

**A CULTURAL HISTORICAL ACTIVITY THEORY ANALYSIS OF A PRIMARY  
SCHOOL'S IN-HOUSE RESOURCE BASE**

**BY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The number of children with SEND in England has increased for the fourth consecutive year (DfE, 2021). There is a shortfall of provision and local authorities are under pressure to accommodate the complex needs of these young people (Nott, 2020). To meet their obligations, many local authorities are encouraging schools to develop their own in-house resource provision. However, to date there is little research exploring the effectiveness of these provisions or how they should optimally be configured.

The current research explores stakeholders' perceptions concerning work practices in a resource base situated in a particular mainstream, local authority maintained primary school. The primary objective of the research was to stimulate organisational development and change within the focus school, whilst also abstracting from this particular case, implications for developments to existing resource bases situated within similar primary schools and/or establishment of resource bases to accommodate SEND in broadly similar mainstream primary schools in which currently, no resource base is sited.

A two-phase action research approach is adopted, using Engeström's (1987) second generation cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) to analyse, chart and present historical tensions and contradictions, which in turn, contributed towards collaborative problem-solving by stakeholders in the school, to develop and implement new models of working. Engeström's iteration of CHAT and the expansive learning cycle (1999) were harnessed as the conceptual and methodological framework for the study, situating the resource base in the context of the wider historical, social, cultural, and organisational systems within which it exists. The findings illustrated that whilst there

was a strong positive ethos within the focus school promoting inclusive education, significant constraining factors were undermining its success. Actions moving forward sought to redevelop working practices both within the in-house resource base and the wider school community to promote collaborative working, increase communication and develop a shared understanding of how to enhance the best possible outcomes for children with SEND.

## DEDICATION

In loving memory of Harry Boyd  
27<sup>th</sup> November 1947 - 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021

I would like to dedicate this in loving memory to my uncle who always believed in me and encouraged me to pursue my aspirations.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ASD</b>	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
<b>BESD</b>	Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties
<b>CAR</b>	Collaborative Action Research
<b>CHAT</b>	Cultural Historical Activity theory
<b>CoP</b>	Code of Practice
<b>DES</b>	Department for Education and Science
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education
<b>DISS</b>	Deployment and Impact of Support Staff
<b>DoH</b>	Department of Health
<b>DWR</b>	Developmental Work Research Laboratory
<b>EHCP</b>	Educational Health Care Plan
<b>EPs</b>	Educational Psychologist(s)
<b>EPS</b>	Educational Psychology Services
<b>IQ</b>	Intelligence Quotient
<b>LA</b>	Local Authority
<b>LEA</b>	Local Education Authority
<b>NCSE</b>	National Council for Special Education
<b>PICO</b>	Population Phenomena of Interest and Context
<b>PSS</b>	Pupil and School Support
<b>SEMH</b>	Social Emotional and Mental Health
<b>SEN</b>	Special Educational Needs

<b>SEND</b>	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
<b>TA</b>	Thematic Analysis
<b>TAs</b>	Teaching Assistants
<b>UNCRC</b>	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction to the research**

This study was undertaken as part of the research requirement of the three-year (2018-2021) Applied Educational and Child Psychology professional training programme at the University of Birmingham.

The research aimed to explore stakeholders' perceptions concerning work practices in a resource base situated in a particular mainstream, local authority-maintained primary school. The primary objective of the research was to stimulate organisational development and change within the focus school, whilst also abstracting from this particular case, implications for developments to existing resource bases situated within similar primary schools and/or establishment of resource bases to accommodate SEND in broadly similar mainstream primary schools in which currently, no resource base is sited; and secondly, implications for educational psychology practice in harnessing understanding of how educational psychologists (EPs)/ Educational Psychology Services (EPS), in their capacity as external consultants, researchers and change agents, might anticipate and/or contribute toward reducing and/or resolving the tensions that can arise within schools in developing in-house, inclusive special educational provisions to which a newly-established or existing resource base is part.

Engeström's (1987) second generation cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) was used to analyse, chart and present historical tensions and contradictions, which in turn, contributed toward collaborative problem-solving by members of and stakeholders in the school, to develop and implement new models of working. Here too, Engeström's (1999) extension of activity theory was harnessed to structure the expansive personal and organisational learning process integral to the change management process.

Through transforming organisational practices within the focus resource base, the research offered targeted support, aiming to promote positive outcomes for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who attend the resource base, as well as informing key considerations for the establishment of similar resource bases in the future.

Engeström's iteration of CHAT and the expansive learning cycle (1999) were harnessed as the conceptual and methodological framework for the study, situating the resource base in the context of the wider historical, social, cultural, and organisational systems within which it exists. The research sought to harness the perspectives of a range of stakeholders who engaged with the resource base in differing roles and from different positions, to illuminate their experiences of its functioning and identify ways in which these appeared complementary and suggestive of effective practice, and any areas of dissonance, potentially indicative of the desirability of more detailed consideration and action.

## **1.2 Research rationale**

The origin of special schools for children with disabilities can be traced back to the 1760s, when children were segregated from their peers and special schools were established in charitable institutions specifically for children with disabilities of the mind or body (Borsay, 2012). Over time, government legislation, national strategies, and statutory guidance (See Chapter 3 for historical analysis) have consistently emphasised the need for educational settings to further improve opportunities for children with SEND. Research suggests inclusive education has, to date, been a continuous process of endeavours toward educational transformation (Schuelka,

2018), still requiring that “changes should be promoted throughout the education system and with communities to ensure that the education system adapts to the child, rather than expecting the child to adapt to the system” (Rieser, 2012, p.106). Meanwhile, it has been argued that the success of inclusive education should be measured by educational quality, outcomes, and experiences, as well as understanding and evaluating teaching practices (Schuelka, 2018). To date, however, persuasive outcome evaluations attesting either to the quality of inclusive educational experience and/or its benefits to children with SEND and/or their peers, has been slender, as discussed more fully in Chapter 3: a mismatch between policy directives/ ‘espoused theory’ and the lived experience of children/‘theory-in-use (Argyris and Schon, 1978) led me to reflect critically on the research investigating the effect of inclusion on children with SEND.

As a trainee educational psychologist, I have undertaken supervised professional practice placements in two local authority EPS, where I have contributed toward assessments for children with SEND and made recommendations on what I thought would be appropriate provision to accommodate their needs. However, my experience to date has taught me that the provisions sought and those which were made were frequently at variance and varied widely in the range and quality of staff expertise, and suitability of the learning environments in which children were educated, so that some children did not experience an inclusive education.

EPs play a significant and proactive role in promoting inclusion for children with SEND (Szulevicz and Tanggaard, 2016). In their daily work, EPs use their psychological knowledge to develop and apply effective interventions to promote psychological well-being, social, emotional, and behavioural development, and to raise educational standards. They apply

psychological theory through their contributions toward planning, implementing, monitoring, adapting and revising interventions, in light of focus children's responses, to support vulnerable individuals, and as part of a multi-agency team they utilise their assessment and consultation skills in schools to support teachers' understanding of children's individual needs and evidence-validated intervention measures (O'Brian and Miller, 2005; Farrell et al., 2006; Hartnell, 2010; Lee and Wood, 2017). EPs also have knowledge and skills in organisational development, collaborative problem-solving and research, in addition to formulating interventions that focus on applying knowledge, skills and expertise to support local and national initiatives (Winward, 2015).

However, even though EPs try to promote inclusion within and throughout all these role dimensions, there is currently an ongoing debate concerning what constitutes an inclusive learning environment, and what forms of provision would best meet children's needs, especially as SEND provision is under significant pressure nationwide in England (Education Committee, 2019). Whilst government guidelines and individual school agendas relating to development of suitable pedagogies and classroom environments and relationships remain influential upon practices for children with SEND; uncertainty exists about what features of educational settings will be necessary or most enabling in ensuring children's complex needs are fully met.

The school in which the current study is situated is illustrative of the tensions surrounding decisions about the placements of children with SEND and the provisions that can be made to accommodate their identified needs, alongside those of other children. The school is one of more than approximately 342 maintained primary schools in a large city in England, where the prevalence of children with an educational health and care plan (EHCP) is 3.2%: significantly higher than the national average of

2.9%. An EHCP identifies the assessed educational, health and social care needs for children, young people and young adults aged up to 25 years old. The increased EHCPs in this city, in common with almost all local authorities in England (Department for Education, (DfE), 2021) has resulted in the city's SEND services facing mounting pressure in satisfying expectations and meeting its statutory obligations. Special schools have reached capacity, and tension and parental dissatisfaction often exists about whether the child's needs will be adequately accommodated by the provisions otherwise available through supported, 'inclusive' mainstream placement, within always-constrained local authority funding (Education Committee, 2019).

Whilst it is understood that to ensure suitable and adequate provision for children with SEND is complicated (Nott, 2020), an option encouraged by many local authorities to reduce the pressure for places at special schools, is for schools to establish specialist resource bases attached to mainstream schools (DfE, 2019). The main driver for this proposal is to meet the continuing, growing demand for special educational provisions which exceed what is viable within supported mainstream school placements. Resource bases operate within a continuum of provision, providing specialist places for a small number of children with higher levels of SEND, with an aim to combine the value of inclusive experiences in the mainstream school setting, alongside more specialised targeted support to enable children to make progress (McAllister and Hadjri, 2013).

Against this context, I was keen to explore what stakeholders perceived to be the supporting and constraining influences contributing toward and/or undermining the effectiveness of a resource base, and what developments they judged desirable to improve its modus operandi and outcomes for children. To accomplish this broad aim,



the research sought to illuminate a range of stakeholder professional colleagues' perspectives on how the resource base and the mainstream school experiences combined to meet children's needs, to analyse these differing standpoints, identifying their congruence and differences, in order then to harness this analysis, in partnership with stakeholders, to inform adaptations through which their agreed priorities might be better reconciled, and children's needs better met. Engeström's (1999) expansive learning cycle was used to structure this process of analysis and application of findings to support action-planning (see Chapters 2 and 4 where the expansive learning cycle is more fully described and its implementation within my research design and methods is presented).

### **1.3 The local context of this research**

The current study took place within an inner-city mainstream primary school, located within a large local authority; there were 491 children on roll. The school prided itself on its strong, welcoming, and inclusive ethos. The school has changed significantly since 2016: in response to management of budgetary constraints, staffing has reduced overall, and most markedly in numbers of support staff (in 2016 there were 20 full time equivalent support staff and in the school year of 2020-2021 there are 8 full time equivalent support staff), which has reportedly had a major impact on how complex SEND are catered for. Historically, most, if not all children with SEND would have received some level of 1:1 support from their teacher or a teaching assistant (TA) within their classroom.

In direct response to financial constraints and to ensure children with complex needs would still experience intensive, individualised instruction, the in-house resource base

(pseudonym 'the Nest') was established by the school's leadership team in 2017. The Nest is situated in a designated classroom; a modified curriculum is provided for eighteen children who have 'severe learning difficulties', which can affect their participation in the school curriculum without support. The children may also have difficulties in mobility and co-ordination, communication, social skills, and independence skills (DfE, 2010). Therefore, if the school staff judge a child to have these difficulties, they are often supported in the Nest.

The Nest accommodates the needs of children from Reception age to Year 6; staffing consists of one SENCo and two inclusion support assistants. The children attend the Nest in the morning and join their mainstream class in the afternoon.

Prior to negotiating the research study, it was my understanding from my placement supervisor, who had worked with the school for nine years and had been involved in supporting the establishment of the Nest, and from my own experiences of undertaking supervised practice within this school in my capacity as a Year 2 trainee EP, that, in general terms, the Nest was judged successful and enjoyed the support of staff. However, my supervisor and I had also observed incidents or been privy to staff comment which had suggested differing views about how the Nest should operate; such signs of emergent tensions contributed to our beliefs that systematic investigation would be timely.

School staff welcomed the proposed research, as they wanted to ensure the best outcome for children in their school with SEND.

#### **1.4 The use of CHAT and the expansive learning cycle for organisational change**

Engeström's (1987) second generation activity theory which traces its roots back to Vygotsky and Leont'ev in the 1920s, has been adopted in this research. CHAT views the interaction between mind and culture as mediated within an activity system composed of tools, rules, multiple actors (subjects), and a division of labour, which must be considered and historicised to understand their development over time and gain a robust understanding of how the status quo has evolved (Kaptelinin and Nardi, 2006). In the context of this research, CHAT was used to conceptualise and structure analysis of the cultural and historical elements of the Nest and the dialectic systems of the multiple stakeholders (the assistant headteacher, a SENCo, mainstream teachers, resource base teachers, and a parent) to offer a way of learning.

In parallel to CHAT, Engeström's (1999) expansive learning cycle (see Figure 1.1) was used as a framework to question existing practice and structure planning for organisational change. Engeström (1999, p.383) states it is "important to extend beyond the singular activity system and to examine and work towards transformation of networks of activity", as at a group level, new ways of working are developed to address previous tensions and contradictions.

Engeström (2001) argues organisational change has lasting effects when it comes from people within the activity system, as change-management is an on-going, cyclical process which produces new forms of work activity. Engeström (2001) emphasises the value of bottom-up processes and of creating structures which give voice and agency to members of the organisation in exchanging their experiences, agreeing targets for improvement and viable strategies and resources.

The theory of expansive learning and the DWR methodology have been developed and applied in many studies since its introduction by Yrjö Engeström in 1987 (Engeström and Sannino, 2010; Engeström, 2015). Strengths of the expansive learning cycle align with the theoretical approach of the activity theory. The expansive learning cycle acts as a mechanism where potential new ways of working are planned, designed, and implemented (Engeström, 1987). Mukute (2009) argues the expansive learning process can be an effective tool to stimulate and sustain organisational change.

In this study the use of CHAT (Engeström, 1999) was judged to afford a helpful conceptual framework and methodological paradigm to provide a cultural historical analysis of existing literature, policies and legislation, prior to moving into the focus of the empirical investigation of supporting macro-level analysis of the activity systems of the focus resource base, and its inter-relationship with the primary school in their joint endeavours to provide effective and resource-efficient inclusive special education. CHAT further recognises the research applications within the expansive learning cycle also support illumination of the complex, multi-level, internal and external social, cultural, and organisational factors which affect the organisation of inclusive special educational provision within the school and the operation of the Nest.

The stakeholders' conceptualisation of the Nest was explored to inform understanding of what did and what did not work well from each stakeholder's position. Any perceived key tensions or inconsistencies within the activity system (of the Nest within the primary school) were then collated and discussed within a Developmental Work Research (DWR) Laboratory'.

The DWR Laboratory is an interventionist research methodology where people work together in a structured and cyclical way to envisage new activity in their organisation (Engeström, Rantavouri and Kerosuo, 2013; Virkkunen and Newnham, 2013). The method applies the concepts of ‘re-mediation’ and ‘dual stimulation, derived from CHAT (Vygotsky, 1978; Leont’ev, 1978; Engeström ,1987; Cole and Engeström, 1993).

**Table 1.1:** *Definition of re-mediation and dual stimulation*

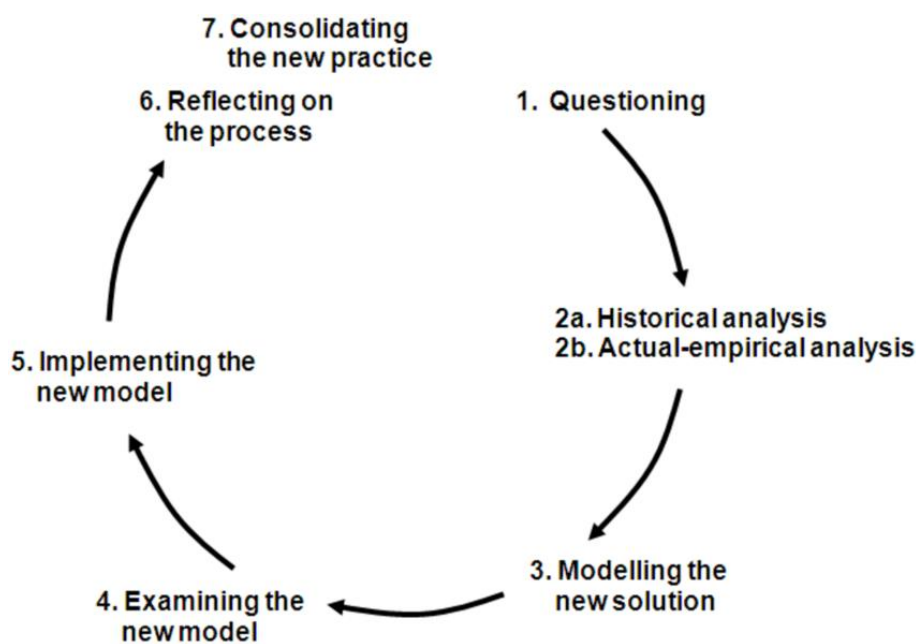
Term	Definition	Applicability
Re-mediation	The act or process of remedying something that is not right	Vygotsky suggests that mediation underpins human action, and it is the process through which individuals act on the social and material world which is mediated by artefacts, including physical and psychological tools.
Dual stimulation	The mechanism with which human beings can intentionally break out of meaningless situations and transform them	By challenging conflicting motives individuals can take control of their actions and change their circumstances to provide solutions to an apparently solution-less situation.

The DWR Laboratory was first implemented in five pilot post offices in Finland to redesign the delivery work of mail carriers and introduce collaborative teamwork to help raise productivity and reduce the threat of job losses (Engeström and Sannino, 2010). The cultural tradition of mail carriers reportedly consisted of a combination of bureaucracy and individualism and the hierarchical organisation of the postal services had not considered the potential value of worker-informed innovation. The workers met once a week for four months in 'Change Laboratories' which were mediated through an external facilitator, Juha Pihlaja. During these meetings, the mail carriers analysed the history and presented contradictions of their work activity, reported, and discussed their findings, and in particular, 'contradictions'. Kuutti (1996) explains contradictions point toward a misfit or tension within or between elements of an activity system, different activities, or developmental phases of a single activity. Using the Finnish post office Change Laboratory as an example, contradictions appeared to be between the changed object (new products and services) and the rules (centralised or local decisions). Resolving these contradictions, enabled first-step solutions to create new products and services. The ultimate result of the Change Laboratory was a sound guiding principle for transformation and new visions for delivery work. The implemented innovations were reportedly judged a resounding success, and later implemented nationwide.

In consideration of this bottom-up approach, central to the application of CHAT in contributing to organisational development through use of expansive (group/organisational) learning, in the present study the aim of the DWR Laboratory was to support stakeholders' endeavours to resolve historical and current tensions and inconsistencies in inclusive SEND provisions, and to refine practice not only for the

benefit of the school, but also, (as in the case of the Finnish postal service exemplar), for consideration by other professionals planning to establish similar resource bases as part of their own school's or local authorities' offer.

The process of expansive learning aims to explain and guide collective, transformative processes within complex activity systems (Engeström, 2008). Figure 1.1 demonstrates Engeström's (1999) expansive learning cycle.



**Figure 1.1:** Engeström's (1999) expansive learning cycle

Engeström (1999) proposes new ways of working within the activity are produced by advancing through the following seven stages:

**Table 1.2:** Engeström's (1999) expansive learning cycle stages

Expansive learning cycle stage	Description
1. Questioning	Questioning, criticising, or rejecting elements of current practice
2a. Historical analysis	Mental, discursive, or practical transformation of the situation to find out causes or explanatory mechanisms

2b. Actual-empirical analysis	through an exploration of origin/evolution and by constructing a picture of its inner systemic relations
3. Modelling the new situation	Modelling the new explanatory relationship in a publicly observable medium. This means constructing an explicit, simplified model of the new idea that explains and offers a solution to the situation
4. Examining the new model	Running, operating, and experimenting on the new model to grasp its dynamics, potentials, and limitations
5. Implementing the new model	Making the model concrete through practical applications, enrichments, and conceptual extensions
6. Reflecting on the process	Reflecting on and evaluating the process
7. Consolidating the new practice	Consolidating the outcomes into new stable forms of practice

### **1.5 Structure of the thesis (Chapters 2-7)**

Within this volume, the following chapters chart how Engeström's (1999) expansive learning cycle was used as a framework for stimulating organisation change within the activity system of the focus primary school and its resource base (the Nest) (see Table 1.3 and Figure 1.2). Time constraints at the time of writing this volume, necessitated that only the first three stages of Engeström's (1999) expansive learning cycle have been completed and reported here; however, with continuing support from my placement supervisor, the school is the process of completing Stages 4-7.

### **1.6 Contribution to knowledge**

Hodkinson and Burch (2019) remind us that policies and practices do not exist within a social vacuum but are underpinned by wider values and ideologies. In recognition of this complex sphere of influences, the salience of national, local, and school culture; diverse stakeholders and the congruence between their viewpoints, from a unique perspective I ensured my research considered the wider historical and current societal



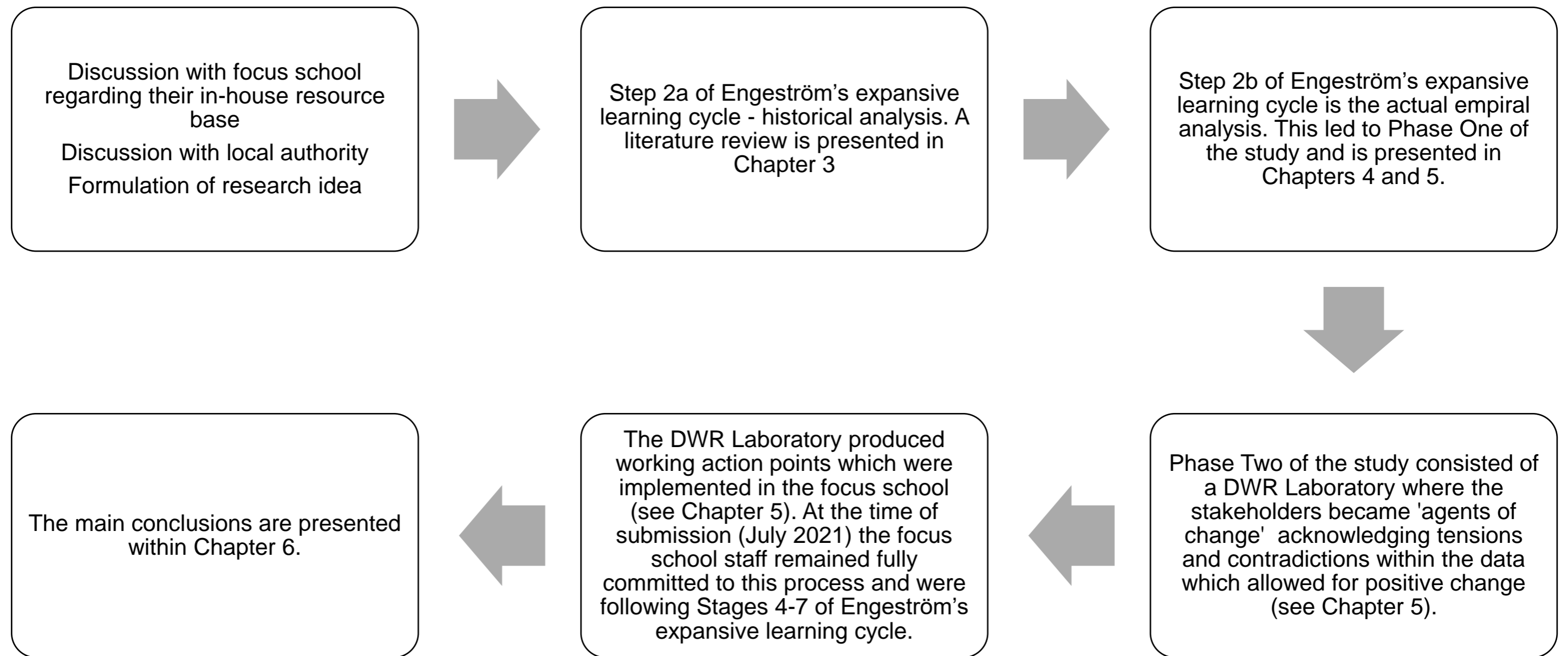
values which have shaped both the macro and micro levels including their influence on the in-house resource base (the Nest).

I believe that the findings derived from this study contribute to the currently small body of knowledge which provides insight into how the potential contribution of resource bases within a mainstream primary school may best be realised.

In addition, the finding informed reflection on the use of expansive learning and the DWR Laboratory as a framework to support/facilitate collegial collaborative planning and action leading to school improvement and as part of that process reflections on how EPs can bring a distinctive contribution to this process.

**Table 1.3: Structure of the thesis**

Expansive learning cycle stage	Structure of the present research facilitating Engeström's (1999) expansive learning cycle
1. Questioning	<p>Chapter 1. Presents the research questions utilised in the present study.</p> <p>Chapter 2. Traces the cultural and historical roots of CHAT, focussing on the influences of Vygotsky and Leont'ev, and subsequent evolutions and developments. CHAT as a conceptual framework and research methodology is outlined, alongside empirical research applications of the framework. A final extension of the framework the DWR Laboratory is introduced and provides the foundations for organisational change within this study.</p>
2a. Historical analysis	<p>Chapter 3. Introduces the historical analysis and the rationale for and development of policies and practice of inclusive education, whilst outlining the social, cultural, and historical context which facilitated a paradigm shift within education. The concept of inclusion is considered through exploration of definitions, theories, and models of disability.</p> <p>The limited existing research into resource bases within mainstream schools and the social cultural and historical influencing and constraining factors are also explored within this chapter. The research is critiqued from an activity theory perspective before the rationale for the current research is presented.</p>
2b. Actual-empirical analysis	<p>Chapter 4. Considers the research approach and research methods adopted within the current study, outlining the data collection methods, ethical considerations, and methods of data analysis.</p> <p>Chapter 5. Presents and discusses the research findings. The data are presented corresponding with each node of the activity system, and themes are illuminated through quotations taken from the interviews. Themes at each node of the activity system are discussed in relation to the corresponding research questions and the research literature.</p> <p>Chapter 6. Concludes the research with a discussion of implications arising from analysis of the contradictions presented within the activity system. The implications for EP's practice, as well as limitations of the research are discussed in addition to thoughts for future enquiry.</p>
3. Modelling the new situation	<p>Due to constraints on the time frame within which this study could be initiated and the required submission of the doctoral thesis of which the research report is a substantive component, only Stages 1-3 are reported here; at the time of submission, (July 2021) the focus school staff remained fully committed to this process and were following Stages 4-7, with the support of the school's allocated educational psychologist (my Year 2-3 placement supervisor).</p>
4. Examining the new model	
5. Implementing the new model	
6. Reflecting on the process	
7. Consolidating the new practice	



**Figure 1.2** presents a visual representation of the complete process of the research study to aid the reader's understanding

### 1.6.1 Research aims and questions

There were two overarching aims of this research:

- To explore how a range of the stakeholders view the 'Nest' resource base as a coherent activity system and their views of its modus operandi; and
- To support stakeholders in engaging with the cultural historical analysis to support collegial reflection and planning to enhance the effectiveness of the school's resource base (the Nest) as a significant component of the school's comprehensive system for mediating inclusive special educational provision.

The following research questions were formulated building upon the existing literature, CHAT methodology, social constructionist epistemology and case study design.

Phase 1:

1. What do stakeholders perceive to be the goal(s) (object) and overall purpose(s) (outcome(s)) of the in-house resource base?
2. What are the perceived supporting/constraining factors influencing/contributing toward the outcomes of the in-house resource base (rules–supports and constraints)?
3. What are the role(s) involved in supporting the resource base children (division of labour)?

Phase 2: Developmental work research (DWR) Laboratory:

4. What key features (including new ways of working) do stakeholders suggest would enhance an in-house resource base and its outcomes for children?

## **Chapter Two: Cultural historical activity theory**

### **2.1 Introduction to the chapter**

This research explores the activity of an in-house resource base, referred to as the Nest through the lens of CHAT. CHAT is a theoretical and analytical framework which helps to understand the societal and cultural factors which shape an activity over time (Leadbetter, 2011). Within this framework, an activity is understood as a purposeful, transformative, and developing interaction between actors (subjects) and the world (objects) (Engeström, 1999b). In this chapter, I outline the historic development of CHAT, explore empirical applications of the framework, and reflect upon some of the strengths and limitations, whilst providing a rationale for using CHAT within this study.

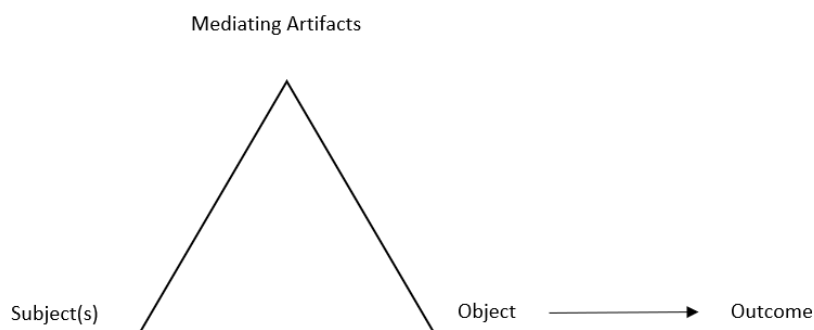
### **2.2 Cultural historical activity theory development**

Daniels (1996) proposed that CHAT cannot be understood without giving due consideration to its history. Activity theory's framework originated from the socio-cultural tradition in Russian psychology in the 1920s, where it was valued as a process to understand human activity. Activity theory is grounded in the work of Vygotsky, the founder of cultural-historical psychology and his students, one in particular Leont'ev, (Holzman, 2006). However, activity theory remained somewhat unknown outside the Soviet Union until the mid-1980s, when the original theory were depicted into three generations by a Scandinavian scholar, Yrjö Engeström (1987). The three generations of CHAT are described in the section below.

## 2.2.1 First generation activity theory

Vygotsky's (1978) early work on CHAT focussed on the idea that all actions are directed towards a goal (i.e., object) and are influenced (i.e., mediated) by a subject's (individual or group) cultural and social contexts (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999). Vygotsky introduced the concept of mediation in response to the inadequacy of the pure behaviourist interpretation of human behaviour, which aimed to explain behaviour through the stimulus-response formula (Bakhurst, 2009). Vygotsky did not entirely abandon the stimulus-response model, but instead added a third element, mediation. Vygotsky (1981) suggested mediation occurs through tools and signs such as "language, various systems for counting; mnemonic techniques, algebraic symbol systems; works of art; writing; diagrams; maps and mechanical drawings; all sorts of conventional signs; etc." (Vygotsky, 1981, p.137).

According to Engeström and Miettinen (1999) the triangular model depicted in the first generation activity theory (Figure 2.1) advocates that human behaviour should be considered as being purposive and culturally meaningful, rather than reactive or adaptive responses to environmental or biological stimuli.



**Figure 2.1:** *First generation activity theory model (Engeström, 1999b, p.30)*

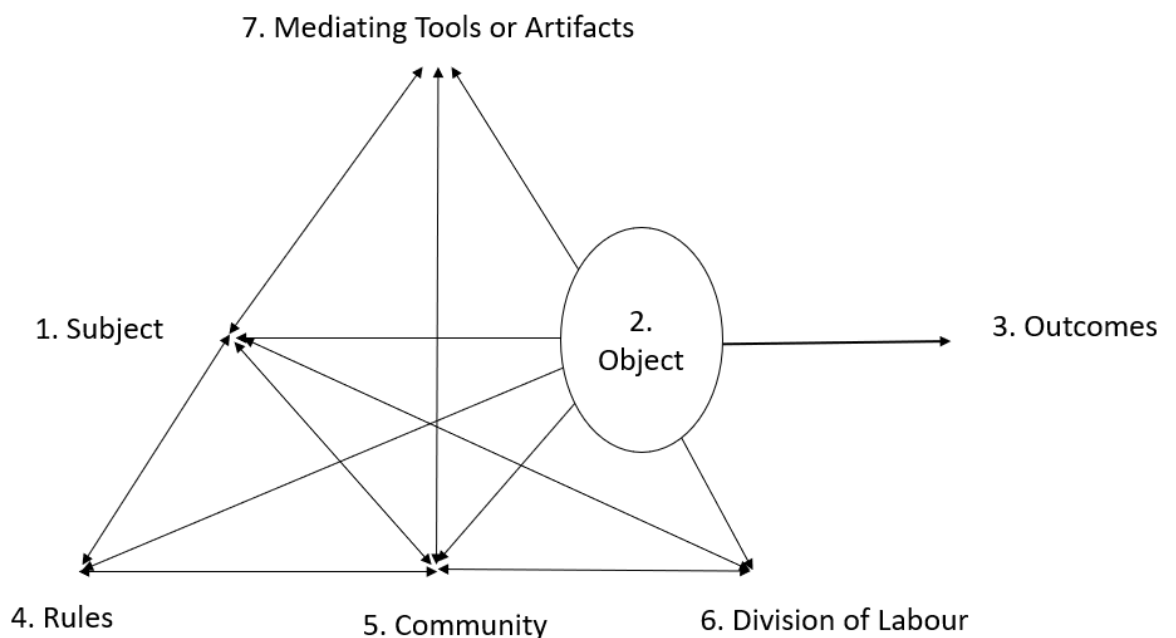
## 2.2.2 Second generation activity theory

Second generation activity theory emerged through the work of Leont'ev (1978), who distinguishes between action and activity, perceiving activity to be something significant and meaningful (Bakhurst, 2009). Kaptelinin (1996) states that activity should always be understood in the context of its cultural and historical environment. According to Hasan and Kazlauskas (2014), often what people seem to be doing, what they say they are doing, and what they actually do can be quite different. Leont'ev (1981, p. 210) used a hunting analogy to illustrate the distinction between action and activity. Reference is made to "a beater", a member of a hunter-gatherer society, whose role it is to startle animals so that others can catch them. The beater's individual 'action' is beating a hedge, completed in order to fulfil a goal (i.e., to startle the animal). His 'activity', however, is hunting, which is undertaken by a community and has an "object" and a "motive" (i.e., the community's' need for food or clothing). In this scenario the action of beating a hedge does not directly address the motive, instead it contributes to a broader, social activity in which the subject plays a part in the outcome. Pointing to the perception that whilst action is individual, activity is collective (Bakhurst, 2009).

