**Operant Subjectivity**

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# "We Just Have to Get on with it". Inclusive Teaching in a Standards Driven System: The Design Decisions of a Q Methodological Study

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***Abstract:*** The purpose of this study was to explore United Kingdom (UK) primary school teachers' positions on two key areas of education ideology: inclusive schools and standards in education. This article explains the research decisions made in developing the Q study and the impact they had on the study's findings. From a sociological, interpretivist research position this study explored the positions of 26 teachers in six schools, selected through purposive sampling to give a range of individual and institutional demographics. A Q set of statements was developed that represented the standards and inclusion agendas. Participants were then asked to sort the statements twice, firstly for inclusion and then for the standards agenda. Factor analysis revealed two distinctive factors for teachers' positions on the standards agenda that focused on their contrasting perspectives of practically implementing the agenda's objectives. Additionally, the factor analysis revealed three factors related to teachers' positions on the inclusion agenda. These factors represented varied perspectives on inclusive practice and the practical barriers that are present in implementing the agenda's objectives.

In UK primary schools what have come to be known as the "standards" and "inclusion" agendas were respectively developed largely by different political parties at different times. They therefore came from different theoretical perspectives. As such, in neither case do their theoretical objectives seem to take into account the other agenda and practical implementation of the two agendas has been felt to pose challenges (Armstrong, 2005; Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009).

## Theoretical Framework

**The development of the standards agenda in mainstream UK primary schools**

Standards in schools have been an education priority since James Callaghan (Labour Prime Minister 1976-1979), famously gave his Ruskin College speech emphasizing the need for teacher accountability and for a central control of the curriculum (DES, 1985). However, it was the Conservative government after the 1979 election which, under the philosophical umbrella of Thatcherism, implemented educational reform that would permanently change the education system. It saw the accountability of teachers and

schools as essential in ensuring that appropriate standards were achieved. A National Curriculum was established and curricular decisions were centralised (Ball, 2008).

Teachers became disempowered by the centralisation of the National Curriculum and were blamed for perceived failures in standards. Summative assessments results at the end of each key stage, named Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs), were used to develop a national form of assessment. In 1992, the results of this assessment became publicly available in national league tables, in which schools were ranked according to how many of their children achieved the desired curriculum levels (Higgs, Bellin, Farrell and White, 1998 ).

The publication of the SAT results in league tables led to prioritisation of the SAT process as a high stakes issue for schools. The results produced by the process were then used by government to judge school and teacher success, producing a competitive ethos amongst schools (Yarker, 2006). In the same year the Education Act (1992) privatised the inspection process and set up the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), a non-ministerial department. Ofsted developed independent teams to inspect schools and schools were subject to intermittent external assessment to ensure they were adhering to the standards objectives (Lawton, 1996).

The era of Thatcherism irreversibly changed education into a marketised system. As such, the focus on standards and the accountability of teachers and schools has remained central to education reform and is said to have become more prescriptive (Winter, 2006). In 1997, New Labour, on coming to power, retained the standards agenda in schools and embraced the need for educational marketisation as society's best route to prosperity (Chitty, 1989). The party's sights were also set firmly on schools being accountable through national league tables and schools were left to focus further on summative assessments, such as SATs. Since the Coalition government was formed through a Conservative and Liberal Democrat collaboration in 2010 there has been a revision of the National Curriculum. This revision encouraged teachers to use the National Curriculum as an outline of core knowledge. Teachers were said to have autonomy to plan exciting, engaging lessons from the National Curriculum outline (Department for Education, 2013). However, there has also been a continued focus on standards, especially in improving educational standards to raise UK schools' performance against international comparators (Department for Education, 2012).

In research on the standards agenda, findings have been focused on the constraints of its objectives. Bowers (2004) found that study participants felt they had little room to make their own decisions regarding any aspect of the standards objectives. Moreover, findings indicate that teachers feel forced to conform and focus on academic achievement (Fielding, Daniels, Creese, Hey and Leonard, 1999; Wyse & Torrance, 2009; Yarker, 2006). West, Sammons, Hailes and Nuttall (1997) highlighted that the SAT process did not encompass all children, especially those with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Moreover, Harnett and Newman (2002) found that a high percentage of primary teachers considered children's achievements to lie outside the curriculum. Teachers in their research were committed to providing a broad and balanced curriculum but also emphasised the need for children to be happy and to enjoy learning.

