

**Where do Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs
Transfer to at Change of Phase from Primary to Secondary School and
How do Parents Choose Which Provision is Most Suitable for their Child**

By

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Abstract

This is the first volume of a two volume thesis; volume two is comprised of five professional practice reports. Volume one contains a critical literature review paper and a full length report of an empirical study to examine the decisions of parents' of children with SEN when choosing a secondary provision for their child and the factors that influence this. The review presents the results of a literature scoping exercise looking at two linked areas: educational provision for pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs in England and the decisions parents of these children make when choosing a secondary placement to send their child to at change of phase. The research paper uses a multiple case study design to explore this issue in the context of one LA by interviewing parents of children with the same needs identified on their statement. All these pupils attended their local primary school in year 6 but then transferred to differing provision: mainstream high; resource provision within mainstream; or special school. The purpose in selecting pupils with the same identified needs and educational histories is to attempt to explore other factors that might be playing an important, influencing role in the different outcomes: parents choosing different types of provision. Socio-cultural and activity theory is used as a framework in the design and data gathering phase of the research and subsequently to discuss and explore the results.

The study found that in the case of the two children who went to a mainstream school, parents had only visited one school, the school chosen, and they felt that neither the child's primary school nor other professionals had influenced them in making their choice. The parents of the two children who had transferred to a special school, had both visited two different special schools on the advice of the child's primary school; but neither felt that they were really free to make the choice that they wanted. The parents of the only child who

transferred to a resourced provision, described the process of obtaining a place for him as a battle.

The concluding chapter considers the implications of this study for future research and practice in Educational Psychology. The suggested implications are that, where the choice of provision at change of phase is undecided by the parents or where a special school placement is indicated, the Educational Psychologist should check with parents if they have considered and visited a mainstream school as well as a special school. It is also suggested that there maybe an implication for SENCo's in primary schools around having a clear understanding of the rights of parents to choose a mainstream provision and understanding the complexity of need that a special school should be providing for.

Chapter 1: Introductory Chapter

The work contained within this volume forms the first of two distinct volumes which combine to meet the assessed written requirements of the Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology. Volume one comprises two research reports, the first of which is a comprehensive critique of the literature relevant to the agreed research proposal. The second is an account of a substantive original research study. The structure of this volume is laid down in the research handbook for the Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology; both chapter 2, the literature review, and chapter 3, the research report are intended to be 'stand alone' papers. The research paper, therefore, has its own, much briefer, summary of the pertinent literature. This results in some unavoidable duplication within the text of the thesis.

The context for the literature review and research paper presented here was a request by the employing Educational Psychology Service (EPS) of the researcher to explore an issue raised by a review of Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision within the Local Authority (LA). This issue concerned the continuity of inclusion for pupils with a statement of SEN during the secondary phase, following attendance at a resourced provision within a mainstream primary school.

More broadly, there was also a concern within the EPS that there was a lack of clarity around the needs of pupils who were being admitted to each of the different types of provision available on secondary transfer: mainstream school; resourced provision within mainstream; or special school. This was also echoed in the SEN review: 'At present there is no clear rationale that distinguishes what a Resourced Provision can offer that is different from a special school' (Cambridge Education, 2008, p.16).

However, the issue of identifying pupils' needs in order to establish admissions criteria has to be considered within a context of parental choice. Parents of children with SEN have had the right to choose the school they would like their child to go to increasingly underpinned by legislation (1981 Education Act; 1993 Education Act; Code of Practice, 1994, DfE; 1995 Disability Discrimination Act; 1996 Education Act; 2001 SEN and Disability Act; Code of Practice, 2001, DfES). There is evidence in the literature to suggest that this is having an impact on the pattern of placement of pupils with SEN (Parsons et al., 2009). This may sometimes be resulting in pupils with very similar needs being educated in mainstream school, resourced provision or special school settings as a result of parents exercising this right. There is a key difference for the parents of children with a statement of SEN, in comparison to parents of children who do not have a statement when making a choice of secondary provision. This is that the decision is often influenced by advice received from the child's primary school and other professionals, particularly at the annual review of their statement (Bagley et al., 2001). Additionally, these parents may be making their decision based on a different set of considerations than parents of children without a statement when choosing a school for their child. Thus, parents of children without a statement of SEN may consider the following in relation to choosing a school: its academic reputation; if it is where the child wants to go; if they already have siblings who are attending; and if it is convenient to travel to etc (e.g. West et al., 1998; Bagley et al., 2001). In contrast, parents of children with a statement of SEN may be making the decision based on other considerations related to the child's individual needs, the level of support on offer and the school's perceived inclusivity (e.g. Bagley and Woods, 1998; Jenkinson, 1998; O'Conner, 2006; Parsons et al., 2009). Also, the extent to which the child's primary school and other professionals impact on the decisions these parents are making needs to be considered. Finally, there is also evidence that the

policies around provision within individual LAs can impact on the destinations of pupils with SEN depending on the range of provision available to choose from, so that in some LAs the level of inclusion is much higher than in others (Croll and Moses, 2000).

An original intention of the research had been to look at the question of where pupils attending primary resourced provision transferred to at change of phase, setting this within the broader context of secondary placement for all pupils with a statement of SEN. An initial review of literature on inclusion trends for pupils with a statement of SEN was therefore undertaken and an examination of the statistical data held by the LA on a specific cohort of these pupils was carried out (see Appendix 6). However, an increasing awareness of the importance of parental choice for children with a statement of SEN led to an extension of the literature search to investigate how much research had been done in this area. This literature search focused on identifying what research methodologies had been used, what the findings of previous research suggested and what the gaps in knowledge were; the results of the literature review are presented in chapter two of this volume.

In designing the research paper presented in the second half of this volume a decision was made to take a different perspective than that originally conceived (i.e. the destinations of pupils attending resourced primary schools). Instead, it looks more broadly at the decisions parents of children with a statement of SEN are making, and what informs these, when choosing a secondary placement for their child. To do this, a multiple case design was selected. There are no studies reported in the literature where this approach has been used; it offers the potential for gathering rich qualitative data which is guided by a theoretical framework developed in advance.

In writing the research papers contained in this volume, the guidelines set by the University of Birmingham have been followed; however, it is hoped to submit these papers to the British

Journal of Special Education for consideration. The length of research articles for this journal is set at 4,000 to 6,000 words, therefore the length of these papers in their current form - 8,800 and 8, 500 for the literature review and research paper respectively will require substantial editing. In addition, the guidelines request that articles are 'written in plain English in order to be accessible to a diverse readership. It may therefore be necessary to make editing decisions in respect of some of the language and content of the research paper in particular.

Both the papers will be disseminated within the LA where the researcher is employed in two public domain briefing sessions to the Educational Psychology Service and other personnel within the LA for whom they may be of interest and relevance. The presentations for these briefings are included in this volume (see Appendix 17 and 18).

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

Abstract

This review presents the results of a literature scoping exercise looking at two linked areas: educational provision for pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs in England and the decisions parents of these children make when choosing a secondary placement to send their child to at change of phase. The review reports on studies that were conducted in other areas of the UK as well as in Australia and the USA because there has been only a limited amount of research into this area conducted in an English context. In addition some of the papers do not discuss school choice specifically but cover related themes. The study concludes that while the overall trend is towards an increasing number of pupils with Special Educational Needs being educated in mainstream high schools there are variations reported in the literature particularly related to different Local Authorities and the specific nature of the Special Educational Need. The studies looking at parent's decision making identify a number of broad factors that impact on this: the age of the child, the nature and degree of the Special Educational Needs; the socio-economic status of the parents; the child's experience of inclusion in the primary phase; the secondary schools philosophy, capacity and perceived commitment to SEN; the nearness and convenience of travel to the school; beliefs about teacher's skills, knowledge, capacity and attitudes; and the influence of other people, for example family, friends and professionals.

Introduction

This literature review focuses on educational provision for pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) in England and the interplay of factors implicated in the decisions parents make in relation to this. Specifically, it is interested in the number of these pupils who, having been included in mainstream primary schools, transfer to either a special school or mainstream secondary at change of phase. Following this, the factors that influence parents' decision making when choosing a school are considered. The catalyst and background for the study was a recommendation that came out of a review of SEN provision within the employing Local Authority (LA) of the researcher:

‘The LA should seek to investigate further the contention of Resourced Provision Head teachers and Head teachers of special schools, that at secondary transfer, the majority of children transfer from mainstream provision to a special school setting.’
(Cambridge Education, 2008, p.19).

In order to set this in context a search of literature and government data containing statistical information relating to numbers of pupils with Statements of SEN was carried out. It looked specifically at the placement of these pupils in England, Wales and the UK, over approximately the last thirty years. This is followed by a discussion of the literature on parental decision making with respect to choice of provision for children with SEN. The review is structured in sections related to these main themes (following an initial discussion about the importance of considering parental decision making):

Section 1: Inclusion Trends for Pupils with a Statement of SEN.

Section 2: Parental decision making regarding school placement for a child with SEN.

(Appendix 1 provides an explanation of the search rationale and a classification of search terms; Appendix 2 provides an overview of the search method).

Why is it Important to Consider Parental Decision Making?

Any attempt to understand current and future trends in educational placement for pupils with SEN must take into account the decisions that parents are making. These decisions are shaped and influenced by a system in which policy and rhetoric suggest that parents can choose from a range of options moving from full, mainstream inclusion through to special school provision. However, it can be seen that, in many respects, this runs contrary to the interests and constraints, either real or perceived, of many mainstream institutions. In addition, within the literature there have been few studies, in an English context, that look specifically at parents' decision making when choosing a secondary placement for these pupils (Bagley and Woods, 1998) (see Appendix 3 for a fuller discussion of the importance of considering parental decision making).

Section 1: Inclusion Trends for Pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs

In order to try to capture the current position with respect to pupils with a Statement of SEN and their placement it is helpful to have an overview of the number of pupils involved, the percentage they represent of the total pupil population, the percentage being educated in each type of provision and how these figures have changed over time. A cut off date of 1981 was used for the literature to be searched to coincide with the 1981 Education Act.

National Trends

Russell (2008) identifies a large increase in the number of disabled children in the UK aged 0-16 from 1975 to 2002 (see Table 1) and suggests that this group will also include the majority of children with SEN. Evans and Lunt (1994) note an increase in the proportion of pupils with statements in their surveys of English Local Education Authorities (LEAs) over a three year

period, starting at 2% in 1990; they predicted that this trend would continue. This prediction appears to have been borne out because in 1999, 3% of all pupils in schools in England had statements of SEN (DCSF, 2009) (see Table 1). Cole (2004) suggests that with the introduction of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Discrimination act (2001) and the revised SEN Code of Practice (2001) changes have now taken place with a view to reducing statements and educating the majority of these children in mainstream schools. Since January 2004 the DCSF have been collecting data on SEN as part of the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) (DfES, 2003). The PLASC gathers information on the numbers and percentages of pupils with statements in total and in relation to the different types of educational provision they are attending. The PLASC data shows that the number of pupils with statements of SEN is gradually beginning to reduce (See Table 1) (DCSF, 2009).

When discussing National trends in relation to children with a Statement of SEN it is also important to bear in mind that, as well as changes in relation to the proportion of children they represent within the larger school aged population, this is not a static group in terms of composition and the numbers also reflect macro fluctuations in that larger population. For example, Head and Pirrie (2007) in discussing the term 'Special Educational Needs' suggest that 'the spectrum of need is likely to widen still further in the wake of advances in medical science' (p.91) which has implications when trying to define this group of pupils as some may have mild, temporary support needs while others will have far more complex, permanent needs; however the term SEN is used to describe all these pupils. Even when sub-groups within the SEN population are identified, (e.g. moderate or severe learning difficulties) it needs to be remembered that these are administrative labels which refer to a primary difficulty, despite the fact that many children with SEN have more than one area of difficulty. In addition, terms are not static and can be replaced, so, for example, schools which provided

for pupils with moderate learning difficulties are increasingly being re defined as schools for complex needs (Male and Rayner, 2007).

In relation to the educational placement of pupils with SEN a number of studies quote government statistics and these are summarised in Table 1 below (Evans and Lunt, 1994; Croll and Moses, 2000; Male and Rayner, 2007). All these studies point to an increase in the number of pupils with Statements being educated in mainstream schools. When interpreting these data it is important to note that although the number of pupils with statements in mainstream schools *was* increasing, the number of statements being written was *also* increasing; this, along with the return of pupils placed out of the authority, resulted in the numbers of pupils in special schools remaining fairly static. By 1997, however, this had begun to change and Norwich (2002), reports that the percentage of pupils aged 5-15 in special schools in England had fallen and continued to fall over the years 1997-2001.

Differences between LAs

Norwich (2002) identifies that national data for the period 1997-2001 shows a fall in the overall percentage of pupils placed in special schools, however 'this conceals increases in special school placements in 41 out of 98 LEAs in England over the same period' (p.6). In addition there were large variations between authorities so that in 2001, Manchester had the highest percentage of pupils in special schools at 2.64 in comparison to Newham which had the smallest with just 0.35. Moses and Croll (1998), (cited in Croll and Moses, 2000, p.179) find a similar pattern: for LAs in England in 1996, 20% had less than 1% of children in special schools while 7% had more than 2%. Evans and Lunt (1994) in their longitudinal survey of English LEAs report an increase in the number of pupils in special schools in 50% of their sample but also an increase in the number of pupils with statements in mainstream

schools in 86%; however, they are not clear about the time scale and additionally the size of their sample was different from year to year. They go on to note that there was an increase in pupils who were being given Statements of SEN overall.

Author / Year of publication	Country	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Increase or decrease
Russell, P. (2008)	UK	(1975): 476,000 Disabled children			(2002) 772,000 Disabled children	Increase
Male, D. & Rayner, M. (2007)	England and Wales		(1986): 35,800 pupils with a <i>statement of SEN in mainstream schools</i>	(1991): 70,900 pupils with a <i>statement of SEN in mainstream schools</i>		Increase
Evans & Lunt (1994)	England			Percentage of <i>pupils with statements</i> : 1990 2% 1991 2.2% 1992 2.4%		Increase
DCSF (2009)	England			(1999) Over 248,000 <i>pupils with statements of SEN (3% of all pupils)</i>		Increase
PLASC data: DCSF (2009)	England				Number and percentage of pupils with statement: 2005: 242,580 = 2.9% 2006: 236,750=2.9% 2007: 229,110=2.8% 2008: 223,610=2.8% 2009: 221,670=2.7%	Decrease
Male, D. & Rayner, M. (2007)	England and Wales		(1981): 1530 <i>Special schools</i>	(1991): 1393 <i>Special schools</i>		Decrease
Croll, P & Moses, D. (2000)	England		(1982): 1.72% <i>pupils in special schools</i>	(1996): 1.40% <i>pupils in special schools</i>		Decrease
Norwich, B. (2002)	England			(1997): 1.39% <i>pupils in special schools</i>	(2001): 1.32% <i>pupils in special schools</i>	Decrease
DCSF (2009)	England			1994-1999 <i>pupils in special schools</i> fell 99,000-97,700		Decrease

Table 1: Summary of the statistical data relating to national trends discussed in the literature and contained in government reports

Differences between Primary and Secondary Education

The PLASC data for England shows that pupils with a statement of SEN in 2009 represent 1.4% of all pupils in mainstream primary schools and 2% of pupils in secondary schools (DCSF, 2009). However, these figures mask a great deal of variation depending on the type of need and while some needs show an increase others show a decrease: so, for example, while the number of pupils with MLD stands at 7,390 in primary schools and 14,120 in secondary, the number of pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) is 2,740 in primary schools but only 1,800 in secondary (see Table 2 below).

Type of need	Primary Schools: number with a statement	Secondary Schools: number with a statement	Increase or decrease
Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)	2,460	9,210	Increase
Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)	7,390	14,120	Increase
Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD)	7,290	10,020	Increase
Visual Impairment (VI)	1,330	1,630	Increase
Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)	2,740	1,800	Decrease
Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)	1,010	260	Decrease
Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)	13,890	9,150	Decrease
Hearing Impairment (HI)	2,720	2,160	Decrease
Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)	200	120	Decrease
Physical Disability (PD)	5,480	5,080	Decrease
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	11,630	10,100	Decrease
Other difficulty/disability (OTH)	1,780	1,550	Decrease
Total number of pupils with a statement of SEN	57,920	65,200	Increase
Total pupil population:	4,074,890	3,217,090	Decrease

Table 2: Numbers of pupils with statements of SEN identified by their primary need in mainstream primary and secondary schools in 2009, DCSF (2009)

When interpreting the figures in Table 2, however, it is important to note the difference in overall pupil numbers in primary compared to secondary, any increase or decrease needs to be offset against this; in addition, there is no breakdown of figures into primary and secondary for special schools in the PLASC data, so it is not possible to see if there are corresponding increases or decreases in this population. Another factor to consider when interpreting these data is that for statements of need, such as MLD and SpLD, the pupils may be being managed at school action plus for a number of years while in primary school and only later receiving a statement, which would produce a rise in the figures with age; in fact numbers are given for pupils recorded at school action plus, and for pupils with these needs the numbers do appear to support this suggestion. While the figures do show that, overall, in 2009 the percentage of pupils with a statement of SEN is higher in mainstream secondary schools than primary there may be wide variations depending on the nature of the SEN.

It seems clear from these data, which look at *all* pupils with a Statement of SEN, that many pupils are being included in both mainstream primary and secondary schools. When looking at difference between primary and secondary, particularly where more pupils are attending a special school in one phase relative to the other, it is important to be clear about the needs of the pupils under investigation; the level of inclusion for groups of pupils with specific identified needs, for example SLD, is unlikely to be representative of the overall inclusion trends for *all* pupils with a Statement of SEN.

Differences depending on nature of difficulty

As we have seen, as well as gathering information on total numbers and percentages of pupils with a Statement of SEN, the PLASC also gathers information in relation to the different types of SEN (see Appendix 4) (DfES, 2003). Table 2 shows the overall figures for pupils

who have a statement placing them into one of the categories identified on the PLASC. There is some discussion in the literature about the nature of pupils' difficulties and the provision they are likely to be placed in. Cole (2004) suggests that the nature of special schools is changing because they are providing for more pupils with behavioural difficulties while children with physical difficulties are tending to go into mainstream schools. Croll and Moses (2001) also suggest that there has been success with the inclusion of physically disabled pupils and with pupils with sensory impairments; however, none of these authors provide supporting evidence for these assertions. A problem with interpreting this data is that it is discussing the nature of the difficulty and not the degree. Although in England, data in relation to learning difficulties is differentiated into MLD, SLD and PMLD there are still issues with interpretation for both these and other categories of SEN. When considering the PLASC data it is important to be aware that it only gives the pupils' greatest primary need; it does not tell us if the pupil has secondary needs or the degree of their difficulties. There is evidence in the literature that these differences can have an impact on the likely placement of a pupil with a statement. In a study involving a sample of 101 pupils with MLD, Norwich and Kelly (2004) found that of those pupils with MLD only, 75% were attending mainstream schools while only 25% were in a special school, however; where pupils had one other additional need the percentage of pupils in special schools increased to 51% and where there were two additional needs it rose to 71%. However, it should be noted that this is a relatively small sample selected from just one county LEA and as noted by Croll and Moses (2000) there is a wide variation in the numbers of pupils included in mainstream schools between different authorities, therefore, had the study been carried out in another authority the figures may have looked quite different.

Section 2: Parental Decision Making in Respect of School Placement for a Child with SEN

General Overview

Bagley and Woods (1998) trace the development of school choice policies from the 1980 Education Act, which gave parents the right to express a preference over the secondary school their child attended, through to the 1988 Education Reform Act which relaxed admission limits set by LEAs and allowed open enrolment to schools; this was intended to increase and extend parents' opportunity to choose their child's school provision. During the same period the opportunities to express a choice for parents of children with a Statement of SEN also increased but with qualifications. The 1981 Education Act required LEAs, in issuing a statement, to take into account the wishes of the parents when naming a school and wherever possible to select a mainstream school (supporting the principle endorsed by Warnock (DES, 1978) of integrated/inclusive provision for pupils with a statement); however, it did not allow parents the final decision.

The 1988 Act introduced a conceptualisation of an 'internal market' in education, thereby freeing schools from 'the bureaucracy of the local education authority (LEA), by allowing them to manage their own budgets and personnel' (Evans and Lunt, 1994, p.1), and at the same time allowing parents to 'choose' which school their child went to: schools would have to compete for pupils and those that did well would become popular and oversubscribed, while those that performed poorly would lose 'customers' and even be forced to close. Evans and Lunt (1994) suggest that:

'The notion of equality of educational opportunity has been sacrificed for a notion of 'diversity' in a system in which parents can 'express a preference', but where over-subscribed schools have the power to choose pupils and less popular schools have to accept those pupils whom other schools have rejected' (p.3).

The authors believe that this system seriously disadvantages pupils with SEN. Gorard et al. (2003), discussing the same issue, conclude that 'it can be argued that the nature of the market as such is that it increases the rewards for the already privileged strata of societies, and reduces them for everyone else' (p.15). Dobson (2008) describes the operation of this system of school choice as a 'quasi-market' which is based on three assumptions: firstly that it provides parents with a choice of schools, secondly that it offers children the opportunity to attend a school that is appropriate to their interests and ability, and thirdly that it promotes school improvement.

Following the 1993 Education Act and the introduction of the SEN Code of Practice in 1994, LEAs were expected to inform parents of the different types of ordinary mainstream and special schools in the area so that they could make an informed decision about their child's education. The LEA was expected to comply with parental wishes but with limiting provisions (DFE, 1994, p.24-25). The Act extended the right to choose a school for parents of statemented children however 'that choice remains qualified and subject to professional verification' (Bagley and Woods, 1998, p.766).

Cole (2004) identifies that the statement process led many parents to seek funding so that their child could be educated in a mainstream school but suggests that many LAs are reluctant to put funding into mainstream schools via statements when they are already funding special schools; the third provision of the Code of Practice (1994), (that placing a child in a particular school would be an inefficient use of resources) can be used by LAs to argue their position. However, given the large numbers of pupils with statements in mainstream schools today this seems unlikely to be still the case for most LAs, except perhaps for pupils with more complex needs who they may feel are better provided for in special schools where specialised resources and staff skills can be pooled. Evans and Lunt (1994) suggest that the 'notion of a

continuum' is flawed to a degree because at the point where a child receives a statement, or is transferred to a special school, the access to and ensuring of resources is actioned; this has implications for both parental choice and equity as some pupils may receive the relative protection of a statement or specialist provision while others may be left to cope in a system which is biased towards valuing academic achievement and in which 'those with special needs are likely to require considerable enhancement or 'value added' as inducement for admission to a school' (Evans and Lunt, 1994, p.9).

With the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 and the introduction of the revised SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) there is a noticeable shift in position, 'an LEA must ensure that a child is educated in a mainstream school' (DfES, 2001, p.61) except if it is incompatible with the efficient education of other children or it is not what the parents want. Morgan (2005) however, disputes this notion of parental choice and suggests that it is still subject to professional adjudication. She takes a radical perspective on the special education system and school choice and uses Foucault's (1977) analysis of disciplinary power to explore what she perceives to be a paradox in the rhetoric of 'choice'. Parents of disabled children are perceived to be under the surveillance of the state to the extent that the statementing and review process of the Code of Practice can be likened to an examination whereby the child is scrutinized and documented. This power relationship, which puts professionals in the dominant position, extends to the placing of children in particular schools, rather than allowing parents freedom to choose: 'Education administrators take on the role of expert and manoeuvre parents, steering them in the direction of particular educational settings' (Morgan, 2005, p.336). Morgan (2005) uses Foucauldian discourse analysis of semi-structured interviews with SEN administrators as evidence to support her conclusions; however, such an approach, while providing a valuable perspective on the way that

administrative power can operate largely unchallenged, does not recognise the constraints of providing education to meet the needs of all children when resources are not limitless. In addition, while SEN administrators are perceived by Morgan (2005) to be reinforcing a government agenda towards inclusion, the evidence presented above relating to variations in levels of inclusion in different LAs suggests that this may be operating differentially at the level of individual authorities.

It appears that despite the increased rights afforded to parents of children with SEN through the legislation, the interests of the quasi market and professional discourses may be working in opposition to this; through an exploration of the literature on parental choice and decision making I hope to surface those themes which illustrate these tensions and define the direction for future exploration.

Specific Factors Identified in the Literature that Influence the Choices of Parents of SEN Children

Bagley and Woods (1998) identify two value perspectives underpinning school choice: instrumental-academic and intrinsic-personal/social. They identify that the dominant value perspective for parents of children with SEN is the intrinsic- personal/social and the choice of school is therefore oriented around the child as a person. There are a number of child variables which are discussed in the literature with relation to their impact on parents' views and choices about school provision, and we begin by discussing these.

Child Variables

Age of the Child

Leyser and Kirk (2004), reporting on findings from a survey of 437 parents of students with disabilities in the USA, found significant differences in the views of parents of children in different age groups (0-5, 6-12, 13-18+); the parents of children in the 0-5 and 12-16 age

groups expressed significantly more positive views regarding mainstream teachers ability and level of teacher/parent support in mainstream schools than the parents of children in the 13-18+ age group. However, when asked about their child's current placement: if they were being included in a mainstream school full time or part time, or if they were attending a special school full time, the authors report that 147 of the parents did not know if their child was or was not being included in a mainstream school. This latter group gave stronger support for inclusion, but, if they were unaware of whether their child was included or not, their understanding of what this means in practice seems uncertain. An Australian study by Jenkinson (1998), reporting on findings from 193 completed questionnaires sent to parents of children with disabilities, found that the tendency for parents to choose a mainstream school for their child initially but to later move them to a special school was related to questions by parents of the appropriateness of mainstream provision for their children at secondary age because of a perception that the social and academic gaps were beginning to widen as the children were getting older. This was particularly the case for pupils with moderate and severe disabilities, where parents were choosing to move their child to a special school because the acquisition of independent living skills was seen to become increasingly important:

‘Parents may integrate their children into mainstream schools at primary level, then change their goals at the end of primary school as they begin to confront the reality that full participation will not necessarily achieve the alternative goal of independent living’ Jenkinson (1998, p.201).

However, the context of this research may have little in common with England today: analysis of the PLASC data above shows nearly twice the number of pupils with MLD in high schools in comparison to primary schools in 2009. In addition, the fact that the parents surveyed were members of an association, of which only 50% responded, could present problems of

representation: parents who are not members of a support group may be less pro-active generally and therefore less active in their choice of school provision.

Kenny et al. (2005) interviewed ten parents and also found that parents reported positive progress for their children with learning difficulties while they were attending mainstream primary schools, particularly in their social skills; however, there was a feeling that as they approached young adulthood they were being left behind by their mainstream peers and needed to 'forge links with other children with similar learning difficulties' (p.17). The parents in this sample were members of a Down's syndrome association and were self selecting. In addition, half were professionals (3 teachers, 2 nurses), therefore although the study provides useful insights, there are likely to be issues of representation. Another factor identified by Lorenz (1998) is that mainstream schools can place different expectations on children with Down's syndrome as a result of, often unfounded, concerns about their ability to cope, therefore parents may be responding to messages received from staff in school as opposed to actively seeking a special school provision.

