

'Is this inclusive?'; teachers' perspectives on inclusion for children labelled with autism

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REFERENCE

**Ms this inclusive?': teachers' perspectives on inclusion for
children labelled with autism.**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of**

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for the Doctorate in Education

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Abstract

This dissertation is an account of a phenomenological investigation which was undertaken with a group of teachers working in primary schools in one locality in England. It examines their perspectives of the process of inclusion for children with the label of autism, as for many of these children inclusion into mainstream schools can be a problematic process. The study has as a central focus the impact of the individual and social models of disability on how these teachers conceive of their practice.

The teachers were participants on a module on a university based professional development programme. Data were gathered from discussions between the teachers and from weekly reflective logs which were written by the teachers as part of their participation on the module. The teachers engaged in a process of reflection on their practice and the discussions in the module sessions were constructed as 'conversation research communities' (Dadds 2005).

Teachers find themselves affected by existing political developments, pulled between the competing agendas of performativity and inclusion which have conflicting relationships with the individual and the social models of disability. It emerged that for the teachers in this study, the agenda of performativity has a limiting effect on inclusive practice, affecting as it does the formation of a teacher's professional identity and also their ability to act as an agent of change. In addition, the fact that these teachers did not readily name or identify the social model of disability as an influence on their practice, despite evidence that it does have an impact, illustrates the need for more overt debate about educational inclusion in a wider social and political context. It is argued in this study that there should be wider opportunities for teachers to engage with debate about the social model of disability as a platform for them to be able to interrogate educational policy development and to explore their own professional identities. In this way teachers may be better enabled to develop inclusive professional identities and to act as agents of change. It is also argued that one way towards articulating a model of inclusive education is for teachers and education researchers to work together in conceptualising practice.

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Preface

This dissertation is an account of a phenomenological enquiry into the perspectives of a small group of primary school teachers on factors which affect the process of educational inclusion for children with the label of autism. The teachers were all students on a module within the Professional Development Programme of a university in England. Their participation on the module and the discussions and reflective diaries that they kept throughout the module formed the data for the study. As a headteacher and as an academic I have become aware that for many children with the label of autism inclusion into mainstream schools can be a problematic process. This 'problem' is the focus for the current research study.

The dissertation is in two parts. Part One, Chapters One to Three explores the professional and theoretical context of the study, and the methodological approach to the enquiry. In Chapter One I discuss the personal and professional context to the study. This includes examination of the social model of disability which forms part of the theoretical basis for the enquiry. Chapter Two is a review of current literature pertaining to two key areas for this study: the social and political context of inclusive education and research into teachers' perspectives on their practice and change to that practice. In Chapter Three I explain the design of this interpretive, phenomenological enquiry where I draw on constructivist grounded theory in my approach to data gathering and data analysis.

Part Two presents the data in Chapters Four to Eight and in the final chapter, Chapter Nine, I evaluate my methodological approach and discuss the possible implications of the findings for professional practice and future enquiry.

I begin and end the dissertation with a reflection on the personal impact of the enquiry for myself as an academic and as an educator.

Terminology

As my research has progressed I have become increasingly uncomfortable with the use of diagnostic labels to identify individuals, whether this is a group of children with the thinking and learning style associated with what is described as 'autism' or a group of children described as being 'severely learning disabled'. It would make sense in this context then to try to avoid using labels such as autism. However, I work as an academic who leads courses with the term 'autism' in their titles. As Mallett and Runswick-Cole (2012) argue, autism is now a commodified product and this is the term that attracts students to our courses. Autism and Asperger Syndrome are terms claimed by those individuals within the autistic community who self-identify as autistic or Aspergic for example Sinclair (1996), Biklen (2000), Broderick and Ne'eman (2002). Much of the literature that I will refer to uses the term autism, whether this is literature relating to an attempt to conceptualise autism or to disability studies and a critique of the impact of labelling. It is a term that the teachers in this study recognise and use. However, I acknowledge the social construction of the concept of autism and the problematic aspects of labelling individuals in this way (Armstrong 2002). For this reason, whilst retaining the term 'autism' in order to ensure that this dissertation is accessible to those whose practice or research has a focus on 'autism', I will refer to 'children with the label of autism' as opposed to 'children with autism' throughout the dissertation, so as to acknowledge the social construction of autism and the dilemma of labelling.

The theory and practice of educational inclusion is littered' with such dilemmas and contradictions and I will address some of these in this study.

At times in the text I refer to the *agenda* of performativity and the *agenda* of inclusion. The use of *agenda* as the singular form is in line with the standard English usage recommended by the Oxford Dictionary (2013) as is the plural form *agendas*.

Introduction

In Chapter One I present the professional and theoretical context of this research study. I introduce the aims of the study and describe the rationale for working with this small group of primary school teachers to explore their perspectives on the education of children with the label of autism in mainstream schools. In particular I will explain my interest in examining whether and in what ways the social model of disability (Tregaskis 2002) is explicitly or implicitly represented in their talk, as I will argue that this model provides the theoretical basis for the development of inclusive educational policy and legislation. My professional experience has shown me that many teachers are unfamiliar with this model of disability, despite being surrounded by the 'rhetoric' of the social model, for example the notion of 'barriers' to access for children, and I wanted, in this study, to explore the implications of this. I worked with this small group of teachers as they discussed and reflected on aspects of their practice whilst they were participants on a postgraduate module within the Professional Development Programme at a university in England.

In setting out the context I begin by reflecting on my own personal experience as a teacher, headteacher and academic and how this experience has led me to the focus for this study. I also review key literature relating to the social model of disability.

Context of the Study

Personal background

I entered this field of research from a background of over thirty years working as an educational psychologist, special school teacher and headteacher. My current role is as an academic working in the area of autism and disability studies. My professional background within special education required me to understand and work with the intellectual style associated with the diagnostic label of autism. I learned, through working with many children and their families over the years, to recognise some of the ways in which this style of thinking and learning might impact on a child's way of 'being in the world'. Many children who attended the school of which I was headteacher arrived there following a failed placement in a mainstream primary school. I became aware that for many of these children, mainstream primary school had been a distressing environment, sometimes despite the best intentions of the school.

If I had been asked then what my perspective was on 'inclusion' and the role of the special school I would have replied unequivocally that special schools are not only completely necessary but completely desirable as well. I subscribed to an understanding that it was only in special schools that many children with the label of autism would be able to achieve their potential. To me, the knowledge and understanding of the staff within that school and the relationships we developed with the families, as well as the close working relationships we had with the speech and language therapists based at the school, was critical in enhancing the education of the children who attended. The knowledge of those therapists about the development of communication skills was, I felt, pivotal in developing professional understanding and capacity to enable the positive

achievement of the children in the school, many of whom had experienced educational and social failure in the past.

I worked in the belief that it was through the process of diagnostic assessment and labelling and the resultant drawing up of a statement of special educational need, which usually brought with it additional financial resourcing, that we would be able to meet the 'needs' of the children with whom we worked. This included funding high staff levels in some settings where a staff to pupil ratio of 1:3 was not unusual. In this context the focus on 'impairment' and 'difference', to achieve the statement of educational need, was seen as critical in gaining access to specialist resourcing.

Within the school I promoted the importance of learning to understand the impact of the intellectual style associated with the label autism, for the individual, on learning, communication and social understanding. I also recognised the importance of changing the environment around the individual, and the school environment was developed with the learning and sensory style of the children with whom we worked in mind. This included the use of visual symbol signage and colour coded areas to denote different activities, the use of schedules, personalised learning activities and a personally differentiated curriculum for each child, as well as a positive approach to working with the behaviour of the children.

It is without doubt that much of my approach to practice was based on identifying the individual learning style of the child in order to argue for resourcing to meet that child's 'special educational needs'. My focus on the importance of 'diagnostic labelling' I now interpret as working within an individual model of disability (Goodley 2011). In contrast I also recognise that

many aspects of our school practice were based on an understanding of the social and environmental barriers around the child. I had at this point no formal understanding of the social model of disability (Oliver 1996), only a professional recognition that children with the label of autism, and their families, were more often than not excluded from equitable access to social, leisure and educational opportunity.

From this special school I moved into my current academic role as a Senior Lecturer with responsibility for teaching courses with a focus on the autism spectrum. I embarked on my Doctorate in Education and so began my journey towards interrogating the practice within which I had been immersed for so long. I began to examine theories of how disability had been conceptualised and developed (and continue to be so). This included an exploration of the social construction of disability and of autism in particular. This has had a profound impact on my developing understanding of how the autism spectrum is conceptualised and of how I can begin to understand and position the experience of individuals with the label of autism. I also continued to extend my understanding of how teachers develop their professional knowledge and understanding through the teaching with which I am involved. Each of these areas came together to form the focus for my research: an investigation into teachers' perspectives on the inclusion of children with the label of autism in mainstream primary schools, and how these perspectives reflect either implicitly or explicitly understandings of the social model of disability.

Aims and Rationale of the Study

My own experience as head of a local authority special school was that some children with the label of autism found mainstream school socially stressful and challenging, an experience which could result in exclusion from the school or refusal to attend. In the current educational environment many families of children with the label of autism continue to look towards special school placements for their children with the conviction that it is only within a specialist school environment of this nature that their child's learning ability will be understood and their entitlement to an appropriate education be fulfilled. It is within this context that the current study has been undertaken and the following section begins with an examination of some of the research into the experience of some families whose children have the label of autism.

Problematizing school

Jordan (2008) comments that the first educational provision for children labelled with autism was in segregated schools created by parents through the establishment of the National Autistic Society in England. These schools were created in the 1960's in response to the fact that many children labelled in this way were, along with children labelled as having severe learning difficulties, excluded from school and found themselves placed on wards in the then subnormality hospitals. The report "Make Schools Make Sense" published by the National Autistic Society (NAS) (Batten et al. 2006) highlights the extent to which for many pupils with the label of autism, the search for a positive school experience continues to be extremely difficult. In this report the authors present

the results from a survey of families whose children have the label of autism which reveals that many of them experienced significant difficulties in finding a suitable school placement for their children. The families surveyed describe experiences across a range of school settings. For some families a positive partnership does not develop with the school (Murray 2000) and this too can impact on the success of the school placement.

For other families though, the experience was more positive and these accounts illustrate approaches that can enable school placement for a child with the label of autism. Whitaker (2007) offers a critique of the report by Batten et al. (2006) arguing that the participant group of families drawn on was not representative of the wider population as the families were all members of the NAS. His report, drawing on parental accounts of school placement for a child with the label of autism in mainstream schools in one local authority in England, presents a more positive picture overall of such placements. The families in both studies represent just a small sample of the families whose children with the label of autism are educated in mainstream schools. Many parents of children with the label of autism still feel that educational opportunities are limited for their children and turn to alternative provision. In the UK today there are voluntary sector organisations such as the National Autistic Society and more locally NORSACA (NORSACA 2012) which provide educational placements for children with the label of autism. This is in addition to the local authority special schools which also exist, many of which are making increasing claim to autism specialism (Rix 2011). Many parents of children with the label of autism have found themselves appealing against decisions about educational placement made by their local authority through the Special Educational Need and

Disability Tribunal (SENDisT) process in order to gain access to what they consider to be their child's educational entitlement (Runswick-Cole 2008). In the context of the findings of researchers such as Batten et al.(2006) and Runswick-Cole (2008) many parents feel that they have had to fight for their child's education, and many in these studies chose not to use mainstream schools which they considered to be ill-prepared for their children. Conversely, both studies cite parents who did choose mainstream school for their children, some of whom were confident in the placement and provision and some of whom were dissatisfied. The experience of families with regard to inclusion then is a complex picture in the context of the English education system.

Many of the parents surveyed by the NAS would ideally have liked their children to be educated within their local mainstream school but found that this was not always possible as many schools continue to be unable to accommodate a diverse range of learning style and ability.

In this study then, I wanted to explore the experiences of children with the label of autism, in mainstream primary schools from the perspectives of a group of teachers. I worked with a group of primary phase teachers, discussing their perspectives on the process of inclusion for children with the label of autism. My aim was to explore how they understand features of the education system, and of their practice, that affect the process of education for this group of children.

Educational change and teachers

The impact of educational change through policy development and legislative implementation can have a significant impact on how teachers experience their professional roles and on their professional identities (Kelchtermans 2005). This in turn can have an impact on their perceptions of the work that they undertake on a daily basis. To me, critical works in this area are the work of Giddens (1991), Howard (2000) and Crossley (2005) on professional identity, Nias (1996) and Kelchtermans (2005) on teachers' emotional response to their work, Hargreaves (1996; 2002) and Nind (2005) on teacher perceptions of change, Ball (2003) and Atkinson (2004) on the impact of legislative change on teachers' professional identity and Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004) and Dadds (2005) on models of developing teachers' understanding of inclusion.

Nind (2005) argues that 'teacher voice' should be more to the fore in educational research notably in the area of inclusion, and I agree with this perspective. Armstrong and Moore (2004), working with a group of teachers with a focus on inclusive practice, write about the potential impact that participatory practitioner research can have on initiating educational change at the classroom and institutional level. For me what teachers have to say about their practice, and how they say it, is of fundamental importance in understanding the process and impact of educational change. Consequently this became a key aim of my own study which I hope will become apparent in the chapters that follow.

Approaching the Enquiry

I undertook this research with a group of eight primary school teachers, six working in LA mainstream schools and two in a LA special school. I worked with the teachers as a group whilst they were all enrolled on an existing postgraduate module on the Professional Development Programme (Appendix 1a) at a university in England.

I gathered their perspectives through a process of recording their conversations as a group, as well as collecting their individual reflections written as a weekly diary. My approach to this enquiry was phenomenological and I applied a social constructivist approach to understanding and interpreting the perspectives of these teachers through what Kvale (1996, p4 citing Berger and Luckman (1966)) describes as '...“the social construction of reality” where the focus is on the interpretation and negotiation of the meaning of the social world’.

As an academic working within the field of disability studies my interrogation of the research data is additionally grounded within the social construction of disablement (Thomas 2007). The social model of disability is fundamental not only in conceptualising inclusion, but also in informing the theoretical and sociological approach I have undertaken to enquiry. It is for this reason that I have chosen to write at this stage in the dissertation about the social model of disability, rather than to locate this in the chapter on methodology (Chapter Three) or in the literature review (Chapter Two), as I wished to highlight the theoretical significance of this model of disability to my rationale as well as to the aims of this enquiry.

Theoretical perspectives of disability

In 1976 the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) published the Fundamental Principles of Disability which Oliver subsequently shaped into the social model of disability (Thomas 2004). This was to directly challenge the prevailing medical conceptualisation of disability which was one of personal tragedy resulting from the impact of impairment. The original articulation of the social model of disability and subsequent critiques (Finkelstein 1980; Oliver 1990; Barton 1996; Barnes et al. 2002; Corker and Shakespeare 2002; all cited Thomas 2007), have served to unite disability activists by offering a framework through which to argue against the disabling impact of the individual model (sometimes referred to as the medical model) of disability. This uniting framework persists despite the fact that there is continuing debate and disagreement between various ontological positions, for example the debate about the role of impairment effects in relation to disability (Thomas 2007). As Shakespeare (2006) argues, the benefits of the social model approach are that it directly opposes the individual or medical model of disability which places the problem of disability with the physical and mental impairments of the individual.

Finkelstein's original articulation of the theory of disability as social oppression (1980 cited Tregaskis 2002) is a materialist, Marxist interpretation of disablement. This interpretation locates the disablement as resulting from the disabling aspects of society stemming from a capitalist emphasis on having a 'normal' (ie healthy, able-bodied, able-minded) workforce. Finkelstein, in founding with Hunt the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), proposed the following definition of disability in 1976:

Disability: the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities (UPIAS 1976 cited Oliver 1996, p35).

It was on this definition that Oliver first based the social model of disability (Thomas 2004).

Oliver (1996, p30 citing Woods 1980, pp27-29) writes that the World Health Organisation (WHO) International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap (ICIDH) stated that impairment and disability can be defined as:

Impairment: In the context of health experience, an impairment is any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function ...

Disability: In the context of health experience, a disability is 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 ...

The ICIDH definition represents the individual model of disability. According to this model a child who 'has autism' is disabled as a result of his or her social communication impairments. Professionals working within this model of disability problematise the individual, noting his or her development or performance as 'abnormal' and aiming to remediate that development through specialist approaches and interventions. If education is not working then it is because of how the child learns and not how he or she is taught. The individual is described as disabled by virtue of his or her individual impairment. The identification of groups of students through such labels as 'SEN' or 'autistic' is illustrative of a discourse of power in education, where a dominant majority (eg psychologists, the medical profession, teachers) are enabled to represent a minority (children whose learning style differs from the 'norm') as deviant in

some way from what is considered to be 'normal' (Armstrong 2002). The 'problem' is understood to be the labelled individual and his or her pattern of development which differs from the 'norm' (Titchkosky 2011). I will return to this notion of 'problem' in disability debates in Chapter Two.

In the UK the social model, using the definition of impairment and disability proposed by the Disabled People's International (DPI 1982 cited Oliver 1996) distinguished between impairment and disability in the following way:

Impairment is the functional limitation within the individual caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment. *Disability* is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers (Barnes 1991, p2 cited Tregaskis 2002, p456).

Since its original articulation the social model of disability has, despite it being the foundation upon which disabled people were enabled to collectively organise themselves, come under repeated scrutiny both from disabled people and others working in the area of chronic illness (Oliver 1996). In particular the concept of impairment was at first felt to be problematic by some academics and activists, with the link between disability and impairment being broken in an attempt to raise awareness of the disabling impact of social barriers and combat the individual model of disability (Shakespeare 2006). Oliver (1996) argues that both the ICIDH and the DPI definitions of disability are underpinned by the concept of normality. The ICIDH refers to 'normal social roles' and the DPI to 'normal life' in the community. Oliver reflects that increasingly, disabled people are rejecting approaches which aim to normalise the individual and instead prefer those which celebrate difference. He argues that only the UPIAS definition of disability is able to 'accommodate the politics of difference' (Oliver 1996, p35). However the original UPIAS definition of impairment and disability

has come under repeated criticism, not least for the omission of reference to those with intellectual impairments (Tregaskis 2002).

Shakespeare (2006) argues that the social model itself has 'become a problem' and that it is time to develop a new theory of disablement. He argues that the lived experience of impairment does, through restricting activity, contribute to disability, whilst also acknowledging the social oppression of the disabled individual. Shakespeare and other disability theorists (Crow 1996; Morris 1996; Corker and French 1999) argue that it is not possible to have a theory of disablement without incorporating the impact of living with impairment. In this way it can be argued that disability is a contested field and I explore whether and how this is represented within the different perspectives of the teachers in this study.

An affirmative model of disability

There is a move towards the development of a positive and affirmative model of disability which has its roots in disability culture (Swain and French 2000), which celebrates difference and validates the lived experience of disabled people. Swain and French argue that such a model of disability is significant in understanding the division between being disabled and non-disabled, what they refer to as the 'disability divide' (Swain and French 2000, p569). They argue that whilst non-disabled people can accept and understand the disabling aspect of social barriers such as lack of wheelchair access, they are far more challenged by the notion that a wheelchair user could be proud of his or her identity as someone who uses a wheelchair. An affirmative model of disability

challenges the perspective of disability as 'personal tragedy' which pervades social representations of disablement.

The affirmation of a positive disabled identity relates not just to the individual but is collective as well and has led to the growth of organisations of disabled people. This has resulted in the development of a disabled identity which enables the individual, as part of a collective identity, to construct themselves in contrast to the non-disabled as 'not one of those' (Swain and French 2000).

The affirmative model builds on the social model:

Disabled people not only look towards a society without structural, environmental or attitudinal barriers, but also a society which celebrates difference and values people irrespective of race, sexual preference, gender, age or impairment (Swain and French 2000, p580).

They argue that it is only with this acceptance of difference and diversity and of disability culture that an 'inclusive' society can be built.

A social relational understanding of disability

Thomas (2004) argues that the UPIAS definition of disability as proposed by Finkelstein in 1976 is a social relational understanding of disability. This original social relational understanding has been lost through the simplified version of understanding presented by the social model of disability. For Thomas, what has been lost is the understanding that:

... disability only comes into play when the restrictions of activity experienced by people with impairment are socially imposed ... when they are wholly social in origin. Such a social relational view means that it is entirely possible to acknowledge that impairments and chronic illness directly cause some restrictions of activity ... (*and*) such non-socially imposed restrictions of activity do not constitute 'disability' (Thomas 2004, p 580).

Thomas (2004) reflects that the social model has only ever presented a simplified version of social relational thinking in understanding disability. This confirms Oliver's perspective of the social model (1996) in that he too felt that the social model had become separated from the theory which inspired it. He also argues though that the model had been hugely influential in the fight against the oppression of disabled people, a perspective with which Thomas agrees. For Oliver the social model of disability continues to have a role in alerting people to the social oppression of the disabled and as such remains a useful educational tool. For example in the context of educational inclusion, some teachers may seek to raise impairment as an excuse for lack of educational progress, as opposed to questioning the educational system and their role within that (Goodley 2011).

A key aim of this research study was to investigate how the teachers in the study positioned themselves with regard to the social and the individual models of disability, and to what extent their professional identity and their practice were influenced by these two models. In this research study I presented the following version of the social model to the teachers in the study:

Impairment is the functional limitation within the individual caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment. *Disability* is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers (Barnes 1991 cited Tregaskis 2002).

In addition, I introduced the notion of diversity and of difference in learning styles based on the writings of Terzi (2004) and Hehir (2002) amongst others. In this way I was able to introduce the social model in a way that was theoretically and practically accessible, as an educational tool as Oliver (1996) argues, for the teachers in the study, as well as to maintain the notion of the individuality of

children and of the diversity of their learning styles. I acknowledge that this presentation of the social model of disability can be critiqued as being simplistic and as avoiding the complexities of the differing debates I have outlined. Terzi highlights the tensions that currently exist in debating inclusive education, and in so doing affirms Thomas's (2004) social relational understanding of disability. She identifies what she refers to as the 'dilemma of difference'. Terzi argues that it is through understanding and knowledge of the impact of impairment on the individual that the social and physical environmental barriers can be identified and removed. Terzi argues that disability can be understood as relational with respect both to impairment and to the social and physical design of the environment. Disability is conceptualised as a 'limitation on relevant capabilities' (Terzi 2005, p453) resulting from a negative interplay between the individual and the environment. In this sense, there is a social justice imperative Terzi argues, for an individual to be enabled in their lives through the removal of 'environmental' barriers. In the context of this study, the inclusion of children with the label of autism currently excluded from education with their peers could be argued to be an issue of social justice, a moral imperative. As I worked with the teachers over the course of the module sessions I gained an impression that they embarked on the module with little overt knowledge of the social or individual models of disability, despite there being evidence in the data that their practice was influenced by both models.

What is significant for this study is that little is known about what impact any debate about the social model of disability has on the knowledge, understanding and practice of teachers. This study sought to understand whether and how these teachers engage with such debates and the potential

impact this might have on their understanding of their practice and the development of a professional identity as inclusive practitioners and enablers of social change.

The process of normalisation

Thomas (2007) cites Lacan (1977) when she argues that within a post-structuralist perspective of disability there is emphasis on the power and impact of the language used to describe people who are disabled. Thomas refers to the use of binary dualisms such as able/disabled. Whilst it is common to refer to those who are 'disabled', it is not so common for people who identify as 'able' to be so labelled (Goodley 2011). Such persons are the 'taken for granted', the dominant majority, who assume an identity of 'normal' and as the dominant group in society, label only those deemed to be 'abnormal'. This process is described as the process of 'othering' distinct beings, where those who do not conform to some 'norm' of society are labelled as 'not normal' whether in relation to gender identity, sexuality, race, culture or intellectual or physical impairment.

The concept of normalisation pervades all aspects of society in the UK, with a drive to achieve at the very least 'normal' in whatever sphere of development or endeavour is addressed. This process is represented in the notion of mainstream and special education, where mainstream could be seen to be synonymous with 'normal' and special is synonymous with the 'non-normal' at either end of the statistical bell curve of educational ability. I would argue that the continued use of the term 'mainstream' when referring to schools is in itself

an exclusionary practice implying that there is also a 'non-mainstream'. Titchkosky (2011) argues that the concept of inclusion (into the 'mainstream') can only exist in opposition to the concept of exclusion (from the 'mainstream'), the two forming another of the binary opposites cited by Goodley (2011).

This process of normalisation (Hehir 2002) is demonstrated in the education system in England where a constant drive in both primary and secondary schools over the past twenty years has been to create a school population where all students are expected to strive towards a 'normal' level of passing an assessment (Benjamin 2002 cited Lloyd 2008). This in turn could lead to teachers feeling that they have failed, or even being judged to have failed, if they are unable to make some children 'normal' (Howard 2002).

I will return to the impact of normalisation on the school policy landscape in the literature review in Chapter Two. It is within this concept of normalisation that educational inclusion currently and uncomfortably sits. I will explore the implications of a normalising society for how the teachers in this study talk about their practice and how this might inform their understanding of inclusion.

Autism within disability debates

Watson (2002) argues that many people with impairments do not identify with being disabled. This is true for those who identify as deaf for example, as well as for many with the label of autism who identify as autistic or 'Aspie' (Sinclair 1993; Biklen 2000; Broderick and Ne'eman 2008). Identity politics is another aspect of the debate within disability studies, leading as it can to a celebration of difference and a positive identity. Some theorists argue that a claim to the

identity of a label (identification with being the 'other') only serves to continue the oppression of the 'other' in society (Corker and Shakespeare 2002, cited Thomas 2007). Whilst identification with a label, as argued, serves to continue the identification of groups of individuals as 'other', there is importance to claiming an identity, for example identifying as feminist, as autistic, as deaf, as gay. Swain and French's (2000) affirmation model of disability sits within this arena with a celebration of the social and intellectual differences associated with the label autism being central to the Aspie identity, as well as the coining of the label 'neurotypical' to identify the 'other' non-autistic members of society. The need to claim an identity can be understood as a way of mitigating the impact of oppression on the individual and in an inclusive non-discriminatory society such a need to self-label in the face of oppression would be removed.

There is a body of research (Croll and Moses 2000; Runswick-Cole 2011) which indicates that some children may be considered 'easier' to include than others, typically those individuals with a sensory or mobility impairment but not those with an intellectual impairment or behaviour perceived as being challenging. Within what Wing (1996) refers to as the autistic spectrum there are individuals with a broad range of intellectual abilities. When discussing the inclusion of children with the label of autism there may be issues arising that relate not only to differences associated with the label of autism, for example social and communication difference, but also to the impact of intellectual impairment. This is particularly pertinent in light of the omission of those labelled as having a 'learning disability' from the original social model (Tregaskis 2002). I explore the data to investigate whether the teachers in this study identify any possible limits to inclusion based on a child's intellectual and learning style. I discuss this in

Chapter Six which explores whether teachers identify any 'limits' to inclusion and how these are articulated.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented the aims and rationale for my research and have located this within a reflection on my own professional background and experience, as well as some current debates in educational research which I explore more fully later in the dissertation. I have introduced the significance of the social model of disability for this study, and of the position of conceptualisations of autism within this model. The social model of disability is an essential theoretical underpinning of this study in its application to interrogating the concept of inclusion and to the conceptualisation of autism, as well as providing a sociological perspective within which my research questions are framed.

I approach this study therefore with an understanding that there are very real social barriers in place for the child with the label of autism in terms of the political and social processes at play in the English education system today. I understand disability and associated labels such as autism to be social constructions which often serve to act as stigmatising labels, but labels to which those individuals are paradoxically bound in order to gain the resources to which they are entitled. Through this study I aim to explore whether and how these social barriers are conceptualised and understood by teachers. I hope to provide some insight into the perspectives of this small group of teachers which will contribute to the developing understanding of how the social model is

recognised and understood by teachers and other educational professionals. In addition I hope the chapters that follow will contribute to the recognition of the importance of drawing on the perspectives of teachers when interrogating the process of educational change.

The next chapter will provide a review of current research, policy and legislation relating to educational inclusion, as well as of literature pertaining to the recognition of the importance of 'teachers' voices' in educational research. I reflect on the educational legislation which drove the inclusion agenda forward and examine the impact of educational policy change on the professional lives and experiences of teachers.

This chapter is in two sections. In the first section, '**Theorising Educational Inclusion**', I provide a critical analysis of the literature relating to the process of educational inclusion for children with the label of autism. This will include sections on the developing conceptualisation and practice of educational inclusion. I review the development of the concept of inclusion, framing this within the social model of disability and examine how it has been reflected in educational legislation, policy and practice since the Warnock Report in 1978.

The second section of the literature review, '**Teachers' Voices**', explores the extent to which teachers have been enabled to contribute to the debate about the process of inclusive education. I hope that this section will provide a context for my method of gathering data based on recording the perspectives of a group of teachers as they discuss their experience of practice.

Theorising Educational Inclusion

McDonnell (2003) argues that the current system of special education and the associated terminology of special educational need (SEN), is based on the individual model of disability and, as discussed in the previous chapter, such a model serves to marginalise and exclude disabled children and children labelled as having SEN. An educational system developed in order to teach children labelled as having SEN, many of whom, prior to the report by the Warnock Committee (1978), had been deemed to be 'in-educable', certainly those who were labelled as 'being severely learning disabled'. Such children were positioned as being outside the expertise of the 'normal school' and were often institutionalised in so-called 'sub-normality hospitals'. It was only with the

advent of Warnock's report that these children were afforded a legal right to education.

McDonnell argues that the individual model of disability permeates special education in two ways: first 'through a discourse grounded in a clinical and individualised understanding of disabled children' and second, through a discourse of professional 'expertisin' (Troyna and Vincent 1996 cited McDonnell 2003, p262). These two discourses are, he argues, interdependent. In terms of how this translates into educational placement, within the system of special education, the 'problem' with the child is identified and then a 'special approach' to working with that child, and others with the same 'problem' develops. This is in contrast to a perspective which conceptualises learners as unique individuals and allows for an understanding of a diversity of learning style and ability and equitable educational entitlement as argued for by, amongst others, Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) and Terzi (2005). Titchkosky (2011, p12-13) argues that current notions of access and inclusion within social institutions, for example schools, are predicated on the notion of the disabled individual as the 'problem':

What the problem is, then, is disability as an individual matter. Disability is the location of trouble since it results in the difficulty of having one's needs met, as well as potentially causing academic problems and barriers to learning.

This conceptualisation persists in practice within the English educational system in the form of statementing to identify special educational need and specialist supports and resources for the individual child. At the same time educational policy regarding inclusive education demands that schools seek to identify and remove barriers to access and learning for children (DfES 2004) based on at

least a partial acknowledgement of the social model of disability. I explore in the data chapters, Chapters Four to Eight, whether the perceptions of the teachers reflect the discourse of the 'individual as problem' or the alternative discourse promoted by the social model of disability.

The 'problem' of inclusion

The concept of educational inclusion is problematic to define. According to Peters, Johnstone and Ferguson (2005, p2-3):

Inclusive education appears to mean different things to different planners and developers, and is translated into yet more varied concepts and practices by practitioners at school levels.

These authors continue by citing Miles (1999b) and Lynch (2001) when they argue that the process of educational inclusion should be based on the 'rights of all individuals to a quality education with equal opportunity ... one that develops their potential and respects their human dignity' (2005, p142).

An attempt to reduce inclusion to a process based on identification and labelling of 'individual pathology' is exclusionary and problematic. On the other hand, it is naive to consider that schools and teachers will be able to identify learning styles and potential barriers to achievement without an understanding of the possible diversity of learning styles and approaches to enable learning (Hehir 2002). This leads to consideration of inclusion as more about an acceptance and embracing of diversity within society and of developing an educational system that is not built to 'include' children but which is built with all children and their rights to education in mind. For children with the label of autism this will include recognition of their social communication and interpretation styles

(Jackson 2002) and the possible impact of their sensory processing styles (Bogdashina 2003) for example.

McDonnell (2003, p261 citing Drudy and Lynch 1993; Skritic 1995 and McDonnell 2003) argues that education systems have two different structural levels: 'deep structures of theories, values, assumptions and beliefs, and surface structures of day-to-day practices in the organisation and operation of schools'. By surface structures McDonnell includes, for example, the content of the curriculum, allocation of pupils to particular educational programmes, the methods of teaching, the distribution of resources. He argues that inevitably, as these are the most visible aspects of education, they have been the focus of much educational research.

He continues by arguing that 'surface' structures depend (for their success or otherwise) on the 'deep structures' beneath, the conceptual framework that is not usually subjected to such rigorous scrutiny as the surface structures of curriculum, timetabling, resourcing. Indeed, these underlying structures are often 'taken for granted and ... subject to much less scrutiny' (2003, p261). This argument is extended by Rieser (2011) who describes the features of an inclusive education system. Rieser argues that these features depend on significant changes to how society conceptualises disablement. This would involve wider public awareness campaigns and education to establish a rights-based approach to inclusion, as well as active encouragement for parents to enrol their children at their local mainstream school. In the context of this study the way that disability is conceptualised within society will inform how inclusive practice is itself conceptualised and implemented. I will argue that there is currently a tension within society between the individual model of disability and

the social model of disability resulting in significant barriers to the development of inclusive schools. In the current education system, such a barrier exists where access to resources depends on identification of disability or SEN based on assessment and labelling of the individual. The question of the financial cost of inclusion is addressed when Stubbs (1997 cited Peters, Johnstone and Ferguson 2005, p144) comments that no-one would argue that a non-disabled child's right to life and development should be 'subject to available resources' (Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990, Article 23) and asserts that it is a myth that disabled children are excluded primarily because of lack of resources. The main barriers to inclusion are identified as attitudes, beliefs, and systems that are not really designed to benefit any children and, as we shall see the teachers in this study identify these same barriers as overwhelmingly significant. I hope that this study will highlight some of the factors which teachers identify as barriers to achieving this equality of opportunity for all children.

In contrast, an inclusive school system would be one where children are entitled and enabled to access all aspects of the school whatever their style of learning or level of ability. Within the context of the current study I will explore how teachers reflect on this relationship between surface and deep structures.

This tension is explored by Slee (2001, p114) when he considers the complexity of attempting to define inclusion in the context of the existing school system. He argues that to attempt a definition in this context is problematic:

In other words, by accepting the existing constitution of schooling, inclusion is reduced to an ensemble of policies and resources to expedite what Bernstein (1996) may have dismissed as an orchestrated process of political 'absorption'.

Slee, in common with other educationalists (McDonnell 2003; Hodkinson 2005; Peters, Johnstone and Ferguson 2005) argues that without a radical restructuring of educational provision, educational inclusion will fail. Such restructuring would include changes to the methods of how schools are judged and valued as well as the location of learning and the curriculum. Without such changes inclusion becomes a process which is 'done to' a group of children who have been deemed as 'other', whether by virtue of race, gender, sexuality, or, in the case of the current study, intellectual, social and communication ability. This maintains the notion that some children are outside of the 'dominant culture' and have to be included into it, or as Slee comments:

... there remains an unacknowledged acceptance and reduction of inclusion to the observed and reported phenomenon of placing children in regular classrooms ... (2001, p14).

This then requires that inclusion is defined within and from a perspective of identifying groups of children as 'other' by virtue of the features mentioned, thus rendering the concept in itself 'non-inclusive'. I will examine how the teachers in this study reflect on this notion of inclusion into an 'unchanging mainstream'.

In a similar vein, Sikes, Lawson and Parker (2007, p357) state that:

... the rhetoric and discourse by which inclusion has been promoted and articulated in governmental policy and publications could be described as somewhat vague.

They continue by reflecting that teachers experience on-going tensions towards what is often best described as 'prescribed' policy.

Armstrong (2011, p7) cites Dyson and Gallannaugh (2007) when she argues

that there is a mismatch in the UK between 'the apparent intentions of one set of policies and what actually happens in practice'. Biesta (2007) reflects that to search for 'what works' in all educational settings is not only undesirable but impossible to achieve. He argues instead that teachers should be equipped through their initial training, as well as through on-going professional development, to develop accessible learning opportunities for the children within their own classroom and school.

Slee (2001) asserts that, historically, many educationalists writing in the field of Inclusive practice have consistently failed to engage critically with the discourses of disability studies, and that inclusion has been addressed from the perspective of the individual pathology of a child. While ever this continues, he argues, inclusive education will be reduced to a focus on this 'individual pathology' and attempts to include the child into 'mainstream schools' will never be truly effective. Titchkosky (2011, p39) extends this argument when she writes that:

Those who 'we' can't, won't, or don't imagine as potential participants are those who remain excludable ... In this way, assertions of inclusion help to normalize conceptions of those who are *essentially excludable*.

For children with the label of autism the focus on the individual child, as opposed to the unpreparedness of the educational setting to work with a diverse population, has meant that mainstream education continues to be exclusive, and that many children with the label of autism are as Titchkosky argues, 'essentially excludable'. As I have commented already, even the term 'mainstream' is problematic, resonating as it does of a dominant culture and the implicit 'othering' that stems from that.

Hehir (2002) argues that some academics confuse 'expertism' with specialised understanding and that a broader and more complex understanding of pedagogy is needed in order to enable inclusive practice to develop. This does not imply however that teachers should be offered courses on 'special educational need', rather that they should be offered the opportunity to learn about a far broader spectrum of learning style and ability than has traditionally been the case in initial teacher training. Rieser (2011) argues that teachers should be offered continuing and on-going access to professional development about diverse learning opportunities, and this includes learning from examples of best practice. Rieser (2006, p167) also argues that schools, in order to become inclusive, need to have access to sufficient support in the form of what he refers to as a 'constellation' of services around the school. This notion of a constellation resonates with the notion of the 'team around the child' (DfE, 2012) and consists of all those members of the professional and family community involved in enabling a child's education.

The organisation Ambitious about Autism (Ambitious about Autism 2013) reports that whilst 71% of children with the label of autism in England are educated in mainstream schools (citing DfE 2012), 54% of teachers in the survey undertaken with teachers in England do not feel they have had adequate professional development opportunities to enable them to understand the cognitive style associated with the label of autism (citing National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) 2011). Jones (2006) writing in the context of teachers working with children with the label of autism, argues that in order to be able to develop inclusive classrooms and pedagogies, teachers need to be enabled to understand the intellectual and social style associated with the label

of autism. I will discuss later how the teachers in this study position themselves with regard to the notion of broader and deeper professional development for all teachers.

I recognise that I seek constantly as an academic and course leader to move the understanding of students on the course beyond problematising the individual child with the label of autism. There is a tension within my practice between explicating and reflecting on the possible experience of living with the label of autism, which includes reflection on the impact of the associated intellectual, social and communication style, and the identification of societal barriers surrounding the individual. My experience as an academic in this area is that most teachers are operating within an individual model of disability with respect to their understanding of educational opportunity for children with the label of autism. As a course team we strive to articulate the concept of a neurodiverse society, one in which the individual style of thinking and learning is valued without stigmatising labels. The issues this raises for the teachers in this study are discussed in later chapters.

Problems in practice

Hodkinson (citing Scruggs and Mastropieri 1996; Croll and Moses 2000,) observes that:

Despite the initiatives (of *the first few years of the 21stC*) it has been contended that some teachers observe inclusive education relates only to children with special educational needs ... and others believe that not all children are capable of being included in mainstream education (2005, p15).

This raised the question for me as to whether the teachers in my study considered there to be any limits to educational inclusion and whether they could identify any groups of children who may be 'beyond' inclusion.

Hodkinson (2005) argues that a more valuable conceptualisation of inclusion is to consider it as a process in which academic success takes second place to the development of self through individual choice. For Armstrong (2011, p8) inclusive education 'implies a transformation in the social, cultural, curricular and pedagogic life of the school, as well as its physical organisation' and is situated in the belief that all members of a community have an equal entitlement and access to it. Cochran-Smith and Dudley-Marling (citing Castanell and Pinar 1993) argue that 'the curriculum and the structures of schooling need to be interrogated as political texts' (2012, p241). For Cochran-Smith and Dudley-Marling, there is a social justice argument for critical re-evaluation of the curriculum and of the purposes of education. They cite King (2006, p337) when they state that '... we are left with the untenable situation in which "equal access to a faulty curriculum" ... is assumed by some to constitute justice' (2012, p241).

In order for our schools and educational system to become fully inclusive it would seem therefore that there needs to be a radical restructuring so that all learners achieve equality of access and entitlement. I discuss later the extent to which the teachers in this study welcome such fundamental change to their practice, and what concerns they have in relation to it.

Biklen (2000) identifies key themes and principles which he feels are necessary for inclusion in schools to be effective. He argues that it is important that schools create and find contexts for disabled children to experience

competence: 'Presuming competence needs to be a taken-for-granted quality of inclusive schooling' (Biklen 2000,p340). Biklen continues by asserting (p341) that in many schools disabled students have to almost prove themselves against 'normate standards' of competence in order to gain access to the mainstream classroom. Within an educational context where one of the ways that a school is judged is by its outcomes in Standard Assessment Tasks (Rose 2001), the performance of disabled children might be seen to threaten or undermine a school's chances of success.

Wedell (2005) succinctly describes the dilemma facing educationalists now with regard to the issue of developing inclusive schools, citing an article that he wrote in 1995:

... one is seeking the right for pupils with special educational needs to be included in educational environments which are ... predicated on misconceived assumptions about the homogeneity of pupils' learning needs (Wedell 1995, p101).

He describes some of the barriers to the development of inclusive practice that exist - one of which is the fact that the predominant approach to teaching and learning in mainstream schools is to organise pupils into classes of 30 pupils.

Pedagogy in schools is about mastering the art of controlling the behaviour of some thirty young persons of the same age, who are reluctantly enclosed in a room of modest size and who can be as easily managed as thirty kittens can be herded (Hargreaves 2001, p2 cited Wedell 2005).

A key focus of this study is how teachers perceive their own classroom practice and how this relates to Wedell's analysis of current mainstream pedagogy. A further aspect of this which I explore, relates to the nature of the curriculum and the constraints of working with an outmoded model of curriculum for the 21st

century, bounded as it is by traditional subject areas. Wedell (2005) argues that for pupils labelled as having special educational needs who attend mainstream settings, the English national curriculum is both limited and restrictive in its capacity to support their learning. Rieser (2011), when defining the attributes of an inclusive education system, includes the requirement for a national curriculum which is accessible for all children, and systems of assessment which are formative and accessible, as opposed to current systems of assessment which, he argues, are exclusive.

Therapy or education?

A familiar theme in much of the literature about special educational needs and disability is the notion of there being some children who require 'therapy', as opposed to education, one which Goodley (2011) critiques as exclusive and as 'othering' the child. Mintz (2009) argues that, whilst the philosophical roots of therapy and education can be traced to a similar starting point in Greek philosophy, they are now understood in Western society to be two distinct traditions. One commonly held definition of therapy is that it is a process which aims to 'cure' an individual (Mintz 2009). It is this process which Goodley (2011) is critical of in the context of special education, the notion of 'curing the damaged child' ie the child with the label SEN. An alternative interpretation of a therapeutic relationship in education is one in which the relationship between teacher and student enables the student to fulfill his or her emotional and intellectual potential. It would thus be possible to have a therapeutic education which did not set out to 'cure' a child but to enable their potential, a notion of

therapeutic which could comfortably sit with the inclusive school (Smeyers, Smith and Standish 2007 cited Mintz 2009).

A confusing policy landscape

Inclusion and performativity: two competing agendas

The Green Paper 'Support and Aspiration: A new approach to Special Educational Needs and Disability' (DfE 2011) will impact on the process of developing inclusion, as will the coalition government's drive to establish an increasing number of free schools and schools with academy status as outlined in the White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching' (DfE 2010). The proposal, by the coalition government, to remove the bias towards inclusion (Cabinet Office 2010 cited Runswick-Cole 2011) to promote the allocation of individual funds to parents to pay for the support that they would like for their child will arguably create an increasingly divided educational system. This reflects the continuing encroachment of marketisation into the education system, whether in the form of academy schools or private investors in special education (Rix 2011). The children whose parents are already socially disadvantaged, for whatever reason, will be at even greater risk of educational and social vulnerability (Ball 2010).

