replica study further aided the decision to elect interview as a method of data collection (Glazzard, 2011). However, whilst Glazzard's (2011) study adopted a focus-group approach to undertaking interviews, due to the sensitive nature of the research-project (students with SEN), and the possibility of respondents giving 'socially desirable answers' (Bloor, 2001; Brinkmann & Vale, 2014; Denscombe, 2010); for the purpose of this research-project, five one-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted.

Throughout the entirety of the research-process, both the British Educational Research Association's (BERA)'s (2011) and Bishop Grosseteste University's (BGU) (2013) research ethics policies were adhered to in the highest regard, thus protecting the welfare of all participants. In order to further establish ethical appropriateness, no data could be collected before the researcher's ethics form had been approved. What is more, when considering that 'ethical issues arise when researching sensitive situations', (BERA, 2011, p. 6); a particular effort was made to assure participants that the interviews were not a test of competence (as executed within Morley et al.'s (2005) methodology. Furthermore, all participants were made aware of the voluntary nature of the research-project, and were reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. To ensure confidentiality across the study, no participants' names were disclosed and all participants were assured of their anonymity within the finalised version.

When conducting interviews, Bell (1999, p. 141) asserts that, in order to maintain validity, it is best practice to organise a venue in which disruptions are highly unlikely. Hence, all interviews were hosted within an appropriate environment. To ensure ethical solidity, participants gave their 'written informed consent' to be audio-recorded (Lambert, 2008, p. 72). In relation to data-recording, both field-notes and audio-recording were used; thus, minimizing the potential of interviewer bias within note-taking (Wellington and Szczerbinski, 2007, p. 86). Upon analysis, all questions were analysed via themed content analysis (Sharp, 2009, p. 112). In order to ensure reliability throughout this process, the audio-recordings were transcribed with reference to the field notes (Denscombe, 2010, p. 276).

With regards to reliability, the use of semi-structured interviews produced a large amount of standardised data, as respondents were able to answer similar questions within a flexible framework (Dearnley, 2005, p. 22). However, reliability may have potentially been compromised as a result of the 'interviewer effect' (Adler & Clark, 2007, p. 237). In order to overcome this, the interviewer adopted a neutral stance towards the responses given (Denscombe, 2010, p. 179). Nonetheless, Marsden and Wright (2010, p. 441) argue that the interviewer effect is characteristic of how the interviewee perceives the interviewer. In this light, reliability

may have been impeded upon, particularly when considering that the interviewer regularly volunteers within the school.

Presentation and Analysis of Findings

What are teachers' perceptions of the barriers towards including children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in the classroom?

Throughout the course of the data collection process, five, individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted. It is important to note that due to the small-scale nature of the research process, interviewees were not invited to discuss their understandings or definitions of inclusion; rather, the interviews remained closely focused upon the barriers that teachers encounter towards including children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) within a mainstream context (thus, for the purpose of this project, inclusion is considered from a situational perspective). Where the text cites interview data, pseudo-names have been allocated (Denscombe, 2010; Sharp, 2009).

Time

Upon analysis, the most cited barrier towards achieving inclusive practice was time. This was a particularly significant finding, with all five participants citing a lack of time as affecting the implementation of inclusive practice. When considering the literature, this was a largely expected finding; thus, can be closely aligned with the research of Leatherman (2007) and Overton (2006), whose studies both suggest that teachers perceive a lack of time as detrimental towards achieving inclusive practice. Yet, in order to gain a more in-depth perspective of how time affects inclusive practice, findings from the second layer of content analysis (Sharp, 2009, p. 114), can be viewed below under a series of key questions.

How does time act as a barrier towards achieving inclusive practice?

> *Mr. Cooper: Time is a huge issue. Take my year six class for example; there are 30 pupils in my class that will, in some way need my support- if I have to direct my time at the 5 pupils with SEN- the other 25 are missing out on key teaching time. (*sighs*).*

When considering this question, Mr. Cooper cites a lack of time as a barrier towards achieving inclusive practice, (tacitly correlating with research by Leatherman, 2007 and Overton, 2006), but continues to advocate that he is also challenged by the notion of *sharing* his time equally, and that underlying this challenge, is the fear of a loss of learning on behalf of the other students. Moreover, additional interview data further corroborates this perspective:

> *Ms. Campbell: To be honest, it's quite difficult time-wise. For instance, if I spend that extra ten minutes working one-one with Laurie, I'm worried that the other 29 children will fall behind.*

From this perspective, findings are perhaps better explained by Croll and Moses (2000) who hypothesise that almost 90% of teachers feel that their ability to teach other students effectively is reduced by having a child with a disability in their classroom. It could be suggested that both Mr. Cooper and Ms. Campell's anxieties arise from the dichotomy of treating all learners the same and responding to their individual needs (Terzi's dilemma of difference theory, 2005), and that at the root of such concerns, is the fact that 'in almost every instance, teachers consider that they are personally held accountable for the child's educational outcomes' (Forlin, 2001, p. 239). Yet, it is also important to note that findings may have been largely contextually bound, due to the mainstream setting in which the research was conducted. In light of this argument, research by Marks-Woolfson and Brady (2009) serves to illustrate that mainstream teachers have typically less positive views upon the propensities of learners with disabilities, when compared to their special school colleagues. Nonetheless, before coming to such bold conclusions, supplementary research would need to be attained (ideally with a sample compromised of both special and mainstream school teachers). However, differing responses should not be ignored, and by contrast, interview data from a different participant served to highlight an alternate perspective:

How does time act as a barrier towards achieving inclusive practice?

> *Miss Haddon: to achieve inclusive practice you really need to meet the needs of all the learners in your class, but in terms of time- it's impossible. I am still expected to provide the same curriculum to all of the children, and show that all pupils are making progress regardless of if they have an SEN or not. How is that possible?*

Here, Miss Haddon makes it explicitly clear that she perceives a lack of time as a barrier towards achieving inclusive practice, (thus, correlating with previous findings by Leatherman, 2007 and Overton, 2006). However, she extends to elaborate in citing a lack of time as synonymous with meeting the needs of all students, as opposed to compromising her teaching time. Whilst this finding refutes the interview data from Figure 1, and in consequence, the previously conducted study of Croll and Moses (2000); findings can be closely aligned to Mackenzie's (2009) study, in which the majority of participants felt that 'a lack of time to differentiate for the needs of all students, was the greatest barriers towards achieving inclusive practice' (p. 6).

From this perspective, it may be plausible to suggest that the issues raised by Miss Haddon are about the heightened expectations upon teachers to meet the needs of an increasingly complex and diverse pupil population, in line with rapid policy developments over the past thirty years (Baker, 2009; Richards, 2010). In this vein, findings strongly suggest that a lack of time is further exacerbated as a barrier towards achieving inclusive practice, when coupled with government-accountability demands. Albeit, a limitation of this study is that it is only representative of primary school teachers, thus, a more diverse sample may potentially relay different findings. Conversely, such a small-sample size may also have hindered confidence in the overall significance of results, so should be treated tentatively.

Behaviour

An additional theme to emerge from the interview data was the challenging behavioural issues that teachers often associated to including children with Special Educational Needs. Out of the five teachers interviewed, four cited behavioural issues, making it the second most prominent barrier overall. This is particularly striking when considering that 'successful inclusion is dependent upon the positive attitudes of school personnel, particularly teachers' (Sharma et al., 2006, p. 85). When compared to the literature, this finding was largely anticipated, and thus, compares favourably to the studies of Avarmidis and Norwich, (2002); Glazzard (2011); Travers et al., (2010), in which the paradox of applying inclusive principles to students with behaviour difficulties was highlighted as a key issue. Thus, in order to further uncover this finding, it is necessary to draw upon the interview responses as shown below.

How does the behaviour of pupils with SEN affect the implementation of inclusive practice?

> *Mrs. Oak: Just last year, I had a child with BESD (behavioural, emotional and social difficulties) in my class and it was quite tough to include him- especially because you don't get any training on how to handle such needs- it's sink or swim a lot of the time! (*shakes head*)*
>
> *Mr. Garbett: of course there's the challenge of behaviour too. You can spend hours and hours planning a fantastic lesson- and if there's a behavioural outburst from just that one pupil, it can throw the whole class off-task.*

Here, both teachers state that they are challenged by the behavioural needs of students when striving to achieve inclusive practices, although for different reasons. For example, Mrs. Oak states that whilst she finds the behaviour of pupils with BESD challenging, she appears to suggest that, underpinning this frustration, is a lack of training. When compared to the literature, findings largely agree with a vast amount of research (Mastropieri, 2001; Overton, 2006; Ring & Travers, 2005), in which it is argued that the majority of teachers require more training in order to address students' specific needs. What is more, Mrs. Oak's concerns are perhaps unsurprising, especially when considering that the 'SEN and inclusive aspects of initial teacher training have been a policy backwater for many years' (Norwich & Nash, 2011, p. 9); henceforth, without a coherent plan for teacher training in the behavioural needs of children with SEN, attempts to include these children in the mainstream will continue to be difficult (Nilholm & Alm, 2010). In a similar vein, a surplus of alternative research augments that, the level of training available to teachers, has consistently been associated with higher levels of self-efficacy in relation to the implementation of inclusive practice (Armstrong et al., 2010; Slee, 2011). From this perspective, Mrs. Oak's concerns could potentially be correlated to a sense of low 'teacher self-efficacy' due to a lack of training (Soodak et al., 1993).

On the contrary, Mr. Garbett attributes the challenging behavioural needs of students with SEN to a loss of learning time. Whilst this finding implicitly contradicts the response given by Mrs. Oak and the corresponding literature (Nilhom & Alm, 2010; Norwich & Nash, 2011); Mr. Garbett's perception of behaviour as synonymous with impeding upon other students' learning, is somewhat reminiscent of Forlin's (2001) notion of teacher

accountability. However, it should be noted that the year group in which Mr. Garbett teaches (year six), may have hindered the validity of findings. For instance, Clough and Lindsay (1991) hypothesise that, for teachers more concerned with educational-outcomes, the presence of children with SEN in the class is a problem from the practical point of view of managing class productivity. This suggestion poses a particular limitation in relation to the validity of this study, particularly when considering the period of time in which the data was collected (three weeks before Key-Stage Two Standard Assessment Tests (SAT) examinations). In addition, a further limitation of this study is that no teaching was observed. Therefore, the responses given may conflict happenings in practice. In consequence, findings should be treated tentatively, and should not be viewed as being representative of the entire teaching population.

In summary, the findings in this section have illustrated that despite the policy rhetoric of inclusive practice, teachers continue to cite a lack of time and the behavioural needs of students with Special Educational Needs as the main barriers towards achieving inclusive practice. What is more, these barriers are often exacerbated by 'sub-barriers' such as a lack of training and a loss of learning on behalf of the other students within the classroom. Hence, the most appropriate question to ask now is: what strategies do teachers offer to overcome such barriers?

What strategies do teachers offer to overcome the barriers towards achieving inclusive practice?

In a similar manner to the research conducted in the previous section, five practitioners were interviewed, thus the overarching aim was to elicit an in-depth perspective of the strategies that teachers offer to overcome the barriers towards including students with SEN in the classroom environment.

Team-work

Upon analysis, results highlighted that the most commonly cited strategy was team work, with all five participants speaking about the importance of collaboration in order to manage time-related barriers. Retrospectively, such broad findings did not come as a surprise, and when compared to the literature, seemingly correlate with those of Sullivan (1998), Tutt (2007) and Chenalsis (2009), in which the importance of collaborative teamwork amongst staff is regarded as a key enabler of inclusivity. From a similar stance, it is also possible to loosely relate findings to the outlook of Mumford and Chandler (2009), who state that at the heart of a school's capacity to support inclusion, is their ability to collaborate. However, in order to further analyse the specifics of teamwork as a strategy, it is necessary to consider the data obtained within the interviews.

How does team-work serve to manage time-related barriers?