Nature and Degree of Special Educational Needs

Bagley and Woods (1998) found that the prime concern when choosing a school for all the parents they interviewed, was the child's SEN and the selection of a school that could best meet the child's needs; the parents of children with statements 'looked to the LEA for support and professional guidance in making a choice' (p.774). Leyser and Kirk (2004) found that parents of children with mild disabilities, in comparison to parents of children with moderate or severe disabilities, showed significantly more positive views of inclusion. The former parents rated the teacher's ability to teach included students and the level of support by parents of students without disabilities far higher on the questionnaire than the latter parents. These findings are supported by a study by Palmer et al. (2001) who surveyed parents of

children with severe disabilities about their views on inclusive provision for their own and similar children; they found that most statements made against inclusion were because of ‘beliefs that the type or severity of the child’s disability precludes benefit from participation in a general education classroom’ (p.473). However, in the study by Leyser and Kirk (2004), it was the parents who identified the child’s *type* and *degree* of disability: mild, moderate or severe. There may be problems in relation to the level of agreement of these judgments and the understandings parents have of the categories given. A survey by Parsons et al. (2009) of 562 parents of children with SEN and/or disabilities looked at their satisfaction with the educational provision for their children in Great Britain. They found that the most satisfied parents were those with children attending special schools; these children tended to have multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a statement of SEN. The most successful provision for children in special schools appeared to be judged on the basis of personal and social aspects of support and provision rather than academic outcomes, lending support to Bagley and Woods (1998) notion that parents of children with SEN choose schools on the basis of an intrinsic- personal/social value perspective. Parsons et al. (2009) go on to say that ‘in contrast to the special school parents, those with children in mainstream settings were the least likely to agree their child’s difficulties would hinder their learning or achievements’ (p.43). However, the special school sample in their survey was recorded as having a higher proportion of children described as learning disabled than those in mainstream which raised an issue of equivalence. The authors conclude that ‘the children in special schools differed in important ways from those in mainstream contexts and this is likely to strongly influence parental perceptions and judgements’ (p.43). The sampling method of the survey was carefully designed to try to get a greater diversity of respondents in terms of the level of the children’s SEN than has often been the case with these types of surveys as the authors

perceive it; however, although they were successful in achieving this aim, they also acknowledge that the sample is skewed towards white middle class parents. A survey by Male (1998) of 80 parents of children, aged between 2 years and 10 years 11 months, with Severe or Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) also found that the majority of parents were happy with their child's special school placement; 'however just over a fifth of parents do indicate a desire for change, with the desire being for a special class in an ordinary school' (p136). The author acknowledges that these parents had only experienced special school provision and there was some sense of 'parents *settling* for special provision rather than actively *choosing* it' (Male, 1998, p.143) and this could be a result of a lack of experience of inclusion. The reasons parents gave for wanting their child to remain in special school provision was a perception of a lack of resources and experience of teachers in mainstream. If the survey were repeated today the results might be different given that mainstream schools have now had twelve more years to develop their skills and change their attitudes to inclusion through experiencing it in practice.

A survey by Palmer et al. (1998) of 460 parents of children with significant cognitive disabilities, found that they tended to be generally positive about the social outcomes of inclusion but 'relatively apprehensive regarding the impact of such placements on the quality of education services their children received' (p.279). The authors initially contacted 3,267 parents by letter so the final sample of 460 is small. They provide a break-down of the sample in percentages for parental characteristics in the areas of ethnic identity, level of education, age of child etc, but data are not provided for comparing this with the larger population from which the sample is drawn; it is therefore difficult to assess the degree of representation and therefore the likelihood that these parents' attitudes reflect those of the wider population.

Whitaker (2007) in a survey of 173 parents of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder attending mainstream and special schools in Northamptonshire, found that there was a much higher level of dissatisfaction expressed by parents of children who were attending mainstream schools compared to those attending special schools. The author acknowledges that it is not possible to know how representative those returning the surveys are. It may be that there are specific issues around the social and communication difficulties of these pupils which mainstream schools find hard to address, in addition there is generally a much higher degree of parent/ teacher contact in special schools which may be important in reassuring the parents of ASD pupils.

Parent Variables

Socio Economic Factors

Leyser and Kirk (2004) found that parents with college education expressed more positive views about the benefits of inclusion compared to parents whose formal education ended with high school. Similarly Stoiber et al. (1998) in a survey of 415 parents of disabled and non-disabled children and 128 early childhood practitioners, found that parents who were college educated, with only one or two children and who were married, had more positive beliefs about inclusion than single parents who were educated to high school level with four or more children. In addition, parents of disabled children were found to be more positive relative to parents of non-disabled children. However, as the authors acknowledge, using a survey does not allow you to get at the complexity and subtlety behind these beliefs. In the UK Bagley and Woods (1998), in a qualitative study into school choice for parents' of SEN children, found that middle class parents spent more time planning visits to schools and making a choice of school. They go on to suggest that:

‘Findings broadly support the notion that competence as a consumer amongst parents of SEN students can to a certain extent be differentiated by social class; middle class parents possessing the cultural, social and financial resources, which enable them to engage with greater awareness and understanding with the public-market’ (p.776).

However, there are some potential methodological issues with this study in that it is not made explicit how middle class and working class parents have been defined and identified, the data was gathered from only nine parents of children with SEN (five of whom had a statement) and the interviewees were drawn from a metropolitan area ‘displaying many of the forms of social deprivation and disadvantage characteristic of parts of urban Britain’ (p.767); this needs to be borne in mind when interpreting this data as the issues may not be the same in areas with a different profile.

School Variables

Experience of Inclusion during the Primary Phase

In their research into the impact of the implementation of the government’s school choice policy, Bagley et al. (2001) found that ‘there was a clear concern amongst parents in all three case study areas that a secondary school would be chosen which did not perpetuate what was perceived as the inadequate and often insensitive handling of their child’s SEN by their primary school’ (p.292). However, it needs to be pointed out that a sample of only 26 parents was interviewed and, apart from the fact that the identification of the child’s special needs was at the discretion of the parent (only 9 had statements), the sample was self selecting as it was composed of volunteers from a larger survey. These parents may have volunteered *because* of their dissatisfaction with their child’s primary education; satisfied parents may have had less motivation to be interviewed. Research by Jenkinson (1998) into parental choice about where their child with disabilities was educated, found that parents who chose for their child to transfer to a special school from mainstream often felt a sense of disillusionment with inclusive provision; factors identified as causing this included ‘negative

attitudes or lack of attention by teachers, large class sizes, lack of availability of funding for teacher aides, and lack of suitable programs' (p.195). Other factors discussed by some of the parents were social isolation of the child and inappropriate handling of the child's difficulties by the school. Some parents whose children were in a mainstream primary are reported to have been concerned about their child's secondary education and indicated that they were likely to choose for them to transfer to a special school. 'While mainstream education is perceived as working well in the early primary years, parents are increasingly questioning its appropriateness in later primary and secondary years' (p.199). However, of the 193 parents surveyed: 52% reported that their child attended a mainstream school and of this group '72% would continue to prefer the mainstream setting' (p.193) and, as pointed out earlier in relation to the study by Male (1998), it is possible that perceptions may now be different because mainstream schools have had more time to develop their skills and knowledge. A survey of 141 parents of children transferring schools in the state of Minnesota by Ysseldyk et al. (1994) found that 40% of the parents were dissatisfied with the child's former school. The authors also give a break-down of the figures according to the disability identified by respondents on the survey questionnaire; a higher figure of 50% dissatisfaction is reported by parents of children with emotional behavioural disorder, learning disability, mental retardation and multiple disabilities. The authors identify a profile of reasons for the choice of provision made by parents: 'an education system that meets their special education needs, where there is frequent communication with parents, where their child receives personal attention, and where their child can attend school with siblings or friends' (p.369). However, the parents in this survey had chosen for their child to transfer school under the state's open enrolment programme. School transfer in this instance is not a process of movement through a system by all pupils, but the invoking of a mechanism by parents who desire a change of

school for specific reasons, thus it seems reasonable to speculate that there may be a higher degree of dissatisfaction among this particular group of parents compared to those parents who do not request a transfer.

The study by Whitaker (2007) of children with ASD, although not reporting on parents' views of primary provision specifically, or differentiating between current placement in terms of mainstream or special, does report that a large number of the parents surveyed report major concerns with previous schools or classes. It was acknowledged earlier that it is not possible to know how representative the parents in this survey are.

Secondary Schools Philosophy, Capacity and Perceived Commitment to SEN

Bagley and Woods (1998) found that one of the ways parents judged the philosophy and commitment of the school to SEN was listening to the head's speech at the open evening. Other factors looked at were: the nature of the SEN provision; the facilities and if these were appropriate for the child's SEN; the school environment; and the child's happiness. The parents interviewed by Hess et al. (2006) in their research into parent voice and advocacy in special education decision making, were reported to generally be in favour of their children having opportunities to learn alongside children who did not have SEN and some parents were against labelling and segregating children for any reason. However, the authors' research involved parents of elementary school pupils in the USA; had they interviewed parents of high school pupils the findings may have been different, especially in light of the reported impact of the child's age on parents' views of inclusion discussed above. Some parents in the survey by Palmer et al. (2001), looking at the potential inclusion of children with severe disabilities, felt that teachers in mainstream schools already had to cope with large class sizes, diverse needs of students and poor teaching conditions. Some were worried that

‘their children would be neglected or not receive the individualized attention or the specialized services that they need’ (p.473). The parents were responding to a postal questionnaire on inclusion and of the 3,267 potential respondents, 476 completed questionnaires were sent back representing a 15% rate of return. This is a low rate and it may not be a representative sample. The authors identify that all the pupils were in special education classes and that many had other serious conditions requiring specialized school services. It is possible that parents who had the most concerns about proposals to educate these pupils in totally inclusive settings had the most incentive to return the questionnaire. In the study by Jenkinson (1998) an important factor for parents choosing special schools was the smaller class sizes, the specialist training of the teachers and their capacity to provide 1 to 1 attention; for those parents selecting a mainstream placement, opportunities to socialize with non-disabled peers, the greater opportunity for developing academic skills and models of appropriate behaviour were seen as important criteria in their decision. Most parents in a study by O’Conner (2006) into parental concerns on inclusion in Northern Ireland, were found to be supportive of the philosophy of inclusion but felt that special schools still had a role; there were concerns that the large class sizes in mainstream schools and the limitations of human and physical resources meant that it was not always the most appropriate provision. Parents appeared to be supportive of inclusion where schools and teachers could adequately meet the pupils’ need; pupils should be placed in the school environment that was most responsive to their needs. However, a consideration when examining research involving Northern Ireland, is the fact that the provision for many children with SEN remained the remit of Health and Social Services until 1987 when it transferred to Education (O’Connor, 2006), 17 years after it had changed in England, therefore it is possible that the attitudes of parents may, to some extent, be different because

of the different historical context. Palmer et al. (1998) in their survey of parents' perceptions of inclusion suggest that 'parents who place a higher value on the development of social skills may be willing to trade off "special education" benefits'...for the social benefits that they consider to be more attainable in a general education setting' (p.280). However, the authors also identify a multidimensionality of parent attitudes towards inclusive practices reflected in their empirical data which:

'... reveals the subjective and phenomenological nature of the reasoning process a parent undergoes when considering educational placement options. This information suggests that parents can be expected to have varying views regarding inclusive placement options based on a broad range of interacting variables rather than on a singular determinant, such as the cognitive profile of the child' (p.279).

While this finding is helpful in adding weight to an argument that parental decision making around the selection of a suitable educational provision for their child with SEN is complex, it is unable to provide a deeper level of understanding of how these variables interact to result in a particular choice, or the process of prioritising the relative importance of factors in order to arrive at that choice.

Nearness / Convenience for Travel

Bagley et al. (2001) found that parents of children with SEN in two, out of three, case study areas rated this factor in their top three influences on choice of school. The third was an urban area and, although not stated specifically by the authors, one might speculate that these schools were closer in proximity to their catchment areas because of the tendency for denser housing in urban areas, thus making nearness less of an issue. Bagley and Woods (1998) also found that, in principle, parents of children with a statement without a named school could choose to send their child to any in the authority; however, the LEAs regulations precluded assistance with transport costs unless the school was over three miles from the child's home and there were no places available in the local school. They cite the example of parent who

wanted to send her child to a school in another area but ‘because she felt he couldn’t cope with public transport and because no additional support from the authority was forthcoming, she had no option, but to select the local school’ (Bagley and Woods, 1998, p.775). In her study, Jenkinson (1998) found no significant difference in the importance of the schools proximity to home for either the parents of children attending mainstream or special schools; both rated this as moderately important but by no means the most important consideration. It may be significant that this study reports the views of parents living in the state of Victoria in Australia where there has existed an extensive school bus service since the 1940s, which is free to those in rural areas, with buses that are accessible to disabled pupils (Victoria Department of Transport, 2010).

Other Variables

Beliefs about Mainstream Teachers Skills, Knowledge, Capacity and Attitudes

Palmer et al. (2001) found that parents of children with severe disabilities in their survey ‘viewed their child as requiring more care and attention than is possible for a general education teacher to offer’ (p.473). Other parents were concerned that there was a lack of specially trained staff in general education settings. However, as outlined earlier there are issues regarding the degree of representation of the parents responding to the questionnaire in this study. Hess et al. (2006) in their study into parent decisions report a perception that teachers were critical to the child’s success, the most important factor being the teacher’s perceived level of care and open communication; this may have implications for mainstream secondary schools where children are likely to come into contact with many different teachers during the school week. In addition the authors suggest that:

‘These voices seem to highlight the mismatch between parents’ expectations of warmth and caring from teachers and the requirements of professional practice which place value on an objective, professional stance’ (p.153).

However, as indicated previously this study involved parents of elementary aged pupils in the USA who were selected to reflect the ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their community: fifteen Hispanic parents; ten African-American parents; and two White parents. The expectations of English parents of SEN children selecting a secondary placement for their child may emphasise different priorities to the parents in this study. There were concerns expressed by parents in the study by Jenkinson (1998) that students could end up isolated in mainstream schools and that there was a need to provide them with educational programmes that were ‘within their capacity and enhanced their self-esteem through a sense of achievement’(p.200). Parents of five children with moderate and severe disabilities, out of a sample of thirteen, in the study by Ryndak et al. (1996) believed that their child’s general education teacher had not wanted them in their class at the beginning, ‘it took a long time for them to understand about inclusion and their child’s learning potential, and thus demonstrate a shift in attitude’ (Ryndak et al., 1996, p.113). In a survey of parents in Northern Ireland, who had a child with a Statement of SEN, O’Conner (2006) found that there were reservations about some of the teaching and support staff in mainstream schools because of a feeling that they lacked sufficient training and practical expertise to ‘productively engage with and support pupils with SEN’ (p.542). In addition, there was a concern that dedicated one to one support identified on a child’s statement could be open to ‘misinterpretation or misuse’ (p.542). However, as outlined earlier, research conducted in the context of Northern Ireland needs to be treated with caution when considering the findings in relation to parents in England because of the different historical contexts.

Influence of Others – Professionals, Family, Friends etc.

Bagley and Woods (1998) report that the majority of parents they interviewed had talked to friends whose children had similar learning difficulties to their own child in order to find out

how schools they were considering had met that child's needs. Ryndak et al. (1996) report that several parents in their study had a 'feeling of powerlessness when decisions were being made' (p.112) and one parent described her position as deferring to expert opinions. However, as the researchers themselves acknowledge, their sample is biased because it draws from parents who are affiliated with an advocacy organisation; these parents may have higher expectations of their level of involvement compared to non-members. In addition, this study was conducted in the USA fourteen years ago; parents of children with SEN in England today have had their rights to be included in the decision about where their child should be educated greatly increased in that time, therefore they may also have high expectations to be included, but less sense of powerlessness. Finally, in their research looking at parent's experiences of accessing mainstream school for their children with learning difficulties, Kenny et al. (2005) report that several parents said schools responded reluctantly to their applications because 'professionals regarded mainstream placements as inappropriate for these children' (p.17). This study was conducted in the Republic of Ireland and involved parents of children with Down's syndrome, the authors recognise that although these children have been participating in mainstream schools since the 1990's the majority continue to attend separate special schools, therefore acceptance by mainstream schools may not be as established as it is in England today.

Table 3: Summary of the review studies looking at school choice and satisfaction amongst parents of children with SEN

Title of paper	Journal	Author/s	Year	Method/ design /sample	Main findings
School choice, markets and special educational needs	Disability and Society	Bagley, C. & Woods, P.	1998	Data drawn from findings of the Parent and School Choice Interaction Survey (PASCi) a 3 year longitudinal investigation in three case study areas. This paper reports findings from one area and draws on interviews with: 12 senior managers 3 SENCos 1 SEN officer 9 parents (5 children with statements)	The prime concern of parents when choosing a school was the child’s SEN and the selection of a school that could best meet the child’s needs. Middle class parents of SEN children spent more time planning visits to schools and making a choice of school.
Implementation of School Choice Policy: Interpretation and response by parents of students with special educational needs.	British Educational Research Journal	Bagley, C. Woods, P. & Woods, G.	2001	Data as above drawn from the PASCi. A total of 240 parents drawn from the larger sample identified that their child had SEN on a postal survey. Of these 26 parents were interviewed (nine of the children had a Statement of SEN).	Concern amongst parents that a secondary school would be chosen which did not perpetuate what was perceived as the inadequate and often insensitive handling of their child’s SEN by their primary school. Parents of children with SEN in two, out of three, case study areas rated convenience for travel in their top three influences on choice of school.

<p>Until somebody hears me: parent voice and advocacy in special educational decision making</p>	<p>British Journal of Special Education</p>	<p>Hess,R., Molina, A. & Kozleski, E.</p>	<p>2006</p>	<p>27 parents of children with a range of disabilities were identified for potential participation by school psychologists at 8 different elementary schools within a school district. The parents were from diverse ethnic/cultural and linguistic backgrounds – they were interviewed in focus groups.</p>	<p>Parents were generally in favour of their children having opportunities to learn alongside children who did not have SEN and some parents were against labelling and segregating children for any reason. There was a perception that teachers were critical to the child’s success, the most important factor being the teacher’s perceived level of care and open communication.</p>
<p>Parent choice in the education of students with disabilities</p>	<p>International Journal of Disability, Development and Education</p>	<p>Jenkinson, J.</p>	<p>1998</p>	<p>Questionnaire mailed to 400 parents on the mailing list of the Association for Children with Disabilities (Victoria, Australia) 193 returned. Students had a wide range of disabilities in terms of nature and severity.</p>	<p>Tendency for parents to choose a mainstream school for their child initially but to later move them to a special school; particularly for pupils with moderate and severe disabilities. Parents who chose for their child to transfer to a special school from mainstream often felt a sense of disillusionment with inclusive provision. An important factor for parents choosing special schools was: smaller class sizes; specialist training of the teachers; and capacity to provide 1 to 1 attention. For Parents selecting a mainstream placement, opportunities to socialize with non-disabled peers, greater opportunity for developing academic skills and models of appropriate behaviour were seen as important.</p>

Accessing mainstream: examining the struggle for parents of children who have learning difficulties	Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs	Kenny, M., Shevlin, M., Noonan-Walsh, p. & McNeela, E.	2005	Parents of children with Down's syndrome were contacted via a parent support network. 10 parents expressed an interest (self selecting) and were interviewed using a semi-structured interview.	Parents felt that as their children approached adulthood they were being left behind by their mainstream peers and needed to 'forge links with other children with similar learning difficulties.' Several parents said schools responded reluctantly to their applications because professionals regarded mainstream placements as inappropriate for these children.
Evaluating inclusion: an examination of parent views and factors influencing their perspectives	International Journal of Disability, Development and Education	Leyser, Y. & Kirk, R.	2004	Questionnaires sent to 1000 parents of students with disabilities in one state. 437 returns.	The parents of children aged 0-5 and 12-16 expressed significantly more positive views regarding mainstream teachers ability and level of teacher/parent support in mainstream schools than the parents of children in the 13-18+ age group.
Parents' views about special provision for their child with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties	Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities	Male, D.	1998	Five S/PMLD schools in London and south east targeted.152 surveys sent out and 80 responded (52.6%)	The survey found that the majority of parents were happy with their child's special school placement; however just over a fifth of parents indicated a desire for a change, with the desire being for a special class in an ordinary school.
Parental concerns on inclusion: the Northern Ireland perspective	International Journal of Inclusive Education	O'Conner, U.	2006	92 participants selected from a previous survey sample of 1032 were interviewed by telephone. Selection was done by proportional stratified sampling and contained both satisfied and un-satisfied parents.	Concerns expressed that the large class sizes in mainstream schools and the limitations of human and physical resources meant that it was not always the most appropriate provision.

<p>Parent perceptions of inclusive practices for their children with significant cognitive disabilities</p>	<p>Exceptional Children</p>	<p>Palmer, D., Borthwick-Duffy, S. & Widaman, K.</p>	<p>1998</p>	<p>3,267 parents of children with disabilities were contacted by letter in three education districts in California. 995 surveys were requested of which 476 were returned, after 16 excluded for incomplete data 460 analyzed.</p>	<p>The authors conclude that parents can be expected to have varying views regarding inclusive placement options based on a broad range of interacting variables rather than on a singular determinant.</p>
<p>Taking sides: parent views on inclusion for their children with severe disabilities</p>	<p>Exceptional Children</p>	<p>Palmer, D., Fuller, K., Arora, T. & Nelson, M.</p>	<p>2001</p>	<p>As for the study above.</p>	<p>Parent's believed that the type or severity of the child's disability precluded benefit from participation in a general education classroom. Parents felt that teachers in mainstream schools already had to cope with large class sizes, diverse needs of students and poor teaching conditions. Some were worried that 'their children would be neglected or not receive the individualized attention or the specialized services that they need.'</p> <p>Parents viewed their child as requiring more care and attention than is possible for a general education teacher to offer.</p>

<p>Satisfaction with educational provision for children with SEN or disabilities: a national postal survey of the views of parents in Great Britain</p>	<p>Educational Review</p>	<p>Parsons, S., Lewis, A., Davison, I., Ellins, J. & Robertson, C</p>	<p>2009</p>	<p>562 parents of children with SEN from six areas of Great Britain were surveyed. The questionnaires were distributed to parents of specific year groups in mainstream primary, secondary and special schools using a stratified sampling technique. The main interest was in the views of parents of children with 'learning difficulties and disabilities' in relation to their satisfaction with educational provision.</p>	<p>The most satisfied parents were those with children attending special schools; these children tended to have multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a statement of SEN. The most successful provision for children in special schools appeared to be judged on the basis of personal and social aspects of support and provision rather than academic outcomes.</p>
<p>Parents' perceptions of educational settings and services for children with moderate or severe disabilities</p>	<p>Remedial and Special Education</p>	<p>Ryndak, D., Downing, J., Morrison, A. & Williams, L.</p>	<p>1996</p>	<p>Parents were recruited through regional parent advocacy organisations in New York state. Parents of children with moderate or severe disabilities receiving special education in inclusive settings. Parents of 13 children volunteered to take part.</p>	<p>Parents believed that their child's general education teacher had not wanted them in their class at the beginning.</p>
<p>Exploring factors influencing parents and early childhood practitioners' beliefs about inclusion</p>	<p>Early Childhood Research Quarterly</p>	<p>Stoiber, K. C., Gettinger, M., & Goetz, D.</p>	<p>1998</p>	<p>A sample of 415 parents and 128 early childhood practitioners took part in the study. A geographical sampling plan was used to try to ensure representation from diverse communities in Wisconsin.</p>	<p>Parents who were college educated, with only one or two children and who were married had more positive beliefs about inclusion than single parents who were educated to high school level with four or more children.</p>

<p>Provision for youngsters with autistic spectrum disorders in mainstream schools: what parents say – and what parents want</p>	<p>British Journal of Special Education</p>	<p>Whitaker, P.</p>	<p>2007</p>	<p>599 surveys sent to parents and carers of ASD children in Northamptonshire, 353 of whom were educated in mainstream schools 173 of these parents returned questionnaires (49%).</p>	<p>The authors found that there was a much higher level of dissatisfaction expressed by parents of children who were attending mainstream schools compared to those attending special schools. A large number of the parents surveyed report major concerns with previous schools or classes.</p>
<p>Parents of students with disabilities and open enrolment: characteristics and reasons for transfer</p>	<p>Exceptional Children</p>	<p>Ysseldyke, J., Lange, C. & Gorney, D.</p>	<p>1994</p>	<p>374 surveys sent to parents of children with disabilities who had applied to transfer school in Minnesota in the 1990-1991 school year. 251 surveys (72%) were returned. A random sample of 45 respondents were contacted for a telephone interview.</p>	<p>40% of the parents were dissatisfied with the child's former school.</p>

Summary

It would appear that there are some broad and recurring themes in the literature around the subject of secondary school choice, but within this there is also considerable diversity which, given the diverse nature of the group of pupils covered by the term SEN, is not particularly surprising. However, the diverse nature of the pupils is not the only factor associated with the different choices and outcomes and there is therefore a need to consider this within a broader social and political context. Palmer et al. (1998) conclude from their research that 'parents can be expected to have varying views regarding inclusive placement options based on a broad range of interacting variables rather than on a singular determinant' (p.279); this conclusion resonates well with the picture that is emerging from the literature.

Discussion

In initially considering the educational placement of pupils with a Statement of SEN, a number of broad trends emerged from the government data contained in reports by a number of authors and accessed directly through the PLASC (DCSF, 2009). Firstly, it emerged that there was an increase from the 1980's through the 1990's of pupils with a statement of SEN; at the same time, although there was an increase in the number of these pupils attending mainstream schools, the number of pupils in special schools remained fairly static (Evans and Lunt, 1994; DCSF, 2009). However, from 1994 the number of pupils in special schools did begin to fall, despite a rising school age population, and following 2001 the percentage of pupils with statements also began to fall (Norwich, 2002; DCSF, 2009). These figures represent the broad impact of government legislation and policy on where and how pupils with SEN are educated, but because of a history of local level interpretation and implementation of policy (Croll and Moses, 2000), and the diverse needs of the pupils

identified, there exists great variation when these figures are broken down further. This variation is also seen between the numbers of pupils with a statement of SEN attending mainstream primary schools and those attending mainstream secondary schools, the latter figure being higher (DCSF, 2009). However, this again masks a great deal of variation as an interrogation of the data broken down into different identified needs shows; thus pupils with MLD show an increase in secondary provision while those with SLD show a decrease (DCSF, 2009). Important questions, therefore, when considering secondary school choice for parents of children with SEN are:

- What is the impact on that choice of the type and degree of the child's need?
- What is the range of suitable provision provided by the residing LA for parents to select from?
- What perceptions do professionals, who may be influencing the secondary placement decision, hold about the child's needs and the capacity of the different types of provision to successfully meet these?
- What perceptions do the child's parents hold about the child's needs and the capacity of the different types of provision to successfully meet these?

The literature on parental choice of placement for children with SEN suggests some further lines of enquiry which could act as a useful framework in helping to answer the above questions. All the literature considering the age of the child concluded that parents were tending to select special school provision as their child got older for a number of different reasons (Jenkinson, 1998; Leyser and Kirk, 2004; Kenny et al., 2005), however the data contained in the PLASC for children with Statements of SEN in England contradicts this; it appears to mainly apply to children with the most severe needs (DCSF, 2009). Other research

which discusses the nature and degree of children's SEN appears to confirm this with parents of children with milder difficulties expressing more positive views of inclusion (Leyser and Kirk, 2004). In addition, a further consideration raised in the literature is the extent to which parents of children with more severe needs actively select segregated special provision as opposed to merely accepting it because they don't perceive that there *is* a choice (Male, 1998). Bagley and Woods (1998) suggested that parents were acting pragmatically to choose a school that represented a best fit for their child's needs. Another suggestion in the literature is that part of this pragmatic decision making may be based on the experience that parents feel their child has had of inclusion in their primary school; if this has not been positive then they may be more likely to opt for special school provision at secondary age (Ysseldyke, 1994; Jenkinson, 1998; Bagley et al., 2001; Whitaker, 2007).

A further question raised by findings in the literature is the extent to which parents consider the following in relation to what a mainstream school offers: the level of support that their child would receive; the child's ability to cope in a large class; and the teachers' ability to meet the child's needs (Palmer et al., 2001; O'Conner 2006). They may then compare this by looking at what is offered in a special school: smaller class sizes; higher staff to pupil ratios; and the specialized training of the teachers (Jenkinson, 1998).

There is evidence in the literature that parents may be influenced in their choice by a number of other factors, for example the head's speech at the open evening, discussions with other parents whose children also have SEN and are already attending the school (Woods and Bagley, 1998), and discussions with professionals and teachers. These latter discussions may raise issues of power because of the potentially higher status of professionals and teachers and the tendency for their professional knowledge and expertise to also command higher status.

