Inclusion and pupils on the autism spectrum in secondary schools: Exploring process, and the contribution of an educational psychologist in moving from rhetoric to reality

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Abstract

This research explores some of the factors which might impact on promoting the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum in secondary schools. The experience of inclusion for these pupils is often described as problematic, and that the general 'top down' information led approaches offered to schools to support their inclusion of this group of pupils seems to be problematic, failing to acknowledge the individuality of their pupils, staff, and the uniqueness of their contexts.

This study utilises a practitioner action research framework in order to explore the experiences and theories about inclusion of staff and pupils on the autism spectrum within a secondary school. This research aimed to 'grow' inclusion within this context and reflect on the key process elements which supported any changes to occur.

The main findings of the study suggested that it is possible to 'grow' inclusive practice and that a number of process elements were necessary to this growth. The significant process elements which emerged were; co-constructing practice and experience local to the community, explicit activity with reference to the process of change and development, and professional expertise relating to autism, the process of change and evaluation.

Based on the findings of the study a model for future practice is proposed and discussed which combines learning from research in the areas of; autism and inclusion, school effectiveness, solution oriented and motivational psychology, and theory based approaches to evaluation. The model developed suggests that in order to grow inclusive practice, including for those on the autism spectrum, we need to move away from a simplistic standards/competency based approach. Instead what is suggested is that inclusion in practice should: have regard to and be constructed by those within a community, requires a process which has regard to both the goals and motivations of individual members of staff and of the broader organisational and social context, and that this requires professional expertise and facilitation.

Discussion as to the implications of the findings of this study in terms of the role of an educational psychologist in this process and the value of practitioner action research in generating evidence on which to base future practice is also undertaken.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own original work. No part of this material has been previously submitted by me for a degree or other qualification in this or any other University.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale

Within this chapter is presented a context and rationale for the research study. This chapter will explores issues which emerged within the context of my professional practice and which led me to reflect on my conceptual framework and the political and social climate in which I was operating, and the impact of this context on the educational experiences of the young people on the autism spectrum with whom I had direct contact. The research began with its roots very much in my practice and continues to inform and be informed by this. What started as a journey about the needs of pupils on the autism spectrum became a story about a school community, and the processes that can lead to change.

1.1 The Context

Working as both a generic educational psychologist (EP) and having a specialist educational psychologist role within the Local Authority (LA) I was becoming increasingly aware of the significant challenges posed for young people on the autism spectrum as they transitioned into secondary schools. For some young people, their families and primary school staff these challenges were more perceived than real. However, for many more the challenges posed were real and significant leading to distress, anxiety and behavioural difficulties. For a small number the severity of these issues had led to exclusions, for others it has led to an anxiety related inability to attend school and for some even to self harm. The anecdotal evidence experienced within my own professional practice was sadly consistent with other information generated and reported by both the All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism (Loynes, 2001) the National Autistic Society (Barnard et al.,) the ESRC funded research by Humphrey (2008), and more recently the National Autistic Society's report 'You need to know' outlining issues relating to the mental health needs of young people with an ASD (Madders, 2010).

In some schools, particularly larger schools and secondary schools which were more complex organisations, there remained a feeling that despite access to some whole school training for school staff difficulties were continuing. In one school, a fairly typical mainstream secondary school which I knew well there was a small group of young people on the spectrum all showing signs of anxiety, a reluctance to attend school, and signs of

emerging mental health concerns requiring specialist child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) involvement. This was despite the fact that many of whom might be described as the key players in typical support systems; that is the families, school support staff, Senco and the Educational Psychologist, were explicitly committed to exploring strategies and interventions that would support the inclusion of these pupils. The pupils, however, were increasingly reluctant to commit to their presence in school. I was confronted by a question from the parent of two of the pupils who asked: "I know that you are doing everything you can, but how come my boys are still not in school?"

What became increasingly clear to me was that there was a need to do something different. The school system needed to be supported to move away from a simple and linear model which identified an issue, put an intervention in place, and hoped for a solution. This realisation came at a time when I had been increasingly drawn into a consideration of solution oriented techniques (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), positive, goal oriented psychological approaches (Austin and Vancouver, 2004), Self Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000), and some work undertaken around school improvement, which although related to a literacy focus, clearly had more general application towards organisational change (Hopkins, 2001).

The head teacher of the school in question was also enthusiastic about taking a different perspective, an enthusiasm not entirely unrelated to a high level parental complaint, and was keen to explore how to 'include' these students. From this arose the opportunity to work more broadly across the whole school. Having got to know the young people quite well over the course of several years it seemed natural to talk to them about what they felt inclusion *for them* might look like. Together all parties embarked on a project which included listening to the stories of these young people, very much as it happens (although not an a priori consideration), in the spirit of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNESCO, 1994), and which led to a short term but apparently effective project enabling a flexible and creative look at what the school day might be like for them as individuals, how it could be improved, and this led to their reintegration and re-engagement with school life.

Much more could be said about this piece of work itself, however, at this point what is relevant is that it created an impetus for myself in terms of a systematic reflection as to what had been going on in this school, what were the important 'bits' of both the process and action, and what might this say about further similar pieces of work. The need to be clear about this thinking was sharpened by the Local Authority political context and the fact that there was a growing political pressure on myself to almost generate a 'list' of what schools needed to do to be 'inclusive' for apparently similar groups of students. For me this sharpened the need to be as clear as possible about the nature of my psychology, the 'evidence' generated from this opportunistic piece of work and what could be drawn and generalised from this and my role as an Educational Psychologist (EP) in this process.

Reflecting on all of these issues it was becoming increasingly clear to me that although I had some views about what had gone on I needed to be much more critical and systematic in both my own thinking and in reflecting on my actions, and how this impacted on staff reflection and action in schools, and in terms of exploring the complex process of supporting the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum in mainstream secondary schools. Thinking, reflection and action that would support school communities in the process of movement from the ill defined clichés and rhetoric about 'inclusion' and 'rights' towards a more practical reality.

1.2 The Research

From these initial reflections on my practice emerged a more systematic research plan utilising an action research cycle, which is the subject of this report. A number of questions emerged to form the basis of my enquiry.

1.2.1   The Research Questions
1. Firstly to consider can you promote and 'grow' increasingly inclusive practice for pupils on the autism spectrum within an individual school?
2. Secondly, to consider how a school, and its staff, might be supported to do this and what processes might be helpful to this?

3. Thirdly, to consider what was my role as an educational psychologist in this process?

1.2.2 Brief outline of the Study

The study began with a request from a Deputy Head Teacher of a medium sized Local Authority maintained secondary school in the North of England to provide a training session to the whole school to help them manage a group of students with autism who were expected to start that autumn. Given my reservations about the impact of a one off training event we agreed that a larger scale school development programme would be undertaken. Following discussion with the Senior Management Team of the school agreement was reached to undertake a piece of development work over the course of a year. This piece of work forms the basis of this research project.

1.3 The structure of the following chapters

In writing up this report the chapters have been organised as a reflection of my journey. In the first instance I have shared the impetus for my interest in the area and motivations to undertake more systematic research in an applied context.

Chapter 2 explores more broadly the areas which I felt impacted on my field of study and helped to clarify the approach I went on to take. In this chapter literature and research from the fields of education and psychology are explored given their relevance in terms of inclusion, autism, organisational change and motivation theory, and the role of EP as facilitator in this process. It will be argued that all of these areas must be actively considered in order to explore the research questions.

Chapter 3 explores the nature of what there is to be known and highlights what might be an appropriate conceptual and methodological approach in researching the questions at hand. Clearly in all research studies consideration must be made of ethical issues. In this project with human participants, and including children who might be described as having particular vulnerabilities, relevant ethical issues will also be discussed.

What follows is a more detailed account of the project and its rationale (chapter 4) followed by a consideration of the data, its analysis, and initial findings (chapters 5). An exploration of the findings points to some emerging theories in terms of this particular school and my role in the process, leading to the proposal of a process model.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings and their implications in more detail, relating them to the broader issues and ideas raised in earlier sections of the document, and explores the role of myself as EP, and how the learning and outcomes from this project may have broader currency within a changing political and economic climate.

The final chapter of the report goes beyond the research questions as they relate specifically to the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum and reflects on my role as an EP in the process including more personal reflections on the research journey and possible implications for EP practice more broadly.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

When a school invites you to 'train' the staff to help them manage a new group of pupils with autism a number of questions are raised that impact on your response, and that can only be answered by stepping back and considering the broader context from which the request arose. A context which needs to consider what did their request say about their constructions of; autism and inclusion, how to develop practice as a school, and what they thought that an EP might be able to offer? And what would my response say about my constructions of the same issues? Part of my process of reflection, which would go on to inform my future actions and reflections, had to start with an exploration of what was hidden in this request.

The literature reviewed in this chapter attempts to 'unpick' this request, to explore its different elements, and support my critical reflection. The review attempts to critically engage with what others in the fields of applied and research psychology, education, sociology, and organisational change have explored and then relate it to my own thinking, practice, and enterprise within this school. In this review I will attempt to distil out what appear to be key theories helpful to the question of how to support a school to include a group of pupils on the autism spectrum.

More specifically this chapter explores questions relating to; inclusion, educational needs and planning relating to the autism spectrum, supporting school communities to reflect on and develop inclusive practice, and the contribution of myself as an educational psychologist to this. Whilst each of these areas is potentially vast, a number of relevant themes emerge and which provide the focus for the literature review. These are;

- Developing an understanding and appreciation of the term 'inclusion' and it's development over time, what it might mean for individuals in different contexts, and how this requires understanding it as an evolving and socially and politically constructed phenomenon

- Considering what is felt to be known about the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum in secondary schools; is there an issue for this group, what do we think that we can know about the issue, and also how might we begin to think about what works and what doesn't work?
- What issues should be considered when thinking about supporting a school as a complex organisation to take on new ideas and practice?
- What might be the role of myself as an EP in this process?

Given such vast areas to explore within the constraints of the thesis a search strategy was employed which focussed on the key words of autism, inclusion, special educational needs, organisational change, school effectiveness, and motivation. Database searches related primarily (although not exclusively) to peer reviewed research papers from the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand; countries with some similarities in terms of their educational systems and civil rights legislation. I employed no limitations in terms of dates of research, the only restriction being in terms of relevance to the topic in hand. I also considered research and philosophical explorations relating to ontology and epistemology within applied research in social contexts. In reporting I have largely focussed on the key references and research studies which occur frequently and which are regularly cited as being influential to smaller studies.

2.1 What does 'inclusion' mean?

The title of this thesis references the word 'inclusion', a term frequently used by professionals in education. It is also sometimes used by parents, and occasionally by pupils. But what does it mean? We talk about it easily, assuming a shared understanding but is there a shared view? It is slipped into a plethora of phrases used in schools and other organisations such as; 'a right to be included', 'inclusive practice', 'evidence of inclusion', 'inclusion policies', and the National Strategies spent a lot of time and resources promoting the '***Inclusion*** Development Programme' (my emphasis) focussing on different types of frequently occurring special educational needs (DCSF, 2009), linking inclusion to SEN rather than broader issues. But is the term used and understood in the same way in each of these phrases and by these different groups and individuals? If we are to consider the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum within secondary schools I would argue that we

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need to explore what the term means to us individually and collectively within our various communities and histories. In order to do this we need to follow the suggestion of Slee who advocates that to understand the term we need first to deconstruct it (Slee, 2001). Without exploring our understandings then discussions about whether it is important, whether is it happening or working for any pupils, including those on the autism spectrum, are redundant.

2.1.1 Inclusion as an issue of rights

In deconstructing the term 'inclusion' it is important to begin with an understanding of its social and political origins, an historical journey which offers important insight into its status as an unchallengeable issue of rights and emancipation, a journey which begins over a century ago: Early in the twentieth century Darwin's work on evolution and natural selection was taken by some and enmeshed with interpretations of Nietzsce's philosophies (see for example 'Nietzscehe: Will to Power', Edited by Kaufmann 1967) to give credibility to new ways of thinking and what might be described as 'social Darwinism'. These new ways of thinking supported by a new set of technologies; psychology and psychometrics, led in turn for some to eugenics and the politics of segregation (see Thomas and Loxley, 2007 for a fuller description). Division and segregation were apparent in many sectors of society, for example relating to gender, class and race, and often unquestioned being seen as the 'natural order' of things. However, the observable impact of these philosophies when taken to an extreme position was perhaps most sharply highlighted in the aftermath of the Second World War when the full horror of the Holocaust emerged. A direct and stark example of where the policies of division and segregation can lead.

The vast social, economic and political impact of not just the holocaust, but also the turmoil of both World Wars in general, provided an international platform for change. It is perhaps from this point and in the spirit of rebuilding and restoration that it became increasingly socially, and in some cases politically, acceptable to react against segregation. The efforts of earlier groups fighting for equality for example the Women's Suffrage Movement were built on and there was an increasing number of highly visible and more 'mainstream'

political demands for an end to discrimination and a move towards greater equality for a number of groups. In the middle part of the twentieth century some things started to change, for example; the Civil Rights movement in the United States of America during the 1960's and other movements pressing for equal rights for a range of other groups during the 1970's (for example greater gender equality). In the United States and Europe these social and political reactions against segregation and towards inclusion gave impetus, eventually enshrined in legislation, towards greater equality and fairness.

Education systems and underpinning philosophies do not sit in a vacuum. They occupy a space within the cultural and social context so it is not surprising that the educational arena reflected these changes too and similar parallel social and political pressures began to be in evidence. For example, in the United Kingdom a universal right to secondary education for all was a crucial and important step forward. In the 1970's girls and boys in state schools began to be offered the same curriculum opportunities and attempts began to develop a truly comprehensive education system. More specifically with regard to disability and education, discussion and debate was also beginning to emerge, not as some might think in the 1970's at the time of the Warnock Report but much earlier, reflecting the political and social climate with debates around the 'rights' of children with disabilities apparent towards the end of the Second World War. In the United Kingdom in House of Commons debates relating to the 1944 Education Act Chuter Ede, Parliamentary Secretary at the time, acknowledged the importance of providing a range of educational provisions, including special schools, but also noted a desire to see as many children as possible in the 'normal stream of school life' (outlined in Lindsay, 2003).

These were ideas driven not by an 'evidence based', outcomes driven, conceptual framework but by a much broader and very powerful principled and philosophical movement. The idea of inclusive education was not conceptualised as a set of practice or outcome statements, which is perhaps why it is difficult to get agreement about what they should look like, but rather it was about ethics and philosophy which were the significant and influential drivers supporting subsequent international legislation. And it is within this

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powerful context that current views and tensions regarding inclusion within educational practice need to be considered.

In the United Kingdom it was the ideas expressed in the landmark Warnock Report (DES, 1978) which represented a significant shift, reflecting the philosophies and beliefs of many educational professionals and academics of the time, in suggesting that special schools did not serve the needs of pupils well, and in some cases argued that their influence was harmful. However, this report very much reflected and was constructed by the political and social beliefs and dogma of the day, and not research evidence however that might be understood (Thomas and Loxley, 2007). It was this report that attempted to move away from a system of deficit labelling, for example categorising some children as 'educationally sub normal'. Unfortunately, the reality is that these categories were replaced by another term 'special educational needs', replacing one set of discriminating labels with another and so falling into the trap described by Foccault (1991) where the language used becomes associated with defining and maintaining difference.

In 1994 the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) gave international recognition to the rights of all children to access education, to be recognised as unique learners, and to have access to 'regular schools'. It is this agreement which has become translated into our current 'agenda for inclusion' and enshrined in a raft of legislation (for example, DfES, 2001) and national and local guidance (DfES, 2004). Again the emphasis was on 'rights' and not necessarily practice.

Despite such powerful roots and high level philosophy in reality there is much to be debated in the Salamanca Statement including what 'regular' actually means, and what the evidence base is for assuming that 'inclusion' into 'regular' schools is going to achieve effective outcomes and for whom. These debates will be explored to some degree below, but what it is important to recognise in this deconstruction of the term 'inclusion' at this point is the powerful political and social context from which the argument for the 'right' to be included came from. A driver so significant that it did not appear to require any 'top down' specificity about what this actually means when it is translated (in either a negotiated

or imposed manner) into practice and experience for individual pupils and school communities.

In the next section I will discuss the limitations around expecting an 'answer' as to exactly what inclusion looks like, and explore the tensions, dilemmas and opportunities inherent in attempting to understand the concept and how local, socially constructed approaches might be most productive.

2.1.2 The 'practice' of inclusion and models of disability

Although the powerful political acceptance and general 'sign up' to the concept of inclusion as a right has moved us away from an era when some children were deemed to be 'ineducable' (see Kirman, 1958), this does not mean that there is a shared view and understanding as to what we really mean and the implications for what happens on a daily basis. As Thomas and Loxley suggest, the use of the term 'inclusion' may in fact have become something of a cliché.

In their research study Croll and Moses interviewed education officers, and head teachers from mainstream and special schools from 11 Local Education Authorities in order to explore their constructions about inclusion (Croll and Moses, 2000), Whilst all respondents claimed to be broadly supportive of the concept of inclusion most stopped short of feeling that full inclusion was possible or in some cases desirable with some groups of pupils, notably those with autism or behavioural difficulties who were deemed to have 'very special' support needs. They found that all mainstream school Headteachers who responded felt that there was a continuing roll for special schools and over half felt that more children should attend them, rather than reduce the number of places available. In fact, despite the myth that 'special schools are closing' there has in fact been very little change in the percentage of pupils attending special school provision between 1974 and 2006 (Runswick-Cole, 2008), and DfE data between 2001 and 2011 shows a similar picture. What does this say about what the concept of 'inclusion' means to this group?

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The research of Croll and Moses supports the idea that as an issue of rights education professionals hold 'inclusion' as something of a sacred cow, but in practice these influential education professionals move very easily to discussions about the importance of segregation, special placement and support needs. There would seem to be a gap between the policy rhetoric and practice reality and experiences. Can a school be truly inclusive if its managers maintain a belief that there are some groups who are 'un-includable'? One has to ask whether the inclusion debate has been adequately understood and developed, invited and negotiated appropriately. And can the same be said about what the understandings of the right to be included might mean for parents and the young people themselves?

There have been some attempts to develop thinking beyond inclusion as a statement of rights and to support and explore it in terms of process and practice, for example, the self audit and development tool 'The Index for Inclusion' (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). Whilst their tool was developed in the context of a strong inclusion model and had some clear apriori ideas about the elements an inclusive school should consider, it helpfully stopped short of top down prescription and suggested that it is through engagement with the local community (that is staff, pupils, parents) that inclusion will grow for a school. The work of Booth and Ainscow was one of the first attempts to recognise that inclusion in practice is known through emerging the multiple constructions of those in the community. They also advanced the idea, which will be used in this study, that inclusion is about more than presence; it is also about participation, acceptance and achievement. However, the use of the Index appears to have had limited impact over time, perhaps indicating that simply providing information is not sufficient to create and sustain inclusive practice when there are other competing demands on time and energy in schools.

So whilst society as a whole through legislation, and from evidence from the views of educators suggests that there is sign up in principle to the idea of inclusion there are a number of significant challenges which impact on its translation into practice. I have already suggested that there may have been insufficient negotiation and exploration of the concept with key stakeholders over time. However, I would also suggest that there are other challenges including:

- That there are other competing and significant political agendas

- That for many the school inclusion agenda and the concept of special educational needs and disability have become almost synonymous, and this can unwittingly lead to exclusionary thinking and practice

- Concerns and lack of clarity around the evidence base for the efficacy of 'inclusion'

The Human Rights movement and its interpretation within an educational context is clearly powerful and positive and has had a major impact on the lives of many children, young people and adults. However, the Conservative education policies of the 1980's including the Education Reform Act 1988 and which have remained largely untouched by New Labour and the current Conservative – Liberal Democratic coalition, continue to have a considerable impact within the country's view of education and school practice and may be seen perhaps to be at odds with the principles and practice of inclusion. For example, the high stakes reporting of attainment (Rose, 2001), and parental choice and school's admissions policies (Thomas and Loxley, 2007). The role of Academies and Free Schools could make children with additional needs less attractive to some schools and provide opportunities for an increasing number of segregated or selective schools, and certainly there is considerable anecdotal practitioner evidence to this effect, as well as concerns as to the impact of the Government Green Paper 'Support and Aspiration (DfE, 2011) on the more vulnerable members of our school communities. Whilst the lofty aspirations of the Every Child Matters Agenda (DfES, 2003a) may be attractive and supportive of some of the rights issues relating to inclusion how this evidences in practice remains to be seen in the wake of Ofsted's seemingly relentless pursuit of increased academic performance (Ofsted, 2011). As Allan suggests following her substantial reviews of inclusive education practice in Scotland and Australia one of the most significant challenges to inclusion may well be such:

 "misalignments within the system which work against social justice, equality and inclusion" (p176, Allan, 2003.)

So whilst there are compelling contemporary, higher level social and political drivers supporting the concept of fairness, access, equality and inclusion in society regardless of race, gender, sexuality, and disability there remain considerable challenges to how 'inclusion' is understood and achieved within educational contexts. Not just as a consequence of a more complex and conflicted political environment, but equally challenging is the association it has come to have with the concept of special educational needs and disability.

Disability as a concept has travelled a similar journey to the politics of segregation and inclusion. Shakespeare et al. (2002), and Lindsay (2003) are amongst those who discuss the evolution of the concept of disability from a medical model which deals in deficit and 'within child/person' problems which need to be recognised, managed or remediated, to a more social model of disability. A model which suggests that there is a collective responsibility to live and work together and any difficulties experienced by individuals or groups are seen as a function of the environment. Such a model of disability is argued for by many who champion the inclusive rights of those with disability, including 'insider accounts' from disabled writers (see Oliver, 1996). There may be, of course, a middle ground which considers that for some children/young people there are inherent within child developmental issues which require consideration, but that understanding and responding to these issues has a moral and legal imperative for the communities of which they are a part. Weddell discussed this in 1997, and whilst his interactionist model has some face validity it still has the potential to categorise as different (or even oppress) some groups of children who are seen as 'special', different, or diagnosable.

In arguing for a social model of disability Oliver and Shakespeare clearly and helpfully put the spotlight on the potentially oppressive and exclusionary aspects of the medical model. However, as Shakespeare and Watson have more recently argued a 'strong' social model does exactly what the gender arguments did thirty years ago, it fails to recognise that people are in fact different from each other. In moving forward they suggest that we should adopt an 'embodied' model of disability which suggests that we are all impaired to some degree,

that society is better at responding to the impairments of some, and in this framework, adaptations (or accommodations) for others is therefore significantly and importantly an issue of degree, not category. This is a potentially helpful approach for schools particularly when we think about the research of Croll and Moses (2000) which noted that most respondents had some ideas of categories of pupils with additional needs who might not be able to be included, which were different from those who could be,

However, despite these philosophical discussions, within the United Kingdom the issue of inclusion in schools still remains closely aligned with special educational needs and disability; an association with inherent tensions. A situation that is likely to be increasingly apparent with the proposed introduction of the Education, Health and Care plans replacing statements of special educational needs (DfE, 2011) and a focus on within child assessment of need. As educational professionals and schools when required to describe our policies and practice around inclusion and equality we speak/write as though we ascribe to a social model of disability. However, in reality most schools still occupy a space where special educational needs and inclusion are used almost interchangeably and much practice guidance and legislation holds a medical, deficit model of disability: The Warnock report suggested a figure of about 20% of children/young people with some degree of special educational needs (DES, 1978) and in order to support schools to manage these children/young people a raft of helpful publications have been produced including; 'Meeting SEN: A programme for action'(DfEE, 1997), and 'Inclusive Schooling; Children with SEN' (DfEE, 2001), 'Removing Barriers to Achievement' (DfES, 2004), and 'The Inclusion Development Programme'(DCSF, 2009) whose three units focussed on particular categories of need or disability. There is confusion (or as Allen would suggest 'misalignment') between the principles of equality and emancipation, and practice which often seeks to remediate for specific groups. The language used in these documents may not be helpful in terms of celebrating diversity, and may again unintentionally serve to define and maintain difference (Foucoult, 1991).

The labelling of a group of children/young people, however large or small, as having special educational needs (SEN) that require some kind of targeted intervention colludes with a medical defecit model and also has the potential of reducing inclusion to a simple linear problem solve, remediate and 'fix' (or 'narrow the gap'). The fact that often detailed 'expert' assessments of the child are requested by parents or school staff who then request 'special support' can further confound the potential for inclusion being a locally constructed community response and responsibility.

School staff often report that they feel ill equipped to deal with the needs of a particular group or individual, children and young people on the autism spectrum being a case in point. For example, Rose used case scenarios to prompt comment from teachers in interview and highlighting their views and concerns about including pupils with special educational needs. Teachers reported that they felt ill equipped and needed additional support, training, and more time for planning. Although in asking school staff what they felt about a 'special' group of children with examples highlighting quite complex medical conditions in some cases this response may not have been unexpected (Rose, 2001). Rose did not, however, agree that the factors described by the teachers would make the difference Rose, and Thomas and Loxley have argued that the many professionals involved in special education with their 'specialist ' knowledge base and specialist assessments has unintentionally served to increase the anxiety of regular education professionals about their ability to be inclusive. And coming to this same conclusion Osborne et al., (2001) noted that teachers who feel confident about their skills tend to be more inclusive. Exploration of this theme in Allan's broad based research would also support the view that experts being called on to provide specialist assessments, scripts for action, and definitive solutions have not in fact led to increased participation and inclusive practice, an idea explored further within this study (Allan, 2003).

So what then has research and reflection in the area of inclusion suggested might be helpful in supporting practice?

SEN is historically about the child (not the school) having the need whereas inclusion understood within a more emancipatory framework may be more accurately understood as

accommodations being made by the organisation or community. I would suggest that there are ways to share 'expertise', as opposed to being seen as 'the expert', and at the same time recognise the knowledge, skills and expertise of other players such as parents, the student themselves, and school based staff. A number of researchers in the area, for example Schon (1987), Allan (2003) and Avramidis (2005) suggest that the challenge for some professionals in moving beyond being '**the** expert' remains great, but is required if we agree with Booth and Aiscow (2002) that the concept of inclusion can only move beyond aspiration and occur in practice if the meaning and response is constructed at a local level. I would suggest that this would require a shift from a visiting professional being someone seen as being 'powerful' and having the absolute solutions to problems and commanding appropriate professional respect and salary, to being a facilitator who shares power and mutual respect with other players within complex scenarios where there is uncertainty of both problem and solution.

I would also suggest that such a shift would include the argument that we need to empower and enable all teachers to understand the issues and feel it is their business. Slee (2001) and Allan both suggest that supporting regular education professionals in regular schools to consider the issues both in terms of rights and also more pragmatically in terms of practice does have an impact on pedagogy. For Slee whose reflections on pedagogy over time led him to reflect that inclusion occurs as a function of those in the community and that it is as much about culture and ethos as anything else. He argues that to offer 'specialist training in SEN areas' is counter productive, an idea shared to some extent by Rose (2001). So what might be helpful? Allan describes the essential features required to move the debate forward; she suggests that teachers need to be politically aware, listen to pupils and their parents about what inclusion feels like for them, and also reflect on what it means for them personally and professionally (Allan, 2003). Allan, Slee, and Thomas and Loxley all acknowledge that there is no one simple solution, but there is a need for debate and critical reflection, encouraging staff to really think about what inclusion means for them and to move away from overarching grand theories. Rose joins them in arguing for local reflection and encouraging education professionals to think not about pupil deficits but more about the classroom environment and community accommodations. A subtle but important

dimension with the locus of activity being at the level of the organisation rather than the focus of 'rights' being applied to a particular group.

So the need to think beyond the word 'inclusion' and have critical debate about what it means and how it can be achieved at a local level seems appropriate. However, in order to have meaningful discussions about whether inclusion is happening, and whether it is effective it has been argued that regular school professionals as well as academics and visiting professionals to schools must reflect on what it is they are considering. Is 'it' about rights or about what is happening educationally? Lindsay (2003) suggests that we should be considering both the issue of the rights of the child *and* their effective education. Or as Croll and Moses (2000), discuss where is the balance point between the human rights agenda, and the rights of an individual to an appropriate and effective education.

Symes and Humphrey undertook extensive research in 4 schools across a number of Local Authorities in the United Kingdom exploring with young people on the autism spectrum and staff in their schools their ideas about inclusion and what it felt like for them. They have adopted Booth and Ainscow's conceptualisation of 'inclusion' relating it to 'presence, participation, acceptance and achievement' (Symes and Humphrey, 2011). In engaging in critical debate and reflection with all stakeholders I will suggest that these dimensions offer a 'good enough' working definition that can hold the ideas of a 'right' to be present, but also enables some qualitative discussion in terms of what is happening and how it feels for those involved, or perhaps accommodates their theories about what constitutes an appropriate or effective education.

I have spent some time exploring the issues of rights and why it is neither possible nor desirable to have a scripted, top down definition of inclusion. However, considering the points made about the rights of children to be included **and** also to receive an appropriate education are there any issues, patterns or trends that emerge and which can inform practice?

2.1.3 Inclusive school practice and the currency of outcomes

Dyson and Gallanaughs' research suggests that there are conflicting views of inclusion policy and practice in schools, a state of affairs that is not surprising given the many dimensions and tensions outlined above (Gallannaugh and Dyson, 2003). However, this is not necessarily a problem if there is a clear and well understood rationale at a local level. Gallannaugh and Dyson do not, however, paint that picture. They suggest that the current politically driven 'standards agenda' is anti inclusive and has perhaps led to confusion and uncertainty. However, despite this apparent conflict, what do we know or think about outcomes, or what might be deemed to be an 'appropriate education' – and is there perhaps a clear and shared view here? Allan talks about the accountability culture where demonstrations of inclusive practice relate to describing the numbers of children present in mainstream schools, or a reduction in the number of statements of special educational needs (Allan, 2003), but this does not tell us about whether children and young people are participating and receiving a better education. In fact even the Salamanca Statement appears a little conflicted in this regard. Whilst requiring that all children have the same rights of access to education that takes account of the wide diversity of their characteristics and needs within regular schools, it also states that this 'provides an *effective* education to the *majority* of children'. But what about the others? Again we must ask the question, "what does this mean in practice?" How can we explore it, and what might we know?

There has been considerable debate for much of the last century, which continues, as to the relative merits of inclusive or segregated education. Certainly the Warnock Report (1978) and a number of sociologists and educationalists in the second half of the twentieth century described their observations and failures of special schools to provide appropriate education for a variety of different groups, have appropriately qualified staff, and suggest that they did little to add value in terms of producing better academic outcomes for pupils in secondary schools (see Rutter, 1967, Coard 1971, and Tomlinson, 1982,). However, much of the research evidence may have been anecdotal and may have been driven more by contemporary social and political beliefs. In fact it remains for some, for example Gallagher, that questions about 'outcomes' are irrelevant, the rights issues alone is worthy of merit, and nothing short of 'full inclusion' will do (Gallagher, 2001). However, if we

accept the position that inclusion should be about rights *and* effectiveness (about presence **and** participation, acceptance and achievement) then we must ask the question – what is the evidence for good outcomes as a consequence of inclusion, both in general, and also for children on the autism spectrum in particular?