> *Mr. Garbett: It's all about team-work. You are always pressed for time in this job (teaching), and as a result, you have to work together in order to maintain that commitment to sustaining, and developing, inclusive practice. I firmly believe that working together, and sharing your experiences with fellow staff-members is the key to working towards inclusive practice.*

> *Miss Haddon: collaboration, collaboration, collaboration! Mr. Garbett and I (fellow KS2 teacher) always collaborate in order to come up with time-savvy strategies! It's the best way really, as we are the ones who have that rich, in-depth, knowledge of our pupils!*

Here, both respondents' viewpoints mirror the previously cited literature upon teamwork, yet when considered at a more in-depth level, the answers serve to illustrate both Mr. Garbett's and Miss Haddon's perception of teamwork as grounded in strategies that are immediately relevant to them. In this light, findings appear to be contradictory when compared to Mrs. Oak's concerns upon a lack of formal training. Although, when considered in relation to the literature, findings can again be aligned to Sullivan's (1998) notion of the 'safe environment'; what is more, Mortier's (2010) concept of 'local knowledge and mutual engagement' is also implied too. Thus when considered in relation to this study, findings could imply that in order to manage the barriers towards achieving inclusive practice due to time constraints, the practitioners within this sample found it effective to make us of collaborative strategies derived from 'local knowledge'. Extending this finding further, alternative research conducted by Hunt et al. (2003) corroborates that when drawing upon local-knowledge, staff become empowered as a result of their own understandings, as opposed to externally imposed interventions. Mr. Garbett and Miss Haddon work within the same Key-Stage and as a result, may have established a particularly efficient ideal in relation to teamwork, thus compromising the overall validity of results. Nonetheless, interview data from an alternative participant served to add a further dimension:

> *Mr. Cooper: you've got to be in constant liaison with the head teacher, or so I believe. At the classroom level, you can only do so much- so you've just got to be collaborating with senior members of staff to ensure that your vision of inclusion is what is best for that child.*

From this stance, findings from this particular respondent highlight the importance of collaborating with the head teacher. Whilst Mr. Cooper's perspective certainly builds upon Sullivan's (1998) notion of the 'safe environment'; such a particular finding is perhaps better explained by Donaldson (2002) who warrants that, at school-level, teachers need to become empowered via dynamic leadership in order to become change agents of inclusive practice. Findings serve to suggest that an effective strategy for overcoming the barriers towards achieving inclusive practice is collaboration with the head teacher *in addition to* fellow teachers. However, the reliability of such findings may be somewhat limited. For example, Avramidis and Norwich (2002, p. 131) have recognised that whilst head teachers are found to hold more positive attitudes towards implementing inclusion policies, this may be in part owing to their typically more distant relationships with students. Considering this outlook in relation to this study, findings appear ambiguous. Additionally, it should not be disregarded that Mr. Cooper may have given 'socially desirable answers' in order to avoid a degrading of professional skills (Gillard, 2005).

Modification of the curriculum

Upon further analysis, the second most cited strategy towards achieving inclusive practice was differentiation, with four out of five participants making reference to adapting curricular constraints and demands. When

compared to previous studies, findings align with those of Lawrence-Brown (2004), Hoare and Taylor (2005) and Swartz (2009), whose research cites differentiation of the curriculum as tantamount with achieving inclusive practice for children with SEN. Thus, interview data serves to further augment the use of differentiation:

How does the use of differentiation serve to overcome the barriers towards achieving inclusive practice?

> *Ms. Campbell: I want all my pupils to achieve, and for that to become a reality, I have to demonstrate a high expectation of all my learners, and I do that through differentiation.*
>
> *Mr. Garbett: in my experience, pupils with SEN often become frustrated by the sheer amount of pressure that formal learning demands. So for me, in order to avoid that frustration, and 'low-perception of self', I think you've really got to differentiate. Yeah. (*smiles*).*

Here, both teachers state that they find it effective to differentiate, (aligning with the research cited across this section), although for different reasons. Ms. Campbell states that she differentiates in order to maintain a climate of high expectations, so as that all her pupils can access the curriculum. Thus, Ms. Campbell's perception may compare more favourably to alternative research by Pratt (2002) who maintains that in order to offer students with SEN a broad and balanced curriculum, practitioners must demonstrate high expectations for all children, so as to avoid marginalisation. On the contrary, Mr. Garbett undertakes a 'social-model paradigm' (Kellet, 2004) and attributes differentiation to managing the behaviour of children with typically more challenging needs. This perspective largely correlates with the recognition that due to the seemingly rigid nature of the curriculum, educators must modify and differentiate their pedagogy so as to allow all students to achieve (Hoare & Taylor, 2005; Swartz, 2009). Yet, it should be noted that this finding may be largely contextually bound as the school within the sample placed a particular emphasis upon differentiation with regards to its inclusion policy. As a result, future research may compare the strategies of schools wherein emphasis on differentiation is high, to a school in which focus on differentiation is low.

Conclusions and Implications

Overall, findings served to highlight that teachers perceive a combination of both teacher and child-related variables as a barrier towards including children with SEN in the classroom, thus, concurring with surrounding research (Avarmidis & Norwich, 2002; Glazzard, 2011). What is more, findings further agreed with research in relaying that teachers are often further challenged by a lack of time within the curriculum, and the often exigent behaviour of some children with SEND (Ring & Travers, 2005).

At school-level, this might be used as a starting point for the school to analyse how they can achieve further inclusivity for their pupil population. Whilst at local-level, findings could be used to consider any particular areas in which staff may benefit from enhanced professional development or support. However, as the sample was obtained through random-convenience sampling, findings can only be applied to that context (Walliman, 2006); thus, additional research would need to be pursued before sanctioning further action.

When considering strategies, findings correlated to suggest that peer-collaboration and differentiation are perceived as effective strategies to managing the barriers towards achieving inclusive practice (Chenalsis, 2009; Sullivan, 1998; Tutt, 2007). However, some areas remained ambiguous such as collaborative working between practitioner and head-teacher. In this light, it may be of interest to direct future research to consider whether this is characteristic in relation to class-teachers, or whether staff members within alternative roles and contexts (special schools) also relay such findings. Similarly, the reliability of findings may have been impeded upon when considering that only one method of data collection was used. Thus, additional research may seek to incorporate observation as a method of data-collection, in order to better contextualise, and triangulate findings. In addition, some findings were not analysed in sufficient depth due to the small-scale nature of the study, and the ambitious aim of including a secondary research question. Therefore, if research was conducted again, this would be prevented by considering barriers and strategies in separate studies.

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Do children express their emotions creatively through art?
Lucy Staves

Abstract

This research study focuses on the way in which four and five year old children express their emotions through creative artwork, colour and picture choice. The research took place in a primary school setting within a small market town with around 300 pupils. Primary data was collected from six pupils (random sampling) using a range of methods including observations with focussed questions, a structured individual drawing task and short questionnaires for the children to complete with support from the researcher. The key findings of the study were that children's colour choice does vary depending on their emotions and the darker, less vibrant colours were often linked to negative emotions; black, brown, grey and white. It was also found that children often linked the choice of colours they used to express positive emotions to preferences with them being their favourite colours. When expressing their emotions, children drew objects or items that were linked with positive or negative feelings or past experiences demonstrating that emotions can be conveyed creatively through art.

Introduction

A research project was conducted with the purpose of exploring how children convey their emotions through creative artwork. The research title was 'do children express their emotions creatively through art?' Following this, two research questions were created; 'Are colour choices in creative activities reflective of mood state?' and 'Do the pictures created reflect positive or negative aspects of the children's lives?' This research study was carried out whilst on placement at 'Patgus Primary School' which is a larger than average primary school consisting of approximately 300 pupils in a small rural market town; the next local Primary School is around two miles away. The collective goal that 'Patgus School' strives for is 'Learning Together for Life.' There are also six values that are prioritised within the school; being caring, being honest, being committed to achieve, showing respect, cooperating and being fair (Patgus Primary School, 2015). Children are guided, cared for and supported to reach their full potential socially, academically and emotionally through close partnerships with the community and parents. The school is made up of ten classes and ten teaching staff along with eleven teaching assistants and one learning support assistant (Patgus Primary School, 2015). The school also has additional members of staff such as the SEN Co-ordinator (SENCO) and intervention support teacher as well.

The aim and purpose of this study is to gather information regarding whether or not children within the reception class express their emotions creatively through artwork such as painting and drawing and to determine whether feelings can be assessed through colour and picture choices. The study is beneficial in helping to support practitioners recognise when children are experiencing emotionally difficult periods in their lives and in turn, practices can be implemented to support these children positively in regaining a more stable mind state. Hopperstad (2010) supports that children's emotions and feelings can be displayed through their artwork but also how children often illustrate how they feel through actions of drawing it onto paper as opposed to choosing a specific colour for a purpose related to their emotions.

The 'Patgus Primary School' implements a curriculum policy in which one of their aims and objectives is to enable children to be creative and develop their own thinking (Patgus Curriculum Policy, 2014, p. 1). Art and design and technology are subjects which are both taught through the International Primary Curriculum, and through the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (EYFS). Through these curriculums, children's skills and experiences are aimed to be developed upon (Patgus Curriculum Policy, 2014, p. 2). Children attending the foundation stage classes at 'Patgus Primary School' in reception classes aged between four and five years old, are encouraged to learn through play and engage in well-planned structured activities (Patgus Curriculum Policy, 2014, p. 3). This inspires children to use creativity to display their feelings and emotions, which is especially significant due to the age of the children, as some may not have developed their speech, language and/or confidence enough to communicate their feelings at this age.

'Patgus Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) Report' (2013, p. 4) recognised that children in the reception class settled quickly into school routines and made good progress to reach both average and above average standards when entering their year one classes. A stimulating learning environment was displayed both indoors and out enabling children to partake in exciting and creative opportunities supporting their confidence in learning. A vast range of creative activities were apparent during the course of this study and resources were provided both indoors and outdoors when on placement with some themed to the topic being learnt about that week and others being openly accessible all year round enabling children to use their imagination to create any artwork they desired using the resources available.

The rationale for this study includes the need to both understand and appreciate the artwork of children in their early years. This is valuable when examining such artwork in depth, a lot can be revealed about each individual. Individual happiness could also be more readily achieved during their education if the feelings expressed through creativity were recognised and supported, as often children are not brave enough to verbalise their emotions at a young age. Wright (2010) supports this idea with the argument that art and learning combined with imagination reaches a peak during early childhood, before gradually declining as the child gets older. Wright (2010) also states that children are able to make-meaning of their experiences through art helping to engage their minds, hearts and bodies. The interpretations of every individual's drawings are crucial in determining how children are feeling. Personal motivation also contributed towards the research choice as through previous placement experiences, it was discovered how much of their lives children recreate through drawings and art activities which created an incentive to find out whether colour choices link to emotions.

The creativity initiative by National College for School Leadership (NCSL) 'Developing Creativity for Learning in the Primary School' further influenced the decision to research children's creativity, as it highlighted the importance of encouraging children and providing opportunities to be creative during their education. This initiative involves encouraging children to think and behave creatively and imaginatively, which gives purpose

to such creative activities. Children are encouraged to generate something original and practitioners should view all outcomes as valuable (NCSL, 2004, p. 6).

Limitations of the study must be acknowledged which include the time taken to carry out such research in a busy well-planned early years classroom, whereby the activities change on a daily basis. This made the children very excited to be engaged in the range of themed activities provided, instead of partaking in specific tasks towards the research study. A further limitation is only having a period of fourteen days in placement to complete the research, as the window of opportunity to conduct the research was narrow. This resulted in the sample size having to be kept small meaning only six children were chosen using random sampling.

Literature Review

When exploring children's creativity during the foundation stage of primary school, Jolley (2010, p. 8) states how their drawings were first of interest in the late 18th century by Romantic artists whom recognised the innocence of the artwork children produced. In the 20th century, the value of children's artwork was increasingly recognised, when their drawings were seen to represent meaning and realism. Anning and Ring (2004, p. 1) also value that mark making and drawing helps children in establishing meaning in their education. Drawing is one way in which children communicate in instances when they lack the speech and understanding of what they are trying to explain. Feelings, interests, sense of self and personal aesthetics can also be reflected through the child's creative work (Anning & Ring, 2004, p. 1).