A key issue for parents of children with and without SEN is their child's happiness, however different parental priorities can lead to quite diverse understandings of the meaning of this and the way that it is to be achieved. The studies looking at parental choice generally (Appendix 5) identified a difference between middle class and working class parents, where the former were more likely to perceive happiness in terms of attending a desirable school and the associated benefits that brings, whereas working class parents were described as being more likely to allow the child's own short term interests to dominate (Reay and Lucey, 2004; Butler et al., 2007). Whether one perceives both sets of priorities as equally legitimate, the fact that one group of parents may be able to negotiate the education 'market' more successfully than the other is a problem and according to Bagley and Woods (1998) it is equally the case in school choice for parents of children with SEN. Another issue for parents may be their ability to make their voice heard in what can easily become a professionally dominated discourse; this may have potentially greater implications for parents for whom English isn't their first language, an area which has not been covered by this review because of lack of space but which may be of particular importance in diverse communities. There has been little research undertaken in this area in the context of the work of Educational Psychologists, but the issues that might be likely to impact on school choice include: parents lacking an understanding of the system and their rights (Rehal, 1989; Ellahi and Hatfield, 1992; and Fazil et al., 2002) and professionals having different expectations of the priorities and support needs of Asian families (Bywaters et al., 2002 and Nawaz, 2006). In addition, Parsons et al. (2009) note that there can be difficulties involving parents from minority ethnic groups in research and as a result issues around equality of opportunity may be being overlooked.

A final point in relation to the papers on school choice discussed in this review is that many of them take a positivist perspective using survey questionnaires to gather their data which,

while it is able to capture some of the broader themes affecting parents' decisions, fails to capture depth. Other studies using interviewing do offer this greater level of interpretive depth, but there are issues of their relevance in relation to other contexts. This review of literature has been undertaken as a background to a further study which needs to take account of the contribution to knowledge provided by the previous research reported here. The aim is then to develop and further the discussion around school choice for parents of children with SEN, particularly in relation to its operation within the LA of the researcher. A decision to use a multiple case study design for this study has previously been outlined and is discussed more fully in the following chapter. However, prior to describing the research study in detail, an important link between what has been found in the literature and the development of a theoretical framework to guide the data collection of these case studies needs to be made.

Conclusion

In concluding this chapter an initial theoretical proposition and subsequent framework are presented. The framework describes the conditions under which a particular outcome is anticipated to occur: parents choosing to send their child to a mainstream school. Where this is the case it is described as a literal replication. The framework then describes the conditions where a different outcome would be anticipated: parents choosing not to send their child to a mainstream school. This, by contrast, is described as a theoretical replication (the replication logic of multiple case studies is fully discussed in the following chapter). This theoretical framework is drawn from the findings of the papers discussed in the current literature review chapter; it determines the design, data collection and analysis of the subsequent research

paper. The research paper sets out to ‘test’ the initial proposition by conducting a number of case study investigations. Some of the cases are chosen to test the literal replication: parents choosing for the child to go to a mainstream school. The reasons for this are anticipated to be because of factors identified in the literature. Other cases are chosen to test the theoretical replication: where parents chose for their child to go to a special school. Again this is for reasons that have been identified in the literature.

The initial proposition suggests that:

The reasons why parents choose to send their child to either a mainstream school, resource provision within a mainstream school or special school are a complex but predictable combination of situational factors and influences that result in parents selecting the provision that they feel will provide the best ‘fit’ for their child.

This proposition is then elaborated through the development of the following theoretical framework. There is no theory proposed at this stage for parents selecting for their child to go to a resourced provision because there is no literature which discusses this specifically; therefore there is no previous theory developed which can be tested.

Theoretical framework

Literal replication- Parents are likely to choose to send their child to a mainstream school when:

- Their child has had a good experience in a mainstream primary school (Jenkinson,1998);

- They value the academic and social opportunities offered in the mainstream school (Jenkinson, 1998);
- They have talked to other parents of children with SEN who attend the mainstream school (Bagley and Woods, 1998);
- They perceived it to be open and supportive of children with SEN (when they went to the open evening) (Woods and Bagley, 1998);
- Their child has friends who are going there from their mainstream primary (Jenkinson, 1998);
- The professionals involved supported them to make the choice that they felt was best for *their* child;
- They want their child to learn alongside peers who do not have SEN and they feel that their child will copy the behaviour of children without a disability (Hess et al., 2006; Jenkinson, 1998).

Theoretical replication - Parents are unlikely to choose to send their child to a mainstream school when:

- Their child has had a negative experience in a mainstream primary school (Bagley, Woods and Woods, 2001; Jenkinson, 1998; Whitaker, 2007);
- They want an educational provision that focuses on the acquisition of independent living skills and a supportive environment (Jenkinson, 1998);
- They have talked to other parents of children with SEN who attend the special school (Bagley and Woods, 1998);
- They did not perceive that mainstream schools could support their child's needs (when they went to the open evenings) (Woods and Bagley, 1998);

- They want their child to have the opportunities to make friends with children with similar learning difficulties (Kenny et al., 2005);
- They felt that professionals had persuaded them that it was not in the best interests of their child (Ryndak et al., 1996; Kenny et al., 2005);
- They are concerned that the child would be bullied or socially isolated in a mainstream school (Jenkinson, 1998);
- They felt that their child would not receive a suitable quality of education by staff skilled in teaching children with SEN (Male, 1998; Palmer et al., 1998);
- They believe that they will not receive a high level of support (Jenkinson, 1998).

This theoretical framework forms the basis for the case selection and interview questions of the research paper which is described in detail in the following chapter.

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Chapter 3: Research Paper

Abstract

Parents' of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) can choose a school for their child and many are attending mainstream schools; however, there is evidence of variation within and between Local Authorities (LA). *Purpose:* to examine the factors influencing the decisions of parents' of children with SEN when choosing a secondary provision.

Methodology: multiple case study design to explore this issue by interviewing parents of children with the same needs identified on their statement; all attended their local primary school in year 6 but then transferred to differing provision: mainstream high; resource provision within mainstream; and special school. *Results:* parents are choosing a mainstream school when making the decision based on their local school knowledge, discussion within the family and little outside input; they are choosing special school when the child's primary school advise that it is in the interests of the child; whereas choosing a resource provision is perceived as a battle with the LA. *Conclusion;* Parents of children who went to special schools were not happy with the choice available; resource provision may offer parent's an option that they would prefer, but gaining a place requires strong self advocacy by parents because of the scarcity of places.

Introduction

In England today there is a strong discourse of school choice which has extended to parents of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN); many of these children are now included in mainstream schools. However, there is variation in the level of inclusion between one Local Authority (LA) and another and anecdotally, this may even extend to significant variation between individual schools. This study aims to explore this issue in the context of one LA and to undertake an in-depth examination to explore the factors that impact on parents' choices when selecting a secondary education provision for their child with SEN. Because of limitations of space the first phase of this research, which examines statistical trends for pupils with statements and their destinations at change of phase from primary to secondary within the LA, is presented separately in Appendix 6.

Review of the Literature on School Choice by Parents of Children with SEN

Parents of children with SEN have had the right to choose their child's school increasingly underpinned by legislation and non-statutory guidance (1981 Education Act; 1993 Education Act; Code of Practice 1994, DfE; 1995 Disability Discrimination Act; 1996 Education Act; 2001 SEN and Disability Act; Code of Practice 2001, DfES), however the right to choose and market principles rely on the existence of different options that can potentially meet the needs of the consumer and the active promotion of those options by providers and those involved in brokering provision through advice and advocacy. There is evidence in the literature suggesting that although parents have a theoretical choice, which may include provision in a segregated special school or inclusion in their local mainstream school, the decisions they are making may sometimes reflect perceptions that to choose a mainstream school is not always supported at the local level in terms of its capacity to meet the child's need, or it is not in

reality a realistic choice (Male, 1997; Grove and Fisher, 1999). Indeed, there are inherent tensions in this market view of education because these 'consumers' are a minority sector within that market, a sector that requires additional resourcing, while providing little in the way of profit, in an economy that principally measures output in terms of academic achievement.

Parental Choice for Pupils with SEN

School choice for parents of children with a statement of SEN can be traced back to the 1981 Education Act when LEAs issuing a statement were required to take into account the wishes of the parents when naming a school. Later the 1993 Education Act and the 1994 Code of Practice (DfE, 1994) extended this by requiring LEAs to comply with parental wishes but with limiting provisions (DfE, 1994, pp.24-25). However, with the introduction of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 and the revised SEN Code of Practice, DfES (2001), there is a noticeable shift in position, 'an LEA must ensure that a child is educated in a mainstream school unless that is incompatible with the efficient education of other children' (DfES, 2001, p.61) or unless a parent does not want their child educated in a mainstream school. However, it appears that despite the increased rights afforded to parents of children with SEN through legislation, the interests of the quasi market and professional discourses may still be working in opposition (Morgan, 2005).

In considering the factors that influence parental choices there are two in relation to the child which are reported in the literature, these are: the child's age and the nature and degree of their SEN. A number of different studies report that parents tend to be more positive about inclusion while the child is younger but then shift their opinions as their goals for the child change (Jenkinson, 1998; Leyser and Kirk, 2004; Kenny et al., 2005). The study by Jenkinson

(1998) found that the tendency for parents to choose a mainstream school for their child initially but to later move them to a special school was related to questions by parents of the appropriateness of mainstream provision for their children at secondary age because of a perception that the social and academic gaps were beginning to widen with age. Parents of children with MLD and SLD were choosing to move their child to a special school because the acquisition of independent living skills was seen to become increasingly important. In relation to the nature and degree of the child's SEN, the literature suggests that parents want a provision that is best able to meet their child's needs and that parents of children with milder difficulties tend to be more favourable towards inclusion (Bagley and Woods, 1998; Palmer et al. 2001; Leyser and Kirk, 2004 and Whittaker, 2007). A survey by Palmer et al. (1998) of 460 parents of children with significant cognitive disabilities, found that they tended to be generally positive about the social outcomes of inclusion but 'relatively apprehensive regarding the impact of such placements on the quality of education services their children received' (p.279). Reporting on a survey of parents of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Whittaker (2007) found that there was a much higher level of dissatisfaction expressed by parents of children who were attending mainstream schools compared to those attending special schools.

The main parental variables that have been observed to effect school choice are level of education and social and economic status (Bagley and Woods, 1998; Stoiber, et al. 1998; and Leyser and Kirk, 2004). In their UK study into school choice by parents of SEN children, Bagley and Woods (1998) found that middle class parents spent more time planning visits to schools and making a choice of school. They go on to suggest that:

'Findings broadly support the notion that competence as a consumer amongst parents of SEN students can to a certain extent be differentiated by social class; middle class

parents possessing the cultural, social and financial resources, which enable them to engage with greater awareness and understanding with the public-market' (p.776).

There are reports in a number of studies that parents were concerned that the secondary provision that they chose would be more supportive than they perceived the child's previous school to be (Yssledyke et al., 1994; Jenkinson, 1998; Bagley et al., 2001; and Whittaker, 2007). The philosophy and commitment to children with SEN of the secondary provision chosen was also an important consideration to parents reported in some studies (Bagley and Woods, 1998; Palmer et al., 2001; and Hess et al., 2006). In the study by Jenkinson (1998) an important factor for parents choosing special schools was the smaller class sizes, the specialist training of the teachers and their capacity to provide 1 to 1 attention; for those parents selecting a mainstream placement, opportunities to socialize with non-disabled peers, the fact that the child had friends from their mainstream primary also transferring, the greater opportunity for developing academic skills and models of appropriate behaviour were seen as important criteria. In the study by Kenny et al. (2005) parents choosing a special school wanted their child to have opportunities to mix with other children with similar learning difficulties as they got older. A third consideration that is reported to be an important influence for choosing a school is its convenience in terms of travel (Bagley et al., 2001). Other factors that influence parental choices include their beliefs about mainstream teachers skills, knowledge, capacity and attitudes in relation to children with SEN (Ryndak et al., 1996; Jenkinson, 1998; Palmer et al., 2001; Hess et al., 2006; and O'Conner, 2006) and the influence of others on their decision, for example professionals, friends and family (Ryndak et al., 1996; Bagley and Woods, 1998; Kenny et al., 2005). There were concerns that there was a lack of specially trained staff in mainstream schools (Palmer et al., 2001; O'Conner, 2006) and a lack of willingness of some teachers to work with these pupils (Ryndak et al., 1996). Some parents in the study by Jenkinson (1998) were concerned that their child would be

socially isolated or bullied in a mainstream school and that the educational programmes would not be suitable. The majority of parents in the study by Bagley and Woods (1998) had talked to other parents of children with similar SEN who were already attending the school being considered to find out how it had met their child's needs. Parents in other studies felt that they had to defer to 'expert' opinion (Ryndak et al., 1996) and professionals were sometimes perceived to regard a mainstream placement as inappropriate (Kenny et al., 2005).

Summary

It would appear that there are some broad and recurring themes in the literature around the subject of secondary school choice, but within this there is also considerable diversity which, given the diverse nature of the SEN of the pupils, is not particularly surprising; however this factor is not the only one associated with the different choices and outcomes and there is therefore a need to consider this within a broader social and political context. Palmer et al. (1998) conclude from their research that 'parents can be expected to have varying views regarding inclusive placement options based on a broad range of interacting variables rather than on a singular determinant', this conclusion resonates well with the picture that is emerging from the literature. A final point to make is that much of this research takes a positivist perspective using survey questionnaires to gather data which, while able to capture some of the broader themes affecting parent's decisions, fails to capture depth. Other studies using interviews do offer this greater level of interpretive depth, but there are issues of their relevance in relation to other contexts. In taking account of the strengths and limitations of the epistemologies reflected in the studies discussed here a decision was made to use a multiple case design. The used of this methodology adds to the literature in this area because, other than the papers by Bagley and Woods (1998) and Bagley et al. (2001), which refer to case study areas, no other studies reported here have made used of it. The study reported here is

based on the approach to case study design described by Yin (2009) which employs a theoretical framework, developed prior to data gathering to support the collection of robust evidence. Yin (2009) describes using multiple data points to aid triangulation; however, because of the small scale nature of this research and limitations of time, a judgment was made that interviews would provide the best source of information; however, some additional background information on each case is also provided to support this.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to provide in-depth, qualitative data about the process of choosing a school for parents of children with a statement of SEN. A multiple case study is used to examine the factors that influenced parents' decisions leading to three different outcomes: the child transferred to a mainstream high school; the child transferred to a mainstream high school with a resourced provision; the child transferred to a special school. Because the nature of the child's SEN is reported to have an impact on the decision making process which is already well documented (Bagley and Woods, 1998; Jenkinson, 1998; Male, 1998; Palmer et al., 2001; Leyser and Kirk, 2004) a sub-group of pupils was identified who have transferred from a mainstream primary school in September 2009 to one of these three types of provision. The aim was to interview parents of two sets of children who represented each of the three outcomes – six in total. These pupils all have similar needs identified in their statement; by controlling for the nature of the SEN, it is hoped to surface other factors which are important in influencing the choices that parents make.

A Definition of Special Educational Needs

The term SEN is defined in the Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) as follows: ‘Children have special educational needs if they have a *learning difficulty* which calls for *special educational provision* to be made for them.’ As outlined earlier, this term is used to describe a group of children with very differing needs, the identification of which is a social process whereby the child’s needs are a reflection of the capacity of the setting and the staff within it, the expectations of the curriculum and its relevance for the child and the individual strengths and barriers experienced by the child. As a result, statements of SEN, which reflect the construction of the child by the individual Educational Psychologist, SEN officer and other professionals, through the collection and privileging of evidence, are always relative: SEN is not a clear unquestionable construction. However, SEN and its identifying categories are currently used and understood in England and therefore the appropriate variable for selecting the cases for this study.

Theoretical Framework: Socio-cultural and Activity Theory

Cultural-historical approaches to psychology and activity theory were initially developed by the Russian psychologists Vygotsky (1997) and Leontiev (1978). Vygotsky was initially concerned with describing the way humans are able to appropriate features in their environment, artefacts, which they use as tools to mediate the achievement of their objects or goals. In addition, these tools are passed down from one generation to the next along with the procedures, or knowledge, for using them through social and cultural-historical processes (Hedegaard et al., 1999). During this first period of activity theory the focus tended to be on

individual activity and did not take into account social structures ‘which themselves act to organise and constrain activity itself’ (Daniels, 2001, p.86). Later, activity theory began to look at the development of consciousness taking place in practical social activity settings: the ‘emphasis is on the psychological impacts of organised activity and the social conditions and systems which are produced in and through such activity’ (Daniels, 2001, p.83).

Activity theory has since been developed further by Engestrom (1999) who has expanded the basic triangle to incorporate ‘social/collective elements in an activity system, through the addition of the elements of community, rules and division of labour whilst emphasising the importance of analysing their interactions with each other’ (Daniels, 2001, p.89) (see Figure 1 below).

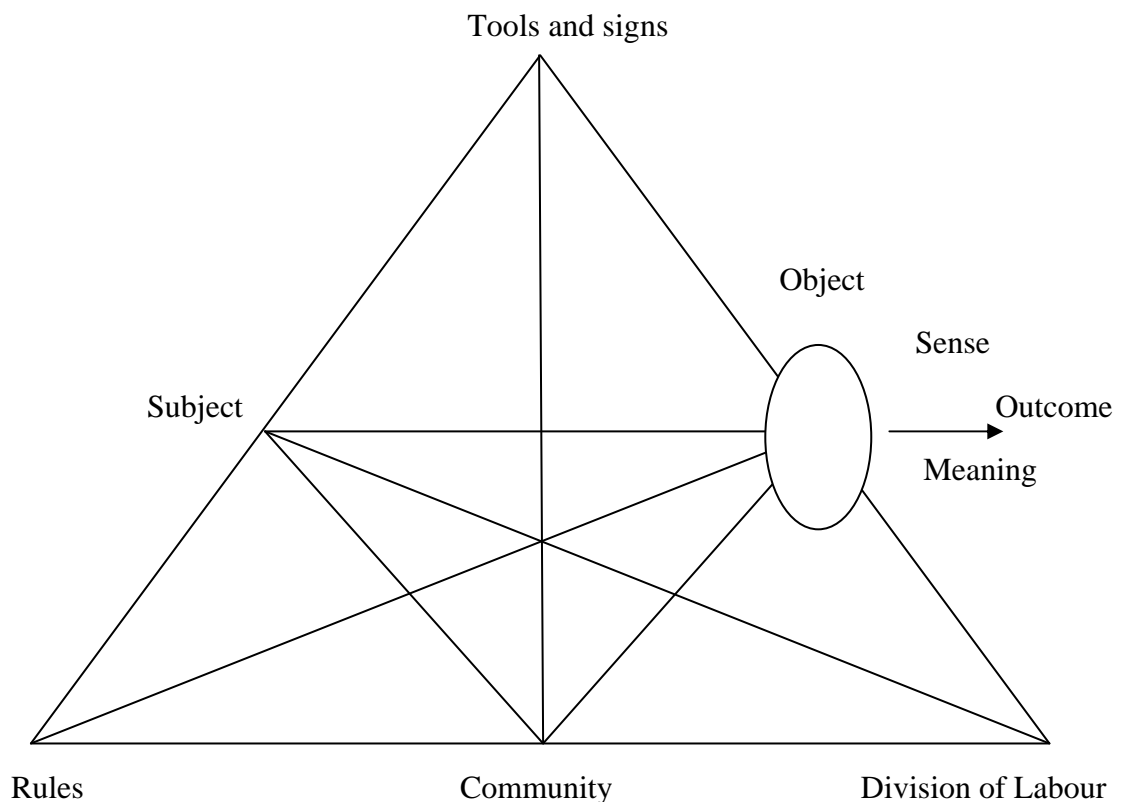


Figure 1: Engestrom’s expanded activity triangle incorporating rules, community and the division of labour and their interconnections (Engestrom, 1987, p.78)

Daniels gives a summary of Engestrom's conception of activity:

‘Activity is a collective, systemic formation that has a complex mediational structure. An activity system produces actions and is realised by means of actions. However, activity is not reducible to actions. Actions are relatively short lived and have a temporally clear-cut beginning and end. Activity systems evolve over lengthy periods of socio-historical time, often taking the form of institutions and organisations’ (Daniels, 2001, p.86).

The above representation of the activity system shows the way in which the individual actions of a subject, acting on an object to achieve an outcome, are located within much wider social, cultural and historical contexts. Within these contexts the cultural artefacts used to mediate actions are subject to procedural constraints of use provided by socially agreed rules. Both artefacts and rules themselves are historically evolving through social practices engaged in by the community of which the subject is a part. Leadbetter et al. (2007) suggest that ‘sociocultural and activity theory emphasize the need to ground any analyses of practice within wider contexts that take account of how and why practices developed in the past’ (p.87).

If we consider the activity triangle in relation to the focus of this research, namely parents (*the subject*) making decisions about which school to send their child with SEN to (*the object*), in order to choose the school that they feel will best suit the child (*the outcome*); it is possible to speculate how the other elements of the triangle may interact to influence this choice through the evolution over time of socio-historical systems and practices. For example, in the 1980s parents of a child with Down's syndrome who wanted their child to go to their local mainstream school would have to accept the final decision of the LEA who may have adjudicated that a special school was more appropriate (*the rules*). In addition, the mainstream school may have believed that they could not meet the needs of the child, despite the child having siblings and friends attending (*the community*). In this instance the *division of labour* can be seen to be unequal; both the LEA and the school converge to reinforce the *rules* which

are not balanced in favour of the parents. However, if we track forwards to 2010, following legislation referred to earlier which strengthens parents' rights to choose the school they want and places a greater duty on LAs to uphold this, it is possible to see that now, where a school believes that they cannot meet a child's needs, the rules have shifted in favour of the parents and the LA must take account of this (DfES, 2001); the *rules* have changed and so has the *division of labour*. However, the interactions of these elements are not fixed but dynamic which is why the outcomes vary.

A final significant consideration which is discussed by Hedegaard et al. (1999):

'The notion of social practice, as an analytic concept, is theoretically unsaturated. That is, no particular ontological or epistemological position is entailed by the general notion of social practice, defined as structured human traditions for interaction around specific tasks and goals. Therefore, the concept can be used with various conflicting philosophical and theoretical perspectives' (p.19).

Thus activity theory can be used to make sense of data gathered through a range of qualitative or quantitative methods.

Research Design

The research question asks why parents of children with a statement of SEN make the choices they do; it seeks to gather data which has both depth and richness, therefore a qualitative approach is indicated in this instance. A multiple case study approach has been fixed on as offering the potential to provide evidence that is both robust and contains depth. It also has the following advantage outlined by Yin (2009):

'Your case study may be part of a larger, mixed methods study. The main investigation may rely on a survey or other quantitative techniques, and your case study may help to investigate the conditions within one of the entities being surveyed' (p.63).

Yin (2009) goes on to suggest that a case study method is appropriate when:

- The research questions involve ‘How’ and ‘Why’;
- The researcher has little control over the events;
- The focus is on a contemporary issue within a real life context.

He identifies these ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions as being explanatory and that ‘such questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence’ (p.9). The former provides a definition of the scope of case studies, but Yin (2009) also provides a technical definition suggesting that case studies can deal with the situation where there are ‘many more variables of interest than data points’ and ‘benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis’ (p.18) (for an overview of the decisions that led to the final design of the study (see Appendix 7).

Multiple Case Studies

Multiple case studies have the advantage of being considered more robust than single case studies; the logic of the study’s choice of participants is one of a ‘replication’ design like that of multiple experiments, rather than a ‘sampling’ design (Yin, 2009). Initially a theoretical framework needs to be developed which identifies when the replication of phenomena are likely to be found, a literal replication, and when a replication of the phenomena are unlikely to be found, a theoretical replication. ‘The theoretical framework later becomes the vehicle for generalizing to new cases, again similar to the role played in cross-experimental designs’ (Yin, 2009, p.54). If some of the cases do not follow the predicted pattern the theory needs to be amended to address this. Multiple case rationales can emerge from the hypothesizing of different types of conditions and the need to have sub-groups of cases covering each type.

‘These and other similar designs are more complicated because the study should still have at least two individual cases within each of the subgroups, so that the theoretical replications across subgroups are complemented by literal replications within each subgroup’ (Yin, 2009, p.59).

Case studies, apart from being either single or multiple, can be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory; the current study fits the latter category as it aims to present data ‘bearing on cause-effect relationships- explaining how events happen’ (Yin, 2003, p.5).

Yin (2009) advises that ‘a case study protocol is desirable under all circumstances, but it is essential if you are doing a multiple-case study’ (p.79). The protocol is employed as a way of increasing the reliability of the research by attempting to impose some standardization on the process. He suggests that as a general rule the protocol should contain a number of different sections that guide the researcher from the initial research question/s and proposition/s, through the development of the theoretical framework, to the case study questions ‘the specific questions that the case study investigator must keep in mind in collecting data’ (Yin, 2009, p.81). A protocol was initially developed for the current study prior to the commencement of data collection; in addition to identifying the questions to be asked it also outlines the procedure for collection, the case selection criteria and the analytical technique to be used once the data is collected (see Appendix 8).

Case Selection

An important difference of a multiple case study design in comparison to methods such as grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) is that theory development occurs prior to the collection of data; therefore case selection depends upon the theory of what is being studied. For the purpose of this study there was a need to impose some control over the nature of the children’s SEN because a theme evident from the data gathered at the quantitative stage (see Appendix 6) which was also identified in the literature (Bagley and Woods, 1998; Jenkinson,

1998; Male, 1998; Palmer et al., 2001; and Leyser and Kirk, 2004) suggests that this can have a significant bearing on the type of school provision selected by parents. Because the evidence around the influence of this factor on the decision making process is already well documented, the intention was instead to get at factors which are perhaps less well explored but which may also be playing an important part in the decision making process. As parental choice has been strengthened by legislation (1981 Education Act; 1993 Education Act; Code of Practice, 1994 DfE; Disability Discrimination Act, 1995; Education Act 1996; SEN and Disability Act 2001; Code of Practice 2001, DfES) and LAs seek to extend this in practice, these other factors need to be explored and surfaced. By controlling for the SEN of the child, the aim is to identify other socio-cultural and historical factors that may be impacting on this choice making process. To this end, interviewees were selected from a group of year 7 pupils identified to have a similar SEN 'banding' under the LA's banding system. All the pupils have the following 3 areas of need identified on their statement which provides them with 11 hours of additional support:

5A - General learning difficulties

5C – Speech and language difficulties

5G – Mild social and relationship difficulties

This selection criterion was made because this group of pupils, more than any other group, appeared to have a pattern of placement at secondary age which encompassed each type of provision. By contrast, for example, those pupils with a band 4 statement (where attainment is not expected to exceed level 1 National Curriculum and requires carefully sequenced teaching within level 1) were predominantly transferring to a special school provision in year 7.

Conversely, those pupils whose statement fell under band 2E (physical disability requiring high levels of intervention) were predominantly transferring to a mainstream high school.

The pupils selected had all been attending their local primary school in year 6 and they had all recently transferred to a secondary provision. The aim was to recruit the parents of six children: two whose child had transferred to a mainstream high school; two whose child had transferred to a special school; and two whose child had transferred to a resourced provision within a mainstream high school (see Appendix 9 for a definition of resourced provision with this LA). This would then allow for the prediction of similar results between cases where the outcome had been the same (e.g. where two children transferred to a mainstream high school), a literal replication. Conversely, contrasting results, but for reasons which might be predicted, would be anticipated between cases where the outcomes had been different (e.g. between children that had gone to a mainstream school and children that had gone to special), a theoretical replication. If results from these cases turn out to be as predicted then this lends support to the theoretical propositions outlined in the conclusion of the literature chapter and incorporated into the case study protocol (Appendix 8). On the other hand, 'if the cases are in some way contradictory, the initial propositions must be revised and retested with another set of cases' (Yin, 2009, p.54). The sample size is small, but the logic is not that of generalization from sample to population but rather that of an experimental design, as discussed earlier. This group is unlikely to be representative of all pupils with statements of SEN because they, as a group, are not homogeneous. Only through conducting a large survey would it be possible to make any claim that a sample was representative. The aim of this study is to gather rich data. By placing parameters on the sample and developing theory in advance, based on previous research, it is hoped to provide some useful insights as opposed to generalizable data. A potential threat to the validity of this sample that does need to be raised, however, is that it is

possible that, despite having very similar needs on paper these pupils in practice may have quite different needs. A profile of each of the children using information from their Educational Psychology records is described below to provide further contextual data.

Initially a letter was sent out from the Principal Educational Psychologist to potential participants (See Appendix 10), a translated version of the letter in Urdu was also provided (see Appendix 11) because a number of the names in the identified sub-group were of Pakistani origin. This initial letter invited potential interviewees to either return a reply slip or telephone for more details about the research. Once responses were received, potential interviewees were contacted by telephone and arrangements were made for the interview to take place, these were confirmed by letter (see Appendix 12).

