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The Inclusion of Pupils with Special Educational Needs

(A Study of the Formulation and Implementation of the National Curriculum Physical Education in Britain)

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The paper examines the planned and unplanned outcomes associated with the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in the National Curriculum Physical Education (NCPE) in Britain. This involves the use of key concepts from figurational sociology, and documentary analysis, to examine the emergence of disability as a social issue in British society and in secondary school education. Norbert Elias' game models (Elias, 1978) are then used to analyse the NCPE 1992, 1995 and 2000 documents, and their associated consultation materials. This allows the researcher to identify all the major players involved in the formulation of the NCPEs, and the extent to which the objectives of each player, and their subsequent power struggles with each other, impacted upon the overall objectives and content of the NCPEs. The game models are then used to examine the extent to which the objectives of the players involved in the implementation of the NCPE generated outcomes which none of the players planned for, or could have foreseen.

Keywords: special educational needs, game models, NCPE

Introduction

Whilst there is a growing body of literature that has examined the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream physical education (PE) from the perspective of PE teachers (Hodge, Ommah, Casebolt, LaMasters and

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O'Sullivan, 2004; Morely, Bailey, Tan and Cooke, 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004), and from the pupils themselves (Atkinson and Black, 2006; Brittain, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2005; Fitzgerald, Jobling and Kirk, 2003a, 2003b; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000), few attempts have been made to examine the outcomes generated from policies designed to facilitate the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream PE in Britain (Smith, 2008).

Drawing upon the key concepts of figuration sociology, and using documentary analysis, this paper examines the planned and unplanned outcomes that are associated with the inclusion of pupils with SEN in the NCPE. To achieve this, the following questions are addressed. First, what were the formally stated inclusion objectives of the NCPEs? Second, who were the groups involved in the formulation of these objectives, and how did their own objectives impact upon the formulation of the NCPEs? Third, who were the groups involved in the implementation of the NCPEs, and how did their own objectives impact upon the achievement of the NCPE's inclusion objectives? Finally, what planned and unplanned outcomes were generated from the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream PE lessons?

To clarify, SEN refers to those pupils who have a learning difficulty that calls for special educational provision to be made for them (Audit Commission, 2002; DfEE, 1997). For this paper, then, the term 'pupils with SEN' will refer to those pupils (some of whom may have disabilities), who have a particular learning need which arises from a wide range of difficulties, including physical, cognitive, sensory, communicative or behavioural difficulties (Audit Commission, 2002). It is noteworthy that the term SEN is a contextual concept insofar as an individual may have a SEN in a classroom-based subject but would not necessarily have a SEN in PE. For example, an individual who has dyslexia may have a SEN within an English lesson but they would not necessarily require additional provision to be made for them in a PE lesson. Conversely, an individual who requires a wheelchair for mobility would not necessarily have a SEN in an English lesson but may require additional provision in a PE lesson (DfEE, 1997). Since this paper draws upon figurational sociology, it will be useful to say something about what this approach involves.

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Figurational Sociology

The Figuration

The 'figuration' should be conceptualised as a dynamic web of human beings, whereby the emphasis is placed on how a plurality of people are tied into social networks because of their interdependence with each other (Elias, 1978). The figuration on which this paper mainly focuses entails: government ministers, policy-makers, PE teachers and other teachers, pupils with and without SEN, special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and learning support assistants (LSAs). In short, the whole network of interdependencies involved in the formulation and implementation of the NCPEs. 'Development' is another central concept of this approach because it 'more adequately captures the complexity of figurations in flux' (Jarvie and Maguire, 1994: 133). Figurations are *constantly* in flux, undergoing changes of many kinds, 'some rapid and ephemeral, others slower but perhaps more lasting' (Goudsblom, 1977: 252). There is, however, no inevitability to the course taken by a particular figurational sequence (Jarvie and Maguire, 1994) because complex figurations can involve a myriad of people (PE teachers, SENCOs and LSAs, etc.) and, therefore, the course of the sequence can be unpredictable, particularly for those involved. This is because groups are often involved in power struggles and, in many cases, these groups are so committed to achieving their own objectives that the outcomes generated from their intended actions are difficult to foresee.

Power

Power relations form a central dimension of interdependency ties and should be conceptualised as a 'structural characteristic of all human relationships' (Elias, 1978: 74). Power should be considered as a relative balance, for 'no one is ever absolutely powerful or powerless' (Murphy, Sheard and Waddington, 2000: 93). Rather, power is always distributed differentially and there are many sources and kinds of power. The balance of power in a figuration is never permanent because power balances are multi-dimensional, dynamic and constantly in flux (Murphy *et al.*, 2000).

Unplanned Outcomes

Unplanned outcomes are often described as anomalies of social life (Merton, 1949); however, to describe them as such only mystifies the process involved (Murphy and Sheard, 2008). Unplanned outcomes are, actually, universal in social life; 'they are consequences of the complex interweaving of human beings with different beliefs, associated misconceptions and divergent objectives' (Murphy and Sheard, 2008: 51). While human action

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is, to varying degrees, directed toward the achievement of personal goals and desires (Hanstad, Smith and Waddington, 2008), it is important to note that the outcomes generated from complex social processes such as the formulation and implementation of the NCPEs cannot be explained in terms of the intentions of specific individuals or groups. Instead, the complex interweaving of a myriad of individuals and groups who wish to maintain, promote and advance their own objectives inevitably generates outcomes that no one would have planned, or could have foreseen (Dopson and Waddington, 1996; Elias, 1978; Hanstad *et al.*, 2008; Murphy and Sheard, 2008). The formulation and implementation of the NCPEs involved many groups with divergent objectives such as policy-makers, SENCOs and PE teachers, which would have almost inevitably generated both planned *and* unplanned outcomes. Indeed, both processes involved many people in different roles within the PE figuration and the extent to which these people were committed to, or opposed to, the NCPE policy will play a crucial role in determining its outcomes (Dopson and Waddington, 1996). To better understand this complex social process, the paper draws upon Elias' (1978) game models.