In order to progress the development of activity theory, Engeström schematised Leont'ev's position and expanded the original first generation activity triangle by adding the elements of community, rules and division of labour. Accordingly, in the second-generation activity theory model, an activity is based on seven elements (subject, object, outcome, tools, rules, community, and division of labour, see Table 2.1). Engeström (1987) suggests this model aims to represent the social/collective elements in an activity system, to examine the community at the macro level, rather than at the

micro level of focussing on the individual actor or agent operating with tools (Daniels, 2008). The second-generation activity theory recognises multiple perspectives as conceptual tools to understand the multi-voicedness of activity systems (Leadbetter, 2008). Engeström (1987) advocates the study of tools as integral and inseparable elements of human functioning, arguing the focus of the study of mediation should be on its relationship with other components of an activity system. In addition, the tools used, and their outcomes should also be related to wider historical, cultural, social, and contextual factors (Leadbetter, 2008).

In the second activity theory model, “the object node has been depicted in an oval, indicating that object-orientated actions are always explicitly or implicitly characterised by ambiguity, surprise, interpretation, sense making, and potential for change” (Engeström, 2001, p.134).



**Figure 2.2:** *Second generation activity theory model (Engeström, 1999b, p.31)*



The second generation activity theory model has seven core components, each of which holds cultural and historical dimensions (See Table 2.1 for description).

**Table 2.1:** *The seven nodes of the second generation activity theory model*

<b>Activity theory node</b>	<b>Description</b>
<p><b>1. Subject</b> <i>Whose viewpoint are we taking?</i></p>	<p>This can be the perspective of the individual, group, or both in order to comprehend the activity.</p>
<p><b>2. Object</b> <i>What is the focus of the activity?</i></p>	<p>The object is what is being worked on, acted upon or the focus of activity. Engeström (2000) suggests that whilst an object can provide clarity and continuity to an activity, due to its social and historic nature it is also internally contradictory.</p>
<p><b>3. Outcome</b> <i>What is hoped to be achieved?</i></p>	<p>Engeström (1999) argued that the changing and developing object of an activity is related to motive. Therefore, action is driven by a conscious goal, and it is the subject or group actions on the focal object that helps to achieve or contribute toward achieving a higher purpose, or outcome.</p>
<p><b>4. Mediating Artefacts</b> <i>What is being used?</i></p>	<p>Leont'ev (1981) recognised that it is important to understand the relationships and connections within any activity, as human psychology processes are intertwined with a form of behaviour in which concrete tools such as an object, instrument or resource, or material tools such as a common language material or more abstract artefacts, processes or frameworks are used as a means of regulating human's interactions with each other. The development of these tools is shaped by the needs, values, and norms of the culture in which they are created and used.</p>
<p><b>5. Rules.</b> <i>What supports or constrains the work?</i></p>	<p>The rules regulate the subject's actions towards an object and relations with other participants in the activity. In this research, it was considered in relation to the concept of 'historicity'. Supports, or constraints either explicit or implicit which may have developed over time for the individual associated with the activity.</p>
<p><b>6. Division of Labour</b> <i>Who does what? How is the work shared out and why?</i></p>	<p>Division of labour refers to role boundaries, and in this research stakeholder's expectations. It emerges from Marx's ideas (Vygotsky, 1978; Engeström and Miettinen, 1999) which position change within social practices and historical developments toward the object.</p>

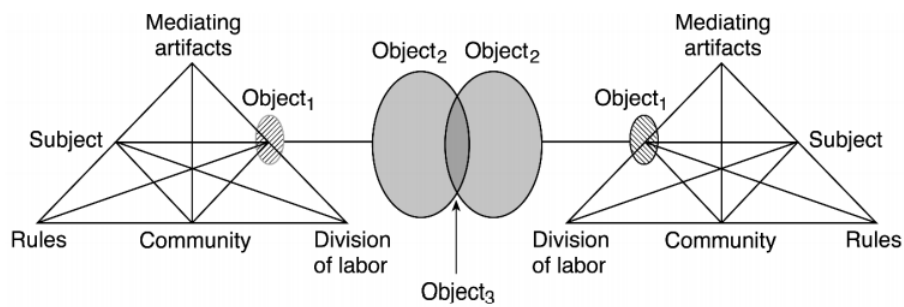
<p><b>7. Community</b> <i>Who else is involved in the work?</i></p>	<p>Leont'ev (1981) depicted activity as a high level usually collaborative construct (Hasan and Kazlauskas, 2014). Labour is a collective activity wherein actions are shared between the group, and individuals perform different roles and actions, to move the group towards their desired outcome.</p>
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These seven components are often described as nodes of intersection. Although there are many connections between them, the analytic strength of CHAT is considered most powerful when the activity system is understood as a single unit (Foot, 2014).

The current research utilises the second-generation activity theory model (Engeström, 1987) as a conceptual tool through which to understand and analyse stakeholders' perceptions regarding the Nest (the object), to support children with SEND. The CHAT framework enables the researcher to go beyond the most immediately apparent components and seek to understand how the wider cultural, historical, and social context are influencing the Nest.

### **2.2.3 Third generation of activity theory**

In the third-generation activity theory model, Engeström (1999) incorporates the concepts of difference, discourse, and dialogue. Recognising that individual activity systems link to form networks of systems which illuminate the many voices, tensions, and contradictions. Engeström (1999) suggests that an activity system is a community of multiple opinions, traditions and interests which can be multiplied in networks of interacting systems. In this model (Figure 2.3) the object of activity has evolved culturally and historically, hence instead of considering individual activity as the unit of analysis, collective meanings and motives are introduced and emphasis is placed on the conflictual nature of social practice (Engeström, 2001).



**Figure 2.3:** *Third generation activity theory model (Engeström, 2001, p.136)*

## 2. 4 Principles of activity theory

Whilst the framework does not have a singular definition of construction (Leadbetter, 2001) meaning that different emphases are found in the variety of activity theory interpretations, Engeström (1999, p.4-5) proposed five key principles to conceptualise CHAT, which Daniels (2001) argues “stand as a manifesto of the current state of activity theory” (Daniels, 2001, p.93). These are detailed in Table 2.2 with examples relevant to this research study.

**Table 2.2:** *Engeström (1999, p.4-5) five key principles to conceptualise CHAT*

Principle	Application to this study
The prime unit of analysis is a collective, artefact-mediated, and object-orientated activity systems seen in its network relations to other activity systems (Daniels, 2001, p, 93).	The activity system is utilised as the unit of analysis, where the activity (e.g., the Nest) is defined by the dialectic relationship between subject and object, in addition to the tools and language used (Vygotsky, 1987).
Activity systems are a community of multiple voices, as depicted in the ‘division of labour’ node of the triangle	Within activity systems, group activity resulting in multiple voices is seen as a key concept (e.g., stakeholders within the Nest) working towards a shared understanding of the object and outcome to develop future practice.
Historicity is of central importance as activity systems are constantly transforming over time and are a product of their history	Activities are a product of their historical developments which contribute to shaping new models of working. Communities can learn from past experiences, models, and policies (e.g., the history of inclusion and different models of SEND provision outlined in Chapters 3 and 4).

<p>Contradictions are a source of change and development arising through tensions within and between activity systems</p>	<p>Research studies the complexities of real-world situations (e.g., the Nest). Any contradictions that may arise provide a mechanism for discussion and analysis of current working practice. The fourth research question within this study is concerned with surfacing contradictions within the activity of the Nest, to consider the implications these may have for future practice, and to generate possible solutions to improve the provision.</p>
<p>Activity systems are open to transformation through cycles of expansive learning where contradictions are highlighted and creatively reconceptualised</p>	<p>Change in working practices can occur when current tensions and contradictions are discussed and analysed to produce new objects (this research may lead to a new way of working/change in current practice within the Nest).</p>

The focus for this piece of research is one activity system, with different subject positions (the stakeholders in the Nest, see Section 4.2 for description of stakeholders). I will therefore focus on the remaining three elements of Engeström’s (1999) principles which I feel particularly relevant to the current research, that is the role of history (‘historicity’), expansive learning cycle, the role of contradictions and the DWR Laboratory.

#### 2.4.1 Historicity

Engeström incorporates ‘historicity’ as a guiding principle to understanding activity systems. Historicity is considered key to understanding how an activity system changes and evolves over time, from an individual perspective to wider cultural and social developments (Engeström, 1999; Leadbetter, 2001). It is proposed problems and potentials can only be understood by appreciating the local history of the activity, its objects and the theoretical ideas and tools that have shaped the activity (Engeström, 1999). Fundamental to the importance of the development of activity systems is that they transpire over lengthy periods of time and as such must be considered within their local history as well as the historical development of the theories and beliefs that have shaped the activity. With regard to this research, the historical development of legalisation and policy for SEND and its influence on practice must first be positioned

within CHAT, as outlined in Chapter 3. By doing this, historical contradictions and the evolution of the process can be better understood.

#### 2.4.2 Expansive learning cycle

Engeström (1987) believes expansive learning is a means to resolve social problems arising within activity systems within an organisation. Mastering these problems which are driven by the contradictory nature of human's collective activities is considered fundamental to their socio-historical development. Engeström (2001) emphasises that expansive learning is a process of questioning existing practice. In addition, Engeström, 1999b, (p.383-384) states it is "important to extend beyond the singular activity system and to examine and work towards transformation of networks of activity", as at a group level new ways of working are developed to address previous tensions and contradictions (summarised in Table 2.3).

Engeström (1999) considers an expansive transformation is achieved when the object and motive of the activity are reconceptualised to embrace a fundamentally wider horizon of possibilities than in the former mode of the activity. Adding a full cycle of expansive transformation could be comprehended as a collective journey through the zone of proximal development of the activity. Consequently, it is considered working collaboratively promotes opportunities to establish new objects (Yamazumi, 2006), as it identifies existing contradictions between activity systems allowing analysis and resolution. It is considered that DWR Laboratories can facilitate this process contributing towards organisational change (Engeström, 2007; Leadbetter, 2017).

The first two phases of Engeström's (1999b) expansive learning process were included within this research. The first phase of questioning was facilitated by continually

criticising and reflecting on current practice relating to the choice of study, reading or rejecting the limited literature available, and during professional supervision. The second phase involved reviewing the legislation, policies, and practice within the literature and also the analysis of the data. The third phase took place during the DWR Laboratory, when the focus school produced a model for their new way of working. However, there is potential to use the framework of the cycle to continue work in the future, with continuing support from my placement supervisor, the school is in the process of completing Stages 4-7.

**Table 2.3:** *A summary of the expansive learning process (Engeström, 1999b, p. 383-384)*

<b>Expansive learning cycle stage</b>	<b>Description</b>
1. Questioning	Questioning, criticising, or rejecting elements of current practice
2a. Historical analysis 2b. Actual-empirical analysis	Mental, discursive, or practical transformation of the situation to find out causes or explanatory mechanisms through an exploration of origin/evolution and by constructing a picture of its inner systemic relations
3. Modelling the new situation	Modelling the new explanatory relationship in a publicly observable medium. This means constructing an explicit, simplified model of the new idea that explains and offers a solution to the situation
4. Examining the new model	Running, operating, and experimenting on the new model to grasp its dynamics, potentials, and limitations
5. Implementing the new model	Making the model concrete through practical applications, enrichments, and conceptual extensions
6. Reflecting on the process	Reflecting on and evaluating the process
7. Consolidating the new practice	Consolidating the outcomes into new stable forms of practice

### 2.4.3 The role of contradiction

In a real-world situation, contradictions and disturbances generated in the workplace can result in conflict and instability. Engeström (2019) suggests the contradictions surrounding an activity can be acknowledged and addressed by repeatedly considering expansive learning cycles (see Section 2.3) and recognising the voices of multiple subjects. Contradictions can occur on four levels, depending on the nature of the contradiction and whether it occurs across nodes, time, or activity systems (summarised in Table 2.4).

**Table 2.4:** *The four levels of contradictions*

<b>Contradiction level</b>	<b>Explanation and example</b>
Primary	Contradiction within a node
Secondary	Contradictions between two nodes
Tertiary	Contradictions between a previous model of activity's object and a new one
Quaternary	Contradictions between the central activity and neighbouring systems

Whilst contradictions can be unsettling, it is considered the reflective appropriation of advanced models and tools are seen as the way out of internal contradictions (Cole and Engeström, 1993), as they can offer the opportunity for new activity systems to be created (Groleau et. al., 2011). Kamanga and Alexander (2020) concur with this, believing that internal tensions and contradictions are the driving force behind the transformation of tool-mediated human activities within organisations and communities, leading to change and development.

## **2.5 Development work research (DWR) Laboratory**

A DWR Laboratory is used as part of that change process. The DWR Laboratory emerged from Vygotsky's ideas relating to double stimulation (Engeström et al., 1996). Vygotsky believed that any task can be construed and reconstructed by someone based on their schemas, and the nature of a task can be modified by mediation (Vygotsky, 1978). Within the DWR Laboratory process, the CHAT framework mediates participants' investigation of contradictions and conflicting motives, allowing them to address them over time (Engeström, 2007).

The DWR Laboratory is centred on Engeström's work on expansive learning, recognising it as a process in which activity systems are qualitatively transformed to develop new models of working (Engeström, 1999). The DWR Laboratory investigates and resolves systemic issues which contribute towards problems in the workplace (Virkkunen, Mäkinen and Lintula, 2010), by illuminating tensions and contradictions between the intended and experienced objects of the activity system (Engeström, 2019). Pre-selected analysed data is presented back to the group in the form of contradictions for participants to comment and reflect upon. Research suggests that DWR Laboratory sessions provide the opportunity for participants to be truthful and open about how they construe the activity (Edwards and Kinti, 2010) and their professional identities, to develop their interpretation of the object. Leadbetter (2017) proposes the DWR Laboratory is an effective tool for EPs to use to support organisational development. However, Engeström,(199b) and Engeström and Glăveanu (2012) suggest to facilitate effective short and long-term change the DWR Laboratory process should take place on the shop floor of an organisation, when staff and management within the organisation are prepared to accept change.



Phase 2 of this present study comprised of a single DWR Laboratory. The aim of the DWR Laboratory was to support stakeholders' endeavours to resolve historical and current tensions and inconsistencies in inclusive SEND provisions, and to refine practice for the benefit of the school (discussed further in Chapter 4).

## **2.6 Strengths and critiques of CHAT**

Daniels (2010) states the analysis of data within CHAT and DWR Laboratory based research is a contentious issue, not least over the analysis of discourse itself (Daniels, 2010). Research suggests that activity theory is not a unified theory, as there are many differing definitions of activity theory (Holzman,2006). This may result in the potentially problematic notion that “activity theory will turn into an eclectic combination of ideas before it has the chance to redefine its core” (Engeström, 1999b, p.20). However, it could be challenged that a developing methodology allows researchers the flexibility to use activity theory as a practical tool in applied settings. In addition, Engeström (1999b) advocated that theories should not be closed systems, but should be open to social transformations.

## **2.7 Rationale for use**

Activity theory is recognised as an analytical framework that offers a contextually specific understanding of workplace learning and development (Edwards, 2011), which has been developed to be used “as a way of engaging with organisations to examine and expand efficient working practices” (Leadbetter, 2008, p.209). Daniels (2010) explains the analysis of communicative action within an activity system provides an approach to consider the development of concepts over time in specific institutional settings. As such activity theory can be construed as representing the central force for

authentic organisational change and development (Engeström, 2001). Purposeful, contextual application of activity theory stimulates, transforms, and promotes empowerment, by placing an emphasis on the individuals within the system. Human activity is viewed as the “fundamental unit of analysis through which to understand the historically changing character of organisational work and the specific types of knowledge and learning required by these shifts” (Warmington et al. 2004, p.9). Consequently, it could be considered a theoretically grounded framework for understanding and recognising the inextricable link between the social and cultural aspects of an organisation. In addition, compared to other models of organisational development such as collaborative action research (CAR), the premise for CHAT is

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017) suggest the design framework of CAR is similar to Engeström’s model of expansive learning (Engeström, 1999b), as such it was also considered as an alternative framework to use in this research, as although CAR (Lawson et al., 2015) is a ‘small-scale intervention’, CAR also operates through cycles of research, action and evaluation to support improvements in practice. CAR is frequently used in educational practice, where it has been found to be beneficial in numerous studies; Farrell (2003b) reported it helped to increase teachers’ self-efficacy and feelings of empowerment, and further studies proposed CAR supported teachers’ professional development (Gennaoui and Kretschmer, 1996; Capobianco and Joyal, 2008).

However, whilst the CAR framework is considered effective in the study of social practices (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017), within CAR emphasis is placed upon a collaborative approach between the researcher and participants (Locke, Alcorn and

O'Neil, 2013) to promote transformation and improvement of work practices (Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007). As the purpose of this research, was to provide a theoretical and practical focus on the activities of work within the Nest, and the CHAT framework focusses on the development of working practices (Engeström, 1999b; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017, the remit of the CHAT framework was judged the better option.

A further strength of the CHAT framework which added impetus to its selection in this study, is that it has been recognised as highly flexible (Daniels et al., 2006; Greenhouse, 2013), in identifying and analysing tensions and contradictions within the activity system in practice. Recognising re-occurring difficulties within the activity system then provides a practical vehicle for moving forwards (Yamazumi, 2006) and facilitating processes of change which lead to organisational development (Sannino and Engeström, 2018).

CHAT offers a robust and analytical framework which can serve several purposes (Nussbaumer, 2011), such as exploring complex, developing professional practices, and inspiring researchers to engage in reflective research (Foot, 2013; Yliruka and Karvinen-Niinikoski, 2013). CHAT recognises the use of multiple perspectives as conceptual tools to understand activity systems, which Leadbetter (2011) argues, have value in exploring and analysing how professional practice could be transformed in EP practice.

The analysis of the tensions within and between activities affords a holistic and insightful view in a real-world situation against its historical background, to provide a rich description of a situation for both the researcher and those being researched (Hasan, 2014). In addition, CHAT concentrates on history as a driver for understanding

change in an activity system, which is particularly relevant to the cyclical fields of education and SEND policies within this research (Freeman and Miller, 2001), which have been seen to regress, rather than progress, through historical rhetoric (Tomlinson, 2017). Chapter 3 reviews the role that historicity plays in SEND development considering the historical context within which the focus activity system, ('the Nest'), has been formed and adapted over time.

Activity theory was chosen as the methodology in this research, whilst giving due thought to its limitations, upon reflection of its strengths as summarised above and founded on a range of factors such as, an empirical method for modelling activity systems and analysing complex activities in workplaces, (Edwards, 2011), it was considered a robust framework within which to analyse, understand and transform the collaborative working practices of the Nest, to improve the support offered to children who experience SEND.

Cultural, historical, and social influences on the development of SEND and how constructions of SEND may influence contemporary mediation of the activity of maintained mainstream resource bases and on-site units are discussed in Chapter 3.

## **Chapter Three: Cultural, historical and social influences on the development of SEND and inclusive special education**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a broad overview of the changing concepts of special education provisions, in addition to the entitlement of children with SEND. Historical advances are reflected upon, in relation to how constructions of SEND may influence contemporary mediation of the activity of maintained mainstream resource bases and on-site units. As the intention of this research was to analyse perceptions of a particular mainstream primary school as an activity system, and its resource base as a further, nested activity system, the CHAT process was considered a suitable approach to frame and inform the historical/cultural review. Step One and Two of Engeström's 'expansive learning cycle' (1999) played an integral role in this research (see Table 1.2) particularly the use of Step Two in the literature review where the use of a 'cultural historical' lens to analyse the literature is evident. Thus: "...it seeks to explain the situation by tracing its origination and evolution." (Engeström, 1999 p.383).

Within this chapter, I am aware that my rationale of providing a broad overview approach rather than looking at in depth at particular local policies means that criticality has to be sacrificed for breadth of knowledge. However, due to the remit of the study and abiding by ethical principles of the focus school to remain anonymous, the focus of this chapter is to provide an overview of the national policies rather than looking in-depth at the local policy and practice in education.

Historical developments combined with cultural rules and the roles of individuals, have played a significant part in developing both policy and practice in education. Acknowledgement of this complex interplay aligns with the principles of CHAT; and

historical analysis forms step two of the expansive learning cycle (Engeström, 1999a; see Chapter 4). The interplay between cultural and historical developments provides a backdrop to the exposition and analysis of the ever-changing political influences on national policy and its impact on provision for children with SEND, which forms the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

### **3.2 Historical development upon SEND**

Figure 3.1 presents a timeline of the key legislation, acts and reports which have influenced provision for children with SEND and Table 3.1 provides a summary of the policies in more detail.

As can be seen in Table 3.1 educational provision for children, young people, and young adults with or without SEND has changed considerably over time; these changes have been propelled by legislative policies and practices which have all had implications on the construction of SEND. However, as Hodkinson and Burch (2019) suggest policy does not take place in a social vacuum, policies are integral to the strength of the Government and are discrete interventions to tackle specific problems which are supported by beliefs and principles, in relation to the rest of the country and the world. Alongside this, CHAT (Engeström, 1999) recognises that activities of practice are mediated by historical cycles of development as well as cultural rules, assumptions, values and priorities and communities of individuals.

### **3.3 Cultural-historical tensions in policy and practices in the conceptualisation of provisions for SEND in England**

This section considers the tensions and contradictions, which have both driven and constrained developments in education, and the impact of this enduring historical

legacy upon current policy and practice within resource bases. Some of the enduring tensions are discussed below (Section 3.3.1 -3.3.7).

### 3.3.1 Benevolent humanitarianisms vs. servicing the needs of the economy

During the 19th century, education was only available for the wealthier and elite, who privately financed their children's education. Prior to the 1918 Education Act it was considered large numbers of children left school at a very early age and did not contribute to the economy of the country (Gillard, 2018). The industrial revolution increasingly changed the foundations of the country's economic prosperity. Alongside Britain's colonial ambitions, which required legions of literate administrators, there was a drive for children to join the workforce due to the early development of the industrial revolution and the associated rise of capitalism (Hodkinson, 2015). Workers were required to increase productivity in newly established factories and mines and children were seen as mini-adults who could reasonably join the workforce once their physical development allowed them to be productive. This led to disparities in the need to reform education for children (Tomlinson, 2017). There was a shift in the construction of childhood and children, as changes led by influential philanthropist members of the aristocracy and politicians, wanted to establish childhood as a protected time within their lifespan to allow children to develop healthily and safely (Barton, 1988). Employment restrictions enforced by law during this time were in part, to allow children to engage in education. However, Slee (2018) argues that developments in special education during the first part of the 20th century were driven largely by benevolent humanitarianism, rather than belief in the rights of children with disabilities or the power of education to enhance their learning or quality of life.

### 3.3.2 Benevolent humanitarianisms and belief in human potential vs. viewing people with disabilities as a threat to society

It was perceived children and adults with disabilities gave little to society and this was brought to the forefront by the growing science of the Eugenics Movement, which focussed on selective breeding to promote the human race (Hodkinson, 2015; Tomlinson, 2017). Children with disabilities were conceptualised as being defective, inherently compromised, and unworthy of education (Tomlinson, 2017). Endemic, discriminatory attitudes and beliefs led to the view that disabled children and young adults were seen as a threat to society and therefore needed to be segregated, in terms of education, and offered philanthropically-motivated care (Tomlinson, 2017). Schooling for children with disabilities was conducted in separate or segregated



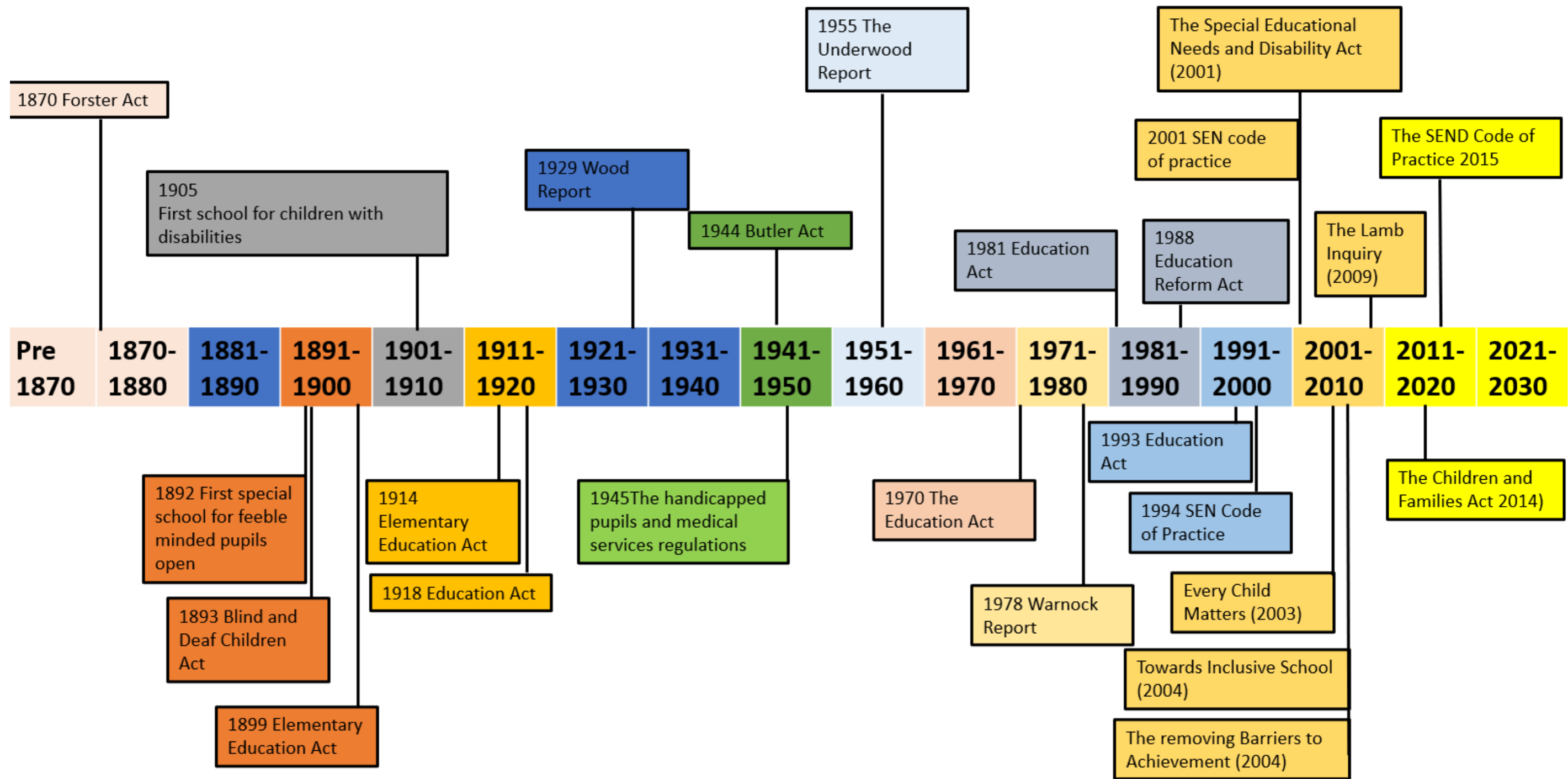


Figure 3.1: A timeline of legislation, acts and reports

**Table 3.1:** A summary of key cultural and historical tensions in educational policy

Time period	Education Acts and reports	Key influences	What did the policy/ policies achieve?	What tensions remained?
1870 1893 1899	Elementary Education Act Blind and Deaf Children Act Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act	The development of charitable provisions to educate children deemed incapable of benefiting from ordinary methods of education. Segregation was further encouraged by mainstream education “payment by results” ethos.	Non-compulsory learning was introduced in schools for all children between the ages of five and 13 years old, upon payment of a small fee.  Increase in specialist schools to support children who were deaf, blind, defective and epileptic.	Provisions criticised as supporting a system of social control.
1914 1918 1929 1944	Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act Education Act (The Fisher Act) The Wood report Education Act (The Butler Act)	Tomlinson (2017) argued around this time the focus was on politicians trying to manage a troublesome population considered incapable of benefiting from ordinary education (Thomas et al 1998). As well as “safeguarding the efficient education of the majority” (Pijl and Meijer 1994, cited in NCSE 2010, p.5). The rise of the Eugenics Movement viewed disabled children and adults as a threat to society/the gene pool, therefore needing segregated education.  Post-war, its aim was to remove the inequalities in education and promote social mobility.	Local education authorities (LEAs) responsible for identifying children with a disability who were not able to be educated in mainstream schools.  Children’s universal access to education improved and compulsory education was extended from the age of 12 to 14 years of age.  LEAs aimed to introduce three main categories of secondary education, grammar, secondary modern and technical. Grammar school entrance based on 11 plus exam. Education was extended to 15 years of age. LEAs became responsible for providing educational provision. Fees at state schools were forbidden.  All children had a right to education based on their age, aptitude and ability advocating that where possible, disabled children should be taught in mainstream schools, where special educational treatment should be provided.  The term ‘mental deficiency’ was replaced by ‘educational sub normality’ and children with disabilities were placed into one of eleven categories of “disabilities of the body or mind.	The Wood Report acknowledged a significant number of children with disabilities were still not being recognised in schools.  Social mobility more difficult for working class families who needed children to be in employment.  Focus remained on the medical model of disability and ignored the influence of their environment on children with SEN.
1970 1978	Education Act Warnock report	Since the 1950s psychologists and other professionals working within the field worked on studies showing the need for a greater differential analysis of cognitive, and other components of disability for children considered ineducable. Advocating a more personalised approach, believing the concept of “handicap” was related to the interaction of their disabilities within their environment, e.g., education and background, as well as their social context.  The Secretary of State for Education (Margaret Thatcher) 1973 to set up an enquiry into educational provision for children with disabilities. The paradigm shift in thinking linked in practice with an increasing concern about the “rights” of children. Parents formed pressure groups to influence targeted	Children no longer judged ineducable. Educational needs passed from mental health services to education authority.  Warnock report advocated children’s medical and social needs, parental input in matters concerning the young person, and a unified multi-agency approach in assessment and provision.  Policies were influential in determining a radically different understanding of disability and SEN, where disability was seen as a separate construct to SEN.	High numbers of children continued to be identified as having learning difficulties. Lack of clarification of the terminology was criticised as it led to confusion regarding how best to support their needs.

1981 1988	Education Act Education Reform Act	approaches to education to meet children's needs, and for those who had been labelled "ineducable".  Introduction of the National Curriculum	Terminology change from children who were 'handicapped' to children with 'special educational needs' (SEN). Statementing was introduced. The national curriculum aimed to address inequalities in the curriculum of schools and standardise education, so everyone was taught the same curriculum.	Criticised for marketisation of education and teaching to the test did not account for differing abilities of children with SEN.
	1993 Education Act  1994 CoP	During this time, the Salamanca Statement (1994), argued for a national and international move away from an integrative approach, towards a more inclusive and a human rights direction of SEN policy (Lundy, 2007; Dunne, 2008).	1993 Act stated that LEAs and school governing bodies must have regard to a SEN CoP to support the identification, intervention, and assessment of children with SEN. Special education should be in mainstream rather than special schools (Runswick-Cole, 2007. Graduated forms of special educational provision (in-class; temporary, regular withdrawal for targeted, intensive teaching; part-time/ full-time placement in designated special unit on mainstream school site; special school)	LEAs critiqued as it was believed children were receiving poor internal support.
2001  2001	The SEN CoP  The SEN Disability Act (SENDA)	There was a political movement towards inclusion, by promoting stronger rights for children with SEN to be educated in mainstream schools. Poor evidence relating to the benefits of specialist education was reported.  SENDA advocated that schools should make reasonable provisions to ensure children with SEN were provided with the same opportunities and choices as those without SEN (Armstrong, 2005; Garner, 2009; Armstrong and Squires, 2012)  There was an increased emphasis on individualised learning for children.  Legislation from the Act replaced the 'five stage procedure' of the 1994 CoP with 'School Action' and 'School Action Plus' interventions (DfES, 2001).	Similar to the 1994 CoP, legislation from the SENDA Act proposed that schools should make reasonable provisions to ensure children with SEN were provided with the same opportunities and choices as those who did not have SEN.  SENDA (2001) also strengthened the rights for children with SEN to be educated at a mainstream school (Runswick-Cole, 2007)	The National Curriculum and marketisation of education made this policy contradictory. Some academics argued focus on full inclusion may prevent some children from accessing specialist education which may benefit them. Increased use of TAs in the classroom which questioned inclusion, as inclusive education policy argues for a focus on how children are taught, as opposed to educational settings changing their cultures and practices (Barton, 1997). Lack of support for young people moving into adult life/adult services and ongoing overidentification of children with SEND.
2015	SEND CoP	'Broken Britain' agenda resurfaced where "troublesome" children were segregated.  The Government sought to 'remove the bias towards inclusion.	Replaced 'Statements of SEN' which focussed on educational provision with 'Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCP)', emphasising an increased focus on attainment and outcomes.  Support increased for young adults with SEND provision extended to 25 years old.  Promoted the role of special schools and asserted it as a valid option. There was a focus on mental health needs with a change in terminology of 'Behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)' was changed to 'social emotional and mental health (SEMH)' needs.  In a significant shift toward inclusive practice, the CoP assumed teachers' skills of differentiation and personalisation of learning would ensure children with SEND could achieve in inclusive classrooms (Gardiner, 2017).	Criticism of lack of funding for pupils with SEND without EHCPs. Continues to lead to increasing numbers of children being recognised as having SEND and requests for EHCPs. Poor integration of environmental data such as poverty into how this may contribute to needs which may be linked to wider policies of the time (e.g., Broken Britain)

Schools to maintain a separation between those considered 'normal' and those who were not (Slee, 2018). Moreover, research proposes that instead of special education being educationally liberating for children with disabilities, or at least in their best interest (Slee, 2018), the unambitious education provided, contributed to proving their limited ability to learn or transcend the effects of their disability and restricted their social mobility.