There were a total of ten possible participants in the cohort who had transferred in September 2009 that met the identified criteria, six of whom had transferred to a mainstream high school, two who had transferred to a mainstream high school with resourced provision and two who had transferred to a special school. In total six parents (60%) either returned the consent slip or telephoned to take part: three whose child had transferred to a mainstream high school; two whose child had transferred to special school; and one whose child had transferred to a mainstream high school with resourced provision. Only the first two of the three respondents whose child had gone to a mainstream school were interviewed and it was made clear in the initial contact letter that selection would be made on the basis of those first to respond. The final sample contained the parents of four children who were from a Pakistani ethnic background and one from a white British ethnic background (see profiles below).

Profiles of the Case Study Children

Case study 1 is a Year 7 female pupil who is currently attending a mainstream high school. She is from a Pakistani ethnic background. Her national curriculum levels in Year 5 were 1C in English and 1C in Maths. This pupil currently receives 11 hours of additional individual or small group support through her statement. Prior to her transfer to the mainstream high school, at change of phase at the end of Year 6, she had attended her local mainstream junior school. While she was at the junior school her statement, which she received in October 2007, provided her with 11 hours of additional individual or small group support.

Case study 2 is a Year 7 male pupil who is currently attending a mainstream high school. He is from a Pakistani ethnic background. His national curriculum levels in Year 6 were 1C in English and 1C in Maths. This pupil currently receives 11 hours of additional individual or small group support through his statement. Prior to his transfer to the mainstream high school, at change of phase at the end of year 6, he had attended his local mainstream junior school. While he was at the junior school he received additional support at school action plus (since 2004), but he only received his statement at the start of September 2009 when he transferred to high school.

Case study 3 is a year 7 female pupil who is currently attending special school provision for pupils with complex difficulties. She is from a Pakistani ethnic background. Her national curriculum levels in Year 6 were 1B in English and 1B in maths. Because she is now

attending a special school she is in an environment with a generally high staff to pupil ratio (there are currently 118 pupils on role, 16 full time equivalent teachers, 4 full time non-teaching staff and 38 part time non-teaching staff). Prior to her transfer to the special school, at change of phase at the end of Year 6, she had attended her local mainstream junior school. While she was at the junior school her statement, which she received in August 2005, provided her with 11 hours of additional individual or small group support.

Case study 4 is a Year 7 male pupil who is currently attending special school provision for pupils with complex needs. He is from a Pakistani ethnic background. His national curriculum levels in Year 6 were 1C in English and 1A in Maths. Because he is now attending a special school he is in an environment with a generally high staff to pupil ratio (there are currently 162 pupils on role, 23.5 full time equivalent teachers and 42 part time non-teaching staff). Prior to his transfer to the special school, at change of phase at the end of Year 6, he had attended his local mainstream junior school. While he was at the junior school his statement, which he received in July 2008, provided him with 11 hours of additional individual or small group support.

Case study 5 is a Year 7 male pupil who is currently attending a resourced provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder in a mainstream high school. He is from a white British ethnic background. His national curriculum levels in Year 6 were 3B in English and 3B in Maths. This pupil currently receives 11 hours of additional individual or small group support

through his statement. Prior to his transfer to the resourced provision at change of phase at the end of Year 6 he had attended his local mainstream junior school. While he was at the junior school his statement, which he received in January 2002, provided him with 11 hours of additional individual or small group support.

Summary of Profiles

From the profiles provided here it is possible to see that, on paper, there are broad similarities between the five pupils in terms of the hours of support they received through their statement while at primary school (although case 2 only received his statement on transfer to high school having previously been supported at school action plus). All the pupils were achieving within level 1 national curriculum in year 5 or year 6, except case 5 who was achieving within level 3. This pupil transferred to the high school resourced provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder so although learning is identified on his statement, it is likely that his needs are greater in the other two areas of speech and language difficulties and mild social and relationship difficulties. Clearly there are variations between this group of pupils, as would be expected amongst any group, however the fact that they have all received a statement of SEN identifying the same areas of need and hours of support implies an administrative expectation that their educational needs are similar. This was the reason that this group were selected because, despite this administrative identification of similarity, they have transferred to a range of different provision. While acknowledging the relativity of statements, the broad similarities of this group would suggest that it is not their need alone which is the main driver in terms of destination (as might be anticipated for a child with a profound multiple learning

difficulty, for example). Therefore this group is likely to be the most appropriate for exploring the other factors that impact on parental choice of provision.

Method

Interviews were chosen as an appropriate method to carry out this research because the intention is to generate rich data able to provide insights into the processes that constitute parents' decision making. An approach to carrying out the interviews which corresponds to that described by Holstein and Gubrium (1995) was adopted:

‘The active interview takes a constructivist perspective on the interviewing process and interview products’ (p.vii).

Holstein and Gubrium (1995) reject the view that interviewees are merely vessels of knowledge that the research interviewer can tap into by making sure that they ask the right questions; instead they propose that interviews are better seen as social productions where interviewees are narrators and interviewers are participants in the process. If our interest is to explore the underlying meanings of our interview respondent then: ‘projecting a subject behind the respondent confers a sense of epistemological agency on the respondent’ (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p7). In order to get at these underlying meanings a different approach to interviewing is required, one which is flexible and dynamic and allows the co-construction of meaning. These considerations were accounted for in coming to a decision about the most appropriate method for data collection in the context of this study, leading to a rejection of the use of questionnaire or structured interview approaches. The Semi-structured interview is a research tool which provides the desired flexibility and opportunity for dynamic interaction reflected in the research aims.

Semi-Structured Interviews

‘Qualitative interviews examine the context of thought, feeling and action and can be a way of exploring relationships between different aspects of a situation. Interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit – to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings’ (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.32).

In a semi-structured interview the interviewer still retains control of the interview in that they have their questions already planned in advance (Robson, 1993) but there is an emphasis on creating a greater degree of natural flow to the conversation by adopting a flexible approach to the question order and wording. The interviewer is therefore more active in the interview and although an interest in the content of answers persists, as stated above, there is no expectation that answers will be replicated on different occasions, validity lies with answers ‘ability to convey situated experiential realities in terms that are locally comprehensible’ (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p.9).

Interview Construction

The design of the semi-structured interview schedule is primarily dictated by the case study questions: what it is that we want to find out from each case (see Table 4 below). These questions in turn can be traced back, through the case study protocol (Appendix 8) to the original research question; they are underpinned by the theoretical framework arising from the review of literature and the theoretical interests of socio-cultural and activity theory. As the interview is semi-structured the questions do not necessarily have to be given in any particular order, however there is a logical chronology to the first three or four questions so the intention was to deliver these in sequence (see Appendix 13). The remaining questions could be

covered flexibly to try to allow a relaxed flow to the discussion. A pilot of the interview was carried out and some amendments were made as a result of this (see Appendix 14).

	Case study question
1.	What were the child's experiences / parents' perceptions of the mainstream primary school?
2.	What was offered by the secondary or special school chosen that was of particular importance/ value to parents?
3.	What form did the information take that made them aware of what was on offer at different schools?
4.	Did they talk to other parents of children with SEN who are already attending the school?
5.	What role, if any, did school staff and other professionals play in helping parents to decide the school their child should attend? Who attended the annual review?
6.	Did anyone else influence parents' decision? Family, friends etc.
7.	What was the division of labour that took place? Who was most powerful in the decision making process or was the decision dispersed? Were parents wishes central to the process?
8.	How did they decide that the school chosen would be the one best able to meet the child's SEN, or was this less important than other considerations?
9.	What are the parents' views about friendship? Is it more important for their child to have peers of a similar ability or more important to have peers from the local community, or neither of these?
10.	What are parent's perceptions of the attitude of mainstream pupils towards pupils with disabilities?
11.	Did rules around SEN play a part in the decision making process? SEN code of practice? Knowledge of legislation – DDA? Unwritten rules/ taken for granted assumptions around provision and needs of the child?

Table 4: The Case study questions developed from the initial theoretical proposition and used to guide the data collection with each individual case

Procedure for analysing the data

The interviews were either audio recorded and transcribed later or, if permission was not received to record, notes were taken during the interview and transcribed as soon as possible afterwards. The transcribed interviews were coded using what Miles and Huberman (1994) describe as a 'start list' of codes, which in this case is derived from the theoretical framework and from the theoretical interests of socio-cultural and activity theory reflected in the case

study questions. In addition, this list of codes is augmented to include unanticipated themes that emerge from the data (see Appendix 15). The coded data was then entered onto a checklist matrix as described by Miles and Huberman (1994). One of the conditions where a checklist matrix is useful is in the analysis of multiple-case studies which require comparability of formatting and measurement.

In the current study a different set of theoretical propositions was identified for the first two possible outcomes i.e. where parents had chosen a mainstream school or a special school. These theoretical propositions were derived from the research literature. In addition the research questions also aimed to gather data that related to socio-cultural and activity theory; it is anticipated that there will be similarities between cases in the same sub-group and differences across sub-groups in the constituent elements of the activity triangle. In relation to the third outcome, where parents had chosen for their child to go to a resourced provision within a mainstream school, it is not possible to develop a theoretical framework prior to data gathering because there is no research that looks at parents choosing this type of provision. It is anticipated that in these cases there is mixed support for theoretical propositions identified for both of the first two outcomes and mixed pattern of support in relation to the elements within the activity triangle. Yin (2009) suggests that:

‘Both the individual cases and the multiple-case results can and should be the focus of a summary report. For each individual case, the report should indicate how and why a particular proposition was demonstrated (or not demonstrated). Across cases, the report should indicate the extent of the replication logic and why certain cases were predicted to have certain results, whereas other cases, if any, were predicted to have contrasting results’ (p.56).

Ethical Considerations

The ethical issues of conducting this research have been considered with reference to the British Psychological Society (BPS) guidance on ethical approval (2004) and data protection guidelines for psychologists (2009). The BPS guidelines identify a number of general principles of which the following are of relevance to this research:

- Ethical approval for all research;
- Protection of participants;
- Informed consent;
- No coercion;
- The right to withdraw;
- Anonymity and confidentiality;
- Duty of Care.

Appendix 10 demonstrates how each of these principles has been addressed in the process of gaining ethical approval for the research through Birmingham University Departmental Ethics Committee in advance of carrying out the interviews (see Appendix 16 for a full description).

The Use of an Interpreter in Interviews

The use of an interpreter in some of the interviews presented a number of challenges that it is important to consider. Before carrying out the interviews, time was spent with the interpreter looking at the interview questions to check that she understood their purpose and intended meanings, and to check for potential issues or difficulties. In addition, the importance of accurately representing the interviewees' views in an effort to ensure the validity of the research findings was briefly discussed.

During the interviews the need for interpretation affects the flow and pace of the interview because it is important to give the interpreter time to process and formulate the question for

the interviewee. In addition, the process of accurately relaying back the interviewee's responses can be demanding for the interpreter, particularly if the respondent has provided a lot of information; inevitably some detail will be lost in the process. The interpreter also had to carefully judge when to interrupt the parents in order to interpret for me, to avoid breaking the flow of the parents' responses.

The interpreted interviews tended to take longer and it was difficult to flexibly prompt or probe to clarify meanings. It is likely that a degree of subtlety and nuance in the responses to questions would also be lost through the interpretation process. In two of the interviews the parents did not want me to use the tape recorder so notes had to be taken instead; the subtlety and complexity of what was recorded was not as rich as the taped interviews. The notes taken in these interviews were subsequently shared with the interpreter to check that the meaning of what had been said had been accurately captured.

Case Study Results

In total the parents of five pupils were interviewed and Table 5 below gives a breakdown of the differences between each interview condition and between the interviewees in terms of who took part, the provision attended by their son/daughter/grandchild and their ethnic origin. The intention had been to interview six parents in total, two representing each sub-group, however there was only one set of parents whose child had gone to a resourced provision who responded to the invitation to take part.

It is important to note that four out of the five parents interviewed are from a Pakistani minority ethnic background which may have implications in relation to the validity of the findings of this report as they may potentially relate to parents from this community as opposed to the broader group of parents of children with statements of SEN. In addition the

use of an interpreter in three of the interviews has an impact on the nature of the interview process that is also raised by other authors (Kumar, 1988; Shah, 1996); this also needs acknowledging.

Interview	Who took part	Ethnicity	Interpreter	Audio recorded or notes	Type of provision attended	Interview location
Interview 1	Pupil's mother	Pakistani	no	Audio recording	mainstream	Primary school
Interview 2	mother and grandparents	Pakistani	yes	Notes taken	mainstream	Home
Interview 3	Pupil's mother and elder sister	Pakistani	Sister contributed & interpreted for mother	Audio recording	Special school	Home
Interview 4	Pupil's mother and father	Pakistani	yes	Notes taken	Special school	Home
Interview 5	Pupil's mother and father	White British	no	Audio recording	Resourced provision	Home

Table 5: Showing differences between interview conditions and interviewees.

The audio recordings or notes taken during the interviews were transcribed and a start list of codes was used to initially analyse the data (see Appendix 15). As the analysis progressed this list was augmented to incorporate codes for emerging themes which had not been identified by the theoretical framework. Tables 6, 7 and 8 on the following pages present data from the interviews. In each table, the first column organises the themes in terms of socio-cultural activity theory by identifying which aspect of the activity triangle they most closely relate to. In the second column those themes in bold type are identified in the theoretical framework and are therefore themes discussed in the research literature (see Appendix 8 the case study protocol and literature reviewed above). Those themes in normal italic type are ones which

reflect the broader theoretical interests of activity theory and those in plain type are new themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview transcript.

Table 6: Case Studies 1 and 2 – parents of pupils who transferred to a mainstream high school at change of phase from year 6 to year 7

The first column identifies an aspect of the Activity Theory triangle and the themes are grouped together under the aspect that they most closely represent.

Key to abbreviations in the themes column:

LRC = Literal Replication Condition (when parents are likely to send their child to a mainstream school)

AT = Activity Theory (themes related to the interest of activity theory)

EI = Emerged from Interview (themes that emerged from the interview)

	Themes	Case study 1	Case study 2
Community	Their child has had a good experience in a mainstream primary school (LRC 1)	YES ‘She was fine and the teachers were happy with her’	NO ‘There had been a problem all along and he had not been making progress, but suddenly in year 5/6 they started to do something about it. They only started running around after we went in to talk to them’
	They have talked to other parents of children with SEN who attend the mainstream school (LRC 3)	NO	NO
	Their child has friends who are going there from their mainstream primary (LRC 5)	YES ‘There were friends from her primary school going to the same mainstream high school’	YES ‘A lot of children from the Mosque went to X High school so he already had friends that were going there’
	<i>Their child had another family member who was going or had been to the school chosen (AT)</i>	YES ‘ Y High school was alright because we all used to go to that school, like all my sisters – we all went there and I thought I’ll send her there’	YES ‘S’s sisters were already at X High school so I wanted S to go there’
	They want their child to learn alongside peers who do not have SEN and they feel that their child will copy the behaviour of children without a disability (LRC 7)	This was not mentioned by the interviewee.	This was not mentioned by the interviewees.

Tools	They value the academic and social opportunities offered in the mainstream school (LRC 2)	This was not mentioned by the interviewee.	This was not mentioned by the interviewees.
	They perceived it to be open and supportive of children with SEN(LRC 4)	YES 'Since I went there it was like different, there was more support and aids.' 'I was happy that she would get loads of support you know – they would help her.'	YES 'I was happy with the SEN provision at X High school.'
	<i>Did people at the Annual Review in year 5/6 suggest schools that you could visit or had you already visited/decided which schools to visit? How many schools did you visit? (AT)</i>	Parents visited 1 school – the school chosen. <i>Interviewer</i> – 'did anybody suggest that you visit other schools?' <i>Interviewee</i> – 'no they didn't.'	Parents visited 1 school – the school chosen. 'I said that I was sending S to X High school so they didn't suggest anything else.'
Division of Labour	The professionals involved supported them to make the choice that they felt was best for their child (LRC 6)	NO (with probing form interviewer) <i>Interviewer</i> – 'Did you discuss which secondary school S would go to?' <i>Interviewee</i> – 'yes they did – she would go to Y high school.' <i>Interviewer-</i> 'So had you already decided?' <i>Interviewee</i> – 'yes I did'	NO 'The school did not really help with the choice.'
	<i>Did anyone else influence the choice of which school to send your child to? (eg: family, friends, the child themselves)(AT)</i>	YES All the family agreed with the choice. The child: 'She kept saying 'oh mummy my aunties went to that school, you went to that school and I want to go to that school.'	YES 'All the family agreed with the choice.'
	<i>Did you attend an annual review in year 5 and/or 6 while the child was still at the primary school? (if yes) Who attended the review? (AT)</i>	YES Parent was very unsure of who attended the annual review apart from the class teacher; there were others attending but she did not know who they were or what their role was.	NO ' I did not go to a meeting in school although the school did phone two or three times.'
Rules	<i>Were you happy with the choices of school available? If not what would you like to have been available? (AT)</i>	YES The parent was happy with the choice available.	YES The parent was happy with the choice available.

Case studies 1 and 2

Cases 1 and 2 were the children whose parents had chosen for them to go to a mainstream high school. There was generally a high degree of correspondence in the responses given in the interviews; there were a number of instances where the answers given did reflect a literal replication of the conditions identified by the theoretical framework but there were also a number of differences. In relation to the first proposition, where it is likely that a child going to a mainstream high school will have had a good experience in their mainstream primary school, this was only true for case study 1. There was no evidence from either case to support proposition 2 (that the parents value the academic and social opportunities offered in the mainstream school) or proposition 7 (that they wanted their child to learn alongside peers who do not have SEN and they feel that their child will copy the behaviour of children without a disability). In relation to proposition 3, (parents are likely to have talked to other parents of children with SEN attending the school) this had not happened in either case, neither did the interviewees in either case feel that the professionals involved had supported them to make the choice that they felt was best for their child (proposition 6). Both cases 1 and 2 were able to choose the school that they wanted for their child.

Table 7: Case Studies 3 and 4 – parents of pupils who transferred to a special school at change of phase from year 6 to year 7

The first column identifies an aspect of the Activity Theory triangle and the themes are grouped together under the aspect that they most closely represent.

Key to abbreviations in the themes column:

LRC = Literal Replication Condition (when parents are unlikely to send their child to a mainstream school)

AT = Activity Theory (themes related to the interest of activity theory)

EI = Emerged from Interview (themes that emerged from the interview)

	Themes	Case Study 3	Case Study 4
Community	Their child has had a negative experience in a mainstream primary school (LRC 1a)	NO – <i>The child had a positive experience</i> ‘We thought she was quite happy at primary school you know, she never used to say she didn’t want to go.’	YES – <i>the child had a negative experience</i> ‘There were constant phone calls from school saying that his learning was slow.’
	They have talked to other parents of children with SEN who attend the special school (LRC 3a)	YES - ‘My uncle’s friend’s son went to X school and he actually suggested it to us.’ ‘He said that his son’s disabilities were really catered for at that school.’	NO
	They want their child to have the opportunities to make friends with children with similar learning difficulties (LRC 5a)	There was no evidence given to support this.	There was no evidence given to support this.
	<i>Did they have any friends going to the school chosen? (AT)</i>	NO	NO
	They are concerned that the child would be bullied or socially isolated in a mainstream school (LRC 7a)	YES - ‘It was also that she might get bullied in a mainstream school and she wouldn’t be able to tell us.’ ‘We just didn’t want other children to take advantage- you know.’	NO
	Although parents have sent their child to the special school they were concerned about behaviour of other pupils there (EI)	YES - ‘We made two visits to Y school but we didn’t really get a positive feel, there were more - sort of behaviour issues that were going on there.’	YES - Mr A spoke to a friend who said ‘why are you going to send your son to that school? It is for disabled children and children with bad behaviour.’

Tools	They want an educational provision that focuses on the acquisition of independent living skills and a supportive environment (LRC 2a)	There was no evidence given to support this.	There was no evidence given to support this.
	They did not perceive that mainstream schools could support their child's needs (LRC 4a)	There was no evidence given to support this.	There was no evidence given to support this.
	They felt their child would not receive a suitable quality of education by staff skilled in teaching children with SEN(LRC 8a)	There was no evidence given to support this.	There was no evidence given to support this.
	They believe their child will not receive a high level of support (LRC 9a)	There was no evidence given to support this.	There was no evidence given to support this.
	<i>Did people at the Annual Review in year 5/6 suggest schools that you could visit or had you already visited/decided which schools to visit? How many schools did you visit?(AT)</i>	YES We visited 2 special schools	YES We were given the option to visit X special school and a special school in Huddersfield, but we were told there would be no transport to that school, so there was no point in visiting, so we only visited X school.

Division of Labour	They felt that professionals had persuaded them that it was not in the best interests of their child (LRC 6a)	YES All the professionals that were attending the review were basically saying she needs to be in a special school.	YES We had considered X and Y high schools but because the SENCo at the primary school when our son was in Y6 said ‘why don’t you consider Z special school because it is nearby, the classes are smaller and there is more support for his SEN.’
	<i>Did you talk to anyone else about the choice of which school to send your child to? (e.g. family, friends) (AT)</i>	YES ‘We spoke to the family – some of the family said that we should send her to mainstream school, but we were put off mainstream because I don’t think it would be suitable for her.’	YES ‘I spoke to a friend “why are you sending your son to that school? It is for disabled children and children with bad behaviour.” But I said it was what we had been advised, we had no choice, no option.’
	<i>Did they discuss the choice with the child?(AT)</i>	NO The child was unable to express an opinion that the parents felt they would be able to take into account.	YES ‘we talked about it to H. Mr A(father) told H what his friend had said. H said ‘you are sending me to that school and all my friends are going to other schools, Z school is for disabled children’
	<i>Did you attend an annual review in year 5 and/or 6 while the child was still at the primary school? (if yes) Who attended the review?(AT)</i>	YES ‘It was the SENCo worker, it was the Educational Psychologist and a lady from parent partnership.’	YES ‘We went to a lot of meetings and they had education people there – we don’t know which ones and we don’t know if the EP came. The teacher and head teacher really encouraged us to choose Z special school.’
	<i>The professionals supported them to make the choice that they felt was best for their child (AT)</i>	YES/NO they did support but they did not get the choice of school they wanted ‘We had decided that we weren’t going to send her to mainstream but we couldn’t decide between the two special schools, they couldn’t tell us which school to choose. The SENCo helped us quite a lot in making a decision and the EP and the speech therapist.’	NO

Rules	<i>Were you happy with the choices of school available? If not what would you like to have been available?(AT)</i>	NO ‘We would have preferred for her to be in a mainstream school but obviously we know that it wouldn’t benefit her, but from the options that were available I don’t think that there was a school that was best suited to M.’	NO ‘What about free choice? we did not have free choice, they kept saying he is behind so Z school is the right place but we had wanted a mainstream school’
	Transport was an issue (EI)	YES ‘It was the transport issue, the authority were saying they can’t provide the transport when there is a nearer school catering for the same needs basically and they said because it is in the catchment area that’s why they weren’t providing transport’ (to the other school).	YES ‘We were promised that we would get transport for him to these schools but were then denied that he would get it. There would be no help with transport to either of these places.’
	Parents felt that they had to battle for what they wanted (EI)	YES ‘We had to go through a long battle even for Y school (local special school) for transport. It was horrendous. It just basically relied on the transport that is why she has gone to Y school.’	This was not mentioned.

Case studies 3 and 4

Cases three and four were the children whose parents had chosen for them to go to a special school. There was a greater degree of difference in the responses given by the interviewees in cases 3 and 4 and there were also differences from the theoretical framework or instances where no evidence was given. However, there were some similarities between the cases which were particularly significant. The first proposition, that the child is likely to have had a negative experience in their mainstream primary school was only confirmed by interviewee 4 and the proposition that they are likely to have talked to other parents of children with SEN who attend the special school (3a) was only confirmed by interviewee 3. Only interviewee 3 expressed concerns that the child would be bullied or socially isolated in a mainstream school (literal replication 7a). There was no evidence given in either interview to support conditions 2a, 5a, 8a or 9a. Neither case 3 or 4 got the choice of school that they would have liked for their child.

Table 8: Case Study 5 – parents of pupil who transferred to a resourced provision in a mainstream high school at change of phase from year 6 to year 7

The first column identifies an aspect of the Activity Theory triangle and the themes are grouped together under the aspect that they most closely represent.

Key to abbreviations in the themes column:

LRC = Literal Replication Condition (when parents are likely to choose to send their child to a mainstream school with resourced provision)

AT = Activity Theory (themes related to the interest of activity theory)

EI = Emerged from Interview (themes that emerged from the interview)

	Themes	Case study 5
Community	Their child has had a good experience in a mainstream primary school (LRC 1)	YES 'It was very supportive and they had other SEN children there'
	They have talked to other parents of children with SEN who attend the school (LRC 3)	YES 'Luckily for us we had a friend whose son had been to X resourced provision, so over the years we had heard a lot about it'
	Their child has friends who are going there from their mainstream primary (LRC 5)	YES 'another boy from his class at primary has gone to X resourced provision with him'
	<i>Their child had another family member who was going or had been to the school chosen (AT)</i>	NO
	The local mainstream high school was perceived to be inappropriate (LRC 8a)	YES 'Because catchment area wise we are Y school, but both of us were adamant he was not going there because there is no specialist support – all he would get is outreach support.'

Tools	They want an educational provision that focuses on the acquisition of independent living skills and a supportive environment (LRC 2a)	YES ‘They do, like, road crossing, so they substitute some of the lessons for like life skills and we thought “ultimately that’s more important than if he walks out with any GCSEs.”’
	They perceived it to be open and supportive of children with SEN (LRC 4)	YES ‘ Through visiting it really, because they make you very welcome, they showed the resourced provision base and explained the nature of the support and the support they offered around independence etc’
	They did not perceive that mainstream schools could support their child’s needs (LRC 4a)	YES ‘I knew he wouldn’t be going to the local mainstream school. I just knew that they wouldn’t be able to cater for him there.’
	<i>Did people at the Annual Review in year 5/6 suggest schools that you could visit or had you already visited/decided which schools to visit? How many schools did you visit? (AT)</i>	YES ‘We went to look at Z and A special schools as well but our hearts were set on X resourced provision.’
Division of Labour	<i>The professionals involved supported them to make the choice that they felt was best for their child (AT)</i>	Some professionals were viewed as supportive but not all. ‘The psychologist was brilliant because they were saying yes we think X resourced provision would be the best place – he’s got the best of both worlds’
	<i>Did anyone else influence the choice of which school to send your child to? (e.g. family, friends, the child themselves) (AT)</i>	YES ‘One of my friends – her son had been so over the years, things that she had said about how he had done and how fantastic it was...’ (had influenced them)
	<i>Did you attend an annual review in year 5 and/or 6 while the child was still at the primary school? (if yes) Who attended the review?(AT)</i>	YES ‘The Psychologist was there, someone from the LA (not sure who) and someone from Autism Outreach.’

Rules	<i>Were you happy with the choices of school available? If not what would you like to have been available? (AT)</i>	YES – However ‘That’s an awkward question because we got the school we all wanted but I should imagine that if you spoke to other parents whose kids didn’t get in I think a lot of people would prefer another couple of mainstream schools that have provision like this.’
	<i>Transport was an issue (EI)</i>	YES ‘X (professional at the meeting) wanted him to go to the local mainstream school – but he can’t go on a bus on his own there!’
	Parents felt that they had to battle for what they wanted (EI)	YES ‘You’ve got to go through the channels; it’s not just cut and dried just because you say that is what you want. The school (primary) said when you go to the review the last time you have to know that that is the school you want them to go to because I think if there are any cracks in the armour they’ll think your either not bothered or they’ll try and push for another school; and two years prior that’s when you have to start getting an idea about where you want him to go, going to visit the schools and getting ready for a bit of a battle.’

Case Study 5

Case 5 was the only case where the parents had chosen for the child to go to a resourced provision within a mainstream high school. No theoretical framework had been developed for this case because there was no discussion in the literature which related to parents choosing this type of provision. The themes which emerged from this interview suggest that there are elements of the conditions which obtain where parents choose a mainstream high school for their child and those where parents choose a special school. For example, they did perceive that the school was open and supportive of children with SEN (LRC 4) but at the same time they were concerned that their child would be bullied or socially isolated in the mainstream school (LRC 7a). The parents of case 5 got the choice of school that they wanted for their child but they recognised that there was likely to be a lot of parents who would not have got their choice because places in the resourced provision were low and they perceived that demand was high. They describe the process of obtaining a place for their son as a ‘battle.’