Lindsay (2003) suggests that current research evidence;

"fails to provide clear evidence for the benefits of inclusion" (page 6).

He expands on this further in his meta review of over 1300 papers in peer reviewed journals which again failed to show evidence for increased effectiveness as a consequence of inclusive education in general (Lindsay, 2007). Four years later, and specifically considering these issues as they relate to pupils on the autism spectrum Osborne et al., (2011) suggests that:

 "The promotion and implementation of inclusive education has preceded substantial amounts of research into its success" (p 1254)

If we accept that inclusion has its roots in human rights and that inclusive education is about the rights of **all** children to access education we perhaps need to consider research which has a broader remit than just focussing on pupils with special educational needs. The large scale research projects undertaken by the University of Manchester (See Kalambouks et al., 2007, and Farrell et al., 2007) do just this. Farrell et al. considered very large scale data sets on pupil achievement (over 500,000 pupils) considering the progress of all pupils in schools and whether the proportion of pupils on 'school action plus' or with statements of special educational needs had an impact on achievement. They found that schools with higher proportions of students with SEN achieved as well, or in some cases better, than schools with lower levels of SEN. Whilst this study only focuses on academic achievement, possibly participation, but does not reflect on social acceptance, it does offer support to the idea that an inclusive school can promote good achievement for **all** of its pupils. A point reinforced in the literature review of Kalambouks et al. The more interesting question perhaps is 'how' they achieved this, an issue that will be picked up in a later section

But in determining whether an effective education has been received, I would suggest that there are other factors to consider, and in fact two large scale studies undertaken by Norah Frederickson and colleagues (Frederickson et al., 2004, and Frederickson et al., 2007) both suggest that the concept of 'good outcomes' is constructed differently by different stakeholders. Whilst both of these studies set out to measure outcomes of inclusion with something of an established idea of what they might be looking for, their research did cover a broader set of dimensions relating to attainment measures, and also social and emotional measures. They concluded in both instances that different groups; teachers, pupils and parents had somewhat different priorities when it came to what constituted a 'good outcome' Frederickson et al. suggests that what you might choose to consider and then measure as a 'good outcome' is very much dependent on who you ask (Frederickson et al., 2007). I think some caution needs to be exercised in terms of their detail of exactly what social acceptance might look like or feel like, or whether parents mean the same thing when they talk about academic achievement as teachers. However, what can be taken from these quite detailed studies is that one size in terms of what constitutes an 'effective education' does not fit all and we need to engage with the different stakeholders to understand what it means for them.

Ofsted suggests that measurements about 'effective inclusion' should include information about educational attainment, gains in self esteem, and evidence of improved relationships between pupils with SEN and their peers, but again fall short of saying how this might be achieved (OFSTED, 2002). The more recent Ofsted framework (Ofsted, 2011) has a much stronger requirement to report on the attainment of pupils with SEN, but this might not be the priority of pupils and parents according to Frederickson et al. Their research suggested that the priorities of pupils might be more related to emotional well being or social inclusion. This is borne out by Whitaker's qualitative research and systematic thematic analysis with parents of children on the autism spectrum whose priorities for education related to social skills, staff understanding, and their child's happiness (Whitaker, 2007). Humphrey and Lewis' detailed work with 20 pupils on the autism spectrum also supported the social aspects of school life as being a priority for them (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008a), again taking a more exploratory, local approach to enquiry about experiences of inclusion.

It would seem therefore that whilst it is hard to pre judge exactly the detail of an effective education we do have to acknowledge the social and political context in which we live. Research around outcomes also suggests that the dimensions we should be looking at relate not just to the attainment outcomes of children with SEN or on the autism spectrum , but a truly inclusive school should be considering the social and affective dimensions as experienced by all members of the community. Once again we are drawn to the conclusion that there are many different constructions about inclusion and what constitutes an 'effective' education and we need to be wary of grand over arching theories and we may well be better served to consider reflections about outcomes at a more local level of enquiry

2.1.4 Summary

The aim of this section has been to deconstruct the idea of inclusion in order to gain a better understanding of the concept. What has been achieved is awareness, through its deconstruction, that 'inclusion' is a complex, multi layered phenomena whose detail is socially constructed by members of the community in which it is occurring. It is neither simple nor linear and it has a complicated and powerful social and political history which needs to be understood within its current social and political context. Evidence of inclusion, what might constitute inclusive practice and consideration of outcomes needs to have regard to these, and also to its construction within the wider cultural context. It also needs to have regard to the social and political contexts of the individuals (staff, pupils, and families) and their local organisations and communities. In short to understand inclusion requires engagement, discussion and debate with pupils and teaching staff in order to develop shared understanding and construction. We need to move beyond both a medical model and a strong social model of disability to a more embodied approach where practice accommodations can be viewed as a matter of degree, not category. From this approach it might be more possible to develop practice that recognises the rights and needs of **all** members of the community and from which consideration of whether the educational practice and outcomes are 'effective' can be made. These issues appear to be generally evident to the inclusion of all pupils within a school community, but also have relevance to staff, parents, as well as pupils whose impairments are less well accommodated including those perhaps on the autism spectrum.

In the next section there will be a discussion as to how these issues and understandings about inclusion relate more specifically to the inclusion of children and young people described as been on the autism spectrum.

2.2 Autism and inclusion

The focus of this research project is the inclusion of pupils described as being on the autism spectrum into mainstream secondary schools. Given that inclusion is generally not a straightforward idea either in terms of theory or practice this section explores whether there are any specific, additional issues about the inclusion of this group of pupils? In this section we need to consider:

- The impact of the diagnostic label of autism spectrum, or 'autism spectrum *disorder*' on inclusion

- Research undertaken at both a national and local level of enquiry will also be considered in an attempt to make sense of the nature and scale of the issues and problems for this group of children and young people in terms of their inclusion

- Is there anything that can be known about process, practice and accommodations which might support their inclusion?

2.2.1 The label of 'autism spectrum'

In previous sections I have discussed the possible tensions between the concept of inclusion and linking this too closely with a 'medical model' of disability and descriptions of deficits, suggesting instead that an embodied model of disability may offer a helpful alternative framework. This model explicitly acknowledges individual differences and can lead to consideration of a range of adjustments and accommodations within a community. For some children and young people including those on the autism spectrum there are neuro-developmental differences that require consideration, or accommodations to be made.

However, how we as a society choose to describe or label these differences can have a significant impact both at an individual and community level.

A range of opinions and tensions around labels and descriptions are very evident within the autism spectrum community relating to trying to find the balance between the rights of individuals to be fully included in society and also sometimes needing something additional or different. Baron Cohen has advocated the use of the term autism spectrum *condition (ASC)* rather than autism spectrum *disorder (ASD)* (Baron-Cohen, 2002) in an attempt to move away from pathologising what many feel is a processing **difference** rather than necessarily **disorder.** Pragmatically, however, for some including the influential National Autistic Society the label ASC is seen as problematic, with them preferring instead the term ASD, as they feel ASC can minimise need and then reduce access to additional resources.

In this paper I will use the descriptive term 'autism spectrum ' and hopefully avoid contention and judgement as to whether a person should be considered as having needs so significant as to be 'disordered' and enables discussions about differences and accommodations to be a matter of degree rather than category . This is consistent with an embodied model of disability and also through highlighting difference rather than disability this may serve to support inclusion in the sense where diversity is valued. Such a view may also avoid an overly negative connotation through the use of labelling (Focault, 1991).

2.2.2 Educating pupils on the autism spectrum

The issue of value judgements and labelling aside, what is frequently reported , however, is the high degree of concern expressed by school staff as to the challenges of teaching and including pupils on the autism spectrum (Humphrey, 2008), and the concern of Local Authorities as to the growing numbers of pupils in schools with a diagnosis of autism, and the increasing number of tribunals of special educational needs for this group (Loynes, 2001).

Although in reflecting on their findings one must acknowledge that the National Autistic Society has a vested interest in raising issues of concern for this group of people to prompt action, they undertook a substantial survey of their members the results of which highlighted the variation, (and perhaps balance in the findings) in satisfaction with the education offered to their children (Barnard et al., 2000). Certainly many of the responses received were positive with many parents of younger children in the early years and primary sectors being generally satisfied with their child's education. However, this number decreased sharply as their children entered into secondary school. Findings consistent with Lindsey and Dockrells' recent report looking at the impact of language and communication difficulties on pupil's social, emotional and behavioural presentation (DfE, 2012). In the NAS report parents were most satisfied when the teachers had some specialist knowledge, and that their child's uniqueness was understood and recognised. What this research seems to be saying is that parents wanted staff to know something about the processing differences and accommodations that related to the autism spectrum, but also to understand at a local level what that meant for their child, and their context. What we don't know from this research is when parents were satisfied what did this look like in practice and what were the conditions that facilitated such practice?

The need for specialist autism knowledge and training is referenced in many documents produced by the National Autistic Society (Barnard, 2000, Batten, 2005), the All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism (Loynes, 2001), and the Autism Education Trust (AET, 2012). Knowledge and training in terms of general awareness raising and information about the autism spectrum linking perhaps to parental hopes that teachers have some specialist knowledge. However, whilst acknowledging that there may be some crucial, general pieces of information and accommodations that seem to be generally helpful about the autism spectrum we must be cautious about making the needs of these young people too special and, as discussed before, inadvertently de-skilling regular teachers and reducing required knowledge of them to a simple handbook and ignoring their individuality. Indeed there have been many publications and training opportunities available to teaching staff, and which have been available for some time. For example the Autism Spectrum Disorder

Good Practice Guidance (DfES, 2002), the North West Regional SEN Partnership file for Key Stage 3 which is full of excellent tips and strategies (Connelly, 2004), the Inclusion Development Programme: Autism Spectrum (DCSF, 2009), and most recently the training and competency frameworks developed by the Autism Education Trust supported by the Department for Education (AET, 2012). However, the impact of these publications on teacher practice or pupil experience to date seems limited.

The significant research projects of Osborne et al., (2011) and Humphrey (2008) engaging with pupils, school staff and their families about their experiences are both clear in that pupil experiences are variable and often problematic for all concerned, and that more work needs to be done to improve practice in schools. What is perhaps lacking is consideration of the *process* of how any available information about practice might be made relevant for diverse students and the diverse schools which they attend. A problematic issue as Allen (2003), Slee (2001), and Rose (2001) have suggested in their discussions about inclusion more generally, that 'top down' scripted responses and prescriptions from experts about 'what to do' do not seem to promote inclusion.

Indeed, the dangers of having an overly scripted response to the needs of this group was highlighted sharply to me during a conference attended in 2009. A presentation by a group of young men and women attending the local ESPA (European Services for People with Autism) college and all of whom were officially diagnosed as having 'social communication difficulties', and who were coincidentally extremely effective in communicating their views. They expressed frustration that just because a professional had read a book on autism or attended a course did not mean that they and their strengths and needs were known. For these young people 'inclusion' could not be achieved by discussing their diagnosis and the provision of general information, but rather constructing it with them through getting to know them and developing a better understanding of them and their context, a sentiment helpfully echoed in the governments strategy for adults with autism 'Fulfilling and rewarding lives' (DoH, 2010).

So, we must be cautious about general prescriptions which diminish our ability to be aware of and respond to the uniqueness of each young person and their context. So what might be helpful? In a report prepared by the National Autistic Society, Batten takes us right back to the rights issues and the principles of inclusion relating to accommodations being made by the school community and concludes that we need to be thinking about adjusting the school environment and teaching practice across the whole organisation but being aware of the specific needs of pupils with an ASD (Batten, 2005). The government document 'Removing Barriers to Achievement' also emphasises the responsibilities of **all** teaching staff to be equipped with the skills to teach children with special educational needs, again highlighting the specific needs of the sub group of SEN (DfES, 2004). Jordan, however, writing specifically about students on the autism spectrum, argues that in fact a truly inclusive organisation where equity is achieved will need to be sufficiently flexible to teach all children as individuals, a sentiment which has most resonance with the original ideals of the original Salamanca Statement and an embodied model of disability (Jordan, 2008). This idea is also supported by the research data offered by Farrell et al., (2007) who noted that schools that achieved 'good' results for pupils with SEN (including those on the autism spectrum) were generally flexible and achieved 'good' results for all of their pupils.

2.2.3 What might good or effective inclusive practice look like for pupils on the autism spectrum?

So, for children and young people on the autism spectrum the same issues with reference to inclusion being socially constructed by them and their communities, being related to the rights of the individual, recognising that like all of us there are some processing differences that require accommodation, and that accommodations are required across a school organisation are apparent. But what about the goals of effective education for pupils on the autism spectrum? Are the same issues as are generally apparent for inclusion relevant? The simple answer is 'yes', and again seeking an answer to the question of what constitutes 'effective inclusive education' for pupils on the spectrum seems to relate to who you ask and their perspective:

Eaves and Ho report research findings from the United States that seem to suggest there is some historic evidence that pupils on the autism spectrum can do better socially and behaviourally within mainstream school contexts. However, their direct research did not support this, in fact their research yielded some evidence of improved academic outcomes but not in terms of peer relationships (Eaves and Ho, 1997). Although they undertook detailed assessment work with 76 children on the autism spectrum one has to wonder as to the validity of administering standardised tests of ability and social and academic performance to such a diverse group of students as they describe in their report. However, even taking these methodological reservations into account what their research does effectively highlight is there are considerable variations in academic performance between different pupils with the same diagnostic label, but with many of the pupils involved in the research appearing to present with behaviour management challenges.

The picture as to real difficulties with social and behavioural outcomes is also apparent in a number of United Kingdom Studies. Batten, (2005) undertook research on behalf of the National Autistic Society and found that 21% of children on the spectrum had been excluded; a statistic five times higher then their peers. A picture also supported by the work of Osborne and Reed (2011)who comment on reported social, emotional and behavioural difficulties for this group. Again they worked with pupils, school staff and parents, using some apriori constructions about inclusion outcomes, but also using some interview techniques to emerge qualitative data and constructions. Again what is interesting in their work is their discussion of previous research into 'what works' for pupils on the autism spectrum. They report a number of research studies who variously report 'better outcomes' across social and academic domains for pupils attending specialised placements, or in small classes, or small schools, or medium sized schools, whilst other studies have found entirely the opposite results (Osborne and Reed, 2011). What they argue for is a more 'finely grained' analysis' so we can generally 'do better' in our schools in terms of a range of inclusion dimensions including presence, participation, acceptance and achievement.

As for a focus on pupils' experiences and perspectives Humphrey and Lewis used a range of generative techniques in their detailed research to establish the views and experiences of young people on the autism spectrum in mainstream secondary schools. They too highlight considerable difficulties in all areas of school life (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008b). But interestingly for some of the young people what they really wanted from their education was to 'be normal' , or to be supported in a way that doesn't make them feel different (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008a).

The 'outcomes' from larger scale research studies (see the NAS, and APPGA reports, op. cit.), talking to young people on the spectrum (see Humphrey and Lewis) and also insight from personal accounts (see Sainsbury, 2000) often talk about the negative outcomes of educational experiences in terms of bullying, social isolation, and anxiety for pupils. Whitaker researched the views specifically of parents with reference to what they wanted in terms of their child's education. He sought the views of all parents within a local authority who had a child on the autism spectrum through questionnaire which presumably enabled a representative sample to be achieved, unlike reports based on the responses of members from a campaigning organisation. What he found was that good outcomes for these parents related to progress in social skills, happiness, settled behaviour, for staff to understood their child's differences, to offer structure and to talk to them as parents who might have some insight (Whitaker, 2007). A somewhat different perspective to that taken by central government with progress and positive outcomes often being described more narrowly in terms of curriculum achievement.

So I would argue that for pupils on the autism spectrum 'measuring' or eliciting the essential outcomes and effectiveness measures of inclusion is not a simple, single dimensional phenomena and, as is the case for other groups, different stakeholders may well have very different views.

So from what has emerged from the large scale research, smaller scale studies and personal accounts how then might it be possible to move forward and support the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum? There is a call for training and information to skill up the work force – but this is already available. Humphrey and Lewis (2008), and Osborne et al., (2011) suggest there needs to be more research into the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum into mainstream secondary schools, specifically about what works, how, and why. Humphrey has in fact begun to distil a 'list' of key factors which might be helpful (Humphrey, 2008) which includes; challenging stereotypes and raising expectations, enhancing routine and predictability, promoting peer understanding, developing social skills and adapting academic subjects. Similarly, Tobias' research from a small scale action research study using a focus group approach with 3 students on the spectrum concludes that there are some key issues around ethos, supports and interventions that are helpful in supporting inclusion for pupils with autism (Tobias, 2009).

In their study Osborne et al., (op. cit.) sought information from ten English Local authorities interviewing 100 secondary age pupils with a diagnosis of asd and statements of special educational needs, their parents, and professionals in order to distil out what the problems might be and 'what works'. Their research highlighted that the majority of the pupils concerned experienced some social, emotional and behavioural issues. They found that school and class size did not contribute significantly to their successful participation and inclusion. However, their behavioural and emotional needs were effectively managed through the use of support assistants, pupils had a greater sense of belonging when their teachers perceived that they had been trained and were competent, and there were a generally higher level of pupils with statements of SEN within the school. Interestingly the close use of support assistants was felt to be a barrier to developing peer social skills.

However, whilst all of these studies share some interesting insights into pupil, teacher and parental perceptions and what has been shown to be more or less effective in hindsight, there is little or no commentary given as to *how* this might be achieved elsewhere. Providing this kind of helpful, 'what to do' information may be necessary, but the

equivocal research evidence from both large and small scale studies, positivist and qualitative, suggests that this does not appear to be sufficient in terms of understanding how a school might become 'inclusive'.

In beginning to consider 'how' this might be achieved it is perhaps worth considering Grieve's work which reflected on teacher beliefs and attitudes about including pupils with 'inappropriate behaviour'. Her conclusions have resonance when considering the issues around promoting inclusion for pupils on the autism spectrum, some of whom may present with behaviours which are challenging (Grieve, 2009). She argues that visiting professionals need to support teachers to work together to challenge their belief systems and then change can occur. Her research also suggests limitations to traditional training models when dealing with complex socially constructed phenomena such as inclusion. She notes that:

"Teachers need safe yet demanding contexts within which to explore their own attitudes towards, and beliefs about, diversity. This would stand alongside the more traditional CPD concerned with the development of appropriate teaching approaches and strategies. Such CPD could be planned to accommodate the inherent complexity of inclusive education, rather than relying on a standards, competency based approach" (Grieve, 2009, p 178)

So, if inclusion for pupils on the autism spectrum has different meanings for different stakeholders and what constitutes an 'effective education' also depends on who you ask we might again we want to move away from grand overarching theories (Slee, 2001) and consequent generalised and imported 'to do' lists for schools and perhaps begin to think differently. In fact, I would suggest that the traditional 'stand and deliver' approaches to imparting knowledge (or satisfying the request for training) seldom has a long term impact on what actually happens in schools and classrooms (see also Stein et al., 1999). The key issues seem to be about developing knowledge, exploring practice and beliefs, and constructing relevant accommodations with those in a community. The way forward does not then seem to be what to do – but rather what are the conditions that might prevail in supporting or encouraging a community to do it!

2.2.4 Summary

In this section we have discussed issues to do with the label of 'ASD' and whether this in some way may be a barrier to inclusion. We have also highlighted a catalogue of concerns relating to the educational experiences of children and young people on the autism spectrum. But what has also emerged is that there is not necessarily a single simple view as to what a 'good experience' might be and there are sometimes conflicting priorities within schools, government policies and the perceptions of pupils, parents and professionals as to whether achievement or social integration should be prioritised. There is also an increasing amount of research available giving powerful information about the experiences of pupils on the autism spectrum in schools, particularly secondary schools, and a distillation of the kinds of practice and organisational features that correlate with strengths and difficulties. However, sharing this information through training or resource packs does not seem to be enough, there remains a high level of concern from all quarters as to meeting the needs of this group of students more generally. What is emerging, however, is that the concept of inclusion, of feeling like you belong and that things are going well, happens at a local level and requires a community response. One size, one prescription taken from a list of good practice does not seem to 'fit all', or be heard and translated into the practice, culture and behaviour of those in schools and classrooms.

I would suggest that the question that needs to be explored next is how then can a school community be supported to become inclusive, to make appropriate accommodations, and what processes might be at play?

2.3 Supporting schools as learning organisations

It is likely that if you ask individual teachers, look at school and LA policies, and also at current legislation it would appear that 'inclusion' has the status of a shared and undisputed goal. We also have research, information and guidance from a range of reputable sources generating lists of ideas about what you need to do to effectively include students who are on the autism spectrum in schools. However, what has emerged from the discussion above

is that the concept of 'inclusion' might not have a shared meaning and what is meant by the term is likely to differ depending on who you ask and in what context. What is also apparent is that despite apparently good intentions and advice there is a great deal of expressed and actual concerns that this is generally a difficult group to include and also, and perhaps more interestingly, it (inclusion) occurs sometimes and not others?

So what is going on? Is it perhaps that individuals who are on the autism spectrum are exactly that; 'individuals', and the schools which they attend are each individual organisations comprised of individual members of staff with a diverse group of pupils in their own social, political, geographic and economic context. Any attempts to support practice that facilitates the inclusion of pupils who are on the autism spectrum, to make appropriate accommodations, must acknowledge this. So, considering all that has been discussed about developing inclusive practice and the autism spectrum it seems important in moving forward to acknowledge that:

- School policies and policy makers claim to want to be (or that they are) inclusive

- A variety of accommodations are required for everyone in a community, and for some individuals there needs to be more accommodations made

- Traditional training approaches do not impact on sustained change in practice

- A visit professional providing a list of 'what works', doesn't seem to work

- Facilitating inclusion needs to engage with, challenge and motivate all in the community

- A local level of activity is required that works to co-construct theories of inclusion and appropriate accommodations

In moving forward to think about how inclusive practice for pupils on the autism spectrum can be promoted moving it from a position of rhetoric about rights to a reality of practice, and to explore action at a local level of engagement and enquiry I will argue requires: consideration of what motivates individuals to feel competent and act, how it might be possible to get the individuals in a community to work together towards a commonly

expressed goal, and also how the experiences of inclusion can be understood through how the pupils in the organisation might relate to the process.

Consequently in this section I will explore:

- How individuals might be motivated to do something?
- How then do you motivate individuals and support development or change in an organisation?
- What might be said about engagement with the pupils?
- How these ideas might be applied to inclusion and the autism spectrum

2.3.1 How are individuals motivated to do something?

What motivates or acts as an impetus for change in an organisation such as a school? It could be a local level need or challenge, for example the arrival of a group of students with a diagnosis of autism, or it could be a more top down impetus, for example, a requirement to improve standards in reading. However, fundamental to the success, or not, of any idea or directive is the motivations and consequent actions of the staff who work in the organisation.

Motivation to do something, or not, is complicated. There may be some things in life for which we have a very high level of intrinsic motivation, there is no requirement to do it, we do it truly because we want to. However, it is probably fair to say that for many more things in life there is a degree of 'having to' do it. Going to work, managing pupils who are a little different or challenging including some on the autism spectrum may well fit into this category. Exploring the work of Self Determination theorists such as Ryan and Deci (2006), goal theorists (see Austin and Vancouver, 1996), solution focussed positive psychologists such as Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), and psychodynamic approaches (e.g. Hanko, 2002) all have some applicability when considering the concept of motivation and staff in school organisations which may be helpful in the discussion about the autism spectrum and inclusion.

Ryan and Deci have had considerable influence on the work of psychologists interested in motivation and goals and offer some insight in this context. They discuss a significant number of research studies into motivation and goals synthesizing them into a concept they call self determination theory (SDT). SDT argues that 'goals', or what one is going to be motivated to do, is the product of an individual's need for autonomy, feelings of competence, and relatedness, needs which can (and in this context should) be supported by the environmental context (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Supporting individuals to have efficacy in the workplace can motivate them to do what they have to /ought to do rather than just what they want (Deci and Ryan, 2008). At a school level it is interesting to think about this in terms of facilitating inclusive practice, acknowledging that this is very much in keeping with some of the findings of Osborne and Reed (2011) when they describe how staff feelings of agency and competence are some of the indicators of an autism inclusive school.

The concept of individual and organisational relatedness is also explored by Austin and Vancouver who again review a wide range of research studies. They discuss that the goals of individuals may well be different from the specific goals of an organisation, but that it is then important to establish and accommodate some relatedness between different goal sets in order to achieve action (Austin and Vancouver, 1996).

So whilst there are interesting theories about the nature of motivation and goals and what might be helpful to consider I am again left with the question of what does this actually translate into for practice in schools, and for the staff in schools. It feels as though we are back to the issue of a top down and interesting list of 'what works' or descriptions of key issues about motivation, but to move forward in terms of understanding the processes at play it is important to move on to explore what can be said about 'how' one might achieve this. Again this requires unpicking the detail at a local level of enquiry when the experiences of those involved can be emerged.

Truscott and Truscott take such a local, grounded approach in their research. They draw on the work and theories of positive psychologists, for example Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, (2000) and offer some interesting themes and processes in their detailed work with a group of teachers over time and their practice regarding literacy (Truscott and Truscott, 2004). If it is important to motivate staff and foster a feeling of connectedness with their organisation their explorations usefully suggest that solution oriented positive psychology process tools can support and motivate individuals, noting that it is in building on staff strengths and qualities that growth and development are fostered (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In positive psychology approaches there is a desire to recognise the individual perspective and competence which relates very much to SDT, whilst also being able to acknowledge and accommodate the complexity and the individual construction of goals within an organisational context. Truscott and Truscott describe the four key elements of positive psychological processes, which can be used with individuals and groups in schools to promote growth and development (Truscott and Truscott, 2004). These are:

a) developing social climates to foster strengths
b) Shifting teacher professional identity from unsuccessful practices to building knowledge and confidence
c) Conceptualising teachers as active decision makers
d) Using their social context and construction to sustain changes

Specifically, the work of Truscott and Truscott suggests that using positive psychology consultation methods can have a positive influence on teachers' motivation to work with what they describe as 'more difficult to teach' pupils, which might describe some pupils who are on the autism spectrum.

The focus of interest for Truscott et al. actually began with a focus on changing literacy practice but became more an analysis about organisational change. They engaged closely with teachers in what they describe as 'authentic contexts', creating a climate where teachers could explore and be challenged through solution oriented conversations. This links very much to the ideas already outlined, expressed by Grieve (2009) who suggests that staff need to be supported to challenge their belief systems in order to do things differently

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More recently the research of Davies et al., (2008) and that of Simm and Ingram, (2008) has also explored the use of solution oriented conversations to support change in practice. Both research studies utilise qualitative action research frameworks and again identified process themes in terms of the role of facilitative, collaborative conversations where teachers had the power to reflect on and develop their practice.

So in exploring this research about goals, motivation and positive psychology what begins to emerge is an essential focus on process, and facilitation, and a consequent shift in power, relationships and staff feelings of agency, competence, and efficacy to generate and sustain change in their practice. The question that follows from this when thinking about a concept like inclusion which requires a whole community response is how then might you develop a broader climate which fosters individuals to be motivated but within a complex organisational context?

2.3.2 How do you motivate individuals and support organisational change?

Within the realm of inclusion I have suggested that there are limited examples of how schools have grown inclusive practice. However, there are helpful patterns emerging from more general work on school development. Exploring research in this area draws parallels between the work of goal theorists with that of Harris for example, specifically referencing the importance of teacher involvement in decision making working towards shared goals in order to promote positive change and improvement in school organisations (Harris, 2008). Her extensive work in the area of school effectiveness also clearly references the need for a sense of agency in teachers which can be established through active engagement and collaboration with colleagues noting that the process of thinking about goals can effectively support the development of pathways to action.

Beginning to look at research which focuses on school improvement generally we can begin to see the possibility of how to link change and action at an organisational level with positive psychology and SDT as it applies to individuals. It is possible to see parallels in the

method and language of organisational change with that of SDT and the individual needs for autonomy or agency, being regarded as competent and influential enough to actively participate, and to relate to others in positively developing your organisation. What then is the research evidence base to suggest that this is possible, and is there anything that can be learnt that is useful to facilitating the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum in secondary schools?

Reynolds describes some of the problems with earlier school 'effectiveness' programmes which had a tendency to roll out policies that seemed to work in good schools with little or no regard to the context of another individual school (Reynolds, 1998). A sentiment shared by Hopkins who also decries traditional approaches which were 'top down'. Approaches which saw the school as a static unit and which failed to recognise their unique contexts and dynamic nature as organisations made up of individual pupils, members of staff and forming a unique community with a unique context (Hopkins, 2001). The design and roll out of attempts to facilitate the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum appear guilty of the same failings; offering grand lists of what constitutes good practice and then attempting to roll out good practice for example via the 'Inclusion Development Programme' (2009), or the 'Good Practice Guidance' (2002), or the more recent Autism Education Trust materials with their standards and competency lists (2012). Failings that may also be levied at the smaller scale studies, for example, Humphreys (2008), Tobias (2009) or Osborne et al., (2011) which emerge local perspectives and patterns but then again appear to suggest that these should simply be adopted by other schools.

However, general school effectiveness research and methods appear to have matured and there are many examples of effective practice which now appear to have grasped the need to 'grow' collaborative approaches albeit within a culture of internal accountability and collaboration, ideas which could be helpful when thinking about autism and inclusion. The model proposed by Harris and Chapman suggests that schools who have a high capacity to develop and grow are supported not by standardised solutions dropped on them, but through approaches which respect diversity, variability and complexity (Harris and

Chapman, 2004). A perspective in fact recognised by the previous Government, but not in an educational context, but in the work undertaken by the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal which explicitly referenced the necessity of an approach that was not based on an imposed framework but rather achieved success through the participation and co-operation of local communities (Amion Consultants, 2010). This feels very much in keeping with some of the early thinking relating to inclusion (for example, Booth and Ainscow, 2002).

An interesting development to this line of thinking that encapsulates the concepts outlined within motivational theory, positive psychology, and more contemporary views of school development is described by a number of researchers and practitioners exploring schools as learning organisations. There are a number of larger and smaller scale studies which helpfully begin to explore the *process* of school change, and not just what a 'satisfactory' end product should look like: For example, Silins and Mulford discuss the concept of schools as 'learning organisations' (Silins and Mulford, 2004). Their analysis of data from over two thousand teachers in 96 schools as part of the Australian LOLSO Project (Leadership for Organisational Learning and Student Outcomes) supports the notion of school staff working together as part of an organisation with shared goals. They note that schools who are effective learning organisations empower staff, enable them to feel effective, and to work collaboratively with their colleagues. From their research they suggest that one of the greatest predictors of student participation in school is what teachers do in the classroom. This large scale exploratory research recognises the core needs in terms of individual motivational theory but then applied within a whole school context.