Goodley (2011, p146 citing Davis 1995) refers to the 'neoliberalism' of education arguing that in neoliberal conceptions of education and childhood there is a 'cultural imperative to fit in, under a rubric of normality, to strive to be normal'. He continues by citing Slee (1996, p107) who stated that 'it has become more difficult to talk of students failing in education without calling on

scholastic labels'. In other words, if students fail to achieve 'normally' at GCSE or Key Stage 2 SATs then it is possible to locate the 'problem' within the child and seek a diagnostic label to explain the failure. So the process of assessment against the national curriculum and the associated league table agenda of school performativity perpetuate a model of education which problematises the children whom it is unable to 'normalise'. I explore in the data chapters how teachers in this study conceive of the impact of this on their own practice in mainstream. Again, this process, in itself, can be argued to work against an inclusive agenda. Benjamin (2002, p47 cited Lloyd 2008) argues that:

The standards agenda operates as if standards are absolute and the legitimizing narrative operates as if those absolute standards can be made accessible to everyone. The ultimate aim of the successful continuously improving school is to produce entire cohorts of students who attain the national average standard or better. Such an aim is cruel, as well as being manifestly nonsensical, since an average standard, by its nature, requires half the population to fall below it.

Rix (2011 citing Allan 2008) suggests that the accountability regimes which have come about as a result of the increased marketisation of education have resulted in inclusion outcomes based on 'presence' of students rather than full participation. Rix argues that the processes of performativity and choice in education have forced primary schools to compete through focusing narrowly on national curriculum based outcomes as assessed through performance on Key Stage 2 SATs. This then can be seen to impact on the behaviour of schools towards students who look unlikely to meet the required standards in these tests as a result of intellectual capacity, motivation or behaviour and attitude to school. Neither of these factors, performativity and choice, encourage or indeed enable schools to drive forward with initiatives which many (Biklen 2000; Slee

2001; Wedell 2005; Osberg and Biesta 2010) deem to be necessary to promote inclusive education. Such initiatives include fundamental changes to the curriculum, a move to assess children's learning within a context of valuing individual achievement against a broad and relevant set of criteria, flexible class sizes and an emphasis on providing equitable access and participation for all children.

Slee (2002, p118) cites Rose (2001) when he refers to the problem with educational inclusion as the subjugation of an equity agenda in education to the imperative of competitive league table performance'. Rose (2001, p148) argues that:

... the emphasis upon an outcomes-driven curriculum, where success is measured only in academic terms and school performance is judged through performance tables, is a direct impediment and a disincentive to schools...

I will explore the impact the performative agenda has on the process of inclusion and how teachers perceive this to impact on their practice.

The Children and Families Bill

The Coalition Government's Children and Families Bill declares its aim to be to improve services for vulnerable children. According to the DfE (2013) the bill aims to underpin wider reforms to ensure that all children and young people can succeed, no matter what their background. The bill is intended to reform the systems for adoption, looked after children, family justice and special educational needs (DfE 2013). In the context of this study I will examine the intentions of the bill with regard to children labelled as having SEN.

The bill will extend the SEN system to operate from birth to 25, 'giving children, young people and their parents greater control and choice in decisions and ensuring needs are properly met'. It takes forward the reform programme set out in *Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability: Progress and next steps* (DfE 2011). This includes replacing statements with a new birth-to-25 Education, Health and Care plan; offering families personal budgets; and improving co-operation between all the services that support children and their families, particularly requiring local authorities and health authorities to work together. The call for closer partnership working between services and with families has been the focus of much recent educational policy (Children Act (Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons 2004); Removing Barriers to Achievement, (DfES 2004)). However partnership working continues to be problematic (Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2008). The organisations Every Disabled Child Matters and the Special Educational Need Consortium (2013) criticise the bill as failing to ensure that the social care element of an Education, Health and Care plan is enforceable in the same way that the health and education elements of the plan will be. The notion of a personal budget can be interpreted as offering greater choice for children and parents but this notion of choice, as I have previously argued could in practice be illusory for many (Ball 2010).

Disability Rights UK (2013), in a briefing on the Children and Families Bill comments on the removal of the categories of School Action and School Action Plus. They cite Department for Education data in 'Special Educational Needs in England' (2012) which indicates that 2.8% of children have a statement of SEN, while 17% 'have SEN without a statement'. This means that a large

number of disabled learners who are identified as having SEN are currently supported through School Action and School Action Plus. Disability Rights UK fear that as a result of the removal of School Action and School Action Plus a large number of children may not receive their educational entitlement. I have argued previously that, whilst the labelling of individual children is undesirable, it is currently an integral part of a system which works to try to ensure that children are enabled to learn effectively.

Every Disabled Child Matters and the Special Educational Consortium (SEC) (2013) voice similar concern to those voiced by Disability Rights UK. In addition they note that under current legislation any child without a statement must be educated in mainstream education. Under the new bill, in Clause 34(9), special academies will be able to admit children without a statement. This could result in children being placed in special education without any statutory assessment and could erode the rights of children and their families to education in mainstream schools. This development has the potential to create even further divisions within an increasingly fragmented education system. In Chapter Nine I will discuss the findings of this study in the context of this bill and reflect on the possible impact it may have on the development of inclusive practice.

Parent-professional partnerships

The 'partnership' between the family and the school, whilst promoted in educational policy documents such as Removing Barriers to Achievement (DfES 2004), is frequently experienced by the family as problematic (Murray 2000). Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2008, p638) refer to partnership between parents and professionals as being a 'modern day mantra within the field of

'special educational needs". The authors continue by arguing that the model of partnership promoted in policy documents (DfES 2001; 2004) often de-values parental knowledge and understanding of their child and places higher value on the professional than the parental perspective. The notion that parents might require 'support' in working with their child is problematic in that this notion of 'support' is not also applied to the professional. The professional is frequently positioned as the expert in the process of deciding on school placement, with parents reporting that they feel vulnerable in their relationships with professionals. According to Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2008, p640) many parents feel that working with professionals is 'more stressful than parenting a disabled child'.

In contrast to this problematic aspect of partnership working, some parents do report effective partnerships with professionals. Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2008, p645) identify the characteristics of effective parent-professional relationship as being 'fluid, able to respond to changing perspectives and shifting perspectives as parents and professionals engage with new experiences and influences'.

Kearney and Griffin (2001) argue that, whilst the 1990's saw many developments in the conceptualisation of disability and identity politics, the experience of the family is still heavily bound within the individual model of disability with an emphasis on identification, diagnosis, and assessment of 'deficit' in the child. Green (2003), in a survey of mothers of disabled children in the US, identified the impact on the family of what she terms 'courtesy stigma'.

She draws on the work of Goffman (1963, cited Green 2003) when she asserts that the stigma attached to the disabled individual also attaches to the family. Whilst the impact, on both the family and the individual, of stigma, varies in degree and impact in different social contexts, Green asserts that there is a tendency towards an increase in emotional distress and social isolation for the family.

Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2008) argue that many families experience significant levels of disagreement with professionals over the issue of applying a diagnostic label to their child. The same authors also describe how, for many families, access to resources for example support within a classroom, is linked to the acquisition of a diagnostic label for their child. Batten et al. (2006) report that many parents in their survey reported being in conflict with the local authority over school placement and that this conflict can have a negative impact on the quality of family life.

Families of school-aged children find themselves within an education system where, in order to gain access to resources, their child is required to be labelled as having 'special educational needs' or, in the context of this study, as having autism (Hodge 2005). With the label comes, as Green argues, a social stigma, but access to educational funding through the statementing process. Without the label, there is still the potential for 'stigma' based on physical or behavioural characteristics which differ from a perceived 'normal', but no access to an appropriate educational entitlement. Parents could indeed find themselves 'between a rock and a hard place' (Runswick-Cole 2008, p173) when seeking the best educational opportunity for their child. This dilemma of labelling, and

the possible impact for the family of discrimination and exclusion by the wider school community, is explored within the data chapters.

Summary

This section of the literature review has identified the current conceptualisations of educational inclusion and highlighted some of the tensions that exist in educational policy and legislation in this area of practice. The impact of both the individual and the social models of disability on current policy and practice emerges as a key tension, one which I will trace throughout the dissertation.

The dual processes of inclusion and marketisation, in the form of comparisons made between schools based on performance in standardised assessment processes, exert opposing influences in mainstream schools and on the staff and pupils connected to those schools. I have argued that the growing move to extend competition in education will have a negative impact on the process of inclusion, and schools and teachers will become increasingly focused on the ability of students to pass examinations, which may well in turn have a limiting impact on the development of the curriculum. The current limited English national curriculum, and the potentially even more limited and rigid revised version (Pollard 2012 cited Vassager 2012), and the associated assessment of student performance against this curriculum through standardised assessments, is identified as being a significant barrier to the development of inclusive practice in schools in England today.

I have argued that the experience of the family of the child living with the label of autism is of significance in the context of understanding educational

inclusion, in particular with regard to the application of diagnostic labels in order to access resources. There will be some exploration in the data chapters of the social experience of the family of the child with the label of autism, including the dilemma that family might face of needing to seek a 'label' for the child.

The next section of the literature review examines the impact of teacher knowledge and understanding of working with diverse learning styles, and teacher professional identity, emotion and attitude to practice. It will examine the ways in which educational change can affect teachers both personally and professionally and apply this to the context of developing inclusive practice. In addition the role of the teacher as a possible agent of change will be explored. The arguments for the importance of gathering teachers' perspectives on practice and educational change will be presented and I will identify how this has formed the basis for my approach to enquiry.

Teachers' Voices

This study seeks to understand the perspectives of a group of teachers on the process of inclusion for children with the label of autism. In the process of educational change the perspectives of all those involved in such change are important in gaining an understanding of the process and impact of the change initiative. However, this is a small research study and as such I have limited my exploration of the process to gathering the perspectives of the teachers only, whilst acknowledging that the voices of the children and of their families also have a central role in developing an understanding of the process of inclusion.

The impact of educational change on the emotions and professional identity of teachers is my focus here, as teaching is inherently understood to involve an emotional investment, which in turn can affect attitude to practice (Nias 1996; Van Veen and Lasky 2005; Kelchtermans 2005). I argue for the importance of placing teachers' perspectives on their work at the centre of debates into educational change and assert that teachers are key agents of change, whose voices need to be heard and acknowledged (Hargreaves 1996; Hargreaves 2002; Nind 2005; Sikes, Lawson and Parker 2007). This body of research informs my approach to enquiry and it is therefore important to set out key aspects of it here.

In order to avoid oversimplification of the notion of teachers' 'voice' Hargreaves (1996) argues that it is important to understand the context in which the perspectives of teachers are gathered, as the context has an impact on those voices and how they are interpreted. For example in the context of this study, it could be argued that the fact that the teachers were all volunteers in the study and all had experience of and an interest in working with children with the label

of autism would affect their perspectives. Perhaps a teacher in a special school or a teacher in a mainstream school, who does not wish to change his or her practice, might additionally wish to find faults with the process of inclusion. Hargreaves also suggests that the role of the researcher, for example in participant selection, is influential arguing that in much qualitative educational research into teacher perspectives, the teacher participants can generally be described as humanistic, child-centred and liberal, in other words are teachers who likely hold views similar to the researcher's. In this way teachers' voices have come to be represented in such research as somewhat homogeneous and benign, to such an extent Hargreaves (1996) argues, that rather than refer to teachers' voices, it has become common parlance to refer in the singular to the collective homogeneous 'teacher voice'. Hargreaves argues that this model of the 'teacher voice' fails to acknowledge that there are many teachers who may well have political and social views very different from the researcher. Teachers who may be disaffected, dissatisfied and who may even be disablist, racist, or sexist are not often represented in educational research, and may even feel, unable to reveal those perspectives. Participants in research studies may well reveal only what they choose to reveal of their perspectives, and what they reveal in a group situation may differ from what they reveal individually for example in a written diary. In the context of this study then I explore the data for differences between the 'public' and 'private' opinions of the teachers. The possible 'harmonisation' of the perspectives of members of group interviews is discussed in Chapter Three. Hargreaves (1996) reflects on the significance of context and the process of interpretation in the analysis of qualitative data when he comments that:

Overall the important thing seems to me to be that we do not merely *present* teachers' voices, but that we *re-present* them critically and contextually ... What matters is that these voices are interpreted with reference to the contexts of teachers' lives and work that help give them meaning (Hargreaves 2002, p17).

Teachers' perspectives on their work

The perspectives that teachers have, the attitudes to their work and conceptualisations of their role are closely connected to their individual sense of professional identity. Kelchtermans, citing Nias (1989), asserts that:

..the teacher as a person is held by many within the profession and outside it to be at the centre of not only the classroom but also the educational process. By implication, therefore, it matters to teachers themselves, as well as to their pupils, who and what they are (Kelchtermans 2005, p1000).

Kelchtermans continues by arguing against '... an essentialist and monolithic understanding of self and identity' (2005, p1000). Instead he reconstructs a teacher's identity as a 'personal interpretive framework', the set of beliefs and representation that teachers develop over time that operates as the lens through which they perceive their professional activity, make sense of it and act on it

Kelchtermans (2005) argues that in the context of the impact of government policy change and societal changes on teachers' identities, it is important that researchers come to understand teachers' emotions when dealing with reform.

It would seem therefore that it is important that educational policy makers understand how teachers experience their work, their emotional experience of the circumstances in which they work and, in turn, how this impacts on their

view of themselves and their identities as teachers; this experience will affect how teachers respond to and also, it should be hoped, initiate educational change and reform.

Sikes, Lawson and Parker (2007, p358) argue that the perspectives of teachers who are charged with implementing inclusive practice are 'of paramount significance in that they shape the 'inclusion experience' of the community in which they work'. They continue by citing Deleuze and Guattari (1987/2004, p7) in reflecting that:

... socially just pedagogies can only evolve and be becoming in so far as they are grounded in personal experience, questioning, action and interpersonal relationships.

This recognition of the central importance of gathering teachers' voices has underpinned my own approach to enquiry, as it resonates with my professional experience as a headteacher in which I was aware of the importance of working inclusively and discursively with school staff in the implementation of change.

Dadds (2005, p31) comments that teacher knowledge about practice in the classroom is central to educational research which 'burrows into the ethical heart of teaching and learning'. She argues for the importance and value of the reflexive subjective voice in educational research as do Sikes, Lawson and Parker (2007). These researchers emphasise the role, in educational research, of what Dadds describes as meaningful professional and academic conversations. These conversations may be in the form of seminars or conferences and these 'conversation research communities' (Elliott 1990, p3 cited Dadds 2005) play an essential role in educational research. Dadds (2005, p37) argues that when educational policy fails to take into account 'practitioners'

situational judgement' that policy change will be difficult to implement and maintain. Citing Nias (1999) and Osborn et al. (2000), she reflects on the professional 'crises of confidence' (2005, p38) experienced by teachers when their knowledge base is devalued in educational reform. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004, p7) extend this argument when they state that:

... the development of inclusive practices ... can only be achieved by engaging in dialogue about the deeply held beliefs of teachers and policy makers rather than through sudden transformations imposed from outside.

Hart (2004) presents Quine's argument that the knowledge of an individual can be conceptualised as a 'web of beliefs' (p43). Those beliefs towards the edge of the web are those most readily adjusted, whilst those more central in the web are more resistant to change. As Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004) argue, it is these deeply held beliefs, those at the centre of Quine's web, that teacher educators and education policy makers should be interested in for the successful implementation of educational change.

Cochran-Smith and Dudley-Marling (2012, p242) understand teachers, in the context of professional development, to be.

... knowers, learners, and generators of knowledge, rather than simply the objects of others' research or the consumers/implementers of knowledge generated outside of the contexts of practice for use inside them.

For Cochran-Smith and Dudley-Marling, teacher education and professional development should be inquiry led, and should avoid a search for universally appropriate 'best practices' (p 242), reflecting Biesta's rejection of a search for 'what works' in all contexts (2007, p1).

MacBeath et al. (2006) undertook a study for the National Union of Teachers which highlighted that few local authorities had initiated effective training, funding or support for the development of inclusive practice in schools. Teachers need to be equipped to meet the challenge of a diverse pupil population, both through initial teacher education courses and, once qualified and in practice, through continuing professional development activity.

Broderick et al. (2011, p838) cite Ballard (2003) who argues that, in order for inclusive practice to develop, graduate teachers as they enter the teaching profession should:

... understand how they might create classrooms and schools that address issues of respect, fairness and equity. As part of this endeavour they will need to understand the historical, sociocultural and ideological contexts that create discriminatory and oppressive practices in education ...

They continue by arguing that student teachers should have knowledge and understanding of the dominant discourses in inclusive education and the theoretical knowledge to be able to interrogate the implication of such discourses for practice.

Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004) argue that the most effective forum for developing teachers' knowledge about inclusive practice is for HEIs to work with practicing teachers, using their existing teaching activity as the focus for their professional development. The same authors argue (2006) that this form of professional development can be effective provided that teachers are enabled to reflect on and critique the values that underpin competing agendas in education. In the context of inclusion then, this would involve reflection on the impact of the social and individual models of disability, as well as the impact of

performativity. This aspect of teacher development is a central part of the move towards developing an education system that is equipped to work with a diverse range of pupil ability, and I will discuss how the teachers in this study reflect on professional development opportunities in Chapter Five.

Emotional experience

Van Veen and Lasky (2005, p918) argue that because teaching involves such a degree of human interaction, teachers' emotions 'constitute an essential element of teachers' work and identity', and Nias states that:

The emotional reactions of individual teachers to their work are intimately connected to the view that they have of themselves and others... So, the unique sense of self which every teacher has is socially grounded (1996, p 294).

Nias continues by arguing that, for teachers, their personal and professional identities are often so closely interwoven that the classroom is a place for the development of self-esteem and fulfilment, but also a site of their vulnerability. Following this argument then, the work that teachers see themselves as doing, their pre-conceptions of their role, of the pupils with whom they will work and the school settings in which they practice, reflect their sense of professional identity which, in turn, is affected by their emotional response to their work. For a class teacher the classroom could be seen to be the main site for the application and development of that teachers' beliefs and values, through a process of reflection on professional action (O'Hanlon 2003 cited Nind 2005). It could be argued, then, that one way to bring about educational change is to 'win the hearts and minds' of the teachers involved. This certainly resonates with me from my time as a headteacher, as well as in my current role as an academic working with

teachers in a professional development context. As I worked with the teachers in this study I found much to support this analysis.

in attempting to understand the emotional responses of the teachers in this study to their practice, through asking them to reflect on and talk about their work, I hope I will gain a deeper understanding of the factors that affect their practice.

Identity and teaching

A teacher's professional identity will affect how that teacher perceives and acts out his or her role within a school. Giddens (1991) argues that the individual in the present day institution, for example a school, constantly has to adjust his or her identity according to the external pressures existing within society at both a local and global level. Giddens describes the concept of the self becoming a 'reflexive project' (p1), one in which the individual constantly develops the narrative of the self within the context of the changes within society, both globally and locally. In what he refers to as this 'runaway world' (1991, p6) the individual professional is involved in a continuing re-shaping of their professional identity in response to changes within the organisations in which they are employed. This construction of identity as a reflexive project provides the context for an exploration of the impact of change on a teacher's identity and the relationship between their emotional experience of that change and their subsequent changing identity.

Crossley (2005, p144) defines the process of identity formation as:

... ways in which we demarcate and make sense of ourselves. It generally entails locating ourselves within a range of categories or formulating an account of who and what one is. Furthermore, by definition this entails a demarcation of what one is not, a marking out of 'the other' and of one's difference.

He argues that most of what we know about ourselves we know by reflecting upon our actions and their contexts, as well as upon how others perceive or respond to our actions. In this sense then our identity, it could be argued, is in part formed through a mirroring of who we are through the responses of those around us to our actions. In the context of teachers then, it could be argued that professional identity is partly formed through that teacher's own personal reflection on their actions and also through that teacher's perception of how his or her peers and those in a position of power respond to their actions. For Crossley, who cites the influence of Mead on his argument, a teacher's identity is affected by the context in which they work and the judgements of those around them:

... we continue to internalize the perspectives of both specific significant and generalized others, judging, assessing and making sense of ourselves from their point of view (2005, p135).

This may be in the form of mentor peers, respected colleagues, senior colleagues, outside agencies, families and students. All of these influences, it could be argued, inform the development of a teacher's professional identity. Howard (2000 p387) argues that a social constructionist perspective on identity recognises the importance of seeing people as 'whole' beings consisting of multiple identities for example identities based on gender, ethnicity, age and profession.

Seeing people as whole means recognising that both our everyday lives and the larger cultures in which we operate shape our senses of who we are and what we could become (Howard 2000, p388).

In this way, in the context of the development of inclusive education, a teacher who considers that his or her identity as a teacher is to achieve a set of targets in standardised assessment tests, may consider that children who are labelled as having SEN within the class will impede this achievement. For this teacher the professional identity of 'a teacher who achieves test results' is challenged by the process of inclusion. Howard (2000) identifies key forces in shaping identity such as the desire to seek attachments to others; the pursuit of recognition and dignity; seeking feelings of agency and empowerment and avoiding fear and anxiety. Citing Erickson (1995) she emphasises the importance of 'meanings' in identity formation - what it means for example to be a teacher and to achieve what Howard terms 'authenticity and meaning' within a multiplicity of relationships and identities. Within this study I explore the data for what it might reveal of how these teachers frame their own professional identities and the impact this might have on their own actions and responses to change. In particular I will examine any data which reveal that there are identities which can be described as 'special' or 'mainstream' teacher, as the current system of segregated schooling might encourage this.

Ball (2003, p216), writing in the context of the impact of the performativity agenda on teachers' professional identities, cites Bernstein (1996) and Rose (1989, p ix) when he argues that policy reform brings about changes to 'our subjective existence and our relations one with another' (p216). Whilst Ball writes in the context of the performativity agenda, he does also reflect that the same applies to any reform of educational policy. In this way, Ball argues that

education reform such as the development of inclusive educational policy will affect 'what it means to teach and what it means to be a teacher' (2003, p218).

In this study i ask teachers to share their reflections on inclusion for children with the label of autism, as i view their perspectives as fundamental to developing an understanding of factors which affect this process. I examine the data for what might be revealed about the impact changing educational policy has on teacher identity, and the impact this has on teachers' attitudes to practice in the context of inclusive education for children with the label of autism.

Special teachers

Broderick et al. (2011, p832) argue that in the view of some educators, there are 'different 'kinds' of teachers best suited to be a teacher to each 'kind' of student'. They argue that this is part of a narrative within education that children with the label of SEN or autism require specialised teaching which can only be provided by teachers 'uniquely qualified for special education'. These 'unique qualifications' apply not only to training but also to personal characteristics such as levels of patience and empathy. The notion of 'professional saintliness' will be discussed in the data chapters, and how this might relate to a professional identity of being a special school teacher. I explore the data for evidence of whether the teachers in the study have established an identity as mainstream or special school teacher, or as a teacher of all children, or whether they are confused about what identity they should have.

Familiarity with diversity

Nind identifies the fact that:

...one clear finding from research on attitudes to inclusive education is that involvement in inclusive practice and familiarity with more diverse groups of learners is linked with more positive attitudes to inclusive education (2005, p 270).

She cites Farrell (2001) and Mittler (2000, p10) as stating that what is called for in the development of an inclusive school is 'radical reform of the school in terms of curriculum, assessment, pedagogy and grouping of pupils...based on a value system'. She continues by reflecting that '...inclusion is an issue primarily for teachers - and that, perhaps, it is them we need to hear more from' (2005, p273) maintaining that inclusion is an issue of pedagogy as well as an issue of human rights. Nind continues her argument by reflecting on the role of teachers as 'change agents - as enactors of inclusive policy' (2005, p273). She cites O'Hanlon (2003) as arguing that 'there is no professional change without personal change' (p273) and that educational change happens often because teachers make it happen. This resonates with the perspectives of Armstrong and Moore (2004) who, in the context of their practice working with teachers in a professional development capacity, perceive teachers to be agents of change as they explore and evaluate their practice.

Teachers as agents of change

Hargreaves (1996, p12) argues that teachers' perspectives are of particular relevance in the context of the role teachers play in educational change and how well their opinions are represented in the discourse of policy and research on education:

Teachers who otherwise might be inclined to change in and of themselves ironically become deeply resistant to change when it is imposed insensitively and seemingly incoherently from above (Hargreaves 1996, p12 citing Richardson 1991; Huberman 1993).

Hargreaves (1996) positions teachers as being capable of resisting policy change if they feel such change is imposed upon them. Hargreaves implies that teachers might be more open to policy change when they feel that they are proactively involved in the change. In this way teachers could potentially be positioned as agents of change through involvement in the development, rather than just the implementation, of change. I explore the data for what it might reveal of how the teachers in this study position themselves in the context of change, and for evidence that they might resist or actively promote change.

Hargreaves (1996) also reflects on the importance of context in shaping a teacher's perspective of what is believed to be appropriate and possible within his or her professional role. The context, Hargreaves argues, has an important impact on how a teacher will practice. If a teacher works within a school where there is a huge drive to achieve a target performance level at Key Stage 2 SATs then that will affect how that teacher perhaps prioritises his or her work in class. It will also affect how that teacher perceives any aspects of student performance or behaviour which will act to reduce the chances of meeting that target. A teacher who has worked in a school where there has been a long history of social inclusion, and where class populations have been more diverse than in some other schools in the same authority, may have a different perspective on working with children whose intellectual and social style vary from the 'typical'. Broderick et al. (2011, p833) assert that teachers are affected by the:

... bureaucratic structures of schooling (*acting*) as powerful forces of surveillance (*which affect*) not only our actions and practices, but indeed also our thoughts and reflections on the processes of teaching and schooling.

In this way it could be argued that teachers discipline themselves to enact the change agenda of the school in which they work. There may be some element of choice here as well, for example teachers may choose to seek employment within a particular school, perhaps because of its reputation or the kind of school it is. In this way a teacher can be affected by the context in which they work but can also seek out a context which may enable them to fulfill an aspect of their professional identity. So a teacher whose professional identity is 'special school teacher' will seek out a post in a special school. A teacher may be affected by their context but may also be part of creating and developing that context. I will search the data for what might be revealed of the impact that the context of the school in which a teacher works has on their ability to act as agents of change.

Hodkinson (2005) cites Corbett (2001) when he comments that many teachers have some reservations about the degree to which they will support inclusive education. These reservations could reflect the ambiguity of the existing policy agendas of performativity and inclusion which act upon teachers and schools. Teachers are more likely to support inclusion if it relates to children with mild mobility or sensory difficulties whose presence in a classroom could be perceived as less 'unsettling of the norm', but are less supportive of inclusion for children whose behaviour is perceived as challenging and therefore more likely to unsettle the 'normal' classroom. Many children with the label of autism can experience a significant level of social anxiety in a school setting which can result in a degree of behaviour which can be interpreted as challenging. For

inclusion to be successful teachers need to be enabled to succeed with the children with whom they are asked to work, and this involves a degree of access to professional development about inclusive practice (Hodkinson 2005). In this way teachers can be better enabled to implement inclusive policy change.

Hargreaves (2002) also argues, however, that for too many teachers, educational change is a 'serial killer' whose repeated actions defeat and destroy improvement instead of developing it' (2002, p189). The reasons for the failure of educational change initiatives are often framed in terms of poor design and implementation by the initiator of the change, or in terms of the level of knowledge and understanding or of attitude on the part of those who will implement the change initiative (Hargreaves 2002; Timperley and Parr 2005). Atkinson (2004) argues that the process of performativity limits the possibility of a teacher acting innovatively through the rigid process of assessing both schools and teachers against a limited set of standards. In the context of educational reform the change initiator is often the government and those who implement change the professionals who work in schools. Timperley and Parr (2005, p228 citing Coburn, 2001; Spillane, Rieser and Reimer 2002) claim that the failure of educational change often results from a complex interaction between the proposed change and the:

...existing norms, belief systems and practices that lead those responsible for implementation to impose their own meanings and interpretations on the change messages.

In addition, Hargreaves (2002) argues, the rapid pace of change implementation can impede the appropriate development of resourcing including inadequate professional development opportunities. Hargreaves

reflects that what professional development there is is rarely focussed on practice in the classroom *in combination* with 'the collegial and coaching support that is needed most' (2002, p190). I will examine what the teachers in the study perceive to be effective forms of professional development in enabling them to respond to the process of developing inclusive educational opportunities for children with the label of autism.

Sustainable educational change

Educational change is, as Hargreaves (2002) and Timperley and Parr (2005) argue, a problematic arena, and one key problematic aspect of such change is that even where change is initiated and welcome it is frequently not *sustained*. In the context of the sustainability of educational change, Fullan (2006) defines sustainability as 'the capacity of a system to engage in the complexities of continuous improvement consistent with deep values of human purpose (Fullan, 2005, p ix).' As the Children and Families Bill is implemented teachers as individuals in their classrooms and collectively as members of their professional bodies and unions will respond to the changes which result from the bill. If as Hargreaves (2002) and Timperley and Parr (2005) have argued, much educational change is poorly implemented and lacks sustainability, then the bill may have limited impact on the process of inclusive practice. I examine the data for evidence of whether and how the teachers in this study position themselves as agents of change, or whether they position themselves as being restricted to only being able to respond to change initiatives.

Hargreaves (2002 citing Capra 1997) asserts that in order to be capable of sustainable educational change and progress, educational systems must become professionally diverse environments which enable the process of creative and adaptable professional learning. In contrast, Hargreaves positions educational change initiatives based on 'rational, standardised scientific efficiency' to be 'the enemy of healthy and creative diversity' (Hargreaves 2002, p191). He argues that such standardised reform endangers those members of the system who are the weakest eg those who are labelled as disabled or as having SEN. For Hargreaves, an approach to teaching which enables sustainable change to take place is an approach which includes:

...not just knowing what, but knowing why (deep understanding), knowing how (application) and knowing who (building social networks and social capital) (OECD, 2001)... Merely maintaining practices that raise test scores or produce easily measurable results does not sustain these deeper aspects of teaching and learning (Hargreaves 2002, p192).

Timperely and Parr argue that communities of teachers working together can provide fora in which the knowledge and understanding to develop new skills can be achieved. They also comment that 'The acquisition of skills and knowledge are motivated by what is valued' (2005, p247). For these authors, teachers as the implementers of educational change, cannot sustain change initiatives without being willing (and being enabled) to engage with and understand the theoretical underpinnings of educational change initiatives. In addition, change initiators must appreciate that teachers perceive teaching as a craft not a mechanistic formulaic activity, one in which they invest their emotions and their self-esteem, and from which their identities stem. Change will only be sustainable these authors argue when initiators and implementers of change

'both critique the other's theories and have their own theories critiqued' (Timperely and Parr 2005, p248). In the context of this study this would mean that teachers should be engaged as active agents in the development of inclusive educational policy. In order for this to be effective teachers need to be enabled to understand the theoretical basis of educational change. Educational policy though is also affected by the political climate in which that policy is developed (Ball 2003) and teachers need also to understand the political context of educational reform. Teachers have the potential for political action as individuals who vote, as well as collectively as members of teacher unions.

O'Hanlon (2003) argues that every educational professional or teacher is responsible for influencing inclusive practice through their professional role, and how they talk and act in ways that demonstrate their attitudes to inclusive practice. For O'Hanlon 'professional change is the basis of any systemic or structural change related to inclusive practice in schools and educational contexts' (2003, p114). As I examine the data I will seek to identify what the teachers consider to be factors which enable them to experience and promote change in their practice, to be agents of change.

It is within this context that the current research study approaches enquiry into the inclusion of children with the label of autism into mainstream primary schools. The research participants are teachers all working with children with the label of autism, and the data represent their voices, both individual and collective.

Summary

In this section of the literature review I have argued that the surrounding context of school, local authority and national policy and legislation impacts on the practice of the teacher in the classroom. The initial training of a teacher prepares them to be a teacher at one point in time, but within society today professional identity is fluid and mutable. The impact of the performativity agenda and the inclusion agenda results in teachers being required to extend their practice with a more diverse student group, at the same time as being asked to meet ever more demanding assessment results. Teachers have limited access to professional development in the area of inclusive practice. With schools and teachers under increasing scrutiny of pupil performance, as measured by standardised assessments, teacher attitude to inclusion is, not surprisingly, limited and muted. It is hard for many teachers to understand how they can perform within such conflicting policy developments.

Teacher identity and attitude are inextricably related. Where a teacher's identity is determined by assessment results then inclusive practice may come a poor second to how that teacher perceives his or her work. Research studies such as those by Nind (2005), Dadds (2005) and Sikes, Lawson and Parker (2007) indicate that educational policy makers need to hear more from teachers about their perspectives on educational practice and change.

Hargreaves (2002), Timperely and Parr (2005) and O'Hanlon (2003) argue that teachers can be agents of change, but can also resist change if they feel it is imposed upon them. They argue that sustainable educational change depends on teachers being involved in the development of the change and on their being enabled to enact that change through appropriate professional

development. Teachers as individuals are enactors of policy as Nind (2005) argues, but they also have the potential to act as agents of change through professional development which enables them to respond critically to educational policy in their schools as well as through their professional bodies and their trade unions.

Through this study I hope to enable one group of primary school teachers to add their voices to the debate about the development of accessible and enabling educational practice for children with the label of autism.

In Chapter One, the social model of disability was introduced as a theoretical model which has a central role in this study. The purpose of the current chapter is to further explicate the theoretical position I have adopted in undertaking this research. The design of the project will be explored and this will include reference to the recruitment of participants and the approach to data gathering and analysis.

The chapter begins with an explanation of the design of the study and an articulation of my approach to enquiry. The ethical aspects of the study are also addressed and I hope I demonstrate how I have reconciled these. The teachers who took part in this project are then introduced through the presentation of pen-portraits, so that the reader has some understanding of each teacher's role and experience of inclusion for children with the label of autism. Finally I provide the theoretical framework for my approach to analysis, presentation and discussion of the data.

Research Design

The study is a qualitative research study which explores the perspectives of a group of eight teachers on the inclusion of children with the label of autism in mainstream primary schools.

I recruited the teachers through placing an advertisement (Appendix 2a), on the local authority web-site as well as through mailing primary schools in the same local authority and circulating existing students on the Professional Development Programme at the university where I work. I secured funding, through the university, for each participant to take part in an existing validated

module 'Reflecting on Professional Learning' (Appendix 1a) as this module was to form the vehicle for generating and gathering the data. In this way each participant was potentially able to gain 30 master's level credits within the Professional Development Programme. The use of reflective practice is a key part of professional development and academic practice in this area (Dadds 2005), and I planned to work with the participants over the typical pattern of module delivery, which in this case was six fortnightly evening sessions.

I gained ethical approval for the study through submission of the research proposal (Appendix 1b) to the university faculty research committee and my proposal was sent to a rapporteur for comment and approval and whose comments on the proposal can be seen in Appendix 1c.

As a novice researcher I decided that I would feel more confident if I planned each of the 6 module sessions with a specific focus each week. I arranged each session to involve the teachers being asked to undertake a group discussion relating to my initial research questions. This facilitated a level of security for me that I would be able to gather teacher perspectives relating to my research questions throughout the sessions. I entered the field with this structure in place and designed activities within each session which would then lead into discussions, which I recorded. The structure and content of each session is more fully explained in Figure 1 (Appendix 4).

I recorded all group discussions with a digital recorder, as well as providing a summary of the group's discussions using a flip chart and post-it notes within the sessions. In this way I immediately summarised with the teachers their key discussion points, providing an element of 'participant checking' (Robson 2002). The participants were then asked to submit, before the following session, a

short, written, reflective log which would be a continuation of their thinking on the questions discussed in each session. In this way participants had the opportunity to take part in group discussions and were also able to develop their own thinking away from the group. The data gathered then reflected both the 'collective voice' and the 'individual voices' of the participants. The findings of the research were presented to the group for consideration and discussion as the sessions progressed, and this process allowed the participants to examine and reflect on the outcome of the immediate data analysis. This process of reflection, in turn, impacted on the research process, providing further prompts for reflection for the teachers, as well as for myself. I had conceived the discussions to be conversations between the participants, which also had a role for me, such that together we formed what Dadds (2005 citing Elliot 1990) terms a conversation research community. To begin with I posed the question, the focus for the discussion, to the group and then I provided prompts and extended responses to clarify and elucidate comments made by the teachers.

The weekly logs formed the basis for a final, re-worked Reflective Account which formed part of the assessment for the module. In addition to this Reflective Account the participants were also asked to submit a further written exploration of an area of their own professional interest. The focus for this second piece of writing was part of their own exploration into an aspect of the inclusion of children with the label of autism in primary schools and was based on questions that participants identified within the weekly sessions. I did not mark the submitted work in order to avoid any potential bias through my joint roles of academic tutor and researcher, and the teachers' joint roles as students

and research participants. Instead a colleague from the same teaching team marked these assignments.

The literature relating to the use of focus groups within research has some relevance when considering the possible strengths as well as limitations of the design of this study. For example, the functioning of the group may be affected by how homogeneous or heterogeneous the group is in terms of the profile of the participants. A group which is homogeneous may facilitate communication and enable the exchange of ideas and experiences but may result in what Robson (2002 citing Brown 1999, p115) describes as "groupthink" (unquestioning similarity of position or views)'. A more heterogeneous group may lead to more stimulating and enriched discussion based on differing view points and experiences; it may inspire participants to consider a topic in a different light. However there may be such differences in experience and culture that there is a risk of power imbalance or of dominant group members suppressing the voices of others. I will address these points in the final chapter of the dissertation when I consider the overall strengths and limitations of my methodology. In the context of this study, the group of participants was quite homogeneous in that all the teachers had an interest in and experience of working with children with the label of autism. They had volunteered their time for the study in the hope of developing their own understanding of the process of inclusion. This had I believe an impact, in the ways described above, on the kind of data gathered within the study.

Formulating the research questions

As discussed above, I entered the stage of data gathering with some questions prepared in advance, and these questions provided the basic structuring of the module's weekly sessions, as previously explained. In addition, further research questions were drawn from my own personal and professional experience, as well as from the review of current educational research and debates discussed earlier. These questions were developed with the aim of further exploring what the teachers identified as the factors which affected the process of inclusion for children with the label of autism in mainstream primary schools. I asked the teachers what they considered to be the barriers to this process as well as the factors which enabled it. I also explored with them whether, and if so how, the social model of disability had impacted on their understanding of inclusion. In addition, I was committed to understanding their perspectives on the impact of taking part in this module on their developing professional knowledge.

In one of the initial sessions with the teachers I asked them to reflect on some professional dilemmas drawn from Pollard (2005) as an activity designed to act as an 'ice-breaker' for the group. This activity also acted as a way of introducing the teachers to the notion that within the module assessment there was the opportunity for them to address a professional dilemma of their own, within the area of working with children with the label of autism. I was aware that within this discussion there may be areas which could be taken as a focus for the sessions. One area of professional interest that arose from this discussion was the impact on the family of educational placement and any associated challenges there may be with this. This then became the focus within one of the sessions.

Theoretical Perspective on Enquiry

I have argued in Chapter One for the relevance of the social model of disability to the ontological position of this research project. In this section I discuss the wider theoretical framework within which this project is framed.

This study is phenomenological and my approach to gathering and working with the data draws on elements of constructivist grounded theory in that it is interpretivist and constructivist wherein:

Interpretive theory calls for the imaginative understanding of the studied phenomenon. This type of theory assumes emergent, multiple realities; indeterminacy; facts and values as linked; truth as provisional; and social life as processual (Charmaz 2006,p127).

Charmaz posits that social constructionists, rather than explaining 'one reality', see multiple realities and seek to understand how people construct and act on their view of reality. She argues that 'Theorising is a practice. It entails the practical activity of engaging the world and of constructing abstract understandings about and within it' (2006, p128). Charmaz's iteration of grounded theory allows for the social context of interpretation and theorising, acknowledging the impact of researcher position, the need for reflexive bracketing of prior knowledge where possible on the part of the researcher.

Charmaz describes 'interpretations' as:

... imaginative renderings of what *we* see and learn...emanating from dialectics of thought and experience ... we are *part* of our constructed theory and this theory reflects the vantage points inherent in our varied experiences, whether or not we are aware of them (2006, p149).

The researcher in this tradition begins with analysis of the data through a process of coding and re-coding until he or she is satisfied that the analysis is thorough and complete. This process is analytical and at this stage essentially

descriptive, working in a 'bottom up' way from the data through a process, drawing out 'themes' from the data. The next stage, the stage of interpretative theorising completes the process. Constructivist grounded theory begins with the words of the participants in the study and through analysis and description, followed by interpretation by the researcher, the theory is developed from the words of the research participants. In contrast to the original iteration of grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss (1967 cited Charmaz 2006) Charmaz acknowledges the role of reflexivity on the part of the researcher in the analysis and interpretation of the data. 'Rather than discovering order within the data, we create an explication, organisation and presentation of the data' (Charmaz 1990 cited Charmaz 2006, p140). The approach adopted in this study to data analysis is discussed fully later in this chapter.

Levering (2007) posits two epistemological starting points of phenomenology, the first being *subjectivity*, that is the granting of the personal meaning that each individual has of the world. The second starting point is *inter-subjectivity* or common shared meanings embodied in language and enshrined in their time and culture. Through what Levering refers to as phenomenological reduction, the researcher seeks, not to abandon his or her own personal perspectives, but to maintain an open mind through a process of reflexivity. It is not possible to abandon subjectivity, but it is necessary to be as aware of it as possible and strive towards an open and reflexive interpretation of research data, which in the context of this study are the transcripts and audio recordings of verbal discussions, as well as the written reflective logs kept by the teachers in the study. Levering (2007, p226) comments that 'At best phenomenological research does not hand us knowledge of factual human lives, but of possible

human lives' as each account from each participant is in itself an interpretation of that person's own experience. If this principle is held true then accusations of 'invalid' qualitative data can be addressed, as each person's account should be accepted as a valid account by that individual.

In so far as it is possible to claim that the data in this study is reliable, I accept the accounts the teachers gave me, either as individuals writing alone or as members of a group talking together and strive to represent their meanings in a way that provides a reliable interpretation through maintaining a highly reflexive stance on the process of data interrogation. It is very possible they have chosen not to write or say particular things, or that they have chosen not to refer to particular incidents or beliefs. That is their prerogative as volunteer research participants and, as Levering (2007) argues, each person's account is their own interpretation of their experience.

The role of reflective practice in research

In this section I will present the rationale for using an existing, validated module on a teacher professional development programme (Appendix 1a), which takes as its' central focus reflection on practice, as the means by which I gathered data for this research study. The module that I used, Reflecting on Professional Learning, was one designed to be open to adaptation for individual student groups on the Professional Development Programme, with learning outcomes and assessment criteria written for this purpose.

The role of reflective thinking in developing teachers' understanding of their practice is appreciated by many educational theorists (Ainscow, Booth and

Dyson 2004; Moon 2004; Dadds 2005; Sikes, Lawson and Parker 2007) as I have argued in Chapter Two. Atkinson (2000) maintains that educational research, rather than seeking to provide what she considers to be rather dubious answers to the question of 'what works', should endeavour instead to broaden discussion and theorising about education and educational practice. Atkinson argues that teachers left to their own practice would be 'natural philosophers'; they would seek to answer reflexively some of the issues that arise in their practice. In this way, Atkinson argues that teachers construct knowledge through reflection on personal experience, shared discussion and through relating this reflection and discussion to theory. This has direct relevance to me working with a group of teachers through a process of reflection on practice.

Typically, reflection or reflective learning is likely to involve a conscious and stated purpose for the reflection, with an outcome that is specified in terms of learning, action or clarification (Moon 2004). Some theorists argue that the most effective teacher education opportunities come about when teachers are enabled to engage in reflection on their practice as part of a community of practice in collaboration with academics who are able to facilitate that reflection and to provide access to current research which will inform that practice (Avramadis, Bayliss and Burden 2000; Ainscow, Booth and Dyson 2004; Dadds 2005; Sikes, Lawson and Parker 2007). Thomas and Glenny (2005, p25) assert that as practitioners and enquirers we should:

...accept rather than deny the insights which emerge by virtue of human experience - insights which emerge from our own knowledge of learning, our own knowledge of failure, success, acceptance or rejection.

It is on this basis that I have developed my current practice as a teacher educator working in the field of understanding how children with the label of autism experience the world.

