

**‘The Inclusion of Students with
Disabilities in Mainstream Post-
Primary Physical Education from the
Perspective of the Physical Education
Teacher’**

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‘The Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in
Mainstream Post-Primary Physical Education from
the Perspective of the Physical Education Teacher’

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Waterford Institute *of* Technology

INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LÁIRGE

Declaration:

I declare that the writing of this thesis and the research contained within is my own work. Any assistance received has been acknowledged where appropriate.

Signed:

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Date:

Abstract

This study explored the realities of including students with disabilities into mainstream physical education classes in post-primary schools in Waterford City from the perspective of the physical education teacher . Data collected was both qualitative and quantitative in nature and was conducted in two phases. Phase one consisted of the administration of questionnaires to all physical education teachers (n=12) and all students with disabilities attending mainstream secondary schools in Waterford City (n=22). In-depth semi-structured interviews were also carried out with a sample of the physical education teachers. Once phase one was completed and the data analysed, phase two was developed. It consisted of observations of students with disabilities participating in physical education classes and based on these observations and information gathered from phase one a workshop intervention was carried out with physical education teachers and special needs assistants.

Results of the study revealed that only 1% of students surveyed who attend mainstream schools in Waterford City had a disability. Results also found that a low number of physical education teachers had received any initial teacher training or the opportunity to gain further training once qualified in the area of special needs and inclusion. Teachers revealed that more emphasis is needed on special needs education both during initial teacher training and in-service. Many barriers to inclusion were highlighted during the study. The most prevalent of those were limited and unsuitable access to facilities, game-dominated physical education and negative attitudes of non-disabled students towards those with a disability.

The study also highlighted that the development of individual education plans and the input of physical education teachers into these plans as an area of neglect and the role and training of special needs assistant to aid in the inclusion of students with disabilities in physical education needs further investigation and development. The results therefore provide evidence that students with disabilities in mainstream physical education face many barriers to their inclusion in and adjustments need to be made in order for future inclusion to be successful.

Dedication

To Dad for your love support and constant interest on when I will get this finished.

To Mum, for your kindness, love, dedication and for teaching me to be all I can be.

To Maria, Majella and Seamus for the madness and gladness throughout the years – long may it continue.

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List of Acronyms

SEN	Special Educational Needs
PETE	Physical Education Teacher Education
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
IEP	Individual Education Plan
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
PE	Physical Education
CSO	Central Statistics Office
NDA	National Disability Authority
WHO	World Health Organisation
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
SIDO	Sports Inclusion Development Officer

THERE IS A CHILD INVOLVED

*Mainstream, self-contain, integrate, include
How's the wind blow, what's the mood?
General ed., special ed., adapted or not,
Teachers everywhere are put on the spot.
Lighter balls, larger goals, and shorter distances too,
The menu's so large; no one's sure what to do.*

*These concerns each could be solved
If we'd only remember,*

THERE IS A CHILD INVOLVED

*Basketball, baseball, floor hockey too,
Do I have to adapt all of them for you?
Why can't you watch, maybe keep score?
Then the "regulars" will get to play more.
Gross motor, fine motor, wheelchairs and walkers,
And all those fancy augmentative talkers.
I went to college to learn how to teach,
But no one told me, there'd be so many to reach.*

*Relax take a breath, for this too can be resolved,
If we'd only remember,*

THERE IS A CHILD INVOLVED

*Frustrated kids who just want a chance
To score a goal, or join in a dance.
They can't quite catch, or keep up the pace,
And seem to get lost in the midst of a race.
But you need not lower the ceiling
For those who stumble and fall,
Just adapt and level the field
For one and for all.*

*So what's to be done, what's the goal to be?
It's plain, it's simple, just teach PE*

And remember....

THERE IS A CHILD INVOLVED

(Michael Marsallo)

(Block, 2003, p.2)

Chapter 1

Introduction

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In first world countries, it is a general expectation that all members of society are treated equally. This is in fact not the reality. There are usually hierarchies who tend to have most control. Those with the greatest voice usually look after their own needs first. On a continuum of social advantage therefore, there are the powerful elites who have the most influence on society. At the other end, are the marginalised groups who tend to have the least say. Many people with disability depend on other people to advocate for their needs as for a variety of reasons they are unable to advocate for themselves. This is obviously a major disadvantage for the group as a whole as the history of civil, gender and gay rights issues were generally taken on by members of those groups supporting their own causes. These groups therefore have had their issues dealt with well before disabled rights became a major cause.

Anecdotal evidence tends to support the widely held view that people with disability often have to fight for basic rights. Even when they win a particular fight there may not be the personnel or resources to allow them benefit. This issue had been dealt with by Prime Time on a few occasions in 2010/2011. I personally know parents of a teenage boy who hounded their health board for three years before they were finally awarded speech therapy for their son. Having finally won that long battle, they were dismayed when they were told that there wasn't an appointment available for two years. Another family campaigned for seven years with several other families to have a special school built for autistic children in Waterford. This campaign took seven years and the government forced them to take the case to the high court even though there had been

clear precedents set and the parents were favourites to win. It took a further three years for the unit to open on the grounds of a secondary school in Waterford by which time their children were too old to benefit. As the researcher is personally involved in adapted physical activity, she was interested to find out what was the situation for students with disabilities in being included in school physical education classes. In reality, the research was examining how a marginalised group were being included in a marginalised school subject namely physical education. This should be an interesting indicator of how we as a society in general are including people with disabilities.

The thesis namely ‘Inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream physical education from the perspective of the physical education teacher’ and was researched to get the views of physical education teachers when they try to include students with disabilities in their classes. To set the scene, an introduction to disability is given from a historical perspective to give the reader insight into the developments regarding disability. This section will also outline and clarify terms that will be used throughout the study as well as outlining the research aim and research questions to be investigated and answered. Next the researcher will outline the significance of the study and inform the reader of the content of the chapters to come.

1.2 Historical Perspective of Disability

The rights of people with disabilities have not been recognised throughout history and the acknowledgment of civil rights of people with disabilities has only evolved in response to changes in social attitudes and behaviours. Although there is now a greater awareness, acceptance and inclusion of people with disabilities into western society, this

has not always been the case (DePauw & Doll-Trepper, 2000). Historically people with disabilities have even been portrayed as inhuman, evil, dumb, sick, and depraved (Trent, 1994). In the early 18th century, people with disabilities were said to be sinners or possessed by the devil and at this time many would have been burnt at the stake or just left to die (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007). The 1850's saw the beginning of the Eugenics Movement. The goal of this movement was to improve the quality of the human gene pool and protect society from those with physical or intellectual "defects". As a result people with disabilities were segregated and hidden in institutions, asylums, hospitals, special schools or sheltered workshops, while others were put on display as entertainment in freak shows and circuses (Adams et. al., 2007). As the Eugenics Movement continued, the rights of people with disabilities were further impeded when in 1883, laws were passed in the United States which prevented people with disabilities moving to the US. People with disabilities were also not allowed to marry or have children and in many instances people with disabilities were forced to be sterilized to such an extent that by the 1970's over 60,000 disabled were sterilized without their consent and/or knowledge.

Traditionally the rights of people with disabilities have been of low priority within society. After the civil rights movement of the 1960's and after the women's and gay rights movements, the disability right movement only then began. Initially the key lobbyist involved were people with disabilities and members of their families. In an Irish context people with disabilities fared poorly. In the early nineteenth century people with disabilities who were not cared for at home were put into workhouses or insane asylums and it was not until the early twentieth century before any type of special provisions were made for them (Quin & Redmond, 2005). By the 1970's there

was a growth in public outrage about the care and conditions that people with disabilities were exposed to and with increased political pressure services for the disabled were moved from institutions to community settings. By the end of 1980's most of the large institutions in Europe were closed (Emerson & Hatton, 1994). Doyal (1993) commented that in order for services for the disabled to continue in the community and to be successful, access to adequate goods and services would be needed and sufficient capital in place to achieve this. The 1990's brought with them the establishment of the permanent Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities which published '*A Strategy for Equality*' (1996), this was a milestone document which highlighted the deficiencies in Irish society for people with disabilities. Two years later in 1998 the National Disability Authority was established by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Disability laws began to take foothold in Irish legislation and as a result the Employment Equality Act and Education Acts (1998), Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) and the Disability Act (2005) were signed into law, giving people with disabilities rights and equality in areas of employment, education and provision of goods and services (Quin & Redmond, 2005). In 2007, Ireland signed the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRPD is the first international, legally-binding agreement among countries to protect the human rights of people with disabilities. The CRPD gives people with disabilities the right to accessible transport, the right to be free from abuse as well as the rights to education and health care (Shettle, 2008).

1.3 Education

People with disabilities are now taking part more in our school and education systems. Education is an essential part of our development and is fundamental to our growth. Education provides us with a greater understanding of the world around us as well as equipping us with skills, knowledge and opportunities (National Disability Authority, 2005). The education of all students regardless of their ability within mainstream education and physical education environment is a relatively new concept within the Irish educational system. Historically, the education of children with special educational needs has been one of exclusion and neglect (Inclusion Ireland, 2005). Traditionally, children with disabilities or children with special educational needs were educated in segregated special schools (Feerick, 1996). Over the last two decades, inclusion has become central to the reform effort to improve the delivery of education and services to students with disabilities by focusing on the placement of these students in the general education setting, including the general physical education class. In an inclusive school, general education does not renounce responsibility for students with special needs but instead works jointly with special education to provide a quality programme for all students (Praisner, 2003).

Many reports have been written promoting inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools. The Special Education Review Committee Report (SERC) (1993) was the first of these documents. This document highlighted the fact that Ireland had a lack of legislation which governs education provision, and in particular, provision of education to students with disabilities. It was not until 2004 when the *Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act* (DES, 2004) and a year later when the *Disability Act* (Department of Justice, Quality and Law Reform, 2005) were signed into

legislation, that children with disabilities and special educational needs in Ireland gained the legal right to an *inclusive* mainstream education.

1.4 Research Population

The population of Ireland was 4.2 million people in the Census of 2006. This census included two questions on disability and revealed that 9.3% or 393,785 people in Ireland reported having a disability. The disabilities ranged from difficulties with breathing, seeing and hearing to intellectual, emotional, physical and psychological disabilities (Central Statistics Office, 2006). Waterford City is located in the South East of Ireland; it is Ireland's oldest and fifth largest city (Waterford City Council, 2009). It had a population of 45,748 and of these 10.4% or 4,752 have a disability (CSO, 2006). This is an increase of 1.8%¹ from the Census in 2002 (CSO, 2004). The Census in 2006 also found that 3,647 children are between the ages of 13 and 18 years in Waterford City. Of those 3,647 only 4% or 145 children (76 male and 69 female) are reported as having a disability (CSO, 2006).

1.5 Definition of Terms

Special Educational Needs and Disability

It is important to define the terms being used to get a clear understanding of their context within a research study. The definition and interpretation of some terminology in various research sources can be contradictory due to the use of interchanging terms

¹ 10.4% of Waterford population with a disability in 2006 compared to 8.6% in 2002

within that research, policies and legislative documents. Terms like “disability” and “special educational needs” are frequently used interchangeably. This will be also be the case in this research. This is a result of both terms being used frequently in legislation, policies and disability and educational research. According to the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) the term special educational needs means: “a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition” (NDA, 2005, p.3). The Special Education Review Committee Report (SERC) (1993) defines students with special educational needs as:

“those whose disabilities and/or circumstances which prevent or hinder them from benefiting adequately from the education which is normally provided for pupils of the same age, or for whom the education which is generally provided in the ordinary classroom is not sufficiently challenging” (p. 18).

According to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2003) defining special needs can be difficult as different sources use various definitions. However, in their documentation the NCCA state that students with special educational needs are ones who encounter barriers to learning, some which include difficulties with speech or language or come from a physical or sensory impairment.

As disability and special education needs are used unchangeably it is also important to get a clear understanding of the term “disability”. Wood (1980), defined disability as:

‘Any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being’ (p.27).

Similarly the American's with Disabilities Act (Department of Justice, 1990), states that a person with a disability is: 'anyone who has a mental or physical impairment, which substantially limits one or more major life activities'. Dattilo (1994) states that major life activities include being able to see, hear, speak, walk, dress and feed oneself as well as being able to work, learn, and perform other daily physical or mental activities.

Inclusion and Inclusive Education

Other terms to be defined include 'inclusion' and the 'inclusive education'. Inclusion is a concept which views children with disabilities as true full-time participants and members of their neighbourhood schools and communities. The inclusion philosophy recommends that all students be educated with their peers in the same physical location (Mercer 1997). Rizzo, Davis & Toussaint (1994) also define inclusion as a means of educating students with disabilities in regular educational settings along with non-disabled peers. Inclusion is a term which expresses commitment to educate each child to the best of their ability. It involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with other students) (Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC), 2007).

Inclusive education means that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups. (UNESCO, 2003:

p.4). Inclusive education is not merely about providing access into mainstream school for pupils who have previously been excluded. It is not about closing down an unacceptable system of segregated provision and dumping those pupils in an unchanged mainstream system. Inclusive education is about the participation of *ALL* children and young people and the removal of all forms of exclusionary practice. (Barton, 1997: pp. 84-85).

Adapted Physical Education (APE) and Adapted Physical Activity (APA)

Adapted Physical Education (APE) was originally defined as a diversified programme of developmental activities, games, sports, and rhythms designed to meet the individual regular physical education programme (AAHPERD, 1952). In 1976 Sherrill updated this definition and defined adapted physical education as “the science of analyzing movement, identifying problems within the psychomotor domain, and developing instructional strategies for remediating problems and preserving ego strength” (p. 17). From the 1970’s onwards professionals moved away from this term and adopted the more umbrella term Adapted Physical Activity (APA). Adapted Physical Activity gained international popularity because it emphasised lifespan services and activity, self-actualization and the empowerment of people with disabilities (Sherrill, 2004).

The International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity (IFAPA) was formed in Canada in 1977. The IFAPA state that there are many definitions of adapted physical activity, most of which are general in nature in order to include as many cases and situations as possible. De Pauw & Sherrill, (1994) define Adapted Physical Activity (APA) as an umbrella term used worldwide to encompass such areas as physical

education, recreation, dance, sport, fitness & rehabilitation for individuals with impairments across the lifespan. APA can also be defined as “an interdisciplinary body of knowledge directed toward the identification and solution of psychomotor problems throughout the total life span ... advocacy of sport and exercise for all persons ... attitudes, skills and habits that will facilitate social integration of persons with disability with family members and significant others (Sherrill, 1990), or as “service delivery, pedagogy, coaching, rehabilitation, therapy, training, or empowerment conducted by qualified professionals to enhance physical activity goal achievement of individuals of all ages with movement limitations and/or societal restrictions (i.e., attitudinal and environmental barriers)” (Sherrill, 2004, p. 4).

This section has provided a historical perspective of disability. An outline of the educational journeys for persons with disabilities as well as a description of the research population involved in the study was also given. The research questions for this research are now presented.

1.6 Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to investigate and answer the following research questions:

- 1) Do physical education teachers have sufficient training and qualifications to aid inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream physical education classes in secondary schools in Waterford City?

- 2) What are the Physical education teacher's experiences and attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities?

The following research questions are supplementary to the research study and were also looked at and investigated:

- 3) What barriers are encountered during physical education for teachers and students with disabilities?
- 4) What is the current status of IEP's for students with disabilities and the role of the physical education teacher on the writing and development of these plans?
- 5) What are the realities for physical education teachers in having special needs assistants present in their physical education classes?
- 6) What is the physical education experience of students with disabilities in mainstream secondary schools in Waterford City?

1.7 Significance of the Study

There is a growing body of literature available worldwide on the area on adapted physical education and inclusion. However, very little of this research exists from an Irish perspective. Up to a few years ago only one University in Ireland provided initial teacher training for physical education teachers. This has changed in the past few years with more universities and colleges including modules in adapted physical activity and special educational needs in their teaching training programmes. The study of the experiences of Irish physical education teachers in teaching students with disabilities in regular physical education classes will give us insight into how teachers are coping with the inclusion of disabled students. It will help identify the barriers teachers face and

give some insights into what can be initiated in order to help physical education teachers give a quality experience to all students regardless of ability.

Investigating how a student with a disability is included in physical education will also provide insight into the PE experiences of that student. It provides a triangulation effect where the researcher gets the opportunity to explore topics and experiences from the teachers and students perspectives.

1.8 Summary of Chapters

Figure 1.1 provides an overview of how the research thesis is presented.

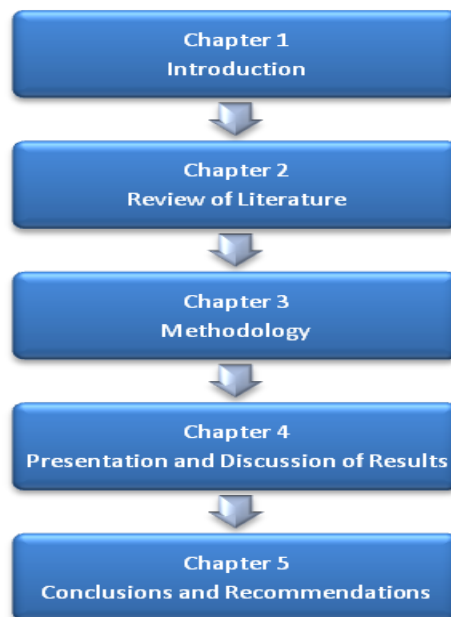


Figure 1.1 Overview of Research Study

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the historical perspective of disability and educating students with disabilities². It highlights the purpose of the study, provides clarification and definition of terms, and outlines the significance of the study. This chapter also gives an overview of the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter explores the research relevant to teaching students with disabilities. It looks at the term disability in more detail as well as outlining and explaining the models of disability. The benefits and barriers of physical activity and physical education for students with disabilities are discussed as well as inclusion and the inclusion movement. It investigates mainstreaming and discusses why an inclusive physical education environment is suitable for a student with a disability. Finally this chapter focuses on the physical education and the physical education teacher. This section discusses what physical education is and what qualities physical education teachers need in order to teach students with disabilities.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to describe the methods used to investigate the research questions for this thesis. Before the methods were decided on, the researcher reviewed the types of research methodologies available in order to determine the ones best suited to attain the information desired with the resources available to answer the research

² The term student with disability refers to teenagers/adolescents of secondary school going age. A teenager/adolescent is defined as a person between the ages of 13 and 19: an adolescent (American Heritage (2009)

questions posed. The research consisted of two phases, which were carried out at different stages. Phase one was specifically designed to determine the current status of physical education delivery to students with disabilities by physical education teachers in the research field centre, namely Waterford City. Phase one also looked at the status of physical education from the disabled student's point of view. As a result, it was deemed important and necessary to take action on the findings revealed and in order to do so phase two of the study was initiated. This phase incorporated field observations and an intervention workshop and follow up support with the physical education teachers and special needs assistants (SNA's) from the secondary schools in Waterford City.

Chapter 4: Presentation and Discussion of Results

This chapter presents the key findings from the data obtained and analysed from the research, this includes questionnaires from both students with disabilities and physical education teachers, the in-depth interviews with physical education teachers and feedback from the intervention workshop which took place. A combination of qualitative and quantitative data was acquired during the research and as a result relevant issues and themes emerged. This chapter is presented in seven sections with the aim to answer the research questions, the seven sections include looking at the profile of the physical education teachers, the profile of the students with disabilities, training and qualifications acquired by physical education teachers, their experiences and attitudes towards teaching students with disabilities, barriers that are faced by both students and teachers in order to be included and facilitate inclusion in physical education classes, the

development and involvement in Individual Education Plans and finally looking at the role of the Special Needs Assistant in the physical education class.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

The aim of this chapter is to present the main findings from the primary research and outline the recommendations for future inclusion in physical education for students with disabilities or special educational needs and what might best help the physical education teachers with inclusion.

Having introduced the thesis the next chapter presents the relevant literature on the subject area.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

2 Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature in relation to the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream physical education in post-primary schools. The chapter is divided into five different sections.

- Section one gives an outline and background to disability. The various definitions of disability are discussed and the models of disability, medical, social and biopsychosocial are examined.
- Section two focuses on the benefits of physical activity for students with disabilities and why it is beneficial for them to be active in physical education. This section looks specifically at the physical, social and psychological benefits of physical activity and physical education.
- Section three follows on from there to give us an understanding of the barriers students with disabilities face when accessing physical activity and education. Environmental, social, internal and attitudinal barriers are discussed.
- Section four looks at the Inclusion and the Inclusion movement. It investigates mainstreaming and discusses why an inclusive physical education environment is suitable for a student with a disability. The benefits of inclusion are outlined and the least restrictive environment is discussed.
- Section five focuses on the physical education and the physical education teacher. Teaching training in Ireland is examined. This section also looks at the attitudes of PE teachers and how attitudes affect participation levels of students with disabilities.

2.1.1 Understanding Disability

Historically the treatment of people with disabilities has essentially been one of cruelty and misunderstanding (Casey, 2005), and although people with disabilities have always been present in our society, for various reasons they have become more visible in the 21st century (DePauw and Gavron, 2005). Defining disability is difficult, but important, and there are many definitions available – each one as valid as the next and each with its own purpose. These definitions can range from being very narrow and specific to being very broad and vague. Disability can also be defined from a medical or social view, and from one, which intends to integrate people with disabilities into society to one, which leads to exclusion and segregation. People with disabilities tend to be labelled as disabled, impaired or handicapped because they look different from the rest of society on account of their appearance, behaviour or capacity to learn (Baquer & Sharma, 1997). In order to understand what disability is, an outline of the various definitions is needed. In 1980 the World Health Organisation (WHO) commissioned Philip Wood to devise a classification system for disability. It was divided into three sections, disability, impairment and handicap. Wood (1980, p.27) defined disability as:

‘Any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being’.

It concentrates on compound or integrated activities, it relates to the person or body as a whole when engaging in a task, a skill or a specific form of behaviour.

The American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990, p.5), state that a person with a disability is ‘anyone who has a mental or physical impairment, which substantially limits one or more major life activities’. Dattilo (1994) states that major life activities include being able to see, hear, speak, walk, dress and feed oneself as well as being able

to work, learn, and perform other daily physical or mental activities. The Disability Discrimination Act (Department of Constitutional Affairs, 1995) of Britain used a similar definition of disability, stating that a person has a disability, for the purpose of this Act, if he/she has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. In Ireland according to the National Disability Authority Act (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 1999, p.5) 'disability, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of a person to participate in economic, social or cultural life on account of an enduring physical, sensory, learning, mental health or economic impairment'. While there are some similarities between definitions researchers agree that disability is very hard to define because it 'encompasses numerous conditions of mind and body and the boundary between ability and disability seems to be less clear' (Degener, 2004, p.4).

Disability and Handicapped are often interlinked or intertwined but it is important that these terms are not confused as they both evoke mixed feelings. Disability refers to a specific impairment or disorder, whereas a handicap results from the action of the person with the disability or by society (Kennedy, Smith, Austin, 1991, p.29). Being handicapped is believed to be a social phenomenon, with our society handicapping many people. Examples include individuals with physical disabilities being handicapped by society because of lack of accessibility to community facilities, negative attitudes, economic deprivation, segregation and denial of human rights. People may experience handicaps because of the colour of their skin, their social class or their gender and people may experience a handicap because of their disability (Lord, 1981). The WHO (1980) agrees that handicap is a social phenomenon, which represents

the social and environmental consequences of impairments and disabilities, it is characterised by the discordance between the individual's performance or status and the expectations of the particular group of which he/she is a member.

Impairment is considered any loss or abnormality of physiological, psychological or anatomical structure or function, a disability is a restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in a manner or within a range considered normal and a handicap is a disadvantage for a given individual with a disability as a result of a social, economic and political circumstances in which he/she lives (Nettleton & Watson, 1998). Thomas (2003) believes that in the past people with disabilities were considered to be social outcasts and were deemed to be inactive members of society. Advocates for people with disabilities have changed these negative attitudes as they have put pressure on society to do so. These changes in attitudes has been lead and influenced by the international recognition that disability is not a medical but a social issue. As seen from the various definitions of disability above there is none that is universally accepted. The various definitions that do exist do generally fall into two categories: medical and social (Thomas, 2003).

2.1.2 Medical Model of Disability

The medical model of disability sees the person with the disability as the problem. The onus is on them to fit in and adapt to society as it is. If the person with the disability cannot function in society then he or she should be removed and placed in an institution or isolated at home (Barnes, Mercer & Shakespeare, 1999). The needs of the individual are not considered and the main focus is on the impairment itself, as a result the person

with the disability will lead a dependent life and the power to change this lies solely with the medical professionals. The Medical model of disability thus creates a dependent, lonely and exclusive life for someone with a disability (Barnes et. al., 1999).

The Medical Model of disability can be summarised as follows:

- Disability is a deficiency or abnormality;
- Being disabled is negative;
- Disability resides in the individual;
- The remedy for disability related problems is cure or normalisation of the individual;
- The agent of remedy is the professional (Gill, 1994).



Figure 2.1 Medical Model of Disability (Self Direction Community Report, 2001)

Figure 2.1 illustrates how society views a person with a disability under the medical model. It shows how society see a disabled person as someone who is sick, needs institutional care, needs help, can't walk or talk, and is wheelchair or housebound (Self Direction Community Report, 2001).

Using the medical model of disability The Employment Equality Act (1998, p.8) and Equal Status Act (2000, p.5) define disability as:

- The total or partial absence of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part on a person's body;
- The presence in the body of organisms causing or likely to cause chronic disease or illness;
- The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body;
- A condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction;
- A condition, illness or disease which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement, or which results in disturbed behaviour and shall be taken to include a disability which exists at present, or which previously existed but no longer exists in the future.

As clearly seen from the above definition the disability and not the person themselves is focused on - their inability to function, malformation of their bodies as a result of the disability, illness, disease and the effects the disability has on their ability to show emotions and judgement. The medical model is strongly rejected by organisations of disabled people, but it still pervades many attitudes towards people with disabilities (Open University, 2006).

2.1.3 Social Model of Disability

On the other hand the social model of disability believes that disability is a socially created problem. An individual with an impairment can and will get on in society if the environmental barriers that they are confronted with are addressed and changed (Barnes

et. al., 1999). This model believes that there can be a cure for disability. This can happen if society is restructured and all aspects of society are made available to everyone, disabled and non-disabled. All people in society will have the opportunity to integrate with each other leading hopefully to all members of society understanding each other and thus eliminating negative attitudes and prejudices associated with disability (Barnes et. al., 1999).

The definition of disability drawn up by the developments of the European Day of Disabled Persons (1994) includes all disabilities and highlights the role of attitudes as well as structural barriers as contributing factors to disability. This definition follows the social model of disability.

‘A disabled person is an individual in their own right, placed in a disabling situation brought about by environmental, economic and social barriers that the person, because of their impairment(s) cannot overcome in the same way as other citizens. Their barriers are all too often reinforced by the marginalizing attitudes of society’ (p.10).

The social model has been developed in the context of people with disabilities forming groups and representative bodies and campaigning for change. The main focus of the social model is on encouraging and forcing society to change. Society needs to change its policy, attitudes and economic discrimination against people with disabilities. The social model of disability creates an independent and inclusive life for someone with a disability and they are an active member of society (Barnes et. al., 1999).

The social model of disability can be summarised as follows:

- Disability is a difference;
- Being disabled in itself is neutral;

- Disability derives from interaction between the individual and society;
- The remedy for disability related problems are a change in the interaction between the individual and society;
- The agent of remedy can be the individual, an advocate or anyone who affects the arrangements between the individual and society (Gill, 1994).



Figure 2.2 Social Model of Disability (Self Direction Community Report, 2001)

Figure 2.2 illustrates how society views a person with a disability under the social model. It shows how society sees a disabled person, no longer as someone who is sick or needs institutional care but someone who is disabled as a result of inaccessible transport, isolated families, segregated education and poverty and low incomes (Self Direction Community Report, 2001). The focus is no longer on the individual but on the society that individual is part of. The social model of disability has fundamentally changed the way in which disability is regarded or viewed and has had a major impact on legislation and policy development (Open University, 2006).

2.1.4 Biopsychosocial Model of Disability

Disability is a complex phenomenon and has been defined using the ‘medical’ and ‘social’ models of disability which are outlined above. The medical model of disability regards disability as an individual pathological problem, is something that needs a cure, rehabilitation and the individual adapting to society. The social model of disability, on

the other hand, draws attention to the social, physical and informational barriers encountered by someone with a disability (WHO, 2002b). These barriers are created by an unaccommodating physical environment, as a result of attitudes and other features of the social environment. On their own neither model adequately describes what disability encompasses. A more useful model is the Biopsychosocial Model of functioning and disability (WHO, 2002b). The World Health Organisation's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) reflects the modern day thinking about disability and is based on this model. The biopsychosocial model combines what is true and useful and discards what is distorted and counterproductive in the medical and social models (UNESCAP, 2008)³. From the medical, model medical rehabilitative interventions are appropriate when dealing with impairments and limitations in a person's capacity to perform actions. From the social model, environmental and social interventions are relevant when dealing with restrictions in a person's participation in educational, economic, social, cultural and political activities; therefore a combination of these elements from both models seems appropriate thus forming the basis of the biopsychosocial model of disability (UNESCAP, 2008).

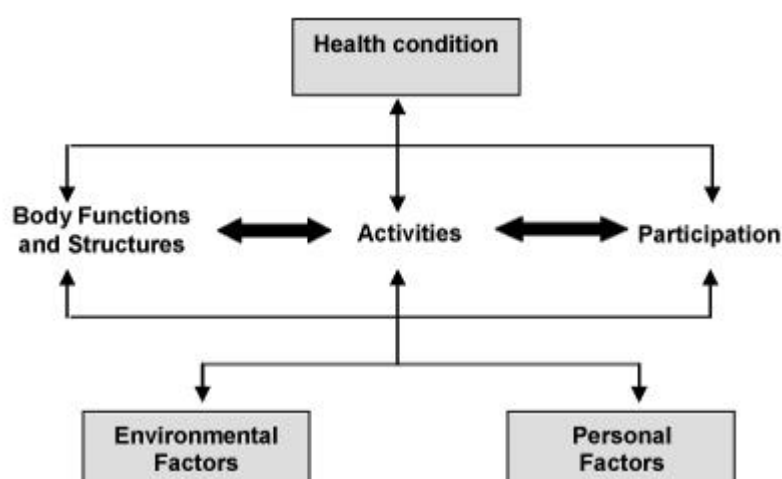


Figure 2.3 Biopsychosocial Model of Disability

³ UNESCAP is the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

A representation of the biopsychosocial model of disability which is the basis of the ICF can be seen in Figure 2.3. The diagram indicates that disability and functioning are viewed as outcomes of interactions between health condition, which includes diseases, disorders and injuries, and contextual factors which are environmental factors such as attitudes, architectural buildings, social structures, the climate and terrain, and personal factors such as gender, age, education, social background, profession, experiences, behaviour and other factors what influence how disability is experienced by an individual (UNESCAP, 2008).

<u>Dimensions of Functioning</u>	<u>Dimensions of Disability</u>
Body Functions and Body Structures	Impairments
Activities	Activity limitations
Participation	Participation restrictions

Table 2-1 ICF Levels of Functioning and Disability

The biopsychosocial model is structurally based on three levels and dimensions of functioning – body functions and structures, activities and participation and dimensions of disability – impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions (Table 2-1) and its only when all this information is collected can a clear portrait of the experiences of disability for an individual be had (UNESCAP, 2008).

Having a disability can mean various things depending on which definition is used. As outlined above no true definition of disability exists but rather there are lots of various definitions with slightly different meanings. It is important also to note that views and attitudes towards disability have changed and we are now encouraged to, view a person with a disability from both a social and medical viewpoint, by doing so can only lead to better inclusion, legislation and policy development for people with disabilities.

2.2 Benefits of Physical Activity and Physical Education Participation for Students with Disabilities

Physical inactivity is now considered a global health problem and has been linked to many serious illnesses facing everyone in modern society (Lamarree & Pratt, 2006). It contributes to 2-3% of the global burden of disease and causes major economic costs as well as indirect costs such as loss of productivity (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2002). In the US, the costs associated with physical inactivity and obesity accounted for 9.4% of the national health expenditure in 1995 and contributed as much as US\$75 billion to US medical costs in 2000. Similarly in Canada, 6% of total health care costs were due to physical inactivity (WHO, 2003). The WHO (2006) states that European studies suggested €300 as an estimated cost of physical inactivity per citizen per year. The population of Ireland stands at 4.2 million (CSO, 2006) therefore inactivity can cost the Irish government on average 1.26 billion each year. Regular physical activity has long been regarded as an important part of a healthy lifestyle and vast amounts of research reinforces the physical and mental health benefits of physical activity. Despite this millions of people every year remain inactive (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 1993b) and fail to meet the activity guidelines outlined by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (1993a) as well as the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM, 2007). They recommend that adults are physically active for a minimum of 30 minutes on preferably everyday of the week and that, children, from infancy and throughout school, should accumulate at least 60 minutes of activity a day.

Worldwide, more than 60% of adults do not engage in sufficient levels of physical activity (WHO, 2003). Physical inactivity is more prevalent among women, older

adults, individuals from lower socio-economic groups and the disabled (WHO, 2003). Individuals with disabilities participate less often in leisure and recreation opportunities and children with disabilities are more at risk of a sedentary lifestyle as the presence of a disability can lead to deterioration of physical functioning which in turn results in a reduction in physical activity (Sherrill, 1998). The SportsScotland study (2001) discovered that participation in sport/physical activity is 24% lower for disabled adults than non-disabled adults. The SLÁN Survey (2002) revealed that 35% of people with disabilities in Ireland reported no physical activity of at least moderate intensity. As well as lack of participation in physical activity for adults the WHO (2003) discovered that physical activity and physical education programmes in schools are decreasing at an alarming rate, leaving approximately two thirds of the world's young people sufficiently inactive to benefit their present and future health.

The benefits of physical activity and physical education for the general population and for people with disabilities are supported in research. A benefit of leisure can be defined as a positive and beneficial change in an individual as a result of desired participation. A benefit can include simply maintaining a level of functional independence, which would have otherwise declined without leisure interventions (Mannell & Klieber, 1997). The benefits of physical activity can be broken down into three sub-categories. They include: physical, social and psychological benefits.

2.2.1 Physical benefits

The physical benefits of leisure and physical activity are well documented in research. Participating in leisure or recreation, which involves physical activity and physical

education; helps contribute to overall increased health and wellness. Regular physical activity decreases the risk of health problems such as obesity and heart disease. Physical benefits of physical activity can include decreased blood pressure, decreased heart rate, increase in bone mass and strength, increased lung capacity, reduction in incidence of diabetes, increases in muscular strength and endurance, increased sense of well being, increased flexibility, balance and coordination and improvements in the immune system (Ayvazoglu, Ratliffe & Kozub, 2004, British Heart Foundation, 2000). Children who are active and physically fit have lower blood pressure (American Heart Association, 2010) and lower body fat (Moore et. al., 2003: Bailey, 1999). These are two important factors when one in ten children in Ireland are classed as being obese (McCarthy, 2009).

Along with the benefits of physical activity, children who participate in regular physical activity from an early age are more likely to develop and continue an active lifestyle throughout their teenage and adult years (Friel, Nic Gabhainn & Kelleher, 1999). On the other hand, unhealthy lifestyles including sedentary lifestyle, poor diet and substance abuse adopted at a young age are likely to persist into adulthood (WHO, 2003). Regular physical activity in childhood and adolescence helps build healthy bones and muscles, helps maintain a healthy weight, reduces anxiety and stress, increases self-esteem, may improve cholesterol levels, reduces the risk of developing type 2 diabetes and reduces the risk of developing chronic adult diseases such as heart disease and stroke (Friel, Nic Gabhainn & Kelleher, 1999). The WHO (2003) include reduced risk of dying prematurely and helps prevent and control risky behaviours, especially among children and young adults, like tobacco, alcohol or drug use, unhealthy diet or violence among their list of benefits of regular physical activity.

Bauman (2004) states that physical recreation programmes can be a cost effective means of preventing secondary health conditions, such as obesity and diabetes, resulting from low levels of fitness in our young population. Just like their non-disabled peers, children with disabilities need an outlet for their physical energy. According to Brink (1995), 64% of K-12 American students do not participate in a physical education programme on a daily basis. He further states that physical exercise is still one of the best ways to stimulate the brain and learning. The benefits of physical activity on a child's health are well documented. Children engaged in daily physical education show superior motor fitness, academic performance and attitude toward school as compared to their counterparts who do not participate in daily physical education (Pollatschek and Hagen, 1996). It has been hypothesised that physical activity at school could enhance academic performance by increasing the blood flow to the brain, enhancing arousal levels, changing hormonal secretion and improving self-esteem (Shepard, 1997). Overall it is clear to see that physical activity and physical education both hold substantial benefits to health and well being of all members of the population especially those with disabilities.

Some people with disabilities can be less active due to their functional limitations. Expectations of inactivity on their own part and that of others may compound their inactivity. Attitudinal, social and physical access barriers as well as the prevailing trend to live a sedentary lifestyle may also increase the likelihood of physical inactivity. Inactivity can exacerbate conditions that people with disabilities have and can precipitate secondary conditions to which they are prone (e.g. kidney failure, obesity) (Fentem, 1994). Being overweight particularly in people with mobility impairments can affect their functional ability and independence and increase the likelihood that they

develop associated complications such as pressure sores. Thus physical activity can be particularly important in maintaining health (Fentem, 1994). After regular physical exercise people of any age or ability can work harder, longer and with less effort than previously and there is a reduced sense of effort for any given task (Fentem, 1994). Physical fitness is particularly important in the face of periods of immobilisation, hospitalisation, serious health problems or disability. It contributes to the maintenance of functioning and prevents the development of new functional limitations (Fentem, 1994).

2.2.2 Social Benefits

As well as physical benefits, being physically active also brings with it many social benefits. Active adolescents tend to feel less lonely and shy than their physically inactive peers (Page et. al., 2004). Physical activity was used as a treatment for hyperactive behaviour by McGimsby and Favell (1988) who showed that increased exercise was an efficient means for reducing rates of aggression and hyperactivity in 8 of 10 intellectually disabled subjects. A good physical education or physical activity programme can improve learning skills, both physically and intellectually by increasing the children's perceptual experience, sensory awareness, co-ordination and time and space awareness (Harris & Ross (1979). Engagement in play, sports and physical activity gives young people opportunities for natural self-expression, self-confidence, relief of tension, achievement, social interaction and integration as well as learning the spirit of solidarity and fair play. These positive effects also help counteract the risks and harm caused by the demanding, competitive, stressful and sedentary way of life that is so common in young people's lives today (WHO, 2003). Talbot (2001) claims that

physical education can help children to develop respect for their body and others', can contribute towards the integrated development of mind and body, develop an understanding of the role of aerobic and anaerobic physical activity in health, positively enhance self-confidence and self-esteem and enhance social and cognitive development and academic achievement. Likewise, a Council of Europe report suggests that sport provides an opportunity to meet and communicate with others, to take different social roles, to learn particular social skills (tolerance and respect for others), to adjust to team/collective objectives (co-operation, cohesion), contribute to personality development and provide experience of emotions that are not available in the rest of life (Svoboda, 1994). Leisure provides an opportunity for socialisation, as most individuals pursue leisure activities with others. When individuals experience adventures or engage in activities together they become bonded from such shared experiences. Social cohesion and integration can also occur. According to Schleien, Ray and Green (1997) participating in recreational activities for individuals with disabilities is crucial in "successful community adjustment". Socialisation also helps individuals to learn and maintain appropriate social skills and individuals can also learn acceptance of others who are not like themselves. Inclusive recreation is an optimal method for individuals to gain acceptance. On the other hand inactivity for people with disabilities can lead to dependency on others, a decrease in social interactions and the development of symptoms such as fatigue, depression, low functional capacity and obesity (Hannon, 2005).

2.2.3 Psychological Benefits

The third types of benefits to be looked at are the psychological benefits of physical activity and physical education for people with disabilities. Emotional as well as social

benefits can come from engaging in physical recreation. Leisure benefits individuals both emotionally and psychologically in many ways. The emotional psychological benefits of leisure are difficult to measure. Although less scientific evidence exists, there is substantial belief that these benefits exist and considerably enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities as well as benefit society as a whole (Mannell & Klieber, 1997). Participation in leisure activities or physical activity can lead to increases in happiness, life satisfaction, morale, self-concept, self-esteem, perceived sense of freedom, independence, autonomy, self-confidence, leadership skills, tolerance and understanding and problem solving (Mannell & Klieber, 1997). Physical exercise influences long term health status and also general well being, personal and social development, effectiveness and achievement. The psychological benefits include improved mood, confidence and self-esteem, a reduction in anxiety and depression and an increase in a person's ability to cope with a range of stressors (Hannon, 2005). These are particularly relevant to someone who has an acquired disability where physical activity can be used to regain self-esteem, social integration and help come to terms with ones disability (Chawla, 1994).