But how do you actually *do* this? Exploring this question again seems to need a more local level of enquiry. We need to explore the detail of schools becoming learning organisations and moving away from more traditional models of training/development where typically an officer of the LA will lead an event that may lead to policy change, but will not necessarily have any impact on practice. Reeves and Boreham describe how within one Local Authority in Scotland schools have been supported to learn as organisations (Reeves and

Boreham, 2006). Their research suggests that learning in complex organisations is socially constructed and crucially related to that social context and active participation from those within that context. Their work draws on that of Engestrom and Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2000), where something new is added when people interact which then leads to changes in practice. In their research they describe the use of practitioner research and action enquiry systems set up within a school working towards a shared vision. I would suggest that there is also something interesting here about the balance of power in the relationships between them as facilitators with expertise, and the teachers as also having expertise and influence which supports change. They conclude that change in school organisations is complex, but possible, and it is the co constructing of practice through the interactions and relations which is important. A co-construction of practice linking very much to the ideas of Moore (2005) who argues for the role of narrative discourse within Educational Psychology practice with a facilitators main tool being the language and questions used.

The work of May offers a further example of a school organisation locally growing and developing effective practice. In his study he explored the processes which support sustained effective literacy practice in school. In this area there might be considered to be a 'body' of knowledge about what to do. However, what was crucial in May's research was not simply about imparting knowledge but rather a focus on how to achieve and sustain change and development over time (May, 2007). In his three phase model he describes how improvements need to be recognised and felt to be everyone's business suggesting that sharing information about individual students or groups of students is helpful. Having established a shared goal there is then the possibility of moving to phase two which is about staff developing attitudes leading to changing practice, and then phase three is the school having an agreed plan for sustainability. This model is interesting as again it builds very much on the participants shared constructions of context, strengths and needs of their individual school and those within, with as much emphasis being placed on process as 'content' or product.

All of these contemporary models acknowledge the complexity of change in large organisations, and avoid reaching for simplistic linear solutions or prescriptions. Whilst simple solutions with input and outputs that appear to be measurable are appealing they do not offer sustained system wide and system deep developments (see Hopkins, 2001), nor do they adequately reflect that schools are complex organisations. Senge (1993) and later Flood (1999) argue strongly that complex organisations including schools can be best understood through systematic reflection. In their descriptions of complexity theory they suggest that individuals in complex social contexts can come to terms with things that are local to them in time and space. This is contrasted with more strategic thinking which might attempt to consider things globally, rather like the 'grand overarching theories' discussed and dismissed by Slee (2001). Having regard to complexity theory does not mean that it is not possible to have a global shared vision within an organisation but does have something to say about the importance of local engagement and dialogue as part of that process. Research and development in complex organisations is seen as a continual process of reflective learning and essential to systemic organisational change is the need to view policy formulation and implementation as a linked and continual process across all levels of the system (Fulcher, 1989), or as Hopkins would say 'system wide and system deep'.

Having considered motivation and the pursuit of change and development at the level of the individual in an organisation, and also at an organisational level a common theme appears to be about having a goal or vision which leads to a sense of shared enterprise. A second crucial theme is to have a facilitative process that empowers, encourages challenge, reflection and a co-construction of practice through interaction. I have discussed the importance of a local level of enquiry and activity for the school staff but to date have said very little about working with the experiences of the pupils in a school community and whether they have any role to play in the process of growing inclusion?

2.3.3 What about engagement with the pupils?

There has recently been an increase in research studies exploring the merits and different ways of engaging with pupils in order to accommodate the ideas expressed within the

United Nations work on the rights of the child, and also in terms of school development practice:

If we accept the idea that each school is a complex and unique organisation made up of the people within, that is; teachers, support staff and pupils at the very least in considering change within the school there is an argument relating to 'rights' and equity that suggests an imperative for understanding the constructions of all members of that community, including the pupils (Busher, 2005). Fullan, however, expressed concern that although there is significant, socially expressed interest in providing equality of opportunity this does not often enough translate to engagement with pupils (Fullan, 2001). It may be that the imperative set down in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children to acknowledge and act on the views of the child has the same status as other ideas expressed within the Salamanca Statement; hard to argue with but seemingly more difficult to act on (Rose and Shevlin, 2004).

However, in addition to discussing the issue of rights there is also an argument that in considering developing practice there is a powerful argument for engaging with pupils. For example, Jeffrey and Woods (1997) highlighted that within school organisations pupils are not simply passive recipients of knowledge, rather they work alongside others in the community to co construct meaning;

If we accept that inclusion is a socially constructed phenomenon which can only be understood through the experiences of those in the community then engagement with the pupils has to be an essential feature of any efforts to explore and develop practice. And in fact some of those engaged in research into general school effectiveness, not specifically SEN, have noted that there is a positive relationship between schools who routinely engage with their students and their performance as learning organisations (see Gray et al., 1995, and May, 2007).

But has this research on either rights issues or a school effectiveness issues impacted significantly on practice as it relates to the process of developing inclusive practice for pupils including for those on the autism spectrum? Perhaps, but only in a limited sense: In the grounded, albeit small scale, action research study described by Barrett the power of using the accounts of pupils on the autism spectrum to gain the attention, generate shared goals and a shift in attitude and action is compelling. His description of these accounts being 'like dynamite going off in my head' highlights how powerful the use of 'insider narratives' can be in terms of providing impetus for change. Barrett also discusses the limitations of traditional approaches to training providing a list of strategies or a 'menu' treating those individuals with a shared diagnosis as being a homogeneous group. Instead his small scale research offers a powerful insight into the role of 'insider accounts' in developing a narrative discourse that leads to staff feelings of empathy, understanding and can prompt change in practice within individual school contexts (Barrett, 2006).

This point is further enhanced by the work of Humphrey in his ESRC funded research into the perspective of pupils on the autism spectrum where the perspective and views of pupils have been sought specifically in order to identify the opportunities and challenges faced by the inclusion of this heterogeneous group of pupils in secondary schools (Humphrey, 2008). What is not clear, however, is how this is then used to support change. Again, as with the work of Barrett, the stories direct from pupils does not fail to create an impression. Of course, the question then remains as to *how* this might be used to effect change?

2.3.4 Summary

So in considering how to support schools to develop practice as learning organisations I have questioned the value of traditional models of training which view schools as static organisations where knowledge about 'good practice' is imparted with the hope that a change in policy will lead to change in practice that is positive, shared and sustained across an organisation.

I have also explored a range of research studies which have recognised that individuals need to feel empowered, autonomous, effective, and connected in order to be motivated, and have recognised the importance of positive, solution oriented psychological approaches in this process. It has also been established that these individual needs can be accommodated within contemporary approaches to developing effective schools. Approaches which acknowledge complexity and recognise that it is important to ally individual and organisational goals and that there may not be a single simple answer that can be generalized to form a 'product' with validity when shared between organisations, and that clearly 'one size' does not fit all.

An exploration of the research literature has also led me to conclude that organisational change that is 'system wide and system deep' requires an impetus for change, and in the case of inclusion there has been an argument made that the perspectives of pupils should contribute to this.

The next question to be explored is whether in empowering schools to 'grow' their own inclusive practice for pupils on the autism spectrum some external facilitation is required, and if so what does the literature say about the role of EPs in this?

2.4 Facilitation and the role of an Educational Psychologist

In previous sections I have explored a range of large and small scale studies reflecting on the process of organisational change, all of which have employed some external facilitation (see for example; Davies, 2008, Simm and Ingram, 2008, and Silin and Milford, 2004). The literature explored suggests that in order to achieve engagement and organisational change facilitation through consultation conversations which enables a co-construction of ideas through reflection and challenge in a supportive climate is helpful (see Allen, 2004, and Grieve, 2009).

In reviewing literature on inclusion and disability I have argued that an embodied model of disability (Shakespeare et al., 2002) has the most potential in terms of acknowledging individual variation and difference, and offers a more socially just framework within which to consider and make appropriate accommodation in terms of degree not category.

In this final section of the literature review I will explore the issue of what an educational psychologist might be able to offer as facilitator using applied psychology techniques, and drawing on their expertise in the areas of child development, autism spectrum, and teaching and learning. The potential risks and threats in terms of expectations associated with the professional role and the need to be aware of potential power imbalances and the threat this poses to facilitating changes in practice at an individual and organisational level will also be discussed (see Truscott et al., 2004, and Reeves et al., 2006).I will also explore what opportunities and benefits there might be as a practicing psychologist to engage in action research, critical thinking and reflection as part of this practice.

2.4.1 An Educational Psychologist as facilitator of change

Earlier discussions have led to the conclusion that supporting the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum requires the recognition and acknowledgement of complexity, and understanding of the process of change in organisations; issues that are embedded in the content and tools of applied psychology. However, this requires a shift from being seen and presenting oneself professionally as an EP who is 'the expert' with 'the solution' to a problem, to being a professional with 'expertise' who can support individuals and organisations to positively change and develop.

This move to consider not just the content or script as to what needs to be done, but also the process of change is not recent in educational psychology and certainly has featured significantly within the work of many psychologists in recent years both formally and informally at an individual case work level. The work of Hanko beginning in the 1990's extended the discussion about facilitating positive change (including changing beliefs and practice) with groups of school staff to good effect (see Hanko, 2002). Her work on

psychodynamic approaches put the psychologist very much in a central facilitating role, a role which continues to be explored and which continues to generate positive outcomes in terms of challenging beliefs leading to changing practice within schools (see for example, Brown and Henderson, 2012). In reflecting on his research practice Moore also talks about the role of language with educational psychologists working collaboratively with individual colleagues in schools to generate change and alternative constructions (Moore op. cit.). Working at its best these conversations can appear effortless and there is a subtle integration of information about child development, organisational change and process (Pellegrini, 2009). However, Pellegrini argues that there are dangers in current EP interpretations of how to use positive psychology and warns against limiting its application to individual casework again highlighting its massive potential for work with complex systems, an idea which may have value when considering how to promote change in inclusion practice in school organisations.

Reflecting back to the discussions of Schon who considered the role of the 'expert' in school as opposed to the idea of a facilitator with 'expertise' (Schon, 1987), and Thomas and Loxley (2007) in terms of the dangers associated with using the terms 'inclusion' and 'special educational needs' almost interchangeably, what might be said abut the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) in schools. Most EPs would see they have a role to play in the facilitation of inclusion, but what do others see as their role? Undertaking 'expert' assessments? Facilitating process? Giving advice? Collaborating with pupils, parents and staff to generate understandings and explore solutions? The research undertaken by Davies et al., (2008) based on some of the whole school inclusion models generated originally by Ainscow used solution focussed action research methods facilitated by EPs in schools with school staff to promote inclusive practice at a general whole school level. They describe some positive change in inclusive practice occurring but interestingly they note that some of this occurred as a consequence of the conflict emerging from challenging perceived roles and the EP working alongside school staff rather than being the 'experts'.

So how can a school request for training from an 'expert' in autism (in this case myself as specialist EP) be reconciled with the ideas of co-construction of theories, changing practice, and shifting power relationships? I think that understanding my role in terms of having some expertise that will support the school community, but then working with its local knowledge and expertise in terms of generating accommodations within an embodied model of disability might be most helpful.

What expertise in addition to that relating to process and change might be helpful in terms of working within an embodied model of disability? Essentially children and young people on the autism spectrum do have some neuro-developmental differences that need a variety of accommodations made when thinking and planning their educational experiences. An Educational Psychologist has a long history of relevant training and experience relating from undergraduate to post graduate qualifications, and considerable teaching or child related professional experience which is relevant to understanding the autism spectrum. A set of knowledge and experiences that, when used well, forms some of the essential elements of the EP 'toolkit' and may well be helpful in terms of supporting members of a school community to explore what accommodations might be relevant to them. (see Farrell et al., 2006). However, as discussed it is important to recognise individuality within this group of students, and individuality in terms of their contexts and subsequent social constructions of 'inclusion', and local perspectives on all of these dimensions within the school organisations. I would suggest that facilitating inclusion cannot be achieved through a simple linear 'input-output' 'recipe book' or 'prescription' approach simply giving 'tips' about what to do, neither in terms of generating a whole school response nor in terms of the needs of individual students. A process that is collaborative, creative, dynamic and responsive to the local issues is required.

2.4.2 EP as researcher and what constitutes 'evidence'

At the outset I described my desire to be critically reflective of my practice and to explore my theories about my action. I have also explored the necessity of teachers being enabled to challenge their beliefs and explore their practice critically in the process of change:

essentially describing a practitioner action research approach to practice. However, in reality the role of the EP as researcher in LA's is possibly under used and what research there is is often in the guise of a traditional positivist approach to research. (Fox, 2003). However, in a more theory oriented approach to action research Ashton's research outlines how an EP can play a crucial role in collaborative school capacity development both as facilitator and evaluator (Ashton, 2007). Within this approach to research all stakeholders are enabled to share their constructions and theories, including the EP with their knowledge of child development and learning, towards action and evaluation. Given this I would suggest that working within the context of a political environment with an increasing and appropriate demand for 'evidence based practice' an educational psychologist is well placed to support developing understandings about process and systems in complex social contexts which appropriately provides evidence about current and future practice. Potentially helping to move away from the undesirable scenario outlined by Burdon that;

"Important decisions are been made about our educational system by politicians and their representatives on the basis of political dogma or current fashion rather than careful consideration of available evidence." P.13 (Burdon, 1997)

Gersch takes the discussion a step further and begins to describe how EP's effectively apply positive psychology to discover the factors which allow individuals and communities to thrive, enabling thinking about the professional role and opportunity for educational psychologists as researchers (Gersch, 2009). As Burdon described political and policy decisions are often based on political dogma or current fashion, and often claim to be based on evidence: claims that are seldom put under scrutiny. For example; asking what was the nature and extent of the research? What were the underpinning conceptual and epistemological frameworks? What can be said about its generalisability? Moore (2005) argues cogently that traditional positivist approaches to research which are based on technical rationality are not appropriate for complex socially constructed contexts. He argues that as a profession we need to take a postmodern perspective which offers an ontological appreciation of the complexity of the world. He suggests that EPs need to have a more clearly understood and articulated consideration of what constitutes the 'evidence' in evidence based practice, a point reiterated by the work of Fox (2011)

Clearly, or perhaps 'ideally', we need evidence on which to base current and future practice and also in order to monitor our efficacy. However, the nature of this evidence is often likely to be about emerging patterns and 'knowing' at a local level of enquiry. Fox notes that the challenge for EP's is to be clear about this and not to be tempted to do what he describes as the 'EP Flip'; that is claim to have a social constructionist perspective but then offer evidence that is presented in a 'pseudo positivist' style (Fox, 2003). Burdon's suggestion is very similar. He argues for EP's undertaking research in the 'real world' and generating 'evidence' which is about developing understandings which can then inform what happens next, understandings which Miller and Todd would suggest apply not just to outcome but also to process (Miller and Todd, 2002) and as such would seem useful to this context.

2.4.3 Summary

In this section we have discussed that educational psychologists can have a facilitation role within a school in terms of both the learning and developmental needs of individual pupils, but also in terms of the whole school context and organisation to create change. We have also recognised that EPs in schools have an excellent opportunity to systematically reflect on what is happening, including what they are doing and identify emerging patterns that can inform what happens next. In other words EPs are potentially well placed to undertake valuable action research on which to build further practice.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This literature review has aimed to unpick the meanings behind an invitation to undertake training to help a school include pupils with autism. It began with consideration of the concept of 'inclusion'. What has been highlighted is that it is not a simple concept. It has a significant social and political dimension which informs its almost unchallengeable status as a 'right'. However, this does not necessarily sit easily with other political agendas relating to outcomes and achievement. And if various stakeholders within the educational arena are consulted about the practice, outcomes, benefits or experience of inclusion;

including politicians, managers, school staff, pupils and parents, a wide variety of responses are likely to be given. This leaves a difficult question in terms of how then do you know it is occurring and equally how can you promote it? The answer it would seem has to be found at a local level of enquiry.

Next, the issue of inclusion and education of pupils on the autism spectrum was discussed. The literature has led me to conclude that the challenges for this group, and presented by this group, are significant however you choose to define their inclusion. However, again there is considerable individual variation in terms of the pupils within this population, and also in terms of their educational experiences. Some pupils seem to do ok, both socially and academically, whilst many others sadly do much less across a wide range of indicators. What is challenging is that despite a number of research studies eliciting the key factors that correlate with positive experiences for pupils on the autism spectrum and the active promotion of this good practice to anyone who will listen this does not seem to be sufficient to reduce concerns and instances of significant difficulty.

Discussion around the language of SEN, models of disability, and the mechanisms of additional funding and assessment suggests that these may have led inadvertently to a feeling that this group of pupils need something 'extra special', beyond the expertise of many classroom teachers. Yet what has been argued is that one of the best indicators of successful inclusion is when staff feel confident about their competencies, and able to be flexible and make appropriate accommodations for all students which they teach. Consideration of how to generate feelings of agency, competency and to motivate individuals within organisations has led me to suggest that we need to actively consider issues of process, not just content. That 'inclusion' is a right that cannot be challenged in a civilised society may have got in the way of open discussions and negotiations with involved parties as to when, how and why this might happen. The resulting 'top down' approach to supporting inclusive practice appears to have failed to keep up with current knowledge about organisational change and school effectiveness requiring a more 'locally grown' approach which recognises schools as dynamic and complex systems where

meanings and practice are co-constructed and power and influence are distributed through the system.

It has also been argued that with regard to the autism spectrum, teaching and learning, and organisational change EPs are well placed to facilitate good practice. Furthermore, in so doing EPs should use the opportunities afforded to them as part of their everyday practice to systematically reflect and research what works and identify emerging patterns that can be useful to their own professional practice and perhaps more widely.

So having unpicked and explored the theories and issues that might underpin my practice in response to a school request to train them to include pupils on the autism spectrum, the next chapter begins to look specifically at how this thinking might relate to what I do as a practicing EP; taking up this request and systematically exploring what might be required in the process of developing and growing inclusive practice for pupils on the autism spectrum in secondary schools. The next chapter will explore the aims of my subsequent research, specific research questions and my conceptual and methodological principles which underpin them.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Conceptual Framework

In this chapter I will consider the nature of the research to be undertaken and how I hope to address the ethical issues which require consideration. This will be a journey that will explore the importance of having a conceptual framework which allows for an ontological appreciation of the complexity of the world and aligns with an appropriate epistemological framework. I will also explore what might be considered 'key features' of such a framework which might enable me to undertake rigorous and trustworthy research and explore what this might mean in terms of generating evidence for future practice.

3.1 Research aims and questions

The aim of this research has, for me, always been grounded in my practice and the regularly apparent and very real issue of how to promote the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum within secondary schools. However, in deconstructing what this means for me, and the pupils, staff and families that I work with, as discussed in the previous chapters, I am faced with a number of questions, all of which merit consideration and will form the basis of my enquiry. These are:

- Firstly to consider: can you promote and 'grow' increasingly inclusive practice within an individual school for pupils on the autism spectrum?
- Secondly, to consider how a school, and its staff, might be supported to become more inclusive, and consideration of the processes which might be helpful to this?
- Thirdly, to consider what was my role as an educational psychologist in terms of the process and practice of supporting inclusion?

3.2 The nature of what I might know; the rationale for choosing a qualitative research paradigm

What then is the nature of the 'stuff' to be known? I have argued that the concept of inclusion is a complex and multi dimensional phenomena. It can only be understood within the context of a particular social and historical culture, and is in turn understood and given meaning by individuals in this cultural context from their own particular perspective and positions of power and influence, for example as a parent, professional or pupil. All of these multiple constructions give meaning to the concept, an understanding that takes us

away from a technical rational singular view of the world and into a realm which is much more complex. In understanding the views people hold about inclusion there is not a single underlying truth, or single rational explanation that can be uncovered about 'how' to include (all) pupils on the autism spectrum in (all) secondary schools that will then have predictive validity in a new context. The people in the community at the heart of this project are not objects to be observed but rather are participants in the process of constructing their theories. (Scott and Usher, 1996)

Therefore, as Moore (2005) suggests I need to consider a conceptual framework that can deal with such complexity. From the earlier deconstructions and discussions about the nature of 'inclusion' I would argue that there is some 'reality', but it is subtle and varies according to the perspective of who you ask and as such can only be understood through the experiences of those within the community (Snape and Spencer, 2003). What this means for my research questions is that the nature of what there is to be known must therefore requires engagement and exploration with those directly involved in that culture.

In accepting that any understandings are achieved through the interpretations, realities or 'theories' of the actors involved is essentially to take a socially constructed view of knowledge in which any meanings can only be understood by taking account of the perspectives of the participants. This concurs with Moore (op cit) who describes the limitations of attempts to generate a technical rational understanding of a complex social world and argues for explicit recognition of the role of discourse and language to generate understanding and meaning. However, within this conceptual framework there is debate and discussion as the nature of what can be known, there does not appear to be one single unifying theory.

In my explorations and reflections about my psychological perspective and having identified myself as a subtle realist I would suggest that what there is to be known is contingent on the multiple realities of those within the community. Given that the concept of inclusion relates to inclusion into a culture or community, some clarity about this perspective was offered to me in considering Engestrom's approach and Activity Theory

(Engestrom, 2000). In illustrating different conceptual positions he discusses Karl Weick's story of the umpires to describe different views about knowledge; describing a continuum between positivist realist approaches i.e. a foul ball is called when the umpire sees it, to a more socially constructed view that is illustrated when an umpire describes a 'foul' ball when he/she says it is. However, if one considers that the nature of what there is to know is contingent on the socially constructed meanings of *all* of the participants and observers in the activity of a community then Engestrom argues that an additional umpire is in fact needed. What is being explained as it relates to inclusion is that the nature of what is to be known is not dependant on the constructions of a single person (or umpire), rather it is related to the multiple and collected constructions of activity by those in the culture and community (or 'Activity System'), a view point consistent with that articulated by Snape and Spencer (2003).

However, as a practising EP acknowledging that the nature of what we are trying to understand is not a single static truth can lead to consternation in terms of what can then be claimed as 'evidence' on which to base future practice, or perhaps more accurately tensions in terms of what others might expect of evidence generated by an EP (Billington, 2005). This tension for EP practice, described by Fox in what he calls the 'EP flip', is when practising psychologists claim to have a socially constructionist perspective in their everyday practice but then attempt evaluation of socially constructed phenomena with imitations of positivist scientific methods that give 'an' answer (Fox, 2003). As suggested by Fox, as part of this research study I hope to give a clear and honest account of research practice which has a robust methodology but does not fall into this trap. As described by Attride -Stirling (2001) in her key work on research methods, a qualitative paradigm is suited to research which aims to generate understandings and inform future action, and is able to deal with complexity and socially constructed phenomena.

 "The value of qualitative research lies in its exploratory and explanatory power" p 403 (Attride-Stirling, 2001)

The aim of my research is about generating patterns, understandings and explanations that are formative, not summative, in nature and which may then inform future action and

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understanding in the first instance at a local level of enquiry. 'Evidence' which is not intended to 'prove' or validate educational practice but which can generate 'evidence' and knowledge with its roots in experience (Corcoran, 2007). As Ritchie and Lewis describe if one only considers evidence as relating to positivist 'facts' then many opportunities for learning and development are potentially missed (Lewis, 2003). In fact even the DfES concluded that they could find;

"no single objective definition of what constitutes good quality research" p2, (DfEE, 1998)

In adopting a qualitative research paradigm, and acknowledging that a key aspect of my research is to explore my practice within a school community what would constitute an appropriate methodology? Given that the study relates to a consideration of the multiple constructions of a range of participants in the culture it is important to acknowledge the complexity of the situation and that a linear input- output framework will not be appropriate. Or, in other words, setting up an experimental design which holds as many factors as possible constant, manipulates an independent (input) variable and then monitors the effect on the measured dependant (output) variable in a replicable methodological 'experiment' is neither possible nor appropriate (see Robson, 2002). Instead an approach which embraces complexity and acknowledges the local nature of the enquiry will be required. Thomas and Loxley begin to set the scene in their considerations of how we might think about research relating to inclusion:

"To examine why people don't fit, and to help organisations to enable them to fit, we have to understand them as people and to understand the people in the organisations which accept or reject them" Thomas and Loxley, (2007, p43)

They suggest that an appropriate method of enquiry needs to have an approach which accommodates people, groups, and organisations. They argue against grand theories arguing instead for local enquiry.

3.3 Exploring practitioner action research

In this section I will discuss the relevance of using a practitioner action research approach to my local level of enquiry and define what this means for me. I will also explore issues around what constitutes 'data' in this context including approaches to data collection and analysis and the need to employ systematic rigour in order to enhance the credibility of the research. However, before doing that I will share how, during the course of exploring appropriate methodological frameworks, I became drawn into work relating to theory based evaluations and the possibilities that such frameworks offer particularly in acknowledging the local theories of those in the community and how this has helped to shape my understandings of 'research' and 'data' in this project.

3.3.1 Exploring theory based evaluation approaches

An exploration of theory based approaches to evaluation appears to align with the underpinning psychology of my enquiry as well as confirming the legitimacy of the local nature of the activity. Although there are variations, theory based approaches to evaluation build on the premise that change in social contexts is socially mediated and requires an acknowledgement of local agency and appreciation of context. In discussing the value of theory of change approaches to methodology Stame helpfully describes what she calls 'the black box' approach to evaluation (Stame, 2004) . She suggests that in theory based evaluation one is not considering the input and output as you would in traditional positivist approaches to research, but it is the **processes** that lead to change that are actively being explored. Stame argues that in elaborating the assumptions, links between events, and engaging in narrative with all concerned parties it is possible for a researcher to help people understand their 'theories' and why something works or not. For the researcher to say not just that something happened, but also to explicitly consider what was going on that supported it to happen. What feels really helpful to my enquiry is to think about this approach in terms of inclusion. Not just about whether 'inclusion' happened or not, but more about the response of the actors in the community to the activities and what that did to their theories and associated practice.

Weiss (1997), a key figure in theory based evaluation approaches, drew on the work of Dewey (1933) who is often considered as the originator of locally based research which actively seeks to consider the experiences of the participants in a study. He describes how

the 'black box' is full of theories (individual assumptions and understandings) that are brought to light in the process of exploration with members of a community. Relating this back to earlier discussions about creating change in schools it is possible to see a relationship with the work of Grieve (2009) who describes the need to explore and challenge the beliefs and assumptions of teachers, and Hanko's work (2003) on the possibility of group narrative approaches in terms of changing practice. However, it is perhaps the theory based evaluation model outlined by Pawson and Tilley (1997) that might be most interesting to my enquiry relating to inclusion and autism. They describe how outcomes or change cannot be seen as relating simply to the content of a programme. They suggest that realistic evaluation considers the interplay between the content and the mechanism (process), and both are necessary. They assert that it is the response of people in their context, not the programme, which makes something change. An interesting point when one considers the limited success of simply having access to training programmes about the autism spectrum to change practice in schools (For example, The Inclusion Development Programme which was made available to all schools).

Stame argues that theory based evaluation approaches have been particularly useful in the evaluation of more complex community based initiatives and certainly this is the argument outlined by Dyson and Todd in their recent evaluation of Full Service Extended Schools Initiative. The type of research being discussed here is about describing, building a theory, shaping interventions and understandings. It is not about setting up an experimental design to validate or prove a point (Carnine and Gersten, 2000). However, it is research and not mere description. As Bassey notes it is not about just doing something that you have done before or following a 'hunch'. It is about definitely planning to do something and subjecting it to systematic and critical challenge (Bassey, 1992). This felt useful as an approach to my research and, as Dyson and Todd suggest purposeful activity implies a 'theory of action'. (Dyson and Todd, 2010). However, it is at this point that the limitations of time and scope in my study emerge. Given the relatively small scale nature of my study the 'Theory of Change' model they describe is perhaps suited to larger scale, longer term evaluations. However, the general ideas of theory based evaluation where the aim of activity might be rather loosely defined, and where the evaluation focuses on the process of

change as experienced by members of the community and their changing theories, does offer a helpful framework.

The next question for me as a researcher is what methods might allow me to explore the theories of those in a community, and the process of change (or 'what is in the black box?')?

3.3.2   An action research approach

In terms of getting into 'the black box' and reflecting on the process through the theories and actions of the players involved, one of the early protagonists of 'local enquiry' already mentioned is Dewey. His approaches aimed to be emancipatory in that he felt that scientific enquiry related to all aspects of human life, and that dualist notions distinguishing higher level theory from practice and experience were redundant. A view consistent with my approach in that my research is grounded very much in my practice and the practice and experiences of those in schools. His idea of 'local enquiry' might be viewed to sit very well to the concept of 'action research' an approach which also emerged in the first half of the last century (Lewin, 1946). Lewin outlined the approach whereby careful reflection on action could provide insight into further action. This spiralling of action, reflection, and further action, essentially a 'plan, do and review' approach, appears well suited to the concept of developing a school as a learning organisation, and informing future action within that, and possibly other, organisations (Kemmis and McTaggert, 1988).

With my research aims in mind the concept of action research appealed as I wanted to systematically reflect on my action/practice in a school, based on my earlier action and reflection, in order to inform my future action. I also wanted to involve the school staff in their own spiral of action and reflection, which would then inform their future action. This technique was used effectively by Simm and Ingram in their research which aimed to support school staff to develop their practice (Simm et al., 2008). It also aligns very well with goal theory (see Austin et al., 1996), motivational and positive psychology (see Ryan et al., 2008), school effectiveness research (see Reeves et al., 2006, and Silins et al., 2004), and theory based approaches (see Stame, 2004) discussed earlier. But what is action

research, and what constitutes good practice? I needed to be clear about what I was doing and understand how to plan for rigour and trustworthiness in my research, and in particular what might be the risks to be aware of in terms of my role as both practitioner and researcher.

McNiff and Whitehead suggest that;
"action research is systematic enquiry undertaken to improve a social situation and then made public" p.11 (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009).

They indicate that action research relates to identifying an issue that you want to explore, taking action, describing what you did, explaining the reason, and its significance for future action, and that the action is social action. However, others have a very different view: Hammersley debates the idea that in order for research to take place then there needs to be a clear distinction between the 'action' and the 'research' (Hammersley, 2004) and there is an unavoidable tension in considering them as equal dimensions. In contrast is the argument that a practitioner can also simultaneously be a researcher and in many instances the two are one and the same. Taylor, for example, suggests that both have the same methodological and conceptual framework in terms of undertaking action to gain knowledge and using existing knowledge to inform action and so on and so forth. It is in the systematic analysis of a situation in the situation that it becomes research (Taylor, 1994). A view also shared by Blaumfield et al., (2008) and which they have explored with a number of successful teacher practitioner action research projects. So, from my conceptual standpoint that change is seen as a product of the interplay and action between participants in the process, and given that as facilitator I am very much a participant in the process and the co-construction of change, my practitioner action research will follow the models described by explored by Taylor, Blaumfield et al., and Mc Niff et al.

However, as a practitioner who is involved in both action and research are there questions to answer about the reliability and validity, the objectivity and independence of the research? Being consistent with the understandings underpinning a qualitative conceptual framework offers a helpful route in answering these questions:

Snape and Spencer feel that in social research it is inevitable that the researcher is not independent of the research problem. Others who share a similar ontological perspective, such as Moore, and Dyson and Todd would argue that involvement is not just unavoidable but in fact is both necessary and desirable. Moore (2005) describes how change is created when a researcher (in this case the EP) and client/colleague work together to develop shared reality and work towards shared goals. He describes this as 'second order practice' and links it to the work of solution focussed approaches advocated by Miller and de Shazer (Miller and de Shazer, 2000). Dyson and Todd (2010) argue that the researcher and actors work together towards outcomes which are negotiated, and again from Theory of change working practices Ashton describes how the evaluator is also legitimately the facilitator of change (Ashton, 2007). And finally, Reeves and Boreham (2006) describe how practitioner research is about co-constructing activity and succeeding together. The action and evaluation are necessarily and intrinsically linked.