Game Models

The game models were developed in order to 'isolate in close focus the interweaving of the aims and actions of people in the plural' (Elias, 1978: 73), thereby making complex processes more comprehensible. The models help identify, more graphically, the processual nature of relationships between interdependent people, whilst focusing attention on changing balances of power as a central concept of human figurations (Dopson and Waddington, 1996). Game models illuminate the ways in which interdependency ties 'inescapably constrain [and enable] people to a greater or lesser extent' (Green, 2003: 19) by focusing on how the dependency of individuals and groups on the actions of other individuals and groups influences their own actions. Through the application of game models the researcher may be able to identify the main players involved in the formulation and implementation of the NCPEs, identify the ways in which they were tied to each other, and examine how their relationships with each other and their associated power struggles both enabled and constrained the achievement of their own objectives, and the objectives of the NCPE.

The Game

The formulation and implementation of the NCPEs may be seen as a game played by the British Government and PE teachers, the former having much more power than the latter. The British Government has a

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great deal of control over PE teachers insofar as they can actually force them to make certain moves. At the same time, PE teachers still have some degree of control over the British Government, even if it is only because the government must take into account the actions of PE teachers when planning their own actions (Elias, 1978; Mennell, 1992). Nonetheless, because one group's power far exceeds that of the other, they can, to a significant extent, control the course of the NCPE formulation and implementation processes. Conversely, a rather different game pattern emerges if their power becomes gradually more equal. When this occurs, two things diminish. Firstly, the more powerful group's ability to determine the course of the game decreases and, secondly, their opponent's ability to control them increases correlatively (Mennell, 1992). One consequence of this process is that the game becomes increasingly beyond the control of either group: when the power disparity of the two groups diminishes, 'there will result from the interweaving of the moves of the two players a game process that neither of them planned for' (Elias, 1978: 82).

As the number of players in the game increases (for example, with the addition of LSAs and SENCOs) so does the complexity of the game. Regardless of how powerful the British Government may be, they *will* become *less* able to control the moves of other players or dictate the course and outcome of the 'game' in order to guarantee that their objectives are achieved. Game models highlight the conditions under which each group involved in the formulation and implementation of the NCPE slowly begin to encounter problems regarding their specific objectives (Hanstad *et al.*, 2008), whereby the game process undertakes 'a course which none of the individual players has planned, determined or anticipated' (Elias, 1978: 95). It is, in short, because of the sheer complexity of the NCPE formulation and implementation processes that the intended actions of all the groups involved inevitably generate unplanned outcomes.

Documentary Analysis

The NCPEs were created from the knowledge, ideas and beliefs of many individuals and groups who had varying degrees of influence on their structure and content. For 'The Formulation of the NCPE' section, government documents such as the NCPE 1992, 1995 and 2000, and their corresponding consultation materials, were examined to determine, first, their stated inclusion objectives relating to pupils with SEN; and second, who was involved and, perhaps more significantly, who was not involved in the planning of the documents, and if their own objectives impacted on the formulation of the NCPEs' objectives. However, the objectives of

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each player were not always written down in these documents; therefore, the researcher also considered the interests and objectives of the organisations that each player represented. For example, a representative from Sport England will be primarily concerned with the development of grass roots sport and the identification of talented athletes (Sport England, 2010). The NCPE documents, moreover, did not always explicitly refer to their 'inclusion objectives'; therefore, the researcher was sensitive to corresponding concepts such as 'equity', 'equality' and 'equal opportunities' throughout the examination. It is noteworthy, here, that the omission of any inclusion objectives is equally as important, if not more important, than their inclusion because it can show how some players (such as policy-makers) can use their power to exclude the views and opinions of other players (such as disability representative groups).

The NCPE documents were also examined to discover what other political objectives the government and policy-makers prioritised in order to determine whether their policy objectives were compatible. When policies are not compatible, they can have consequences which militate against, or even undermine, the achievement of their objectives and the objectives of other policies (Murphy and Waddington, 1998). If the NCPE documents contain other political objectives that are not compatible with their inclusion objectives, this could, potentially, constrain the extent to which the government achieves the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream PE. For 'The Implementation of the NCPEs' section, the paper examines government reports focusing on the participation rates of pupils with SEN, and peer-reviewed journal articles focusing on the views and experiences of pupils with SEN and PE teachers who have experience teaching pupils with SEN in the NCPE to identify the planned and unplanned outcomes of the NCPEs. These outcomes are determined by comparing the actual outcomes of the NCPEs – identified by the findings of existing research – with the objectives of the NCPEs. The information presented in the reports and journal articles, however, was not accepted uncritically; rather, the researcher examined the empirical data, where possible, to determine its reality-congruence with the information presented (Elias, 1987).