The module used in this study was a module designed to enable teachers to engage in such a reflective process, and this, it was hoped, would be one of the benefits for the teachers in taking part in the research study; to have time and space to reflect on their practice with other teachers within an academic context. A conversation research community (Dadds 2005 citing Elliot 1990) was formed, with me as module tutor and researcher, working with a group of teachers reflecting on practice.

The teachers in the study: pen portraits

There were eight teachers who participated in the study. At the time of the research they were all working in local authority maintained primary schools, 7 in the same local authority and one in a neighbouring local authority. Two of the teachers, the two who worked in a special school, worked in the same school, and the remaining 6 teachers all worked in different mainstream settings covering a range of social contexts and geographical locations. I provide, in each pen portrait, information about the type of school (mainstream, special), role within school (class teacher, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo)), Key Stage and prior professional experience with children with the label of autism. This biographical information provides contextual information about the teachers so that they each have a professional identity within this research. In this way the spread of experience and professional background

can be recognised by the reader. The factors that all participants have in common were that at the time of the study they were practising teachers working in primary schools, each with an interest in, and some experience of, working with children with the label of autism. I have used pseudonyms throughout for these teachers so that their identities are protected.

Ros: had worked mostly in Foundation Stage and had 15 years of teaching experience. At the time of the study Ros was working in Key Stage 1 of a mainstream primary school and had responsibility for being SENCo as well. As SENCo, Ros was aware of there being a number of children with the label of autism in the school.

Wendy: was a mainstream teacher with 0.4 of her time allocated to being SENCo. She qualified as a teacher in 1996. Wendy had previously worked in an integrated resource attached to a mainstream school and since 2007 had been SENCo in a mainstream primary school. At the time of the research she was working with three children with the label of autism in the school, one of whom was in her class.

David: worked in a primary special school which is LA maintained. The school had a high proportion of children described as having complex communication disorders, a high percentage of whom had a diagnosis of autism. He had also worked for 3 years in an inner city primary school. At the time of the study he had been working in the special school for 2 years. His class consisted of a small group of children all with the label of autism and he was studying for his MA in Autism.

Lynn: at the time of the study Lynn was working in foundation stage and was Early Years co-ordinator. Lynn had taught since 2004 and had worked in foundation stage and in KS 1. Her teaching experience with children identified with the label of autism had led her to study for the MA in Autism.

Liz : had taught for over 20 years and had worked in both mainstream primary and secondary schools. At the time of the study she was working in the same primary special school as David where she had worked for 10 years. Her KS 2 class consisted of a small group of children all of whom had been identified with the label of autism.

Karen: was a full time teacher in the reception class of a mainstream primary infant school where she had worked since 2004. At the time of the study Karen was working with a child with the label of autism in her class, and had worked previously with 2 other children identified with this label.

Dee: was in her sixth year of teaching in a mainstream primary school. Dee had worked with children in Years 2, 5 and 6. In her current class she worked with a pupil who had a diagnosis of autism as well as a number of other children who she identified with the label of autism.

Pat: had been teaching for three years in a large primary school, and for one of those she had been SENCo in the school. During this time she had worked with children identified with the label of autism either in her own class or within the wider school community as SENCo. At the time of the study she was aware of a number of children in school who could be identified with the label of autism.

None of the teachers who participated in the study was in their first year of teaching, nor were any at the end of their teaching careers. The length of their teaching careers varied from 3 years (Pat) to over 20 years (Liz).

Structure of the sessions

The sessions were planned so that as well as there being time to discuss the focus for the session there was social time for the teachers to spend talking to each other and have a coffee, as all of the teachers travelled straight from work to the sessions.

In addition to teaching the module I also acted as the academic tutor, supporting the teacher participants in developing the academic writing aspect of the second written task for their assignments for the module. My dual role as academic tutor and as researcher inevitably produced some element of potential bias in the research process which I discuss later. This was a small scale research study, and I was the sole researcher as well as the module tutor. The use of the module as a vehicle for gathering data was constructive in that it enabled me to attract 8 participant teachers to the study and to in some way compensate them for their time. The primary data gathered consisted of the

weekly logs written by each individual teacher and the recordings of the weekly group discussions. Each of these data sources was gathered prior to any involvement I had in supporting the academic writing of the teacher participants. In this way any impact of my role as academic tutor was muted but it was still an element of which I was constantly aware throughout the delivery of the module and the gathering of the data. I did not mark any of the submitted work; this was marked by a colleague for whom I undertook some additional marking for one of his modules. This process was not felt to disadvantage any of the students, as marking student work is frequently distributed across the course team.

I asked for the teachers' feedback on my on-going analysis of the data through the process of 'participant checking' at the end of each session, through summarising with flip charts and post-it notes, as well as with PowerPoint slides in the following session.

I chose to plan the content for each session and what would happen in them in terms of academic content and the discussion focus being explored. At some point in each session I gave a presentation on an aspect of the development of inclusive practice. I also offered a stimulus for discussion each week, where I presented either a reading or a video clip or a quotation and asked the group to use this as a prompt to begin their discussion about that week's research question. Structuring the sessions in this way might have served to direct attention to particular issues and this may be an additional source of bias in the study (Richards 2009). I have explained why my position as a novice researcher led me to adopt a more structured and controlled approach to the content of the sessions, and this structure did indeed enable me to more confidently 'act as a

researcher'. The focus for each session acted in the same way as the introduction to a focus group, or a question in an interview, and in this sense the 'bias' acted to guide attention to a focus within the study, rather than to distort the research process (Richards 2009). I took care when presenting to the group that I did not present the content as my personal perspective but as a review of the literature and debates within the area of inclusive education. Whilst I made it clear that I welcomed the participants posing questions for the group to consider (as *opposed to*, as well as *in addition to* my questions), this in reality did not happen to the extent that it perhaps might have if I had not been so structured and organised. In this way the structure might have acted to limit some questions emerging from the group in the sessions. Overall, however, I believe that the approach I adopted to delivering the module as a vehicle for generating and gathering data was effective. Through working with this structured approach I was able to ask the teachers to reflect on and discuss the key areas of focus and the key questions that I had identified at the beginning of this study. In Figure 1 (Appendix 4) I provide an overview of each of the six sessions with a brief description of the:

- theoretical focus for the session, where I presented current theory regarding an aspect of practice in the area of inclusion
- the stimulus or prompt to begin the discussion
- where relevant, the specific question that I posed as the focus for the discussion, although in some sessions there was no specific question posed as the aim was to reflect on the stimulus.

As the teachers began to discuss the session focus, the stimulus and the question that I had posed, they divided into two smaller groups, and these

discussions were not recorded by me. These small group discussions initiated the process of reflection, which was then continued within the wider group. It was these whole group discussions that were recorded and in which I took some part. My role in the discussions was to clarify what the teachers were saying so that I could be as certain as possible that I understood the meaning of the comments they were making. I did this through questioning for clarification and also through summarising, with the group, what were perceived to be the key issues arising from the discussion, using a flip chart and post-it notes.

During the week following a session each participant then continued with individual reflection by writing a short reflective log and e-mailing this to me. I was then able to work immediately with these weekly logs, along with the audio file of the week's discussion, and so could bring the initial analysis back to the group the following week for consideration and validation. The weekly logs formed the basis for the final Reflective Account which was part of the formal module assessment.

Ethical considerations

Participant recruitment

All the teachers were recruited by responding to an advertisement for the module (Appendix 2a) which was sent to all local authority primary schools, placed on the local authority web-site and also circulated to postgraduate students already studying on the Postgraduate Development Programme at the university through which the study took place. The number of respondents was small enough, at 10, for me not to have to consider sampling from the

responses, but I had decided in advance that if the response rate was high I would take the first 12 students who applied. There were, in addition to the teachers I have already described, two other participants to begin with, but these withdrew from the module at various stages (one became ill after the second session and missed the following two so withdrew, one attended the first two then withdrew as he had thought the module would be more of an 'introduction to autism' than it was) and I withdrew their data from the findings. I discuss in Chapter Nine the possible impact this recruitment process might have had on the data gathered in the study.

Starting the research process

All of the teachers were invited to an initial meeting at which I described the proposed research project and their role in it if they chose to take part. I provided a verbal and written explanation of the module focus (in the form of PowerPoint notes) and academic requirements, as well as a description of their role as participants in a research project (Appendix 2b). The teachers were all asked for written consent for the recording of the discussions, the written weekly logs and assignments to be used as data in the study (Appendix 2c). All participants were advised, in writing, at the beginning of the study of their right to withdraw all data associated with them from the study providing they made that choice before the end of the last session. Each teacher was asked to sign an agreement slip (Appendix 2c) acknowledging that they understood their right to withdraw from the research as well as their right to anonymity and confidentiality. However, the funding for the module was contingent on them being participants in the research study, so that withdrawal from the research

meant that they would either have to fund the module themselves or withdraw from the actual assessment part of the module and not gain academic credit for the module. I recognise that it would have been more desirable to have a model of funding that extended the opportunity to gain accreditation even if a participant decided to withdraw from the study, and in a future study I would endeavour to obtain a more flexible method of funding to support this possibility. As it was, my aim in gaining funding had been to enable the participants to benefit as far as possible from taking part in the research study. The participants were assured that in the project report I would use only pseudonyms, and that no schools or local authorities would be identified by name. Within the sessions all participants were asked to abide by a code of conduct wherein no colleague, pupil or family would be named or identified in discussion.

Issues of bias and power imbalance

I was acting in the dual role of tutor and researcher and, as such, I was very aware of the potential conflict of interest that these two roles posed, and mindful of Hargreaves' perspective (1996) on the impact of the researcher. This meant that I chose not to mark submitted assignments, as this would have been ethically problematic because of the potential conflict of interest between my roles, and I arranged for a colleague to do this for me. I attempted throughout the study, through a process of reflexive bracketing, to maintain a deliberate naivety (Kvale 1996) so that I limited any bias from my own knowledge and perspectives.

Ethical considerations for participants

Benefits

It was hoped the teachers involved in the study would benefit from participation in two ways: they would gain access to the Professional Development Programme at no financial cost and stand to gain through successful submission of an assignment, 30 academic credits and they would be able to develop their own professional interest in, and knowledge and understanding of, an issue of significance to them with a group of peers.

Possible negative consequences for participants or third parties:

A possible negative consequence of taking part in this research project was that a teacher might find that his or her point of view was at odds with those of the rest of the group and this may be potentially distressing, for example, if opinions led to a 'heated' discussion. As a tutor on PDP modules I am accustomed to creating spaces where professionals discuss their practice and their perspectives, and they are encouraged to do this with due regard to the feelings of others in the group.

The ethical considerations that I highlight in my general teaching sessions were applied to these module sessions as well. The teachers in the group were advised to respect the views of others in the group and to be aware of the professional ethics of maintaining confidentiality about students and the schools within which they worked.

All the participants in the research module were assured that their identities would remain confidential and anonymous beyond the context of the sessions and within the documentation of the project and final dissertation. All audio files were kept on a password protected computer and all transcripts and personal weekly logs were anonymised.

Gathering the Data

The social and political perspective from which the researcher approaches their chosen area of research will inform the interpretation they make of a social text. The method of data handling is central to the success of the research process (Richards 2009). The processes of project design and data handling are critical in ensuring that the qualitative research project produces and manages the data required in order to answer the research question. To this extent, within this study I used my initial research questions to inform the focus for the discussions for each section. In this way I was able to gather data which addressed each of these research questions in turn. As this was a qualitative research methodology and the process of discussion and reflection allowed for considerable flexibility of topic coverage, each session raised data which illuminated the whole research project.

Ensuring validity of the research process

In this section of the chapter I present my arguments for the validity of the research that I have undertaken. I reflect on the role of reflexive bracketing in this process as well as on the possible threats to validity.

Reflexive bracketing

Ahern (1999) stresses the importance of reflexivity in phenomenological research, awareness of the ways in which a researcher may influence the process through their social identity and background. Ahern argues that an attempt to put aside personal feelings or perspectives on the part of the researcher is more realistic than attempting to claim objectivity, as there will always be feelings of which the researcher is not fully aware and therefore not able to control for in the research design.

In the context of this study I was aware of the potential conflict of interest that might exist between my role as academic tutor and my role as researcher. I was careful to avoid promoting any particular stance towards inclusion within the sessions, seeking to balance arguments which inform that debate as far as possible. I also made it clear, as previously described, that I would not mark the final submission of the assignments so that my role as researcher could be seen to be separate from my role as module tutor.

I entered the field, as all researchers do, with my 'personal history', previously described in Chapter One. Through the process of on-going reflexivity I attempted to maintain as neutral a stance within the group sessions as possible. I ensured that all participants were afforded anonymity and confidentiality throughout this research project and that participants were advised of their professional responsibility to maintain confidentiality for pupils, families and other professionals when discussing their own practice. Findings from this research will be informative but will not be attributable to any specific source.

The gatekeepers within this research study were the teachers themselves and the university. Once I had gained permission for the module to be used as a

locus for the research, then it was the teachers themselves and their continuing engagement and participation that enabled the research to succeed. Whilst I did lose two participants very quickly, the remaining 8 participants were involved and appeared engaged throughout, and their participation allowed the study to progress effectively.

Kvale (1996) proposes that three aspects of validation support the quality of the research study; questioning, theorizing and checking. I have already commented on the process of developing and refining my research questions and on the theoretical position within which this research is framed. The process of checking includes actions such as triangulation and participant checking.

Triangulation is the process whereby data are gathered from multiple sources and the results compared. If similar results are gained from data from a variety of sources then this can be taken as a reflection of how valid those data might be (Richards 2009). Within this study I have been able to engage with data triangulation using both audio files of group discussions as well as immediate and reworked individual reflective logs. The teachers' perspectives are their own perspectives as teachers working in primary schools in England at the time of the study. I make no claim that this group of teachers is a purposeful sample of the profession, only that their voices are the voices of professionals engaged in practice. As such, what they have to say about their own practice and their own settings will be of interest to others involved in the field of education and the process of inclusion for children with the label of autism. Their stories illuminate their practice and, it is hoped, provide a window of insight into what

these teachers understand about this process. As Nind (2005, p273) comments '... inclusion is an issue primarily for teachers – and that, perhaps, it is them we need to hear more from'. As I moved, through analysis of the data, from description of the perspectives presented by these teachers, to interpretation of these perspectives, I began to see that the findings of the study can, with caution, be generalised beyond this study to other contexts (Green et al. 2007).

Participant checking

Participant checking is the process of returning to the participants in the study and presenting them with the data and interpretations made of that. I undertook immediate participant checking through summarising the key discussion points as they arose and group members agreed or modified my interpretations. In addition, each week, I presented to the group, for comment, my initial analysis of the discussion and of the weekly personal logs from the previous session.

Approach to Data Analysis

In the final section of this chapter I discuss some of the issues related to my approach to data analysis.

The data is taken to 'represent the research participants' truth of their situation as they see it' (Ashworth 1997, p 219). Themes which were interpreted relate transparently to the data and receive 'consensual validation', from the participants (Ashworth 1997, p221).

In working with the data I was aware that the process of reflection and reflective writing in itself involves interpretation, as the teacher participants decided what to write about and what information to withhold. The written and verbal data in this way represents the world perspective of the teachers as they chose, consciously or otherwise, to represent it at the point of writing or discussion.

I undertook analysis of the data in a systematic way, working through each written log and each transcript in an initial process of coding any phrases or concepts which seemed to be significant as factors relating to the process of inclusion. As each factor which the participants identified as having an impact on inclusion emerged from the data, I highlighted the statement, applying a numerical and alphabetic code. So, in a transcript from Session 2 where I asked teachers to identify barriers to inclusion, the first factor that I coded was *A child in my class, how there's a huge focus on their every move...*. I gave this a code of 1A and a descriptive title 'focus on the child'. In addition, I gave each log and each transcript a code to denote which teacher the log belonged to and which session the log and the group discussion came from. In this way, as I worked through and noted codes in the data, I was able to ensure that once I moved coded sections of text through the process of developing categories, I would not lose track of the original source of any of the coded excerpts.

Charmaz (2006, p57) describes the process which follows on from initial coding as 'focussed coding' whereby the initial large number of codes is reduced analytically, as similarities are noted between groups of codes. Green et al. (2007) refer to this as the process of producing 'categories' and it is this term that I shall use in what follows. Both Charmaz (2006) and Green et al. (2007) describe the same process whereby the initial large number of coded factors

are worked with in a systematic and analytic way to reduce the overall number of codes to a manageable and meaningful set of categories where the constituent coded sections of transcript have a central conceptual relationship.

The set of categories that I identified are essentially taxonomic in nature and provide a descriptive framework for organising the data in relation to the initial research questions. In this way I have been able to draw from the data:

- i) what these teachers perceive to be the factors affecting the process of inclusion for children which the label of autism
- ii) whether, and if so how, the social model of disability has impacted on their understanding of their practice
- iii) what they perceive to be the impact for the family in trying to negotiate a suitable school placement for their child.

Hays and Singh (2011), describing the challenges of representing voice in qualitative research, cite Lincoln and Guba (1985) who refer to the 'crisis of representation'. They argue that the process of representing 'voice' in qualitative research is not a simple process of analysis of transcripts through a process of thematic coding, but that presentation of voice has come to be understood as a far more philosophically complex process. Mazzei and Jackson (2012) argue for the interpretation of qualitative data drawn from interviews, or other methods of gathering the voices of participants, in the context of theory and of the social context within which the data were gathered, as does Hargreaves (1996). In this way they argue there are not just the voices of the participants within the process of data interpretation, but also the 'voices' of theory, social context and the researcher. In the context of this study then the

processes of data analysis and interpretation are influenced by for example, the personal background, school context and the personal beliefs and prejudices of a teacher, by the theory within which I am immersed as a researcher, and by my own personal context. Each of these influences would affect aspects of the study such as the research questions that I posed, how much the teachers chose to reveal or conceal in their responses to these questions and how I approached analysis and interpretation of the data. This then raised the question of where the power lies in this process. The researcher is potentially able to decide whose voice is included and whose voice is excluded from the research and the final presentation of the data, which theory will influence the interrogation and interpretation of the data. The process of participant checking can be seen to mitigate the power of the researcher to some extent and the role of reflexivity for the researcher, as I have argued, is critical throughout this process. The voices that are finally represented derive from a process of interpretation in such a way that the notion of 'letting the voice of a participant speak for itself' is perceived as over-simplistic. This process reflects the theoretical coding that Charmaz (2006) describes, resulting in 'themes' which emerge from this interpretation of the data (Green et al. 2007; Charmaz 2006). In this way it can be argued that the perspectives of the teachers in this study could be generalised beyond this study to wider contexts (Green et al. 2007) in that the voices of the individual teachers in the study, when interpreted in the wider context of social theory, can then have possible relevance to the voices of other teachers in other contexts.

In Chapter Nine, the final chapter, I examine the perspectives of the teachers in this study within the context of theory relating to the social model of disability,

and the literature which relates to the impact of performativity on the process of inclusive education. I then explore the implications of this for those involved in professional development opportunities for teachers, as well as for further educational research studies.

Summary

In this chapter, I have undertaken an explication of the design and implementation of this research project. This has included examination of the role of reflection on practice as both a vehicle for professional development for teachers and also as a means to generate data for this research study. I have explored the ethical aspects of the research design, and have discussed the theoretical position within which the research is framed, and the approach to the analysis of the data. The challenge of representing voice in qualitative research was discussed and as was the impact of reflexivity by the researcher at all stages in the process of enquiry

In Part Two of the dissertation, in Chapters Four to Eight, I present the themes which emerged from analysis of the data. In the final chapter of Part Two, Chapter Nine, I discuss the implications of the findings from this study, for educational practice and research.

Part Two

Presentation of Data, Discussion and Implications for Practice

Introduction

The Data Chapters

In the five data chapters that follow, Chapters Four to Eight, I present my interpretation of the verbal discussions and written logs of the teachers in this study. These data chapters have emerged through the process of interpretive analysis described in Chapter Three.

The analysis represents my interpretation of what the teachers wrote and said throughout the process of data gathering. I have provided quotations and excerpts from the transcripts of the recorded discussions and the written logs throughout each chapter, to act as illustrations of each issue that emerged from the data, in this way enabling the validity of my interpretation to be evident. Where possible I have provided the pseudonym of the teacher to whom the quotation can be attributed, but in places, where a quotation has been drawn from a recording of a group discussion, it has not always been possible to identify the voice of the individual teacher. In these instances the quotation will be unnamed and it will be made clear that the quotation was taken from a group discussion. In addition I provide samples from individual teacher logs and from the transcripts of the recorded group discussions in Appendix 3. I refer to this Appendix where relevant to provide additional context for the quotation taken.

Chapter Four, **Tensions**, explores the tensions within the education system overall that the teachers in this study identified as impacting on inclusion.

Chapter Five, **It's What Teachers Do**, examines areas of the teachers' practice that they identify as impacting on the process of inclusion and this includes how they interpret their role.

The perceptions of the teachers in the study of the contrast between special schools and mainstream schools, and their conceptualisations of the inclusive school, are presented in Chapter Six, **Imagining the Inclusive School**. The possible limits to inclusion identified by these teachers are also revealed in this chapter.

Chapter Seven, **Beyond the Classroom**, examines what these teachers understand about the experience of the family when a child with the label of autism attends a mainstream primary school. The data in this chapter emerged in part through response to a particular research question and in part from the wider discussions and logs from each of the weekly sessions.

The final data chapter, Chapter Eight, **Overcomings**, presents ways in which the teachers in this study consider that inclusive practice can be enabled.

Inevitably there may be some replication between the chapters, as the quotations from the teachers' logs and discussions can, in analysis, be subject to multiple interpretations. For example, when a tension is identified in Chapter Four, the pathway to overcoming that tension may also be contained in the same quotation and will emerge again in Chapter Eight.

Discussion, Implications and Personal Reflection

The final chapter in this section is Chapter Nine, **Perspectives on Inclusion, Implications for Research and Practice, and Personal Reflection**. This contains the discussion of the themes within the data chapters as they relate to the current theory, reflection on the impact of the research design and methodology of the study, and possible implications for future research.

To conclude I identify the potential implications for practice and offer a final personal reflection on the process of undertaking this research study.

The teachers in this study identified many tensions as they reflected on their practice. This chapter explores these tensions and the extent to which they arise through different aspects of the education system. It reviews external tensions relating to the wider educational environment such as school, local authority or national policy, as well as those 'within' individual teachers as they balance awareness of the child and their learning style, with their own vision for a lesson.

The tension between the impact of the social and the individual models of disability, whilst not overtly articulated by the teachers, emerges as an underlying theme in much of their discussion and reflection, throughout all of the data chapters.

Scrutinised, assessed and supported

The social style associated with the label of autism is frequently identified as being different from the social style of the dominant majority of children and adults in a mainstream school (Jackson 2002). Karen is aware of the social style associated with the label of autism when she comments that:

'When children with ASD arrive in school, they are in a social situation that is all about reading others and conforming to others' expectations.'

She considers the impact of the neurotypically dominated social environment and social expectations of her mainstream school and how this might have an impact for children with the label of autism.

For Karen, these children are lacking in agency as they:

'are bounced between being scrutinised, assessed and supported and being expected to be anonymous in a class of 30 children.'

Her comments illustrate the potential tension that there may be between being a child who has a 'label' and an identified set of 'special educational needs' and being a child amongst others, perhaps trying to be 'one of the crowd' (Goodley 2011, p146 citing Davis 1995). The processes of scrutiny, assessment and support are processes that imply the child is in need of being changed and work to normalise the child, to move their learning and social style to be closer to that of the 'typical' child. For Karen, here, it is the child under scrutiny and not the environment, reflecting an individual model of disability. Here Karen implies a lack of agency on the part of the child, where education, or even inclusion as Slee (2001) argues, is something done *to* the child rather than *with* the child.

'It is not surprising that children put up walls to protect themselves from the barrage of different social situations and rules and routines they encounter.' (Karen)

Children with the label of autism, when surrounded by potentially confusing social complexity and demands, might appear to create protective barriers between themselves and those around them, as Karen reflects here.

Scrutinising behaviour

The behaviour of some adults towards a child with the label of autism might be influenced by that label (Thomas 2007). Karen is aware of how adults in a class may be over-vigilant of the behaviour of a child with the label of autism when she comments, in a group discussion (Appendix 3e) that:

A child in my class, the behaviour side of things, how there's a huge focus and scrutiny of their every move ...' (Karen)

There may be an expectation of the child's behaviour being challenging and any behaviour may be interpreted as such. In contrast, in another child (without the label of autism), the same behaviour may go without note:

someone else in the class might get away with doing something but your focus is on what they're going to do wrong next, almost.' (Karen) (Appendix 3e)

Karen reflects that in her experience, children with the label of autism may be subjected to negative scrutiny of their behaviour so that any behaviour, however slight, might be noticed and perceived as challenging. If a child is treated as if their behaviour is challenging, as opposed to their behaviour being analysed for meaning and communication, then this may well have a negative impact on the child's behaviour. Karen describes the impact of labelling (Armstrong 2002), where the label reduces the child, in the eyes of those around him or her, to a pre-conceived set of behaviours associated with that label.

Similarly there might be a possible impact of the expectation of education professionals in a school on a child's emotional well-being.

When Karen reflects that:

'There's a huge pressure on them to perform, and it must just be exhausting.'

she is arguing that a child might be aware of vigilance or expectation from adults. The individual model of disability leads the adults working with the child to focus on the child and their performance, to place the 'problem', as Titchkosky (2011) argues, with the child and the child's performance and

behaviour. This process sits in contrast to the policy of inclusion which is driven by the theory of the social model of disability (Oliver 1996), creating a tension for Karen between the impact of the two models.

Understanding the little social cues

So at times for these teachers, as can be seen in the previous section, the 'problem' seems to be located within the child. Wendy, in a group discussion, identifies a 'problem' with the social understanding of children with the label of autism:

'I think most, or some autistic children find that really hard to deal with because they don't read the little social cues about staff and facial expressions.' (Wendy) (Appendix 3e)

The 'problem' here seems to be with the child's social interpretation of situations, reflecting awareness of some of the social challenges a child with the label of autism might experience in a neurotypically dominated social environment. Wendy feels that children with the label of autism may not notice or understand what she refers to as *'the little social cues'* that the adults in class may use when communicating. In this instance the focus is on the social understanding of children with the label of autism and of what this may mean in the social context of a mainstream school setting.

At other times the 'problem' is located beyond the child and the barriers created by the environment surrounding the child. Wendy continues by reflecting on the social spaces which exist within school, and of how complex this range of 'spaces' could be for a child with the label of autism:

1... school is socially, such a complicated place in terms of in your class, in the playground, working in groups, working with teachers, working with dinner supervisors.' (Wendy)

For Wendy, the range of adults and other children situated in a school setting is problematic and creates barriers. This includes how the child is expected to adapt to the social demands of a range of settings throughout the school day. Each social setting brings with it a new set of social rules and social relationships to recognise, understand and navigate and can result in some confusion and associated anxiety for the child with the label of autism. This in turn can lead to behaviours which those around the child might interpret as challenging. This should not be the child's problem, but Wendy feels that it frequently becomes so. She identifies a tension between the social barriers created by the neurotypically dominated social environment of the school and the social style associated with the label of autism. Here the social environment is *unchanged* and is not readily accessible for differing social styles and levels of social understanding. Such an environment fails to provide a context in which the child with the label of autism will experience the competence Biklen (2000) argues is critical to successful inclusion. The child, as Titchkosky (2011, p39) comments, is 'essentially excludable' in such a context.

Being a flexible teacher

The teacher's level of knowledge and understanding of the learning style associated with autism (Hehir 2002) is revealed as a tension by these teachers. In the following quotation, Liz reflects on the lack of what she calls *'pre-emptive planning'* for a child, a girl, in a mainstream classroom. She describes an

incident in which a child with the label of autism does not want to do her work using the colour of paper offered by the teacher, instead indicating that she wishes to use another colour. The child is trying to complete the task in her own way, but the teacher interprets this as 'challenging', viewing the child through the lens of the individual model of disability and perhaps responding in this way because of the label of autism, and the child's behaviour escalates:

'Looking at (her), it seems to me there's a real lack of pre-emptive planning that would facilitate (her) into the classroom. She should have had every colour that she needed, and if she couldn't find the colour she should have had the prompt that "You don't go and nick it from somebody else ... (you) say 'May I have pink please?' "
There's a lot that could have been done, to facilitate that child.'
(Liz) (Appendix 3e)

For Liz the teacher has the responsibility for understanding the child and knowing what would best facilitate her learning. The focus is on the role of the teacher as facilitator, as opposed to the 'problem' being the child's behaviour and learning style.

Liz reflects on how the demands from the teacher appear to be very rigid and inflexible, and questions the wisdom of asking the child to perform in certain ways in class, perhaps revealing that there are times when teacher expectations and inflexibility can create barriers for the young person with the label of autism. The use of the term *'pre-emptive planning'* by Liz indicates that she feels that with some thought and understanding on the part of the teacher, the problems for the child could have been avoided and barriers identified and addressed in advance.

Having a flexible curriculum

The structure and content of the English national curriculum emerges as a tension and a barrier to inclusive practice (Wedell 2005; Osberg and Biesta 2010). Wendy identifies the English national curriculum as being problematic when she argues that:

'Although there is some flexibility within the curriculum, there are also demands and expectations on what schools deliver – for instance through national guidance, Ofsted inspections.' (Wendy)

The impact of the current system of school inspection, and how this can limit the flexibility of the curriculum, is provided as an example here, and Wendy favours a more flexible curriculum and system of school evaluation, just as Liz favours a more flexible teaching style. Here Wendy questions not only the curriculum structure and content but the way that it is influenced by performative practice, providing an instance of interrogating the curriculum and structures of schooling as a 'political text' (Cochran-Smith and Dudley-Marling 2012, p241).

Wendy also comments that the curriculum is not always motivating for the child in her class, child 'A', when she writes:

'The curriculum does not always fit with A's own agenda or special interests and this can result in a level of disengagement.' (Wendy)

The structure and the lack of flexibility in the curriculum is a tension for David as well:

'In mainstream schooling I had the issue over delivering what is best for children or delivering what will bring best academic results. The pressures put on schools to perform to certain criteria often had a negative effect on the pupils... particularly those who were lower abilities.'

This can lead to poor participation for children with the label of autism, through failure to provide motivating or engaging learning opportunities for them. In this context the curriculum acts as a normalising influence, in which all children are expected to engage in a similar manner with the same curriculum, a process which then excludes some children with the label of autism. This reflects Wedell's (2005) argument that the English national curriculum is 'predicated on misconceived assumptions about the homogeneity of pupil's learning needs (Wedell 1995, p101)'.

Karen goes further than identifying the curriculum as being problematic, when she comments that:

'The school system itself creates barriers for the child with autism. They are placed in situations which can often set them up for failure.' (Karen)

Whilst she does not specify *which* aspects of the school system in this quotation, she does reflect that children with the label of autism are '*set up for failure*' by the barriers created by the school system which is not inclusive. Here the 'problem' is located with the school system and not with the individual child, and the impact of the social model of disability on Karen's thinking can be seen. Karen reveals the complexity of the interactions between the social and the individual models of disability here. She identifies, for example, that within the process of inclusion the school system creates barriers for the child (Oliver 1996), through perhaps the inflexible national curriculum identified by Wendy, which act to 'normalise' the child. The process of inclusion stems from the social model of disability, and the normalising systems in a school (Thomas 2007) are based on the individual model of disability. Teachers find themselves

surrounded by such tensions in their daily practice, and the teachers in this study provide evidence of such tensions as they reflect on their practice.

Reports, targets and achievements

For these teachers, working within a target-driven school culture emerged as an issue of significance, with achievement of targets and the associated evidencing of this perceived as a disabling factor in developing inclusive practice:

'You still have to write reports and targets and achievements for them at the end of the year and if they've decided that they don't want to do ... like I've got a little boy in my class just got up and walked out and said "I don't fancy doing this", you know, but one of the targets is 'will sing songs from memory and join in with singing'.'

Here, the child, with the label of autism, is not motivated by 'singing songs' as part of a group and walks away from the activity. The teacher talking in this group discussion comments, here, on the tension of implementing lessons and undertaking assessments planned according to the national curriculum. This teacher is aware that the individual child in question is not engaging with this lesson and may therefore not be enabled to demonstrate progress against a particular learning outcome when assessed. The child in this quotation did not wish to join in with group singing, whether from lack of interest and motivation or perhaps from impact of sensory overload (Bogdashina 2003) within a class singing session, it is unclear. The outcome, for him, of not being in class to learn to sing songs from memory, will be that he does not demonstrate achievement *under these circumstances* against this learning outcome. However, the comment *'You still have to write reports and targets and*

achievements for them at the end of the year' reflects that *this* teacher perhaps sees *these* 'reports, targets and achievements' as not fully applying to the child she is talking about. This in itself could represent an 'othering' of this child, with the implication that the 'reports, targets and achievements' in question may well be suitable for other children in the class. Where school performance is assessed with a significant emphasis on pupil attainment against Standard Assessment Tasks, and where student performance on these assessment tasks is low, there is the potential that the perceived effectiveness of the school overall will be reduced. This illustrates Benjamin's argument (2002 cited Lloyd 2008) when she describes the tension of trying to set targets and measure attainment for all children within an inflexible and limiting curriculum.

Here the tension between the social and the individual models of disability is again revealed with inclusion being undermined, in the view of the teachers in this study, by the impact of the inflexible, normalising curriculum and associated testing regime.

Priorities

There can be a tension between the priorities identified in a school spending plan and the perceived priorities of the teacher working in the classroom. Ros reflects on how opportunities for staff development might be affected by school spending plan priorities:

'Inclusion/ASD training is not a priority for the school currently and so it is difficult to keep it in the front of colleagues' minds. Other initiatives take over. Doesn't lead to raising SATs results.' (Ros)

She reflects on the possibility that another priority in the school spending plan might take precedence over the development of inclusive practice. For Ros inclusion is perhaps something that teachers might do in addition to their normal daily practice, something that is not a central part of their 'teacher identity' (Hargreaves 1996). Perhaps the teachers at her school may find their identity as 'mainstream class teachers working towards SATs results' challenged by the requirement to also work inclusively and to differentiate their class work (Howard 2000). When Ros comments that inclusion '*Doesn't lead to raising SATs results*' she seems to argue that this may be a reason for inclusive practice not taking priority over other school activity which does lead to raising SATs results. The performative league table agenda in this context impacts on teacher identity with the drive towards '*raising SATs results*' competing with an inclusive teacher identity. This reveals the tension between the competing agendas of performativity and inclusive practice as Rix (2011) argues. Performativity, in the context of a school, involves assessment of performance based on a normalising and limited curriculum, and is influenced by the individual model of disability, whilst inclusive practice is based on the social model of disability.

. and there is much competition for time and money resources in mainstream settings and much is dependent on school priorities and how these are managed.' (Wendy)

Wendy also considers, here, the impact of school spending plan decisions and that school spending on inclusion at any point in time will be in '*competition*' with spending on other areas of the school spending plan.

Questioning national policy

The allocation of funding to a school to develop inclusive practice overall, allows for whole school initiatives and developments. This model of funding can be argued to relate to the social model of disability, where schools are enabled to develop their inclusive practice 'across the board' without recourse to labelling individual children. A funding model that is dependent on a diagnostic label (Hodge 2005) leads to funds being allocated, through the statement of special educational need, to the child and accounted for with that specific child in mind. This model of funding has its roots in the individual model of disability, where the child is labelled as having, for example, autism, in order to attract funding for his or her individual support.

Ros identifies her concern about changes to funding support for inclusion:

'Statementing was a way of additional funding improving provision – devolved (funding allocated to the school for whole school initiatives) may mean less money.' (Ros)

She describes what she interprets as the impact of attempts to move the funding model away from money allocated to support an individual child, to money devolved into the main school budget to be allocated across the school, to develop inclusive practice more widely throughout school. Ros argues that such a change may lead to an overall reduction in money being available for specific support for a child. For Ros it seems that the best way to secure funding for inclusive practice is for that funding to be allocated to the individual child. This model of funding is the preferred funding model described in the Children and Families Bill (Great Britain, Parliament, 2013). Ros argues that the process of statementing is one way of gaining additional funding which can be

used to develop inclusive practice. This model of funding allocation for the individual child is one which perpetuates the individual model of disability, through the process of labelling and 'othering' the child (Armstrong 2002). It represents a key tension in the education system at all levels, namely that in order to access educational entitlement the individual requires a 'label', whether a statement of educational need or a diagnostic label of autism for example.

Ros also reflects on the positive impact of the agenda of inclusion and the fact that

'Disability equality legislation can help argue the case (for inclusion) in school...' (Ros)

Throughout the data here it emerges that a teacher's work is affected by the legislative field of education (Rix 2011). This legislative framework (the agenda of performativity being one such instance) can be seen to disable teacher actions as well as to enable it, as in the quotation above.

For Ros the emphasis on inclusion through changing policy has raised the profile of this process and there is now more recognition and awareness amongst her colleagues:

'Emphasis on inclusion has been constructive, no longer an enclave leading to wider understanding in mainstream.' (Ros)

This is somewhat in contrast to her earlier comment, where she argues that the issue of inclusion is *'difficult to keep it in the front of colleagues' minds'* at times. So perhaps she feels there is wider awareness of the issues surrounding inclusion, but it is still not perceived to be a central feature of a teacher's practice (Hodkinson 2005). For Ros it might seem that particular legislation has extended practice, making inclusion something schools and teachers 'have to

comply with'. She indicates that the legislation has itself raised the profile of inclusion. It may be that this process is one aspect of organisational change, but it does not necessarily imply a change in the 'hearts and minds' of those implementing inclusion. If change occurs to comply with legislation rather than for a real belief in the change, then this reflects what McDonnell (2003) refers to as 'surface' changes as opposed to 'deep' structure changes. This perhaps demonstrates what Hargreaves (2002) argues when he reflects on the qualities of sustainable educational change which include teachers knowing not just what should change, but also why and how it should change, as well as wanting it to change. However Ros does seem to imply that this heightening of awareness has brought inclusion into the gaze of more professionals than previously, although it is unclear what she understands the impact of this to be.

Limited staffing, time and money

Limited resourcing is not just interpreted by these teachers as having too little money to fund additional staffing or buy equipment, but also as limitations of school organisation and structure:

'There is some level of frustration, worry and concern that although the family recognise that school is trying very hard within the constraints of budgets and resources to meet needs this might not be enough ...in the real world of limited staff time, money and within existing school organisation and structures - for instance the need for A to function within a large group as he is, for the most part, taught as part of a class.' (Wendy)

Wendy, writing about a child in her class, child A, indicates here that the family of the child might feel that what the school provides for their child is falling short

in some way. Wendy comments on how falling short of meeting parent expectations leads to some *'frustration, worry and concern'* for the school. Here the school feels that it lacks sufficient resources, reflecting the findings of MacBeath et al. (2006) and so fails to meet these expectations.

Wendy reveals how inadequate resourcing could result in even well intentioned and well planned activity being less effective than it could be with additional resources. Perhaps, in Wendy's experience, children with the label of autism require resources in school which are beyond those required by children without that label. In addition she comments on how the existing school organisation and structures may have a negative impact on the process of inclusion. Wendy provides as an example the fact that child A is taught in a large class for most of the day, indicating that this might not always be suitable for him. She feels that mainstream class organisation is itself problematic, in so much as children are taught in larger classes, as opposed to perhaps more flexible class sizes. Wedell (2005) argues that class size is a critical factor in enabling inclusive practice and Wendy implies that, at least for child A, the option of some time spent in a class group smaller than 30 would be desirable. Classes of 30 children are based on an expectation of children learning in the 'typical' style of the dominant majority of children, Wedell's (2005, p101) 'homogeneity' of learning style. Children whose learning and thinking style is not commensurate with that of this dominant majority can be excluded by such mainstream class organisation.

Aspects of current mainstream educational practice, for example the time allocated to the development of differentiated teaching materials, and levels of

knowledge and understanding about diverse learning styles, are considered to be ill-suited for inclusive practice:

'Some of it is about resources – it does take time and therefore money for someone to observe and analyse a child's behaviour, for someone in a mainstream school to set up independent work systems...' (Wendy)

Wendy implies here that a child with a learning profile beyond the 'mainstream' will require additional processes of assessment and understanding and a more inclusive approach to curriculum development (Osberg and Biesta 2010). So perhaps here she indicates that current mainstream pedagogy is rooted firmly in the context of working with the dominant neurotypical majority, and that any child beyond that majority has to be individually assessed and teaching materials developed for them.

The belief by some, for example MacBeath et al. (2006), that the comparative failure of inclusive initiatives to date, results at least in part from inadequate or too costly levels of resourcing, is seen by others to represent a 'myth' (Stubbs 1997, cited Peters et al. 2005). For the teachers in this study the level of resourcing is frequently reflected on and emerges as a significant issue, for example Liz comments:

'Perhaps it is my belief that the cost implications of what would be necessary would not be able to be met.' (Liz)

Here, Liz reflects on the challenges, professional and financial, of creating a school setting in which all children could be effectively and equitably educated arguing that it would be too great a financial cost to society to develop a fully inclusive education system.

This chapter has examined the tensions that the teachers in this study identified as having an impact on inclusive practice. These included the tensions in practice which come from national agendas of performativity and inclusive practice, the impact of an inflexible national curriculum and the associated assessment and reporting regimes, the impact of different methods of funding schools and current mainstream class organisations. Within the individual teacher, the impact of inflexible teaching style, based perhaps on lack of knowledge and understanding about diverse learning styles, was identified as critically important. Throughout the chapter there is evidence of the impact that both the social and the individual models of disability have on national practice and policy, as well as on the way that these teachers understand and articulate their own practice.

The next data chapter explores how these teachers reflect on what it means to be a teacher, and how they perceive the actions of teachers and other professionals to impact on the process of inclusion. This includes reflection on the impact of teacher attitude to practice and on professional identity, as well as on the role of professional development opportunities.

This chapter examines what the teachers in this study perceive to be those aspects of their professional practice which impact on the process of inclusion. The teachers identify areas of practice which could create barriers, as well as some which could enable inclusive practice. They reflect on issues which might apply to the profession as a whole, as well as on aspects of their own practice which they perceive to be relevant. This includes consideration of access to professional development opportunities, the impact of teacher attitude and of 'labelling' individual children and how this might affect teacher perspectives. They also explore what the role of an 'inclusive' teacher is or could be and articulate the professional and personal attitudes and attributes that are needed to fulfil this role.

Being aware of 'triggers'

Terzi (2005) argues that professional knowledge and understanding about the impact of impairment on thinking and learning style affects the process of inclusion. In the following quotation from a group discussion, Liz reflects this perspective when she comments on how it seems that education professionals who work with children with the label of autism are often not aware of the possible reasons for a child's behaviour:

'What I see from here is if this was a hit sheet that you were going through for triggers, if you're looking at your own lesson, to knock off the triggers that may have ended up with everything going into chaos, there are a lot of triggers here. Seating arrangement, do you know what I mean, what choice of paper, the fact that she doesn't want to do castles she wants to do her own thing, she needs 'first this, then that', so she can do her own thing, but she

needs to do the co-operative thing first. I don't know if it's a teacher who doesn't know it, or if it's the fact that it just hasn't been done, but (the child) isn't facilitated to succeed in that particular situation, it doesn't seem to me.' (Liz) (Appendix 3e)

In her view, lack of knowledge and understanding of the child on the part of an adult may prevent the adult from being able to recognise the reasons for a child's expression of discomfort and anger through their behaviour. This, she suggests, may lead to the adult interpreting the child's behaviour as 'challenging' and will limit the possibility of then being able to work positively with the child. She raises the question of why the adults around a child do not always search for underlying causes (triggers) for behaviour, rather than apparently problematising the child because of his or her behaviour. Liz is commenting on how circumstances (in this example the behaviour of the adults) around the child can lead to a particular behaviour. For Liz the emphasis should be on seeking to understand behaviour, on recognising 'triggers' for behaviours, and on adapting staff behaviour as well as adapting the environment. Liz interprets the environment around the child, in this instance the behaviour of the adults, as the 'problem', as opposed to locating the problem with the child, and in this respect the impact of the social model of disability can be argued to influence her interpretation. It is unclear if it is lack of teacher knowledge and understanding or *lack of action* by a teacher that has created the barrier. Here she identifies a difference between lack of knowledge and understanding and lack of desire to change or amend practice on the part of the classroom professionals, reflecting the importance that Kelchtermans (2005) places on the impact of a teacher's emotions on his or her own actions and practice. This perhaps is what Timperley and Parr (2005) argue when they

comment that teachers cannot sustain educational change without being willing and enabled to sustain that change.