A number of reasons have been proposed as to why activity affects anxiety and depression. One of the reasons proposed is that regular activity serves as a positive coping strategy and a diversion from the stress of everyday life. It provides a sense of control over one's life and environment. Regular activity or improved fitness has a beneficial effect on self-esteem and self-concept. Leisure would seem to offer one of the best opportunities for people with or without disabilities to experience self-determination because it offers a chance for individuals to be in control. This potential for control often does not occur in work or other situations where external pressure

exists (Austin, 1997). A study by Hooper (1984) illustrated that self-esteem increased the longer an individual participated in disabled sport.

In summary, there are a number of important benefits to participation in physical activity and physical education for members of the general population as well as people with disabilities regardless of age. Physical activity offers the physical benefits such as improved health and wellbeing as well as counteracting heart disease and stroke in later life. The social benefits of physical activity and physical education can be especially important and relevant for someone with a disability where they may not get the opportunity to integrate with others on a regular basis outside of their parents, siblings or family members as a result of their disability. Lastly the psychological benefits of physical activity and physical education include improved self-esteem, self-confidence and improved body image. These benefits hold value for someone with a disability as they can lead to a prolonged, healthier, independent life, with increased confidence, self-esteem and general sense of well-being.

2.3 Barriers to Physical Activity and Physical Education Participation for Students with Disabilities

The above research has outlined the benefits of physical activity and physical education participation for disabled and non-disabled children. It is important to point out that although children with disabilities maybe aware of the benefits of participation there are quite often many barriers in place that stop or restrict them from participating and being included not only in physical education but in community based sports programmes and activities. Environmental, social, internal and attitudinal barriers need to be overcome by people with disabilities on a day to day basis in order to be active members in society.

2.3.1 Environmental Barriers:

Rimmer, Riley, Wang, Rauworth & Jurkowski, (2004) outlines many environmental barriers that people with disabilities face on a day-to-day basis. They include lack of curb cuts, inaccessible access routes, doorways being too narrow for wheelchair access, facility front desks being too high for persons in wheelchairs to be able to communicate with the person at the desk, and lack of elevators (Rimmer et. al., 2004, p.421). When it came to fitness centre facilities people with disabilities encountered another set of barriers. They found that entry to facilities such as steam rooms, saunas, hot tubs or whirlpools was not possible due to narrow doors and no ramps being available to them. In the fitness centres, especially around water and in the changing room insufficient handrails were supplied and there were safety issues with slippery floors (Rimmer et. al., 2004). In the school environment students faced similar barriers. Environmental barriers faced by students with disabilities could include the physical location of the schools. Sometimes non-availability of schools or its location in an area that cannot be

accessed becomes the major barrier for children to get education (Jha, 2002a). Children with disabilities also face environmental or access barriers if the building has not been constructed with their mobility needs in mind (Jha, 2002a). In a study by Hemmingson and Borell (2002) it was reported that lack of ramps, elevators and automatic doors were the environmental barriers faced by students with disabilities in mainstream schools. The students in this study also found that the desks, chairs and other facilities in the school were not suitable or inaccessible to them. It is normal school routine to move to different classes for various subjects, this practice causes problems for students with disabilities, as the short break between classes proved an inadequate amount of time for the transfer. This caused problems when transferring to physical education classes as transfer time and changing times were not sufficient to allow students arrive and start class on time (Hemmingson & Borell, 2002). As most school buildings in Ireland are old and aging it can be argued that these barriers would apply in an Irish context also. In a study by Kenny, McNeela & Shevlin (2003) it was highlighted that almost all students with physical disabilities in Irish secondary schools encountered difficulties accessing various classrooms and teaching environments, with one student commenting that if his classmates didn't carry him up to the second floor classrooms then he just 'didn't go to that class'. However, with the inclusion of Part M⁴ in the Building Regulation (2000) any future buildings including schools now being built must be disability accessible.

⁴ The requirements of Part M ensure that buildings and dwellings are accessible and useable by people with disabilities. The guidelines outline criteria for approaching and access into and around a building or dwelling as well as use of facilities and sanitary conveniences within those buildings. Lastly the regulations state if a building contains fixed seating for an audience or spectators then adequate facilities must be provided for people with disabilities (Building Regulations (2000), Technical Guidance Document M, Access for People with Disabilities)

2.3.2 Social Barriers:

Social barriers are the second type of barriers to physical activity and physical education faced by students with disabilities. Sherrill & Williams (1996) state that the most reported barrier to active leisure is not having a companion, friend or advocate to share the experience with. A frequent problem in inclusive education is that students without disability often interact too much with other students without disability in class and not too much with their assigned partners who may have a disability (Sherrill, 1998). Goodwin (2001, p. 291) noted that “The degree to which classmates isolate or involve others in their activities, ridicule or acknowledge proficiency, and limit or facilitate active involvement can significantly impact students’ experiences in physical education”. Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) revealed that there was “a preconception that people with disabilities had competence levels below the norm that was considered acceptable by classmates and teachers was instrumental in restricting participation” (p.155). Research by Meegan (2006) confirmed this fact. She stated that ‘James’ peers and physical education teachers perceived his competence in physical education as below that of his able-bodied peers. This perception may have been a key reason as to why he was repeatedly allocated passive roles thus reducing his participation in physical education’ (p.151). Other barriers include, a lack of transportation to activities outside school environment (e.g. the local swimming pool), inadequate equipment or facilities, the desired activity not being available, a lack of time, a lack of specific skills, insufficient support groups, and inappropriate behaviours that diminish peer acceptance in an activity setting (Ferrara, Dattilo & Dattilo, 1994). These barriers were still evident in the SportsScotland study in 2001 when half the adults interviewed in this study felt that their disability at school had limited their participation in sport, physical activity and physical education, with almost 19% of disabled adults never or only sometimes

given the opportunity to participate in physical education, and while some were only sometimes given the opportunity, 12% were actually discouraged from taken part. Similar responses were received in the Irish study by Kenny et. al. (2003) when comments such as ‘the school wasn’t equipped to cope. They tired, but the majority of times you had to stay out’ and ‘the nearest I got was inside the hall.... He could have let me referee, there’s nothing wrong with my mouth’.

2.3.3 Internal Barriers:

The Sport Scotland study (2001) also explored internal barriers to sport participation. The study outlined internal barriers such as ‘feeling different’ from the majority of the population, unable to fit in, self-consciousness or lack of confidence and fear of failure as ones that people with disabilities faced within a physical activity or educational experience. Similarly the Health Education Authority of England (HEA) (1998) list lack of knowledge about the benefits of physical activity including physical education, poor attitude and self-concept, poor body image, embarrassment, and fear of failure among their list of intrinsic or internal barriers. In a study by Rimmer et. al., (2004) it was found that people with disabilities faced emotional and psychological barriers when accessing fitness facilities and physical activity, which could include physical education. These barriers included the perception that they will face unfriendly environments, feel self-conscious among their peers, facing the fear of the unknown, and having concerns about asking for or needing assistance (Rimmer et. al., 2004). Similar barriers were experienced in a study by Blinde & McCallister (1998) who stated that students with disabilities often experienced an array of negative emotional responses resulting from their experiences in physical education. The emotional responses experienced were a result of being excluded from class activities as well as

unpleasant social interactions with classmates. Being excluded from the physical education class led many students with disabilities to feel like outsiders and unwanted by their peers, this also led to feelings of sadness and anger. Feelings of embarrassment were also experienced as some students with disabilities were unable to perform the skills and movements required for success in an activity (Blinde and McCallister, 1998).

2.3.4 Attitudes of Non-disabled Students:

The attitudes and perceptions of others are among the most significant factors preventing individuals with disabilities from participating in many activity programmes including physical education (Heward, 2000). Kasser & Lytle (2005) state that the effects of attitudinal barriers on individuals with disabilities are considerably difficult to overcome. An attitude can be defined as an acquired behavioural disposition or an emotion or action towards a person, a place, or thing (Lemon, 1973, p.). Ajzen and Fishbein (1987) state that an attitude can be described as a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object. Brehm & Kassin, (1996) concur with this stating that attitudes are generally based on learned beliefs and commonly reflect the extent to which someone or something is kindly or positively regarded. Personal experience, familiarity with others, knowledge and prevalent views of significant others combine to shape a person's belief system. These beliefs in turn also influence behaviour towards and relationships with those who are perceived as different. Individuals with disabilities might be perceived negatively, treated as being incapable of making decisions or even devalued and ignored completely (Kasser & Lytle, 2005, p.24). Attitudes are based on beliefs, thoughts and ideas (Smith, Austin and Kennedy, 1996) and as no one is born with preconceived

attitudes it can be concluded that attitudes towards various objects or people, including those with disabilities have been influenced by society (Sherrill, 1998).

Resulting from various research studies debates have arisen concerning the extent to which students with disabilities affect attitudes of students without disabilities in the general physical education environment. Some studies indicate that inclusion is perceived positively (Block, 1995; Block & Zeman, 1996; Volger, Koranda & Romance, 2000) and other do not (Ellery, Rauschenbach & Stewart, 2000). The impact of including a student with a disability in general physical education classes on non-disabled students is often overlooked. Inclusion by and large looks at what is best for the student with the disability and does not take into consideration or account the impact or effects that this inclusion has on the non-disabled student and their physical education experience (Block & Zeman, 1996).

Research has shown that attitudes of school children towards their peers with significant disabilities plays a part in their intention to participate with them in physical education (Verderber, Rizzzo, Sherill, 2003). Peer acceptance can be the difference between successful and unsuccessful inclusion. It is important to note peer acceptance is not easily achieved when students are perceived as different (Fishbein, 1996). Research suggests that many students without disabilities have positive attitudes towards including classmates with disabilities in physical education (Block, 1995, Block & Malloy, 1998). However, despite this, the first response of many peers without disabilities may be a negative one as they have had no prior experience or interaction with someone with a disability. Some students will be scared of students with

disabilities and others will immediately reject them because they feel these students will ruin their physical education experience or programme (Block 2003). Block (2003) believes the reason for these responses is that non-disabled students know very little about disability and how they should act or interact with students who have disabilities; therefore an important part of the process of including students with disabilities is to prepare, educate and provide information on disability to classmates and peers.

Research has found that people who have friends or family who are disabled have more positive attitudes towards people with disabilities (Rosenbaum, Armstrong & King, 1988). This would suggest that the more contact and interaction a child has with other children or adults with disabilities early on in life might influence their attitudes towards disability (Budisch, 2004). Fichten, Amsel, Robillard, Sabourin and Wright (1997) suggest even the presence of people with disabilities in everyday life will help with interactions. Thus it follows that schools that are inclusive of students with disabilities may foster these attitudes (Tripp, French & Sherrill, 1995, p.330). Rosenbaum et. al., (1988) found that students in integrated schools held more positive attitudes towards students with disabilities. Similarly Tripp et. al., (1995) found that students who were in integrated classes tended to view their peers more positively than students in segregated classes. This is reinforced by the results of a study by Block and Malloy (1998). In the study, Block and Malloy (1998) found that girls aged 11-13 overwhelmingly accepted a student with a disability into their competitive, fast-pitch softball league. They were also willing to allow modifications to make sure this peer was successful. Barriers exist in all areas of society but especially for those with disabilities and their ability to access inclusive general and physical education. Until these barriers for dealt with and over come true inclusive education maybe out of reach.

‘Removing barriers and bringing all children together in school irrespective of their physical and intellectual abilities or social and economic status and securing their participation in learning activities leads to the initiation of the process of inclusive education. Once walls within schools are broken, schools move out their boundaries, end isolation and reach out to the communities. The distance between formal schools, non-formal schools, special schools and open schools will be eliminated’ (Jha, 2002b. pp.15-16).

2.4 Inclusion and Mainstreaming

Inclusive education in Ireland is a relatively new concept and there have been considerable developments in policy and legislation since the early 1990’s (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006a). Worldwide, a considerable amount of research has been carried out in regards to educating students with disabilities in an inclusive environment but despite the research and legislation that has been implemented, a void occurs between policy provision and programme delivery. Many views on inclusion exist, some believe inclusion is policy driven by an unrealistic expectation that money will be saved (Block, 2000). Others believe that all students belong in an inclusive environment and that the regular education classroom is where all students should be educated. It is believed that “good” teachers are those who can meet the needs of students regardless of what those needs may be (Schultz Stout, 2001).

In order to discuss the concept of inclusion it is important to understand and discuss the differences between the common terminologies used. Some of these terms include: mainstreaming, inclusion, full inclusion and least restrictive environment.

2.4.1 Mainstreaming

The terms inclusion and mainstreaming are often used interchangeably. This is a direct result of the concept of inclusion growing out of mainstreaming and shares many of its philosophical goals. It is worth noting that these terms mean different things to different

people (Salend, 2001). Mainstreaming is considered to be a dated term where students with disabilities may attend one or more regular education classes (Block, 1999). In the regular education classes it is generally assumed that a student must earn his or her opportunity to be placed in these classes. They must do so by demonstrating an ability to 'keep up' with the work assigned by the regular classroom teacher (Schultz Stout, 2001). According to the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, 1975) mainstreaming is:

1. Providing the most appropriate education for each student in the least restrictive environment;
2. Placing students based on assessed educational needs rather than clinical label;
3. Providing support services to general educators so they could effectively serve children with disabilities in the general environment;
4. Uniting general and special education to help students with disabilities have equal educational opportunities.

The CEC (1975) also noted that mainstreaming is not:

1. Wholesale return of all exceptional children to general classes;
2. Permitting children with special needs to remain in general classes without the support services needed;
3. Ignoring the need of some children for a more specialised programme that could be provided in the general education programme (CEC, 1975, p.174).

Despite these guidelines students with disabilities were *dumped* into general education and physical education classes without the supports that were needed (Grosse, 1991). Students with disabilities were asked to follow the same curriculum, given the same materials and instructions, as well as work at the same pace as other students in the

class. It does not come as any surprise that students with disabilities failed in these environments and why the term mainstreaming was no longer recommended for use (Block, 2003).

2.4.2 Inclusion

The movement to inclusion has been led by many who believe that separate education is not an equal education, and that the setting in which a programme is implemented influences the programme and education provided for a child (Winnick, 2005). Inclusion involves a project of shared exploration and cooperation between schools and communities as a means of challenging and overcoming exclusionary attitudes and practices in education. It is a continuous and changing process, which is deeply affected by change in society - both short and long-term (Armstrong & Moore, 2004, Booth, 2003). Inclusion is a term, which expresses dedication to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students) (Schultz Stout, 2001). Similarly Sebba and Ainscow (1996) define inclusion as the process by reconsidering its curricular organisation and delivery in order to best meet the individual needs of all its pupils. Through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all pupils who wish to attend and in so doing reduces the need to exclude pupils.

Inclusion and full inclusion are two terms which are closely linked but have different meaning which are important to understand. As mentioned already inclusion means educating students with disabilities in a regular educational setting along with non-

disabled peers (Rizzo, Davis and Toussaint, 1994). They may be included but sometimes the level of inclusion may vary. Simply put, inclusion refers to providing specially designed instruction (including support services as needed) to students with disabilities within regular education environments (Giangreco & Putnam, 1991). The levels of inclusion can vary and a student with a disability can be placed anywhere along the inclusion continuum (Winnick, 2005). Figure 2.4 below illustrates the six levels on the inclusion continuum that any student with a disability may experience physical education at.

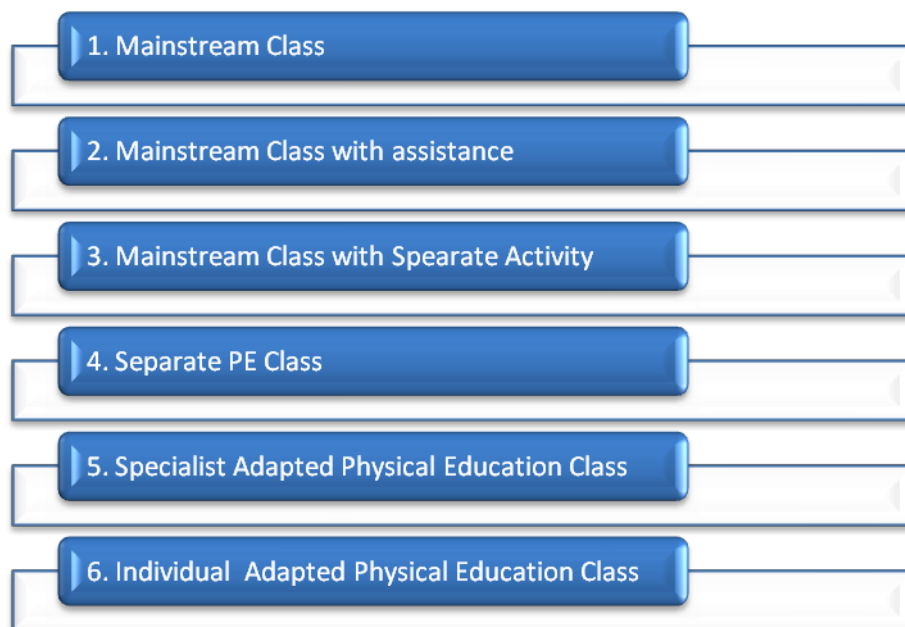


Figure 2.4 Inclusion Continuum (Winnick, 2005)

It is important to note that inclusion does not mean ‘*dumping*’ children into general education classes without the support and services they need to be successful there, trading off the quality of a child’s education or the intensive support services the child may need for inclusion. Inclusion is not doing away with or cutting back on special education services, nor is it having all children learn the same thing, at the same time or in the same way. Inclusion is not expecting general education teachers to teach children

who have disabilities without the support they need to teach all children effectively, or sacrificing the education of general education children so that children with disabilities can be included (Wigle & Wilcox, 1996). Successful inclusion practices depend on restructured schools that allows for flexible learning environments, with flexible curricula and instruction. Under ideal conditions all students' work towards the same overall educational outcomes. What differs is the level at which these outcomes are achieved, the additional support that is needed by some students and the degree of emphasis placed on various outcomes. A restructured system that merges special and regular education must also employ practices that focus on high expectations for all and rejects the prescriptive teaching, remedial approach that leads to lower achievement (Guess and Thompson, 1989).

2.4.3 Full Inclusion

Full inclusion on the other hand means that all students regardless of their disability or severity of disability will be in the regular classroom or regular physical education programme at all times. The child will receive all services in that setting (Schultz Stout, 2001). Full inclusion occurs when people with disabilities participate directly with, not beside their able-bodied peers (Schilling & Coles, 1997). 'According to Halvorsen & Neary (2001), full inclusion differs from inclusion in that students are members of the general education class only and do not belong to any other specialised environment based on their disability' (Hines, 2001, p.2). Full inclusion advocates believe that it is very seldom, if ever, appropriate for special education students to be outside the mainstream classroom setting (Rogers, 1993).

2.4.4 Least Restrictive Environment

As mentioned previously by Winnick (2005) the levels of inclusion can vary depending on the student and their level of disability. Winnick (2005) and Block (2003) recommend that a student with a disability or special educational needs should be educated in the least restrictive environment. Sherrill (1994) defines the term least restrictive environment using two fundamental beliefs. To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including those in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who do not have disabilities. The removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature and severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily, it is at this stage that special classes or separate schooling would be recommended (US Department of Education, 1992). The benefits of learning in the least restrictive environment for children with special needs can include: increased motivation, higher self-esteem, improved communication and socialisation skills and greater academic achievements to name but a few.

2.4.5 Benefits of Inclusion

Researchers claim that segregated programmes are detrimental to students with disabilities and do not meet the original goals for special education (Carlberg & Kavale, 1980; Wang, Reynolds & Walberg 1995). Educating students with disabilities in an inclusive environment can bring with it many benefits. Recent studies confirm this stating that there is a small to moderate beneficial effect of inclusive education on the academic and social outcomes of a special needs student (Katz & Mirenda, 2002). Researchers state that there are positive signs to inclusion and the students with disabilities show positive changes, including:

- A reduced fear of human differences accompanied by increased comfort and awareness (Peck et. al., 1992);
- Growth in social cognition (Murray-Seegert, 1989);
- Development of personal principles and ability to assume an advocacy role towards their peers and friends with disabilities;
- Warm and caring friendships (Bogdan & Taylor, 1989);

To support the findings above the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (2004) lists the following as reasons against segregated schooling:

- Segregated schooling has been associated with: impoverished social experiences, reduced academic experiences in terms of curriculum provision, examination opportunities and accreditation, lower student aspirations, lower teacher expectations, high absence rates, poverty in adulthood and poor preparation for adult life.
- Negative consequences for segregated students include: depression, abuse, lack of autonomy and choice, lack of self-esteem, isolation, fewer friends and more restrictive interpersonal relationships (CSIE, 2004).

In 1989 the cost of educating students in segregated programmes was twice as expensive as that for educating them in an integrated programme or environment (Pioma, 1989). Eleven years later, studies by Odom et. al., (2000) confirmed that in the programmes they studied, six of the nine inclusive programmes were less expensive than traditional special education programmes.

Many research studies outline the various benefits that inclusion in mainstream education and physical education can bring with it. They include: (a) Preparation for adult living – education allows students with disabilities the opportunity to prepare to be contributing members of society (McCarty, 2006). A segregated setting may not offer the individual the skills to function in integrated community and work environments because they do not afford those with or without disabilities opportunities to develop the attitudes, values and skills required to get along with one another as interdependent members of society. Schools allow students to practise skills learnt in an actual community setting where they are needed and they can develop a sense of belonging (McCarty, 2006). (b) Learning from peers - students with disabilities who are in an integrated education and physical education environment get the opportunity to grow socially and academically as a result of interacting with their peers and getting exposure to a greater variety of experiences and (c) Improved academic standard – students with disabilities who are included in general education benefit from the academic standard that is set in the classroom (McCarty, 2006). Irmsher (1995) states that research has shown that special needs students in regular classes perform better academically and socially than comparable students in non-inclusive classes.

As well as the positive experiences and benefits of inclusion for those with disabilities research shows that students without disabilities can also benefit from an integrated schooling environment. Some of those benefits include (a) Growth of peers - having a student with a disability in a classroom environment allows students without disabilities the opportunity to develop skills in dealing with and communicating with others who are different. (b) Develop friendships - integrated environments allow students with and without disabilities the opportunity to forge and develop friendships which they can

take through to adulthood (McCarty, 2006) and (c) Acceptance of differences - as students with and without disabilities interact more with each other, opportunities to break down barriers and gain more understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities will arise (Berg, 2004).

Huebert (1994) outlines that some major philosophical proponents to the inclusion movement do not view those with disabilities as typically different from others, but rather limited in certain abilities. According to these inclusion proponents, segregated special education services are too expensive and ineffective (Huebert, 1994). They believe that students with disabilities or special educational needs can benefit greatly in mainstream classes because:

- Teachers who have only low ability students have lower expectations;
- Segregated programmes tend to have “watered down” programmes;
- Students in segregated programmes tend not to have individualised programmes;
- Students in segregated programmes tend to stay in segregated programmes;
- Most regular education teachers are willing and able to teach students with disabilities;
- The law supports inclusive practices (in the USA, inclusion is mandatory under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)).

(Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), 1995, p.4)

Participants with disabilities can benefit from inclusionary practices in several areas specific to sports and physical education: (a) societal acceptance - persons with

disabilities have the potential to challenge stereo-typical views through sport (Lindstrom, 1992). Gaining genuine support from the school sends a message to the community that athletic participation for persons with disabilities is both significant and valid. Inclusion in physical education also shows positive effects on both disabled and non-disabled students. Hanrahan (1991) states that inclusion in physical education is beneficial for social and physical interaction as well as promoting acceptance of students with disabilities. (b) Team dynamics – including athletes with disabilities will encourage coaches to demonstrate that team attitude is as important as physical ability. Hemstetter, Peck and Giangreco (1984) found that social interaction between school children with and without disabilities resulted in improved self-concept and self-esteem for non-disabled children. (c) Competitive spirit – the able-bodied athlete on an integrated team can learn the true essence of competition, which is to use desire as well as hard work to overcome personal limitations.

In contrast there are many that believe inclusion is not the best means of education for people with disabilities and put forward the following arguments against inclusion in education including physical education. Huebert (1994) outlines that some inclusion opponents believe that students would be best served outside the mainstream classroom because:

- Special education teachers have higher expectations of their students;
- Special education curricula are appropriate to their intended students;
- Individualisation is more likely to occur in smaller classes with specialised teachers than in regular classrooms;
- Regular teachers do not want special needs students in their classroom; and

- Students with disabilities have never been well-served in regular classrooms and there is nothing to indicate that teachers are any more able to deal with them now than they were previously.

(SEDL, 1995, p.5)

Bateman & Bateman (2002) believe that full inclusion is not the best placement for all students. One major disadvantage to inclusion is students with disabilities may be disruptive to other students and as a result teachers cannot teach. The students without disabilities suffer as they are not learning at a pace suitable for them (McCarty, 2006). Irmsher (1995) believes that educators and parents of children in general education worry that inclusion of students with disabilities leads to a lower standard of learning and that socialisation become more of a priority over education. In order for inclusion to work it is important that both the educator and the parents find the best fit for the student with disabilities. Wigle, Wilcox & Manges (1994) sums up the reasoning behind inclusion as follows:

‘The ultimate goal of special education, as with all educational programmes is to assist students in becoming productive citizens. Regardless of their level of skill or whether they possess a disability, people cannot be productive if they are unable to function in the society and the workforce’ (p.4).

Research outlined above shows arguments for and against inclusion. Block & Zeman (1996) and Lieberman (1996) found that including students with disabilities in the general physical education class did not have a negative effect on the physical education programme or students without disabilities. Block and Zeman (1996) found inclusion in physical education promoted better attitudes towards students with disabilities and the modifications that were made to accommodate these students. As a result of these

findings the research suggests that the inclusive classroom is the best environment for a student with a disability remembering that students do not necessarily have to spend their entire day in the inclusive setting (Block, 1994).

2.5 Physical Education

2.5.1 Definition of Physical Education

Physical education programmes which can reflect social norms, present a platform on which persistent problems of racism, discrimination (as a result of disability), sexism and motor elitism can either be perpetuated or eliminated (Craft, 1996). Physical education can be defined as an educational process by which human performance and human development are enhanced through the medium of physical activities; physical education includes the acquisition and enhancement of motor skills, development of physical fitness and knowledge about physical activities, (Wuest & Bucher, 1995), it engages the entire body in movement - movement, which is purposeful and enhances self-concept, as well as social and psychological well being (Grosse, 2009). The Berlin Agenda (1999) expands these definitions and states that physical education is:

‘A systematic introduction to and progression through the skills and understandings required for lifelong involvement in physical activity and sport and for effective participation in 21st century work, family and leisure’ (p.1).

Physical education is used to provide children with guided experiences that promote development of physical fitness, enhance motor abilities and foster sport and leisure activity participation (Grosse, 2009). It applies a holistic approach and incorporates the concepts of both physical (body) and education (mind) of a person (Kretchmer, 2005). According to AAHPERD (American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 1992) a physically educated or physically literate person has learned the skills necessary to become physically fit, participate regularly in a variety of physical activities, and understand the benefits and values of physical activity as well as its contributions to a healthy lifestyle. Learning in physical education involves acquirement of knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes vital to physical education,

together with acknowledgment of its potential for integration with other curriculum areas (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), 2003).

According to the National Summit on PE (2005) the aim of physical education:

‘is systematically to develop physical competence so that children are able to move efficiently, effectively and safely and understand what they are doing. The outcome, physical literacy, is as important to children’s education and development as numeracy and literacy’ (p.33).

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2003) state the purpose of physical education is to contribute to the preparation of the student for a life of self-directed well-being. This aim will be achieved through the enrichment of the students’ sense of self through the development of skilful and creative performance of practical activities. Physical education provides the student with the motivation to choose a lifestyle that is active, healthy and meaningful, and develops personal and social skills and positive attitudes and values in his/her interaction with others including those with disabilities (NCCA, 2003).

Within our secondary educational system in Ireland the main emphasis is on results and gaining maximum points for entry into college or university. As a result

‘Physical education is often regarded as a peripheral or second class subject, having a lower status and being constructive, vocationally non-productive, non-academic, lacking in educational value and merely a compensatory recreational activity’ (Committee for the Development of Sport (CDDS), 2002, p.6).

Therefore, many researchers concentrate on what a *quality* physical education programme provides for students rather than focusing on defining exactly what physical education is. Quality physical education promotes the personal, social and physical development of an individual (Williams, 2000). It can be used to help a person become more independent, promote and improve self-esteem, self-efficacy as well as self-

confidence. Quality physical education can also aid in communication skills and promote qualities such as tolerance, perseverance and patience (CDDS, 2002; Kidd, 1999). Similarly Hardman & Marshall (2000) state that

‘Quality physical education is the most effective and inclusive means of providing all children with skills, attitudes, values, knowledge and understanding for lifelong participation in physical activity and sport’ (p.6).

McNamee (2005) believes that a quality physical education programme can provide a student with increased social and intellectual benefits, with research showing that students who perform and function at a high level in physical education also tend to do so intellectually and interpersonally (Shelly, 1993).

A well planned physical education programme can integrate education across the dimensions of the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, aesthetic, moral and creative aspects of development (Sleap, Warburton & Waring, 2000). Quality physical education programmes provide opportunities for students to attain movement and sport skills that can be applied to physical activities across the lifespan. Opportunities are also provided for students to develop increased levels of lifetime physical and health fitness, which contributes to an active lifestyle. The World Summit (Doll-Trepper & Scoretz, 1999) suggests that a quality physical education programme can make a significant contribution to the following:

1. Education;
2. Children’s development;
3. Children’s health;
4. Sports development, foundation for and of sport;
5. Social development and inclusion

6. Social and cognitive development, and school life
7. Economy; prevention of risk behaviour, health problems and long term benefits.

According to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO): ‘the practice of physical education and sport is a fundamental right for all’ (UNESCO, 1978, p.2). The Joint Committee Report (2005) states that schools play an integral role in encouraging pupils to have positive attitudes towards physical education, physical activity and healthy lifestyles. In American legislation the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (US Department of Education, 1997) ensures that all children regardless of disability receives physical education. As a result of the different disabilities that need to be catered for, different delivery models of physical education programmes have evolved. Within any physical education programme the National Curriculum for Physical Education in the UK identifies four key principles that teachers and policy makers in Ireland should consider when including students with disabilities in mainstream physical education. The principles include *entitlement* whereby students with disabilities have the right to access to physical education, *accessibility*, whereby teachers are responsible for designing lessons and classes which are relevant, accommodating and accessible for students with disabilities, *integration*, that recognises the advantages and disadvantages of educating students with disabilities in a mainstream environment and finally the principle *of integrity*. Teachers need to have a personal commitment to the curriculum that they teach (Vickerman, Hayes & Whetherly, 2003).

2.5.1.1 Physical Education Programmes

At post-primary level, many physical education programmes are dominated by games, in particular team games. Broderick and Shiel (2000) found that almost half of the children they surveyed played soccer in physical education every week. Darmody and Halbert (1996) found that of the seven practical areas within the physical education syllabus, games dominated the programme in the majority of the schools. The seven practical areas include: adventure activities, aquatics, athletics, dance, games – including invasion, net and fielding games, gymnastics and health related activities (NCCA, 2003). MacDonncha (2002) suggests the effects of tradition, large class sizes, absence of facilities, competencies of the teacher and inadequate curricular time as the main reasons why team games dominate physical education. In his study, MacDonncha revealed that 9% (

Table 2-2 below shows the breakdown of disabilities referred to in the study) of students in second level education had a disability, therefore one might question the quality of the physical education experience these students are receiving if team games are dominant.

%	Disability
51%	Learning Difficulty
24%	Physical Disability
15%	Sensory Disability
10%	Multi-Disability

Table 2-2 Disability % breakdown from MacDonncha’s study (2002)

2.5.1.2 Participation in Physical Education

At post-primary or second-level, the physical education syllabus was first introduced in 1985. The syllabus has since been revised and updated and the new syllabus is being phased in both junior and senior cycles (Fahey, Delaney & Gannon, 2005). With the pedagogical underpinning in Irish schools being highly developed the fact remains that we still fall short of recommended standards (Fahey, Delaney & Gannon, 2005). This is evident in the change of physical education staff, for example, in 1986 approximately 70% of second level schools employed the services of qualified physical education staff (Darmody, 1986); however, according to Deenihan (1991) more than a quarter of all Irish Post-Primary schools do not employ the services of a qualified physical education teacher. Eleven years later in MacDonncha's (2002) study, results showed that of the teachers surveyed less than half (47%) of them who were allocated hours to teach physical education were actually qualified to do so.

It is clear from the research outlined above that there are certain shortcomings when it comes to the provision and delivery of physical education in our post-primary school. One area worth looking at is the time allocation for physical education. The current syllabus recommends that each student should receive a minimum of 120 minutes or 2 hours of physical education per week. Many research studies (Table 2-3) have showed that most Irish secondary schools fall short of this minimum requirement and as students move through the years the time allocated to physical education decline, with the exception of transition year (Fahey, Delaney & Gannon, 2005; Darmody & Halbert, 1996).

	Darmody & Halbert (1996)	Fahey, Delaney & Gannon (2005)
Year	Time	Time
1st	79 minutes	-
2nd	74 minutes	70 minutes
3rd	66 minutes	70 minutes
Transition Year	73 minutes	110 minutes
5th	57 minutes	52 minutes
6th	46 minutes	54 minutes

Table 2-3 Time allocation for Physical Education

The status and time allocation for physical education in Ireland does not compare favourably to other European countries. Fisher (1995) surveyed 21 countries and found that Ireland had the lowest time allocation for physical education at second level. Fisher (1995) explained that the main reason behind the lack of time allocation was due to the fact that the main focus for teachers was on subjects, which were allocated CAO points, reiterating the point made earlier which indicated that physical education in an Irish educational system is regarded as a second class subject, which lacks in any educational value (Council of Europe Committee for the Development of Sport (CDDS), 2002).

2.5.2 Physical Education Teacher Education and Training in Ireland

As the inclusion movement continues more and more children with disabilities or special educational needs are enrolling in mainstream schools and as a result physical education teachers will need to be sufficiently prepared and educated to meet those needs (Vickerman, 2007). “The Strategy for Physical Education in Ireland” conducted by MacDonncha in 2002 showed that 9% of students attending second level education in Ireland had a disability. Winzer (1999) outlines that many teachers who are supportive of inclusive education also identify major problems with it. Minke, Bear,

Deemer and Griffin (1996) cite lack of skills, training and education in the area of inclusion and special educational needs as the main problem with inclusion. Barton (2003) found that inclusion is inadequately addressed and often neglected in teacher training and as a result, Smith & Green (2004) and Smith (2004) suggest that in order to have a more progressive physical education inclusion agenda to meet these students needs then the first point of focus for change must be on the teacher training curriculum. This is further emphasised by DePauw & Doll-Trepper (2000) and Morley, Bailey, Tan & Cooke (2005) who suggest that the teacher training providers are the link between government legislation and policies on inclusion and the process of equipping teachers with the skills, knowledge and understanding to guarantee children with disabilities a high quality physical education experience. Therefore they need to review their existing methods of training in order to reflect the new requirements and demands on physical education teachers to include students with special educational needs or disabilities.

In an Irish context, physical education teacher training providers have made significant revision and progress to their curricula in order to place a larger emphasis on the area of inclusion. In the academic year 2005/2006 there was only one physical education teacher education (PETE) institution in the Republic of Ireland which was based in the University of Limerick (UL) (MacPhail & Halbert, 2005). Within this degree there was only one module on special educational needs or disability. This module consisted of an eight-week mandatory course in the student's final semester of their final year. There was relatively no theory involved in this module and in order to complete it, students were required to deliver an eight-week physical activity programme to students or adults with disabilities. It is worth noting that very little specific training and preparation was

given to students prior to the delivery of the physical activity programme (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006b).

MacPhail & Halbert (2005) note that in order for physical education teacher training in the area of disability and SEN to improve two things need to happen. Firstly the expansion of the current PE degree course in UL and secondly the development of new courses in other Irish institutes of higher education. In the University of Limerick the physical education degree was reviewed and rewritten and the new course was disseminated to students in 2006 (McGrath, O' Neill & O' Reilly, 2005). The new course 'sees an increase in adapted physical activity and these modules will occur in the 2nd, 5th, 6th and 8th semesters. Some of the areas covered include terminology, definitions, history and objectives of adapted physical activity. They examine legislation and disability, sport and disability and integration and inclusion in schools and the community' (McGrath, O' Neill & O' Reilly, 2005, p.10). In the academic years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 two new physical education courses came on stream, the first in 2006/2007 in Dublin City University (DCU) (B.Sc. in Physical Education and Biology) and the other in 2007/2008 in University College Cork (UCC) (B. Ed. (Hons) in Sports Studies and Physical Education). The degree in DCU includes three modules on adapted physical activity delivered in years one and three of the four year degree. In year one students study a module named Adapted Physical Activity 1, this is a theoretical module. In semester one of year three the students study Inclusion and Adaptation, Physical Education and Physical Activity, which again is a theoretical module and Adapted Physical Activity II in semester two. This module combines both theoretical and practical elements (DCU, 2010). The Sports Studies and Physical

Education degree in UCC provides one module on disability which is titled Sport and Disability⁵. This module is delivered in the fourth year of the course (UCC, 2010).

The fourth physical education teacher training course available in Ireland is run in Institute of Technology, Tralee. Students enrol in the B.Sc. in Health and Leisure Studies, which is a three year course and take the one year add-on to receive a B.Sc. degree in Physical Education. Within the four years of study students receive three modules on adapted physical activity/education. In year two students study a module titled Adapted Physical Activity and Disability Studies. In year three they complete a module titled Adapted Physical Activity and Outdoor Environments and finally in their fourth year students study a specific module on Adapted Physical Education (I.T. Tralee, 2010). Accessibility to physical education teaching training in Ireland has become easier, with the development of the new courses in DCU, UCC and I.T. Tralee. In regards to APA and adapted physical education the Institute of Technology Tralee is the forerunner in this area. The institute has established and developed links with local sports groups as well as sports organisations countrywide and internationally. These links provides the students with excellent opportunities for work experience and future employment (McGrath, O' Neill & O' Reilly, 2005). An example of this would be the European Inclusive Education Training (EIPET)⁶ module. EIPET was a two year project which ran from November 2007 to November 2009 and was led by the Health and Leisure Department in the Institute of Technology, Tralee. The aim of the project was to tackle the difficulties that arise with the inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream education and the deficiencies that exist in initial and continued physical

⁵ The Sport and Disability module is the only specific disability related module outlined on the programme overview, no information available to indicate whether this module is practical or theoretical or whether adapted physical education is included in other modules on the course.

⁶The EIPET Module can be viewed at the following address – www.eipet.eu

education teacher training. The project developed a module with an accompanying resource pack to enable physical education training organisations readily include inclusive physical education in their undergraduate programmes. It is a highly practical module which develops student's abilities, confidence and competencies in working with people with disabilities using a hands-on approach (EIPET, 2010).

Although improvements have been made to the provision of initial teacher training the fact still remains that the vast majority of qualified physical education teachers in Ireland have not received adequate training to include and teach students with disabilities. MacDonncha (2002) conducted a study called "The Strategy for Physical Education Ireland". The purpose of this study was to look at the training and education of the Physical Education teachers in both primary and post-primary schools as well as special schools. Of the post-primary teachers surveyed 62% felt that their undergraduate training was insufficient for them to teach students with disabilities. A further 29% were unsure and only 9% felt that they had sufficient training at undergraduate level to competently teach physical education to students with disabilities. Inadequate professional preparation at the university level, the lack of information regarding learners with disabilities and the lack of teaching method courses and special training about safety aspects are barriers to inclusion that physical education teachers also face (Sherrill, 1998). MacDonncha (2002) also surveyed members of the Physical Education Association of Ireland (PEAI) and found that 22% of its members were offered modules in adapted physical activity (APA) at undergraduate level. Of the 22% only 16% of teachers in Ireland took up the opportunity to study any of these inclusive or adapted physical activity modules. The study showed that 50% of the respondents (PEAI members) stated that they felt unqualified to teach students with disabilities

(MacDonncha, 2002). A study by Meegan & McPhail (2006) revealed similar results where findings showing low numbers of physical educators having completed initial teacher training in special needs education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels thus leaving them feeling unprepared and unqualified to teach students with disabilities.