Willarts (2005, p. 1) states that drawing rules for children differ from those used by adults. Children's drawings are believed to be a copy of a perceptual image from life and memory combined with other images from their imagination. Faulkner and Coates (2011, p. 112) add that children's drawings show expression and developmental patterns which are seen within the foundation stage curriculum. In the Early Years Foundation Stage (expressive arts and design: being imaginative, 40-60+ months), one of the characteristics of effective learning is 'choosing particular colours to use for a purpose' demonstrating the recognition that colours are often chosen at this age for a specific reason (DfE, 2012, p. 46).

Ideas explored by Milbrath and Trautner (2008, p. 108) link to the concept that children use colours for a particular purpose. It is highlighted within Milbrath and Trautner's research how choice of colour can be associated with the way children feel about their drawing task or about how they feel regarding colours chosen. Children's personality traits are thought to be linked to colour choice. Milbrath and Trautner (2008, p. 108) support this idea by arguing that children who chose yellow are happier and more neurotic than children who use the other primary colours; blue and red. Children may choose certain colours due to preference or alternatively, personality characteristics (Schaie, 1966, p. 512). Milbrath and Trautner (2008, p. 109) acknowledge the ongoing debate as to whether children's reactions to colours are biologically based or a learned process. Lawler and Lawler (1965) study results depicted that yellow was associated with happiness

and brown with sadness demonstrating support for a biological link regarding colour choice. These findings were however, deemed inconclusive by Cox (2005) when debate arose concerning children having the potential to have had the opportunity to learn which emotions are associated with which colours at a young age prior to the study, dependent upon upbringing and emotional intelligence (Milbrath and Trautner, 2008, p. 109).

Children's drawings can be used by a range of professionals such as educational psychologists and counsellors to engage children in talking about their families and feelings (Tomlin, 2008). Drawings are also an enjoyable activity for the majority of children reducing both anxiety and resistance. Drawings do not depend on language, so are beneficial for communication with children whose speech has not developed or who are not confident in talking to other professionals, as they are still able to express how they feel in this format (Cox, 2005, p. 240). Malchiodi (1998, p. 161) however, highlights the interpersonal aspects of children's drawings whereby children are influenced by interactions with others. Such interactions help children to reflect on their everyday lives and what they see, feel and experience regarding other people and their environment. In turn, these can then be reflected in their drawings supporting the use of creativity in deciphering children's past experiences and feelings.

Likewise, allowing children to express events in their lives through creative activities is seen as a very valuable tool by Bahman and Maffini (2008, p. 83). They similarly state how children are able to express feelings such as low self-esteem and being bullied more easily through pictures as opposed to words. Art can be a coping mechanism for children when experiencing loss or separation also. The saying 'a picture speaks a thousand words' proclaimed by Fred Barnard in 1927 supports this idea. Children can portray their emotions and depth of expression through pictures depicting their emotional intelligence amongst other skills. Children become increasingly self-aware through art and the impact different colours have on mood can help children to manage their emotions independently (Bahman & Maffini, 2008, p. 85). As a result of these recognised qualities, the belief that creative arts help develop children's personal, social and emotional wellbeing arose (Jarrett, 2013, p. 5).

Hopperstad (2010) studies the meanings of children's drawings. He found that current texts utilised by children, often include visual images or graphics demonstrating the importance and value of visual forms. Hopperstad (2010) believes drawings are an alternative way to represent and communicate knowledge and understanding, opposing the view undertaken by Milbrath and Trautner (2008, p. 108) who argue that colours are used to convey emotions, as mentioned afore. The multimodal quality of children's drawings is also highlighted, as well as children's drawings being suggested to convey meaning and help children to articulate their ideas and understanding in different ways to how spoken language can (Hopperstad, 2010). Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) created a visual grammar as a tool to analyse images. The visual grammar included the means to decipher drawings such as ideational meaning; what that image represents, interpersonal meaning;

the way it addresses its audience and textual meaning; the visual features such as colour and size. Using this tool of analysis, professionals are able to make-meaning from children's drawings, even from a very young age.

Ofsted (2011) state that art, craft and design are thought to effectively improve children's self-confidence, creativity and achievement in all subjects of the curriculum. Communication and cooperative skills develop as a result of creative activities and decision-making is strengthened. Children develop their independence and enthusiasm, as well as expressing their own views and feelings. Evans (1996) expresses how creativity can be enhanced through provision of various experiences. This enables knowledge to be gained resulting in creative thinking and development of imaginations. Ehrlen (2009) adds to this by stating that to obtain an idea of children's conceptions, representations in drawings should be analysed. Ehrlen argues that children often draw stereotypical representations if asked to draw an item that is not exclusively the stereotype they recognise, preventing recognition of real-life items. Drawings should be looked upon as cultural tools contributing to answers. Drawings can be visually realistic or oppositely, intellectually realistic.

Through this particular literature review of academic sources, it is clear that there are many different perceptions on children's creativity which will help during the interpretation of findings from this study.

Methodology

The methods chosen to investigate whether children express their emotions creatively through art, included observations of the children partaking in creative tasks and asking them a series of questions related to the emotions expressed within the artwork conducted. The children were then encouraged to complete a structured drawing activity whereby they were asked to draw a range of pictures linking to their different emotions. Finally, a questionnaire was created for the children to answer with support of the researcher to discover any correspondences between colour choice and emotions.

A random sample of six children formed the population for this study; three male and three female children participated, whom we randomly selected through choosing every third child on the separate gendered lists. Random sampling ensures all children have an equal chance of being selected as well as increasing the validity by reducing bias (Hucker, 2001, p. 89). Qualitative data was gathered primarily from the research methods chosen focussed on gaining detailed information from a small population (Mukherji & Albon, 2014). The emphasis within the research project was on the words or images used, as opposed to quantitative data regarding figures being the research focus. Experiences were a central theme to this particular study, and the environment in which the research was carried out was naturalistic in order to reflect reality. Roberts-Holmes (2014) additionally states that qualitative research data, including observations, interviews and children's drawings, tends to produce in depth and detailed responses. The interpretative research model was followed whereby meaning-making and experiences were key to the study.

The reliability and validity of all three methods were considered in order to ensure the research conducted was as reliable as possible. Ethical considerations were also implemented to ensure children were safeguarded and their well-being paramount, as regards to the Data Protection Act 1998 (Alderson & Morrow, 2011, p. 36). Children's names have been kept anonymous and pseudonyms used - child one to six; to ensure all their answers provided are kept confidential. Children's specific ages were also not revealed.

The Bishop Grosseteste University Research Ethics Policy 2013 was acted upon and in accordance with this, the required forms were completed and signed by the BGU supervisor and placement mentor so that all parties concerned were aware of the research that was going to be carried out. The parental consent form was signed on behalf of the children by the placement mentor, with 'Patgus Primary School' being able to provide consent for the research data needed in accordance with their ongoing child development assessments. All data collected was stored in a locked cupboard or on a password protected computer and only shared with the relevant parties. It was made clear that any information affecting safeguarding of the children, would be disclosed to the appropriate member of staff in the school.

The first research method utilised was observations of the children whilst they were partaking in unstructured creative activities such as drawing or painting, before asking a series of questions to assist in determining children's feelings at the current time (in this instance, the children were creating pirate ships). The questions included asking children how they were feeling at the time of the task and why they had chosen the colours they were using. The research population were also asked how their pictures made them feel, what colours they liked using the most when making pictures and why, and what colours they did not like using and why. This enabled an initial idea to be formed upon each individual's responses regarding colour choice and emotions and whether there were any noticeable similarities or differences between respondents. Participant observation was conducted, whereby the researcher was involved in interactions with the children whilst asking the questions. Notes were kept brief and objective in order to record exactly what was said without bias (Palaiologou, 2009).

The next method of data collection used was a structured drawing task with an overall statement: Choose some colours that make you feel 'happy'. Now use these colours to draw a picture that makes you feel 'happy'. Children were also asked to draw something that made them feel sad, cross and excited so the colour choices as well as the picture drawn could be assessed with regards to any meaning behind their decisions. Broadhead, Howard and Wood (2010, p. 95) support the value of children's meaning-making through drawings. They recognised how everyday experiences were combined with their imagination to make sense of their own world (Broadhead et al., 2010, p. 97).

Self-completion questionnaires were then used to affirm any associations made between children's artwork and their emotions, evident through the specific questions asked. Both open and closed questions were used to give a broad range of responses. The questionnaire was designed specifically to ensure it was neither too

long nor too time-consuming for the children to be able answer (Hucker, 2001, p. 88). Easy tick boxes were created for the majority of questions so children could tick the boxes themselves once the question was read out to them. A pilot study of the questionnaire was handed out before giving it to the chosen sample to help determine whether any changes needed to be made (Roberts-Holmes, 2014). The questions had to be simplified so that young children could understand them better and the space provided for the answers had to be enlarged as a lot of the children's fine motor skills had not yet developed enough to write concisely within the given space.

Interviews were considered but decided against as a result of the pressure this may put on the children and the time needed to conduct these combined with the varying attention spans of the individuals. Also as stated by Hucker (2001, p. 111), children's answers may be influenced by the interviewer's body language or facial expression during their interviews which would result in invalid and unreliable data. The three research methods used enabled a wide range of qualitative data to be collected, so results from all three tasks could be compared and contrasted when analysing the data.

Findings

The three data collection methods included observations, structured drawing tasks and questionnaire responses, from which the findings are depicted below.

Observations

During the research study, observations of the six children were conducted individually when they were partaking in a ship making creative activity whilst learning about pirates. Child 1, 2 and 3 were male and child 4, 5 and 6 were female. Child one provided non-stereotypical responses to the questions asked, as he said he had chosen to use the colours red and black for his picture as they were his favourite colours. However, red and black are the typical colours associated with pirates so this may have influenced his decision from prior knowledge and understanding regarding the pirate topic. Child two chose the colour pink for his ship as he said that pink made him happy. Child three decided to use yellow, black, white, purple, green, red and blue for his ship as he said he wanted it to look like a chocolate factory. This may be a result of him using an empty chocolate tray to create his junk model ship. Child four also used a variety of colours; red, orange, pink and blue as they made her feel happy. Child five used blue, pink and purple because they were her favourite colours. Finally, child six used yellow, purple and pink because they made her 'really really really happy.'

Figure 1 below displays the colours that were used during the observations of the pirate ship creations. It shows that pink was the most common colour used, followed by purple, blue and red but unexpectedly, no brown or grey was used for the ships although both these colours are associated with pirate ships. Black also was used more than other brighter colours possibly suggesting a link between the topic and colour choice.
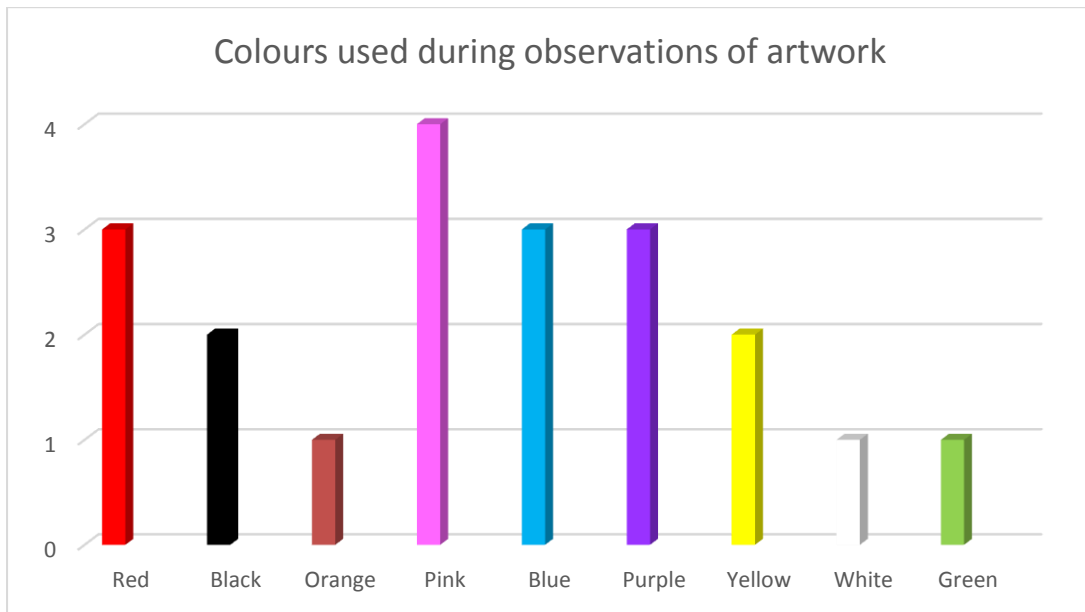
Figure 1- Bar chart showing colours used during observations of artwork.