NCPE documents offer 'concrete' accounts that 'give access' to past events at which the researcher was not present (Payne and Payne, 2004: 65). Apart from trying to locate and survey or interview those involved in the formulation and implementation of these documents, they are the only source available for examining who was involved in the formulation of these documents, how each player was tied to others, what the

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objectives of each player were, and how they impacted on the formulation and implementation of the NCPE documents. These documents, however, cannot be regarded as presenting an 'objective' description of the situation at the time (Atkinson and Coffey, 2004; Bryman, 2008; May, 2003). Instead, they should be viewed as having more or less degrees of reality-congruence because documents are written in order to express an impression, which will be favourable to the authors and those whom they represent (Bryman, 2008). In other words, the NCPE documents contain the ideological beliefs of those who formulated them. The researcher, therefore, must aim to separate the mythical from the more reality-congruent information. To achieve this, they must again ensure that they do not accept the information presented in these documents uncritically; instead, they must compare the information against the empirical research available and provide a well-balanced and well-informed examination.

Disability as a Social Issue in Britain

Wave One: 1940s -1950s

The emergence of disability as a social issue in Britain is a long-term process that has roots that can be traced back to the Second World War as part of the British welfare state and the government focus on social policy (Oliver and Barnes, 1998). Government policy, at this time, was largely focused towards the 'treatment' of disability because it was viewed mainly as an individual 'problem' in which many of the 'victims' could be rehabilitated and cured (Davis, 1999; Oliver, 1996; Oliver and Barnes, 1998). This view of disabled people is rooted in the medical model of disability, which is founded on the notion that many of the problems that disabled people encounter are a result of their own physical or mental impairments (Brittain, 2004; Hahn, 1986), rather than social structures, attitudes and policies (social model) (Finkelstein, 2001; Tregaskis, 2004) For centuries, the British Government had incarcerated many disabled people in closed institutions such as hospitals and 'special' schools (Barnes and Mercer, 2003; Goffman, 1961; Oliver and Barnes, 1998). The passage of the Education Act in 1944, however, marked a watershed in education provision for disabled pupils by providing a special needs education system (DoE, 1944). This segregated system, and a commitment to the medical model of disability, meant that the issue of disability maintained a relatively minor position in the wider society because disabled people had little power within the figurations of which they were a part.

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Wave Two: 1960s – 1970s

Then, through mass demonstrations and the formulation of disability activist groups, disabled people were able to exert their power more effectively than in the past. Previously, disabled people were *more autonomous* of each other than they are today. Their chains of interdependence were much shorter and, therefore, their power and influence was limited significantly because when they did attempt to challenge discriminatory practices, they usually did so separately, through individual cases. Often, they found themselves in power struggles with much more powerful groups such as service providers, policy-makers and the government. Through the formulation of disability activist groups, however, the chains of interdependence of disabled people became longer and much more complex, resulting in an increase in the power of disabled people and a correlative decrease in the power of service providers, policy-makers and the government.

There was growing support in society for young disabled people to be educated alongside their age-peers in mainstream schools because many people believed that the inclusion of these young people into mainstream education would help facilitate their access to, and participation in, social life more generally (Smith and Thomas, 2005). The Education Act of 1981 further consolidated this view by explicitly suggesting that disabled pupils should be given the opportunity to be educated in mainstream schools as a means of breaking down barriers between disabled and non-disabled people (DES, 1981). This education reform was most likely influenced by the increasing power of the disabled people's movement, the 'equalisation of opportunities' rhetoric that had swept European societies as part of the human rights movement and education developments generally.

Wave Three: 1980s-present

One outcome of the 1981 Education Act was that the medically defined categories of 'handicap' were supplanted with the concept of SEN, resulting in the identification of as many as 20 per cent of pupils deemed to have special educational needs (DES, 1978). The increasing pressure for pupils with SEN to be educated in mainstream schools, moreover, meant that there began a transference of pupils from special to mainstream schools over the coming years. The chains of interdependence, therefore, of school head teachers, teachers, pupils without SEN, etc., lengthened to incorporate pupils with SEN, thus resulting in a more complex school and PE figuration. The pledge towards inclusive education and the debate surrounding its feasibility was further intensified by the introduction of the Salamanca Statement in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994), proposing that *all* national

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governments enrol *all* children into mainstream schools wherever possible in order to help to bring about a 'genuine equalization of opportunities' (UNESCO, 1994: 11) for disabled people. The British Government, in turn, adopted this Statement as a way of aligning itself to the United Nation's human rights agenda, thus showing how figurations on an international scale can influence national policies. The 2001 *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act* (SENDA) (Stationary Office, 2001) progresses the government's apparent commitment to inclusive education by providing the legal right to all pupils with SEN to a mainstream education. It is within this context that the next section will examine the formulation of the NCPE in 1992.

The Formulation of the National Curriculum Physical Education

The Education Reform Act, PE Working Group and NCPE 1992

The 1988 Education Reform Act was passed in response to a perceived decline in educational standards in many state schools (Penney and Evans, 1999). The National Curriculum which followed in 1992 comprised of 'core' and 'foundation' subjects to be taught to all pupils aged 5-16. PE was identified as a 'foundation' subject, not a 'priority' subject, perhaps decreasing the power chances of PE teachers in their school figuration when compared with teachers of core subjects. A planned outcome of the Act was that the National Curriculum enabled the government to have greater control over the school experiences of pupils and the work of teachers. Hitherto, teachers had greater influence over curriculum organisation, content and delivery in their schools (Penney and Evans, 1999) and, therefore, more power within the educational figuration of which they were a part.

The Act enabled the government to develop attainment targets and Programmes of Study for each subject (DES/WO, 1991a). Working groups were established to advise on structure and content. The actions of the groups, however, were, in practice, constrained considerably. It was the government, for example, that detailed the format for the PE Working Group's recommendations, the approach they should adopt, the groups they should consult and the time scale within which they were expected to complete their consultation and recommendations. The government, moreover, could choose whether to accept or reject the group's proposals (Penney and Evans, 1999) if they did not facilitate their own objectives because, ultimately, the government exercised far greater power within the NCPE formulation process.