**The development of the inclusion agenda in mainstream UK primary schools**

The New Labour government in 1997 sought to combine the need for standards with a focus on diversity in schools (DfEE, 1997). There was a move from the era of "integration" (which focused on children with SEN being placed in mainstream schools) to "inclusion" through focusing on the provisions and support available to help children with SEN to succeed (Sikes, Lawson and Parker, 2007).

New Labour ideologically envisaged all children being fully included in every aspect of the school experience, in an ongoing process of development that was designed to create hope for the future of education (DfEE, 1997; Winter, 2006). However, whilst the standards agenda centralised power over teachers and Local Authorities (LAs), inclusion required collaboration with teachers and LAs, giving them responsibilities and autonomy in implementation (George & Clay, 2008; Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan and Shaw, 2000) and teachers were left to implement the objectives as much as possible (Winter, 2006).

Armstrong (1998) argued that New Labour's vision offered little focus on the curriculum or on the teaching of children with SEN. In fact, inclusion was discussed primarily in relation to the educational mantras of the standards agenda that did not effectively consider SEN (Armstrong, 2005). In the standards agenda, children with SEN were not distinguished from their peers as far as matters such as the National Curriculum and the SAT process were concerned, although these had been designed for pupils who could achieve the national average (Bines, 2000). This led to the introduction of the p-scale system in 1998, offering an add-on to the National Curriculum for children with SEN. The p-scales were put in place to measure levels of attainment lower than the first level of the National Curriculum (Ndaji & Tymms, 2010).

Understandably, Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan and Shaw (2000) argued that inclusion remained locked into focusing on a child's SEN. The introduction of the *Index for Inclusion* in 2000, published by the Centre for Studies of Inclusive Education (CSIE), highlighted the educational focus on standards, competition and inspection and offered a "supportive" approach (Booth et al., 2000; Clough, 2000). Instead of focusing on educating children with SEN the *Index* aimed to change the focus of inclusion to encompass all mainstream pupils. As such, its notion of inclusion entailed a need in the inclusion agenda to value all pupils and to view difference as a resource to support learning (Booth et al., 2000).

However, the move to take into account inclusive practice for all children has not been completely embedded in all subsequent legislation. In multiple pieces of legislation and government documents there has been no fixed definition of inclusion. There are also differing policies that either focus ideas of inclusion on children with SEN or consider the needs of all children. This lends itself to confusion in policy over what inclusion entails and who is covered by the objectives. Nutbrown and Clough (2006) consider inclusion to be operational as opposed to conceptual, owing to its multiple current versions. The recent Coalition government's focus on inclusion had been on identification and assessment to inform initial placement and provide early intervention of provision for children with SEN (Department for Education 2011). Interestingly, in the revision of the National Curriculum there was great emphasis on teachers' planning to ensure inclusion for all pupils. The revisions highlighted the importance placed on the "right teaching" and identification of individual needs in order to include children in the National Curriculum. With effective planning it was suggested in these revisions that only a minority of children with SEN would need additional resources (Department for Education, 2013).

In the limited studies researching their positions on the inclusion agenda, teachers appear to have a personal commitment to the ideal of inclusion while at the same time believing it is not fully possible to implement it professionally (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Croll & Moses, 2003). One of the key contributors to these positions appears to be the confusion in determining the definition of inclusion (Lacey 2001).

Throughout the studies considering teachers' positions on inclusion there appear to be three variables that contribute to the development of these positions: the child, the teacher and the environment (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000). The child variable represents a difference in position on inclusion depending upon a child's individual characteristics, seen as deficits (Avramidis & Norwich 2002; Croll, 2001; Croll & Moses, 2003). Teacher- related variables are the barriers teachers feel they face professionally. For instance, they mention the need for more training and experience in order to develop a more positive position on inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Reynolds, 2001). It appears that many of these teachers felt ill-prepared and unsupported for the task of inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Sikes, Lawson and Parker, 2007). Finally, environmental variables highlight practical barriers faced by teachers and include the lack of learning support assistants (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000).