Cross Case Analysis

Although the patterns identified in the empirical data provided only partial support for the patterns suggested by the theoretical propositions there were clear differences between the subgroups of cases. Some of these differences are mutually exclusive because of the outcome, e.g. where parents chose a mainstream school it was because they perceived that the mainstream school was open and supportive to children with SEN, or where parents chose a special school they have talked to other parents of children with SEN who attend the special school and these differences are anticipated in the theoretical framework. However, there are other differences, particularly those that relate to themes which are of interest to activity theory.

Element of the activity triangle	Sub-group: Mainstream	Sub-group: Special school	Sub-group: Resource provision
<i>Their child had another family member who was going or had been to the school chosen (AT)</i> Community	YES	NO	NO
<i>Did people at the Annual Review in year 5/6 suggest schools that you could visit or had you already visited/decided which schools to visit? How many schools did you visit?(AT)</i> Tools	Both visited only 1 school the school chosen and in neither case was it suggested they should visit other schools.	In both cases it was suggested they visit at least two different special schools – no mainstream schools were suggested or visited.	Parents visited two special schools as well as the resource provision school.
<i>Were you happy with the choices of school available? If not what would you like to have been available? (AT)</i> Rule	YES Both were happy.	NO Both would have preferred mainstream but were persuaded that special was the right choice.	YES But parents acknowledged that many other parents may not have been happy because of the limited places and high demand.
<i>Did you talk to anyone else about the choice of school to send your child to? (e.g. family, friends) (AT)</i> Division of Labour	All the family agreed with the choice.	Friends and family questioned why they were sending their children to special school.	A friend whose child had been to the school and who said how good it was.
<i>Did they discuss the choice with the child?(AT)</i> Division of Labour	One case did The child wanted to go to the school	One case did The child did not want to go to the (special) school.	NO

Table 9: Cross case analysis of cases looking at themes related to Socio-cultural and Activity Theory

Interestingly the one factor which did not appear to consistently have an influence on parents' decisions to choose either a mainstream school or special school was the child's experience in their mainstream primary school.

Discussion

In turning to consider the case study findings, perhaps the first thing to note is that in both conditions, whether the child had gone on to a mainstream secondary school or a special school, the experience that the child had at their mainstream primary school did not seem to have a critical part to play in that decision: there were parents whose child had a positive experience and parents whose child had a negative experience in both. This then throws into question the conditions identified in the theoretical framework that suggest: where parents are likely to send their child to a mainstream secondary school they will have had a positive experience at their primary school (Jenkinson, 1998) while, conversely, where parents are unlikely to choose a mainstream secondary school, their child's experience at primary will have been negative (Jenkinson, 1998; Bagley et al., 2001; and Whitaker, 2007). As there is only one case where the child went to resourced provision it is not possible to make any observation other than to say that it seems reasonable to speculate that it would be a similar situation.

Where parents have chosen for their child to transfer to a mainstream high school (cases 1 and 2) neither of the parents had talked to the parents of SEN children who were already attending the mainstream school (Bagley and Woods, 1998) and neither appears to believe that they had been supported in making their choice by the professionals involved:

‘The school did not really help with the choice’ (case study 2).

It would appear in both these cases that the main influences on the decision about which school the child should go to were from within the family and that the primary school and other professionals played a limited, almost negligible role in the decision: interviewee 2 did not even attend the annual review. In both these cases all the family had agreed that the child should go to the mainstream high school and they also had family members who either had

been there or were currently attending. In addition, the children in both cases had friends from either their primary school or the Mosque also transferring to the school and this supports the proposition in the theoretical framework that came from the research by Jenkinson (1998). In the case of interviewee 1, the child herself had also expressed her desire to attend the high school: ‘she kept saying “oh mummy my aunties went to that school, you went to that school and I want to go to that school.”’ In addition, both sets of parents only visited the school chosen, and they both perceived that school to be supportive of children with SEN (Woods and Bagley, 1998). It appears that these parents may never have considered a special school as an option and because there was little input from the school or other professionals they made their decision based upon the knowledge they already possessed about local schools.

The parents who chose a special school provide a more varied picture with differences between interviewees and differences from the propositions in the theoretical framework. However, in relation to two significant points there *is* agreement: both sets of parents felt that school staff and professionals had persuaded them that it was not in the best interests of the child to go to a mainstream school. In addition, neither was really happy with the choice of schools available to them as the following quotes clearly demonstrate:

‘We would have preferred for her to be in a mainstream school, but obviously we know that it wouldn’t benefit her, but from the options that were available I don’t think that there was a school that was best suited to M’ (case study 3).

‘What about free choice? We did not have free choice, they kept saying he is behind so Z school is the right place, but we had wanted a mainstream school’ (case study 4).

Given that these parents felt that they had been persuaded by the child’s primary school and other professionals that a mainstream school was not an option for their child (Ryndak et al., 1996; Kenny et al., 2005) the choice of a special school appears to be a forced rather than an active choice. Because the opportunity to consider the relative benefits of a special school in

comparison to those offered by a mainstream school had been removed by this pre-emptive action a number of the propositions in the theoretical framework (see Table 7: LRC 2a, 4a, 5a, 8a, 9a) are in effect obsolete because parents are responding to pressure as opposed to actively choosing: ‘we did not have free choice’ (case study 4), which would explain why there is no evidence either for or against these propositions.

The parents whose child went to a resourced provision within a high school present a picture which has resonances of both the mainstream sub-group and the special school sub-group but there is one significant difference between these parents and the others: they describe the process of getting their child into the school of their choice as a battle.

‘Two years prior, that’s when you have to start getting an idea about where you want him to go, going to visit the schools, getting ready really for a bit of a battle, getting ready for somebody saying “yes well you say you want him to go there but X is a perfectly good school and they have got autistic children” – yes that’s fine, that’s ok but my son is not going’ (case study 5).

These parents were already aware of the resource provision from talking to a friend whose child was attending and although they did visit other schools they were clear that this school was the choice they wanted. Additionally, these parents were well supported by the child’s primary school who gave them a lot of advice and guidance.

The differences between the mainstream sub-group and the special school sub-group, particularly those that relate to themes which are of interest to activity theory, seem to suggest differences in the operation of the activity systems leading to these differing outcomes and the figures below represent the activity systems that are suggested by the data in each situation (see Figures 2, 3 and 4 below).

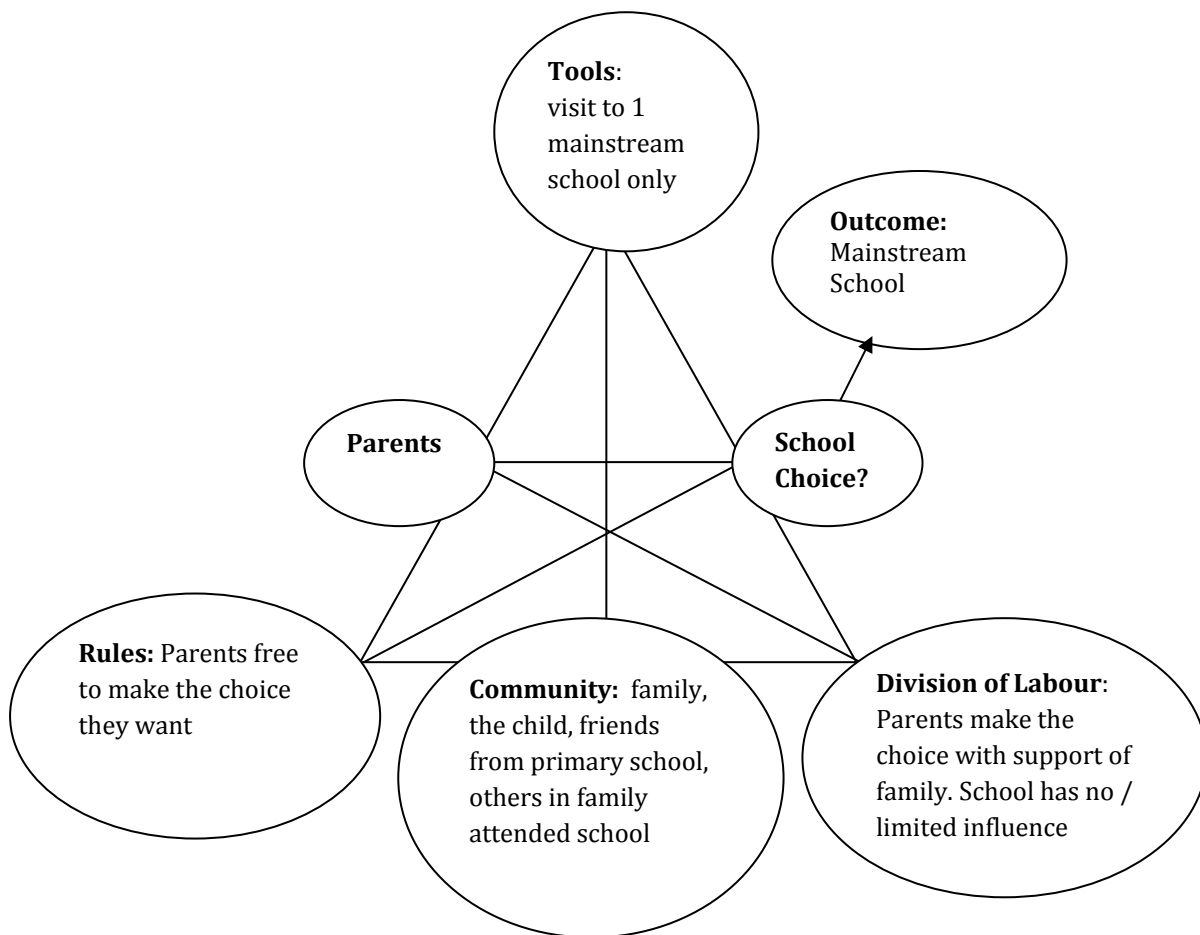


Figure 2: Parents of SEN pupils choosing a mainstream high school for their child viewed as an activity system (N=2).

However, it is important to emphasise, in identifying trends in the operation of the activity systems, the fact that there were only two sets of parents in the case of the mainstream pupils, two sets of parents in the case of the special school pupils and one set in the case of the resourced provision pupil. These limited numbers mean that the data presented here needs to be regarded with great caution. Generalisation cannot be made and is not intended to be made; rather it is intended to identify trends in the context of the participants in the study which may or may not have resonances for other contexts.

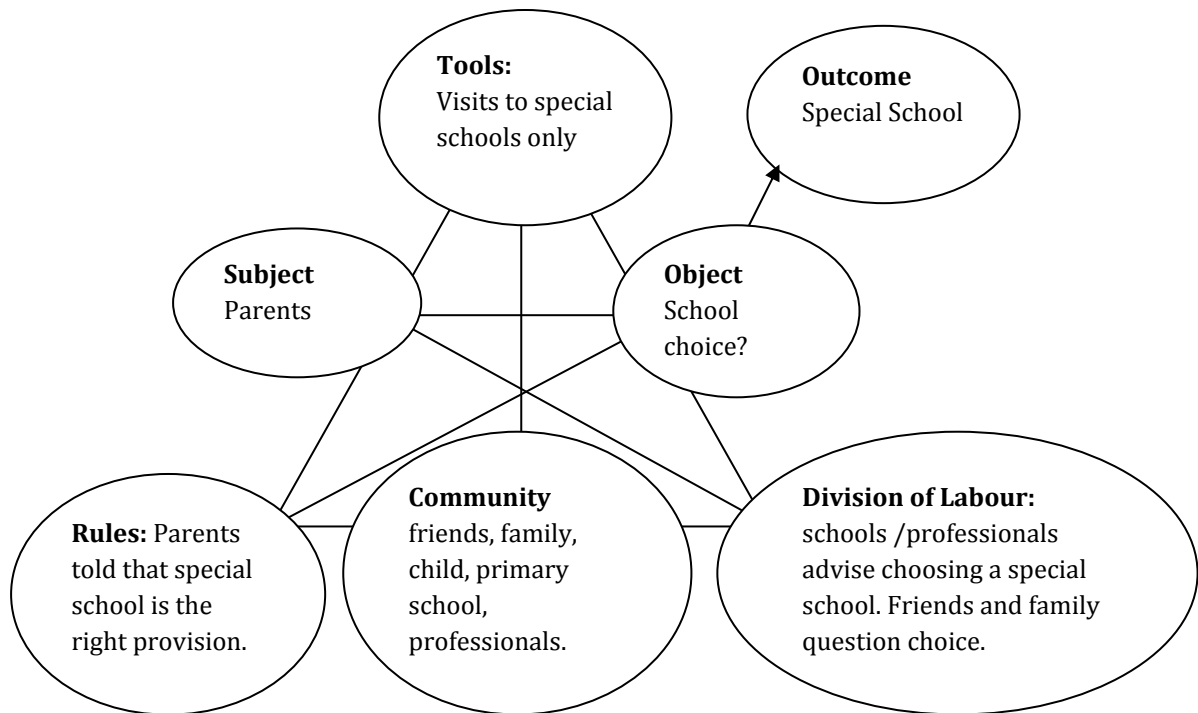


Figure 3: Parents of SEN pupils choosing a special school for their child viewed as an activity system (N=2).

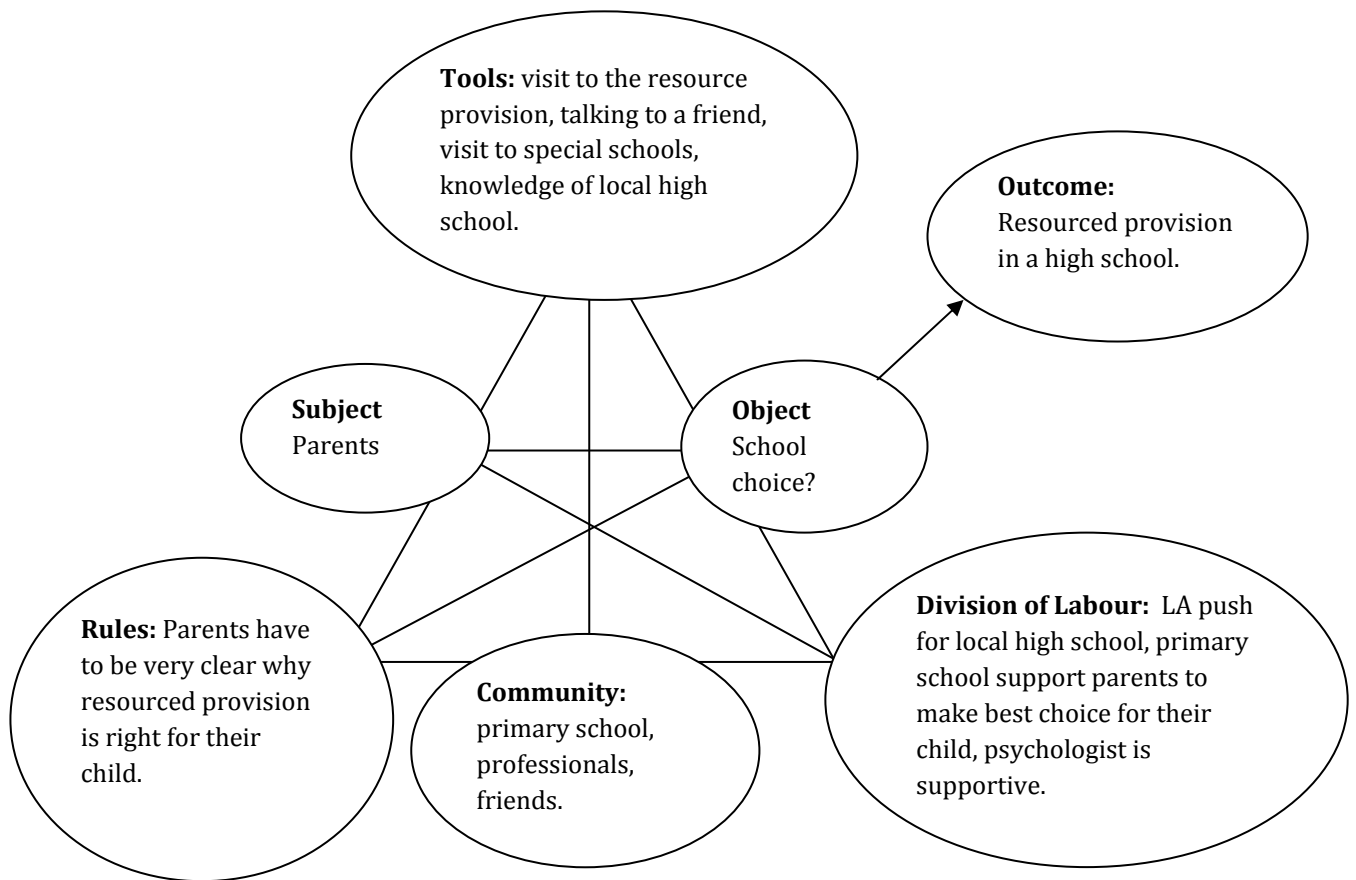


Figure 4: Parents of SEN pupil choosing a resourced provision within a mainstream high school for their child viewed as an activity system (N=1).

Ratner (1997) suggests that ‘culture includes social concepts but also concrete social institutions that are arranged in a division of labour and governed by definite principles of behaviour, forms of control and power, allocation of opportunities and rewards and punishments’ (P.116). The above activity systems suggest that these concrete social institutions, here the mainstream primary schools attended by the children and the other involved professionals, may evolve their own cultural norms which dictate the way that they impact on parents decisions. Some schools may have a firm belief that some children with SEN will not cope in a mainstream high school and therefore steer these parents into considering a special school for their child; others may hold less fixed views and so wait for the parent to either express a view or request support with the choice. The exercising of different degrees of control and power results in different opportunities for children and nowhere is this more apparent than where opportunities are scarce such as is the case of resourced provision places. In the case reported here, the parents who obtaining a place for their child in the resourced provision described themselves as very lucky. In this case, because of the scarcity of places, the locus of power shifts from the primary school to the LA who the parents believed they have to engage in ‘battle’ in order to secure the opportunity they have chosen for their child as the following quote illustrates:

‘At the final meeting, all and sundry were there, people from education and all that and they kept banging on about X school and this that and the other, and I just put my hand down on the table firmly and said that’s fine, that’s ok but my son is not going there’ (case study 5).

Limitations

There are a number of limitations that can be identified in the current study and it is important to acknowledge these. Firstly, the fact that it was possible to interview parents of only one child who transferred to a resource provision and that there is no theoretical

framework developed in advance for this case means that no claims can be made that this case is able to explain phenomena; however, it could provide exploratory evidence that could be built on by conducting a future study. Another possible limitation of the study is that although all the children whose parents were interviewed had a statement with the same areas of need and level of support required identified in them it is possible that there are inconsistencies between these children in reality and that this is a reason why some pupils are more likely to transfer to a mainstream school and some to a special school.

The findings from this study cannot be generalized, this is not the intention of a multiple case design; as stated earlier the case selection is not based on a sampling logic where the sample is intended to be representative of a larger universe but rather a replication logic where you seek to replicate the findings from one study by conducting further studies which you anticipate to provide the same results (a literal replication) or different results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication). Where the studies support the propositions of the theoretical framework this provides evidence that is increasingly robust, where they do not the framework may need reformulating.

The composition of the final sample may represent a threat to the theoretical conceptualization of the study because four out of the five families were from an Asian minority ethnic background and for three of the interviews an interpreter was required. It is possible that some of the findings of the study relate to specifically issues effecting parents from this community. The use of an interpreter in three of the interviews is, on the one hand, a strength because the voices of ethnic minority parents whose first language is not English are not frequently heard; on the other hand, however, the use of an interpreter presents a potential weakness because of the possibility of misinterpretation or misrepresentation (It is not suggest that this *has* occurred or that should it have done so that it was in any way purposeful).

A further limitation of the current study in relation to its intended aims is that it did not fully capture the historical and broader cultural aspects at play in school choice. The interview questions failed to elicit these themes from the parents. I would hypothesise that these themes are quite subtle and operate at a level of awareness that would require a different focus to the questioning and perhaps a different approach to analysis, for example a discourse analysis approach might help to surface these themes and any tensions within them.

Finally, in considering the limitations of this research the fact that it only discusses school choice from one perspective, that of the parents, needs to be taken into account. A further study might usefully triangulate data by seeking to elicit the views of other key stakeholders, for example: staff in the primary school, staff in the receiving school, the Educational Psychologist, other involved professionals and representatives of the LA, particularly the SEN Statementing Officer. A future study might also plan to elicit the voice of the children themselves as there is an increasing emphasis on ensuring that they, as the service recipients, are involved in shaping the services they receive.

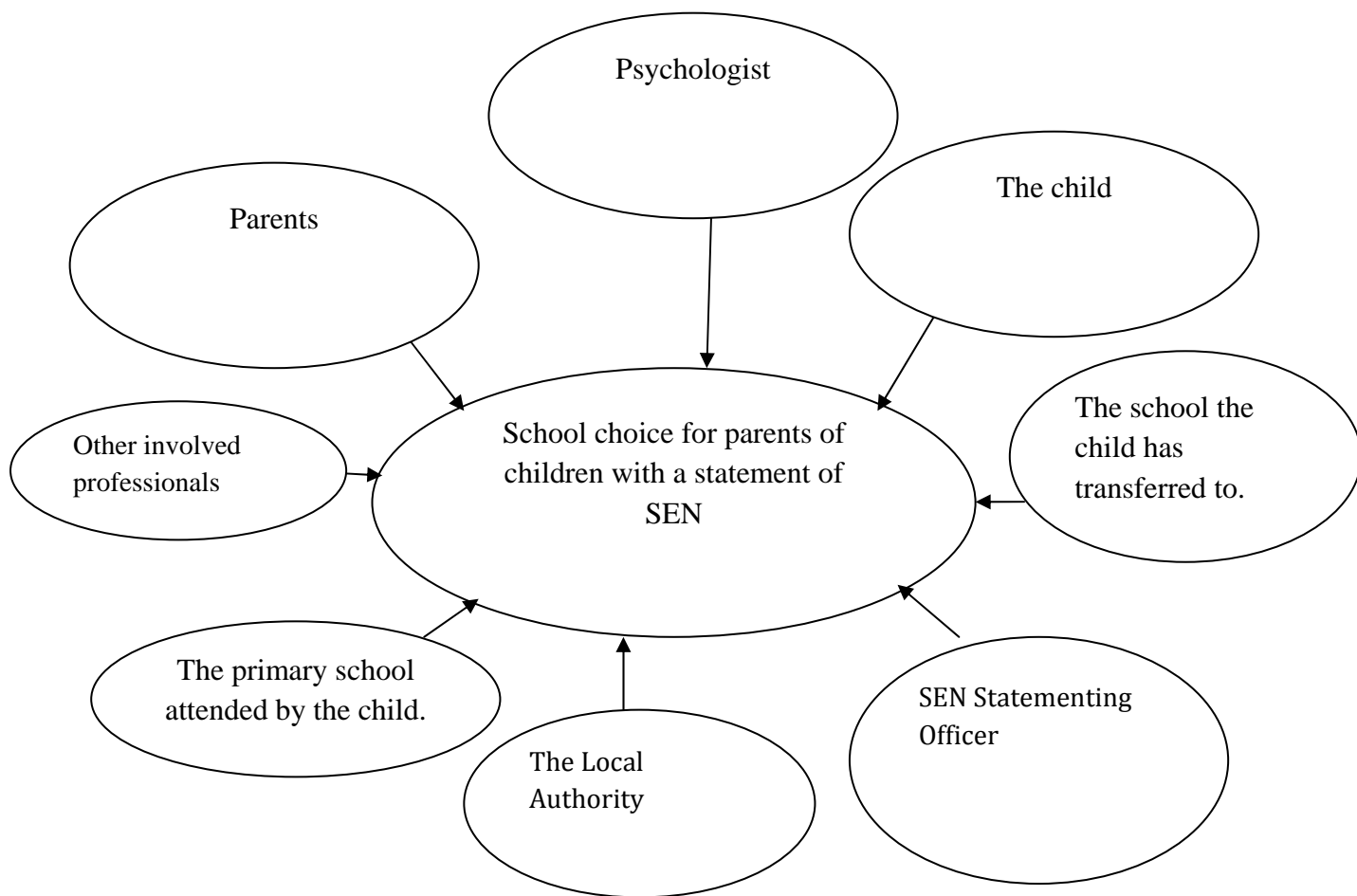


Figure 5: Diagram showing the major stakeholders who are involved in school choice at change of phase for a child with SEN

Conclusion

The current study shows that in the context of this LA, the level of inclusion of pupils with a statement of SEN in mainstream high schools has increased in relative terms over the last three years. However, there is variation between groups of pupils depending on the nature of their SEN and this is consistent with other findings in the literature. The current study also shows that there is variation within groups of pupils with the same needs identified on their statement. It might be presumed that this is because parents are using their right to choose a school for their child in order to select a provision that they feel is best able to meet the child's

needs. However, the interviews with parents whose children went to a special school suggest that professionals may have led them to believe that to choose a mainstream school was not a realistic option and, therefore, they only considered and visited special school provision. Although only exploratory, the case involving the parents of the child who transferred to a resourced provision in a mainstream high school suggest that there is a high demand for this type of provision which is why they describe the experience of securing a place for their child as a battle. It seems likely from the interview with these latter parents, and those whose children went to special school, that there would be parental support for extending this type of provision within the LA and this lends support to a suggestion made in the review of SEN provision by Cambridge Education (2008):

‘Parents would like to see the development of Resourced Provision in every pyramid of schools across [*the LA*]. This would enable their children to transfer between educational phases alongside their community peer groups’ (p.17).

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Chapter 4: Conclusions and Implications for Future Research and Professional Practice

The research reported in this paper is intended to extend and compliment the limited amount of previous research carried out in this area in an English context. The use of a multiple case design is not intended to provide data that can necessarily be extrapolated to other contexts, clearly the local implementation of policy in this area and the different socio-cultural and historical contexts of different LAs imply a heterogeneous picture unlikely to be captured in such a small scale study within one LA. What it is hoped that this study has achieved is a deeper understanding of the way in which interacting factors can impact on the decisions parents are making, resulting in the different outcomes in terms of school choice for children with SEN.

The study has attempted to minimise the influence of the nature and degree of the child's SEN in order to explore the impact of other factors on parents' decisions; however, it is important to acknowledged that there is a potential threat to validity of the case selection because it is not possible to be certain that the fact of the children having the same SEN identified in their statement maps onto the same needs in practical day to day terms.

There are implications for future professional practice of Educational Psychologists suggested by this research and there are also implications for the LA. Of particular concern are the cases reported here where the child transferred to a special school because these parents are expressing a belief that there was no choice available that was really suitable for their child. In addition, these parents appear to have been led to believe that a mainstream provision was not a viable option and had therefore only visited special school provision. Parents of children with a statement SEN need to be encouraged to visit the full range of provision so that they have chance to consider what is available within the LA and from this choose the school that *they* feel is most likely to meet the child's needs. Educational

Psychologists are juggling the demands of many competing priorities and therefore are not always able to attend transition reviews in year 5; however, the termly planning meetings would offer an opportunity to discuss any year 5 pupils with a statement of SEN to establish whether parents' have already expressed a preference for their child's secondary placement. In those cases where parents are undecided, or a special school appears to be the likely choice, it would be helpful for the EP to either attend the transition review or contact the parents by telephone to ensure that they are making an informed choice and that they have fully considered the options available to them.

There is a need for Educational Psychologists to support parents in situations where there is a lack of certainty about which is the most appropriate provision for their child. Parents should always be encouraged to visit a range of provision including a mainstream high school. However, parents may require support around what to look for in a school that would indicate a positive attitude and capacity to meet the needs of children with SEN. Attention could be drawn to the range of additional needs that the school is already successfully including and any adaptations and accommodations that have been made for this purpose. Parents could also be directed to look at the school's promotional material, particularly the school brochure, to look at how the school prioritises and highlights the needs of children with SEN.

Educational Psychologists might further support parents by encouraging them to make use of other services that can help them to make the best choice for their child. For example, the parent partnership service can support parents where they feel that they are being pressurised unduly to consider a particular type of provision in contradiction to their preference. In addition this service also provides a school choice advice service to support parents in choosing secondary provision for their child.