From the research outlined above it is clear to see that advances have been made in the area of initial teacher training with improvements in old courses and the addition of new physical education teacher training degrees. However, one problem that still remains is the up-skilling and re-training of all the teachers who have graduated before 2005. These teachers would not have received this training and still feel inadequate to teach students with disabilities (MacDonncha, 2002). The EIPET project is tackling this whereby revisions to the EIPET module are envisaged to include a module targeting in-service physical education teacher training. The EIPET module is a valuable resource and a movement in the right direction in regards to training and re-training physical education teachers in the area of inclusion and disability.

2.5.2.1 Communities of Practice

One other area of research worth noting is the new concept of communities of practice.

Communities of practice can be defined as

‘groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly’ (Wenger, 2006, p.1).

A community of practice has must have three crucial characteristics; the domain, the community and the practice.

1. **The Domain:** a community of practice has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership implies a commitment to the domain and a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people;
2. **The Community:** in pursuing their interest in their domain members engage in joint activities and discussion. They help each other and share information. Members build relationships that enable them to learn from each other. Having the same job, for example, does not make for a community of practice unless members interact and learn from each other;
3. **The Practice:** members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources, experiences, stories, tools and ways of addressing and solving problems. In order for this to happen time and sustained interaction is essential.

(Wenger, 2006, p.1)

Wenger (2006) describes a school as an organisation which faces increasing knowledge challenges. Communities of practice have been applied in teacher training and in providing isolated teachers access to colleagues. Yarnit (2000) explains how the benefits of communities of practice in a learning community can be as diverse as increasing economic prosperity. Communities of practice can hold benefits for both students and teachers. Students academic and social achievements can be increased (Calderwood, 2000). Diminished isolation, cooperation among teachers, increased

curricular integration, a fresh approach to academic disciplines and increased satisfaction with students learning can be listed as the benefits of communities of practice for teachers (Collier, 2002 and Kezar, 1999). Communities of practice could be useful for teachers teaching students with special needs or disabilities as knowledge and past experiences can be shared and new ideas formulised to overcome barriers and challenges teachers may be facing. Communities of practice will also encourage localised and on-going lifelong education.

2.5.3 Attitudes

Attitudes are often cited as extremely important in order to successfully work with and teach students with disabilities (Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995; Downs & Williams, 1994). Attitudes are considered to be a combination of feelings and beliefs that predispose a person to behave in a certain way (Noe, 2002), as physical education teachers play an important role in the lives of the children they teach (Auxter, Pyfer & Huettig, 2001) their attitude towards the inclusion of students with disabilities affects the success of the physical education programmes (Sideridis & Chandler, 1997; Salend, 2001; Van Reusen, Shoho & Barker, 2001). Teachers' attitudes have been found to affect the process and the outcome of inclusion to a great extent (Kalyva, Gojkovic & Tsakiris, 2007).

2.5.3.1 Theory of Reasoned Action

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) state that “an attitude towards any concept is simply a person’s feeling of favourableness or unfavourableness for that concept”. They state that behaviour does not result from attitudes alone but from underlying connotations that include attitudes, norms, habits, beliefs as well as favourableness towards a specific concept (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) developed the Theory of Reasoned Action (Figure 2.5), whose purpose is to understand and predict behaviour. The Theory of Reasoned Action proposes that the intention to engage in a given behaviour (teach students with disabilities) is the best predictor of that behaviour. The intention is dependent on attitudes towards the behaviour and the subjective norm. It is representative of a person’s behavioural orientation towards participating in a given behaviour and reflects the motivation towards that behaviour (Hagger, Chatzisarantis & Biddle, 2002). Finally, a person’s subjective norms are their beliefs about how the behaviour in question will be viewed by people they care about (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

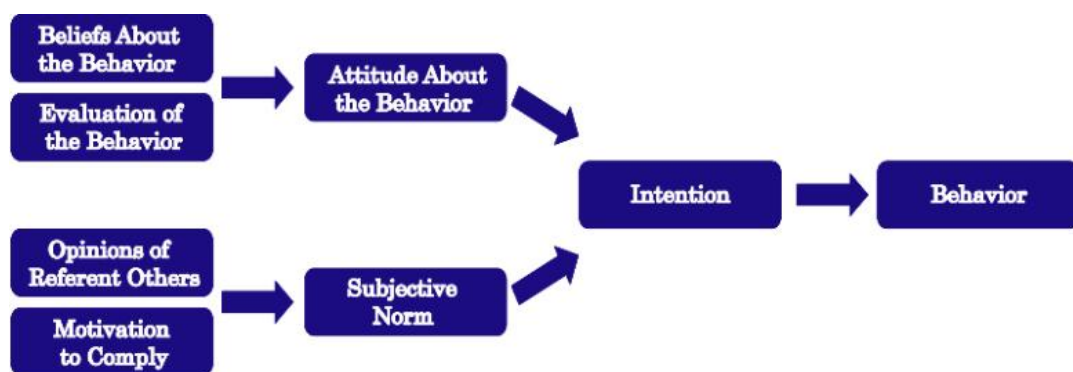


Figure 2.5: Theory of Reasoned Action

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) has been used by many researchers to explain pre-service and in-service physical education teacher’s attitudes towards teaching

students with disabilities (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006, Bishop, Rizzo & Silva, 1999; Downs & Williams, 1994). The Physical Educators' Attitude Toward Teaching Individuals with Disabilities III (PEATID-III) designed by Rizzo (1993) is grounded and constructed based on the TRA. As a result the PEATID-III has become the instrument of choice for researchers (Hodge & Jansma, 2000; Folsom –Meek et. al., 1999; Rizzo, 1993 and Meegan & MacPhail, 2006). The PEATID-III consists of 12 belief statements (for example see Table 3-4), attitudes towards behaviour is inferred from participants agreement with those statements.

2.5.3.2 Physical Education Teacher's Attitudes

Many studies have shown that there is an association between physical education teachers attributes, which include age, gender, years of teaching experience, number of adapted physical education courses taken, exposure to individuals with disabilities and perceived competence to teach students with disabilities, and their attitudes towards teaching students with special needs or disabilities (Conaster, Block & Lerope, 2000; Downs & Williams, 1994; Duchane & French, 1998). The three major factors that influence attitudes are teachers' experience, training (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006b) and motivation (Kalyva, Gojkovic & Tsakiris, 2007) with age and gender also playing a role.

2.5.3.2.1 Experience

Many teachers have negative attitudes towards students with disabilities because they do not know how to teach them (Clark, French and Henderson, 1986; Subban & Sharma, 2005). In addition, the large class sizes and the lack of equipment and support

personnel create problems as well (Auxter et al., 2001). Research indicates that inclusion does not promote positive attitudes, unless specific interaction experiences are planned and the environment is carefully structured (Jones, 1984; Horne, 1985). Much of the research revealed that experienced teachers hold more positive attitudes towards inclusion than those who have no prior experience with individuals with disabilities (Elhoweris & Alsheikh, 2006). This was reinforced by a study Van Reusen, Shoho & Barker (2001) who stated that a physical educator's attitude towards inclusion was related to the levels of special education training received and experience in working with students with special educational needs or disabilities. When teachers in inclusive and non-inclusive schools were surveyed results showed that teachers in the inclusive school held more positive attitudes towards inclusion (McLeskey, Waldron, So, Swanson & Loveland, 2001). A study by Kalyva, Gojkovic & Tsakiris (2007) confirmed this fact even further by stating that: 'teachers with experience in working with children with SEN held more positive attitudes towards their inclusion than their colleagues without relevant experience' (p.33). Reasons for these positive attitudes included having the specific skills, instructional and management, necessary to include students with disabilities, specific knowledge about disability (Kalyva, Gojkovic & Tsakiris, 2007) as well as the feeling that they could make a difference (Janney, Snell, Beers & Raynes, 2005). Bekiari & Sakelariou (2004) carried out a study on physical education teachers and their opinions and attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. The study indicated that most physical education teachers (67%) believed that they did not have the skills to cope with the needs of students with disabilities in their regular classes; however their willingness to promote inclusion to these students does not depend on their perceived level of knowledge.

2.5.3.2.2 Training

Studies have shown both positive and negative outcomes and attitudes regarding including students with disabilities in the regular physical education classroom (Block & Volger, 1994; Heikinaro-Johansson & Volger, 1996). One factor contributing to the sometimes negative experiences in inclusive classrooms may relate to the type of training physical educators receive during initial teacher training for teaching students with disabilities (DePauw & Karp, 1994; French, Keele & Silliman-French, 1997). Research supports that teacher's attitudes toward students with disabilities influence interactions and successful inclusion for students in physical education (Block, 2000). In a study by LaMaster, Gall, Kinchin and Siedentop (1998) results showed that teachers felt they were inadequately prepared to teach effectively with inclusive classes and they had strong feelings of guilt and inadequacy as they continued to try to be effective for all children. In a similar type study Kozub and Porretta (1998) examined coaches' attitudes towards including students with disabilities in interscholastic programmes and the coaches, although positive towards inclusion, felt inadequately trained to address the needs of disabled students in the interscholastic sports environment.

Positive attitudes can be achieved through training and Rizzo and Vispoel (1992) confirmed this in their study. The study was used to determine the influence of two physical education courses, one with adapted physical education modules and one without, on undergraduate physical educator's attitudes towards teaching students with disabilities. Results indicated significantly improved attitudes only for physical educators attending the adapted physical education course. As previous research has shown physical education teachers have not received adequate training to include

students with disabilities in physical education classes but despite this teachers are willing to be retrained as confirmed by a study by Bekiari & Sakelariou (2004) who found 98% of teachers sampled were willing to attend additional workshops to broaden their knowledge about educating children with disabilities and special needs. The future development of appropriate support services for teachers along with more adequate and appropriate preparation and education of physical education teachers are necessary issues that need to be addressed in order to bridge the gap between the theory and actual application of inclusive physical education (Bekiari & Sakelariou, 2004).

2.5.3.2.3 Motivation

Cook (2001) and Richards (1999) state that a teachers positive attitude is one of the main influencers in facilitating inclusion as positive attitudes are closely linked with the motivation to work with students with disabilities. Teachers' motivation levels need to be high as inclusion and successful inclusion of students with disabilities or special educational needs demands a lot of time, organisation and cooperation (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000). Kalyva, Gojkovic & Tsakiris (2007) believes that a highly motivated teacher will in turn lead to better dynamics within a classroom, allowing children with and without disability to interact, adjust and function alongside each other.

2.5.3.2.4 Age

Wishart (2001) states that the variable consistently linked to teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are their experiences in teaching children with special needs. Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden (2000) believe that teachers who have worked with students with

disabilities hold more positive attitudes towards inclusion. As improvements have been made on implementation and delivery of more special needs courses within teacher training degrees (Richards, 1999) it can be surmised that younger teachers with less teaching experience would have more exposure to the area of special needs and disability and therefore hold a more informed attitude towards inclusion. Teachers age has been found to be negatively correlated with attitudes and the older the teacher the less favourable the attitude (Rizzo, 1985). Conflicting research was found in the study by Simons & Kalogeropoulous (2005) where older physical education teachers revealed a more positive attitude towards inclusion, however the researchers found this result unexpected as they presumed that younger physical education teachers nowadays would hold more positive attitudes as they have more opportunities to interact with individuals with disabilities than teachers years ago.

2.5.3.2.5 Gender

According to Downs and Williams (1994), women were more likely to express a positive attitude towards teaching individuals with disabilities. This can be explained by societal expectations of women as nurturers and caregivers. This finding was reinforced in the results of the study carried out by Bekiari & Sakelariou (2004). Meegan & McPhail (2006b) found similar results in their study on physical educators' attitudes towards students with disabilities. They hypothesed that females are socialised to be more nurturing and caring than males and tend to apply a more hands on approach at an earlier age when it comes to helping people. Despite this it is worth noting that some studies, however, found no significant difference in attitudes between the genders (Rizzo & Vispoel, 1991; Murata, Hodge & Jansma, 1994).

2.5.3.2.6 Improving Attitudes

Elhoweris & Alsheikh (2006) put forward four strategies to improve attitudes and aid inclusion for physical education providers to students with disabilities. First they recommend increasing the knowledge base of educators and ways to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Shade & Stewart (2001) state that attitudes of physical education teachers can be positively influenced by training. Secondly, the use of successful inclusive teachers as guest speakers could be a good strategy to promote successful inclusion. Thirdly, to teach acceptance of individual differences which could involve disability awareness activities where physical education teachers get the opportunity to experience how it feels to have a disability (Salend, 2001). Fourthly, teacher education programmes should provide both pre-service and in-service teachers the opportunity to interact with individuals with disabilities in order to gain experience and information on how to interact and better include students with disabilities in their classes (Elhoweris & Alsheikh, 2006).

2.5.4 Individual Education Plans

The Education for Persons with Special Needs (EPSEN) Act was published in Ireland in 2004. One of the key issues dealt with in this Act was the provision of legislative basis for the introduction of individual education plans (IEP's) for children with disabilities and special educational needs (SEN). The Act identifies SEN as

“a restriction in the capacity of a person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently without that condition (p. 3).”

Under the Act it is recommended that children are educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have special educational needs. It is important to note that the

Act stipulates that the child should be educated in the least restrictive environment - a place where the best interests of the child are met.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a working document and should be available, useful and comprehensible to all those dealing with a student with a disability. The plan should provide a comprehensive record of the students learning needs, goals and progress (NCCA, 2002). The IEP provides many advantages to a student with a disability. They include:

- Providing a vehicle for communicating, collaborating and reporting;
- Drawing together all assessment information;
- It considers the views of all those directly involved with the education of the student including the parents and the student him/herself;
- It facilitates the setting of goals and objectives;
- It provides a forum for clarifying expectations;
- It facilitates a focused team approach to the planning and implementation of the curriculum;
- It focus attention on appropriate teaching strategies;
- It outlines the resources required to meet the students needs;
- It documents and celebrates the students progress;
- It facilitates structured evaluation and review;

- And it facilitates the transfer of information between education and care settings.

(NCCA, 2002, pp.18-19)

In mainstream schools the resource teacher is usually the person who takes the lead in the planning and implementation of the IEP. It is important to point out that the planning process should include the class teacher, other teachers involved with the student, the student with the disability, the students parents or carer, any relevant non-teaching professionals and any others involved with the students education and not *just* the resource teacher (NCCA, 2002).

2.6 Special Needs Assistants

The responsibility of including students with disabilities into mainstream physical education lies within school structures and a whole school approach needs to be adopted for inclusion to be successful. The special needs assistant (SNA) plays a contributory role in making the school and physical education class a more welcoming and inclusive environment for students with SEN (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006b) and the SNA is a valuable resource in the delivery of the physical education curriculum (NCCA, 2002). In 1998, approximately 200 teachers were working directly with students with disabilities in secondary schools in Ireland. This number had risen to 1,640 teachers in 2006 (NCSE, 2006) and 374 full time special needs assistants are employed at second-level to assist teachers (NDA, 2004b). By 2006, there were approximately 6,000 special needs assistants in Ireland, employed in mainstream primary, special and post-primary schools (Teagasc, 2006). The role of the special needs assistant is specifically to assist in the care of the students with disabilities in an educational context. It is important to

note that the duties of a special needs assistant are of a non-teaching nature (DES, 2002). Hannon (2005) goes on to say that an important role for the special needs assistant is ensuring that children with disabilities experience quality physical education in schools and the relationship between the physical education teacher and the special needs assistant needs to be a positive and open one. Despite this in a study by the Special Needs Committee (2004) 44% of SNA's surveyed stated that they were unsure of their role and misunderstandings between them and the teacher had arisen as a result.

The roles and duties of the special needs assistant are outlined by the Department of Education and Science. They involve tasks such as:

- Preparation and tidying up of classrooms in which pupil(s) with special needs is/are being taught;
- Assisting children to board and alight from school buses. Where necessary travel as escort on school buses may be required;
- Special assistance as necessary for pupils with particular difficulties e.g. helping physically disabled pupils with typing or writing;
- Assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene;
- Assisting on out-of-school visits, walks and similar activities;
- Assisting the teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods;
- Accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom;

- General assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the Principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature.
- Where special needs assistant has been appointed to assist a school in catering for a specific student, duties should be modified to support the particular needs of the pupil concerned.

(DES, Circular 07/02, 2002, p.4)

The Special Needs Committee Report (2004) summarises the impact of the special needs assistant on the teacher and the school community. The report clearly indicated that having a non-teaching staff member in classrooms was a trend that teachers were still adjusting to. Teachers also had concerns about confidentiality re students with disabilities especially if the SNA was a parent of another student. The role of the SNA was something that was also questioned in the report. Some SNA's were unsure of what they were supposed to be doing which often led to misunderstandings, and some teachers revealed that in their school SNA's were used to perform administrative and supervisory duties. The item of most concern for teachers was the lack of formal training that SNA's received (Special Needs Committee Report, 2004).

2.7 Conclusion

It is evident from this review of literature people with disabilities are more engaged in our society. The research shows how we have moved from a medical to a more social view of people with disabilities, seeing them more as valued individuals who can contribute to society rather than sick, deformed or handicapped people who have nothing to give or contribute. The research outlines the health, social and psychological benefits that someone with a disability can achieve from participating in physical activity and physical education. However, despite these benefits it is clear that many barriers to physical activity participation exist. These barriers include environmental, social, internal and attitudinal barriers. Inclusive education in Ireland is a relatively new concept and there have been considerable developments in policy and legislation since the early 1990's (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006a). Worldwide, a considerable amount of research has been carried out in regards to educating students with disabilities in an inclusive environment but despite the research and legislation that has been implemented, a void occurs between policy provision and programme delivery. Research has shown that students with disabilities are more likely to attend mainstream secondary schools and how problems and barriers exists in their inclusion in general education and physical education classes. The main barriers come from the short fallings of the general and physical education teacher, some through no fault of their own, with lack of training, experience and motivation as the main reasons why students with disabilities might not be fully catered for or included in mainstream physical education classes.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe the methods used to investigate the research questions for this thesis. The research consisted of two phases, both of which were carried out at different stages. Phase one was exploratory and specifically designed to investigate and explore the current status of physical education delivery to students with disabilities by physical education teachers in the research field centre, namely Waterford City. Phase one also looked at the status of physical education from the disabled student's point of view. The results of phase one were analysed and findings proved consistent with previous research (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006; Morley et. al., 2005) indicating a major shortfall in the in-service training and professional development of physical education teachers when teaching students with disabilities. As a result of these findings it was deemed important and necessary to take action. Phase two of the study was therefore designed and initiated. The specifics of each phase are described in this chapter, the methods used, how they were implemented and the analysis of data are also outlined and discussed.

3.2 Research Questions

Sarantakos (2005) states that before any methodology can be designed, an investigator must first outline and make clear the focus of his or her research. To do so implies the identification and development of the research question(s). This research took into consideration the current literature and methodologies used prior to preparing and determining the research questions for this study. The following research questions were developed based on the investigation of this literature:

- 1) Do physical education teachers have sufficient training and qualifications to aid inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream physical education classes in secondary schools in Waterford City?
- 2) What are the Physical education teacher's experiences and attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities?

The following research questions are supplementary to the research study and were also investigated:

- 3) What barriers are encountered during physical education for teachers and students with disabilities?
- 4) What is the current status of IEP's for students with disabilities and the role of the physical education teacher on the writing and development of these plans?
- 5) What are the realities for physical education teachers in having special needs assistants present in their physical education classes?
- 6) What is the physical education experience of students with disabilities in mainstream secondary schools in Waterford City?

3.3 Research Approach

It is important in any study that the research methods adopted are both adequate and appropriate in order to answer the research questions outlined. After conducting an audit of previous and related research studies the following methods were deemed most appropriate for use.

The methods used in this study are as follows:

Phase One

- A review of literature was carried out to provide the researcher with an in-depth knowledge of what the current trends and issues arising for physical education teachers with the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools and physical education classes;
- Questionnaires were administered to available students with disabilities in the eight secondary schools in Waterford City ($n=22$);
- Questionnaires were administered to the Physical Education teachers in all secondary schools in Waterford City ($n=12$);
- Semi-structured interviews were carried out with Physical Education teachers who were previously questionnaired ($n=4$).

Phase Two

- Observations of physical education teachers teaching students with disabilities during a physical education class and discussion with physical education teachers;
- Workshop with physical education teachers and SNA's from secondary schools in Waterford City.

3.3.1 Triangulation

This study consisted of four different methodological tools, namely questionnaires, interviews, observations and a workshop which also included follow up visits. The use of such a range of methodologies was designed to aid triangulation. Triangulation is defined as the use of more than one approach in the investigation of a research question

in order to enhance confidence in the ensuring findings (Bryman, 2004). Similarly, Sarantakos (2005) refers to triangulation as a means of employing several research tools within the same research design in order to get a particular view point or answer a particular research question. This helps to enrich the knowledge received and enhances test validity. Many researchers discuss the advantages of using mixed methods – triangulation approaches (Hussein, 2009). For example, it has been suggested that triangulation allows the researcher to increase the depth and understanding of the study (Olsen, 2004), increase accuracy, credibility (Flick, 2006) and validity (Denzin, 1978) as well as allowing comparisons with other research which can overcome deficiencies of a single method approach (Flick, 2006). Triangulation also assumes that the use of various sources of information will help both to confirm and improve the clarity of the research findings (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

As outlined already, triangulation can be defined as the use of multiple methods in studying the same phenomenon (Jick, 1979). As multiple methods can vary, they can in turn lead to various types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, multiple triangulation and methodological triangulation (Dyson & Brown, 2006). Of these types of triangulation, methodological or method triangulation was chosen for this study as it is considered to be the most widely understood and applied approach (Seale, 2006). Moreover method triangulation is often cited as the rationale for mixing qualitative and quantitative research methods (Seale, 2006).

3.3.2 Qualitative, Quantative and Mixed Methods

Sarantakos (2005) states that quantitative and qualitative research rest on different assumptions about the world and therefore use different approaches to social reality. Quantitative data is the collection of information via the use of numbers where as qualitative data is mainly expressive in words (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1988).

	<u>Quantitative Research</u>	<u>Qualitative Research</u>
Strengths	<p>Useful for obtaining data that allow quantitative predictions to be made</p> <p>Data collection can be quick</p> <p>Provides precise, quantitative, numerical data</p> <p>Data analysis is relatively less time consuming</p> <p>Is useful for studying large groups of people</p> <p>Can generalise research findings when the data are based on random samples of sufficient numbers</p> <p>Can generalise a research finding when it has been replicated on many different populations</p>	<p>Data based on the participants own categories of meaning</p> <p>Useful for describing complex phenomena</p> <p>Useful for studying a limited number of cases in depth</p> <p>Provides understanding and description of peoples personal experiences</p> <p>Data are usually collected in naturalistic settings in qualitative research</p> <p>Qualitative approaches are especially responsive to local situations</p> <p>Qualitative data in the words and categories of participants lend themselves to exploring why and how phenomena occur</p> <p>Provides individual case information</p>
Weaknesses	<p>The researchers categories that are used might not reflect local understandings</p> <p>The researchers theories that are used might not reflect local understandings</p> <p>The researcher might miss out on phenomena occurring because of the focus on theory or hypothesis testing rather than on theory or hypothesis generation</p> <p>Knowledge produced might be too abstract and general for direct application to specific local situations and individuals</p>	<p>Knowledge produced might not generalise to other people or other settings</p> <p>It is difficult to make quantitative predications</p> <p>It is more difficult to test hypothesis and theories with large participant pools</p> <p>It might have lower credibility with some administrators</p> <p>It generally takes more time to collect data</p> <p>Data analysis is often time consuming</p>

Table 3-1 Strengths and Weaknesses of Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Table 3-1 outlines the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research (Johnson & Christensen, 2010, pp.429-430) and Table 3-2 outlines the perceived differences between both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. These two tables show the contrasts between the two methods as well as the merits and limitations of each.

Table 3-2 Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methodologies

Feature	Quantitative Methodology	Qualitative Methodology
General Framework	Seek to confirm hypotheses about phenomena Structured methods used	Seek to explore phenomena Semi structured methods used – interviews, focus groups and participant observations
Analytical objectives	To quantify variation To predict relationships To describe characteristics of a population	To describe variation To describe and explain relationships To describe individual experiences
Questions format	Closed-ended	Open-ended
Data Format	Numerical (obtained by assigning numerical values to responses)	Textual (obtained from audiotapes and field notes)
Flexibility in study design	Study design is stable from beginning to end Participants responses do not influence or determine how and which questions researchers ask next Study design is subject to statistical assumptions and conditions	Some aspects of the study are flexible (addition or exclusion of questions) Participants responses affect how and which questions researchers ask next Study design is iterative – data collection and research questions are adjusted according to what is learned.

Adapted from Family Health International (2005, p.3)

Having looked at the differences and varying approaches to research from a qualitative and quantitative viewpoint, it was deemed appropriate to use a mixed method approach. Creswell (2003) confirms this by stating that mixed method research provides strengths that will offset the weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative research. Similarly Burke-Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) suggest that the strengths and weaknesses of a

single method research approach are enhanced and limited respectively if a mixed method study is utilised. Henn, Weinstein & Foard (2006) concur and note that it is logical to use multi-strategy research in order to overcome deficiencies which arise from a dependence or reliance on one particular method.

Methods are combined to gain the individual strength of each one as well as to compensate for the limitations and faults of single method approaches. Research by Bryman (2006), conducted an extensive review of the reasons why qualitative and quantitative or mixed method approaches were used in various research studies. Bryman (2006) summarise the rationales for using mixed method methodologies as follows:

- *Triangulation or validity* – to corroborate quantitative and qualitative data;
- *Offset* – offset weaknesses and draw on strengths from quantitative and qualitative data;
- *Completeness* – provides a more comprehensive account of the area of enquiry if both qualitative and quantitative data are collected;
- *Process* – quantitative research provides outcomes whereas qualitative research provides sense of process;
- *Different research questions* – quantitative and qualitative research answers different questions;
- *Explanation* – qualitative results can be used to explain quantitative results and vice-versa;
- *Unexpected results* – surprising results from one may explain results from the other;
- *Instrument development* – qualitative research employed to design the instrument and then the instrument is tested;

- *Sampling* – one approach facilitates sampling from other approach;
- *Credibility* – both approaches enhance the integrity of research findings;
- *Illustration* – qualitative data helps develop depth for quantitative data;
- *Utility* – more useful to practitioners;
- *Confirm and discover* – this entails using qualitative data to generate hypotheses and using quantitative research to test them within a single project.

(Bryman, 2006, pp.105-107)

It is worth noting that like every research method the mixed method approach has draw backs. Johnson & Christensen (2010) list the weaknesses of mixed method research as follows:

- It can be difficult for a single researcher to carry out both qualitative and quantitative research;
- The researcher has to learn about multiple methods and approaches and understand how to appropriately mix them;
- Methodological purists contend that one should always work within either a qualitative or quantitative paradigm;
- It is more expensive;
- It is more time consuming;
- Some of the details of mixed research remain to be fully worked out by research methodologists.

(Johnson & Christensen, 2010, p.437)

Numerous factors need to be considered before utilising a mixed method research methodology. The potential gains obtained from mixing methods are substantial; greater diversity and collaboration between researchers, more comprehensive findings, increased confidence in results, increased validity, more insightful understanding of the underlying phenomenon and promotion of more creative ways of collecting data (Johnson & Christensen, 2010). It could be argued that no stone is left unturned when using a mixed method approach; therefore the numerous benefits of mixed method research far outweigh the limitation of this approach (Henn, Weinstein & Foard, 2006). It is important to point out that both qualitative and quantitative research on teachers' perceptions of teaching physical education to students with disabilities in Ireland is extremely limited (Meegan & McPhail, 2006b).

3.3.3 Methodological Design and Methodologies Contemplated

Once the research questions were developed and an audit of previous and related research carried out, the researcher determined the best method(s) to be used to answer the proposed research questions. The research procedure used, especially in phase one, was predominately determined by precedent set down by previous research similar in its nature. However, it is important to point out that prior to the selection of methodologies to be used a number of alternative approaches were reviewed and considered, but deemed unsuitable. These methods and the rationale for not selecting them are outlined below.

A viewpoint on the current status of physical education in secondary schools was the main purpose of phase one of this research study. Many research methods were considered before the best fit was decided on. The methods considered include questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, observations, focus groups and telephone interviews. Questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and observations are explained in section 3.7.1, 3.7.2 and 3.8.3 respectively. One of the methods contemplated for use with the students with disabilities was focus group interviews. Focus groups are relatively easy to assemble, inexpensive and flexible in terms of format used and types of questions asked. Nevertheless, many reasons have been suggested for not utilising focus groups, Sarantakos (2005) outlines several of these reasons. They include:

- Being in group might make participants hide their real opinions, especially if their views can have effects on their personal life;
- Recording of data can be problematic;
- Domination of the discussion by some members might affect the direction and outcome of the discussion;
- Some members might not participate in the discussion;
- There may be difficulties keeping the discussion on track.

(Sarantakos, 2005, p.198)

Although focus groups have many advantages, the researcher felt that they would not be suitable due to the nature of the students she was studying. The researcher felt that it would be logistically difficult to cater for the various individual needs of each student with a disability in a focus group situation i.e. what might be helpful to one student could be distracting for another. As having a disability is a personal issue, the researcher

felt that students may not be open to discussing their disability in front of other students. Also some students with a disability may not be able to express themselves verbally and this environment may be stressful and uncomfortable for them. Moreover, it was felt that focus groups would not yield the information required and therefore would not provide any meaningful statistical measurement. This could render focus groups redundant and not be the most appropriate method of data collection for this group. Focus group interviews were also considered when researching methods of attaining information from the physical education teachers. Focus groups were not used as the researcher felt that the information needed was personal in nature and were specific to the individual teacher and sometimes only relevant to the school in which they taught.

Telephone interviews were also considered for use with the physical education teachers. However in this case, the researcher felt that a telephone interview would be too impersonal. She also felt that this type of interview would not give her the opportunity to visit the school and get to know the teachers which would be a valuable learning experience.. Although telephone interviews can be quicker and less time consuming (Seale, 2006) they also have many disadvantages. For example:

- Questions have to be simple and interviews to be kept short because they tend to have higher break off rates where people refuse to continue than face-to-face interviews;
- It can be difficult to ask sensitive questions on the telephone;
- There is no opportunity to use visual aids or to pick up so easily on the non-verbal responses of interviewees;
- Some people may be excluded as they may not have a telephone.

Telephone interviews were not used as a result of the reasons outlined above, moreover, the researcher felt that face-to-face interviews would better yield the information she desired.

3.4 Fieldwork Location

Waterford City is located in the South East of Ireland; it is Ireland's oldest city with a population of 45,748 people. Of this population, 10.4% (4,752 people) are estimated as having a disability (CSO, 2006). Waterford City has eight mainstream secondary schools with a total of 4,154 students attending those schools (Department of Education and Science, 2009). The table below outlines the schools who took part in the study.

School Name	Pupils	Total number of Students
C.B.S. Mount Sion	Boys	192
De La Salle College	Mixed	992
Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School	Girls	601
Presentation Secondary School	Girls	398
St Angela's, Ursuline Convent	Girls	858
St Paul's Community College	Mixed	503
Waterpark College	Mixed	269
Total		3813

Table 3-3 Secondary Schools in Waterford City, Department of Education (2009)

3.5 Selecting the Research Population

As the aims of this study were to look at inclusion of students with disabilities in physical education in mainstream schools and investigate the opinions of the physical education teachers about inclusion, all mainstream secondary schools in Waterford City were asked to participate in the study. Within each school, every student with a disability was asked to fill out a questionnaire. The resource teacher sourced these students for the researcher. Similarly, within each school all teachers who taught physical education were asked to complete the teacher questionnaire. All physical education teachers who completed the questionnaire were asked if they would be willing to be interviewed. Those who granted permission were contacted and a date and time set up for the interview to take place. In phase two of the study, all physical education teachers, including those not interviewed, were contacted again and asked to take part in the workshop. A letter was sent to each physical education teacher and was followed up with phone calls to contact the relevant personnel.

3.6 Secondary Data Research

A review of current literature was carried out on the topic of physical education and the inclusion of students with disabilities from the perspective of both the teacher and student. This review helped the researcher highlight areas of interest which aided in the construction of interview questions and questionnaires. The literature available from an Irish perspective was limited. Research documented was accessed from the library in Waterford Institute of Technology in the form of books and journals. Various other pieces of literature were retrieved from the national governing bodies and disability organisations relevant to this study and online databases which are available from the library at Waterford Institute of Technology.

3.7 Phase One

3.7.1 Questionnaires

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected in this research. The quantitative data was retrieved from the questionnaires administered to the students with disabilities as well as the physical education teachers of Waterford City. The qualitative data was collected using open ended questions in the questionnaire for physical education teachers and students as well as interviews carried out with four physical education teachers in Waterford City.

Questionnaires are a common method of collecting data in the social sciences (Sarantakos, 2005). Being cost effective, time saving and convenient for the responder as well as producing quick results are few of the advantages of using this method of data collection (Sarantakos, 1993). Questionnaires also offer less opportunity for bias (Sarantakos, 2005), are good for acquiring a complete picture of the activities people involve themselves in (Veal, 1997) and can provide multifaceted information in an easily understood form (Veal, 1997). Despite these benefits, questionnaires like all other research methods have their drawbacks and limitations. Questionnaires do not allow probing, prompting or clarification of questions; they do not provide opportunities to collect additional information and partial responses are quite possible due to lack of supervision (Sarantakos, 2005). Respondents may also complete answers with information they think they should write rather than how they actually feel about a topic or subject (Black, 1999).

Both questionnaires used in this research were designed to provide the researcher with relevant information from the responder. The questionnaires followed a simple, logical format, with instructions and definitions of terms outlined and explained in the introduction to aid in its understanding and completion. Both questionnaires also included a combination of open and closed questions in order to reduce respondent fatigue (Bryman, 2004) as well as allowing for the gathering of both qualitative and quantitative data.

3.7.1.1 Questionnaire Design – Physical Education Teachers

The physical education teacher's questionnaire consists of six different sections, the content of which is described in section 3.7.1.1.1. The questionnaire was developed using the combination of a standardised questionnaire (PEATID – III, Rizzo, 1993 – used by Meegan & McPhail, 2006b. See Table 3-4 for an example of questions from PEATID-III) and questions from questionnaires used in previous studies of a similar nature and methodology, namely studies by Loreman (2003), Morley, Bailey, Tan & Cooke (2005), Australian Education Union (AEU) (1994) Special Needs Committee (2003) and Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education (IATSE) (2004). In combining a wide variety of questions, there was the potential for obtaining a large amount of information. Throughout the design process the researcher was aware of the length of the questionnaire. If it was too long, the respondents would lose interest in completing the questionnaire and may answer questions incorrectly as a result (Oppenheim, 2001). Therefore the questionnaire consists of both open and closed questions which will provide both qualitative and quantitative information.

One advantage of teaching students labelled in my regular physical education class with nondisabled students is that all students will learn to work together towards achieving goals:

1	Emotional/Behavioural disorder	SD	D	U	A	SA
2	Specific Learning disability	SD	D	U	A	SA
3	Mild-moderate mentally impaired	SD	D	U	A	SA
4	Moderate-severe mentally impaired	SD	D	U	A	SA

Table 3-4 Example of PEATID – III question

3.7.1.1.1 Questionnaire Structure

The questionnaire (see Appendix A) was divided into six sections:

Section 1: General Details

This section of the questionnaire gives the researcher an understanding and insight into the background of the Physical Education teachers. Details such as age, gender, school taught in, years teaching physical education, details of students with and without disabilities attending their school and details of the types of disabilities the students they have taught are included in this section.

Section 2: Training and Professional Development

This section outlines and details the physical education training and continuing professional development that the physical education teachers have acquired over the years of teaching physical education. The questions include details on where the physical education teacher received formal training, highest qualification achieved, details on training for people with disabilities, training received whilst holding a

physical educators post as well as training they feel would help them most in their teaching of students with disabilities in the future.

Section 3: Teaching Students with Disabilities

This section gives the researcher details on the attitudes of the physical education teacher towards students with disabilities as well as some information on how much physical education is *officially* and *actually* carried out in the schools in which they teach.

Section 4: Attitudes of Non-disabled Students

This section consists of two open ended questions which outlines the opinions of the physical education teachers on how students with disabilities are accepted or not accepted into mainstream physical education classes and how the non-disabled students help or hinder inclusion and integration of students with disabilities.

Section 5: Availability of Assistance and Support

This section discusses the help, support and assistance the physical education teacher receives in order to facilitate their physical education classes. The questions seek details on Individual Education Plans (IEP's) as well as the use and availability of Special Needs Assistant's (SNA's).

Section 6: School facilities

The final section of the questionnaire gives the researcher details on the facilities that are available for physical education and questions the suitability of these facilities for students with disabilities in the school. This section also outlines the sports and activities completed in physical education classes.

3.7.1.2 Questionnaire Design – Secondary School Student with Disability

No standardised questionnaire was used in the development of the student with disability questionnaire. Similar to the teacher questionnaire the sections were developed on the basis of reviewing methodologies from previous related research. The questions were adapted from studies by Kenny, McNeela, Shevlin & Daly (2003), English Federation of Disability Sport (2002) and Byrnes & Rickards (2001). Throughout the questionnaire design the researcher was aware of the structure, wording and length of the survey, and factors which would affect its completion by people with disabilities.

3.7.1.2.1 Data Collection with People with Disabilities

The researcher referred primarily to two documents in order to complete detailed preparation and planning to prepare for data collection. The documents in question are the “Ask Me”⁷ guidelines and the “Guidelines for Including People with Disabilities in Research” written by the National Disability Authority (2002a&b). These documents were relevant as they outline information on how to make contact and communicate

⁷ ‘Ask Me’ guidelines and ‘Guidelines of Including People with Disabilities in Research’ refer to all people with disabilities regardless of age therefore including children/adolescents of secondary school going age.

with people of all ages with disabilities. They also provide information on appropriate disability etiquette and language or terminology to use when preparing questionnaires, interview questions and speaking with persons with disabilities of all ages. These documents provided useful direction in framing the overall research.

3.7.1.2.2 Questionnaire Structure

The student's questionnaire (see Appendix B) was divided into six sections.

Section 1: Type of disability

This question gives the researcher insight into the type of disabilities that students attending mainstream secondary schools have.

Section 2: Participation levels and involvement in physical education

This section gives the researcher information on the number of physical education classes students with disabilities are offered and participate in each week. This section also asks students with disabilities to outline activities they have been unable to participate in and why.

Section 3: Facilities available in the school and accessibility of these facilities

This section questions the students about the facilities that are available in their school and how accessible these facilities are in relation to their disability.

Section 4: The student's experiences in physical education

Students are questioned about their experiences in physical education. They are asked if they have had any negative ones and what could have been done in order to make the experience a better one.

Section 5: Special Needs Assistant and Individual Education Plan

These questions give the researcher information on the number of special needs assistants available to students with disabilities and how they assist these students during physical education. Students are also questioned on whether they have an Individual Education Plan and whether information on physical education is included in the plan.

Section 6: Activities offered and student's involvement in decision making around these activities

These questions provide information on the types of sports, games and activities offered and experienced by students with disabilities. Students were asked if they were involved in any way in the decision making around what activities were being taught and whether any of these games, sports or activities specifically suited their disability.

3.7.1.3 Questionnaire Pilot

St Joseph's Special School Waterford, is a school for boys and girls with mild learning disabilities and autism. The school caters for students from the ages of three to eighteen and offers both primary and secondary education syllabi. The researcher contacted the principal of this school and arranged a meeting with her. During the meeting the researcher outlined and explained the study she was conducting. The researcher asked if some of the students in the school would complete the questionnaire to test the suitability, structure and content of the questions included. The principle agreed and passed the student and teacher questionnaires to the vice principal who read both questionnaires and provided feedback on same. Eight leaving cert applied students also completed the questionnaire. The results of these questionnaires were not included in the study but were used to ensure the information provided, mapped to the information being sought. Some questions were altered and changed as a result of the students and vice-principal's feedback.

3.7.1.4 Administration of Questionnaires

Each principal of the secondary schools in Waterford City were contacted personally by phone. A follow up letter was then sent to the principal outlining what would be involved in the research (See Appendix C). The normal protocol was that the principal put the researcher in contact with the resource teacher once he/she had granted permission for the research to go ahead. The resource teacher was the contact point for the researcher as he/she spent time with all students with disabilities during the school week and felt that this time would be the most suitable to complete the questionnaire therefore not segregating these students during integrated classes. The resource teacher identified the students in the school who had a disability. Each student received a

consent form which was filled out and signed by both the student and his/her parents or guardians (See Appendix D). The resource teacher was asked if any of the students with disabilities needed the questionnaire to be adapted or modified according to their disability. Once this was arranged, a separate time was set aside for these students to fill out the questionnaire. Both the researcher and resource teacher were present in order to help the students with any problems that they may have understanding or clarifying items on the questionnaire.