**Considering the practical implementation of these agendas simultaneously**

The inclusion agenda provides an ideological plan for the future of education, while standards agenda objectives have, since the Education Reform Act (1988), become increasingly prescriptive. Standards agenda objectives are designed for day to day classroom implementation and are of great importance for the measurement of both teacher and school success. The introduction of the standards agenda changed the education system, creating a new focus on accountability. Its objectives transformed schools into a marketable system, focusing on school to school competition to increase standards (Winter, 2006). The introduction of inclusion did not change existing standards objectives. Instead, add-on systems, such as the p-scales and requirements to adapt both curriculum and assessment processes to "accommodate" children with SEN were put in place. This highlights the question asked by Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) as to whether inclusion can only be implemented through the standards agenda objectives.

Based on the literature, three research questions guided this research: What are primary teachers' positions on the education standards agenda; what are primary teachers' positions on the inclusive education agenda and how do primary teachers manage these agendas simultaneously?

# Research design

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) suggest that researchers coming from a sociological perspective believe individuals determine their actions within the social world. Therefore, researchers construct their knowledge from social contexts and accept that their positions are informed by those of others, by the environment and by personal experiences. The focus in this study is on participants' positions, acknowledging that these positions and one's actions can alter over time and can be dependent on situational circumstances. The term "positions" rather than "perspectives" or "attitudes" is used to convey the idea of taking up a stance on something. The focus on the term "positions" developed during the study to reflect the complexity of teachers' positions *vis-à-vis* the inclusion and standards agenda.

Epistemologically, the study focuses on the interpretivist paradigm in engaging with the positions of individuals who are the research participants (Burton & Bartlett, 2009). Combes, Hardy and Buchan (2004) suggests that Q methodology allows an in-depth study that explores the complexity of different participants' positions on a given subject where differences of opinion are expected. The "theory of self" can be evaluated in a measurable form with Q methodology without abandoning the need for in-depth

qualitative data associated with social influences (Eden, Donaldson and Walker, 2005). Brown (1996) suggests that Q methodology is a means of studying subjectivity, providing a "scientific instrument" that has both the qualitative dimension necessary for interpretivist research and also the capacity to produce rigorous numerical data.

McKeown and Thomas (1988) highlighted that multiple conditions of instruction could be used on one Q set when there is a possibility that the participant will perform differently under separate conditions of instruction.  It was important in this study that teachers were asked about their perspectives on the inclusion and standards agendas separately as they are seen in theory as separate agendas (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009).  However, at the same time the study needed to ascertain if these agendas' objectives impacted on the practical implementation of each.  Therefore, a concourse of 48 statements was designed that drew on relevant literature in the two agendas' research areas.  The statements were written so that they were not readily assigned to one or other of the two agendas.  Some statements included the words "inclusion" or "standards", but all of the statements could be applied to both agendas as, to be inclusive, all children should appear within the standards agenda and, for all children to achieve, they should all be considered in the inclusion agenda (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; George & Clay, 2008).

In total 26 teachers from six different primary schools were asked to sort the statements under two conditions of instruction – firstly with regard to their position on the standards agenda and then with regard to their position on the inclusion agenda. The schools differed in socio-economic location and included one Catholic and one Church of England primary school.  This purposive sample was not intended to produce a comparative study but was directed at gaining as wide a selection as possible of mainstream primary schools.  To enhance the qualitative data at the Q sort, participants were also asked to describe on a report sheet why they had placed statements in the most extreme distribution columns.  The focus was solely on the extreme columns to ensure detail in their descriptions and to give due consideration to the time constraints that applied to each participant.

The study's distribution had an 11 point scale from -5 to +5 and had the smallest number of statements possible on the most extreme columns.  PQ method was used as the computerised method of inputting data and extracting factors (Eden, Donaldson and Walker, 2005).  The study was influenced by Watts and Stenner's (2005) suggested use of PQ method for qualitative researchers and used centroid analysis and varimax rotation.  Following analysis of the Q sort data, eight post Q sort semi-structured interviews were carried out.  Unfortunately, in this second data collection fewer participants were available to allocate time to meet for these interviews. Influenced by Stainton-Rogers and Stainton-Rogers' (1990) factor interpretations (derived from the PQ factor analysis), participants were presented with factor interpretations and asked which factor they felt best represented their position for each agenda.  This method was used to further increase a sensitivity to subjectivity in the study and influenced additional questions asked in the semi-structured interviews.