### 3.3.3 Education of the (predominantly male) elite vs. a universal entitlement to education

Promoting social mobility has been a long standing ideological debate. Prior to 1944, poorer families were prevented access to education due to the associated fees. This caused tension between how education was provided and to whom. To accommodate humanitarian values and growing concerns for equality of opportunity, reforms in the 1944 Education Act introduced universally free state secondary education in a drive to make education accessible for all. To address differing levels of ability and 'potential' relevant at secondary school level, a 3-tier secondary education system (grammar; technical; and secondary modern) was introduced. Cyril Burt, a psychologist, was influential in driving this movement as he argued educational ability could be inherited and should be proven in an exam in their last year of primary school (Gillard, 2018).

However, a social cultural divide remained with inequalities of class, as places in grammar schools were mainly taken up by the middle class, and secondary modern schools which parents considered to be inferior were attended by the lower classes (Gillard, 2018). Grammar schools remained elitist, as entrance was based on

intelligence quotient (IQ) testing with an eleven-plus exam, which although perceived to facilitate social mobility as allocation of places were based on intellectual ability rather than payment of fees, emphasis was placed on the use of language and grammar, making it more accessible for children with highly educated parents, as opposed to children from working class backgrounds (Gillard, 2018). There was also perceived gender bias in the pass rates of the exam, reflecting the cultural norms of society around this time it was considered boys had differing educational needs to girls and standardisation of results meant that some girls got higher scores than boys, but were still not allocated places in grammar schools (Floud and Halsey, 1957).

#### 3.3.4 Post-war recovery: the economic and social value of investing in education vs. encouraging earlier employment

It could be considered post-war that the economic needs of the country conflicted with the principles of education (Hellowell, 2018). During the 1940s, there were differing views within the Labour Government pertaining to education, one such argument was raising the school leaving age to 15 (Gillard, 2018). Whilst some politicians felt this action would lead to a direct loss to the national labour force and have a detrimental effect on the country's economy, a counter argument was that a delay in raising the school leaving age would deprive children of a year's education on top of schooling already lost as a direct result of the Second World War. Furthermore, it was suggested child labour should not be a means of addressing economic pressures of the country; in April 1945, the school leaving age was raised to 15. Beliefs about the purposes that the public education system should serve also led to disparity of opinion, and a conflict between national policy and local policy within government.

In the 1960s a newly elected Labour government had still not implemented a fully comprehensive education system, differing political views, as well as the growing influence of 'academics' in the fields of philosophy, sociology and the newer discipline of psychology contributed towards a call for change. Psychologists during this time argued that segregation in different types of schools went against the theory of innate intelligence, and leading sociologists advocated that the divided secondary system was discriminatory against working class children (Lawson and Silver, 2013). The suggestion was that academic achievement and access to secondary education were attributable to social class, predominantly middle class. This led to a growing shift towards a more liberal agenda, to maintain the status quo and to meet and anticipate the needs of the labour market. The comprehensive education system was introduced by the Labour government in 1965 to encompass a broad cultural background and offer greater equity, and a universal entitlement for all (Chitty, 2009). It was believed comprehensive education would create a more egalitarian society, where mixed ability classes could help children learn from each other, and no child was made to feel a failure (Gillard, 2018). Comprehensive schools offered differing opportunities or more emancipatory purposes for children's development and self-actualisation thus, contributing to their social mobility.

However, a move to comprehensive education did little to accommodate equal opportunity for all, as class inequality transpired through banding and streaming processes, whereby working class children most often finished up in the lower bands (West and Bailey, 2013). There was also little parental choice of schools, as it was

considered all schools offered a standardised approach to education which did not always accommodate children with disabilities.

### 3.3.5 Medical vs. social model of disability

Another cultural-historical tension within educational provision was medical vs. social model of disability. Traditionally, the medical model of disability was instrumental in supporting segregated special education for children with disabilities. However, towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a change in societal values about disability and it was evidenced segregated provision was not proving a success (National Council for Special Education, 2010). This brought political pressure from disability and parental advocacy groups to introduce new legislation to reform education, amid a growing consensus that inclusion was necessary to restructure education (Thomas et al., 1998). During this time specialist professionals rejected the medical model of disability, challenging its beliefs and related practices and there was a paradigm shift linked to practice concerning the rights of the child (Lewis and Lindsay, 2000). Professionals working in the field of psychology began studies which demonstrated the need for a greater understanding of cognitive ability and other components of disability, in recognition of a more personalised approach. There was an identified move away from the medical model of disability where social expectations were driven by the limitations of individuals due to their impairment (Barnes and Mercer, 2006), towards a social model of disability which did not focus on the underlying medical condition (Evans and Varma, 1990; Armstrong, 2007; Runswick-Cole and Hodge, 2009). Thus, acknowledging that people are disabled by barriers in society, derogatory attitudes, and social exclusion rather than impairment or difference (National Council for Special Education (NCSE), 2010; Peer and Reid, 2012).

Reflecting recognition of the social model of disability, legislation in the 1970 Education Act advocated the term 'mentally handicapped' should be replaced by 'special educational needs'. Children were no longer judged as uneducable with low educational expectations, and responsibility for their education was transferred from mental health services to the education authority.

Changing perceptions surrounding children's disabilities and lobbying pressure from both professionals and parents led to the Secretary of State for Education (Margaret Thatcher), calling for an enquiry into radically changing the educational provision for children with disabilities, this was to be led by Mary Warnock.

#### 3.3.5.1 The Warnock report

The Warnock report (1978) was arguably one of the most important policies of its time, as it conceptualised the provision of special education and paved the way for later developments which would have a significant impact upon policy and practice over time to the present day (Bajwa-Patel and Devecchi, 2012; Peer and Reid, 2012). Children's medical and social needs, parental support, and relationships between different professionals were considered, with the assertion that "no child should be sent to a special school who can satisfactorily be educated in an ordinary one" (Department of Education and Science, (DES) 1978, p.99), therefore aiming to integrate all children into mainstream education, regardless of ability or disability (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2006). The Warnock report proposed to address the endemic assumptions of the equivalence of disability and SEN, disaggregating the two and positioning SEN as an outcome and not a human characteristic.



One of the key recommendations from the Warnock report (1978) was for graduated forms of special educational provision (in-class; temporary, regular withdrawal for targeted, intensive teaching; part time/full time placement in designated special units on mainstream school sites), and wherever possible should be attached to and function as part of ordinary mainstream schools. However, although current policy highlights the importance of inclusion in meeting the needs of children with SEND, there are factors which impact on the consequences of the initiative it espouses.

### 3.3.6 The role of the state: centralised control and marketisation vs. local 'bottom-up' responses to children's community and economic needs

Under the New Labour Government, the 1988 Education Act introduced marketisation into education under the guise of the National Curriculum, which caused a conflict of interest between policies and practice, as teaching to the test and the division of children in classrooms based on ability, was in direct conflict with inclusion policy, and ultimately led to segregation (MacBeath et al., 2006). The 'market forces' culture of league tables was advantageous to more academic students but led to a less inclusive environment for children with SEN, which resulted in a new form of marginalisation (Bines, 2000), with schools using TAs to teach children with SEND (Lauchlan and Greig, 2015).

As well as this, the decreased power of local authorities and the increased strength of school governing bodies resulted in a significant number of schools becoming academies. Currently more than 78% of secondary schools and 37% of primary schools are academies (DfE, 2021). However, evidence suggests children with SEND are less likely to be enrolled in academies (Pearson, 2013), as preference is given to

wealthier pupils, or pupils with higher attainment levels upon transition from primary to secondary school (Wilson, 2011). Black et al. (2019) reported since 2012, the number of pupils with SEN in academies has reduced significantly in comparison to local authority maintained schools. Lamb (2019) argues for the need to improve the education system to accommodate more children's needs, rather than a market led approach in schools and other educational settings.

3.3.7 Getting the balance right: parental wishes vs. local authority responsibilities vs. children's rights and ascertainable wishes

In England, children's SEN took a significant step forward when the Education Act 1993 introduced new parental rights of choice and a more robust and independent appeal process to ensure the education service provided equal opportunities to help all children achieve their potential. The Act placed a duty on the Secretary of State to issue a SEN Code of Practice (CoP) to set out in detail how local education authorities and school governing bodies should carry out their statutory duties to identify, assess and make provision for children with SEN.

The SEN CoP (1994) set out a five staged approach to the assessment of children's needs and how to meet those needs (as described in Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2:** *Description of the five stages of the SEN CoP (1994)*

Stages	Description of Stages.
1.	Action plan.
2.	School to deliver intervention.
3.	External help/support such as EPs, speech and language therapists may become involved.
4.	Statutory assessment process is completed using detailed information about the specific individual needs of the child, through the use of

	parental, school-based and professional information and assessment reports.
5.	Statement of educational needs. This details the child's needs and the suggested provision to meet those needs.

Policies within the CoP were deeply rooted in cultural values, and aimed to eliminate social exclusion (DfE, 1994), mainstream schools were encouraged to educate children with SEN. The government's overall political drive was to extend educational provision and opportunities for children with SEN, within a framework of equal rights initiatives (Armstrong, 2005; Gray, 2009; Armstrong and Squires, 2012) and special schools were only to be considered as a final option.

Inclusion for children with SEN took another step forward in 2001, when the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) (SENDA), made it statutory for all non-statemented children to be educated in mainstream schools. Issues around SEN re-surfaced when significant failures were identified relating to the inability of schools and LEAs to provide statutorily required information for children with SEN. Parents lack of confidence in the SEN system, triggered the Lamb inquiry (2009), a Review of SEN and Disability information. The Lamb inquiry called for a major reform of the SEN system, highlighting the need for a more independent and easily assessable assessment process.

In 2014, the SEND system was once again completely overhauled, it was perceived to address the underperformance of the previous SEN system in England (Hellowell, 2015). The SEND CoP (DfE and Department of Health (DoH), 2015) and the Children and Families Act (2014) advocated children's rights were key as children had to be involved in discussions and decisions relating to their care and education, and impartial

advice, support, and a mediation service had to be provided. However, it has been argued that despite the philosophical shift within the Children and Families Act (2014), with a move toward a new conceptualisation of SEN and implications for professional practice and service provision; there was perceived to be a mismatch between the theoretical approach to disability portrayed in the new policy and many of the changes introduced (Castro, Palikara and Grande, 2016). Proposals from the 2015 SEND CoP (DfE and DoH, 2015) resulted in a change of terminology from SEN to SEND, to reincorporate the salience of disability. However, whilst successive governments have claimed to champion the cause of SEND through the 1994 and 2014 CoPs and each claim to overcome past barriers, it could be considered the fundamental stance on SEND remains unchanged (Lehane, 2017).

### **3.4 Summary of the cultural historical tensions**

To summarise, numerous cultural and historical tensions have been influential in children's access to appropriate educational provision. Expectations for inclusive special educational provision have changed over time, evolving from the idea of children with SEND being integrated into mainstream schools, to schools being expected to address the needs of all children and embrace their diversity (Wedell, 2005; Rix *et al.*, 2009; Landor and Perepa, 2017). However, in practice this is not always feasible: the increased prevalence of children with SEND, as well as an increase in school population (National Audit Office, 2019), medical advances in determining SEND and the allocation of resources, the extension of SEND services to up to 25 year olds, and increased family poverty (Perera, 2019), have all placed significant financial burdens on the education system in England. Whilst, between

2007-2017, the percentage of children with an EHC plan was relatively stable at 2.8%, since then it has steadily risen to 3.7% in 2021 (DfE, 2021). The aforementioned factors coupled with austerity, have led to local authority reductions in available resources, affecting how they were spread, resulting in some services being cut (White, 2010; Nott, 2020). These factors have all impacted on the educational provision of children with SEND.

### **3.5. Implications of enduring tensions associated with resource bases**

Resource bases have evolved to meet an identified gap in the continuum of local authority provision (Hebron and Bond, 2017). Ravet (2011) suggests resource bases are a middle ground solution between assuming mainstream education for all children and a specialist based inclusion setting such as special schools and a viable option to socially, and academically, educate children with SEND.

Resourced provision is facilitated within a resource base within a mainstream school, where class sizes are smaller and planning and support is tailored to a child's individual needs (Frederickson, Jones and Lang, 2010). Resource bases are often considered effective in supporting inclusion (Jordan, 2008) as children's attendance time, is divided between the base and mainstream classrooms (Education and Skills Funding Agency, 2020). In January 2021 it was recorded that in England there are 1066 school with resource bases (DfE, 2021)

I reviewed the limited UK research literature into factors influencing the effectiveness of resource bases, to inform my understanding of the supporting and constraining factors contributing toward positive outcomes for children with SEND. I utilised a pragmatic approach to searching, using logical and systematic methods to identify the

existing literature (Boland, Cherry and Dickson, 2014). Between September 2019 and August 2020, I searched the following four electronic databases – PROQUEST, EBSCO, Psych Info and Web of Science. Multiple search strategies were used relating to the research questions, involving synonyms and truncations for resource bases (“Resource\* base\*” OR “Resource\* provis\*” OR “Resource\* unit\*” OR “Speci\* Hub\*” OR “Resource\* Hub\*” OR “Learn\* base\*” OR “Speci\* Unit\*” OR “Speci\* base\*” OR “Speci\* Provis\*” OR “hub\*” OR “Inclus\* hub\*” OR “Inclus\* base\*” OR “Inclus\* unit\*” OR “Speci\* hub\*” OR “Focus\* Provis\*” OR “Focus\*base\*” OR “Focus\* unit\*” OR “Focus\* hub\*” OR “SEN\* unit\*” or “SEN\* Hub\*” OR “SEN\* base\*” OR “combin\* Unit\*”) AND (speci\* educat\* or spec\* need\* or disabil\* OR inclus\* or inclus\* educat\* or mainstream\*), school (School\* OR Educa\*), and factors (support\* factor\* OR Constrain\* factor\* OR contribut\* factor\*). Appendix One illustrates results from each database.

### 3. 5 (i) Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

In this study I decided to adopt the inclusion and exclusion criteria proposed by Cherry et al (2014) founded on the PICo method of (**p**opulation, **p**henomena of interest and **c**ontext). Utilising only UK studies and excluding articles from newspapers and books (context) I elicited parents’ and/or teachers’ experiences (population) of resource bases (phenomenon of interest). The search was limited to the following dates: 1/1/1978 – present date. Articles from Titles and abstracts of each paper were screened, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to identify potentially relevant studies. 19 papers which met the inclusion criteria would be evaluated for the literature review.

### 3.5 (ii) Thematic synthesis

Thomas and Harden (2008) introduced the term thematic synthesis to demonstrate how a systematic review can comprise of the integration of data from multiple qualitative studies. Synthesising multiple qualitative studies can allow data to be gathered from different contexts which helps to identify any differences or inconsistencies in literature (Tong et al.,2012). Within this research six themes were identified which are discussed further in Section 3.5.1-3.5.6.

#### 3.5.1 Supporting factors of resource bases

##### 3.5.1.1 Whole school culture

Studies suggest a positive school ethos is vital in promoting the inclusion of children with SEND who attend resource bases, as success relies on a shared philosophy and approach (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008; Morewood, Humphrey and Symes, 2011; Landor and Perepa, 2017). Preece and Timmins (2004) argue this involves a clear vision and aim, combined with an appropriate referral system and entry criteria (Glazzard, 2013), to ensure judicious systems for the return of children with SEND to full time participation in mainstream lessons. These findings were further supported in Hebron and Bond's (2017) study which explored the perceptions of 16 parents of 9 children who had autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), where the ethos of the wider school was instrumental in helping children who were part of the resource provision to feel included. However, although a potential strength of Hebron and Bond's (2017) study was the interviews were repeated at specific time points enabling clarity of perspectives, methodological issues such as relying on note taking instead of audio

recording the interviews, lack of specificity in their findings and considering the participants as a homogeneous group, limited the generalisability of these findings.

#### 3.5.1.2 Management/leadership and staff roles

A key positive influence upon resource bases is the commitment of the senior leadership team to a vision of inclusion and whole school responsibility for children with SEND (Ellins and Porter, 2005; Morewood, Symes and Humphrey 2011; Bond and Hebron, 2016; Belli, 2021). The importance of leadership is consistently stressed as a facilitator, ensuring resource bases are led and overseen by appropriately skilled teachers and consistently staffed to enable children with SEND to build positive relationships (Bond and Hebron, 2016; Belli, 2021).

#### 3.5.1.3 Shared understanding of staff roles and responsibilities

Morewood, Symes and Humphrey (2011) reported the importance of collaborative working with the expertise of all staff valued as part of a whole school approach. Belli (2021) found in several schools where there was a strong emphasis on the progress of children with SEND, provision was a shared responsibility between resource base staff and the wider school, driven by the headteacher, in close alliance with the senior leadership team and the SENCo. In these schools it was found shared leadership, supported by clearly defined roles and collective responsibilities, a strong school ethos and ongoing self-evaluation by school staff contributed towards consistency for children with SEND who attended the resource base, especially during times of transition or change. Belli (2021) also believed mainstream teachers should continue to set work and be responsible for the progress of all children in their class, including



those with SEND who attend the resource base. However, although research by Oldham and Radford (2011) emphasised the importance of SENCOs as leaders in being assertive advocates for children with SEND, statutory regulations do not require them to be appointed to senior leadership teams, which can result in some SENCOs feeling restricted in their capacity to influence practice across the wider school. Consequently, very clearly defined roles and responsibilities are required regarding the resource base, as the person appointed to lead inclusion needs to have a clear vision for SEND, with the capacity to influence/contribute to the leadership impact of whole school inclusive practice (Belli, 2021).

#### 3.5.1.4 Staff expertise and perceived competence

The SEND CoP (DfE and DoH, 2015) places the responsibility for meeting the needs of children with SEND with class and subject teachers. Teachers are required to understand contributory factors which may affect children's learning and adapt their teaching approaches accordingly. However, Bond and Hebron (2016) report that in some schools some mainstream staff were reluctant to accept responsibility for children who attended the resource as well as their class, as they believed increased levels of expertise were required for children with SEND, and that a more personalised approach to planning was required. The investment of specially-trained staff with SEND experience was highlighted as a key supporting factor contributing to effective resource base provisions (Whitaker, 2007; Landor and Perepa, 2017). Frederickson, Jones and Lang (2010) found parental satisfaction is influenced by the level of staff training and expertise regarding SEND; findings supported by Whitaker (2007) and Hebron and Bond (2017), who discovered parents were more satisfied with resource provision

when school staff understood, empathised, and had a positive attitude towards their children's difficulties, and when schools were flexible in their response to an individual's needs. Frederickson, Jones, and Lang (2010) identified talking to children, a strategy regularly adopted in resource bases, enabled staff to understand and be more empathic toward an individual's needs. Hebron and Bond (2017) further acknowledged the partnership between home and school combined with support and input from wider services, such as, speech and language therapists were judged crucial by both school staff and parents alike, who believed that regularly sharing information between professionals made it is easier for all parties to understand children's unique needs (Robertson, Chamberlain, and Kasari, 2003). Bond and Hebron (2016) propose collaboration between resource bases in other schools, is a valuable means of supporting staff in their continued professional development.

#### 3.5.1.5 Peers

The sense of community within a school resource base was highlighted as important. Many children with SEND and their parents reflected on the advantages of attending a resource provision which offered opportunities for access to a broader curriculum; here a positive perspective was the children were not seen as being different to their peers (Hebron and Bond, 2017). Resource bases provide opportunities for greater social interaction with peers than special schools (McAllister and Hadjri, 2013), enabling participation in wider school life, such as after-school clubs and trips which allow friendships to develop out of school (Hebron and Bond, 2017). McAllister and Hadjri (2013) argue that exposure to the mainstream environment as well as attending a resource base supports children's learning social skills, with children benefitting both

socially and academically from being in the mainstream school (Farrell, 2001). Glazzard (2013), meanwhile suggests that an advantage of a within school resource base is that mainstream peers are exposed to difference at an early age, which helps to promote acceptance, tolerance and understanding, qualities preparing them for adulthood and a foundation for a more truly inclusive society (Tepfer, 2001; Jordan, 2008; McAllister and Hadjri, 2013).

#### 3.1.5.6 Physical environment

Morewood, Humphrey, and Symes (2011) found the design, location, and layout of resource bases within mainstream schools needed careful consideration, as the location could be either a facilitator or barrier to effective support and inclusion for children with SEND. Central location of resource bases was considered an important condition to support inclusion, with the resource base valued as a safe area for children to access (Bond, and Hebron, 2013) and not remote from the mainstream activities of the school, studies routinely show that children learn better when they feel safe (McAllister and Hadjri, 2013). However, when considering the evidence for this theme, it is important to note that inclusion is a multi-faceted construct and therefore other factors need to be taken into consideration.

#### 3.5.2 Constraining factors which can compromise the effectiveness of resource bases

Resource bases are not a panacea; every child is unique; therefore, no approach will address every child's needs equally well. Even though espoused government policy is to promote and implement an inclusive society, it could be argued facilitating its

implementation while supporting children with SEND remains a challenge for any school.

In addition, it could be considered that whilst some resource bases may have a beneficial impact on developing inclusive values amongst children, affording priority to the needs of children with SEND may risk undermining their areas and detaching from success within the standards agenda, impacting their overall school results (Glazzard, 2013). Runswick-Cole (2011) recognises it can be a struggle for schools to improve their academic results alongside including children whose meaningful progress would not be reflected in test scores; alignment of the standards agenda and the inclusion agenda is a complex undertaking. Such pressures may then require educational settings and leadership teams need to demonstrate the positive impact of resource bases on children's progress and attainment levels. Whether or not these form priorities for all children with complex SEND.

Overall, evidence suggests that not all resource bases are successful and some separate learning bases have failed to meet the varying needs of children with SEND. Organisational practices such as rigid approaches to timetabling, grouping, inflexible staffing structures and pressures on funding are cited as constraints which contribute towards poor outcomes for resource bases (White, 2010). Preece and Timmins (2004) ascertained that some children with SEND had limited access to support from qualified teachers, or on occasions, were provided with poorly differentiated work. Furthermore, in schools that did not promote inclusive teaching, where teachers were less accountable for individuals with SEND, there was an increased reliance on TAs to support their learning outside mainstream lessons. However, support from TAs has been criticised as the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project showed

this had a strong negative impact on children's academic progress, particularly in relation to children with a statement of SEN (Webster and Blatchford, 2013).

### 3.5.3. Critique of existing literature

When considering previous research and reflecting on what constitutes evidence, it is important to note any methodological issues that may influence findings. The majority of studies referred to in the present research used a small sample or an auto ethnographic account, which limited generalisability. In addition, some studies used self-report measures at a certain point in time, which do not take into consideration that perceptions may change over time. The samples used tended to be either purposive or voluntary samples and were therefore only reflective of participants who wanted to voice their opinion, rather than a true reflection of all participant's viewpoints. Consequently, if more research was conducted different themes may have emerged. Another case in point, is that the majority of studies focussed on resource bases for children with ASD, therefore, it could be argued that different findings may emerge from a resource base that encompasses a broader range of needs.

Therefore, whilst the previous research literature was considered insightful and helped to provide a detailed picture of resource bases, none of the selected papers focused purely on organisational factors, furthermore, there was little pre-existing qualitative literature which considered the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. Consequently, further research would make a valuable addition to this emergent field to ascertain triangulation and promote optimal practice in resource bases for children with SEND.

### **3.6 Justification for the current study**

Accommodating the needs of so diverse a group of learners can be a significant challenge for mainstream schools. Carrington and Elkins (2002) recognise this challenge and refer to the gap that still exists between policy and practice, advocating a collaborative problem-solving approach to explore and analyse the underlying principles behind agreed practices to evaluate the effectiveness of their implementation. Farrell (2001) suggests successful inclusion requires commitment from every member of staff and each person needs to be aware of their own responsibility to make it work.

There is currently limited research which explores the modus operandi and/or effectiveness of resource bases or how they should be designed. The current study sought to add to existing research by exploring how a particular resource base fits within the wider school in terms of organisation and philosophy, as well as how systems within the locality such as admission criteria and multi-professional networks help to support its development. I judged that this analysis would help inform future practice in areas such as the allocation of places and operational practices which best achieve the goals set for the well-being and educational progress of children with SEND. Cultural historical activity theory (Engestrom, 1999) was harnessed to structure analysis of the resource base. The discussion of findings derived from this analysis with key stakeholders working within the school, to support a development plan tailored to stakeholders expressed priorities for development.

Through better understanding of the internal and external factors judged to contribute to the effectiveness of the focus in-house resource base, I intended findings would not

only drive progress within the focus resource base, but also through the process of theoretical generalisation future provision developed in other similar mainstream primary schools would be better informed. For the specific school which forms the research site for the current study, the action research was intended to make valuable contribution to school improvement.

Chapter Four outlines the methodological approach adopted in this research.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the choice of methodology made within this research along with ethical considerations, data collection methods and analysis.

### 4.2 Research aims and questions

The aim of this research was to explore stakeholders' perceptions concerning work practices in a resource base (the Nest) situated in a particular mainstream, local authority-maintained primary school. Their objectives, roles, and beliefs about what is perceived to be best current and future practice are explored. Conflicting themes are presented and discussed with the stakeholders to harness understanding of how EPs/ EPSs, might anticipate and/or contribute toward reducing and/or resolving the tensions that can arise within schools in developing a resource base in a broadly similar mainstream school.

#### 4.2.1 Research questions:

The research questions formulated by building upon the historical analysis of the existing literature, cultural-historical activity theory methodology and case study design are outlined below:

Phase 1:

1. What do stakeholders perceive to be the goal(s) (object) and overall purpose(s) (outcome(s)) of the in- house resource base?
2. What are the perceived supporting/constraining factors influencing/contributing toward the outcomes of the in-house resource base (rules—supports and constraints)?



3. What are the role(s) involved in supporting the resource base children (division of labour)?

Phase 2: Development work research (DWR) Laboratory:

4. What key features (including new ways of working) do stakeholders suggest would enhance an in-house resource base and its outcomes for children?

Through addressing the aims of the study, this research endeavoured to resolve tensions suggested by the Phase 2 (DWR Laboratory) and cultural historical analysis of stakeholders' perspectives on the resource base as an activity system, situated within the more complex activity system of the mainstream local authority school. This would help produce new ways of working to promote positive outcomes for children who attend the Nest and inform considerations for the proposed establishment and broadly similar resource bases offering targeted support for children with SEND.

### **4.3 Research philosophy**

A research philosophy is a belief about the way in which data about a phenomenon should be gathered, analysed and used (Thomas, 2017). Ontology and Epistemology are two different components of research philosophy.

#### **4.3.1 Ontology**

Ontology is the study of being (Crotty, 1998, p.10). Ontological assumptions are concerned with what constitutes reality, regarding perceptions of how things really are and how things really work (Scotland, 2012). Interpretivist ontology is adopted in this

research: this assumes that reality is individually construed by personal experience and how we make sense of it (Waring, 2012). This perspective is validated by the epistemology of studying subjective understanding and meaning, in accordance with CHAT (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999), qualitative data collection methods (Newby, 2014), and thematic analysis (TA) (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

#### 4.3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is the philosophical study of the nature, origin, and limits of human knowledge (Thomas, 2017). It is a multi-faceted area of philosophy concerning all aspects of the validity, scope, and methods of acquiring knowledge, such as, what constitutes knowledge, how it can be acquired, or how the legitimacy of its transferability is assessed. Epistemological perspectives determine the extent to which it is believed that knowledge can be attained based on our own experiences and language (Lock and Strong, 2010). The social, historical, and collective nature of the knowledge shaped by the principles of CHAT lends itself to social constructionism, more specifically macro social constructionism (Burr, 2003), where emphasis is placed on the awareness of social structures, relations, and institutional practices in mediating subjective realities.

##### *4.3.2(i) Social constructionism*

In a socially constructed world, it is considered that human experiences of reality are socially construed and constituted through language, and knowledge is sustained and developed primarily by social processes (McNamee and Gergen, 1992). Individuals communicate with each other and create rules and beliefs shared through social engagement and participation (Berger and Luckmann, 1966 Shotter, 1993); thus, our

beliefs about the world are social conventions. Social constructionist research concentrates on investigating social influences on communal and individual life, it assumes that knowledge is influenced by the cultural, historical, political, and social norms that operate within that context and time (Gergen, 1973), perceiving that reality is constituted through the language and social consensus through which we understand the world (Young and Collin, 2004).

These assumptions complement the principles of CHAT, a development process that recognises that an activity system and the reasoning that individuals or small groups apply to solving specific problems within it are strongly influenced by historical and socio-cultural factors (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999; Leadbetter, 2017).

However, social constructionism has been criticised as lacking a united definition (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). In addition, researchers must consider multiple perspectives to understand multiple realities (Schwandt, 1994), which could result in differing versions of what social constructionism represents and refers to. Moreover, it is imperative that the role of the researcher is transparent in both data collection and subsequent analysis, as the analysis includes the relationship between the researcher and participants as an active part of the data.

To clarify the epistemological nature of social constructionism adopted within the current research, Table 4.1 presents an overview of key assumptions.

**Table 4.1:** *Key assumptions associated with social constructionism (adapted from Burr, 1995, p.3-5)*

Assumption	Description
A critical stance towards our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world and ourselves	Social constructionism involves critically appraising most of our knowledge of ourselves and the world we live in. It suggests we should abandon assumptions as there are objective, verifiable facts that we cannot come to know. It challenges the idea that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world around us. Therefore, we should always be suspicious of and willing to challenge assumptions about how the world appears to be and what truth comprises.
The ways in which we understand the world are historically and culturally specific	Accepted knowledge is governed to a large degree by standardised rules that are historically and culturally established. It is an understanding of how ideas and attitudes are developed over time within a social community context.
Knowledge is sustained by social processes	Social constructionism requires an awareness of the way we perceive and experience the world. It assumes our consciousness and the way we relate to others is learned from and indeed taught by our culture and society. The focus is not on individuals but rather on social interactions in which language is generated, sustained, and abandoned.
Knowledge and social interactions are inherently dependent upon communities of shared intelligibility	In a world of conversational narrative, it is through conversing with each other that individuals develop a sense of identity or an inner voice. Language is more than a way of connecting people, people exist in language. We understand ourselves and each other

	through ever changing stories and self-descriptions.
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Social constructionism requires collaborative processes in the construction of new forms of knowledge (McNamee and Hosking, 2012); therefore, research findings are construed not as objective, verifiable facts, but as results of the subjective construction (Lock and Strong, 2010). The current study endorses this position, as it endeavours to facilitate collaborative exploration of the multiple voices of participants and consider how reality is presently constructed, in order then to interrogate and better align these social constructions, and so enhance the Nest and its outcomes for children. By doing so, the researcher and participants can aim to construct a new reality and activity system to expand learning and transform practice.

#### **4.4 Research methodology**

##### **4.4.1 Research design**

Thomas (2017) states the research design constitutes the most important element in the way research is structured, as it provides the framework connecting purposes with questions and the ways in which data can be collected.

##### 4.4.1 (i) Case study design

A case study design aims to capture the complexity of the subject matter providing a full, complex understanding in either a single case, or a small group of cases in real life contexts, using multiple sources of evidence (Thomas, 2009). Yin (2009) argues that a case study is an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth, within its real-life context. Stake (2008) meanwhile suggests

that as a form of research, the case study is defined by interest in an individual case and not by the methods of inquiry used. Leadbetter et al. (2007) propose studying the complexity of a single case and understanding its activity in context, helps to promote meaningful analysis.

As the aim of this research was to explore the views of stakeholders and promote organisational development and change within the focus school, the parameters of the research were already set by the case of the school; therefore, a case study was considered an appropriate design. Furthermore, the use of a case study design enabled examination of concrete, contextual, in-depth knowledge relating to the specific, real-world subject, (the Nest), to identify patterns of behaviour. It also allowed for multi-voicedness, as well as aligning with the principles of the CHAT methodology adopted by the current research, reflecting the essential cultural historical principles that an activity or learning is not independent of social, cultural, and institutional specifics (Leadbetter, 2008).

Single case study analysis has been criticised and questions raised about levels of methodological rigour, researcher subjectivity, and external validity. Simons (1996) acknowledges that case study design has been critiqued by positivist researchers who voice concerns about the absence of generalisable conclusions and lack of empirical evidence (see Section 4.6 for discussion of generalisation). However, this research aimed to gain in-depth analysis of the Nest itself, rather than making generalisations to a wider population: therefore, a case study design was judged to be appropriate.

## **4.4.2 Participant recruitment**

### 4.4.2 Participants

#### *4.4.2(i) Local authority context*

The research was undertaken in an inner city mainstream primary school located within the focus local authority, Green City Council (pseudonym) where I am undertaking my doctoral training programme. At the time of the research, I was on placement within the service as a trainee educational psychologist (see Table 4.2 for potential ethical implications). The school has 492 pupils on roll, it has a two-form entry and was rated outstanding in the most recent OFSTED report (November 2014). Ten children in the school have an EHCP and 80 children are on the SEND register.

This research was seen to contribute towards organisational change not only in the focus school in this case, but also the derived implications for development could be introduced in resource bases situated within similar primary schools and/or be conducive in the establishment of resource bases in broadly similar mainstream primary schools. Secondly, it provides implications for EPs/EPs practice to facilitate and harness understanding of the tensions that may arise within schools in developing inclusive special educational provisions or contribute toward reducing tensions in newly-established or existing resource bases.