3.7.2 Interviews

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gain the relevant information needed to complete this study. This could be achieved as semi-structured interviews allow questions about attitudes, opinions, perspectives and meanings to be asked and explored in depth and detail (Knowler, 2007). Semi-structured interviews also give the interviewer the freedom and flexibility to explore topics and themes not previously mentioned or set out in the interview structure (Silverman, 2004). Insight into the personality and motivations of the interviewee can also be gained from semi-structured interviews (Knowler, 2007). Interviews are commonly used in the social sciences and are often considered the best method to use in social research (Sarantakos, 2005). The use of interviews bring with it many advantages, some of which are outlined below:

- The interview allow for *Flexibility* – they can be adjusted to meet many diverse situations;
- The interview provides a *high response rate*;

- The interview allows the interviewer the *opportunity to observe non-verbal behaviour* which could not be achieved using indirect methods;
- The interviewer has *control over the environment* and can control the conditions under which questions are answered;
- *Capacity to correct misunderstandings by respondents*;
- *Control over the order of questions* – can be important when the order of the questions is significant to the study;
- Interviews allow the interviewer the *opportunity to record spontaneous answers* which may add valuable information to the study;
- Lastly the interview allows for control over the *time, date and place* of the interview.

(Sarantakos, 2005, pp.285-6)

The advantages of interviews are plentiful but despite this interviews do have their shortcomings. The interview can be a costly and time consuming method of data collection (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997; Sarantakos, 2005). For example, on one hand it allows for the questions to be guided by the interviewer and points to be clarified (Frey & Oishi, 1995), but on the other, this method does rely on the respondent's willingness to give accurate answers (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Schaw, 1995). Respondents may often lie as a result of feeling embarrassed, inadequate or having a lack of knowledge on the topic being explored (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997). Interviewer bias is also a problem with interviews. The non-standardisation of the questions in this method means that it is difficult to generalise on a larger scale (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997; Sarantakos, 2005).

The researcher was aware that her ability to conduct an interview would influence the responses given by the interviewees. Farber (2001) outlines five factors which need to be addressed to limit bias and reduce error-producing factors. The following outlines what those factors are and how the researcher dealt with them to the best of her ability.

- **Lack of skills** – the interviewer can influence the results through lack of organisational and professional ability, carelessness or through contacting the wrong person, excluding or misreading questions, reading them out of order, recording the wrong answers, misunderstanding the respondent and leaving questions unanswered (Sarantakos, 2005).
 - To overcome these factors the researcher ensured she was fully prepared before each interview. The questions were typed and printed to ensure each question was asked in order and that none were omitted. All interviews were conducted by the primary researcher who wrote the questions therefore alleviating the possibility of questions being misread or misunderstood by the interviewer. The interviewer could also clarify questions or reword questions if the interviewee needed further information. All interviews were tape recorded, with the permission of the interviewee, therefore avoiding answers being recorded incorrectly.
- **Misconduct** – the interviewer may intentionally modify or exclude answers, rephrase questions, replace respondents or cheat by not contacting the respondent but answering the questions personally (Sarantakos, 2005).
 - To overcome these factors the researcher conducted all interviews herself ensuring that they were all completed correctly and by the person

intended. The interviews were recorded; therefore no answers could be altered or omitted.

- **Presentation** – the interviewer’s own appearance may cause distortion and influence data, for example appearance, tone of voice, attitude to the respondent and reaction to answers or comments made (Sarantakos, 2005).
 - To overcome these factors all interviews were conducted by the researcher. She ensured she dressed appropriately and similarly for each interview. The researcher, to the best of her ability, kept a neutral attitude towards the respondents and reactions to comments they made.
- **Expectations** – the expectations interviewers have to the respondents – for example as a result of appearance, living conditions that may influence the procedure and result of the interview (Sarantakos, 2005).
 - There was very little the researcher could do to prepare for these factors. The researcher did her best to limit preconceived expectations and keep an open mind at all times.
- **Probing** – the research can also be prejudiced by the interviewer’s use of probing that is whether it was done, where and when and whether it was carried out or instructed. (Sarantakos, 2005).
 - The researcher did probe respondents at times during the interviews. The probing was used for different reasons. They included clarification and expansion of answers given, to gain more specific information from the respondent and finally to tease out information to help respondents recall extra or new information.

3.7.2.1 Administration of the interviews

Each physical education teacher was asked if they would be willing to be interviewed by the researcher at the end of the questionnaire. Initially, only two physical education teachers who completed the questionnaire agreed to be interviewed. Given this problem, however, the researcher contacted the physical education teachers again, by phone, and two more teachers agreed to be interviewed. The four interviewees taught in different schools hence allowing the researcher got a snapshot of the physical education process in different school systems. All interviews were carried out by the primary researcher in order to achieve consistency.

The Physical Education teacher questionnaire formed the basis for the questions for the interview, where answers received in the questionnaire were probed and expanded on in greater detail. The interview was carried out at a time convenient for the PE teacher and the researcher. The interviews were conducted in the school and one interview was carried out in the home of the PE teacher. All interviews were taped with the permission of the interviewee. Interview's were transcribed and coded according to responses given using the software package NVivo 7⁸.

3.7.2.2 Content of the interviews

The interview questions were delivered using the same structured sections outlined in the physical education teacher questionnaire.

⁸ NVivo 7 is explained in section 3.9

Section 1: General Details

This section of the interview probed for more information on the background of the physical educational teacher. Details and clarification were sought about the school or schools taught in and furthermore teachers were asked to explain the number of students with disabilities and to clarify the types of disabilities the teachers encounter.

Section 2: Training and Professional Development

This section of the interview outlines and details the physical education training and continuing professional development that the physical education teachers have acquired over the years of teaching physical education. Teachers were asked whether their primary degrees or further education and qualification included any element of special needs/disability content. This section also asked teachers to what degree they felt they were equipped to meet the needs of a special education student in their physical education classes. Teachers were also probed as to why and what they felt would be needed to better cater for the needs of students with disabilities in physical education.

Section 3: Teaching Students with Disabilities

This section gives the researcher details on the attitudes of the physical education teacher towards students with disabilities. The interviewer asked teachers to explain in detail and give reasons why they agreed or disagreed with the statements outlined in the questionnaire, which in some instances led to in-depth discussions. Teachers were questioned about the differences in time allocated to PE and time actually spent on physical education. They were asked to explain why the differences occurred and what

could be done to change that. The status of physical education in the school was also spoken about in this section.

Section 4: Attitudes of Non-disabled Students

This section consists of two open-ended questions which outlines the opinions of the physical education teachers on how students with disabilities are accepted or not accepted into mainstream physical education classes. How non-disabled students help or hinder inclusion and integration of students with disabilities was also looked at. Teachers were asked to explain their answers and discussion around these answers took place during the interview.

Section 5: Availability of Assistance and Support

This section of the interview discussed the answers physical education teachers gave in relation to the help, support and assistance received in order to facilitate their physical education classes. The questions seek details on Individual Education Plans (IEP's) as well as the use and availability of Special Needs Assistant's (SNA's). The teachers were asked about the involvement of the SNA's and the problems they have encountered as a result. Teachers were also questioned about their involvement or lack of involvement in the development of IEP's as well as the policies around IEP's in their school.

Section 6: School facilities

The final section of the interview gave the researcher the opportunity to question the physical education teacher's on the facilities that are available to them and the

suitability of these for students with disabilities. This section also outlines the sports and activities completed in physical education classes and the input the students with disabilities have in the decision making process.

3.8 Phase Two

3.8.1 Introduction

One of the findings from phase one of the research strongly indicated that PE teachers felt that they were not sufficiently trained to accommodate and make adaptations for students with disabilities in their mainstream physical education classes. As mentioned previously these findings are consistent with previous research (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006; Morley et. al., 2005) indicating a major shortfall in the in-service training and professional development of physical education teachers when teaching students with disabilities. It appeared that there wasn't an adequate emphasis on adapted physical education when teachers completed their college qualification and since starting their teaching career, no adapted physical education workshops or in-service adapted physical education (APE) training was made available to them. Assessment of initial teacher training and academic preparation of physical education teachers indicated that six participants (50%) had not received any training or qualifications in the area of adapted physical activity or adapted physical education during their primary physical education degree. One teacher stated

‘we got no training at any stage of college and we are expected to integrate students with disabilities into PE programmes, this can be very difficult’ (PETQ#10).

As well as initial teacher training the lack of in-service training in the area of physical education and adapted physical education was highlighted by teachers as an area of neglect. One physical education teacher stated that she had

‘attended all the PE in-services that have been on and there has always been a 5-10 minute little bit of how we would adapt our classes but that’s it’ (PET#2).

When teachers were asked if any training, workshops, continuing professional development courses had been offered to physical education teachers in their school, a resounding

‘no, none, nothing’

was the response. In order to address this, phase two of the research study was designed and implemented. Phase two consisted of the observations of teachers and students with disabilities in the physical education class/setting. The researcher had a brief discussion with the PE teachers immediately after the class. The workshop was designed, organised and delivered based on the outcomes of the observations and discussions.

3.8.2 Action Research

Action research is a model of professional development that encourages collaborative investigation, reflection and discussion (Hewitt & Little, 2005). It emphasises the involvement of teachers in problems in their own classrooms and has as its primary goal the in-service training and development of the teacher rather than the acquisition of general knowledge in the field of education (Borg, 1965, p.313). Rawlinson & Little (2004) point out, that within the action research process, teachers study student learning in relation to their own teaching. It allows teachers to learn about their own instructional

practices and to continue to keep an eye on improved student learning. Guskey (2000, p46) goes on to state that:

‘The idea of action research is that educational problems and issues are best identified and investigated where an action is: at the classroom and school level. By integrating research into these settings and engaging those who work at this level in research activities, findings can be applied immediately and problems solved more quickly’

Action research is a continuous and reflective process where educators make instructional decisions based on student needs reflected by classroom data. It consists of four phases:

- Diagnosing or identifying the problem;
- Developing and implementing a research plan;
- Collecting and analysing the data;
- Taking action based on the results and sharing of these results.

(Hewitt & Little, 2005)

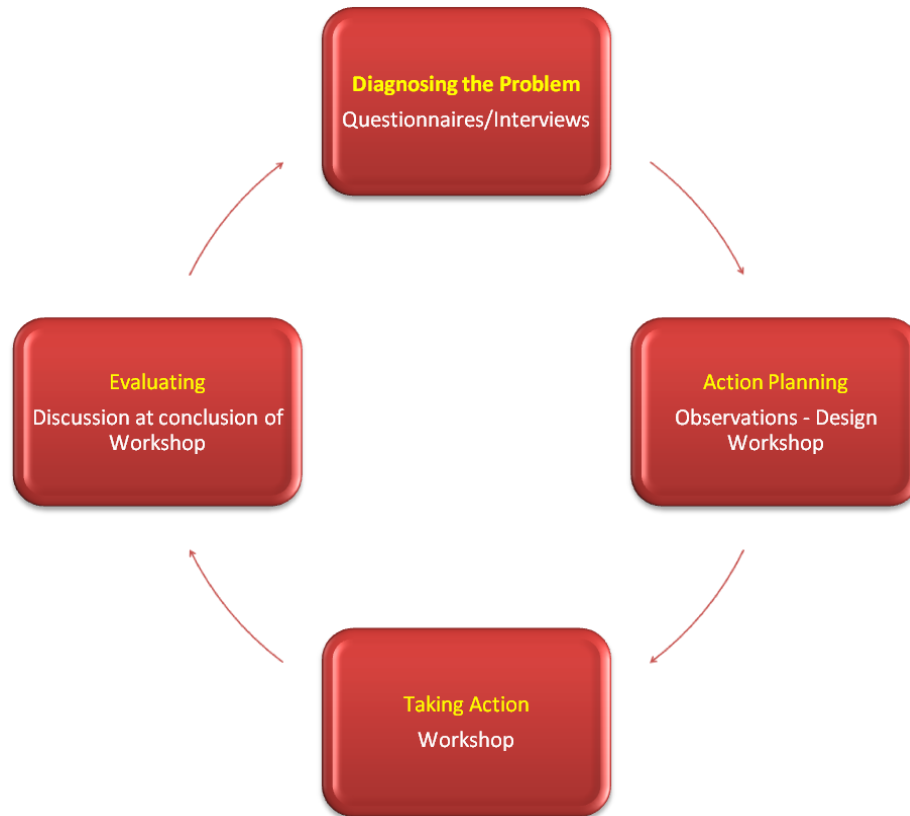


Figure 3.1 Action Research - Adapted from Susman (1983)

The research process which was followed with the physical education teachers is illustrated in Figure 3.1. This type of research would be considered “Action Research” where the researcher posed questions (research questions), gathered the data (questionnaires and interviews), reflected on the results of this data and decided on a course of action (Workshop) (Ferrance, 2000).

Calhoun (1994) illustrates action research in Figure 3.2. She defines action research as a fancy way of saying let’s see what is happening and decide how to make things better.



Figure 3.2 Action Research – (Calhoun, 1994)

Action research has many advantages. It is characterised by the amount of empowerment it gives its contributors. Involvement of contributors is of a knowing nature and communication between them is crucial. Action research involves researcher and contributors viewpoints of a problem and there must be free information flow between them (ITEACH, 2010). Ferrance (2000) list the following as benefits of Acton Research. Action research focuses on school issues, problems or areas of collective interest. It is a form of teacher professional development, allowing for and encouraging collegial interactions and improving communication, giving teachers the opportunity to reflect on their own practices and has potential to influence change in a school environment (Ferrance, 2000). Lack of enthusiasm of some people involved, the over involvement of the researcher, may bias the research results and it can be time-consuming and complex to conduct are some of the disadvantages of action research (ITEACH, 2010). Despite these disadvantages the active participation of teachers and others in the school in the research makes action research a vital and useful tool (Ferrance, 2000).

Borg (1965) and Guskey (2000) explain how action research has as its primary goal the in-service training and development of the teacher. As a result of this the researcher felt a workshop would best suit the needs and facilitate the in-service training desires of the physical education teachers. The tools used in phase two of the research study were

observations and a workshop which are described and explained in the following sections.

3.8.3 Observations of Physical Education Classes

Observation is one of the oldest methods used in social research. It entails gathering data using vision as its main source. Observations can be used as the only technique of gathering data or combined with other methods (Sarantakos, 2005). Observations have many strengths and weaknesses, some of which are outlined in Table 3-5 below:

<u>Strengths</u> (Maher, 1995)	<u>Weaknesses</u> (Becker, 1989; Maher, 1995)
Provides information when other methods are not effective;	Cannot be employed when large groups or extensive events are studied;
Subject selection procedure is less complicated and time consuming;	Cannot provide information on future or unpredictable events;
Can offer data when respondents are unable and/or unwilling to offer information;	Cannot study opinions or attitudes directly;
They are conducted in a natural setting, and studies events as they evolve;	Is vulnerable to observers' bias and is dependent on their selective perception and memory;
Offers first hand information without relying on the reports of others;	Offers no control measures to balance the bias, attitudes and opinions of the observer;
Allows collection of a wide range of information, even info thought to be irrelevant at the time of the study;	It is inadequate when studying sensitive issues;
It is relatively inexpensive.	It is laborious and time consuming.

Table 3-5: Strengths and Weaknesses of Observations

(Sarantakos, 2005, p.234).

There are two types of observations that can be employed – structured and unstructured. Structured observations employ a prescribed and strictly ordered and organised

procedure with a set of well defined categories. Unstructured observations are loosely organised and the method of observation is left up to the observer (Sarantakos, 2005). Unstructured observations were chosen as they are flexible, studies both large and small groups, are informal and unobtrusive, employ low levels of standardisation and are qualitative in their design.

Phase two of the study consisted of observations and workshop. To facilitate this, a letter was sent to every physical education teacher in Waterford City (see Appendix E) inviting them to attend a workshop that was taking place in December 2009. A follow up phone call was then made to each teacher. Teachers who wished to attend were asked if the researcher could carry out an observation of their PE class with students with disabilities. Once the time, date and location of the observations were organised the process of recording the data to be observed was next to be designed.

The recording of data is something that must be considered early on in the data collection design. Three issues need to be addressed: what will be recorded, when and how. In qualitative research, note taking is the most common method used. Notes can be taken during or directly after the event has occurred. Tape or video recording can also be used (Sarantakos, 2005). To facilitate the note taking an observation sheet was designed which ensured that similar items were attended to during the observations (see Appendix F). The observation sheet was adapted from 'Inclusion Observation Checklist' (Thompson et.al., 1993) and 'Engagement Checklist' (Jenson, 1994) adapted by the Circle of Inclusion Project (2002) in the University of Kansas.

A suitable time was arranged and the researcher visited the schools and observed the physical education class. This allowed the researcher to view the students with disabilities in a PE class as well as observing and evaluating the skills of the PE teacher in relation to dealing with these student(s). The sole purpose of the observations was to determine the content of the workshop, ensuring it met the needs of the teachers and the students with disabilities they were currently teaching. The observations and discussion revealed that the teachers:

- Lacked awareness and understanding about disability – i.e. terminology to be used and knowledge of effective and appropriate communication methods;
- Had limited knowledge on specific disabilities, namely Autism and Spina Bifida;
- Had limited knowledge and information on the possible effects of exercise for specific disabilities;
- Lacked ideas on types of games and activities that can be played with people with disabilities – both physical and intellectual;
- Lacked the knowledge to make appropriate adaptations, changes and modifications to some activities, sports and games played during physical education;
- Lacked knowledge on the appropriate placement of students with disabilities - teachers were not aware of the inclusion continuum or least restrictive environment;
- Lacked confidence in their own ability, needed affirmation that some things they were doing were right.

The next phase of the research was the workshop which is explained and outlined in the next section.

3.8.4 Workshop

The researcher used the list of information above to develop and design the layout and content of the workshop. The researcher strongly believed that the needs and views of the PE teachers must be the deciding factors on the content of the workshop, therefore making it as applied and applicable as possible.

The one day workshop was held in Waterford Institute of Technology on Dec 4th 2009. The workshop began at 9.30am and ran till 3.45pm. The schedule for the day was as follows:

Workshop Timetable	
9.30am -9.45am	Meet and greet
9.45am-10.45am	Disability Awareness and Communication
Break	
11.00am-1.00pm	Strategies for adapting physical education, planning and assessment
Lunch	
1.45pm-3.30pm	Adapted games and activities
3.30pm- 3.45pm	Debrief and close.

The group moved to the classroom where the timetable for the day was outlined once the meet and greet was concluded. Each attendee received an information pack (copy attached). The pack was divided into three sections. Section one consisted of examples of games and activities with adaptations included. Section two consisted of the theory notes which would be attended to throughout the day – disability awareness, communication, strategies for adapting. Lastly, section three of the pack included information on Autism and Spina Bifida. This information was included as a direct result of requests from the physical education teachers who felt their knowledge on these disabilities was limited and needed improving. As most of the workshop participants had limited knowledge and training on people with disabilities the morning began with a disability awareness seminar. In this section the nature of disability and what it meant to have a disability was examined.

The attendees were set awareness activities to help them understand what it might be like to experience having a disability. They wore blindfolds to simulate visual impairment, ear plugs for hearing impairment, used a wheelchair and crutches for physical impairment and the group also performed activities to help understand the nature of intellectual disabilities. The group moved on to discussing best practice for communicating and interacting with people with various disabilities once a greater understanding of the disabilities was achieved. The next section of the workshop looked at the physical education environment and strategies for adapting physical education classes. A brief discussion was held on assessment and placement of student with disabilities in mainstream classes. As a result of this discussion, attention was paid to the inclusion continuum and the least restrictive environment.

After lunch the group gathered in the Dance Studio of the Tourism and Leisure Building in Waterford Institute of Technology. Here the researcher brought the group through a series of games and activities applicable to the physical education syllabus. Discussions were held on how the strategies for adapting physical education classes could be applied and what adaptations can be made for various disabilities. Some of the activities included a Local Muscular Endurance circuit, an activity circuit that incorporated a variety of skills – throwing, catching, locomotor, and games such as soccer, basketball and volleyball. Once the activities were finished the group returned to the classroom for debrief and conclusion of the workshop. This workshop concluded the research collection stage, and from here all data was collated and inputted for analysis. A follow up visit was carried out with each physical education teacher to see information received being implemented and to offer further support to the teachers. The next section will discuss the methods that were used to analyse this data.

3.9 Methods of Analysis

As a mixed methodological approach was used, the data received was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. To facilitate the analysis of this data various statistical packages were used to ensure that an accurate and reliable analysis was carried out. SPSS 15© for Windows was used to facilitate the analysis of the quantitative data from both the physical education teacher and student with disability questionnaires. SPSS was chosen as it is believed to be the most comprehensive statistical programme available with a wide variety of statistical analyses and options for social scientists (Ntoumanis, 2001). Clark (2009) states that SPSS is very user friendly, popular among researchers and allows for the easy transportation of data from other programmes. However, SPSS does have some disadvantages; the default graphics are poor and not

easily altered to improve them. It is very expensive and its licence is not very user friendly. Lastly the menu offerings are typically the most basic and sometimes lead to inappropriate analysis (Clark, 2009). Every statistical package will have its advantages and disadvantages and despite its disadvantages SPSS is considered the preferred choice for Sport and Exercise Sciences (Ntoumanis, 2001). All interviews were transcribed and transferred into NVivo 7 for analysis of the qualitative information. NVivo was used as it is user friendly, it allows for the importation of documents directly from a word processing package and once imported the documents can then be easily coded. Coding stripes can be made visible which allows the researcher to see at a glance which codes have been used and where (Welsh, 2002). Some researchers have expressed concerns over using software such as NVivo as they believe the software may guide the research or researcher in a particular direction (Seidel, 1991). The primary reason NVivo was used in this study was a result of it being the only software package of its type available to the researcher. Each interview transcript (See Appendix G) was read several times and general themes were coded and categorised.

3.10 Ethical Issues and Clearance

Ethics can be defined as:

“a set of standards by which a particular group or community decides to regulate its behaviour – to distinguish what is legitimate or acceptable in pursuit of their aims from what is not”

(Flew, 1979, p.112).

This research study complied with the “Core Values and Ethical Guidelines”⁹ which are set out by the National Disability Authority (NDA, 2004a).

⁹ The Core Values and Ethical Guidelines document refers to people with disabilities of all ages including children or adolescents of a school going age.

NDA outline these guidelines to ensure ethically sound research is carried out on individuals of all ages with disabilities. These guidelines are divided into five sections and offer the following advice to researchers:

1. Well being and avoidance of harm

- Well being must be the centre of the research process;
- Every effort must be made to anticipate any possible harm which might result for participants;
- established rights and legitimate entitlements must not be denied by the research;
- All legal responsibilities must be fulfilled.

2. Collaboration

- Participation in research by the people who are directly affected must be promoted.

3. Consent

- Voluntary and informed consent must be obtained from all participants.

4. Respect

- The dignity of the contributor must be respected throughout the research process;
- Confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of the participant must be guaranteed at all stages.

5. Equality and Diversity

- Equality and diversity among people must be included.

(NDA, 2004a)

This research project received ethical approval from the Waterford Institute of Technology's Research Ethics Committee. The researcher was required to complete a detailed application and research proposal for ethical approval. The application requested information on the research methods to be used, location of study as well as information on the research sample. As the sample in this study involved students with disabilities, it was important that all procedures and data collection methods were ethically sound. The researcher adhered to ethical standards set out by Sarantakos (2005) as well as the ethical guidelines mentioned above from the National Disability Authority. Sarantakos (2005) suggests that in order for research to be ethical, the researcher should provide adequate information on the type of questions being asked, the degree of sensitivity and the consequences of the questions. He/she should provide concern for the welfare of the respondents by paying particular attention to safety, personal embarrassment and physical and mental health. He/she should also provide informed consent. In this study, a letter was sent home to all students eligible to participate in the study. Consent forms were attached to this letter and consent was sought from both parents/guardians and the student with the disability (see Appendix D). Lastly the researcher has a responsibility to recognise the responder's right to privacy, anonymity and that all information about them remain confidential (Sarantakos, 2005).

The research application was sent to the ethics committee of Waterford Institute of Technology to be reviewed and the researcher was then invited to attend a research ethics committee meeting. The committee consisted of eight individuals with varying research backgrounds, interests and expertise. The researcher was given the opportunity to clarify and answer any questions the committee had from an ethical viewpoint.

The ethics committee made minor recommendations to the ethical process and once these were amended ethical approval was granted.

3.11 Limitations to the study

There are numerous limitations that may have influenced the outcome of this study.

They include:

- Questionnaires are self-report and it is difficult to know how honest the students with disabilities were when they completed them. If the study was to be repeated, interviews with the students would add more reliability and opportunity to expand on the information gathered.
- Only four physical education teachers agreed to be interviewed. This was a limitation as the views of teachers from only four schools were reviewed. The expansion of the study to another city or cities would overcome this limitation.
- The number of students with disabilities attending mainstream schools was considerably lower than what the researcher had anticipated and that was statistically expected. This was not something the researcher could control. The researcher would recommend future studies of all school going aged students with disabilities to determine where they are going to school and why they are not attending mainstream schools.
- The workshop was not Department of Education approved, therefore as a result of the recession; some teachers were not released from work to attend, as the school could not afford cover. It may be a better option in the future to run workshops at the weekend or possibly run it twice – during the week and again at the weekend to facilitate as many people as possible.

- The researcher felt that during the observations of the PE classes there was a possibility that the teachers taught and prepared the classes differently due to the observer's presence. In the future it may be more appropriate to ask the teachers for a number of class times that could be observed. The researcher could pick one at random, therefore not giving the teachers any advanced warning of the observations occurring. The presence of another observer could aid in the reliability and comparison of data observed and collected.
- The research identified that the opinions of able bodied students within the physical education class environment was a factor in the inclusion and acceptance of students with disabilities. The scope of this research did not explore this factor and further research would have to be carried out to determine their impact on students with disabilities.
- The research did not look at the physical activity levels of students with disabilities outside the school environment. Information on participation levels and barriers faced at primary school level would have been beneficial.

3.12 Validity

Bryman (2004) and Neuman (2006) argue that research whether qualitative or quantitative in nature needs to address the issues of validity and reliability. This study consisted of four different methodological tools. The use of such a range of methodologies, as discussed previously, aids triangulation. Triangulation helps to enrich the knowledge received and enhances test validity. It also allows the researcher to increase the depth and understanding of the study (Olsen, 2004), increase accuracy, credibility (Flick, 2006) and validity (Denzin, 1978) as well as allowing comparisons

with other research which can overcome deficiencies of a single method approach (Flick, 2006). Triangulation also assumes that the use of various sources of information will help both to confirm and improve the clarity of the research findings (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). A mixed method approach offers greater diversity and collaboration between researchers, more comprehensive findings, increased confidence in results, increased validity, more insightful understanding of the underlying phenomenon and promotion of more creative ways of collecting data (Johnson & Christensen, 2010).

Validity is a fundamental part of qualitative research (Steinke, 2000). The terms validity, credibility, trustworthiness and authenticity are used interchangeably by various researchers (Sarantakos, 2005). To guarantee validity, researchers apply a number of measures which will vary according to what is being measured. They include cumulative validation, communicative validation, argumentative validation and ecological validation. Cumulative validation¹⁰ can be applied to this study, as the findings in phase one are supported and compared to findings from similar studies. The researcher has attempted to honestly reflect the responses and data obtained, this is parallel to Kincheloe & McLaren's (1998) principle that the term trustworthiness may be more appropriate for use with qualitative research.

¹⁰ Cumulative validation - A study can be validated if its findings are supported by other studies. The researcher can compare the various findings and make a judgement about the validity of the studies (Sarantakos, 2005, p.86).

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter sought to outline in detail the research methods utilised to carry out this study. Once the research questions were established the researcher set about outlining the methods used to answer these questions. The research took place in two phases and the details of each phase were clearly outlined. The researcher described the research methods used in conducting this research and put forward her justifications for using the discussed research tools. Due to the nature of the individuals included in this study ethical clearance and guidelines were an important area to be included and discussed. Finally the researcher outlined the methods used for analyses of the data. The next chapter will present, analyse and discuss the research findings.

Chapter 4

Presentation and Discussion of Results

4 Presentation and Discussion of Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings from the data obtained and analysed from the research, this includes questionnaires from both students with disabilities and physical education teachers, the in-depth interviews with physical education teachers and feedback from the workshop which took place. A combination of qualitative and quantitative data was acquired during the research and as a result relevant issues and themes emerged. This chapter is presented in eight sections with the aim to answer the research questions outlined previously and stated below for the readers convenience.

- 1) Do physical education teachers have sufficient training and qualifications to aid inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream physical education classes in secondary schools in Waterford City?
- 2) What are the Physical education teacher's experiences and attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities?
- 3) What barriers are encountered during physical education for teachers and students with disabilities?
- 4) What is the current status of IEP's for students with disabilities and the role of the physical education teacher on the writing and development of these plans?
- 5) What are the realities for physical education teachers in having special needs assistants present in their physical education classes?
- 6) What is the physical education experience of students with disabilities in mainstream secondary schools in Waterford City?

The eight sections are as follows:

- 1) **Teacher Profile** – this section outlines and gives a background to the physical education teachers who are teaching in Waterford City. This section will include information on the teacher’s age, gender breakdown, the number of years and experience teaching physical education, where they received their physical education qualifications and the status of physical education in their school.

- 2) **Student Profile** – this section outlines and gives a background to the students with disabilities who are attending mainstream secondary schools in Waterford City. It provides information on the number of students with disabilities attending these schools as well as the nature and type of disability these students have.

- 3) **Teacher Training and Qualification** – this section outlines and gives information on the training and level of qualifications that the physical education teachers in Waterford City have received. The information is broken down into three sections looking at training and qualifications at initial teaching training stage, since qualifying as a physical education teacher and what level and type of training the physical education teachers feel would best suit them for future teaching and inclusion.

- 4) **Teachers Experiences and Attitudes** – this section outlines and gives information on the level of experience and attitudes of the physical education teachers who teach students with disabilities in Waterford City. Factors such as teacher’s age, gender, qualifications and level of experience have been analysed to check there effect on the teachers attitude towards a student with a disability.

This section will also contain qualitative data on how the physical education teachers feel about having students with disabilities in their classes and how it affects them, and other students.

- 5) **Barriers to Teaching Physical Education** – this section outlines and gives information on the major barriers that physical education teacher's face while teaching students with disabilities, such as access to facilities, sports played, attitudes of other students, time allocation and teacher workload.
- 6) **Individual Education Plans** – this section outlines and gives information on the delivery and involvement of the physical education teacher in the design and development of an individual education plan for physical education for a student with a disability.
- 7) **Special Needs Assistants** – this section outlines and give information on the involvement and role of the special needs assistant in the physical education class and the realities this presents for the physical education teacher.
- 8) **Students Experiences** – this section outlines and gives information on the experiences of students with disabilities in mainstream physical education. This section looks at the intrinsic barriers, attitudes, SNA's and participation levels of students with disabilities in physical education.

All quotations from physical education teacher interviews will be identifiable to the reader as they are indented for clarity purposes. The individual physical education teachers will be identified by an interview number, for example, *PET#1* – this represents the comments or views from the interview with physical education teacher number one or by questionnaire number, for example, *PETQ#3* – this represents comments or views from the questionnaire from physical education teacher number three. Any comments from the open-ended questions in both the physical education teachers and students with disabilities questionnaire will be accredited to the appropriate source where possible.

4.2 Teacher Profile

The gender profile of the physical education teachers showed that more female than male teachers taught physical education in Waterford City post-primary schools (58% female and 42% male). These results show similar gender profiling to teachers in the ASTI Teacher Survey (2002). The gender of the teachers also corresponded to the gender of the pupils attending the school where the teachers worked. All single sexed female schools had one or more female physical education teacher, the single-sexed boys' schools only had male teachers and the coeducational where there was more than one teacher had both male and female physical education teachers. The age profile of the physical education teachers shows that 55% of the teachers were between 40 and 59 years of age (33% - 40-49 age category; 25% - 50-59 age category). 33% of physical education teachers were in the 30-39 age category, no respondents fell into the 60+ age category and only 9% ($n=1$) was between the ages of 20-29 years. This age profile would indicate that very few physical education teachers in Waterford City are recent graduates and therefore it is probable to surmise that they have not received updated

training on teaching or including students with disabilities in their initial teacher training.

The study revealed that at least one qualified physical education teacher was employed in each school, with only two schools employing the services of someone who was not qualified in physical education. One physical education teacher explained that

‘we have a part time person who is not a qualified PE teacher but has qualifications in different coaching courses and she assists us in some PE areas. She would not take a PE class on her own. She might be the person, especially if there is a person who has difficulties in the class, she would be assigned to the PE class, to assist with that class or person’ (PET#2).

An interesting point to note is that physical education teachers in Waterford City are in contrast to the MacDonncha (2002) study. This study showed that only 47% of teachers who were allocated hours to teach physical education were actually qualified to do so.

The study also revealed that 73% ($n=9$) of the physical education teachers received their physical education qualification in Ireland; two were educated in Britain and one in the United States. The physical education teachers in Waterford City have been teaching physical education on average for 19 years. This would correspond with the age profile of the teachers and between them they are an experienced group. It may be probable to surmise therefore that physical education teachers in Waterford City would not received adequate amounts of training and exposure to students with disabilities that physical during initial teacher training. These teachers may also have become less responsive to change and closed to new ideas and training methods as a result. An example of this

was explained by one teacher who spoke about the introduction of the new Junior Cycle Programme and the senior physical education teacher's attitude towards change –

'The other PE teacher is near retirement and just doesn't want to do it, why put in all this work only to be leaving in a few years (PET#1).

4.3 Student Profile

This section describes students with disabilities who are attending mainstream schools in Waterford City. Attempts were also made to categories and group the students with disabilities according to their disability. This proved quite difficult as conflicting information was received from physical education teachers and students with disabilities and no general figures are available from the CSO or Department of Education and Science to make comparisons. The prevalence of students with disabilities and the types of disabilities they had will now be discussed.

4.3.1 Prevalence of Students with Disabilities

Education is one of the areas that show lower participation levels and where significant inequalities exist between student with disabilities and others (Gannon & Nolan, 2005). Information on the number of children with disabilities as well as the type of disability they have is limited. Both the Central Statistics Office and the Department of Education and Science do not have updated or specific figures or information on children with disabilities who attend mainstream schools (NDA, 2008).

Waterford City has a population of 45,748 and of these 10.4% or 4,752 have a disability (CSO, 2006). The Census in 2006 also showed that 3,647 children are between the ages of 13 and 18 years and of those 3,647 only 4% or 145 children (76 male and 69 female) are reported as having a disability (CSO, 2006). This study showed that only 1% of students attending mainstream secondary schools in Waterford were registered as having a disability. One possible explanation for this might be that children with disabilities are still attending special schools; however it might be more realistic to suspect that a large majority of the children in Waterford City with a disability have left school early.

Findings from the 2002 Census revealed that 46% of students with disabilities left school after receiving their primary education, this figure decreased to 40% in the Census of 2006. The AHEAD survey (2003) stated that although a large number of students with disabilities enrolled in the Junior Cycle programme only 27% went on to Leaving Cert level and not all of these remained to receive a Leaving Cert education. As seen in Table 4-1 below only 18% of persons with disabilities completed their secondary education (Census, 2006). Gannon & Nolan (2005) concluded that people with disabilities leave school earlier and with fewer qualifications and of the people surveyed only 44% left school with a Leaving Certification.

Persons	Total whose full time education has ceased	Highest Level of Education Completed		
		Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary
	Number	Number	Number	Number
		%	%	%
Total Persons	2,850,333	514,085	573,411	803,498
		18%	20%	28%
	Number	Number	Number	Number
		%	%	%
Total Persons with a disability	329,255	131,781	64,604	60,648
		40%	20%	18%

Table 4-1 Persons aged 15 years and over classified by disability and highest level of education completed. (Extracted from CSO, 2006, Table 21)¹¹

4.3.2 Type of Disability

The Census 2002 showed that 60% of people with a disability have multiple disabilities. Despite this figure European statistics show that the number of people in Ireland with a disability is 5.4% lower than the European average (Eurostat, 2004). In this study the types of disabilities were broken down into four categories. Definitions of these categories were given to the teachers to aid clarification during completion of the questionnaire. They included sensory impairment, intellectual disability, physical disability and emotional or behavioural disabilities. As mentioned previously exact figures for each category couldn't be calculated but it is possible to attempt to rank the disabilities (see Table 4-2 below). It is clear from the physical education teacher's questionnaire that emotional/behavioural disabilities is the most prevalent type of

¹¹ CSO (2006) – it is not specified whether the persons with disabilities attended mainstream or special schools.

disability that they have to cope with in their physical education classes. These results show similar findings to MacDonnacha's (2002) study (see

Table 2-2) where 51% of students were categories as having a learning/intellectual disability, 24% physical disability, 15% sensory disability and 10% with multi-disabilities.

Rank	Disability
1	Emotional/Behavioural Disabilities
2	Intellectual Disabilities
3	Physical Disabilities
4	Sensory Disabilities

Table 4-2 Prevalence of Disability Category

4.4 Teacher Training and Qualifications

Research Question:

- 1) Do physical education teachers have sufficient training and qualifications to aid inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream physical education classes in secondary schools in Waterford City?

This section will aim to answer research question number one and will look at physical education teachers' training and qualifications in two areas. They are: initial teacher training and qualifications and training received since qualifying as a physical education teacher. This section will also take a look at and discuss what training and qualifications

teachers felt would best aid them in the teaching and inclusion of students with disabilities in the future.

4.4.1 Initial Teacher Training

With changing norms in Irish society more and more children with disabilities are enrolling in mainstream schools. As a result physical education teachers will need to be sufficiently prepared and educated to meet those needs (Vickerman, 2007). Assessment of initial teacher training and academic preparation of physical education teachers indicated that six participants (50%) had not received any training or qualifications in the area of adapted physical activity or adapted physical education during their primary physical education degree. It is worth noting that the teachers who had received some adapted physical activity or adapted physical education training, received their teacher training abroad. Additionally only one physical education teacher had received any post-graduate education in the area of special needs education. One teacher stated

‘we got no training at any stage of college and we are expected to integrate students with disabilities into PE programmes, this can be very difficult’ (PETQ#10).

Another teacher pointed out that modules on adapted physical education were

‘just not available’ (PET#4)

during her initial teacher training. These findings have been mirrored in previous research (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006; Morley et. al., 2005) who highlighted the general lack of initial teacher training in the area of inclusion and adapted physical education in pre-service physical education teachers. Morley et. al., (2005) go on to state that this lack of training is not uncommon in most colleges and universities. It is fair to conclude that physical education teachers from this study may not have the awareness or

commitment to inclusion as they have not received or been given the skills or knowledge necessary to teach a student with a disability. It is worth noting at this point that initial teacher training for pre-service physical education teachers has undergone minor changes in Ireland in the past five years, with new and revised physical education teachers courses coming on stream. In Waterford City none of the current physical education teachers are recent graduates therefore had not received the updated and revised special needs training.

Although 50% of physical education teachers did not receive any initial teacher training in the area of adapted physical education, 67% did have some interaction with students with disabilities during their initial teacher training, one teacher outlined that she had

‘voluntary weekly experience teaching PE and there was some clients with disabilities, this was my only real experience while in college’ (PETQ#9)

another teacher stated

‘I only got some interaction during work experience, I received no training in college’ (PETQ#4),

a third teacher said that her experience ‘*was voluntary*’. She went on to explain that the experience

‘involved going out and assisting one of our lecturers who was doing a thesis on working with people with disabilities and that was back in 1985 which was a long time ago. It was by chance that I got to volunteer, we were in the year group that was asked were we interested so we just went along’ (PET#2).

This teacher also explained that the interaction she experienced gave her

‘an insight [into disability] but nothing that would help me to go on and teach adapted physical education or physical activity’ (PET#2).

This study revealed that 83% of physical education teachers had taught a student with a disability at some stage either in the school they currently teach in or since qualifying as a physical education teacher and with every school in the study stating that they had at least one student with a disability in attendance. It is fair to surmise that the majority of new or previously qualified physical education graduates will be faced with teaching a student with a disability at some stage in their career and therefore will need specific training to meet the needs of these students.