Figure 2 below shows the colours children said they do not like to use in their artwork when asked during their observations. This is a stereotypical result that was expected as many negative emotions are associated with these less vibrant colours. The majority of children at a young age, seem to be drawn towards the brighter more vibrant colour choices.
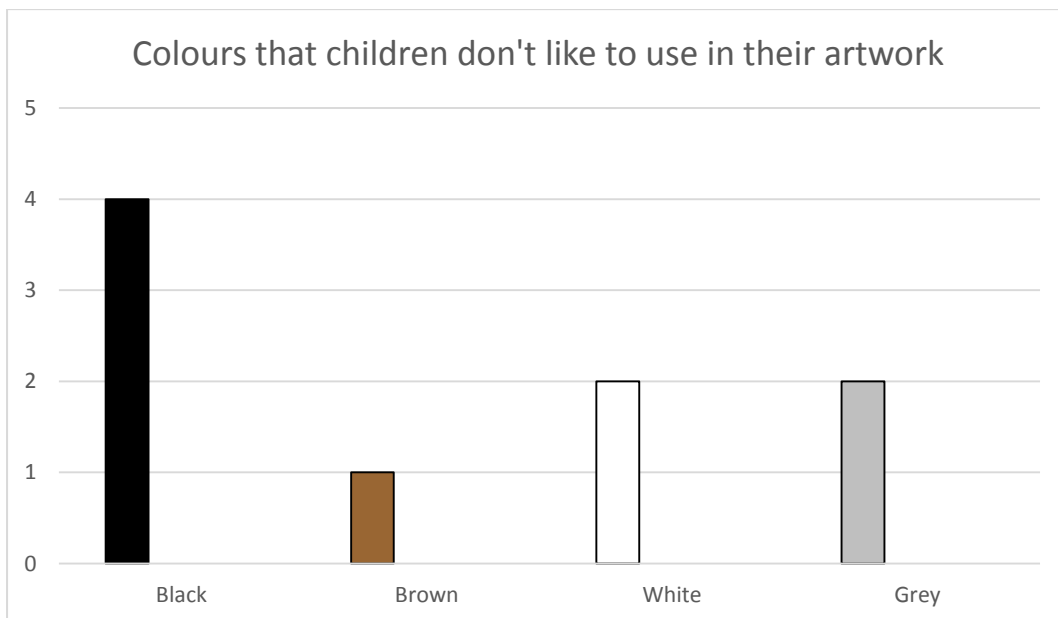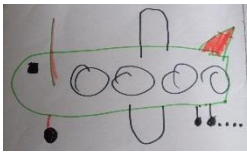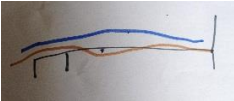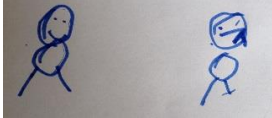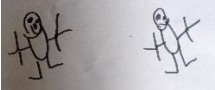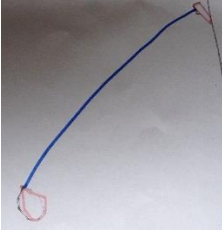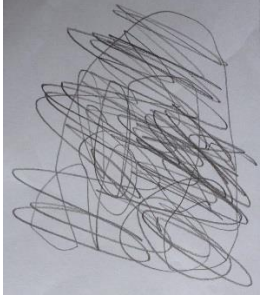

Figure 2- Bar chart demonstrating disliked colour choices.

Structured drawing activity

From the structured drawing activity, when children were asked to choose colours which made them feel happy, sad, cross and excited, and to then use the colours to draw a picture that reflected that emotion, only child one used black and brown in his positive emotions drawings. Child two chose colours that were expected in accordance with their drawing, showing in-depth thinking and understanding of the task before completing it by knowing which colours were needed to produce a lifelike picture. Child six was the only child who was consistent with her colour choices; pink and blue were used for the happy and excited emotions and black and brown were used for the sad and cross emotions. All the children used blue in their positive emotions boxes which was a surprise as blue can often be associated with sadness and cold.

Table 1 below displays the responses of the six children during the structured drawing task. It depicts what the children said and drew (included colours chosen) when asked to draw a picture relating to four different emotions.

	Happy	**Sad**	**Excited**	**Cross**
Child 1	Aeroplane	Bed - feeling tired	Trains	'When someone isn't doing something for me.'
Child 2	Sun and seaside	'When someone doesn't play with me.'	Sky and aeroplanes	No picture drawn - 'I never feel cross.'
Child 3	Wires and plugs and extension leads	'Water chasing me in a water pipe when I am small.' Tap and sewage works drawn.	New aerial wire	'Wires that are tangled up.'

Child 4	'Burger, square chips and tomato.' 'I feel happy when mummy does my dinner and when I'm not at school.'	'I don't like peas.' Picture drawn of potatoes, peas and mushrooms. 'I feel sad when mummy doesn't do my tea.'	'Going to the seaside with my new frozen bucket and spade.' Beach drawn with sand and sea.	'When people are not being very good to me.' 'When my sister is being naughty.'
Child 5	Music- CD player and disc drawn	'When I've not got mummy or daddy.'	'When I get presents.'	'When someone tells me off.'
Child 6	'When I make a song up.'	'When I play in the sand and its wet.'	'When I go to sundown.'	'When I sing a song in collective worship.'

Table 1 - Table demonstrating structured drawing tasks.

Questionnaires

From analysis of the questionnaires, child 1 stated that all colours make him feel happy and excited and no colours make him feel sad or cross and displayed this consistent response throughout the whole questionnaire. Child 2 however, decided all colours apart from black and grey make him happy and excited but black and grey are associated with negative emotions. The lighter pastel colours were seen as more positive and the darker colours seen as more negative. Consistency was shown in child 2's responses also. Child 3 on the other hand, stated that only the colour blue made him feel happy and excited and all the other colours displayed made him feel sad and cross. He associated the light colours being more positive with a previous experience of 'getting light wrapping paper.' He remained with the similar answers throughout the questionnaire. Child 4 alternatively decided she associated all the colours apart from green, black, grey and white with positive emotions but displayed no preference between both the dark and light colours. She was also reliable in maintaining the same answers for the final questions regarding how the different colours make her feel with green, black, white and grey producing negative emotions. Child 5 only associated the colours pink, blue and purple positively and regarded negative emotions with black and grey. The light colours were

seen as happy and excited as opposed to the dark colours as sad and cross. The responses given to how the different colours made her feel were very different to the other respondents as she thought of a different word to describe each colour. Finally, child 6 gave a mixed range of responses and stated some colours made her feel both happy and sad such as green leading to the belief that she may not yet have a full understanding of the questions asked. The responses given to the light and dark colour questions were also unusual through not linking to the question properly; when asked to pick the colour box that made her feel happy, she chose the dark one because 'it makes me feel about being at school and getting really tired.' She gave different answers about how the colours made her feel which did not correspond with the initial questions responses. Figure 3 below displays the answers to the six questionnaires regarding how many children chose the different colours in response to feeling happy and excited. From this, it is clear that children associate more positive emotions with the brighter colours.
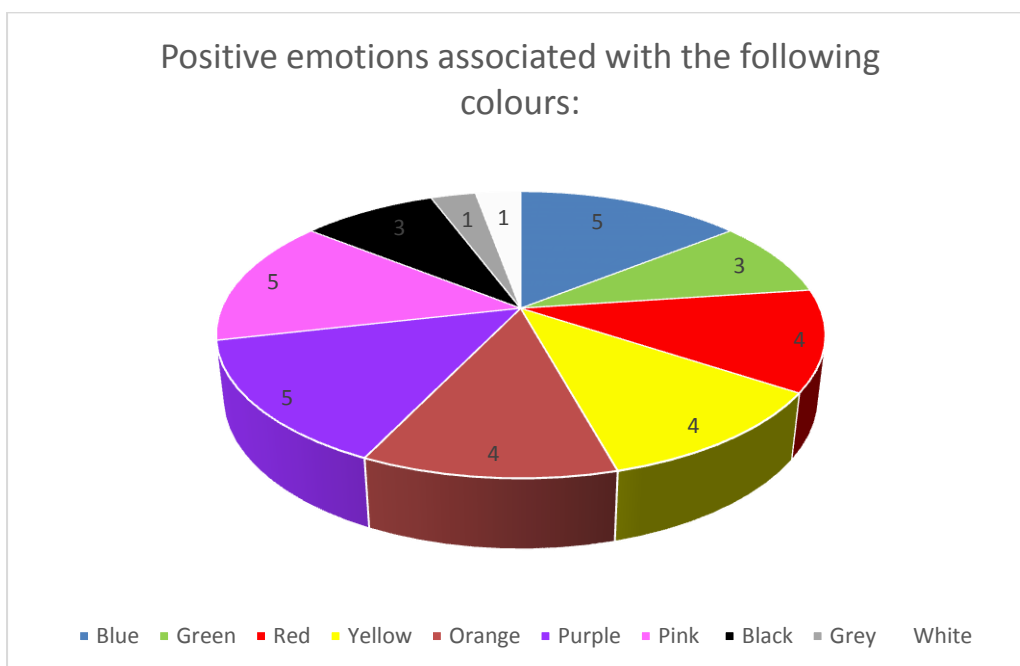

Figure 3 - Pie chart displaying positive emotion - colour associations.

Figure 4 displays the six children's responses to which colours made them feel sad and cross. From this chart, it is obvious that children associate their negative emotions with the darker, less vibrant colours. It was surprising however, that green was chosen by half of the sample children as being associated negatively. This could be linked to other experiences such as monsters and aliens being green for example which some children are scared of.
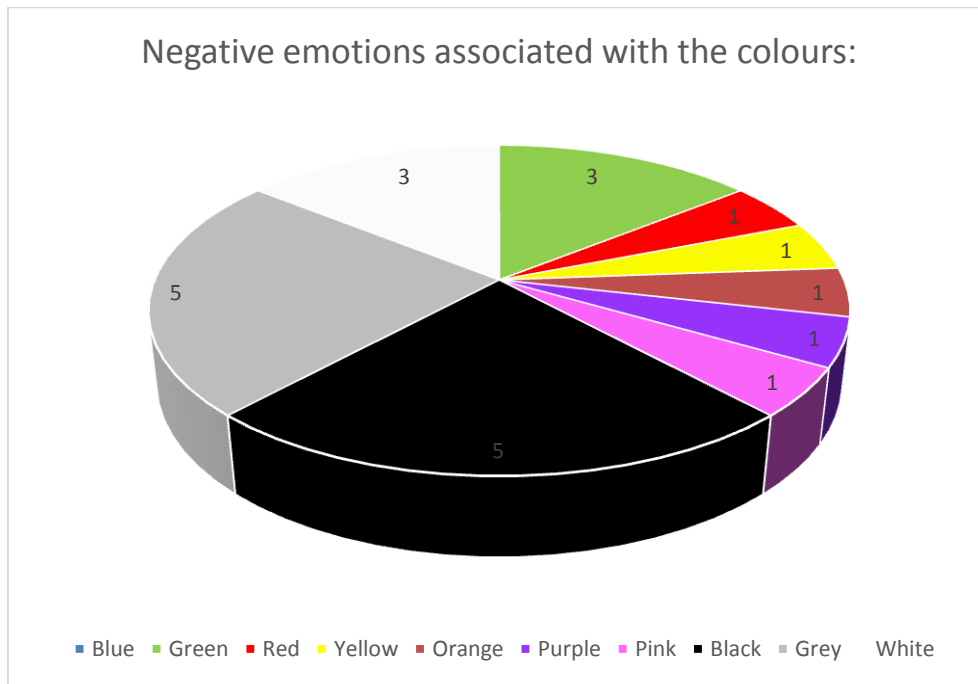
Figure 4 - Pie chart demonstrating negative emotion – colour associations.