#### *4.4.2(ii) Sampling and recruitment*

In this study, seven participants were recruited (four members of school staff, two professionals from external services and one parent), using voluntary sampling (summarised in Figure 4.1 and Table 4.2).

A voluntary sample was used as it was considered this research necessitated engagement from the stakeholders within the existing activity system (the Nest and the wider school) as within this role they could become 'agents of change' and employ systemic approaches in consideration of the wider environment. The participatory nature of this research required the stakeholders to develop the ability to question, analyse, and shape their own practice. Engeström (2011) advocates interventions such as the DWR Laboratory can facilitate change through the expansive learning process of transitioning from individual initiatives towards collaborative actions. CHAT as a systematic inquiry moves participants away from merely being consumers of research to agents of change that support educational reform. Through this process, networks and knowledge are shared to provide solutions that have hindered the Nest's success

Therefore, prior to voluntarily taking part in the study, participants were advised the research would involve two phases: an individual interview and a DWR Laboratory. They were further advised that activity theory would be used as a conceptual framework to promote learning and stimulate organisational change, and that this may result in them having to rethink their current working practices and therefore required participants to be "agents of change". However, a limitation of voluntary sampling is that it may leave the research open to selection bias (Thomas, 2017), as participants who volunteer to be interviewed may have stronger, views about the Nest. I am aware that in this research, the sample of participants was not representative and did not reflect every person's opinion within the Nest.



#### *4.4.3 Reflexivity and positionality*

It is important to be aware of positionality and how this may influence the findings. Throughout my placement at Green City Council, as a trainee educational psychologist I have worked closely with members of staff within the focus school. However, for the purpose of this research I considered it necessary to remind all participants of my position as a researcher, as I was concerned that otherwise my working relationship may limit or change the information given during interviews. To address this dual identity, university headed paperwork was used as well as using professional titles and professional group terminology during recruitment, data collection stages and interviews. In addition, I continually monitored and sought to identify influences upon data collection and analysis, and further reflected on such influences through supervision.

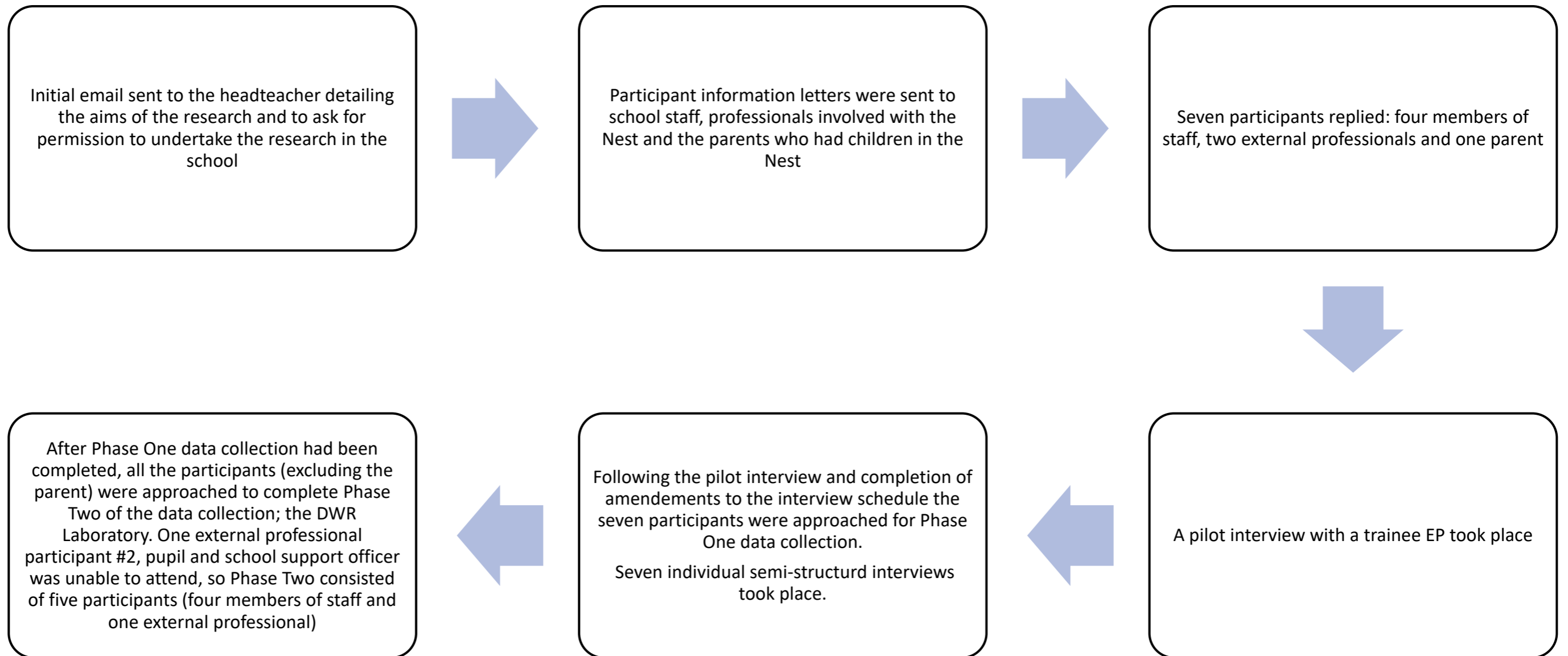
#### **4.5 Data Collection**

Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured individual interviews (Phase One), followed by a single focus group (Phase Two; DWR Laboratory).

##### 4.5.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is an interpretive approach involving understanding concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to recognise how individuals observe and make sense of their social reality. What this means is qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, to gather in-depth insights to make sense of, or construe events around them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

Interpretive research seeks to make sense of how the world is seen, understood, and experienced from an individual's perspective, therefore giving voice to the rich tapestry of people's lives (Braun and Clarke, 2013), which is considered particularly relevant to the aim of this research. Research conducted within a social constructionist epistemology relies more heavily on the spoken word through conversation, interviews, and narratives (Gergen, 2001; Padgett, 2004). This affirms Engeström's (1999) assertion that activity systems are multi-layered and multi-voiced and the idea



**Figure 4.1:** *A summary of the sampling procedure*

**Table 4.2: Sample demographics**

Participant Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sex	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
Current Professional Title	Educational psychologist	Pupil and school support	SENCo	Inclusion support assistant	Assistant headteacher. Class teacher inclusion lead at school	Class teacher	Parent
Time at the school	Nine years	Ten years	Four years	Four years	Fourteen years	Three years	Seven years
Experience of the learning hub	Supported the school whilst they were creating the Nest. Provided on-going support to children inside and outside the Nest for the past 9 years.	Supported the school whilst they were creating the Nest. Provided on-going support to the children inside and outside the Nest for the past ten years.	Created and runs the Nest.	Works in the Nest	Created the Nest with the SENCo three years ago. Oversees the running of the Nest. Has children in her class who access the Nest.	Has children in her class who access the Nest.	Parent of child who has accessed the Nest four mornings a week for the past three years.
Previous experience of resource bases	EP for another school with a resource base. Has previously visited resource bases.	Previously a teacher in a school with a resource base. Supports another school with a resource base.	Visited other settings.	Used to work in a special school.	Visited other settings with a resource base.	No previous experience of resource bases.	Has other children who access resource bases and a special school.

of internal tensions and contradictions are the driving force of change and development in activity systems and a guiding principle of empirical research.

Strengths and limitations of using qualitative research in relation to organisational development are summarised in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3:** *A summary of the strengths and limitations of using qualitative research in relation to organisational development (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Gray, 2014; Newby, 2014).*

Strengths	Limitations
Qualitative methodologies provide the opportunity to seek an in-depth understanding of experiences, allowing the opportunity to explore subtle differences in meaning not available through quantification.	Open to influence by the researcher-participant relationship.
Values subjectivity and reflexivity when trying to comprehend people's meanings.	Potential bias as a researcher may bring their views and perceptions into the research process.
Data are not isolated from their content; the relationship between researcher and participant is reciprocal and flexible with influence in both directions.	It can take longer to complete collection and data analysis.
Closely resembles real life, in comparison to other methods such as experiments. Can produce rich meaningful descriptions of participants environment that contribute to more general understandings.	Often subjective in its analysis, based on the researcher's context.
It can be open-ended, exploratory, and flexible.	Costly in time needed for data collection and data analysis.

#### *4.5.1 (i) Phase One: semi-structured interviews*

The overriding rationale of this research study was to employ an activity theory framework to elicit qualitative, in-depth, rich, and illuminating information regarding complex work practices in a real-world context. Therefore, structured interviews were avoided as they were considered too rigid and inflexible in nature, and semi-structured interviews were the chosen data collection method during Phase One of data collection. This method satisfies the epistemological position of the research, encouraging co-operation and rapport and allowing the researcher and participants to acknowledge that knowledge can be co-constructed (Walford, 2001). Furthermore, its flexibility enables the researcher to ask additional questions and go into more detail to clear up any misunderstandings, providing a truer assessment of what the participant really believes. It is acceptable practice to use prompts in semi-structured interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Cohen et al., 2017; Thomas, 2017). In addition, probes such as “what is your own personal view” or asking “anything more” or “could you go over that again” alongside useful non-verbal tactics such as a period of silence or an enquiring glance could also enhance the data collection process (Robson, 2002). However, prompts and follow-up questions should only be used sparingly to elicit extra detail or clarity, as too many prompts may result in the interview process being more open to researcher influence (Cohen et al., 2017).

Figure 4.2 presents the semi-structured interview schedule, and Appendix Two details prompts used during the interview process.

**Table 4.4:** Strengths and limitations of semi-structured interviews (Newby, 2014; Thomas, 2017).

Strengths	Limitations
Focusses on the meaning of a particular phenomenon to the participants; two-way conversation is encouraged to strengthen depth and clarity of understanding developed by the researcher	Conducting, analysing, and transcribing responses to open ended interviews is time consuming.
Semi-structured interviews can be a flexible and adaptable way of finding things out. Researcher can guide the conversation to keep participants on the topic in hand.	Smaller sample size may result in a lack of data to sufficiently describe the phenomenon of interest and address the research questions.
Allows the researcher to probe further into issues to help to elicit strong and thick data about a specific question or topic. They help to reveal the values, experiences perspectives, and views of the participants.	Lack of standardisation raises concerns about bias.
Suitable for smaller sample sizes.	

#### 4.5.1 (ii) Pilot interview

A pilot interview allows the researcher to observe different phenomena from various angles, and to try alternative approaches (Yin,1994), thus, giving a chance to refine data collection plans to ensure they are feasible (Robson, 2002). A pilot interview also provides the opportunity to suggest and establish where further explanation or additional prompts or probes may be necessary, to strengthen the quality of the data collection process. Therefore, a semi-structured interview was piloted with a trainee

EP. The pilot interview was audio- recorded and followed the semi-structured interview schedule (Figure 4.2).

Following the pilot interview, critical assessment was sought from the trainee EP to clarify instances where questions may have been judged to be unclear or to ascertain where additional prompts may be needed. Whilst overall the interview question schedule was deemed to be appropriate, it was considered that rewording one of the questions would reduce ambiguity and strengthen participants' understanding.

The semi-structured interview schedule derived from the second-generation activity theory framework (Engeström, 1987) and adapted from Durbin (2009), is presented in Figure 4.2. Explanation of how the CHAT process informed the formation of the semi-structured interview questions can be found in Table 4.5.



**Table 4.5** presents justification of interview schedule

CHAT Node	Interview questions	Rationale
Subject	<p>What is your role/ responsibility (in relation to the resource base)?</p> <p>What experience of the resource base/school do you have?</p> <p>Do you have any experience of any other resource base provision?</p>	Engeström highlights that we must understand whose perspective is being taken, exploring their experience of policy changes
Object:      Outcome	<p>What is the focus of the resource base?</p> <p>Has it been different in the past?</p> <p>What does “resource base” provision mean to you?</p> <p>What does your ideal resource base provision look like?</p> <p>Can you describe any examples of particularly positive/negative practices within a resource provision?</p> <p>What do you see the outcome/overall purpose of the resource provision as being?</p> <p>What would you notice if the outcomes had been achieved?</p> <p>What is the ideal outcome of a resource provision?</p> <p>Do you perceive different outcomes being achieved? If so, how?</p>	This aimed to divide thinking between the object, that is the actions directed towards, and the objective, the higher purpose that it is seeking to achieve.
Rules	<p>What factors help to achieve have/supported the outcome of the resource base?</p> <p>What factors have constrained/restricted the outcome of the resource base?</p> <p>Are there any barriers to achieving the outcomes?</p> <p>Do you see the resource base provision changing in the future?</p>	These questions are linked to the ideas put forward in Table 2.1 and the notion of historicity.
Community	<p>Who else is involved in the resource base?</p> <p>What is their role and working relationship with you?</p> <p>Who have you worked with in the past (in resource base?)</p> <p>Who else in the wider community was indirectly involved?</p> <p>Who do you envisage working with in the future (in resource base?)</p>	Leont’ev (1981) argues that labour is a collective activity wherein actions are shared between the group, and individuals perform different roles and actions, to move the group towards their desired outcome. Therefore, I considered it important to seek the stakeholder’s perspective as to who was involved in the community of the Nest.
Division of labour:	<p>How are the roles/responsibilities of the resource base shared/divided?</p> <p>Do you think others will have different expectations of your role in the future?</p>	Division of labour refers to role boundaries, and in this research stakeholder’s expectations. It emerges from Marx’s ideas (Vygotsky, 1978; Engeström and Miettinen, 1999) which position change within social practices and historical developments toward the object. Therefore, I considered that it was important to explore the stakeholder’s perspective on division of labour
Mediating tools or artefacts	<p>What resources in the resource base help it to achieve its outcomes?</p> <p>What are the physical tools used, if any, to support the outcomes of the resource base?</p> <p>What are the abstract tools used to support the outcomes of the resource base?</p> <p>What do you think might be useful to support the outcomes of the resource base in the future?</p>	I wanted to explore the supporting and constraining tools within the Nest. Leont’ev (1981) argued the development of these tools is shaped by the needs, values, and norms of the culture in which they are created and used. I therefore considered it important to explore the stakeholder’s perception of useful tools.

#### 4.5.1. (iii) *Semi-structured interview*

Individual interviews were conducted with seven stakeholders of the Nest who offered their voluntary participation. To accommodate Covid-19 restrictions all interviews were conducted over Microsoft Teams instead of face to face.

It is important to practise video call interviews, as extra care and attention is required to ensure equipment reliability. The Microsoft Teams interviews were conducted in a quiet, neutral room away from any obvious distractions or interruptions. As the quality of each video call can vary, it was important to speak more slowly and deliberately than in a face-to-face interview, whilst looking at the camera rather than the screen may have helped the participants to relax. The average (mean) length of the interviews was 53 minutes; research suggests single interviews lasting for less than thirty minutes are unlikely to be valuable and interviewees could consider interviews lasting over an hour to be unreasonable (Robson, 2002).

Prior to the start of each interview, participants were emailed an outline of the nature and purpose of the study and advised of the ethics procedure being followed. Following this, their informed consent to take part in the research study was requested and they were given the option to engage in the planned follow-up DWR Laboratory session. Following their agreement to proceed participants were emailed an overview of activity theory (Appendix Three).

All the research interviews followed a similar sequence which aligned with the activity theory framework order of nodes: subject, object, outcomes, rules, community, division of labour and tools (see Chapter 2 for description of terms). At the end of the interview joint discussion between the participant and researcher allowed any contradictions

highlighted within the nodes (primary contradictions) and between the nodes (secondary contradictions) to be considered (see Chapter 5).

The interviews were audio-recorded using a Dictaphone, and contemporaneous notes were taken by the researcher (Appendix Four). To ensure transparency the interviewees were invited to check the raw material and the accuracy of the contemporaneous notes at the end of the interview. Following the interviews, the audio-recordings were transcribed so data analysis could take place.

#### *4.5.1 (iii) Phase Two: DWR Laboratory*

The DWR Laboratory is an interventionist research methodology closely coupled to activity theory, where participants work together in a structured and cyclical manner in an activity, to produce new activities in their organisation (Engeström, Rantavouri, and Kerosou, 2013; Virkkunen and Newnham, 2013). Engeström (2007) argues the DWR Laboratory allows the application of “activity theory through interventionist research to develop expansive learning in workplace settings” (Edwards et al., 2009, p.199). Engeström’s expansive learning cycle is described in more detail in Section 2.4.2.

### 7. Mediating tools and artefacts:

- What resources in the base help it achieve the outcomes?
- What are the physical tools if any used to support outcomes of the resource base?
- What are the abstract tools used to support outcomes of the resource base?
- What do you think might be useful to support outcomes of resource base in the future?

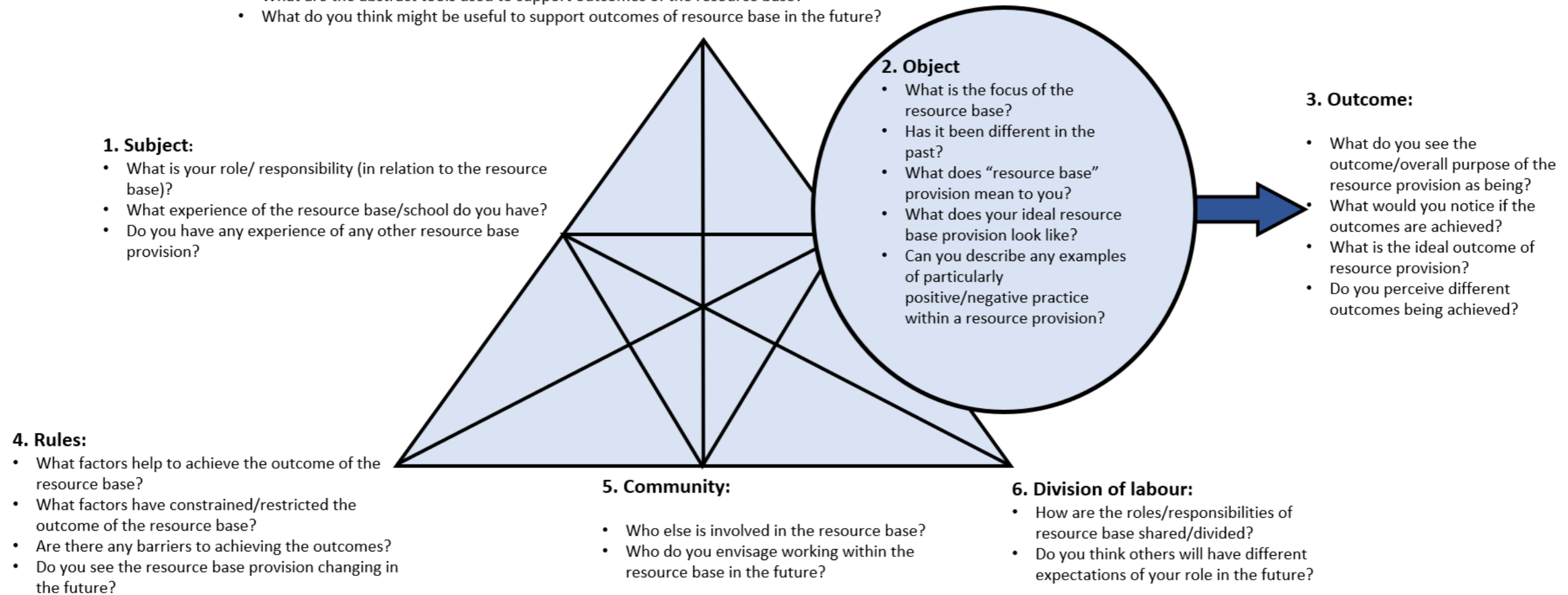


Figure 4.2: Outline of semi-structured interview questions used in Phase One data collection

Phase Two of the research study comprised of a single DWR Laboratory. As described in Section 2.4, this process supports development of a deeper understanding of research data by working collaboratively to create new styles of working (Edwards et al., 2009), thus, ensuring expertise is interactive and distributed.

The purpose of the DWR Laboratory was to support participants in addressing and resolving the highlighted contradictions/tensions within the Phase One data. Table 4.6 presents four principles of a DWR Laboratory.

**Table 4.6:** *Principles of a DWR Laboratory*

<b>Principles of a DWR Laboratory</b>	<b>How the principles were enacted in the DWR Laboratory in the present study</b>
Working with professionals to “enable them to articulate and refine concepts that we hope help to explain and to take forward understandings of practice” (Edwards et al. 2009, p.191)	The DWR Laboratory enabled stakeholders to discuss historical and present working practice.
“Encouraging the recognition of areas in which there is a need for change in working practices” (Daniels, 2008, p.134).	Stakeholders were able to discuss the contradictions which arose within Phase One of the data collection which were causing tensions in the resource base and across the wider school.
“Enabling professionals to generate fresh ways of explaining what was going on in both existing and emerging practices” (Edwards et al. 2009, p.191);	Post discussion of the contradictions, new ways of working were proposed with a view to change working practice.
“Suggesting the possibilities for change through re-conceptualising the ‘objects’ that professionals are working on, the ‘tools’ that professionals use in their multi-agency work and the ‘rules’ in which professional practices are embedded (Daniels, 2008, p.135).	A plan was created with six salient actions to be implemented and reviewed to promote organisational change within the Nest.

This method contributed towards the collaborative establishment of a new model in this study by collectively exploring ideas and suggested solutions to address contradictions and transform practice.

A summary of the DWR process followed in this research is presented in Table 4.7. Four members of school staff and the school’s allocated EP took part in this process. To accommodate Covid-19 restrictions, the DWR Laboratory was conducted using the secure video-conference platform, Microsoft Teams. Prior to this, a pilot focus group was arranged with five trainee educational psychologists (who role played as stakeholders) and two university tutors (as facilitators) to test the process and identify any necessary adjustments, to maximise prospects that the remotely-mediated research DWR Lab would go smoothly.

**Table 4.7:** *A summary of DWR Laboratory element and application within current research*

DWR Laboratory process	Application within the current study
1. Discuss interview data and introduce the contradictions	Prior to the DWR Laboratory, I analysed the data from the interviews and highlighted contradictions. Participants were invited to the DWR Laboratory. Four members of school staff and an EP attended. The session was facilitated and scribed by Dr Collette Soan (university tutor) who had prior experience of the DWR Laboratory process. Consent was sought at the start of the session, concerning the length of the session which would last for 90 minutes and was mediated via Microsoft Teams due to Covid-19 restrictions. A Dictaphone was used to record all voices. This allowed for precise transcription of conversations and information discussed.

<p>2. Data from analysis of the Phase 1 interviews are presented to the group to pinpoint historical structural tensions in the Nest and where these may have originated from.</p>	<p>Key quotes from the thematically analysed interview data were presented to the participants relating to three contradictions which the researcher judged to be predominant and important. The CHAT framework and expansive learning cycle were also presented to the group (See Appendix Five for copy of the PowerPoint) Participants were given the option to decide which contradiction they would like to discuss in more detail, concerning the way forward.</p>
<p>3. Trace the origins of current difficulties by drawing upon past experiences.</p>	<p>Upon agreement of the contradiction to discuss, time was given to discuss it in more detail. The facilitator invited the participants to speak and present their thoughts and practices relating to the contradiction from their different subject positions.</p>
<p>4. Refine beliefs and develop new ideas/ways of working</p>	<p>As the discussion developed, new ways of working were discussed.</p>
<p>5. Draft proposals for specific changes to be clarified.</p>	<p>After the strengths and limitations of the new way of working were discussed, a draft proposal was produced, upon confirmation that all participants agreed with it. The proposal was left with the school to implement.</p>

#### 4.5.4 Data analysis

The social constructionist epistemological stance of the research supports the view that knowledge and meaning are construed by individuals through their interaction and engagement in interpretation. Indicating that the research process and interactions between the researcher and participants included a continual form of interpretation and analysis (Robson, 2011). Robson (2011) states that when analysing qualitative data, the focus should be on interpretation. To ensure the accuracy of analysis, my interpretations of data were checked with participants at the following three stages of the research process: the individual interview, and the beginning and end of the DWR

Laboratory. During the individual interview, as detailed above (Section 4.5.4 (ii)) using the shared screen function of Microsoft Teams, notes were taken on the interview prompt sheet (see Appendix Four for example) and participants were asked to check this for accuracy. In addition to this, at the start of the DWR Laboratory, the thematic analysis from Phase One was presented back to the participants to ensure accuracy of analysis and interpretation.

#### 4.5.4 (i) *Thematic analysis*

Thematic analysis (TA) is a qualitative analytic method used to identify, analyse, and report patterns within data through thematic coding (Braun and Clarke, 2013), which helps to reduce and organise data in rich detail. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest TA can be conducted within an essentialist/realist and constructionist paradigm as it can be seen to reflect reality as well as unpick or unravel the surface of reality.

TA was chosen in this study due to its flexibility and accessibility. TA aims to identify themes across the data set to present back to participants, with the focus on research moving towards shared constructions of the activity, rather than aiming to understand the effects of language on construction (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest there are six steps involved in TA; Table 4.8 provides an outline of these steps with examples of my coding process included in Appendix Six.

**Table 4.8:** *Outline of thematic analysis stages (Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.202-203)*

Thematic analysis stage	Process undertaken
1. Familiarising and transcribing the data	The researcher listens to and transcribes a verbatim account of what was said in the audio-recording in its original nature.



2. Generating initial codes	Interesting aspects of the data are methodically coded across the entire data set checking data relevant to each potential theme.
3. Searching for themes	Relevant codes are collated into potential themes.
4. Reviewing themes	Themes are revisited to check whether they work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set prior to generating a thematic map. This stage links to considerations of reflexivity and reliability (see Section 4.6) to ensure themes represent interviewee data rather than my own interpretations based on my own knowledge/experiences.
5. Defining and naming themes	In this stage, the themes need to be reconsidered to define how they fit in relation to the research questions. Consideration is given as to whether they require a sub-theme to give them structure and how each theme works in relation to each other. Concise names are given to each theme and sub-theme to ensure clarity.
6. Producing the report	Vivid examples or extracts capturing the meaning of the demonstrated points are inserted in an analytic narrative making an argument in relation to the research questions.

An inductive or deductive approach can be used by researchers to identify themes (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2012). As used in grounded theory, in an inductive approach the researcher collects data from specific observations, analyses patterns in the data to lead to broader generalisations, resulting in the generation of themes which are used to develop a theory (Varpio, Young and Uijtdehaage, 2019). However, as the derived themes are data driven, potential participant deviation from the topic in hand could result in the answers given not always being representative of the questions asked. Moreover, an inductive approach does not necessarily reflect the researcher's interests or beliefs on the chosen subject (Braun and Clarke 2006). On the other hand, a

deductive approach is researcher driven, it usually starts with a pre-existing social theory or theories of interest to the researcher, participant data is collected and analysed to discover interesting themes (Braun and Clarke, 2012; Varpio, Young, Uijtdehaage, 2019), to ascertain how derived findings can be better understood in the context of a pre-existing theory or framework (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Therefore, this research adopted a deductive approach aiming to understand the data in relation to the CHAT nodes.

Although TA is not a complex method and is seen to have many clear advantages, it also has limitations. However, Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest some of these limitations could be attributed to inadequately conducted analyses or inappropriate research questions, rather than to the method itself. This necessitates being clear and explicit about what is being done, and what you say you are doing needs to match up with what you do (Braun and Clarke, 2019). The key strengths and limitations of TA can be seen in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9:** A summary of the strengths and limitations of TA (Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013)

Strengths of TA	Limitations of TA
It offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data.	Flexibility in this approach can lead to a belief that it is not a rigorous method.
A powerful analytical method which is quick and easy to learn Useful for identifying, organising, and reporting patterns within data. It can describe data in rich detail.	No ideal theoretical framework or method for conducting qualitative research.
<i>Can report experiences, meanings, and the realities of participants to produce unanticipated insights.</i>	It can be challenging for researchers to decide on what aspects of the data to focus on, which may lead to a lack of understanding when identifying and

	developing themes derived from the research data (Holloway and Todres, 2003). Consistency and cohesion can be promoted by emphasising the study's theoretical assumptions and clarifying how it was undertaken (Braun and Clarke (2006).
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#### 4.5.4 (ii) Analysis of DWR Laboratory

Research suggests analysis should provide a concise, articulate, sound, non-repetitive and interesting account of the narrative within and across themes (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Transcribed data providing appropriate evidence of the themes within the data were extracted from the transcription of the DWR Laboratory. The resultant data set were analysed, and actions identified for further development. The data were presented in two ways: a brief summary was emailed to the participants to indicate whether they agreed that the most important points had been documented, along with a detailed account of discussions.

### 4.5 Procedure

#### 4.5.1 Ethical consideration

Comprehensive review of the ethical requirements associated with this study was conducted in line with the University of Birmingham's ethical review process. The approved application for ethical review is included for reference (see Appendix Seven), with key considerations summarised in Table 4.10. Attention was given to the guidance provided by the British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2018).

**Table 4.10:** *Ethical considerations for this research*

Ethical area	Consideration made
Gaining freely given informed consent and confirming participants right to withdraw	It could be seen to be ethically challenging to undertake insider research within the local authority in which I am undertaking an extended supervised professional practice placement. This could potentially lead participants to experience subtle pressure to take part in the research due to social pressure. Furthermore, they may provide more, less, or different information than they would normally disclose to outsiders. To reduce such risk, I will remind participants of their on-going right to withdraw from the project and re-emphasise that participation is entirely voluntary.
Confidentiality	Participants will be given a pseudonym to provide confidentiality to their data set and participant quotations where used will be anonymised. However, participants will be known to each other and will be grouped together during the DWR Laboratory. Therefore, at the start of the DWR Laboratory the participants will be reminded of the ethical procedure and any quotations presented/discussed in the DWR Laboratory will be anonymised. I will also be meticulous in safeguarding confidentiality.
Potential risk: sharing of views	To avoid any confusion, I will maintain a clear differentiation between my identity as a researcher and a trainee EP, and my identity as a researcher will be reiterated at the start of the session. Anonymised, participant views when presented and discussed could lead to tensions or conflict within the group. Although, using risk assessment, this was deemed to be low risk, it will be addressed by reassuring applicants that contradictory viewpoints are good as they can motivate change.
Transparency	To minimise any risks of a potential power imbalance between me and the research participants, I will address any issues of the participants feeling coerced or pressured into taking part in the study by reminding them of their right to withdraw their fully informed consent and reiterating that their data will remain confidential. To distance myself from the data and to alleviate subjective bias, the DWR Laboratory will be led by a skilled facilitator (university tutor).

#### 4.5.2 Research timeline

Table 4.11 provides an overview of the research procedure and shows the research timeline.

*Table 4.11 Overview of research procedure and timeline*

Research Activity	Date Completed
Research idea checked with university tutor and LA placement manager to ascertain whether it was suitable.	September 2019
University research panel of two academics questioning and clarifying points pertaining to design of research and research questions.	February 2020
Application for ethical approval submitted to university board and confirmation of full ethical approval confirmed (see Appendices Seven and Eight)	April 2019 July 2020
Distribution of expression of interest email to school staff.	July 2020
Seven individuals (one EP, one pupil school support (PSS), four members of staff and a parent) expressed an interest.	August 2020
One trainee EP took part in a pilot interview.	August 2020
Formal consent to participate received from the seven participants.	August-November 2020
Data collection (Phase One), individual semi-structured interviews conducted with participants. Consent script used to re-iterate oral consent at the start of each interview.	August-November 2020
Transcription of all interview data from Dictaphone recordings.	August-December 2020
Conducted analysis of data.	December 2020 and January 2021
Participants contacted to confirm consent to take part in DWR Laboratory (Phase Two of data collection).	January 2021
Phase Two: DWR Laboratory conducted with five participants. Consent script re-iterated at start of the session to obtain verbal consent from participants and session led by university tutor.	February 2021
Data was analysed and a summary of data analysis provided for participants.	February 2021

#### 4.6 Considerations of rigour

According to Reicher and Taylor (2005, p.549) “rigour lies in devising a systemic method whose assumptions are congruent with the way one conceptualises the subject matter”. Thomas (2015) proposes when considering case study design,

researchers should make sure the methodological approach undertaken is carefully implemented to ensure reliability and validity, otherwise rigorous interpretation of results will not be viable. Engeström (1999) proposes that in CHAT, validity and generalisability are associated with the viability of new working models and their take-up within similar systems, rather than a focus on similar constructions being found across systems.

#### 4.6.1 Internal validity and trustworthiness

In assessing validity, the researcher must ensure the research questions, choice of methodology, design, tools, processes, and data are all appropriate and valid for the desired outcomes (Thomas, 2006).

The concept of internal validity in this research was addressed by adopting a transparent approach to the discussion of the research methods and procedure and the process of data analysis (see Section 4.5.5). In addition, the research data gathered, and the identified themes were checked numerous times with each participant to ensure accuracy. Through this triangulation, participants were able to examine key themes taken from the data and clarify their contribution, checking back the accuracy of my interpretations and ensuring that reliance was not placed upon a single data collection method.

#### 4.6.2 External validity or generalisations

Generalisability, also known as external validity, is the extent to which the findings of a study can legitimately be applied across settings: the nature of, and conditions under which generalisability can be claimed within qualitative research has been hotly

contested (Cohen et al., 2017). Simons (1996) argues that, by focussing in-depth and from a holistic perspective, a case study can generate both unique and universal understandings and provide the opportunity to consider how the findings may apply within other similar settings. That said, such generalisations should be indeterminate, relative, time and context bound (Lincoln and Guba, 2002) and the theoretical/ analytical generalisation necessitates similar conditions to the Nest. Analytical generalisation involves making projections about the likely transferability of findings from an evaluation/ a study, based on a theoretical analysis of the factors producing outcomes and the effect of context. Realist evaluation can be particularly important for this. Analytic generalisation is distinct from statistical generalisation, in that it does not draw inferences from data to a population. Instead, analytic generalisation compares the results of a case study to a previously developed theory. Although a concern about case studies is that they provide little basis for scientific generalisation, case studies, like experiments, are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, "the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a "sample," and in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalise theories (analytic generalisation) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalisation)" (Yin, 2009, p.15).