It is Ball, however, who several decades ago perhaps gives the clearest steer in terms of objectivity his view suggests that questions about 'objectivity' are simply not relevant. As the aim of the research is not to create a replicable study, we are dealing with complex systems and cannot pretend to exactly 'know the thing' that made the difference and can make the same difference elsewhere. In qualitative research which is focussing on socially constructed phenomena we are not being honest if we are claiming pseudo scientific objectivity (Ball, 1990). He suggests that what is needed is an acknowledgement that the data gathered is a product of the interface between researcher and researched, and as also noted by Henwood and Pidgeon, it is about being clear about the researcher impact on the context (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1995). This need for an explicit acknowledgement of the impact of the researcher and a clear conceptual framework which is systematically reflected on elevates action and description and brings it into the realm of systematic enquiry and research (Flood, 1999). In this methodological framework the concept of reliability may instead be conceptualised as 'trustworthiness' (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003), and validity replaced by 'understanding' (Maxwell, 92).

Having considered the possibilities offered by a theory based approach to evaluation, and aligned a research method of practitioner action research with my conceptual framework it

is also necessary to explore some of the issues relating to what might constitute data in an attempt to understand and undertake trustworthy research which might then generate understanding.

3.3.3 Data

The data which occurs in locally based research studies such as this can be either generated or naturally occurring but needs to be flexible enough to capture the experiences and perspectives of those involved (Ritchie, 2003). Moore (2005) describes the discourse which occurs between researcher and actor as being crucial in providing rich data sources with additional data sources including diaries and annotated notes from meetings etc.

The nature of the data to be collected is not necessarily neat and tidy in its presentation and one cannot seek information in overly prescribed or controlled ways more typical of traditional positivist research. There are, however, different approaches to data gathering. For example, grounded approaches (Glaser, 1992) are described as lacking a priori assumptions about peoples' thoughts, beliefs, and actions and use inductive techniques to draw out themes. However, given that there exist a range of views, albeit varied and related to the constructions of those involved, about what inclusion might be this is not necessarily going to be an approach used exclusively in this study. In fact, as Braun and Clarke (1996) suggest, many studies which claim to be grounded are probably not as the researchers must recognise that they are active in the process of analysis and will inevitably come to analysis with assumptions and theories. The claims of some researchers that in the absence of apriori assumptions themes simply 'emerge' is also criticised as this fails to acknowledge that data analysis is an active and interpretative process, and not just description.

 In this study I will be adopting what might be described as a more realist approach (see Braun et al., 2006, and Robson, 2002) and seek data using techniques including semi structured interviews with pupils and school staff based on some pre existing ideas which I would like to explore, and having my research questions in mind. However, I will also use other data sources such as my own reflections from my research diary and the naturally occurring comments of school staff as part of the project which will require a more

inductive approach to analysis. Hopefully, this will lead to the generation of potentially large amounts of data; often in the form of words, data that might be described as 'rich' or 'thick' and which will require systematic collection and analysis. Having multiple sources of data will also enhance understanding and trustworthiness as having several sources of information which confirm something (Ball 1990, Snape et al 2003), is more likely to generate insight and offer 'triangulation'.

A thematic approach to data analysis has been chosen as this offers a flexible approach to the systematic organisation and analysis of data from a range of sources but which does not require close adherence to a specific theoretical framework (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The nature of the research undertaken within this study is dynamic and as such a flexible but systematic tool for analysis is required. There is also an expectation that although specific questions and ideas are being explored there will also be some data which emerges naturally during the course of the study again requiring analysis which is theoretically flexible and transparent such as systematic thematic analysis.

Within this project it is my aim to gather data from as many sources as possible in order to explore the theories in the 'black box'. This will include initial feedback from all teaching staff, initial and final interviews with a group of pupils, interviews with the staff action researchers, my research diary notes during the project, and notes from a range of staff comments and discussions along the way. Braun and Clarke (2006), Miles and Huberman (1994) and Henwood and Pidgeon (1995) all emphasise the need for thematic data analysis to be systematic and transparent in order for the trustworthiness of the research to be enhanced. Miles and Huberman are helpful in that they describe the process of thematic analysis as '3 (*almost simultaneous*) flows of activity'. That is data reduction, display and conclusion drawing. However, given the detail described in Braun and Clarke's process and the explicit reference to their method with regard to psychology research theirs is perhaps the most helpful method of thematic analysis to apply in this research in an effort to be systematic and transparent. They emphasize the need to be clear about what is being done, why, and how, and suggest that a researcher needs to continually ask questions of their practice in order to maintain conceptual clarity and consistency. I have already described that the data from this study will include some gathered in response to specific apriori

assumptions, and some data will require a more inductive approach to analysis. In analysis I will hope to compare and contrast the themes which develop with the issues raised as part of the literature review, described by Braun et al. as a semantic level of analysis, in the hope of generating some understandings which have applicability beyond just that particular school. More detail in terms of the data being collected and why follows in the next chapter. In terms of the 'how' of analysis the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke will be followed and will include:

- Immersing myself in the data
- Generating initial codes
- Starting to organise data into initial themes, sub themes
- Refining themes
- Defining themes
- Reporting

Having outlined the research questions, considered the nature of what can be known, and identified an appropriate methodology what then can be hoped from this study in terms of generalisation? At the planning stage it is hard to be completely clear about the exact nature of the conclusions drawn from the data. However, what can be said is that a clear and specified 'recipe' as to exactly what any secondary school can be supported to do by their educational psychologist in order to facilitate inclusion will not be the outcome. At best a 'fluid collection of principles and hypotheses' will be generated (see Lewis and Ritchie, 2003) which might offer some understandings useful to another context, although as Lincoln and Gubba suggest the success of this will depend on the degree of congruence between the new and old contexts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). On a more local level it is hoped there may be learning and generalisation for the people and/or the organisations directly involved.

3.4 Ethical considerations

In any research, but particularly that involving people, clearly ethical issues must be considered. This project, as with all other aspects of the professional practice of an EP, is guided by a Code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychological Society, 2009) which have

been considered in the course of this project. In addition some particular issues relating to working with children and young people have also been explored and discussed below.

Ensuring that all participants gave informed consent relates particularly to the principle of respect, and requires that all involved have ample opportunity to understand the nature, purpose and activity of the research project (BPS Standard of informed consent). As an action research project all of the adult participants were fully involved in the planning and choices about their activity throughout. They were not 'subjects' in the research and as such some of the power issues to be mindful in such contexts are not relevant (Taylor, 2004). Information sharing included ensuring that the Senior Management of the school had clear information relating to planned activities at the outset, which was followed up with signed written consent. Staff involved in the project group were also fully verbally appraised about the project, their role, information that might be elicited, and how it would be used. They were aware that they could opt out at any point and in fact a number of the staff group participants were not available for all of the sessions.

With regard to the pupils and their families they were given information at the outset about the project. Parental consent was sought through a letter from school with an outline of the project, including the fact that any information gathered would be anonymised, and an invitation to contact myself or a named member of the school staff if any further information was required. Pupil assent for participation was sought at the time. However, despite the fact that written and verbal assurance was given that the pupils could withdraw there are ethical issues to consider in terms of what is actually possible in terms of withdrawal. In reality within a school context if a pupil is asked if they want to do something they generally concur, which is not the same as either consent or assent (see Lewis, 2001). Sending the letters home and giving time for the pupil and family to talk about whether they genuinely wanted to take part was an attempt to address this issue.

When working with the individual pupils I was mindful of their potential communication style and offered, through showing separate paper versions, pictorial and text based interview options. Questioning techniques were quite general and open ended following the recommendations of Lewis in order to minimise potential anxiety about there being a

'right' answer and having regard to the power imbalances in adult –child interviews. At the end of the sessions I checked out my understanding of the responses made by the pupils with them allowing me to use some rephrasing when presenting the information in a collated form to the school staff in an attempt to respect my commitment to anonymity of response The pupils and families were provided with a brief outline of the main findings of the project at the end, again with an invitation to contact me for further information or discussion if required.

As the project was essentially collaboration between staff, and myself as participant and researcher, it was underpinned by the principle of respect and value (Taylor, 1994). The school staff were aware that they were co-researchers and collaborators, rather than objects to be studied, although they were aware that I would be using their comments and my reflections of activity as a source of data. Consideration was also given to debriefing and planning for sustainability beyond the timescale of the project, in keeping with the BPS principle of responsibility. Whilst the pupils were participants in the community of the school it is not accurate to claim that they were active participants in the research, nor were they subjects of research. Reflecting on the requirement to act responsibly making written information available and the provision of contact information for myself and a key member of the school staff was I feel helpful However, reflecting on what I might have done differently I think that making myself available to both the families of the pupils, and the pupils themselves in a group at several points throughout the project would have supported a more accountable approach.

In terms of the principles of competence and integrity I feel that they were maintained throughout as information provided was, at all times based on current best practice, and endeavoured to be clear and honest. The conclusions drawn from the research have been carefully reported to those involved in the process and in the writing of the report and considering the impact of the research consideration has been given to research guidance in terms of 'not going beyond' what it is legitimate to claim.

3.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter I outlined the nature of my research questions, the conceptual framework about what might be known, and how this might be known. A qualitative practitioner action research model has been identified in terms of its responsiveness to emerging patterns and themes which can inform future action. Approaches drawn from theory of change evaluation approaches which acknowledge complexity and the role of the constructions of a number of participants in the process have also been acknowledged.

 The next chapter relates this conceptual thinking directly to 'what' I did and 'why' in an attempt to address my research questions in an ethical, systematic and conceptually robust manner.

Chapter 4: Research Method

In this chapter I will detail how the research project was planned and reflect on some of the changes that happened along the way and their implications. Initial description will be followed by a table reflecting the specific timeline and highlighting the relationship between action and research elements of the project.

4.1 Initial context and set up

I had been involved with many individual students on the autism spectrum in secondary schools over many years, usually in terms of sharing my expertise as an EP with pupils, their families and school staff (usually a Senco) to identify issues and support interventions. Over time, and following reflection on my activity, my practice was increasingly influenced by approaches from positive solution oriented and motivational psychology (see for example, Ryan and Deci, 2000, and Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, and Green et al., 2006) but with activity still applied at the level of individual pupils and staff. With further reflection I began to think that whilst this activity did help to change experiences it did not address the issue of 'inclusion'. I began to explore more systemic, preventative approaches at the level of the school community. With a small, but increasing, number of requests to share my expertise and 'help' schools to include pupils on the autism spectrum I realised that I needed to be clear about what my response to these requests said about my underlying conceptual framework, what was the evidence on which I built my practice, and also what did these requests say about the beliefs and assumptions of a school and its members, and the broader context in which I work?

My thinking led me to three questions, which form the basis of this research study:

• Firstly to consider: can you promote and 'grow' increasingly inclusive practice for pupils on the autism spectrum within an individual school?

• Secondly, to consider how a school, and its staff, might be supported to become more inclusive and consideration of the processes which might be helpful to this?

• Thirdly, to reflect on what was my role as an educational psychologist in terms of the process and practice of supporting inclusion?

At this time I was approached by the Assistant Head responsible for continuing professional development (cpd) of a secondary school in the North of England to provide some 'training' to the whole school as part of their annual in-service programme relating to the autism spectrum. This was prompted by the school expecting a group of 5 students in Y7 with a diagnosis of asd, a prospect which was causing some concern amongst the staff as a whole. In a school with an intake of approximately 115 pupils per year group this was a relatively high number and many staff felt that they had no experience of ASD, although this view was later revised. In discussion with Senior Staff in school, and based on what might loosely be described as practice evidence generated by myself in other contexts, we decided that a broader view of school development might be appropriate and discussion was undertaken, initially with senior staff as to what would meet both their needs as a school, and my needs as a researcher (See Appendix A for consent agreement)

Following our initial meeting just before the school summer break (July) an activity outline for the forthcoming academic year was agreed. Whilst this was a negotiated process it was largely driven by my theories influenced by research from positive psychology, models of disability, organisational change/school effectiveness, and theory based approaches to evaluation:

•   September: Initial whole school training provided by me as an impetus for further work and to support all members of the school community to have a feeling of a shared goal (see literature on schools as learning organisations, for example, Harris 2008, Silins and Mulford 2004)

•   September: A general invite to be made to any interested school staff to participate in a smaller working group over the year to focus on developing practice through exploring assumptions, beliefs and undertaking action research (see previous literature on motivating individuals in groups to develop practice, for example Grieve, 2009, Hanko 2002, Reeves and Boreham, 2006).

•   October: Acknowledging that the experience of inclusion is understood through the experiences of members of a community it was agreed that I would interview a group of students on the autism spectrum to ascertain their views and experiences of school life and use this to support and inform the work of the staff group in making appropriate

accommodations. (see previous literature on using pupil accounts, models of disability, and inclusion, for example, Barrett 2006, Shakespeare 2002, and Humphreys 2008)

- October to April: 4 workshop sessions with the staff working group to run over the first 2 terms of the school year, facilitated by myself (see previous literature on motivating individuals in groups to develop practice, and practitioner action research, for example Grieve, 2009, Hanko 2002, Reeves and Boreham, 2006 and Blaumfield et al., 2008)).

- June: Further interviews with the pupils in the summer term of the same academic year (see previous literature on practitioner action research for example McNiff and Whitehead, 2009)

- June: Interviews with 5 members of staff from the working group at the end of the year (see previous literature on action research for example McNiff and Whitehead, 2009).

I had developed with senior managers from the school an initial outline plan; a process that would hopefully lead to change and that was to be explored both by myself as part of my action research cycle, and by members of the school team as their systematic reflection on their action. At this point in time not all of the elements of the action were absolutely clear as they were subject to further negotiation and reflection over time with other players in the process and further detail would emerge over time and as a consequence of reflection on previous action.

The model below attempts to illustrate the separate but interconnected activity and reflection of both myself as EP and school staff working together to co-construct a version of 'inclusion' for that school community:

Figure 1: Outline of double spiral of action and reflection

4.2 Details of 'Action' undertaken, why, and by whom

a) Initial 'set up' meeting

At the time I did not consider that this initial meeting was part of the research project and which could offer data. However, on reflection without that initial approach and then subsequent flexibility in terms of activity there would have been no context in which to undertake action. Additionally that the senior managers of the school were motivated to use one of their school training sessions to look at how to include pupils on the autism spectrum gave a clear message to the rest of the staff that this was something important. This event did signal the start of the project, my activity and offered a data source for later analysis

b) Initial whole school training provided as an impetus for further work.

In the first instance the 'action' was undertaken by myself. In line with thinking about schools as learning organisations (Silins and Mulford, 2004) it was important to build on the initial leadership message of support providing all staff the opportunity to consider the issue of inclusion, the experiences and possible needs of pupil on the spectrum, and what it might mean for them. In his work on power relationships and change in school Busher (2005) also emphasizes the need to include the wider community in the process, as does Harris in her work on school effectiveness and the importance of distributed leadership (Harris, 2000). Consequently I provided a half day of training to all teaching and support staff at the beginning of the school year. The title of this training input was to develop a broad and general understanding of the nature of the autism spectrum and offer an initial impetus to school staff for further work. Materials developed by myself were used in addition to 'insider accounts' using video clips from the Inclusion Development Programme: Autism Spectrum (2009), and more significantly the personal accounts of Rory Hoy in his DVD 'Autism and Me' in which he describes his perspective on life (Hoy, 2007). A further and crucially important secondary aim of this session was to generate a shared interest in the topic from the organisation as a whole and beginning to establish the idea of a shared goal, or a least a feeling of shared enterprise within the organisation around how could they, as a whole school staff, better include children who were on the autism spectrum in their school.

Reflection: My experience suggests that it is not always easy to engage a non voluntary whole school staff group (N=61) with their various assumptions and priorities in training around a specific group of students. However, the evaluations all pointed to a well received session with apologies for non attendance only being made by only 2 members of staff.

c) A general invite to be made to all school staff to participate in a smaller working group over the year to focus on developing practice in school

At the end of the whole staff training a further invitation to participate in a small working group was made by myself following up the Assistant Head's e-mail request, with support from the Head teacher that this would count as 'legitimate' and directed continuing professional development for those concerned. Details of the timings of the group and the

fact that some content would be prepared by myself but that the group would follow a course steered by their constructions and the needs of their pupils and their school was made clear at this point in time. That participants were expected to engage in practitioner research was also noted with this being seen as an important dimension of developing confident and reflective practitioners (Simm and Ingram, 2008). The use of the insider account dvd was also planned as a powerful tool in encouraging staff to notice the impact of understanding and inclusive practice on individuals (Barratt, 2006).

Reflection. I had hoped to be able to establish the group of interested members of staff at the time, however, not all staff had accessed their e-mails and had been unaware that they would be able to participate in the group. It was agreed that the Assistant Head would collate the list and set up the first group meeting.

d) Interview a group of students to ascertain their views as to participation in school life and use this to support and inform the work of the staff group.

In the week before the first staff working group parental consent and student assent to participate in the research and undertake a semi structured interview was sought jointly in writing by the school and myself from 5 Year 7 pupils in school diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum. Permission was given for 4 of the pupils to participate. (see Appendix A)

Interviews were conducted by myself during the school day using a semi structured interview using open questions developed from an interview used by Connor (2000) in some previous research. As this interview had previously been used and yielded interesting results no piloting of the questions was felt to be necessary. The discussions were not constrained to the interview questions and other lines of enquiry/discussion points were followed up by the examiner as they arose. All pupils were prepared in advance for the meeting and told at the outset that they were free to terminate the interview at any point, and that they did not have to answer any question if they did not want to. Two versions of the interview were prepared, one in text format, and one using pictorial representations. In all cases the pupils opted to use the text format as a reference although all of the questions

were presented verbally and their oral responses recorded in note form by myself. I opted for this method as this meant that the pace of the interview was relatively slow as I completed my notes which prevented me from rushing participants to answer the next question. (see Appendix B).

At the end of each interview I checked back with the pupils what I had understood by their responses. Summaries of the responses were written up and combined into an overall grid for use with the staff working group. In line with the ethical considerations of the project all responses at this stage were not attributable to any individual student.

The aim of this activity was to offer some initial information about how the pupils felt they were included in the school, and to provide a local level of data for the staff working group to build on and inform their goals and action.

Reflection: My initial feeling was that the pupils were neither active participants in the project, nor subjects to be researched, rather their role was as knowing participants of the school community. All of the pupils appeared comfortable within the interview sessions and no further contact or clarification was sought from either myself or the assistant headteacher by them or their families.

e) Workshop sessions with staff group

All staff were given the option of participating in the group with interested staff members responding by e-mail volunteering to be part of the working group and a date for the first meeting was set. Due to timetabling restrictions these meetings were usually held immediately after school in a staff workroom. Initially 10 members of staff signed up to join; the Senco, 2 support staff, teachers of English, French, P.E., maths, head of Key Stage 3, a cover supervisor, and a transition support worker. Over the duration of the sessions 5 members of staff attended consistently (Senco, Head of Key Stage 3, French and maths teacher and 1 support worker) with others not attending all of sessions.

The activity of the groups employed many of the strategies used by Hanko (2003) during each session. For example, staff were encouraged to be respectful and use questions with each other rather than directive statements to help individuals come to their own understandings and actions. Each of the group sessions were facilitated based on solution oriented approaches (for example the work of Reeves and Boreham, 2006). Members were encouraged by myself to explore practice that was going well or consider the possibilities illuminated by the practice of others through discussion and case scenarios, rather than to deconstruct specific problems and be given a scripted solution. A further hoped for benefit of working in a group was suggested by Reeves and Boreham whose work demonstrated impact, not just on individual practice, but also on coherence and co-ordination of practice across an organisation.

The first of these sessions formed the basis for goal setting and outlined the scope of future activity and reflection. In each session there was a recognisable action research cycle where previous activity was shared and reflected on, stimulus materials and discussion provided to stimulate further action planning, and then all group members planning further activity either in school, or for me, planning the next session.

Session 1:

During the first session a general structure and ground rules were negotiated including the use of questions rather than directives. It was agreed that each member of the group would have some responsibility for participating in 'homework tasks' aimed at making accommodations to facilitate the inclusion of pupils (although not exclusively) on the autism spectrum which would then be shared and reviewed at the beginning of the next session. The content i.e. nature and scale, of the task would be determined by individuals. In each session there would also be some input from myself around an agreed topic which would prompt discussion, sharing of existing practice, and offer a starting point for a homework task.

The first session was slightly different as this used their local knowledge and pupil views to begin to raise and explore their theories and assumptions. Members of the group were asked to consider what they thought was going well in terms of the inclusive practice for pupils with asd in their school and what they felt could be better. In an attempt to make the group feel a 'safe' context (see Grieve 2009) this was a paired discussion in the first instance, and then a group discussion. The information from the pupil interviews was then shared providing supplementary information, again in the context of both strengths and concerns. From this discussion the group generated some ideas about what was going well in their school, and what could be developed further. This information was then used to plan the future content and order of the sessions with the group (see Appendix C). At the end of this first session and based on the group discussion, the initial training, and their pupil comments each member of the group described something that they would try to do within the next 4-6 weeks. An activity grid designed using solution oriented principles was provided for school staff to use (Appendix D). This was the beginning of the first cycle of action and reflection both for the school staff and also for myself as the facilitator.

The topic for the second session was agreed as the relatively safe topic of curriculum access. Diary notes were made during and immediately after each session by myself reflecting on group activity, future content and process, and also my role.

Session 2

In each of the subsequent sessions there was a similar structure following a basic action planning cycle of action and reflection:

i.   Review of homework. At this time the staff group were encouraged to carefully and systematically reflect on their own practice. Each member of the group had a distinct role and their own way of managing situations. The discussion aimed to be aware, responsive, and supportive of this.

ii.   Input around curriculum access. This was established as apriority from the session 1 reflections of both staff and pupil views of the needs of their school. During this and each

subsequent session the input included some general awareness raising and sharing of experience regarding autism, access to resources both published and experiential, and relevant websites and further sources of information intended to stimulate future action. This was followed by discussion about how this related to their school and their pupils, and then to sharing of ideas about what to do. In some senses this might be seen as part of the methodology in terms of content. However, there were no prescriptions given; resources were explored by the group within the group with individuals having the freedom to use, develop or ignore them. The programmes were not the subject of enquiry. As described by Weiss (1997) in theory based approaches to evaluation it was not particularly the programme that was of interest but the response that the activities generated in the actors.

iii.   Discussion and planning of new tasks/activities, initially in pairs and then to the whole group. This included my commitment to share ideas/resources in response to issues that arose in terms of the focus of input for the next session

Session 3 (see above)

i.   Review of homework
ii.   Stimulus input around social and emotional development to promote activity
iii.   Discussion and planning of new tasks/activities
    Session 4 (see above)

i.   Review of homework
ii.   Stimulus input around whole school issues.
iii.   Discussion and planning of new tasks/activities. Confirmation that there would be a further meeting for each member of staff on an individual basis to review their activity, take feedback about the process as a whole, and plan next steps.
During and after each session notes were kept by myself and provided an additional source of data as part of the research.

Reflection: The timing of the sessions turned out to be a barrier to full attendance. In the school development work undertaken by work undertaken by Simm and Ingram (2008) funding was available to release staff from the classroom. Despite the commitment from the senior managers that the time for the groups could count as directed time slippage occurred

to due a range of unexpected events. Overall, 5 members of staff attended all of the sessions with an average of 7 staff in each of the meetings.

It was also interesting that although a range of resources were shared in the groups and many handouts were distributed and taken their detailed content did not feature greatly in the activities reported on.

e) Further interviews with the pupils were undertaken in the summer term of the same academic year.

On this occasion the group met together as a focus group to share their reflections on their participation in school life. This was an unexpected event, decided on by the school as they felt that the pupils had generally begun to relate well to each other and they felt that they would work well together as a focus group, providing input to the school as to how things were going for them, and what they as a school could do . Again, open questions from the semi structured interviews were used and responses recorded, other comments and points made were followed up in the group discussion and recorded.

In addition all of the pupils were given a blank piece of paper with a 1-10 scale on it and asked to rate their satisfaction with school life. They were first asked to rate their feelings about their comfortable participation* in school life part way through the autumn term and then in response to the same question now. They were also asked to offer any thoughts as to why there might be a change in their responses. This was not an attempt to generate spurious quantitative data in a positivist conceptual framework, but rather it offered an opportunity to explore with the group whether they had noticed any differences and what those differences might say about their construction of inclusion.

(* 'participation' included simplified terminology used during discussion to cover the terms: presence, participation, acceptance, and achievement. Working definition of inclusion drawn from Booth and Ainscow, 2002).

Reflection: I wonder about the impact of the final pupil interview been undertaken as a focus group activity. Whilst this was never my intention as I had hoped to replicate the conditions of the first interview, perhaps an intention related more to a drift towards neat and tidy positivist research approaches when one attempts to control the variables. However, that the school took it on themselves to make the pupils available as a group, rather than individually in fact offered some additional data, information and insight. That the data was grounded very much in local experience and method and had evolved as part of the project did not, with hindsight, challenge either my method or rigour (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1995).

f)   Semi structured exit interviews using open questions were undertaken in the summer term with the 5 consistent members of staff from the working group. See Appendix E. (This formed session 5 for the staff). This approach was used to explore some of the apriori assumptions about inclusion and change that have been discussed earlier, but also offering a framework that was sufficiently flexible for respondents to be able to introduce new ideas and experiences (see Robson, 2002). Any additional points or comments made were followed up.

In the interview each member of staff was asked to reflect on the project and what was going well, which processes had been helpful to this, and also to set themselves targets for further activity. Whilst this differed in structure from earlier sessions it was hoped that this would allow individual members of staff to reflect on their own action and learning and set themselves goals for future action as they moved away from the security of the group to more independent activity and reflection and offer some sustainability to the project. Again I opted to take notes during the sessions in an attempt to minimise rushing through questions. Previous personal experience led me to favour this approach as it gave some 'quiet time' which encouraged participants to elaborate on their thinking yielding additional data.

Reflection: With hindsight the timing of the exit interviews, towards the end of term appeared to give the impression that the project was 'over'. It might have been helpful to have followed up with a further session with the group at the beginning of the new academic year in terms of planning properly for sustainability.

g) Verbal feedback was given to the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (Senco). A summary of research findings were shared with all involved in the sessions and also to the senior management team of the school and shared with the families of the pupils involved. An invitation for further discussion with myself was made to all parties.

Reflection: Again no further enquiries were made of myself or the assistant headteacher.

4.3 Details of data collected

Over the course of the research project a range of data was gathered which I hoped, through systematic thematic analysis, would allow me to explore the theories (assumptions, understandings and experiences) about inclusion of those in the school community and research project, any changes that might occur in their theories, and exploration about the process of change. Data collected included:

- Notes from initial planning meeting and my reflections on this.
- Initial training: planning and reflection notes
- At the end of the initial training evaluations were gathered from all staff asking for their comments, how they might act on what they had heard, and any future training needs
- Responses to the individual pupil interviews were recorded on the semi structured interview sheets. Additional points made by the pupils were noted on these sheets as they arose.
- Individual group session notes and my reflections on content and process for each session
- Notes of teacher comments and discussions during the group sessions
- Responses to the pupil questions in the group were recorded on the semi structured interview sheet, with additional points made by the pupils noted as they arose.
- Individual pupil ranking sheets were collected and collated.
- Responses to the final school staff interviews were recorded in writing by myself
- Research diary between initial planning meeting and data analysis.
- On going reflections relating to the process and my role within that as the data reduction and display was undertaken.