Figure 5 illustrates children's representations of how they perceive light and dark colours. From the sample, it is displayed that children mostly associate positive emotions with lighter colours and negative emotions with darker colours.
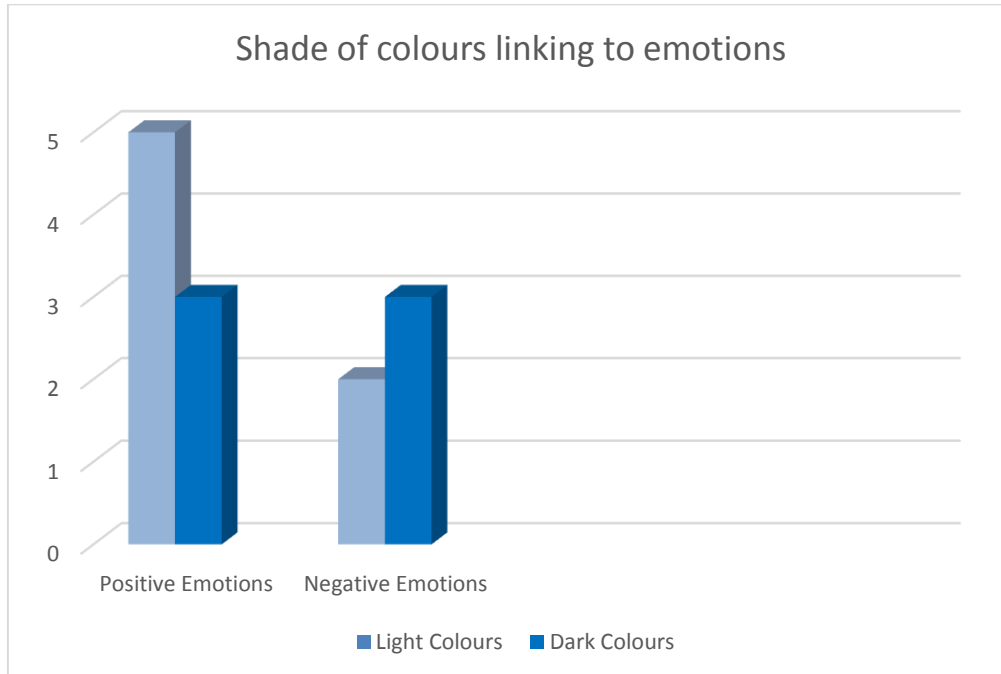

Figure 5- Bar chart linking shade of colours to emotions.

Discussion of Findings

After the qualitative data and series of questionnaire responses had been completed, the data could then be analysed for discussion.

Observations

Through analysing the observations made of the children, some correlations were discovered. All six children stated that the pictures they created made them feel happy, suggesting that the colours used for the artwork reflected their mood state. The majority of the children also claimed they had chosen the specifics colours they were using because they were their favourite colours however a couple of the children linked the colours to what there creation was; red and black for a pirate ship and multi-coloured for a chocolate factory. Wright (2010) argues that creativity is closely linked with personal connection, expression, imagination and ownership. This could explain the link to the personality of the children regarding what colours they choose and for what reason. Wright (2010) builds upon Bruner's (1996) theory of children's creativity. Bruner stated that the learning processes of children involve internal reorganisations of previously known ideas. Therefore, the children may have had preconceived ideas regarding colour choices and feelings as a result of past experiences with the potential to have influenced their decisions.

Alternatively, Burkitt, Barrett and Davis (2003, p. 3) claim that often, children's choice of colour are linked to the feelings about the topic they are being asked to draw, showing an emotionally significant link. DFES (2003, p. 31) affirm that by encouraging children's creativity, their self-esteem, motivation and achievement will be consequentially promoted, and skill development and individual talents will be extended. This is supported by Bahman and Maffini (2008, p. 85) who argue that children can express their self-esteem through drawings, as well as art and design encouraging them to become increasingly self-aware in order to help manage their own and others emotions. Children should therefore be encouraged to express their emotions through their artwork in order to learn and develop further.

Structured drawing task

When examining the responses from the structured drawing task, the positive drawings were mostly linked to outside of school experiences and the negative drawings were mainly linked to falling out with friends or parents. Child one used a range of colours for all of his drawings using blue consistently in the negative drawings and black, red and green in the positive ones. Black was used for child twos negative drawings and orange and blue for the positive ones. Child three used green and black connected to negative emotions and blue for the positive emotions. Child four used mostly black and green in association with being sad and cross and blue, yellow and orange for happy and excited. For the negative drawings of child five, brown and black were used, and for the positive drawings, child five used pink and blue demonstrating the largest awareness of colour choice. Child six however, used a mixture of colours for both her positive and negative drawings highlighting a lack of awareness regarding colour choice or purpose.

The Arts Council England (2014, p. 35) comment on how children's creativity through art can increase cognitive abilities as well as holistic development physically through fine and gross motor skills, and socially through interacting with peers whilst partaking in the creative activities. The National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) (1999, p. 24) reports that letting children be creative, enables them to explore and express their emotions and feelings in constructive and positive ways.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum followed in the foundation stage of primary school encourage children to be creative through the expressive arts and design area of learning and development aspects exploring and using media and materials and being imaginative (DfE, 2012, p. 5). Hope (2008) believes children draw to feel- which encompasses the development of their affective, emotional responses to the world surrounding them and enables them to connect with their imagination. Herr (2001, p. 22) supports this view by stating that being creative enables children's holistic development to be promoted. With regards to their social and emotional development, when children engage in art activities, they have the opportunity to express their emotions such as fears and frustrations for example, as art is seen as an acceptable outlet for expressing negative impulses and feelings.

As suggested by Willarts (2005, p. 1) in the above literature review, it has been observed that children do copy a perceptual image from memory combined with images from their imagination. This was observed during the structured drawing task whereby children were drawing pictures of objects that were not available to view within the classroom. Children were using their memories to assist them in creating a lifelike picture of different items.

Questionnaires

When studying the varied responses to the questionnaires, the stability of the children's views and opinions throughout the research could be discovered. Child one maintained his view that he liked all the colours and associated no colours negatively. Child two was consistent in arguing that black and grey made him feel negative emotions throughout all of the research tasks and this was because he didn't like those colours. Child three similarly upheld his view that the only colour he associated positively was blue because this was his favourite colour that he associates with his favourite hobby; wires. Child four gave equivalent answers in associating black, white, grey and green with feeling sad and cross as a result of them not being her favourite colours. Child five similarly retained the same responses throughout the tasks with relating pink, purple and blue to positive emotions and black and grey to negative emotions on a preference choice. Finally, child six provided more in depth responses but was unsystematic in her answers as chose some of the same colours for making her feel happy, as she chose for feeling sad. She did, however, link the emotions when asked for reasons for choice of colours to past experiences such as being excited because she visited her cousins and feeling cross when she gets told off.

Jolley (2010, p. 36) argues that children's drawings are a means of communicating moods, feelings and ideas. Through conducting relevant research, Jolley found that children use literal expression in their artwork through depicting their emotions literally through the facial expressions drawn on the people pictured (Jolley, 2010, p. 38). This suggests that children depict their emotions through their drawings as opposed to simply the colour choice made. Wilson (2007, p. 119) claims that all visual elements of the artwork should be considered; lines, colours, tone, shape, pattern, space and form. The materials and processes used are also significant in recognising the feelings of the children whilst being creative.

Milbrath and Trautner (2008, p. 108) claim how colours are linked to children expressing their emotions a phenomenon which was observed during the questionnaires. Five out of six of the respondents were constant with their responses in the course of the questionnaires showing they were using their thought processes and feelings to answer the questions truthfully and that they fully understood what was being asked of them. Many of the children chose certain colours as they were their favourites, using adjectives such as 'nice, happy, good, like and light' to describe the colours associated with their positive emotions, however 'don't like, dark, not my favourite, don't use them, cross, sad and tired' were used to describe the colours they associated negatively. These results oppose the link Milbrath and Trautner (2008, p.108) suggest there is between children's personality traits and colour choice, as all the children researched displayed different personality characteristics during the course of the study however, many of the children chose similar colours to reflect their emotions suggesting there may be a nature link as well as a nurture aspect towards colour associations.

Conclusion

When taking into account the research conducted regarding whether children express their emotions creatively through art, as well as acknowledging whether colour choices in creative activities are reflective of mood state and whether pictures created reflect positive or negative aspects of children's lives, a number of conclusions can be made. The aim of the study, as well as finding answers to the research questions, was to deliberate ways that practitioners can support children's creativity and artwork through both provision and expertise enabling them opportunities of additional methods to express their emotions and have their feelings recognised correctly and supported without them having to verbalise their worries. The study was conducted using various research methods and had a sample size of six participants. These included observations with focussed questions, a structured individual drawing task and questionnaires for the children to complete with support from the researcher.

The key findings of the study were that children's colour choice does vary depending on their emotions and the darker, less vibrant colours were often linked to negative emotions; black, brown, grey and white. It was also found that children often linked the choice of colours they used to express positive emotions to preferences with them being their favourite colours.

When expressing their emotions, children drew objects or items that were linked with positive or negative feelings or past experiences demonstrating that emotions can be conveyed creatively through art. Gordon and Browne (2014, p. 451) claim that children emotionally express their inner selves through art and work through their feelings; both positive and negative, which was observed during this study.

Implications apparent within early years policy and practice when providing opportunities for children to express their emotions creatively, would include the need to ensure a variety of resources are provided for children to use to express their feelings through art rather than speech. Also, practitioners need to be aware of recognising the key features of children's artwork which suggests they are trying to express their emotions without having to verbalise them. This could be through colour choice, the picture drawn, the marks made on paper and how the crayon or paintbrush is being used for example.

Recommendations for practice would include training for practitioners in recognising signs of emotions being expressed creatively through artwork. A further recommendation would be to encourage children to partake in activities inspiring them to become more expressive instead of internalising their thoughts and feelings. To encourage children to express their emotions, a large piece of sugar paper with a central emotive theme could be passed around during circle time, with each child choosing a colour reflective of the mood stated, to add an image demonstrating their feelings on the subject. As stated by Mosley (2015, pp. 17-20), listening and responding with understanding, extending vocabulary of 'feeling' words, confirming children's feelings, being positive, setting a good example and making boundaries clear will help children to manage their emotions appropriately. Alternatively, children could be asked to create a piece of individual artwork which makes them feel excited or cross to enable them to compare and contrast their feelings with their classmates on a more individual and unstructured basis. This would enable the practitioners to assess how each individual child expresses their emotions through the creative activities. The children could then be advised on social aspects of how to interpret others emotions appropriately.

Limitations of the study included time constraints which meant only six children were able to take part in the research tasks, which is unrepresentative of the whole class. Having a larger sample size would increase both the reliability and validity of the research as well as researching the topic in the foundation stage of various primary school settings will increase the generalisability. Ensuring all six children completed the required tasks was also very time consuming as the classroom activities were changing daily so children were very engaged into the environment around them and some struggled to maintain focus on the tasks.

Reflections on personal learning for future projects would be to ask additional questions during the creative activities as the children were all very communicative in providing answers to the questions whilst completing their artwork. Observing more than just one activity would also be beneficial to compare results in seeing whether children's colour choices were influenced by the activity topic or through own preference. In general,

organisation and time management for any future projects would be the key focuses so that task execution was completed more concisely.

Finally, future areas of research as a result of the study could include investigations into whether children's perceptions of colour choice are linked to previous experiences and influences, or whether most children are born to view brighter colours in a positive way and darker colours more negatively as a result of brain function and genetics.

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'Streaming or Screaming'
(Effects of Streaming on Low Ability Boys in Key Stage 4)
Daisy Young-Alls

Abstract

This small scale research project identifies the possible effects of streaming on low ability boys in Key Stage 4. The recently implemented National Curriculum places significant emphasis on the importance of raising academic attainment and encouraging all pupils to achieve their potential. The process of streaming is frequently utilised in schools as a means of improving pupils' performance. Streaming is intended to facilitate more effective teaching; enabling teachers to match their lessons to the learning needs of their pupils.