#### 4.6.3 Reliability

In qualitative research, reliability refers to being able to repeatedly produce consistent results in order to determine credibility and allow the reader the chance to agree with the conclusions reached (Cohen et al., 2017). A triangulation of data (Newby, 2014), combining information from two methodologies, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group, is seen to strengthen reliability in this research and help to develop a

comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. The process of data collection and analysis were also critically discussed with academic tutors, alongside reflective research logs (see Appendix Nine).

Reliability may also be associated with the concept of double hermeneutics within the process of TA, recognising that according to the social constructionist paradigm, individuals interpret their world on an individual basis (Cohen et al., 2017), thus, contributing to the subjective nature of the analysis process. Therefore, checking back data with the participants during the DWR Laboratory, can help to counteract this subjectivity (Newby, 2014).



## Chapter 5: Findings and discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

Following the framework of Engeström's expansive learning cycle, this chapter reports Stage 2b (actual-empirical analysis) and Stage 3 (formulation of new model of working) to stimulate organisational change within the activity system of the focus primary school and its resource base (the Nest).

Data collected from seven individual interviews with diverse stakeholders (henceforward referred to as the Phase One participants), aimed to provide an in-depth picture of the activity of a particular resource base (the Nest), within the focus primary school. As outlined in Section 4.5.4, the data were analysed using predominantly deductive thematic analysis in line with the (object, outcome, rules, tools, community, division of labour and mediating tools or artefacts) nodes of Engeström's (1999b) second generation activity theory model.

Data are presented for each research question, utilising thematic mapping; all themes are illustrated with direct quotations from individual interviews. Appendix Six illustrates the progressive stages of data analysis through Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage process.

Research questions:

Phase 1:

1. What do stakeholders perceive to be the goal(s) (object) and overall purpose(s) (outcome(s)) of the in-house resource base?

2. What are the perceived supporting/constraining factors influencing/contributing toward the outcomes of the in-house resource base (rules–supports and constraints)?
3. What are the role(s) involved in supporting the resource base children (division of labour)?

## Phase 2: Developmental work research (DWR) Laboratory

Research Question 4: What features (including new ways of working) stakeholders suggest would enhance the in-house resource base and its outcomes for children?

The first three research questions were addressed, and relevant themes presented, described, and discussed with reference to the literature as follows:

- Section 5.2: themes relating to the object and outcome(s)
- Section 5.3: themes relating to the rules, and mediating tools or artefacts
- Section 5.4: themes relating to community and division of labour.

Research Question Four is explored within Section 5.5.

As the chapter progresses and the findings related to each node of the activity system are discussed, the themes are gradually aligned with an activity system model, until at the end of the chapter, a completed activity system of ‘the Nest’ is conceptualised as representing the data collected (Figure 5.6).

## 5.2 Object(s)

Within the activity system, the object is defined as the goal or motive of the activity, and the outcome is the result of the activity (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). In considering the object of the Nest the participants identified two main goals:

1. Providing targeted provision; and
2. Inclusion of children who experience SEND.

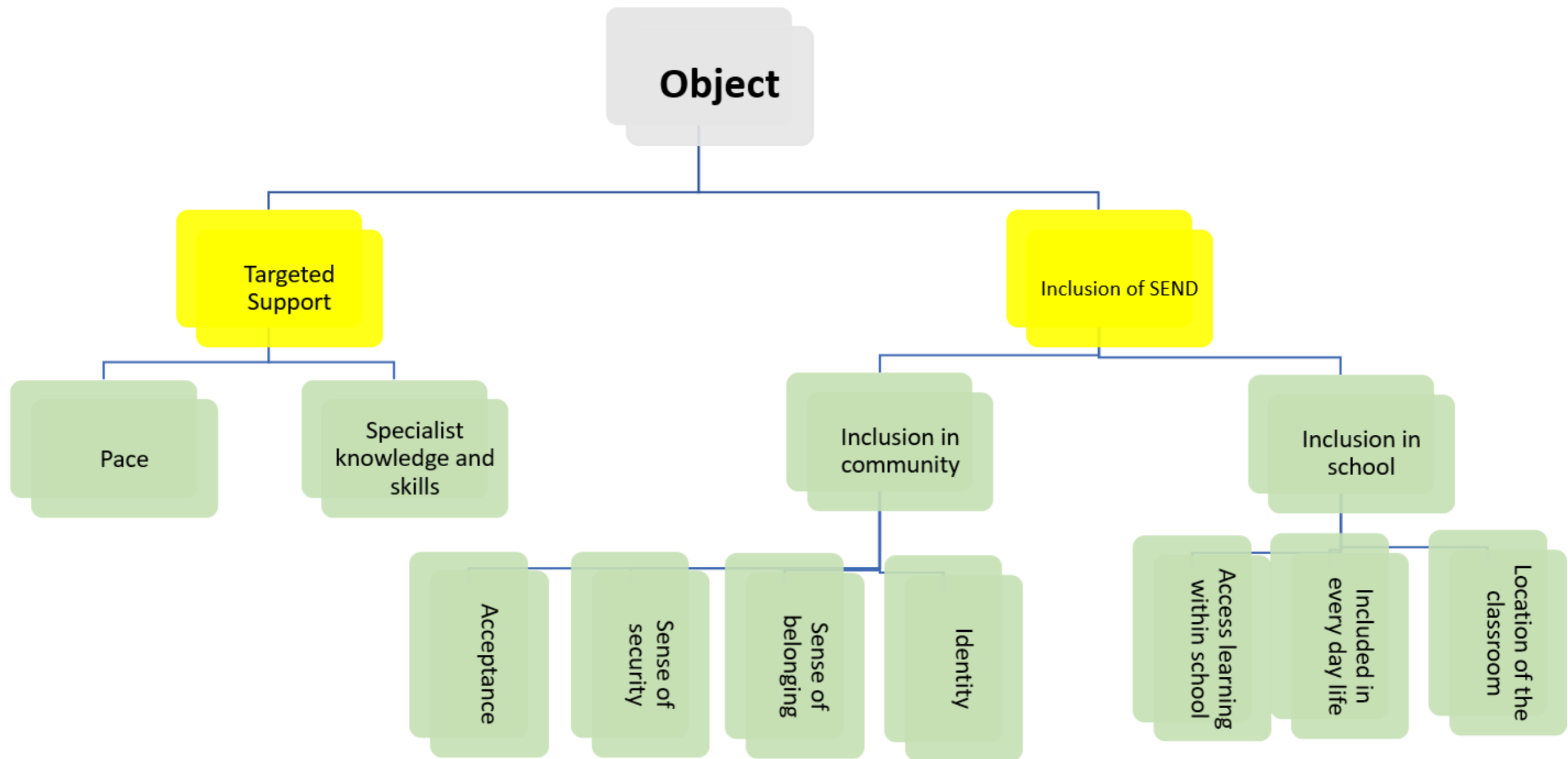
A thematic map of the object(s) of the Nest is presented in Figure 5.1.

### 5.2.1. Providing targeted provision

The pace of lessons alongside teacher skills were extracted as subthemes relating to the object of the Nest; both points were previously acknowledged by Bond and Hebron (2016), Croydon et al., (2019) and Hebron and Bond (2017), who reported teachers in resource bases were valued for providing individual support at a slower pace within a flexible curriculum. Dyson (2001) argued teachers face constant dilemmas in the classroom, including management of the pace of learning and differentiating styles of learning when teaching children with SEND, since addressing their diverse needs requires additional time and support (Mitchell and Beresford, 2014).

#### 5.2.1.1 (i) *Pace*

In the current study, the value of ensuring learning was paced cautiously, to help provide sensitively-attuned support to facilitate the progress of children with SEND, was identified as an often-necessary condition for accelerated learning and contingent realisation of this object of the Nest.



**Figure 5.1.:** A thematic map of the object of the Nest

*“It allows these children to access their learning at an appropriate level for them... it allows them to access an appropriate environment at a level that is appropriate and a pace that is appropriate”*

(Participant #3, SENCo)

*“A place where the skills can be developed at an appropriate pace and an appropriate curriculum”.*

(Participant #1, EP)

The topic of pace was further highlighted when a participant referred to a child with SEND, who prior to attending the Nest could not keep up with the pace of the mainstream classroom:

*“She would often be lost and not be able to keep up with the work, the lesson was too fast for her which meant she had big gaps in her learning”*

(Participant # 6, class teacher)

*“They can learn at an erm a different pace to perhaps what is going on within their mainstream classroom, so it is tailored more individually I guess, so it is above and beyond differentiation”.*

(Participant #2, PSS)

Addressing the individual needs of CYP and tailoring the pace of learning echoes one of the principles within the SEND CoP (DfE and DoH, 2015), which advocates that CYP should receive high quality teaching which should be differentiated to support their individual needs.

#### *5.2.1.1 (ii) Specialist knowledge and skills*

The significance of teachers possessing the skills and attitude necessary to provide appropriate support for children with SEND is considered paramount, since factors which may enhance or undermine their learning need to be recognised and differentiated, individualised teaching styles adopted (Wang, 2009). Carroll et al. (2017) argue children with SEND will have different needs from one-other; for example,

one child may require ‘scaffolding’ to support their language skills or planning, whilst another may need help with social interaction and communication skills.

The importance of personalised learning resonated with all participants, who emphasised the importance of teachers’ skills in providing sensitively and accurately targeted support within the Nest.

*“I think teachers who are qualified and experienced with supporting children with special educational needs, they might have done a level 1 or level 2 or even if it exists a level 3 autism training. It might be teachers that have had that additional qualification and experience of working with children and have the patience they are really valuable and really help with providing the right support for the children”.*

(Participant #2, PSS)

*“it’s great to have XXX’s experience and a teacher with a background of a resource base, I think this really helps when supporting the children”.*

(Participant #3, SENCo)

*“The Nest provides learning for children that have significant needs that actually is suitable for them, erm it provides really high-quality teaching for those children whereas if it was not there, I mean realistically they would be sat in a class, and they might have five minutes with the teacher and that would be it. So definitely the high quality teaching gives them something that they can actually learn and is suitable for them”*

(Participant #6, class teacher)

Whitaker (2007) and Landor and Perepa (2017) also found specially trained staff with SEND experience were important constituents of a successful resource base. However, in practice this enhanced expertise cannot always be provided, as national and local authority funding constraints have resulted in dramatic cuts in expenditure and funding for well-trained support and teaching staff, as recognised in Chapter 3. In addition, the increased numbers of children with SEND (National Audit Office, 2019), has compromised attainment of the goal of the focus school, of providing ‘the right’ support for children in the Nest, in part, through assuring that staff would be expert SEND pedagogues.

### 5.2.1.2 Inclusion of children with SEND

This theme encapsulated the sub-themes, 'inclusion within school' and 'inclusion within the community', both of which were judged necessary conditions for ensuring children with SEND felt confident and happy, both within the Nest and the wider school community.

#### *5.2.1.2 (i) Inclusion within school*

The inclusion agenda and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) both advocate children's right to inclusive education, irrespective of disability. Furthermore, the government should ensure that education is made available and adapted to every young person's needs, as well as making sure that wherever possible children with SEND are integrated into the daily life of schools and the local community (Minou, 2011). Thus, helping them to feel a greater sense of integration (UK government legislation; SENDA Act (2001) and the Disability Discrimination Act (2005). The legitimacy of the policy requirements were accepted by participants, and incorporated within their own accounts of the object of inclusion for children with SEND.

"The focus of the Nest is to make sure the children access the teaching and learning within the school, and that through being able to access that teaching and learning their academic skills progress"

(Participant #5, assistant headteacher)

*"So I guess our objective is to help them with their learning and try and make them feel part of the school, and they are not just pushed aside a little as I think that's what most special kids feel like in mainstream school"*

(Participant #4, inclusion support assistant)

*"I think erm probably there is a feeling of both belonging to the local community, but also, it's a little bit more broad, so one of the objectives of the Nest is developing the identity of the children and feeling that they belong to that mainstream school as well"*

(Participant # 1, EP)

*“And actually it is okay that these children are different to you and talking about those things, and the children in the Nest being proud of themselves and having their own identity and how they are okay to them as much as anyone else. All of those things we talk about in school and that is hopefully what makes a difference”.*

(Participant # 3, SENCo)

*“Yes, the Nest is not hidden away it is quite prominent, its nice as the kids get to see all the other kids as well. So, they get to see the other staff like when they go out to play all the staff say hello to them, so they feel really included in the community of school”*

(Participant #4, inclusion support assistant)

#### 5.2.1.2 (ii) Inclusion within the community

The SEND CoP (DfE and DoH, 2015) emphasised the need for children to be able to attend high quality local provision and reduce the need for out-of-area placements. Participants in the current study concurred with this, as they believed children with SEND benefited from membership of the mainstream school within their local community as it helped to promote their sense of belonging.

*“I don’t think that is the main purpose of the Nest is to get the child back included into the mainstream school, I think it is more about centring SEND into the community rather than putting it out on a limb.”*

(Participant #1, EP)

*“By having the Nest, you would hope that means that children would stay in the community, rather than going to a provision that is far away from their home”*

(Participant # 2, PSS)

*“The children attending the school in the community, helps them to feel the same as their friends/siblings and belong to the local community instead of going to a special school far away”*

(Participant #5, assistant headteacher)

Inclusion in the community is promoted in the national and local inclusion agenda which argues segregated placement is usually less desirable wrong because the primary objective of education should be to include children fully within the community in which



they live, and they should attend their local mainstream school (Terzi, 2010). However, advocates for special schools argue that placement in special classes or special schools can similarly result in a sense of belonging for children with SEND, who may feel more comfortable with peers who have similar needs (Hornby, 2015). Taking into consideration both viewpoints, Ravet (2011) suggests resource bases can educate children both socially, and academically within mainstream schools able to offer targeted enhanced support to meet complex SEND within their local community.

### 5.2.2 Outcomes

The perceived outcomes of the Nest were organised into two themes: 'progression' and 'wider school benefits'. Figure 6.2 presents a thematic map illustrating the perceived outcomes of the Nest

#### *5.2.2.1 Progression*

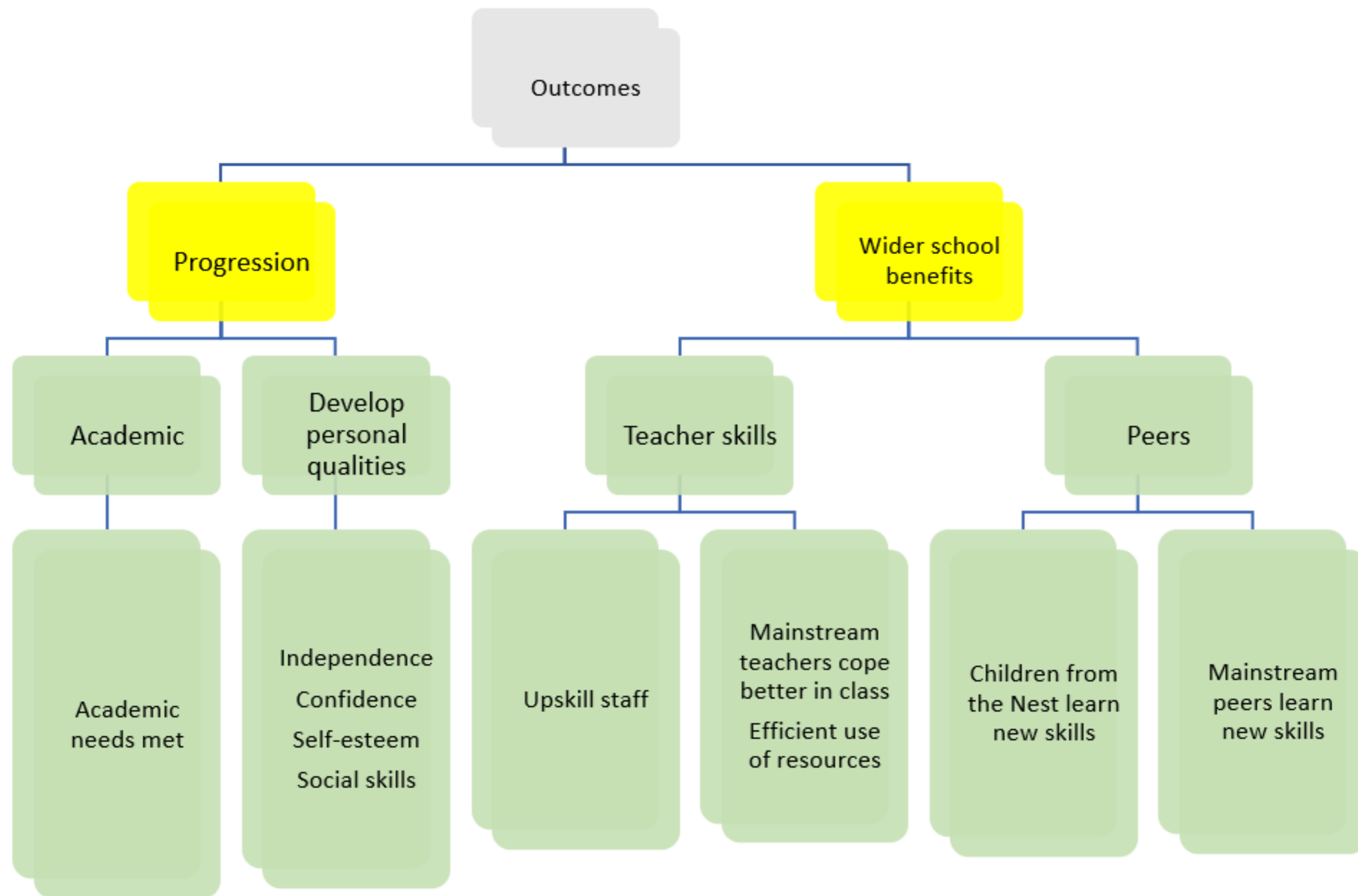
Attendance at a mainstream school introduces children to a range of different experiences as well as enabling them to develop academic and personal qualities, such as, confidence and independence. These were considered important outcomes to be attained by the Nest.

*"An outcome of the Nest is to make sure the children access the teaching and learning within the school, and through that being able to access that teaching and learning their academic skills progress. But they also develop all the soft sided skills for example the confidence and the independence".*

*(Participant #3, SENCo)*

*"The Nest helps the children to make progress academically but also socially and also be good communicators and being able to survive outside in the world, which is what the Nest wants them to achieve".*

*(Participant #5, assistant headteacher)*



**Figure 5.2:** A thematic map illustrating the perceived outcomes of the Nest

This was further echoed in the interview with participant #6, (class teacher), who provided an example of a child within her class whose learning progressed as a result of attending the Nest in her opinion.

“She was obviously a girl who sat through numerous worksheets and really struggles with them, and then suddenly she is in the Nest, and she thinks oh I can actually do this, and this builds confidence erm around children they can relate to more you know”

(Participant #6, class teacher)

These identified outcomes are congruent with previous literature suggesting that resource bases benefit children and help them progress McAllister and Hadjri, 2013).

#### 5.2.2.2. Wider school benefits

It has been argued inclusion in mainstream schools for children with SEND, improves not only their academic achievement and social development, but also their quality of life, as well as increasing staff knowledge and awareness of SEND (Connor, 2000; Kurth and Mastergeorge, 2010). All participants referred to wider school benefits as a valued outcome, noting for example how teachers became better equipped to respond to SEND, and the importance of the children’s relationship with their mainstream peers.

#### *5.2.2.2. (i) Teaching*

Historicity was recognised and reflected upon, as Participant #5, (assistant head teacher) acknowledged the Nest was designed and implemented as children with SEND had previously made little progress with their English and maths, because they were not experiencing the direct teaching time needed in their mainstream classes. Whilst, Hopkins, Ainscow and West (1994) and the SEND CoP (DfE and DoH, 2015),

advocate the need for confidence in the teacher's ability to deal with and support all children regardless of their individual needs, participants in the current research disagreed with this, acknowledging teachers could cope better in class if they were not 'firefighting', (referring to jointly teaching children with and without SEND). The Nest was seen as an effective use of resources to defuse this situation, as the provision assured children with SEND of quality time with 'specialist teachers', which in turn allowed mainstream staff extra time to attend to their children in the classroom.

*"I had a child erm in my class who was in the classroom for probably a term and her maths was just so poor, I just could not teach her what she needed to know because I had my whole class to teach who also had a range of needs". Adding "I don't think we did her justice of what we taught her, because erm the class teachers just don't have that resource to do it. Whereas when she was in the Nest, she was making so much more progress filling in those blanks that she should have learnt."*

(Participant #6, class teacher)

*"Is to probably give erm the pupils in there specialist teaching, so they have qualified specialist teachers who have experience working with children with different needs, whether that is cognition and learning, whether that is SEMH or whether they have autism. I think the knowledge and understanding of staff is a really important one, so the way they communicate with the pupils".*

(Participant #2, PSS)

*"By the children with SEND going to the Nest, this allows teachers to teach the other children in the class to a high standard rather than spreading the teaching too thinly".*

(Participant #6, class teacher)

*"I think the wider school benefits from the Nest as teachers can come down to the Nest and speak to staff and share knowledge and expertise to upskill the staff. There is also a lot more training on offer compared to other schools who perhaps may not have children with complex learning difficulties or a medical diagnosis".*

(Participant #5, assistant headteacher)

The SEND CoP (DfE and DoH, 2015) emphasises all teachers should have high aspirations and expectations for children with SEND. However, in practice, as illustrated in this study, staff believed children's needs were better met in the Nest, than within mainstream classes suggesting that, whatever their aspirations are for

these children they felt ill-equipped to meet their needs. This will be discussed in Phase Two of the research (see Section 5.6).

#### 5.2.2.2(ii) Peers

Another benefit of participation in the wider school for children with SEND which has been noted in previous research is the positive influence of peers, where it has been argued children with and without SEND benefit both socially and academically (Farrell, 2001; McAllister and Hadjri, 2013). Furthermore, children's acceptance of peers with diverse needs was judged to aid their understanding and tolerance concurrently and perhaps in later life (Glazzard, 2013).

*"You know they love being with their peers and their year groups as well, and they get an awful lot out of being in their mainstream classrooms, so I would never want to take that away from them".*

(Participant # 3, SENCo)

The participants in this study recognised the importance of the interaction between both peers in mainstream school and their peers in the Nest, as mainstream children learned new skills from children in the Nest, and conversely children with SEND benefitted from mixing with their mainstream peers.

*"I think that's where the inclusion came in. I think one strength of our model although obviously it is not an official resource base, the children still have a very strong link to their own classes and can make relationships with peers of all sorts of abilities, and I think that benefits the children that go to the Nest and the children in the wider school as well"*

(Participant #5, assistant headteacher)

*Also adding "when we see children leaving year six who we wouldn't believe would get where they are when they were in nursery and move on to specialist provision or secondary school. I feel they are confident individuals and their peers in mainstream classes are so much better for having had them in their class, than not having them in their class, it's really nice to see,"*

(Participant # 5, assistant headteacher)

*“Actually, they all looked after him and learnt loads just from trying to look after Sam (pseudonym), making sure he is okay, and they probably learnt so much about you know special needs just from being with him, and you know Sam learnt so much from the other children in terms of how to act and how to work that kind of thing”*  
(Participant # 6, class teacher)

*“Olivia (pseudonym) really benefits from being able to mix with her mainstream class, she has developed some really nice friendships from both classes, and I think this has helped with her speech as well as social skills and confidence”.*  
(Participant #7, parent)

Putnam et al. (1993) suggests collaborative learning encourages more positive interactions between children with SEND and their peers without SEND, which can promote long term social benefits. Although research suggests that mainstream teachers should include mixed ability collaborative learning activities in their lessons, in which children with SEND are fully integrated, this area as a potential benefit has not yet been harnessed in this focus school as in the present study on some occasions children were not always integrated, for example, Participant #4, (inclusion support assistant) states “it is really frustrating as when the children go back to class they are often sitting on the outskirts of the class and the teachers have not fully planned for them to be included, as they do not know what work they can complete”.

### **5.3 Rules and mediating tools or artefacts**

In response to Research Question Two, here, the thematic analysis aimed to facilitate in consideration of the supporting and constraining factors of wider social, cultural, and organisational systems upon the Nest the meaning of CHAT terms: “rules” and “mediating tools or artefacts” was explained to the participants (see Table 2.1), who were then asked questions and prompted in accordance with the interview schedule (see Figure 4.2)

Figure 5.3: A thematic map illustrating the themes abstracted relating to the ‘rules’ and ‘tools’ within the Nest.

### 5.3.1 Supporting factors

Within the activity system, the object is mediated through rules and tools used by the staff to support the desired outcomes of the Nest.

Seven main themes were abstracted from the thematic analysis of these nodes, which were organised into three superordinate themes:

- (1) Environmental factors- Section 5.3.1.(i);
- (2) Physical resources- Section 5.3. 1.(ii), and
- (3) Ethos of school-Section 5.3.1.(iii).

#### *5. 3. 1 (i) Environmental factors*

The findings of this study concur with Morewood, Humphrey, and Symes’ (2011) and Bond and Hebron’s (2013) findings relating to the influence of the learning environment on outcomes: several participants thought the purpose-built classroom and location of the Nest facilitated its success.

*“Yes, the feeling of inclusion; by that I mean the room being located in the centre of the school is really important.”*

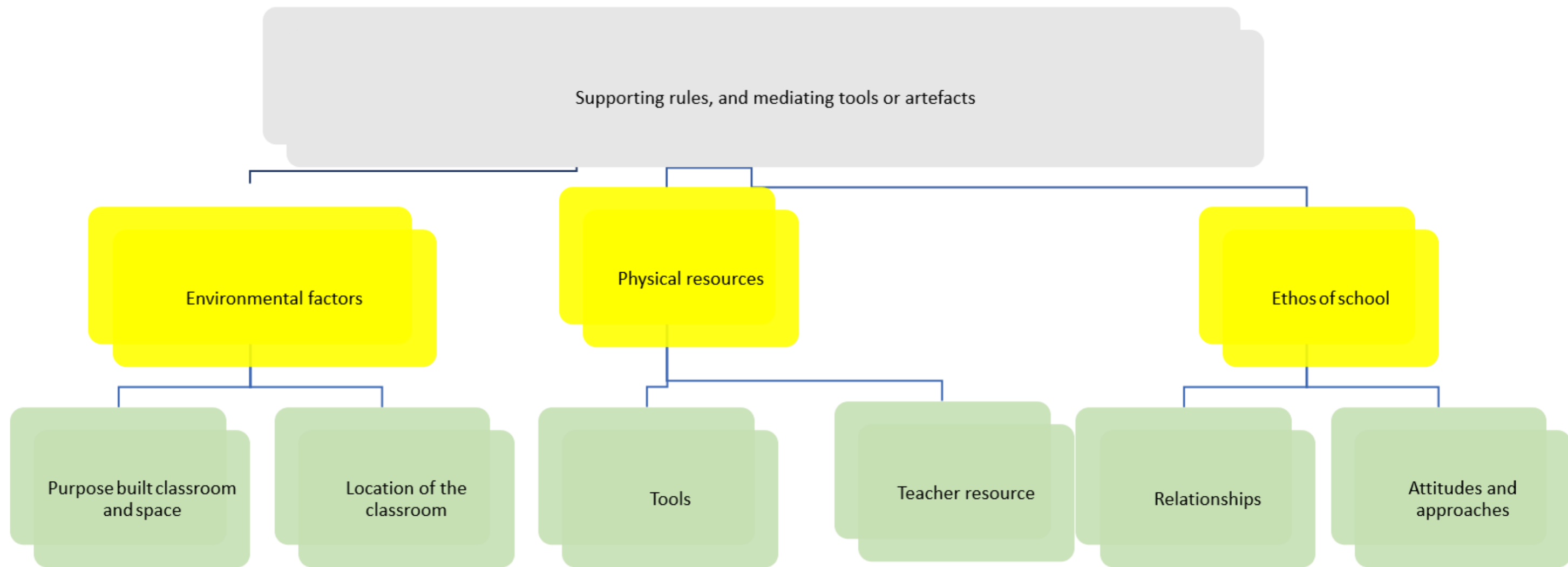
*(Participant #1, EP)*

*“An appropriate environment, with the correct resources helps to give the right support”*

*(Participant #7, parent)*

*“We are lucky to have almost like a purpose-built classroom... by having a designated room it gives a sense of identity and belonging to the children ”*

*(Participant #3, SENCo)*



**Figure 5.3:** *Thematic map of the supporting rules and tools of the Nest.*



It is important to note that location is also salient, merely positioning a resource base just anywhere within a school environment is not acceptable as although children with SEN can be helped to face new challenges or situations in a supportive environment, in contrast an unwelcoming and ill equipped environment can be harmful to a child's education (McAllister and Hadjri, 2013).

### 5.3.1.(ii) Physical resources

The importance of the physical resource dimension of 'beneficial tools' was emphasised in this study; Participants #3, (SENCo) and Participant #4, (inclusion support assistant) highlighted the importance of training, whilst Participant #6 (class teacher), underlined the need for a range of planning and the use of technology as well as visual aids and sensory equipment.

Although tensions existed within this node, reflecting staff perceptions of inadequate resources, the belief amongst participants was that the single most enabling influence within the Nest was the creativity of the teaching staff.

*"They are very imaginative with their resources, so they can get the best out of the children."*

(Participant #2, PSS)

*"The skills of the staff in there really are attuned well to the children and they get that balance right between responding to the individual and keeping the group in a routine, and they are fairly resilient; they have had some tricky cases"*

(Participant #1, EP)

*"The staff; we have a clear understanding of the children and what the next steps are and what we can and can't do, and we try to think outside the box with resources to accommodate their needs"*

(Participant #3, SENCo)

*"They will get specialist support in the Nest whereas in the classroom they kind of just get left to the wayside don't they. Whereas, in the Nest we aim to give them that special attention; that 1:1 attention, give them that one-to-one provision, that specialist provision, that they need, which they wouldn't get in their classrooms".*

(Participant #4, inclusion support assistant)

These findings are similar to previous studies which highlighted the importance of staff skills, knowledge, understanding and empathy for children with SEND (Whitaker, 2007; Frederickson, Jones and Lang, 2010; Hebron and Bond, 2017; Landor and Perepa, 2017).

### *5.3.1.(iii) Ethos of the school*

Both the findings of this research and previous literature suggest a positive school ethos is vital to promote the inclusion of children with SEND, with successful inclusion achieved through a shared philosophy and approach (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008; Morewood, Humphrey and Symes, 2013; Landor and Perepa, 2017). Cited as a key positive setting condition for resource bases is the commitment of the senior leadership team to a vision of inclusion and whole school responsibility for children with SEND (Ellins and Porter, 2005; Morewood, Symes and Humphrey 2011; Bond and Hebron, 2016; Belli, 2021). These findings were echoed in the present study as in answer to the question “what rules are present and active in supporting the outcome of the resource base?” all participants described the supportive ethos of the school noting features such as good relationships within the school and the staff’s positive attitude and approach.

*“We are very lucky that erm that the ethos and school are massively supportive to both the children and what the staff are able to provide”*

*(Participant #3, SENCo)*

*“The head teacher comes in, she is always really good, erm and the senior leaders come in all the time and check how we are getting on and speak to the kids, so they make them feel part of the school”*

*(Participant #4, inclusion support assistant)*

*“It’s not them (the Nest) and us (mainstream) it’s we are one,.I feel like it is built into their ethos of their school”*

*(Participant #2, PSS)*

*“The ethos of the school is all different, all equal, all growing together and that is our ethos that we are all different and this ethos is demonstrated when actually the children come from the Nest back to their classroom. That’s because they are part of the class and what they give to the other children in their class is really important”.*

*(Participant #5, assistant headteacher)*

*“The whole school is very supportive, not only staff but the children and parents as well, we as parents are included in decisions and I really like that”*

*(Participant #7, parent)*

### 5.3.2 Constraining factors

However, whilst the supportive orientation of the whole school was recognised and valued in the present study as well as in previous literature, some constraints were considered to limit the success of the Nest.

Eight main themes were abstracted from the thematic analysis of the tools and rules node of the triangle within the activity system, which participants (subjects) believed constrained the outcomes achieved and achievable by the Nest. These were organised into three superordinate themes; each main theme relating to each superordinate theme is described in the following sections:

- Funding- Section 5.3.2.(i);
- No clear identity- Section 5.3.2 (ii); and
- No clear understanding of staff roles and responsibilities -Section 5.3.2.(iii)

Figure 5.4 presents a thematic map illustrating constraining factors as represented by the data.

### 5.3.2.(i) Funding

It has been argued that some local authorities educate children with SEND in mainstream classrooms to minimise the cost of special education support (Ryan and Cooper, 2012).

All participants in the current study, excluding the parent (who may be less aware of the financial situation) agreed funding was a significant constraint, compromising the Nest's capacity to reliably achieve otherwise realistic outcomes.