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The working group did not include PE teachers, partly because they were one of the least powerful players when it came to formulating policy. Furthermore, it did not include 'inclusion experts' (for example, special school teachers) or representatives from disability sport organisations (for example, the British Paralympic Association (BPA)). Seemingly, the inclusion of pupils with SEN in the 1992 NCPE was not a 'priority issue' of the British Government because the working group did not include representatives who may have provided a valuable insight into this area. The appointment of Ian Beer (Headmaster of Harrow School), however, from a school tradition well-known for its emphasis on sport, and two professional athletes (John Fashanu and Steve Ovett), could be seen as a move by government to reinforce the view that the 1992 NCPE should be synonymous with elite sports performance (Penney and Evans, 1999).

The working group's Interim Report recommended that there should be three attainment targets, 'participating and performing' being the most important element of attainment in PE (DES/WO, 1991b). This was perhaps an attempt by the group to ensure that their recommendations facilitated the government's sporting objectives, whilst endeavouring to ensure that the new NCPE was inclusive. The Interim Report recommended, moreover, that pupils should receive a PE programme 'which is differentiated to meet their needs' (DES/WO, 1991a: 5). However, pupils with SEN were not the central focus of this policy; rather, along with elite sports performance, the concept of 'equal opportunities', which was considered as a process of 'treating all children as individuals with their own abilities, difficulties and attitudes' (DES/WO, 1991b: 16), dominated the expectations of the group. This emphasis is perhaps unsurprising when considered against the background of an education system that had been heavily influenced by the equal opportunities movement that swept across much of Europe during the 1970s and 1980s.

The government asked the working group to 'reconsider the structure [of the NCPE] with a view to there being a single attainment target for physical education which reflects the practical nature of the subject' (Clarke, 1991: 88). Notwithstanding concerns that a single target would focus entirely on performance in PE, thus 'further disadvantage [some] pupils with special educational needs' (DES/WO, 1991a: 17) because of their ostensibly inferior physical ability, the group encompassed all three targets into a single 'End of Key Stage Statement' (the level of knowledge and performance expected for a particular age group) in their Final Report. The government, it seems, used its power to ensure that the group's final proposals were compatible with their sporting agenda. The government also

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told the group that the Programme of Study they offered was too detailed and rigid, and called for a more flexible, non-prescriptive framework for PE (Clarke, 1991). The Final Report subsequently included a more flexible curriculum because failure to succumb to the government's interest would likely have resulted in the disbandment of the group and the replacement by a group who were more willing to facilitate the government's elite sports performance agenda (Talbot, 1993). The working group, therefore, were unable to resist or reject the government's interests in the 1992 NCPE because of their limited power. The next step was for the National Curriculum Council (NCC) and the Curriculum Council for Wales (CCW) to consult on the working group's Final Report.

The NCC's Report placed even greater stress upon games in PE, most likely because the objectives of the NCC – a group that comprised of individuals appointed by the government – were more compatible with the government's preferred view of PE. The NCC believed that the Programme of Study was flexible enough to include *most* pupils; schools were charged with the task of providing provision for those pupils who find it difficult to 'fit in' to the curriculum as it is planned for the majority of pupils (NCC, 1991). From this 'integration' process, it seems that pupils with SEN were not the main focus of attention for the government or the NCC; instead, the development of elite sports performance was their main objective. Upon receipt of the Consultation Report, Draft Orders for the NCPE were produced, finalised by the government and submitted to parliament. The NCPE was subsequently introduced in 1992.

The Dearing Reports and the NCPE 1995

A revised version of the National Curriculum was called for because many schools and policy-makers thought that the components of the first curriculum were not manageable (Penney and Evans, 1999). A reduction in content was said to be required for all subjects because a slimmer curriculum 'would... [give] teachers the scope necessary to provide pupils with a meaningful entitlement to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum' (Dearing, 1993b: 53). These comments demonstrate that teachers had at least *some* power in the formulation of the 1995 NCPE insofar as the government had to consider the actions of these players when formulating policy. Sir Ron Dearing was appointed to present recommendations for the revision. A letter to Dearing, from the then Secretary of State for England, John Patten, highlights the degree of constraint the government wanted to place on the revision process: 'I expect you... [to] take into account, the views of serving teachers who have experience implementing the National Curriculum and its assessment arrangements' (Patten, 1993: 64). Working

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groups were established for each subject that gave greater representation to teachers because Dearing's ability to resist Patten was constrained because he had far less political power. These educational developments were most likely influenced, in part, by wider processes such as the development of the Salamanca Statement less than a year earlier.

Once more the PE Working Group did not include disability specialists or those from disability sport groups, again highlighting the limited power these players have when it comes to formulating PE policy. There was, however, a *relative* increase in the power chances of PE teachers, especially when compared to the formulation of the previous NCPE. They were now in a position to present their views and experiences of the NCPE, particularly in relation to pupils with SEN because, by now, many had experience teaching these pupils. The following excerpt, however, may instil doubt regarding the extent to which the government were prepared to recognise the views and opinions of teachers and change the 1995 NCPE: 'the task ahead is to identify a slimmed down statutory content for each subject... it will not involve the introduction of new material' (Dearing, 1993a: 35). This constraint was, perhaps, placed upon the working group to prevent the introduction of material that was not compatible with the government's still prevalent view of PE, which focused on elite sports performance.