Data was collected from a cohort of forty-five Key Stage 4 pupils in an inner city academy in Nottinghamshire. The effects of streaming were investigated utilising a multi-method triangulation approach. Questionnaires and observations were used to explore pupils' satisfaction with their group placement, in addition to identifying any positive or negative effects of the streaming process. In correlation with previous research the findings suggest that many pupils in low ability sets are dissatisfied with their group placement (49%, n=22), mainly because of the disruptive behaviour of their classmates, who divert their attention away from learning. Despite this however, the vast majority of pupils were content with their work level and the variety of learning styles utilised by their teachers.

Introduction

Ability grouping is a practice based on the initiative that pupils with similar levels of current attainment are grouped together as a whole class (Education Endowment Foundation, 2014; Hallinan, 2003). The idea being, that pupils have a somewhat set 'level of ability', and thus, need to be taught in accordance with this (Boaler, William & Brown, 2000, p. 632; Hallinan, 2003). Although, it is important to note, current attainment does not define an individual's ability, or more importantly their potential (Education Endowment Foundation, 2014). The strategy of grouping pupils based on their ability has been prevalent in schools dating back to the 1950s. Subsequently, *The Education Act* (1988) ensured streaming was used in conjunction with the structures of the National Curriculum as a means of increasing 'academic success' (Boaler et al., 2000, p. 632).

The recent changes to the National Curriculum place emphasis on driving up educational standards and providing all children with the equal opportunity to reach their potential (Gove, 2014). With pupil performance as the current key focus (Adams, 2014), schools are encouraged to consider the effectiveness of ability grouping as a means of raising achievement. The White Paper, *Higher Standards Better Schools for All* (DfES, 2005, p. 53) encouraged the use of ability grouping and advised schools to follow existing 'innovative practices' to ensure high expectations in low ability groups (DCSF, 2007, p. 7).

However, there is a plethora of research which contradicts this idea. The Education Endowment Foundation (2014) clearly states that ability grouping is not an effective strategy to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, and previously, both Gamoran (1992) and Hallinan (2003) suggested that streaming caused lower achieving pupils to fall even further behind. Drawing on the results of a large range of research, it appears

there are three main trends. First, despite the large amount of literature highlighting the weaknesses of streaming pupils, there is very little evidence that streaming has a detrimental effect on pupils' attainment (Boaler et al., 2000). Second, research has found that in comparison, low attaining pupils excel further in mixed ability groups (Lee & Sukhnandan, 2002). Finally, even though attainment grades are not affected, streaming still has negative effects on low ability pupils' self-confidence, and furthermore, enforces inequity and the segregations of wider society (DCSF, 2007; Dunne, Humphries, Dyson, Sebba, Gallannaugh & Muijs, 2011; Gammoran, 1992; Hallam & Ireson, 2005; Hallam & Ireson, 2006).

Literature Review

The highlighted benefits of ability grouping proposed by the government included: improved performance and engagement (DCSF, 2007). Current research however, raises important questions regarding the continued underachievement of certain types of pupils, particularly those with low socio-economic status, placed in bottom sets (Boaler et al., 2000; Dunne et al., 2011; Gillborn & Youdell, 2000; Hallam, Hurley & Ireson, 2005). Research by Hallam and Ireson (2007, p. 28), also recognised 'disproportionate' numbers of pupils with low socio-economic status and ethnic diversity in low ability groups.

Further research reinforcing the link between social class and educational achievement found that pupils with low socio-economic status did not have the values and social attitudes required for academic success (Willis, 1977). Rutter, Mauhgan, Mortimore and Ouston (1979) suggested that classes should consist of a balance of high and low attaining pupils. They proposed that segregating low achieving pupils can create a restrictive learning environment.

Negative outcomes from research suggested structured grouping led to 'low expectations, limited opportunities and stigmatisation' attached to pupils who are recognised as low ability (Hallam & Ireson 2006, p. 583). Gillborn and Youdell (2000) additionally explored pupils' experiences of ability grouping, and found that many in low achieving groups felt their learning was insignificant in comparison to more able groups. These pupils were also aware of the stigma attached to being in a low set. Other reasons for wanting to move up included: unsuitability of the work set and wanting to reach their potential. There were very few responses linked to social cohesion or wanting to be with their friends (Hallam & Ireson, 2007, p. 40). Interestingly, it has been found that low ability pupils in mixed-ability groups demonstrate increased academic performance, compared to low ability pupils who are streamed (Clarke et al., 2002; Lee & Sukhnandan, 2002, p. 167). It is mooted that mixed ability grouping not only encourages 'social cohesion', but also provides a desirable environment for peer learning and pupil interaction (Hallam & Ireson, 2006, p. 584).

Teachers' Expectations, Differentiated Pedagogies and the Construction of Groups

Early research suggests that the process of streaming can facilitate teachers' preconceptions of pupils, based on their attainment (Hallam & Ireson, 2007, p. 28). The judgments teachers make, then have the potential to

develop into 'differential expectations', and thus, self-fulfilling prophecies, effectively, creating a barrier on pupils' learning (Gamoran & Berends, 1987; Jacobson & Rosenthal, 1968; Oakes, 1985). However, alternative research indicates that the key reason teachers can accurately predict student achievement, is because of their professional expertise, not because they make impulsive judgements about pupils based on their attainment (Harber & Jussim, 2005). Moreover, Gillborn and Youdell (2000) highlighted, that the process of grouping in schools, expects teachers to make professional judgements about pupils, regardless of their views or feelings on the subject.

Generally, evidence suggests that the majority of teachers prefer teaching high ability groups, because of the challenges that accompany teaching lower sets. Teachers stated that low attaining groups were less engaged and demonstrated difficult behaviour, which disrupted the lesson and distracted other pupils (Hallam & Ireson, 2003). Although, surprisingly research has found that generally the majority of teachers agree with the process of ability grouping, as they feel it enables them to simultaneously match the learning needs of the pupils and implement effective behaviour management strategies (Hallam & Ireson, 2003). Teachers were aware however, that low ability groups can develop low self-esteem due to polarisation and lack of positive high-achieving role models (Hallam & Ireson, 2003).

Despite this, a possible limitation of ability grouping may be repetitive teaching strategies; resulting in a less accessible curriculum for low achieving students (Clarke et al., 2002). This is congruous with the findings of Clarke et al. (2002), who found that lower groups experienced repetitive teaching, 'less discussion' and increased whole class instruction, because it was assumed that all pupils had equal levels of ability. Interestingly, a great deal of research also explored the idea that pupils were not grouped solely on their ability; other contributing factors also included: 'behaviour and organisational constraints' (Hallam, Hurley & Ireson, 2005, p. 455). Also it was found that flexibility between attainment groups was often restricted (Clark et al., 2002; Macintyre & Ireson, 2002).

A large case study by Dunne at al., (2011) explored the teaching and learning of pupils in low sets. Evidence demonstrated that there was a significant over representation of boys with a low socio-economic status in low ability groups. The research consistently found that low attainment groups had significantly smaller classes, providing teachers with the extra time to focus on individual learning and the opportunity to get to know their pupils.

Dunne at al., (2011) also contended that contrary to research (Kutnick et al., 2006), low ability sets were not taught by the most inexperienced teachers, in fact, the senior practitioners in the case studies reiterated the importance of high standard teaching for low attaining pupils. Notably, this research was conducted through the means of a case study, therefore reliability and validity need to be considered (Thomas, 2009).

It could be argued that streaming pupils involves a range of issues, many of which are negative. This research will explore the debate between equity and efficiency in low ability groups; with the central argument being that ability grouping should strive to benefit all learners.

Existing research explores the general effects of ability grouping on all pupils, although, this study may provide some insight into the effects streaming has on low ability boys and the impact this has on the last stage of their compulsory schooling in English. It will use questionnaires to explore the effects of ability grouping from the pupils' perspective; data will then be corroborated through the means of observations.

Methodology

Overview

An amalgamation of qualitative data was obtained through the means of a multi-method, triangulation approach (Denscombe, 2010, p. 134; Lambert, 2008; Thomas, 2009, p. 11). The first part of the study explored pupils' perceptions of tiering, utilising a standardised questionnaire, followed by discussion with key teachers. Further information was obtained in the second part of the study through the means of observation. Both parts of the study were carried out in a mainstream secondary academy in inner Nottingham. The school was selected based on both their sophisticated tiering system and also their social positioning. This meant that the research was conducted with a particularly challenging cohort in a socially deprived area. Details about the school's streaming arrangements were discussed with senior members of staff before commencing the study. The representative sample was selected through the means of 'convenience sampling' (Walliman, 2006b, p. 163), due to the expected demands of the school timetable. It is important to note that due to the convenience factor of the representative sample, reliability may have been affected, and thus, generalisations must be carefully contemplated.

The sample included forty-five boys from three Key Stage 4 classes. All of these classes were bottom sets in English and were taught by Newly Qualified Teachers in groups of approximately fifteen students. This correlated with the ideas of Dunne et al. (2011), who suggested that low ability classes were typically taught in smaller groups. The aim was to obtain quantifiable data that could be decoded and analysed to identify key themes, and links with previous research regarding the effects of streaming.

Research Ethics was considered throughout the study and frequent reference was made to the ethical guidelines provided by British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2011) and Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU) (2013). Voluntary informed consent was gained from the respective institution and the respondents (BERA, 2011; BGU, 2013). All participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and ignore any questions they did not feel comfortable answering. Pupils were also able to withdraw from the study at any point should they wish to do so (BERA, 2011; BGU, 2013), although in the event no student or teacher opted to withdraw. A 'clear and fair description' of the study was provided verbally, in addition to a concise

explanatory cover sheet which also outlined the purpose of the research (BGU, 2013, p. 23; Davies, 2007, p. 99).

Questionnaires

During lessons pupils were asked to complete a pre-formulated questionnaire which comprised both a mixture of structured and unstructured questions. The questionnaire was based on structural guidance from Sharp (2010, p. 65-67) and intended to lead respondents through a concise series of questions with ease. A diversity of 'response modes' were utilised; this included: 'dichotomous questions, list questions, Likert- type scales and open questions' (Davies, 2007, p. 96; Sharp, 2010, p. 63; Thomas, 2009, p. 175-180).   Questions made reference to pupils' general attitudes towards school; tiering preferences and satisfaction levels with their placement.

The researcher assisted pupils with reading the questions, if requested to do so. A positive element of utilising questionnaires can be that they typically require minimal interaction with the researcher, which helps reduce researcher bias and the effects of personal interaction (Thomas, 2009). However, in light of the pupils' academic ability, there was a selection of students that needed extra support with reading and explaining the questions, which in turn, may have affected results.

Questionnaires are also a flexible research tool for collecting large amounts of data (Walliman, 2006b, p. 166). This research method enabled a whole class of students to complete the questionnaire in a manageable time frame, and therefore avoided wasting valuable learning time. Denscombe (2010, p. 158) stresses the importance of getting questionnaires 'right first time'. He suggests that 'organisation' and 'preparation' are integral elements to the success of this research method. Completing a pilot study provided an opportunity to amend any ambiguous questions and ensure the clarity of instruction for the respondents (Davies, 2007, p. 47; Sharp, 2010, p. 64; Walliman, 2006b, p. 168).

Denscombe (2010, p. 157) suggests that questionnaires can provide a 'social- climate' whereby respondents feel confident to provide 'full and honest answers'. This was encouraged in the study by ensuring full confidentiality and anonymity (BERA, 2011; Thomas, 2009, p. 175). Respondents were put at their ease and were given the clear option to withdraw at any point (BERA, 2011). Regardless of assured anonymity, there was still the risk that pupils responses may have been simulated by the presence of their peers or by their teachers' expectations (Thomas, 2009, p. 175). This may have a direct impact on the validity and reliability of the data obtained, and therefore the conclusions that are drawn from the study.

Observations

Sharp (2010, p.83) stipulates that 'seeing is believing', and therefore it could be suggested that observation is an effective research method to compliment the questionnaire, giving a more 'reliable basis' for unearthing the effects of ability grouping (Simpson & Tuson, 1995, p. 2).