4.4 Timeline highlighting relationship between action and research stages

Activity and date	Action aims	Data gathered	Reflections on action and data
Planning meeting July 15th	To establish needs and plan initial training and school development activity.	Diary notes	Positive meeting, training to be signalled as the start of a process of school development. Clear management support.
Whole school training September 3rd	Overview of AS given, use of 'insider accounts' with the aim to elicit awareness, understanding and provide a context for future action in school.	Staff evaluation forms Diary notes	Clear positive evaluations from all staff provided a positive context for working group. Many staff expressing a desire to want to do things differently. Need to offer some content but build on the school staff existing skills. The use of Rory Hoy dvd made a significant impact – noted that sharing experiences and accounts likely to be a useful future tool.
Interview with students October 7th	To gain pupil views about strengths and issues within the school and use this to motivate activity at a local level within this school community.	Written recording of pupil responses. Diary notes	Very rich data clearly highlighting social concerns in unstructured times and relating to behaviour policies. Relative strengths noted in terms of curriculum. I

			needed to collate this fairly and facilitate staff activity according to their agenda, not mine.
Workshop 1 October 21st	To establish ground rules and group ethos, and reinforce the ideas underpinning action research. To share the views of their pupils about experiences in school and plan future sessions	Notes taken during and after session Power point presentation	A positive meeting with all staff who seemed very engaged with the process. Despite the pupil comments staff were united in a desire to look at curriculum issues in next session. I made personal note to monitor this over the sessions. I agreed that I would bring some resources to contribute to the next session and they would do something additional/different for discussion and reflection. Some apologies given for the next session reflecting issues with after school timing
Workshop 2 December 2nd	I brought some examples of visual and structured materials, and subject specific ideas in hand outs for the group to take away. Most staff shared what they had attempted and others in the group	Notes taken during and after session Power point presentation	Staff were supportive and interested in others 'homework' tasks, some good discussion with some members taking more of a lead, I recognised the need to monitor participation and split into paired work

	were interested and supportive. A number of the group were very good at sharing their classroom practice and some of the things they did, or used to do, in their classrooms. As a group we noted that some of the issues of concern that arose for them were around social and emotional needs and communication and this was agreed as the focus for the next session		if necessary. I was aware that some of the issues raised by the pupils related to social communication differences and would require modifications to communication style from the staff. The next session would need to include resources and discussion which prompted and supported staff to come to this understanding.
Workshop 3 February 3rd	Review of homework tasks and all had contributions to make. Resources shared included those about developing supportive environments and those which developed individual pupil skills. Discussion led to the idea of broader application for these resources and provided an opportunity to think about broadening the discussion to some of	Notes taken during and after session Power point presentation	Staff were supportive and interested in others 'homework' tasks, some who did not initially feel they had done anything did contribute. Some of the contributions were quite idiosyncratic. All of the staff now contributing and an awareness that they were working together to the same end. Interesting that staff were able to note that some of the ideas would be useful for a broader group of students.

	the issues that occurred for these and other students across the school. Agreed that in the next session whole school issues would be the focus.		An increased confidence was apparent within the group that they were doing some good things and could do more. I noted the need to continue facilitating the group to confidently identify the issues for their pupils and schools, and generate solutions that would work for them. A lot of resources had been shared and in the next session I wanted them to begin to apply their knowledge to the whole school context. This required a non directive approach - I decided to generate scenarios described as 'stories from other schools' as a tool to do this.
Workshop 4 April 21st	Lively discussion about what they had been doing including some ideas that were also spilling out beyond their own classrooms. Introduction of scenarios that related to whole	Notes taken during and after session Power point presentation	Lots of contributions from all staff. The scenarios were very helpful in raising issues and all staff appeared confident in problem solving for the other schools and then drawing parallels with

	school issues at both a practical and policy/management level. An invitation was made to problem solve these issues for other schools this led to thinking and discussion about issues in their school. Agreed that I would find out about what further activity they had engaged in during the final interviews.		some of the solutions they had already put in place, or needed to put in place. Positive group dynamic very apparent and I was keen that they had a further opportunity to review what they had been doing. We discussed plans for final interviews but agreed they could not be completed until the end June given school exams.
Final interview with pupils June 23rd	Intention for individual interviews with pupils changed by the school and there was a group discussion instead. Semi structured interview with written notes taken in order to allow time for additional comments to be made. Pupil scaling question also given.	Written record of pupil responses. Dairy notes	Information about change as experienced by these pupils in this school to be used in the final summary to school staff and managers and would hopefully continue to motivate staff activity.
Final interview with staff June 30th	Semi structured interview with responses recorded manually to avoid any potential rushing through questions, and giving	Written record of staff responses. Diary notes	Information about what had been helpful to be used by myself in future work, and to be fed back to school staff and managers to support on-going and

	staff time to give an answer and then elaborate on their thinking.		future school development. I wondered whether the timing of this session towards the end of the school year gave the project something of a 'finished' feel. The staff contributions to what else they would be doing were more limited.
Feedback session July 16th	Detailed verbal feedback to Senco and written summary provided		

Chapter 5: Data, Analysis and Main Findings

The data collected over the course of the project came from a range of sources over time as discussed above and the method of systematic thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was followed. Initially this meant immersing myself in the data which included reading, re-reading, transcribing and organising as appropriate. As this process matured a number of initial codes, identification of significant elements in the data, were noted. As I had some research questions which I hoped to address I organised my analysis around them. Each set of data was explored in relation to each of the questions. A small number of codes ran across all of the question areas although the majority were relevant to distinct questions (See Appendix E for a full list of codes). I opted to undertake this process manually as I felt that this allowed me to frequently revisit the original data and the process felt physically more fluid as the extracts, codes and emerging themes could be easily moved and reorganised as my thinking developed . Below is an example of coding as applied to responses to the question asked of teachers in the final interview; "Thinking about the project, can you discuss the features that were important to you in supporting your practice development":

Thinking about the project, can you discuss ….	Initial codes
The information given was useful, it was good to be able to re-read it and think about it	General increased awareness
It gave insight …the DVD of Rory was really good for that	Engaging with pupils
I think talking to any of the kids is important	Engaging with pupils
Well we don't normally get the opportunity to chat, plan and discuss with them	Being supported by the group
I think talking to colleagues is an opportunity. well its like gold dust really	Being supported by the group
What was particularly valuable was feeling that you are not alone	Shared context – within the school
I think the ones *(goals)* we set ourselves are more	Setting own goals

likely to be achieved	
I think probably its been good to think about how other schools, and us as well, tackle the things, problems in mainstream schools which can be quite hard for us	Shared context – with other schools
You were absolutely vital because if you hadn't been there to lead it really there wont have been anything	Supported by facilitation
I think that going away and having to do something was actually really helpful	Giving something a go
It was good that different issues came from different people who had different roles and perspectives in school	Challenging own practice *(and)* Shared context –within the school
It made you sort of think out of your own box	Challenging own practice
A specialist gives exact information and I think you need that expertise	Supported by facilitation
It was more of a discussion really rather than having to report on homework which was good - because I was a bit nervous at first	Being supported by the group
I liked the fact that we had some say in what we were doing	Not being told *(and)* setting own goals

Having coded the data from all of the data sets I began to organise these into initial themes. Having checked the data again themes were refined, some themes were collapsed into broader ones (for example 'stories of other schools' was subsumed under 'working as part of a group') and for some there was insufficient supporting data.

In the sections below I will describe the results using the themes which arose in response to the research questions, and some initial theories are suggested. Some examples of data will be given in order to illustrate more broadly expressed ideas. A more detailed and critical

discussion of the emerging theories and how they relate to the broader context occurs in Chapter 6.

5.1 Themes around 'Can you promote and 'grow' increasingly inclusive practice within an individual school?'

In generating data from the students, staff and from my own reflections about their comments a number of themes arose from analysis of the data. The focus of the themes in this analysis relates to what being in the school feels like for the pupils, or was noticed by others in the school such as the teachers in terms of presence, participation, acceptance, and achievement. There was also an exploration of what this might feel like over time, and were there any changes over time illustrated by the emerging theories of the key participants? Although the research study particularly considers the experience of the pupils on the autism spectrum, observations or comments relating to others in the community were acknowledged.

I found the analysis relating to this section initially problematic. I had some assumptions about the issues that might be facing the pupils on the autism spectrum (for example social issues), the concerns that the school staff might have (for example, 'behaviour') and the activities that staff might engage in to resolve them. However, these were related to my theories, based on my experiences, and from reading. Whilst there was some congruence; some of the issues, responses, and subsequent solutions were in fact highly diverse and very much grounded in the local context of that school. Having looked at the data repeatedly, the codes that eventually felt helpful were in fact those described by Booth and Ainscow (2002) that is; presence, participation, acceptance and achievement. Additional coding relating to the pronouns that pupils and staff used over the course of the project were also illuminating and emerged across all of the research questions.

The themes here also required several revisions but ultimately what presented as being helpful as tools to understand the activity illustrating the experience of inclusion and which were also able to capture its local nature related to: the curriculum and lessons, the social

environment, the community of the whole school, behaviour of staff and pupils, the physical environment, and the sensory environment.

5.1.1 The curriculum and lessons

Initially the pupils had lots to say about the curriculum, and they had comments both about the 'lessons' on the timetable, how they were taught, and what was helpful to their learning. At the beginning of the project all of the students were able to describe some of the lessons which they enjoyed, felt they were good at, and those which they did not enjoy and which they felt they were not good at. The pupil discussions about the subjects they liked followed a similar pattern to that apparent when you talk to most groups of secondary age pupils and were fairly consistent over the duration of the project, for example:

"Well I like Science, Biology and just science and PE and Art" (Pupil 1, interview 1).

And similarly there were a range of subjects which were not appealing or interesting, for example:

"Yeah I think maths and RE need to be a bit more interesting because they are quite boring actually" (Pupil 2, interview 1)

That experiences of school life and the 'enthusiasms' of pupils are highly local was illustrated by the comments of 1 pupil who had some interesting ideas which he felt should be listened to in terms of making the curriculum better and which he felt would help his learning and accommodate his particular enthusiasm for Lego:

Pupil: "No well I'm fine, ….. I think ….. school, there should be more Lego"

Interviewer: "What do you mean?"

Pupil: "Well more Lego … like as a lesson … sort of a Lego lesson"

Interviewer: "I don't know if that's possible, I think the school has to do certain lessons, by law"

Pupil: "Just …. But you could do Lego maths, you could do Lego science, you could do Lego technology, you could do Lego English, you could do Lego ICT"

Interviewer: "Right, so you are arguing for more Lego in the curriculum?"

Pupil: "Yeah"

Having being given this information the staff in the school found their own way of flexibly responding to his needs. Over the course of the project the school did not add Lego to the

curriculum, but they did introduce a Lego club at lunchtime in a separate room which not only accommodated Pupil 3's interest but served to resolve some of the wider lunchtime social issues which were raised by a number of pupils in the initial interviews and which will be described below. Just one example of how the school made a local response to a local need.

At the outset the teachers in the whole school training struggled to generate specific ideas about what they would do in their classrooms, other than they would do something. The teachers in the group were also keen to think about the curriculum and what they could do in their classroom, or when they were supporting in lessons. In fact this was prioritised by them as forming the content of an early group session although it had not been raised as a particular area of concern by the pupils. Perhaps being something they were familiar with and for which they felt they had a greater sense of agency. A point illustrated by the request of one teacher at the first session:

*"I would like to have some ideas about work, you know getting it finished, about how to get **them** to finish something" (BS: teacher in group session 1)*

All of the students were able to make comments both at the beginning and end of the project in terms as to what they found helpful or challenging in terms of the way a teacher managed the lesson and the subject, comments which were fed into the staff working groups. For example:

 "Having things written down sometimes is good like on the board or something like that is helpful" (pupil 2, interview1)

Sharing this information did lead to increased evidence of change in their practice in many classes. By the end of the project all of the staff in the group sessions and interviews, and the pupils were reporting some very specific activities that they felt were making a difference. For example:

 "I've been using the whiteboard and putting numbered steps on it ... actually lots of the kids like it." (comment made in group session)

And some of the strategies noticed and referenced by the pupil group included:

 "I like it when Ms H writes things down at the beginning, I know what to do"

"..Yeh"

"Mr. B uses some pictures sometimes, that's good"

Some of the responses were again highly individualised and over time there was an emergence of responsiveness in classroom activities and a flexible approach to meeting individual needs with pupils beginning to be described by their names:

*"I put a paperclip in the planner to remind **R**. to look at a particular page so homework is handed in on time" (teacher response in final interview to being asked about things that had made a difference).*

Interestingly some of the accommodations described by the pupils were being made by staff who were not part of the target group.

It appears that by the end of the project that all staff in the group, and some others apparently, were able to generate and implement some simple but apparently effective ideas in class that both they and the pupils who were asked had noticed. This is contrasted with staff comments made at the outset following the initial training that they would like to do something but were unable to make any specific suggestions (For example: "I will be more careful when teaching children on the autism spectrum").

5.1.2 The social environment

As part of my diary reflections I noted with some curiosity in the first group meetings that it was the curriculum and how to deliver 'lessons' that the staff initially wanted to work on rather than what struck me as issues of more concern including what I had felt to be perhaps some loneliness, social isolation and anxiety expressed to some degree by all of the pupils.

"Curriculum issues raised (I) wonder about the process of including the staff. Seems they are interested in their world, not really picking up some of the friendship/corridor/'wandering around the school' issues from the pupils feedback" (notes from research diary)

The challenge posed by the social times of the school day was a repeated theme in all of the pupils' initial responses which were shared with the staff group. Finding the social

environment busy, uncomfortable and descriptions of struggling to find friends or people to be with was apparent in all four student initial responses. Comments from Pupil1, interview 1 illustrate the possible isolation of the students:

Pupil: *"I will go to Mrs F.'s office because she has usually got lots of things to sort out ……so I help he*r*"*

Adult: *"Do you have any particular friends in school?"*

Pupil; *"Well err I don't know really"*

Despite the initial interest in the curriculum and 'lessons', when discussing what they thought they were doing well (session 3) the staff group significantly noted and talked about the social supports (and not the curriculum) that they were providing, for example feelings diaries in individual sessions with some students, and as a consequence they felt that the pupils appeared calmer and more settled. The staff had also allowed access for 'vulnerable' students, including the group on the autism spectrum, to a quiet garden area near senior management offices which offered higher levels of supervision for students who wanted a quiet, safe space to spend time in. What was apparent from staff activity and my reflections about this was that staff were also becoming more aware of the needs of a wider group of students, not just those in the target group, who were passive and somewhat withdrawn and who may also require additional 'accommodations' as suggested by Shakespeare et al., (2002). It was also the case that the senior management awareness of need and implementation of accommodations was happening from staff who were not part of the working group, with practice changes being endorsed by senior managers also beyond those in the group.

Initially the pupils felt that there were times when you got help and times when you didn't but all were in agreement that if there were problems then the person to go and see was the school Transition worker and they all felt that her room was a safe place to go , and that you were listened to (Pupil 3).

Pupil: *"Yeah I talked to Mrs F"*

Adult: *"Right, why have you talked to her?"*

Pupil: *"Because people were calling me names"*

Adult: *"And that solved it?"*

Pupil: "Yes it did"

By the time of the second pupil interview there was a much wider group of people who the pupils felt they could go to if they had a problem and their network of support had developed beyond one single person. The staff named included both support staff and more senior teaching staff, and again included names that went outside the staff working group. Whether this can be attributed to this project, the ripple effect of practice, or simply maturating relationships is not clear, but change had occurred and was being felt by the pupils and noticed by other staff. The pupils were also all positive about having some friends and feeling less threatened by other students in school, a point also picked up by several staff in the group sessions and final interview. When asked about having any problems in school the pupil responses included:

Pupil: "Not really, it's better"

And one member of staff in the final interviews noted that:

" I felt kind of pleased that things had moved on and J. seems to be more settled and has some friends and there seems to be quite a little group now who are getting along so it was really nice to hear them talking together.(Teacher 2, final interview)

By the end of the project all staff were explicit and positive about the value of listening to the pupils to gain insight, something which they appeared not to have engaged in before:

"I think that feedback from the pupils – you know talking about things like feelings, emotions, problems and things like that – we should use (it) a little bit more" (teacher 1)

At the outset the staff group did not explore the social dimensions of inclusion (participation and acceptance) despite the negative comments from their students and the sense of empathy for pupils on the autism spectrum which came from the initial training and the use of the Rory Hoy DVD. However, by the end of the project there was a change in the experiences of the pupils and the views and subsequent views and actions expressed by the staff group. What had also emerged is that some of the accommodations and actions

were increasingly apparent more widely across the school, a point which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

5.1.3 Behavioural Issues

At the beginning of the project the comments made by both staff and pupils regarding each others' behaviour tended to be negative despite an explicit invitation to discuss both strengths and difficulties.

For example, in one of the initial training evaluations a member of staff noted that they wanted to have more training and learn more about autism because:

"There are more behaviour challenges for us in mainstream school"

The pupils had comment to make both about the behaviour of other pupils, and also some members of staff. All of the students had comments to make at the outset with regard to the corridors being busy and that they were pushed around by the older students. They also felt that this behaviour was particularly an issue at lunchtime and that they weren't being helped. For example as noted by Pupil 4 at the initial interview:

Pupil: "Well big kids sometimes push us"

Adult: "Oh"

Pupil: "Yeah …… they push us down the corridor ... push us to get us out of the way"

Adult: "Right, how do you feel about that?"

Pupil: "Don't know, ... get used to it"

Adult: "What do the teacher's say?"

Pupil: "Nothing"

Adult: "What do the teacher's do?"

Pupil: "Nothing"

In addition, 2 pupils had comments to make about the behaviour of the staff in class. For example views about the unfairness of universally applied sanctions:

Pupil: "I get really... really ... frustrated ... because we (are) behind the other class because we have kids messing about and the teacher keeps waiting for us, and waiting for us …..so we don't get anything done. We missed our break one day"

There was some evidence at the outset that there had been an attempt, albeit not terribly effective, to provide an accommodation to meet a behavioural need, although in the absence of proper discussion with the pupil it was not being used: A 'time out' card for one student had been introduced before the project began, (Pupil 1interview 1):

Pupil: *"I have a time out card"*

Adult: *"And do you think that's useful?"*

Pupil: *"Partially useful"*

Adult: *"So have you used it?"*

Pupil: *"No I haven't used it"*

Adult: *"Do you think you might use it?"*

Pupil: *"Yes I think I might use it but I haven't used it yet, ...I'm not really sure how to"*

By the end of the project there were no negative comments about behaviour from either staff or pupils in the group. The pupils in the group together shared some things they had noticed about general arrangements made which were flexible and helpful: For example:

"Sometimes I am allowed to swap seats if the noise is.... It's too noisy" (pupil in final group discussion)

And as for the staff they were also noticing some of the things that they were doing that were making a positive difference:

"I think that things ..... arrangements, at lunchtime ... and ..just being noticed a bit more has helped" (teacher 4)

In my notes from group session 4 I had also noticed a greater reflection, acceptance and understanding of the needs of particular pupils and that 'behaviour' was not only about acting out behaviours.

"Behaviour homework – all staff beginning to identify more positively with the pupils. Beginning to recognise some of the anxious type behaviours present in KR and RW"

As the group had developed individual staff within the group were challenging their beliefs and generalised assumptions about autism and behavioural challenges and recognising that they could make relatively small accommodations that would make a difference. The pupils were being seen as individual students and not just 'autistic', rather like the hopes

expressed by the students from the ESPA college described in chapter 2.

5.1.4 Physical aspects of the building

Concerns about the physical aspects of the building have been covered to some degree by the discussions around behaviour and social issues when all of the pupils noted the difficulties with corridors and finding a safe place. However, the concerns were not conceptualised as being building related problems by either the pupils or the teachers at the outset, rather they were described as social or behavioural problems. However, in reflecting on what was going well both pupils and school staff had begun to see solutions from accommodations made in the physical environment.

At the end of the project the pupils as a group (note the use of the pronoun 'we') reflected on the need to help the new intake with locating the "good" and "safe" places:

*"The corridors are still busy and I think **we** need to give some advice to the Year 6 children about where to go at corridor time and where the quiet places and what you can do at lunch and break times. It is getting better slowly but surely" (Pupil response in final group discussion)*

The pupils also began to list a range of places that they could now go to (new developments) where they enjoyed break time including 'the garden', 'computer club', and 'lego club'. The school staff were also beginning to note that they had achieved some success at lunchtimes and staff were now 'more aware' of the needs of this group which had led to the development of a number of fairly low key, but nonetheless effective, interventions or changes..

Changes to the physical environment or how it is accessed or organised requires whole school   agreement, unless perhaps it relates to a single classroom/ office. One of the comments of a member of staff in the final interview discussed her views on how working as a larger group can make things happen. As an individual she suggested that she was aware of some of the issues and concerns, and that they had been apparent before the

cohort of pupils on the autism spectrum arrived into school, but it was only being part of the group that generated enough momentum to make something happen:

"It was good to kind of get it out there in the group because some of the things, you know like corridors and playtimes, stuff like that …. It's important to listen to their views, like…. **all** *of us you know" (teacher 3)*

5.1.5 Sensory environment

The challenges of the sensory environment were initially referenced by all of the pupils and related to noise, uniform, and school lunches. For example, all pupils made comment on the hectic and at times noisy environment of the corridors and social areas, prompting them in part at least, to seek quieter areas:

"sometimes its too noisy" (Pupil 4, interview1)

"It's too noisy in music and in drama it's too noisy and ….. it's a bit hectic really"(Pupil 1, interview 1)

Another student (Pupil 2) was also very vocal about the constraints and physical irritation about the school uniform:

Pupil: "I don't like the school tie, and I don't like having to have my button fastened because the collar is too tight, that's really annoying …… but you have got to have it and when you come out of assembly they watch to see you've got it fastened up"

At the end of the project no further comments were made by the pupils about any sensory features of concern in school life. Issues about uniforms and corridors had disappeared and staff had introduced a quiet table (group session 4) which offered some flexibilities at lunch in terms of seating arrangements, which also had some benefits for social acceptance, which were being noted by the students:

"(at lunchtimes we) can just sit at the table and sort of …wait….sort of play."

"Yeh … we don't have to …really … well we don't have to go out, they don't tell us to….go" (Pupil responses in group discussion)

Again there was no data which unearthed why some of the issues around other sensory irritations had diminished, for example uniform, we can speculate that perhaps as other stressors had reduced then their resilience to cope with other niggles was greater, or it may

simply relate to the pupils getting used to the uniform or with age it had got softer or shoes more flexible. However, what is apparent is that the sensory issues were no longer a concern that required comment, the situation again had improved.

5.1.6 Whole school ethos issues

At the outset of the project from discussions at the initial set up meeting, and from the evaluations of the initial training there were some comments made by the school staff about the need to have a whole school approach to pupils on the autism spectrum suggestive of a desire to have an inclusive community perhaps? However, the comments were typically over arching and quite general comments but they did suggest a will that a collective school response would be helpful, for example:

" It is good to have an overview of asd, we need to be more flexible to the individual needs of students"

Despite this, at the beginning of the working group and up to session 3 individual staff in the group were reluctant to prioritise activity that related to wider school issues. The locus of activity was all individual; about their own classroom or support tasks. For example in discussions at week one staff were commenting on the pressure to get pupils to complete work tasks and how hard it was for them as teachers

*"Yeh, **I've** got to get **them** (all pupils) through loads of work this term"*

In my reflections on the process in session 3 of the staff working group I recognised that I was pressing for recognition of the need to address whole school challenges.

"Whole school issues had not cropped up so (I) introduced stories from other schools and 'wondered' about next time. I decided to mention this as a possible future action and this was agreed".

With the introduction of case scenarios ('stories from other schools') that had a whole school element I hoped to link some of the concerns identified by the students for active consideration by the staff. However, at the end of session 4 ideas were being generated by the staff about things which needed to be addressed by themselves with the support of the

senior management of the school, as illustrated in this exchange between members of the group for example:

"we need to do something about the dining hall so kids don't have to go out"

" we could use the garden area"

" it would be good if we could get a covered area built you know when we are doing up the yard, I will take it to SMT"

Comments made in the discussion and also in the final interviews suggested that the locus of activity had shifted from safe, familiar and individual practice to a more collective responsibility and a different terminology of 'we' with staff expressing views about what they as a group and perhaps a whole school had done to make things different:

*"I think what **we're** doing at lunchtime has really helped"*

*"Yeh, it's been good now the lunchtime staff understand. **We** need to keep an eye on that"*

(comment from teachers session 4)

The pupils within the project were not actively involved as researchers in any formal sense. They were, however, an important part of the school community and their observations and comments were sought in order to provide data about their experiences of inclusion; (presence, participation, acceptance and achievement) to triangulate with data gathered from the school staff and my own reflections. Their experiences were also an important part of the method of action in terms of providing an impetus. In their role as providers of information their comments at the initial and final interviews offered rich sources of data suited to a qualitative framework. At the end of the process they were also all asked to use a 10 point rating scale to give an overview of their experience in the autumn term compared with the end of the summer term. All students felt that the situation was better with a mean change of 4 being noted overall. This method was not intended as way of providing spurious positive data or 'hard evidence' of change. It did, however, offer an opportunity to provide a global, personal perspective on school life and any shift in their experiences, to compare it with their qualitative data, and data gathered form other sources

5.1.7 Summary

The data generated through this evaluation does suggest that inclusive practice, as evidenced by presence, participation, and acceptance for this group of pupils in this school has been grown. In line with theory based evaluations (Stame, 2004) there has been an attempt to get inside the black box and explore the experiences of those involved in the process and offer some detail of what inclusion means for some of those in this community. However, as Pawson and et al., (1997) note it is not the content of any programme of itself that makes a difference and prompts change, it is the processes at play and their effect on what people then do which are of interest. In fact when looking at the very context specific nature of the activity and solutions undertaken in this school it is hard to identify a recognisable programme. But some things were happening, there was change in practice and it was having an impact.

At the beginning of the project the problems were about 'autism' or 'special needs' (a within child medical model of disability) but the solutions that were arrived at by individuals and groups of staff over time were not about 'remediation' or 'fixing' the pupil, but about accommodations made by adults in the school and the community of the school (a social or embodied model of disability). What has also emerged is that participation and acceptance can also be discussed in terms of the school staff and their active participation in the process, co-constructing action through practice and reflection, and acceptance of these and other students and perhaps also of each others roles and actions working within the school community.

In analysing the data what is suggested is that the activity by those in the school was often highly local in nature. In order to capture this data in a way that has relevance to those outside this specific school the data was organised into broad themes that are likely to have meaning to other school communities, and within all of these themes a positive shift towards inclusion has been noticed. The diagram below illustrates the broad themes, and how activity in each of the areas, for this school, contributed to emerging inclusive practice.
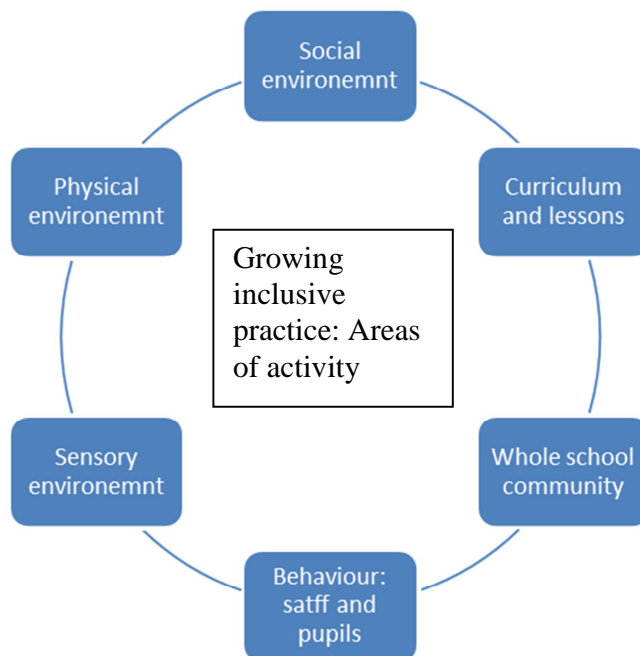
Fig. 2 Diagrammatic representation of themes involved in 'growing' inclusive practice

5.2 Themes around 'How a school might be supported to become inclusive and consideration of the processes which were helpful to this?'

Within this project I have suggested that a qualitative conceptual framework is most appropriate to explore the concept of inclusion supported by a methodology which is not looking to prove a hypothesis. That inclusive practice appeared to grow within this school is interesting, but perhaps what is more interesting is an exploration of why this happened? What was going on? What processes might have been underpinning the change? In this section I will attempt to explore these processes; what was going on and what was noticed and valued. Data has been analysed from the initial set up meeting, staff and pupil comments and reflections over the course of the project, and reflections about my actions up to and including the data analysis.

I had considered some potential process ideas at the outset but in the process of looking at and coding the data a number of revisions were made. For example, 'programme content' was finally subsumed under the theme of 'external facilitation', and 'initial training' was subsumed under the theme of 'goal setting and motivation'. I also debated as to whether 'pupil views' should be a separate theme or whether it should in fact be included within the 'whole school community ethos' theme, deciding on the former given the strength of data for this as a stand alone item. In explaining the findings the final thematic analysis of the available data in this section which considered key elements of process was consequently organised into the following categories: 'goal setting and motivation', 'working as a group', 'external facilitation', 'pupil views' and 'whole school community/ethos' , giving more overarching descriptions of process elements rather than the detail of the activities.

5.2.1 Goal setting and motivation

Before the training session analysis of my own notes highlighted the fact that although the initial training request related to a single training event, it was very easy to negotiate with the senior managers (SMT) of the school to broaden this to a whole school staff development project. A crucial and clear signal to the school staff that there was management sign up to the school goal of how to support this group of students who were starting that September. A clear message was also given to school staff in that SMT wanted to use a valuable limited resource (a whole school training slot) and that all staff were expected to attend to in order to consider the issue as a whole school.

Comments from the individual evaluations made by all staff indicated that it was felt to be valuable at the time, with 100% positive evaluations being received. So whilst this felt like a good start, what could be said about impact on future practice? In terms of responses to the question about what they were going to do next the following was typical in terms of school staff being motivated to do something:

"be more careful…" (…of the needs of pupils on the autism spectrum.)

However, in terms of impact it was difficult to be clear from the feedback provided what they would actually be doing differently as part of their, or their schools, response as only 2 comments were specific about what they would do next, for example:

"(I will) ..adjust the way I give instructions"

This is very much consistent with the findings of Grieve (2009) and Steine et al., (1999) who identified the limitations of single one off training.

And, rather like Rose's (2001) enquiry to school staff about what would help them be more inclusive there was a common theme from many responses that more information and training was going to be needed. As one respondent said;

"It has opened a lot of questions, opened a lot of doors, we need more training"

With others indicating that they want:

"more awareness of possible problems and solutions"

However, if these comments were viewed in the context of this being the start of something, rather than the end of something, then a different and more positive perspective emerges.The initial training was mentioned in the comments of 4 of the teachers in the final interviews with them suggesting that it had been helpful because others in the school were responsive to what they, as individuals and as a group, were doing:

"I think that we had things like the DVD I think it made a really good impression – it was good to talk with colleagues about that, I think it kind of stuck in their head" (teacher interview 2)

Perhaps what this data is suggesting is that both the management support and the initial training was sufficiently motivating to provide a context in which new activity could grow, and the idea that , for this school including pupils with autism was a shared goal.

So what about new activity? Were any specific patterns about goals evident from the data? The setting of specific activity goals was a key feature of the action research model that all staff joining the group had signed up for and did in fact feature positively and explicitly in the data generated from the teacher interviews, and also implicitly reinforced in observations of the comments made by teachers in the group and my reflections on the group sessions. In particular two main features were apparent; school staff feeling a sense of value and agency in terms of being able to set their own goals and do something, and an acknowledgement that their activity sat within a broader organisational context. For example:

"Within the groups I think the activities were good because they enabled you to really understand what was being talked about and I think going away and having to do something was actually really helpful. Well I don't think it's that easy actually because I think we all are so different and I think sometimes it is better to have goals for you rather than the whole group" (Teacher interview 2)

and

"I mean we all knew that we wanted to work on in our way to make the things better and I guess we are all part of the school but we all did it our own way and that was interesting as well that you can do it your own way" (teacher interview 3)

In my reflections at the beginning of week 3 I noticed an increase in the level of participation and reflection from all of the group. I noticed that there appeared to be something happening in terms of individual confidence and practice, sense of agency, but also in terms of gaining confidence sharing their ideas and practice within the group:
"Really good start (to the session). All had done interesting things and were feeling very positive…was it to do with the activity or an increased confidence in the group? Or a bit of both?"

Interestingly during the sessions staff were also beginning to spontaneously align their activity and practice with the broader whole school goals around inclusion, and also other system wide activity. For example, during the session relating to social/behavioural issues some other wider goals of the school were referenced linking activity in this project to work they had been doing relating to restorative justice (RJ) approaches. One member of staff suggested that they might use some of the role play approaches used in RJ to support the social understanding of pupils on the autism spectrum, and vice versa. Possibly evidence that the learning in this situation was becoming embedded and part of a broader set of responses, with the students diagnosed with autism not being seen as such a separate group and that the activities engaged in had more general applicability.

5.2.2 Working as a group

I have already suggested that there were benefits of working in a group in that ideas were shared and it offered the possibility for some alignment between individual and group/organisational goals. But was anything else going on? In exploring this theme data was largely generated from the staff group comments along the way, my reflections and research diary, and data from the final teacher interviews. What is highlighted is that being part of a community and recognising that others faced similar challenges appeared helpful, as did the opportunity to notice, explore and respond to similarities and differences in both activity and context, and learn from this.

All of those who worked in the group made some comment as to a feeling of shared enterprise, and an acknowledgement that this included some challenge but that it felt helpful, as described by Grieve (2009). For example:

"I think it worked really well actually – I think it was good because different issues came from different people who had different roles and perspectives in schools you know LSA's, Teachers, Supervisors. It was all important really, it made you sort of think out of your own box if you know what I mean. You know we are all working at the end of the day for the same reasons aren't we, we all have the same service to give" (teacher interview 2)

And finally the feeling of value was really emphasized in this comment:

"Well we don't really normally get the opportunity to chat, plan and discuss with them (other staff) and I think talking with other colleagues and thinking about what's going on is an opportunity ... well it's like gold dust really. What was particularly valuable is the awareness and the feeling that you not alone that there might be pattern to the problems." (teacher interview 1)

From a facilitators point of view there was an initial enthusiasm apparent in terms of people expressing a desire work together but it was only evident in my notes at the beginning of session two that this was translating into active participation and reflection from all members of the group. This felt a significant point as earlier discussions have highlighted that practice is best supported to change and develop when individuals feel comfortable enough to engage with critical reflection and challenge relating to their own practice.