Finally, with the lack of initial teacher training received, physical education teachers were asked to rate their current level of ability to teach students with disabilities, results revealed that it was below average (MEAN = 4.33). Most teachers did not feel comfortably trained to teach students with disabilities and one teacher stated that

‘it’s been 13 years since I was trained and I have forgotten it all’ (PETQ#12).

One reason for this maybe the lack of in-service provided with teachers stating that *as far as they were aware* no in-service in the area of adapted physical education have been offered to them since they started teaching. One point to note is that there was no significant difference between the age of the physical education teacher and their level of perceived training efficiency (Kruskal Wallis Test, $\chi^2=3.593$; $df=3$; $P=0.309$). Based on the results of this study and despite the best efforts of the physical education teachers it is difficult to imagine that quality, successful, inclusive physical education programmes are being implemented in second-level schools in Waterford City when

teachers have received inadequate teacher training at undergraduate level to be able to deal, cope and successfully include students with disabilities in their classes. This research showed that despite this lack of training, teachers were still expected to teach students with disabilities without a clear grounding and understanding on how best to teach and include them. One physical education teacher admitted that she felt the adaptations she was trying to make to include the disabled student was just

‘tokenism, as I’m not equipped with the knowledge I need’ (PET#2).

Although changes have now been made to current PETE which will improve teacher’s ability to include students with disabilities the next focus and emphasis for training providers must be on in-service or continuing professional development training for physical education teachers already teaching.

4.4.2 Qualification and Training since Qualifying as a PE Teacher

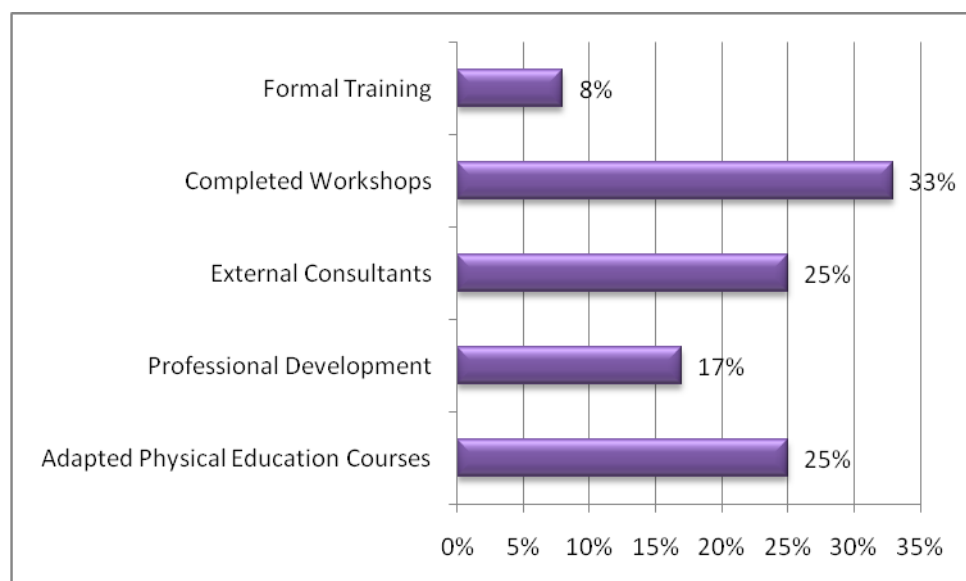


Figure 4.1 Qualification and Training received since Qualifying

Figure 4.1 above shows that since qualifying as a physical education teacher only 25% of teachers have taken any courses in adapted physical education¹². 17% of physical education teachers have attended or received professional development in the area of special needs or adapted physical education, 33% of physical education teachers had completed workshops and 8% ($n=1$) of physical education teachers had completed any formal training¹³ in special education since qualifying as a physical education teacher. One teacher explained that formal training

‘was high on the priority list of what PE teachers wanted from in service’.

She went on to say that

‘it was kind of unanimous – they want, need for it and it was felt that no one has had formal training. It would be nice to be able to have some sort of formal structure in that area’ (PET#2).

The lack of in-service training in the area of physical education and adapted physical education was highlighted by teachers as an area of neglect. One physical education teacher stated that she had

‘attended all the PE in-services that have been on and there has always been a 5-10 minute little bit of how we would adapt our classes but that’s it’ (PET#2).

When asked if any training, workshops, continuing professional development courses had been offered to physical education teachers in their school, a resounding

‘no, none, nothing’

¹² Workshops, professional development and adapted physical education courses were considered once off courses or professional development received as part of in-service for example.

¹³ For the purpose of this study formal training was considered receiving any of the following: Degree, Masters, HDip or Postgraduate qualifications or training in the area of special needs education or adapted physical education.

was the response from the physical education teachers. One teacher went on to say that

‘There is no push in this country what so ever to encourage anyone to take extra courses. I even see it in the staff here, they have their degree and that all they want. They don’t want to do any more and therefore their teaching gets stale!’(PET#1).

When asked if in-service was encouraged one teacher explained

‘No, at the end of the day the principal has to get a sub in for me if I go to in service, which is more hassle than anything else. No one has ever come to me saying I want you to go on this course or that course. It’s just up to myself’ (PET#1).

McNiff (1993) stated that a teacher’s career is a continual process of transformation therefore continuing professional development and in-service opportunities should not only be encouraged but be made compulsory in order for teachers to remain updated with current trends and changes in the education processes for both disabled and non-disabled students.

4.4.3 Future Training

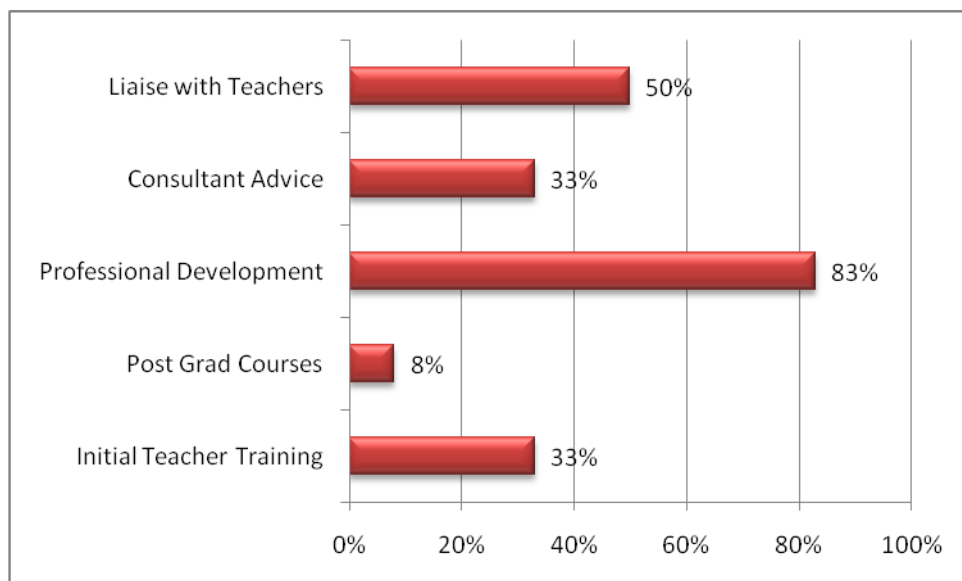


Figure 4.2 Future Training and Development Options for PE Teachers

Figure 4.2 illustrates that 83% of physical education teachers in Waterford City would prefer more availability of continuing professional development and in-service training in order to up-skill in the area of adapted physical education, 50% of teachers would like to be able to liaise with other physical education teachers and discuss ideas and strategies that worked for them and 33% of physical education teachers felt that including more adapted physical education in their initial teacher training would best suit their needs. When teachers were asked if they would be willing or would like to do some formal training in special education, one teacher put further training in special educational needs in context by stating that she would be

‘interested in doing some more certainly but again you have to mitigate against the fact that out of... I teach possibly 300 of the 850 students in the school and of those two have special education needs. So you are talking about getting special education to help with two students, which would be valuable but I would have to put it in context’ (PET#4).

This is an important point and one that needs to be highlighted. One teacher put training courses in perspective for himself saying that he feels that *‘time’* should be allocated for training. He goes on to say that he has

‘a family and can’t just go on these courses outside of work time’ (PET#1)

therefore he would have to weigh up the value of any courses that he does go on and how they would contribute to his work.

As mentioned above 50% of physical education teachers would like to be able to liaise with other physical education teachers and discuss ideas and strategies that worked for them when integrating and including students with disabilities. In spite of this high number it was highlighted at the Workshop that most physical education teachers,

despite being teaching in Waterford City for a number of years, had not met each other before that day. It would be recommended that a local forum or community of practice be set up by teachers in order to share their ideas and have a point of reference in order to gain the help, knowledge and information they may need (Wenger, 2006). This may be done formally or informally but as stated by Thorburn (2001) continuing professional development has a better chance of success if teachers feel empowered and if it is relevant to their needs (Amour & Yelling, 2005).

4.5 Teacher Experiences and Attitudes

Research question:

- 2) What are the Physical education teacher's experiences and attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities?

This section will look at the physical education teachers experience of working with students with disabilities and how this and other factors such as their age, gender and number of years teaching affected their attitudes and opinions towards teaching students with disabilities and their inclusion in physical education.

Integration verses Segregation

Teachers with more experience and exposure to students with disabilities did possess a more favourable attitude towards integrated physical education classes (Spearman $r = 0.716$, $P=0.009$). During the interviews physical education teachers were asked to comment on why they felt an integrated physical education class was the most

appropriate environment for students with disabilities. One teacher explained how they felt about a segregated education. He said –

‘I think it would be detrimental..... I think it could be detrimental because you are isolating them. They have to integrate into society anyway and I think if they can integrate the pupil working with them, they have a better understanding and give themselves a better understanding of what to do and how they can do it.... it develops a strong bond between the pupils without disabilities and the students who might have a disability in terms of them helping’ (PET #3).

One physical education teacher felt a combination of both integration and segregation would be best for students with disabilities. She said

‘I think it depends maybe. I think there should be a bit of both. There are probably some things that they may not be able to do and need more time in a segregated environment to work on them. I don’t think that is accommodation. In an hour and 10 minutes you have one kid that needs extra attention and then the teacher has 20 other kids, it is very difficult. I think they would need to have more time allocated, now with special needs, the kids that we have, don’t have special needs assistants - they are mainly with kids who have emotional and behavioural problems. So there would not be anyone to help while teaching PE (PET#1).

Contrary to the opinions of the physical education teachers above one teacher in particular felt strongly against integration and gave the following as her reason. She said

‘Well I have huge doubts about this area because I have worked it for quite some years now and I have found that instead of integrating them into a physical education programme it literally almost highlights their disability to have them in with a group of able-bodied students. For instance Student X herself feel that – she does a community-based programme on a Friday night with other disabled students and she thrives at that and she loves it and is one of the best there, where as in a PE class of 29 or 30, where 29 of them are well able- her disability stands out like a sore thumb’ (PET#4).

There are mixed feeling when it comes to the inclusion and integration of a student with a disability in mainstream physical education classes. Successful inclusion practices depend on restructured schools that allows for flexible learning environments, with flexible curricula and instruction (Guess and Thompson, 1989). Inclusion is not doing away with or cutting back on special education services, nor is it having all children

learn the same thing, at the same time or in the same way (Wigle & Wilcox, 1996). The lack of information on this fact was highlighted during the Workshop where physical education teachers felt all students with disabilities had to be placed in the mainstream class regardless of the level of their disability and not in the least restrictive environment as recommended by research. Teachers were also unaware of the Inclusion Continuum (Winnick, 2005) and the options that could be made available to students with disabilities. The general feeling from teachers was it was *all or nothing*.

Gender

This research shows that there was a significant difference between male and female attitudes towards inclusion, with female physical education teachers feeling that students with physical disabilities are more likely to disrupt the harmony of the physical education class (Mean=2.86; P=0.048; z= -2.036; Man U=5.500). This finding is unusual as research has hypothesised that females would have a more favourable attitude towards students with disabilities. This is because women would be considered to be more nurturing and caring than their male counterparts (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006b). Research by Block & Rizzo (1995) revealed that teachers were less favourable toward students with severe disabilities compared to those with behavioural or emotional disabilities. This research, however, showed different results where one male physical education teacher felt that it was students with behavioural problems are the ones that disrupt the harmony of his class. He said explained that

‘Without a doubt, I had a lad yesterday who has behavioural problems and he disrupted the class with sexual comments. These students have special needs assistants but in this environment the special needs assistants don’t really know what to do so they just stand and watch most of the time. The attention span of the students just is not there’ (PET#1).

Training

The younger physical education teachers had the least amount of experience teaching students with disabilities. These teachers felt they needed more training and qualification when it comes to teaching students with emotional and behavioural disabilities, as a result. They felt they did not need as much training for students with other kinds of disabilities (Spearman $r = -0.673$, $P=0.023$). One teacher explained that he would love more training

‘without a doubt. The training needs to be brought to our attention though. Bring it to the forefront and make it so we get something out of it and that we need to go on the training courses. If I was offered courses then I would go on them but I have not really seen anything on offer and anything I did see I would have to travel a long distance to get to them’ (PET#1).

4.6 Barriers to Teaching Physical Education

Research Question:

- 3) What barriers are encountered during physical education for teachers and students with disabilities?

This section looks at the barriers faced by both the student with the disability and the physical education teacher during physical education class. The barriers are broken down into access to facilities, sports and attitudes of non-disabled students and time allocation for physical education.

4.6.1 Access to Facilities

In the school environment students with disabilities are faced with many environmental or access barriers especially if the building has not been constructed with their mobility needs in mind (Jha, 2002a). In an Irish context, most school buildings are old and aging, and it can be argued that environmental and access barriers exist as a result.

School	Indoor Facilities	Outdoor Facilities
1 - Boys School	Sports Hall, Gym, Squash Courts	3 Playing Pitches, 2 Tennis Courts, 2 Basketball Courts
2 - Boys School	Sports Hall, Gym	Playing Pitches
3 - Girls School	Sports Hall, Gym	Playing Field
4 - Girls School	Sports Hall, Gym Area	Small outdoor playing area
5 - Girls School	Sports Hall, Gym, Indoor Hall	2 Hockey Pitches, 4 Tennis Courts, Large Green Area
6 - Mixed School	Sports Hall, Gym	Playing Pitch and Basketball Court

Table 4-3 Facilities Available in Secondary Schools in Waterford City

The sports and physical education facilities that were available in the secondary schools in Waterford City which were involved in the study are outlined in Table 4.3 above. As the table shows each school has both an indoor and outdoor facility available to them. The Junior Cycle Physical Education syllabus (Department of Education and Science, 2003) states that ideally, facilities for implementation for physical education should include some or all of the following:

- suitable indoor space – sports hall with changing and shower areas;
- suitable outdoor space - grass pitch and hard-court areas large enough to work efficiently and in safety;
- access to swimming pool;
- access to areas suitable for the teaching of adventure activities;
- access to classrooms, audio-visual and ICT equipment as required.

(Junior Cycle Physical Education Syllabus, DES 2003, p.9).

The NCCA (2003) outline aquatics as one of the seven syllabus areas to be covered in physical education. Further to that the Junior Cycle PE syllabus as shown above stipulates that ‘access to a swimming pool’ should be provided to meet the requirements of the syllabus. It is clear from the list of facilities that no school in Waterford City involved in this study had its own swimming pool. When physical education teachers were asked about access to swimming pools and the inclusion of swimming in their plan for physical education one teacher responded

‘We try to get them in swimming but it was really hard to get a slot in the pool that suits. The timetable is never set so we work from year to year and do our best’ (PET#1).

Due to constraints in the timetable and access to facilities the aquatics element of physical education seems to be neglected in the secondary schools in Waterford City. This is an area of concern as swimming or aquatics hold so many benefits for students with disabilities. Some of the benefits include improvement in physical fitness and conditioning, improved self-esteem and self-confidence, swimming provides opportunities to make new friends and the ability for someone with a disability to perform an activity alongside family members, as well as rehabilitation and

maintenance of function and flexibility (ASA, 2000). Due to the buoyancy properties of water, swimming can bring with it periods of independence for someone with physical disabilities and may be the only activity where wheelchair users may be free from the confines of their chair (Association of Swimming Therapy, 1992).

The Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) (2003) revealed that 99% of second-level schools had an enrolment of students with one or more disabilities. Despite this figure the study also revealed that only 17% of schools would be considered accessible. This study showed similar results where 66% of physical education teachers felt that their school was inaccessible for students with disabilities. The situation re accessibility is still problematic as Hemmingson and Borell (2002) point out that lack of ramps, elevators and automatic doors were the environmental barriers faced by students with disabilities in mainstream schools. Of the schools studied none had elevator or lift facilities in their sports halls or gyms, and physical education teachers pointed out that the

‘gym was upstairs and there is no wheelchair access’, ‘the balcony area is unsuitable as there are only stairs to access this area’, and ‘wheelchair users can not use the sports field’

leaving many sports facilities inaccessible to students with disabilities.

The WHO (2003) show that physical activity and physical education programmes in schools are decreasing at an alarming rate, leaving approximately two thirds of the world’s young people sufficiently inactive to benefit their present and future health. This research showed that number 17% of students with disabilities were not participating in any physical education during their school week. Although 83% of

students stated that they do participate in physical education, the researcher would question their real involvement and the extent of their involvement as many of the students outlined that they couldn't play various sports such as

“all contact sports”, football, basketball, tennis, anything really”

as well as outlining that there were facilities that they could not access. Students mentioned that they could not use

“all sports facilities”, “PE hall” or the “weights area”.

Supporting this conclusion is the fact that when students were asked to describe their level of participation in physical education only 45% revealed that they participate fully and with 3 out of 10 students with physical disabilities who participate almost never or not at all.

4.6.2 Sports

As mentioned previously two thirds of the world's young people sufficiently inactive to benefit their present and future health as a result of a decrease in provision of physical education in schools (WHO, 2003). The types of sports and activities participated in, in school plays its part in student's performance and adherence to physical education.

Rank	Sport/Activity chosen by Teachers for PE	Participation Levels of Students with Disabilities
1	Football	69%
2	Soccer	65%
3	Basketball	54%
4	Rugby	50%
5	Rounders	42%
6	Gymnastics	42%
7	Athletics	35%
8	Volleyball	19%
9	Hockey	19%
10	Badminton	15%

Table 4-4 Sports Participation in by Students with Disabilities during PE

MacDonncha (2002) suggest the effects of tradition, large class sizes, absence of facilities, competencies of the teacher and inadequate curricular time as the main reasons why team games dominate physical education.

Table 4-4 above illustrates that of the top ten sports or activities played by physical education teachers in Waterford City secondary schools only two of the ten are individual sports or activities. As a result one might question the quality of the physical education experience for students with disabilities if team games are dominant. One physical education teacher confirms the dominance of team games by stating that

‘We have a strong games aspect in our junior cycle’ (PET#2).

4.6.3 Attitudes of Non-disabled Students

The attitudes and perceptions of others are among the most important factors preventing individuals with disabilities from participating in many activity programmes including physical education (Heward, 2000). Research has shown that attitudes of school children towards their peers with significant disabilities plays a part in their intention to participate with them in physical education (Verderber, Rizzo, Sherill, 2003). Peer acceptance can be the vital difference between successful and unsuccessful inclusion. In this study the physical education teachers were asked whether they felt students with disabilities were accepted by their non-disabled peers. The physical education teachers put forward various reasons as to why students with disabilities were not accepted by their peers. They included:

(a) Age – the older the student the less accepting of a student with a disability. Budisch (2004) concurs with this stating that the more contact and interaction a child has with other children or adults with disabilities early on in life the more positive their attitudes towards disability becomes;

(b) Exposure to students with disabilities at primary level – teachers felt that if students had exposure to students with disabilities in primary schools that it becomes a norm therefore excepting them at secondary level also. One teacher felt that

‘in first year there is a shunning off of people [with disabilities] unless they had been with that girl all the way up from primary school’(PET#2);

(c) Co-operation with special needs assistants – if students without disabilities respected and co-operated with special needs assistants in physical education

classes then teachers felt non-disabled students were more accepting of students with disabilities;

(d) Disruption – teachers felt that students with disabilities were not accepted when

‘they are disruptive to the rest of the class’,

this tended to apply to students with behavioural or emotional problems. One teacher stated that

‘students with behavioural problems either disrupt the class totally which annoys the other students causing the class to be disjointed’;

(e) Avoidance – teachers felt that non-disabled students accepted students with disabilities on an intellectual level but not physically and therefore

‘avoided working with them’

or didn’t want to be

‘partners with them or include them’.

One teacher explained about one group in particular stating that the

‘group are very intolerant of being held back and they see it as a punishment if I put them working with her. It caused an awful lot of friction’ (PET#4).

A reason for this might be that some students will be vary of students with disabilities and others will immediately reject them because they feel these students will ruin their physical education experience or programme (Block 2003).

The views and opinions of non-disabled students also have an impact on the student with the disability and their motivation to participate in physical education. Two students questionaired did not like physical education because they were afraid that

‘people might say stuff’

about them and one student said

‘I’m very bad at sports and I am scared people will laugh at me’

Physical educators play an important role in fostering positive attitudes and aiding students accept their disabled peers (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006b). The researcher feels that with knowledge, understanding and experience for both the physical education teacher as well as the non-disabled student will aid the acceptance and inclusion of students with disabilities in physical education classes.

4.6.4 Time Allocation for Physical Education

	Darmody & Halbert (1996)	Fahey, Delaney & Gannon (2005)	Current Study
<i>Year</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Time</i>
1st	79 minutes	-	66 minutes
2nd	74 minutes	70 minutes	66 minutes
3rd	66 minutes	70 minutes	58 minutes
Transition Year	73 minutes	110 minutes	90 minutes
5th	57 minutes	52 minutes	50 minutes
6th	46 minutes	54 minutes	50 minutes

Table 4-5 Time Allocation for Physical Education

Fahey, Delaney & Gannon (2005) state that there are certain shortcomings when it comes to the provision and delivery of physical education in our post-primary schools. One area worth noting is the allocation of time to physical education. The current post-primary syllabus recommends that each student should receive a minimum of 120 minutes or 2 hours of physical education per week. Table 4-5 above shows the time allocation for physical education in secondary schools in Waterford City and how they compare to previous studies. It is clear from the table that the results of this study are in line with those from previous research indicating that there still is a major short fall in the provision of physical education in Irish secondary schools. When physical education teachers were asked if they felt the time allocated to physical education was adequate one teacher replied

‘No, not remotely. The PE department of Ireland recommend 2 hours a week. We do an hour and 16 mins, which is 2 classes a week. They come in here, it takes them 6-10 mins to get ready and 10-15 mins to have a shower afterwards, which only leaves 45 mins of PE a week which is nothing, it’s a joke’ (PET#1).

Another teacher explained the attitude of other towards physical education in his school and states that

‘when I’m out sick, they will take someone in that has no PE experience or qualifications and he/she will come in a throw them a ball and that’s the attitude all around. I think they see this as a handy job’ (PET#1).

Fisher (1995) stated that the status and time allocation for physical education in Ireland does not compare well to other European countries. Fisher (1995) explained that the main reason behind the lack of time allocation was due to the fact that the main focus for teachers was on subjects, which were allocated CAO points, reiterating the point which indicated that physical education in an Irish educational system is regarded as a

second class subject, which lacks in any educational value (CDDS, 2002). One physical education teacher reinforced this notion by saying that the attitude in her school can sometime be

‘sure it’s only PE, it’s only one hour a week, and it’s not the end of the world if they miss it’ (PET#4).

As well as actual time spent in physical education it is worth noting that physical education teachers are given no extra time to plan or prepare physical education classes which contain students with disabilities. When asked teachers stated that

‘we are given no help at all, no encouragement or help with planning or programming’ (PET#1).

Another teacher explained his situation in regards to planning. He said ‘*No*, [he is not given extra time]

but that’s because I only teach 15 hours a week and all my planning and preparation is done on my own time. I’m not given specific planning time within my timetable because I’m not full time, there is no specific time given extra based on who we are teaching’ (PET#3).

When asked if having a student with a disability in the physical education class increases the planning and preparation workload of the teacher, it was clear that it did –

‘It does, you prepare your classes and then you have to do more, I have these 3 kids with different disabilities that I have and I have to make sure that they are looked after’ (PET#3).

Another teacher explained

‘We get planning days to prepare for or normal classes but no extra time for anything different or out of the ordinary’ (PET#1).

4.7 Individual Education Plans

Research Question:

- 4) What is the current status of IEP's for students with disabilities and the role of the physical education teacher on the writing and development of these plans?

The Education for Persons with Special Needs (EPSEN) Act was published in Ireland in 2004. One of the key issues dealt with in this Act was the provision of legislative basis for the introduction of individual education plans (IEP's) for children with disabilities and special educational needs (SEN). The Act identifies SEN as

“a restriction in the capacity of a person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently without that condition.”

Under the Act it is recommended that children are educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have special educational needs. It is important to note that the Act stipulates that the child should be educated in the least restrictive environment - a place where the best interests of the child are met. In the research carried out only 23% of students stated that they had an Individual Education Plan. Of further concern is that of those 23%, 67% of them did not have physical education included in its content. Therefore no realistic or measureable physical activity goals were outlined, no strategies to help physical education teachers include the student with SEN and no information given to the physical education teacher to help them plan or prepare classes with SEN students in them. Of the physical education teachers that were surveyed and interviewed

only one of them stated that they had any involvement in the development of physical activity goals for a SEN's student, leaving 92% of physical education teachers having no input in IEP development. With that the physical education teacher outlined that the resource teacher

“gives you what they think a person should achieve in your PE class” (PET#2).

The teacher was not asked what she thought the student should achieve... She said

“I have to set their goals but I'm setting them from what level? From what I have read, the assessment, from what I have learnt from speaking to the resource teaching and what is written up in the file about her disability. So then it is up to me to set the goals, whether it is to attend all PE classes, whether it is to do a warm up, I'm starting from an empty void here so really I generalise”(PET#2).

The physical education teacher was asked if she is given any help in understanding and learning about the disabilities that her students had and she replied

‘The people who do out the IEP's would come to you and say her IEP is in there and her assessment is there and you would have to go in your own time and read it and if you have any problems then you can go to the learning support who will go to the parents and come back to you’ (PET#2).

The physical education teacher felt that it would be a lot easier to plan and develop PE classes where students with disabilities were involved if she was involved in the IEP process. She believes

‘There needs to be more of an overall structure of an IEP developed, rather than me in my little vacuum doing PE and someone else doing English and someone else doing Maths. Like really we need to look at when we come together and look at the IEP then, if we feel “she should be able for more than this”, we should do this tooing and froing together’ (PET#2).

It appears that a gap exists within the communication and discussion of goals that need to be achieved for students with disabilities. It seems to fall to the learning support

teacher or the resource teacher to develop and design the individual education plan for each student with a disability with no consultation with the physical education teachers or the students in question. It is not surprising then that the AHEAD survey (2003) stated that only 4% of second-level schools had formulated written school plans for the inclusion and education of students with disabilities.

4.8 Special Needs Assistants

Research Question:

- 5) What are the realities for physical education teachers in having special needs assistants present in their physical education classes?

The responsibility of including students with disabilities into mainstream physical education lies within school structures and a whole school approach needs to be adopted for inclusion to be successful. The special needs assistant (SNA) plays a contributory role in making the school and physical education class a more welcoming and inclusive environment for students with SEN (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006b) and the SNA is a valuable resource in the delivery of the physical education curriculum (NCCA, 2002). In 2006, there were approximately 6,000 special needs assistants in Ireland, employed in mainstream primary, special and post-primary schools (Teagasc, 2006). Of those 6,000, 374 full time special needs assistants were employed in post-primary schools to assist the general and physical education teacher (NDA, 2004b). In this study 55% of students with disabilities had a special needs assistant with them during the school day. The role the special needs assistant played varied depending on the student and the

physical education teacher. When the teachers were asked if the special needs assistant participated in physical education contrasting responses were received. One physical education teacher found the special needs assistant more of a hindrance than a help and said

‘I would rather not have them there. They don’t really have any training in PE’ (PET#1).

On the other hand other physical education teachers had a very positive view of the special needs assistant and said

‘She [special needs assistant] sees the benefit of it [physical education] to them so she is very good in that if there is anything you do need she will come in and give you a hand’ (PET#3) and ‘She is brilliant; it would not have worked as well as it has if she wasn’t as, as available and as interested in PE as she is’ (PET#4).

The Special Education Committee Report (2004) confirms that the effectiveness of the special needs assistant depends on their personal qualities and interests. Hannon (2005) pointed out that an important role for the special needs assistant is ensuring that children with disabilities experience quality physical education in schools and the relationship between the physical education teacher and the special needs assistant needs to be a positive and open one. This relationship can be hard to build when teachers are given no training to deal and cope with a special needs assistant in their class. One physical education teacher had strong feeling on this and said

‘we have not gotten any training on how to work with an SNA (PET#2). The SNA is given his/her contract outlining what his/her job is and the teacher is just told you have an SNA in your class at this time, this time and this time and that’s it. That’s the bottom line’ (PET#2).

This physical education teacher when on to say

‘their [SNA’s] general knowledge of PE would be limited and would see it as whistle and ball and don’t understand the reasoning behind PE. I have heard comments “Oh they were sitting down for a lot of it or they were doing the same thing a lot of the time, they should have had the game for longer at the end of the class”. They are saying what they think PE class should be and they don’t understand the different activities, skill breakdown, other aspects or areas of PE. They don’t understand what PE is about, they expect, like 90% of the population that PE is just games or running around. You have that uninformed person in your classroom to deal with as well as - so you are trying to make the class sometimes pleasing or positive in their eyes sometimes, because they are the adult looking on in your class. It’s a pressure that is added and you try to - well you do your own thing but you still have that impact in there (PET#2).

Similar feelings to this were highlighted in the Special Education Committee Report (2004) when the impact of having a special needs assistant in the classroom was discussed. 12% of teachers stated that ‘the presence of another adult in the classroom continues to upset me as I feel under scrutiny’. In the report 84% of teachers stated that having a non-teaching member of staff in the classroom was a trend that they were continuing to adjust to and 59% of teachers found it very hard to adjust to the presence of another adult(s) in their classroom.

Brady (2004) states that although in general special needs assistants are welcome in classrooms some SNA’s have had excessive levels of responsibility to deal with and undertake work which they may not have the necessary qualifications. One physical education teacher confirms this and states that

‘She [SNA] does not have her own ability to be active within the PE class. It is the lack of training’ (PET#2).

In the Special Education Committee Report (2004) the lack of training for Special Needs Assistants was also highlighted with 69% of teachers reporting that they were concerned about the lack of formal training that special needs assistants received.

It is important to point out that it's not only the physical education teacher who needs to be positive towards the special needs assistant. The student with the disability must also be open and positive to their involvement. In this study where the SNA was involved in physical education the student with the disability was positive to their presence. However one teacher did point out that one student in particular was

‘very aggressive towards the SNA and very abusive, verbally, has hit out at her, lashed out at her and has huge behavioural problems dealing with the SNA which in itself creates another problem’ (PET#2)

one which physical education teachers are not given the training or strategies in order to deal and cope with this behaviour.

To conclude this section the main points emerging can be summarised as follows:

- **Physical Education Teacher Training** - The physical education teachers feel they are not sufficiently trained to deal with special needs assistants in their classrooms –

‘we have not gotten any training on how to work with an SNA (PET#2).

- **Dynamics of the Class** - Physical education teachers feel under pressure in the presence of the special needs assistant. On teacher explains

‘You have that uninformed person in your classroom to deal with as well as - so you are trying to make the class sometimes pleasing or positive in their eyes sometimes, because they are the adult looking on in your class. It's a pressure that is added and you try to – well you do your own thing but you still have that impact in there (PET#2).

- **Special Needs Assistants Training** - Teachers feel that special needs assistants are not sufficiently or specifically trained in physical education to aid the inclusion of a student with a disability, as one teacher explained

‘in this environment [the physical education class] the special needs assistants don’t really know what to do so they just stand and watch most of the time’ (PET#1).

Studies have shown that both teachers and special needs assistants are unsure of the duties and roles of the SNA leading to miscommunications in the classroom (Special Education Committee Report, 2004). As a result one teacher felt he

‘would rather not have them there. They don’t really have any training in PE’ (PET#1).

- **Increased Workload** - Due to this lack of training the physical education teacher’s workload increases as he/she has to explain everything to the special needs assistant therefore decreasing even further the time spend active in physical education for both the disabled and non-disabled students. The student with the disability also increases the teacher’s workload as one teacher explains

‘The students themselves know that the SNA is not a teacher and they don’t want the SNA helping them, they want the teacher. So the SNA is there just as sometimes a person who is available to help out but after they have helped the student still wants the teacher to go back and check what was done’ (PET#2).

- **Personal Qualities of the SNA** - Finally the effectiveness of the special needs assistants is determined by their personal qualities and attitude towards physical education. Positively –

She [special needs assistant] sees the benefit of it [physical education] to them so she is very good in that if there is anything you do need she will come in and give you a hand’ (PET#3) and ‘She is brilliant; it would not have worked as well as it has if she wasn’t as, as available and as interested in PE as she is’ (PET#4)

or negatively –

‘She [SNA] does not have her own ability to be active within the PE class. It is the lack of training’ (PET#2).

Special needs assistants possibly don't help or participate in physical education as a result of lack of knowledge, interest, understanding and training in the area of physical education.

4.9 Students with Disabilities

Research Question

6. What is the physical education experience of students with disabilities in mainstream secondary schools in Waterford City?

This section will look at the physical education experiences of the students with disabilities. This section will look at the number of students with disabilities attending mainstream schools, intrinsic barriers they face, levels of participation, attitudes and the role of the SNA from the students point of view. The nature of disabilities the students had was addressed in section 4.3.

4.9.1 Number

The last few decades have brought about improved medical and health care services. As a result of this we all have the potential to live longer, healthier lives. People with disabilities are now living longer and their presence in society is more evident but maybe not as much in our schools. As mentioned previously only 1% of students attending mainstream secondary schools in Waterford are registered as having a disability.

4.9.2 Intrinsic Barriers

The Sport Scotland study (2001) explored some of the internal barriers to sport participation. The results highlighted barriers such as “feeling different” from the majority of the population, unable to fit in, self consciousness or lack of confidence and fear of failure. Similarly the HEA (1998) list intrinsic barriers to participation as lack of knowledge about the benefits of physical activity and physical education, poor attitude and self-concept, poor body image, embarrassment, over protected as a child and fear of failure. The results of this study echo those results with students stating similar reasons for not participating in physical education. Students made comments like

“I am very bad at sports and I am scared that people will laugh at me...”

or

“people might say stuff about me”

and

“I would be put off if I didn’t feel welcome”.

An interesting point to note is that 31% of students with disabilities answered no when asked if they could participate in activities offered by the school in physical education. When asked why, all students answered with an intrinsic answer stating something to do with them and their disability as the reason. No student mentioned the inability to access buildings or lack of modifications from the physical education teacher as the reason. It is important to point out that 85% of students with disabilities felt that they did have positive experiences in physical education and were willing to give most sports a try.

4.9.3 Attitudes

Attitudes and perceptions of others are among the most significant barriers preventing individuals with disabilities from participating in many activity programmes including physical education (Heward, 2000). Negative attitudes towards people with disabilities are evident in all aspects of society. Individuals with disabilities might be perceived negatively, treated as being incapable of making decisions or even devalued and ignored completely. Many students with disabilities are excluded from decision making when it comes to their involvement in activities in physical education, this is supported by the fact that 66% of students surveyed stated that they had no input in any of the decision making in physical education. Unfortunately of the other 34% of students who answered yes to this question, it is clear from their comments that they were not truly involved in making any decisions in regards to the content of their physical education class. Students mentioned that

“my teacher involves me in the decision on how I will participate in class”

“I have been asked if I’d like to try something and have been asked to say if I’m not able for it”.

The choice of activities is a decision made by the physical education teacher, the student is then questioned as to whether or not they can participate or how they could be involved in that activity. This notion is supported by the fact that 67% of students were asked to be involved in activities that did not suit their disability.

4.9.4 Participation

Physical inactivity is now considered a global health problem and has been linked to many serious illnesses facing everyone in modern society (Lamarree & Pratt, 2006). Regular physical activity has long been regarded as an important part of a healthy lifestyle and vast amounts of research reinforces the physical and mental health benefits of physical activity. Despite this millions of people every year remain inactive (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 1993b) and fail to meet the activity guidelines outlined by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (1993a) as well as the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM, 2007).

Individuals with disabilities participate less often in leisure and recreation opportunities and children with disabilities are more at risk of a sedentary lifestyle as the presence of a disability can lead to deterioration of physical functioning with in turn results in a reduction in physical activity (Sherrill, 1998). The SLÁN Survey (2002) revealed that 35% of people with disabilities in Ireland reported no physical activity of at least moderate intensity. As well as lack of participation in physical activity for adults the WHO (2003) discovered that physical activity and physical education programmes in schools are decreasing at an alarming rate, leaving approximately two thirds of the world's young people sufficiently inactive to benefit their present and future health. Physical education programmes in Irish secondary schools are no different. The results of this study show a major shortfall in the provision of physical education. The time allocation for physical education can be seen in Table 4-5.

This study also showed that 17% of students with disabilities did not participate in any physical education each week. When questioned as to why students outlined that they could not participate in contact sports, one said he could not do anything that was being played in PE. The level of participation of the other students with disabilities is questionable as 31% of students with disabilities answered no when asked if they could participate in all activities offered by the school in physical education. When asked what activities they could not participate in the most frequent responses were football, rugby and basketball – all team sports and three of the top four sports most played in secondary schools in Waterford (Table 4-4).

4.9.5 Special Needs Assistants

The responsibility of including students with disabilities into mainstream physical education lies within school structures and a whole school approach needs to be adopted for inclusion to be successful. The special needs assistant (SNA) plays a contributory role in making the school and physical education class a more welcoming and inclusive environment for students with SEN (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006b) and the SNA is a valuable resource in the delivery of the physical education curriculum (NCCA, 2002). In this study 55% of students with disabilities had a special needs assistant with them during the school day. The role of the SNA varied according to the student. It can be seen in Figure 4.3 that 8 out of 12 SNA's only help students with school work.

Students said their SNA's

'help me for Maths'

'helps me to spell and read'

'helps mostly for practical work in school such as science and home economics and art'

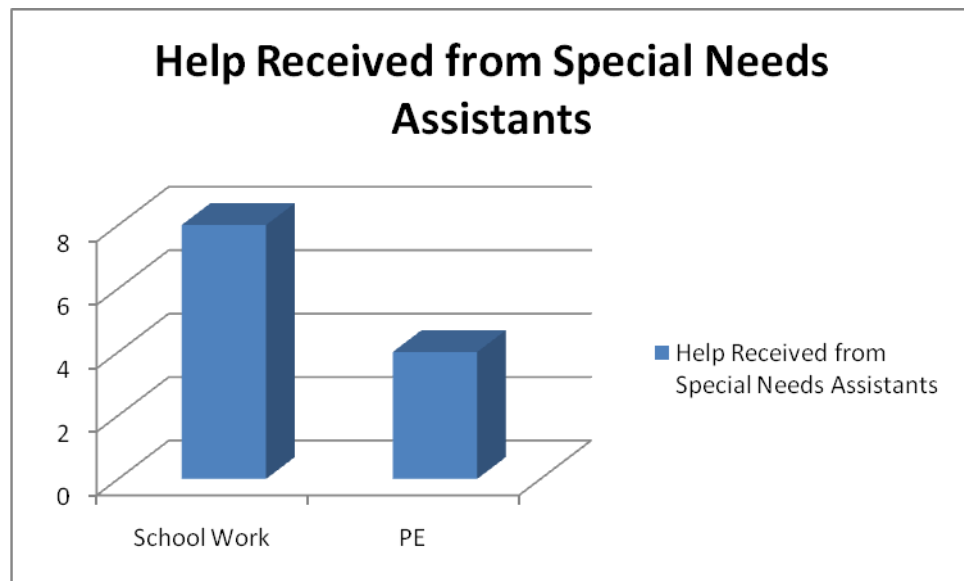


Figure 4.3 Help Received from Special Needs Assistants

Four students did state that their SNA helped them in physical education. They said the SNA:

'mostly my assistant helps me by part-taking in a activity that the teacher has adapted for me'

'helps throw the basketball'

'she helps organise our sports'

'she tells me what to do and joins in'

Although these SNA's seem to be participating and helping in physical education more research needs to be carried out in defining the role of the SNA in the physical education class and the impact on acceptance and interaction of disabled and non-disabled students.