Not facilitating

Liz argues in the previous section that circumstances around the child can cause the child to react against the environment and the actions of those around him or her.

A teacher's attitude to a child's behaviour, based perhaps on level of knowledge and understanding of the impact of autism (Hehir 2002) can affect how that teacher responds to the behaviour. Dee also comments on the importance of learning to understand and interpret a child's behaviour:

I have a child in my class... he panics and lashes out, shouting, kicking or hitting and running away. I am working out the triggers for this, and it's often something that has happened in the playground ... when he comes back into class he can sometimes be too upset to get on with work, and this disrupts his learning.'
(Dee)

She demonstrates a positive understanding of the need to search for, and identify, the triggers for behaviours in the same way as Liz does. She describes the child's behaviour where '*he panics and lashes out, shouting, kicking or hitting and running away*'. Dee then reflects on her own developing practice, identifying that playtime and the subsequent transition back into the classroom is often challenging. Her gaze is pupil-focussed, an understanding that here the behaviour is a communication of unease and there must be a basis beyond the child for that behaviour to occur. This is an example of a positive adult response

to a child's behaviour which could result in a search for better understanding, recognition of areas that are challenging for the child and adaptations to settings such as playtimes to avoid the re-occurrence of the behaviours. For Dee her identity as teacher is to ensure that the child is enabled to learn and she believes that if he is unhappy then he will not be able to learn effectively. Dee's perception of her role as teacher means that she tries to understand the behaviour of all children in her class and to work for a positive outcome. Dee's embodiment of her professional identity is to work inclusively and she positions the child's behaviour as something to understand rather than as a challenge to her ability as a teacher. So Dee's teacher identity allows for ambiguity, challenge and the freedom not to have all the answers immediately. The meaning of being a teacher (Howard 2000) for Dee is to work inclusively. Perhaps teachers need to be offered models of teacher identity that allow them to embrace ambiguity, challenge and the notion of taking risks.

Dee continues by reflecting on her practice:

'(He) finds it hard to sit still and work independently... often gets up and wanders around or causes trouble. I realise now that he is doing this because he is bored and I need to get him something to do that he will enjoy and more importantly that he can do independently.' (Dee) (Appendix 3a)

When she comments *'I realise now that he is doing this because he is bored'* this may indicate the possible impact, for Dee, of taking part in the module where participation in the group discussion has provided the opportunity for her to reflect more deeply on the child and his behaviour through the activities provided. In her individual log (Appendix 3a) Dee's extended reflection on the impact of participation in the group discussion and how this has enabled this

process of professional reflection and change can be seen. This provides an example of what Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004) write about as Dee reflects on practice from the perspective of her engagement with the academic module, a combination of reflection on practice facilitated through academic activity. The focus for Dee is to understand the child's learning style and interests, and then to develop her practice, in order to better enable his learning. Here too perhaps can be seen the impact of professional development on a teacher in the context of implementing educational change (Hargreaves 2002).

Impacting on teacher identity

At times the way that a child behaves or responds to a teacher can affect that teacher's sense of professional identity and value. In the following quotation Liz, in a group discussion, is commenting on a child, C, with the label of autism, who is very passive in her social style and very compliant to adult demands, in contrast to another child, J, whose behaviour is perceived as challenging by the adults around her:

'Well I said at the end, one of the things was, of course, C wasn't facilitated either, but (she) feeds back to staff something nicer about themselves, whereas J's feedback to staff is something not so nice about themselves, so then you get that whole thing of what it says back to you about how you function in a role, and "let's let J be the one who's wrong" and "C the one who's sweet".' (Liz)
(Appendix 3e)

She reflects on how a child's behaviour may impact on the identity and feeling of self-worth of a member of staff. For Liz the perceived 'challenging' behaviour

of J may impact negatively on the adult's sense of professional worth and their own positive identity, leading in turn to a negative perception of J. In contrast C, with her more apparently passive and compliant behaviour, is less of a 'threat' to staff, her behaviour more easily accommodated, and they therefore feel more positive about themselves. Here a teacher's sense of professional success or failure is affected by the behaviour and reactions of the children that he or she teaches, illustrating Kelchtermans' argument (2005) about the complex relationship between professional identity and action, and emotional experience. This in turn is reflected back onto the child in the way that the child is perceived so that C, whilst no more enabled to learn than J in this example, is perceived of more positively because of her passive and compliant behaviour. By positioning J as the problem a teacher may then be able to construct his or her own identity in response to this 'problem' and so avoid being 'the problem' themselves. This is perhaps an example of what Howard (2000) describes when she comments on key forces which impact on identity formation, citing as an example of such a force the desire to construct authenticity and meaning within their identity. If J is the problem, it could then be argued, that the teacher and his or her practice is not. In this way the teacher can avoid examining and changing his or her own practice (Goodley 2011). Performativity, it can be argued, leads to the formation of teacher identity which constructs not meeting targets as teacher failure, in this way the process of performativity can be understood as controlling teacher behaviour through positioning teachers as failing or succeeding (Atkinson 2004).

In the comment below Lynn in an individual log (Appendix 3b) describes a perspective she has encountered in a school that she has worked in:

'One teacher said (of a child that had moved into her year 1 class) that he was no problem for her and he did not have tantrums if he was left to colour with his favourite pencil. Is this inclusive education if he is just colouring?' (Lynn)

This comment resonates with child C's situation as described by Liz, where a child with the label of autism and with a passive social style can be seen as 'no problem' because they are seemingly happy, absorbed in their favoured activity. As Lynn comments, *'Is this inclusive education if he is just colouring?'* She questions whether there is any expectation that that child can participate in anything more than 'colouring' in the classroom or if he is left with this activity as it is one he accepts and enjoys. Her comments resonate with Rix (2011 citing Adams 2008) when he argues that inclusion can at times be reduced to the *presence* of pupils in a classroom rather than their full *participation* in the curriculum. Lynn seems to accept that the teacher in question is leaving the child alone to undertake a self-chosen activity and may therefore be avoiding trying to broaden his participation in other class activities. It can be seen in Lynn's log that her own professional context seems to be a less positive experience than those of the other teachers in the study and Lynn is troubled by some of what she experiences in her school setting.

Tainted views

Adult interpretation of behaviour can have a significant impact on the individual student and Dee reveals this when she comments:

'Another thing that struck me ... was the way they were treated by staff. ... It is important to keep an open mind about these children ... it's not fair for them to come to your class and you have tainted

views about them before you even start the year.' (Dee) (Appendix 3a)

Here she reflects on how important it is that education staff should try to avoid developing preconceptions of a child, in order to avoid developing a negative image of him or her. Dee comments on the danger of the adults around the child being influenced by the label or reputation attached to the child. So the label of 'autism' or 'challenging' might act to prejudice education staff, rather than 'signpost' them as to possibly supportive and enabling teaching approaches. Here the child again becomes the 'problem' through the labelling process and is singled out as being different, as being 'othered' (Thomas 2007). Dee, through considering the negative consequences of a child being 'labelled', illustrates the impact of the individual model of disability where the child arrives in a class with a 'reputation', and about whom the education staff might develop '*tainted views*'. This is in contrast to having knowledge and understanding about a child's learning style in order to identify and remove barriers to learning in advance of the child arriving in a class as described by Hehir (2002).

Labelling a child as having SEN or autism can also affect teacher expectations of that child's ability as David comments:

'However, the term SEN can also create a lowering of expectations... It is interesting how often teachers are pleasantly surprised by the outcomes children produce if given the challenge... Labelling children as anything can have negative consequences ... Perhaps the child does not want to be labelled.'

Here being accorded a label is, in David's view, something a child may not welcome. Some children who have been given the label autism, as they grow

older try to lose that label, whilst others claim it as part of their identity (Sinclair 1996).

Being organised and planned

Inclusion, for these teachers, could be unpredictable and perhaps even an interference to the smooth running of the classroom. In their view, teaching requires careful organisation and planning:

*I think what happens is that, I sometimes get into something where I decide how I want it to be done, I plot it out, somebody will object, and I'll say 'no, no, no please do it on this one', and instantly 'fine do it on that one', because actually I have then lost, often, in that child because it's all to do with being organized and planned, and if you only want them to use so many colours and if you only want them to do it on this bit of paper, and that's what you're working towards, it's easy to slip down that slope.' (Liz)
(Appendix 3e)*

In this quotation Liz reflects that however well meant a teacher's actions are the imperative of following a curriculum-based lesson plan can still take over, even momentarily. This perhaps illustrates the challenges of delivering the national curriculum across a diversity of learning styles. Liz is describing how her desire to have a lesson run according to her plan, surmounted her intention to be inclusive and responsive to individual learning style. The 'words *that's what you are working towards*' illustrate here the pressure on teachers to work towards identified learning objectives within each lesson and Liz reflects here on the dual pressures of being responsive to the individual child and of following a

lesson plan. For Liz this planning imperative restricts the ability of a teacher to be responsive to the individual child.

For Wendy there is a variation in teacher preparedness for inclusive practice when she comments that:

'Within school there are differing levels of understanding of autism, different perceptions of what it might mean, and different approaches.' (Wendy)

She considers the impact of different teacher personality and teaching 'style' on a pupil (A) in her setting:

'...In Year 3 A's teacher was very passionate about inclusion, and many children with SEN flourish in her care. She is an exuberant and exciting teacher who loves to enthuse. A seems happier though, with fewer reported 'shutdowns' in Y4, with a very experienced teacher, who has taught many ASD children previously, with a quieter calmer manner.' (Wendy)

Pupil A seems to have had a less 'settled' year with his year 3 teacher than with the year 4 teacher. So here, Wendy argues that experience and attitude and a particular calm, quiet personal teaching approach have been more enabling for A than *'an exuberant and exciting teacher who loves to enthuse'*. Wendy does though reflect that it may not be as simple as the individual teacher style or length of experience when she comments that:

'... perhaps school has become reactive to incidents rather than proactive in giving responsibility to A, providing choices and alternatives for him before anxiety levels reach 5 (on his 'stress thermometer', a classroom tool for self-assessment used by children to monitor their levels of stress and anxiety against a recognised set of behavioural descriptions).' (Wendy)

Here Wendy reflects on the impact of the growing knowledge and understanding gained throughout the school about A and his learning style and of the impact of particular strategies implemented to enable A in his learning, such as the use of the 'stress thermometer'. For Wendy, perhaps the school can sometimes create barriers for the child by being reactive to his behaviour, rather than trying to change practice around the child through understanding and providing him with strategies to communicate and behave otherwise. This resonates with Terzi's articulation of the 'dilemma of difference' (2005) where at times the child's immediate behaviour is the central focus, and at others the gaze is on adaptation to the school's environment to prevent exclusive practice.

Nothing left to learn

The attitude of some teachers to changes to practice, for example developing inclusive practice, can sometimes create barriers to such change, as Hargreaves (1996) argues. Ros reflects on how some education professionals might avoid new demands and ways of working, wishing to maintain a status quo to their practice:

'Understanding of ASD...training is provided but some practitioners feel they have nothing left to learn and so do not take up knowledge and support of others.' (Ros)

Her comments indicate perhaps an unwillingness by some educational professionals to change entrenched perspectives and to continue to develop professional understanding. This possible lack of desire to change could additionally reveal what Hargreaves (2002) describes when he argues that educational change is a 'serial killer' for many teachers who have experienced

successive changes to policy and practice which have proved unsustainable. This professional attitude would work against widening participation in mainstream schools for children labelled with autism if, as Nind (2005) argues, teachers are the enactors of educational change.

Not all teachers, as Hodkinson (2005) writes, perceive 'inclusion' in the context of children labelled as having SEN as part of their professional role. Pat comments that some teachers, by their attitude, can create barriers to inclusive practice, and therefore to learning, for some children:

I have noted that some staff have attitudes that can cause barriers to inclusion and learning of these children. Some staff have a low tolerance of behaviours and find it hard to adapt their teaching methods so that the children feel more comfortable and safe. They think that 1-to-1 support should be full time, almost, so they don't have to do anything.' (Pat)

For Pat, these teachers seem to consider the role of supporting children whose learning style lies beyond the dominant majority in class, to be the work of support staff and not of themselves as class teachers. These teachers do not see their professional role as working with a broad and diverse pupil population and do not have an inclusive professional identity (Hargreaves 1996).

Learning from the professionals

The role of professional development, in enabling teachers to work inclusively, emerges as a factor of significance. Karen argues that to develop inclusive practice teachers will need access to training opportunities:

'There are also training implications, at the moment SEN training seems to happen as and when it is needed or teachers are expected to find their own way.' (Karen) (Appendix 3c)

She believes that this training happens almost in response to a need arising and that it is currently a rather ad hoc affair, perhaps even left to individual teachers to *'find their own way'* to it.

'To allow all children no matter what their needs to reach their full potential, real organised training in a range of approaches and strategies is needed...' (Karen)

She reflects on what she sees as the critical role of 'training teachers' to enable all children to reach their full potential and argues that this training should be *'from people with classroom experience'*. Karen places value on learning from professionals who have worked in a school setting and have perhaps an element of peer credibility, reflecting the arguments proposed by Hargreaves (2002), Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004) and Rieser (2011) on the nature and role of professional development for teachers. Through such development opportunities perhaps teachers can be more empowered to act as agents of change as Timperely and Parr (2005) argue.

Removing barriers: everyday practice

The notion of the teacher as perhaps a 'detective' who 'solves problems' is revealed when Wendy comments that:

'As a SENCo and a teacher removing barriers is really part of everyday practice. It is about identifying problems and trying to implement solutions.' (Wendy)

Here Wendy reveals her perspective that it is an essential element of teacher identity to work inclusively. For Wendy this is her professional identity and this perspective perhaps enables her to embrace the changes that will enable the development of inclusive practice. Wendy it seems has constructed for herself an identity of teacher as inclusive (Howard 2000) when she identifies aspects of her practice which resonate with inclusive policy. Wendy continues to reflect on the role of the teacher and inclusion as she comments that:

'It cannot be done in isolation – how can it be effective unless parents, other professionals and people working with the child and the child themselves are involved?' (Wendy)

Here Wendy takes the role of the teacher beyond the classroom walls and into a wider professional sphere of collaborative practice which involves the family and other professionals as well as the child (Rieser 2006). Inclusive education for Wendy is not just about what happens within the classroom but about shared learning and understanding beyond it:

'Removing barriers has a lot to do with team working and communicating with others.' (Wendy)

The identity of teacher, in Wendy's view, is not an isolated professional who only teaches but also as someone who is learning by working in partnership with the family (Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2008) and with other education professionals (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson 2004; Rieser 2006) to develop practice.

Pat's perspective on the critical importance of staff attitude in enabling the inclusive agenda resonates with that of Sikes, Lawson and Parker (2007) as she comments:

'It seems to me that staff attitudes in school can have the greatest impact on whether inclusion is successful or not.' (Pat)

She then identifies what in her view are the critical elements of the teacher as enabler of inclusive practice:

'Staff who are open to new ideas and are flexible in their thinking and working practices are generally not the ones who come to see (me) and tell me that the child being in their class is not working.' (Pat)

Teachers with such characteristics, in Pat's experience, do not identify the child as the 'problem'.

The diversity of learning and thinking style and ability in today's mainstream classrooms is an accepted fact for Pat, writing in her individual log (Appendix 3d):

'Teachers need to understand that they will have children with ASD and other SENs in their class, and they have to make reasonable adjustments to their teaching and learning environment to meet the needs of those children.' (Pat)

Pat comments, from the perspective of being a SENCo, that teachers must accept that they will be working with a diverse group of learners and have a responsibility to work effectively with the range of learning styles of the children in their classes. This resonates with Wendy's comment that inclusion is about '*what teachers do*', illustrating Titchkosky's argument (2011) that the inclusive classroom is one in which diverse learning styles are expected and accepted, so that groups of children are not conceived of as 'excludable'. Wendy and Pat reflect on the professional role and expectations of what it means to be a teacher in the 21st century, where teachers are expected to enable the learning

of groups of children with a diversity of learning styles and implement 'reasonable adjustments'. Pat continues to describe the attributes of successfully inclusive teachers, writing that these are:

'Staff that have imagination to change the way they deliver their lessons, constantly review their successes and failures and are open to new ideas. They would not be afraid to stray from the restraints of the curriculum and plan learning experiences that are levelled at the needs of the child. This I believe would be personalised learning and therefore inclusion at its best.' (Pat)

In a school which celebrates diversity, as it seems Pat's school does, then the possibility of adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of the child could be seen as implementing personalised learning opportunities and be *'inclusion at its best'*. In another school where there was a culture of more rigid adherence to a central curriculum, there would be a question over how far teachers could expect to *'stray'* and how far they would be required to adhere to a pre-ordained set of planning documents. Such a school is one where the teacher's actions are limited by the school's 'bureaucratic structures' (Broderick et al. 2011, p833). Pat positions teachers with such professional attributes as agents of educational change in their daily practice, revealing aspects of the school as a sustainable educational system described by Fullan (2006). For Pat the teacher who takes risks, who is not afraid to stray from the *'restraints of curriculum'* can then be an agent of change through resisting curricular orthodoxy to enable inclusive practice.

Pat's comments here are all indicative of the social model of disability at work within the school setting, reflecting some of the features of the inclusive school described by Rieser (2011). Pat describes the removal of barriers for children

with the label of autism (Oliver 1996) through changes to the educational system. She considers that all teachers need to recognise that their work will involve working with children with the label of autism. She reflects on the importance of changes to practice, with individual teachers taking professional responsibility for this. In her experience there are some teachers for whom this process is easier and more natural than for others who, she implies, are more likely to problematise the child and come to her as SENCo for 'solutions'. This may also then reflect not just staff attitude but also professional identity. Where a teacher perceives his or her practice as being to work creatively with a diverse group of learners then they are more likely to approach this with a positive attitude (Nias 1996) providing they in turn are enabled to do this.

This chapter explored the ways in which the teachers in the study identify aspects of their professional practice which might impact on the process of inclusion. The complexity of the relationship between the emotional experience, professional attitude and action of education professionals was identified by these teachers as having a critical impact on inclusion. So too was the impact of 'labelling' a child either formally, through statementing, or informally by labelling the child as 'challenging', on the expectations of the child by the adults around him or her. Access to professional development opportunities, especially those which include some contribution from experienced professionals, was identified by these teachers as having a significant impact on the development of inclusive practice. In contrast, it was argued that some education staff feel they have 'nothing left to learn' indicating a lack of desire on the part of some teachers to change and extend their practice. The impact of educational policy emerged as having a significant impact on professional identity, and the

possibility that teachers could resist imposed educational change and so become agents of change themselves was revealed.

Some of the teachers provided personal reflections on their own developing knowledge and understanding about working with children with the label of autism, and within these comments it was possible to interpret the impact of discussion with other teachers through participation in the module. For these teachers, participation in the module had enabled them to reflect on and develop their practice.

The teachers additionally identified the danger of inclusion being reduced to the presence of pupils rather than their full participation in the curriculum.

In the following chapter, features of practice in mainstream schools and special schools are contrasted, as the teachers reflect on the attributes of 'an inclusive school'. Possible limitations to inclusion are considered and conceptualisations of the inclusive school outlined by Rieser (2011) emerge as problematic.

Throughout their discussions and individual logs the teachers in the study contrasted aspects of practice in mainstream and in special schools, which they identified as enabling or as creating barriers to the process of inclusion. Some of their reflections can be interpreted as conceptualisations of an inclusive school. This chapter reveals these perspectives, articulated in terms of the professional qualities of education staff and their practice, the geographical location of learning and student learning profiles. A key dilemma which runs through this chapter is the possibility for these teachers that there may be 'limits to inclusion', raising the question for them of whether it is possible to have a school which is inclusive for all pupils whatever their learning style and ability.

Smaller classes, more adults

The size of mainstream classes, where 30 children is the typical class size, compared to those in special schools where there may be as few as 6 children in a class, emerges throughout the data as a factor which affects inclusion.

One of the stimuli that I used to develop the group discussion was an excerpt from Leicester (1999) which states that there is nothing a 'special school can offer that a mainstream school cannot offer'.

The following is a quotation taken from a group discussion:

'Just going back to that, that's saying there's nothing a special school can provide that a mainstream can't, then we are talking smaller classes for everybody, you know otherwise (he) is not being included...'

The teachers talking here argue that if this quotation from Leicester was taken to its ultimate conclusion, there would be smaller class sizes in a mainstream school in order for it to be more accessible for a diverse pupil population. I posed the following question during this discussion '*Should classes of 30 exist?*' and the response was an unequivocal "*No*" (*several voices*)'

Class size has emerged previously in the data chapters as a factor, for these teachers, which affects inclusive practice, as well as being identified in existing research (Slee 2001; Wedell 2005).

The level of staffing in a special school is considered, by Ros, to be a favourable attribute of a special school which will enable inclusive practice:

'More appropriately resourced. Adult/child ratios smaller enabling more teacher-child time to build trusting relationships.' (Ros)

Here Ros argues for the more favourable adult: pupil ratios found in special schools, commenting that special school education professionals have more time to build on and develop a '*trusting relationship*' with their pupils. In her view it is important for children to feel confident in their relationships in school, and perhaps this aspect of teacher-student relationship building is lacking in current mainstream schools for some pupils and staff, creating a barrier for inclusive practice.

Changing the school

In addition to having smaller class sizes and more favourable adult: pupil ratios, mainstream schools will have to change other aspects of their practice in order to become more inclusive:

'There would also need to be extra facilities such as a sensory room that would be an essential part of his day at school.' (Dee)

Here, Dee's comments reflect a model of inclusion based on the social model of disability, where features of the school, such as the introduction of a sensory room, change so that the school is more inclusive for the child she is writing about. The process whereby the pupil is identified as being 'other' than the mainstream reflects, though, the individual model of disability.

In the following excerpt from a group discussion the teachers are again discussing the quotation taken from Leicester (1999):

I think that Leicester's idea of children having the right to attend their ordinary, neighbourhood school is a good one in theory but it would take a lot of planning and change before this could happen. He (sic) also says that ordinary schools should be able to offer the same as special schools but I can't see this happening unless the government invest a lot of money into it! (Dee)

Dee reflects here on what she understands to be the difference between special schools and mainstream schools when she states that, for all children to attend their local school, *'it would take a lot of planning and change before this could happen'*. She comments that the idea of children having the right to attend their mainstream school is a good one *'in theory'* but seems sceptical that this could happen without significant financial investment. Dee perceives the special school as being able to offer more than the mainstream school can for some children.

Whilst some researchers such as Kelchtermans (2005) focus on the experience of the individual teacher, others such as Slee (2001), Peters, Johnstone and

Ferguson (2005) and Rieser (2011) write about inclusive practice from the development of education systems and whole school initiatives.

Here, Ros argues that inclusion has to be a whole school initiative:

'Whole school working together to create an environment suited to needs of ASD pupils eg visual symbols used by all.' (Ros)

This will include making environmental adaptations such as the use of visual support for communication, which can create a more accessible learning environment for some children. Here Ros places the impetus for change on the school as a community, with the environment being seen as in need of change in order to be more accessible, reflecting the social model of disability. Her comments describe what she perceives as the special school environment, although perhaps not all professionals working in special schools would agree that their school community is as united in approach as Ros seems to think it might be.

Special school expertise

Teachers and teaching assistants in special schools are often framed as being experts in their area of practice, for example in working with children with the label of autism (Rix 2011).

Wendy reflects here that:

'... and if we wanted to include (a child with the label of autism and intellectual impairment) he would be about special school expertise and members of staff and resources and things into mainstream school really.' (Wendy)

She argues that there may be a degree of '*special school expertise*' that mainstream schools could usefully access (Lloyd 2008), a body of knowledge and understanding built up by professionals in special schools, in order for inclusion to be effective.

This illustrates the argument by Broderick et al. (2011, p832) of there being a narrative or discourse within education in which children with the label of autism can most effectively be taught through specialised teaching, delivered by teachers 'uniquely qualified for special education'. This is a theme which arises throughout the data, with these teachers perceiving the education professionals in special schools to have a better core of knowledge and understanding about the learning style associated with the label of autism than professionals in mainstream schools. This perspective is considered by some to represent a discourse of special school 'expertism' (Troyna and Vincent 1996 cited McDonnell 2003) although Hehir (2002) argues that some academics confuse 'expertism' with specialised understanding and that a broader and more complex understanding of pedagogy by all teachers is needed in order to enable inclusive practice to develop.

Pat comments on the importance of the knowledge and understanding developed by teachers in special schools and of not losing this:

. special schools offer professionals who have the time, training and experience to meet the needs of these children.' (Pat)

She argues that education professionals who work in special schools have not only more time, but training and experience, which better equips them to work inclusively with children with a diversity of learning style and ability, reflecting Nind's argument (2005) that familiarity with diverse learning styles enables the

development of knowledge and understanding which will support inclusive practice.

Unchanging mainstream

By describing the inclusion of children who are labelled with autism as requiring *'special school expertise and members of staff and resources and things into mainstream school'* there is, perhaps, an understanding by Wendy that the 'mainstream' would remain essentially the same but with additional resources, staffing and expertise placed into that 'mainstream' for the child. This has up until now been the traditional approach to 'inclusion' where resources are 'attached to the child', but the mainstream around the child remains relatively unchanged (Wedell 2005).

So, whilst the teachers in the study do present some very clear ideas about what factors they perceive to impact on the process of inclusion, they also seem at times, bound by a concept of the 'unchanging mainstream'. This 'unchanging mainstream' is problematic and has been identified in the literature as such (Goodley 2011; Titchkosky 2011). For these teachers there cannot be an inclusive school system without fundamental change to the way that schools and education are conceived.

Problem curriculum

The structure of the national curriculum, a factor which has emerged in the previous data chapters, is considered by, amongst others, Wedell (2005) and

Cochran-Smith and Dudley-Marling (2012) to present a significant barrier to inclusive practice.

The approach to working with the national curriculum in special schools is interpreted by these teachers as being more flexible than in mainstream schools:

less pressure to achieve NC levels so more able to deliver a more child-centred curriculum equipping them with skills for life.'

(Ros)

Ros's perception of there being a difference in the curriculum and less pressure to achieve national curriculum levels in a special school is an interesting perception, in that special schools are, in fact, also judged in part through their effectiveness against national curriculum targets year on year. The 'testing agenda' is not unknown in special schools, and the pressure of having SAT results scrutinised is present in these schools.

Pat argues for the importance, in developing inclusive practice, of a curriculum that permits greater focus on life skills and creative and physical development:

'...I believe that unless the curriculum in mainstream is allowed to relate more to life skills and creative/physical development, the role of special schools will continue to be vital.' (Pat)

In her view the national curriculum as delivered in mainstream schools is limited and inaccessible for many pupils, reflecting Rieser (2011) when he argues for a more flexible approach to curriculum delivery and assessment processes. So for Pat unless the curriculum in mainstream schools changes significantly, special school will continue to be necessary as considers there to be a

significant difference in the curriculum content between these two school sectors.

A school within a school

The dilemma of how to arrange the physical location of learning for groups of children with a diversity of learning styles and abilities is taken to its extreme in the segregated school system, which has produced mainstream schools and special schools.

The physical location of learning emerges from the data as a feature of inclusive practice:

'The Salamanca Statement states that SEN pupils should be provided with 'child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting (their) needs'. This is unarguable, but challenging to provide in a regular setting.' (Liz)

Liz argues here that in a regular or mainstream setting it would be *'challenging'* to provide an appropriate education for all children, despite the *'unarguable'* nature of the Salamanca Statement.

She extends this argument further when she comments that:

'It is very difficult for me to imagine how the very particular needs of many SEN pupils could be met in a mainstream school without an inevitable development of a school within a school as SEN pupils are withdrawn from the ordinary classroom lessons.' (Liz)

Here Liz is unable to conceptualise the inclusive 'mainstream' school, seeing it as potentially a *'school within a school'*. Liz's understanding of the 'inclusive school' seems to be framed within the concept of an almost unchanging

mainstream school, a process critiqued by Slee (2001). For Liz, in this instance, children with the label of SEN are still a separate group from the 'mainstream', rather than being recognised as an integral part of a wide and diverse pupil population. These children continue to be 'essentially excludable' as Titchkosky (2011, p39) comments.

Limits to inclusion?

The possibility that there may be limits to educational inclusion is a concept that has emerged in some studies, for example for children who are labelled as intellectually impaired (Runswick-Cole 2011) or as behaviourally challenging (Hodkinson 2005).

For the teachers in this study, the degree of intellectual impairment for a child emerged as one factor which may affect the process of inclusion. The group had watched a Teacher's TV video clip about a child called Reuben who is described as 'having Asperger Syndrome':

I think Reuben would be much easier to integrate into mainstream school. ...I thought it was great how his friends were helping him to be accepted by others by teaching him skills such as playing football, dressing better and learning to read body language. Reuben seemed keen to learn these things but wasn't going to change too much as he was now happy being himself.' (Dee)

For Dee it would be '*much easier*' to include a child with the label of Asperger Syndrome, whose academic and communication skills are similar to those of his mainstream peers, than a child with the label of autism who is also labelled as intellectually impaired. She comments on how Reuben has friends who help

him to *'be accepted by others'*, by helping him to understand some aspects of the social environment. Her comments here reflect the individual model of disability, as her focus is on how Reuben was helped by his friends to learn to be more socially 'typical'. She does however recognise the tension there is in the notion of 'changing' the individual when she comments that Reuben *'wasn't going to change too much as he was ... happy being himself'*. Perhaps Reuben was being 'scaffolded' rather than 'changed', so he was more able to apply strategies in social contexts which would enable him to be socially comfortable and less anxious. There is a distinction between scaffolding learning, and attempting to change the individual in order to 'normalise' him or her.

In this instance, for Dee the school and the student made adaptations, so that Reuben was better able to access the school environment, and the focus for the adaptations was the thinking and learning style associated with the label of autism or Asperger Syndrome. When Dee comments that Reuben would be *'much easier'* to include, she compares him with a child with the label of autism and of intellectual impairment. Perhaps what she is arguing is that a mainstream setting may learn to adapt to the different *social and communication style* of children with the label of autism, but may find adapting to the *level and rate of learning* of children who are labelled as intellectually impaired more challenging (Runswick-Cole 2011). This perspective reflects the early articulations of the social model of disability where those labelled as having learning difficulties were excluded from the social model (Tregaskis 2002).

In the following quotation Dee reflects that it might be more difficult for children with the label of autism who are also labelled as intellectually impaired, to be included into their local mainstream school:

'In an ideal world, there would be more money available so (he) could have the full time support that he would require.' (Dee)

She suggests that where there is no limit to financial resources, it would be possible to adapt schools in any way necessary, in order to become inclusive. However for Dee it also seems necessary to have *'full time support'* for a child with such a learning profile, so that he can be included in a mainstream setting. She seems not to conceive of this child in a classroom without this full time support. This understanding of inclusion depends on the individual model of disability where the child is offered extra support to be 'included' into the mainstream.

Not just geography

Wendy reflects on the implications of working to include children with the label of autism and intellectual impairment in a mainstream school:

'If (such a child) was placed in a mainstream school, he'd be (just) geographically present in the classroom without an awful lot of support and money and time and expertise.' (Wendy) (Appendix 3f)

She questions the feasibility of creating a classroom, or a school, that could be appropriately organised for a child with this learning profile as well as for children with 'typical' communication skills and levels of intellectual ability. Here there is a focus on the physical location of learning. Wendy questions how a wide range of students, with a diversity of intellectual abilities and styles, could be offered appropriate and accessible learning opportunities in the same geographical space, the same classroom.

. and what people would he really be engaged with in a class of 30? So it isn't always about geography is it really?' (Wendy)

Here she argues that inclusion is about more than just the *place* of learning, it is also, as Armstrong (2011, p8) states, about 'the social, cultural, curricular and pedagogic life of the school'. In Wendy's view the opportunities for social engagement for a child with such a learning profile within a mainstream class will be limited. This continues from Liz's comments about 'a *school within a school*' in the earlier section of that name. Both Wendy and Liz appear to see limits to inclusion, as they seem unable to imagine sufficient changes to the mainstream to enable full inclusive education for all children, whatever their level of learning ability. This perspective illustrates Rieser's (2011) argument that much of the educational change relating to inclusion to date has occurred as somewhat unco-ordinated *adjustments* to the existing mainstream, which then founder under the pressures of the performative culture of the mainstream system.

Perhaps, for Wendy and Liz, some children are more easily included than others, and it is difficult for them to imagine how some children can become part of the 'mainstream'.

Being truly included

In the following quotation, taken from a group discussion (Appendix 3f), the teachers question how included a child with the label of autism and intellectual impairment would be in any school setting that is described as 'mainstream', implying that he may be 'integrated' but not 'included':

Liz: Just going back to that that's saying there's nothing a special school can provide that a mainstream school can't, then we're talking smaller classes for everybody, you know, otherwise Ricky is not being included.

Pat: Well, the other children are being discriminated against aren't they?

Liz: But also he's having special provision made within a mainstream school...

David: Which other children?

Pat: The ones, if the class that he's in is going to be smaller, the other children in the school, if they're in bigger classes still

David: Yeah, every class needs to be made the same, 7 or 8 children yeah

Sue: ...and so if (he) was in a special, small class in a mainstream school that stayed the same, then he would still be excluded...

Liz: I think then, all you are doing is transferring a special school environment to mainstream...

David: ...but not changing anything else...

that's right ...' (Several voices in a group discussion)(Appendix 3f)

They identify the '*special, small class in a mainstream school*' as still being exclusive, as just '*transferring a special school environment to mainstream ...*'.

(In this group discussion my voice is represented seeking clarification of what is being discussed.)

Pat considers that special schools will continue to be available for some children when she comments:

'I believe that special schools continue to have a role to play in the education of children with complex learning difficulties.' (Pat)

Pat works in a mainstream school as a SENCo, and her comments indicate that she considers it desirable to maintain a system where there is a distinction between the 'mainstream' and the 'special'. It seems that for Pat there may be a limit to inclusion for children with the label of '*complex learning difficulties*'.

In many schools, individual or small groups of children are withdrawn from the main class for some or all of their academic learning. In the following quotation Pat, writing in an individual log (Appendix 3d) reflects on her understanding of inclusion:

'Inclusion is not just about geography! Children need to be able to access the entire curriculum within mainstream school (at their own level) without being withdrawn from class, to be truly included.' (Pat)

Pat considers that inclusion in a school setting is not about being withdrawn from the classroom in order to learn, but about being entitled to education within that classroom. In her view inclusion is participation and not presence alone, as Titchkosky argues (2011). In Pat's view, if a child is withdrawn from class for learning then they are not being '*truly included*'.

Dee in an individual log (Appendix 3a) also reveals this tension when she reflects on changes to her classroom practice made for a child with the label of autism:

'...we made sure that in the future she would go out and do the test at a slower pace until she got used to it. I'm not sure if going out of the class to do the test was the correct thing as it was

singling her out, but we felt it was better than her getting stressed and upset.' (Dee)

For Dee in this situation the child was enabled by being out of the class and working on an assessment at a different pace from her peers, but she also reveals her concern that this may actually have excluded rather than included the child.

Therapy and education

The notion of there being some children who require 'therapy', as opposed to education, is a familiar theme in much of the literature about special educational needs and disability, one which Goodley (2011) critiques as exclusive and as 'othering' the child. This consideration emerged as an issue of significance for the teachers in this study.

Liz and Pat both reflect on this notion of the therapeutic environment (Appendix 3f). Liz comments about one child that:

'Really (he) would be better in a therapeutic environment,'

whilst Pat argues that:

'But not all children need a therapeutic environment, and while all children would benefit from being in smaller classes I don't know that all children would necessarily benefit, in the same way, from a therapeutic environment.' (Pat)

Both Liz and Pat consider that some children may need a '*therapeutic environment*' in school, more than others. The term 'therapeutic' brings with it for some academics (Goodley 2011) associations of 'damage', 'distress', 'in

need of being healed'. With this comes the implication that the individual who needs therapy is not so much in need of education alone, as of some 'healing' and as a result is excluded from a concept of schooling which provides 'education' alone (Thomas 2007). Pat comments that not all children will require a 'therapeutic environment' even if they may benefit from being in smaller classes. There is a distinguishing line being drawn, by these teachers, between those children considered to be 'in need of therapy' and those 'in need of education'. This brings with it an associated question over the role of the teacher in such 'therapeutic settings' and how far the role of teacher and the concept of education can change. The notion of therapy arises from the individual model of disability, whereas the notion of fundamental change to the role of teacher and the nature of education rely on a social model of disability and will enable more inclusive education. However it is also possible to consider that a school environment could in itself be a therapeutic environment (Mintz 2009). Perhaps the problem here is that 'therapeutic environments' are considered to be in some way 'special' and to apply beyond the mainstream. It could be argued that the notion of a therapeutic environment in itself is not the problem, but the notion that a mainstream school cannot be therapeutic.

Professional saintliness?

Throughout this chapter there has emerged an element of there being something 'special' about special school professionals, with the teachers in the study arguing that they have, perhaps, more empathy in addition to more knowledge and understanding, time to work with individual children and a higher level of expertise in working with pupils with diverse learning styles and abilities.

'More specialist staff, better trained/equipped to meet needs of child with ASD. More empathy.' (Ros)

Ros portrays professionals in special schools as perhaps having different personal qualities than their mainstream colleagues, with the possible implication that children in special schools require more empathy than those in mainstream schools.

Pat comments that education professionals working with children with the label of autism and intellectual impairment would need to be:

highly qualified, motivated, flexible, dedicated and very well trained.' (Pat)

In her view such professionals require personal and professional qualities over and above those of 'ordinary' teachers and support staff and have perhaps an identity almost of 'super teacher'. This perspective of what might be considered the 'professional saintliness' of special school teachers persists, which in itself, perhaps, places the role of working with children labelled as having SEN or autism 'beyond the mainstream' (Broderick et al. 2011). There is perhaps the expectation within the identity of 'special school teacher' that that teacher has specialist knowledge and with this some element of power (Armstrong 2002). Alternatively, it may be that not all teachers construct their identity as educators of children with the label of intellectual impairment, because such children and adults have always been placed at the edges of society, with limited opportunities for social contact (Young 1990 cited Thomas 2007). Here perhaps the possibilities of professional identity have been limited by the teachers' own experiences, both professionally and in the wider personal context (Howard 2000). There are also limitations on identity through the cultural messages

about whom education and mainstream schools are for and for whom they are not, who is excludable from mainstream and who is includable (Titchkosky 2011).

Pat also considers this staff team to be in need of support because of the perceived demanding nature of their work:

'...and that those people also have support, because it's such a demanding job, that there's a circle of people that would support each other and (the child)...' (Pat)

So, working with children who have the label of autism and also intellectual impairment is perhaps construed by Pat to be more challenging than the work of the 'mainstream' teacher with 'mainstream' children. This in turn may reflect the impact of the individual model of disability where a group of children continue to be seen as beyond the dominant majority and then are 'labelled' and so 'othered' (Goodley 2011).

The teachers in the study identified the possible features of an inclusive school as they reflected on the attributes of mainstream and special schools, comparing and contrasting these. They described what they consider to be the personal and professional qualities of education professionals who could work inclusively, and indicated that there might, in their view, be some limit to inclusion and that some children may be 'beyond' inclusion, in need perhaps of 'therapy' rather than education alone resonating with the concerns of Goodley (2011). At times the notion of the 'unchanging mainstream' persists for these teachers, reflecting the individual model of disability, whilst at other times the

social model of disability is evident, as they articulate the changes to practice needed to promote the mainstream school into becoming an inclusive school.

In this chapter a picture emerges of how these teachers seem unable to move away from the notion of the unchanging mainstream school in order to conceptualise the inclusive school. Their practice, their professional arguments and their professional identity are so bound within the frame of the current segregated school system and the competing agendas of performativity and inclusion that they find it almost too challenging to move away from that.

The following chapter, Chapter Seven, explores the teachers' perspectives of the impact on the family of placement for their child with the label of autism in mainstream schools.

In this data chapter I present the teachers' perspectives of the experiences for the family of the child with the label of autism, as they support their child through school. As I have described in Chapter Three, the situation for families was part of the focus for one session on the module, as the families of children with the label of autism often act as advocates for their child throughout their education. Some of the data of relevance to this theme arose from a range of discussions and teacher logs over several sessions, and some arose in specific response to the stimulus for discussion presented in Session 5. In this session I asked the teachers to consider factors which affect the family, as my own experience in the field as well as a review of the literature (Murray 2000; Batten et al. 2006; Runswick-Cole 2008), suggests that the relationship between home and school is one which is of considerable importance in this context. For this reason this *theme* cannot be said to have *emerged* from the data, as I asked a specific question about the family experience, although some of the coded phrases or categories did emerge from other areas of data gathering. The theme then represents a combination of elicited responses, as well as significant issues which emerged from the data overall through analysis.

For many families living with a child with the label of autism, the process of school placement and of movement through school, from class to class and stage to stage, is not a straightforward process, and many of the comments made by the teachers in the study reflected this. There is also reflection on the impact of the perspective and attitude of other parents within the school community to the child and to the family, and the implications of this for the school and how they work with a community of families as well as with the individual family. The attitude of the child's peers is also identified as being of

significance, both directly on the child as well as in the context of the developing attitude of the wider community of families.

Finding time

The sometimes problematic nature of developing effective home-school partnerships emerged as an area of concern for these teachers:

'... that was another thing we were talking about is working partnership with parents, support for parents ... time to be able to do that in a proper way, rather than a snatched couple of minutes...'

The teachers here discuss together the challenges of developing a '*working partnership*' with parents, one in which parents are supported by the school. This aspect of parent partnership is one that is commented on in the literature (Murray 2000), and reflects a professional understanding, perhaps, of the role of the professional as an 'expert' who can offer '*support for parents*'. Time to work with parents, for these teachers, was more limited than they would have liked it to be and was a factor affecting the process of inclusion.

Feeling different

Parents of children with the label of autism can feel alienated in their relationships with school professionals (Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2008). As Ros comments:

'Parents can lack engagement with school/denial of (the) child's needs/avoidance of the playground chats/feeling different, isolated.' Ros

Here Ros considers the sometimes negative experiences and attitudes that parents of children with the label of autism can have in their interactions with school. She feels that parents may not develop a positive relationship with the school, through lack of engagement. If, as revealed in the previous quotation, time is limited for teachers to work with parents, then this may affect how parents are enabled to engage with the school. Ros also comments that some parents may have some *'denial of (the) child's needs'*, by which, perhaps, she feels that some parents do not agree with the professional assessment of their child (Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2008). So this disagreement may also have an impact on how the family is able to engage with the school. She then observes that some families have an *'avoidance of the playground chats'*, perhaps because these families receive negative feedback from other families about their child. This avoidance can result in the family becoming isolated from other families in the community (Green 2003). For Ros, some families have an unhappy experience of their child at school and experience social isolation.

She further comments that the family might adopt a combative attitude towards achieving what they see as their child's entitlement, which again will affect the nature and quality of the school and family partnership:

'Others can be consumed by the need to 'fight' even when there is no battle and we are working towards the same end - inclusive education for their child.' (Ros)

These comments by Ros reveal less than positive images of family experiences, and indicate that the development of home-school partnerships

can be a complex process, which will require sensitivity, time and the development of trust on both sides. This notion of having to 'fight' to gain educational entitlement reflects the experience of parents surveyed by Batten et al. (2006) for the NAS.

Building barriers

The relationship between a child's parents or carers and the school may at times be challenged when the school has a different perspective of a child than that held by the family (Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2008).

In Karen's view some families may not wish to hear the school's perception that their child may be following a pathway of development which differs from his or her peers:

'Occasionally parents build barriers to protect themselves from news they do not want to hear.' (Karen)

When she refers to *'news they do not want to hear'*, Karen is commenting on the school's assessment of a child. She feels that perhaps some parents wish to avoid hearing the 'professional assessment' that their child is not following a typical pattern of development, is in some way identified as being 'different'. Here, the professional assessment and the family perspective are at odds (Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2008), resulting in families who *'build barriers to protect themselves'*. It appears from Karen's comments that the school perceives the identification and labelling of the child as un-problematic, and that it is the parents' lack of agreement that is problematic, their rejection of the assessment.