The Educational Psychologist might also work with mainstream schools to support them in the development of inclusive practices. Additionally, it would be helpful if there were parents of children with SEN already included in the school were willing to talk about their experiences and their perceptions of the school's capacity to meet the needs of children with SEN.

Educational Psychologists provide independent advice to the LA and to the SEN Casework officers about the needs of children and the provision required to meet those needs. As part of this role the EP is in a position to influence decisions by encouraging both parents and SEN caseworkers to consider the full range of provision available before making a choice and naming a school. Where this is the case it seems likely that parents will be making an informed choice which has a higher probability of reflecting their own and their child's wishes.

However, it needs to be acknowledged that such input may already be too late for some parents because of experiences and messages they may have received earlier on from staff within school regarding the appropriate educational placement for their child. Such messages can have a powerful impact on parents' expectations and beliefs about their child, especially if they are feeling vulnerable. This may have implications for the LA as a whole if it is truly committed to a position where a mainstream school is always considered first. There may be a need implied for additional training and awareness raising of SEN issues for all frontline staff in schools.

The interview with the parents whose child transferred to a resourced provision and the outcomes of consultation with parents in the review of SEN provision in the LA (Cambridge Education, 2008) both reflect a desire by many parents of children with SEN for more of this type of provision to be made available. However, given the current economic situation and

the fact that the LA has recently invested in upgrading its special school provision, this seems to be unlikely to occur in the short to medium term. What may be important therefore, is that special school provision, as a limited resource, is suitably targeted at those pupils with the most complex needs of which it is suggested there is a growing number (Head and Pirrie, 2007; Cambridge Education, 2008). There may be a need for primary school managers and SENCOs to have a better understanding of the needs these schools should be targeting so that parents are not only signposted towards this provision when a mainstream school might also be an option.

There are a number of themes that are not addressed by this study which are either directly related or closely linked that would provide a valuable contribution to knowledge. Firstly the interviews with parents of children with SEN transferring to a special school at change of phase seem to be suggesting that this is not necessarily a positive choice but rather one that is perceived to be the only real option by these parents. Other parents may be actively choosing a special school provision, particularly if their child's needs are more complex (Parsons et al., 2009). However, an important question to ask is what would those parents who are not actively choosing a special school like to be available as an alternative option? A further linked question is related to long term outcomes. The current study reports on pupils with similar needs identified in administrative terms who, having first attended a mainstream primary school, have subsequently transferred to three different types of provision. Research to track a similar cohort of pupils, through a long term follow up study, would allow an observation of any significant differences in the later, post school, outcomes for these students; this would be especially useful if these could be linked with a suitable level of reliability to the provision they had attended.

A final area of significant interest which is only discussed incidentally in this research is the position of parents to access the information they require to make an informed choice and

their capacity for self advocacy in a process that can be interpreted as being under the scrutiny of the LA. This scrutiny is not extended to pupils without SEN, whose parents are free to make the choice they feel most desirable (even if not guaranteeing them a place); however, it may be having an influence on the decision making process of those parents of children with SEN. This may have particular implications for families from an ethnic minority background, especially where English is not the first language. Four out of the five families interviewed in this study were from a Pakistani ethnic background and three out of these four did not speak English as a first language. It was not within the remit of this study to explore this issue further but it may be an important consideration for future research on school choice.

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Appendix 1: Clarification of terms used in the literature

Because the extent of the literature looking specifically at school choice and decision making (by parents of children with a Statement of SEN) in England is limited, papers covering England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, The Republic of Ireland, Australia and the United States of America were also examined; as well as papers about parents' views on inclusion and special school provision. In addition, although all the children being discussed in the papers would be viewed as having SEN under the English education system, this in no means a heterogeneous group and definition is further complicated by the use of different terminology in other countries; however, a search strategy using Special Educational Needs or SEN alone would have greatly reduced the amount of relevant literature identified therefore it was important to extend the searches beyond these terms. When discussing papers, differences of need are taken into account and implications are discussed.

A definition of Special Educational Needs (SEN) is provided in the Code of practice (DfES, 2001): 'Children have special educational needs if they have a *learning difficulty* which calls for *special educational provision* to be made for them' (p.6).

As a result there are differences in terminology and meanings related to differences in definitions, policy, legislation and local government structures and provision. The following is a list of terms and the equivalent terms used in England:

- i. Elementary school (USA) = Primary school in England
- ii. Intellectual disability (mild/moderate/severe) (Australia) = learning difficulty (mild/moderate/severe) in England.
- iii. LEA = Local Education Authority / LA = Local Authority
- iv. Learning disability (USA) = specific learning difficulty in England.
- v. Mental retardation (USA) = moderate learning difficulties in England.
- vi. Severe mental retardation (USA) = severe learning difficulties in England.

Appendix 2: Search Methods

A literature search in peer-reviewed education, special education, disability and educational psychology journals for the years 1981 to 2009 was conducted (the earlier cut off date was selected to coincide with the 1981 Education Act in the UK). The following sources were searched: ERIC, British Education Research Index (BERI) and Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA). In addition a manual, on-line search was made through relevant journals (*British Journal of Special Education*, *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, *Disability and Society*, *European Journal of Special Educational Needs*, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*) and published books. Reference lists in Journals and Books found through this first wave of searches were then used to identify further relevant papers through a snowball technique.

The following research terms were used in different combinations: PARENT*, CHOICE*, OPTION*, PREFERENCE*, SELECTION*, VIEW*, MAINSTREAM*, SPECIAL*, SCHOOL, EDUCATION*, PLACEMENT, LERNING, MENTAL, DISABILIT*, DIFFICULT*, RETARDATION, SEN, SPECIAL NEED*, SECONDARY, HIGH.

Papers were identified that presented original data that either directly discussed the issue of parental choice of secondary education for children with SEN or indirectly presented relevant data for example: parent's views on inclusion, parental choice of secondary school provision generally etc.

Appendix 3: Why is it Important to Consider Parental Decision Making?

The concept of parents as ‘purchasers’ or ‘consumers’ of education services, as Male (1998) suggests they are now positioned by legislation in England and Wales, has become an accepted part of the discourse and an almost taken-for-granted position, here and in other countries (Gorard, 1999), for example in Australia (Jenkinson, 1998) and the United States of America (Bagley and Woods, 1998). The following statement, a response by the Children and Young People Service in the LA where the research took place, to the outcomes of an earlier SEN review, Cambridge Education (2008), reproduces this discourse and in so doing neatly captures this consumer conceptualisation:

‘We aspire to the development of a coherent map of specialist and mainstream provision which is well understood by stakeholders and reflects a sustainable mixed economy of high quality specialist schools and resources for children with severe and complex special educational needs.’ ChYPS (2009).

Parents of children with SEN have had the right to choose their child’s school increasingly underpinned by successive legislation and non-statutory guidance (1981 Education Act; 1993 Education Act; Code of Practice, 1994 DfE; Disability Discrimination Act, 1995; Education Act 1996; SEN and Disability Act 2001; Code of Practice 2001, DfES), however the right to choose and market principles rely on the existence of different options that can potentially meet the needs of the consumer and the active promotion of those options by providers and those involved in brokering provision through advice and advocacy. There is evidence in the literature suggesting that although parents have a theoretical choice, which may include provision in a segregated special school or inclusion in their local mainstream school, the decisions they are making may sometimes reflect perceptions that to choose a mainstream school is not always supported at the local level or, in terms of its capacity to meet the child’s need, is not in reality a realistic choice (Male, 1997; Grove and Fisher, 1999). Indeed, there are inherent tensions in this market view of education because these ‘consumers’ are a

minority sector within that market, a sector that requires additional resourcing, while providing little in the way of profit, in an economy that principally measures output in terms of academic achievement. Knill and Humphreys (1996) capture and contextualise this issue concisely suggesting that ‘the articulate middle class will get the *best buy* as schools will want to attract the more able, talented pupils, but will not want the expensive children with SEN who perform poorly, leading to a society of marked inequality of opportunity’ (p.30). Bagley, et al. (2001) further expand this theme in their research into the responses by parents to the implementation of a school choice policy:

‘for parents of children with SEN, key words in seeking appropriate secondary schooling include safety, security, care, inclusivity, unconditional respect for individual worth and potential. The English education system is, however, increasingly being driven in the direction of *privileging the academic*’ (p.305).

Appendix 4: Areas of need identified by the PLASC

A. Cognition and Learning Needs

- Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)
- Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)
- Severe learning Difficulty (SLD)
- Profound and Multiple learning Difficulty (PMLD)

B. Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development Needs

- Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulty (BESD)

C. Communication and Interaction Needs

- Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

D. Sensory and/or Physical Needs

- Visual Impairment (VI)
- Hearing Impairment (HI)
- Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)
- Physical Disability (PD)

Other (OTH)

Appendix 5: Findings from Research into Parental Choice Generally

The extent of research relating to parents of SEN children in the UK is limited and, although there are specific issues effecting this group of parents that are different from those affecting the majority, it is likely that all parents and children will share some concerns and have some requirements in common when it comes to selecting a secondary school.

Thomas and Dennison (1991) explore the degree to which children themselves are involved in the choice of their high school and found that 60% of the 72 pupils they surveyed made the final decision; in addition, the authors also interviewed 12, randomly selected, parents who confirmed that their children had the biggest say. The reasons for the choices made tended to be a complex mix of interrelated factors, however, important factors were: that it was the school that friends were going to, having siblings at the school and its proximity to their home. When considering this research it may be important to take into account the fact that it only involved children in an inner city area, if the research were conducted on a larger, more demographically diverse sample, the extent to which the child's choice was taken into account may have been less significant. For example, in their research Bagley et al. (2001) report that for three different demographic areas, one with above average middle class homes, one urban with above average working class homes and one a semi-rural area (sample numbers 737, 369 and 524 respectively), 23% of parents from the urban area gave child preference as an important influencing factor for their choice of school; however, for the other two areas the percentage of parents giving this as an important factor was too small to be ranked in the top five. It appears that although it is important not to overlook the influence of the child's wishes in school choice, it may not always be the most significant factor, but may operate differentially depending on the socio economic background of the family, as the following studies also suggest.

Butler et al. (2007) distinguish between middle class and working class parents, describing the former as operating strategically to get their children into desirable schools while the latter represent a more complex picture. They support these claims with an investigation which used GCSE data contained in the PLASC to identify a total of the six best and six worst performing schools in six East London Boroughs and then cross referencing this with geodemographic codes to identify the social make-up of the postcodes from which the pupils were drawn. They found that for the best performing schools pupils were attracted from a wide geographical area which 'firmly indicates an advantaged set of home postcodes, whilst those of the worst schools come from the least advantaged' (p.16). Interestingly parents from code group F (described as welfare borderline) tended to attend poorly performing schools which were not local, while those in group E (described as urban intelligence) were attending schools covering the whole range of performance: 'the former may lose out entirely on choice—even constrained choice—whilst the latter may reflect a parental value system about going to the local school' (p.26). An important issue for the wider relevance of this study is the fact that it relates to the operation of school choice in London which may have quite specific influencing factors which are less relevant to other areas of the country; for example, the authors identify that it has more than twice the national average of pupils being educated privately and 20% of pupils attend schools where white pupils are less than 50% of the pupils on roll.

Reay and Lucey (2004) found similar trends in their study. They looked at how school choice worked in practice using a combination of focus group interviews with all the year six pupils from eight primary schools in two London boroughs and individual interviews with a follow up target group, and a sub set of parents and teachers. They found that there were differences for working class and middle class families, the latter employing a range of strategies to ensure their children did not end up at the so-called 'sink' comprehensives while for most

working class children 'where they lived determined what sort of schooling they got' (p.39). The authors suggest that this did not necessarily mean that the working class families saw themselves as making negative choices: 'over half the working-class children in our sample saw attending the local school as a positive choice in which they were building on social networks and connections of family and friends' Reay and Lucey (2004, p. 40). However, like the previous study by Butler et al. (2007) this study reports on research carried out in London which may not be easily generalizable to elsewhere.

Another interesting area to explore is that of parents who choose to take their children out of state education. A paper by West et al. (1998) looked at parental choices of children attending state and private schools and makes comparisons between the two. The authors interviewed the parents of 120 children and asked which factors, from a given list, were essential in making a choice of secondary school and got the following results: *believe child will be happy* (79% of total), *suit child's needs* (74%), *school atmosphere/ ethos* (70%), *discipline* (61%) and *the child wants to go* (55%). However, two factors showed significant differences between the two groups: *quality of education* (45% state parents; 70% private parents) and *class size* (17% state parents, 38% private parents). The qualitative data from this study provides some interesting insights into the underlying reasons for parents making a decision to pay for a private education for their child and there are some parallels that can be drawn with the decisions being made by parents of children with SEN to choose a special school for their child identified later. 'The overarching issue appears to be that of the 'risk' associated with using the state sector as opposed to the 'safety' of using the private sector' (p.56) . They go on to discuss one particular case where the children were sent to local state schools initially but were then moved to private schools 'as the perceived benefits of the local school were outweighed as their academic achievement was felt to be placed at risk' (p.56). Another factor that came out of the interviews was the preferred social mix that a private school

provided which was perceived to be 'safer' than in state schools and also there was seen to be a risk of disruption in state schools by other pupils. A study by Arora (2006) found that the three concerns mentioned most frequently by parents leading to them choosing to home educate their children were: the child's SEN not being met, bullying and school refusal by the child. In fact '...specific concerns about their child's experiences with schooling were the most prevalent of the reasons quoted' (p.59).

Appendix 6: Phase one of the research looking at the statistical data on pupils with a statement of SEN in the LA and tracking their destinations at transition from year 6 to year 7

Review of the Literature on Statement and Inclusion Trends

Following the 1981 Education Act, when statements of SEN were introduced, there was a gradual increase in the number and percentage of children being given a statement through the 1980s and the 1990s (Evans and Lunt, 1994; DCSF, 2009); however, since 2005 these figures have begun to fall back slowly (DCSF, 2009). Over this same period there has been a gradual reduction in the number of pupils attending special schools and the number of these schools has also reduced; at the same time there has been an increase in the number of pupils with statements being educated in mainstream schools (Evans and Lunt, 1994; Croll and Moses, 2000; Norwich, 2002; Male and Rayner, 2007). However, these general trends mask large variations reported in the literature between different LAs (Evans and Lunt, 1994; Moses and Croll, 1998; Norwich, 2002) so that in 2001, for example, Manchester had the highest percentage of pupils in special schools at 2.64 in comparison to Newham which had the smallest with just 0.35 (Norwich, 2002). There are also differences between the numbers of pupils included in mainstream schools between the primary and secondary phases of education. The PLASC data for England shows that pupils with a statement of SEN in 2009 represent 1.4% of all pupils in mainstream primary schools and 2% of pupils in secondary schools, (DCSF, 2009). However, these figures mask a great deal of variation depending on the type of need and while some needs show an increase others show a decrease: so, for example, while the number of pupils with MLD stands at 7,390 in primary schools and 14,120 in secondary, the number of pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) is 2,740 in primary schools but only 1,800 in secondary. When looking at difference between primary and secondary, particularly where more pupils are attending a special school in one phase

relative to the other, it is important to be clear about the needs of the pupils under investigation; the differences in levels of inclusion for pupils with certain specific needs is unlikely to be representative of the inclusion trends for *all* pupils with a Statement of SEN; in addition certain needs tend to be managed at school action and school action plus for a period before a statement is made and this is part of the reason why figures are higher in the secondary sector.

The Purpose of the First Phase of the Study

The purpose of the first phase of the study is to examine the data on children with a statement of SEN in one LA to find out what type of provision they are transferring to at change of phase from primary to secondary education. Data on three cohorts of pupils is examined, these are: all pupils in the LA who are currently in years 7, 8 and 9 who have a statement of SEN which they had received before entering year 6. The data is examined to see what type of provision they transferred to: mainstream high school, mainstream high school with a resourced provision, special school, independent special school or home education. A subgroup of particular interest are those pupils who were attending a mainstream primary school in year 6: specifically, how many of these pupils are staying in the mainstream system on transfer into year 7 and how many are transferring to a special school provision? This seeks to explore an issue raised by a review of SEN provision in the LA by Cambridge Education (2008), which suggested that many of these children are transferring to special school. The review refers in particular to children attending resourced provision in a primary school; however, a decision was made to look at all children with a statement of SEN attending mainstream primary schools to set this within a broader context.

Research Design

This first question, relating to the destinations of pupils with a statement of SEN at change of phase from year six (last year primary) to year seven (first year secondary), is most easily addressed through a quantitative method: gathering and analysing data held by the LA on all pupils with a statement of SEN from specified cohorts.

Method for Gathering Statistical Background Statistical Data

Data records on pupils with a Statement of SEN were provided by the Development Officer for IT in the LA's SEN Administration department on request from the Principal Educational Psychologist. This data provided the following information:

- Data on all pupils with a statement of SEN in year 7, 8 or 9 from September 2009;
- The current school attended by these pupils;
- A history of all previous schools attended by these pupils with dates;
- Data on statement banding/ category for all pupils, with dates of commencement and any changes to banding;
- A subset of data showing those pupils who were in a resourced provision in year 6 with information on where they transferred to in year 7.

Results from the Statistical Data

Table 10 below gives total figures for the number of pupils in the LA currently in years 7, 8 and 9, followed by overall figures for all pupils with a statement of SEN currently in years 7,8 and 9 showing the numbers attending each type of provision with a break down by year group.

The first thing to notice from this table is that the number of pupils with a statement of SEN has dropped considerably, especially when comparing those pupils in year 8 and those in year

7. This also represents a drop in absolute terms because total figures for all pupils in these year groups across the authority do not show a similar decrease. When analysing the data only those pupils who had a statement of SEN at the time of their transfer from year 6 to year 7 have been taken into consideration. It can be seen that the number of pupils transferring

Year group/ cohort	Total number of pupils in Kirklees LA in each year group identified	Total number of pupils with a statement of SEN for each year group identified	Pupils who transferred to a special school in year 7	Pupils who transferred to a mainstream school with resource provision in year 7	Pupils who transferred to a mainstream school in year 7	Pupils who transferred to a special school out of borough in year 7	Pupils who transferred to home education in year 7
Y6 in 2006/7 (current year 9)	4726	174	77	21	73	2	1
Y6 in 2007/8 (current year 8)	4686	165	61	15	88	1	0
Year 6 in 2008/9 (current year 7)	4724	128	43	10	74	0	1
Totals	14,136	467	181	46	235	3	2

Table 10. Total pupils in the LA in years 7, 8 and 9. Total pupils with a statement of special educational needs in Year 6 who are currently in years 7, 8 and 9 showing totals by year group and type of provision transferred to at change of phase into year 7.

to a special school also dropped considerably from year to year and in fact to a far greater degree than the overall number of pupils with statements, likewise the number of pupils transferring to a resourced provision within a mainstream school also shows a sharp decrease. By contrast the number of pupils transferring to mainstream high schools has remained fairly constant despite the drop in the number of pupils with statements which therefore represents a rise in the proportion of the total who are now being educated in a mainstream school.

Table 11 below gives a further breakdown of the data contained in Table 10 and shows the destinations at change of phase of pupils with a statement of SEN attending a mainstream primary school in year 6. The number of pupils transferring to either a special needs school or a resourced provision within a high school shows a considerable decrease from year to year but as with the overall figures in Table 10 the number of pupils transferring to a mainstream high school remains fairly constant

All pupils with a statement of SEN attending a mainstream primary school in Y6	Total number of pupils	Pupils who transferred to a special school in year 7	Pupils who transferred to a mainstream school with resource provision in year 7	Pupils who transferred to a mainstream school in year 7	Pupils who transferred to a special school out of borough in year 7	Pupils who transferred to home education in year 7
2006/7 (current year 9)	117	22	20	73	1	1
2007/8 (current year 8)	118	15	15	87	1	0
2008/9 (current year 7)	92	9	10	72	0	1
Totals	327	46	45	232	2	2

Table 11 All pupils with a statement of special educational needs attending a mainstream primary school in Year 6 who are currently in years 7, 8 and 9 showing totals by year group and type of provision transferred to at change of phase into year 7.

On further analysis of the data it is apparent that there are a number of pupils who are transferring from a mainstream school to a special school both before and after year 7 which, if taken into account, more than doubles the total figures of these pupils shown in Table 11 above (see Table 12 below). It is particularly interesting to note the high numbers (23) that transfer in the year before they would normally transfer to a secondary provision.

Pupils transferring from a mainstream school to a special school up to 1 year prior to year 7	23
Pupils transferring from a mainstream school to a special school up to 2 years prior to year 7	6
Pupils transferring from a mainstream school to a special school up to 4 years prior to year 7	6
Pupils transferring from a mainstream school to a special school more than 4 years prior to year 7	6
Pupils transferring from a mainstream school to a special school after year 7	7

Table 12: Numbers of children transferring to a special school from a mainstream primary school prior to change of phase in Year 7.

Further breakdown of the data shows that this phenomenon is not seen in the special school provision for pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties, where the pupils are nearly all remaining in the same provision for the whole of their time in school (just one pupil transferred from a mainstream school at year 7). It is predominantly happening in the schools designated for pupils with complex needs.

Pupils in Special Schools and Resourced Provision

Table 13 below shows the data for those pupils attending a Special School in year 6. It can be seen that for the majority of these pupils, if they are in a Special School in year 6 then they will usually remain in that school into year 7 (in this particular LA all the special schools are through primary and secondary). Although insignificant in absolute terms, it is interesting to note the small increase each year in pupils who are transferring to a mainstream high school in year 7 and to speculate whether this is a trend which is set to continue.

All pupils with a statement of SEN attending a Special School in Y6	Total number of pupils	Pupils who transferred to a special school in year 7	Pupils who transferred to a mainstream school with resource provision in year 7	Pupils who transferred to a mainstream school in year 7	Pupils who transferred to a special school out of borough in year 7	Pupils who transferred to home education in year 7
2006/7 (current year 9)	57	55	1	0	1	0
2007/8 (current year 8)	47	46	0	1	0	0
2008/9 (current year 7)	36	34	0	2	0	0
Totals	140	135	1	3	1	0

Table 13: All pupils with a statement of special educational needs attending a special school in Year 6 who are currently in years 7, 8 and 9 showing totals by year group and type of provision transferred to at change of phase.

A breakdown of the destinations of pupils who were attending a resourced primary school in year 6 by cohort and the type of resourced provision attended is given in tables 14, 15 and 16. It can be seen from this that pupils are tending to transfer to a range of destinations but there are some distinct differences depending on need. Pupils in a resourced provision for Learning Difficulties in Year 6 are *all* transferring to a special school in year 7, while pupils in a resourced provision for physical difficulties are transferring to a mixture of provision. Pupils in a resourced provision for a sensory impairment in Year 6 are nearly all transferring to a resource high school in year 7.

Pupils attending resource provision in Y6 2006/2007	Number of Pupils transferring to special school in Y7 September 2007	Number of Pupils transferring to resourced provision in a mainstream school in Y7 September 2007	Number of Pupils transferring to a mainstream school in Y7 September 2007
Total: 21	7	12	2
Speech and Language difficulties: 4	0	4	0
Physical difficulties: 6	3	1	2
Visual Impairment: 2	0	2	0
Autism: 2	0	2	0
Hearing impairment: 3	0	3	0
Learning difficulties: 4	4	0	0

Table 14: All pupils attending resourced provision in year 6 in 2006/7 showing the type of provision they transferred to at change of phase into year 7; subdivided into category of resource provision attended.

Pupils attending resource provision in Y6 2007/2008	Number of Pupils transferring to special school in Y7 September 2008	Number of Pupils transferring to a resourced provision in a mainstream school in Y7 September 2008	Number of Pupils transferring to a mainstream school in Y7 September 2008
Total: 10	3	5	2
Speech and Language difficulties: 3	0	3	0
Physical difficulties: 1	0	0	1
Visual Impairment: 0	0	0	0
Autism: 2	1	1	0
Hearing impairment: 2	0	1	1
Learning difficulties: 2	2	0	0

Table 15: All pupils attending resourced provision in year 6 in 2007/8 showing the type of provision they transferred to at change of phase into year 7; subdivided into category of resource provision attended.

Pupils attending resource provision in Y6 2008/2009	Number of Pupils transferring to special school in Y7 September 2009	Number of Pupils transferring to resource provision in a mainstream school in Y7 September 2009	Number of Pupils transferring to a mainstream school in Y7 September 2009
Total: 15	3	7	3
Speech and Language difficulties: 5 (1 moved away)	0	3	1
Physical difficulties: 3	1	0	2
Visual Impairment: 1	0	1	0
Autism: 2 (1 moved away)	0	1	0
Hearing impairment: 2	0	2	0
Learning difficulties: 2	2	0	0

Table 16: All pupils attending resourced provision in year 6 in 2008/9 showing the type of provision they transferred to at change of phase into year 7; subdivided into category of resource provision attended.

Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Over the three years covered by the data there was a drop in the total number of pupils with a statement of SEN in real terms and there was also a drop in the number of these pupils transferring to both special school and resourced provision within a mainstream school.

During the same period the number of these pupils transferring to a mainstream high school remained at about the same level representing an increase out of the total proportion. In respect of the sub-group of pupils with a statement of SEN attending their local mainstream primary school in year 6 the overall trend is the same with a drop in the numbers transferring to special school or resourced provision over the three years and by far the greatest majority transferring to a mainstream high school. However, if the data showing the number of pupils attending a mainstream primary school who then transfer to a special school either before or after year 7 are taken into account this more than doubles the total number. For those pupils

attending a special school in year 6 the vast majority remain in that school in year 7 (in this LA all the special schools combine both primary and secondary provision).