*"The funding and finance; and I think that stops them possibly doing more than they could"*

(Participant #2, PSS)

*"Wider factors would be funding and support, the wider council which would then lead to training to then equip our staff with the tools to be able to support the children. We would need funding in order to train them in the right approaches and in the right things".*

(Participant #5, assistant headteacher)

*"Funding for the Nest isn't great, we took all of their children out their classroom and made it easier for them, but then put all the stress in one classroom. So I think resources as in staffing can spend more money on that and we don't have all the stuff for them, like all the sensory stuff we don't really have any of that which is what the Nest really need erm, and if we do have it is stuff we have brought in from home or had to beg borrow or steal off people to use. Yeah, resources are definitely a major negative on the Nest.*

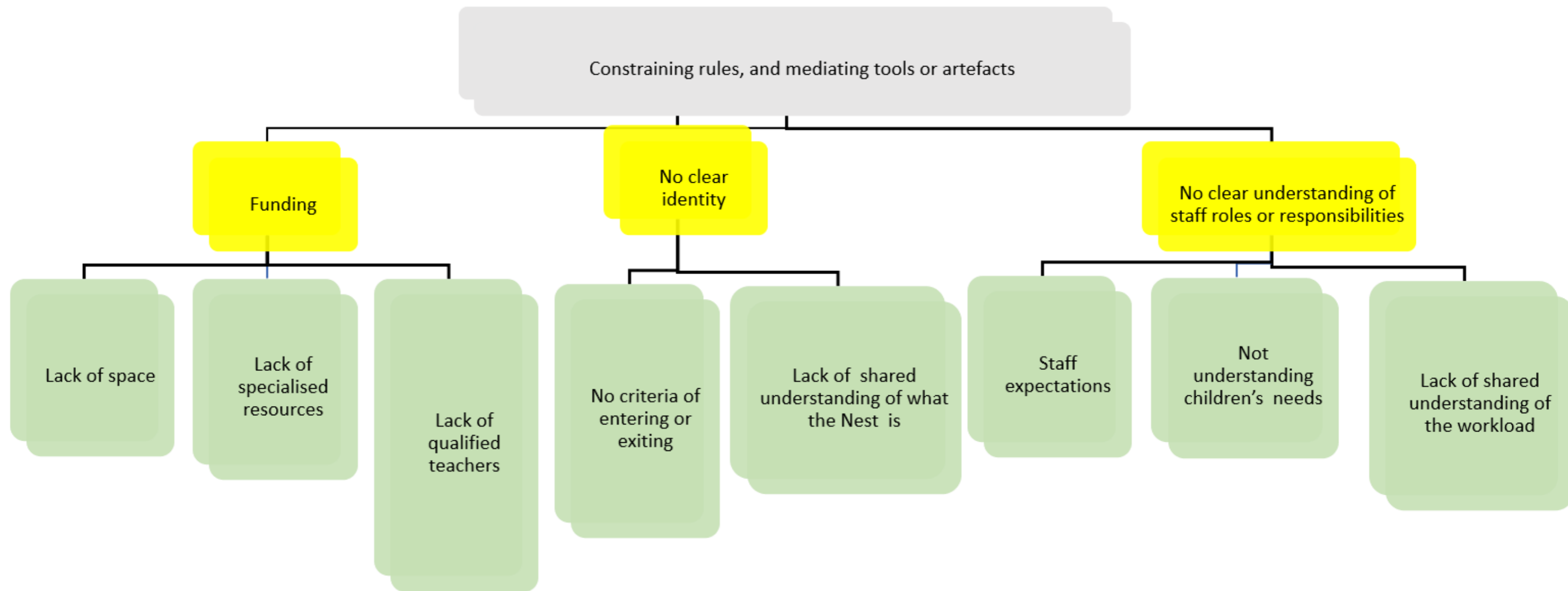
(Participant #4, inclusion support officer)

*"Yeah I think if we had some money, I think we could impact more, have more staff and have more support for pupils"*

(Participant #6, class teacher)

The participants further emphasised their opinion that insufficient funding leads to inadequate space, lack of specialised resources and insufficient specialised staff within the Nest which inevitably compromise the outcomes children could otherwise attain.

Although espoused government policy is to promote and implement an inclusive society, in practice, investment levels suggest at best half-hearted commitment: School staff clearly believed that inadequate funding contribute towards poor outcomes for children with SEND (Gibbons et al, 2011).



**Figure 5.4** *Thematic map of constraining factors*

### 5.3.2. (ii) No clear identity

Humphrey and Lewis (2008); Morewood, Humphrey and Symes (2013) and Landor and Perepa, (2017) propose that a shared philosophy amongst staff and a clear understanding of the role of a resource base is crucial to its success, whilst Preece and Timmins (2004) and Glazzard (2013) argue a whole school approach necessarily encompasses a clear vision, combined with clear structures and systems such as an appropriate referral system and recognised entry criteria.

However, whilst a positive whole school approach was acknowledged amongst participants in the present study, there were notable tensions as some participants did not believe all school staff fully understood the purpose of the Nest, in contrast to the participants who worked there and thought there was a shared view of its role and criteria.

*"I think erm, I think the whole school completely understands what the Nest does and its purpose."*

(Participant #3, SENCo)

*"They could do with a multi-agency approach to defining what The Nest is" and "I think possibly I sometimes get the impression that there are tensions with the staff that work there, in terms of erm inclusion and exclusion. So, what are the criteria of the Nest, because it has been developed from bottom up its hard to know with confidence who belongs and who doesn't".*

(Participant #1, EP)

*"There is no sort of criteria so it's up to erm individual members of staff to kind of like put in, you know the idea that the child should attend the Nest, but the problem with that is er people who are working in the Nest might think no that is not appropriate and you know there is no kind of clear criteria on who should be in there and who should not"*

(Participant #1, EP)

*"We have children in mainstream classrooms who would really benefit from the support in the Nest, but you have to draw the line somewhere of how many numbers you have or getting that Nest support. So some sort of criteria would probably help"*

(Participant #5, assistant headteacher)

*“If they only have room for ten but they have fourteen EHC how do they chose which children get priority, they can’t keep taking them. So erm I don’t know whether there is a referral system to the Nest, or if the Nest makes the decision based on complex needs.”*

(Participant #2, PSS)

*“I am not sure whether the Nest does the research, it might be because they have not got that identity what do they do”.*

(Participant #1, EP)

This significant contradiction is discussed further in Section 5.6.

### *5.3.2.(iii) No clear understanding of staff roles and responsibilities*

Several participants perceived that some of the mainstream teachers in the focus school, did not clearly understand their own role and responsibilities and how best to support children with SEND some staff suggested paradoxically the school had become less inclusive, as staff expected children with SEND to attend and have their additional needs met the in the Nest, rather than in their mainstream classroom; expectations which run counter to established national policy which emphasises every teacher is a teacher of SEND and previous literature which suggest teachers should assume responsibility for every child in their class without exception (Belli, 2021).

The SEND CoP (DfE and DoH, 2015, p.99) stipulates “teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff”. However, Ekins, Savolainen and Engelbrecht (2016) argue to develop the necessary confidence and self-efficacy to respond effectively to the needs of children with SEND, mainstream teachers require more training, knowledge and understanding of SEND and related



processes and practices, as research suggests teaching staff feel inadequately trained to teach children with diverse needs (Ellis, Tod and Graham-Matheson, 2008).

*"It would be interesting to see what the class teacher's views of the Nest are, because I'm pretty sure it is that we do all of the learning and teaching then they don't do any of it for the children"*

(Participant #4, inclusion support assistant)

*"When the kids do go back to class and if they have not got the teacher who understands the teacher just puts them to the side, and thinks they have everything they need down in the Nest today, I don't need to really bother. I guess that contradicts inclusion."*

(Participant #3, SENCo)

*"You know well they are getting their maths reading and English in the Nest, you as a class teacher lose sight as to where they are at, or what they need to work on. I think the roles and responsibilities between the Nest and class teachers are just blurred lines".*

(Participant #6, class teacher)

*"But because the Nest children aren't with you all the time, you can't assume the Nest is doing that, so I am not responsible anymore. But actually, you are erm, and that can be confusing you don't quite know what you do about it whether the class teachers need to be told you are completely responsible for your child which they are sometimes".*

(Participant #5, assistant headteacher)

*"It's the class teacher's responsibility that they are members of their class, and they need to know what is going on erm within that that would be interesting as I don't know that perspective. Do the class teachers know exactly what is going on in the Nest on a daily basis"?*

(Participant #2, PSS)

*"I wonder whether sometimes there is a difficulty with erm the understanding of the workloads".*

(Participant #1, EP)

*"Some teachers think oh they have gone down the Nest now and that is where they learn, and I have not got time to deal with them they have done their learning so they should be doing something nice and fun with me. But if we understood their individual needs a bit more and understood what they can do and have some activities, erm I think you would do a better job".*

(Participant# 6, class teacher)

The need for a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities in supporting the holistic education of each child has been endorsed within previous literature (e.g. Morewood, Symes and Humphrey, 2011; Belli, 2021). This is an aspect of particular interest to the focus school (as discussed further in Section 5.6) as the apparent lack of consensus could compromise the extent in which the Nest and mainstream class successfully achieve the outcomes on which staff do agree.

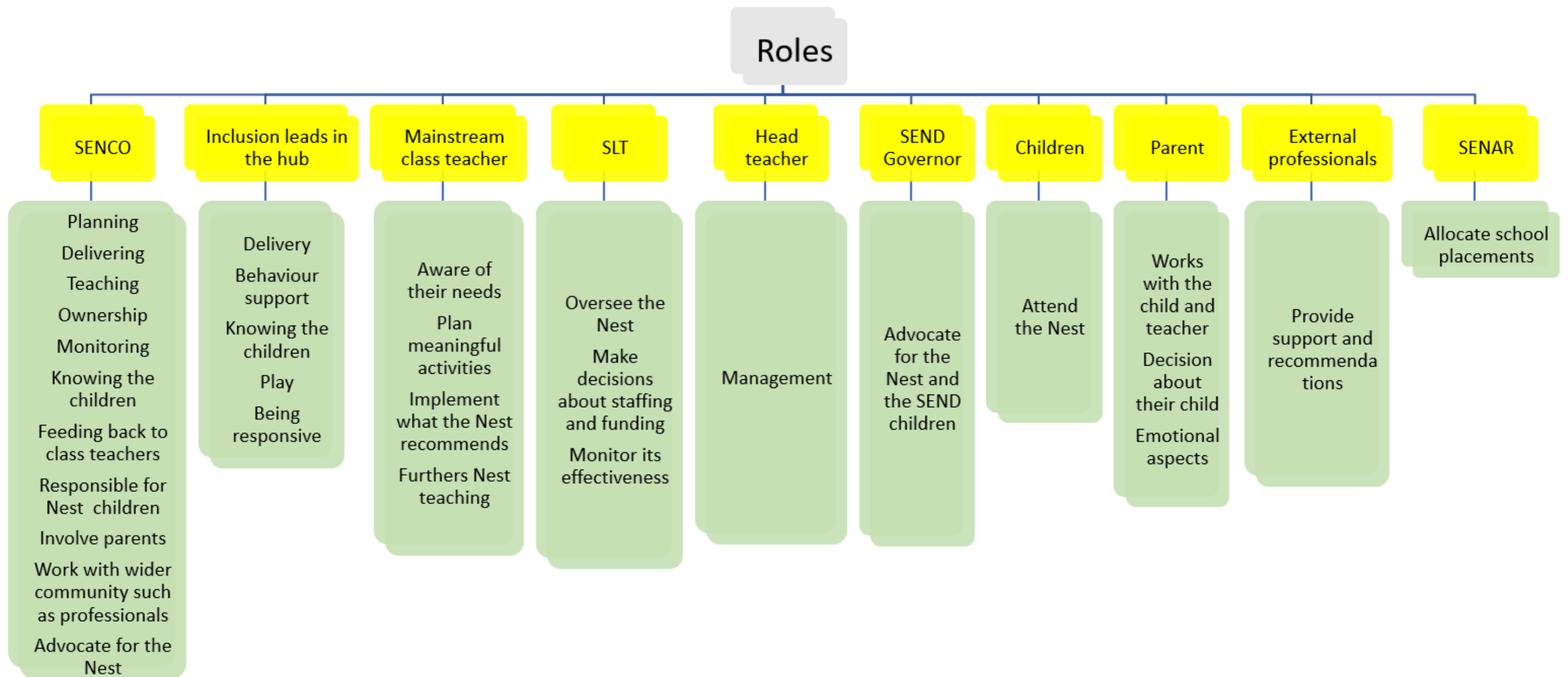
#### 5.4 Community and division of labour

The community and division of labour nodes of Engeström's (1987) second generation activity system are now brought into focus in answer to Research Question Three. Leadbetter (2007) suggests attention to this node facilitates consideration of role demarcations and expectations.

Although there was not a clear understanding of roles (as discussed at 5.3.2.iii), all participants were able to identify the personnel involved (illustrated in the Thematic Map 5.5).

#### **5.5. Model of the activity system**

By way of comprehensive synthesis and analysis, Figure 5.6 represents an annotated representation of the Nest as an activity system: the annotations reflect themes abstracted from the analysis of the Phase One interviews.



**Figure 5.5:** Thematic Map illustrating the themes regarding the community of practice and division of labour as represented by the data

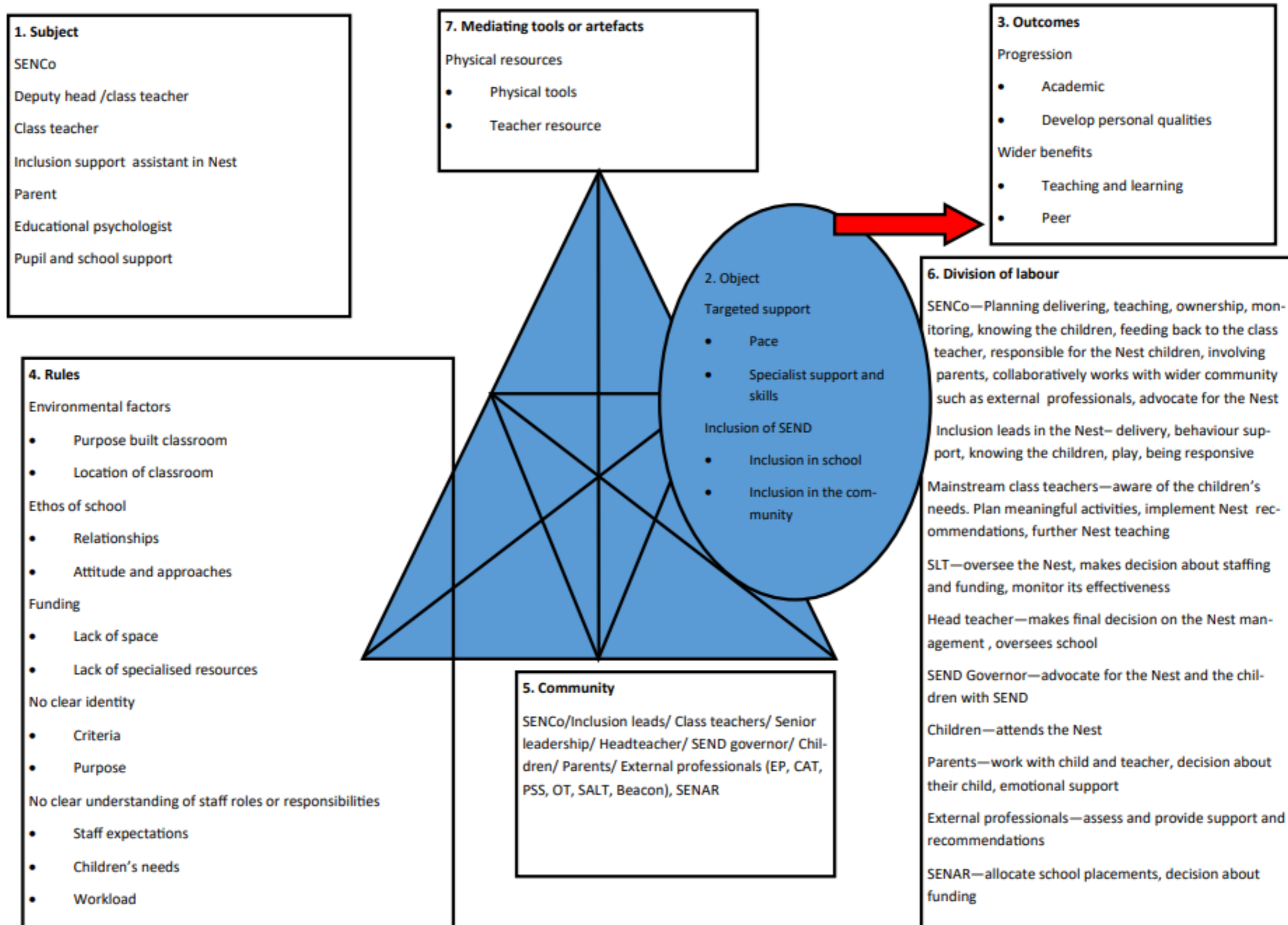


Figure 5.6: The activity system: subject, object, outcomes, rules, tools, community, and division of labour.

## **5.6 Identified contradictions**

Contradictions within activity systems can occur on multiple levels (Chapter 2, Table 2.3) and are recognised as affording potential to act as a driving force in facilitating change (Kerosuo, Kajamaa and Engeström, 2010). The analysis outlined in Sections 5.2-5.4 drew attention to contradictions, both within and between themes (as detailed in Figure 5.6), which led to the identification of three substantive contradictions that were robustly supported by the interview data and seen to capture significant areas of concern and conflict; these were taken forward to the DWR Laboratory session, (Phase 2 of this study)

Through the lens of CHAT and the DWR Laboratory the participants (subjects) were invited to discuss tensions that had been identified in the Phase One analysis arisen within and between the elements of 'the Nest 'activity system and the wider school.

The three substantive contradictions suggested by Phase One data analysis are summarised in Table 5.1

### 5.6.1 DWR Laboratory

The purpose of the DWR Laboratory in this study was to address Research Question 4 "What key features (including new ways of working) do stakeholders suggest would enhance the in-house resource base and its outcomes for children with SEND?" and to elicit suggestions re: how EPs in their professional capacity as external consultants/researchers and change agents might anticipate or contribute towards resolving tensions in broadly similar resource bases. The participants who attend the DWR Laboratory can be seen in Table 5.2

**Table 5.1:** A summary of the contradictions presented during the DWR Laboratory.

	Identified Contradiction	Contradiction Level	Example Quote
1.	Shared understanding of the Nest cf. Lack of shared understanding of the Nest	Primary contradiction within subject perspective and object  Secondary contradiction between rules and object.	<i>"No sort of criteria, so it's up to erm individual members of staff to kind of like put in you know the idea that the child should attend the Nest. But the problem with that is er people who are working in the Nest might think no that is not appropriate, and you know there is no kind of clear criteria on who should be in there and who should not"</i>
2.	Mainstream class staff members' roles/responsibilities in supporting the holistic education of children with SEND who attend the Nest cf. the Nest staff members' role/responsibilities in supporting the holistic education of the children	Primary contradiction within division of labour.  Secondary contradiction between division of labour and object.	<i>"Where the responsibility of the Nest ends, and the responsibility of the teachers start will be good. Yeah, I don't know how clear that is."</i>
3.	Having our own Nest cf. An external resource base, supported by local authority funding additional to the school's budget	Primary contradiction within rules and object	<i>"The Nest is bottom-up, so it works because it is not prescriptive and is very responsive".</i> cf. <i>"Funding would be good as we could then have our own separate building, space and equipment"</i>

**Table 5.2:** *Participants attendance at Phases One and Two of data collection*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Description of role</b>	<b>Attendance at Phase One</b>	<b>Attendance at Phase Two</b>
1	Educational Psychologist	Yes	Yes
2	Pupil and School Support Assistant	Yes	No
3	SENCo	Yes	Yes
4	Inclusion support assistant	Yes	Yes
5	Assistant headteacher	Yes	Yes
6	Mainstream class teacher	Yes	Yes
7	Parent	Yes	No

Participant #2, (pupil and school support assistant) was unable to attend the DWR Laboratory due to work commitments and whilst it was felt the additional contributions may have added to the study, due to time constraints the date for the DWR Laboratory could not be re-arranged. In addition, whilst conversing with staff in the focus school, it was felt there may be a power imbalance as only one parent agreed to the Phase One data collection, furthermore staff felt they could speak more openly and honestly about any sensitive issues raised pertaining to the education of children with SEND in the focus school. Therefore, it was agreed participant #7 (parent) would not be invited to the DWR Laboratory.

The DWR Laboratory presented the three contradictions to the group. The Laboratory discussion began with discussion and reflection on what they believed to be the most significant, which, if resolved, would help promote organisational change. Participants, did indeed consider these identified contradictions valid and salient, and, if so to identify which they thought would benefit the effectiveness of the Nest and perhaps also SEND provisions and outcomes across the wider school.

The participants chose Contradiction Two: **‘no consensus re: division of labour, role and responsibilities of teachers in supporting children with SEND who attend the nest (division of labour).**

Discussion relating to the selected contradiction is organised below to align with each of the proposed actions, identified within the discussion within each set of actions, the dialogue taken to reach each of these is summarised prior to their consideration with reference to relevant literature.

#### 5.6.1.(i) Contradiction Two: shared understanding of roles and responsibilities

Discussions within the DWR Laboratory revealed contradictions had surfaced because of confusion and tension between participants concerning accountability for the academic needs of children with SEND within the wider school. The mainstream class teachers believed the management of these children’s learning was primarily the SENCo’s responsibility, whilst in contrast the Nest staff considered it to be a shared responsibility.

*“Personally in my role I feel that once a child has come to the Nest, I think that’s it they are mine and I need to oversee everything that goes with them, whereas the code of practice deems that’s not necessarily how it should be at all but obviously it is a very blurred line in that technically in the Nest I am their class teacher but I am also the school SENCo as well so it erm it is not as clear cut as just saying it is my responsibility or it is the class teachers responsibility” (Participant #3, SENCo)*

*“Erm I have been the class teacher with the child who goes to the Nest whilst also being a member of the senior leadership team and supporting to lead the Nest and that’s tricky. So you’ve got this thing where the child goes to the Nest and they do the English and maths ....but how does the class teacher know what’s the expectation for writing for that child, what do they need to support them in order to get the best writing out of them in other lessons, do they know what level they are writing at in the Nest and how is that transferred to the classroom. Who reports to parents at parents evening, do you both do it, do one of you do it, does one of you know enough to be able to do it on your own? Those sorts of things are quite tricky and as a class teacher it is your responsibility, they are a member of your class and as a member of senior leadership team I feel really strongly about that.*



*Actually, they are in your class and they are part of your classroom and you are responsible for them but you do not teach them for half the time so you can't be responsible for half of them at the same time" (Participant #5, assistant headteacher)*

*"I had a little boy last year who was in the classroom and felt very much as part of the class, erm but he would go to the Nest every morning and he would come back. He was working at reception level, and as a year 6 teacher I don't have a huge amount of experience with that. I had no idea how to support him, like if I asked him to write something, obviously I have some idea as I did teacher training, but I am not an experienced teacher of special needs or early years or anything like that. So I think that was part of the problem. I guess, even just simple things such as who gets his reading book, because sometimes he wouldn't have a reading book and I don't know what reading level he is, just basic things like that really. I think the contradiction was all about responsibility wasn't it and actually there needs to be potentially clearer communication on whose responsibility different things are" (Participant #6, class teacher)*

Whilst all staff valued the inclusive philosophy of the school and strove to ensure children with SEND achieved the best possible outcomes, a lack of communication between staff pertaining to children's academic needs risked leading to a gulf in provision, resulting in a perception that the school had become less inclusive. This surfaced contradiction had led to feelings of professional incompetence, and frustration simmering between staff in the Nest and mainstream teachers due to lack of clarity re: role/or demarcation of roles and responsibilities.

*"The whole Nest team really have tried to come up with communication solutions, but everyone is really busy that is essentially part of the problem" (Participant #6, class teacher)*

*"I'm not saying it in a horrible way, but it is frustrating as we are trying really hard in the Nest, and we feel no-one outside the Nest wants to listen. Because for three hours of the day they have got rid of their problem children and they don't have to do the work with them then, but that is just my view from the Nest, but it is not all teacher's opinion. We do a lot of work in the Nest and it is really frustrating when you then go round and see them sitting outside doing other activities and not joining in with the class in the afternoon, and they become very isolated because they have been in the Nest all morning and then they are not with their class peers because they are sitting outside playing on the floor or doing something else" (Participant #4, inclusion support assistant)*

*"I get extremely frustrated like xxxx has said when I see children in the corridor, when I know they have only got an hour in their mainstream classroom which they need to be thought about for and provided for. But I also do understand that there is lots going on and its sometimes hard to cater for them, and I think it is also really a shame that class teachers don't see some of the children in the Nest, as they are in the Nest as I think they are very independent confident children in the Nest. But then they go back to their class and erm, unfortunately sink back into the child in the background then which does not want to be seen"* (Participant #3, SENCo)

*"I wonder whether in some ways the Nest has some supportive features but has deskilled some teachers, as there was a time when you would have had those children in your class all the time, and although you had teaching assistant support, you would as a class teacher you would be expected to plan for them"* (Participant #5, assistant headteacher)

As a result of highlighting contradictory expectations re: the division of labour, during the DWR Laboratory, discussion focused on developing mediating artefacts that could help to support the relationship between the Nest and the wider school community. The analysis of the contradiction led the participants to a process of organisational development, with an action plan drawn up to improve communication (See Table 5.3).

Staff believed these tools would challenge staff members' perception of the Nest, which would enable new models of working to be agreed and implemented within the school in relation to the Nest in particular. Staff expected this would promote a positive systemic difference to whole school practice, allowing the school to continue to achieve its agreed shared goal upon which all participants prided themselves upon 'inclusive policy' for children with SEND (the objective).

Participants believed a collaborative approach would ensure responsibilities were distributed and enable opportunities to be created to promote shared learning between all members of staff. This resulted in six proposed actions, which in effect would not

only resolve Contradiction Two, but other also some other highlighted tensions which had surfaced in the DWR Laboratory.

The proposed new model of working was intended to enhance both staff and children's developmental learning and so offering substantial benefits to the whole school.

The action points (development of mediating tools) are discussed and summarised below; the contemporaneous notes can be found in Appendix Ten.

Development of mediating tools:

1. Creation of a working group to continue this activity system review process.
2. Creation of an opportunity to provide a rota whereby teachers can swap roles to experience a day in the Nest, enabling a sharing of knowledge and skills.
3. Creation of provision mapping software to improve communication across outside agencies, teachers, and the school community in relation to children with SEND. This would allow teachers to view what children are working on, what they would be working on in the future, and what they have achieved.
4. Ensure there is enough time for a thorough SEND review with each class teacher to discuss all the children with SEND in their class. The use of video technology in SEND reviews as a mechanism to provide a personal account of that child, share information and provide a richer discussion.
5. Creation of a transition pathway to ensure information for children with SEND is shared with new class teachers at the start and end of the year.
6. Creation of a working group to produce a SEND policy for every subject, to explain how that lesson should be taught for children with SEND. The working group would allow co-construction between The Nest staff and mainstream

staff. Shared resources could potentially help with scaffolding to help children with SEND learn in every subject.

#### 5.6.1.1 Creation of a working group

All participants were keen to create a working group to continue this activity system review process. For example, participant #5 (assistant headteacher) stressed the importance of collaborative working when reviewing the nest.

Participant #5, (assistant headteacher): “it is important to co-construct things and I think that is so important, and the mechanism we are talking about (working group) if they are co-constructed I think it would work better and we would be able to review what is going on within the school”

Facilitator: “That’s an action (.) erm that’s an action potentially for a little working party perhaps nest staff and mainstream staff so you’ve got that co-construction and potentially shared resources...you can do that together and it takes the onus away from that one person having to do all of that hard work because you are doing that all together (.) if you could all put your energies together which you are doing right now “

On reflection, the participants’ proposal and commitment to create a working group in the focus school was significant, as although not originally planned prior to the DWR Laboratory process, this constituted an important action point potentially ensuring the longevity of the review and development process initiated by Phases One and Two of this study and supporting the development of an improved model of working, its implementation and on-going dynamic review and refinement over time. This aligns with stage 4-7 of Engeström’s (2001) expansive learning cycle.

#### 5.6.1.2 Sharing knowledge and skills through swapping roles

Proposals were put forward that if mainstream class teachers could observe how children with SEND are taught in the Nest, the experience and knowledge instructional support which would better help them in differentiating the children's work, to provide a curriculum and accommodate the strengths and needs of children with SEND in their mainstream classes.

*"I think it would be good if the teachers actually came into the Nest or saw some of the children's work, like participant, #6 said the boy that was in her class used to pull her leg and be like I can't do it, but for us in the Nest he would generally do it all... I think if they came in and saw some of the work that the children could do it might raise their expectations of what they might do in their classroom with them"*  
(Participant #4, Inclusion Support Assistant)

This reflection led to Action Point 2, a suggestion of establishing mechanisms such as rotas or timetables to allow staff to exchange roles, so providing opportunities to learn with, and from each other. This was judged to provide provides an exciting opportunity, not only to help children in the Nest, but also influence the whole school culture positively.

#### 5.6.1.3 The use of technology and time

The need to invest in a strategy that would ensure time was set aside by all staff to fully share knowledge and prioritise learning for children with SEND led to Action Points 3 and 4. Participants believed the current gulf in communication meant that not enough time had been spent on a thorough SEND review, which had in turn contributed towards a lack of shared understanding of roles and responsibilities in supporting the holistic education of children with SEND.

#### Mapping software to improve communication

*"I think we need to invest in some kind of system like an education provision mapping software. This will provide a better way of communicating across outside*

*agencies teacher and everyone who is involved in that child including parents... So having some kind of software like that means that's we are all linked up, virtually we have got access to the same information. We can all erm read it together, read it separately we can add whatever you want to add to it yourself" (Participant #3, SENCo).*

#### Time for a SEND review

*"I was just thinking about our SEND reviews, so we do have SEND review three times a year and it just occurred to me whenever I do my SEND review with the SENCo, I talk about the children that are in my class, but I wouldn't actually talk about the boy who attended the Nest.... But actually, it would be helpful to the boy who attended the Nest, as well as being shown some of the work he is doing and the book that he is reading" (Participant #6, Class Teacher).*

*"Perhaps, there needs to be a SEND page on Microsoft Teams with all the documents that the teachers could look at, for example, what the children are working on in terms of their EHCP, what levels they are at in terms of their continuums. But it is just making sure that there is that expectation that it is looked at, and it is used as a way of working out what level we can pitch the geography in the afternoon. Because I know what they are roughly working at in their English erm, but its just as an idea it is a mechanism that works for school erm and everyone can access it" (Participant #3, SENCo)*

#### 5.6.1.4. Transition pathway and SEND policy for subjects

To further aide communication, the participants proposed and agreed upon a transition pathway to improve communication between all staff members, to share knowledge of the children's strengths and needs.

*"There should be a conversation around transition, for example this is what he did last year, these are the type of activities you could do in the first week, this is the reading book he can read. This would really help me, because all the staff in the Nest know the children so well and they are so knowledgeable" (Participant #6, class teacher)*

In addition to this, they also suggested and agreed to introduce a SEND element to all subjects, rather than just core subjects. To facilitate this a working group would be developed to help provide time and resources to co-construct and share practice to support more inclusive teaching of all subjects which would better accommodate the learning of children with SEND.

*"I know, practically I have thought about it in the past, for every subject policy we have in school we need to have a SEND element of it. Like really underpinning how that lesson is taught for SEND children and that's been something on the to do list for a couple of years, but never really happened" (Participant #3, SENCo)*

## **5.7 Strength and limitations of the use of CHAT in the process and outcomes of the research**

Whilst Chapter 4 outlined numerous methodological issues relating to validity and reliability when conducting qualitative research, it was important to reflect upon the methodological issues explored in the above discussion of findings in this research and how the relationship with the literature and data reduces objectivity and therefore potential validity of the findings. This was particularly important concerning the positionality of myself as the researcher and the realisation that other researchers may have viewed the literature and data differently, allowing alternative themes to be produced, and different conclusions to be drawn.

However, in this study I considered this aspect was addressed through high levels of reflexivity by cross checking the codes to themes of the initial data, using a research diary and discussions with my supervisor during supervisory sessions.

Secondly, consideration also had to be given to the fact that whilst completing the research I was a trainee educational psychologist working within the focus school, therefore, this relationship may have influenced the voluntary aspect of participants and may have inadvertently affected some answers to questions in the individual interviews. However, upon reflection I considered that my position in this research was as an outsider who understood the culture of the school (Kerstetter, 2012), rather than being a direct member of school staff. I considered this strengthened the relationship and allowed the stakeholders to provide their perceptions in an open and reflexive manner, leading to thought-provoking conversations within the interviews and the

DWR Laboratory. The purpose of the research was not about assessing the quality of the Nest provision, rather to reflect on their perspectives of the Nest.

Thirdly, as previously mentioned in section 4.5.4.(i), this research adopted a deductive approach whereby data was collected and analysed to discover interesting themes and to ascertain how derived findings could be better understood in the context of a pre-existing theory or framework (Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, although activity theory was used in this study with an aim to understand the data in relation to the CHAT nodes, it could be argued that a deductive approach could be considered reductionist, and an inductive approach would present broader generalisations.

However, despite its limitations, CHAT was considered a robust framework to address the research questions, as it enabled the activity of the Nest to be viewed both in terms of its historicity as well as in relation to highlighting the perspectives of multiple stakeholders who work in the Nest. An additional strength of CHAT is that by reflecting the data back to participants through the DWR Laboratory (Engeström, 2007), those involved could interrogate the data further strengthening the validity of the findings. Published research is scarce concerning how CHAT as a framework can offer the possibility to illuminate how perceptions are constructed and how by surfacing tensions and contradictions through a DWR Laboratory it could provide areas for organisational and individual development. Activity theory, therefore, not only offers a comprehensive approach to analysing and utilising activity, it also holds the potential to facilitate change in practices enabling change and learning within schools.



## **5.7 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, historical analysis of the literature explored in Chapter 3 has been outlined and selected nodes of Engeström's (1999) second generation activity system was discussed in relation to the research questions and findings were analysed and strengthened by the inclusion of direct quotations from the participants.