'How difficult must it be for a parent to be told their child is different, that they will need extra help and support to complete tasks that other children take in their stride?' (Karen)

Here Karen places the school in the position of telling the parent that their *'child is different'* and will need *'extra help and support'*, a process of labelling the child which arises from the individual model of disability (Oliver 1996). Again, for Karen the 'problem' is the lack of parental acceptance of the assessment, not the assessment and process of labelling a child. The education professionals, though, do not seem to have their assessment of the child disturbed by the parents' different perspective. Here the parents are positioned as defensive, perhaps feeling vulnerable when faced with a professional opinion that differs from their own as Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2008) describe. The need to identify children as 'different' so that their special educational needs can be met is a function of the individual model of disability. Parents can report very mixed experiences of the process of diagnosis and subsequent 'labelling' of their child (Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2008). Perhaps it is not the identification of learning style that is the issue here, but the assumed attachment of some sort of 'stigma' to the child through the process of labelling (Green 2003).

Karen's comments may reflect existing practice at school level where it is important to understand a child's development and, if necessary, to 'label' that development as different through the use of terms such as 'learning difficulty', 'autism' or 'dyslexia'. Access to funding through which to support a child's learning comes through a system of assessment, diagnosis and labelling of 'need'. There is, in a sense, a financial imperative on schools and the family to identify 'need' in order to access resources (Goodley 2011). In such

circumstances it could be argued that teachers are working within a predominantly individual model of disability.

A dilemma of labelling

Parents may not wish to attach a label to their child, but in the current system of funding can be forced into this:

'...sometimes parents don't want to have a label for their children.'

Here the teachers argue that some parents do not wish to attach a 'label' to their child, but they see this as problematic when they comment that:

'But because they don't have a statement or anything they're not getting the support...'

The teachers argue that, for parents, there is a dilemma of needing to gain a diagnostic label for their child, in order to better argue for resourcing and support. This model of educational resourcing depends on the individual model of disability as Goodley (2011) argues.

There is, then, a dilemma for some parents where, by not wanting their child to be 'labelled' as 'autistic' or as having 'special educational needs' (Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2008), they find themselves denied access to funding which will enable more effective education for their child.

Where there is insufficient resourcing, for example level of staffing in a classroom, as a result of lack of funding, then the child may be ineffectively supported (Hodge 2005) and this may result in constant discussion between school and home of a potentially problematic nature as this comment reveals:

the child then is always in the middle of some sort of discussion between the parent and the teacher or...'

Here there is an assumption that funding attached to the individual child, through the process of statementing, is the key to resourcing the school effectively. The individual model of disability underpins such a model of funding. For these teachers the 'problem' (Titchkosky 2011) is, here, located on the individual child who lacks the statement which in turn would enable additional resourcing to be accessed.

Creating barriers

The dilemma of labelling arose again, but in a different context. Here the impact of the label of autism is seen by Karen as problematic:

'The use of labels can create barriers. From teasing in the playground to the lack of understanding displayed by other parents, being labelled as different can isolate you even if you do not manifest behaviours understood as autistic.' (Karen)

She is aware that a child with the *label* of autism may be teased by others in the playground or that the parents of other children may have a '*lack of understanding*'. This illustrates the effect of the label as a stigma (Green 2003) on the child and the family resulting in discriminatory behaviour on the part of the wider community. Karen's commentary indicates that it is not just the staff whose attitudes to difference have an impact on the child and the way that they are perceived. It appears that children with the label of autism may also be identified as 'other' by their peers and by the parents of their peers. This social

vulnerability is perhaps one reason why many young people choose not to attend their local mainstream school (Batten et al. 2006).

The social style associated with the label of autism may also lead to some discrimination by a child's peers:

'Other children once they realise that there is something different about a member of the class can make things difficult. They are labelled as the 'naughty' child and either blamed for things or goaded into a reaction.' (Karen)

Here Karen argues that the response of other children in the class can impact on the child with the label of autism, with that child possibly being labelled as *'naughty'* or with the child being *'goaded'* to react in some way. For Karen the response of the peer group is problematic, reflecting here that other children can respond negatively to the social difference associated with the label of autism.

Karen also feels that other children in class may be aware that a child with the label of autism is receiving additional adult attention in class when she comments:

'Children can also become jealous at the extra attention that children with SEN receive which can cause problems.' (Karen)

In Karen's view this 'jealous' reaction may be problematic in class, perhaps leading to other children also trying to gain additional adult attention.

It is argued by Rose (2001) and Goodley (2011) that the regime of performativity leads to the 'exclusion' of children who fail to achieve targets of

attainment within the proscribed SATs levels, such children being seen to pose a threat to standards of learning within a class or a school. For the teachers in this study, some parents seem to feel that children whose behaviour and learning style does not match that of the dominant majority in class will limit the overall level of learning and attainment for the class:

A child with SEN can be seen as holding a group/class back even if they are high functioning.' (Karen)

Karen argues here that there may be a stigma attached to any child who has a label of 'SEN', whatever that child's level of intellectual ability, and that child may be perceived as '*holding a group/class back*'. This illustrates what Goodley (2011) refers to when he argues that the disabled child, in a competitive market-driven education system, can be framed by the 'consumers' in that system, i.e. parents of the peer group, as 'problematic'. The fact that Karen identifies experiences such as being bullied in the playground, or being perceived to be a threat to attainment for other children, would imply that she is familiar with such events. So, in this quotation, Karen describes events which are also described by individuals with the label of autism (Batten et al. 2006) and their families. Here the influence of the peer group and the wider community can be seen to have a negative impact on the process of inclusion.

The attitude of other families towards the child and the family can result in discriminatory actions:

I was saying that, one of the problems is the parents of the other children as well, who often put pressure on the class teacher or the head teacher because they think that they're either destroying the lessons, or their children aren't achieving.' (Dee)

Dee reflects on how the attitude of other parents, towards the child with the label of autism, emerges as one of the barriers to successful inclusion, with parents applying pressure on the school through complaints that the child *is 'destroying lessons'* or that their own children *'aren't achieving'* as a result of the presence of the child with the label of autism. For her this attitude is problematic but for the parents of the child's peers the child with the label of autism is the 'problem'.

In addition Dee argues that some parents feel that children with the label of autism are more favourably treated than their own child:

or they're getting away with things more than their child, or they're getting rewards for things that their child's isn't.' (Dee)

Her comments seem to indicate an element of confusion and almost suspicion on the part of parents, where a lack of equity is perceived in the way that children are treated in class.

Playground chat

Some parents in the wider school community may perceive there to be something problematic about the child and the child's behaviour which affects the whole class. So the child is situated as the 'problem' by these parents.

'Playground chat (by other parents) can be quite a barrier can't it? Because if we've got a child in reception who was in, like we had a two-a-year intake, he was in the first intake, and we've had parents whose child or children were coming in in the January starters, who have specifically said, "I don't want my child in a

class with him”, we’ve had at least four this time, that have said this.’(Pat)

Here Pat comments on how parents can develop negative attitudes to a child through ‘playground chat’ and try to avoid having their child placed in the same class as a child with the label of autism, again reflecting the argument by Goodley (2011) that such children can be discriminated against by the wider parental community.

The impact of stigma spills over from the child to affect the whole family:

‘We’ve got parents at school who find the playground frightening ... because it’s, “Ooh, your son’s being doing this...” you know? She finds that it’s easier for her to turn up late to pick him up. That’s how she resolves it.’

Here the parent (of a child with the label of autism) felt excluded and judged by other parents in the playground. For this parent the impact of the ‘playground chat’ resulted in her finding the playground ‘*frightening*’, and she avoided being in the playground. This comment reflects the process of stigma attaching to the family (Green 2003). As some of the families describe in Batten et al. (2006), accessing a local mainstream school can result in a family feeling socially excluded and discriminated against by other families.

This chapter explored the experience of the family of the child with the label of autism. For these teachers the development of an effective partnership with families can be problematic, with tensions rising from lack of time for professionals to work with families, as well as parental attitude to school. They

reflect on the impact of the wider community on the process of inclusion for the school and for the family of the child with the label of autism.

The dilemma of labelling' a child emerged for these teachers as being significant for some families, with the label acting as a gateway or signpost to resources, as well as a source of discrimination and exclusion. There is a tension for school, the family and the child, of this process of labelling, which plays out in several different arenas. The family may not accept or agree with a professional assessment which involves a label. In this instance the family refusal to accept the label is framed as the 'problem' by the teachers in this study. For the teachers, the process of diagnostic labelling, which from their perspective can lead to statementing and access to resourcing, can act to enable the child and the process of inclusion. For the family, the process of labelling can be to stigmatise the child and perhaps also the family, in addition to enabling access to resources.

The teachers also reflect on the potentially discriminatory impact that a label of autism can lead to, with adult expectations being negatively affected by this label. The child with the label of autism can be discriminated against by parents of other children because of the 'label' attached to him or her, or through negative perceptions of their behaviour and impact on learning for others in class. The child with the label of autism was sometimes located as a 'problem' by the families of other children in the class and could be perceived by these families as causing a reduction in 'standards' of learning within a class. This can create pressures on the school as well as the family, who experience negative feedback from other families when they meet at school. In this way, pressures

were identified which can lead to the family, as well as the child, feeling socially excluded.

In addition the complex relationship between the family and the school in negotiating a successful education for the child emerged as, at times, problematic for both the family and for the school. The positive aspects of parent-professional partnerships are not overtly commented on by the teachers in this study. There is though reflection on how this partnership could be improved and could work more effectively, which I interpret as meaning that for these teachers partnership working with parents is not viewed as inherently problematic, but that circumstances in many primary mainstream schools can result in it being experienced as problematic.

In the final data chapter, Chapter Eight, I will present the ways that the teachers in this study identified factors which act to enable the process of inclusion.

This chapter, which is the final data chapter, explores those aspects of practice that the teachers in the study identified in particular as enabling the process of inclusion. Throughout each of the preceding data chapters other factors are revealed, in the teacher's written logs and discussions, which act to enable inclusive education. In Chapter Four, for example, they reflect on the impact of adults in schools having a positive attitude to inclusion. I will not re-present these features here but will return to consider them in the final chapter of this thesis, Chapter Nine.

In this chapter the teachers in the study identify approaches which will enable education professionals to facilitate a child's learning through developing their own knowledge and understanding, not only of the individual child, but of more inclusive pedagogical approaches. They suggest possible changes to the curriculum, as well as adaptations to levels of resourcing and staffing, which they believe will enable and facilitate more effective practice. There are, in addition, suggestions for ways in which to improve the relationship and collaboration between families and schools.

Facilitating the child

In the literature a teacher's level of knowledge and understanding of the child's learning style is identified in many studies as having a significant impact on educational change and the possibility of successful inclusion (Hargreaves 2002; Hehir 2002; Terzi 2005; Rieser 2011). Where a teacher is enabled to enact policy change, for example to have wider knowledge and understanding of diverse pedagogies, then they will be more able to act as agents of change (Timperely and Parr 2005).

An instance of this is revealed by Pat when she comments that:

7 had a child last year and at the beginning of the year he wouldn't write, and we actually managed to get round it by linking the writing to what he was interested in and by the end of the year his fixation was writing!' (Pat)

She describes how she incorporated a child's 'special interest' into her lesson in order to motivate him to engage with learning. In this instance Pat used her knowledge of the individual child, as well as her knowledge of the learning style associated with the label of autism to implement appropriate teaching strategies. Without this level of knowledge and understanding, both of the individual child and of inclusive pedagogical approaches, Pat might not have been able to successfully modify her teaching. As Terzi (2005) argues, knowledge of the way the child learns enabled Pat to implement this successful strategy.

Changing the curriculum

The problematic national curriculum (Wedell 2005; Osberg and Biesta 2010), which has emerged in previous chapters as a barrier to inclusion, again emerges in this chapter as having a critical impact on the success of inclusive practice.

In the following quotation, taken from a group discussion, the teachers argue that the national curriculum content and method and rate of delivery, is too inflexible to be inclusive:

'Need to look at ways of enabling staff to teach a more creative curriculum, more child initiated/child centred.'

These teachers would like to be able to deliver a *'more creative curriculum'*. The comment *'more child-initiated, more child-centred'* reveals the importance these teachers place on working *with* the child to facilitate learning, rather than trying to mould the child into a learning situation which is ill-conceived for that child, illustrating Biklen's argument (2000) about the impact of a normalising curriculum.

Levels, sub-levels and league tables

For these teachers it is important that parents have an understanding of the development of their child's learning, as indeed do the children themselves, but without the breakdown to complex sub-levels and without the 'league tables' which currently exist in the curriculum assessments:

'Broad brushstrokes which were measurable for parents without the breakdown into levels and sub-levels and league tables.' (Liz)
(Appendix 3f)

For these teachers an inclusive curriculum would enable parents and children to understand the pattern of a child's learning, but without recourse to what they consider to be rigid curriculum levels and sub-levels.

They comment as well on how the overly complex use of curriculum levels and sub-levels in the curriculum can limit and restrict the curriculum, making it less flexible and inclusive:

'also if the curriculum was not so rigid in the breakdown of levels...So that you don't have to be a Level 1 C ... If actually there were goals we were aiming at with all our children, that were

like, by the time children are seven, the majority should be independent readers...'

For these teachers, changing the curriculum and associated assessment processes, to be more flexible, more creative and more responsive to the learning style of all children would enable more inclusive practice, reflecting the arguments put forward by Osberg and Biesta (2010) and Rieser (2011).

Managing practice

As these teachers wrote in their weekly logs, they revealed a level of reflection on their own practice, illustrating the reflexive voice that Dadds (2005), Nind (2005) and Sikes, Lawson and Parker (2007) describe as being essential in educational research.

Dee, in an individual log (Appendix 3a) reflects on how she should be adapting her teaching within class:

'Need to remember at all times to give short, concise instructions as the speed at which we talk is often hard for autistic children to follow. They will often need instructions repeating ...I find this difficult in my classroom sometimes ... without support, it can be hard to manage.' (Dee)

She argues that a lack of adult support within class inhibits her ability to adapt and develop her teaching approach. Dee is aware of the challenges of managing differentiation and knows what she wants to achieve, but sometimes is not enabled to do this. She argues that if she had additional adult support in the classroom she would be able to better differentiate her teaching approach.

Dee continues by reflecting on the learning style of a child with the label of autism in her class:

'He also finds organising his belongings very difficult and often can't find his pencil/pen etc. I tried to pre-empt this problem by creating a zip wallet with everything he would need for the lessons. The problem is he forgets to put things back into the zip wallet so by the time the next day comes, things are lost again! I need to remember to praise him for putting things away correctly.'

(Dee)

Here she comments on the need to remind herself to re-adjust her expectations and pre-conceptions of learning, and so to break down the process of self-organisation for the child into small stages which each need to be learnt, mastered and valued. She engages in a process of reflection on her practice and on-going development through this commentary, and comes to a resolution where she realises that *'I need to remember to praise him for putting things away correctly'*. For Dee the problem is located here in her own practice and not the child. The responsibility for learning is situated within the teacher with an expectation that her practice is what needs to change to enable learning. The process of reflection has enabled Dee to implement changes to her practice which have expanded the accessibility of her classroom for the child she is working with. This process of change through reflection is an example of what Nind (2005 citing O'Hanlon 2003) describes when she comments on the classroom being the main site for the application and development of a teacher's beliefs and values through reflection on practice. This perhaps reveals what O'Hanlon (2003, p114) argues, when she reflects that 'professional change is the basis of any systematic or structural change related to inclusive practice in schools and educational contexts'. Here Dee is able to promote

change in her own classroom but perhaps also in her school through discussion with colleagues, as well as further afield through the kind of professional development opportunities that the module employed for this research study involves.

Communicating well

Effective communication emerged as being significant for these teachers in enabling the process of inclusion. This applies to communication between members of staff within school, as well as to communication between home and school, and with other professions such as speech and language therapists, psychologists or school nurses. Such a network of communication reflects Rieser's argument (2006) for a constellation of services in place to support inclusive school practice.

'Where inclusion is at its best there are extremely effective communication systems in place. If all the professionals who are working, or will be working with the child are aware of the particular needs, flashpoints, behaviours and any strategies/interventions that have been successful, the continuity of provision will be at its best... Communication between school, outside agencies and parents forge partnerships and ensure that all work towards meeting the same goals.' (Pat) (Appendix 3d)

Pat values communication between education professionals based within school, and also with parents and with external professionals, as part of successful inclusive practice. In her view such communication within school enables school professionals to share and transfer their knowledge and understanding within each class team and between classrooms. This level of

good communication ensures that *'the continuity of provision will be at its best* for the child. She extends this notion of *'extremely effective communication systems'* to being between school and outside agencies as well as between school and the families of the children, but provides no detail of what such systems might be. Perhaps this is an example of the features of effective parent partnership working described by Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2008).

Dedicated and very well-trained

The resourcing of practice has been the focus of reflection and discussion in previous data chapters and here the focus for Pat is on how additional funding would enable more staff to be employed within each classroom:

A major enabler for effective inclusion is funding. A limitless budget would enable schools to employ as many highly-qualified motivated staff as they needed... staff would need to be flexible, dedicated and very well trained.' (Pat)

She argues that with a *'limitless budget'* the school would be able to employ members of staff who are highly qualified, motivated, trained, flexible and dedicated. The fact that Pat has identified spending on staff with such admirable professional profiles would imply, perhaps, that she considers the role and quality of the adults around the child as having a major impact on the process of inclusion. For Pat it is not just the number of adults in a classroom or school but the level of their knowledge and understanding that enables inclusive practice. This illustrates the arguments proposed by Nind (2005) and Hehir (2002) that the success of inclusive practice depends in large part on the familiarity of

education professionals with diverse learning styles and with diverse pedagogical approaches.

Wendy argues that there is a '*knowledge gap*' for many teachers even the most recently qualified, and that there is a need to *share* good practice:

'There is a need too for good practice to be shared and from my own experience there is a knowledge gap, even with recently trained colleagues, although there is some centrally controlled attempts to address this – for instance through the recently released Inclusion Development Programme.' (Wendy)

The use of 'share' indicates that for Wendy, part of developing professional knowledge is about learning with and from with other teachers as Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004) and Dadds (2005) have argued. She does reflect on the recent (at the time of the study) introduction of the Inclusion Development Programme for autism, perhaps with the hope this would have an impact on levels of knowledge and understanding for school professionals.

A degree of flexibility

The notion of 'flexibility' has emerged in previous data chapters for example in the context of curriculum, assessment practice and planning, but here it arises in the context of being able to manage and deploy a team of support assistants within school in order to be responsive to situations:

7 have to say, I'm somewhere in the middle (between special and mainstream with no flexibility) really because I've got a larger special needs team that work for me, I've got 8 staff, so I have got that certain amount of flexibility so my team does change a lot and moves about on a weekly basis really according to need, so their

timetables I think, if you'd ask them, have changed about 8 times since the beginning of September, (it was January at the time). So I've got that flexibility... I think it's because I've got such a large team....it's (the school pupil population) just short of 600.' (Pat)
(Appendix 3f)

Pat is a SENCo in a large mainstream setting and describes here how she has sufficient resources in terms of support staff in her department to be able to deploy the staff '*according to need*' around the school. Pat describes her situation as being '*somewhere in the middle*', that is to say between the higher resources of a special school and a mainstream which has no flexibility. There is almost an implication of 'economy of scale' here, where Pat attributes her inclusive capacity to the large size of the pupil population. For Pat, it is the '*amount of flexibility*' that she has, in her deployment of the support staff, that enables her to develop more effective inclusive practice.

Safeguarding the interests of all

An inclusive education system is one in which all children have equality of entitlement and access to an enabling and effective education (Armstrong 2011).

The notion of equality for all children emerged when Karen reflected that:

'With the best will in the world inclusion should safeguard the interests of all pupils. A child who is in the classroom but not involved, or a class of children coping by themselves while the adult focuses on one child is not true inclusion.' (Karen)

She argues that inclusion should '*safeguard the interests of all children*' and that all children should have equality of opportunity in a classroom. In her view all

children in a class must be equally enabled for practice to be inclusive. Lloyd (2008 citing Young 1990) argues that an education system which is inclusive is one in which all children have equality of access and opportunity, and where no one group of children is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged over another.

Karen identifies support within the class for the teacher, as well as the size of classes, as having an impact on inclusion:

'Support in the classroom and class size is always a vital issue ... With most teachers not having a full time support staff, and class sizes of 30 plus, full inclusion seems impossible.' (Karen)

For Karen *'full inclusion seems impossible'* unless there are changes to levels of staffing within class, as well as changes to the sizes of the classes.

'But with smaller classes and a flexible, trained support network, it should be possible to be more fluid within the classroom.' (Karen)

In addition Karen argues that this must be a *'flexible, trained support network'*, and that this, in conjunction with smaller classes, would allow for greater fluidity in the classroom. Here, the support staff in a classroom are well-trained professionals who are able, with the teacher, to work flexibly and perhaps more responsively.

For Karen better funding would enable smaller class sizes, more educational professionals in a classroom and better resources:

'Unfortunately a lot of this comes down to funding, smaller classes, more support, more training, properly resourced classrooms are all reliant on bigger budgets. Maybe that is the underlying factor that would enable inclusion.' (Karen)

Karen articulates what she believes should be changed in schools to better enable inclusion and her belief is that increased funding would enable the changes to be implemented.

Sharing practice

Wendy has previously commented on the importance for her of sharing knowledge and understanding with other teachers in order to develop professional practice. This sharing of knowledge is also important in the context of the individual child, where knowledge about the child's learning style and approaches which enable learning can be passed on from one teacher to the next at the point of transition between classes:

'My school are very good at transition between classes... This is valuable time, as you can find out what the needs of the children are and more importantly, strategies that work!' (Dee)

For Dee, managing the transition of children between classes, is an important aspect of inclusive practice, where knowledge about the child's learning and appropriate teaching approaches can be passed onto the new class team.

'Consistency is important for autistic children so surely, if strategies are working, then it is better for children and staff to continue.' (Dee)

For Dee this process of transition is built on knowledge and understanding of the child and their learning style (Hehir 2002), and is a process which enhances inclusive education.

We are always given a staff meeting or part of a training day to pass on information to the next teacher.' (Dee)

In Dee's school, this time of transition, and time for staff to share their knowledge, is enabled through allocation of non-contact time, highlighting the value of the process to the school.

Here the culture of the school acts to promote inclusion and to enable teachers to think and work more inclusively as Broderick et al. (2011) describe. This practice could also reflect what Fullan (2006) argues for when he describes features of sustainable change. The culture of the school enables teachers to enact changes to practice, but the success of the change process will depend on the attitude of the teachers to the change as Hargreaves (2002) argues. It is very possible that the change promoted by one teacher may be resisted by another within the same school and this is a key tension within education.

Working in partnership

In the previous chapter the importance of having enough time to develop effective partnership with families was identified as an issue affecting inclusive practice. In the following quotation from an individual log (Appendix 3c) the personal nature of that relationship is highlighted by Karen:

A sensitive approach to dealing with parents and a partnership between schools and parents is another vital aid to inclusion.'
(Karen)

Karen argues for the importance of good partnership between the family and the school.

For Karen this relationship is of importance for parents and for the school:

'Parents need to feel confident in the school's ability to provide for their child and school staff need to feel that parents will support their work.' (Karen)

There are many accounts by parents where they feel that their child is in a school under 'duress' and where parents feel that they receive only negative feedback at the end of the day (Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2008). Whilst Karen does reflect on the need for the school staff to feel that *'parents will support their work'*, this does not include consideration of the fact that the family may in fact add to the school's knowledge and understanding of a child.

Wendy reflects on the importance of working as a team with the family:

'It (effective inclusion) cannot be done in isolation – how can it be effective unless parents, other professionals and people working with the child and the child themselves are involved? Removing barriers has a lot to do with team working and communicating with others.' (Wendy)

She argues that teachers may be able to identify and remove some of the barriers to successful inclusion, through valuing and nurturing the partnership with families. Wendy also emphasises the importance of the child being involved in this partnership, revealing that she places value on the child's perspective and voice in the process of education. When she comments that *'Removing barriers has a lot to do with team working and communicating with others'*, Wendy argues that the process of developing inclusive education is not just the province of the teacher but of all those around the child and the child themselves (Rieser 2006).

This chapter has examined what the teachers in the study identify as aspects of practice which can enable the process of inclusion. The level of funding emerged as affecting other aspects of practice such as levels of staffing, class sizes, and allocation of time for preparation.

The level of knowledge and understanding of diverse pedagogical approaches and having sufficient levels of well trained staff, who could work flexibly and responsively, were both identified as key issues which would enable inclusive practice. In addition a reduction in the size of classes and changes to the curriculum and the complexity of assessment against levels and sub-levels of the curriculum were revealed by these teachers as potentially enabling the development of inclusive practice. The concepts of sharing knowledge about practice, partnership working with families and with other professionals, and flexible practice are prominent throughout this chapter. The quality of the relationship between school and the family was perceived to be important in enabling effective inclusive practice.

The process of reflection on practice is evident, especially where a teacher makes particular comment on the impact of the process of reflection in the context of developing his or her own practice. For these teachers there are some very clear changes that could be made to the education system which would enable better, more effective and more inclusive practice.

In the final chapter, Chapter Nine I will discuss the findings from the analysis of the data in the context of current theory relating to educational inclusion, and identify the implications of the outcomes of this study for future research and practice. The chapter will include a reflection on the methodological approach to

enquiry and will conclude with a personal reflection on the impact of undertaking this study.

Chapter Nine

Perspectives on Inclusion, Implications for Practice and Research, and Personal Reflection

In Part One of this dissertation I presented the aims and rationale of the study. I provided a professional, as well as a theoretical context, for the enquiry and clarified the research questions that I would try to answer. I identified two key models of disability that impact on the context of educational inclusion, the individual and the social models of disability. A key focus for the enquiry was to examine whether and how the teachers in this study engage with the social model of disability. I reviewed the literature relating to the process of educational inclusion with a particular focus on how it impacts on the lives of children with the label of autism (Hodge 2005; Batten et al. 2006; Jordan 2008; Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2008).

The competing agendas of performativity and inclusion are identified in the literature as a key tension for schools in England today. Performativity, with the associated limited and inflexible national curriculum, assessment processes and setting of school-based targets, is predicated on the process of normalisation, which in turn inhibits the development of inclusive practice.

The notion of the unchanging 'mainstream' school emerges from the literature as a limiting principle in attempts to conceptualise the inclusive school. The possibility that there may be some limit to inclusion was investigated, with the implication that some children may be identified as being beyond the 'scope' of educational inclusion. This relates in turn to the discourse of therapy as compared to education, and the debate as to whether some children are 'in need of therapy' as opposed to education alone is examined.

I reviewed the literature relating to educational research which focuses on the perspectives of teachers and the recognition for some researchers that teacher attitude and action can have a significant impact on the process of educational

change. I hope I have demonstrated how this body of research has led me to the development of my methodological approach, which is interpretive and phenomenological.

In Part Two of the dissertation, in Chapters Four to Eight I have presented the voices of the teachers in this study, as accessed through their weekly discussions as a group, as well as through their weekly individual written logs. I provided in these chapters an 'interpretation' of the perspectives of the teachers undertaken by me as the researcher and in the context of my understanding of existing debates outlined in Chapters One and Two.

In this final chapter I draw together what for me are the key findings of this study that can inform current knowledge of the area and make a contribution to the development of practice. I examine how these might illuminate more effective understanding of teachers and their practice in response to a changing policy environment. In particular, I explore the impact of the social and the individual models of disability in this context, and the impact of the agenda of performativity on the process of inclusion.

I reflect on the methodology employed in this study and consider how this might develop in future research, and as this is a professional doctorate, I also evaluate what contribution this study might make to professional practice for those working in the area of teacher professional development.

In conclusion I provide a personal reflection in which I examine the impact of undertaking this research for my own professional and personal development, and relate this back to the original personal context statement at the beginning of the dissertation.

Perspectives on Inclusion

In this chapter I identify how the findings of this study might contribute to knowledge and the development of professional practice. In this part of the chapter, **Perspectives on Inclusion**, I offer a synthesis of the perspectives of the teachers as they talked and wrote about their practice, and through reflection on these perspectives in the context of current theory I identify the implications of the findings for practice.

Through reflection on their **Professional identity and practice**, these teachers revealed that, for them, a teacher's professional identity and attitude to practice has a significant impact on the process of inclusion. This includes consideration of the impact of professional development on a teacher's capacity to work more effectively with a diverse student group. In particular, these teachers reflected on their level of knowledge and understanding of the impact on learning of the intellectual style associated with the label autism.

The possibility that for these teachers, there may be some limits to inclusion emerged from the data, and this debate is explored within the concept of the 'unchanging mainstream' school, in the section **Conceptualising inclusion**. In this section I also examine 'possible limits of imagination' and consider how teachers and educational researchers working together could co-construct new possibilities for imagining inclusion.

In the two sections on **Competing policy agendas** and the **Impact of the social and individual models of disability** I consider the impact of the performativity agenda and the two models of disability on a teacher's professional identity and practice and on her or his ability to conceptualise

inclusive practice. Throughout the chapter I identify the contributions to knowledge in the area of educational inclusion that emerge from this study.

I conclude this part of the chapter with a reflection on the *Process of enquiry*, and in particular on working to enable the voices of a group of teachers through the process of reflection on practice.

Professional identity and practice

Professional development

For these teachers the level of knowledge and understanding of the learning and social style associated with the label of autism was important in enabling effective teaching approaches in their classrooms. This resonates with Hehir (2002) who argues for teachers to have knowledge about a diversity of learning styles and supports the findings of research by the NFER (2011 cited Ambitious About Autism 2013). In this study 54% of teachers in England who responded to the survey commented that they lack professional development opportunities to enable them to understand the learning style associated with the label of autism.

Hargreaves (2002) argues that one reason for the lack of sustainability in educational change is that there are limited opportunities for adequate professional development for teachers which focus on practice. The module which I used within this research study was constructed as a vehicle for teachers to engage in professional learning, through reflection with others on their practice. This process can be seen in action when Dee reveals that her involvement with the module had changed her ability to think about and understand the behaviour of a child in her class (p119 in Chapter 5).

The teachers in this study considered that professional development opportunities are key in the development of this knowledge and understanding, but that such opportunities are not currently sufficiently available. They valued learning from experienced colleagues with different professional knowledge resonating with Timperely and Parr (2005) who argue that communities of teachers working together can create fora in which knowledge and understanding can develop. Special school knowledge was privileged, however, and the teachers in the study cited special school colleagues as having that knowledge and understanding of the learning style associated with the label of autism. Nind (2005) argues that the more experience teachers have of working with diverse learning styles the more positive their attitudes to inclusive education might be. The teachers in this study argued that teachers in mainstream schools may be able to learn about accessible teaching approaches from their special school colleagues. Whilst this might resonate with the perspectives of some researchers as the problematic notion of 'special school expertism' (Troyna and Vincent 1996 cited McDonnell 2003, p262; Broderick et al. 2011), it can also be interpreted as an understanding that the experiences of working in a special school could enable a teacher to develop some different understanding of pedagogies than a mainstream colleague, as Nind (2005) argues. So, for these teachers, the opportunity to learn with and from colleagues in the special school sector could provide useful professional development opportunities.

One reason, identified by these teachers, for the relative lack of effective professional development was that schools sometimes had to choose between funding development opportunities on inclusion or funding other priorities within

school. This reflects findings by MacBeath et al. (2006) which highlighted the same limitations in the education system. If this is the case, then schools and the teachers within them are not prepared for inclusive practice until they find themselves faced with a 'problem' in the form of a child whose learning style they do not understand.

Professional identity, professional attitude

The teachers in this study argued that some colleagues do not perceive 'inclusion' to be part of their professional role, and that they have nothing left to learn. Such teachers, it could be argued, have established their identity as educators of the 'normal' child. For the teachers in the study, the level of staff knowledge and understanding, combined with a positive attitude to working inclusively, has a significant impact on how inclusive a teacher can be. Kelchtermans (2005) argues that in the context of educational change it is important that the emotional response of teachers to their work is recognised and understood, in order for educational change to be implemented effectively. The emotional component of a teacher's identity needs to be an essential and valued element of that identity, equally valued by teachers and by the initiators of educational change (Timperely and Parr 2005).

For the teachers in this study, teacher attitude can act to facilitate a child, as well as to have the opposite impact. The success of professional development is felt by some researchers to be dependent on the personal attitude of teachers (Nias 1996; Sikes, Lawson and Parker 2007). Some teachers may be resisting educational change because they feel it has been 'imposed insensitively and

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seemingly incoherently from above' as Hargreaves (1996, p12) argues. As a result, teachers may not develop a professional identity which allows them to perceive of themselves working inclusively with classes of children who have diverse learning styles and abilities. Rather, their professional identities may be located firmly within the notion of 'mainstream teacher' as the teacher whose only purpose, or 'meaning' (Howard 2000), is to achieve good SATs results. For such teachers the idea of inclusive practice can be seen as a threat to that identity, resulting in resistance to such change in practice.

Teachers, as members of a diverse society, each develop their own personal and professional value systems. Their perspectives on issues such as disablement, inclusion and exclusion are shaped by their own experiences. As Hart (2004, citing Quine) argues, some deeply held beliefs and attitudes are very resistant to change. As Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004) state, it is these deeply held beliefs that teacher educators and education policy makers should be interested in for the successful implementation of educational change. This could suggest that many teachers, those whose deeply held beliefs run contrary to an inclusive education system, may be very resistant to change which promotes inclusive practice.

This has implications for the introduction of educational change and also for the introduction of issues relating to disablement and inclusion as part of the curriculum in schools. Sikes, Lawson and Parker (2007, p358) argue that the perspectives of teachers who are charged with implementing inclusive practice are 'of paramount significance in that they shape the 'inclusion experience' of the community in which they work'. This resonates with O'Hanlon's claim that every teacher is responsible for affecting inclusive practice. Rieser (2011) has

argued that part of the development of inclusive education is to include wider learning opportunities about disablement and inclusion in the school curriculum, as well as in wider society. Learning about the processes that shape an inclusive society should, then, begin in school and be a central part of practice and pedagogy, through the socially just pedagogies argued for by Deleuze and Guattari (1987/2004 cited Sikes, Lawson and Parker 2007). This resonates with the call by Broderick et al. (2011, p838) for the inclusion in initial teacher training courses of the theory which underpins the 'historical, sociocultural and ideological contexts that create discriminatory and oppressive practices in education'. Whilst schools continue to be evaluated through emphasis on performance on assessment based league tables, then perhaps teachers will feel some confusion about how 'inclusive' their practice is meant to be. As Broderick et al. (2011) argue a teacher's actions are limited by the bureaucratic structures of the school in which they work.

Emotional experience

Nias (1996, p294) reflects that the emotional experience of teachers affects their professional identity and their attitude to their work.

The teachers in this study recognised the possible impact a child's behaviour may have on a teacher's feeling of success or otherwise, for example when Liz comments on a child whose behaviour is interpreted as challenging by the teacher:

. whereas J's feedback to staff is something not so nice about themselves, so then you get that whole thing of what it says back to you about how you function in a role

Nind (2005, p273) argues that teachers have a critical role as 'change agents - as enactors of inclusive policy', and cites O'Hanlon (2003) as arguing that 'there is no professional change without personal change'. Nind asserts that in order for inclusive practice to develop effectively, teachers will need to be fully supportive of it and embrace an identity of agent of change. As Hargreaves (2002, p189) argues, educational change is experienced by some teachers as a 'serial killer', with repeated change initiatives implemented only to lack sustainability and then to fail. In the view of the teachers in this study, teachers should be enabled and encouraged to develop a strong and positive attitude to working inclusively, as without this, inclusive reforms will fail. As Nind (2005) comments, teachers are the enactors of policy

Professional change is the basis for any change to the education system (O'Hanlon 2003). Timperely and Parr (2005) argue that teachers, as implementers of educational change, cannot sustain change initiatives imposed by the government without being willing, and enabled, to engage with the theoretical underpinnings of such change in order to be able to invest emotionally in the change. In the context of inclusive policy, for the teachers in this study, this wholehearted support for inclusion is not in place in schools and they considered that many teachers feel neither suitably skilled for, nor inclined towards, inclusion as a part of their professional role. This finding is significant for those promoting inclusive practice in schools today.

Changing the curriculum

The English national curriculum, and the associated assessment and planning regimes, were identified by the teachers in this study as forming a significant barrier to inclusive practice. The curriculum was criticised by the teachers in the study as being limited, inflexible and inappropriate for a diverse pupil group. The national curriculum has long been criticised in the literature as not being supportive of inclusion (Biklen 2000; Wedell 2005; Osberg and Biesta 2010) and is framed as being too limited and restricted in its capacity to support the learning styles of a diverse student population, including children with the label of autism. The coalition government is currently in the process of undertaking curriculum reform, but already the proposals for this reform are being criticised for lack of vision and for leading to an even more restricted and limited curriculum model (Pollard 2012 cited Vassager 2012). For the teachers in this study it was important to have a curriculum which allowed teachers to respond to the child and to their interests and learning style, rather than to have to adopt a curriculum and planning regime which assumed an homogeneity of children's learning and which posed barriers for many children.

If the curriculum is changed in the ways that these teachers have argued, then this could be a significant contributor to the development of more inclusive educational practice, bringing with it changes to assessment and to planning.

Peters, Johnstone and Ferguson (2005, p142) cite Lynch (2001) who argues that:

... inclusive educational philosophy is based on the right of all individuals to a quality education with equal opportunity...one that develops their potential and respects their human dignity.

Curriculum changes based on such a philosophy will act to empower children, and are based on the concept of a broader more inclusive, more enabling pedagogy. As Biklen (2000) argues, it is important that schools create and find contexts for disabled children to experience competence, and this will include curricular changes.

Flexible practice

These teachers conceptualised the inclusive teacher, to whom they attributed flexibility of approach as an essential characteristic. They argued that teachers should be enabled and encouraged by the surrounding education system, to adapt and develop this flexible approach, so that they are better able to respond to the learning styles of the children with whom they work. This flexibility will depend in part on there being some flexibility in the curriculum and associated planning and assessment processes, which in turn will affect the way that the performance of schools can be compared and evaluated externally. The current system of performativity does not enable inclusive practice (Slee 2001; Lloyd 2008; Rix 2011), and these teachers recognise this tension as it impacts on their practice. Their focus on changes to the flexibility of the curriculum and of how they are able to work responsively *with* children in their class reflects this argument.

The notion of inflexibility was carried into other areas of practice as well and included the current approach to mainstream class sizes of 30 children, an aspect of practice identified by these teachers, as a barrier to inclusion (Wedell

2005). In the view of these teachers, there should be flexibility in class sizes in order to better enable inclusive practice within a school.

The dilemma of labelling

There was a tension at play for these teachers between the notion of the label (of autism) as 'signpost' to teaching approach or 'gateway' to resources, and the label which stigmatises (Armstrong 2002). This is an inherent part of the education system in England, whereby a child is labelled as 'autistic' or as having SEN, and so can then access additional funding for a support teaching assistant, or speech and language therapy, or a place in a special school. Without this label the family, the child and the school may struggle to gain access to resources to enable the child to learn effectively. So for these teachers, in their practice, successful inclusion relies on the labelling of a child's special educational need or autism, so that resources can be accessed. Families are often faced with the dilemma of having to seek a label in order to be able to access resources to support their child's education, despite their desire not to 'label' their child in any way (Hodge 2005). In this way, the child becomes 'the problem' (Titchkosky 2011) who, once assessed and labelled, can then have resources allocated in order for a school placement to be accessed. Goodley (2011) cites Slee (1996, p108) when he argues that the use of diagnostic labels permits educators to 'resist applying diagnostic probes to their own teaching, the curriculum they use and the organisation of the schools in which they work'. Terzi (2005), in contemplating the 'dilemma of difference', argues that it is important that the impact of impairment on learning is understood in order for inclusive practice to develop, but she does not argue

that access to resources should be dependent on a 'label'. As Stubbs (1997 cited Peters, Johnstone and Ferguson 2005, p144) comments, no-one would argue that a non-disabled child's right to life and development should be 'subject to available resources' (Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990, Article 23) which are based on access to a diagnostic label.

For the teachers in this study, there is a tension in their practice between the two models of disability and currently, the process of accessing an enabling education for a child with the label of autism is dependent on the impact of both models.

Labels and expectations

The teachers in this study argued that sometimes education professionals develop negative views of a child, for example by hearing of their 'reputation' from other staff in school, or by being negatively influenced in their expectations by the 'label' of autism attached to the child (Armstrong 2002). For these teachers such 'tainted views' had an impact on how members of staff might respond to a child, and on the process of inclusion.

The attitude of a child's peer group, and that of their families, could be problematic for these teachers. They reflected on how some families would try to avoid their child being placed in the same class as a child with the label of autism. Some families expressed the view that the child with the label of autism might lower the levels of attainment in a class (Goodley 2011). For these teachers, the attitude of such families could affect inclusion for the child with the label of autism by creating a negative attitude towards the child. Here the

culture of the community and the expectations of the wider community were at odds with the culture of the school. This exclusion could extend as well to the family of the child with the label of autism. Some parents felt excluded or stigmatised by the wider community of families, a process described by Green (2003). For the school, in this situation, there is a complexity of tensions and pressures at play. This raises a question over how far the wider community understands the move towards an inclusive school system and the social processes of exclusion and inclusion, of disability awareness. Rieser (2011) includes community awareness campaigns to raise public knowledge about inclusive education, when he lists recommendations for the development of inclusive schools, and the perspectives of the teachers in this study, with regard to understanding in the wider community, support his argument.

Resourcing

Perhaps predictably the teachers identified levels of resourcing in schools as problematic on many occasions, and always in the context of being enabled to develop and extend their practice. They identified factors such as having smaller classes, higher levels of staffing, additional curriculum resources, appropriate levels of professional development opportunities and time to work effectively in partnership with parents, each other and the wider community of professionals. For these teachers resourcing, or rather lack of it, was a significant tension and could act as a barrier to developing practice. Resourcing can only have a positive impact if it is paralleled by fundamental changes to the way that the education system is structured and evaluated. Such changes are those which were highlighted by the teachers in this study for example

pedagogy based on a more flexible, responsive curriculum, delivered by well trained staff who are motivated to work inclusively and enabled to do so. These are the fundamental changes based on a 'socially just pedagogy' that Sikes, Lawson and Parker (2007, p358) argue for, the fundamental changes that Nind (2005) recommends.

Resourcing then is an inevitable tension, it can enable inclusion but it can also be ineffective if the fundamental barriers to inclusion remain in place. The social principles which underpin inclusive practice are those which promote social equity (Avramadis, Bayliss and Burden 2000), social justice (Terzi 2005), socially just pedagogies (Sikes, Lawson and Parker 2007) and the social model of inclusion (Tregaskis 2002). Peters, Johnstone and Ferguson (2005 citing Stubbs 1997) argue that it is a myth that disabled children are excluded primarily because of lack of resources, the main barriers to inclusion being attitudes and beliefs and inappropriate education systems. The teachers in this study, however, did not perceive the impact of resourcing to be a myth, and for them limitation of resources created a barrier to inclusive education.

Levels of resourcing can also impact on the time that teachers are able to allocate to particular activities within the working day, and one area that the teachers commented on in this respect was the ability to develop partnerships with the families of the children at school.

Too little time for partnership

The development of effective partnership with the families of children with the label of autism was considered by these teachers to be problematic at times,

reflecting the findings of existing research (Murray 2000; Hodge and Runswick-Cole 2008). They commented on the lack of time that teachers have in schools to enable effective partnership working and revealed that they value this partnership. The quality of the partnership with a family was identified by these teachers as having an impact on developing effective practice.