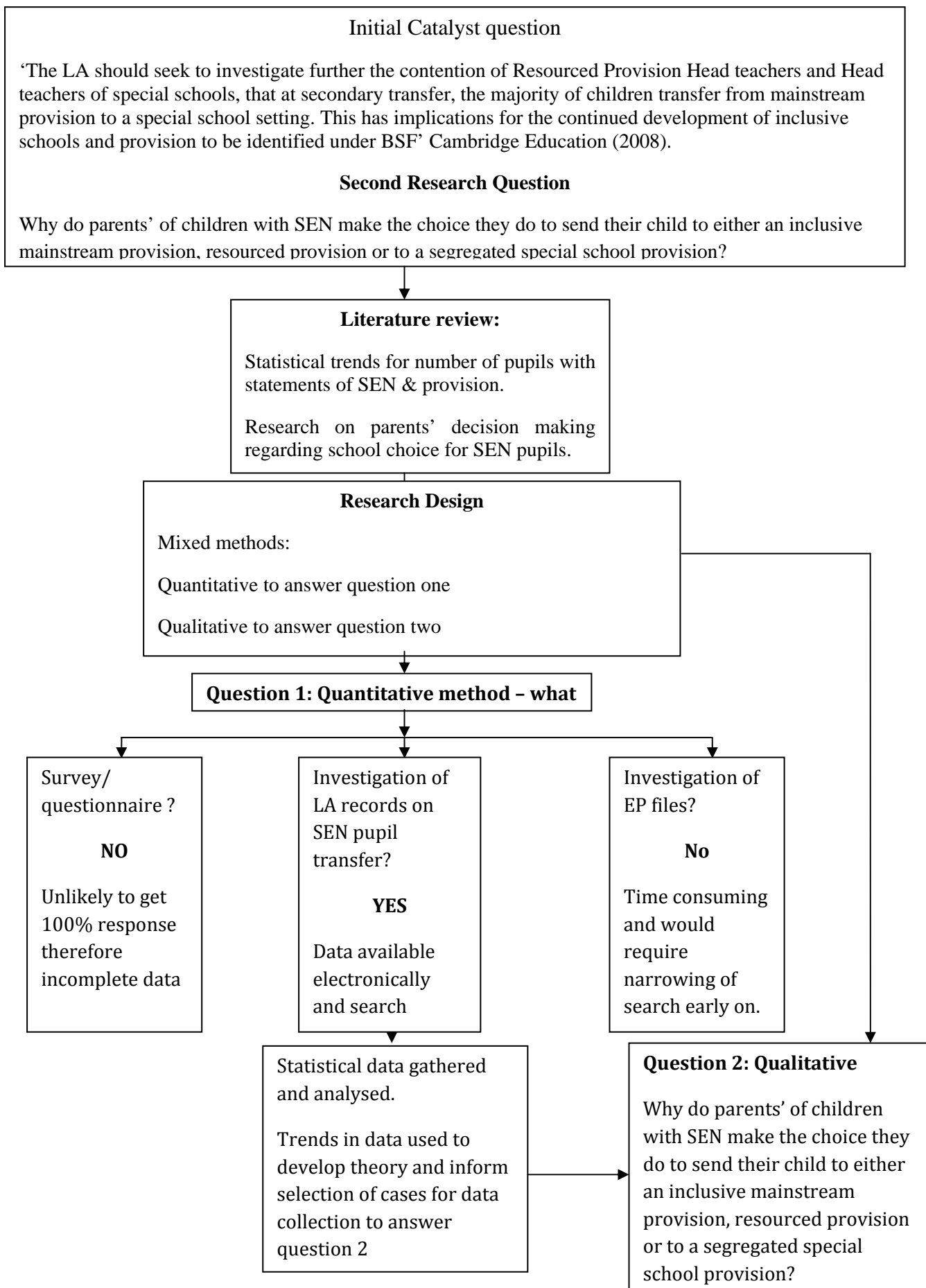
Discussion

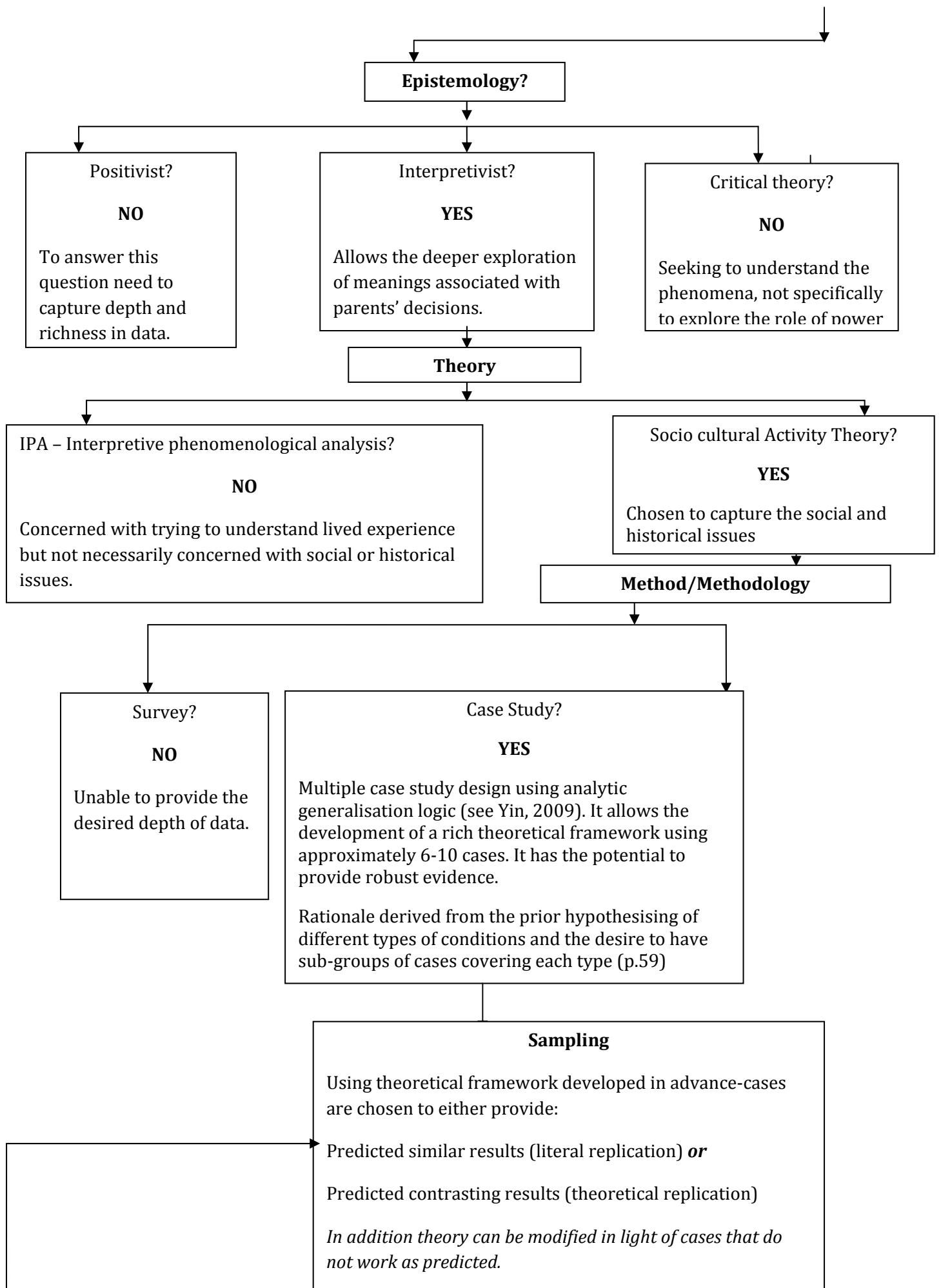
From the quantitative data provided it can be seen that over the three years there has been a drop in the number of pupils with statements of SEN and a drop in the number of those transferring to special school provision and resourced provision in year 7; at the same time the number of pupils transferring to a mainstream high school has increased in relative terms. This mirrors the national trend reflected in the PLASC data (DCSF, 2009) which shows a drop in the overall percentage of pupils with a statement of SEN from 2.9% in 2006 to 2.7% in 2009 and a trend towards increased inclusion of pupils with statements of SEN within mainstream schools (Evans and Lunt, 1994; Croll and Moses, 2000; Male and Rayner, 2007) at the same time a there has been a drop in the percentage of pupils in special schools (Norwich, 2002).

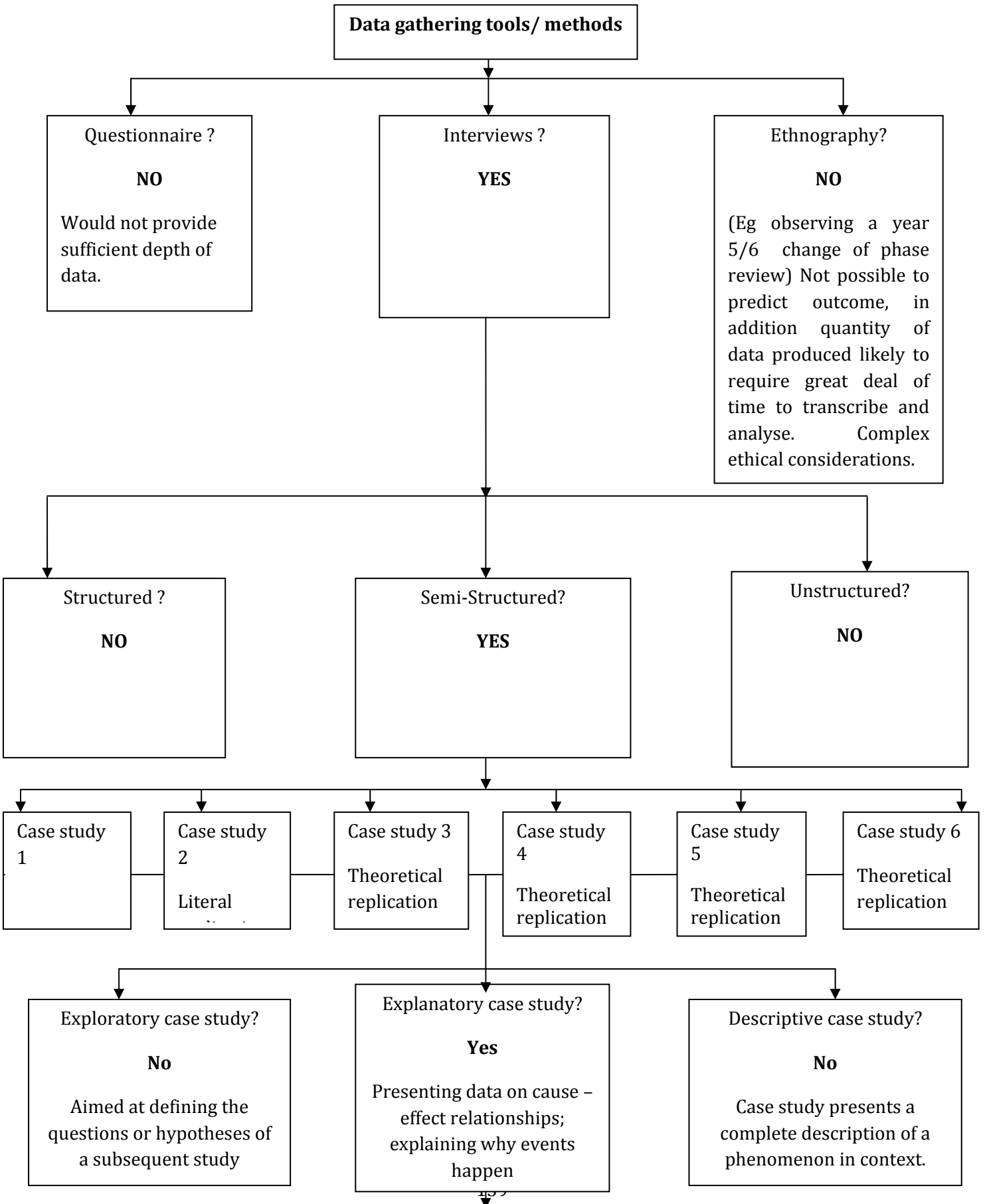
These changes reflect the impact of a government commitment to inclusion for pupils with SEN. However, this commitment is interpreted and delivered differentially by individual LAs (Norwich, 2002) and it also appears that individual primary schools have different perspectives about the capacity of children with SEN to cope in a mainstream high school and the mainstream high school's ability to meet the child's need. The choice of a suitable secondary provision for parents of children with SEN is therefore impacted upon by these three levels: government, local government and school. The messages delivered by these institutions, in turn, reflect historical and cultural influences which have not only a national context but also a local context, for example, related to how special needs provision has developed over the years within a particular LA and the way that discourses around special educational needs have developed in specific schools and communities. School choice has

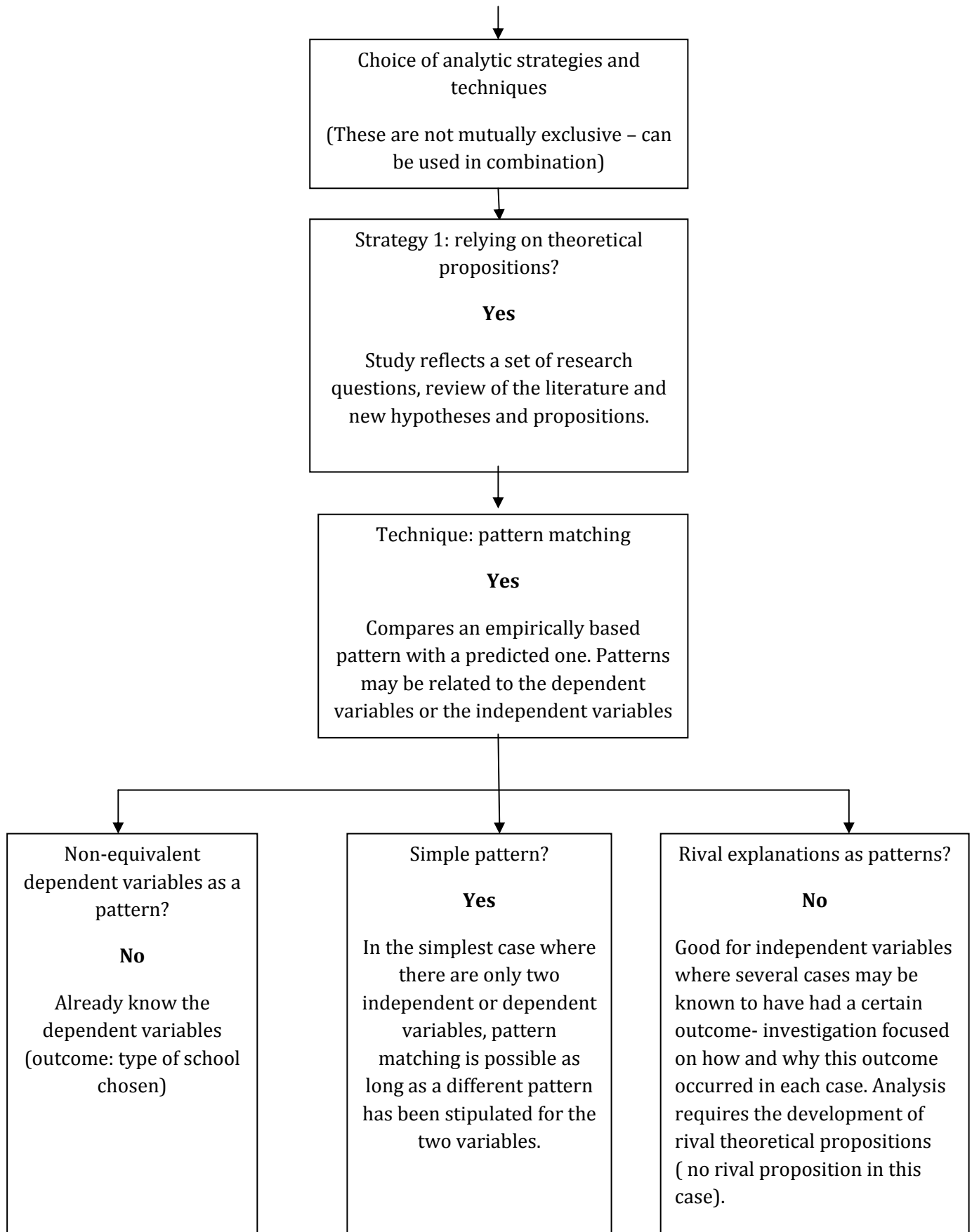
become increasingly supported by legislation for parents of children with SEN, but this choice does not operate in a vacuum and it is for this reason that a consideration of the factors that influence parents' decisions is of particular importance to policy makers and local strategists.

Appendix 7: Flow diagram of research design decisions









Appendix 8: Case Study protocol

Case Study Protocol

Section 1: An introduction to the case study and purpose of the protocol

a. The case study questions, hypothesis and prepositions

Main question: Why do parents of children who are identified to have similar special educational needs make the choice they do to send their child to either a mainstream provision or to a segregated special school provision?

(The choice to conduct a case study design is innovative because there has been no case study research in this area previously and the core question is framed in order to attempt some control over the SEN of the child so that the inquiry focuses on the parents' decision making in relation to socio-cultural and historical factors).

'Most researchers will want to compare their findings with previous research. For this reason, the key definitions used in your study should not be idiosyncratic. Rather, each case study and unit of analysis either should be similar to those previously studied by others or should innovate in clear, operationally defined ways. In this manner, the previous literature also can become a guide for defining the case and unit of analysis' Yin, p. 32-33.

Unit of analysis: The decision making process.

*'The unit of analysis is related to the fundamental problem of defining what the "case" is.' 'For instance, in the classic case study, a "case" may be an individual.' 'Of course, the "case" also can be some event or entity other than a single individual. Case studies have been done about **decisions**, programs, the implementation process, and organizational change.'* (Yin, 2009, p.29).

Explanatory case study

This is an explanatory case study rather exploratory or descriptive because it aims to present data bearing on cause – effect relationships; explaining how events happen.

proposition:

- The case study aims to show that the reasons why parents choose to send their child to either a special school, mainstream school or resourced provision within a mainstream school are a complex but predictable combination of situational factors and influences that result in parents selecting the provision that they feel will provide the best 'fit' for their child.

'The goal of theory is to have a sufficient blueprint for your study. This requires theoretical propositions about why acts, events, structure and thoughts occur. It provides guidance in

determining what data to collect and strategies for analyzing data. Theory development prior to data collection is essential.' (Yin, 2009, p.35).

b. The theoretical frame work

'A more elaborate theory desirably points to a more complex pattern of expected results. The benefit is a stronger design and a heightened ability to interpret your eventual data.' *'For some topics, existing works may provide a rich theoretical framework for designing a specific case study.'* (p.36). *'In general, to overcome the barriers to theory development, you should try to **prepare for your case study by doing such things as reviewing the literature** related to what you would like to study'* (Yin, 2009, p.37).

'Illustrative types of theories: types of theories for you to consider include:

- *Individual theories*
- *Group theories*
- *Organizational theories*
- *Societal theories*

Other examples cut across these illustrative types.' (p.37). Cultural-historical and Activity theory can be seen to cut across all these areas as it can be used to explain individual development and learning through to the level of society; for example, the role of cultural institutions like the church.

In relation to my initial propositions socio-cultural and activity theory would suggest that the influences on parents in making decisions about secondary school provision for their child with SEN are in the form of historical and cultural artefacts or tools (e.g. language, their perceptions when they visit a school, school prospectus etc) their perception of the rules around pupils with SEN (e.g. SEN code of practice, DDA, etc) and the influence of the community (family, friends, professionals, experiences of primary school education for their child) and the division of labour (who's perspectives are most powerful or persuasive). The theoretical framework has been developed to reflect expected conditions identified in the literature and the theoretical influences identified by socio-cultural and activity theory.

'The theoretical framework needs to state the conditions under which a phenomenon is likely to be found (literal replication) as well as the conditions where it is not likely to be found (theoretical replication). This framework becomes the vehicle for generalizing to new cases, similar to cross experiment design. If some of the empirical cases do not work as predicted, modification must be made to the theory.' (Yin, 2009, p.54).

The theoretical framework below reflects findings from researching the literature and states phenomena that are likely to be found where parents have chosen to send their child to a mainstream school (literal replication) and a contrasting set of phenomena that are likely to be found when parents did not send their child to a mainstream school (theoretical replication). There is no theoretical framework in relation to the third outcome, where parents had chosen for their child to go to a resourced provision within a mainstream school because there is no research that looks at parents choosing this type of provision. It is anticipated that

in these cases there is mixed support for theoretical propositions identified for both of the first two outcomes and a mixed pattern of support in relation to the elements within the activity triangle.

Literal replication- Parents are likely to choose to send their child to a mainstream school when:

- 1) Their child has had a good experience in a mainstream primary school (lit.rev: Jenkinson, 1998);
- 2) They value the academic and social opportunities offered in the mainstream school. (lit rev: Jenkinson, 1998);
- 3) They have talked to other parents of children with SEN who attend the mainstream school (lit. Rev: Bagley and Woods, 1998);
- 4) They perceived it to be open and supportive of children with SEN (when they went to the open evening) (lit. Rev: Woods and Bagley, 1998);
- 5) Their child has friends who are going there from their mainstream primary (Jenkinson, 1998);
- 6) The professionals involved supported them to make the choice that they felt was best for *their* child;
- 7) They want their child to learn alongside peers who do not have SEN and they feel that their child will copy the behaviour of children without a disability (Lit rev: Hess et al., 2006; Jenkinson, 1998);

Theoretical replication - Parents are unlikely to choose to send their child to a mainstream school when:

- 1a) Their child has had a negative experience in a mainstream primary school (lit.Rev: Bagley, Woods and Woods, 2001; Jenkinson, 1998; Whitaker, 2007);
- 2a) They want an educational provision that focuses on the acquisition of independent living skills and a supportive environment (lit.rev: Jenkinson 1998);
- 3a) They have talked to other parents of children with SEN who attend the special school (Bagley and Woods, 1998);
- 4a) They did not perceive that mainstream schools could support their child's needs (when they went to the open evenings) (lit. Rev: Woods and Bagley, 1998);
- 5a) They want their child to have the opportunities to make friends with children with similar learning difficulties (lit.rev: Kenny et al., 2005);
- 6a) They felt that professionals had persuaded them that it was not in the best interests of their child (lit.rev: Ryndak et al., 1996; Kenny et al., 2005);
- 7a) They are concerned that the child would be bullied or socially isolated in a mainstream school (lit. Rev: Jenkinson, 1998);
- 8a) They felt that their child would not receive a suitable quality of education by staff skilled in teaching children with SEN (lit. Rev: Male, 1998; Palmer et al., 1998);
- 9a) They believe that they will not receive a high level of support (lit. Rev: Jenkinson, 1998);

Analysis will use a pattern matching technique for simpler patterns. *'In the simplest case, where there may be only two different dependent variables, pattern matching is possible as long as a different pattern has been stipulated for these two variables'* (Yin, 2009, p.140)

c. The role of the protocol in guiding the case study investigator

The protocol acts as a standardized agenda for the inquiry in each of the cases to be investigated.

Section 2: Field procedures

a. Interviewee's

The parent interviewees are to be selected from a group of year 7 pupils who are identified to have a similar SEN 'banding' under the LA banding system. All the pupils have the following three areas of need identified:

5A - General learning difficulties

5C – Speech and language difficulties

5G – Mild social and relationship difficulties

In addition all the pupils attended a mainstream primary school in year 6 but have transferred to a range of different provision in year 7: mainstream school, special school or resourced provision in a mainstream secondary school.

b. Data collection plan

Semi structured interviews will be used with the parent/s in each case to be carried out over February and March 2010. The parents will be asked for permission to audio tape the interviews for later analysis where this is not given notes will be taken; in both instances transcribing will follow as soon as possible afterwards.

c. Preparation prior to data collection:

- Select potential cases, these cases are to be selected from a sub-sample of the original statistical data gathering exercise which identified all pupils with a statement of SEN currently in years 7,8 and 9 in the LA.
- A letter from the Principal Education Psychologist will be sent out by Psychology Administration staff to parents of pupils who make up the sub-sample of interest;
- Parents will be invited to return a reply slip to the PEP or telephone for more information about the research;
- Parents who return a reply slip agreeing to participate in the research will be telephoned by the researcher and offered an interview time and date, arrangements for an interpreter if required and agreement of where the interview will take place;

- A letter confirming the arrangements, re-outlining the purpose of the research and giving them clear details of their right to withdraw will be sent out to parents following the telephone call ;

Section 3: Case study questions

‘The protocols questions, in essence, are your reminders regarding the information that needs to be collected, and why. In some instances, the specific questions also may serve as prompts in asking questions during a case study interview. However, the main purpose of the protocol’s questions is to keep the investigator on track as data collection proceeds.’ (Yin, 2009, p.86).

Yin (2009) identifies five different levels of questions; he describes case study questions as occurring at level 2: These are *‘questions asked of the individual case (these are the questions in the case study protocol to be answered by the investigator during a single case, even when the single case is part of a larger, multiple-case study).*

1. What were the child’s experiences / parents’ perceptions of the mainstream primary school?
2. What was offered by the secondary or special school chosen that was of particular importance/ value to parents?
3. What form did the information take that made them aware of what was on offer at different schools?
4. Did they talk to other parents of children with SEN who are already attending the school?
5. What role, if any, did school staff and other professionals play in helping parents to decide the school their child should attend? Who attended the annual review?
6. Did anyone else influence parents’ decision? Family, friends etc.
7. What was the division of labour that took place? Who was most powerful in the decision making process or was the decision dispersed? Were parents wishes central to the process?
8. How did they decide that the school chosen would be the one best able to meet the child’s SEN, or was this less important than other considerations?
9. What are the parents’ views about friendship? Is it more important for their child to have peers of a similar ability or more important to have peers from the local community, or neither of these?
10. What are parent’s perceptions of the attitude of mainstream pupils towards pupils with disabilities?
11. Did rules around SEN play a part in the decision making process? SEN code of practice? Knowledge of legislation – DDA? Unwritten rules/ taken for granted assumptions around provision and needs of the child?

Section 4: Outline of the case study report

Analytical strategy to be used – Relying on theoretical propositions. (p.130)

Analytical technique to be used: Pattern matching with simpler patterns.

‘Pattern matching logic can be applied to simpler patterns, having a minimal variety of either dependent or independent variables. In the simplest case, where there may be only two different dependent (or independent) variables, pattern matching is possible as long as a different pattern has been stipulated for these two variables.

‘The fewer the variables, of course, the more dramatic the different patterns will have to be to allow any comparisons of their differences. Nevertheless there are some situations in which the simpler patterns are both relevant and compelling. The role of the general analytic strategy would be to determine the best ways of contrasting any differences as sharply as possible and to develop theoretically significant explanations for the different outcomes’ (Yin, 2009, p.140).

A possible alternative to this approach might be to use cross case synthesis (see Yin, 2009, p.156)

Appendix 9: Definition of Resource Provision in the Local Authority

Within the authority there are seventeen resourced provisions attached to mainstream schools.

They cater for a range of identified needs. A pupil requires a statement of SEN naming the resourced provision as the placement they will attend to be placed there. Pupils attending resourced provision access the mainstream classes in school with support where necessary; they also receive small group and individual withdrawal to access targeted interventions etc. The resourced provisions are supported by additional professionals as necessary e.g. teacher of the deaf, physiotherapists, speech therapists etc. The resourced provisions available are as follows:

- Two are attached to nursery schools catering for developmental delay, each offering six places.
- Nine are attached to Junior, Infant and Nursery schools (JI and N) as follows:
 - Two for physical disabilities, one offering 24 places and one offering 16 places;
 - One for speech and language difficulties offering 24 places;
 - One for visual impairment offering 9 places;
 - Two for Autistic Spectrum Disorder, one offering 6 and one offering 9 places;
 - Two for hearing impairment, one offering 12 places and one offering 18 places;
 - One for moderate learning difficulties offering 20 places.
- Six are attached to high schools as follows:
 - One for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder offering 20 places;
 - One for pupils with visual impairments offering 9 places;
 - One for pupils with physical impairments offering 24 places;
 - One for pupils with hearing impairments offering 20 places;
 - One for pupils with moderate learning difficulties offering 12 places;

- One for pupils with speech and language difficulties offering 25 places.

Appendix 10: Letter to Parents in English

Dear _____,

I am writing to you as a parent of a child with a statement of Special Educational Needs to tell you about a study that is being conducted in the LA and to invite you to take part. Your name and contact details have been obtained from the LA Special Educational Needs database which the Educational Psychology Service use to organise and plan their work with schools.

What is the study about and who is doing it?

The study is being carried out by Andrew Byrne, a Trainee Educational Psychologist who is currently working for the Educational Psychology Service, under the supervision of Dr X, University of Birmingham, School of Education, College of Social Sciences, Edgbaston Park Road, Birmingham, B15 2TT (tel. XXXXXX).

The purpose of the study is to find out why parents of children with a statement of Special Educational Needs chose the school that they did when their son/ daughter transferred from Junior school to High school or Special school. The aim is to find out how parents were supported to make this choice and to find out how Educational Psychologists can be more effective in supporting parents. It also aims to find out if parents' felt that the schools available to them were suitable choices.

What would I be asked to do?

If you agreed to take part you would be asked to take part in an interview that would take no more than one hour. You would be contacted by telephone to arrange a day and time for Mr Byrne to come to your house to interview you or alternatively the interview could take place at the Child and Family Consultation Centre (at the address above). The interview would be audio recorded so that it could be written up afterwards; the recording would then be destroyed. In the final report no original names would be used or any other information that could identify you; therefore no one reading it would know who is being talked about or who has taken part.

What if I agree and then later change my mind?

You can withdraw from the study at any point, in which case any information you have given will not be used.

What if I need someone to interpret for me?

If you would not feel confident or do not wish to be interviewed in English an interpreter can be provided.

Do I get anything for agreeing to take part?

Those parents that take part will be given a **£10** shopping voucher for their time and trouble, however if there are more respondents than are needed, then parents will be selected on a first come first served basis. If parents decide to withdraw either during or after the interview they will still receive this shopping voucher.

What should I do next if I want to take part?

If you would like to take part, please sign the tear off slip below and return it in the envelope provided. You will then be contacted to arrange an interview. Alternatively you can telephone me on XXXXX to arrange an interview. If you have any additional queries you would like to discuss before agreeing to take part you can discuss them with me over the phone or when you meet with Mr Byrne.