Some interesting, and for me unexpected, process issues also developed when looking at the various responses to 'stories from other schools'. Using solution oriented, non directive approaches and allowing staff to explore issues and recognise what they were already doing and knew was utilised as a way of avoiding providing scripts or 'tips for teachers' that wouldn't necessarily align with their theories. It also provided a safe format for challenge that had a less personal feel. Consequently a number of anecdotes, scenarios and shared examples from other schools were developed by myself and used as part of the process (Appendix F). In small groups staff were invited to think about what might be going on and what kinds of accommodations they had made or might make to address the issue. Comments were made by a number of the staff with regard to this suggesting that this had been helpful and they didn't feel like they were being told what to do. For example:

"Discussion about scenarios and examples helped my transfer from theory in to practice"(teacher interview5)

and

"Real life stories and examples (were useful), it kind of makes you think"(teacher comment in session3)

An unexpected process feature that emerged was that hearing about other school experiences seemed to extend the breadth of the support group to include 'people like me in other schools'. The staff comments related to feeling somehow validated that other people struggled with the same issues, whilst for others it was about knowing that they had been able to resolve these issues when others hadn't. For me both of these kinds of comments seemed to be about expertise – and who had it.

"So do other schools face the same things, like challenges and stuff?"

"yeh, that's good to hear really" (Two members of the staff group discussing scenarios)

and another comment, in session 4;

"I wonder why they did that, you know about the exams. I think they should have explained it all a bit better, or practised first or something. You think that would work"

5.2.3 The role of an external facilitator

Analysis relating to this dimension has been based on data from the school staff and my own reflections from the initial set up meeting up to the data analysis. At this point the focus is on whether the facilitator was a key part of the process, discussion as to my

reflections on this will be undertaken in the next section (5.3) However, in reality there are considerable overlaps between theses sections, but in the first instance they have been kept separate in an attempt to answer the two separate research questions. Analysis of the data was generally supportive in favour of having a facilitator with a number of particular features noted including; the need to have someone lead the process, the benefits of having an external facilitator, the autism related expertise of the facilitator, and the style of the facilitation.

My first role in the process was at the initial set up meeting. However, my reflections on this process suggest that 'facilitation' may not actually be an appropriate term to use as the conversations were quite directive in terms of what I wanted to achieve:

"I wanted to move from 'the expert' to a position of having expertise ....I wanted to get the idea of shared enterprise" (research diary)

and I was quite clear that I did not want to just deliver a one off training session. Whilst the content was up for negotiation; that I wanted to work alongside a staff group, and engage with pupils was not, potentially causing some conceptual tensions that I will explore more fully later. In this instance it is probably fair to say that I took the lead perhaps in an 'expert' role suggesting a clear model to develop practice.

However, once the project was underway comments from staff in the working group highlighted their views that there should be a facilitator:

"Well that's absolutely vital because if you hadn't been there to lead it really there won't have been anything. Yeah it would have been helpful actually if you could have come into lessons and watch what was going on and use that to talk to us about at a later stage. That would have been really helpful." (teacher interview 1)

However, there are perhaps a number of alternative views as to what this member of staff might be looking for. Going into lessons to observe draws one into a different kind of support, perhaps more related to a coaching model (see Green et al., 2006) which is a much more practice grounded individualised approach to changing practice, and not one that was within the scope of this project. Alternatively it may have been a quest for validation for the member of staff to know that she was doing ok, which again moves away from the

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underlying psychology of this project - that meanings are co-constructed and practice is not judged as 'right' or 'wrong' by a visiting expert.

However, all of the other staff discussed the importance of facilitation with more of an emphasis on sharing of expertise:

"I know it's our school but it's good to have someone supporting you in that really" *(teacher interview 2)*

There were also a number of other comments about the value of facilitation and that this should be undertaken by someone with a degree of separation from the school system:

"I think someone from outside just makes it feel a little bit different rather than the same old, same old – same people saying the same things." (teacher interview 2)
The idea that having someone else in the mix, along with colleagues in the group, adding to the feeling of challenge was also valued in comments made in the final teacher interviews:
"It made you sort of think out of your own box if you know what I mean?" (teacher interview 2)

So in all of this did it need to be someone who had some content knowledge about the autism spectrum more generally? There were a significant number of comments from the initial training evaluations and also during group sessions and final interviews reinforcing the idea that the facilitator was able to draw on knowledge about the autism spectrum, and experience from other schools in terms of enriching the discussion. However, the value of any content knowledge needs to be considered alongside other data linking to process, individual feelings of competency and agency working within an approach which hopes to seamlessly integrate these aspects of EP practice (Pelligrini, 2009). Putting the facilitator knowledge alongside valuing other peoples' knowledge and expertise effectively distributes power and influence and can support motivation and positive action (Harris, 2008), as illustrated by this comment:

"It was good having you there. I know you had lots of ideas and information which was good, and a new person in the mix changes things. I didn't feel under pressure though we all got to say our bit and do things" (teacher interview 4)

The idea of the facilitator's knowledge working alongside that of the school staff suggests that practice was in fact being co-constructed, as perhaps highlighted in my observation that despite an interest is looking at resources and taking handouts none of the interventions shared by the school staff really were recognisable other than in broad brushstroke terms with any of those which I had shared!

As the facilitator I had some responsibility regarding the style of the delivery and organisation of the group sessions and this was referenced by several members of the working group and the subject of my reflections. The comment below being typical and highlighting how important it was to actively listen and monitor the group process, and how this might have contributed to the co-construction of understandings and practice:

"That was good, I liked it, I liked the fact that we had some say in what we were doing I know you had some ideas as well but it was good that you well, you kind of went at our pace." (teacher interview 3)

During the sessions I noted that I needed to keep resisting the temptation to be directive in terms of what I thought needed to happen avoiding prescription in order to keep true to my underpinning conceptual framework:

I appreciated that I had a lot of information about autism and other students from other schools on the autism spectrum , as well as lots of ideas or 'tips' for intervention. I regularly checked my inclination to directly suggest an answer. Instead I often began a session with an outline of a number of resources, depending on the topic in hand , and would then use questions to encourage group discussions and "wonder" about what might have been going on and generation of ideas. Question formats used included: " I wonder what might have been going on for … ?" or " I wonder why…?". The question formats were intended to encourage the staff group exploration of an idea. They were also designed to move the participants away from anecdotal 'chit chat' about what had happened that week and into more purposeful solutions and action, hopefully supported by maintaining with the session structure of review previous action, plan, and then do some more.

However, part of being the group facilitator also brings with it responsibilities and comments were made by all of the school staff who participated in the group noting that the timing of the sessions was problematic both in terms of being after school, and also the gap between sessions:

"I would have liked it to be in the day time, not after school you know because not everyone could come all of the time" (teacher interview 4)

and

"I think ideally we could have had the sessions closer together perhaps more condensed, the time span between the sessions was too long from beginning to end" (teacher interview 2)

I have to say that my reflections supported these points of view; the first issue was out of my control and was a worry of mine from the outset in terms of how after school timing impacted on equality of access and also in terms of the value put on the activity by the school. However, the timing of the whole project could have been different and is something that in the future I would hope to do differently so as not to lose momentum.

5.2.4 Pupil Accounts

One of the key ways that the local theories and meanings of inclusion can be understood is through the experiences of the pupils (see Frederickson et al., 2007, and Humphrey, 2008), and any process which attempts to grow inclusion should have these constructions at its heart.

In this project, from the initial training session, throughout the work and interviews with the staff group comments about the pupil views raised a high level of comment. For this reason I felt that this needed a separate theme as an essential element of process in developing inclusive practice

For example, in the initial training forty three respondents in the evaluation noted that the dvd of Rory Hoy telling the story of his autism had made a significant impact on them, with typical comments being:

"It (the dvd) really made it stick in your head"

Comments rather like those described by Barratt (2006) when talking about the use of 'insider accounts'.

Sharing the comments from the pupils in their school with the working group also provoked a strong response from the staff, although at the outset they did not necessarily feel able to address the issues that were raised. I have to say that for me the pupil accounts were powerful, possibly influenced by the fact that I had heard them first hand and they had resonance with the accounts I had heard from many other pupils during my practice, and a point to pick up in more detail in the next chapter in terms of who might be best placed to elicit pupil views. Data from my research diary noted with some surprise, and frustration, that despite the fact that the pupil interviews had yielded some quite stark messages about the difficulties experienced particularly at lunch and break time, and in the corridors the staff group did not pick up on this as an area of focus in the first instance when planning the group sessions.

Comments from the final interviews included:

"Well actually I was quite surprised to hear some of the things that they said; I was quite surprised to hear their perspective" (teacher interview 2)

and,

"I don't think we listen enough, we see so many kids and then you get another class and another class and another class and ..well.. I think if I am being honest you can just see the ones who are… well…a bit.. you know challenging. It has been interesting to hear what these have had to say" (teacher interview 4)

Reflecting on both of these comments together moves us away from the rather general (albeit enthusiastic) comments after the initial training to something that feels much more personal. Similar comments were apparent from other members of staff and perhaps suggest that the pupil views were challenging to listen to. Both of these comments have something of a confessional or apologetic feel to them and may offer some explanation of why, at first, activity occurred within the possibly more familiar territory for these teachers, their classroom and the curriculum. As the confidence of the group developed perhaps they were in a better position to deal with this challenge more positively?

But for others who had a different role in school the pupil perspectives were not new, and they were pleased that some of the pupils' stories and issues were being shared in a wider forum which might then lead to positive action:

"Well I spend a lot of time talking to the kids so I kind of knew some of the issues that cropped up. But it was good to talk to other people about them as well because sometimes when the kids talk to me it's kind of in confidence so I can't really share it. But this was good to kind of get it out there because some of the things you know like corridors and playtimes and stuff like that it is important to listen to their views and you can't help but feel a bit sad sometimes." (teacher interview 3)

Several members of the staff group expressed some validation after hearing the pupils themselves expressing how they thought things had changed for the better

"Yeah it was good it was nice to hear what they said and the fact that they all thought things were better and you feel things are better but it's good to hear the kids say it themselves" (Staff member 5)

and:

"That was interesting as well. I think some of the things they had to say, I felt kind of pleased that things had moved on and J. seems to be more settled and has some friends." Staff member 2)

Note also at this point that teacher 2 has moved from 'surprised about 'them' to pleased about what she had noticed about a particular named pupil.

5.2.5 Whole school community issues

All of the themes discussed above have pointed to what feel like essential elements of the process in this school; having a reason to do something at a school and individual level, bringing together goals again at an individual and whole school level, individuals working together in a group and acknowledging their role and influence as part of a wider school community and community of schools, and acknowledging the importance of understanding the term 'inclusion' with direct reference to those who experience it. The staff in the group, and some beyond the group, appeared to be coming to terms with the 'grand vision' of inclusion by coming to terms with what it means to their local time and

space (Flood, 1999). However, whilst we talk about the pupils' accounts a lot of what has been discussed above in terms of process actually also relates substantially to staff experiences and accounts.

Over the course of the project staff moved from activity related to their own classroom practice and began to talk about what 'we' need to be doing and what 'we' have done or need to be doing next; for example the following comments occurred in discussions in group session 4:

*"I think what **we** are doing at lunchtime has really helped"*

During the group activities and final interviews there were also an increasing number of specific comments about named children, not all of them on the autism spectrum, and a move away from a generic 'they' referring to some homogenous group of pupils on the autism spectrum. Perhaps staff in school were beginning to notice and make accommodations in a more individualised and flexible way; a key issues in an inclusive community according to both Jones (2008), from an autism perspective, and Kalambouks (2007) from a school achievement perspective.

Over time a number of key issues for staff were becoming apparent, that is a feeling of agency, influence and method of expression from the staff similar to that outlined by Harris in her discussions about the merits of distributed leadership (2008). The project seemed to have generated a feeling of inclusion (presence, participation, acceptance, achievement) and not only for the pupils but also for the staff involved with the project. In developing inclusive practice and a more inclusive community it seems that processes that support the inclusion of all players in the community is required.

5.2.6 Summary

So having explored the data a number of essential themes seem apparent that relate to process and what was in the 'black box' that helped staff in this local context to change practice and work towards a shared goal. Whilst an overriding theme relates to developing a sense of community, an inclusive community that makes accommodations for all of its members, in this instance this was achieved through conscious planning and facilitation

within a clear conceptual framework. This specifically included regard to motivation and goal setting, the value of working within a group, and taking account of the theories of those within the community. These themes are represented within the diagram below:
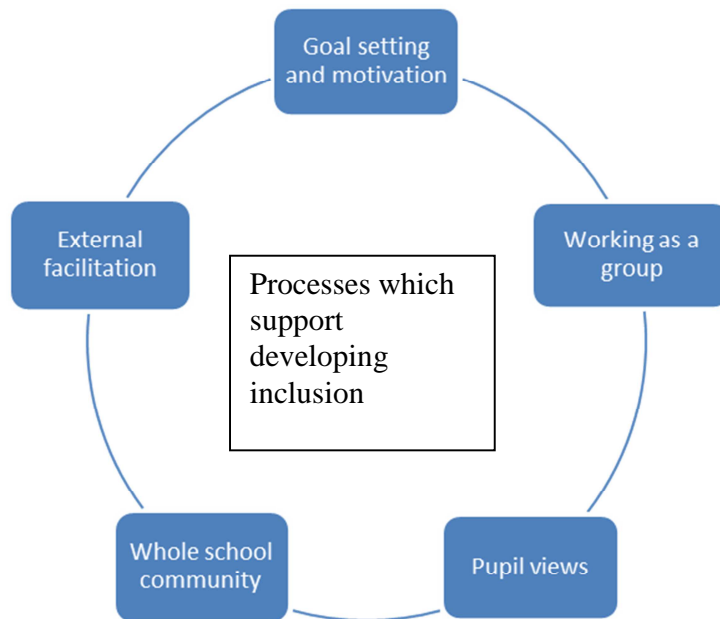
Fig. 3 Diagrammatic representation of themes relating to processes which supported a school to become more inclusive

5.3 Themes around 'what was my role as an Educational Psychologist in supporting the process and practice of inclusion?'

In this section I will highlight the findings not just in terms of the role of facilitator, but rather from the perspective of me as an educational psychologist acknowledging, of course, their relatedness to discussions in the previous section. I have already discussed the findings in terms of the expertise and style of facilitation, but will begin to consider what the findings suggest in terms of being an educational psychologist. The themes outlined

below are drawn primarily from my own reflections over the process and triangulated from data drawn from other sources and as such relates more substantially to my cycle of 'action research' as an EP, rather than the cycle of action research focussing on processes relating to inclusion in that particular organisation. The results appear to suggest that there are 3 relevant areas of practice: knowledge of the psychology of typical and atypical child development and learning, knowledge about the psychology of motivation and change, and research and critical reflection.

5.3.1 Knowledge of the psychology of typical and atypical child development and learning

Throughout the sessions there was a need for myself as facilitator to have readily available knowledge and expertise about school systems and curriculum demands, what 'typically' developing pupils are expected to do and learn, how autism can impact on development and learning, how this might manifest itself in a school context, and what strategies, interventions, modifications, and access arrangements can be helpfully employed. The active employment of this knowledge from the initial planning stages through the initial training session and follow up group sessions is apparent from my own notes, resources discussed and shared and also from the reflections and comments of the school staff was used to achieve different outcomes over time. However, whilst this was valued, for example:

"Information provided was detailed and presented in an accessible way"

It actually bore little detailed resemblance to any of the actions undertaken by the staff, probably because it was shared and immersed amongst other experiences and practice reflection.

My notes and comments from the teaching staff illustrate in sessions 2 and 3 that the staff group were interested in the resources available, that they served a useful purpose in terms of an external resource to discuss and perhaps provide an initial impetus that then enabled the whole group to contribute. A finding offered support in the comments from final staff interviews:

"The information given was useful, it was good to be able to re-read it and to think about it in an ongoing way about what I was doing" (teacher interview4)

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Having some content knowledge was also important for me in being able to monitor the discussions and comments of the staff in the group and help them to reframe some of their anecdotes or concerns from an asd perspective, using established 'autism friendly' techniques such as, for example, the 'Iceberg Model' (Mesibov et. al., 2004) a helpful problem solving tool for generating understandings that support purposeful future action about incidents that have occurred. (reflection in notes from session 3).

This knowledge was also useful in gently challenging some of the myths that emerged in terms of inclusion and autism requiring quick access to accurate information. For example, challenging the assertion made by one of the teachers that:

"I think probably when special schools were closed it meant there were more challenges in mainstream schools which has been quite hard"

This was not accurate at either a local , regional or national level (DfE data, 2011) and it was helpful to have this knowledge to hand and then use questions to explore alternative narratives.

5.3.2 Knowledge about the psychology of motivation and change

In contemplating the psychology involved in motivating activity in previous sections I have discussed the value of a facilitated process, and the need for active monitoring of the process. For me it was also about monitoring my own psychology and staying true to my conceptual framework, and resisting requests that might cast me in a more traditional 'expert' mode. This included not responding to the request of many staff after the initial training session to do more training in this style. This did not happen given my scepticism founded on my own practice experience, and criticisms from educational researchers (eg Allen, 2003). The initial training was about setting a context and establishing an organisational goal from which further local action could take place. My framework was about acknowledging and working with the different theories about inclusion that existed for different members of the community, and co-constructing practice, not giving scripts about what they should do which would be unlikely to align in any meaningful way with their theories.

During the sessions I explicitly used solution oriented conversations and consultation techniques. Questions were used to support staff to recognise their own strengths and develop their own solutions, increasing the likelihood that the solutions would fit (Miller et al., 2000).

Whilst this was a led process in terms of my role as facilitator, the challenge of getting the right balance between leading and facilitation, and prescription and direction is apparent in my reflections. As previously described throughout the first two sessions I noted with some impatience the reluctance of the staff group to feel able to tackle whole school issues that were having an impact on pupil comfort in school. In resisting the temptation to prescribe content for the next session 'scenarios' highlighting stories from other schools were introduced as a way of promoting discussions that were likely to prompt a response to consider whole school issues. This method did lead the staff group to begin to engage in consideration of whole school issues and their role in this, allying themselves with other schools, rather than changing the nature of power and influence in the relationship with direction or scripts being dispensed by a visiting expert (see Thomas and Loxley, 2007).

5.3.3 Research and critical reflection

The school staff in the group were engaged in systematic reflection about their activity, supported by myself as facilitator. The power of this model has been outlined by Simm and Ingram (2008) in their work with school staff using action research techniques to develop school level change. In this project the critical reflection occurred as part of the sessions and then at the end in terms of sharing the information with the school, firstly in the form of a discussion with the Special Needs co-coordinator and Senior Management Team, and then in the form of a summary information sheet for the pupils and staff involved. The exploration of whether change had occurred and what might have been going on in terms of process for the school was valued by the staff group, and the senior management of the school. However, I regret that I did not engage in discussion with those involved about what this might say regarding generalising this learning for the school in terms of other projects and for the sustainability of this project.

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In addition to the action research with the school, throughout I was also engaged with planning and monitoring my role as practitioner and researcher; developing my views about inclusion, noticing my practice, challenging what I was doing, and collecting data about this. This process of reflecting, reviewing and data analysis has been crucial to my cycle of action research the implications of which for my future practice will be explored more fully in Chapter 6 and 7.

5.3.4 Summary

In exploring the role of the EP in the project both as facilitator and researcher a number of key themes emerged, supported by the data from school staff, and my own reflections. Which are represented diagrammatically in Figure 4. Essentially my role as an EP was about systematically applying psychology (content, process and research) to my practice, and using this to inform future practice – both mine and of those in the school.
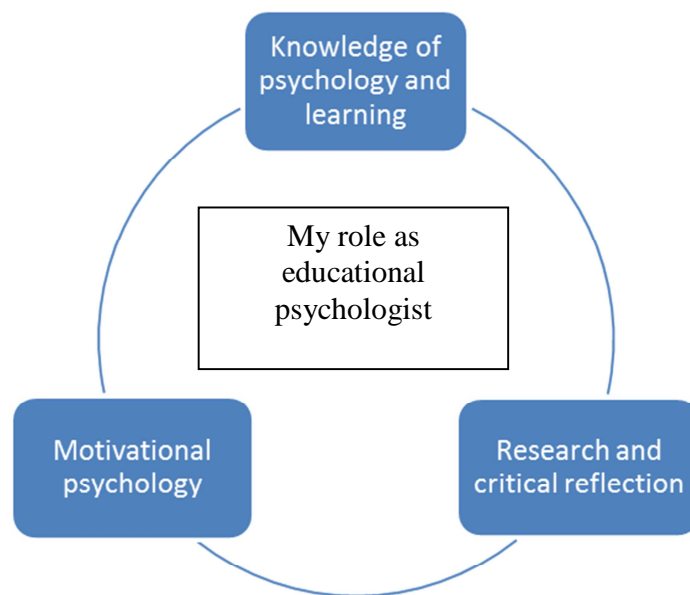

Fig. 4 Diagrammatic representation of themes reflecting on my role as an educational psychologist in the process and practice of supporting inclusion

5.4 Chapter summary and emerging theories

Whilst 'on paper' I have disaggregated the findings relating to the research questions working through the data there are clearly considerable interconnections. Neither the process of change, nor the concept of inclusion are linear nor simple. The initial analysis and description of findings suggest that it has been possible to 'grow' inclusion within this schools for at least this group of pupils. However, whilst the activity of those involved in the process can be slotted into recognisable education 'boxes' (for example 'the curriculum'), the responses were not scripted or 'off the shelf' but were diverse and relevant to the theories and practice of those within the community.

The process of change and the growing of inclusion did not happen spontaneously. It was a led process based on a number of different elements of applied psychology but again within a conceptual framework which allowed for responsiveness to a local approach. It was also a process that was explicitly monitored and reflected on, drew from the previous practice experiences of those involved and generating evidence on which to base future practice.

Reflecting on the findings of this small scale research project a number of interrelated elements essential to the process of moving from clichéd rhetoric to more grounded reality in supporting the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum begin to develop into an emerging theory and merit further discussion. These are:

- The co-construction of meaning and practice local to the community
- Explicit regard to goal setting, motivation and organisational change
- Professional expertise and facilitation

The balance and emphasis of these elements across the duration of the project might change but the initial analysis and discussion of the research findings suggest that specific activities undertaken should attend to each of these elements. Figure 5 (below) incorporates these ideas into a potential process model the validity of which will be explored in the next chapter.

Fig. 5 Diagrammatic representation of a proposed process model for 'growing inclusion'

Chapter 6: Discussion

In this section I will consider the main findings and any patterns and explanations which emerged from the data analysis and how they relate in more detail to the research questions which were initially posed, how the research questions relate to each other, and their relationship to the broader contextual issues raised in the literature review. Whether the findings of this research merit integration into a possible 'process model' with greater applicability for growing inclusion for pupils on the autism spectrum into other secondary schools will also be explored.

6.1 Exploring the question of whether it is possible to 'grow' increasingly inclusive practice for pupils on the autism spectrum within an individual school.

In previous chapters much has been said about the local nature of inclusion and how it can only really be understood or given meaning by exploring the constructions of those within the community. Using Booth and Ainscows' description of inclusion (2002) and acknowledging that we are looking at the local experiences of presence, participation, acceptance and achievement for this school community, staff and pupils involved in this research were reporting positive shift in the first three areas. If you consider keeping up with the work of the class and 'achieving' socially and emotionally as achievement (see Frederickson 2004) there was positive shift in the fourth area as well. Although data was not sought specifically to consider curriculum achievement this would be relatively simple to acquire. However, the lack of seeking this probably relates to my own theories that if you get other aspects of school life right then there will be a consequent impact on academic achievement.

The findings which came from the data in this project have some features which might be recognisable to all schools. However, in this project their content was primarily about their school, their needs and their solutions. Simply rolling out the same accommodations in another school will not make a positive difference, nor I would suggest is it possible, nor desirable, to reduce the activity in this school to a list of 'tips for teachers'. To do this

would be to fail to acknowledge that the responses made were related to the identified needs of that community, arising from the hopes, goals and competencies of the staff as individuals and this school as an organisation. Attempts to roll out good advice was not successful in early school improvement work (see Reynolds, 1998), and neither has the autism specific good advice available to all schools over the last ten years including the 'Good Practice Guidance' (DfES, 2002), and the Inclusion Development Programme' appeared to make a significant impact on the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum (2011)

The themes illustrated in the data analysis and reporting were used as they covered the main areas of activity and enabled an illustration of the change to be described to the reader in terminology that was familiar. And, of course, these may prove to be useful in future similar projects when exploring some of these areas with those in a different school as considerations for workshops for example, or to structure conversations with pupils, but the content and activity which occurred did so as a consequence of process. Being consistent with a theory based approach to evaluation (Stame, 2004) it is in fact the theories of those undertaking the activity that is of interest in terms of understanding what happened, and not the specific content of what they did in any sense which merits replication in another context (for example, setting up a lego club, or developing a covered area in the school garden).

In considering whether it is possible to grow inclusion in a school I looked at the four key areas outlined by Booth and Ainscow. And, like many others who had explored inclusion and the autism spectrum, initially considered it in terms of the experiences primarily of the pupils, whether that was by trying to understand their constructions and meanings as I did (and also as did for example, Humphrey, 2008, and Osborne, 2011), or as others have done by considering the data as it related to them as subjects of enquiry (Eaves and Ho, 1997). However, what became increasingly apparent as the project progressed was that in growing a more inclusive community these descriptions need to apply to all of its members. That inclusion that was grown here appeared to relate not just for the pupils but also for the staff

and that was what felt different. Initially all of the staff in the school were present and participated, and accepting of the idea of the need to attempt to include those pupils on the autism spectrum. Over time the staff group, and several other members of the staff, were visibly participating in activity, being accepting of each others ideas and the pupils themselves, and also felt a sense of achievement and were able to recognise what they had accomplished. With hindsight it would have been interesting to have extended the concept of school community to include parents and to also explore and engage with their theories and understandings of inclusion perhaps leading to a more robust community response.

So within this research is a suggestion that in 'growing' inclusion the concept appears to be much more than being just about the experience of the pupils, it was about the shared experiences, inclusion and consequent constructions of the wider community. In Hanko's psychodynamic approach to staff support in schools she describes how, over time, teachers in groups can 'surprise'; themselves as to what they can do and how they can support each other (Hanko, 2002). Reflecting on the data and experiences from this project this certainly seems to be the case. During the project it emerged very clearly that the school staff had a feeling of being included and being active participants in the community and its activity, and that over time they had developed a voice and a greater sense of agency. It seemed as though inclusion needed to refer to the rights, needs and actions of all members of the community if it was to be successful. The term 'pupil voice' is currently very popular, a legacy perhaps of the United Nations work on the rights of the child, with proper engagement with young people being at its heart. It quite clearly has relevance both morally and culturally to discussions about inclusion. However, what emerges for me from this project is that in developing inclusion one has to have regard to the voice and constructions of the wider community and all of its participants.

Over the course of the project, from the initial whole school training and including the teacher group sessions, the teachers challenged their thinking and acknowledged that they needed to do some things differently. In this challenge perhaps came an element of cognitive dissonance which enabled change to take place, rather like the challenge and

dissonance described by Grieve (2009), and also Davies et al., (2012). But what was also interesting is that the challenge and change in practice also seemed to be apparent in the reports of staff and pupils that new ideas, supports and interventions were being introduced and/or supported by a wider group of staff. There appeared to be a 'ripple effect' going on. It is hard to know why this occurred. It may be that the initial training generated a receptive context for staff members who became more receptive to some of the ideas being explored and modelled by their colleagues, and certainly this was specifically referenced by some members of the working group. There was also a feeling of community increasingly evident with members of the staff group using 'I' less often to describe what they were doing and an increasing evidence of the word 'we' to describe activity in the school, again possibly suggesting a more community based response.

By the end of the project the pupils had stopped talking about staff being unfair in terms of how they managed a class, or not seeing them as individuals. This may have been as a consequence of the initial awareness raising session, but perhaps also because there was a greater understanding within the school of some of the challenges facing these students, and a greater willingness to be flexible in a number of small ways. Simple strategies which were articulated by school staff and noticed by the pupils included writing tasks down, splitting large classes into smaller groups for some activities, and being flexible to student needs in terms of seating arrangements, and all appear to have made a difference to the comfort and experience of both staff and pupils. By the end of the project the staff were not discussing the group of students on the autism spectrum as a separate group, there was much more flexibility. Some of the strategies were also being accessed by a wider group of pupils, not on the autism spectrum, whilst others were being introduced with a specific student in mind. The work of Farrell (2007) and Kalambouks (2007) suggest that schools that do well, whether they have high levels of SEN, or not are the ones that are able to make such flexible accommodations. The pupils needs were being noticed more as a function of their individuality, as the young people from the ESPA college (conference 2009) had hoped, and their 'behaviour' was not just about 'autistic behaviour' or 'behaviour problems'.

Whilst we do not have data on exactly what was better across the classrooms, we do know that both the pupils and the staff in the project felt the situation had improved. Perhaps if it is *the process* of finding a shared solution for that school context, rather than being categoric about what future plans should look like for a different school, then we do not really need to know exactly what the arrangements were. Interestingly, and a theme that emerged frequently from the data, was that what the school staff might have felt of as 'lesson' or curriculum based intervention or modification appeared to be impacting on the emotional and social responses of the pupils. As Osborne and Reed noted in their recent study relating to factors that support 'inclusion' he noted that the more confident staff are in terms of their competency the more pupils were reported to feel a sense of belonging (Osborne and Reed, 2011). This seems to be borne out by the experiences in this school.

So although changes in practice was reported by pupils and staff and elements of inclusion were more apparent, can this be claimed to be as a consequence of the project, or was it just an inevitable consequence of the passage of time? I have to acknowledge that passage of time may account for some of the changes, for example, pupils being more comfortable talking to a wider group of staff. However, the pupils and the staff had some different theories about this. Clearly the staff felt that working together in a group, and planning and reviewing activity had made a difference, and that this was an opportunity which would not normally occur ("It's like gold dust really"), and the interventions developed as a consequence of this process were amongst those noticed by the pupils, offering something by way of triangulation. But perhaps most importantly in challenging themselves, recognising that they wanted to do things differently and acting accordingly their narrative as individuals and as a school community to some extent seemed to have changed. As predicted by Rose (2001), Allen (2003) and Grieve (2007) perhaps what had happened was that they were less reliant on the expert scripts of a visiting professional (myself, for example), and had an increasing feeling of competence in meeting the needs of their pupils.

However, in a theory based approach to evaluation, and as part of my cycle of action research, what is perhaps of more interest is not that change occurred but what can we understand of the processes that might have underpinned this?

6.2 Exploring the questions of what were the processes that might have facilitated increasingly inclusive practice, and what was my role as EP in this?

As the project has developed, and as illustrated in the previous sections, it has been increasingly difficult to keep the idea of 'key process elements' separate from my role as facilitator, researcher and practitioner in discussion. What seems to have happened over the course of the process is that the different elements are significantly intertwined and, as Ashton (2007) predicted, the roles of practitioner and researcher are enmeshed. An idea that might horrify positivist researchers but is possibly an inevitable feature of the conceptual framework underpinning my work. Therefore, in this section the process elements and my role as EP will be discussed together.