## Results

### The standards agenda

The factor analysis of the standards agenda Q sort yielded two significant factors.  The interpretations of these factors represent commonalities in their positions and cannot be generalised to all teachers' perspectives of the agendas' objectives.  There was however, for these teachers, a distinctive demographic that differentiated these two

factors.   Teachers in Factor one mostly taught year three and upwards, whereas teachers in Factor two mostly taught up to year three.  In total, 14 teachers were associated with Factor which was named "standards agenda sceptics".  Factor two represented commonalities amongst 11 teachers' positions and was named "standards agenda optimists".

**Factor one: Standards agenda sceptics:** The teachers in Factor one were named standards agenda sceptics because they viewed the standards agenda objectives with question and doubt.  This group felt that they had little choice in how they implemented these objectives and suffered occupational stress due to conflicts within the agenda's objectives.  One standards agenda sceptic suggested, "...you are, you are judged so much on results that children are achieving on a set of data, ...there is so much else that goes on".  This group felt torn between their personal and their professional opinions and, interestingly, did not consider their position to be influenced by the government's objectives.

      This group saw the standards agenda objectives as not being inclusive of all children because the objectives for them did not encompass all children.  The education of children with SEN was seen as suffering within the standards agenda.  Moreover, this group of teachers did not agree with categorising children according to gender, racial background and SEN to ascertain their educational needs.  One standards agenda sceptic suggested "there is a lot of pressure from children included within this initiative to achieve at the same rate as others".

### Table 1: Distinguishing Statements for the Standards Agenda Factor 1

| Number | Statement | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5. | I think that all children are considered within this initiative | -4 | +2 |
| 10. | I do not believe that every child in this initiative can be fully included | +3 | -2 |
| 11. | I think that the education of children with SEN suffers within this initiative | +2 | -2 |
| 13. | I don't have enough resources to include children with SEN | -2 | +1 |
| 27. | I feel torn between my personal and profession opinion | +2 | -1 |
| 31. | My position on this initiative is influenced by the government's objectives | -2 | +3 |
| 39. | I feel that I have little choice with how I implement this initiative | +3 | 0 |
| 40. | I suffer occupational stress due to the conflicts within this initiative | +3 | 0 |
| 48. | There is a need to categorise children according to their gender, racial background and if they have a SEN to ascertain their educational need | -3 | +1 |

**Factor two: Standards agenda optimists:** Factor two's group was named standards agenda optimists because they have a more favourable position on the agenda's objectives. These teachers' positions were influenced by the government's objectives.

This group did not think they needed to focus more attention on the children who could achieve the "national average". One standards agenda optimist suggested, "national average means very little and success comes in many shapes. Academic success is something, but there are more important things in life". Whilst they sought more allocated time and funding to implement the agenda effectively, they considered it necessary for schools to be accountable to external inspection and the assessment process. One standards agenda optimist explained that the standards agenda was a very useful guide, rather than a set of strict objectives. For teachers within this group the standards agenda objectives did consider all children and they did not believe that the education of children with SEN suffered within this agenda. One teacher in this group considered that these objectives were one aspect of teaching; she explained, "teaching is about more than league tables, especially for children with SEN".

*Table 2: Distinguishing Statements for the Standards Agenda Factor 2*

| No. | Statements | Factor 1 | Factor 2 |
|-----|-----------|----------|----------|
| 5. | I think that all children are considered within this initiative | -4 | +2 |
| 11. | I think that the education of children with SEN suffers within this initiative | +2 | -2 |
| 22. | There is enough funding within the school to implement this initiative | 0 | -2 |
| 23. | I need more allocated time to implement this initiative effectively | +1 | +4 |
| 31. | My position on this initiative is influenced by the government's objectives | -2 | +3 |
| 43. | I should focus more attention on the children who could achieve the 'national average' | 0 | -3 |
| 45. | It is necessary for the school to be accountable to external inspection and the assessment process | 0 | +2 |

## The inclusion agenda

The factor analysis of the inclusion agenda Q-sorts yielded three significant factors. Seven teachers in factor one mainly taught in year groups up to year three, this factor was named "inclusion agenda pragmatists". In total seven teachers also developed factor two, with no commonalities in demographics and this factor was named "inclusion agenda idealists". Finally, nine teachers in factor three mostly had over 10 years' experience in practice and developed the factor named "inclusion agenda adversaries".