It was decided that each activity area, except games, would be split into 'half units' (SCAA, 1994). The prominence of games was 'non-negotiable' (Penney and Evans, 1999: 65), largely because Dearing was constrained, by the government, to produce recommendations that were compatible with their PE agenda. In response to the Draft Proposals, John Patten revealed: 'I am particularly pleased to see the emphasis given to competitive games in Key Stages 1-3... [And] your recommendation that games should be made a requirement at Key Stage 4' (Patten, 1994: i). These comments were made despite earlier concerns that competitive sports and team games were activities in which PE teachers would 'especially experience difficulty fully integrating children with SEN' (DES/WO, 1991a: 36). Notwithstanding the prevalence of equal opportunities rhetoric in both Dearing's Interim and Final Report, the prominent position of games was increased, rather than challenged, because they were part of the government's sport agenda. It is noteworthy that the NCPE 1995 emerged, in part, out of a wider government policy on sport called *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH, 1995) wherein PE is identified as a potential avenue for the development of future athletes (DNH, 1995). This is a prime example of how wider policies on sport have interwoven and become more interdependent with PE policy.

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The main theme to emerge from the consultation with PE teachers was that some pupils with SEN were working on Programmes of Study that were set, by law, for their age but which were often unsuitable for their ability (Dearing, 1993a). To combat this, the Interim Report suggested moving to a grouping system, which is based entirely on attainment rather than age to ensure that pupils were not studying material that is above or below their abilities (Dearing, 1993a). Dearing's Final Report suggested that the National Curriculum levels should be broadened to include level 1 at Key Stage 2, and level 1 and 2 at Key Stage 3 to ensure that teachers can provide work in line with their pupils' abilities and needs, particularly those with SEN (Dearing, 1993b). In the Final Orders, attainment targets were set in the form of 'End of Key Stage Descriptions' relating to the type and range of 'performance' that 'the majority' of pupils should be able to demonstrate by the end of each key stage (DfE, 1995: 11). It was suggested that these descriptions were flexible enough to allow for provision to be made for pupils with SEN to enable them to progress and demonstrate achievement (DfE, 1995). Pupils with SEN were, therefore, expected to 'fit in' to the arrangements made for the majority of pupils because direct provision was not made for them, a point that illuminates the limited power of pupils with SEN within the school figuration.

Government Proposals, QCA Consultation and the NCPE 2000

The third revision of the National Curriculum was stimulated, in part, by the arrival of a Labour Government who wanted to stamp their own mark on an education system at the heart of their political agenda (Houlihan and Green, 2006). The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) outlined its preliminary recommendations on a forthcoming review of the National Curriculum (QCA, 1999). David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, having received the QCA's advice, published his proposals from the review and set out a vision for the National Curriculum (Blunkett, 1999a). Blunkett, therefore, consulted the QCA on the National Curriculum revision but, ultimately, he and his advisors set out the government's vision of the content and priorities of the new National Curriculum; he used his political position and greater power chances to further the government's objectives. The key objectives of the proposals were to raise standards in education, whilst ensuring that all pupils fulfil their potential, particularly those with SEN (Blunkett, 1999a). The government proposed a less prescriptive and more flexible curriculum and the introduction, for the first time, of a 'detailed, overarching statement on inclusion' (DfEE/QCA, 1999b: 3). This statement was most likely influenced by policy developments occurring within the wider figuration. For example, the 1994 Salamanca Statement

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– to which the government had pledged its commitment (DfEE, 1997) – and the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act placed added pressure on the government, policy-makers and educationalists to provide a mainstream education for all pupils with SEN. Much more of the NCPE 2000 and its associated consultation materials, therefore, focused on providing a more equitable curriculum, especially for pupils with SEN, than did previous NCPEs. This is again a prime example of how figurations and policy developments on an international level can influence policy direction and change on a national level.

The QCA were constrained to consult groups largely decided by the government (for example, schools, Local Education Authorities, universities and sports organisations) on curriculum content, within a non-flexible time frame (13 May until 23 July) (Blunkett, 1999a). What the QCA could do, however, was make recommendations on the proposals. Again, the government had the power to reject any of these recommendations if they did not support the government's PE objectives, which now encompassed elite sports performance *and*, albeit to a lesser extent, provision for the inclusion of pupils with SEN. In short, the Secretary of State enabled the QCA to participate in the revision process but used his greater power chances to limit the extent to which his proposals could be challenged. The QCA sent out a booklet summarising the government's proposals. Here, the onus was on interest groups to contact the QCA with any issues they felt arose from the proposals. Questionnaires and focus groups were also used to gathered data from interested parties (DfEE/QCA, 1999a). Some of those consulted were SENCOs and teachers who had experience teaching pupils with SEN in mainstream PE, thus adding an interesting insight into the potential implications of the proposals for SENCOs, PE teachers and pupils with SEN. The inclusion of these groups may serve as evidence that the issue of SEN had gained a more prominent position on the education agenda.

Support for a general inclusion statement was discovered; however, a 'large majority' of those consulted suggested that 'it would be [more] helpful to have individual subject statements' of inclusion (QCA, 1999, annex 1: 5) to ensure that teachers were able to tackle the subject-specific issues they face when teaching pupils with SEN. Some SENCOs and PE teachers, moreover, felt that some pupils were being led towards unachievable targets. In response, the QCA's report set out a flexible, nine-stage plan that was referred to as 'Level Descriptions', which describe the types and range of performance that pupils working at a particular level should characteristically demonstrate. Such a flexible, subject-specific

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scale, it was argued, would give teachers something to assess those pupils with SEN who are unable to perform at the level expected for their age-group (DfEE/QCA, 1999c). Here, it appears that the success of a PE lesson is determined by the level of performance achieved. Nevertheless, the development of these Level Descriptions is a prime example of how the actions of SENCOs and teachers – two players with ostensibly little political power – can constrain the QCA – a player with far greater political power – to change the NCPE's assessment arrangements.