The semi-structured observations focussed on three main areas: behaviour of pupils, engagement of pupils and the differentiation of teachers' pedagogies. This was recorded in note form during the lesson and provided a 'systematic record' of classroom interactions for analysis at a later date (Simpson & Tuson, 1995, p. 17). Additionally, the unstructured schedule provided the flexibility to 'accommodate unforeseen happenings' (Sharp, 2010, p. 84). On one hand, observations provide instant and effective results in an everyday context (Walkman, 2006b, p. 172), whereas on the other hand, a potential weakness of observations, could be that, in highly variable environments, such as schools, observations cannot be identically replicated to identify patterns (Sharp, 2010, p. 84). The main purpose of this research was to explore the effects of ability grouping on Key Stage 4 pupils, and as such, observations provided physical evidence of natural classroom behaviours. Even though observations are the least obtrusive research method (Simpson & Tuson, 1995, p. 14), this notion clashes with the idea that observations can overlook the complexity of the classroom environment and interrupt natural patterns of behaviour. Furthermore, as an individual observer, subjective assumptions may be made based on these manufactured behaviours, and thus affect the reliability of the findings.

Respondents were reminded that their participation in the observation would remain completely confidential and anonymous, to encourage natural behaviour, although researcher bias still remained a possible limitation (Simpson & Tuson, 1995, p. 18). Simpson and Tuson (1995, p. 19) speculated that observer bias can be limited through the means of discussion. Discussing 'underlying assumptions' with the classroom teacher ensured that findings were viewed in a more objective light (Simpson & Tuson, 1995, p. 18), this possibly mitigated initial observer bias.

Findings and Discussion

Attitudes Towards Learning

In order to establish the effects of tiering on Key Stage 4 pupils in the subject of English, the pupils were initially questioned about how important they perceived school work to be. The aim of this question was to provide insight into whether pupils valued their education, and moreover to explore if the pupils acknowledged a link between their school work and future. This category question (Sharp, 2010, p. 63) within the questionnaire provided quantitative data regarding the pupils' views about the significance of school work, and furthermore enabled the researcher to divide their perspectives into three groups: "very important", "quite important" and "not important at all" (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Pie Chart Showing: "To me, the work I do in school is..."**"**


The Importance of School Work
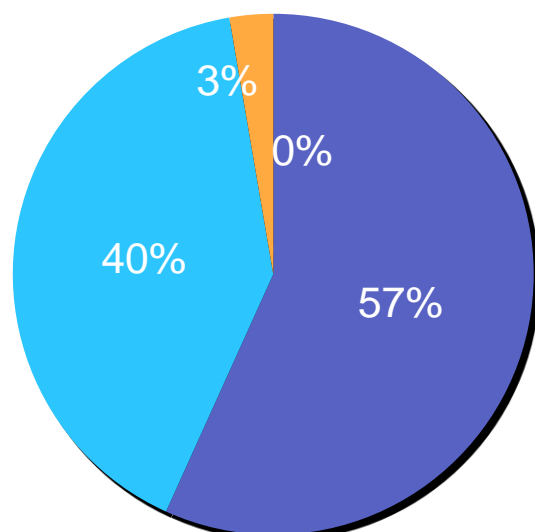
Pupils' Responses
- ■ Very important
- ■ Quite important
- ■ Not really important
- ■ Not important at all

As a general consensus, the findings suggest that the vast majority of pupils viewed their school work as either "very important", or "quite important" (see Figure 1). Early research conducted by Willis (1977) suggested that low achieving pupils, with low socio-economic status did not encompass the values or social attitudes to achieve academic success, as they could not draw connections between school and their future. These findings however, imply that the pupils in this cohort are fundamentally aware of the importance of school work, and thus are conscious that the quality of their education has a direct impact on their future (see Figure 2). Hallinan (2003, p. 100) stresses the importance of providing a 'strong academic climate' in the classroom which highlights the significance of learning, in order to prompt positive classroom behaviours. It is important however, to consider that due to the mature nature of the question, pupils may have tailored their answers to match the expectations of the teacher or their parents (Thomas, 2009).

Figure 2: Bar chart Showing: "The work you do at school helps you get a good job"

"The work you do at school helps you get a good job?"
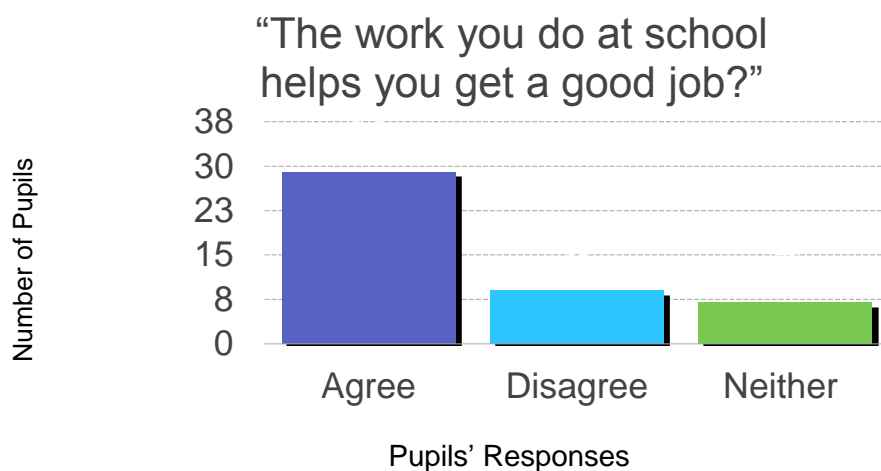
Pupils' Satisfaction with their Group Placement

In order to obtain data regarding pupils' satisfaction with their allocated group, respondents were asked to "strongly agree" or "disagree" with the statement: "I am happy with the group I'm in for English". The use of the Likert scale enabled the researcher to identify pupils who provided definite responses, and equally, pupils who were neutral or unsure. Of the 45 pupils who responded, 15 were completely unsatisfied with their allocation and 22 were completely satisfied (see Figure 3). The use of 'pre-coded questions' however, does incur possible limitations (Denscombe, 1998, p. 106) with the danger being that respondents' answers may be restricted by the question (Denscombe, 1998, p. 106).

Figure 3: Pie Chart Showing Pupils' Responses to "I'm happy with the group I'm in for English"
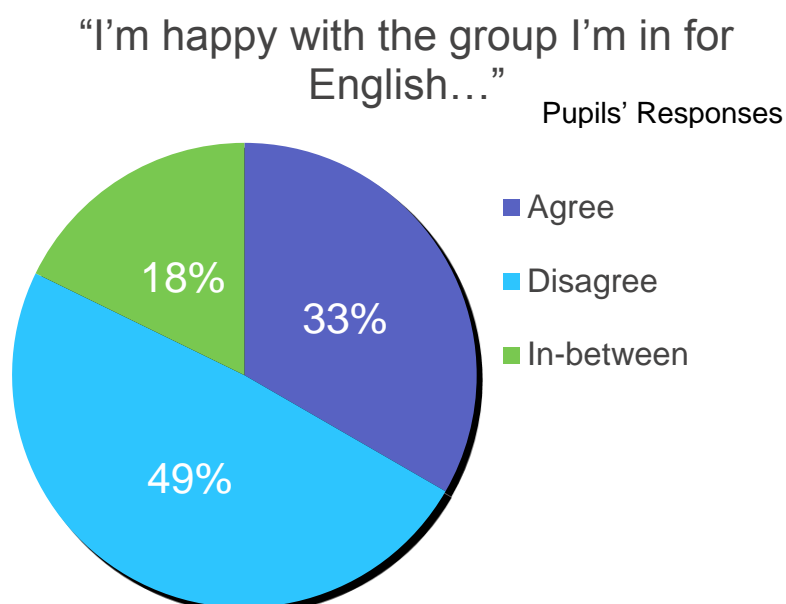
Behaviour

The pupils' reasoning behind these responses varied greatly. However, findings suggest one predominant trend (see Figure 4). Of the 49% of pupils that disagreed with their allocated group, the most recurrent reason for this was related to the disruptive behaviour of their classmates (n=11). The findings imply that teachers are frequently distracted by poor behaviour, which diverted the attention away from learning (see Figure 4). There was also reference made to the unsuitability of noise in the classroom (n=6), which in turn, impeded on both concentration and subject related discourse. It is important however, to consider the possible limitations related to open-ended responses which may have affected validity and reliability. Firstly, pupils' responses are based on their own self-concept, and secondly, pupils may have been influenced by their peers. Another problem of course, is that open ended questions are also more difficult to analyse (Opie, 2004, p. 107). To overcome this, open ended answers were decoded by identifying key themes or trends.
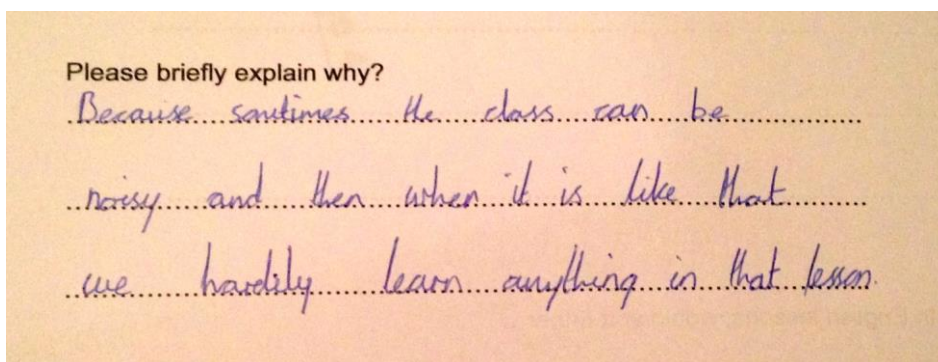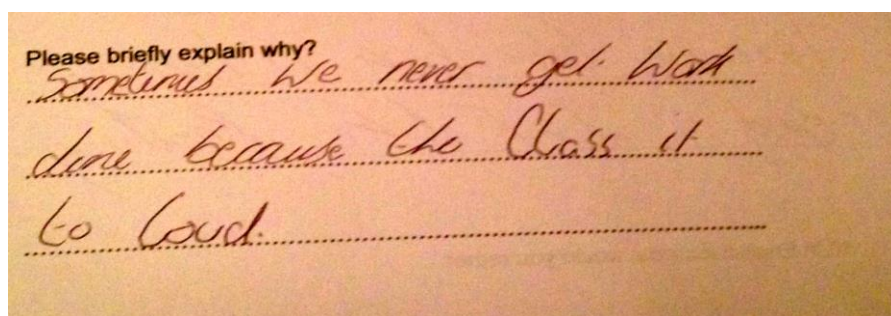
Figure 4: Pupils' Written Reasons for Disagreeing with their Group Placement

Previous research conducted into the effects of ability grouping also implied that teachers of lower sets tended to waste valuable learning time dealing with disruptive behaviour (Hallam & Ireson, 2006; Hallam & Ireson, 2005; Oakes, 1985).

Hallam and Ireson (2006, p. 584) suggested that higher ability pupils accepted 'normative' school behaviours, whereas comparatively, lower ability pupils resisted these rules and as a result formed 'anti-school attitudes'. Responses suggest that the majority of pupils were very much aware of their poor behaviour (n=4), and subsequently, the negative impact this has on their own learning and the learning of their peers. A small selection of pupils also made reference to the unprincipled grouping criteria (n=3); stating that they were not grouped based on ability, but on their poor behaviour. This correlates with a plethora of research (DCSF, 2007; Dunne et al., 2011; Hallam et al., 2005; Hallam & Ireson, 2003), which found that the process of streaming was not based solely on pupils' abilities, but other factors such as behaviour and attendance. Undoubtedly, a larger and more diverse sample size would be needed to improve the validity and reliability of such findings.

Barker's (2003) case study presented similar implications which correspond with these findings. Barker (2003, p. 10) suggested that pupils placed in the year 9 bottom set in English were subjected to an inescapable culture of underachievement. Barker (2003, p. 10) found that many pupils in low ability sets were lacking in confidence, although it was found difficult to support these pupils, in a class mainly occupied by disruptive and aggressive boys. There are, however a number of methodical weaknesses with case studies (Dencombe, 1998, p. 32). Therefore, the findings of Barker's (2003) research may be difficult to generalise, due to the limited sample of year 9 pupils (Denscombe, 1998, p. 32).

Level of Work

Interestingly, 24 or 53% of the respondents felt that their level of work was just right, this contrasts against research conducted by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) (2007), Dunne et al., (2011) and Hallam and Ireson (2007), who all found that most pupils in bottom sets wanted to move up due to the unsuitability of the work set.