## Factor one: Inclusion agenda pragmatists

Factor one's group was named inclusion agenda pragmatists as the commonalities in their viewpoints were influenced by their practical experience. Teachers in this group considered more emphasis to be placed on the SATs than any other objectives. However, they also believed that they should not focus their attention on children who could achieve the "national average". One inclusion agenda pragmatist explained, "Statutory Assessment results are published; the public views schools according to these... the results of such tests remain the focus point for schools".

 Teachers in this group did not view the inclusion of children with SEN as hindering the education of the rest of the class. However, they regarded the school system as not

adapting to accommodate children with SEN. They also did not believe they had enough resources to include children with SEN. One inclusion agenda pragmatist described individual child progression that isn't recognised within the SAT assessment process. She thought that "just because children do not reach the national average doesn't mean they haven't made progress. It is possible to measure small steps and developmental progress for those who may not be 'average'".

   This group of teachers considered there to be practical barriers to implementing inclusion. These included a lack of support from the Local Authority, inadequate school environments and a lack of adequate training in order to effectively meet the agenda's objectives. Additionally, they did not feel they had obtained enough practical experience to achieve the objectives of the agenda. One teacher concluded, "often initiatives look good on paper but when you have a class of 50 children they are not easy to implement successfully – especially SEN issues".

*Table 3: Distinguishing Statements for the Inclusion Agenda Factor 1*

| No. | Statement | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 |
|-----|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 12. | I believe that children with SEN hinder the education of the rest of the class | -2 | -2 | +4 |
| 13. | I don't have enough resources to include children with SEN | +3 | -1 | +1 |
| 16. | I feel that within this initiative the school system adapts to accommodate children with SEN | -2 | +1 | +1 |
| 19. | The school environment is not adequate for the fulfilment of this initiative | +2 | -1 | -1 |
| 20. | There is a lack of support from the Local Authority to implement this initiative | +4 | 0 | 0 |
| 24. | I believe that I have adequate training in order to effectively meet the initiatives objectives | -3 | 0 | -3 |
| 41. | I feel that I have obtained enough practical experience to achieve the objectives of this initiative | -2 | 0 | 0 |
| 42. | More emphasis is placed on the SATs than any other objective | +5 | -3 | +1 |
| 43. | I should focus more attention on the children who could achieve the 'national average' | -3 | -3 | +1 |

**Factor two: Inclusion agenda idealists:** Factor two's name derived from their viewpoint that recognised a tension between their idealistic perspective on inclusion and how inclusion was practically implemented in today's education system. These teachers felt a moral obligation and pressure to fulfil these objectives. They also felt solely responsible for their classes' successes and failures. For instance, one inclusion agenda idealist mentioned, "…I feel pressure to follow all the initiatives and to meet the 'good' teacher criteria. There feels more pressure to do this than to help children achieve their potential". Teachers in this group did not consider that there was more emphasis on SATs than any other objectives and did not focus more attention on children who could achieve the "national average". One teacher in this group explained, "if education is about meeting the needs of all learners it MUST recognise that not all children are academic and begin to find ways to recognise success in other areas".

Teachers in the inclusion agenda idealists group believed that there was a continuing reduction in numbers of children who were excluded from obtaining the objectives. They considered the school to be supportive in implementing the inclusion agenda and did not believe that children with SEN hindered the education of the rest of the class. One member of this group discussed her position on the barriers to implementing inclusive practice. She said, "…time, personnel, a restrictive and demanding curriculum prohibits tailored learning for all".