Another aspect of partnership working that emerged from the data was the opportunity to work in partnership with other professionals in the same class and school, professionals from beyond the school and the wider school community. The opportunity to learn with and from other teachers emerges as a significant factor for these teachers. The development of professional learning groups is identified in key research studies as being a factor which can have an enabling impact on the development of inclusive practice (Hargreaves 2002; Dadds 2005; Ainscow, Booth and Dyson 2006; Cochran-Smith and Dudley-Marling 2011). These professional development partnerships could include teachers from mainstream and special schools, professionals from other parts of the education system as well as academic partners from HEIs as Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) and Dadds (2005) argue. In this way teachers work in partnership with each other and with other professionals in an academic context to interrogate and develop their practice.

Barriers for families

At times these teachers seemed to frame the behaviour or attitude of some families as being a 'problem', notably when the families did not agree with or accept the school's assessment and labelling of their child. This resonates with

the findings of Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2008) when they argue there may be disagreement between the perspectives of a family and of the school on the 'need' to apply a label to the child. For these teachers, the label of autism enabled the school to access resources, whereas for the family, the label of autism might act to stigmatise their child as well as the family (Green 2003). Indeed, as revealed in the data, these teachers also believe that labels can stigmatise a child. Both the family and the teacher can find that they are caught in that dilemma of labelling created by the conflict between the social and the individual models of disability, and the current process of identifying a child as 'other' than the dominant majority in order to argue for resources.

The teachers in the study identified key features of their professional practice which impact on the process of inclusion. They argue for access to supportive professional development opportunities, which include opportunities to learn from other colleagues with classroom experience, in order to better understand the learning style associated with the label of autism, and to adopt accessible teaching approaches. They identified the importance of being able to work with a more flexible and responsive curriculum and associated planning and assessment processes which are not bound by performativity. Levels of resourcing are important for these teachers, when they identify changes to practice such as having smaller class sizes, higher levels of staffing and more time to develop aspects of practice such as partnership working. Crucially they comment on the need to address any exclusionary social attitudes and practices which affect schools, either through the attitudes of education professionals themselves, or through those of the wider school community of

families. As Wendy comments, *removing barriers is really part of everyday practice*'.

Conceptualising inclusion

Contrasting mainstream and special schools

As the teachers reflected on inclusive practice and how it might actually be enacted in school, they identified features of special schools which they considered to be more favourable for children with learning styles which differ from the 'dominant majority', including those with the label of autism. In the current segregated school system, it is inevitable that they should reflect on the attributes of both the mainstream and special school systems. At times, when they identified a feature of mainstream schools that they considered to be a barrier to inclusion, for example class sizes of 30, they then contrasted this with class sizes in special schools which are usually much smaller. In identifying class size as a factor affecting inclusive practice, they then highlighted the more favourable circumstances of special schools. There was not in itself an implication that they thought that the current segregated system should continue. On the contrary they commented on the almost 'incontrovertible truth' of arguments such as that by Leicester (1999) that there was nothing a special school provides that a mainstream school cannot. For these teachers though, there are features of the structure of special schools, in contrast to mainstream schools, that they considered to enable more accessible practice than the mainstream school can. This included reflection on class size, level of staff knowledge and understanding about learning style and teaching approaches, higher staffing levels which might then enable more flexible practice, and a

more 'relaxed approach' to the curriculum, which these teachers believe to be more flexible and child-centred in the special school.

The changes proposed by these teachers can only be implemented if there are fundamental changes to the ethos of the entire education system, as they will require a move away from a normalising curriculum (Goodley 2011), and from associated restricted processes of assessment (Benjamin 2002 cited Lloyd 2008), a change to class sizes (Wedell 2005), and expanded opportunities for all education professionals to undertake regular professional development (Rieser 2011).

Special teachers

For these teachers it seemed that professionals working in special schools are perhaps more empathetic than their mainstream colleagues. This notion almost of 'professional saintliness' is interesting, implying that teachers in special schools require more empathy to undertake their practice. Teachers in special schools were also perceived by these teachers to perhaps have wider knowledge and understanding of more diverse pedagogical approaches. McDonnell (2003, p262 citing Troyna and Vincent 1996) refers to the 'myth of special school expertism' but Nind (2005) and Hehir (2002) argue that teachers who have worked with children with diverse learning styles may acquire additional knowledge and understanding based on their differing professional experience.

For the teachers in this study, professional identity and professional attitude impact on the process of inclusion, and they perceive special school teachers to

have perhaps a different professional identity and attitude to the mainstream class teacher in some respects. The current segregation of many children labelled as having SEN or with the label of autism, has led to inclusion being seen almost as something that is in addition to 'normal teaching'. In mainstream schools there are 'special teachers' to take a lead in this respect, the SENCo, and special teaching assistants to support teachers and children in class. The services of support teachers and psychologists are available in local authorities, and schools are additionally encouraged to 'buy in' the services of independent consultants and those attached to voluntary sector specialist schools. Our current education system depends on the identification of difference labelled as 'need' for resourcing (Goodley 2011). It is, perhaps, no surprise therefore that these teachers identified teachers who work primarily with children labelled as having SEN as being somewhat 'special' themselves. In this area of practice the individual model of disability and the associated system of SEN identification and resourcing has a negative impact on the process of inclusion.

The unchanging mainstream

For these teachers the concept of the unchanging mainstream was difficult to lay to rest. This tension is explored by Slee (2001, p114) when he considers the complexity of attempting to define inclusion in the context of the existing school structures.

He argues that to attempt a definition in this context is problematic:

In other words, by accepting the existing constitution of schooling, inclusion is reduced to an ensemble of policies and resources to expedite what Bernstein (1996) may have dismissed as an orchestrated process of political 'absorption'.

Their conceptualisations of an inclusive school were almost constantly framed within the existing mainstream structure and tradition. So, features such as *additional* members of staff to *support* within the classroom, or *withdrawal* of a child from the classroom for learning, were reflected on as being ways to promote more inclusive practice, although it was acknowledged that these practices were in themselves not inclusive.

For these teachers the fully inclusive school, accessible to all children, was almost too complex a concept to imagine, and they found themselves challenged when trying to conceive of the school that was accessible and inclusive for all children. The following section, *Special children*, develops this theme further.

Special children

These teachers found the inclusive school most complex to imagine when they reflected on the inclusion of children with the label of autism and also with the label of intellectual impairment. The teachers could conceive of the inclusive school which was accessible for children with the label of autism, but not with the additional label of intellectual impairment. It was this label that was the greatest challenge, for them, to the notion of the inclusive school.

So for these teachers there were limits to inclusion, and these limits applied in this study to children with the label of autism and intellectual impairment. This argument is articulated by Hodkinson (2005) who argues that not all teachers believe that all children are capable of being included in mainstream education.

This resonates with Runswick-Cole (2011) who asserts that some children may be considered more challenging to include than others, notably those who have behaviour considered to be challenging or those with an intellectual impairment. The problem here is not the notion of inclusion, perhaps, but the presence of the 'unchanging mainstream'. It may be that within the limitations of the notion of an unchanging mainstream there are limits to 'imagined possibilities' as well. Broderick et al. (2011) argue that teachers are inhibited in how they are able to conceptualise changes to practice by the impact of the bureaucratic structures of the school system. Perhaps for these teachers, they are so immersed in the segregated school system and associated practices that they are unable to conceive of a 'social model of education' (Apple 1982 cited Goodley 2011, p151). To imagine new possibilities for inclusive education, perhaps teachers and academics need to work together to co-construct these new possibilities as Cochran-Smith and Dudley-Marling (2012) argue. It is only through being able to interrogate the theory behind educational change that teachers will be truly able to have an impact on educational change beyond the surface features of education (Timperely and Parr 2005).

Limits to education

The argument of there being 'limits to inclusion' is paralleled by an argument that could perhaps be termed '*limits to education*', where the teachers in the study reflected how, for some children, an approach which is 'therapeutic' might be more appropriate than an approach considered to be 'educational'. For these teachers then, there may also be 'limits to education' and some children might

be in need of therapy as opposed to education alone. Goodley (2011) argues that the notion that some children have developed in such a way as to 'need therapy' instead of education is a discriminatory concept, especially as this concept of a 'therapeutic approach' is typically applied to children who are labelled as having significant sensory, physical and intellectual impairments. This argument resonates with that of Titchkosky (2011) that some children are framed by education professionals as 'essentially excludable' from a classroom, a school or even from education. The notion of therapy as opposed to education brings with it a question over the role of the teacher in a 'therapeutic' setting. However it is also possible to consider that a school environment could in itself be a therapeutic environment (Mintz 2009). It could be argued that the notion of a therapeutic environment in itself is not the problem, but the notion that a mainstream school cannot be therapeutic.

Equity for all

Wendy argued that inclusion must work for all the children in a class. It should not be something that is 'done' to one group of children, those labelled as having SEN or autism (Slee 2001). Rather it is about the entire nature of the school system such that all children have an equality of opportunity to an enabling education. The teachers in this study recognised that for inclusion to be effective, a system of education should be developed so that all children had an equality of access, and that resources should be equitably shared. Inclusion for them was about participation and not just about presence alone. For these teachers inclusion is not all children in the same class learning the same thing

in the same way at the same time, but about equity of opportunity, resonating with the arguments of Peters, Johnstone and Ferguson (2005).

For these teachers, conceptualising a school that is inclusive and accessible to all children who attend it was challenging. They identified aspects of practice in both mainstream schools and special schools which could enable inclusive practice, but there were limits to their vision when they considered the inclusion of children with the label of autism and intellectual impairment. Notions of therapy, as opposed to education alone, emerged, and for these teachers some children fall beyond the realm of education and into the need for 'therapy', reflecting the individual model of disability.

In the following two sections, ***Competing policy agendas*** and ***Impact of the social and individual models of disability***, I examine the impact of the performative culture and of the two models of disability, on the processes identified by the teachers and summarised in the previous sections: ***Professional identity and practice*** and ***Conceptualising inclusion***.

Competing policy agendas

Throughout the data the tension between the performative agenda and the agenda of inclusion emerged, reflecting the concerns of educational researchers such as Ball (2003) and Rix (2011). The process of performativity results in pressure to achieve targets against SATs performance, practice which is critiqued by Lloyd (2008 citing Benjamin 2002) and which in turn leads to 'normalisation' in the education system. In this way the child who cannot meet

the limited assessment expectations of the national curriculum becomes the 'problem' and is provided with the label of 'SEN' or 'autistic' as an explanation for this failure (Titchkosky 2011). The teachers in this study articulated the tension in their practice of working within these two competing agendas; they identify the curriculum and processes of assessment and planning, of school evaluation, and of class organisation as problematic within the context of inclusive practice. When these teachers argue for a more flexible curriculum which allows them to be more responsive to individual children, and in which processes of assessment and planning are also more flexible, they reflect the inhibiting affect that performativity has, for them, on the development of inclusive practice.

The tension between the agendas of performativity and of inclusion may contribute to confusion within teacher identity, as I have argued. This in itself could be a source of stress for any teacher, no matter what kind of school they work within in the public sector. This confused identity may in turn affect teacher attitude to working with children with diverse learning styles. In the view of these teachers, there may be confusion about what the priority is for a class teacher in a primary school when they find themselves in the middle of these two competing agendas.

Ball (2003, p216), writing in the context of the impact of the performativity agenda on teachers' professional identities, comments that:

The ground of such struggles is often highly personal. Expressed in the lexicons of belief and commitment, service and even love, and of mental health and emotional well-being.

Ball reflects that the same applies to any reform of educational policy. He argues that education reform such as the development of inclusive educational

policy will also affect 'what it means to teach and what it means to be a teacher' (2003, p218). This is evidenced in this study when the teachers reveal that, in their view, there is some confusion for teachers as to their professional identity and what it means to be a teacher (Howard 2000).

The performative culture also exerts pressure on the process of inclusion through the wider community of families, as Goodley (2011) states, and this is supported by the perspectives of the teachers in the study. Atkinson (2004) has argued that the performative agenda acts to prevent teachers from acting innovatively, and so as possible agents of change, through inspection processes in which teachers are judged against limited sets of standards. Armstrong (2011) considers the educational policy landscape to be confusing and it could be argued that educational policy which relates to educational inclusion is ambiguous and will not enable real change to the current segregated system. She (2011, p7) cites Dyson and Gallannaugh (2007) when she asserts that there is a mismatch in the UK between 'the apparent intentions of one set of policies and what actually happens in practice'. The process of 'inclusion' continues to be compromised by the performative agenda of testing and league table comparisons, and these teachers identified this tension as they worked to make sense of their day-to-day practice within this confusing policy landscape.

Currently perhaps teachers are able to make changes, as Pat describes (p131 in Chapter Five) at the classroom level with the children with whom they work and at the school level, through processes of school policy and practice development, as well as within groups of their peers through professional development opportunities and professional networks. It could be argued that

the potential for teachers to act as agents of change more widely is limited by government policy through the performative agenda, which encourages conformity through processes of performance management. Changes at a level beyond this require teachers to act politically through their union or professional body, by offering a critique of government policy through the process of consultation on new policy proposals. The ground for this level of action needs to be prepared by teachers having access to the theoretical basis upon which educational policy is developed, and through being enabled to debate this theory in the context of reflection on their practice. This is where academics and teachers could work together as Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004) and Armstrong and Moore (2004) suggest. It is through a combination of teachers and their practice knowledge and academics and their access to wide knowledge bases that real contribution to debate about educational policy could be effected.

In the view of the teachers in this study inclusion will not be achieved within the current performative agenda, based as it is on the erroneous notion of a normative model of children's learning (Biklen 2000; Lloyd 2008). The changes that the teachers in this study identify, as being necessary to enable educational inclusion for children with the label of autism, reflect this argument.

As the Children and Families Bill (Great Britain, Parliament, 2013) is implemented there will be further changes to the way that children labelled as having SEN or as being disabled or as having the label of autism are educated. Feedback on the current pathfinder initiative for the part of the bill which relates to the area of SEND '*Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability: Progress and next steps*' (DfE 2011) indicates

that there are significant reservations about the bill and the implications it may have for the education of many children. Agencies such as Disability Rights UK (2013), Every Disabled Child Matters and the Special Educational Consortium (2013) have raised their concerns about the removal of the categories School Action and School Action Plus which they feel will endanger the support offered to many children who do not have a statement of SEN, but have been identified as having a style of learning which benefits from adjustments to the mainstream level of adult support or style of teaching. In addition there is concern about the possibility that if the bill is implemented as it currently stands, then under Clause 34(9) of the bill, a child could be placed in a special academy without a statutory assessment. Currently any child in this situation must be educated in mainstream school. In this way a child could be labelled as 'problematic' and removed to a special academy without due statutory process. These aspects of the new legislation are worrying as they do not offer an unconditional commitment to inclusive education, rather a commitment reflected in other aspects of the coalition government's education policy to further fragmentation of the education system (DfE 2010). In such a policy landscape the possibility of an inclusive education system appears to diminish as does the potential for teachers developing a more inclusive professional identity.

Impact of the social and individual models of disability

The teachers in the study also revealed, implicitly, that their thinking and their practice are influenced by both the individual and the social models of disability. This reflects the situation in wider society and, in the context of this study,

schools and families 'living with autism', where both models of disability affect practice for teachers and life for the family of the child with the label of autism.

Locating the 'problem'

At times, for these teachers, the child and his or her learning style was the locus of the 'problem' (Titchkosky 2011). At such times the child might not accept aspects of the curriculum, or might reject parts of a lesson, or find aspects of the school environment unsettling. The child without a label of autism with which to attract resources was also problematised, as were the parents who rejected the label of autism. In such circumstances the impact of the individual model of disability can be seen at work.

At other times for these teachers the education system was the problem, whether the inflexible curriculum, the pressure on teachers of the performativity agenda and league tables of test result performance, or large class sizes and low levels of staffing. Here the barriers to access are located beyond the child; they are located within the system, reflecting the social model of disability. In the view of these teachers, there must be fundamental changes to the education system in order for inclusive practice to develop. As they articulate such changes, they are constructing what Goodley (2011, p151 citing Apple 1982) refers to as a 'social model of education', and Sikes, Lawson and Parker (2007) as socially just pedagogies.

The influence of the social model of disability

These teachers work within an education system which is imbued with the rhetoric of the social model of disability, where they are asked to identify and remove barriers to inclusion and to celebrate diversity. They were not, though, when they first engaged with the research study, familiar with the notion of either the social or the individual models of disability, only with *experiencing* the impact these two models had on policy and on practice.

They refer to barriers to access and describe ways of removing these barriers, and they comment on the fairness of the social model theory and of the drive towards a system of education which offers equity to all children. In agreement with the social model these teachers frequently identified the 'problem' as the system of education: the curriculum, the class sizes, the lack of effective and timely professional development, the attitude of some teachers towards their work and towards children who do not conform to the stereotypical 'norm'. In this study these teachers were able to identify these barriers and offer ways to overcome at least some of them.

I do not interpret the fact that these teachers seek wider professional development to understand how to work effectively with diverse learning styles as evidence of framing the child as the 'problem'. Rather, as Hehir (2002) argues, teachers need to be able to learn to understand how children might learn in different ways, and as Shakespeare (2006) argues it is important that teachers recognise the possible impact of impairment on the individual in order that they may better develop inclusive pedagogies. Many teachers have had limited access to this kind of learning and limited experience in the classroom of this as well. Nind (2005) argues that experience of working with diverse learning

styles and levels of ability brings with it a more positive attitude towards inclusive practice and also presumably greater confidence for those teachers.

The negative and stigmatising consequences of attaching a label to a child (Armstrong 2002) were recognised by these teachers. They argued that exclusionary attitudes, based on discrimination towards a child with the label of autism, could arise from education professionals or a child's peer group, as well as from the families of their peers. For these teachers, these exclusionary attitudes were a barrier to inclusion, as they argued that children should have equitable access to school in the same way as their peers. In this way it could be argued that their understanding of exclusionary forces depended on the social model of disability.

For these teachers, participation in this research study was their introduction to the social model of disability. This is a significant finding of the study as this model underpins the rationale for the social equity agenda of inclusive educational practice. It is a finding that has directly impacted on my own practice as a course leader, and I have placed engagement with the social model of disability at the heart of my course of professional development. If it is important to win the 'hearts and minds' of teachers when introducing educational change, then teachers need to be enabled to understand the theoretical foundations of such change. Sikes, Lawson and Parker (2007, p358) state that the perspectives of teachers who are charged with implementing inclusive practice are 'of paramount significance in that they shape the 'inclusion experience' of the community in which they work'. This, I would argue, has implications for educational research.

As Cochran-Smith and Dudley-Marling (2012) comment, teacher education and professional development should be inquiry led, with teachers positioned as:

... knowers, learners, and generators of knowledge, rather than simply the objects of others' research or the consumers/implementers of knowledge generated outside of the contexts of practice for the use inside them.

The influence of the individual model of disability

In contrast, these teachers also used the language of the individual model of disability and indeed their words revealed that their thinking and their practice were influenced by this model. They commented on the need for a child to be labelled as autistic in order to gain access to appropriate funding and support, reflecting Goodley's argument (2011) about this problematic aspect of school funding. They did not comment on whether they felt this to be acceptable, they commented on the fact that, for them, it is understood to be part of the process of SEN funding. In their view the child's learning style is, at times, the 'problem' (Titchkosky 2011) which requires additional support and resources. The level of attainment of children with diverse learning styles can affect the ability of classes to meet assessment targets, and where this is a possibility it benefits schools, as Rose (2001) argues, to 'label' the child as 'non-typical', as 'having SEN' or 'autism', in order to limit the impact of the child's assessment scores. So 'labelling', one aspect of the individual model of disability, is a part of the education system, a process which continues to influence how teachers and schools practice.

The vocabulary of these teachers is the vocabulary of schools which incorporates terms such as 'SEN children', 'autistic children', 'learning difficulty'.

These are the terms used in today's education system, terms which Armstrong (2002) argues can be interpreted as being as oppressive as earlier terms such as 'handicapped' and 'retarded' are now considered to be. This vocabulary reflects the individual model of disability, in its reduction of a group of children to 'other' than the 'norm'. This vocabulary reflects the vocabulary that many of our students use on our professional development courses; it is the vocabulary of practice in many schools at the present time, as well as in wider society.

Somewhere in the middle

The use of particular vocabulary and labels, for example 'SEN', autistic, ADHD, serves to 'other' groups of children (Armstrong 2002) but is a central part of the education system where the '*special needs*' of groups of children are identified and supported (Goodley 2011). This is within a system of education today where the social model, in contrast, requires that *barriers to access* are identified and removed, and identifies these barriers as being in the system, beyond the child.

As these teachers identified the tensions which they believe impact on inclusive practice, a fundamental tension which underpins many others relates to the two conceptual models of disability. This is part of what McDonnell (2003) terms the 'deep structures' of our education system, the belief systems, the social and political interpretations which affect policy in the system today. As Cochran-Smith and Dudley-Marling (2012, p241) argue, 'the curriculum and the structures of schooling need to be interrogated as political texts' in order for inclusive practice to become the dominant culture in the education system. Teachers, along with students and families, as key stakeholders in the

education system, should be enabled to contribute to the development of educational policy in a real and meaningful sense if such change is to be sustainable (Hargreaves 2002; Fullan 2006). In this way perhaps, with teachers contributing to policy development, sustainable educational change will be possible.

In the context of this study the way that disability is conceptualised within society will inform how inclusive practice is itself conceptualised and implemented. Teachers find themselves and their practice affected by both the individual and the social models of disability. In order for them to be enabled to critique these models and to understand the implications of them, teachers should have access to professional development that enables this process. As Broderick et al. argue (2011) teachers should have access to understanding the historical and social context of discriminatory practice. Rieser (2011) argues that education about inclusive practice should be extended through, for example, television, films and in other cultural contexts. Goodley (2011, p154) comments that '... the school culture's willingness to embrace diverse learners can only be encouraged through conscientisation around the politics of disability'. In this way perhaps, those deeply held beliefs that Hart (2004 citing Quine) refers to and Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004) identify, will develop with an inclusive rather than a discriminatory perspective.

This study has revealed that for these teachers, there has not, so far, been the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of the theory relating to the social model of disability, and this may well be the same for other teachers in other primary schools.

The process of enquiry

In this study I employed an existing academic module (Appendix 1a) on our Professional Development Programme for teachers as the vehicle for gathering data. The use of the academic module was effective in as far as it provided a structure and a location for the study to take place. I was fortunate to gain funding for this module to take place and I believe this enhanced the recruitment of teachers to the study. I have acknowledged in Chapter Three that, were I to use such a module again in a study, I would prefer to gain funding that enabled the participants to earn academic credit for the module even if they were to withdraw from the study. The funded module as it was though allowed me to 'give back' to the participants in recognition of the time and commitment given to this research. In addition the module provided a 'space', both physical and temporal, for reflection on aspects of their practice with other professionals in an academic context. For the duration of the module the teachers and I formed what Dadds (2005 citing Elliot 1990, p3) terms a 'conversation research community', and within the data it is possible to see the impact of this 'reflective space' on a teacher's thinking (Appendix 3a).

The process of reflection on practice is one in which I have a particular professional interest, as I believe this to be an effective method for professional development to take place. I agree with Nind (2005) and Dadds (2005) when they argue that education researchers need to hear more from teachers about their views of their work and of education reform. My aim in this study was to access the voices of a small group of teachers through the process of reflection on practice.

Whilst this approach to the design of the study did allow me to access those teachers' voices, there are some areas for development to the design that I would seek to address for future studies. One limiting factor, for me, was time. There was simply not enough time in the six planned module sessions to discuss as much as I felt these teachers could, and they commented in their final evaluation of the module that they would have liked more time to talk together and to learn from each other. So for the teachers, participation in this academic module which was based on reflection on practice, did have an impact on their developing thinking and understanding as Dee revealed when she reflected *'I realise now that he is doing this because he is bored'* (Appendix 3a), resonating with the findings of Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004). For myself as a researcher, I would have valued more time to spend listening to the teachers talking and recording these discussions, which would have produced more, and possibly even richer, data.

The second factor that had some impact on the kind of data produced was that I chose to structure the sessions as I did. I have already explained my decision to do this as a novice researcher. However I also think, on reflection, and having undertaken the study, that I could have been less structured in my approach and perhaps could have worked with the teachers to identify the focus for reflection each session. This would have resulted in an approach to enquiry which was participatory to a higher degree (Armstrong and Moore 2004).

I adopted an interpretive approach to analysis of the data (Charmaz 2006) and 'handled' the data manually as this was a relatively small-scale study and this manual handling was manageable and, for me as a novice researcher, rewarding and meaningful. I additionally played and re-played the audio

recordings of the discussions and this also proved a valuable means by which to re-visit the content of the discussion sessions.

As a novice researcher I was mindful of the need to bracket (Ahern 1999) my previous years of experience in schools and as an academic. I maintained a constant vigilance in order to limit the impact of any bias, from my own previous professional life, on my analysis and presentation of the data. Inevitably though, my very choice of research questions, of methodology and of design of the study is a source of bias, and I am unable to make any interpretation of the voices of these teachers without some aspect of my own history and developing conceptualisation of the investigated phenomena influencing that interpretation. It is for this reason that I provide at the beginning of the study, as part of the context, a personal statement so that the reader might be informed of my previous experience and possible sources of bias which stem from that.

Undertaking this study by working with these teachers through reflection on their practice has confirmed, for me, the value of placing the voices of teachers at the heart of this interpretive, phenomenological enquiry. I believe this to be a valuable finding from the process of enquiry, supporting what Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004, p7) argue when they assert that:

... the development of inclusive practices ... can only be achieved by engaging in dialogue about the deeply held beliefs of teachers and policy makers rather than through sudden transformations imposed from outside.

I am aware of the limits to how far I can claim any possible generalisation for the findings from my study to other teachers in other educational settings. Hargreaves (1996) counsels against oversimplification of the notion of teacher voice. He argues that in much educational research

working with the perspectives of teachers, the participants could be described as humanistic and child-centre with views perhaps similar to the researcher. This is perhaps the case in this study. The teachers were all volunteers for the study with a self-professed interest in working in the area of inclusion. They were motivated to give their time to the study, albeit with some 'reward' in the form of academic credits. Robson (2002) outlines the dangers of participants with experience and interest in common developing an homogenised voice, or even of bringing similar perspectives and experiences to the research study which then are reinforced through participation. The group of teachers in this study could be described then in some respects to be a fairly homogeneous group. They did however have some varied experiences which they brought to the group. Two of the teachers were working in the special school sector at the time of the study and the remaining six in mainstream classrooms. This difference itself can be seen to provide the context for learning and reflection within the group which has then been revealed in the teacher logs and the transcripts of the group discussions. Only one teacher, Lynn, was evidently working in a school setting where she was uncomfortable with, and in disagreement with, much of the practice in the school. This is more evident in her individual logs (for example Appendix 3b) than in the group discussions.

None of the teachers in the study positioned themselves in a completely adversarial stance to the others and they negotiated their discussions with consideration for each other. I cannot claim that there was any evidence from the data of differences between the perspectives of

teachers in their individual logs and their perspectives expressed in the group discussions. To this extent perhaps the somewhat homogeneous nature of the group was evident. Further research studies with different participants recruited perhaps under different circumstances may reveal very varying findings. Hargreaves (1996) argues that the voices of teachers with very differing perspectives need to be gathered. I acknowledge this and recognise that the perspectives revealed in this study are bound by the contexts in which the participants worked, were recruited and participated in data gathering.

In the following section I will present what I believe to be the implications of this study for practice. I will then provide a brief summary and personal reflection as the conclusion to this dissertation.

Implications for Practice and Research

So far, in the first part of this chapter, **Perspectives on Inclusion**, I have presented a synthesis of the data chapter findings which represent an interpretation of the perspectives of the teachers in this study. I have discussed, where possible, the findings from the data in the context of relevant research.

In this final part of the chapter I will present the implications of the findings of this study for professional practice and for future research studies in this area.

As these teachers identified the tensions which they believe impact on inclusive practice, a fundamental tension which underpins many others is between the two conceptual models of disability, the individual and the social models. In addition, the process of 'inclusion' continues to be compromised by the

performative, market-based agenda of testing and league table comparisons and these teachers identified this tension as they worked to make sense of their day-to-day practice within this confusing policy landscape.

The teachers in this study identify key factors which create barriers to the practice of inclusion for children with the label of autism, and suggest ways to overcome these barriers. Through my reflection on the methodological approach to enquiry I have been able to evaluate the impact for this study of working through a process of reflection on practice with a group of teachers.

In conclusion to this chapter I outline the following implications that this study might have for future research studies and for practice:

Implications for academics involved in professional development for teachers:

Professional development opportunities for teachers which provide:

- professional development modules and courses which offer the opportunity to examine the social and the individual models of disability and how these impact on educational policy and on conceptualisations of inclusive practice
- institutions which offer professional development opportunities which are located in teachers' practice and which include learning with and from each other as well as from academic research
- the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of a broad range of learning styles and pedagogical approaches

- courses which highlight the importance of reflection, both on- and in-practice and developing resources and approaches to pedagogy that support this

Implications for educational research and policy development

Educational research studies which enable:

- approaches to enquiry which situate teachers' voices at the centre of the data gathered in educational research, so that the impact of educational reform can be evaluated in this way as well as through other forms of evaluation
- developing *with* teachers approaches to qualitative enquiry, based on reflection on- and in- practice, so that they have suitable opportunities to reflect on their practice and on the impact of educational change and initiative
- teachers, as the enactors of educational policy, to add their voices to educational research and policy developments through systems of consultation and discussion which value their contributions and perspectives, such that teachers and researchers can together articulate a 'social model of education'

Policy development which involves:

- recognition of the importance of keeping the social model of inclusion at the heart of any debate on educational inclusion

- taking understanding of the social model of disability to the wider community, so that more overt knowledge and understanding of the principles contained within this debate can inform developing educational practice from the perspective of a human rights agenda
- processes of policy development which place the voices of teachers (as well as children and their families) at the heart of that development through systems which enable real, informed participation for these groups in changes to educational policy and practice

Summary

Through this research study, I have worked with this group of eight teachers in order to understand their perspectives on the factors which affect the process of educational inclusion for children with the label of autism. The area of educational inclusion is in a constant state of flux, as are other areas of educational policy development placed as it is at the heart of political debate. Teachers find themselves affected by existing political developments, pulled between the competing agendas of performativity and inclusion which have conflicting relationships with the individual and the social models of disability. The teachers in this study describe their experience of these conflicting influences on their practice and their perspectives reflect current debates in educational research. The fact that these teachers, all practising professionals with an interest in inclusion, do not readily name or identify the social model of disability as an influence on their practice, despite evidence that it does have an impact, illustrates the need for more overt debate about educational inclusion in a wider social and political context.

The teachers in the study recognise that professional identity, for some teachers, is threatened by the notion of inclusion, and such teachers do not believe working with children with the label of autism to be part of their professional role.

In the view of the teachers in this study, professional development opportunities which enable them to learn about the learning and thinking style associated with the label of autism, are central to the development of inclusive pedagogies. This finding has implications for the development of initial teacher education courses as well as for the continuing professional development offered for teachers.

For the teachers in this study there may be possible limitations to inclusion. I argue that this limit to 'imagining the possibilities of inclusion' could perhaps be addressed with teachers and researchers working together to co-construct or re-imagine a model of inclusive education for the future.

In the view of the teachers in this study, the argument about educational inclusion is an issue of human rights, but it remains one they are unable to fulfil in the current political and educational context. In this respect the potential for teachers to act as agents of change is, it could be argued, currently limited by the practice and policy landscape within which they work.

Personal reflection

This study has offered me the chance to reflect on the challenges and tensions of my earlier career as a headteacher of a special school, as well as my current professional role as an academic working in the field of teacher professional development. It has provided me with space for personal reflection and

learning, as well as the opportunity to learn more about the challenges that today's teachers face in developing inclusive practice for children with the label of autism.

In common with these teachers, my own working knowledge of the theory of the social model of disability was limited when I worked as a teacher and a headteacher. My practice was heavily influenced by the individual model of disability, but also I later realised, by the impact of the social model of disability.

Listening to what the teachers in this study had to say about their own practice has revealed the tensions that affect the way that today's teachers undertake their work, tensions which I recognise from my own practice. It seems to me that, even though I left the school system eight years ago, the same underlying tensions remain for schools today. Teachers continue to strive towards offering children an equitable education, an achievable and enabling education. For some children the site of their education is in mainstream schools and for some in special schools.

Despite my own journey towards deeper understanding of the social model of disability and the social construction of the label autism, I can still understand why some parents choose a special school placement for their child, as opposed to a placement in their local mainstream school. I do not believe that a segregated school system should exist, but I continue to see the mainstream as significantly 'problematic' in its current inception for many children with the learning and social style associated with the label of autism. I can understand why, for many of these children, a special school might offer a more enabling school experience than many mainstream schools could *currently* offer.

Throughout my career I have worked to promote wider understanding amongst education colleagues of how their practice can become more inclusive and accessible for children with diverse learning styles. As a headteacher, my priority was to ensure, through continual professional development, that each member of staff in my school was able to offer the best possible education for the children with whom we worked. This included the promotion of opportunities for staff discussion, as well as for liaison and working with parents.

Undertaking this research study with these teachers has brought together the two strands of my previous career, learning to understand the educational barriers that exist for children with the label of autism and a passionate belief in on-going professional development for education professionals. It has offered me a unique opportunity to undertake my own reflection, both on- and in-practice.

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Appendix 1a

Reflecting on Professional Learning Module Handbook

Division of Education and Humanities
Faculty of Development and Society

Professional Development Programme

Reflecting on Professional Learning

15-7008

Module Handbook 2008-9

1. The structure of the module

The Reflecting on Professional Learning module is used to support individuals and groups of learners who want to pursue studies in their own professional context which support their professional development. Consequently, the module you will be studying is a generic module which is studied by a range of students for different purposes. The focus of your studies, and the tutor who will support you, will depend on the Route within the PDP that you are following. The main components of your study will be as follows.

Self-Directed Study

In order to complete the assessed tasks you will need to undertake a personal reading and investigation programme that is appropriate to your study objectives. You may need to consult with colleagues in your workplace and peers on the module.

Support for your study

While undertaking this module you will be entitled to the following:

- support in defining an appropriate focus for your assessed work;
- feedback on an initial plan for the work;
- feedback on a draft.

These may be provided in a number of ways: within a group context, through individual tutorials or some combination of the two. They may involve email or telephone communication as well as face-to-face support. The exact form will be determined within each Route to reflect the needs of students on that Route, but your allocated tutor will be your first source of advice concerning access to support for the module.

2. Registering your topic

When you have agreed your topic and assignment task with your tutor, you should complete the Contract Assignment Form (see Annex B) and return it as indicated at the bottom.

3. Assessment Tasks and Guidance

The exact nature of your assessment will be agreed with your tutor. A variety of methods of assessment are possible, but particular approaches may be preferred on particular Routes. Whatever the method of assessment chosen, your work will be expected to demonstrate the following learning outcomes and meet the specified pass criteria.

Learning Outcomes

1. Design and implement, or review, a clearly focussed activity designed to enhance your professional learning in relation to an appropriate setting

Pass Criteria

- a relevant problem or problems are clearly identified which have significant potential as a focus for advanced professional learning
- learning tasks are undertaken with considerable autonomy and professional independence
- appropriate guidance and resources are accessed to support your study

2.	Identify, and engage critically with, a knowledge base that is appropriate to the area of professional practice on which your study is focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ relevant key theories/texts are identified, some of which are at the forefront of contemporary issues and debates in the field ▪ theories/texts are used judiciously and critically to illuminate the study
3.	Produce evidence that clearly demonstrates the outcomes of the study and is appropriate to context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the outcomes of your study are synthesised and communicated effectively and in a format appropriate to context and audience ▪ evidence is presented in a way that is consistent with the expectations agreed at the outset of the study ▪ outcomes are reported in ways consistent with relevant academic conventions
4.	Critically review how the learning on this module has impacted on your professional understanding and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the contribution of the study to your personal and professional development is presented in a clear and reflective way ▪ the ways in which the work undertaken in the module has changed (or could change) your professional practice is reviewed critically.
5.	Evaluate the significance of your study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the implications of your conclusions/ recommendations/supporting evidence for children, students or other client groups in your setting are reviewed critically

The following list provides an indication of what the most successful work on the programme looks like. Whatever the format for assessment, it is work in which the student:

- engages with alternative interpretations and views;
- identifies key ideas and themes exploring unresolved or unresolvable issues;
- demonstrates breadth and depth of reading, and is able to critique and build on key ideas;
- synthesizes ideas effectively in order to produce a coherent piece of work that is appropriate to the assignment brief;
- organizes his/her work in ways that are carefully structured and conceptually sound;
- illustrates the relevance of his/her work to professional practice;
- demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of impact;
- shows an ability to theorise practice and to use theoretical understandings to develop practice;
- identifies further areas for research and/or theoretical development;
- acknowledges complexity whilst maintaining a focused argument;
- subjects own work to critical and evaluative scrutiny.

4. Hand-in Deadline and Arrangements

Work submitted by August 31st 2009 will go to the April Award Board. The next submission date after that will be 28th February 2010.

MODULE TITLE	Reflecting on Professional Learning		
Module Code	15-7008-00A		
Level	7		
Credit Points	30		
Indicative Assessment Components & Percentage Weightings	100% Coursework One Component, Continuous Assessment/Coursework		
Pre-Requisite Modules (if applicable)	None		
Delivered according to Standard Academic Calendar	Long: 2 semesters	Short: 1 semester	Other delivery pattern: <i>Please specify</i>
NO	YES	YES	

1 MODULE AIMS

This module aims to enable you to use an appropriate professional activity or independent investigation related to your workplace or care setting as a vehicle for your own professional learning. You will be expected to reflect critically both on the significance and/or impact of the activity or investigation itself and on your own learning from it, and to place these reflections within a wider context informed by current theory, research and policy development.

Your work on this module may focus on a professional activity that you have already undertaken or are currently undertaking. Alternatively you may design a small-scale project or investigation as a specific vehicle both for your own learning and to contribute to developments in your workplace or care setting. Your study may focus on one or more of the key stages of design, implementation and review/evaluation. Your choice of focus must be relevant the specific award for which you are registered.

2 MODULE LEARNING OUTCOMES BY THE END OF THE MODULE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO...

In relation to study in your chosen area:

Design and implement, or review, a clearly focused activity, or undertake and investigation, designed to enhance your professional learning in relation to an appropriate setting

Identify, and engage critically with, a knowledge base that is appropriate to the area of professional practice on which your study is focused

Produce evidence that clearly demonstrates the outcomes of the study and is appropriate to context

Critically review how the learning on this module has impacted on your professional understanding and practice

Evaluate the significance of your study

3 INDICATIVE LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES WILL HELP YOU TO ACHIEVE THE LEARNING OUTCOMES...

You may be supported in a range of ways in undertaking this module, including:

- workshops
- face to face tutorials
- tutor-led input
- mentoring
- student support groups
- flexible learning materials
- electronic support, including VLE-based materials, e-mail and computer conferencing.

These options will be offered in various combinations as appropriate to your circumstances and preferences as well as the availability of resources. Support will be particularly focused upon: developing learning outcomes; encouraging reflection; facilitating access to resource material to support learning; helping to identify sources of and evidence of learning; advising on the structure for presenting a study or portfolio; relating learning to a wider context.

The module will be assessed in a form suitable to its agreed objectives and learning outcomes. The form of assessment will be negotiated with your tutor. Evidence submitted for assessment may take a number of forms, for example:

- a report

- a case study
- a learning journal
- a portfolio of validated evidence
- a resource pack
- a presentation

The scale of your assessed work will depend on its form. However, a total package should be equivalent to a written report of 6000 words. All forms of documented evidence must be supported by a reflective summary, which demonstrates the learning outcomes achieved. The specific tasks will be agreed with the module tutor, and the mode of assessment will be negotiable in order to maintain accessibility for all learners and relevance to professional context

4 INDICATIVE MODULE CONTENTS/TOPICS

Within the context of studying in your chosen area, the content of the module will be largely determined by the focus and direction of the individual/group. The precise range of criteria will need to be negotiated between you, your tutor and, if relevant, your employer. These will reflect the specific learning outcomes negotiated.

Reflecting on Professional Learning

Contract Agreement Form

Name:

Route:

Tutor:

Title of assignment:

Brief summary of agreed assignment tasks indicating how these will meet the module learning outcomes:

Form of assessment

Expected date of submission:

Signed by student:

Signed by tutor:

Date:

Once agreed with your tutor, copies of this form should be retained by you and your tutor and one copy forwarded to Module Leader (see p 2).

This form should be word processed or typewritten if at all possible. Please read the notes attached at the back of the form before completing it.

1 CANDIDATE DETAILS (Section 1 of notes)

Surname: CHANTLER Female
 First Name(s): SUSAN ANNE Date of Birth: 25.09.50
 Lodging Address: Permanent Home Address:

Present Place of Work : Sheffield Hallam University

Post Held: Senior Lecturer in Autism

Qualifications

	Qualification 1	Qualification 2	Qualification 3
Awarding Body:	Liverpool University	Manchester University	Sheffield University
Degree/Award:	B Sc 2:2	Postgraduate Certificate in Education NA	M Sc NA
Classification/Grade:			
Subject:	Psychology	Primary Education	Educational Psychology
Date of Award:	July 1973	July 1974	September 1978

Experience

Other Relevant Training and/or Experience/Details of Published Work etc:

- Teacher: Liverpool LEA: 1974-1976
- Trainee Educational Psychologist: Liverpool LEA including period studying for Master's Degree: 1976-1978
- Training Officer: Youth Opportunities Programme: Sheffield: 1978-1981

- Career Break: family, including some part-time work with LEA: project work and Educational Psychologist
- Teacher, including post as Deputy Headteacher: Sheffield LEA: Rowan Special School: 1985-1999
- Headteacher: Rowan Special School: 1999-2005

2 RESEARCH PROPOSAL (up to 3,000 words, excluding references)

Faculty: Development and Society

Date of Initial January 2006

Enrolment:

2.1 Title of Proposed Research Investigation (should be no longer than 12 words in length):

Including children with autism in mainstream schools: teachers' perspectives

Teachers' perspectives on inclusive education: teaching children with autism in mainstream schools

2.2 Aims and Objectives: (see Section 2 of the notes)

- engage in participatory research with a group of teachers who are involved in educating children with autism in mainstream schools
- identify their perspectives on the process of inclusion for this group of children
- evaluate how teachers' perspectives' might enable or impede the inclusion agenda
- evaluate the impact of the Social Model of Disability on teachers' perspectives.

The process of undertaking this research will inform and develop my teaching at SHU, and will support those concerned with teacher CPD and teacher education with identifying curriculum content in relation to the inclusion agenda. It will also identify whether and how the Social Model of Disability is having an impact within the education system outside of higher education and be of interest to those working to develop the wider workforce in mainstream primary schools.

The key research questions are:

What are teachers' perspectives on the inclusion of children with autism in the mainstream sector?

What do teachers identify as the barriers that they might create in relation to this process?

What do teachers identify as the ways in which they might enable this process?

How does teachers' work with the wider workforce enable this process?

What are teachers' perspectives on the Social Model of Disability and what impact does this have on their own perspectives?

What do teachers identify as the impact of facilitated reflective thinking on their engagement with the inclusion agenda?

2.3 Rationale/background

This research proposal is predicated on the understanding that the success of any educational venture relies heavily on the actions of the key professionals in the classroom, which in most mainstream primary schools is still the class teacher. Fullan (1991:117, cited Pollard, 2005) states that *'Educational change depends on what teachers do and think. It's as simple and complex as that'*. Research by Avramadis et al (2000) indicates that one of the factors which strongly influences the success of inclusive activity is the attitude or perception of the teachers involved (Avramidis et al, 2000)

The rationale for this proposed research study is to increase understanding of how teachers perceive the inclusion of children with autism into mainstream primary schools, and of what they perceive to be the barriers and enabling factors within this process. The specific focus on children with autism, could be construed as problematic within the Social Model of Disability as it allows focus on specific impairment. Madriaga et al (2008:10) however argue that, whilst a focus on a specific impairment may *'..appear to reaffirm divisions within the Disabled Peoples' Movement (Humphrey, 1999), it does bring attention to the particularities of impairments ... which have often been ignored in the social model of disability literature'*. The particular thinking and learning styles which characterise autism require specific understanding on the part of those working in this area. The increasing impact of current workforce reforms throughout the school system has particular relevance to the development of inclusive practice. Government funding had established a workforce in excess of 80,000 teaching assistants in mainstream schools alone by 2002 (Farrell and Balshaw, 2002) and teaching assistants are often the key members of staff who work closely with children with autism. One focus for this study will be to identify what teachers' perspectives are of the role of the TA in the inclusion of children with autism.