This research also strived to explore the suggested link between lower sets and restrictive pedagogies based on research by Clarke et al. (2002). When analysing participants' responses regarding their favourite part of English lessons, evident trends included: visual learning styles (n=4), creative lessons (n=6), discussion and reading (n=3). This clashes with the notions of Boaler et al. (2000) and Hacker and Rowe (1993), who postulated that practitioners altered their pedagogies based on the overall ability of the group, and thus, limited learning styles to mostly whole class instruction.

Additionally, Barker (2003) found that bottom sets were often labelled as difficult, which in turn prevented teachers from utilising a diversity of creative pedagogies, out of fear of misbehaviour. These sources could be viewed as outdated however, considering the ever changing education system and the rigorous alterations made to teachers training programmes.

Furthermore, multiple supplementary sources give strength to the idea that lower ability groups are typically taught by inexperienced teachers. This particular research, due to convenience sampling, does support this idea. However, through discussion with the head of English, it was evident that low ability groups were evenly distributed between NQT teachers and senior practitioners, therefore, it could be argued that this sample is not truly representative of the school's system. This links neatly with research by Dunne et al. (2011), which also supported the idea that low ability pupils were not solely taught by inexperienced teachers.

Pupils' Confidence

Overall, 28 or 62% of pupils felt very confident answering questions in class. Furthermore, 13% of respondents, suggested that ability grouping actually increased their confidence, as they felt more confident surrounded by familiar pupils (see Figure 5 below). This correlates with the findings of Kulik and Kulik (1982), who found that pupils prefer being grouped with others of a similar level of ability. Furthermore, Hallam and Ireson (2006, p. 584) suggested that the reason pupils may enjoy streamed lessons, could be due to the 'quality of interaction' with their peers. Challenging this idea, Oakes (1985) found that in comparison to higher ability groups, the interactions in lower sets were less supportive and antagonistic; this tallies with the respondents' recurrent answers regarding disruptive behaviour.

By contrast, an abundance of research (Chaplain, 1996; Hallam & Ireson, 2005; Kerckhoff, 1986) highlights that ability grouping has a negative impact on pupils' confidence. This may be relevant to the remaining 38% of

pupils, who felt either unconfident or very unconfident in class. Again, it is important to appreciate the limitations of this study due to the very small sample size and the homogenous social positioning of the cohort.

Figure 5: One Pupil's Written Reason for Agreeing with their Group Placement
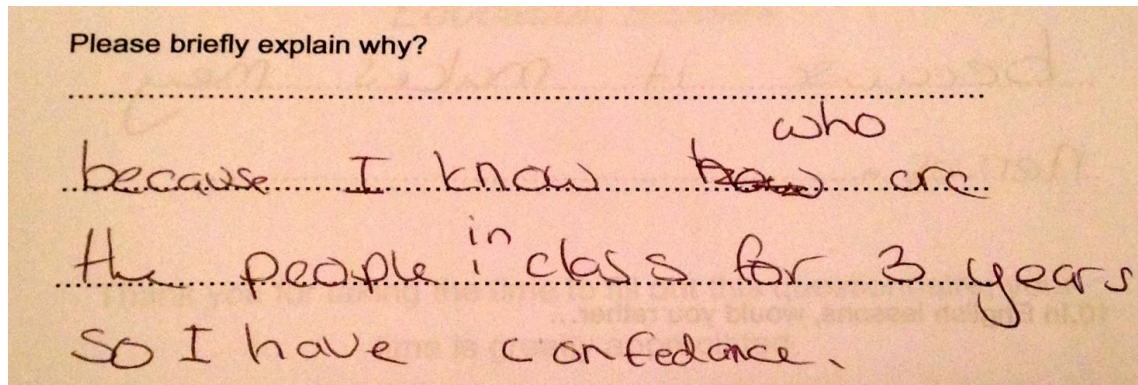
The overall findings of this research correspond with a large scale study conducted by Hallam and Ireson (2007), which found that a high proportion of pupils were unhappy with their allocated set. Pupils' reasons for this however, do not correlate with this research; instead Hallam and Ireson (2007) found that the highest proportion of pupils were unhappy with their group due to the unsuitability of work. Interestingly, the vast majority of pupils in this study felt that they were working at the correct level, and as result of this felt confident in class. The main reason respondents gave for dissatisfaction with their allocated group, was poor behaviour of classmates, which in turn detracted the class from learning and created unmanageable noise levels.

Hallinan (2003, p. 123) argues that if high ability students are typically 'conducive to learning', and low ability pupils tend to rebel against this, then the low ability pupils become seriously disadvantaged. Essentially, higher sets are presented with an optimum learning environment, with greater opportunities, and lower sets are presented with a predominant culture of distraction and underachievement.

Observations

Overview

Prior to the class observations, pupils and teachers provided voluntary informed consent and were offered the option to withdraw at any point during the research (BGU, 2013; BERA, 2011). The classes had already completed the questionnaire and were therefore familiar with both the researcher and the purpose of the research. The classes were mixed gender, therefore the researcher had to selectively observe the boys in order to overcome any invalid findings. This was a possible limitation, however, as there was no formal seating plan, the boys tended to gravitate towards each other, which then meant the observer was able to

concentrate on specific tables. Similarly, the teacher was aware of the observation, and this again, may have had an impact on her teaching.

To guarantee confidentiality, names were not utilised, and notes were retained by the researcher at all times. All participants were reassured of this; the aim being to encourage natural classroom behaviours.

Classroom Behaviour and Attitudes to Learning

Overall, all the observations presented similar results, therefore raw data was analysed and averaged out to reflect the mean number of typical behaviours. After completing several pilot studies it was decided that the observation schedules would be kept very brief, with the three main focuses being: behaviour, variety of teaching styles and attitudes to learning. Behaviour was initially categorised as off task or on task, and then disruptive behaviour was further divided into appropriate sub categories. The raw data was then coded and categorised.

It is important to note that some pupils displayed more than one behaviour, and therefore the data reflects this. As the questionnaires had already been completed, the researcher attempted to remain objective and uninfluenced by any previous responses, it is essential to consider, however, that previous data may have affected researcher bias.

Figure 7: Pie Chart Showing Frequency of Misbehaviour in the Classroom
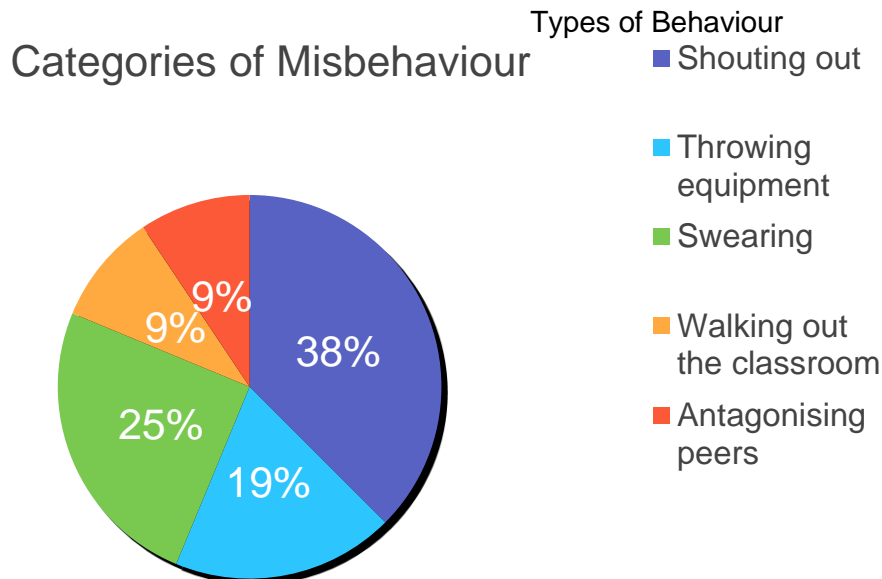
Only two sessions used PowerPoint as a continuous prompt throughout the lesson. As a general consensus, the lessons that used PowerPoint consistently were much more focussed, and engendered a clear sense of pace. The lesson that did not utilise PowerPoint adopted a less formal approach, which encouraged a group activity based on the comprehension of their GCSE text. However, with the exception of one small group, 12 or 80% of pupils were off task. Off task behaviour constituted shouting, throwing equipment, swearing, antagonising peers or walking out of the classroom. Many of the pupils were not completing the activity and

were disengaged from learning. Interestingly, when the teacher attempted to motivate the pupils, there were recurrent negative references made about the GCSE text 'Inspector Calls'. During this discussion with the teacher, pupils stated that the text was: "boring", "too difficult", and irrelevant to their future. These findings tally with the views' of Jones and Myhill (2006), who found that there is a clear connection between disaffection and underachievement in boys; it is suggested that factors such as peer pressure and cultural expectations have a direct impact on behaviour, and thus, the climate of the classroom.

This links neatly with the findings from the questionnaire, which found that many disruptive pupils were aware of their poor behaviour, yet still continued to misbehave because of their peers. Furthermore, in correlation with the questionnaire's findings, there tended to be a consistently distractive level of noise in all three classrooms. Seemingly, this encouraged further noise, and also distracted the few pupils that were on task. This correlates with the findings of Shield and Dockrell (2006, p. 2003). Through multiple studies they have found that unsuitable classroom acoustics can have a detrimental effect on learning in the classroom, again emphasising the importance of a calm and focussed school environment. Despite the teachers' efforts, pupils in all of the classes tended to be very inattentive; often ignoring the teachers' instruction and talking to their peers.

Teaching and Pedagogies

Contrary to research by Boaler et al., (2000), all observations utilised a diversity of pedagogies and learning styles (Dunne et al., 2011). A captivating starter or thinking task was used to initially engage students, and this was used in conjunction with group or pair work. Questions were used in every aspect of the lesson to engender learning and encourage subject related discourse. Although, it was evident that subject related discourse only seemed to take place when instigated by the teacher. Unfortunately pupils became off task at any independent learning opportunity. Research conducted by the DCSF (2007) and Ireson and Macintyre (2002) also discovered that pupils in low ability groups tended to engender poor concentration skills.

As a general consensus creative learning styles tended to be most successful in engaging the pupils, such as mind mapping and story writing; equally, this was often an ideal opportunity for pupils to misbehave. This may be the reason previous research (Clarke et al., 2002) has found that low ability groups are often subjected to whole class instruction. Teachers may be apprehensive about veering away from conventional learning, as they do not want to risk losing the pupils' focus.

Furthermore, Boaler et al., (2000) found that students in low ability groups were often bored by the lack of challenge, which may be another reason why pupils misbehave. It is important to note however, that representativeness and validity may be limited by the small sample size, and by unintentional researcher bias fuelled by the results of the questionnaire.

Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, the purpose of this research was to unearth the effects of ability grouping on low ability boys in English. The aim therefore was to explore Key Stage 4 boys' perceptions of the streaming process and identify any correlations with previous research in this field. The students reported a wide range of negative experiences, predominately linked to poor behaviour and distractive noise levels.

Many pupils were aware of the importance of education and its role in their future, although unfortunately, their classroom behaviour was not reflective of this. This clear lack of motivation could potentially be linked to low self-esteem, or quite possibly to 'laddish' cultural expectations (Jones & Myhill, 2006). It is important to note however, that the vast majority of pupils felt that the work they completed in class was at the correct level, therefore contrary to research by Hallam and Ireson (2007), respondents' unhappiness regarding placement was not a consequence of insufficient differentiation.

More significantly however, teachers were utilising a range of pedagogies in attempt to engage the pupils (Dunne et al., 2011), despite their lack of cooperation. Notably, there are still many uncertainties with the data; in order to further consolidate findings, it may be useful to replicate this study with higher tiers. This way the researcher could compare findings and identify key similarities and differences. It may also be advantageous to explore a different group of students in a contrasting area, as the findings of this study may have been affected by the geographical location of the school and the overall school ethos, meaning the findings are not nationally representative.

There are also aspects of the study that could have been explored in greater detail with more time and an extended word limit. This includes teachers' perceptions of streaming, and the symptom of the self-fulfilling prophecy in low ability groups.

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