4.10 Feedback from Workshop and Follow up Visit

The feedback from the observations and discussion with physical education teachers was outlined in section 3.8.3, the results of which were used in the design and development of the workshop. The feedback from the workshop and follow up visit is as follows:

- The physical education teachers stated that the disability awareness activities gave them a better understanding of what it is like to have a disability. As a result of this teachers felt they were better equipped to plan and choose activities that suit specific disabilities in their own school. One SNA stated that she never got the opportunity to experience similar type activities during her SNA training. She mentioned that all she learnt was theoretical information about disabilities and could not understand why disability awareness activities were not included.
- Some teachers mentioned that they had not taught any students with disabilities in the past and were not teaching any at present. Teachers revealed they had a certain amount of apprehension about teaching students with disabilities as they felt they were not sufficiently trained. After the workshop the teachers felt better equipped to take on the task.

- The workshop was the first time that the majority of the teachers met each other. Teachers felt comforted that similar problems and lack of training were issues being experienced in other schools.
- Teachers were under the impression that all students with disabilities had to be included in mainstream physical education regardless of ability. Once the inclusion continuum and least restrictive environment was explained teachers felt more at ease and more confident in choosing an environment to best suit the needs of the student.
- The teachers enjoyed the practical session of the workshop. They felt they picked up some skills that they can apply to their own classes. Some things they felt were quite simple once attention had been drawn to them. Teachers also felt confident in the fact that some of the things they were doing was correct and that they were on the right track.
- Teachers were happy that they received some new ideas that they can use in their physical education classes as well as some new activities that they had not tried before, therefore changing the focus of physical education away slightly from team sports.
- Teachers expressed that they needed more training of this kind. Regular updated and local available training would be the preferred option.

4.11 Conclusion

The benefits of physical activity and physical education for the general population and for people with disabilities are supported in research. The physical education teachers in this study outlined the following as the benefits they felt students with disabilities can receive from physical education. They were health benefits, enjoyment, increased fitness, and social aspects, promotes feelings of being able, promotes positive body image, interaction with others, to be challenged, achieves some measure of fulfilment, increased self-esteem. Despite these benefits many barriers to inclusion in physical education still exists. Physical education teachers describe lack of training and own ability to teach students with disabilities, attitudes of other students and parental approaches as some of the barriers that they face. Others include, lack of resources including equipment, inability to adapt to students needs, inadequate knowledge and limited understanding about disability and how to adapt physical education classes to promote inclusion.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of this chapter is to present the main findings from the primary research and outline the recommendations for future inclusion in physical education for students with disabilities or special educational needs and what might best help the physical education teachers with inclusion.

5.1 Conclusions

In consideration of the evidence highlighted within this research the following areas merit attention – profile of students with disabilities attending mainstream schools, teacher training and qualifications, physical education teachers attitudes and experiences of teaching students with disabilities, barriers to physical education and time allocation for PE. Finally individual education plans and the use and role of the special needs assistant are also worth noting. These areas are now discussed in more detail.

5.1.1 Student Profile

The number of students with disabilities attending mainstream schools at present is not known and no figures are available either from the Central Statistics Office or the Department of Education and Science. According to the Census of 2006 3,647 children between the ages of 13 and 18 years lived in Waterford City. This research revealed that only 1% of all students attending secondary schools in Waterford had a disability and of that 1% emotional/behavioural disabilities were the most prevalent. Three conclusions could be drawn upon as to why there are such a small number of students with disabilities in mainstream education. Firstly, as this study revealed most school buildings and sports facilities are not completely accessible for students with

disabilities. The students may physically not be able to gain access the school. Secondly, perhaps students with disabilities did not go on to secondary education as the findings from the 2002 Census would suggest. 46% of students with disabilities left school after receiving their primary education (Census, 2002). Also, Gannon & Nolan (2005) concluded that people with disabilities leave school earlier and with fewer qualifications with only 44% of people surveyed left school with a Leaving Certification. Finally, it might be possible to infer that the disability the student had was too severe and that student could not be catered for in a mainstream environment, perhaps their least restrictive environment is in a segregated or special school.

5.1.2 Teacher Training and Qualifications

With changes in society more and more children with disabilities are enrolling in mainstream schools and as a result physical education teachers will need to be sufficiently prepared and educated to meet those needs (Vickerman, 2007). Assessment of initial teacher training and academic preparation of physical education teachers indicated that six participants (50%) had not received any training or qualifications in the area of adapted physical activity or adapted physical education during their primary physical education degree. It would be possible to surmise that physical education teachers do not have the skills necessary to adapt their physical education classes for students with disabilities as a result of poor or inadequate initial teacher training. If this study revealed a lack of ITT training in the area of special education needs in physical education then it is reasonable to infer that similar deficiencies occur in other schools throughout Ireland. The lack of ITT has many implications. The first port of call must be the PETE colleges. Improvements have been made to the inclusion and development of modules at undergraduate level to address the issue of special educational needs in

physical education. However, as these changes have only been made recently it will be some time yet before improvements are made on the ground in the delivery of physical education to SEN in our secondary schools. The inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream education including physical education is underpinned in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (DES, 2004), however, due to the lack of initial teacher training and the length of time teachers have been teaching physical education (Mean = 19 years) it could be fair to say that at present students with disabilities are not receiving adequate physical education or getting equal opportunities to participate in physical education as physical education teachers simply do not have the training, skills, knowledge or know how to adapt physical education classes to meet their needs.

5.1.3 Teacher's Experiences and Attitudes

Research reveals that experienced teachers hold more positive attitudes towards including students with disabilities than those who have no prior experience (Elhoweris & Alsheikh, 2006). This was reinforced by a study by Van Reusen, Shoho & Barker (2001) who stated that a physical educator's attitude towards inclusion was related to the levels of special education training received and experience in working with students with special educational needs or disabilities. This study showed similar results where teachers with more experience did hold mainly positive attitudes towards students with disabilities with it came to integration into general physical education classes. The age, amount of experience and exposure to students with disabilities could be put forward as the reasons behind these positive attitudes towards integration. Despite the best efforts and attitudes of physical education teachers it is difficult to imagine that quality, successful, inclusive physical education programmes are being

implemented in second-level schools, especially when teachers have received inadequate teacher training at undergraduate level and inadequate in-service or continuing professional development in the area of inclusion to be able to deal, cope and successfully include students with disabilities in their classes. Teachers were still expected to teach students with disabilities without a clear grounding and understanding on how best to teach and include them. One physical education teacher admitted that she felt the adaptations she was trying to make to include the disabled student was just

‘tokenism, as I’m not equipped with the knowledge I need’ (PET#2).

Although changes have now been made to current PETE which will improve teacher’s ability to include students with disabilities, continuing professional development and improvements in in-service will need to be made in order for positive attitudes to continue as teachers attitudes are directly linked to their intention to engage in a particular behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) i.e. inclusion.

5.1.4 Barriers to Physical Education

The barriers to physical activity and physical education are well documented in research. These barriers stop or restrict children with disabilities from participating and being included not only in physical education but in community based sports programmes and activities. Within the school environment and physical education, barriers such as access to facilities, sports and activities being played and attitudes of non-disabled students are ones that students with disabilities face on an ongoing basis.

The availability of adequate and accessible facilities would be necessary for physical education teachers to provide quality physical education for their students. In the school

environment students with disabilities are faced with many environmental or access barriers especially if the building has not been constructed with their mobility needs in mind (Jha, 2002a). In an Irish context, most school buildings are old and aging, and it can be argued that environmental and access barriers will exist as a result. This study showed that 66% of physical education teachers felt that their school was inaccessible for students with disabilities. Of the schools studied none had elevator or lift facilities in their sports halls or gyms, and physical education teachers pointed out that the

‘gym was upstairs and there is no wheelchair access’, ‘the balcony area is unsuitable as there are only stairs to access this area’, and ‘wheelchair users can not use the sports field’

leaving some sports facilities inaccessible to students with disabilities. It is possible to infer therefore that full inclusion in physical education for some students with disabilities is impossible as a result.

MacDonncha (2002) suggests the effects of tradition, large class sizes, absence of facilities, competencies of the teacher and inadequate curricular time as the main reasons why team games dominate physical education. This study showed that physical education was dominated by team games with only two of the top ten activities participated in by students with disabilities as individual activities, namely gymnastics and athletics.

The attitudes and perceptions of others are among the most significant factors preventing individuals with disabilities from participating in many activity programmes including physical education (Heward, 2000). Research has shown that attitudes of school children towards their peers with significant disabilities plays a part in their

intention to participate with them in physical education (Verderber, Rizzzo, Sherill, 2003). Peer acceptance can be the vital difference between successful and unsuccessful inclusion. This research study revealed five factors that influence the attitude and acceptance of disabled students by non-disabled students. The factors include - The older the student the less accepting they are of non-disabled students, if they have exposure to students with disabilities at primary level and have a positive relationship with the SNA attitudes are more positive. The type of disability the student had was a factor that affected attitudes with students being more accepting of students with intellectual rather than physical disabilities. It is fair to conclude then that strategies i.e. prepare and educate non-disabled students about disability – the more knowledge the less fear, must be put in place to alleviate and help prevent negative attitudes towards students with disabilities.

Fahey, Delaney & Gannon (2005) state that there are certain shortcomings when it comes to the provision and delivery of physical education in our post-primary schools. One area worth noting is the allocation of time to physical education. The current post-primary syllabus recommends that each student should receive a minimum of 120 minutes or 2 hours of physical education per week. The fact that no school in this study met this recommendation shows how physical education is viewed as a ‘peripheral or second class subject’ (CDDS, 2002). The reduced time allocation for physical education has an impact on students with disabilities as their time in physical education could be even shorter than their non-disabled peers as more time may be needed to transfer from one class to another (Hemmingson & Borell, 2002).

5.1.5 Individual Education Plans

The Education for Persons with Special Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004) provides the legislative basis for the introduction of individual education plans (IEP's) for children with disabilities and special educational needs (SEN). This research revealed that only 23% of students with disabilities had an IEP developed for them and of that 23%, 67% did not have any physical education included in its content. The NCCA (2002) guidelines outline, that the planning process should include the class teacher, other teachers involved with the student, the student with the disability, the students parents or carer, any relevant non-teaching professionals and any others involved with the students education, it is evident from this study that this is not the case as only one teacher said she had any involvement in an IEP development and with that the involvement was not a collaborate or informed one. It appears that a gap exists within the communication and discussion of goals that need to be achieved for students with disabilities, one teacher sums it up by saying

‘There needs to be more of an overall structure of an IEP developed, rather than me in my little vacuum doing PE and someone else doing English and someone else doing Maths. Like really we need to look at when we come together and look at the IEP then, if we feel “she should be able for more than this”, we should do this tooing and froing together’ (PET#2).

5.1.6 Special Needs Assistants

The responsibility of including students with disabilities into mainstream physical education lies within school structures and a whole school approach needs to be adopted for inclusion to be successful. The special needs assistant (SNA) plays a contributory role in making the school and physical education class a more welcoming and inclusive environment for students with SEN (Meegan & MacPhail, 2006b) and the SNA is a valuable resource in the delivery of the physical education curriculum (NCCA, 2002).

Despite this however, it is evident in this study that special needs assistants are not sufficiently trained to aid students with disabilities in physical education classes. One teacher summed up his opinion by saying

‘I would rather not have them there. They don’t really have any training in PE’ (PET#1).

Finally, the physical education teachers felt that they also have not been given the skills, knowledge or training to effectively use a special needs assistant in their classes, as one teacher expressed –

‘We have not gotten any training on how to work with an SNA’ (PET#2).

5.1.7 Student Experiences

Only 1% of students attending mainstream secondary schools in Waterford are registered as having a disability. 17% of students with disabilities did not participate in any physical education each week. Students list access to facilities, sports being played and intrinsic barriers as the main reason why they cannot or do not participate. Students made comments like

“I am very bad at sports and I am scared that people will laugh at me...”

or

“people might say stuff about me”

and

“I would be put off if I didn’t feel welcome”.

The level of participation of the other students with disabilities is questionable as 31% of students with disabilities answered no when asked if they could participate in all activities offered by the school in physical education. When asked what activities they could not participate in the most frequent responses were football, rugby and basketball – all team sports and three of the top four sports most played in secondary schools in Waterford (Table 4-4).

Many students with disabilities are excluded from decision making when it comes to their involvement in activities in physical education, this is supported by the fact that 66% of students surveyed stated that they had no input in any of the decision making in physical education. Unfortunately of the other 34% of students who answered yes to this question, it is clear from their comments that they were not truly involved in making any decisions in regards to the content of their physical education class. The choice of activities is a decision made by the physical education teacher; the student is then questioned as to whether or not they can participate or how they could be involved in that activity. This notion is supported by the fact that 67% of students were asked to be involved in activities that did not suit their disability. It is important to point out that some students with disabilities felt that they did have positive experiences in physical education and were willing to give most sports a try.

5.2 Recommendations

The following are the recommendations that the researcher suggests as a result of the research carried out. These suggested recommendations may be undertaken to improve the provision of physical education to students with disabilities by physical education teachers. The recommendations are:

- Improvements in the delivery of Initial Teacher Training. The researcher would recommend that the study was repeated to investigate if new PETE has an effect on inclusion.
- Continuing professional development opportunities should be made available to all physical education teachers on both a local and national level. Greater and specific emphasis should be placed on including and adapting physical education classes for students with disabilities in in-service training. It would also be recommended that physical education teachers get more accessibility and availability of adapted physical education workshops.
- The Department of Education should insist that all students should receive a minimum of two hours physical education a week as the PE syllabus recommends.
- Once a physical education teacher receives their primary qualification, there is no emphasis or incentive for them to remain in tune with current trends in physical activity or teaching methods, as a result the researcher would recommend that all teachers up-skill and show evidence of continuing professional development on an ongoing basis.
- A community of practice or local forum should be set up for physical education teachers, allowing them to correspond with each other, share ideas and give

advice on situations that occur in the integrated physical education classroom.

This may also be possible on a national level.

- It would be recommended that Special Needs Assistants get more hands-on training and training specific to physical education while qualifying.
- Individual Education Plan development – needs to be encouraged and due process given to it by those who should be involved in its development including the physical education teacher, student and parents.
- It would be recommended that a Peer training course be devised or developed to aid in the preparation and education of non-disabled students in understanding and accepting students with disabilities in their classes.
- This study revealed a low number of students with disabilities attending mainstream secondary schools in Waterford City. Further research could be carried out to understand why the disabled students of Waterford City are not attending mainstream schools and devise a plan to aid inclusion and integration into the mainstream.
- It was highlighted in the study that the attitude of the non-disabled student is a factor which can affect inclusion and participation levels of a student with a disability in physical education. It would be recommended that a separate study be carried out assessing the effect of these attitudes.

This study has examined the 'Inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream physical education from the perspective of the physical education teacher'. What appears clear from the research is that this is just one of several issues being faced by PE teachers and in some instances had not yet cropped up for teachers. It seems that not many students with disabilities are being included in physical education classes. This has two impacts. Firstly, the fact that it is not happening very often means that there is little push from teachers to get further training and or experience. Secondly, schools will not prioritise this aspect as it is not a major issue for them.

However, there appears to be improving training opportunities for adapted physical activity. Much of the impetus for this training has come from I.T.Tralee... In fact, they have led the EIPET programme which is being implemented across the EU and further afield. This should help in promoting more inclusive physical education provision. However, just as progress was being made, the deep recession has meant that many programmes are being shelved or reduced. Disability programmes are often seen as marginal and are therefore more prone to cutbacks. Already SIDO (Sports Inclusion Development Officer) programmes are being curtailed and the numbers of SNA's are being cutback. Inclusion for students with disabilities in physical education is an area which will need advocacy before it becomes embedded. The good fight will have to continue to be fought.

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Appendices

Appendices

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Appendix A

Questionnaire for Physical Education Teachers

Appendix A



Waterford Institute of Technology
Inclusion in Physical Education in Mainstream Schools
Questionnaire for Physical Education Teachers

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the inclusion levels of students with disabilities in secondary school physical education classes in Waterford City.

All findings will be **confidential** and no school will be mentioned by name.

Please use the following definitions of disability when answering this questionnaire.

Physical disability:

A physical disability is any physiological disorder or condition. It can consist of any anatomical loss or cosmetic disfigurement affecting any of the body systems (scoilnet.ie).

Intellectual disability:

A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), with a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning); which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development (UK Government White Paper published in 2,000 in 'Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century').

Emotional/behavioural disability:

“The term, refers to a condition characterised by one or more of the following behaviours: severely deviant disruptive, aggressive or impulsive behaviours, withdrawn or anxious, general unhappiness, depressed or wide mood swings, delinquency, hyperactivity, social maladjustment, hypersensitivity and is usually serviced with a behavioural management programme” (Rizzo, 1993, p1).

Sensory disability:

Vision – reduced fields of vision therefore the need for specialist support applies (McRae.1996).

Hearing – “a bi-lateral sensori-neural loss that is moderate/severe/profound where the student requires intervention or assistance to communicate” (McRae, 1996, p8).

Section 1 – General Details

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Age: 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59
- 60+

3. Name of School in which you teach

4. How long have you been teaching physical education?

Years: _____

5. Please complete the following tables:

Junior Cycle	Total no of students in the year		No. of students taking Physical Education		No. of class groups taking PE per year	No of students with disabilities
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls		
1 st Year						
2 nd Year						
3 rd Year						

Senior Cycle	Total no of students in the year		No. of students taking Physical Education		No. of class groups taking PE per year	No of students with disabilities
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls		
TYP						
Leaving Cert Yr 1						
Leaving Cert Yr 2						
LCA Yr 1						
LCA Yr 2						

6. Please indicate the nature/type of disability of all students with disabilities in your classes. Please indicate what year they are in.

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	

7. Is physical education a compulsory subject for all year groups?

Yes No

Section 2 – Training and Professional Development

8. Where did you receive your physical education training?

9. Please tick the highest qualification you have received to date.

Qualification	Please tick	Qualification	Please tick
Certificate		Masters (state research title)	
Diploma		H. Dip	
Degree		Other (please specify)	

10. While receiving your PE training did you

- | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Study a module on adapted physical activity/education | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Teach any students with disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Have any interaction with students with disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being insufficiently trained and 10 being extremely sufficiently trained) do you feel you are sufficiently trained to deal with and teach students with disabilities?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9 ----- 10

Please explain.

12. Since beginning to teach Physical Education have you

- | | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Taken any Adapted Physical Education courses? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Professional development in-service specific for teaching persons with disabilities? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Worked with external consultants to ensure activities are suitably adapted for individuals and their disability? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Completed any workshops? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

13. Have you completed formal training in special education?

Yes No

If yes please explain:

14. What type of training (if any) do you think would be most helpful in assisting you to better cater for the needs of the students with disabilities in your classes?

- Training in the area I did my initial teacher training
- Postgraduate college courses
- Professional development in-services
- Consultants in the school who can offer advice
- Opportunities to liaise with other teachers who have experience/training for advice

Section 3 – Teaching students with Disabilities

15. How much time is **officially allocated** to Physical Education each week for all students?

Year	Time (hours)
First year	
Second year	
Third year	
Transition year	
Fifth year	
Sixth year	

16. How much time do you **feel is actually** dedicated to Physical Education each week?

Year	Time (hours)
First year	
Second year	
Third year	
Transition year	
Fifth year	
Sixth year	

17. Does anyone external person come to the school to facilitate the teaching of any physical education classes? Yes No

If yes, please explain:

18. Do students with disabilities in your school participate equally in physical education?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Emotional/behavioural disorders					
Physical disability					
Intellectual disability					
Sensory disability					

19. Should all students have equal access to PE?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Emotional/behavioural disorders					
Physical disability					
Intellectual disability					
Sensory disability					

20. Do you think that students with disabilities would learn more during integrated physical education classes.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Emotional/behavioural disorders					
Physical disability					
Intellectual disability					
Sensory disability					

21. Do you feel that students with physical/intellectual disabilities would learn more during segregated physical education classes?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Emotional/behavioural disorders					
Physical disability					
Intellectual disability					
Sensory disability					

22. Do you feel that students with physical/intellectual disabilities disrupt the harmony of your physical education classes?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Emotional/behavioural disorders					
Physical disability					
Intellectual disability					
Sensory disability					

23. Do you feel that teaching students with physical/intellectual disabilities take up too much of your time?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Emotional/behavioural disorders					
Physical disability					
Intellectual disability					
Sensory disability					

24. I feel teaching students with physical/intellectual disabilities increase my workload.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Emotional/behavioural disorders					
Physical disability					
Intellectual disability					
Sensory disability					

25. I feel I need more training and experience of teaching students with intellectual/physical disabilities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Emotional/behavioural disorders					
Physical disability					
Intellectual disability					
Sensory disability					

Section 4 – Attitudes of other non – disabled students

26. Are students with disabilities accepted in your classes by other non-disabled students? Please explain.

27. Please state any examples you may have of how other students integrate students with disabilities into the class?

Section 5 – Availability of assistance and support

28. Have you ever been involved in the development of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for any of the students with disabilities that you teach? Please explain.

29. Does your school provide a special needs assistant or other assistance to help you with your physical education teaching? Please explain.

Section 6 – School facilities

30. What sporting facilities are available in your school?

Indoor: _____

Outdoor: _____

31. Does your school have access to other facilities, which are not owned by the school? i.e. swimming pool.

32. The schools facilities are accessible for all your students regardless of ability/disability. Please tick the box of the statement which you feel is most true for you.

<i>Strongly</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly</i>
<i>Agree</i>				<i>Disagree</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain the disabilities you refer to with your answer.

33. Are any of the facilities used during physical education unsuitable for students with disabilities? Please explain.

34. Do you have adequate space to perform the activities/sports with students with disabilities? Please explain

35. Please list the equipment/adapted equipment you have at your disposal for use during physical education classes.

36. Please list the games/sports/activities that you play with your students during physical education classes.

Soccer		Gymnastics		Tennis	
Basketball		Volleyball		Swimming	
Dance		Badminton		Athletics	
Outdoor activities		Football		Hockey	
Rounder's		Martial Arts		Aerobics	
Baseball		Water polo		Orienteering	
Wrestling		Handball		Squash	
Horse riding		Weight lifting		Handball	
Rugby		Hurling		Golf	
Hill walking		Circuit training		Other (please specify)	

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. All information will be dealt with in confidence.

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Secondary School Students with Disabilities

Appendix B



Waterford Institute of Technology
Inclusion in Physical Education in Mainstream Schools
Questionnaire for Secondary School Students

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the inclusion levels of students with disabilities in secondary school physical education classes in Waterford City.

1. Please describe your disability.

2. How many physical education (PE) classes are you timetabled for each week?

Number of classes: _____

3. Do you participate in physical education (PE) in school?

Yes ... **1**

No ... **2**

4. Are there any activities offered by your school that you are unable to participate in?

Yes ... **1**

No ... **2**

If No, please skip to question 7.

5. Please list the activities you are unable to participate in.

6. For any of the activities you have mentioned above please detail why you cannot participate in them?

7. Are there any facilities offered by the school that you are unable to use?

Yes ... **1**

No ... **2**

If No, please skip to question 10.

8. Please detail the facilities that you are unable to use.

9. For any of the facilities mentioned, please detail why you cannot use them.

10. Which of the following best describes your participation levels in physical education? Please circle **one number** only.

Participate fully **1** Most of the time **2** Some of the time **3**

Almost never **4** Never **5**

Please explain the reason for your answer:

11. Do you have a special needs assistant with you during school time?

Yes ... **1**

No ... **2**

If **Yes**, please explain how your assistant helps you during your physical education classes.

12. In school, during your PE class(es) which sports/activities have you tried? Please circle the **numbers** that relate to the sports/activities you have tried.

Soccer	1	Athletics	2	Football	3	Hurling	4
Swimming	5	Hockey	6	Golf	7	Rugby	8
Camogie	9	Badminton	10	Volleyball	11	Tennis	12
Dance	13	Rounders	14	Martial Arts	15	Basketball	16
Aerobics	17	Gymnastics	18	Baseball	19	Water Polo	20
Orienteering	21	Mountaineering	22	Wrestling	23	Handball	24
Squash	25	Horse Riding	26	Weight Lifting	27	Other	28

If **Other**, please give details:

13. Have you ever had a bad experience during PE that has made you not want to participate again?

Yes ... **1**

No ... **2**

If No, please skip to question 15.

If **Yes**, please give details:

14. In your opinion what could have been done to make the experience better?

15. Does anything put you off trying new sports or activities in school PE classes?

16. Have you an Individual Education Plan? Yes ... 1 No ... 2

If No, please skip to question 17.

If **Yes**, does it include a plan for Physical education? Yes ... 1 No ... 2

If No, please skip to question 17.

Please outline the physical education content of your Individual Education Plan.

17. Have you ever been included or involved in any way in the decisions made about what activities you perform in physical education?

Yes ... 1

No ... 2

If No, please skip to question 18.

If **Yes**, please give details:

18. Do you play games/sports that specifically suit you and your disability in physical education class?

Yes ... **1**

No ... **2**

If **Yes**, please give details:

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. All information will be dealt with in confidence.

Appendix C

Letter to School Principal

Appendix C

Waterford Institute of Technology

Cork Road,

Waterford.

Dear Principal,

I am planning to carry out a survey titled the “Analysis of Mainstreaming in Physical Education for Children with Disabilities”. This is an integral part of my Masters thesis. I am hoping to do my study on all children with a disability who are attending a mainstream secondary school in Waterford City as well as the physical education teachers who are providing the physical education for these students. I am therefore hoping that you will allow me to distribute questionnaire to your physical education teachers as well as any students in your school that has a disability, physical or intellectual.

The questionnaire should not take longer than 30-60 minutes to complete. I will organise to distribute the questionnaire to the students at a time convenient for you and times that will fit in with the student’s timetable.

I hope this will not be a problem for you and I look forward to your correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

Deirdre Barry,

Department of Sport, Health and Exercise Science,

W.I.T.

dbarry@wit.ie

086 0505813

Appendix D

Informed Consent

Appendix D

Dear Parent/Guardian

Parental Consent Form

I am currently undertaking a study on “The Analysis of Mainstreaming in Physical Education for Children with Disabilities” for my Masters of Arts research in Waterford Institute of Technology. The aim of the study is to find out about the experiences your son or daughter is having during physical activity while at school, what barriers they face and problems they have encountered.

I would be most grateful if you could give your son/daughter permission to fill out a questionnaire and answer verbal questions. The questionnaire and question answers are crucial to the success of my study. All information received through the questionnaire will be treated in the strictest of confidence and your child will not be required to state his/her name.

Please return this letter to the school as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Deirdre Barry

Waterford Institute of Technology

Please complete and return

Parental Consent

I have read and understand the nature of the study and I understand that if I have any questions concerning the participation of my son/daughter in the completion of the questionnaire I can contact Deirdre Barry (dbarry@wit.ie/0860505813).

I am willing to allow my child to complete the	Yes	No
questionnaire and answer any questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
in relation to the above study.		

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Pupil Consent

I _____ understand that my parents/guardians have given permission for me to fill out the questionnaire and answer any questions in relation to your study. I am aware that I do not have to partake in this study if I choose not to.

Signature of child _____

Appendix E

Letter to Physical Education Teachers

Appendix E

Waterford Institute of Technology,

Cork Road,

Waterford.

Dear Physical Education Teacher,

My name is Deirdre Barry and I have been conducting research on the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream physical education classes. To date most physical education teachers in Waterford City have completed a questionnaire and some have been interviewed about this topic. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your involvement in my research to date.

One of the consistent findings from the research I have conducted is that many of you feel that you would like to have more training in relation to adapting physical education classes to include students with disabilities. It appears that there wasn't an adequate emphasis on adapted physical education when you completed your college qualification. I would therefore like to invite you to a workshop on adapting physical education classes for students with disabilities. This workshop is aimed specifically for physical education teachers, with the main focus being on how to adapt your physical education classes to include a student with a disability. The workshop will take mainly a practical approach where the strategies to adapting will be implemented.

To make this day more applicable and useful to you, I would like to come to your school and observe one of your physical education classes which contains a student(s) with a disability so I can structure the workshop around your students and really make the day about what you need and what can help include that student more.

If there is sufficient interest I will run a practical workshop on Friday 4th of December from 9.30am – 3.00pm in the Tourism and Leisure Building of Waterford Institute of Technology. Lunch will be provided.

This workshop is free of charge.

Kindest regards,

Deirdre Barry

In order to facilitate this work shop can you fill in the following and return to the address below before Wednesday 18th of November:

Deirdre Barry,
Tourism and Leisure Building,
Waterford Institute of Technology,
Cork Road,
Waterford.

If you would prefer to confirm attendance via email, phone or text, please feel free to do so on:

Phone: 0860505813

Email: dbarry@wit.ie

Name: _____ **School:** _____

Phone No: _____ **Email:** _____

I _____ would like to confirm my attendance at the workshop on Friday 4th of December in Waterford Institute of Technology.

The time(s) available for Deirdre to observe the student(s) with a disability that I teach are as follows:

Day _____ **Time** _____

Day _____ **Time** _____

Please state the disability or disabilities being observed:

Appendix F

Observation Sheet – Physical Education Teachers and Students with Disabilities

Appendix F

Observation Sheet – Teachers

Teachers name:

School:

Disabilities observed:

Number of students in class:

Number of disabled students in class:

Location of activities:

Activities completed:	
Communication skills used:- instructions/feedback/encouragement/motivation/body language	
Adaptations made for disabled students:	
Teaching style used:	
Use of SNA's:	
Time management:	
Use of peers: - interaction	
Structure of lesson plan:	
Organisation of class:	

Observation Sheet – Student with disabilities

Student's interaction with teacher:	
Suitability of activities for disability:	
Students interaction with peers:	
Communication skills:	
Behaviour:	
Encouragement/Motivation	
Level of inclusion:	
Progression through activities:	
Level of success at activities:	
Needs of student meet:	

Appendix G

Transcription of Physical Education Teacher Interviews

Appendix G

Interview # 1

**Bold writing =
interviewer**
Non bold writing
= interviewee

How long have you been teaching PE?

13 years

Where did you go to college?

Indiana University

What did you study?

Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology – and then teacher prep so I could teach Physical Education and with a minor in Health Education, that's the way they operate over there. In Ireland you need a HDip, no I did the teacher training alright. It has to be an exam subject to fit into the curriculum; the curriculum over there is health. Health is a huge area so that's what teachers do is take physical education and health.

What made you decide to go to the States to study?

I never filled in a CAO form here in Ireland; I got a scholarship so I went to the states for running. I did a 4-year degree but I registered for 5 so when you're injured you can take your time and I did my degree in 5 years.

Did you come home straight after that (5 years in college)?

No, I went to Holland, I went to the Netherlands but before that I taught in a high school in Brooklyn. In the Netherlands I taught fitness and did fitness work there.

Were you teaching physical education in the Netherlands?

No, not at all. I was there for a year and then I came home to Dublin and then from Dublin to here (Waterford).

In your degree you completed a module on Adapted Physical Activity (APA), was that for just one semester or?

Yes, just 16 weeks

What did that module entail?

Ah it just, well I can hardly remember but I remember that we were paired with people with disabilities, students with disabilities because they offer PE in middle school and elementary school and stuff and I can't really remember. There was a kid with Down Syndrome I think he was 12 or 13 which would have left him in middle school, we were

paired with him and some teachers are specially trained to teach PE to kids who are disabled, severely and mildly and that would have been my case.

Was the module theory and practical based?

Yes.

So you got both?

Ya, I did well in that module, which wasn't easy to get. I enjoyed it so it was good. It was hands on experience with kids like that, it was funny how the little things work for somebody working with a normal bodied person out there you would expect to work in bigger stages but for people with disabilities you need to work in little stages which are big to them, its tedious but the rewards are great, it's very rewarding.

It's one thing I found myself with working with people with disabilities - the rewards, they come a little bit quicker because as you said you take much smaller steps, very rewarding work.

I actually think that in the last couple of years, Special Olympics came and people came in here from the Special Olympics to do gymnastics and I have been in there watching them, I think it brought a serious awareness, even to myself about people like that being involved in sport, even someone who is severely disabled either physically or mentally even throwing a bean bag, 2003 I think it was, it was phenomenal, great to watch. I think it's come on, even our kids here in the school would be more accepting because maybe they would have seen that and heard about it and are now more accepting of kids with disabilities.

Were any of the kids in the school here part of the Special Olympics?

No, not that I know of. There is teacher here involved, as her brother is on the basketball team. There are a few kids working with the team but none of the students are part of the team. There is a student in 3rd year I think who is involved in the team because her brother is on the Special Olympic team.

What was your major experience from your time in college working with someone with a disability is there anything that helps you with your teaching now?

Well I think it's just using small steps.

Anything in comparison to over here in Ireland?

In America it's the ongoing education, they give you 5 years to get your masters degree once to have received your bachelor's degree, they make you do it, they make you sign up for these things. In this country if you don't want to do it then you don't have to. I'm sure that maybe I have stuff here that maybe doesn't come to me that offers courses for APA and adapted physical education but I think there should be a time allocated to me, I have a family and can't just go on these courses outside of work time but if I was to get something rewarding from it or I was made do in a sense that it was part of the curriculum to get this done, in order to get re-certified in teaching then I would have to do it. There is no push in this country what so ever to encourage anyone to take extra courses. I even see it in the staff here, they have their degree and that all they want. They don't want to do any more and therefore their teaching gets stale!

Since you have been working here have you been offered any courses or workshops?

I'm sure there may have been something but I can't remember it. Maybe there was something. I have been offered workshop on health education as for adapted physical education I can't remember, maybe I saw something but I didn't really uptake on it. I have been offered stuff, health related physical education and I'm not joking it was the worst course I have ever been at. I have never in my life been to something so bad. It was a waste of time.

In regards to in service, have you been sent on in service?

No, you just sign up for it. What happens is at the start of the year out comes a list of in service that are available and the department head for SPHE for example, which is a subject I teach also, asks if you want to go and you can opt in or out.

Is in service encouraged?

No, at the end of the day the principal has to get a sub in for me if I go on in service, which is more hassle than anything else. No one has ever come to me saying I want you to go on this course or that course. It's just up to myself.

Have you seen anything been offered across the curriculum that targets anyone with a disability not for PE in general but all subjects?

Not really no, maybe if I was looking for it. But there is never anyone who comes in to me and says I would like you to go on this course because we have kids here with special needs or disabilities and we think this would be good. No not at all!

What do you think the benefits of physical education for those with disabilities are?

I think with disability it is huge to feel part of the class and I don't think they feel they should be treated any differently, that's why they are in a mainstream school. I think when they come here and they see that things are set up for them and their disability and they are encouraged to do it, its huge for not only them but for their parents also, for their parents friends who will talk about this school and so on and on the opposite side where it is not encouraged but discourage, sure everyone talks and things grow legs. Because they are encouraged and made to feel part of the class group then that looks good on our school.

This school seems to have a few students with disabilities other than learning disabilities; can you explain what disabilities you are dealing with?

We have one student in a wheelchair and one that uses crutches. We also have a student with Asperger's Syndrome and a kid with a brain injury who has lost power on his left side. This kid did the bleep test with me last week and I was shocked because his left leg trailing behind him and he went as far as if not further that a lot of the able bodied students. He is not looking for sympathy "look at me I am participating" he just want to participate, which I think is a great thing. We have a kid here that the other PE teacher teaches and she would adapt everything for him, basketball and football.

What do you think are the major barriers that children with disabilities face?

I think adequate training for the teachers as well as lack of adapted equipment. For example with basketball or football all the equipment is standard, nothing is modified at all. Maybe just equipment in that sense. Our classes are scheduled together where one group is in the hall for half the year and the other half they are in the playing field. The student that we have with Spina Bifida who is in a wheelchair cannot access the playing field so is restricted to the yard when his class are due to be in playing field. There is no lift to the gym upstairs so he can't even go up there and use the equipment so he is limited to the yard.

Do you think there is sufficient time given to Physical Education during the academic year?

No, not remotely. The PE department of Ireland recommend 2 hours a week. We do an hour and 16 mins, which is 2 classes a week. They come in here, it takes them 6-10 mins to get ready and 10-15 mins to have a shower afterwards, which only leaves 45 mins of PE a week which is nothing, it's a joke. It just shows me exactly what is thought of PE in this country. In America, the students had PE everyday for about an hour, hour and a half every day. It is taken as an elective so you have to do it and others can specialise in it and take more classes, if they are into to sport they can focus more

on PE. I think a lot depends on the principle, in the Good Council in New Ross they have 4 classes a week of PE for every class, for everybody, which works out at about 3 hours a week. Every week from 1st year to 6th year they all get 4 classes of PE a week. In this school, which is VEC run, if they wanted to offer that much PE a week they would have to hire another PE teacher, which would mean cuts would have to be made somewhere else.

I think people forget the offset benefits that PE can have especially in a school, for example helping with behaviour and concentration.

I think your right but not only that, it just goes to show that when I'm out sick, they will take someone in that has no PE experience or qualifications and he/she will come in and throw them a ball and that's the attitude all around. I think they see this as a handy job, what are you worried about, look at you. I think some PE teachers give the job a bad name by just coming in and just throwing the kids a ball and letting them get on with it. I would tend to go the opposite and do a wee bit extra. If they leave here with the knowledge to set up a programme for themselves, either to lose weight, get fit or so on, that's my whole area. Beside how many of them are going to join a basketball team, that's only a minority of them who are into that. The others I'm happy if they leave here with the understanding about fitness for life, that's the most important thing.

You said you do a bleep test with all the students?

The inspector who came in here rapped me for that. We got our subject inspected as you do. I do BMI, lung volume, blood pressure, height, weight, bleep test, he disagreed with fitness testing the students and I try to get across, hold on a second here, what do you want. He thinks that we are emotionally affecting them in front of their peers. I said let's get something straight. I'm not in there putting a gun to their heads; I encourage them to do their best. They start there and then they work from that. I'm there to help them and cater for them and their parents. What do you want me to do? I'm trying to help them and I got rapped for that! I expect them all to do the bleep test but with the height and the weight, I know a lot of them are overweight but I understand that. I encourage them but I don't put a gun to their heads, I don't say you have to do it. I take their height and weight and I chart it for them and with a chart like that they can see their progress.

Is this done for the kids with disabilities?

Oh yes, it's done with everyone. There is some stuff they cannot do but I get them to do what they can. I take blood pressure, sit and reach all the basic core fitness tests that you can do. I concentrate more on all that with the 4th years.

Do you get extra time with the 4th years?

Yes, funny enough the last principal that was here, I sat down with him and told him what we can do, so they get 3 classes of PE a week. It is rotated, they do a triple with me on a Wednesday morning and I do all the core fitness work with them, cardiovascular endurance etc. and then we test it all. After that then they get their horse riding and surfing. Last year we had a young fella in transition year that went horse riding, he had Spina Bifida so they strapped him in on the horse and he was delighted that he could be involved and he loved it.

They would have 4 classes on a Tuesday so they could do all those activities. There is a massive push on PE in 4th year and then come 5th year they are back to square one again.

Do 5th and 6th years have PE?

This year the way he worked it is that there are 3 classes fired into 2 so we have 50 students here in the hall together on a Monday, which is ridiculous, it's just a way of saving and buying time. The biggest problem this year for the principal was that most of the 6th years were sporty so you couldn't not give them any PE. They have the option of going to a study class but so many of them are in to sports that we have huge numbers for those classes.

So in 6th year if you do not want to do PE then you don't have to?

Ya, your right. That's just the way it is in this school and in most of the schools in this country. I think that is the way in a lot of girl's schools especially. What kind of message is that to be sending to people at that age! Especially in this day and age when obesity is rampant in our young kids. Sure look at the amount of places and schools in this country that do not have a gym or even a yard that is suitable for PE. Some of this stems from primary school. Some primary school are so over crowded that they have take their yard or PE area and turn it into classrooms. The primary school teachers don't mind because most of them don't want to teach PE and are not trained to do so. If they are not into sports then the kids don't get out the door.

If this is the case, what about the kids with a disability?

They just fall through the system and that's just the way at that's the way it will be until such a time that someone says enough's enough and starts to fund it properly.

Does anyone come in to facilitate the teaching of any classes?

We have rugby development officers, we have a guy that does self-defence and we have people that come in to do extracurricular stuff and they get paid to do that. We have a girl that comes in and does basketball. She does it with the girls and I do it with the boys, it's funny, she gets paid and I don't! That's just the way.

Of the people who come in to the school do you think or know if any of them are trained to work and deal with kids with disabilities?

Well the girl that does basketball is in China at the moment with the Special Olympics. She would be but a lot of them would not know what to do at all. They wouldn't remotely know what to do with them. No idea how to adapt or modify the games for them. The kids with disabilities would be sitting in the corner because they wouldn't have a clue on how to adapt the game for them.

You agreed that students with disabilities participate equally in PE in this school.