*Table 4: Distinguishing Statements for the Inclusion Agenda Factor 2*

| No. | Statements | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. | I believe that there is continuing reduction in children who are excluded from obtaining the objectives of this initiative | -1 | +2 | -1 |
| 12. | I believe that children with SEN hinder the education of the rest of the class | -2 | -2 | +4 |
| 21. | There is a lack of support from the school to support me in implementing this initiative | 0 | -2 | -2 |
| 26. | I feel pressure to try and fulfil this initiative | 0 | +3 | 0 |
| 28. | I feel a moral obligation to fulfil the objectives | 1 | +3 | -2 |
| 38. | I feel solely responsible for my classes' success and failures | -1 | +2 | +2 |
| 42. | More emphasis is placed on the SATs than any other objective | +5 | -3 | +1 |
| 43. | I should focus more attention on the children who could achieve the 'national average' | -3 | -3 | +1 |

**Factor three: Inclusion agenda adversaries:** The name "inclusion agenda adversaries" was chosen for this group because they were opponents of the existing inclusion agenda. These teachers did not believe that every child was fully considered or could be fully included in this agenda. Moreover, for these teachers, children with SEN hindered the education of the rest of the class. They did feel solely responsible for their classes' successes and failures; however they did not feel a moral obligation to fulfil the inclusion agenda objectives. One inclusion agenda adversary explained, "in my experience it can be very difficult, even distressing for some children to be included fully".

For these inclusion agenda adversaries it was necessary for schools to be accountable to external inspection and the assessment process. Moreover, these teachers believed they had to focus their attention on the majority of the class. One teacher suggested, "I feel I do have to focus my attention to children who could achieve the national average to protect myself from criticism". Another explained her perspective, "…no account is taken of SEN levels/needs of individuals - they are supposed to magically 'disappear' within your percentage of children achieving level four. Yet the government says that SEN children must stay in mainstream – they can't have it both ways." Teachers in this group considered that the school supported them in implementing these objectives, but believed they needed more adequate training to effectively meet the agenda's objectives. Furthermore, these teachers considered that the p-scale system benefited children with SEN. One inclusion agenda adversary explained, "some of the mainstream National

Curriculum is not relevant to children with severe SEN – they should have an education based around their individual needs".

*Table 5: Distinguishing Statements for the Inclusion Agenda Factor 3*

| No. | Statement | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 |
|-----|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 5. | I think that all children are considered within this initiative | -1 | 0 | -4 |
| 10. | I do not believe that every child in this initiative can be fully included | +1 | 0 | +5 |
| 12. | I believe that children with SEN hinder the education of the rest of the class | -2 | -2 | +4 |
| 21. | There is a lack of support from the school to support me in implementing this initiative | 0 | -2 | -2 |
| 24. | I believe that I have adequate training in order to effectively meet the initiatives objectives | -3 | 0 | -3 |
| 28. | I feel a moral obligation to fulfil the objectives | +1 | +3 | -2 |
| 33. | The p-scale system is of benefit for children with SEN | -1 | +1 | +3 |
| 37. | I have to focus my attention on the majority of the class | 0 | 0 | +3 |
| 38. | I feel solely responsible for my classes' success and failures | -1 | +2 | +2 |
| 45. | It is necessary for the school to be accountable to external inspection and the assessment process | 0 | -1 | +2 |

# Discussion and conclusion

The use of Q methodology in this study has provided a breadth of detailed data that explored teachers' positions on these different agendas.  There is a depth to these methods that allows teachers to express fully their positions on both agendas so that the findings on each separate agenda extend relevant research.   The purpose of this study was to ascertain teachers' positions on the practical implementation of the standards and inclusion agendas.  Particular attention was also paid to how primary teachers manage these agendas simultaneously by using two conditions of instruction with one Q set.   The use of two conditions of instruction with one Q set enabled teachers to consider the impact of both agendas on their position in relation to either inclusion or standards.

In research that considers teachers' positions on the standards agenda, findings have mainly focused on the constraints of its objectives (Bowers, 2004; Fielding, Daniels, Creese, Hey and Leonard, 1999).  The constraints found in previous research led to the conclusion that teachers in those studies felt they had little room to make their own decisions and therefore felt forced to conform and focus on academic achievement (Fielding et al., 1999; Wyse & Torrance, 2009; Yarker, 2006).  This study extended previous findings through its use of Q methodology.  Factor one's fourteen teachers developed the factor named standards agenda sceptics and the commonalities in their positions aligned with research in this area.  This group felt that they had little choice and suffered occupational stress when implementing the objectives.  However, eleven

teachers developed the factor named standards agenda optimists. These findings suggested that this group of teachers held a more favourable position on the standards objectives. They believed that it was necessary for schools to be accountable to external inspection and the assessment process.