The government's commitment to 'equal opportunities' was consolidated by the introduction, in the NCPE 2000, of the statutory inclusion statement, which aimed to provide effective learning opportunities for *all* pupils by outlining 'how teachers can modify, as necessary, the National Curriculum programmes of study to provide all pupils with relevant and appropriately challenging work at each key stage' (DfEE/QCA, 1999b: 28). The NCPE 2000, however, contains only a generic statutory inclusion statement despite many of those consulted suggesting, and the QCA recommending, that a subject-specific inclusion statement would be more beneficial. Again, this approach was most probably adopted because PE was not a core subject and, therefore, the inclusion of pupils with SEN *in PE* was not a priority objective of the British Government. Nevertheless, the inclusion of a generic statutory inclusion statement in the NCPE 2000 is a prime example of the government using its greater power chances to reject the views of those consulted, and the recommendations made by the QCA, to further its own interests.

Although the government heavily constrained the extent to which their objectives could be challenged, their actions – through the development of a flexible curriculum that teachers could adapt as they deemed necessary – gave PE teachers the power to determine the extent to which pupils with SEN would be included in mainstream PE. The next section will examine the outcomes associated with the implementation of a NCPE which aims to include all pupils with SEN within a curriculum that prioritises elite performance in competitive sport and team games.

The Implementation of the National Curriculum Physical Education

Pupils with SEN: Their Views and Experiences of the NCPE

Much of the available research suggests that, when compared to their age-peers, pupils with SEN receive a narrower PE curriculum – a process which may decrease the power chances of these pupils in relation to

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their age-peers – in which they tend to participate in more individualised activities such as swimming, gymnastics, badminton and dance (Atkinson and Black, 2006; Morely *et al.*, 2005; Smith, 2004, 2008; Smith and Green, 2004; Sport England, 2001). Despite ostensibly being the most powerful player in the policy process, then, it appears that the government have been unable to achieve their objective of providing a broad and balanced curriculum for *all pupils* and, thus, control the outcomes generated from the implementation of the NCPE. Sport England's (2001) report, moreover, suggests that young disabled people in special schools were more likely to participate in PE than those in mainstream schools, both 'at least once' (93 per cent and 89 per cent, respectively) and 'frequently' (69 per cent and 59 per cent, respectively). In light of these latter data, it seems that despite UNESCO suggesting that the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools would bring about a 'genuine equalization of opportunities' (UNESCO, 1994: 11) and thus, they assumed, increase the power chances of pupils with SEN more generally, an unplanned outcome of this inclusion process has been that the opportunities for pupils with SEN have actually decreased, in PE at least, when compared to their age-peers in special schools. Rather than decreasing the power disparity between pupils with and without SEN, research suggests that an unplanned outcome of the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream PE is that the balance of power between these two players has become more unequal, perhaps reinforcing, rather than ameliorating, barriers between pupils with and without SEN.

In research conducted by Fitzgerald (2005) and Smith (2004) it was not uncommon for some pupils with SEN to leave the activity being delivered (particularly a team game or competitive sport) and, perhaps more importantly, their age-peers, to practise skills or do other activities if they were unable to 'integrate themselves' into what had been planned. It is noteworthy, in this regard, that the 1992 PE Working Group (DES/WO, 1991a), together with the testimonies of some PE teachers (Morely *et al.*, 2005; Smith 2004), considered those activities that are increasingly marginalized in the PE curriculum such as swimming, gymnastics, badminton and dance (Penney, 2002; Waddington, Malcolm and Cobb, 1998; Waddington, Malcolm and Green, 1997) as particularly suitable activities in which pupils with SEN can be fully included with their age-peers (DES/WO, 1991a). Some of the pupils with SEN interviewed by Fitzgerald *et al.* (2003a), moreover, suggested that they were often involved to a significantly lesser degree in PE when the activities being taught were team games. From these data, it appears that another unplanned outcome of the NCPE is that many pupils with SEN are participating in a

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narrower PE curriculum than their ostensibly more able peers because the government objective of elite performance in competitive sport and team games has marginalised those individual activities that are more inclusive by design and, thus, less likely to require significant modification in order for pupils with SEN to be included (Meek, 1991).

In summary, a planned outcome of the NCPE is that the government's elite sports performance objective is being prioritised; however, an unplanned outcome is that the prioritisation of elite sports performance – by PE teachers and, in light of the content and structure of the NCPE, the government – is constraining the extent to which PE teachers can achieve the government's inclusion objectives. This is because, in short, the two objectives are not compatible. In fact, the sheer complexity of the NCPE policy implementation process, together with the impact of the government's attempt to constrain teachers to achieve conflicting objectives, has meant that the prioritisation of elite sports performance has militated against and undermined the achievement of the full inclusion of pupils with SEN.

For some pupils with SEN, their limited experiences of the breadth of activities offered to their age-peers is said to have had a negative effect on their self-esteem and confidence in PE (Fitzgerald, 2006; Fitzgerald *et al*, 2003a, 2003b; Goodwin and Watkinson, 2000). Some of the pupils with SEN interviewed by Fitzgerald (2005) suggested that they often experienced differing degrees of social isolation in PE when they participated in separate activities from their peers. Amongst other things, this segregation process often had a detrimental effect on their social interaction with age-peers and their confidence in PE (Fitzgerald, 2005). Perhaps more importantly, however, an unplanned outcome of isolating pupils with SEN from their age-peers is that it can normalise segregation and, therefore, reinforce, rather than challenge, discriminatory attitudes and, subsequently, increase the power disparity between these two players. This tendency to teach some pupils with SEN in isolation from their age-peers can be attributed to many processes, most notably, the perceived inappropriateness of the NCPE, particularly because of its emphasis on elite performance in competitive sport and team games.