The report "Make Schools Make Sense" published by the National Autistic Society (Batten et al, 2006) highlights the fact that for many pupils with autism, the search for a positive school experience continues to be extremely difficult. In this report the NAS claims that many children with autism are unable to find a school placement which will be able to meet their entitlement to an education which will provide them with the best opportunity to develop and learn. In the current educational environment many families of children with autism continue to look towards special school placements for their children with the conviction that it is only within a specialist school environment of this nature that their child's learning ability will be understood and their entitlement to an appropriate education be fulfilled. It is also apparent from this study that many parents of children with autism would ideally like their children to be educated within their local mainstream school but find that this is not always possible as many schools continue to be unable to accommodate a diverse range of learning style and ability. This despite the fact that since the publication of the Warnock Report in 1978, the move towards the development of an inclusive school system has been advocated, and has informed much of recent educational policy (Excellence for All Children (DfEE, 1997) Removing Barriers to Achievement (DfES, 2004), Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) Every Child Matters: ECM, DfES, 2003). What is not yet known is the extent to which teachers might share these perspectives.

The concept of inclusion and the practice of educational inclusion are concepts which are consistently debated with supporters of inclusion arguing that all children should be educated within their local mainstream schools and that special schools, seen as segregated and exclusive, should cease to exist while others claim that there should continue to be a range of school types available for parents and children to choose from which should include mainstream and special schools as well as resources and units attached to mainstream schools, the system that currently exists in the UK (Weddell, 2005). Lindsay (2002), for example, cites Manset and Semmel (1997:177) whose research led them to conclude that the benefits of inclusive programmes for most disabled students were *'relatively unimpressive'*

Nind et al (2004:268) reflect on the complexity of researching the development of inclusive practice in schools, referring to the '*...cultures, attitudes, policies and practices (that) are interwoven with complex contexts...*' in this area of research.

In order for schools and the educational system to become fully inclusive there would need to be a radical restructuring of mainstream schooling so that all schools can accommodate all learners. This restructuring of the school system may well require a re-positioning of teacher understanding about the work that they do and will depend on the development of teachers' knowledge and understanding about working with a very diverse pupil population. The Social Model of Disability (Oliver 1996), could provide the arena for developing policy in this area but little is yet known about its current impact on teachers' perspectives.

The government's promotion of 'personalised learning' (Milliband 2004 cited Wedell, 2005) is an indication that education systems are moving towards a greater appreciation of the diversity of learners' needs within schools.

but it is not known to what extent teachers are engaging with and supporting this agenda. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004) argue that the most effective forum for developing teachers' knowledge about inclusive practice is to work with practicing teachers, using their existing teaching activity as the focus for their professional development. They argue that this use of a teacher's actual practice results in more specific learning for that teacher which allows her/him the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate his/her own practice and learning. This aspect of teacher development is a central part of the move towards developing an education system that is equipped to work with a very diverse range of pupil ability.

The process of attempting to transform schools into fully inclusive settings will be complex and multifaceted. There is much current research which focuses on the role of the teacher and their knowledge and practice within this process. The development of inclusive practice poses a huge challenge for the teaching profession. Robert Berkeley (2001) maintains that teachers have given the General Teaching Council the mandate to embrace the concept of inclusive practice but that the role of ITE and CPD in this development is critical if teachers are to be able to meet this challenge.

Avramidis et al (2000) cite two studies into teacher attitudes towards inclusion. In one, Vaughn et al (1996) examined the perceptions of teachers, who were not involved in working in inclusive settings, towards inclusion. The majority of these teachers had strong negative reactions to the concept of inclusion and felt that policy makers were out of touch with the reality of a classroom. These teachers identified several factors that they felt influenced successful inclusion including lack of adequate teacher preparation. In another study, Villa et al (1996) working with teachers who had active experience of inclusion found contradictory findings, namely that these teachers favoured the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream school. Teacher commitment to inclusion often emerged towards the end of the inclusion programme when teachers had had chance to acquire new skills and knowledge and to develop their confidence. Other studies (LeRoy and Simpson, 1996) support these findings indicating that teacher confidence, and one assumes also their knowledge and ability to apply this to their practice, increases as they work with children on inclusive programmes.

Research evidence also indicates that university based CPD courses which encourage reflective thinking and work focussed learning are more effective in producing change in a teacher's practice than training activities which are one-off events (Avramidis et al, 2000). This is in line with the concept of learning being most effective within the context that practice takes place for example within a Community of Practice (Wenger, 2007) or a networked learning community (Cochran Smith and Lytle, 1999, Ainscow et al, 2004).

Rose (2001:148) argues that

If the management of schools is to be changed to create a climate more conducive to inclusion, there will need to be a radical reappraisal of teacher expectations with regards to pupils with SENs

He continues by stating that if teacher perception and practice are identified as a critical factor in the success of inclusive practice then it is essential that those involved with teacher education are able to support teachers in developing their inclusive practice. Rose conducted a study with 20 primary school teachers in order to gauge their preparedness for working with pupils with a diverse range of ability. The need for training and concern for a lack of professional experience was a consistent theme with the teachers in this study. Rose cites various studies whose authors have suggested the importance of a range of teacher education experiences in the development of inclusive practice: Garner (1996, 2000) who indicated the importance of ITE in preparing teachers for inclusive practice; Ainscow (1999) who suggests that the current experience of practising teachers provides a valuable context within which training and learning can take place; Lipsky and Gartner (1996) who consider the most successful learning will take place in school teams with experience of working with pupils with diverse abilities.

The move towards a school system which is less segregated and more inclusive continues to be part of the government's current educational policy, set firmly within a social, ethical and moral context. Inclusive practice is conceptualised as morally valuable and desirable.

It is within the context of such research that the current research study will explore teachers' perceptions of the inclusion of children with autism, through engagement in CPD activity based on Reflective Practice. The findings will be of value to the researcher in her role as an academic working in the area of teacher CPD and autism practice. This research will support The Autism Centre at SHU in its process of evaluating how its own Professional Development modules might more effectively support teachers in developing inclusive practice, as well as to other researchers and academics involved in the area of teacher CPD and inclusion the development of the wider workforce in the mainstream primary and secondary school sector.

References for Rationale/Background:

- Ainscow, M., Booth, T. and Dyson, A. (2004)** 'Understanding and developing inclusive practices in schools: a collaborative action research network', *International Journal of Education* Vol.8 :2, pp 125-139
- Atkinson, E. (2000)** 'In defense of Ideas, or why 'what works' is not enough.' *British Journal of Education*, Vol 21:3, pp 317-331
- Avramidis, E., Bayliss, P., and Burden, R. (2000)** 'A Survey into Mainstream Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs in the Ordinary School in one Local Educational Authority', *Educational Psychology* Vol. 20:2 pp191-211
- Batten, A., Corbett, C., Rosenblatt, M., Withers, L., and Yuille R., (2006)** *'Make School Make Sense'*, National Autistic Society: London
- Berkeley, R. (2007)** 'Empowerment and Professionalism: the General Teaching Council for England - developing policy to support social inclusion', *Journal for In-Service Education* Vol 27:3 pp501-516
- Department for Education and the Environment (DfEE 1997)** *Excellence for All*. London:HMSO
- Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2001) *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice*. London:HMSO
- DfES (2003)** *Every Child Matters*. London:HMSO
- DfES (2004)** *Removing Barriers to Achievement*. London:HMSO
- Farrell, P. and Balshaw, M. (2002)** 'Can teaching assistants make special education inclusive?' In P. Farrell and M. Ainscow (eds) *'Making Special Education Inclusive'*, Oxon: David Fulton Publishers

Madriaga, M., Goodley, D., Hodge, N., Martin, N. (2008) *'Enabling transition into higher education for students with Asperger Syndrome'*, Higher Education Academy, York.

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/detail/projectfinder/projects/pf29711r>

Nind, M., Benjamin, S., Sheehy, K., Collins, J., and Hall, K. (2004) *Methodological challenges in researching inclusive school cultures' Educational Review*, Vol. 56:3, pp 259-270

Oliver, M. (1996) 'Defining Impairment and Disability: Issues at Stake' in C. Barnes and G. Mercer (eds) *Exploring the Divide*, Leeds: Leeds Disability Press

Pollard, A. (2005) *Reflective Teaching: Evidence-Informed Professional Practice* London: Continuum

Rose, R. (2001) 'Primary School Teacher Perceptions of the Conditions Required to Include Pupils with Special Educational Needs' *Educational Review* Vol. 53:2, pp 147-156

Wedell, K. (2005) 'Dilemmas in the quest for inclusion', *British Journal of Education*, Vol 32:1, pp 3-11

http://www.ewenger.com/theory/communities_of_practice_intro... accessed 28/09/2007

References for Research Methods:

Atkinson, E. (2000) 'In defense of Ideas, or why 'what works' is not enough.' *British Journal of Education*, Vol 21:3, pp 317-331

Biesta, G. (2007) 'Why "What Works" won't work: Evidence-based practice and the democratic deficit in educational research.' *Educational Theory*, Vol 57:1

Cochran-Smith, M. and Lytle, S. (1999) 'Relationships of Knowledge and Practice: Teacher Learning in Communities', *Review of Research in Education*, Vol 24, pp 249-305

Corbetta, P. (2003) *Social Research: Theory, Methods and Techniques*, London: Sage Publications (translated from the Italian by Bernard Patrick)

Hargreaves, D.

Richards, L. (2005) *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide*, London: Sage Publications

Robson, C. (2002) *Real World Research*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Saunders, L. (2004) *'Grounding the Democratic Imagination: Developing the relationship between research and policy in education.'* Based on a professorial lecture delivered at the Institute of Education, University of London on 24th March 2004

2.4 Work Plan

I will recruit a group of teachers into this research study through offering a funded module at Postgraduate level. This module will be an existing validated module (Reflecting on Professional Learning or Professional Learning in the Workplace) which enables teachers to engage with an aspect of their practice through reflective activity and will contribute 30 credits towards a Postgraduate Certificate within our MA Programme. The anticipated group size will be between 8 and 12 participants. I will act as tutor for the module. The participants will all currently be working with children with autism in either mainstream primary schools or in primary special schools.

I will work with the teachers through the course of the module which will run over one semester, to interrogate the key research questions. The module will provide an opportunity for teachers, through a variety of jointly agreed reflective activities, to examine their perspectives on the inclusion of pupils with autism. The discussions within sessions will be audio and video recorded and the transcripts analysed for content and any themes which arise will be identified. Teachers will be asked to keep an informal written/electronic reflective log which they will be willing to share with me and will relate to their perspectives on the research questions. This will be in addition to work produced for assessment purposes on this module. The content of these accounts will also provide data for this study but will be independent of the assessments.

The module will run either during Semester 1 or 2 in the coming academic year, 2008-9, and will be a part-time module running fortnightly during the evening, in line with our current teaching pattern. Data will be gathered during the sessions as well as at the end once the written accounts have been submitted and marked.

Data analysis will take place as soon as possible after each session has been completed. The reflective logs will provide a further seam of data, which will be available at the end of the module. The timescale for data gathering will be 12 weeks for the data gathered directly at the sessions. The written data will be available at the end of the module, which will be either February 28th 2009 or 31st August 2009. Data analysis and exploration of any themes arising from the data will be on-going throughout the module, and will be completed by December 2009. I will then complete the discussion of the findings, identifying any areas for further research, as well as implications for practice in the area of teacher CPD and teacher training. Should I be unable to secure the funding required to support a module then I will recruit participants as volunteers who are interested in engaging with a research project to examine teachers' perspectives of teaching children with autism in mainstream primary schools. I plan to use the same methodology of working with the participants as a group through a variety of reflective activities, to interrogate the research questions.

I will offer two sessions of taught input from myself on areas of working with children with autism that the group chooses as an additional incentive to participate in the research project. These sessions will take place at the end of the discussion sessions and may be of interest to the participants. The discussions within sessions will be audio and video recorded and the transcripts analysed for content and any themes which arise will be identified. Teachers will also be encouraged to keep a reflective log of their thinking as they engage with these sessions and I will ask that the content of these accounts be shared with me as part of the data for the research study. Data analysis will take place as soon as possible after each session has been completed. The reflective logs will provide a further seam of data, which will be available at the end of the module. The timescale for data gathering will be a maximum of 16 weeks (sessions will be spread out according to how the group wishes to organise itself but I anticipate they will not be weekly sessions) for the data gathered directly at the sessions. The written data will be available at the end of the sessions. It is anticipated that the groups will run from January to April 2009 and that there will be a maximum of 6 meetings.

Data analysis and exploration of any themes arising from the data will be on-going throughout the module, and will be completed by December 2009. I will then complete the discussion of the findings, identifying any areas for further research, as well as implications for practice in the area of teacher CPD and teacher training. The literature review will be on-going, and the dissertation will be finalised by August 2010. I intend to submit the dissertation in September 2010.

2.5 Research Methods: (see Section 2 of notes)

This research study will focus on the perspectives of teachers working in the primary sector and will focus on the education of children with autism in mainstream primary schools. Participation in the study will not be restricted to teachers who work in mainstream primary schools but will also include teachers who work in primary special educational settings as they will bring their own perspective.

The methodology is qualitative and this will be a phenomenological enquiry. I want to work within the principles of participatory research where the endeavour is a shared one between participants and the researcher. Therefore the participants, who will be teachers working within the primary school sector, will contribute to the design of the research by, for example, selecting a series of session focus activities which they feel will allow them to explore aspects of autism inclusion. Working with the understanding that qualitative research should be essentially 'fluid

and flexible' (Richards, 2005:11) I will encourage the group participants to introduce the focus for the sessions through group discussion and negotiation. Qualitative research is based on an interpretive paradigm and has 'an open and interactive relationship between theory and practice' (Corbetta 2003, p36). The constructivist paradigm of social research conceptualises knowledge as jointly constructed. The basic tenet of constructivism (Robson, 2002) is that reality is socially constructed, there is no one true version of reality. Research participants are viewed as helping to construct the 'reality' with the researcher and it is anticipated that there will be multiple perspectives of that reality.

In this study the participants will work together with the researcher to explore their perspectives on the inclusion of children with autism and to address the key research questions posed by the researcher. The findings of the research will be continually presented to the group, as part of the ongoing process, for consideration and discussion and this process will allow for the participants to examine and reflect on the outcome of the data analysis – what Robson (2002) describes as 'member checking'. Issues of reliability and validity of the collected data will also be addressed through both audio and video recording of group discussions and reference to the written accounts produced by participants at the end of the module.

Critics of the positivist tendency in educational research such as Atkinson (2000) and Biesta (2007) argue that it is inappropriate if not in fact impossible to explore the complex social arena which is education through the use of such scientific techniques as randomised control trials which Hargreaves (1996) called for. They argue instead, that it is more effective and more informative to examine these settings through the use of more phenomenological methodology, investigating 'what works' for a particular teacher in a particular setting for example. This understanding would illuminate knowledge and understanding of practice in other settings without being held up as something to attempt to replicate.

Atkinson (2000) maintains that educational research, rather than seeking to provide what she considers to be rather dubious answers to the question of 'what works' should endeavour instead to broaden discussion and theorising about education and educational practice. Atkinson argues that teachers left to their own practice would be natural philosophers, they would seek to answer reflexively some of the issues that arise in their practice. In this way, Atkinson argues that teachers construct knowledge through personal experience and through reflection on that experience.

It is within this philosophical context that this research study is situated employing the concept of working with teachers to allow for the construction of an understanding of the process of the inclusion of children with autism through reflection on their practice.

Statement of Research Ethics

1. Does the research require formal ethical approval? NO
2. If the answer to question 1 is Yes, has this been obtained?
3. If you have answered Yes to the above questions, please state the committee name and location and attach a copy of the decision to the ED1 form YES/ NO
4. If you have answered No to question 2, please state the date when you will be able to provide the information

Ethical issues relating to methodology:

Methodology which involves the use of a funded module:

- Participants will engage with the module with the understanding that this is a funded module that has been set up for research purposes. From the beginning they will have an understanding that their work will be used within the research process and will be asked to give their agreement to this. Participants will also be informed at the beginning of the study that they have the right not to disclose any information they do not wish to disclose and that they may withdraw from the study at any point in time
- On the funded module benefits to participants from engaging in the research include gaining credits within the MA programme and the opportunity to reflect on and develop their own practice with other teachers
- As researcher and also as module tutor and facilitator my role will be complex. Participants need to feel confident that the aim of the module is not to establish an agreed perspective on the issue of inclusion but to recognise and value the individual perspectives that participants will present. I would wish to take the stance of 'naïve enquirer' as described by Kvale (1996) in this research study, acknowledging that the purpose of the module is for the participants to engage freely with reflection on their practice and on the education of children with autism in mainstream schools. The perspective of each teacher will be respected and valued.
- I acknowledge that it may be impossible for my own perspective to appear 'neutral' and that this may influence how participants engage with the sessions and with what they choose to talk and write about. It is inevitable within qualitative research that the personal 'bias' of the researcher will be an influence within the research process, but this is the nature of qualitative research in that it is can be described as 'messy'

Methodology which uses volunteer participants:

- Participants will engage with the sessions with the understanding that the sessions have been set up for research purposes. From the beginning they will have an understanding that the discussions will be recorded and will be used within the research process and will be asked to give their agreement to this. Participants will also be informed at the beginning of the study that they have the right not to disclose any information they do not wish to disclose and that they may withdraw from the study at any point in time
- Potential benefits to participants from engaging in the research include the opportunity to reflect on and develop their own practice with other teachers
- Participants need to feel confident that within the sessions their perspective will be valued and respected and that there will be opportunity to debate different perspectives as well as to reflect on personal perspectives. I would wish to take the stance of 'naïve enquirer' as described by Kvale (1996) in this research study, acknowledging that the purpose of the sessions is for the participants to engage freely with reflection on their practice and on the education of children with autism in mainstream schools. The perspective of each teacher will be respected and valued.
- I acknowledge that it may be impossible for my own perspective to appear 'neutral' and that this may influence how participants engage with the sessions and with what they choose to talk about. It is inevitable within qualitative research that the personal 'bias' of the researcher will be an influence within the research process, but this is the nature of qualitative research in that it is can be described as 'messy' because of the social complexity of the situations being researched.

3. SUPPORT FOR THE PROGRAMME (see Section 3 of notes)

3.1 Director of Studies

Name:	Dr Karen Dunn
Qualifications:	
Post Held:	Principal Lecturer Head of ASECC
Organisation (if external to the University, ** Faculty or Research Institute/Centre) ** Approval for the appointment of an external Director of Studies is granted only exceptionally. If necessary a written statement justifying such an appointment should be attached to the ED1 form.	Sheffield Hallam University
Full Correspondence Address:	Faculty of Development and Society Sheffield Hallam University The Arundel Building 122 Charles Street Sheffield S1 2NE

Experience of Supervision

	At Sheffield Hallam University		At Other UK Institutions		At Overseas Institutions	
	MPhil/PhD	Ed.D	MPhil/PhD	Ed.D	MPhil/PhD	Ed.D
Numbers Currently Supervising:	2	2				
Numbers Successfully Completed:	4	6				

Other relevant experience (eg. supervisor training undertaken at SHU or elsewhere, doctoral level examining etc):

Outline of relevant experience and publications appropriate to the programme of research:

3.2 Second Supervisor (1)

Name:	Dr Nick Hodge
Qualifications:	Ed D
Post Held:	Senior Lecturer in Autism
Organisation (if external to the University, Faculty or Research Institute/Centre)	Sheffield Hallam University
Full Correspondence Address:	Faculty of Development and Society Sheffield Hallam University The Arundel Building 122 Charles Street Sheffield S1 2NE

Experience of Supervision

	At Sheffield Hallam University		At Other UK Institutions		At Overseas Institutions	
	MPhil/PhD	Ed.D	MPhil/PhD	Ed.D	MPhil/PhD	Ed.D
Numbers Currently Supervising:		2				
Numbers Successfully Completed:	1 (virtual)					

Other relevant experience (eg. supervisor training undertaken at SHU or elsewhere, doctoral level examining etc):

Have completed Research supervisor training. Have examined an MPhil for the University of Birmingham and an EdD for The Open University

Outline of relevant experience and publications appropriate to the programme of research:

- Phenomenological Psychology focus on investigating experience for thesis
- Professional background in multi agency working with health and education

Publications

Hodge, N. and Runswick-Cole, K. (2008, forthcoming) Problematising parent-professional partnerships in education. *Disability and Society*.

Runswick-Cole, K. and Hodge, N. (2008, in submission) Educational Rights: challenging the discourse of special education. *British Journal of Special Education*.

Hodge, N. (2008) Evaluating Lifeworld as an emancipatory methodology. *Disability and Society*, Vol 23, 1:29-41.

Hunter, C., Hodge, N., Nixon, J., Parr, S. and Willis, B. (2007) *Disabled people's experiences of anti-social behaviour and harassment in social housing: a critical review*. Report for the Disability Rights Commission.

Hunter, C. Hodge, N., Nixon, J. and Parr, S. (2007) Anti-social behaviour and disability - the response of social landlords. *People, Place and Policy Online*. CRESR, Sheffield Hallam

4 PROGRESSION TO THE DISSERTATION STAGE OF THE PROGRAMME

Statement by Applicant

- I wish to apply for progression to the Dissertation Stage of the programme on the basis of the proposals given in this application.
 - I confirm that the particulars given in Section 1 are correct.
 - I understand that, except with the specific permission of the University, I must prepare and defend my dissertation in English.
- I have completed a Training Needs Analysis (RFTNA) form.

Successful Completion of Year 1 & 2 Taught Units:

Statement by Chair of Ed.D Unit Assessment Board:

I confirm that the candidate has successfully completed all taught units required in Years 1 & 2 of the programme.

Recommendation by Supervisory Team

We/I support this application and believe that the candidate has the potential to successfully complete the programme of work proposed and we/I recommend progression to the Dissertation Stage of the programme.

Statement by the Head of Programme Area (Research Degrees)

I confirm support for the candidate's programme of research by the Faculty including resources as specified in Section 3. I also confirm that the proposed supervisory team are not responsible for more research students than can be adequately and equitably supervised and that a reasonable period of time is allocated for supervisory sessions.

a Sheffield
Hallam University

Student and Academic Services
City Campus Howard Street
Sheffield S1 1WB

SHARPENS YOUR THINKING

GT/RDSC

Tel no: 0114 225 4047

Fax no: 0114 225 4459

26 June 2008

E-mail: g.taylor@shu.ac.uk

Dear Ms Chantler

Approval of Research Project and Supervisory Team in the Dissertation Stage of the EdD

Your application for approval of research project and supervisory team was considered at the Research Degrees Sub-Committee meeting held on 18 June 2008 and I am pleased to inform you that it was approved. Please see the attached rapporteurs' comments for information.

The next stage for you will be the approval of your Dissertation title and examining team. These details should be proposed on form ED3 by your Director of Studies, and submitted to the Graduate Studies Team at least 4 months in advance of submission of your thesis. In your case we would expect to receive an ED3 by no later than 26 September 2012. Your registration details are also attached.

If you have any queries, please contact the Graduate Studies Team, Room 5403, Surrey Building, City Campus, contact details above.

Yours sincerely

Secretary
Research Degrees Sub-Committee

cc Director of Studies
Head of Programme Area (Research Degrees)
Research Administrator

Enc

From : Aylott, Jill
Sent: 25 June 2008 12:27
To: Simpson, Amy
Subject: RE: Rapporteurs: Sue Chantler

My feedback is as follows:

The rationale and focus for this piece of work has been well thought through and will have important relevance and application to the primary school sector. The literature review is reasonably comprehensive (although more reference to the social model and its application to autism/education would have been helpful). The methodology section is interesting and innovative.

My only concern is regarding ethics and the participation and engagement of the teachers on the taught unit. If the teacher(s) expressed an interest in 'disengaging' from the research study, would they also need to exit from the taught module? I am just wondering if the issues of participant engagement in research needs to be expanded further and also how will Sue safeguard against researcher bias if she is also the teacher/facilitator of the module?

best wishes
Jill

INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM IN MAINSTREAM PRIMARY SCHOOLS: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

Are you a teacher in a mainstream or special primary school and currently working with a child with autism?

Are you interested in participating in a research study to explore teachers' perspectives on the inclusion of children with autism in mainstream primary schools?

I would like to recruit up to 12 teachers, with a range of experience, who currently work in mainstream or special primary schools to participate in a research project.

What will it involve?

You will be enrolled as a student on a module from the Professional Development Programme for Teachers at ***** University. The module is called Reflecting on Professional Learning and successful completion of the module will allow you to earn 30 Level 7 credits (a Postgraduate Certificate is the equivalent of 60 Level 7 credits).

What will this cost?

The module is fully funded and there will be no cost to yourself.

When will the project take place?

The module will run between January and March 2009. The sessions will be fortnightly on Tuesday evenings from 5.00 pm to 7.30 pm and there will be a total of 6 sessions.

If you are interested in applying to take part in this research project then please contact me either by telephone or by e mail. My contact details are:

Sue Chantler
Senior Lecturer in Autism
The Autism Centre
***** University
A ***** Building
122 ***** Street

Telephone: 0*** 225 4549

e mail: **S.Chantler@***.ac.uk**

*1 2NE

Appendix 2b

Participant Information as Powerpoint notes

The following notes are a Word version of the content of the PowerPoint presentation that was delivered to potential participants prior to their engagement with the research study. These notes structured the session and also worked as a record for participants following the information session.

Slide 1:

Reflecting on Professional Learning

Sue Chantler
Senior Lecturer in Autism
***** university

S.Chantler@***.ac.uk

0*** 225 4549

Slide 2:

The Research Project Aims

- To work with a group of teachers who are working with autism and to identify their perceptions of the inclusion of children with autism in mainstream primary schools.
- This is qualitative research, so no surveys or questionnaires.
- Aim to work together to identify individual perspectives.

Slide 3:

Why this focus?

- Teachers are key 'players' in the school setting and it is important to understand as much as possible about their experience in the classroom
- There is on-going debate about how and where children with autism are educated, and this research will inform that agenda.

Slide 4:

How will this happen?

- Recruitment of the group through the offer of a funded module on the Professional Development Programme: 30 academic credits at Level 7, which equates to half a PG Certificate.

- The group will work on the module and be assessed on the module as would any group: they will identify a personal professional focus and research and write about this.
- As part of the module sessions the group will consider and discuss the research questions which will act as a vehicle for developing knowledge and understanding in the area of autism inclusion.

Slide 5:

How will the data be gathered?

- Group discussions will be recorded and summarised at the session so that the group agrees the summary.
- Participants will be asked, as part of the assignment task, to keep an on-going Reflective Journal which they will share with the researcher as part of the data.

Slide 6:

What's in it for you?

- The chance to gain 30 academic credits.
- The opportunity to access ***'s learning centre facilities, including the on-line data base.
- The space to engage in professional development activity which follows a focus of your own choosing and to have academic tutor support.
- The opportunity to work alongside a group of teachers to examine your own professional thinking and practice.
- A *** card!

Slide 7:

What's in it for me?

- A ready-made, motivated group of participants in my research study.
- The chance to pursue two areas of interest: working in schools with children with autism and working to better understand what makes for effective PDP opportunities for teachers.

Slide 8:**When and where?**

- There will be six sessions, on Tuesday evenings, roughly fortnightly between January and March 2009 in City Campus.
- The Assignment Tasks can be submitted for assessment in August 2009, but the Reflective Log must be made available as it is written as it provides part of the data and will need to be available throughout the course of the module.

Slide 9:**What about the ethics?**

- I will not assess your final assessment tasks: this will be undertaken by another member of the Autism Centre Team.
- There is no expectation of any perspective being the 'right one': the purpose of the research is not to develop any one way of seeing the world but to uncover individual perspectives.
- As a group we must all agree to confidentiality.
- The group will need to develop its own house rules to protect and honour individual perspectives

Reflecting On Professional Learning: Research Module Data Handling Agreement

On behalf of the researcher, Sue Chantler

I confirm that all audio and video recordings made during the module sessions and all written accounts used as data for this research project, will be confidentially and securely stored by me, and that all identifying material will be removed when the data is referred to in the research thesis.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

On behalf of the research participant:

I understand that the group discussions will be audio or video recorded and that material gathered from these recordings will be used as part of the data for the research project.

I understand that the written reflective accounts produced by me for this module will also be used as data by the researcher

I agree for this material to be referred to and quoted from by the researcher on the understanding that all identifying material will be removed by the researcher to ensure my complete confidentiality.

I understand that I will be able to see how the data will be presented in the dissertation.

I also understand that a requirement of my participation in this module is that I agree for my writing and verbal discussion to be used as the data for the project. If at any time I do not wish to continue to allow my views to be used as data for the research – I will let the researcher know this and withdraw from module.

Name of student:.....

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Appendix 3a

Excerpt from Individual Teacher Log: Dee

Appendix 3a: Excerpt from Individual Log: Dee

I've spent some time thinking about barriers that exist to children with autism and their complete inclusion and have realised there are quite a number.

I feel that it is important for a child with autism to be included into mainstream schools where possible but it can also be difficult for them to cope. Firstly, the pressures on the teacher to cover certain schemes of work and prepare for tests means that there is a lot to get done and often the curriculum moves very quickly from one thing to another to make sure everything gets covered. I feel that this is difficult for any child to cope with but an autistic child, who maybe needs a bit more time to 'get their head round things' it is hard work to keep up.

I clearly remember a day in Year 3 when I had an autistic girl (Holly – not real name) in my class. We were starting doing mental maths tests and I knew the children would find it difficult so we did lots of practices where I read the questions, a bit slower than the CD would, and then we went through our answers. After a number of weeks, the children were improving so I decided we would use the CD. I explained what was going to happen and we listened to the practice question. I then pressed play. Holly had coped well with the questions being read but this wasn't the case with the CD. She found it extremely difficult to cope with the speed of the questions and got flustered and upset that she couldn't keep up. I felt annoyed with myself that I had caused her upset and hadn't thought in advance that this would happen. After discussion with a teaching assistant (who Holly had time with during the week), we made sure that in the future she would go out and do the test at a slower pace until she got used to it. I'm not sure if going out of the class to do the test was the correct thing as it was singling her out, but we felt it was better than her getting stressed and upset. Holly also found it hard when she got things wrong. She got very upset and wanted to start again or rub her mistakes out. I didn't really want to the class to use rubbers but I think I changed the rules slightly for her so it was one less thing for her to worry about. Holly is now in the other Year 5 class and goes to a small Maths group. The teaching assistant who teaches the group says she gets upset if she knows she is going to finish last completing her work. All these things I feel are barriers to her learning and her complete inclusion, as the way she reacts to making mistakes or finishing last makes her slightly different to the other children.

I also feel as teachers we often try to give lots of information and expect children to remember it. I know I am guilty of this at times, giving lots of instructions at once, then wondering why they have only done a few of them! I know I need to remember at all times to give short, concise instructions as the speed at which we talk is often hard for autistic children to follow. They will often need instructions repeating and then checking they understand what has been

said. I find this difficult in my classroom sometimes as there are a number of children who need this and sometimes, if you get distracted by something or someone else, you can go back to these children and they haven't done anything. Without support, it can be hard to manage.

I found it really interesting reading about Cassandra and Josie. They are two completely different girls who are treated completely differently in their schools. I feel it is very poor that information about Josie was not passed to her new school ready for the start of term. How can she be expected to make a good start when staff are not fully briefed on her background and needs? My school are very good with transition between classes. We are always given a staff meeting or part of a training day to pass on information to the next teacher. This is valuable time, as you can find out what the needs of the children are and more importantly, strategies that work! Consistency is important for autistic children so surely, if strategies are working, then it is better for children and staff to continue.

I have a child in my class who reacts in a similar way to Josie when he is upset. He panics and lashes out, shouting, kicking or hitting and running away. I am working out the triggers for this, and it's often something that has happened in the playground. We are working to help this child deal with the problems but the way he reacts can make him stand out as different. Also, as these incidents often occur at the end of break/lunchtime, when he comes back into class he can sometimes be too upset to get on with work and this is disrupting his learning.

Another interesting point about Josie was the fact that she couldn't work because she hadn't the correct paper/felt tips and ended up getting into trouble as she tried to get these items. In our discussion following this, someone in our group mentioned that pre-emptive planning was needed to make sure Josie had everything she needed in order to succeed. This made me question the way I organise my classroom and think of ways to improve it. Also, the child I was talking about earlier finds it hard to sit still and work independently. During guided reading, the children are expected to read quietly or complete a task set the previous day in their reading session. This child finds it very difficult to get on independently and so often gets up and wanders around or causes trouble. I realise now he is doing this because he is bored and I need to get him something to do that he will enjoy and more importantly, that he can do independently. Also, being rewarded for this will then hopefully help him in future. He also finds organising his belongings very difficult and often can't find his pencil/pen etc. I tried to pre-empt this problem by creating a zip wallet with everything he would need for the lessons. The problem now is he forgets to put things back into the zip wallet so by the time the next day comes, things are lost again! I need to remember to praise him for putting things away correctly.

One other thing that struck me about Cassandra and Josie was the way they were treated by staff. Cassandra, being quiet and gentle, seemed to be treated better by staff and was probably praised more. Josie on the other hand, had a reputation and didn't seem to be praised for anything; it seemed she only got into trouble. There are a number of children on the Autistic spectrum in my school and teachers often need to discuss things that have happened in the staffroom. I feel it is important to keep an open mind about these children though as it's not fair for them to come to your class and you have tainted views about them before you even start the year. It is important that all children are praised for the good things they do and treated fairly. A child in my class on the autistic spectrum has been finding it difficult to settle back into school since Christmas and I felt whenever I saw his parents or spoke to the SENCO and other staff I was very negative about his behaviour etc. I am now trying very hard to make sure this boy is praised more often for doing the right thing and I am also using a home/school book to improve communication with his parents. This has had very positive feedback from the parents and I feel their support is very valuable. We are lucky as I know other parents find it hard to accept problems and school can find the lack of support a problem.

Children's perceptions of each other can also be a barrier. One particular child in my class who is on the autistic spectrum himself has said, about another child with autism in the year group that she behaves as she does because she has 'brain problems'. I'm not sure where this has come from and it is not a good perception. Although it has been explained to this boy that this is not the case, it is difficult to make him understand.

I have found this very interesting because it has given me the chance to reflect on my practice and the autistic children that I work with. I want to make sure I re-evaluate the ways in which I run my classroom to make sure all my children can succeed to the best of their ability.

After reading the question for reflection I thought I would begin by looking up the term Special Educational Needs. The government define children with SEN as having 'learning difficulties or disabilities which make it harder for them to learn or access education than most other children of the same age' (http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents/life/sen/statements/sen_explained.shtml)

I think the term is useful because there are a number of children in school with different needs and we need to know how best to help them.

I agree with the ethos of DfES (2004b) 'good teaching is good teaching for all'. I feel that if you are a good teacher you should be able to manage all the children in your class, no matter what their needs. However, teachers do need support in order to do this.

I recently met with someone from the Autism team to discuss a couple of children in my class. I felt pleased that my SENCO had organised this as it was a chance for me to have a bit of time away from the classroom to reflect on my practice and discuss the strategies I was currently using plus any problems. I found the meeting extremely useful not only because I got some new ideas about strategies to try out but also because it was reassuring to realise that what I was doing already was right! I think that constantly picking up new ideas is part of good teaching and quite often, I find that the ideas that are suggested for SEN children are actually good advice for most children in the class.

I don't feel there is a specific SEN pedagogy as such but I do think that a broad knowledge of SEN is important in order to be a good teacher. When I did my teacher training seven years ago, I completed a PGCE. I found the course very enjoyable but, as it was only a year's course, there was so much to fit in. We did cover theory on SEN but I don't remember spending a lot of time on it. Therefore, it is important that schools provide training about various aspects of SEN on a regular basis to make sure their teachers and support staff keep up to date on knowledge and thinking.

Another part of 'good teaching' is using a range of strategies that cater for all children's needs. Like I mentioned earlier, the tips given for teaching children with SEN, dyslexia for example, are quite often useful for all the children in the class, not just the ones with SEN. However, certain strategies are more useful for specific children e.g. social stories for ASD children. This is where I feel support staff are invaluable. I have a boy in my class with mild autism and social situations often crop up where it would be useful for a teaching assistant to take him out of the room and talk about the situation and discuss strategies for future as I don't always have the time to do this myself when teaching the class. I don't have a teaching assistant full time so value the support I do get!

To conclude, I feel that 'good teaching is good teaching for all' is good in theory but teachers and schools need the money and time to make sure that all staff are correctly trained and have all the resources they need to be as good as they can be.

Appendix 3b

Excerpt from Individual Teacher Log: Lynn

Appendix 3b: Excerpt from Individual Log: Lynn

What barriers exist to a child with Autism to their complete inclusion in a mainstream school?

Upon reflection of session two I feel that the main barriers to a child with Autism being included within a mainstream setting are as follows:

Funding

Attitudes of other professionals

Lack of understanding of the condition

Funding

During my experiences as a teacher who has and still does teach children with Autism in mainstream primary schools I have found that the attitudes of some professionals within school is that children with Autism are welcome in school for the funding that school receives to support the child. These children are included in school and are welcome but the education that they receive is not necessarily inclusive. For example, I have had experience of a child being provided with a statement of need but the funding was not used for his benefit because he could cope within the confined classroom environment. He was not provided with additional adult support and it was felt that if he was left alone he would not display challenging behaviour. Where did this funding go?

On another occasion at a different school the parent of a little girl with Autism was greeted with a professional 'distance' from senior management because she wanted her child to be educated in a special school for children with Autism. This little girl's mother knew her child better than the staff and was aware that the learning environment was inappropriate for her child's development. I was in agreement with the mother, having taught the child and realised that she was unable to cope with mainstream school, but I could not air my views due to the negative stance and bad feeling that prevailed. The senior management were more worried about losing the funding rather than ensuring that this child had a level of education and care that met her individual needs. Are children with special needs only welcome in mainstream school because they come with a higher price value? I have been told by one senior manager that children are just £ signs walking through the door and we need to get as many as we can in through the 'gates'.

Attitudes of other professionals

I find that in my day to day dealings in mainstream primary schools that some teachers and outside agencies do not believe that Autism exists. Comments that have been made are 'He's just naughty', 'If he has a tantrum send him to

me and I'll shout at him, that'll sort him out' and 'He's quiet and playing with the train track, there's nothing wrong with him'.

Parents have also told me at how they have a battle on their hands to get recognition or diagnosis that their child has Autism. One parent was taking her son to the physiotherapist for two years because her son was having trouble walking and he would collapse on the floor. The physiotherapists visited him in school and intimated that it was a neurological problem, discharged him and referred him to the occupational therapy department at the local hospital who then advised her that there was a 2 year waiting list. Out of the blue his mum received an appointment for him to visit a doctor at the local clinic. During the consultation the parent was told that the doctor was a specialist in Autism and that because the boy could follow an instruction (he was told to sit on a chair) that he could not possibly be Autistic. Mum was advised to not take him again but if she wanted she could have a follow up appointment in 6 months time. This left her very confused and feeling seriously let down by the system.

I currently teach in an integrated foundation unit with 40 children aged between 3 and 5 years old. The environment is not really suitable for children with Autism due to the fact that children have free play to learn at their own pace. This seems to confuse them and causes poor behaviour, tantrums, screaming and an unpleasant environment for all. The attitudes of some teachers within school is that we are doing something wrong to the children for them to be distressed, they don't understand that a child with 'mild' Autism can cope with the structured environment of the classroom with fixed routines and timetables and that this is not the structure in an integrated foundation unit. One teacher said (of a child that had moved into her year 1 class from the unit) that he was no problem for her problem and he did not have tantrums if he was left to colour with his favourite pencil. Is this inclusive education if he is just colouring?

Lack of understanding of the condition

I have only been teaching for 5 years but I have found that there are some teachers, especially those that are more mature and have been teaching for a long time, have a lesser understanding of the condition. This may be because they have not had to teach pupils with special needs because they would have been taught in special schools. Also, some don't want to acknowledge that there are children with Autism. They perceive these children as naughty, badly behaved and that it is the fault of the parent for not disciplining their child or providing routines and structure.

During my role as co-ordinator of the foundation unit I organised a twilight session with outside agencies to come in to school and train myself and other teaching staff about the condition. The take up was poor and only those staff directly involved with the children in the unit attended. The teachers of the next

year group (Year 1) didn't bother coming to the meeting even though they would be teaching a child with Autism in the coming months when he moved into year

How can I make my practise inclusive to children with Autism?

Following session 3 I thought carefully about the ways of including children with Autism such as, changing my approach to teaching, differentiating the curriculum, adopting a visual timetable. On reflection I already adapt my teaching strategies and resources to attempt to meet the needs of children with Autism but the challenge to including these children is as follows:

Schools need to adapt and change – not just the class teacher.

Whole school awareness and issues around teaching children with AS need to be tackled from senior management down, with class teachers being supported and provided with suitably trained support staff.

Class teachers should be taught/trained in Autism awareness.

Other support staff in school (dinner ladies etc) should be made aware of the needs of children with AS especially when they have sensory problems and can only tolerate a small selection of foods.

Schools need to be flexible but the curriculum and the government initiatives need to be suited to the needs of children with AS.

Remove the test culture – children with AS cannot always access the curriculum. For example, I teach in Early Years and I was expected to profile 2 pupils with profound AS that could not access any of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. I was expected to give them points for speaking when they could not speak and when I asked for support from a senior member of the LEA I was told to 'find something to enable them to have some points'. This was not possible and it seriously affected the average profile scores of the cohort. This information, when analysed against all schools in the LEA showed my class of pupils as being well below average and the worst performing class in the LEA. This is not very motivating when you are judged on test results and others think that you are poor teacher because of results when in fact it is the opposite.

Also, since the session I have spoken to two staff member of my present school about inclusion. One is a supply teacher for school who undertakes regular weekly supply teaching covering PPA time. When I explained about my course he confided in me that he had left his last post due to conflict between teaching all pupils and the test culture. He taught a Year 6 class in a mainstream school which had an Autism unit attached to it. He was expected to be inclusive for the benefit of the children with Autism but their behaviour and needs were so extreme that he felt he was letting all the children down. The behaviour of the children with AS was impacting on the learning for the rest of the class, it impacted on his teaching because he was expected to prepare and deliver end of Key Stage 2 SATS for all the pupils and he was under pressure from senior management to raise attainment for all. This was making him ill and so he

resigned and decided to do supply work until he can retire. This is a teacher with over 30 years experience and he felt demoralised, de-motivated, de-valued and un-supported due to the system of test culture and being told to 'get on with it'

I have also spoken to my Head teacher about my course and we discussed a particular child that I taught last summer. This child has profound Autism with mobility problems, food intolerances, echolalic speech (repeats 'Daddy do it'), and obsessive behaviour with books always wringing them and tearing them apart. She obsessed about horses and would become motivated when able to read books about horses or play with horse figures. Unfortunately, this could not be implemented into whole class inclusive teaching because it did not meet the Foundation Stage Curriculum. The curriculum and my teaching, which is governed by the curriculum, could not be adapted to her needs. She was also prone to seizure and when stressed or tired would collapse so the ground and then fall asleep. This child's parent was very 'in tune' with her daughter's needs and wanted her to go to a special school that could meet her needs. The parent had a battle with the authority and was treated rather negatively by the HT of my school. His concerns were based around the fact that this child came with a 'price tag' that paid the wage of a TA. The loss of this child could have resulted in a member of staff losing her job.

After much wrangling by the parent, her daughter was provided with an assessment place at a special school for pupils with Autism. I was led to believe that the assessment place would be until Easter 2009 but this is not the case. It transpires that this little girl had a 6 week assessment place but fortunately for her and her mother the relevant departments in the authority did not communicate between each other and the child was kept in the special school, when in fact she should have returned to mainstream schooling after the assessment period, even though this is not suitable for her. The HT of my school only found out about this development when the SEN department contacted him to find out why an annual review had not been organised for this child. Following the Victoria Columbia incident the Every Child Matters Agenda became law whereby services have to work in an integrated way and communicate with each other to ensure that in future children with a need or at risk do not slip through the net and become damaged, neglected or worse killed. What happened with the integrated services for this child? Her mother had to fight to get her daughter a place at a special school that would meet her needs, when in fact this was a temporary placement and then the system designed to ensure that all children's needs are met failed her yet again through lack of communication. It was lucky that this had a positive outcome because the child was not removed from the special school.