Yes, I mean they are not and don't be excluded. There is a list a mile long of all the students with disabilities that go to this school. The most of them have emotional or behavioural problems. Actually the last school I was in they offered them more PE, they offered them 4 classes of PE a week instead of metal work where they could stab somebody. It makes more sense. These kids with those kind of problems should be out running about. What I do when they come is play a game of tag and let them run riot around the place and then after that you can focus them in the attention span is better. But they do, with the physical disabilities here they are not omitted at all, they are all encouraged.

Do they all have equal access bar to the field and upstairs.

Yes, the guy in the wheelchair cannot get to the field or to the gym upstairs.

Do you think they will ever make those facilities accessible to them?

Well they are after putting a lift in over in the school to the music room, there are only a few steps, a ramp would have done. He got the funding to do it and there isn't even any music in that room this year.

Do you think they will put in a lift in the sports hall?

No I can't see it happening.

Would it be feasible to move some of the equipment from upstairs to downstairs so the student in the wheelchair could use it?

No, I can't see it. Maybe the rowing machine which would be all arm work but no I don't see it happening.

Do you think students with disabilities learn more from an integrated or segregated learning environment?

I think it depends maybe. I think there should be a bit of both. There are probably some things that they may not be able to do and need more time in a segregated environment to work on them. I don't think that is accommodation. In an hour and 1 minute you have one kid that needs extra attention and then the teacher has 20 other kids, it's very difficult. I think they would need to have more time allocated, now with special needs, the kids that we have, don't have special needs assistants - they are mainly with kids who have emotional and behavioural problems. So there would not be anyone to help while teaching PE.

Do the kids with disabilities change for PE by themselves?

Ya, we used to have a kid who was on crutches and we used to let him change in our room, which I don't think was right as it is a cramped little hole and probably felt very uncomfortable being in there. I'm easy going and it was no problem with me but just don't think he really wanted to change in there, it just didn't suit him. I don't know where the kid in the wheelchair changes. As far as I know his mother comes in at 11 O'clock and changes him. There was a toilet done up for him to use and she comes in and changes him for PE.

Does that take up time that is allocated to PE class?

I'm sure it does but I'm not sure, as I don't teach him.

Do you think students with disabilities either physical or intellectual disrupt the harmony of a physical education class?

Without a doubt, I had a lad yesterday who has behavioural problems and he disrupted the class with sexual comments. These students have special needs assistants but in this environment the special needs assistants don't really know what to do so they just stand and watch most of the time. I tell them that I don't need them as I can handle that disruption in a class situation so I just tell them to go on. The attention span of the students just is not there.

How do you think this affects the non-disabled students?

I know they tend to disrupt a lot of the normal classes and the teachers just kick them out because they just don't know how to deal with them. I don't do that I give them lots to do in order to keep them active and keep their attention. In fact the students that get kicked out of other classes come over to me and I include them in my PE classes.

A lot of the students have emotional/behavioural problems or ADHD, the old style of teacher cannot handle them and just give out to them and show them the door. We have had kids here that have been kicked out and left outside the door and the principle wouldn't take the teacher on and tell them that they need to be included. It is a problem and the principle just takes care of them while that class is on and they don't get to participate in that class. Metal work in particular or woodwork are the subjects that they tend to be kicked out of most often and would you believe they come over to me then and I give them extra PE and that is behind the scenes, the principle just doesn't want to know, the vice principle just doesn't want to know and a lot of these students just fall through the system. The SNA will come to me and ask if they can join my class and if I have a class on my own then they is no problem I take them into my classes.

Would there not be issues around insurance for these kids being kicked out of class and just roaming around the school?

It is a big thing we had a lawyer in at the start of the year telling us about duty of care, but I think that is up to the principle to sort out with the teacher. If I'm teaching them I'm not sure what the ins and outs would be but when I'm teaching them I'm here and looking after them and giving them the opportunity to partake in something as opposed to being in a room or being kicked out, good luck.

Do you think the students without disabilities feel resentment toward the disabled students?

I'm sure some do but I think so. I don't see it happening. The classes that they are in plays a big part of it I think.

Are you allowed any extra time to prepare classes that include students with disabilities?

No, not at all. We get planning days to prepare for or normal classes but no extra time for anything different or out of the ordinary. In saying that, I'm not the head PE teacher here so I have to follow what the head PE teacher does and there are class plans there but they are rarely followed, sometimes it's a case of just go in and do whatever you want. Maybe if things were different I could sit down and work things out and get some structure in PE. I kind of do my own thing and follow my own schedule but it can be very difficult when you are timetabled with another class and teacher. Sometimes you may need the hall but have to use the field or court outside so it's very hard to follow a programme over a month or so.

Are you given any help at all with the students with disabilities?

I have not been given any help but maybe the other teachers have, no you are just given your class and told to work away.

Do you converse with other teachers about the students with disabilities?

Yes, but usually it is about negative things like their behaviour and about the trouble they are in. You just handle them and that's it, we are not given any help or guidelines on how to deal with them and their behaviour. We would talk to the SNA's and they would be very good. They would come in and explain bits and pieces to me. Teachers talk anyway but it's usually the negative aspects that are discussed.

Do you feel you need more training and experience with teaching students with disabilities?

I would yes, without a doubt. The training needs to be brought to our attention though. Bring it to the forefront and make it so we get something out of it and that we need to go on the training courses. If I was offered courses then I would go on them but I have not really seen anything on offer and anything I did see I would have to travel a long distance to get to them,

Do all students with disabilities have a special needs assistant?

No, not all of them. They get funding so my understanding is that they are assessed and they will come up with the disability they have and then it's all based on that. We have 3 new SNA's this year which make 7-8 in total. They tend to stay with them from first year to fifth year, we have a student with Asperger's and he has his SNA with him all the time.

Do the SNA's take part in the physical education classes?

They can but they don't.

They don't by your choice or by their choice?

By my choice.

Do you think they are more of a hindrance than a help?

For me yes. I would rather not have them there. They don't really have any training in PE, maybe they have some first aid but I don't know. I don't need them; if I wasn't able for the kids then I think it would be time for me to retire! Its mainly kids with emotional disabilities that I have in my classes, and I can deal with them.

Do the students with disabilities have Individual Education Plans (IEP's)?

No, not at all. I do some programmes for some students and we would work on them in lunchtime, but I was not getting help from management so I couldn't continue.

Do you use any facilities outside school grounds?

We use Kilbarry for Pitch and Putt. The transition years go swimming in Splashworld and they can go to classes there also like Salsa dancing and they go horse riding. We go away for outdoor education usually once a year. The first years go quad biking and paint balling. They get a good bit but not enough of the outdoor education.

Do you go swimming?

We try to get them in swimming but it was really hard to get a slot in the pool. They usually accommodate the primary schools first and WIT and then we were lucky enough this year to get in with 6th years, they have a double class on a Monday. It's never set so we work from year to year and do our best.

As regards to funding is there money available for equipment or to buy modified equipment or to change the facilities you have?

I'm sure there is but we would never really hear about it. We have a PE budget every year and we just put an order in and you get the stuff but with the equipment up stairs in the gym we got that sorted out 5 years ago and we need new equipment now but the money is being spent on other things like "windows", cosmetic things. PE is not really a priority, but in fairness in comparison to other school or facilities are not bad at all. We have a good variety. Those that don't like team sports and games can use the gym and vice versa.

Body image is a big thing that needs to be dealt with. I find those that have low ability at sports tend to have low self-esteem and poor body image. Especially the girls, they don't want to participate in the games or activities or they don't want to even change in front of others, they want to go into the toilet and change. It's definitely an area that needs to be worked on.

Is it predominately girls or boys with disabilities in this school?

Boys. Mostly boys. There is a list of all the kids with disabilities and what disabilities they have. A psychologist or someone assesses them, which is good for us as we get funding for each student then and they will get their SNA. We are given the list of students with disabilities but no help. With this all the teachers know who the students are so if they are disrupting class or climbing walls we know there is a reason for it. But we are not given much help on how to go from there!

The lady that is involved who is a special needs teacher she would have made up the list of all the students with disabilities in the school.

So you are saying that you are given no help, no encouragement, no accessible facilities, and no help with programming or planning?

Yes – we are given no help

The JCP programme for junior certs they give a handout on kids with disabilities and sports, but I never see it and if I see it I see it on the 28th of May because she needs to get it done. She does not come around and say can we do this, this and this.

There would be the odd meeting with her but it's a case come if you're free, but most of the time I'm not free because I'm teaching. It's not compulsory and you're expected to go to most of these things on your free time. There are few coordination meeting but the likes of sports and SPHE (which I also teach) are way down on the list of priorities and don't get looked at, at all. With the JCP programme things are not coordinated properly from the top down.

Do you think PE will ever become an examinable subject?

Well the inspector told me that it would be September 2010 when it will become a leaving cert subject, optional subject. There was a junior cert syllabus that was out and piloted the last couple of years but I went to the principle (the other PE teacher had no interest in doing this programme) and told him I would like to do this, he said he would give me a first year class to do this and I was like so you are going to give me one class to do all this work with while the other PE teacher does nothing and all the other classes don't get to do it either! The other PE teacher is near retirement and just doesn't want to do it, why put in all this work only to be leaving in a few years. He annoys me when PE is not taken seriously or people not wanting to try new things to make the programme in our school better. I called the lady who is over this programme and explained the situation and she could not believe that a teacher was dictating to the principal and no the other way around. When the inspector came into this school he couldn't believe a school of this size and facilities did not avail of the new pilot programme, and I just sat there and had to listen to this when I had gone to the principle and asked to do it and we didn't because he wouldn't make the other PE teacher so the programme.

With this kind of attitude towards PE it's no wonder someone with a disability gets lost along the way.

Totally Junior cycle programme, only given it on the 28th of May so it's a case of we must get this done, but that's no good to me.

You have been teaching PE for 19 years, have you been in this school for all that time?

No I spent 2 years in one school and 5 in another before I can here and I'm teaching 12 years here.

Are you the only PE teacher in the school?

No, there are two full time PE teachers and we have a part time person who is not a qualified PE teacher but has qualifications in different coaching courses and she assists us in some PE areas. She would not take a PE class on her own. She might be the person, especially if there is a person who has difficulties in the class, she would be assigned to the PE class, to assist with that class or person. She might be the special needs assistant with that class group because usually with a person with disabilities they would have a special needs assistant so she would be in PE class as she would in any other class.

The other PE teacher is also a full time PE teacher!

Yes, she is a full time PE teacher who qualified abroad but has been teaching in Ireland all the time.

There are quite a lot of children with disabilities in the school.

I found it hard to know exactly what disabilities the kids had. We have an awful lot of children with intellectual or learning disabilities; we have someone in a wheelchair and visual impairments also. We would be designated as a disadvantaged school so we would have a catchment area and disadvantaged area which has a lot of children who would be bad attenders and early school leavers, would have anger management problems so therefore they would be assessed, usually a lot of them would have been assessed in the primary school but then we would assess quite a number and we would usually assess about 6-8 a year but we could assess another 6-8 a year, is what I was told from the learning support group when I enquired in order to fill out the questionnaire. The learning support group told me that we would have roughly 8-9 with learning difficulties within each group, which would lead sometimes to 4,5 of them, depending on the year group, having behavioural difficulties as a result of their learning difficulties.

Do you think that the learning difficulties interfere or interrupt learning specifically on how they learn or participate or integrate in PE class?

Yes, definitely. I would find that the old form of thinking would have been that if you were bad in school, non- academic, that you would have been good at Art, Home Economics and PE, which I feel could not be further from the truth, because I have found that girls with learning difficulties find it difficult in an environment in the PE hall where it is an open forum, where they have very low self esteem, will have a negative body image and will have a level of knowing that they are unable to do things within the school environment so therefore you have all of those coupled with the fact that PE is a physical thing and a lot of the time, a generalisation I am making, is that I would find that people with academic inability would also have physical disabilities also and that would be a cross over. I would also see that going into school teams that kids who have learning difficulties find it hard to cope in team games under pressure, when they have to score or something like that, it's their coping skills within the PE environment is what they can't deal with or cope with at all.

Would they have problems with instructions or cues?

Sometimes, depending on how severe the learning difficulties would be, yes you would have that, definitely.

Would you have any kids with Down Syndrome?

No we don't.

The girl that has the physical disability, do you know why she is in the wheelchair? Was it an acquired or congenital disability?

I don't know actually, I think it is from birth, maybe Spina Bifida, but I'm not sure, as she is not in my class group.

You also have a student with sensory disability, is that visually or hearing impaired?

Yes, visually impaired, she is very strongly impaired, I don't teach her, but she has a laptop that she used in class. She has severe learning difficulties as a result of her visual impairment, but she has also a very weak learning ability. She has severe learning difficulties also with her visual impairment.

Does she participate in physical activity?

She does but she has huge behavioural difficulties as well so she is severely aggressive.

Do you think that is because of her visual impairment?

It is an accumulation of all the circumstances that she finds herself in and all the difficulties that she has, she hates PE with a passion and is frustrated by the lack of ability to get involved, so she more often than not does not bring her PE gear and opts out or leaves the premises.

Has there been any help given to her to help with inclusion in the PE class?

Yes there has, she has an SNA all the time with her as does the girl in the wheelchair. That means that she has a one to one assistant with her all the time in every single class group, at lunchtime, to move her from place to place and to go with her wherever she needs to go.

The first year who is in the wheelchair is very positive towards the involvement of the SNA but the 3rd year person (visually impaired) is completely, very aggressive towards the SNA and very abusive, verbally, has hit out at her, lashed out at her and has huge behavioural problems dealing with the SNA which in itself creates another problem, so she has severe problems which you know run into PE and to be honest I know that she only participates in about 10% of the PE classes because of frustration and her inabilities.

You didn't get any formal teaching in APA while at college.

No, it did come up at the Junior Cert in service that we had last November, that it is one of the areas that the group from Wexford, Waterford, Kilkenny – it was high on the priority list of what PE teachers wanted from in service. It was kind of unanimous – they want, need for it and it was felt that no one has had formal training. It would be nice to be able to have some sort of formal structure in that area.

Structured Guidelines?

Yes, what we should do or shouldn't do, what is acceptable, what is healthy and safe to do.

Is the girl in the wheelchair ever taken out for PE?

No. She has a changing bed and a catheter so she has severe physical disabilities.

So she wouldn't have any ability to walk.

No. Her parents come in twice a day to empty her catheter. She has a changing room with a hoist bed, which was got during the summer so to enable her to come to school.

Where did the funding come from?

The funding came from the DS due to immense lobbying from the primary school, our school and the parents. It was a lot of work to get it done.

During college you worked voluntary with people with disabilities?

Yes, it was voluntary. It involved going out and assisting one of our lecturers who was doing a thesis on working with people with disabilities and that was back in 1985 which was a long time ago.

So it was by chance that you got the opportunity to work with people with disabilities.

Yes, by chance, and yet volunteering, we were in the year group that was asked were we interested so we just went along.

What do you think you gained from that voluntary interaction with people with disabilities?

I suppose it gave me an insight into working with people with disabilities. I wouldn't have had any family that would have had disabilities other than my Down Syndrome cousin who participated in the Special Olympics in Beijing and I would know him quite well. As regards to doing physical activity with people with difficulties I would have no formal training nor interaction with anyone with a disability so it gave me an insight but nothing that would help me to go on and teach adapted physical education or physical activity. But where I did the voluntary work was a place where everyone had a disability, it was segregated, special education, you were not talking about the normal school environment where the vast majority are fine and the minority had disabilities or difficulties.

Some of the Belmont service users come in and do some physical activity with the transition year students. Can you tell me what is involved with that?

That programme has been running in the school for a long time, which was set up by another teacher who used to teach here, over 16 years ago. So what happens is in transition year we do an integrated PE programme, where Susan Mc Gill from Brothers of Charity brings over service users during PE times and half the class do an integrated PE class of games, challenges, they go to Belmont, they go bowling, they go on a beach walk, they go, sometimes depending on weather and time a hill walk with the service users in Belmont and we also give those transition year students the opportunity to volunteer their services to help out with the Special Olympics. Our TY programme consists of a certificate, achieved by 90% attendance and participation in PE class – that's a level 4. Level 3 is participation in all PE classes combined with a project on some PE area. Level 2 is the second highest where you do an hour of sport outside school and keep a diary for the year of the sport or recreational activity, which is signed by someone outside the school, combined with levels 3 and 4. Level 1 - highest level, distinction certificate is the other 3 levels as well as a voluntary hour given to some community-based activity, sport wise or recreation. We give the students an opportunity and Susan McGill works with them and assigns them a time because they do a lot of their training here in our PE hall on Mondays and Saturdays. So there is an overlap so they can be here in school with the Special Olympics group from 6-7 or 7-8pm. So they do half their PE class with Belmont and the other half is a weights training programme which is not integrated, it's purely on their own. The decision not to do the weight training programme with the Belmont service users was because, back a long time ago it was felt that we were not equipped in knowledge to know what the service users would be able to do or not be able to do and that has not change. It probably needs to be re-looked at.

There can be a lot of medical issues that need to be looked at and may not always be disclosed to you.

Well that's our biggest problem and concern; it was a health and safety issue rather than a decision not to have the weights programme integrated. But the other programme works well and it does give the students an insight into people with disabilities. Some of them would never have known anyone with a disability. There is a lot of socialisation with the programme because a lot of the students would be afraid, would have a negative approach to it, but I think all in all it is definitely a positive thing and it does enhance the students ability to integrate or mingle with people with disabilities. We have a Belmont party then at Christmas, where we have a party and but on a bit of a show and we sing, have sweet and some dancing as well. I feel that this is a very strong part of our PE programme.

Do you think that influences how the girls see their fellow classmates with disabilities?

It would definitely. They see them as people that are not as different as they think they are, because I think in first year there is a shunning off of people unless they had been with that girl all the way up from primary school, where now you don't notice the difference and there would definitely be some girls who wouldn't have a clue about someone with a disability, or even know how to talk to the person. It is great to see at our party, people going over and doing games and dancing with them and they sing. Our girls sing and they sign and thing year one of our girls and one of the Belmont service users sang a song together, so it definitely enhances their ability to accept and integrate with people with special needs.

Would you see a big difference from 1st – 3rd and then after they have finished transition year?

I think its 99.9% positive in giving our students a more informed idea about people with disabilities. There are problems with it don't get me wrong. There has been students who have refused at the beginning to do the programme. We have encouraged them and met with the parents and tried and get them around. Sometime you would have the family background the same. Sometimes this can happen when there is a family member who has a disability. It happened once to me about 4-5years ago where there was a brother who was a service user in Belmont but was living in all the time and she couldn't cope with dealing with the class as her family didn't really interact a lot with the brother. But there were others who had a sister, brother, first cousin who would be hugely involved and know and be really good in the PE class and small things like when they are jogging around to warm up that they pair up with someone and talk to them. I do think its down to personality and being able to cope as well as their own self-esteem and maturation.

For working within this programme you became more aware of your inadequacies in dealing with the area of special needs.

Susan McGill usually takes the integrated programme part and the PE teacher takes the weights training programme at the same time, as we would have too many students otherwise. But there have been times were we would put them altogether and I would find my lack of knowledge in the area would hinder me in trying to cope.

Have you had any opportunity to overcome those inadequacies?

Well only through doing some of the classes year in and year out, and watching Susan and gaining experience and knowing what you can't do and kind of trying to adapt things depending on who is in front of you. We used to have more severe clients coming in and we found that was causing difficulties. In this day and age I think there is

we had to have more moderately to mild people come in and less older people. In the beginning when I started here 12 years ago we would have had older Down Syndrome clients, we would have had a lot of male clients who would have been in their 50's and we found that the girls coped less well with those. So there was kind of a decision 7-8 years ago made by Susan McGill that it should be more mild to moderate disabilities that the girls work with. There was too much of a divide between 16 year olds and fifty year olds.

A lot of student's years ago would have grown up in a school environment where nobody would have had a disability and its only now in secondary schools that we are beginning to have them, because I think it's only in the last 8-9 years that we have had students with disabilities attending our school. Having a disability is only evident in the wider society in the last 10 years. It was in its own package over there and you only had to deal with it if it was at your doorstep in your family. I do think the Department of Education is severely lacking in all its structures for primary school, not only in PE but in the whole wider issue of education, by definitely integrate, I have no problem with integration but now I think the resources are not there. I know from my own child who is 4th class and she has two special needs assistants in her classroom. There is a Down Syndrome child and a child with severe Spina Bifida and has since primary school. There are 37 in the class and the teacher tells me at parent teacher meetings that she is not able to cope and I could understand her. She said that she was taught to teach the mainstream, like myself, now she has 2 SNA which totally changes the dynamic of the classroom, two adults, she has two special needs students and she says now those two in all her plans dictate, and she says that is the way it is so she can cope, because she has no other coping skills. She has tried to set the general, what she has to teach but all the time the two students, not through any personal thing of their own, they influence strongly her plans for everything. So she said, "Am I teaching the student? Definitely the high flyer is not being taught in my class, the lower end of the learning difficulties gets some resources but I'm pitching it I don't know where" and that's what she said. "I'm strangled here with 37" and that's her situation in her class. It's crazy, 3rd and 4th class together, no one is happy, but what do you do. Resources are a huge thing. I agree with integration, I agree with it in secondary school, the secondary system is even worse because the SNA's are not as accepted by the general student body as they are in primary school. The students themselves know that the SNA is not a teacher and they don't want the SNA helping them, they want the teacher. So the SNA is there just as sometimes a person who is available to help out but after they have helped the student still wants the teacher to go back and check what was done.

Are the teachers trained to deal with SNA's.

No, we have not gotten any training on how to work with an SNA. The SNA is given his/her contract outlining what her job is and the teacher is just told you have an SNA in your class at this time, this time and this time and that's it. That's the bottom line.

Do you have SNA's in your physical education classes?

Yes in 5th year but there are a lot of SNA's throughout the junior cycle classes.

Do you find your SNA is open to doing physical education? Does he/she interact with the group?

Interact, yes, but their general knowledge of PE would be limited and would see it as whistle and ball and don't understand the reasoning behind PE. I have heard comments "Oh they were sitting down for a lot of it or they were doing the same thing a lot of the time, they should have had the game for longer at the end of the class". They are saying what they think PE class should be and they don't understand the different activities, skill breakdown, other aspects or areas of PE. They don't understand what PE is about, they expect, like 90% of the population that PE is just games or running around. You have that uninformed person in your classroom to deal with as well as - so you are trying to make the class sometimes pleasing or positive in their eyes sometimes, because they are the adult looking on in your class. It's a pressure that is added and you try to - well you do your own thing but you still have that impact in there.

The SNA - they just come in and sit down and what they tend to do is give out to the students who aren't participating in our class for numerous reasons. They get PE articles to summarise so she will go and immediately get those articles and will go around and give them out to the three or four that aren't participating, she will bring out the equipment and open the changing rooms. She does not have her own ability to be active within the class. It is the lack of training on both the PE and SNA.

Did you complete and workshops in APA or special needs?

No, I didn't. I have attended all the PE in services that have been on and they has always been a 5-10 minute little bit of how we would adapt this to and it is discussed but I have not attended any workshops.

Has anything ever come to the school that has been offered to you as a physical education teacher to help you with children with disabilities?

No, not yet.

Would you attend workshops?

Yes, definitely.

In Q14 which of those would now benefit you the most?

Professional development and in service, someone coming into my class and offering advice, opportunities to liaise with other teachers – definitely.

I was speaking to a lady I know who works in St Martin's special school and I ran into her a couple of weeks ago and said to her "I must meet you sometime to get some ideas on what you're doing in your PE". But she works in a special school so there would be a variety of disabilities. It would be just to get some ideas from her to use.

Do you think the school her would be open to yourself and the other PE teacher to inviting people in to help you?

Oh absolutely, there is never a problem here in regards to getting help to improve the situation with our students.

None has been done as of yet?

No, the reason being is that we haven't asked for it because we have no one to ask. If I knew there was someone who could come in and look at my situation and our school in regards to our disabilities and learn how to cope with them then yes I could ask the school can I do this and I would imagine that there would be no problem.

So you're saying that the biggest part of the problem is not knowing where to go for help.

Yes that what I'm saying, where is out there? Where are the specialism's? Where are the people who are working in this area adapting the general PE programmes that are in schools? We have a new Junior Cycle PE programme that is lovely and binded with beautiful ideas.

Are there not guidelines for working with people with disabilities in the new programme?

There are at the back, but we didn't actually do any adapted games. We spent loads of time on the programme for health related fitness but never was there a mention of any special needs students. We did 5 in services and its only been a verbal add on, yes they told us it's in your package, it's there but really there was no one person telling what we should do or shouldn't do or no half day even given to it. I felt after 19 years of teaching the stuff that it was ad hoc some of it and I felt that the people who were newly qualified in the last 3-5 years must have really thought the whole programme was so basic. I could remember doing it and that was 20 years ago, so it hasn't changed. New

ideas maybe but the general consensus is that it is the same way it's always been. That's what I felt about it that it's just a reminder of what was in this and this and that. For me it was probably of benefit, to change slightly a few things that I do, but in general the whole objectives and aims were the same. (*talking about what went on at in service*)

Most of the students get approximately an hour and 14 minutes for PE.

Yes they get a double class a week from 1st year to 6th year.

But realistically get only get about 50-60minutes.

Yes because of changing on both sides. We have two good changing rooms. They don't shower but I suppose we really have about 50 minutes of physical activity for the hour and 14 minutes, you might get 60 minutes if you have a class either side of lunch break but the majority of the classes are 50-60 minutes of physical activity.

Would you consider that adequate?

Oh no, I think for a secondary school we are lucky, most of the schools around have only a single class. We are not doing too bad on the overall picture but of course you want more. Our 5th and 6th years are all together at the same time. We have 54 fifth years and we have 52 6th years so we have 3 people in at that time. Our senior cycle programme would be in house based activities which would be games, toning, body conditioning, aerobics and an outside activity which they contribute to (money wise). Whether it is going to Waterford Crystal gym and health and fitness centre, whether we have someone come in and do yoga, we have someone who comes in and does cardio kick boxing which are 5-6 week slots so we try always to have something available recreationally, physically in the community. It gives them and insight into Pilates, this year we are going down to the new Kingfisher gym, with the 6th years, they won't allow us use the gym, but they are going to give us a taster class in Swiss ball, spinning, boxercise, thaibo, step aerobics. Its €5 a head for the students. At least it is giving the students an opportunity to leave school and say we went go to a Pilates class – at least they will know what it is and have done a class or 6 weeks of it at some stage. Our general senior cycle programme is that. It works well and it is good.

At that stage I think they like the change.

Oh yes, at that stage they are fed up of you number one, having had you for 4 years and two it's nice to get someone who is a professional in a certain area where you wouldn't have those expertise. It is good to show them the other things that are available. I think that they should have more but our school is adamant that our 5th and 6th year programme is mandatory. It isn't a choice. So 6th years don't have a choice not to come to PE but there are sometimes you would like to throw 12 or 13 of them out because they don't bring their gear and cause more hardship than anything.

Especially being a girl's school, and at that age, body image and weight are major issues. The activities that you are doing with them give them the opportunity to have the information in order to do some of the exercises themselves in the future.

Yes, giving them the encouragement to have the competence to actually go in and join a gym, or those sorts of things. I think they are very important especially as I have found in the last 5 years, by first year you have a group that had very strong problems with body image and self esteem. Whereas 10 years ago I don't think you have the same problems as much with first years and second years but it is coming. You have this lack of wanting to participate because of earlier puberty, hormones, all those things are happening earlier and that is effecting because of the limited availability of PE and structured PE by professionals in primary school. These problems are not being dealt with so you are get the pull back from it and then you have into secondary school the problems and they are there from first year.

Do you think you will get more PE in your school programme?

No, because we are lucky to have what we have and maintain what we have but the new subjects at junior cert level like CSPE and SPHE and because we are a religious school we have our religion that we need to have some many classes that our timetable is already stretched to the ultimate.

Do you think PE will become a leaving cert subject?

Here? Depends, we would have good resources in regards to a hall and that but we would not have access to the aquatics or that area. Resources and money would be a problem. I don't think I would be in favour of it even because of the lack of resources by the Department of Education. They are putting it out there but they are not funding it adequately at all, so why try and fill a void that is there to have PE as a leaving cert subject or whatever but trying to do it with limited resources and limited back up is ridiculous so I would not be in favour of it.

What do you think would be the three biggest barriers to physical education for your students with disabilities?

Barriers – my inadequacies to adapt courses in each year. That would be a huge one. If I can't adapt the programme then they can't get involved so that's a huge thing. If I have a limited understanding of their actual disabilities also, medically and safety wise, I am reluctant to try and model something about them unless I have very clear, definite input into the programme, so that would be another huge thing. Another thing I suppose as well is not having enough knowledge on disabilities in general and specifics to involve them and I suppose sometimes having to work around that person a lot more then the others are sometime neglected, I'm not sure because of my inabilities.

What do you think are the three biggest benefits would be for those kids with disabilities to participate in physical education?

Oh, the same as what the other kids would benefit from PE. From health issues, from enjoyment, from getting fitness, from social aspects of interaction with others through the medium of recreation and physical activities, from feeling able, from giving them a positive body image, from being able to do things and interact and all that. There are loads to be benefited just like all the other kids.

You said students in your school participate equally in physical education except for those with emotional or behavioural disabilities – they are not equally involved?

No, because their behavioural difficulties are hugely noticeable in PE. If you're asking them to run around for a warm up they are pushing and shoving, spitting, they are aggressive, they find it hard in open spaces. They seem to just go berserk sometimes in PE in the open spaces and therefore I find that they are not able to cope.

They are not able to understand the social rules that surround PE?

Yes, that is it. I mean it's hard enough for them in the classroom where there are in a 4 X 4 walls, sitting down - they can't behave and then you give them that open space! I mean you have that spitting and pushing and shoving when they are running around and when you are doing basketball, they will keep the basketball. They don't do anything civilly; they do everything with the height of aggression and kicking the ball and when they pass the ball they lash it.

Do you think that is entirely down to their disability?

I think it's a combination of everything – (home environment and their disability). They have never learnt how to do lot of things. They would be poor school attenders; socially they wouldn't be involved in many physical clubs outside school, they would find it hard, they speak with aggression, you ask them to warm up and stretch, they won't stretch properly and when you correct them and tell them how to stretch properly, they go into a bit rant. Saying, "I was doing that" and there is argy bargy and that is constant with children with behavioural difficulties, and it is highlighted in PE. Sometimes you prefer that they didn't take part because it's easier have the class, you can just continue. They create problems from the word go, they come in without their gear. They forget their gear. They won't sit and write things for you and if they are taking part, they are taking part under their set of in abilities to follow the social rules of a classroom.

How do you think the other students react to that?

It is a disturbance, they are fed up with it, and they find it hard to cope with their classes being held up. They are constantly hearing this giving out and argy bargy, but PE - that's supposed to be fun and enjoyment and there again you have these kids who are unfortunately because of their inability to - and it depends, last week they have been dreadful because after the Christmas holiday where there has been over indulgence and loads of things and they are hungry and that's the reality, so January is always a tough month.

Are you given any extra time to prepare your classes that have students with disabilities?

No, nothing extra at all.

Are you given any help in regards knowing about the disabilities that you are dealing with in your classes? Learning resources, parents other sources?

The people who do out the IEP's would come to you and say her IEP is in there and her assessment is there and you would have to go in your own time and read it and if you have any problems then you can go to the learning support who will go to the parents and come back to you.

So you would not have any involvement in the development of an IEP?

They will give you what they think a person should achieve in your PE class.

So they don't ask you what you think they would be able to achieve or what you think they should do.

That's what I'm saying. I have to set their goals but I'm setting them from what level? From what I have read, the assessment, from what I have learnt from speaking to the resource teacher and what is written up in the file about her disability. So then it is up to me to set the goals, whether it is to attend all PE classes, whether it is to do a warm up, I'm starting from an empty void here so really I generalise.

The goals that you set – do you do that on your own?

Yes, but there are sometimes meeting about a particular child where they come together to look at the IEP and you have some tooting and froing but I have not been involved in any this year.

Would it make it easier for you to be involved In the IEP decision making, goals, information etc..

Yes.

Would it make it easier for you to do out your class plans or sessions if you were involved?

It probably would. I think on the resources we have we do the best we can, but there is no extra time given and there needs to be. There needs to be more of an overall structure of an IEP developed, rather than me in my little vacuum doing PE and someone else doing English and someone else doing Maths. Like really we need to look at when we come together and we look at the IEP then, if we “she should be able for more than this”, we should do this tooting and froing together.

Does the student have an input in the goals that they would like to attain in physical education?

Not with me, no.

That is probably down to the fact that the IEP is not set up where the child, parents, and all teacher involved get together and discuss the goals.

It is more of working from the assessment and where the child is at in the learning support area of the school. I think the parents meet with the learning support but I’m not too sure.

You would not have any interaction with the medical doctor or physio?

No.

Are you given any extra money in your PE budget for adapted equipment?

No

Is there any game or activities you would like to do but can't because of the disabilities you are working with or resources?

Adapting the games I find it very difficult because I have this thing in my own head that might be completely wrong is that I'm doing tokenism, that I am doing a skill at a lower level but really am I teaching a skill at all, for them maybe yes but then its hard to see if I'm teaching volleying and the person is volleying in the wheelchair there is only a limited amount of ability - throwing up and catching, that's my limiting, I'm trying but the games is where I find it most difficult. We have a strong games aspect in our junior cycle. Circuit training is fine because you can adapt across each station.

Have you tried the skills of Volleyball as a circuit?

Yeah but that's only one class so what do you do with the other 5? I would have the circuit mostly with the skills either at the beginning to see where they are at in the sport/skill or to assess at the end what they have learnt from my module of six weeks. That is grand but teaching it through the thing you know it's hard to teach a skill by doing a circuit, I usually use it as an assessment or a method of seeing where the skills performance of my students are at, I wouldn't use it much as a skill learning mechanism. That would be me but I would use circuits an awful lot and I do find that it is easier to use a circuit with a wider range of abilities, because you are able to adapt each station and have three levels at each station. I suppose you could use it as a skill learning mechanism but I find it takes too much organisation and the class is nearly over by the time you get it all sorted. We only have 50 minutes and you want them to be as active as possible in that time.

You have a balcony area where you have weights equipment, when you are using that what does the girl who uses the wheelchair do?

She is only in first year so they don't do weights until TY so I will tell you in three years time ☺

She can't get to the balcony at the moment, that's another issue and we have now another computer room down stairs which is interesting because I think it was in the hindsight that we are.... because our computer room is upstairs and there is no way to get up there bar using the stairs, but now we have a computer room down here.

I see there is a new extension happening?

A new school, a complete new school, all being knocked – a new two storey school

Is there anything happening on the PE side of things?

No that is staying. That is only about 18-20 years old.

Are ye getting any extra facilities?

No. It hasn't become an issue. We probably have as good a gym as you are going to get, unless it is being newly built. We have good equipment and we would have a four badminton court size hall with a balcony which is quite adequate for taking 20 students for aerobics. Our floor isn't in great nick, it is a concrete floor with a top surface, and there are a few cracks in it. We have put in for a new floor but we will have to wait and see if we get it.

Thank you

You have been teaching PE for 8 years, have all those years been here in Waterford?

No. I did my teaching practice in England. I taught in Tramore CBS for a year and have been here for 3 years.

Are you the only PE teacher in the school?

No, there is another PE teacher.

Do you share the PE teaching?

Yes, what we tend to do is when the kids come over we set them based to ability and then they go through the same curriculum. Where we have two teachers who teach two groups per year. For example 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B etc one of us could be inside doing gymnastics and the other outside playing Gaelic Football.

They are timetabled at the same time?

Ya, so the lads do a wider curriculum basically.

It is the same class group split into 2?

Yes, it is based on ability, because I have found in teaching mixed ability PE, the middle kids get lost and the bottom kids, their self esteem gets low because they think they can't do it because they are looking at someone else. Where as if they were with their own ability they look around and say I can do this and everyone else is doing it so I'm ok. You are teaching to one ability level for example in gymnastics we start with counterbalance, counter tension and the better kids will move on from that quicker than the other kids will so they are being taught to their own ability level.

Do you have basic core skills that you assess in order to assess ability?

Yes, we look at flexibility, agility, speed, stamina and core strength, different things like that. Also there is scope that if a kid is in a group where he is better at one sport than another. Rugby would be an example of that where you might have someone who is a

prop or a hooker who is good at rugby so we would get him out for that module and then he would slide back.

Can you explain what disabilities you have in the school?

The disabilities we have in the school are learning disabilities. We have 2 children with physical disabilities and about 10-12 with learning disabilities. Some of those would be in the higher group and some would be in the lower group, so it's mixed across and we take it basically that I take one group and the other teacher takes the other group, then the groups will switch so as teachers we get exposure to both groups.

What type of physical disability do the students have?

One lost a leg due to injury and he uses a prosthesis and the other guy has mild cerebral palsy.

In regards to PE how able are they?

The guy with CP is very able; he gets involved with everything and has a fantastic attitude. The guy who has lost his leg will do as much as he can do. He is very involved and very enthusiastic. If there is something he can't do then he won't do it but it's never been a problem. He does get a bit de-motivated at times but we just talk to him and get him on track again. He did have problems with his weight but that's all on track now and he is much more confident in himself and what he can do. We are looking to getting him involved in Special Olympics athletics and that kind of stuff. I spoke to him at the start and he has an interest in that, so we will try and get him involved. He is very strong and doesn't recognise his own strength so I think he would be good at the shot putt or the javelin.

You studied in Bedford in England. What type of degree did you do?

It was secondary PE and English.

3 years?

No 4 years.

You studied a module on APA while in college; can you tell me what you covered in that module?

Ya I did that in England. We looked at different teaching styles for teaching kids with disabilities. We had to do teaching practice, which I did in Milton Keys in a school for kids with behavioural problems. We were shown the different approaches that were used so it's very interactive teaching more than some lessons would be command style of teaching or reciprocal teaching – this is what I want you to do so go off and do it and come give me some feedback. It would be very basic stuff where you are involving the kids more in their own learning and how they want to do things so they would ask them lots of questions like “how would you do this?” “How would we do that?” “What is the best way” there is a lot of problem solving- this is what we have to do now you go away and think of ways how we can do it. Put them into groups and then get them back to discuss what they came up with.

Did you have a theoretical module on disability?

No we didn't, it was basically go out and get it done. We spent a week to two weeks involved and three to four days of that we shadowed people, talking about how you would deal with people with behavioural difficulties and then we moved on from that with mostly practical.

Do you think it prepared you for teaching kids with disabilities?

It did ya, as I can reflect on what we did and I can use some of the stuff and adapt it into what I want to do so you can break things down a lot easier, you understand more where the kids are coming from, you understand that this one teaching style is not going to work for everybody and you find a balance with them with what they want to do and what makes them happy, because I think those kids who want more ownership over their lesson, the kids with better ability, they want more direction – ok, do this – they want to be tested but with these guys with disabilities - more ownership for them is more enthusiasm for them is something they understand better.

Did you get a chance to work with anyone with a physical disability in your teaching training?

No. We were just placed with a group, some of my class got to work with people with Down syndrome, autism, physical disabilities and learning disabilities and I got a group with behavioural problems.

You haven't taken any adapted physical education or activity courses or you haven't had any specific in service for teaching kids with disabilities. Was it that you haven't had the opportunity to do any or none were made available to you?

Both. In the school I taught in England we had a full special needs department of 7 so with any kids with disabilities in the school and with emotional behaviour, learning difficulties we would have an SNA with us. No one has ever mentioned it or said anything about it here.

Have you ever had the opportunity to do in service here in Ireland?

No, none.

Has there ever been any mention of special needs in service for PE?

No, None. Nothing.

The external consultants that you work with who are they, that come in and help?

We have Ann¹⁴ who is here and Mary as well so if you are having any problems they will come in and say look this is John is in first year ----- comes in and she works with him in class and she will take him out. She is the liaison between John and us and she will say this is what John can do, this is what he can't do, and this is how to approach it. He likes to be outdoors more than indoors, so if we are outdoors he will go out. If his group is indoors and if the activity we are doing is something he likes then he might do that twice, for example Gaelic football was something he liked so when the other group were doing it he did it again.

Does he have a learning disability?

Yes. So it is up to Ann and Mary to let us know how to cope and deal with kids with disabilities and how to be more interactive as well.

You completed a workshop?

That was part of the one I did in England but nothing here in Ireland.

¹⁴ Ann, Mary and John are fictitious names - all names have been changed

Have you completed any formal training in APE?

No

You said that what would suit you best is professional development and in service and you have said that none of that has been made available to you. Would you like to complete any formal training in special education, special needs?