Elite Performance in Competitive Sport and Team Games

The prioritisation of team games in British schools is not a contemporary development; its roots can be traced back to the early nineteenth century in English public schools (Dunning, 1971, 1977; Dunning and Curry, 2004; Dunning and Sheard, 2005). Nevertheless,

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several studies (Morely *et al.*, 2005; Penney and Evans, 1995; Penney and Harris, 1997; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green 2004) have suggested that through the apparent emphasis that the government has placed on achievement, skill and performance in the NCPE, many pupils with SEN are being excluded, to varying degrees, from the same opportunities and experiences provided for their age-peers in curricular and extra-curricular PE. When some pupils with SEN *do* participate in the same activities as their age-peers, their involvement is often limited by the actions of their age-peers (Fitzgerald, 2005). Some of the pupils with SEN interviewed by Fitzgerald (2005) suggested that there was often a process of peer-led exclusion whereby some pupils with SEN were bypassed in activities, particularly in team games (for example, during a passing move) by their age-peers because of their ostensibly inferior physical capabilities. In other words, on some occasions some pupils without SEN are using their greater power chances – which they received from their apparently superior physical ability – to constrain the extent to which some pupils with SEN can participate in the game figuration.

This process, whereby some pupils with SEN are becoming isolated in mainstream PE lessons, can be explained further by drawing on Elias's game models (Elias, 1978) to examine the significantly different patterns of social relations and game dynamics that are involved in individual activities and competitive sports and team games. Whilst participating in an individual activity such as swimming, a pupil can determine the duration and intensity of their physical exertion because they are not being constrained by any other individual. However, this control of intensity and duration can diminished significantly when participating in competitive sport and team games (Waddington, 2000). When competing with or against another player or group of players in a game figuration, an individual usually has to instigate moves and react to moves in relation to the moves of other players (Waddington, 2000). An individual is only one player in a complex interweaving of a plurality of players who are both constraining and enabling the actions of each other. When participating in competitive sport and team games, the individual has far less control over the intensity and duration of the activity than they have during individual activities. With this in mind, it has been argued that PE teachers find it easier to fully include pupils with SEN in individual activities because they are easier to modify in ways which best suit the individual's capabilities, without other pupils constraining the involvement of pupils with SEN (Morely *et al*, 2005; Smith, 2004). PE teachers, therefore, often find it particularly difficult to include pupils with SEN in competitive sport and team games because they involve a complex interweaving of the actions of a large number of players.

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Competitive sport and team games often encompass a significant dimension of the identity or 'habitus' (Elias, 1978) of many PE teachers and one which 'cannot easily be shaken off' (Elias; cited in Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 251). The development of habitus is a life-long process, which develops most rapidly during childhood and youth, and is shaped by the experiences of individuals as part of a dynamic network of people bonded together. The older an individual becomes the more deep-rooted and, thus, more difficult to dislodge their ideologies become. By the time an individual becomes a PE teacher their PE ideologies are firmly established. Smith and Green (2004: 598) suggest that 'almost without exception and regardless of age or gender' each PE teacher who they interviewed came from a 'traditional games background'; a tradition, perhaps, they share with many other PE teachers. Competitive sport and team games, therefore, often form the ideological basis of many PE teachers' individual and social habitus (Dunning, 2002) and, thus, their view of what the NCPE should entail. It appears, then, that PE teachers are using their greater power chances in the NCPE implementation figuration, which they received as deliverers, to constrain the extent to which the government are able to achieve their inclusion objectives by continuing to prioritise competitive sport and team games as a way of maintaining and furthering their own and, lest we forget, the government's sporting and team game objectives. Some PE teachers, albeit within a dearth of research, have also suggested that their learning support colleagues have constrained them, to varying degrees, in their quest to include pupils with SEN (Hodge *et al.*, 2004; Morely *et al.*, 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004).

Special Educational Needs Coordinators and Learning Support Assistants

As more and more pupils with SEN were transferred to mainstream schools, the chains of interdependence of PE teachers lengthened further to incorporate SENCOs and LSAs, resulting in the figuration in which PE teachers are enmeshed becoming denser, more differential, and even more complex. There are now more players with whom PE teachers have become interdependent and, therefore, more players whose intended actions both constrain and enable the actions of PE teachers. A SENCO is an educational practitioner whose role is to manage LSAs, assess pupils with SEN and manage the records and statements of pupils with SEN (DfES, 2001). Seemingly, one of the objectives of a SENCO is to *enable* PE teachers to include pupils with SEN.

In much of the limited research available, however, some PE teachers have suggested that their ability to include pupils with SEN has been constrained by the tendency of many SENCOs to neglect them in terms

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of information, support and resources, particularly in the form of LSAs, prioritising other subjects such as English, maths and science (Audit Commission, 2002; Morely *et al.*, 2005; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004). Many statements of SEN, for example, 'relate to English, Maths and Science...they don't really go into physical capabilities' (Teacher; cited in Smith and Green, 2004: 600). Moreover, many PE departments have to endeavour to overcome financial constraints to include pupils with SEN because, whilst equipment designed to facilitate the inclusion of pupils with SEN (such as computer software packages) may be purchased from the funds designated by the SENCO and used across much of the curriculum, in PE, much of the equipment required is PE specific, for example, softer, brighter or larger baseballs. The onus, therefore, often falls on the PE department and these financial constraints, together with a lack of information and LSA support, potentially, could constrain the development of an inclusive environment. These findings suggest that some SENCOs are using their greater power chances within the school figuration, which they gained through their ability to control and designate information and resources, to further their objectives for core subjects such as English, maths and science. Subsequently, an unplanned outcome has been that many PE teachers feel constrained and unable to deliver the government's inclusion objectives for PE because of the lack of support they receive from SENCOs, both financially and in the form of resources and information, regarding the abilities of pupils with SEN when planning their curriculum (Smith and Green, 2004).

The inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream PE lessons has allegedly been compromised further by the tendency of many LSAs, who have increasingly become a central part of a PE teacher's figuration, to place varying degrees of constraint upon the everyday activities of PE teachers (Hodge *et al.*, 2004; Smith, 2004; Smith and Green, 2004; Smith and Thomas, 2006). Many LSAs are traditionally classroom based assistants and their lack of PE training has resulted in some PE teachers considering some LSAs 'more of a hindrance than a help' in relation to the impact their presence has on the effectiveness of their teaching (Smith and Green, 2004: 601). Furthermore, some PE teachers *and* some pupils with SEN consider the presence of LSAs in PE lessons as having a negative impact on the social interaction and learning of pupils with SEN in relation to their age-peers (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2003a, 2003b; Morely *et al*, 2005; Smith and Green, 2004). An unplanned outcome of the presence of LSAs in PE lessons, thus, is that they are playing a part in reinforcing, rather than breaking down, barriers between pupils with and without SEN. Some teachers, however, identified the pragmatic benefits of having LSAs in their lessons; LSAs

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often allow teachers to 'get on with teaching the other pupils' (Teacher; cited in Smith and Green, 2004: 601). The teacher can assign an LSA to a pupil with SEN to work on a one-to-one basis, allowing them to teach the activity they had planned for the rest of the class. Again, an unplanned outcome of this process is that it can contribute to the isolation of pupils with SEN in PE, reinforce barriers between pupils with and without SEN and, perhaps, build barriers between PE teachers and pupils with SEN. Nonetheless, these comments highlight what some PE teachers perceive as an enabling dimension of the relationship they have with LSAs.

Conclusion

The disabled people's movement and international policy developments have contributed to the increasing power chances of some disabled people in the wider society. More powerful groups in the policy process (such as UNESCO) then used their greater power chances to constrain the British Government to develop their own inclusive education policies. One outcome of these wider processes was a gradual transference of pupils with SEN from special schools to the figurations of mainstream school PE teachers.

The British Government were able to constrain, to varying degrees, the actions of the PE Working Groups because they had the power to reject the groups' recommendations if they compromised the government's PE objectives, which focused largely on elite sports performance. The outcomes generated during the formulation of the NCPEs, therefore, could be largely understood in relation to the objectives of the government. Nevertheless, because of the disabled people's movement and national and international policy developments, the NCPE in 1992 and its subsequent revisions were also underpinned by the concept of equal opportunities. To ensure that all pupils with SEN were included in mainstream PE lessons, the NCPE 2000 set out a flexible curriculum with PE teachers charged with the task of adapting this sport and team game dominated curriculum in ways to ensure that all pupils with SEN are included.

One unplanned outcome of endeavouring to include pupils with SEN within a curriculum that prioritises elite sports performance is that many pupils with SEN, when compared to their age-peers, are spending less time in PE and are participating in a narrower range of activities. From these findings it appeared that, despite the fact that the government were the most powerful player within the implementation figuration, they have been unable to ensure that their inclusion objectives are being achieved.

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Instead, it is PE teachers who are using their increasing power chances as deliverers of the NCPE to constrain the actions of the government and prioritise competitive sport and team games as a way of advancing their own objectives.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The fact that this paper has argued that processes of policy formulation and implementation almost inevitably generate unplanned outcomes does not mean that planning is a futile process (Dopson and Waddington, 1996). Rather, the government need to examine and understand the relational complexities involved in the formulation and implementation of the NCPE, and how the aspirations and objectives of each player are more or less constrained by those of other players. Once these players and their objectives have been identified, the government could constrain the actions of these players to ensure that they are working towards their inclusion objectives. For example, the government could develop a more rigid, more prescriptive PE curriculum – designed from the outset to be inclusive – in order to constrain the actions of PE teachers. They could also set clear guidelines stating the role of teachers, SENCOs and LSAs to ensure that all these players know what they are responsible for and what is expected of them.

The government may also take account of the fact that the participation of all pupils in PE is both constrained and enabled by their age-peers, and develop a curriculum that is more geared towards the individual and their own capabilities. Additionally, policies can be developed to ensure that the objectives of SENCOs are compatible with inclusion objectives for PE. SENCOs would need to review current statements of SEN to include the PE context and ensure that training opportunities are made available for LSAs, which allow them to become familiar with the PE curriculum and inclusive practices within the PE context. Finally, given what has been said above about unplanned outcomes, a systematic process of monitoring, perhaps in the form of PE teacher and pupil surveys, could be built into future NCPE policies so that the government can measure the extent to which they are achieving their educational objectives. Again, however, like all policies these recommendations may come to be undermined by the extent to which the whole relation network is committed to the government's inclusion objectives for PE.

To end, it is hoped that by identifying the process whereby the intended actions of all the players involved in the formulation and implementation

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of the NCPEs generated unplanned outcomes, and by using Elias's game models to understand them, this paper will stimulate further analysis of these largely neglected aspects of NCPE policy.

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