At the outset of the project I had some views about the kind of activities that might have been helpful to facilitate change. These were developed as a consequence of my own reflections on earlier work, being critical of the impact of 'top down' one off training events, and also from my exploration of research in the areas of organisational change, school improvement and solution oriented, and motivational psychology. However, did the practice and processes in this research relate to this thinking, and what might be seen as the essential elements of process, or framework, for this school, and for possible future schools?

6.2.1 The process of growing inclusive practice

In chapter 2 I discussed Truscott and Truscotts' model where they describe the four key elements of positive psychological processes, which can be used with individuals and

groups in schools to promote growth and development (Truscott and Truscott, 2004). These are:

a) developing social climates to foster strengths
b) Shifting teacher professional identity from unsuccessful practices to building knowledge and confidence
c) Conceptualising teachers as active decision makers
d) Using their social context and construction to sustain changes

Specifically, the work of Truscott and Truscott suggests that using positive psychology consultation methods can have a positive influence on teachers' motivation to work with pupils who they feel might challenge them.

The initial findings of this project seem to suggest that some of these elements were evident as part of the process of change for this school. I would suggest that the group work and the style of interaction which included positive, non directive approaches and an action research model satisfied the first three requirements, and that using the experiences of the pupils and staff was important in linking activity to a social context. And, for the duration of the project at least, the working group provided a powerful social context to construct and sustain change. However, what this model does not adequately reflect is the linking of individual activity to broader school goals over time, nor perhaps the degree of challenge that was experienced by a number of the staff group in school and its role in change when they listened to the experiences of either Rory Hoy from his DVD (2007), or the pupils from their school.

In May's model for school development he identifies the need for a strong feeling of shared enterprise within the organisation, possibly supported by an exploration of the experiences of the pupil (May,2007). He suggests that this should be followed by activity that supports staff to change some of their attitudes (or perhaps 'theories' and assumptions) which will then lead to a change in their practice. He describes that whilst there might be a body of knowledge that can support practice it is attention to process that is just as important. This does have some resonance with what went on in this project: The management support and

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the initial training did provide a context to stimulate change and a feeling of shared enterprise, the group work offered a context to challenge and explore assumptions and practice, and sharing pupil experiences also supported the feeling that something needed to be done.

However, within this project there was a fluid and changing nature to the motivations, goals and practice at both an individual and school level over time which offers a slightly different conceptual framework from either of these models, and which perhaps gives meaning to the activities engaged in and processes in this project.

Reflecting on the work of goal theorists Austin and Vancouver (1996) and motivational psychology (See Ryan and Deci, 2008) motivating individuals to engage in activity that is relevant to an organisation requires a linkage between the individual and organisational goals, and that individuals have a feeling of autonomy, relatedness and competence. In this project these features were all apparent, but with different emphases at different times:

• Following the initial training there was an initial whole school desire to be more supportive of pupils on the autism spectrum. This feeling had the status of a shared goal but it was unfocussed.

• Initially within the staff working group the goals were very individualised and related to the immediate working contexts of individual members of staff

• As the group progressed there was a feeling that individual activity was becoming related to the activity of others in the group, and to staff in other schools.

• By the end of the project the activity of individuals was aligning much more with the whole school goal of being more inclusive but the activity and outcomes were much more tangible. Staff in the group, and some external to the group, were able to act individually but being mindful of the collective agenda, and appeared to feel more competent and confident in their agency within this.

The focus of this project had been to see if it was possible to 'grow' inclusive practice, and how this might be achieved. Reflecting on the relationship between the process activities undertaken, the impact of these activities on the 'theories' of those involved, and how this in turn impacted on their motivation and practice seems to be at the core of what went on. This possibly relates most closely to the work of Harris and Chapman (2004), and Silins and Mulford (2004) around schools as 'learning organisations', although not within specific autism, SEN, or inclusion agendas. They both describe the need to 'grow' effective practice with staff who feel empowered through participation and co-operation at a local level, and where diversity and complexity are respected and recognised as essential elements of organisations. In schools which are described as 'learning organisations' staff are empowered, they feel effective, and are able to work collaboratively with their colleagues. For the staff in this school, specifically those in the working group, this seems to have happened.

The first significant process activity in this project seemed to be the initial training: In common with all of the earlier discussions about motivation and change there is a need for some initial stimulus. In this project this relates to the initial discussions between myself and senior management in the school about a group of new pupils, and the initial whole school training session. That the feedback from this session was very positive was clearly a good start. However, I think that there were perhaps some risks in my agreeing to do this in that I was being portrayed as an 'expert' and perhaps was perceived to have power, but probably little influence on practice, as a consequence of this (Buscher, 2008). The real dangers of deskilling teaching staff by providing scripted responses has already been explored (see Allan, 2003). And if one agrees that the meaning of inclusion can only be understood from an exploration of the constructions of those in a community then as a vehicle to grow inclusive practice whole school training is flawed. However, the real value of this session seemed to be in offering some stimulus and some challenge, particularly through the very personal and grounded insights offered by Rory Hoy (2007) that would lead to a community awareness that they needed to think about their theories (assumptions and practice) about individuals on the autism spectrum. The evaluations of this session and the interest in joining a working group suggest that it had achieved this aim.

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The next significant process activities identified as a theme from the data analysis suggested that both working as a group and listening to the experiences of the pupils were a valued element of the process in this school. These activities also related significantly to the motivation and activity of the staff in the group. In the early group sessions the school staff seemed very reluctant to act on the concerns of the pupils, although afterwards they acknowledged how powerful the pupil comments were. It was as if at first they were acting as individuals and did not feel able to take on issues outside of their comfort zone. However, by week 2 the group were beginning to work as a group. They were feeling like they had common issues and concerns and that it was ok not to have all of the answers. The fact that the group members 'surprised' themselves with what they could achieve over time has resonance with Hanko's work. As their confidence and group identity established there began to be some alignment of their activity and group goals ("well we are all working to the same end aren't we?") .

As a psychologist monitoring the process there appeared to be strengthening of professional relationships within the group as a consequence of facing challenges together, a feeling of shared enterprise and that their individual actions and endeavour were playing together towards a common end. Although not explicitly 'badged' as such, the comments from the staff implied very much a school or community response to the issues had been established. Research exploring the factors essential to inclusion (see Booth and Ainscow, 2002) and more specifically to the inclusion of children on the autism spectrum (see the Autism Education Trust standards document, 2012), and Humphrey and Lewis (2008a) emphasise the need for a whole school response. But very little in terms of *how* this might be achieved. In this research there has been exploration of one possible way that this might be achieved building on a Vygotskan model of socially mediated learning. This project specifically looking at the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum but if slightly different stimulus materials were used then this approach may equally apply to other inclusive practice developments in large organisations where progress is based on the co-constructions of those in the community (see Reeves and Boreham, 2006).

The strengthening of collegiate professional relationships and shared enterprise (or goals) could also relate to the staff group response to the stories from other schools, where the co-construction of theories about what was going on and possible solutions was occurring almost within a virtual community of school staff. It is interesting to consider at this point where the expertise was felt to lie. The data from the group sessions suggests that the staff were not looking to me necessarily for the solutions; my role was to raise issues and facilitate the sharing of experiences, and they were becoming increasingly confident about their practice and skills. Something 'new' seemed to be added when people interacted, which led to changes in practice

The use of accounts from pupils also seemed to have a role in the goals, motivation and activity of all of the staff, as suggested by both Barrett (2006) and May (2007). At the outset I thought that it was an interesting approach and that both the Rory Hoy DVD and pupil interview data would give a very grounded and human perspective. I had perhaps underestimated their role in terms of goals and motivation. The significant and empathetic response after the initial training was attributed significantly to watching Rory and from the comments made perhaps challenged staff assumptions about how difficult mainstream schools had it when they had to accommodate potentially tricky students. From this challenge perhaps stemmed the general goal of "We must be responsive to the needs of these pupils". The fact that the pupils they were receiving probably had more differences than similarities to Rory Hoy did not really matter as concrete activities were never expected to follow immediately from this session. The impact of his account was perhaps more to do with the challenge to their theories and assumptions which appeared to prompt a broad based desire to change practice or 'do something'.

However, the challenge offered by the accounts of pupils in their school was different. Initially the response from the staff group was to do something, but related to their own feelings of competence and their own 'activity systems', not the issues raised about whole school issues such as corridors and lunchtimes. The comments from the final interviews illustrate the discomfort felt by the staff when the pupils described difficult times of the

day, and relief and perhaps pride when they felt that there had been improvements. Perhaps it was only when the group felt safe enough that they were able to address this challenge in a positive way (Grieve, 2009). That some cognitive dissonance occurred is possible, and as suggested by Engestrom 'disturbance in the system' can lead to change (Engestrom, 2000). As the group progressed the activity system broadened and the goals of the staff in the group aligned in a much more concrete and practical way with the broad goals of the whole school. As a facilitator I saw my role as providing a context and stimulus materials that would challenge and would enable then to explore their constructions about autism, inclusion, and the pupils in their school, and co-construct new theories within their context.

A question for me, and one I raised in the previous chapter arising from this, is who might be best placed to elicit the pupil views? I found it to be a powerful experience and perhaps the first hand nature of my experiences linked to some impatience on my part for the staff group to tackle these issues first. Had the staff members undertaken the interviews would they have got to this point more immediately? It is hard to say. However, I think there are methodological and ethical issues to consider in terms of a single interviewer is more likely to reduce variance in the way questions are asked (Robson, 2002), although in this project perhaps it was not necessarily important to maintain such standardisation in questioning, as different experiences were to some degree to be expected from the pupils. Ethically I think having someone from outside the school probably allowed for a greater openness from the pupils and certainly increased the possibility of anonymity of responses. But as far as the question of whether it would have changed the motivation and goals for the staff; that two members of staff at least confessed to have known about the issues of concern prior to the project but had not felt able to address them until the group had established a safe context and momentum for sharing suggests that it was the journey of the group, rather than who elicited the views, that impacted on motivation to do something different.

6.2.2 My role as facilitator in the process of change

If motivation and goals, and the processes which support them are seen as a key feature in the change that occurred, what can be said about the contribution of myself as an external

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facilitator to this process? Is this an essential element? At the outset the staff in the school thought it was necessary to have an 'expert' (me as Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist) give them training, following recent traditions in the world of 'special educational needs (See Thomas and Loxley, 2007), views echoed in the recommendations of many reports including those produced by the NAS (2002), the manifesto and updates of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism (2009), and the Autism Education Trust (2012). My 'expertise' was referenced and appreciated in the initial training evaluations and some staff even wanted more. However, I think that by the end of the group sessions the comments of the staff group and my own reflections suggested that it was the facilitation not prescription that had enabled understandings of the needs of pupils in the school and relevant, manageable and appropriate accommodations to be co-constructed which were relevant to that community. The needs of the school appeared to have shifted from a medical model where information about 'autism' was required to a more embodied approach where accommodations and adjustments were being made by staff and across the school community because they felt motivated and enabled to do so.

My activity as external facilitator was referenced by all of the staff group at the final interview. During the group sessions my role was perhaps more implicit than explicit. It reflects very much the stance of Miller and de Shazer (2000) who describe the role of the facilitator in terms of 'second order practice' with change occurring through the activity of someone else but prompted by the activity of the first person – in this case myself as educational psychologist. However, what may perhaps be seen as a professional challenge in this, is that when it goes well and the feelings of power, influence and expertise shift to those directly engaged with the target activity it can perhaps leave some with the question of "so what did the EP do for us?" Certainly wider research from organisational change, motivation theory and from positive, solution and goal oriented psychology suggest that the 'clients' who are the agents of change gain most when the action plan and action have been generated not by the external facilitator, but by themselves.

However, in terms of facilitation and the application of psychology, the sessions didn't 'just happen'. The sessions were planned and had some content. As discussed earlier as an educational psychologist I have my knowledge and experiences of autism, a range of interventions, teaching and learning, and the curriculum, which I drew on in the sessions, along with my own theories and constructions about inclusion, the needs of these pupils, life in secondary schools etc. However, any content I shared was at the request of the staff and most importantly in the form of illustration and stimulus, not prescription, and not with any more status than their ideas. As noted by one of the group members:" I know you had lots of ideas and information which was good….we all got to say our bit and do things". A point reinforced when you consider the diverse nature of the accommodations made by the various members of the school. I would suggest that when looking at the process of the change it was not the programme itself which was of interest but rather what it led people to do (Weiss, 1997). A point echoed by the work of May (2007) who, although looking at the teaching of reading which might perhaps be considered less of a socially constructed phenomena, considers that it is the process of stimulating change not the product or programme that leads to practice development.

Throughout this process, part of my research was to reflect on my own activity, and other peoples reflections on my activity and to think was there anything that I was doing that made a difference. Throughout I have discussed the need to consider process, and be aware of the essential elements. At the outset I had a general idea about the outline of the project. I felt that essential elements were likely to be related to working with a group, supporting them to look in their black boxes and explore their theories about what inclusion meant for them, their school and their pupils (Stame, 2004). This was very much a facilitated process and required me to set up specific activities, consider the balance of content and discussion, utilise positive consultation techniques and actively monitor the process and contributions of those involved (for example as suggested by Davies et al., 2008). My role was not static and this facilitation appeared to be a key element of change ("Well without you it just wouldn't have happened" teacher comment). As suggested by Pelligrini (2009) educational psychologists can generate change and alternative constructions through the subtle integration of information about child development, organisational change and process,

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carefully balancing both professional expertise and facilitation. And according to Pelligrini apparently, at its best this can appear effortless!

However, it also seemed important that the facilitated process encouraged staff to critically engage with their activity and then to review and reflect on this in an explicit action research approach ("Made you think outside of your box" teacher comment). Facilitating this action research approach appeared to enable challenge and exploration that allowed for positive change, as noted by, for example, Allan (2003), and which was explicitly used as a model in the development work of Simm and Ingram (2008). A phenomena also described by both Senge (1993) and then Flood (1999) in their discussions about complexity theory. What they describe, and what seems apparent here, is that individuals in large and complex organizations (such as schools) are best able to engage with large or visionary ideas (such as inclusion perhaps) at a local level of engagement and dialogue. However, as they also note they often need help to do this.

My role as practitioner researcher also included activity and planning around some of the more practical aspects of the process including group size and composition, and timing. My hope had been to have a group that comprised a cross section of staff including key members with influence across the school, influence not by virtue of position necessarily but those with a significant voice. I had also hoped to have a consistent group of 8-10 staff to generate a range of ideas and perspectives. However, given the difficulties with timing and the fact that this was not in official directed time this did impact on the group composition and I was aware that not all of those staff who wanted to attend were able to, and not all who attended were able to do so consistently. However, this is the dilemma of real world, applied research. As a practitioner researcher one looks for opportunities to learn and reflect, and often they are not 'neat and tidy'. However, despite these issues positive change did occur within the school, and some valuable patterns in terms of process have emerged and provided evidence for future practice. In terms of the timing between group sessions with hindsight there needed to be a sharper time frame with perhaps four weeks between sessions, which would also have allowed for more group sessions over the

course of the year and an opportunity to develop a strategy for sustainability seen by May as a crucial element of process, and which was lacking in this project.

In discussing the findings of this project in terms of processes which have been helpful it appears central to this is motivation, and facilitating a context and structure that enables the goals and motivations of the organisation as a whole to have relatedness to the goals, motivations and feelings of expertise of the individuals within the community. This has not been a simple linear process. The goals and motivations started broad and vague. Then they became somewhat narrow and individualistic in the face of challenge. But as a group dynamic emerged that provided a safe context to explore assumptions and challenges then through this dissonance (or 'disturbance in the activity system') the activity and motivations of individuals appear to have aligned in a much more concrete and tangible way with those of the organisation. In this process the practice in the school, as evidenced by the reports of the pupils and the staff working group, had also appeared to shift from a medical model to an embodied model of disability where more flexible accommodations were being made across the community in response to the needs of particular pupils. It seems that the answer to what was in the black box is as Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggest – the people.

6.3 Towards a process model

When I began this project my focus was to try and be more effective in my practice when trying to support a school to include pupils on the autism spectrum, and to research the elements of process that were effective. In many respects the headline theme was 'pupils with autism' that was what it was about. However, as I have engaged with the activity of this project, worked with the data, reflected on what happened and the themes which emerged I am conscious that the use of the term 'autism' has gradually faded both in the staff discussions and in my write up of the project. It has become more a story of how to support a school community to be more inclusive. A similar story is apparent elsewhere, for example May's research began thinking about implementing changes to literacy practice but concluded that it was the process of change, not the programme content, that required

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most attention (May, 2007). As this fading of the word autism occurred what has perhaps emerged is an approach (and a process model) that may have broader application.

In the previous chapter theories were emerging from the data generated through activity in a particular school and the activity of myself and some of those within it which suggested a number of key elements to the process. As I have explored the research questions and initial findings alongside a broader literature context there is some congruence between the activity and findings of this study and other research from a range of different contexts: Contexts which include school effectiveness, organizational change, motivational psychology, and perspectives on disability. And consideration within a conceptual and methodological framework which advocates a local level of enquiry and activity, and a socially mediated approach to learning. As suggested earlier in this project the linking of positive psychological approaches, SDT, and school effectiveness (and not necessarily autism standards) supported individuals in school to regard themselves as competent enough to actively participate and relate to others in positively developing their organization.

Given this I would suggest that there is some validity extending beyond this school and proposing a simple process model from this research which can offer an outline approach of 'how' inclusion might be 'grown' elsewhere. As it is the process elements and not the content which seem to be essential elements the model may offer some understandings for activity in other similar school contexts if there is sufficient congruence between them (see Lincoln and Guba, 1985), and may be relevant to developing inclusive communities generally, and not just with relevance to pupils on the autism spectrum, although acknowledging the limitations given the small scale nature of the project.

Some theory based approaches to evaluation, (see Stame, 2004, and Weiss, 1997), and the one I have adopted here, suggest that change relates to the theories of those in the community, and not the programme content itself. However, that does not imply that there is no content. And an embodied approach to disability acknowledges that there is a need to recognize that some accommodations are required for most individuals, and that some individuals and groups need considerable accommodations. In the case of accommodations

for pupils on the autism spectrum some general content might offer a helpful starting point that would populate the 'professional expertise' element of the model, and different 'contents' may be used in different contexts.

Indeed there have been some references to autism related knowledge in this project, some of it was evident in the initial training and group sessions, but I have also been critical of the demands of the National Autistic Society, The Autism Education Trust, Department for Education, and smaller scale research studies such as Humphreys for an increase in training and a standards approach to encourage school development and increased inclusion. They all reflect a rather top down approach which fails to acknowledge the nature of inclusion as a socially constructed phenomenon, and the nature of change in complex organizations, and that what is in the black box between input and output is 'people' and their theories (Weiss, 1997)

If we adopt the position that 'content' or programmes provided as part of professional expertise/facilitation offer a necessary, but not sufficient, element that can motivate further action then a more helpful stance of 'awareness raising' rather than 'training' may be adopted.

So in conclusion, the findings of this project, when referenced with broader research sources from other fields offers some support to this process model. The model suggested from the findings of this study (and illustrated in Fig 6 below), whilst having relevance to pupils on the autism spectrum, may be able to relate more broadly to developing an inclusive school community and includes three inter related elements:

- The co-construction of meaning and practice local to the community
- Explicit regard to goal setting, motivation and organisational change
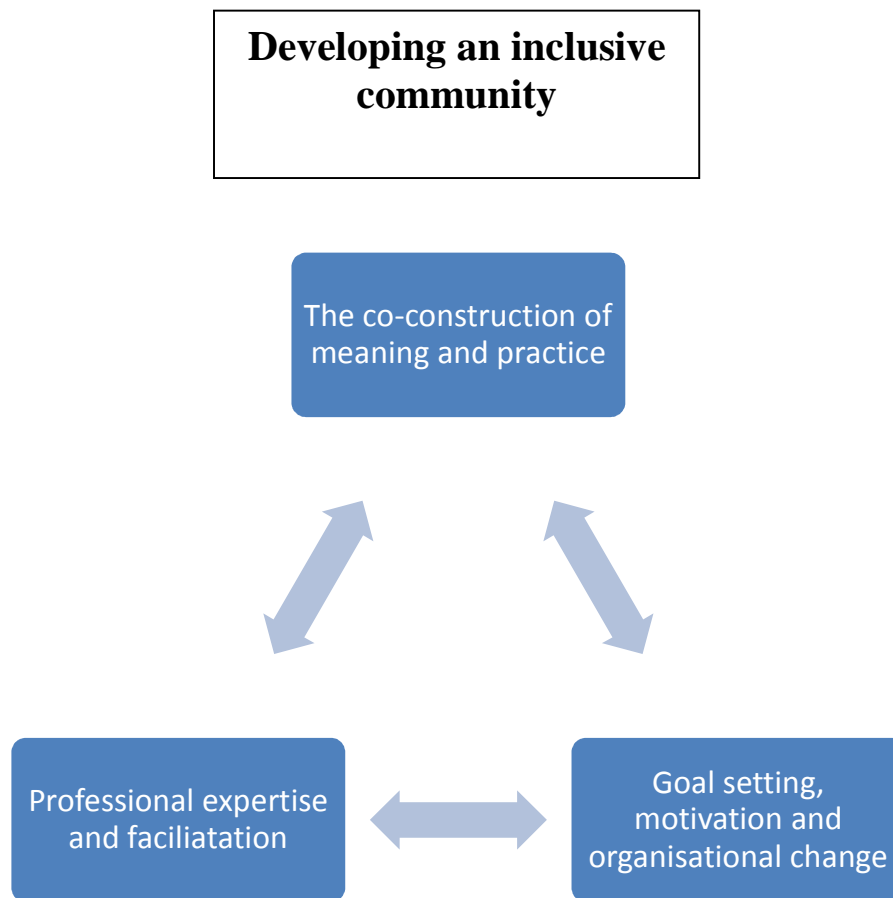- Professional expertise and facilitation

Developing an inclusive community

The co-construction of meaning and practice

Professional expertise and faciliatation

Goal setting, motivation and organisational change

Fig 5 Process model for growing an inclusive community

In moving from the rhetoric of inclusion to reality in this particular project the detail of these elements of practice related to a number of specific activities including; facilitator and staff working together in a group, listening to the pupils experiences and theories, employing an action research model.

In other future studies the exact nature, content, timing and balance of activities may be different, these activities seemed to work here for me and this school. But what has also been important is that there has been an opportunity to generate evidence from practice that can be helpfully used to inform future practice, particularly for myself, but perhaps also for others (see Fox, 2003). In the next chapter I will reflect on the limitations of this study and possible implications in terms of the nature of the evidence generated and for whom.

Chapter 7: Reflection and conclusions

In this final chapter I will move beyond the research questions posed in this study and reflect on the process of undertaking this research, and my own personal reflections on the research journey. I will also consider what it means for me and my thinking and practice as an EP, and possibly for other EPs within the current political climate.

7.1 Reflections on methodology

This study did not set out to test a hypothesis about 'how' to support inclusive practice relating to pupils on the autism spectrum in secondary schools. It set out to explore whether it was possible to 'grow' inclusive practice in a particular school, what processes might be helpful to this, and what I as an Educational Psychologist might contribute to this. It was not just about testing whether inclusion could be promoted, significantly it was about exploring what was in the 'black box', what were the processes that promoted it, what was happening at a local level of enquiry and what was the role of all of the players in this process? It was a journey of exploration, and about emerging patterns and trends. It was also very much about how any knowledge gained could be used to generate evidence which would then support future practice for both the school and myself as a practicing EP. As such, a qualitative action research conceptual framework in terms of planning the research, generating and identifying data was employed, and an appropriate methodological approach employed

As a practitioner researcher I was immersed in the setting and attempted to both 'research' the action of others, that is the school community, and also to research and reflect on the action of myself. This double spiral of enquiry at times posed challenges and I was very conscious of the need to remain aware and reflective of my role in both the action and research. My 'action' was about the process of facilitation and not directly about what the school staff chose to do in their roles and as their action. My 'research' focussed on what I was doing, and the role that had in what other people then did. At times I was very conscious of almost being drawn into and becoming part of the school community and wondering whether in fact this was a problem. However, that there is a legitimate

relationship between the research context and the researcher, as acknowledged by Snape and Spencer (2003), Dyson and Todd (2010), and Moore (2005), is not unexpected nor necessarily problematic in qualitative research, as long as one is mindful of this issue and in reporting this is acknowledged. In fact, as noted by Moore, that relationship and joint exploration may in fact be essential in the generation of a shared reality or formulation that enables something different to happen.

In terms of an action research model the methods employed within this project relate to those set out by McNiff and Whitehead but within the context of a double spiral of action. Within this I was quite clear about my action; I set out to do something, I had a plan, and wanted to monitor the process, the progress and impact of activity over time, and use this to impact on future activity both within this project and beyond. With hindsight I do not think that the signalling of this and the regular explicit acknowledgment and exploration of this dimension with the staff working group were so clear. Whilst there was a clear and explicit 'plan, do and review' approach taken on a session by session basis with the working group, and a final review and analysis undertaken with this group and senior management their role as researchers was not always explicitly acknowledged other than at the beginning and end of the project. Perhaps within the context of making this process feel 'ordinary', something anyone could have a go at, this was helpful in terms of empowering staff. Where the boundary lies between 'critical reflection' and explicit 'research' does not appear to be hard and fast; and there are many different views on this. However, that all of the practitioners in the process were active decision makers, planning to do something and then being critical about what happened and why, before embarking on further activity is to engage in action research. As such they can be considered as researchers - engaged in practice generating evidence that informs future practice (see Fox, 2011, Blaumfield et al., 2008).

Had the project ran for longer it would have been useful to have sought data at a greater number of points along the way to be able to plot the journey of the process of change as some longer term, larger scale 'Theory of change' projects have been able to do (for example Dyson and Todd, 2010). This would have been particularly useful to explore not

just whether change had occurred, and the factors which supported this growth, but perhaps offering additional insight into the factors which might sustain and maintain it over time.

I think that it may also have been useful to have individual interviews with pupils who were not on the autism spectrum perhaps to explore whether the themes which emerged were felt more generally by other pupils across the school. Whilst this would have moved me from my original lines of enquiry, this may have been interesting to explore in terms of whether a school facilitating the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum is generally felt by their community to be inclusive, as one might have predicted from the study reported by Kalambouks et al., (2007).

In terms of validity within this project the findings have been explored and appear to have helped to generate understandings for this community and my practice as part of this. I think that the understandings generated may have had an even broader validity for that community if there had been more people included in the process, that is, more school staff, pupils and parents. However, despite the small scale nature of this project from the work in this school a process model has been developed, one which is offered some support from research projects in other fields of practice including organisational change and school effectiveness. It has a number of elements all of which appear to be necessary, but none of which are sufficient on their own. On reflection it is perhaps that there is a lack of prescribed content within the process which enhances its potential relevance to other contexts. However, in this project the focus has been in a specific arena, that of autism and inclusion. The next challenge will be to undertake further action research and consider the extent and reliability of any understandings it might offer in future practice.

Any EP practice, including that relating to complex socially constructed contexts, needs to have an explicit theoretical base but there is a suggestion that its application also requires artistry (see Schon, 1987, and Fox, 2011), And in this case the artistry required by myself, or another EP may be utilising this model in a way which is responsive to the particular context of their practice, another school, and working to co-construct and 'grow' inclusive practice as it relates to the needs of that unique community. Of course, 'genearlaisabilty', as understood within a qualitative research framework, is enhanced suggest Lincoln and Guba (1997), when there is greater congruence between new and old settings, for example in this

case, both being mainstream secondary schools. In this particular study we have been discussing pupils who are on the autism spectrum, but I am suggesting that the conclusions and process model may have broader validity in the field of inclusion. Having expertise in process, change and motivation **and** knowledge of child development, teaching, and learning is at the heart of much of the practice of an EP. For me, the model emerging from this study suggests that supporting inclusion in school communities, whatever that community looks like, and whichever groups or individuals you might be thinking of including or making further accommodations for needs to consider:

- The co-construction of meaning and practice local to the community

- Goal setting, motivation and organisational change

- Professional expertise and facilitation

7.2 Reflections for myself as a practitioner

Over the course of this project my thinking and practice have undoubtedly been challenged. It has been shaped by the 'doing', and also through the reflections on the process and my role from the initial discussions and meetings with school staff to the present time. This has included the 'micro-level' reflections relating to the school at the heart of the project, and the 'macro-level' reflections as to the possible implications for my own practice, other schools, and possibly for Educational Psychology more generally as part of a broader political landscape. I am still involved in the school at the heart of this project and must resist the temptation to talk about the ongoing journey, as apparent through the narratives of the staff and pupils, as this goes beyond the scope of this research project. However, what I am able to discuss is the journey that I have taken as a practitioner from the discussions several years ago when a parent of 2 teenage boys on the autism spectrum said to myself and a Secondary school Senco; "I know that you are both doing everything that you can, but how come my boys are still not in school?' A question that prompted me to begin to think more carefully about what had been happening and start to reflect more systemically on my own activities. A question I now feel in a better position to answer with some confidence.

What has become increasingly apparent to me as I have reflected on the project and its process has been how my role and activities undertaken have supported the motivation and development of goals at an individual and systemic level. In some respects reflecting Pelligrini's suggestion (2009) that positive psychological, goal oriented approaches can have a significant potential for work at both an individual and system level. However, what has also been important as part of my contribution to the process has been to maintain a focus on my conceptual framework. That is to employ practice which genuinely allows for the co-construction of alternative theories and practice, recognising that the concept of inclusion can only be understood through the understandings of those within the community, and that a socially mediated approach is required. This means, as an EP, resisting the request to just deliver training, or to provide answers to the problems that might be described, and to acknowledge one's role as a participant in the process.

Although the first step in this particular project was a request for training from an 'expert' which could potentially pose some tensions between what I felt it would be more appropriate to do, both conceptually and methodologically, and what the school wanted, this did not prove to be the case. To some extent this contrasts with the account of using solution focussed activity theory techniques by Davies et al., (2008) who suggest that the tensions between schools' views of EP practice and EP views of what they wanted to achieve led to disturbance and challenge in the 'activity system' which contributed to subsequent change. The experiences for me in this project were that the school did not feel challenged by my suggestion that something else would be useful. The challenges that led to change in this context seemed more related to the fact that the pupils in their school were experiencing difficulties. One of the challenges for me related to the fact that I needed to hold true to my conceptual framework and facilitate a co-constructed approach to understandings and practice, even though at times I was tempted to have been more directive and suggest some things they could do. Perhaps a point when the balance between practitioner, facilitator, and researcher was in danger of being lost?