Appendix 3c

Excerpt from Individual Teacher Log: Karen

Appendix 3c: Excerpt from Individual Log: Karen

When asked to sit down and think about this piece, I was amazed and saddened by how easy it was to find a list of the barriers that affect children with ASD in mainstream schooling. Knowing the amount of effort, time and care myself and other staff put into inclusion, the fact that the list of negatives would be far easier to compile than positives is something that both saddens and worries me. How can we, with the limited time and resources available in the mainstream setting, possibly overcome these problems and offer all children the education they deserve.

Autism is a condition all about barriers. When children with ASD arrive at school, they are in a social situation that is all about reading others and conforming to others expectations. They are bounced between being scrutinized, assessed and supported and being expected to be anonymous in a class of 30 children. It is not surprising that children put up walls to protect themselves from the barrage of different social situations and rules and routines they encounter

Occasionally parents build barriers to protect themselves from news they do not want to hear. How difficult must it be for a parent to be told their child is different, that they will need extra help and support to complete tasks that other children take in their stride? Rejecting this help or refusing to acknowledge the problem can be a way of putting off accepting diagnosis. Many times I have sat in the staff room complaining and listening to complaints about a parent, who does not appear to want help, or the child that is consistently confrontational, forgetting no matter how hard it is for us, simply getting to school each day can be a trial for both parent and child.

The school system itself creates barriers for the child with autism. They are placed in a situation which can often set them up for failure. The curriculum, even for very young children is fairly rigid, there are assessment criteria, targets and reports that need to be filled in for every child and teachers are meant to deliver this curriculum to all the children in their class even if it is unsuitable or does not fit in with the current interest of the child. A child has to be assessed in music, even if they find sitting in a large group, concentrating for extended periods or dealing with noise difficult. For the final paperwork all that is seen is a tick in a box or a blank space without any room for explanation. Therefore, even children who are high functioning can often achieve low scores in formal assessments, labelling them for their school career.

The use of labels can create barriers. From teasing in the playground to the lack of understanding displayed by other parents, being labelled as different can isolate you even if you do not manifest behaviours understood as autistic.

Placing a child with SEN is difficult within a class as parents feel that if a child needs extra support in one area, then obviously they must be failing to achieve in all areas therefore how can they be a group with their child. A child with SEN can be seen as holding the group/class back even if they are high functioning. Parents become defensive if a child with autism is on a higher reading level, in a more able group for maths or simply in the same work group as their child. Other child once they realize that there is something different about a member of the class can make things difficult. They are labelled the 'naughty' child and either blamed for things or goaded into a reaction either out of curiosity or as entertainment. Children can also become jealous at the extra attention that children with SEN receive which can cause problems.

When beginning to read around the topic of inclusion, the phrase that seemed to resonate with me the most was taken from the DFES document 'Inclusive Schooling' and states

'Inclusion is far more than just about the location of a child's school placement.'

A child with SEN could be placed in a mainstream school and remain completely isolated without the proper support and resources in place.

While reading further I found that many of the things that I would have suggested as a way of supporting those children that need it are found in many policies and documents. It is now just a matter of these good ideas appearing consistently in the classroom.

In 'Inclusive Schooling' the first issue addresses is the physical environment, many old school buildings are still on 2 levels with no disabled access other than a volunteer carrying a child between floors. Though the situation with disabled ramps has improved, many playgrounds can be on split levels, and can have little equipment for children with different needs. Buildings and playgrounds need to be modernised and equipped suitably to ensure easy access to all.

There are also training implications, at the moment SEN training seems to as and when it is needed or teachers are expected to find their own way. To allow all children no matter what their needs to reach their full potential, real organized training in a range of approaches and strategies is needed, from people with classroom experience.

A sensitive approach to dealing with parents and a partnership between schools and parents is another vital aid to inclusion. Parents need to feel confident in the schools ability to provide for their child and school staff need to feel that parent will support their work.

In 'Removing Barriers to Achievement' a greater flexibility in the curriculum is suggested, to engage children with BESD issues. Allowing the teacher the freedom to build on a child's interests instead of being a slave to tests and the national curriculum can only benefit every child, not only those with SEN.

Support in the classroom and class size is always a vital issue. With the best will in the world inclusion should safeguard the interests of all pupils. A child who is in the classroom but not involved or a class of children coping by themselves while the adult focus is on one child is not true inclusion. With most teachers not having a full time support staff, and class sizes of 30 plus, full inclusion seems impossible. But with smaller classes and a flexible, trained support network, it would be possible to be more fluid within the classroom.

Unfortunately a lot of this comes down to funding, smaller classes, more support, more training, properly resourced classrooms are all reliant on bigger budgets. Maybe that the underlying factor that would enable inclusion.

Appendix 3d

Excerpt from Individual Teacher Log: Pat

Appendix 3d: Excerpt from Individual Log: Pat

I decided it would be easier to think in terms of a child who I have worked with on a daily basis. He has a statement with 9 hours of 1-to-1 support. His main barrier was his attitude to failure. I found when I taught him, that he reacted in extreme ways if he was unable to succeed at a task first time. He has run out of the classroom and hidden around school several times this year, often taking staff a long time to find him. Last year, when I was teaching him, he occasionally huddled into a corner, almost as though he were hiding from the learning. Obviously this self-removal from mainstream affected his learning. Another barrier is his own non-acceptance of his condition. At the age of 8 he wanted to know why he was different, and why he had to have this condition. How can a child possibly learn with so much pent-up frustration and anger? Time then becomes a barrier as a lot of 1-to-1 work was needed to deal with self-esteem, condition acceptance and anger management. Many mainstream primary schools do not have the staff to facilitate this support.

The priority of the mainstream school has an effect on the willingness for inclusion of children with ASD. I have noted that some staff have attitudes that can cause barriers to inclusion and learning of these children. Some staff have a low tolerance of behaviours and find it hard to adapt their teaching methods so that the children feel more comfortable and safe. They think that 1-to-1 support should be full time, almost so they don't have to do anything. Without the feelings of safety I think that children with ASD find it almost impossible to learn. Also unless there are pre-emptive measures in place to knock off triggers to flare-ups, more disruptions ensue. If there is a lack of understanding and training, this can lead to a variation in response to different situations. This leads to confusion on the part of the child, as they need clarity and firm boundaries.

Sometimes I have noted other children 'help' by doing the work for some children with ASD. I have observed one child in particular who gradually became less willing to participate in lessons or do his own work because he knew someone would do it for him. On this occasion the reluctance of the teacher to stop the 'helping' because it was easier meant that the child was not fully included and was withdrawing from the lessons. This obviously has a significant impact on learning. The climate of testing frequently can cause some of the children being withdrawn and so not being assessed or an enormous amount of stress, quite unnecessarily.

There are many barriers to full inclusion, both intrinsic and extrinsic, but total inclusion requires detailed planning, and a whole-school approach.

A major enabler for effective inclusion is funding. A limitless budget would enable schools to employ as many highly-qualified motivated staff as they needed. Often SEN support staff are spread few and far between. They would be hard-pressed to provide enough support for more than a few children with

ASD, if there were not enough of them. Staff would need to be flexible, dedicated and very well trained.

I have noticed over the last couple of years that where inclusion is at its best there are extremely effective communication systems in place. If all the professionals who are working, or will be working with the child are aware of the particular needs, flashpoints, behaviours and any strategies/ interventions that have been successful, the continuity of provision will be at its best. It is far easier to deal with any difficulties if you are aware they are coming than if you start to plan to deal with them as they happen. (A pro-active not reactive way of working). Transition points between nursery and KS1, from class to class each year and from KS2/KS3 are times where effective communication can make the difference between successful and unsuccessful inclusion. Communication between school, outside agencies and parents forger partnerships and ensure that all work towards meeting the same goals.

It seems to me that staff attitudes in school can have the greatest impact on whether inclusion is successful or not. Staff who are open to new ideas and are flexible in their thinking and working practices are generally not the ones who come to see me and tell me that the child being in their class is not working. Teachers need to understand that they will have children with ASD and other SENs in their class, and they have to make reasonable adjustments to their teaching and the learning environment to meet the needs of those children. (Disability Discrimination Act) I am not sure that many staff have actually even heard of the act, never mind understand that it is their responsibility, and not just mine as SENCO. Some seem to believe that I will come along with a magic wand and make all the difficulties go away and also that I have an endless supply of support staff that I can produce at will. (If only!)

Staff that have the imagination to change the way they deliver their lessons, constantly review their successes and failures and are open to new ideas. They would not be afraid to stray from the restraints of the curriculum and plan learning experiences that are levelled at the needs of the child. This I believe would be personalised learning and therefore inclusion at its best.

Inclusion is not just about geography! Children need to be able to access the entire curriculum within mainstream school (at their own level), without being withdrawn from class, to be truly included.

Appendix 3e

Transcript of Group Discussion: Week 2

Transcript of Group Discussion: Session 2

(Code DSC300018)

Sue: Anyone want to start? Barriers that might exist?

V: I looked at Josie, but it reminded me of

V: Yeah, yeah

Karen: A child in my class, the behaviour side of things, how there's a huge focus and scrutiny of their every move and you're, someone else in the class might get away with doing something but your focus is on what they're going to do wrong next, almost. There's a huge pressure on them to perform, and it must just be exhausting.

Sue: Do you think she's aware of that?

Karen: Yeah, I think Josie is, that fact that someone's sat next to her and ...

Sue: So would you call that the velcroed adult the person sat next to her?

V: Stuck with her all the time, or?

Karen: Erm, in this instance, yes, but I think in my experience, that all the staff know the name of this child, it's almost, you know, waiting for something.

Sue: Are we veering into that expectation question?

Karen: It's pitching, because it's finding the pitch, you may work with a child and notice that it's either pitched far too high, and like you say everything's being watched, or getting away with murder. The other view though, oh well, you don't expect them to follow that routine or...

V: Yeah

Sue: So the expectations will vary depending on the child but...

Karen: No I think it's other staff, if you work with a child very closely, but in the wider school

V: Right, yeah

Karen: They're getting mixed messages because some people are, you know, you have to do the same as everybody else, or...

V: Right

Karen: And then other people are ...

V: Making finely tuned judgments?

V: Yeah.

Sue: So there's a kind of, that in itself is a barrier isn't it? So, variation in staff understanding, and therefore response?

V: Yeah

V: There has to be a consistency, of what the child's being told.

Wendy: I think some autistic children, I think most, or some autistic children find that really hard to deal with because they don't read the little social (queues [can't spell it]) about staff and facial expressions and I said, we were talking about just generally school is socially, such a complicated place in terms of in your class, in the playground, working in groups, working with teachers, working with dinner supervisors, if you've not got that - if you can't read facial expressions very well, if you've not got that, if you can't take those little (queues) then it becomes, it must be completely stressful for some children. Then you can understand why they drop their pencil and everything kicks off, it's because to cope in that situation, (**3.21) as well, to make sense of it must be really hard.

Sue: So the social situation around the child is very complex and then the child's own learning style and the way that they operate is a mismatch?

V: Yeah.

Sue: Ok, so. We're looking there at the kind of areas of development, and that mismatch of social requirement and social information is the kind of thing that precipitates the meltdown, is that what you're saying?

V: Yeah

V: And that's one of the ways that's, a barrier? Yeah ok

Dee: I was saying that, one of the problems is the parents of the other children as well, who often put pressure on the class teacher or the head teacher because they think that they're either destroying the lessons, or their children aren't achieving, or they're getting away with things more than their child, or they're getting rewards for things that their child's isn't.

V: So thinking that a specific child is either taking attention away?

V: Yes

V: And preventing the learner...

Sue: I'm going to summarise sometimes what you say and you tell me if I've got it wrong, yeah? And reducing opportunity?

Pat: Playground chat can be quite a barrier can't it? Because if we've got a child in reception who was in, like we had a two a year intake, he was in the first intake, and we've had parents whose child or children were coming in in the January starters, who have specifically said, "I don't want my child in a class with him", we've had at least four this time, that have said this.

Karen: So we split our reception class at the end of last year and you gave slips out saying, whose their friends, and we had them back with "I do not want my child..."

Sue: So tension, pressure from parents? Because rumours spread, is that...?

V: Mmm, yeah

V: Ok, right.

Ros: And for those parents as well.

V: So the parents of the children...

Ros: We've got parents at school who find the playground frightening.

V: Right, right?

Ros: Because it's, "Ooh, your son's being doing this..." you know? She finds that it's easier for her to turn up late to pick him up. That's how she resolves it.

Sue: Excludes the parent?

V: Yeah, it can do

V: So they kind of start to feel down about themselves and that's really, useful, yeah.

Liz: I think there's a lack of kind of, looking at Josie, it seems to me that in the description here there's a real lack of pre-emptive planning that would facilitate Josie into the classroom, so who gives a toss what the paper is? Unless the paper's a big issue, pick your battles, do you know what I mean? She should have had every colour that she needed, and if she couldn't find the colour she should have had the prompt that you don't go and nick it from somebody else, what can Josie say, could say "May I have pink please?" or do you know what I mean? There's a lot that could have been done, just from that brief description, to facilitate that child who, bless her, it seems to me, has already got to sit next

to somebody that she really doesn't want to sit next to, so she sits where she's supposed to, but moves her chair away. You know, I wonder why she has to sit next to that person? That is immediately such a barrier to her. And it's hard because it's only part of the story isn't it,

V: Yeah

Liz: A lack of preemptive planning, so proximity without having to actually share a table with whoever this unfortunate person is.

Sue: With the preemptive planning, do you mean in that sense that there was lack of awareness from staff, to be able to do that?

Liz: It's hard to know. What I see from here is, that a lot of this, if this was a hit sheet that you were going through for triggers, so if you're looking at your own lesson, to knock off the triggers that may have ended up with everything going into chaos, there are a lot of triggers here. Seating arrangement, do you know what I mean, what choice of paper, the fact that she doesn't want to do castles she wants to do her own thing, she needs first this, then that, so she can do her own thing, but she needs to do the cop-operative thing first, I don't know if it's a teacher who doesn't know it, or if it's the fact that it just hasn't been done, but Josie isn't facilitated to succeed in that particular situation, it doesn't seem to me.

Dee: Do you think that's partly because she's not as sympathetic as Cassandra, that people ...

Liz: Well I said at the end, one of the things having read the other was, of course, Cassandra wasn't facilitated either, but Cassandra feeds back to staff something nicer about themselves, whereas Josie's feedback to staff is something not so nice about themselves, so then you get that whole thing of what it says back to you about how you function in a role, and "let's let Josie be the one who's wrong" and "Cassandra's the one who's sweet" (**8.40)

V: Mmm, mmm

Sue: So, Cassie makes the staff feel good, Josie doesn't make the staff feel so good? About themselves, and that effects the way that the staff are able to, you know, feel comfortable?

V: (**8.56)

V: And that feeds into what (*Liz*) said about the, she isn't facilitated, she's not given the right sort of strategies, or, you know, the environment in which to succeed. And I suppose that, yeah, so that's really important, in that the, maybe a lack of awareness about what might be possible is missing there?

Liz: The accumulation for Josie is that she's not helped, isn't it?

Sue: That's right. Do you think, does that come from not understanding about Josie or of, do you think that's where it comes from?

Karen: My understanding, erm, there was a lack of transition ...

V: Yeah

Karen: The year before, and I didn't have past experience of even classroom behaviour to think, "I'll try this" and if that doesn't work "I'll try this", so it was ...

Sue: So, you had to re-invent the wheel did you?

V: Yeah

Sue: So lack of transition and information, between classes, yeah?

Ros: I think that happens a lot

Pat: I think it happens a lot lot lot

Dee: You're not given enough time, are you, to feed into other class teachers, you know. This has worked in my classroom, and it might work to use this next time.

V: I know sometimes I've gone in with a child, and I've gone in with him the next year in a new class, and then the next year, and you think, well you're next door to each other and you work with each other every day say

V: (**10.33)

Ros: But some teachers often, though, don't want to be made a failure, you know, and think, 'oh God I've been teaching for twenty odd years and I've got to go back and say to this NQT, "What worked for you?" ' That's a barrier, really.

Sue: So some teachers with lots of experience may not want to seek advice, yeah?

V: Yeah, they find it difficult, to take advice

Pat: It's like what you were saying about experience, I actually find that the less experienced staff are the ones that are far more open to the ideas.

Lynn: More open to change?

V: Yeah

Sue: So less experienced staff may be more open to change?

Liz: There also seems to be quite a gravitation towards quite confrontational behaviour, with the Josie thing. You know, if she wants to do it on another piece of paper, what would be wrong with saying to Josie, "What a lovely idea, it would look nice on that piece of paper." If your target is to get her to draw a castle, or is it to get her to draw anything? On the piece of paper that you've chosen? I means, what's the target for Josie in that lesson? She's got so many that she's trying to fulfill: sit down, these colours, this paper, sit next to this person, you know.

Lynn: It's confusing for her...

Liz: It's not clear enough, I don't know if there's... it doesn't seem as though the adults working with her have got a clue, to tackle the three things that they most want from Josie in the next three or four weeks, and then tackle the next three. (**12.08) Really pick your battles. It looks as though Josie has a lot of confrontation in her school day.

Sue: Does that ask you ... taking that stance, you know, kind of letting go, because teachers, you know, organize things don't they, if you think, does it matter what kind of paper, you know, if you ask yourself that question, do you consider that asking yourself questions like that is kind of like taking a risk?

Pat: You need to bargain with these children. Yeah, you can do that if you just do such and such for me. Do you know what I mean? Yeah, alright, you can (**12.50) if you want to do it on the pink paper.

Sue: But is that easy to do that? How easy is that?

Liz: I think what happens is that, I sometimes get into something where I decide how I want it to be done, I plot it out, somebody will object, and I'll say no, no, no please do it on this one, and instantly (**), fine do it on that one, because actually I have then lost, often, in that child because it's all to do with being organised and planned, and if you only want them to use so many colours and in you only want them to do it on this bit of paper, and that's what your working towards, it's easy to slip down that slope.

Sue: So teacher rigidity?

V: Yes, you know, and even if it's a result of all the things that we're required to be, (**13.38)

Pat: They find ways that you really haven't thought of before, you think you've covered all the (***) don't you?

Sue: Does the system require you to? I mean how far do you feel you're ...

Wendy: Pressures of the curriculum

V: Exactly

V: *(lots of voices – general agreement with point)*

Sue: That was the question: why do teachers feel they have to have certain sort of targets and ways of behaving and things? Because the curriculum dictates?

Wendy: Yeah, and we said that sometimes clashes with a particular, perhaps a child's got a very high level of interest in a particular subject, and we're not, we don't follow that up perhaps because like it's RE and then it's music, and ...

Karen: You still have to write reports and targets and achievements for them at the end of the year and if they've decided that they don't want to do, like I've got a little boy in my class just got up and walked out and said I don't fancy doing this, you know, but one of the targets is 'will sing songs from memory and join in with singing'

V: I suppose sort of things like children that are hypersensitive to noise, you know.

Sue: So the environment?

V: The environment, because you've got hundreds of children in a mainstream school it's going to be noisy at times and that can be very difficult, for some children.

Liz: And the last thing is that there's nothing about this that is congratulating, it would be so good if you could say, "It's so nice to see you", "Hello Josie you're here, you found it by yourself, you're only five minutes late" or half an hour or whatever it is, you know, Josie's giving, from this report, as it's written, a lot of signals, it seems to me, about trying to step towards the line that she's got probably nothing invested in but the system that she's part of requires her to be, castles, times, colours, papers, and there's no applause for that, you know it's

all seen on, Josie's always half empty and never half full, if you see what I mean.

V: It goes for all children doesn't it? Not just the ones with special needs.

Lynn: This is a secondary school isn't it? Where they've got to get to different classes every time and if they haven't got support to get there well she's probably getting confused walking round the school.

(17.12 lots of voices)

Dee: In addition to that I would say something very similar about, sometimes parents don't want to have a label for their children. But because they don't have a statement or anything they're not getting the support, and like you were saying there, the child then is always in the middle of some sort of discussion between the parent and the teacher or, and they're thinking, well something's wrong with me because some people are saying that it is, and I'm sure when I go home that the conversations at home are about, you know, what's wrong with me and so the child itself thinks that they're inadequate in some way. And they're certainly aware that they're letting their parents down, and that the parents are annoyed about things that they are just doing naturally, but they don't see that there is a problem with.

Sue: So there is the problem from the child's point of view, without knowing why, yeah?

Appendix 3f

Transcript of Group Discussion: Week 3

Transcript of Group Discussion: Session 3

(Code: DS300019)

Sue: Shall we leap straight in? So, two extremes there, but they were just a starting point really. I can tell from the way that you're talking that, this question's been harder for you, maybe, than the barriers question? Yeah? Listening to you I would say it has. So, tell me what your thoughts are, and I'm just going to write them down, you know, what you've been saying, what you've been thinking. I asked you what enables, or would enable the inclusion of children, you know, into mainstream schools, which is what we use by the term inclusion at this point in time, and you've come up with lots of questions as well about the inclusive progress, but start me off with something.

Wendy: We started thinking about Ricky and thinking, if he was placed in a mainstream school, he'd be geographically present in the classroom without an awful lot of support and money and time and expertise, and what people would he really be engaged with in a class of 30? So it isn't always about geography is it really.

Sue: Right, right, so it's not about geography? It's about something more than geography.

Wendy: And if we wanted to include Ricky he would be about special school expertise and members of staff in and resources and things into a mainstream school really. And that would be lovely, but, you know, we know at the moment is Sheffield, if Ricky came into our school, into mainstream school next year he would probably come with £1000 of exceptional needs funding, and you know that doesn't

Pat: You could do plenty with £1000

Wendy: There's a bit of a difference between what in an ideal world you would like to do for children and what is possible within the system as it is at the moment.

Sue: So in an ideal world, in the real world, what you're saying at the moment is that the system is such that you wouldn't get enough resourcing in order to facilitate Ricky in the way that you feel he would need? But you used the word ideal world...

V: M m m

Wendy: In an ideal world, what would happen?

V: In an ideal world...

V: And this is just your perspective ...

Wendy: We'd have a group of staff that were positively motivated to work with Ricky.

V: Yeah

Wendy: And were flexible enough to deal with that.

V: Yeah

Wendy: You had high levels of training and knowledge

V: Yeah

Wendy: And that there were additional staff to provide the time to do those communication strategies and the things that we saw, and the provide help at playtime, help at lunchtime, feeding, those kinds of tasks as well

David: And like, money not being an issue at all, that if people were off or whatever, you could just get other people

V: Yeah

Wendy: And that those people also had support, because it's such a demanding job that, that there's a circle of people that would support each other and Ricky.

V: Yeah?

Sue: And would there be more Rickys?

Wendy: Would there be more Rickys possibly? Yeah?

V: Yeah

Sue: So there could be more Rickys in that ideal world?

V: Yeah

Sue: In an ideal world you would create an environment that more Rickys could be correctly engaged in? So would your school carry on being the same?

Wendy: No, I think it would change, I think that happens not just with the Rickys of this world, but lots of children come in and change how a school is and you know, challenge a school and move a school forward, and it changes for the staff and for the children, and the parents as well and that was another thing we were talking about is working partnership with parents, support for parents, you know we felt that with Ricky and with Reuben

Sue: Yep, so parent support? Would be really critical?

Pat: And a parent partnership as well, definitely

Wendy: Again, time to be able to do that in a proper way, rather than a snatched couple of minutes

V: Motivated, dedicated, knowledgeable, resourced

V: Mmm Hmm

Sue: Money and time. So in an ideal world, you might have all of these things committed for a Ricky or lots of Rickys for them to attend their local neighbourhood school, in an ideal world.

V: Yeah

Sue: Ok. Has anyone got other things that they want to reflect on? This is about kind of staff isn't it? It's about resourcing staff, knowledgeable and things like that.

David: I just thought that for someone like Ricky ...

V: Yeah

David: Is it, would it be more beneficial for him to be in a larger class or a smaller class? Just because of the amount of confusion, the noise level, they're obviously going to upset him, is there a point of him going into that class? Is it actually worth it in the end?

Sue: So for Ricky you'd question a mainstream sized class? Currently mainstream classes are 30, or more?

V: Or more

V: Current mainstream is 30.

V: Yeah

Sue: Ricky, from your perspective, doesn't need a 30 class?

David: Yeah, I just...

Dee: We'd have smaller classes in an ideal world.

V: Yes, so, smaller classes...

Sue: So you're saying that all classes would be smaller, or some smaller classes?

Liz: If you're talking about your local neighbourhood school ...

V: In a sense that's what inclusion is pushing for

Liz: Just going back to that that's saying there's nothing a special school can provide that a mainstream school can't, then we're talking smaller classes for everybody, you know, otherwise Ricky is not being included.

Pat: Well, the other children are being discriminated against aren't they?

Liz: But also he's having special provision made within a mainstream school

David: Which other children?

Pat: The ones, if the class that he's in is going to be smaller, the other children in the school, if they're in bigger classes still

David: Yeah, every class needs to be made the same, 7 or 8 children yeah

Sue: And so if Ricky was in a special, small class in a mainstream school that stayed the same, then he would still be excluded?

Liz: I think that then, all you're doing is transferring a special school environment to mainstream

Dee: But not changing anything else

V: That's right.

8.18 (****)

V: (***)... specific and very different from a mainstream classroom that's still geared up around 30 children and a mainstream curriculum.

Liz: There isn't a child born who wouldn't benefit from being in a class of 8 or 10. It's just that the others can survive by being in a class of 25 or 30. Nobody wouldn't benefit from getting four times as much interaction with the teaching staff.

Sue: Should classes of 30 exist?

V: No (several voices).

Wendy: Is it because, historically, the way schools were set up, that's been the organisation, that's been the way that they've been built, and is it not necessarily about what's beneficial, but it's just the system that we've all inherited in a way, because of things that happened in Victorian times or whatever.

Liz: But in Victorian times, in a funny sort of way, although class sizes were bigger, your front row, which was your reception, was about 8.

V: Mmm hmm

V: Yeah

Liz: Do you know what I mean? That intake (** 9.40) and as you worked further down as you got older you were required to be more independent, and then by the time you were on the back row you were being used as an assistant teacher. So it was a sort of family grouping, where actually the youngest members, the default model of having 30 in a reception Y1 class is quite a relatively modern phenomenon. It's, I think, I mean, I'm not an historian, but...

Sue: So, if you had classes, if you routinely had smaller classes, in mainstream schools, what impact would that have on the capacity of teachers in schools to be more

V: Responsive?

Wendy: Do you need classes? Could you be even more flexible than that about how you group children? Do they always have to be in a class of Y1?

V: In an age (*** 10.31) sort of thing

V: Yeah

Karen: If you've got a complete blank slate, if you're assessing Ricky with the rest of the class, against your curriculum, you have to do this and this and this, though that's going to have to change, the curriculum's going to have to get freer...

Liz: Really, Ricky would be better in a therapeutic environment,
(A few people talk together here)

Ros: That's what we said, yeah

Pat: It doesn't seem particularly relevant that he knows how to do long division does it?

Liz: No, and I can't imagine that he would show much enthusiasm for it....

Liz: But not all children need a therapeutic environment, and while all children would benefit from a smaller class I don't know that all children would necessarily benefit from, in the same way, from a therapeutic environment.

Sue: Do all children benefit equally from the national curriculum?

V: No, no I said that quite emphatically didn't I?
(laughter)

Sue: Would you like to extend your thinking on that one?
(laughter)

Sue: How could that be changed to enable inclusive practice?

Liz: Of special needs children?

V: How could it be changed?

Pat: Creative curriculum.

V: M m m

Pat: Skills taught?

Ros: So you're back to being flexible again
(***12.12 people talking over each other)

V: You know, not necessary, should I say, to some children.

Dee: Maybe it's about starting with the child and not with the document, really?
It's about where they are, what they can do, what is the next step for...

V: Ok, so start with the child, which is sounding quite like, quite like, erm, a particular policy initiative at this point in time ...

V: But that is going on at the same time that we're still supposed to be delivering

V: Yeah

V: The National Curriculum.

Liz: And it's within the context of the National Curriculum isn't it?

V: Yeah

V: Have I misunderstood that? I thought it was within that....

V: It is, but how do you do that? How do you do that for Ricky?

V: Yeah, quite

Sue: So how, how do you have a joint operation of a National Curriculum and a (personalised) learning, have you got to that point? Have you had those debates in school?

Pat: Yeah

V: And?

Pat: I can talk particularly about maths, say, as I have a low ability group with lots of special needs children in it, and I have this argument a lot, where, erm, my children do not need to be learning about decimals, which comes into year four...

V: Yeah

Pat: So there are some of the learning objectives I just don't do because they're not appropriate to the children, because they can't add two numbers together, so therefore we would then work more on adding two numbers together, and do a basic table for it, so I'm looking at what they can do and what they need to progress onto rather than what the National Curriculum and the strategies are saying I should be doing for a year four child.

V: Right

Pat: So I suppose that's a start to it

Sue: Yeah, so that's a - starting with the child? And working out what their next learning step would be?

Ros: But do you not get anybody going, "Why aren't you doing decimals? It says here..."

14.14 (Several voices at once)

Sue: How would that fit for Reuben?

Ros: Well Reuben, I'm sure you can imagine that Reuben, I'm sure maths and science he's absolutely fantastic at, but perhaps in English Literature, he's not going to understand a speech in Shakespeare, in a real ...

Wendy: Putting himself in some ...

Ros: In an empathic way

V: Yeah

Wendy: So, that would again, it wouldn't be as dramatic, but it is about personalising, and perhaps he won't reach national expectations for interpreting text at 14, I'm sure he isn't, but because of who he is, really, and what he brings to it.

V: I also think there's a certain amount of, he might choose what he wants to do and I think there'll be things where he says, "I'm not doing that, don't want to do that"

Liz: Reuben almost qualifies for two extremes, in that he is a special need because of his Aspergers (****15.19) because of his phenomenal IQ (and particular fields?)

V: Well, we've got...

15.24 to 15.31 (*people speak over each other*)

Sue: So, if you felt there was a Reuben who wanted to cherry pick in the curriculum, who felt more comfortable with some bits than others, and everything, and you had something called personalised learning and a national curriculum, where are the tensions and the resolvers in that?

Wendy: I've got a kind of Reuben who doesn't write, who refuses to do fiction writing, you know, and it gets to the end of the year, and the head's going, "I need your writing assessment", he won't do it, because to him, he just doesn't engage in it, and I don't know, I can't resolve that one ...

Pat: I had a child, I was saying to you before, I had a child last year, who was a Reuben, and at the beginning of the year he was exactly like that, he wouldn't write, and we actually managed to get round it by linking the writing to what he was interested in and by the end of the year his fixation was writing!

V: Yeah

V: (laughter)

Pat: From not writing at the beginning of the year, he then became fascinated with just writing, all the time

V: (16.37 several voices)

Sue: So you were able to use his interests? You were flexible in that sense? You didn't say to him, "You have to write about this", you looked at him and thought, "What does he like? Let's get him writing about that."

V: About what he likes, something he's interested in? Yeah

Sue: And so, that kind of starting with the child, the personalisation, so you were being, in that sense, am I correct, you were being flexible?

V: Mmm, yeah

V: In that sense

Sue: So your school system allowed for flexibility there, is that right? So there was a flexibility in the school system that allowed you to follow the child, and in that sense you were able to come to a positive outcome for the child?

V: Mmm, mmm

Sue: So flexibility in a system? Don't let me put words into your mouth, tell me if I have, flexibility in the system allowed for you to move forward with that child? In a way that you might not have been able to do if you had rigidly adhered to only writing about an expected thing?

V: Mmm

V: Yeah

David: When I taught in mainstream school we were actively encouraged to do that.

V: Yeah

V: Yeah

David: And the head teacher would actually criticize you if you stuck to the planning. (17.50****)

Sue: Do you think all schools operate like that? No? So some schools aren't able, some teachers aren't able to be as flexible or responsive as you were encouraged to be and as you were able to be.

V: Right

Karen: And I think, personally, some teachers don't like breaking away from the planning, they've got their planning and it's comfortable and "we use this work sheet on this day and"

Sue: So that could actually then not enable, it could do the opposite to enabling, couldn't it, so, the enabling is a flexibility in a system and in a teacher. And the barrier might be the lack of that flexibility, as you indicated, when you talked about Josie and Cassie last week, was a lack of imagination from a teacher's point of view about what kind of paper Cassie could write on

Liz: And I think last week's examples were really quite good, looking back, there being reluctance of the schools to change, the children won't so the schools have to do, and the thing is you have to change and change again, and the R***** is a special school and we change everything almost every year for our population. Classroom furniture, classroom teams, every aspect of the timetable is a constant change and we've got a small population and a high ratio of staff.

Sue: So in a special school there is the capacity for constant change, as well as the requirement?

V: Yeah

Sue: Is there that amount of change in a mainstream school? How much change? Because you are your own experts and do you feel that you make constant big changes?

Ros: There's constant change but it's not always positive, it's initiatives and

V: Yeah

V: So your

(**19.45 people speak at once)

Sue: So do you feel your change is in response to outside initiatives as opposed to children?

David: I found that, definitely, coming from mainstream, all the changes were from outside initiatives, and they were constantly throwing stuff at you ...

V: Yeah

V: You don't have time to consolidate one thing before you're onto the next thing

David: In special needs I feel it's really the other way, you don't have those pressures.

Ros: Do you have more control?

David: Yeah, you're just not as accountable I don't think. It doesn't seem that the people above are as bothered about the outcome to therefore ...

V: But that would be like you were saying though

V: There's more freedom

Karen: The targets and the assessments, we've got to tick boxes and make sure a certain amount or percentage get this and a certain amount and percentage get that...

V: It's really limiting isn't it?

Sue: So that agenda, that accountability agenda of targets and achievements and levels and things like that, how does that sit as an enabler? Or how would you enable inclusion within that environment? Target setting, agendas...

V: It's really hard isn't it?

Ros: Well definitely more personal target settings, which would be good for all children, not just...

V: Yeah

V: Yeah

V: So ...

Pat: I have to say, when you're on about changing things, I'm somewhere in the middle really because I've got a large special needs team that work for me, I've got 8 staff, so I have got that certain amount of flexibility so my team does change a lot and moves about on a weekly or monthly basis really according to need, so their timetables I think, if you'd ask them, have changed about 8 times since the beginning of September. So I've got that flexibility

Liz: Within a mainstream, more rigid setting

V: Yeah, yeah

Pat: I think it's just because I've got such a large team.

Sue: So, a sizeable team that's focusing on individual needs

V: Yes

Sue: Allows for more flexibility.

V: Yes, it does. Yeah

Sue: Ok. Could that grow then? Could that be grown in other schools to be bigger?

Lynn: It depends on the size of the school.

V: Yeah

Lynn: If it's a smaller school there won't be the funding to do that.

V: So, is yours a big school?

Pat: Yeah, it's just short of 600.

V: Right.

V: (22.17***)

Liz: Also, if the curriculum was not so rigid in the breakdown of levels

V: Yeah

Liz: So that you don't have to be a level 1C, do you know what I mean? If actually, if there were goals that we were aiming for with all our children, that were like, by the time children are seven, the majority should be independent readers, or do you know what I mean?

V: Yeah

Liz: Broad brush-strokes which were measurable so that there is some sort of structure, and an accountability for parents without the breakdown into levels and sublevels and league tables. I mean it's a long time since I've been where you guys all are. And where I was before was in secondary, so you've got public exams there, which do that job for you. And it's such, that would be an easier thing for you to make the bridge for the special needs because you are so rigidly held by the specifics of....

V: Well there's that horrible term 'value added' isn't it, that's what we've got to prove

Dee: You hear people talking about children like, oh she is a 2C, he's a 1A and you think you're not just a level are you?

Ros: But the kids talk like that, the kids talk like that in mainstream

V: Yeah

V: And it's scary

V: It is frightening.

V: (**23.27 several talk at once)

Karen: Last year they could do this, this year they can do this

V: Yeah

(23.30— 23.38 ****)

Ros: It's like somebody described today, I've been on some (****) training for nurture groups today, and somebody there described how you get your children in at the beginning of the year and you get all your information from the previous teacher, and all the SEN stuff and, so you've got your group of apples, pears, oranges and bananas

V: M m m

Ros: And after a few days, a few weeks, those pears know that they're pears, and they don't aspire to be anything other than a pear, as next year they're going to be a pear again.

V: M m m , m m m

Ros: Do you know what I mean? They are never going to be a banana. And we're flogging these children and making them feel so disengaged so early, because we are not meeting their needs. And I'm not just talking about the special needs children, I'm talking about children who are emotionally damaged and vulnerable, emotional

Liz: And all children, really

V: All children

Liz: What if you are not emotionally disturbed, but not very clever (****24.39) a long time to get the hang of numbers o r...

V: Yeah

Liz: What if you just thought you would like to be in what we used to call Wendy corner? For a long time, because that's where you sorted yourself out actually

(**** 24.51 several people talking at once)

Sue: What you're saying is that, your mainstream setting doesn't seem to be meeting an awful lot of childrens' com fort zones

V: No

V: Is that right? Do you feel ...

V: And I think we know that

V: So, you're actually ...

V: As practitioners we know that and we can't just change it

V: It's not just the Rickys, it's not just the Rickys then, it

V: No

V: It's actually an awful lot of children who are in mainstream schools are not comfortable.

V: No

Liz: And partly it's because we've made learning, which was a sort of round, interwoven, multi-bulbous all kinds of shapes thing, into bloody straight lines, so

children, you know, they've got to learn in a line, this is the English line and this is the maths line and these are the steps on the line and ...

V: You've got to (****25.43)

V: Yeah, these are the steps that they have to get across this particular river on in this particular order, and the whole concept of actually, you know, learning that you like about books is because you keep pretending to read to some imaginary friend, or whatever

V: Yes

Liz: Or whatever those lovely, sort of, leads that you could follow as a teacher rather than having to predict or direct that it was a certain direction, and that's the pleasure of learning, it's like learning through play, only until you're three, finish now!

V: Thank you

Liz: Now learn what we say you're going to learn in this particular order.

Sue: So you've got an overwhelmingly, over structured, rigid curriculum that doesn't seem to be meeting the learning

V: You see mine's a bit of a meander

V: Exactly

Pat: Maybe it makes me a bit of a rebel, I don't know, but I, you know, if I can see we can start a week doing whatever I've planned, but I might get halfway through that lesson and think, oh let's abandon this, and do something else, I will do that...

Dee: But that's being a good teacher isn't it?

Pat: I don't know, I don't know maybe I'm just, a rebel, but

V: You do kind of get encouraged, they'll say, well, be creative, but it's within these

V: The lines! The lines...

(Laughter)

V: You can't step out the box.

V: To be creative, not necessarily for the Rickys of the world, but to be creative for the pears of the world

V: For all children

V: Then, you don't, those lines are too limiting. Those boundaries.

Wendy: Isn't it that in other countries that they, this particular country and system's got very, very detailed, very prescriptive, centrally controlled

curriculum, and that other places, from my limited understanding of it, do things quite differently, and I think one of the Scandinavian countries, they've got a national curriculum, but you can read it on one side of A4, you know

V: Yeah

V: And you can imagine (****27.48)

V: An international focus might be a good focus, and erm

V: It's just (****29.07) politics isn't it?

V: Yes.

V: One government always criticises the other. One party always criticises the other.

V: It has. Education's become a political toy, really.

V: If it's a political toy... what should it be? It's a political toy? Presumably you don't think that's a good idea? What should, in your view, education be about?

Matt: The child, isn't it?

Liz: Equipping children for their futures. (29.39****) society.

Dee: Absolutely.

Pat: Yeah, skills to live isn't it? Independently, at the end of the day.

V: Oh, I think, come here, write them all up. Tell me what education should be about

(****29.55— 30.35 *Everybody talks while you're writing things down, I think*)

V: I think it should be life-long, I don't think it stops, you know, it's

V: You need to get the pen out, you need to ...

(****30.53 difficult to understand what's going on here)

Sue: If it was all these things, would you then see that question about inclusion and enabling, how does that, how do you feel about the issues of inclusion if you kind of begin to look at education from the perspectives that you're talking about? Does that change how you feel? Not about inclusion but does it change your feelings?

Liz: It changes my feelings about the fact that it wouldn't be as utterly laughable as it seems in many ways at the moment.

V: Yeah

Liz: But I think the thing behind it is, because I think that inclusion has been politicised, and used, I might be cynical and I have no strong evidence for it, so

you know, take it with a pinch of salt, but there's a big financial drive to not equip special needs, to not fund for special needs

V: Yeah

Liz: And so the desirability of seeing your child as an included person is a desirable thing, and also massively economical. For whoever the providers are. So I'm not sure. I think I need to know myself, more about what we believe inclusion delivers, what is it that's good for Ricky and Cassie, and Josie and Reuben, about being included in the local school. I don't know, personally, enough about why that's so burningly important.

V: And, for the other children.

V: I mean that's a problem we have, what's in it for the other children in the class?

Liz: Exactly, so having got that, then it would be easier, certainly this is a much better place to start debating, but, for me, when you start at 'inclusion is desirable', I'm not sure why. I'm not saying that it isn't.

V: No, I know what you mean

V: I'm saying that I'm not fully, I'm not conversant why

V: This drive to

Liz: Why, and my cynicism is that it's probable, that may be wrong, it could be cost, there may be other things about it, but it didn't used to happen at all when (****32.54) then there were a lot of special schools, then special schools became reduced, and now they're trying to get rid of special schools altogether, and I'm not sure what the journey of that circle is and what the purpose is for the children in question.

Sue: I guess that could be the thing that you focus on when you're reading, if that would be a question that would help you to understand more your thinking in this area, and therefore your arguing about whatever it is you want to, maybe that's an area that there will be an evidence, or a research basis that you will have to follow through, that will help you to kind of position your argument, and position your thinking, which you've asked lots of questions in there and what you are looking for is a way of, beginning to address those questions which we all do, we all want to ask and to address those questions, and in a sense, you know, there is no right or wrong answer

Figure 1 Structure and content of the weekly sessions

Session 1 **Focus for session:** introduction to module and to reflective log and account. Consideration of the process of reflection and impact on professional action.

Focus for discussion: I provided a list of professional dilemmas from Pollard (2005) to read as a starting point for discussion.

Question: I asked the teachers to share and discuss initial thoughts and feelings about autism and inclusion using the 4 post-it activity.

Session 2 **Focus for session:** introduction to theory, policy and practice re inclusion: 1

Focus for discussion: I asked the participants to read two vignettes each about a girl with the label of autism taken from Benjamin (2002). One girl had behaviour that could be perceived as challenging and one was more socially passive. I asked the group to reflect on the differences in the experience of these two girls and on aspects of school practice which might impact on the outcomes for each.

Question: I asked the teachers to identify the factors which act or might act as barriers to inclusion.

Session 3 **Focus for session:** introduction to theory, policy and practice re inclusion: 2

Focus for discussion: Teachers TV clips, one about a boy identified with the label of Asperger Syndrome and one about a boy with the label of autism and intellectual impairment

Question: I asked the teachers to identify factors which they felt enabled the process of inclusion

Session 4 **Focus for session:** social model/individual model of disability.

Focus for discussion: reflection on a critical incident. I asked the teachers to consider an incident, which related to a student with the label of autism, that had been significant in challenging them to think about their practice and then to describe how they each worked with this situation.

Question: I asked them to reflect on their feelings and responses.

Session 5 **Focus for session:** research about autism and inclusion: a review of some of the literature.

Focus for discussion: two quotations taken from Leicester (1999) and Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford (2001).

Question: I asked the teachers to read and then reflect on/discuss these two quotations.

Session 6 **Focus for session:** discuss individual focus for the final account: this is an enabling session to further develop thinking.

Focus for discussion: working with families: key issues for families.

Question: I asked the teachers to reflect on and discuss what they understand to be some of the experiences of and factors which affect families living with children with the label autism in the context of educational placement.