The research questions are re-visited and my critical methodological reflections are outlined and discussed in Chapter 6. Implications for wider EP practice are also considered, alongside areas for potential future research.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study was to explore the wider social, organisational, and cultural factors influencing practices and outcomes of a resource base and inclusive special education in a mainstream, maintained primary school, from the unique perspective of stakeholders. The objective of this research was not only to stimulate organisational development and change within the focus resource base and the school, but also to abstract suggestions for similar resource bases within similar context, and/or for newly-established resource bases.

Firstly, the conclusions drawn from the data in Chapter 5, in relation to the research aim and the four research questions are now considered further. Secondly, the impact of the chosen research design (case study) and research methodology (CHAT, and the use of the expansive learning cycle to facilitate participants' critical engagement with the Phase One findings, and to structure the process of exchange based learning, review and development within this community of practice are reviewed, as part of the process of judging the trustworthiness of the Phase One and Phase Two research findings, and their legitimate generalisation to other settings. Finally, the implication for practice (in schools; and by educational psychologists) are then suggested, alongside directions for research.

### **6.2 Conclusion drawn from the research aims and questions**

The conclusions drawn from the research questions are depicted below. The research questions were:

1. What do stakeholders perceive to be the goal(s) (object) and overall purpose(s) (outcome(s)) of the in-house resource base?
2. What are the perceived supporting/constraining factors influencing/contributing toward the outcomes of the in-house resource base (rules—supports and constraints)?
3. What are the role(s) involved in supporting the resource base children (division of labour)?
4. What key features (including new ways of working) do stakeholders suggest would enhance an in-house resource base and its outcomes for children?

In this research it was found the overall collaboratively agreed goal of stakeholders was to promote a systemic difference to whole school practice, allowing the Nest to provide targeted support for children with SEND and inclusion of SEND within the community and school; which would facilitate wider school benefits and progression of academic skills as well as personal qualities to enhance the developmental learning of children with SEND and facilitate a shared vision of inclusive education for all.

However, whilst it was considered there were many benefits associated with the Nest and all staff valued an inclusive philosophy; significant constraining factors such as insufficient funding (consistent with previous research) over time had led to fewer resources, and cuts in budget had resulted in a substantial reduction in staffing levels. Whilst in times of austerity there is little that can be done to appease this situation, excitingly it was believed some of the unexpected constraining factors brought to light by the DWR Laboratory in this research and affecting the success of the Nest in this particular mainstream school could be accommodated by the overall supporting factors

of the strong ethos of the school and the willingness of participants to promote change. A previously unrecognised lack of a shared understanding of the role of the Nest and its referral system and entrance criteria, deemed to be important factors by Glazzard (2013), was challenging staff members perception of the Nest and considered to limit the success of this particular provision. Time constraints had led to a lack of communication between staff, whilst in addition, controversy relating to roles/division of labour between staff in the Nest and across the wider school, led to what could be considered the most important finding of the present study, as the lack of clear understanding relating to the demarcation of roles and responsibilities was inadvertently affecting the holistic care of children with SEND in the focus school, leading to children being excluded rather than included in classroom tasks, which was not beneficial for the children and detracted from the inclusive ethos of the school.

Through collaboratively discussing the tensions and barriers that were affecting the Nest and the wider school, stakeholders were keen to address the surfaced contradictions; which led to the identification of positive actions for new ways of working and an innovative model of working practice, which it was believed would not only help to support the relationship between the Nest and the wider school community, but also the improved communication would help to promote inclusive practice and also ensure the best possible outcome for children with SEND.

A strength of this study is that it adds a unique in-depth understanding of work practices from the stakeholders' own perspectives on the 'shop floor' of the resource base (the Nest) in a focus mainstream primary school. In doing so, it was able to extract how communication between staff across the whole school in relation to roles and responsibilities, and transfer of practice can get lost in translation over time, which may

impact on the quality of educational provision for children with and without SEND. In addition, this research has highlighted that although there are many benefits associated with the Nest for children with SEND, in some ways the Nest has segregated the children and made the school less inclusive, by a perceived deskilling of some mainstream class teachers, as it was reported some teachers lacked confidence in understanding and addressing children's SEND. This is an important finding to not only consider for the focus school but also in similar schools.

Outlining the surfaced contradictions enabled an understanding of the barriers that were affecting the Nest and the wider school which led to the identification of positive actions for new ways of working and an innovative model of developmental working practice. In effect, the stakeholders became agents of change, as ideas and proposals developed through collaboratively discussing the analysed tensions resulted in a strategic action plan, which may not have been previously implemented.

### **6.3 Critical Reflection on Methodology**

A further strength of this research is that as well as successfully facilitating answers to the research questions, it also unearthed previously unrecognised tensions which were unknowingly affecting the success of the Nest and the wider school community to facilitate inclusive practice for children with SEND. The second-generation CHAT presented a useful framework to recognise the 'multi-voicedness' (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999) of the participants within the Nest and to identify tensions which were constructed within the activity.

Whilst the overarching strengths and potential limitations of the methodology used in the current research can be seen in Chapter 5, upon reflection there are some further limitations to the research process which were also considered.

The data generated is based on the perceptions of a small selection of participants in a single mainstream primary school, it is therefore arguable whether they reliably represent the practice and opinions of different individuals within the wider school or other resource bases. Furthermore, although seven participants were considered a suitable sample size for data collection and analysis (Section 5.5.2), it was recognised that one participant (a parent) could not contribute to most questions as they were related to certain aspects of the Nest, which they perceived to be outside their field of knowledge. As well as this, as participation was voluntary the results could be perceived to be somewhat insular, as they are only representative of certain individuals within the focus school. Future research could therefore explore the practice of more participants from other resource bases and across different schools to generate a much wider data set.

The intervention research methodology of the DWR Laboratory in this research allowed participants to work together in a structured and cyclical way in an activity (Engeström, Rantavuori and Kerosou, 2013; Virkkunen and Newnham, 2013) to visualise and produce new activities, within the Nest and across the wider school. The opportunity to promote organisational change through the DWR Laboratory underpinned by Engeström's (1999b) second generation activity theory contributed to participants overcoming historical systemic contradictions, which could be seen to arise from internal relationships (Ollman, 2003) and helped to promote an action plan to address current tensions within the focus school. The cyclical process of intertwining

conceptual and empirical development (Horn, 2013) and the use of expansive learning, according to Karl Marx enabled ascension from the abstract to the concrete development of conceptual understanding (Engeström, 2015). It could be considered the use of mediating physical and psychological tools which underpinned the participants social actions (Vygotsky, 1978) linked social-historical processes with mental processes. Whilst it has been critiqued that questioning within a DWR Laboratory could cause additional tension (Young, 2001), participants in this research were enthusiastic about the DWR Laboratory session and were keen to continue with the working group; to improve communication methods to further build upon the identified actions, as well as any issues that may arise within their school in the future. However, it could be argued that the participants in this research were more amenable to the process as the focus school was actively looking for an avenue to effect change. This in turn leads to a further reflection which was recognised by CHAT and discussed in Chapter 4. As referred to and further discussed in Section 4.5.3 of this research, within my remit as a trainee EP whilst my personal understanding of the focus school could be considered a strength as it helped to build rapport with the participants and possibly enhanced the quality of the data, it could be argued it may have inadvertently influenced the analysis. However, upon reflection my professional position enabled me to ensure my research was appropriate and provided a positive contribution to the school.

Through the developmental research tool of CHAT, stakeholders were able to facilitate how policy may be mediated into practice. The introduction of a workable action for the Nest and wider school practice will not only serve to alleviate current and historic tensions, but also the creation of a shared understanding of division of labour will have

a positive impact on the whole school and community. What is more, Action point 1 (introduction of a working group) has already been put into practice; and it is believed the additional five proposed action points will not only lead to sustainable change in the Nest and across the focus school, but perhaps may be important considerations in similar resource bases in other mainstream settings, to enhance the outcomes of children with SEND.

#### **6.4 Contribution to Knowledge and Implications for Practice**

This section summarises how the findings from this research might add to knowledge in the field of psychology and practice at a local, professional, and wider policy level.

##### *6.4.1 The focus school*

The tensions and contradictions uncovered in the single DWR Laboratory, may have been contributing to the speculative demise of the Nest in the present study, which could also be affecting similar resource bases. It is considered the innovative idea for the Nest staff and wider school staff to swap roles to support the skill development of mainstream class teachers in differentiating tasks could help to promote a curriculum to accommodate the strength and needs of children with SEND, as well as deliver an exciting opportunity to not only enhance the learning of children in the Nest in the focus school, but it could also have a positive impact on the whole school culture and perhaps across other schools with a resource base. This could go some way toward achieving the primary goal of allowing children with SEND to attend a school in their local community, to develop academic and social skills, and personal qualities such as confidence, independence, and self-esteem.



However, the reduction in staffing levels over time has resulted in the Nest having to accommodate more children, going against the objective of a smaller environment with more intensive specialised teaching. It could be argued if this situation continues an important implication would be to transfer the practice to the wider school, so children with SEND receive inclusive practice and the right support, knowledge, and expertise from all school staff, not only from those in the Nest.

Table 6.1 presents the reflections on actions points which arose from the DWR:

**Table 6.1** presents reflections on actions points from the DWR Laboratory.

<b>Outcomes from the DWR Laboratory</b>	<b>Reflections on the implementation of action points</b>
1. Creation of a working group to continue this activity system review process.	This has allowed the school to take ownership of the findings and continually monitor and evaluate the outcomes using Engeström expansive learning cycle. The working group consists of the participants within the study and is facilitated by an outsider agency.
2. Creation of an opportunity to provide a rota whereby teachers can swap roles to experience a day in the Nest, enabling a sharing of knowledge and skills.	School staff can share their expertise and knowledge and feel more competent in their everyday teaching. All staff are given the opportunity to shadow the teaching in the Nest and provided with a time slot to teach.
3. Creation of provision mapping software to improve communication across outside agencies, teachers, and the school community in relation to children with SEND. This would allow teachers to view what children are working on, what they would be working on in the future, and what they have achieved.	<p>This has been put in place and has resulted in increased communication between staff members. All teachers are now able to see current working levels for children within the Nest and view a sample of their work. Staff have positively reflected on the benefits of this.</p> <p>Currently outside agencies do not have access to this provision mapping software, but this may be something the school and outside agencies can work upon in the future.</p>
4. Ensure there is enough time for a thorough SEND review with each class teacher to discuss all children with SEND in their class. The use of video technology in SEND reviews as a mechanism to provide a personal account of that child, share information and provide a richer discussion.	This action is being carried forward into the new school academic year (September 2021). All class teachers will have an allocated time for a SEND review to discuss children in their own class, as well as the children who attend the Nest. The use of video technology is being encouraged and is going to be supported by the school's EP.
5. Creation of a transition pathway to ensure information for children with SEND is shared with new class teachers at the start and end of the school academic year.	This has started to develop and links to Action point 3.
6. Creation of a working group to produce a SEND policy for every subject, to explain how that lesson should be taught for children with SEND. The working group would allow co-construction between the Nest staff and mainstream staff. Shared resources could potentially help with scaffolding to help children with SEND learn in every subject.	This is currently taking place and will continue within the next academic year.

#### *6.4.2 Opportunities for educational psychologists*

One aspect of an EP's role is to consider the needs of the whole child and promote inclusive practice by working with schools to suggest solutions to help overcome barriers to learning. In addition to assessing and planning to ensure successful inclusion in their class, school, and community; EPs continually build on an individual's strengths by encouraging school staff as well as families and children with SEND to adopt an optimistic view of the future. Within England the context of inclusive education and developing school policies and strategies both nationally and at a county level is a key objective for EPs (Farrell et al., 2006).

It is considered the derived implications from this research may be useful in helping EPs and/or the EPS to recognise, understand and serve to alleviate any tensions that may arise within schools in relation to in-house resource bases facilitating inclusive special educational provision to help create an efficient and meaningful system that works for the whole school and community. As the impact on school processes and the potential utility of this model for EP practice could be particularly important in relation to acknowledging tension and contradictions, within a framework that allows for positive change as an outcome. Following this research, and as a direct result of the positive response within the DWR Laboratory concerning the way forward, as a trainee EP, I instigated meetings with members of the senior leadership teams in numerous schools to discuss the provision provided for children with SEND, reflecting on how to improve constraining factors. I intend to continue these meetings on a regular basis to ensure the best outcome for children with SEND.

### *6.4.3 For wider policy*

One of the aims of this research was to explore the wider social and organisational factors that affect the activity within a primary school's resource base. It could be suggested the model presented in Figure 5.6 provides a practical resource through which to explore the different elements of the activity which could be used as an informative tool to introduce the concept of a resource base in more schools. The model could be perceived to provide a much fuller understanding of the practice procedures (i.e., the tools) used by the participants as well as facilitate discussion and reflection about the factors that are likely to support or constrain their work (rules) within schools.

The data in this study could be seen to support previous limited literature relating to reviewing and monitoring inclusive provisions for children with SEND. By addressing historic concerns and considering a change in approach as to how a resource base is managed, it could help to ensure that best possible practice is adhered to.

### **6.5 Future research opportunities**

I consider an important complement to my own research would be to explore the perceptions and experiences of the children themselves, who attend a resource base as well as a sample of peers who are in the mainstream classes. Every child is unique and the 2015 CoP (DfE and DoH, 2015) advocates the rights of the child to be heard, and their opinions acted upon. Children are seen as knowledgeable experts on their own lives and as such their perspective and interest could be considered a valuable contribution to practice (Langsted, 1994; Dahl, 1995; Mayall, 2000; Clark and Moss, 2001). It could therefore be perceived that by exploring and listening to a child's voice

and understanding what works well and what does not work well in a resource base may contribute towards and help to determine ways in which future provision could be established to help support the outcomes of children with SEND.

## **6.6 Concluding comments**

In conclusion, participants involved in the DWR Laboratory within the present study viewed the session as a positive tool for strengthening the success of their resource base and going forward were enthusiastic for the working group to continue to inform practice. Whilst the outlined findings from this research is closely aligned with the limited findings presented within previous literature which presents a resource base as an activity which continues to play a crucial role in supporting children with SEND. It could be proposed the introduction of action plans drawn from a single DWR Laboratory using the bottom up approach of Engeström's (2001) expansive learning theory to share knowledge, expertise, and communication may not only benefit the focus school but may also positively impact upon schools locally and nationally. Strategies suggested in this research may help to transform objects of activity to promote equality and inclusion (Andrews, Walton and Osman, 2019) to help achieve the aim of a more inclusive environment, so that children with SEND can feel more included in the community and less excluded at mainstream school.

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**Appendix 1: Results from each database**

<b>Database searched</b>	<b>Search terms used</b>	<b>Number of citations identified</b>	<b>Number removed due to duplication or not meeting inclusion criteria after screening titles and abstracts</b>	<b>Studies that met inclusion criteria based on title and abstract</b>	<b>Studies that met inclusion criteria after being fully screened and were included in literature review</b>
<b>PsycINFO 1967 to present</b>	("Resource* base*" OR "Resource* provis*" OR "Resource* unit*" OR "Speci* Hub*" OR "Resource* Hub*" OR "Learn* base*" OR "Speci* Unit*" OR "Speci* base*" OR "Speci* Provis*" OR "hub*" OR "Inclus* hub*" OR "Inclus* base*" OR "Inclus* unit*" OR "Speci* hub*" OR "Focus* Provis*" OR "Focus*base*" OR "Focus* unit*" OR "Focus* hub*" OR "SEN* unit*" or "SEN* Hub*" OR "SEN* base*" OR "combin* Unit*"),	21	18	3	2 - (Frederickson, Jones and Lang, 2010; McAllister and Hadjri, 2013)
<b>EBSCO</b>		284	266	18	13 - (Bailey, 1982; Deeman and Bozic, 2002; Nind and Cochrane, 2002; Lindsay et al. 2005; Frederickson, Jones and Lang, 2010; White, 2010; Warhurst and Norgate, 2012; McAllister and Hadjri, 2013; Glazzard, 2014; Greenstein, 2014; Bond and Hebron 2016; Hebron and Bond, 2017; Belli, 2021;)
<b>ProQuest</b>		113	105	8	5 - (Lindsay et al, 2005; Lindsay, 2007; McAllister and Hadjri, 2013; Saddler, 2015; Lehane, 2016).

	<p>school (School* OR Educa*),</p> <p>factors (support* factor* OR Constrain* factor* OR contribut* factor*</p> <p>special education or special needs or disabilities</p> <p>inclusion or inclusive education or mainstreaming</p>				
<b>Web of Science</b>		238	195	13	5 - ( <i>Lindsay, 2007; Lehane, 2016; Landor and Perepa, 2017; Halsall, Clarke, and Crane; Warnes, Dones and Knowler, 2021</i> )
	<b>Total</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>19 (without repetition)</b>

Example of deductive analysis of previous literature using CHAT Stage 2a of expansive learning cycle.

In a number of schools the vision and aims for SEND provision were clearly driven by the Headteacher, in partnership with the whole senior leadership team and the SENCo. In these schools there was a strong emphasis on the progress of pupils with SEND as a shared responsibility. Examples of proactive steps taken to ensure that this notion of distributed leadership and accountability was embedded within school practices included: (i) access to support for SEND from a range of leaders across the school including Heads of Department, progress leads and leading practitioners (ii) the setting up of a SEND working group, represented by a range of stakeholders, including staff, governors, parents and pupils, to support the development of SEND provision across the school (iii) the identification and training of a staff 'SEND Champion' within all departments, providing advice and support for pupils with SEND in relation to the specific demands of their subject. These approaches further supported the school's response to succession planning and change, so that in contexts where an individual SENCo was moving on, provision for SEND pupils remained uninterrupted.

Rules –  
By having a shared vision leads to better outcomes

A number of SEND departments had securely established written communication systems so that subject teachers could access key information about pupils, enabling them to understand the strategies needed to include them within mainstream lessons. In some schools, 'good practice guides', 'pupil support plans' or 'student information profiles' disseminated good practice and inclusive strategies that supported pupils across the different areas of need. Moreover, some schools went beyond identifying need and barriers to learning, to specifically teaching new skills to bring about progress in both learning and behaviour. Furthermore,

Tools–  
Communication system as a mediating artefact

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Macrosystem – (b) cultural values – diversity

Parents also identified the importance of positive staff attitudes towards pupils with ASD. For some parents this had been a concern in the past, especially in terms of staff demonstrating an understanding of the issues surrounding having a child with ASD. The parent of a Y11 student expressed concern that, 'we was getting daily calls and it was always 'Sean this, Sean that, Sean the other'. They wasn't looking at the problem, they blamed the family'.

Rules –  
Positive staff attitude/knowledge /empathy

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Parents also described previous experiences of staff not having sufficient knowledge of ASD to manage incidents of bullying, resulting in episodes lasting lengthy periods of time. Some pupils described how their experiences in the resource provision contrasted with previous school experiences, e.g. 'I find it very different from the other school there was all the bullies, I find it perfect here' - Y5 pupil.

Similarly, when staff had found it difficult to manage challenging behaviour, lack of understanding of ASD and its heterogeneity had on occasion led to reductions in curriculum opportunities as well as inclusion. For example, parents spoke of reduced timetables and being called to collect their child due to behavioural challenges, 'Yeah, I would be like drop him off at nine ... by the time I reach work I had to go and pick him up' - Parent of Y1 pupil.



## Appendix Two – Interview schedule and prompts

### Housekeeping:

- Welcome the participant and thank them for agreeing to meet.
- Explain the research aims and the interview process (time and topics).
- Check understanding of the participant information sheet and answer any queries.
- Review signed consent form, including agreement for audio-recording of the interview and right to withdraw.

### Interview commences (turn on audio-recorder):

Topic	Possible questions	Possible prompts and follow up questions	Probes
<b>1. Subject</b>	What is your role/ responsibility (in relation to the resource base)?	<i>How long have you had this role?</i>	
	What experience of the resource base/school do you have?	<i>How long have you had this experience?</i>	<i>Tell me more</i>
	Do you have any experience of any other resource base provision?	<i>If so, what are these? How did they look in practice?</i>	
<b>2. Object</b>	What is the focus of the resource base?	<i>What does it look like?</i>	<i>Tell me more</i>
	What does resource base provision mean to you?	<i>What does it look like?</i>	
	What does your ideal resource base provision look like?	<i>Who does it involve? Length? Participants? Outcome?</i>	<i>Any other factors?</i>

	Can you describe any examples of particularly positive/negative resource provision?	<i>Can you identify the factors associated with these?</i>	<i>Anything else?</i>
	Has it been different in the past?	<i>In what way?</i>	<i>Can you tell me more?</i>
<b>3. Outcomes</b>	What do you see the outcome/overall purpose of the resource provision as being?	<i>What would this look like? To achieve what? What is the end goal?</i>	<i>Tell me more</i>
	What is the ideal outcome of resource provision?	<i>What would this look like?</i>	<i>Go on</i>
	Do you perceive different outcomes being achieved?	<i>If so, how?</i>	<i>Anything else?</i>
	What would you notice if the outcomes have been achieved?	<i>What would this look like?</i>	
<b>4. Rules</b>	What helps to achieve its outcome of resource base?	<i>e.g., friends, teachers, peers, any changes over time...</i>	<i>Can you tell me more?</i>
	What factors have constrained/restricted the outcome of resource base?	<i>E.g., funding, resources, expertise, knowledge</i>	<i>Anything else?</i>
	Do you see the resource base provision changing in the future?	<i>If so, why? If not, why not?</i>	<i>Anything else?</i>
<b>5. Community</b>	Who else is involved in the resource base?	<i>If so, what was their role and working relationship with you? Who have you worked with in the past (in resource base?)</i>	<i>Go on...</i>

		<i>Who else in the wider community was indirectly involved?</i>	
	Who do you envisage working with in the future (in resource base)?	<i>Who else in the wider community was indirectly involved?</i>	<i>Anyone else?</i>
<b>6. Division of Labour</b>	How are the roles/responsibilities of resource base shared/divided?	<i>What are the other roles in the resource base? What do they do?</i>	<i>Tell me more?</i>
	Do you think others will have different expectations of your role in the future?	<i>If so, what do these look like?</i>	<i>Anything else?</i>
<b>7. Mediating Tools or Artefacts</b>	What are the physical tools if any used to support outcomes of the resource base?	<i>e.g. resources, staff, equipment</i>	<i>And</i>
	What are the abstract tools used to support outcomes of the resource base?	<i>e.g. Language, psychological knowledge?</i>	<i>Anything else</i>
	What do you think might be useful to support outcomes of the resource base?	<i>Can you give me some examples?</i>	
	Are there any barriers to achieving the outcomes?	<i>Can you give me some examples</i>	

**Conclude interview** (turn off the audio-recorder):

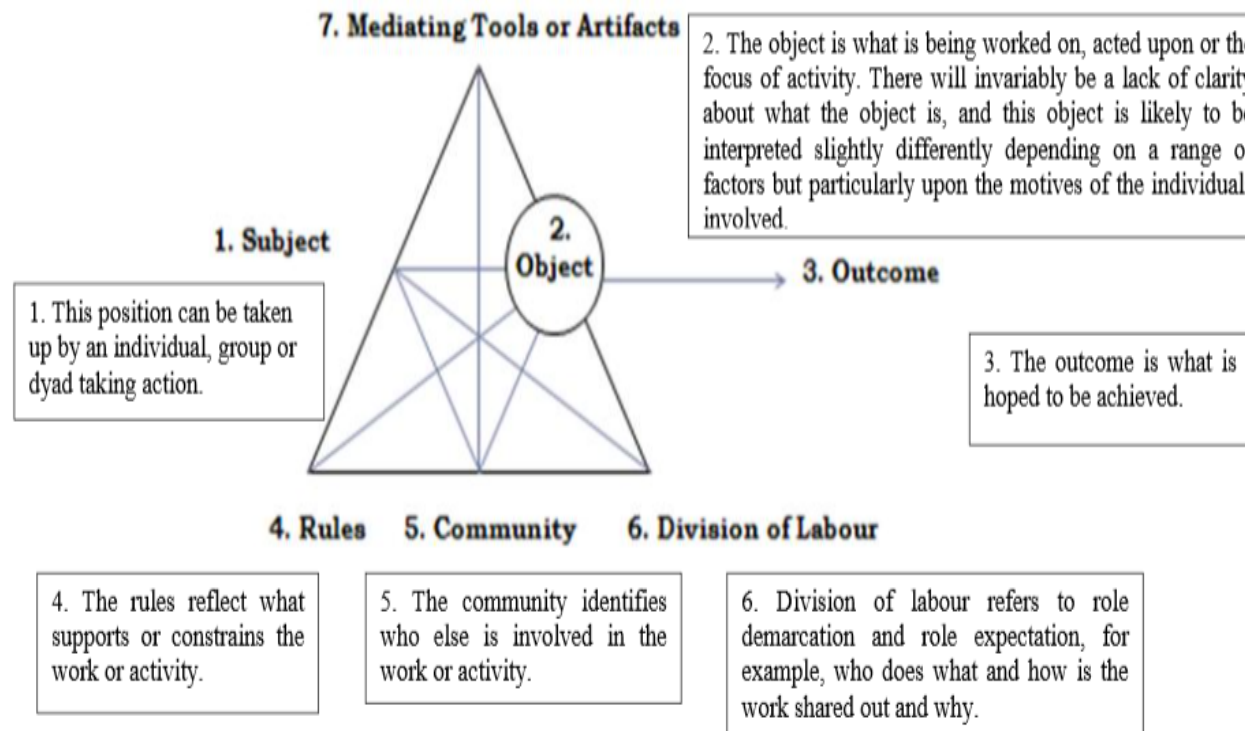
- Thank the participant for taking part.
- Remind the participant of their right to withdraw within the next 14 calendar days, and of the steps to take should they wish to do so.
- Signal to the participant that their participation in the next (group discussion) phase of the research would be appreciated, but is not required, and that an invitation will be sent once a viable date and time have been agreed within the school calendar\*.
- Signpost the participant to the offer of a debrief via telephone once data collection and analysis are complete.

*\* The invitation to participate in a group discussion will not be made to parents. Rather, they will be thanked for their contribution and reminded that, with the greatest care maintained to protect confidentiality and ensure respondents remain unidentifiable, parental experiences, views and suggestions will be included in the feedback to staff, to inform action-planning.*

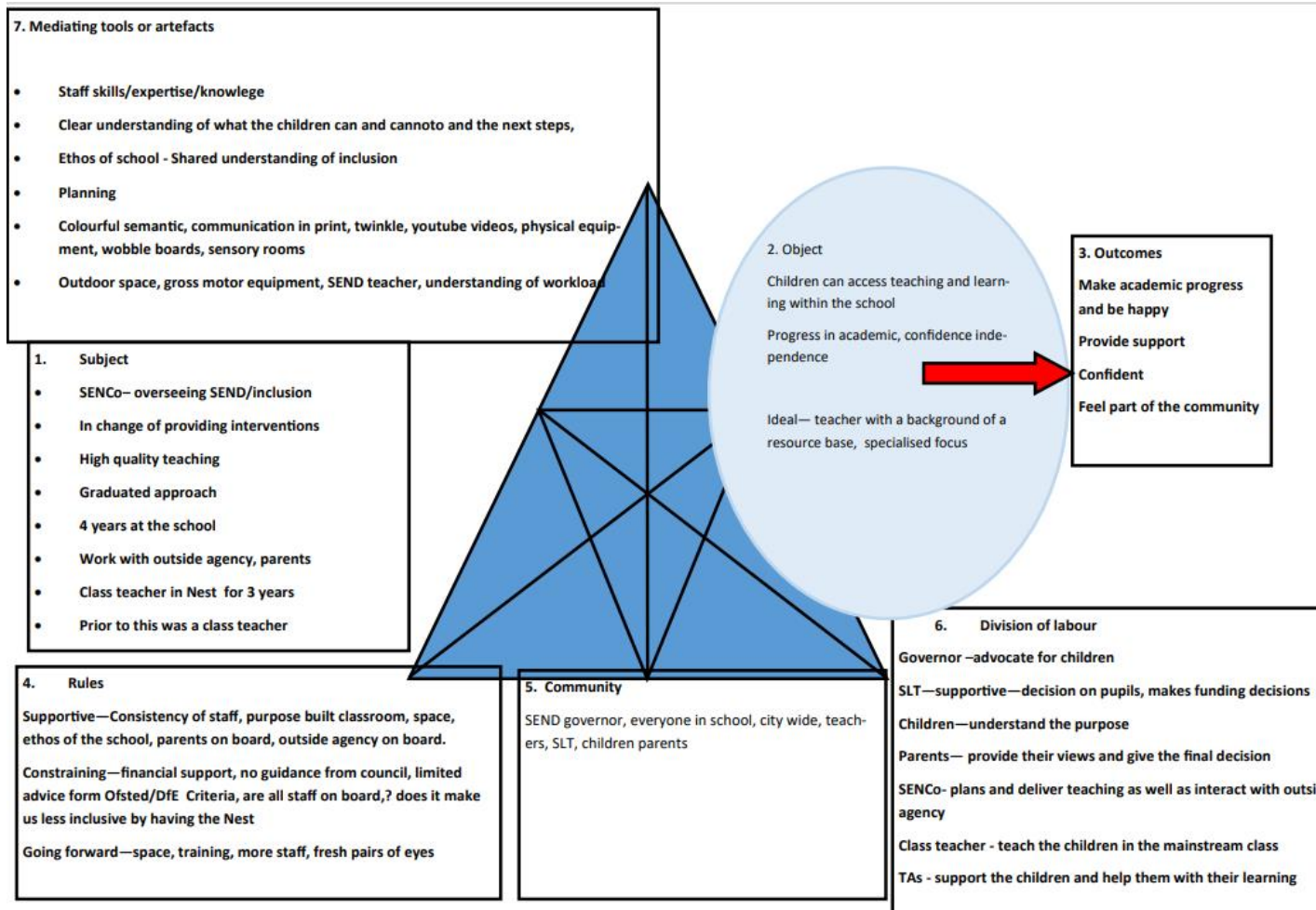
## Appendix Three: An overview of activity theory

### Activity Theory: 'Second Generation' (Engström, 1987)

7. This part of the triangle presents the mediation that takes place between the subject and the object in order to achieve an outcome. The artefacts (or tools) might be concrete (such as an object, instrument or resource) or maybe abstract (such as a common language being used, processes or frameworks).