These teachers also held contrasting positions on how inclusive the standards objectives were for children with SEN. West, Sammons, Hailes and Nuttall, (1997) had found that teachers in their research viewed the SAT process as not catering for all children, especially not for children with SEN. These views were comparable to those of the standards agenda sceptics and their position on the standards agenda generally. For these teachers, the standards agenda objectives were not inclusive and did not consider all children and the education of children with SEN was seen as suffering within the standards agenda. However, the standards agenda optimists viewed the standards agenda objectives as considering all children and did not believe that the education of children with SEN suffered within that agenda. The contrasts in positions should be considered in relation to the demographics of these groups. In Factor one most of the standards agenda sceptics taught year three and above; whereas in Factor two most of the standards agenda optimists taught up to year three. Therefore, their positions could be linked to the stage of learning these teachers had experienced in practice.

In research that focuses on teachers' position on the inclusion agenda; teachers predominantly appeared to commit personally to the ideal of inclusion while at the same time believing it was not fully possible to implement it professionally (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Croll & Moses, 2003). Those research findings are comparable to Factors one and two of this study; however the use of Q methodology has provided a further depth to these findings. The seven teachers who developed the factor named inclusion agenda pragmatists focused on their practical experience. Interestingly, these teachers mostly taught up to year three and regarded the school system as not adapting to accommodate their needs, but did not believe that children with SEN hinder the education of the rest of the class, whereas the seven teachers who developed factor two, named inclusion agenda idealists, focused on a tension between their idealistic perspective on inclusion and how inclusion is practically implemented. These teachers feel a moral obligation and pressure to fulfil the inclusion agenda objectives. They also believe that there is a continuing reduction in numbers of children who are excluded from obtaining the objectives. The study's third factor represented a contrasting view on inclusion to that of previous research. Nine teachers, who mostly had over ten year's practical experience, developed the factor named inclusion agenda adversaries and were opponents of the existing inclusion agenda. These teachers do not believe that every child is fully considered or can be fully included. They also consider that children with SEN hinder the education of the rest of the class.

Studies considering teachers' positions on inclusion detail three variables that contribute to the development of their positions: the child, the teacher and the environment (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Croll, 2001; Croll & Moses, 2003). Practical barriers that reflect these three variables to inclusion were particularly evident for inclusion agenda pragmatists. These teachers highlighted a lack of resources, lack of support from their Local Authorities, inadequate school environments and a lack of adequate training and practical experience as barriers to the agendas' practical implementation.

However, the use of two conditions of instruction and one Q set gave the teachers the opportunity to detail the impact of the standards agenda on the practical implementation of the inclusion agenda. In research, the practical implementation of

the two agendas has been felt to pose challenges (Armstrong, 2005; Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009).  The inclusion agenda pragmatists and the inclusion agenda idealists did not believe they should, in practice, focus their attention on children who could achieve the "national average". However, they differed in their perspectives on whether more emphasis was placed on the SAT process than any other objective, with pragmatists believing that there was more emphasis on SATS and idealists opposing this position.  The inclusion agenda adversaries were the only group in this Q sort to state that it was necessary for schools to be accountable to external inspection and the assessment process.  Moreover, they believed they had to focus their attention on the majority of the class.

**Future research and limitations**

This study is not without its limitations, especially in modifications that would need to be completed on the concourse before future research is carried out in this area.  For instance, there was a move in this study from considering inclusion and standards as initiatives to thinking of them as agendas.  This was done to acknowledge the duality of these ideologies in education, recognising their implementation in the classroom and their reinforcement by legal statute.  This change in terminology would need to be used in the Q set for future research.  Additionally, there are a few statements in this Q set that would need to be re-worded for the sake of clarity and analysis.  For instance, statements 5 (I think that all children are considered within this initiative) and 10 (I do not believe that every child in this initiative can be fully considered) are too similar.  Additionally, statement 48 (there is a need to categorise children according to their gender, racial background and if they have a SEN to ascertain their educational needs) on reflection carries three different ideas in one statement.  In future research it would also be advantageous to have a larger sample size and to carry out targeted research on Early Years, Key Stage one and Key Stage two practice to investigate further the demographic findings in this study.

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