I think that another emerging issue for me over the course of the research project has been to re-evaluate how I understood the concept of inclusion. At the outset, my theories about inclusion were largely related to pupils with some additional need and often included a strong desire to support school communities to do a better job in including these pupils, many of whom were on the autism spectrum. My motivations related to the many pupils I have known over my years as an EP who have found secondary school life really challenging with a significant impact on their emotional health and well being, and achievement socially, and academically: a picture evident all across the United Kingdom (see APPGA, 2009, Batten, 2005). Whilst I am still motivated by this, the way I think, which relates to what I do, has changed:

Following Slee's suggestion (2001), I began deconstructing the term 'inclusion' and became drawn into reflections about its historical and social provenance and why it has the status of a 'sacred cow'. In exploring and challenging my own views of inclusion alongside the views and language used by others whom I work with on a regular basis the real tensions in using descriptions such as 'SEN' and 'asd' were highlighted. As Focault suggested (1991) using such terms can have the unintentional effect of segregation, and as Thomas and Loxley (2007) and Allan (2003) and Rose (2001) suggest can lead to regular school staff feeling deskilled. For me the question was how to move forward when all of these words and individual theories about what they mean exist and are used by politicians, school staff, parents, and sometimes pupils. For me the challenge was not about challenging the language used by others and so creating dissonance and change, it has become about shared enterprise, about deconstructing the concepts with others in the community and co-constructing it together. The process of growing inclusion for me has developed into an understanding of an inclusive community being one that relates as much to the feelings of presence, participation, acceptance and achievement of the staff as it does to the pupils.

When discussing the themes that came from the data I was aware that the staff in the working group moved from describing their action in the first person to a greater use of the word 'we. They also shifted from describing the pupils on the spectrum as something of a

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homogenous group to seeing them as individuals. I am also aware that through the course of this project, in my notes, and also when writing up my language has changed. I began thinking about the 'me' (my activity) and the 'them' (school staff) but moved to more use of 'we' when talking about what was happening. What I think this reflects is the close, or perhaps indistinguishable, relationship between researcher and practitioner, possibly a false distinction in reality. The interface between researcher and researched in practice is not simple and the boundaries were inevitably blurred. However, perhaps I can take comfort that my methodological rigour was maintained when reading Ashton who suggests that it is not unreasonable, in fact may be desirable, for the evaluator also to be a practitioner (Ashton, 2007).

I have also being challenged by the idea of where do my views about the autism spectrum, a diagnosable neuro-developmental condition with some tried and tested ideas about good practice ideas fit with a socially constructed approach to knowledge and understanding where solutions are generated by the practitioner, with support from a facilitator (for example Reeves and Boreham, 2006). I have been critical of the impact of practice guidance relating to autism on what goes on in schools. It is not that I am opposed to the content of any of these approaches (for example: ASD Good Practice Guidance 2002, The IDP 2009 etc.), but rather it is the lack of consideration of process that seems to be a significant stumbling block. These programmes still feel like the early failed attempts to improve schools through a distilling out of features of good practice and then attempting to 'drop' these features into other schools without acknowledging their unique context, community and constructions (see Reynolds, 1998, and Hopkins, 2001, discussions exploring the limitations of the 'school effectiveness programmes of the 1990's). The model for future practice developed over the course of this research project has regard to the fact that there may be some 'good practice' content to consider but allows for school communities to consider the needs of their community (adults and pupils), and be supported to develop or construct as active practitioners their own solutions, moving away from a 'standards' or 'competency' based approach.

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I think that consideration of an embodied model of disability (Shakespeare et al., 2002) relates to this and considerably develops the interactionist approaches suggested by Weddell et al., (1980) into a more ethically acceptable framework. If we accept that we all require some form of accommodations to be made by society, and that some pupils might require more – including perhaps some of those on the autism spectrum- this allows us to consider that some information and resources are helpful but stops short of saying exactly what must be done. How this is achieved should relate to the individual needs of that pupil, or teacher, or community, with accommodations been seen as a matter of degree, not category.

In the earlier chapters I highlighted how Thomas et al., (2007) suggested that in order:

"To examine why people don't fit, and to help organisations to enable them to fit, we have to understand them as people and to understand the people in the organisations which accept or reject them" Thomas and Loxley, p43

I would agree that evidence supports the need to understand people as individuals, not by virtue of their 'diagnosis', but I am not sure that we (or I) can really understand the complexity of the people and organisations which accept or reject them. However, I do think that what this research project has shown me is that it is possible to support and challenge people in organisations to better understand themselves and their theories, and sometimes this can lead to them doing things differently.

As an emerging researcher one of the most interesting features of the action research cycle is how the process of critical reflection still continues during the writing of the report. This is certainly not 'clean' positivist research with a definite beginning and end. The data relating to my own role was available through my notes and reflections over the course of the project. It is also fair to say that my reflections on the process and my role have continued to emerge in the course of working through the data from the range of sources, and in writing the report. This dynamic aspect to the reflection has presented me with challenges as I have been writing in terms of knowing exactly when my thinking and action

research cycles started and when to stop. However, in writing up the research I have endeavoured to be mindful of not going beyond what I can legitimately claim from the data available to me (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

In my writing I have attempted to capture this changing dynamic, and also reflect that for me one of the key outcomes of this research has been in combining thinking from a number of different areas. I have wondered why there have been many attempts at defining good practice for pupils on the autism spectrum, but little drawn from school effectiveness that has impacted on how positive change can be grown. It may be that SEN and Autism in particular continue to be seen as somewhat 'niche' and specialist areas, supported by a range of specialist assessments and techniques, and even it's own act of Parliament (Autism Act, 2009). In this process I have also wondered whether these factors contributed to the schools initial 'panic' at the thought of how they would manage these pupils and was, ironically, crucial in them dedicating whole school training to the area and the dissonance created enabled some disruption to their system that allowed something different to happen.

7.3 Conclusions

In conclusion the question remains as to whether this has merely been a useful exercise for me and this particular school, or whether using the ideas generated there are messages with a broader appeal within the educational psychology profession?

As a practitioner, alongside many of my EP colleagues, I have witnessed and contributed to a debate around the relative merits and shortfalls of 'medical models' of EP practice, contrasted with more process models of practice. Some Local Authority Educational Psychology services have promoted exclusively process or consultation models, whilst others have clung steadfastly to a more medical model of practice supported to some extent by the statutory assessment and 'statementing process' and a more medical model of disability, required and paid for by employers. Proponents of both stances would perhaps argue that they were supporting 'inclusion', either by attempting to influence the systems

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around a pupil, or by being clear about the needs and interventions required for a pupil to be accommodated or perhaps have their deficits remediated.

What this research has provided me with is a clearer rationale that as an EP I need to have both expertise in process, change and motivation **and** knowledge of child development, teaching, and learning. In the case of autism spectrum disorder there is some useful information about processing differences and the kinds of accommodations or approaches that seem to work and be helpful. Information which can be drawn from positivist science research (for example neuro science, see Gryngzpan et al., 2012), from external research studies (for example TEACCH approaches, see Mesibov reference), or from insider accounts (for example see Rory Hoy). We also, as EPs in schools, need to know how and what to share of the plethora of information at our finger tips, and how to work with individuals in the organisations to get positive shift or change. For me supporting inclusion in school communities, whatever that community looks like, and whether it relates to the inclusion of an individual, or groups of pupils or for staff in school must acknowledge the multi dimensional aspects of the situation.

However, at the outset I was clear that I wanted to reflect on the nature of the 'evidence' which informs my current and future practice. It has also led me to consider how the profession of educational psychology more broadly might engage with and utilise action research within the changing and potentially challenging social and political context in which we work.

At the beginning of this project most Educational Psychology services within England worked within a LA context where the majority of services were free at the point of delivery. A substantial amount of time was spent by EPs relating to individual casework, often around the statutory assessment and review process and its entire inherent 'medical' model of disability. But the remainder of work tended to be negotiated with individual schools according to their needs and the skills, and the interests and inclinations of an

individual EP. In such a climate it was possible to negotiate a piece of development research, one in this case which appears to have made a difference.

At the time this project was conceived the world somehow felt different which perhaps allowed us as a profession to frequently (indulgently?) contemplate the nature of our professional being and the nature of our client group. Since the 1970's (see Gillham, 1978) we have been constructing or 'reconstructing' our role and debating the nature of our client(s), our academic credibility and conceptual frameworks, and the nature of the evidence which informs our practice. And yet we are still debating the nature of our ontological and epistemological frameworks. Despite this contemplation Fox suggests that as a profession whilst we are inclined to espouse constructionist conceptual frameworks, we often revert to pseudo positivist frameworks when we want to claim 'credible evidence' and impact (Fox, 2003). Perhaps this is also why eight years later we are charged, by Fox again, with appearing to cling to ill formed or outmoded belief systems and failing to take responsibility for reflecting sufficiently critically on our practice in order to generate adequate evidence to support future practice (Fox, 2011).

My journey through this research project has illustrated to me the importance of being consciously and critically reflective and thinking about the nature of what there is to know and how it can be known and making sure our practice is consistent with our conceptual framework. This builds on the work of, for example, Miller and Todd (2002) who claim a legitimate role for EP activity to generate understandings about process as well as outcomes. It also builds on both Fox and Burdon's assertion that EPs have legitimate skills working at the level of the organisation, not just individual casework, and that in undertaking such activity EPs should conceive themselves as reflective practitioners and researchers. From there perhaps we can be more secure about why we are doing what we do, why it might need an Educational Psychologist to do it, and be able to negotiate with our clients about where the journey of change might take us and how we might know we are on the right track.

Some might say that the current political and economic climate contains more threats than opportunities for the approaches described in this project which have positive impact both for individual pupils and organisations. Will it be possible to find opportunities to support communities such as schools to 'grow' practice, and for EPs to use and develop the process model to 'grow' inclusive practice in secondary schools, or to undertake any pieces of work that do not have an individual child statutory focus?

Following the formation of the current coalition government in 2010 significant spending cuts were tabled across most areas of the public sector which has had an impact on the number of Educational Psychologists employed by Local Authorities and in some cases increased their focus on the statutory elements of the role. A reversion perhaps to the role of EP as a specialist or expert, undertaking specialist assessments and reporting on all of the special, additional or different things that a pupil might need. This is potentially one of the most significant threats in terms of available EP time and a political conceptualisation of disability relating to deficit, moving practice away from community responses to the needs of particular groups of pupils. We need to be aware of the implications of any conceptual position we take including moving away from a social or embodied model of disability towards a medical model and a 'within child' focus of activity, particularly in terms of our role, and what our action might say about our and others' theories of inclusion.

And so, finally, there are still groups of students in schools who cause concern, and we know anecdotally, and from national studies (see Batten, 2005) that many of these students are on the autism spectrum. We know that to support these students to be present (and not fall below acceptable and reported attendance levels), to participate, to be accepted, and to achieve (and not let themselves or the school down in terms of outcome measures and future contributions to society) requires more than just the activity of the Senco or EP trying to solve problems after the event, or undertaking an assessment about the needs of the pupil or the context. This study has suggested that a more psychodynamic response is required which acknowledges and relates to the whole school and which can support change.

The rhetoric associated with inclusion is powerful and understandable, but in order to move inclusion to a reality which is understood and experienced by all in a community, including those on the autism spectrum we have to have regard to process, and enquiry and activity, at a local community level.

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Appendices

1. Appendix A Consent letters

1.1 Copy of written consent to undertake research within the school:

Following discussions with Mrs. ....Headteacher of .... Secondary School permission to undertake an action research project within the school has been given. This project will have as its focus 'facilitating the inclusion of pupils on the autism spectrum in a secondary school and reflection on the processes which support this'.

It was noted that this action research project would include:

- Individual interviews conducted with four pupils within the school. Separate information to be provided and consent for participation sought from each of these students and their parents/carers. Information from these interviews to be shared, with consent, within the school project. Some of the information may be anonymised within the school and will be anonymised in any written information
- Support from, and access to, a member of the senior management team of the school for the researcher over the year and to include regular consultation discussions and updates
- Access to a staff group who would participate in the project over the course of the year
- Written questionnaires to be completed by all members of the staff group; responses to be anonymised
- Interviews to be undertaken with four members of the staff at the end of the process, responses to be anonymised.
- Summary verbal and written feedback to be provided to the Senior Management of the school
- Information gathered during the course of this project to be used to inform future action within other schools in the local Authority
- Fuller written information to be included as part of a doctorate thesis (DEdPsy. University of Newcastle on Tyne)

Signature of Headteacher... Date: ....

Signature of Educational Psychologist .... Date: ....

1.2 Copy of letter sent to pupils and parents involved in the semi structured interviews:
Dear

Hello there, my name is Janet Crawford and in my role as an Educational Psychologist for ...., I go into different schools in .... and sometimes work with different pupils. At the moment I am undertaking some work looking at helping schools to do the best they can to work with all kinds of different pupils, including those who have been diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum, or having Asperger syndrome.

It has been suggested that you might like to take part in this project which is looking at what it feels like to be part of this school. I would like to know about the things that you like about school life, the things that you might find difficult, and if there is anything that you would like to keep the same or to change.

I would like to meet with you to talk to you about these things in the next couple of weeks, and again at the end of the school year in July 20--. The things you tell me will be used to help the school to do the best they can but what you say will be anonymous. That means school teachers will not know who told me, unless you tell me that it is alright to share. Of course, if you tell me anything that I think means you are not safe I will need to share that information. If at any time during our discussion you would like to leave this would not be a problem.

If you and your family are happy for you to meet with me I would need you both to sign this letter and send it back to me in the enclosed envelope. If you are not sure you could have a chat with Mr. .... in school, or contact me at the address on the top of the envelope.

If you are happy to meet with me I will arrange an appointment with you in school and send you a letter with the date and time on it.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Janet Crawford, Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist

....

Pupil Consent

Yes I am happy to take part in the project

Signed .... Date...............

No, I do not want to take part in the project

Signed .... Date...............

Parent Consent

Yes, I am happy for my son/daughter to take part in the project

Signed .... Date...............

No, I do not want my son/daughter to take part in the project

Signed .... Date...............

Please return this slip to:

Janet Crawford,

Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist

Address:........

....

2. Appendix B Pupil questionnaire

1. Pupil Interview

2. We are going to talk a little about school. Can you tell me what do you like?

3. Are there any things which are hard, or a bit tricky in school?

4. What do you do if you have a problem, or if you need help?

5. Can you tell me a bit about lunch time, and breaks?

6. What about friends?

7. Is there anyone who it is difficult to get on with?

8. If you could, are there any thing that you might change about school?

9. What kinds of things do you think you might be interested in doing in the future, perhaps when you leave school?

10. Anything else?

11. NOW CHECK BACK!

3. Appendix C Group session outline sample

Supporting Inclusive Practice for Pupils with AS

Agenda
- Terms of reference for the group
- Recap: key issues within ASC
- Learning strengths and challenges
- Your pupils, your school
- Some scenarios
- Next steps, options and timescales

JC/ASD Team

AS: Revision

Psychological theories
- Central coherence
- Theory of mind
- Executive functioning

JC/ASD Team

AS: Revision

Behavioural issues:
- Triad of impairments;
    Social communication
    Social interaction
    Flexibility of thinking
- Sensory issues
- Motor issues

JC/ASD Team

Learning strengths and challenges

Think about possible:

> Learning strengths

> Learning challenges

Get to know the individual pupil

JC/ASD Team

Your Pupils, Your School

- What they had to say
- Task: in groups consider as a school
- What you are doing well
- What might improvements look like?
(You may want to think about ethos and whole school issues, curriculum access, climate for learning, the physical environment, the sensory environment, social/leisure times, anything else?)

JC/ASD Team

The Learning Context: A Framework for Effective Learning

In any classroom context, for all pupils, there is a need to;
> Identify 'The Big Picture'
> Create a climate for learning
> Think about reflecting on learning
> Consider the main learning activities

JC/ASD Team

Scenarios

Consider these scenarios. Think about
- What might be happening?
- What might you do?

JC/ASD Team

Next steps

> Think about something to try with an individual pupil/group for next time

JC/ASD Team

Supporting Inclusive Practice for Pupils with AS. Session 2

> Recap
> Feedback on activities

JC/ASD Team

1

4. Appendix D Staff homework activity grid

Your Pupils – Your School

What is going well?	Evidence	Who noticed?
What might improvements look like?	Evidence	Who would notice?

As a group what should we focus on to be able to move towards these goals?

-
-
-

6. Appendix E Initial codes

Question 1 codes

Presence

Participation

Acceptance

Achievement

I/we/they/me

Whole school

Question 2 codes

Challenging own practice

Challenging school practice

Giving something a go

Noticing own skills

Shared context – their school

Shared context –other schools

Supported by facilitator

Being told

Not being told

Supported by group

Increased awareness of general need

Increased awareness of specific need

Setting own goals

Listening to pupils

I/we/they/me

Impetus

Question 3 codes

Noticing own skills

Sharing expertise

Setting up

I/we/ professional identity

Evaluation process

Monitoring process

Positive questioning/ questionng style

View of inclusion

Time scales

Timing

7. Appendix F Sample of scenarios (Stories from other schools)

Scenario 7

- John has been told to use his locker to keep his belongings safe. However, during the exam period he is told by a member of staff that he cannot go to his locker. He has been reported to senior management for being verbally abusive and barging past the member of staff.

8. Appendix G Sample of initial training evaluation

Evaluation Form

Presenter: Janet Crawford
Date: ███████
Venue: ███████
Aim/Support Targets: - To provide an introduction to asd and implications for school

	Agree			Disagree
The content of the training was appropriate	☑	☐	☐	☐
Support targets were met	☑	☐	☐	☐
Course well prepared and delivered	☑	☐	☐	☐
Some of the principles, ideas and techniques could be used in our setting	☑	☐	☐	☐

Which particular parts of the presentation did you find most useful?	Video & following discussion. AT-1 Information presented in accessible way - use of specific examples.
Future training needs	Investigate issues AT-1 further & identify specific strategies to use with pupils.
What will you now do as a result of this CPD activity?	Apply knowledge / info. AT-1 in classroom setting.
Any other comments	Very interesting session. AT-1

9. Appendix H Sample of pupil interview notes

1. Pupil Interview

2. We are going to talk a little about school. Can you tell me what do you like?

Well, I like teacher, – science teacher

Yeah – biol., chem, phys – – – – – PE, or art.

Ch or technology.

Lots of things etc etc.

Am good at PE, like tag rugby, PE is my best.
Discussed teachers he liked. Some too funny. Some had things written down -- is helpful.

3. Are there any things which are hard, or a bit tricky in school?

Maths hard, or drama or music

Checked – Too noisy in music + in drama too noisy -- but maths really!
back + wrote notes

Oh year or lunch getting pushed by yr11s they always push in corridor.

Corridors really busy + you cant get to meetings for dinner.
You need to put name on - simple meetings. Also dont like homework too hard, too much work, dont like doing homework.

4. What do you do if you have a problem, or if you need help?

I go to mrs F because she talks to you + she - she will help find
out what to do.
I have a time at cord, (have you used it) no - havent used it.
(do you think you might) Yeah I might but I havent used it -- Im not
really sure how to.

?

5. Can you tell me a bit about lunch time, and breaks?

I go to mrs F's office because shes got lots of thys to sort
out -- so I help her.
of at lunch or break. Doesnt do much else   (seems a bit isolated?)
clarified)

(lives next to sign, so its his friend
neighbour, not neighbour, sf another neighbour - du-

6. What about friends?

I have a friend whose neighbour, I do but cant remember names (checked
friends live in H. hes says he
has
friends but
could
give no
info)

Discussed corridors or pushing. Big kids. In the corridors --
they kind of push you + I dont really like them cos of that.
– feels nothing has happened although he did tell mrs T.

(this was confirmed)

7. Is there anyone who it is difficult to get on with?

Went back to discuss boys [kids]. Seems ok with
his yr. gp. ie no probs — but he doesn't know
anyone new. But they don't hassle him — Got a
bit stuck on feel[s] threatened in corridors @ at lunch.

8. If you could, are there any thing that you might change about school?

Want to get corridors quiet.
Also - Lunch [he] can't get a seat - Some of the grls
lie on [kerb] seats + you can get a bit squished.
(Checked out + clarified at th...) → (He asked that the were not set places — pos - couldn't work
at what to say)
The are 3 people in little space & no where for him.

9. What kinds of things do you think you might be interested in doing in the future, perhaps when you leave school?

Interested in science, po [pos] - a biologist. Thought he
should 'cheat in' both biology & chem- at school.
Or pos - copter.

10. Anything else?

Really didn't have anything else to say - We had got
to end of our questions so he wanted to leave!

11. NOW CHECK BACK!

Checked back a few things so I v/s the detail. Took me
time to write verbatim comments.

(Lots of incidental chat not written down verbatim. But got
gist.

10. Appendix I Sample of reflection comments taken during staff group sessions

Session 4: Whole school issues

> Recap on activity and impact
> What were the pupils saying?
> What do staff feel?
> Strengths
> Areas of concern

'Beh· homework' → all staff beg· to identify more
positively with the pupils. Reces- of some of the anxious type
beh· noted by KR & RW as well as more act challenges.

Beginning to see some staff reflect on the issues of under per
of pupils & benefits of strats· employed more widely.

MR - "I used the Frg with RW & ~~the tools~~ ―― wanted
it to. I've decided to use it in all lessons· now!"

AW the pupils, I think notice what I am doing & I
think its has a good effect all round"

This sector ~~doesn't~~ took quite a long time tools Grp· m· more confident

Wanted to anchor This conversation with What the pupils were
saying in the first instance.

Staff were now up for this conversation. Beginning to show
insight & empathy, with different level of sophistication, also
beg· to talk abt Sorethgs they were doing.

" I dont like into the lunch hall myself. I knew sor of
the kids here kind of got their own table, unofficial sort of
thing'

18

Used a cxple of the 'whole school scenario' cards as well
to extend the scope of some of the issues· Staff comment
"other schools facing same challenges & issues" "Yes that's good to hear really"

11. Appendix J Sample of notes from teacher final interview

Teacher Interview (End of project)

1.	As you know we have been working on a project to promote inclusive practice over the last year and I would like to talk to you about the experience. Thinking about the project, can you discuss the features that were important to you in supporting your practice development? If you remember the first thing that happened is that there was some whole school training in September.....
	Oh yes, yeh...the information given was useful, it was good to be able to re-read it and to think about it in an ongoing way about what I was doing, the handouts and stuff. And well... well it gave insight into what the child thought about the world and the DVD of Rory was really good for that. I enjoyed it, thought it is was good
2.	After the training we started to meet together to share practice and plan new activities. Do you have any comments about this?
	I think, ...I think that I am much more aware of those on the autism spectrum than other children than I come into contact with at school. Well, I sort of remember to things for a little while and then I go back to my own ways of doing things. I think that I am a little more keyed in when the lessons are being watched by somebody, or I have to talk to someone about what I have done this is helpful ..., like the group thing I mean. I think . I think that I probably need to be a little bit more proactive .. if I'm not then I kind of..... otherwise I go to a kind of default position. I liked the sessions, kind of what we did, the content was fine really – it was good actually. And well, the meeting together well we don't really normally get the opportunity to chat, plan and discuss with them and I think talking with other colleagues and thinking about what's going on is an opportunity ... well it's like gold dust really. What was particularly valuable is the awareness and the feeling that you not alone that there might be pattern to the problems.
3.	Was there anything else that you want to comment on?.
	I think talking to any of the kids is really important and me talking to them was really good. I think we have been doing quite a bit of work on student voice and I think writing down actually what they say rather than what we think they say was really good because we can't really report completely objectively It is important to talk to the pupils, although I suppose you have to be careful there is no bias creeps in though. (What do you mean?) Well, sometimes they might say something you weren't expecting and it is important to know that....well.... well we all have our own views don't we. One person might have a problem, but someone else might not, and then we need to think how we can deal with it, sort of sensitively if you know what I mean – not just push it under the carpet. It was funny talking with the others ... if one person says something and you've been thinking it then you kind of feel like you might say it too. I think that happened a bit. (Pause.......)

12. Appendix K Sample of research diary notes

Teacher Session 1

JLA good turnout today, initially people a little wary but they did relax. I think working in pairs + then groups was helpful.

The recap quiz was helpful to make link to earlier whole school session & there was a 'need' to strategies looking at strengths + challenges. Interesting that despite a theoretical appreciation of difficulties with language & LH still attributing direct speaking as 'rudeness' (implicit of intent — or poss. poor parenting?)

Sharing their stories — needed help to not be overly negative but some empathy apparent for Ss. Interesting to bay who is 'rude' is perhaps more due. Need to bear this in mind as we go.

I am not too concerned about what they say they or goals to do next — just that they will be doing something. It is not the 'product' that is interesting in itself it is their process + realization that they can do something that makes a difference.

Took a little while for the group to get into the swing of identifying issues that were true / —ve. Then were able to come up with deep scenarios worked well. Seemed people found it easier at this point to have an opinion about something at a distance, + then use that to reflect on their own practice.

Cumulative issues raised! Wonder about the process of including the staff in the process — whose need to be included is greater — the staff or the pupils? Seems they are interested in this world — not really picked up on some of the friendship / corridor / 'wandering around school' issues of the pupil feedback.

13. Appendix L Sample of coding data and initial themes

Identifying themes from codes

(2) Process of Change : Codes   **Themes**

- (AA A) challenging own practice
- (B B B) challenging school practice
- (C C C) giving something a go
- (D D D) noticing own skills
- (E E E) shared context — within this school
- (F F F) shared context — with other schools
- (G G G) being supported by facilitator
- (H H H) being told / directed
- (I I I) not being told — own ideas
- (J J J) being supported by ~~facil~~ grp
- (K K K) increased awareness of general need
- (L L L) impetus / reason for doing something
- (Mmm) increased awareness of specific need
- (N N N) setting own goals
- (O O O) listening to pupils
- (P P P) I
- (Q Q Q) we
- (R R R) they
- (S S S) pupil name
- (T)
- (T T) Generally valuable

Themes:
- Whole school trans— community
- working as a group
- external facilitation
- confidence — Goal setting / activity
- pupil voice
- stories about other schools
- challenge self / school
- Prog. content

Refined Themes

- • Whole school community / ethos.
- • Working as a group (incl. other schools & challenging pract)
- • External facilitation (incl. programme content)
- • Goal setting & motivation (incl. initial setting)
- • Pupil Views (debate as to where this goes into community / whole school — discuss)
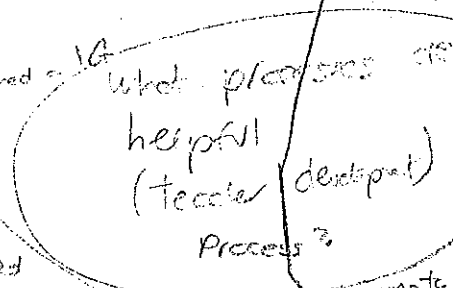
① before ② during ③ after.
-ve   +ve

Initial T/ing

Good overview of RTP we will to T'
will be more aware/respective/ Barriers to included
needs "be more confid' when teach:
children with asd" T'
wanted more training

"opened a lot d' grobham, opened a lot
of doors" T³
we can spot the "characteristics"
with more AS
One teacher wondered about
how there with
asd are overwhelmed
by the outside world.

what process was
helpful
(teacher development)

Process ?

Working as a group - T³

Shared endeavor - x3 - T³
"feels like you are not alone"
felt there might be a pattern I
have are all parts of delivery we are all
some reach I guess we are all
Te put out aim was that associated...

Sessions clarified together T³
"different people had diff'
perspectives ... think about
your own base"
... at first nervous...
now like a discussion on there
having to report on research I was abit
nervous at first T³

JC - grp initially went to experience
but turns...
Shared experience began to grow in confidence
Session T³

Goal Setting

"Good to talk to colleagues going away to
have to do something was actually really helpful"
"I like the fact that we had some
in which we were doing at each of our pace" T³
ideas to work out t with our peers
Tended to be our goals - were informal
by other schools but only smt infrastructure got
the whole session? provision etc²

Pupil Voice → T'

DVD Ray Hg - 43 responses
co quite surprised to hear some of the things they
... Its helpful to talk to people in secul T³
we seems to be quite a wide group now who are
doing dons "T³
DVD "It really made it stick in your head" (T³. like
namite going off in my ears)
its talk to you in confidence ... was good to get it
... there... some of the things you know like corridors
stuff. "T³
feel things are better but its good to
the kids say it themselves

Role of EP

goals unclear - T'
& input T' (12)
If you hadn't been there to lead really... wouldn't have
been anything." T³
"A special (EP) gives exact info if you do need their expertise, I
know its our school but its good to have someone supports you "T³, I
"I don't think it would have happened if that hadn't been coming
coming in" T³

Other school visits? (s) T'

we d' shared scenarios (s) T'
JC noted that they were helpful in
may turn an day remain share of
security/ hide/ safety - again issue of
shared categorise scenarios in form & over
whole school scenarios in form to see their role - in a
useful for them to see their role - in a
less personal context initially EP²

Random

Maths

We spend when were circ't
& there were more challenges in meaningcom
... which has been quite good T³

Change?

noticed by pupils & teacher

ore

o

Curriculum

the subjects $P^{①+③}$ – frequent
class P^{1+3}
things written down helps P^1
some subjects P^{1+3}
good structure & planning $T^{②}$
[illegible] classes / lessons
[illegible], Too much homework P^1
[illegible] lego P^1
"already done it & I already know it" P^1
already done it & cant thread the needle
[illegible] the machine or [illegible] I really dont like tech" P^1
[illegible] at you.

Behaviour / Co-operation

Using flag motivator $T^{②}$
Not late now T^2
'Class detentions are not fair – P^1
" If you've got a problem [illegible] you get
help & [illegible] you dont"

Building issues
[illegible]

Several more places done
by pupils as good places to go P^3

Transitions

in class helped T^2
short to play lego $P^{①}$
[illegible] groups $P^{④}$ x 2
[illegible] yard friends are there $P^{①}$
[illegible] help T^2
[illegible] talking T^2
know what to do P^1
pushed by y11's P^1 x 4
more breaks P^1 x 2
around on my own finding quiet places really" P^1

How to you
Include Pupils
with AS
Themes Content?

Sensory

[illegible] & tie too tight P^1
like noisy music P^1
too noisy P^1

General ASD/Ls

Whole School

Go to a range of staff members P^3
Go to TF (P^1
Group had idea of talking to Y6 about
how to manage corridor [illegible] & [illegible] places P^3
"Want more time to get to lessons P^3
"Getting better, slowly but surely" P^3
"Cant always get the dinner you
want" P^1
~~Need support to work with individ~~ T^1
~~students~~ (x10)
Getting better at transitions T^2
Support staff becoming more aware T^2
By session 4 ideas from group about what
they needed to take to SMT EP3

[illegible] Cont

[illegible] are really busy & noisy P^1
[illegible] support at lunchtime T^2
calmer, more settled T^2
staff ~~seeing~~ starting to see passivity as a concern. SENCO^2

hee

Role of EP
meta process?

my reflections:

– EP1 all staff [illegible] & keen. Training renewed [illegible]
People up for doing something
Group needed prompt to see whole school issues –
appeared were quite concrete & stuck with own issues EP2
Had to fight my inclination to go[illegible] to
whole school / ~~[illegible]~~ social EP2
Feeling of shared enterprise & respect EP2
I ~~was~~ had 'gone native' in session [illegible]
whole school issues because of my casework with JY
How good was I at critically reflecting on role –
process did a lot of Autism – 'pattern recognition' in
'knowing in action' EP3
Good to refocus child anecdote [illegible]
" I wonder what might have been going on there
I wonder why – non directional not
directive more