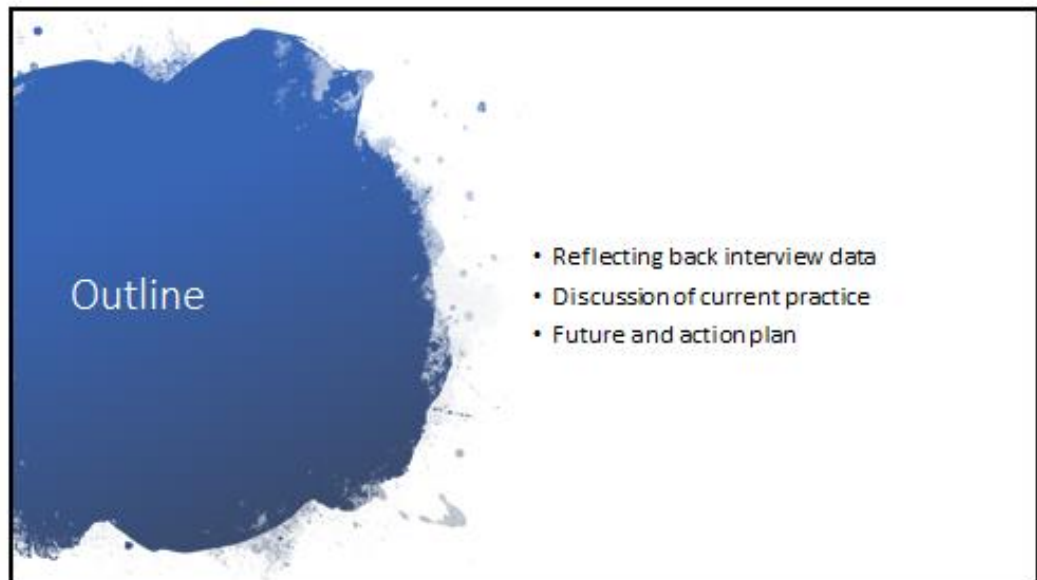
**Appendix Four: Example of contemporaneous notes taken by the researcher during individual interviews**



## Appendix Five: DWR Laboratory PowerPoint

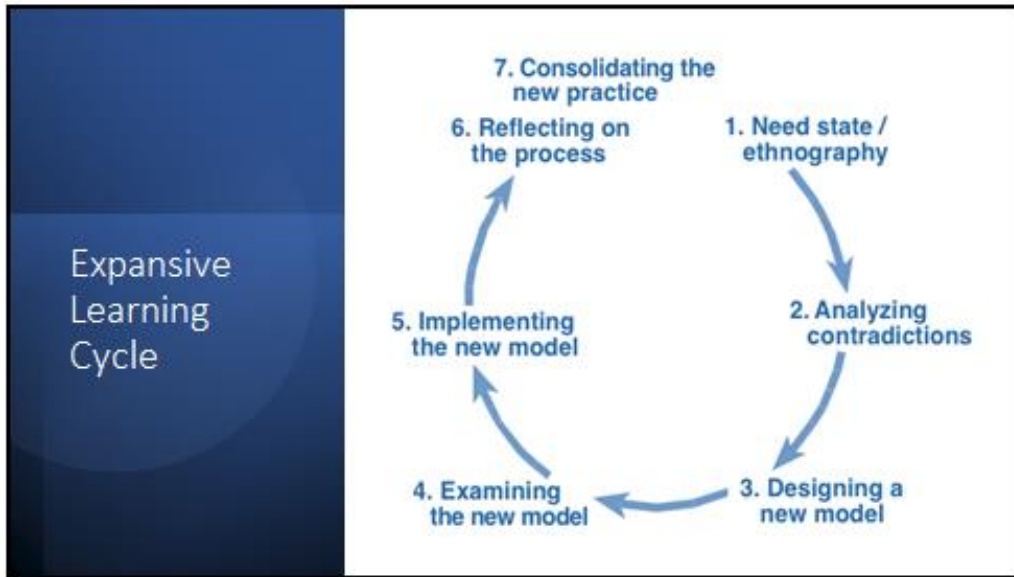


1

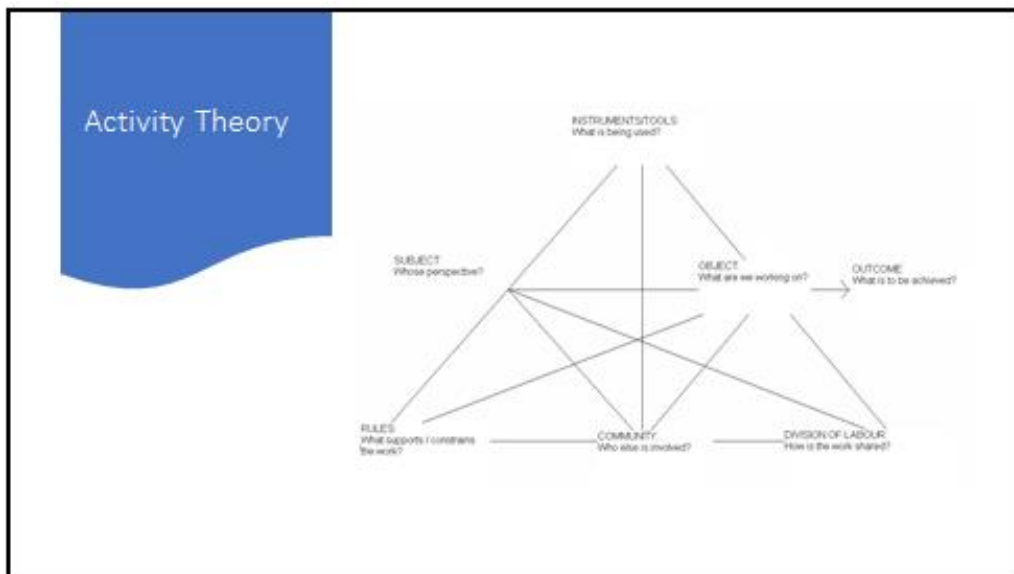


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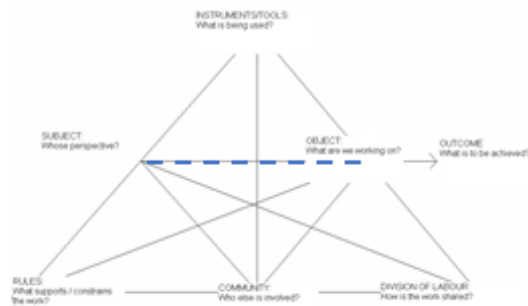


4

## Contradictions between:

Shared understanding of the nest Vs lack of shared understanding of the nest

*"No sort of criteria so its up to erm individual members of staff to kind of like put in you know the idea that the child should attend the nest (.) but the problem with that is er people who are working in the nest might think no that is not appropriate and you know there is no kind of clear criteria on who should be in there and who should not"*



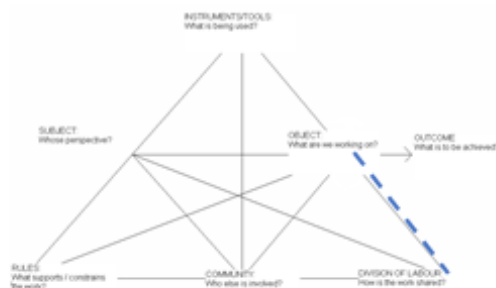
5

## Contradictions between

Class staff members roles/responsibilities in supporting the holistic education of the child

Vs

nest staff members role/responsibilities in supporting the holistic education of the child

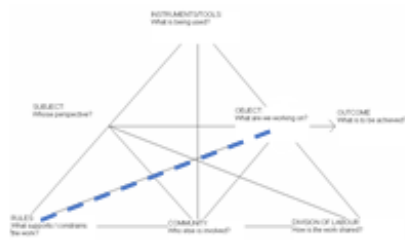


*"Yes, and where the responsibility of the nest ends, and the responsibility of the teachers start will be good (.) yeah I don't know how clear that is"*

6

Contradictions between:

Having our own nest Vs external resource base



*"The nest is bottom-up so it works because it is not prescriptive and is very responsive"*

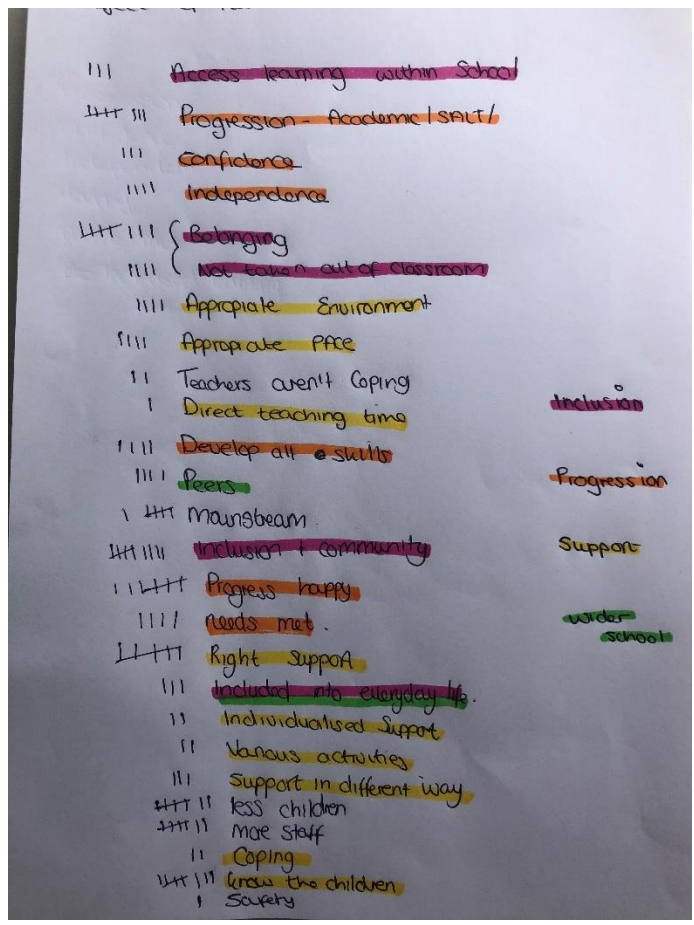
Vs

*"Funding would be good as we could then have our own separate building, space and equipment"*

## Appendix 6: Example of thematic analysis process for interviews

TA Stage	Examples
<p><b>1. Reading and familiarisation; taking notes of items of potential interest</b></p>	<p><i>Example of notes made for Interview #2</i></p> <p>1 Interviewer: <u>yeah</u> they are helpful points (.) what would you perceive the constraining factors to be  2 what are restricting the outcomes of the nest?</p> <p>3 Participant #1: <u>Erm</u> (long pause) well finances is one (long pause) I think probably not having  4 much influence in the authority is another and possibly sometimes parents possibly their views but    5 they don't want children to be coming to the nest because that works against the way that they  6 work (pause) I think possibly I sometimes get the impression that there are tensions with the staff  7 that work there in terms of erm inclusion and exclusion (.) so what is the criteria of the nest because  8 it has been developed from bottom up its hard to know with confidence who belongs and who  9 doesn't so <u>erm</u> I think sometimes members of staff in there might think a child in there shouldn't  10 be in there so we all know that they are going to act in ways that subconsciously make lives more  11 difficult</p> <p>12 Interviewer: <u>yes</u> can you explain a little bit more</p> <p>13 Participant #1: Yes I suppose in the resource bases in other areas like the XXXX one and the other  14 one speech and language one there is quite stringent criteria as to whether or not children can  15 attend the nest or resource bases whereas with XXX it has kind of been created in response to the  16 needs of the children so there is no sort of criteria so <u>its</u> up to erm individual member of staff to kind  17 of like put in you know the idea that the child should attend the nest (.) but the problem with that is  18 er people who are working in the nest might think no that is not appropriate and you know there is  19 no kind of clear criteria on who should be in there and who should not and I think that may be  20 comes to XX's thinking about people needing an <u>EHCP</u> there is not really any clear guidance around  21 that (.) so if a member of staff in the nest is thinking this child should not be in the nest there needs  22 are too severe they might just you know give up a little bit more easily to show it is possible</p> <p>23 Interviewer: I am just thinking about when you said not having an influence in the local authority  24 what do you mean by that</p> <p>25 Participant #1: I think they feel that they are disconnected from the local authority they are not  26 having that communication with SENAR very easily or erm they have made a request to become an  27 official resource base and they have not heard <u>back</u> and I think there is frustration there from that</p> <p>28 Interviewer: I am just wondering how they could overcome these barriers or whether there <u>is</u> new  29 ways of working?</p> <p>30 Participant #1: Probably they could do with I am wondering whether they could do with a  31 multiagency approach to defining what the nest is so erm I think a lot of the stuff I think XXX  32 struggles to let go and a lot of the stuff comes from her and I think maybe if she worked with SENAR  33 and external agencies to come to an agreement of what the nest is maybe more people might be on  34 board to fund it or become more actively involved in it</p>
<p><b>2.Coding</b></p>	<p><i>Example of notes made for Interview</i></p>

	<p>Participant #5: So if we had a resource base I would want the resource base which allowed children to still be included in the mainstream school</p> <p>Interviewer: Yeah yeah and I think that's it isn't it sometimes erm are often meant to be designed for inclusion but it is still in a separate building to the school and the children just go into there and they don't kind of mix with their mainstream and I think that's what quite nice about St Johns they still have the opportunity to mix</p> <p>Participant #5: Yeah</p> <p>Interviewer: What would your ideal kind of learning hub look like</p> <p>Participant #5: Yes the feeling of inclusion by that I mean the room being located in the centre of the school is really important and I suppose if you are talking ideally what inclusion looks like you would have more space it would have the space so we try and run the hub on a loosely on the early years it started like that its less like that but it depends on the children who are there</p> <p>Interviewer: Yeah</p> <p>Participant #5: And their needs but you would want space for continual provision space for physical and sensory work and life skills work ideally you would have a little kitchen area a wet area (.) so physically the learning the resource base in an ideal world (laughs) would be a lovely space</p> <p>Interviewer: Yeah</p> <p>Participant #5: Which is important obviously you know training for the staffing was be really key if we ran an official resource base obviously a resource base you are given the resource base for a reason for a specific sort of children or children with specific needs and erm and making sure that the staff that worked in there were experienced or had the right training erm would be really important as well and the staff and the rest of the school were really erm knew what went on in there as sometimes I think that can be a bit of an issue especially if the children then come back to your classroom so as a class teacher if you have a child who goes to the hub and then comes back to you in the afternoon you need to be clear on your roles who is responsible for the progress of that child whose responsible for what they learning the curriculum erm what's best for them what working on that sort of expectation of behaviour when they are in different parts of the school (.) that's really important as well(.)</p> <p>Interviewer: Yeah and that kind of taps into other questions later on section three is about outcome what do you hope the learning hub achieves</p> <p>Participant #5: Err I think I think it achieves different things depending on which level you look at it so from the children that go to the hub for them it gives them a sense of security but also also it gives them what they need academically so obviously one of our jobs as school is to erm improve the academic outcomes of those children to whatever they are capable of</p> <p>Interviewer: Uhm</p>	<p>RW francesca weir included</p> <p>RW francesca weir peers</p> <p>RW francesca weir inclusion located centre of the school</p> <p>RW francesca weir Space</p> <p>RW francesca weir More space</p> <p>RW francesca weir Staff experience</p> <p>RW francesca weir Training</p> <p>RW francesca weir Clear on role and responsibility</p> <p>RW francesca weir Sense of security</p> <p>RW francesca weir Academic skills</p>
<p><b>3. Searching for themes</b></p>	<p><i>This example shows the initial naming of themes from data based on presence across sample groups</i></p>	



**4. Reviewing themes**

Themes were then checked back against the data, making comments line with themes identified in Stage 4

*Academic skills*

Participant #5: Erm the focus of the Nest is to give the children with complex needs erm usually with an EHCP but not always erm what they need really. So the focus of the Nest is to allow those children **have a focus on their areas that they need to work on, which is they need to work on academic as well as life skills and social skills. There's a big language and communications erm focus in the** Nest giving them a **sense of belonging** in the Nest along with belonging to their class and the school at the same time

Interviewer: erm

Participant #5, a class teacher you can't, you can't give them that in a class of thirty with 29 other children without another **adult to support them**

*Wider school benefits*

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant #5: I think that's where the inclusion came in, I think one strength of our model although obviously it is not a resource base the

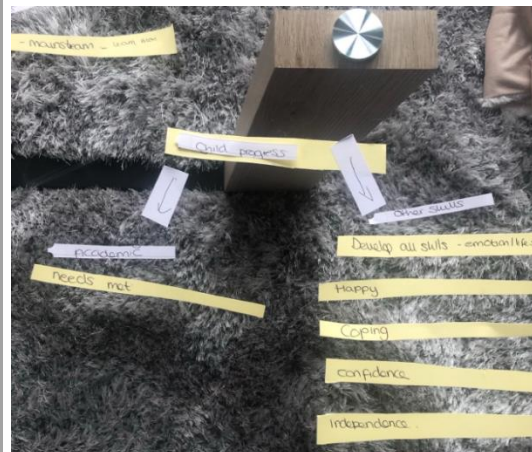
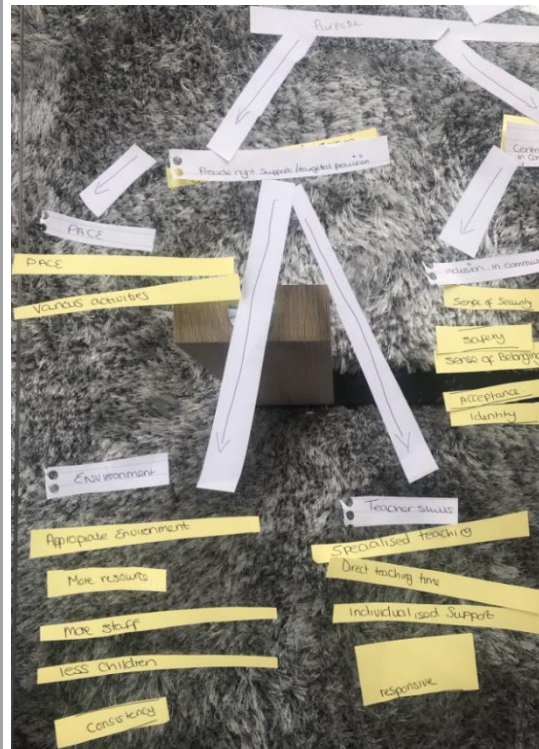
children still have a very strong link to their own classes and can make relationships with peers of all sorts of abilities and I think that benefits the children that go to the Nest and the children in the wider school as well

Interviewer: Yeah yeah

Participant #5: So if we had a resource base, I would want the resource base which allowed children to still be included in the mainstream school

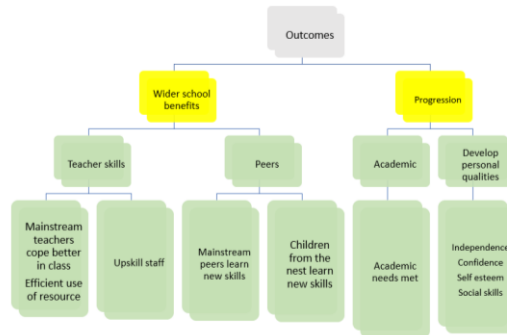
**5. Defining and naming themes**

*Themes were tallied for their presence found in Stage 5. These led to the final thematic maps found in Chapter 5.*



*These initial themes lead to the final themes (example below):*

Research question 1: What do key stake holders perceive to be the goals and overall purpose of the inhouse resource base?





## **Appendix Seven – Application for ethical review**

**Relevant extracts from my application for ethical review have been included below. A full copy can be made available upon request. Appendices have not been included but are also available upon request.**

### Section Participants

#### **Who will the participants be?**

*Describe the number of participants and important characteristics (such as age, gender, location, affiliation, level of fitness, intellectual ability etc.). Specify any inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used.*

As mentioned above, prior to the main study, I intend to pilot the interview schedule (Appendix 1). I will complete a pilot interview with a volunteer teacher, colleague or fellow trainee educational psychologist who will be independent to the research school. This will allow me to elicit his/her formative feedback on the interview content and process.

#### **Interviews**

The study will recruit a purposive sample as this research study has been driven by a mainstream school within XXXXX City Council who has an established resource base. The senior leadership of the school are keen for the research to take place as they would value the school centred research and the educational psychology service have judged it to be a relevant case study to extract learning.

The sample of participants will consist of key stakeholders from the school. The proposed key stakeholders will be: the SENCo, head teacher of the school, class teacher of a pupil who is attending the resource base for at least a term, a parent of a child who is attending the resource base for at least a term, educational psychologist for the school, speech and language therapist for the school and the communication and autism team member for the school.

Gender will not be part of the inclusion/exclusion criteria.

In terms of inclusion criteria, all participants must be have had direct experience with the resource base for at least a term.

#### **How will the participants be recruited?**

*Please state clearly how the participants will be identified, approached and recruited. Include any relationship between the investigator(s) and participant(s) (e.g. instructor-student). Please ensure that you attach a copy of any poster(s), advertisement(s) or letter(s) to be used for recruitment.*

After obtaining ethical approval for the research, I intend to approach the head teacher of the mainstream primary school to invite them to take part in this research study. An information sheet (Appendices 2, 3 and 4) will be provided outlining what will be expected of participants, should a school/individual staff member agree to take part.

Assuming the head teacher confirms the school can be involved in the study, the staff team will be informed about the nature of the project during a whole staff meeting and participant information sheets (Appendix 3) will be provided. I will ask school staff to send an information sheet (Appendix 4) to the parents of the children who attend the resource base and invite members of staff and parents to contact me either by telephone or email to express their interest in participating in the study, providing they meet the study's participant inclusion criteria. My contact details will be provided on the information sheet.

I will invite participation from any professionals who meet the inclusion criteria (for example, educational psychologist, speech and language therapist) via an information sheet (Appendix 5).

## Consent

### **What process will be used to obtain consent?**

*Describe the process that the investigator(s) will be using to obtain valid consent. If consent is not to be obtained explain why. If the participants are under the age of 16 it would usually be necessary to obtain parental consent and the process for this should be described in full, including whether parental consent will be opt-in or opt-out.*

Once initial discussions with the head teacher of the school regarding the implications of the study have taken place, freely- given informed consent will be sought from staff members, parents and professionals. The nature of the research will be clearly explained, and participant information sheets will be provided. These information sheets will contain concise details about the project and what will be expected of participants should they agree to take part in the study. The aims of the research and implications for participants will be reiterated prior to each interview and participants will be given the opportunity to ask any questions and sign consent forms (Appendix 6) on the day of the interview.

## Participant compensation, withdrawal and feedback to participants

### **What, if any, feedback will be provided to participants?**

*Explain any feedback/ information that will be provided to the participants after participation in the research (e.g. a more complete description of the purpose of the research, or access to the results of the research).*

After completing the interviews, participants will be debriefed. During the debrief, the purpose of the interview and how the data will be stored, analysed, reported and used, will be explained. It will be clarified to participants that the research will form the basis of my thesis (which will be available online) and could potentially be published in an academic journal. I will inform participants that the research findings will be shared with the wider school team, but participants' interview responses will be presented collectively, so that it will not be possible to attribute an interview response to any individual participant. Following the initial data analysis, all participants will be invited to a focus group interview, "the DWR Laboratory", to discuss any key tensions or inconsistencies within the interview.

After this has taken place, a feedback report will be sent to all participants outlining the main findings

of the research. Participants will be offered the opportunity to meet me individually or for those who prefer as a group, to discuss the research findings.

### **What arrangements will be in place for participant withdrawal?**

*Describe how the participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project, explain any consequences for the participant of withdrawing from the study and indicate what will be done with the participant's data if they withdraw.*

Participants' right to withdraw from the study will be stated explicitly in the participant information sheet, written letter and consent form (Appendices 2, 3, 4 and 5). In addition, I will orally reiterate participants' right to withdraw prior to the commencement of each interview. Withdrawal time will be limited to a maximum of two weeks from data collection, as after this time data analysis will be in progress.

There will be no consequence for participants if they choose to withdraw from the study. If a participant requests to withdraw from the project after the participant interview has taken place, but within the two-week 'window' summarised above, audio recordings and any written transcripts or notes will be deleted, and the data removed from any analysis.

As mentioned in section 3 (page 7), the second part of this study will involve the participants attending a focus group where an action plan can be produced for the school. I will explain to participants (as well as being written in the information sheet) they can opt out of the focus group, however, once the focus group has taken place their data cannot be deleted as it would be extremely difficult to identify their individual responses.

## Confidentiality/anonymity

### **Will the identity of the participants be known to the researcher?**

*Will participants be truly anonymous (i.e. their identity will not be known to the researcher)?*

Yes

No

### **In what format will data be stored?**

*Will participants' data be stored in identifiable format, or will it be anonymised or pseudo-anonymised (i.e. an assigned ID code or number will be used instead of the participant's name and a key will be kept allowing the researcher to identify a participant's data)?*

Anonymity cannot be offered as the study involves face-to-face interviews. In the participant information sheet, participants will be made aware that the research will involve this method of data collection. I will inform participants the research findings could be shared with the wider school team in a summary report, but that participants' interview responses will be presented collectively and that it will not be possible to attribute an interview response to an individual participant. Participants will also be informed that the final write up of the research project will form the basis of my doctoral research thesis which will later be available online (I will also explain that the research may be

published at a later date). Participants will be made aware that their names will not appear in the final report, nor will any other identifying information. Participants will be told that excerpts from interview transcripts will be included in the final write-up of the research project, provided there are no risks that quotations would render participants identifiable.

Within the audio-recorded data and written transcripts the school and individual participants will be labelled with a code (pseudonym) that only the researcher will know. A record of which code applies to which participant will be stored separately from the data in a password-protected file on the UoB BEAR DataShare to ensure that data are stored securely and can be withdrawn on request. As such, the data are confidential but not anonymous.

Confidentiality may need to be breached if a disclosure were made which suggests that the participant or others are in danger of harm or which indicates illegal activity. In the event of issues around safeguarding or child protection arising from an interview, local authority and school safeguarding/whistleblowing procedures would be followed

#### **Will participants' data be treated as confidential?**

*Will participants' data be treated as confidential (i.e. they will not be identified in any outputs from the study and their identity will not be disclosed to any third party)?*

Yes

No

*If you have answered no to the question above, meaning that participants' data will not be treated as confidential (i.e. their data and/or identities may be revealed in the research outputs or otherwise to third parties), please provide further information and justification for this:*

The participants' data will be treated as confidential. However, there is a risk that individual participants could be identified through the research, particularly considering the small sample size. This risk will be minimised by ensuring that the names of any individuals, organisations or geographical locations are not reported in the written presentation of findings. Whilst information about the participants (e.g. gender, role, teaching experience) and the school (e.g. size, OFSTED rating, inclusion policies) will be reported, this information will not be linked to individual participants to ensure that this information could not serve to identify participants and their responses to individuals who know them. Finally, as noted above, direct quotations will not be used where their content or wording constituted any risks to participants identifiability.

## Storage, access and disposal of data

**How and where will the data (both paper and electronic) be stored, what arrangements will be in place to keep it secure and who will have access to it?**

*Please note that for long-term storage, data should usually be held on a secure University of Birmingham IT system, for example BEAR (see <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/it/teams/infrastructure/research/bear/index.aspx>).*

The audio-recorded data and written transcripts will be labelled with a code (pseudonym) that only the researcher will know. A record of which code applies to which participant will be stored separately from the data in a password-protected file on UoB BEAR DataShare to ensure that data are stored securely and can be withdrawn on request.

### **Data retention and disposal**

*The University usually requires data to be held for a minimum of 10 years to allow for verification. Will you retain your data for at least 10 years?*

Yes   
No

*If data will be held for less than 10 years, please provide further justification:*

N/A

*What arrangements will be in place for the secure disposal of data?*

A Data Management Plan (DMP) will be put in place for this research. Immediately after each participant interview, the electronically audio-recorded data will be transferred from the audio-recording device to a password-protected folder on UoB's BEAR DataShare. The audio files will then be erased from the audio-recorder. Electronic transcripts and notes will also be held in a password-protected folder on UoB BEAR DataShare. Printed transcripts, written notes and consent forms will be electronically scanned into and stored in on the UoB BEAR DataShare. In accordance with university research policy, data will be stored on UoB BEAR DataShare for 10 years after completion of the project. A 10-year expiry date will be set for the electronic data stored on UOB BEAR DataShare. Any paper records will also be destroyed after 10 years.

## Risks and benefits/significance

### **Benefits/significance of the research**

*Outline the potential significance and/or benefits of the research*

#### **Benefits**

As only a limited number of recent studies have been undertaken in this area, I expect that the

current study will make a useful addition to understanding of the process of SEND inclusion, and specifically resource provision. To my knowledge, this is the first study in the UK to use socio-cultural activity theory to explore different subject perspectives of resource bases. Moreover, by involving diverse stakeholders such as teachers, parents and professionals as participants in the research, the study will serve to bring the irrelatively unacknowledged 'voices' into the debate.

At a local level, it is expected this study will have school-wide benefits by analysing the resource base within the setting and creating an action plan for the resource base to be further-developed, in relation to teaching children with SEND and the encountered facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of these children. It is anticipated that in stimulating discussion and encouraging reflection upon current practice, both the process and the findings of the current research could potentially effect some positive systemic change within the setting.

### **Risks of the research**

*Outline any potential risks (including risks to research staff, research participants, other individuals not involved in the research, the environment and/or society and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap.) **Please ensure that you include any risks relating to overseas travel and working in overseas locations as part of the study, particularly if the work will involve travel to/working in areas considered unsafe and/or subject to travel warnings from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (see <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>). Please also be aware that the University insurer, UMAL, offers access to RiskMonitor Traveller, a service which provides 24/7/365 security advice for all travellers and you are advised to make use of this service (see <https://umal.co.uk/travel/pre-travel-advice/>).***

***The outlining of the risks in this section does not circumvent the need to carry out and document a detailed Health and Safety risk assessment where appropriate – see below.***

### **Potential Risks**

The British Psychological Society (2018) and British Educational Research Association (2018) ethical guidelines were consulted when taking into consideration potential risks to the researcher, research participants and other individuals not involved in the research. The measures that will be taken to minimise these risks are detailed below along with explicit reference to the ethical responsibilities outlined in the British Educational Research Association (2018) ethical guidelines.

### Consent and Right to Withdraw

It could be ethically challenging to undertake 'insider' research within the local authority in which I am undertaking an extended supervised professional practice placement, and it is therefore important that I put clear strategies in place to mitigate any potential ethical or methodological ambiguity. Although there are benefits associated with 'insider' research such as, an in-depth understanding of the organisation, easy access, shared rapport and reference with participants, this may potentially lead participants to experience subtle pressure to take part in the research due to social pressure (Johnson & Clarke, 2003). Furthermore, they may provide more, less or different information than they would normally disclose to outsiders (McConnell-Henry et al., 2010).

To reduce such risks, I will remind participants of their ongoing right to withdraw from the project and re-emphasise that participation is entirely voluntary. I will also be fastidious in safeguarding confidentiality, maintaining a clear differentiation between my identity as a full-time post graduate

researcher of the University of Birmingham and from my identity as a trainee educational psychologist undertaking a placement with Birmingham Educational Psychology Service.

#### Transparency

To minimize any risks of a potential power imbalance between me and the research participants I will address any issues of participants feeling coerced or pressurised into taking part in the project by reminding them of their rights to withdraw their fully informed consent and reiterating that their data will remain confidential. I will establish rapport with the participants prior to the commencement of the interview, and during the interview I will ensure questions are asked in a friendly and informal manner so that participants feel able to express their true perspectives.

#### Harm arising from participation in research

Physical risk of harm to me as the researcher is minimal as the interviews will be conducted in the school setting. If a safeguarding concern arises I will follow the local authorities safe guarding procedure

([https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/13434/model\\_safeguarding\\_and\\_child\\_protection\\_policy\\_for\\_education\\_2019\\_-\\_2020](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/13434/model_safeguarding_and_child_protection_policy_for_education_2019_-_2020)) . I intend to take steps to prevent evoking distress for all those involved and will operate within an ethic of respect throughout the course of the research study. Participants will be debriefed after interviews in order to afford them the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the research and to help identify any concerns. If I sense that a participant is becoming distressed, the interview will be sensitively adjourned. If the participant wished to access further support, I would signpost the participant to professional support from a colleague or senior member of staff in school, or to relevant external services and agencies. All participants will be provided with my contact details and those of my university research supervisors, should they wish to ask questions or make a complaint.

#### Privacy and Data Storage.

I will request the sole use of a quiet room for the duration of the interviews to minimise environmental distractions for myself and the research participants and to ensure that the interviews are not overheard.

There is a risk that a participant may make a disclosure which raises safeguarding concerns. If this occurs, school procedures will be followed. Participants will be made aware of the limits to confidentiality via the participant information sheet (Appendices 2,3 and 4).

## Appendix Eight: Ethical application approval

Application for Ethical Review ERN\_20-0501



Samantha Waldron (Research Support Services)

Wed 15/07/2020, 09:07

Sue Morris (Department of Disability Inclusion and Special Needs); Francesca Weir (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT)  Reply a

Inbox

 Action Items

Dear Mrs Morris,

**Re: "A socio-cultural activity theory analysis of a primary school's in-house resource base"  
Application for Ethical Review ERN\_20-0501**

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project, which was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee.

On behalf of the Committee, I confirm that this study now has full ethical approval.

I would like to remind you that any substantive changes to the nature of the study as described in the Application for Ethical Review, and/or any adverse events occurring during the study should be promptly brought to the Committee's attention by the Principal Investigator and may necessitate further ethical review.

Please also ensure that the relevant requirements within the University's Code of Practice for Research and the information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages (available at <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Links-and-Resources.aspx>) are adhered to and referred to in any future applications for ethical review. It is now a requirement on the revised application (<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-Forms.aspx>) to confirm that this guidance has been consulted and is understood, and that it has been taken into account when completing application for ethical review.

Please be aware that whilst Health and Safety (H&S) issues may be considered during the ethical review process, you are still required to follow the University's guidance on H&S and to ensure that H&S risk assessments have been carried out as appropriate. For further information about this, please contact your School H&S representative or the University's H&S Unit at [healthandsafety@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@contacts.bham.ac.uk).

Kind regards,

**Ms Sam Waldron**  
Research Ethics Officer  
Research Support Group  
C Block Dome (room 137)



## Appendix Nine: Extract from the reflective research log

Reflection on 27/07/20; am I being viewed as a trainee EP and part of the local authority - will this limit the data provided by stakeholders?

- The stakeholders made reference to me knowing the school well in my role as a trainee EP often referring to the processes within the school/wider council and the children.
- Discussed with CS/SM; how could this have been eliminated. It was discussed that it could not be completely eliminated, but this would need to be considered as a research bias.

Reflection regarding participants and ownership over the action plan on 18.01.2021

- School had asked for the headteacher to attend the DWR Laboratory to be involved in the action plan. However, upon reflection and discussion with research supervisors it was felt that there would be a power dynamic as the headteacher had not taken part in Phase One data collection and perhaps this may impact on the participants as they may not feel that they could be as open and honest throughout the DWR Laboratory process.
- The headteacher had previously been invited to participate in Phase One data collection, however due to time constraints was unable to commit. Therefore, it was discussed with the headteacher and we agreed that she would not attend but the action plan would be fed back to her.

## Appendix Ten: Extract from the contemporaneous notes from the DWR

Facilitator more complex needs. Tussells – best place for them. Communication. Competence.  
Purpose – person centred –

Participant #3 person centred – difficulty putting curriculum together. Saw some of the hub children's work. **Partnership – visiting when possible.**

Participant #6 **SEND review – talk about the children going into the hub** – shorter – teacher to be in the review –

Participant #3 SEND team on MS teams – contains all the documents – mechanism that works as a school.

Facilitator what does it actually mean.

Participant #5 Hub has deskilled teachers – specialised approaches.

Facilitator what does it look like.

Participant #3 very good at asking for help. **Subject policy – need SEND section.** Co-construction and shared resources

Participant #1 personalised. Co-constructed. Mechanisms. Adult learning theory. Use of video.

Participant #5 incidental conversations and some teaches struggle more than others. Systems.

Facilitator next steps

Participant #3 CPOMS. **Provision mapping software.** Better way of communicating including parents. Linked up virtually. Photos. Has capacity to be shared with class teacher and hub teacher. Website.

Participant #6 Participant #3 to communicate with teachers. Everyone in the hub is talented. Sam to be communicating. Empowering the rest of the hub staff.

Facilitator how do you enhance that partnership – 2 way transfer of information, knowledge. What system of mechanism could we try. So much to offer each other.

Participant #5 **enhanced transition.** When the most important conversations take place.

Participant #6 **clearer on who has responsibility for what – practical stuff and how does it work.** Contiuums being on line. Teachers check on teams. Inclusion. **School- school diary.** Extra work but could be really helpful.

*Person centred. Partnership. Mechanisms or systems to support. Proposed operationalism of ethos in practice.*