Yes, definitely it's something that they have in England and it can work very well when you have that training. The backup we had in England with the specialist from 7 people was actually fantastic, we don't have that here.

That was in the school you taught in?

Yeah. It is different totally. Here you don't have that; you might have one or two in the school. So to have that here would be fantastic as it would be something I would love to do as it would broaden my teaching ability

You said there was a difference in time between times actually given to PE. Everyone has a double class?

Yeah everyone has a double but transitions years have a double, double. Transition years have a double on a Wednesday and a double again on a Friday.

Do they do anything different?

They do. They start the weights course up stairs. They do a lot more fitness, health related activities. We try and do some teaching and coaching courses as well. They do a hurling course module, a rugby coach module. We are looking to introduce them to badminton coaching and soccer coaching as well. Basically we have some kids in there who are not that keen on PE so it's to get them out of the game structure and into the physical activity, health and recreation and different things like that.

Am I correct in assuming that the difference in time between actual time and allotted time is changing time?

Yeah.

Is there always a class before and after their PE class?

Generally there isn't. There is normally a class before PE class but the principle is very good, like the first years have PE now and then they have break time so we can bring them in a little later. 3rd years and 4th years have PE last class of the day and then that can run into extra circular activities for us as well so we can bring them in a little later as well. 6th years on a Wednesday have a break before their class so they can come over early and get changed so generally they get the full time.

Do students have shower facilities?

Yes

Do you think anything will be done to change the time allocation for PE? But firstly do you think it is a sufficient amount of time they have for PE a week.

It is yeah. Next year it's changing. This year all the second years come up, all the 3rd years come over together and they get divided into groups. Next year there are going to change in that they come over in their class groups but they will still have to same amount of time. They will still have their double class. So there will be fewer students, mixed ability and a double class. So the whole format is going to change. A lot more work for the teacher.

What do you think are the 3 biggest barriers to physical education are for the students with disabilities that you teach?

Resources

School resources or resources from you personally?

Both! We are lucky in the facilities that we have. But if we don't have the pitch we have the hall, and that's it. We don't have another area that we can go to. So school resources, my own ability teaching in that we have had no professional in-service. If there is anything you want to do you have to go talk to someone or go down load it from the internet or something like that, and then practical resources, things we should have on site here, in terms of like different types of games, things like that.

What do you think are the 3 biggest benefits for people with disabilities are for participating in physical education?

Increased self esteem is definitely one, health and fitness, two and social interaction.

With the barriers that you spoke about, with the resources – the in service, the equipment do you think the school will help overcome those barriers?

Definitely, if things are indentified as a need then no problem, no problem at all. We have a lift inside of one student, so any problems like that the school is really good. We are a small school, 240 kids so we can concentrate on ever single kid.

The lift that was installed for one of the students was it the school who did it or was it advocated for by his parents?

No, I think the school did it.

Is it just for rugby that external people come in to the school?

Yeah, we do one sport in extra circular at the moment. I'm part time at the moment so my time is limited as to what I can do after school as I have got other stuff going on outside of school. So we have coaches that come in, we have 2 coaches that come in to the junior team and one coach comes in for the under 14 team. One coach comes in for the senior team as well.

Does anyone come in to help during physical education time?

The senior coach would come in if we are doing rugby, he would come into a couple of modules because he is an RDO as well so he might come in and do some coaching and that.

Anything specific for disability?

No, nothing specific at all, I haven't even heard of anything.

You agreed that students with disabilities participate equally in physical education. Can you explain why you stated that?

Our policy here is that if you're in school you're in kit and we are very understanding towards kids that might not want to do it but we don't do a lot of games. Like if we are indoors we do indoor soccer but we try and do teaching of skills as much as possible, and the fact that we divide them up into groups where hopefully we are increasing confidence and self esteem. I am not very tolerant of someone coming in and saying that I forgot my kit, I did this I did that, so they have to participate in the lesson so they get equal access, equal opportunity and its delivered at their level and it's all about skill and it's all about improving them although they might be doing something that they might not like that if you do it and do it or a couple of weeks you will see that you can do it and get better at it and we try to make it as interactive and enjoyable as possible.

So it's more the individual components of the games rather than just here is the football.

No we don't do any of that, any of that at all.

All students have equal access to PE?

Definitely.

Students with disabilities would learn and benefit more during integrated physical education classes – you agreed expect for physical disabilities.

Yeah because I don't know enough, like I see the student that I have with the physical disability and I say yeah that's grand but then there are times he doesn't really want to do it, like when we are doing indoor soccer then he is fine.

Do you think then that student with disabilities would be more suited to a segregated learning environment or do you think it would be detrimental to their learning?

I think it would be detrimental. I haven't had much experience with it but personally I think it could be detrimental because you are isolating them. They have to integrate into society anyway and I think if they can integrate the pupil working with them have a better understanding and give themselves a better understanding of what to do and how they can do it and it develops a strong bond between the pupils without disabilities with the students who might have a disability in terms of them helping. I saw once case in England when I was doing my teaching practice there was a student with severe cerebral palsy and everyone in the class showed him so much encouragement and help, it was

amazing. If you isolated him with kids who have a disability they wouldn't have that experience so

Do you think students with disabilities disrupt the harmony of your physical education class?

No

Behavioural problems?

Not really but we have a student who gets frustrated and he will go out of the lesson but someone came in and spoke to us about that and the fact that he likes to be outdoors more and at times it does. He has ADD and is on medication for it. Minimal disruption, we have kids that may misbehave and answer back occasionally but no major issues.

Do you think that it's down to the way you structure things or you have just been lucky with the people with disabilities that you have had?

A bit of both, the way we structure things there is no room for the kids to get away with it as they are doing what they want to do where as if you have a mixed ability class and you have five or six kids that couldn't do something no one would set off the other 4 like a chain reaction and we would be given that attention. We are very tolerant of behavioural problems in the class if someone has behavioural problems there is a lot of leniency towards that and we would take them out, give them 5 minutes and then bring them back into the class.

How does that work?

We take them out and give them 5 minutes, we talk to them explain that they are disrupting the class, we would ask them are they ok, can they do this, is there a problem, do you need help with something, if all those answers are I'm fine, I'm ok you will be going back into the class in a moment, take your time, calm down, come back in when you are ready and don't do this again.

What if they do it again?

We take them out, talk to them again, keep them out for longer and say listen you are disrupting the class, this is serious, if you have to be taken out again then you will have to go get changed and sit out for the rest of the lesson.

Even those with ADD

No those with ADD we give them a lot more leniency but we also work more closely with them in the lesson so like if we are doing gymnastics for example, I would be in the corner where they are so, so I would position them where I know I'm going to be so I can spend a lot more time with those guys and keep them on track. With ADD it is a lot of keeping them on track and giving them a lot of praise, using that energy, cos they have loads of energy, so as soon as they finish something I keep them busy and give them three more things to do, therefore not giving them the chance to mess around.

Are you given any extra time to prepare class to deal with students with disabilities?

No, but that's because I only teach 15 hours a week and all my planning and preparation is done on my own time. I'm not given specific planning time within my timetable because I'm not full time.

Does the other PE teacher, who is full time?

Her timetable has 22 hours so the hours outside of that she would be expected to do planning and preparation in that time, but there is no specific time given extra based on who we are teaching.

Do you get any preparation time at all regardless of whether you are part-time/full time?

If you're full time you teach 22 hours out of 30 so the other 8 hours are your prep time.

The contact hours for PE are something like 12 hours and I teach first year English, so that is my contact hours and what I am contracted for. So I could walk in at 9.36am and teach a lesson and walk out at 11 o'clock and walk back in again 1.45pm for English, so any prep that I have to do has to be done outside of those 15 hours.

So you're not given any extra time to plan for students with disabilities

No.

Are you given any help or advice according to the disabilities and what would benefit them in physical education?

Lot of advice from the resource teachers in regards to the kids, communication with them, what they like, don't like and I bring it down to their level in order to deliver the lessons. In relation to physical disabilities no because they don't have a background in PE.

They wouldn't know physically what would benefit them?

Yeah, well, from a general perspective yes but from a PE perspective no.

Do you feel that teaching kids with disabilities increases your workload – you don't get paid for your prep time so does it take even more time to prep a class with students with disabilities in it

It does any way, you prepare your classes and then you have to do more, I have these 3 kids that I have and I have to make sure that they are looked after, also on the other side when I was teaching in England we had really talented kids and you had to prep for them as well, so in your mixed ability your different abilities went from your kids who lets say are uncoordinated, who suffer in PE, on the other side then you have the very able. So you have able, very able and not so able, that's a better way of putting it. So you do your lesson plan and break it down into sections you would have activities for the lesser ability group, the middle group and the talented group like if I was doing Rounders for example I would plan the lesson and then I would have to think about these 4 other kids, and I would have to think about the 4 kids who are on the top of the group as well because if they are finished earlier than everyone else then they are going to start messing because they will get bored waiting for the others.

When you prepare your classes with students with disabilities in it do you gear the class more towards them or would it be for the core and branch off from there?

It would be a core and branch off and hopefully hit somewhere in the middle.

You are lucky in that your classes are divided by ability groups so it is easier?

It is a lot easier, a lot easier.

Do you feel you would need more training and experience in dealing with students with disabilities?

Yes

How do you feel students with disabilities are accepted by their non-disabled peers?

We are a small school, 240 kids everyone gets on with everyone else, there is a very good community spirit among the kids so they always help each other out and get involved.

Have you had any negative experiences?

No.

Do you think that is from the kids themselves or the ethos of the school that is put across to the students?

It comes from the ethos of the school and the kids that we have in this school are good kids, come from good backgrounds, good understanding and because of it being a small school everyone knows everyone in the school, like the first years know the sixth years so there is nobody getting lost and there is a good friendly atmosphere and good ethos.

With the Individual Education Plans, do the students with disabilities in your school have them?

They do.

Are you involved in writing them?

No, the resource teacher does.

From a PE perspective, do they have an IEP for physical education?

No

Will that change?

Yes, I will look into that.

Do your students have SNA's?

Yes, she works with John and Joe as well

Do they help in PE?

No, I just find that in physical education he is grand and at the start the SNA will come over and help John with some stuff, so when every we need her we will say we are doing stuff like gymnastics for example we ask her to come over and give a hand with John. Both she and John are very open to that.

Do the students have individual SNA's?

No they all use the same one. No one is severe enough to need one all the time.

Is her opinion about PE a positive one?

Yes, definitely.

Is she sporty herself?

No, just smart. She sees the benefit of it to them so she is very good in that if there is anything you do need she will come in and give you a hand.

Other than the SNA and resource teachers is there anybody externally involved in the PE of the kids, doctor, physio etc?

No, no one at all

From the IEP have there been recommendations made that transfer over to physical education?

No

Do you get access to the IEP?

Yes

But you don't get to write anything on them?

No

Any reason why?

PE is a non curriculum subject. Like with the SNA's their focus is mainly academic, with kids with disabilities what they look at is getting them through the curricular subjects rather than like PE. Even going back to in service etc, now the perception is changing away from games to actual teaching, like i was taught in England that physical education is education through the physical media of activity, it's both physical, mental, holistic type of thing. Here in Ireland its games and its not perceived as having any benefit curricularly where people involved in PE will say that PE helps with concentration, it's a stress release, it your doing exams etc etc but in relation to the cross over to what people could learn, different teaching strategies, like if you go to any PE department and you go into any other department in the school where kids are giving problems generally those kids won't give problems in PE because it is a different atmosphere, it's a different environment, it's a different contact, its more open, there is less tolerance because its leadership, team work, etc, etc

They are involved in their own learning a bit more

Exactly those benefits are not seen as a cross over so there is no inter curricular learning here yet in relation to PE benefiting other subjects so the IEP are solely centred on the academic stuff.

Is it important that we make children physically literate at a young age to help combat obesity? Do you think a lot of kids in your school would be obese?

It is a rugby school and the fact that kids coming in know that – obesity - there are one or two kids in first year that would be obese but in a school of 240 kids I would say

there are about 10 that you would classify as overweight to obese. What we do see, like in first year this year out of 40 kids there are about 30 whose hand eye coordination is very poor and the ability to catch a ball or kick a ball is very poor. Like if these kids didn't have a good lifestyle and good background behind them then I think there would be a lot more obesity then. They would be eating fatty food and pigging out on chips and things like that but the lifestyle background that they come from would be healthy eating. We see that in England major obese from poor socio economic backgrounds.

You seem very lucky in your school in that you have a small student cohort and good support structures around you to do your job!

Oh yeah, very lucky like in a school with 600 kids it would be a lot different because we would be bursting at the seams, there wouldn't be the support but because of the smaller numbers of the kids it allows us to focus on the different areas that we want to do. We are very much pupil centred in this school.

Is the number of student you take on small by choice or enrolment?

Enrolment, last year we had 56 in second year and third year, we had 38 to 40 in first year we have 56 kids coming in next year.

Do you have the capacity for more students?

Yes we have the capacity for 500. It's just getting them in the door, that's the problem. Its recruitment, it's the curriculum because we have so few kids we don't offer the entire curriculum because we can't we only have 18 teachers, next year we will have 20 and will be 2 over quota. So we are losing geography and we are losing chemistry so if kids want to do chemistry or physics, one of those at leaving cert, they can't because we don't have the teachers to teach it. They won't give you the teacher unless you have the kids. Like we had a PE inspection 4 years ago and the PE inspector came out and said you need another PE teacher so the school applies to the department of education for a PE teacher and the department comes back and say you are over quota so you can't have any extra staff. The school wrote back and said well we had a PE inspection and we were told we need another PE teacher and they just said yeah we know that but you are over quota. The school appealed the decision and eventually they said ok we will give you 11 hours for a PE teacher. We will get 15 hours next year and 22 hours the year after. So this is what we are dealing with from the department. PE is considered a specialist subject therefore you need a specialist teacher.

I was under the assumption that all the basic subject available for leaving cert would be available in all schools regardless.

No, that is not the case; if you don't have the teacher then the subject can't be offered. Your teaching staff is based on the enrolment from the previous year so like this year we had a good amount of teachers we had a lot of concession because so many kids came in the previous year into first year. So the teaching allocation for 08/09 is based on the first year enrolment of 07/08. So it goes back a year. 36 kids came in last year so it is deemed that you don't need the teachers so we are losing 2 full time posts. Well we lost one teacher who changed jobs and went to teach in Thurlus CBS so we got a replacement in for him and that job is not there next year! One other teacher retired and the person you came in to take over their classes is now gone. They are cutting based on the amount of kids we had to the amount of staff that we have. They won't look at it and see that you need to have a PE teacher full time in your school because each school has to have PE teacher, a language teacher, a science teachers, a music teacher, an art teacher, a geography teacher and a history teacher and English teacher. So then they will say look you have a guy who can teach science and maths, another can teach geography and English so you are covered, you have 240 kids, 18 teachers you can cover all these areas so it's up to you now to deal with it. Like I don't have much job security – my job finishes on the last day of august and starts again the following day in 1st of Sept when the school year starts and for the last 2 years it was a phone call from the principal close to that date saying yeah you have a job next year. The fact that we had an inspection and we were told we need a PE teacher and the same department said no you can't have one.

One hand is saying yes while the other is saying no!

Yeah and with that they are saying that we are over quota and have been over quota for the last 4 years, we have had someone who teaches geography who has an interest in PE taking the lessons your department is telling us we need a specialist PE teacher because there is a new curriculum coming in and now you're saying no your over quota, you have too many teachers.

Do you have the new junior cycle programme in yet?

No.

It is ridiculous. You see full time teachers have to have 22 contact hours and if they don't the department isn't happy because that's what it is meant to be so you have to find 22 hours for all those teachers. We had a teacher here who was teaching geography and PE, lovely guy, real interest in sport, we had someone else teaching before that science and PE, mainly science and he was coming over, James was coming over, he has an interest in sport and would have coached rugby here, he also teaches Irish and Maths. He didn't have enough hours so James got 6th year PE and Jack we will give you first, second and third year PE and someone else was down 4 hours so they got transition year PE and that was it. That was how it was done.

How did children with disabilities survive in PE with that system in place?

Tom is in third year and he has been here since I have been here, prior to that I can only imagine that they sat down and watched PE or went off and studied or they just didn't take part, I would imagine. It is very much based on the school you are in, like I have been in some schools in Ireland where PE is absolutely phenomenal. Ballincollig School in Cork is an example. They have 2/3 PE teachers and a fantastic PE department who are development and skill orientated, but there is no model across the board for all the school – this is what you do. My experience of PE classes in my secondary school were the PE teacher came down 10 minutes late and told us whether we were indoors or outdoors. If you had your outdoor kit you wore your shoes for indoor soccer if you had your indoor kit you wore that outside, there was no structure and then other school in the city would be absolutely fantastic at PE. We would hear stories – we do this, we do that, we do this for 6 weeks, we do that for 6 weeks all based on the teacher that they had. Now they will probably bring in the structure that everyone will have to do “this”.

PE is compulsory for students in your school?

Yes, leaving cert students included.

Are you given any extra money in your budget for adapted equipment? Do you have a PE budget?

We don't have a PE budget. The budget comes out of the main school budget. There is meant to be money set aside for PE so in that essence I suppose there is a PE budget but no one has ever said to me that this is your budget for the year. In England we had a budget; you are given it at the start of the year which is then broken down in to the 3 semesters – this is your budget from September to Christmas – this is Christmas to Easter and this is Easter to Summer of about 2 grand so you are talking about 6 grand a year. The budget here is based on the capacity of the school so the department gives you money per head of people that you have in the entire school.

So what do you do if you need new footballs or basketball etc?

Generally in that regard we are ok, I will put in an order and that will go through the finance department and they will be fine with that. We fundraise; we bag pack for the art and PE department every year. We also have a rugby committee; we had a ball last year which raised 10,000euro for rugby in the school that will mainly go to rugby and any left over – 2,000euro – I can use that at the start of next year for PE equipment.

So there is nothing directly from the school that says this amount is for PE?

No, basically what I have to do is get out my SP Sports catalogue fill it out and go to the vice principal who is in charge of finances and say listen I need these things for PE, he will have a look at it and he will come back and say yes or no. He has never said no yet.

Do the children in this school go swimming?

No access to a swimming pool. We contacted Waterford Crystal last year and they said they had no hours to give us. Kingfisher is open now so we will take a look at the timetable next year and see if its feasible to get the kids to the pool, like we they have PE the last 2 classes that would be good as they could get picked up out there. PE classes in the morning are on at 9.38am so there is a class on before, it could be feasible to go, have 30-40 minutes in the pool and get them back during the break.

Would the student have to pay for that themselves if they were to go?

They would yeah. We would have to pay for a bus as well as we don't have a school bus.

You have a weights room and aerobic equipment upstairs in the sports hall, can Tom access that? Any wheelchair access?

Tom can access it no problem, but no wheelchair access.

I know that is not a problem for you at the moment and won't be until someone who uses a wheelchair comes to the school.

Is the school wheelchair accessible?

It is as we just got a lift in the main building.

Once you use the lift can you access all areas up stairs?

Yeah, all areas.

Are there any activities that you don't do at the minute that you would like to be able to do?

Swimming, I would like to do some martial arts. We had a girl on work placement 2 years ago from the Ursuline and she was into kickboxing and she did it with the kids and absolutely loved it. It was fantastic. We have been looking at getting someone in next year like for the days that its wet and we don't have the pitch for a few weeks; it would be great to do something like that. If they could take 40 kids and do a mass practice it would be fantastic and I think it would be something that the kids would be into because like in first year now we have about 3 lads that play team sports the rest library club is the big one for them. So it's to get them physically involved - get them involved in something as well, like we did fitness with them last week and their fitness levels were extremely poor so doing something different like Thai boe – different things like that. You need to keep it as varied as possible because when it does rain – our pitch outside is used for rugby matches as well so during the rugby season we are restricted. If there is a lesson or training then training get priority. If there is training or a match then the match will get priority. When it rains half the pitch will flood and there will be puddles all over it so you can only use one half of the pitch. We have had something like 28 games on that pitch this year and our pitch cannot take 28 games.

So what happens when there is a game on during PE time?

If there is a game on, for example there is a game on Wednesday and we have PE on Tuesday if the pitch can't take the PE lesson then the lesson will go inside. That is my call and the reason for that is it's kind of a balancing act if we do well in relation to our extracurricular we sell the school and get more kids in, therefore more money, more access, more things for PE, a wider curriculum, more teachers, etc, etc. Where if we go out and let's say go up to the top half of the pitch and wreck that and then there's a rugby match the next day then you know it ruins the pitch for both teams and makes an absolute marsh, if it been raining here for a day there will be 8 puddles on that pitch and you just can't play a match with standing water. So it's a case of keeping the kids off it, let it drain so that it won't get too much wear and tear and we can get out matches done.

Do you have any opportunities for further training for example in martial arts so you can implement that into the PE programme for students?

No

As a PE teacher is there an onus on you to get any further qualifications?

No

Any up skilling?

No

Professional development?

No. The only professional development currently available is the new professional development based on the new curriculum. All those courses have been run where the first phase is mandatory for all teachers to complete. I have done all that already. There isn't a lot of in service available for PE, like they we'll say such and such dance company is running a dance course for PE teachers. The FAI do some good coaching, the rugby do some good coaching, GAA do some good coaching as well. They come to your school so basically they would say to me that there are rugby courses on in Cork on a Thursday night in Musgrave park, come down if you want don't if you don't want.

Would there be any pressure from the school for you to do any of these courses?

No, it would be up to me. Totally on myself as to whether I go or not.

Thank you very much

You have been teaching PE for 20 years, have all those been here at this school?

No, I have been here for 8 years, before that I was in Ferrybank for 6 years and before that I taught in the UK in a high school in the south of England.

Are you the head PE teacher?

No, there are 3 PE teachers and we are a department of 3 / 4 and I am permanent part-time.

Is PE your main subject?

Yes

Do you teach other subjects as well?

English

How many hours a week do you teach PE?

Mostly I have only one class of English a week and the rest is PE.

You said that there are 3 students in the school with a disability.

Those are the ones that I have.

Can you explain their disabilities and their limitations in Physical Education?

Of the 3 that I am teaching only two participate in PE. The third girl has opted out. It was the parents that didn't want her to participate. She is visually impaired, she was in first year last year and I was due to have her this year and the parents decided to opt out of PE.

Any particular reason?

I think they felt the danger was too great to the child. She had very little vision and I don't really know much after that.

Did the student herself opt out?

Yes, she opted out and the parents agreed with her.

Of the other 2 girls, both have cerebral palsy. One is wheelchair bound at this stage. She came in, in first year and I have had her since first year. When she came in, they had said that her condition would not degenerate any further. Apparently she had degenerated as far as she had gone but that hadn't been the case. She had degenerated considerably throughout the last three years. The first year she was mobile with the aid of a walker and sometimes with the aid of sticks, so you could do some stuff with her standing. But unfortunately that didn't free up her hands, as she needed her hands to get herself upright. Then when she came back in second year she was in a wheelchair and the muscles in her quads had become detached at either end so they were floating, basically she didn't have anything to get her standing. In fairness she managed for a long time but eventually she ended up wheelchair bound, it was a manual wheelchair and we had awful problems with that and it was a case of it almost tipping over and one day one of the wheels fell off. It just wasn't a happy situation at all. Last year when she came back in September she had a motorised wheelchair. Now essentially, not just me obviously, the school felt the situation was unsafe for her in a manual wheelchair. I had kicked up stink and I had gone via the central remedial clinic in Waterford who had - she had been one of their clients so she would be attending in an outpatient basis and they just said eventually that yeah the manual wheelchair wasn't ideal. So she is in a motorised wheelchair now and sometimes she is in a better manual wheelchair that she can self propel which I think is better for her as she can do some exercise.

What parts of her body does she have use of?

She has use of her right hand and limited use of her left hand.

On the days she has PE does she bring her manual wheelchair to school?

Yes. She brings it to school those days.

Does someone help her during school?

Yes, she has an SNA

Does the SNA help her in physical education?

Yes. She is brilliant; it would not have worked as well as it has if she wasn't as, as available and as interested in PE as she is.

The other student then is in – actually she is gone this year. She has done the leaving cert applied and she has cerebral palsy also not as bad – Joan had some condition I can't remember the name of it or the term for it but she was more affected on one side. With Sally then, she is also cerebral palsy but she is much more mobile. The added complication for her is that is she some underlying difficulties as well, she would have problems understanding were Joan is as smart as a whip.

I was just going to ask how their communication and speech were?

Sally has some, I understand her very well as I have had her all the way up through the years, so I don't have any problems with that. Joan was very softly spoken but I think I have gotten over that by just repeatedly saying I can't hear you.

Do they use any communication boards or devices?

Not in PE no, but they do use them in other subjects.

Is it just that you haven't needed them in PE.

No we haven't needed them in PE.

You said that when you were studying for your degree that you did not get the opportunity to study a module on APA or APE. Was that by choice?

No, it just wasn't available.

You didn't get the opportunity to teach or interact with any students with disabilities while studying. Again was this by choice?

No, again just not available. It would not have been an issue; simply the students that we are seeing now in mainstream schools would have wound up in St Joseph's or St Martin's in other years. So they just wouldn't have been in mainstream so it wasn't an issue. I have never refused to teach a student with a disability.

You have pointed out that your level of training in regards to disabilities is inefficient, can you explain the difficulties you have encountered now trying to integrate a student with a disability into physical education.

Well I have huge doubts about this area because I have worked it for quite some years now and I have found that instead of integrating them into a physical education programme it literally almost highlights their disability to have them in with a group of able-bodied students. For instance Laura herself feel that – she does a community-based programme on a Friday night with other disabled students and she thrives at that and she loves it and is one of the best there. Where as in a PE class of 29 or 30, where 29 of them are well able- her disability stands out like a sore thumb.

Do you find yourself organising your PE class around her?

No, I try and fit her into what I have for the others.

How does that work?

Sometimes it works, other times it doesn't. It depends on the activity. A successful one for example has been dance. This year we introduced rhythmic gymnastics so although limited she could fit in better there and the girls worked well with her there to fit in. In the games I don't think it really works, you limit everybody and they go nut and they are a difficult enough group to work with. Or I try and integrate Joan as much as possible.

If you were teaching basketball for example and you were doing skill – she is involved in that and then left out for the games?

Yes, she is involved in that but for the games she is out for her own safety.

Do you play many games that maybe include her?

By choice again I pretty much go by what she wants to also and what she feels safe with. An she doesn't feel safe as she can't get a hand up to protect her face when a ball, it doesn't matter how soft or hard the ball is, it's the shock of getting a ball in the face, and that would be the height the others would be throwing at - because she is in a wheelchair it is right at eye level for her. So I felt it wouldn't work so I didn't integrate her into that respect.

Is she ok with that?

Yes, she is fine with that. She helps me referee or has some involvement from the sidelines. Technically that what she says she will do but she does tend to hold back a little bit. It is not ideal.

It is important to remember that including someone in physical education is not all about doing the same as everyone else, obviously because of her disability there will be a certain amount of limitations and she may never play a game of basketball with her peer group and sometimes that is ok as long as she is safe and that she doesn't feel hard done by the fact that she is not included. I think the fact that you have asked her and discussed with her the game part and that she is happy to stay out of it then I think you have done your job and it's not a case that you have decided that I feel that this is the best way to go about it and disclude her from that.

She is always been asked but I don't feel happy about it at all.

I think that sometimes you can't always get the perfect situation. Once she is happy is your job done?

I don't think she is happy with that though. Compare the PE class that she does to the level of enjoyment she gets through the sporting club she goes to with her peers, who are disabled, she gets far more enjoyment out of that. I think in a classroom situation her disability is not as highlighted because she is very smart and she has stuff to help her write quicker. In a PE class everything that is wrong for her is highlighted, even getting from the main school to the sports hall is a chore for her. She has come the doors of Bressa and then up a ramp and then across and back across again and into the sports hall, now that is better than it was. She has to go all the way around which means she arrives to the hall after everyone else, which highlights her disability even more. Sally I would be far happier about even though she has a learning disability I can integrate her an awful lot more. Now some of that, now this is not to cast any aspersions on the group that Joan is in – I have raised the issue a few times with them and with their tutors, but some of them just don't want to know. I don't think its working, it has been addressed by the school and they are thinking of putting her in a different group next year because 4th year is a natural year for them to be split up and but that group are very intolerant of being held back and they see it as a punishment if I put them working with her. It caused an awful lot of friction. If I address it they just say we have had this conversation before – ya but nothing has changed!

Are they willing to change?

No, not now.

Does she have one or two friends in the group that tend to work with her?

There are but not a whole lot. There is maybe one possibly two and then maybe two other kind girls but for the most part your typical teenage me feiners.

That in itself can be a massive barrier for her in PE, automatically its “oh god its PE today”

Now to be fair to her I have never gotten that attitude from her. Id say she hasn't missed a PE class the whole year, despite the effort it takes. I have a very good relationship with her on a personal basis at this stage now so I know that she enjoys my company in the class more than her peers. Now that would be the nature of that child as she is an only child and the group she is used to relating to is adults. I strongly feel that PE is highlighting all her area of inability rather than integrating her.

You have taken an adapted physical education course. Can you tell me where and when you did it?

I did it with Pat Flanagan and it was just a one-day course. It was run by Waterford Sports Partnership and I did it in Dungarvan or Dunhill I can't really remember. That course was all about integration and to be honest that's the only thing that has given me any confidence to deal with the students that I'm dealing with. That wasn't run through the school, I paid for that personally. I think there was an in service on the same day even that the department was paying for but this course wasn't paid for the Department of Education obviously. It was helped greatly by Waterford Area Sports Partnership, that's the only course I did and yeah I did find it helpful.

Is that the workshop included in that day?

Yeah

Did you approach the school to pay for that course for you?

I didn't at the time and I didn't as that just my way, I would have been free that day anyway. After doing the course I was suddenly wheeled out as the expert!!! I make the point at one stage that I did this course off my own back and then wheeled out as the resident expert and then I was given all the students with disabilities, which really wasn't fair as it is a lot of work. That wasn't my colleagues fault, they were equally prepared to take it on but they just looked at just she has done that course - ticked the box and let her off. I didn't approach the school but that not saying that they won't have supported me if I had done. They probably would have.

Some of the other PE teachers that I have spoken to would very much like someone to come to their school and help them with the students, facilities, hall, equipment and access that they have. Do you think your school would be open to doing something like that?

Oh yeah I'd say so yeah.

They are quite open-minded?

Yeah, oh yeah. They would be very good like that and it would be equally the case that this it is a very small part of this child's education its one class a week out of how ever many - 35 that they have! So you know if I can deal with it let me off, they don't have to think about it anymore.

The common thing that is coming up is "it's just PE", sure it's only one hour a week, sure if they miss it it's not the end of the world.

Not that's just not the feeling towards students with disabilities that's the feeling in general.

A lot of people with disabilities have a lot of associated medical problems that could be helped or alleviated with physical activity or physical education. Getting a child physically literate at such a young age is so important especially for Laura for example who is getting progressively inactive, she will have a poor quality of life later on if she is kept someway mobile or flexible. To do activities like dress yourself, brush your hair – those things and she is still quite young She is 3rd year 14 maybe 15. For her if she is digressing at such a fast rate by the sounds of it. When she is in her mid twenties she might not be able to do a lot for herself. Being physically literate now would stand to her along the way and I think a lot of people miss that. The parents sometimes are over protective – they don't want them to do anything in case they hurt themselves but not giving them the opportunity to decide for themselves what they really want to do.

Would you like to do any formal training in special education yourself?

Yeah, I would be interested in doing some more certainly but again you have to mitigate that against the fact that out of... I teach possibly 300 of the 850 students in the school and of those two have special education needs. So your talking about getting special education to help with two students, which would be valuable but I would have to put it in context.

Do you foresee the number of students with disabilities increasing in the future?

I don't know, it seems to come in kind of waves. I imagine it would if their whole policy were to integrate students from a younger age then obviously that will filter through into the secondary.

Within the school do you have many with intellectual disabilities, other than the students you teach?

Not really no, not many. Learning difficulties yes but not I don't think by intellectual disabilities do you mean Down Syndrome or...

Yes or extreme learning disability. They would need some extra care, attention or direction in physical education or general education.

I can think of one other student at the moment, a first year student who I think she has the conceptual grasp of about a 5 to 6 year old, through the lack of education. She hasn't been exposed to education. She is a very good adapter and she is actually very good at PE. She might not understand if I said Deirdre would you mind going over and picking up that ball, she will watch and see what the others are doing and she will do exactly the same. So she is very good at picking things up and adaptation.

It is probably the verbal communication she struggles with?

Yeah for her now she loves her PE every week and she is brilliant and that is total affirmation of everything she is. **It's something for her that she doesn't need to rely on verbal communication to do.** I'd say all her intelligence is static. She looks and she sees, she is quite well able to get herself into a situation and she seems to have an innate intelligence in regards to positioning in a game situation. She won't just stand there uselessly, something in her brain understands that she needs to move to a space, which to be honest a lot of them wouldn't know.

There may be other students with learning disabilities but because they are not severe enough have not been brought to my attention.

There is a girl with Asperger's. **Is she high functioning?** Yes she is high functioning. There was a funny incident with her when we were doing step aerobics and she is a fierce nice kid but I'd say for years and years she has gotten away with being slightly odd you know, and she is somewhere along the Asperger's spectrum so she is high functioning but she does have problems, I'd say there is an element of Dyspraxia in there as well but I don't know if that goes with Asperger's, I haven't looked into it enough but we were doing dance choreography via the step, so it was sets of eight and routines put together around the step. So she came up to me at the end of the class and she said Mrs Bloggs would it be a feature of Asperger's I just can't get that step, I just

can't get those steps. So without thinking I said, "if that is the case then an awful lot of people in your class have Asperger's" and she went off chuckling. As soon as I had it out of my mouth I was oh my god that was so politically incorrect, she actually brilliant that I would make that comment but I was oh god. She would find it where as the child with learning that language difficulty she would have an innate understanding of movement into space, whereas I don't think the child with Asperger's will ever have that you know what I mean she will always be the one standing still getting the ball into the side of the head and she know it you know what I mean. What we say to her a lot is duck. But I suppose the big thing is... **She is obviously very aware.** She is very aware. They all have great awareness; that is my admiration. Because I have always been physically very able I suppose I look at it one or two ways. I could maybe not understand someone who is not physically able but I just have the hugest admiration for people who get out and do it when they are not physically able you know so maybe I bring a huge element of praise to them and I think I genuinely think they are wonderful for being in front of me in my class but I just don't feel I utilise that enough.

Physical education can be a great medium to develop social skills where they are out of the rules of the classroom and they can interact with someone and talk to someone who they wouldn't normally not talk to because they are at the front of the class or the back of the class or they are miles away each other in the classroom, so when the students are feeling that bit of resentment it's definitely going to be harder on the students. Sometimes there is very little you can do about that and it does come down to the personality of the class group or the class dynamics.

Have you had any opportunity to liaise with other teachers who have experience or training for advice on the students?

I'd go really informally you know, and actually a lot of my colleagues from college we would meet up every now and again and with Sarah and Michelle we would discuss this and that and you know what are we going to do here, very informally and very infrequently.

Has there been anything at in service to help?

No, I don't think so. Whenever there is in service in the school in general it is directed towards academic subjects.

Has there ever been in service offered to you anywhere that has anything to do with disability and PE?

No, not that I can recall.

The training day that you went to, did that come through the school?

No that came through Waterford Sports Partnership

Was that because of your connection with Waterford Sports Partnership?

Yeah, yeah

Nothing has come to the school from top down to say that this is available to or teachers?

I don't think so no.

The official time allocated for PE is approximately 56 minutes for 1st year and 2nd year, only 38 for 3rd year, I assume that is because of Junior Cert, 6th year again PE is optional. Any reason why there is a difference in the time allocated and time actually spent in physical education?

With some of the groups it's the experience of getting changed for PE and getting changed again for class. In the 76 minutes you have to allow for them to come from class, get changed and leave class and get changed. So realistically you have to allow 10-15 minutes. That's the discrepancy between the actual time, the PE timetable and the real time.

Do you think 25 minutes for 3rd years is a sufficient amount of time?

No.

Especially at exam year when they need it more.

That has nothing to do with me, we have actually just had a PE inspection and that was one of the areas that have been highlighted as the school being very lacking -whether it's going to be addressed- I don't know.

You said that PE is not compulsory for all students? Is that just in 6th year and is there a reason why that is so?

Traditionally it has been a case that the timetable has been the issue, PE has been timetabled against honours maths and LCVP so again that was timetabling just so we could fit in subjects. Again that was out of our hands.

Was that to give the students more options, as in subject options for the leaving cert?

Yes. Even in the timetable offering it against honours maths is stopping a lot of students from doing PE.

Do you think anything can be done to equalise the time?

It's under negotiation

Do you think anything will come from that negotiation?

I think it certainly isn't going to happen from us. Like when I came into the school, first years had an hour and then every other year bar 4th year had the 28 minutes. So we got the double class for second year, we are working towards the double for third year and we reckoned we had it about 3 years ago and CSPE became an exam subject so that ditched that idea.

You see realistically there are too many subjects at Junior Cert level and I can't understand why. That's the time they should be having at least two hours of PE a week. That's the time to do it, I'm not saying it gets any less important but obviously to get through the syllabus in 5th and 6th year it does require more class time, but if they just reduced the amount of subjects they have. They are now sitting 11 subjects in the Junior Cert - **11!! Are they examined on 11 subjects?** Examined on 11 subjects, religion is now an examinable subject. It used to be 9 with an option of 10. In the last 4 to 5 years, religion has come on as an exam subject, which means again that you have a curriculum to get covered. So straight away they look at the timetable and look at what can give. French can't give, they need 5 classes to cover their timetable, and then literally we had an agreement, I had specifically had kicked up stink saying this is not... they are still enthusiastic coming into third year, you are taking that and its crashing in flames. So. and that was the year the CSPE was made an exam subject. Realistically if you try and fit 11 subjects on to the timetable, there is not much time left for PE, it just doesn't fit.. 11 examinable subjects! PE is getting squeezed out, it's getting marginalized.

In transition year where you could possibly have extra time for PE they still only have one hour?

Yes. There is more time available to us if we want it.

Do you use that time to do these self-defence etc?

No we use that time to take them off site. There have been occasions where they have done a half-day and gone off canoeing or something like that.

Have any students with disabilities been involved with that group? Have they gotten to 4th year yet? The girl that left last year!!

She did most things, she didn't do canoeing now, and she didn't do surfing.

Was that by her choice?

She wouldn't have been able to hold the paddle.

There wasn't a boat where 2 people could go in?

I can't recall, actually I think it was that she couldn't swim. So the parents actually said that they wouldn't be happy her going on the water. She would come along for a walk on the beach with her SNA, while we doing the activity. **So she was still included.** Yeah.

What do you think are the three biggest barriers to physical education for your students with disabilities?

Training of the teacher, attitudes of other children and maybe parental approach to physical activity.

What do you think are the three biggest benefits for them participating in PE?

Well lets go for the students that it has worked for. If it works, it works very well. They integrate socially, they are challenged to do things they wouldn't normally do and I guess they do achieve some measure of fulfilment from it.

Do you think anything can be done in your school to overcome those barriers?

Possibly more training, possibly more time allotted to PE would help. I honestly don't know how you change the mindset of 15 year old who are only interested in themselves. **Attitudes are probably the hardest thing to change, as the person has to change themselves.**

Do don't have any.... do you do these yourself like the self-defence, complimentary therapy the dance choreography?

No we bring outside people in for those.

Do they have background, a knowledge or experience of dealing with people with disabilities?

I don't know but they do include them

They have been quite positive?

Quite positive yeah.

You said students with disabilities participate equally in physical education except for those with physical disabilities and sensory disabilities, can you explain?

Yeah.

What are the reasons why they don't participate equally?

I suppose they physically can't and there is the fear of injury and the student with the sight issue whose parents opted out.

All students have equal access to PE. You agreed with all of them except for physical disabilities.

For all the reasons I have outlined above, simply. Sometimes I just don't think it is a positive experience for the child. **That is based on the students and the experiences you have had?** Yeah.

Do you think all students will learn more during integrated physical education class? You agreed for emotional and behaviour problems and intellectual disabilities and disagreed for physical disabilities.

Again the same reasons, we are just coming back to all the same things. I think if it's not a positive experience they are not benefiting. If their disability is being highlighted by them being in an integrated PE class there might be something they could do that might be more valuable to that time. Still probably physical, if it's not integration then I don't think its working.

So you would recommend for the students in particular that you have dealt with... a segregated class would then be a better option for those particular students?

For one of my students definitely, but if I have more like her I would be recommending the same thing.

Thank you.