Yours Sincerely

XX

Principal Educational Psychologist

I would like to take part in the study into parents' decisions about secondary or special school for children with SEN. I can be contacted on (telephone number) _____ to arrange an interview. Signed _____

Please print name _____

Please return by Friday 26th February 2010

Appendix 11: Letter to Parents in Urdu

محترمی

میں آپ کو یہ خط اس لئے لکھ رہا ہوں کیوں کہ آپ مخصوص تعلیمی ضروریات کے بیان والے بچے کے باپ/ماں ہیں۔ میں آپ کو اس مطالعے کے بارے میں بتانا چاہتا ہوں جو کرکلیس میں منعقد ہو رہا ہے اور آپ کو شرکت کے لئے مدعو کرنا چاہتا ہوں۔

مطالعے کا تعلق کس بات سے ہے اور اسے کون انجام دے رہا ہے؟

مطالعے کو زیر ترقیت تعلیمی ماہر نفسیات، اینڈریو بائرن (Andrew Byrne) انجام دے رہے ہیں جو حالیہ ڈاکٹر پاول ٹیمینس (Dr [REDACTED]) University of Birmingham, School of Education, College of Social Sciences, Edgbaston Park Road, Birmingham, B15 2TT (ٹیلیفون [REDACTED]) کی نگرانی میں کرکلیس ایجوکیشنل سائیکالوجی سروس کے لئے کام کر رہے ہیں۔

مطالعے کا مقصد یہ پتہ لگانا ہے کہ مخصوص تعلیمی ضروریات کے بیان والے بچوں کے والدین نے اس اسکول کو کیوں چنا جسے انہوں نے اس وقت چنا ہے کہ ان کے لڑے/لڑکی کو جونیئر اسکول سے ہائی اسکول یا اسپیشل اسکول میں منتقل کیا گیا۔ مقصد یہ معلوم کرنا ہے کہ اس انتخاب میں والدین کا کس طرح تعاون کیا گیا تھا اور ساتھ ہی یہ پتہ کرنا ہے کہ تعلیمی ماہر نفسیات والدین کا تعاون کرنے میں کس طرح زیادہ مؤثر ہو سکتے ہیں۔ یہ معلوم کرنا بھی اس کے مقصد میں شامل ہے کہ کیا والدین نے محسوس کیا کہ ان کے لئے دستیاب اسکول مناسب انتخابات تھے۔

کرکلیس ایجوکیشنل سائیکالوجی سروس کے پاس ایک ڈیٹا بیس ہے جسے وہ کنبوں، نوجوانوں اور اسکولوں کے ساتھ اپنے کام کا انتظام کرنے اور اس کا منصوبہ طے کرنے اور مزید برآں انہیں اس تحقیق کو انجام دینے کے لائق بنانے کے لئے استعمال کرے ہیں جو ہمیں بہتر خدمت فراہم کرنے کے قابل بنائے گی۔ آپ کے نام اور رابطے کی تفصیلات کی شناخت اس لئے کی گئی ہے کیوں کہ آپ کے بچے کو حالیہ تعلیم کے ثانوی مرحلے میں منتقل کیا گیا ہے۔

مجھے کیا کرنے کے لئے کہا جائے گا؟

اگر آپ حصہ لینے کے لئے راضی ہوئے ہیں تو آپ کو انٹرویو میں حصہ لینے کے لئے کہا جائے گا جس میں ایک گھنٹہ سے زیادہ نہیں لگے گا۔ آپ سے ٹیلیفون کے ذریعہ رابطہ کیا جائے گا تاکہ مسٹر بائرن کے لئے دن اور تاریخ طے کیا جائے جس میں وہ آپ کے گھر آکر آپ سے انٹرویو لیں گے یا متبادل طور پر انٹرویو چائلڈ اینڈ فیملی کنسلٹیشن سینٹر (مندرجہ بالا پتے پر) منعقد ہو سکتا ہے۔ انٹرویو آڈیو ریکارڈ کیا جائے گا تاکہ اسے بعد میں لکھا جاسکے! پھر ریکارڈنگ کو تلف کر دیا جائے گا۔ آخری رپورٹ میں کسی اصلی نام کو یا کسی دیگر معلومات کو استعمال نہیں کیا جائے گا جس سے آپ کی شناخت ہو سکتی

ہے! لہذا اسے پڑھنے والے کسی شخص کو یہ معلوم نہیں ہوگا کہ کس کے بارے میں بات چل رہی ہے یا کس نے حصہ لیا ہے۔

اگر میں راضی ہوں اور پھر بعد میں میرا ذہن بدل جاتا ہے تو کیا ہوگا؟

آپ کسی بھی مقام پر مطالعہ سے واپس ہوسکتے ہیں، اور اس صورت میں آپ کے ذریعہ دی گئی کسی معلومات کو استعمال نہیں کیا جائے گا۔

اگر مجھے اپنے لئے کسی سے ترجمانی کرانے کی ضرورت پڑی ہے تو کیا ہوگا؟

اگر آپ پر اعتماد محسوس نہیں کرتے یا انگریزی میں انٹرویو دینا نہیں چاہتے ہیں تو ترجمان فراہم کیا جاسکتا ہے۔

کیا حصہ لینے پر راضی ہونے کے لئے مجھے کوئی معاوضہ ملتا ہے؟

حصہ لینے والے والدین کو ان کے وقت اور زحمت کے لئے £10 کی خریداری کا واؤچر دیا جائے گا، تاہم اگر ضرورت سے زیادہ جواب دہندگان ہیں تو والدین کو جو پہلے آئے سو پہلے پائے کی بنیاد پر منتخب کیا جائے گا۔ اگر والدین انٹرویو کے دوران یا اس کے بعد واپس کا فیصلہ کرتے ہیں تب بھی انہیں یہ خریداری کا واؤچر ملے گا۔

اگر میں حصہ لینا چاہتا ہوں تو آگے مجھے کیا کرنا چاہئے؟

اگر آپ حصہ لینا چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم نیچے دی گئی پہلا کر علیحدہ کی جانے والی پرچی پر دستخط کریں اور اسے فراہم کردہ لفافے میں ڈال کر واپس بھیج دیں۔ پھر آپ سے انٹرویو کا انتظام کرنے کے لئے رابطہ کیا جائے گا۔ متبادل طور پر آپ انٹرویو کا انتظام کرنے کے لئے مجھے [] پر ٹیلیفون کرسکتے ہیں۔ اگر آپ کے پاس کوئی مزید سوال ہے جس پر آپ حصہ لینے سے پہلے بات چیت کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو آپ فون پر مجھ سے بات کرسکتے ہیں یا جب آپ محترم برائن سے ملیں۔

آپ کا مخلص

جینے ویٹونز []

پرنسپل تعلیمی ماہر نفسیات

میں ایس ای این والے بچوں کے لئے ٹائلی یا اسپیشل اسکول کے بارے میں والدین کے فیصلے کے متعلق مطالعے میں حصہ لینا چاہتا ہے۔ انٹرویو کے بندوبست کے لئے مجھ سے (ٹیلیفون نمبر) _____ پر رابطہ کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ دستخط

براہ کرم نام پرنٹ کریں _____

براہ کرم جمعہ 5 مارچ 2010 تک واپس بھیج دیں۔ شکریہ

Appendix 12: Confirmation Letter to Parents

Dear

I am writing to confirm the date, time and place for the interview that you kindly agreed to:

- **Date:**
- **Time:**
- **Place:**

How long will it take? The interview will take no more than one hour.

What do I get for taking part? You will be given a £10 giftcard for XXX (you will be asked to sign to say that you received this).

The project: The information that you give in the interview will help to improve the work of Educational psychologists when they are supporting parents of children with special educational needs to decide the best school for their child to go to when they finish primary education.

What will the interview involve and what if I change my mind? The interview will ask questions about how you decided which school you wanted your child to go to and what or who helped you to decide. The interview will be recorded so that it can be written out afterwards: the recording will then be destroyed. You can change your mind at any time – just let me know that you no longer want to take part. If you have already taken part in the interview and then change your mind your information will not be used but you will still be given the giftcard.

Will anyone know that I was involved? No – all information is confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. When the interviews are written up for the report **no** names will be used of any parents, children, schools or professional etc. Therefore no one will know who is being talked about.

Thankyou very much for agreeing to take part

Andrew Byrne

Trainee Educational psychologist

Appendix 13: Interview Questions

Semi-structured interview Questions for Research

Opening statement

I would like to begin by thanking you again for taking part in this research. The aim of the research is to try to find out how professionals and particularly educational psychologists can improve on the support that they offer to parents of children with SEN about choosing a school for their child when they finish primary education.

I need to check that I have your permission to record this interview so that I can write it out afterwards. I would like to reassure you that the tape will then be destroyed.

No names will be used in the final report so it will not be possible for anyone apart from you and me to know that you have taken part.

If you wish to change your mind either now, during or after the interview that is ok – just let me know.

At the end I will give you the £10 gift card and I will ask you to sign to say that you received it.

If you decide after the interview that you do not want your information to be used in the report that is ok – just let me know. You will still receive the £10 gift card.

Interview Questions

- ***I would like to begin by asking you to think about XXXX's time at primary school.***
 - How do you feel about XXXX's experience at primary school?

- ***Now I would like you to think about the last couple of years that XXXX was at primary school.***
 - When did you first start to consider which secondary school XXXX might go to and what were the initial factors that led you to consider that/ those schools? (Prompts: eg did they have friends or siblings attending, was it near to home, good reputation etc)
 - Did you attend an annual review in year 5 and/or 6 while XXXX was still at the primary school?
(if yes) - Who attended the annual review?
 - Did you discuss which secondary school XXXX would go to at the annual review?

- Did anyone else influence your decision about which school to choose, or support you in your choice? (ask specifically about the EP if they were attending)
- Did people at the review suggest schools that you could visit or had you already visited/ decided which schools to visit?
- Did you feel that you were free to make the choice that you felt was best for your child?
- ***Now I would like to ask about your visits to look at potential schools for XXXX***
 - How many schools did you visit?
 - What was offered by the school that you finally chose that was important to you? How were you aware of this? (for example talking to staff, heads speech, school brochure etc)
 - What made you reject the other schools that you visited? What do you think your child's experience would have been like there? (if more than one)
- ***I would now like you to think about any other people or factors that influenced your final decision.***
 - Did you talk to other parents of children who were attending the schools you visited? Did any of these children have SEN? Did these discussions influence your choice?
 - Did anyone else influence your decision about which school to send XXXX to? (prompt: family, friends, the child themselves etc.)
- ***I would like to ask about social factors that might be important.***
 - What are your views about what is important for XXXX in terms of friendship and social opportunities?
 - What is your opinion of the attitudes of mainstream pupils towards pupils with SEN?
- ***I would like to ask you what you thought about the choices available to you for XXXX?***
 - Were you happy with the choices available? If not what would you have liked to have been available?

- *Finally, is there anything that I haven't asked that you think is important that you would like to tell me about?*
- *Thankyou for agreeing to take part in my research.*

Appendix 14: Piloting

The use of a pilot case is aimed at helping to refine the plan for data collection particularly in relation to the content and procedures (Yin, 2009). The pilot can provide an insight into the issue being studied and if used along with an ongoing review of the literature the final research design can be 'informed both by prevailing theories and by a fresh set of empirical observations' (Yin, 2009, p.95). Robson (1993) suggests that pilots can help develop research questions from the exploratory towards the explanatory with the benefit of the experience gained in the process. Arksey and Knight (1999) discuss the use of pilots when conducting interviews and recommend that this is done with a sub sample of the intended study population. A pilot for the current study was carried out with the parent of a year 8 pupil attending a local high school. This pupil has a statement of SEN identifying three areas of need; he is therefore representative of the pupils identified for case selection. The parent interviewed for the pilot was selected because she was already known to the researcher; she met the criteria for a pilot case suggested by Yin (2009) of convenience, access and geographical proximity.

As a result of piloting the interview questions the following changes were made:

- A question to help parents identify when they first started to consider a choice of secondary school needed to be included early on.
- There was a need for a specific prompt to find out if the Educational Psychologist had supported them in making a choice.
- In the question asking about what was offered by the school chosen, there was a need for additional prompts to elicit the influence of cultural tools (head's speech at open evening, school brochure etc).

Appendix 15: Start list of codes for analysis

Code	Research proposition	Activity theory
Pr- gd ex	Their child has had a good experience in a mainstream primary school.	Community
Vlu - MS	They value the academic and social opportunities offered in the mainstream school	Tool
TTP- MS	They have talked to other parents of children with SEN who attend the mainstream school	Community / tool
Suptv -MS	They perceived it to be open and supportive of children with SEN (when they went to the open evening)	Tool
Frds - MS	Their child has friends who are going there from their mainstream primary	Community
Prof -supt	The professionals involved supported them to make the choice that they felt was best for <i>their</i> child.	Division of labour
+ve inf -MS	They want their child to learn alongside peers who do not have SEN and they feel that their child will copy the behaviour of children without a disability	Community
Pr – Ngvtv ex	Their child has had a negative experience in a mainstream primary school	Community
Indp - SpS	They want an educational provision that focuses on independent living skills and a supportive environment	Tool
TTP - SpS	They have talked to other parents of children with SEN who attend the special school	Community
Inap - MS	They did not perceive that mainstream schools could support their child's needs (when went to open evenings)	Tool
Frnds - LD	They want their child to have the opportunities to make friends with children with similar learning difficulties	Community
Profs - ?MS	They felt that professionals had persuaded them that it was not in the best interests of their child	Division of labour
Isol-MS	They are concerned that the child would be bullied or socially isolated in a mainstream school	Community
-ve teach - MS	They felt that their child would not receive a suitable quality of education by staff skilled in teaching SEN	Tool
-ve supt MS	They believe that they will not receive a high level of support in mainstream	Tool
Sch- Vsts	The parents visited different schools	Tool
Trans - trav	Transport and nearness for travel were a factor in the final choice of school	Tool
TTFf	Parents talked to family and/or friends about choice of school	Division of labour
TTC	Parents talked to the child about the choice of school	Division of labour
AnnRev	Annual review – people that attended	Division of labour
B/S -Schl	They already had a brother and/or sister at school chosen	Community

Themes that emerged from the interviews

Code	Emergent Theme	Activity Theory
Bat	Parents felt they had to battle with authorities to get what they needed/ wanted for child	Rule
-ve bhvr SpS	Negative behaviour experienced in special school	Community
Diss- schls	Dissatisfaction with the school choices available	Rule
Trans issue	The provision of transport was an issue and dictated school attended	Rule

Appendix 16: Ethical Approval

PROPOSED PROJECT TITLE: Where do Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs Transfer to at Change of Phase from Primary to Secondary School and how do their Parents Choose Which School Provision is Most Suitable for their Child

BRIEF OUTLINE OF PROJECT: (100-250 words; this may be attached separately)

The project will take a mixed methods approach. It will start with initial data gathering and analysis of existing records held by the Local Authority on pupils currently in years 7,8 and 9 with a statement of SEN. This data is held electronically by the Special Needs Administration department in the LA. I will make a request to the Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) for a data search to be carried out to provide specific information on identified variables (SEN banding, Primary school attended, current school attended and year group). The PEP will make the request to the SEN information officer on my behalf and I with her permission I will use the information provided to look for any significant trends. Next this data, along with the results of the previously undertaken literature review, will be used to develop a theoretical framework for the selection of approximately six cases for a multiple case study design. Semi structured interviews will be used to gather data from the parents of the six cases to find out why they made the choice of school that they did for their child. Permission will be sought from the parents to audio record the interviews for later transcription. The data produced will be analysed and written up.

MAIN ETHICAL CONSIDERATION(S) OF THE PROJECT (e.g. working with vulnerable adults; children with disabilities; photographs of participants; material that could give offence etc):

The project involves access to confidential records on pupils with special educational needs which therefore involves the issue of data protection. All data will be kept securely to avoid access by anyone other than me. The project also involves interviews with parents and so confidentiality and anonymity are required.

RESEARCH FUNDING AGENCY (if any):

None

DURATION OF PROPOSED PROJECT (please provide dates as month/year):

February 2010 –April 2010

DATE YOU WISH TO START DATA COLLECTION:

February 2010

Please provide details on the following aspects of the research:

1. What are your intended methods of recruitment, data collection and analysis? **[see note 1]**

Please outline (in 100-250 words) the intended methods for your project and give what detail you can. However, it is not expected that you will be able to answer fully these questions at the proposal stage.

Initial data collection will involve gathering information contained in existing Local Authority records on pupils with a statement of special educational needs.

The second wave of data collection will involve the use of semi-structured interviews with the parents of children with special educational needs.

From the initial data search, which will provide details of pupil's names, schools attended and the nature of their statement of SEN, a sample will be drawn up by a member of the administration team and letters will be sent out from the Principal Educational Psychologist inviting them to take part in a face to face interview, either in their home or in the Educational Psychology base where I am employed. I will seek permission to audio record this interview so that I can transcribe the data afterwards (participants will be informed that once transcribed these recordings will be erased). The data will be subsequently analysed for potential themes of interest.

2. How will you make sure that all participants understand the process in which they are to be engaged and that they provide their voluntary and informed consent? If the study involves working with children or other vulnerable groups, how have you considered their rights and protection? **[see note 2]**

Initial contact with parents will be made by letter (addresses will be accessed via the SEN Administration data base by a member of the administration staff), briefly outlining that they have been selected as a parent of a child with a statement of Special Educational Needs and that their details have been obtained from the Special Educational Needs database. The purpose of the project and the nature of the involvement being requested will be explained and their right to withdraw at any time. This letter will be sent under the name of the principal psychologist and will introduce me as the researcher by name and the name and contact details of my University supervisor. Initial permission for me to contact participants by phone will be provided by parents filling in and returning a tear off permission slip; alternatively I will provide a contact number for them to contact me by phone if they wish. An initial agreement to an interview with an agreed day and time will be discussed over the phone. If this initial agreement to participate, in principle, is given then a second letter giving full details of the project and what is being requested of the participants will be sent to their home address. This letter will outline what is being consented to and it will state clearly the option to withdraw consent at any point either prior to, during or subsequent to the interview taking place (in the case of consent being withdrawn subsequently then any data provided

would not be used in the final write up). The letter will confirm the date, time and place of the interview. Some participants may not have English as a preferred language therefore both the letters will be provided in translated form and the option of having someone to translate during the interview will be given.

As an incentive for parents to take part in the study I intend to offer a £10 shopping voucher. I will explain in the letter that if there are more volunteers to participate than is required, then parents will be selected on a first come first served basis. I will also make it clear to the parents in the letter that a decision to withdraw either during or after the interview will not jeopardise them receiving the shopping voucher.

3. How will you make sure that participants clearly understand their right to withdraw from the study?

At the outset of the interviews I will explain clearly that participants have the right to withdraw at any time during the interview and that they may also withdraw subsequently, in which case I will not use any of the data gathered from that interview in the final write up of the study.

4. Please describe how you will ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Where this is not guaranteed, please justify your approach. **[see note 3]**

The anonymity of the participants in the write up of the study will be guaranteed and following guidelines laid out by Arksey and Knight (1999) all names will be changed to avoid disclosing the identity of participants as well as ensuring that comments or any other sources of information are not attributable in a way that the individuals and institutions concerned can be identified.

5. Describe any possible detrimental effects of the study and your strategies for dealing with them. **[see note 4]**

All participants will be anonymous in the write up of the project so that they will not be identifiable by schools, LA personnel or anyone else who might conceivably read the final report.

If the process of the interviews throws up any issues around the placement process, or parents degree of satisfaction with their child's current placement I will provide them with information and contact details of the local parent partnership organisation who can provide them with ongoing support and advice.

6. How will you ensure the safe and appropriate storage and handling of data?

Data will always be kept as secure as possible either in the researcher's own home or securely on the person of the researcher when out in the field. Any information kept on computer will be secured by the use of an access code, all information on paper when not on the person of the researcher will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home.

Recordings of interviews will be wiped clean once transcription has taken place.

7. If during the course of the research you are made aware of harmful or illegal behaviour, how do you intend to handle disclosure or nondisclosure of such information? [see note 5]

The nature of this study and its area of interest makes it unlikely that any such disclosure should occur, however, in the event that it does, careful consideration of the likely impact of the behaviour and the most appropriate subsequent course of action would be undertaken and a record of all discussions and decisions would be made. Where possible and appropriate the participants would be informed of the intention to make a disclosure and the reasons for doing so. I will seek the support of my supervisor in the event of any such actions either prior to or immediately following their taking place.

The anticipated possible disclosures and subsequent actions might reasonably be perceived to be as follows:

- *That incorrect information had been either unknowingly or deliberately supplied to schools and the LA which had then influence their decision over placement. **Action:** I would seek advice from my supervisor and line managers before proceeding further with this.*
- *There was an incidental disclosure or other evidence which suggested a child protection issue. **Action:** I would make a written record of my concern and discuss it with my line manager/ designated child protection co-ordinator as soon as possible, or, if outside office hours and a high level of concern, I would contact the social services Emergency Duty Service.*
- *Disclosure of other illegal behaviour. **Action:** Depending on the level of concern I would make a written record of what was said and discuss it first with my line manager before taking further action, or, if a high level of concern, I would contact the police and pass the information on directly to them.*

8. If the research design demands some degree of subterfuge or undisclosed research activity, how have you justified this and how and when will this be discussed with participants?

It is not anticipated that this research will use any such subterfuge or non-disclosure.

9. How do you intend to disseminate your research findings to participants?

A commitment will be made to all participants to provide them with a copy of the subsequent report with the invitation to give feedback either by e-mail, telephone or face to face.

Appendix 17: Literature Review Public Domain Briefing

Where do Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs Transfer to at Change of Phase from Primary to Secondary School and How do Parents Choose Which School Provision is Most Suitable for their Child?

Background to the study

- Interested in the number of statemented pupils who, having been included in mainstream primary schools, transfer to either a special school or mainstream secondary at change of phase.
- Looks at the factors that influence parents' decision making when choosing a school.
- Catalyst and background – recommendation from the LA SEN review:
'The LA should seek to investigate further the contention of Resourced Provision Head teachers and Head teachers of special schools, that at secondary transfer, the majority of children transfer from mainstream provision to a special school setting.'

Background to the study: Although the quote from the LA SEN review is specifically discussing pupils attending a resource provision in the primary phase it seemed important to set this within the context of inclusion trends more broadly as it would be unlikely that there would be sufficient research looking at resourced provision pupils specifically; therefore inclusion for all pupils with SEN is discussed.

Why is it Important to Consider Parental Decision Making?

- Parents of children with Special Educational Needs have had the right to choose their child's school increasingly underpinned by successive legislation and non-statutory guidance.
- Any attempt to understand current and future trends in educational placement for pupils with SEN needs to take into account the decisions that parents are making.

Why is it Important to Consider Parental Decision Making? The concept of parents as 'purchasers' or 'consumers' of education services, as Male (1998) suggests they are now positioned by legislation in England and Wales, has become an accepted part of the discourse and an almost taken-for-granted position. However, there is evidence in the literature suggesting that although parents have a theoretical choice, which may include provision in a segregated special school or inclusion in their local mainstream school, the decisions they are making may sometimes reflect perceptions that to choose a mainstream school is not always supported at the local level. There is also some evidence that parents may feel that, in terms of its capacity to meet the child's needs, a mainstream school is not a realistic choice.

Inclusion Trends for Pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs

- There was a gradual increase in the number and percentage of children with statements of SEN from the late 1980's through the 1990's; however since 2005 these figures have begun to fall back slowly. Over this period there has been a gradual reduction in the number of pupils with statements attending special schools and a fall in the number of those schools; at the same time there has been an increase in the number of pupils with statements being educated in mainstream schools. However, these general trends mask large variations reported in the literature between different LAs .

Inclusion Trends for Pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs: It is possible to see the broad impact of government policy, legislation and guidance in the data; however local implementation and contextual factors results in variation.

Differences in inclusion levels in mainstream schools depending on LA, between primary and secondary phase and depending on the nature of the SEN

- 2001: 2.64 % pupils in special school in Manchester but only 0.35 % in Newham (Norwich, 2002).
- PLASC data 2009: 1.4% mainstream primary pupils and 2% of secondary pupils have statements of SEN – however masks different trends towards an increase or decrease between phases depending on the nature of the SEN.
- PLASC data 2009:
 - pupils with MLD 7,390 in primary schools and 14,120 in secondary.
 - pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) is 2,740 in primary schools but only 1,800 in secondary.

Differences in inclusion levels: For some needs such as MLD the increase in numbers in the secondary mainstream sector can be explained by the fact that many of these pupils are being managed at school action plus for some or all of their primary mainstream education hence the lower figures in that phase.

Pupils with SLD may be educated in a special school provision for the whole of their time at school or they may be educated in a mainstream school for some or all of their primary education but then commonly transfer to a special school at change of phase to secondary.

Overview of the development of school choice for parents of SEN pupils

- 1981 Education Act : wishes of parents to be taken into account.
- 1993 Education Act and 1994 Code of Practice: LEA to comply with parental wishes but with three provisos.
- 2001 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act and revised SEN Code of Practice 2001, DfES: LEA must ensure that a child is educated in a mainstream school unless - incompatible with the efficient education of other children or - parent does not want their child educated in a mainstream school.

Overview of the development of school choice for parents of SEN pupils: 1981 Act builds into legislation recommendations from the Warnock commission (DES, 1978) that wherever possible children with SEN should be educated in a mainstream school.

Specific Factors Identified in the Literature that Influence the Choices of Parents of SEN Children

- **Child variables:** age; nature and degree of SEN.
- **Parent variables:** Socio economic factors.
- **School variables:** child's experience of inclusion in the primary phase; secondary schools perceived capacity, philosophy and commitment to SEN; nearness and convenience of travel.
- **Other variables:** beliefs about mainstream teachers skills, knowledge, capacity and attitude; influence of others- family, friends, professionals etc;

Specific factors identified in the literature: These parents are not necessarily making the decision based on the same considerations that most parents take into account when choosing a school for their child e.g. academic reputation, having siblings who are attending and convenience for travel etc. Instead parents of SEN children may be making the decision based on other, needs led considerations e.g. the nature of the child's SEN, the inclusive ethos of the school, the perceived support for SEN etc.

Child Variables

- **Age**
- **Leyser and Kirk (2004):** parent's of younger children are more positive about inclusion than parent's of older.
- **Jenkinson (1998):** parent's are tending to want inclusion while the child is younger then moving them to special school.
- **Kenny et al (2005):** positive achievements at primary age but parents feel the child is getting left behind as young adulthood approaches.
- **Nature and degree of SEN**
- **Bagley and Woods (1998):** parents want a school that could best meet the child's individual needs.
- **Leyser and Kirk (2004):** parents of children with mild disabilities have significantly more positive views of inclusion that those with moderate or severe.
- **Palmer et al (2001):** most statements made by parents against inclusion were because of a belief that the nature and severity of child SEN precluded a benefit.
- **Whittaker (2007):** survey of parents of children with ASD found higher level of dissatisfaction among parents where the child was in mainstream.

Child variables: An important consideration when discussing child variables is the fact that the term SEN covers a very broad range of need therefore it is important to be clear about the needs being discussed when interpreting research papers.

Jenkinson (1998) study – this tended to be related to questions by parents of the appropriateness of mainstream provision for their children at secondary age because of a perception that the social and academic gaps were beginning to widen as the children were getting older.

Kenny et al. (2005) study - interviewed ten parents and also found that parents reported positive progress for their children with learning difficulties while they were attending mainstream primary schools, particularly in their social skills, however there was a feeling that as they approached young adulthood they were being left behind by their mainstream peers and needed to 'forge links with other children with similar learning difficulties.'

Whittaker (2007) - the author acknowledges that it is not possible to know how representative those returning the surveys are. It may be that there are specific issues around the social and communication difficulties of these pupils which mainstream schools find hard to address, in addition there is generally a much higher degree of parent/ teacher contact in special schools which may be important in reassuring the parents of ASD pupils.

Parent Variables

- **Leyser and Kirk (2004):** college educated parents were more positive about inclusion than those who aren't.
- **Stoiber et al (1998):** college educated, married parents were more positive than single parents with no college education.
- **Bagley and Woods (1998):** middle class parents spend more time visiting schools and making a choice.

Parent variables: Leyser and Kirk (2004) and Stoiber, Gettinger and Goetz (1998) are both studies carried out in USA.

School Variables

- **Experience of Inclusion during the Primary Phase**
- **Bagley et al(2001)**: concern by many parents that a secondary school was chosen that did not perpetuate insensitive handling of child's SEN experienced in primary.
- **Jenkinson (1998)**: parent's whose child transferred from mainstream to special were often disillusioned by inclusion.
- **Ysseldyke et al (1994)**: 40% of parents are dissatisfied with the child's former school.
- **Whittaker (2007)**: a large number of parents of ASD pupils reported major concerns with their previous school.
- **Secondary Schools Philosophy, Capacity and Commitment to SEN**
- **Bagley and Woods (1998)**: parents made judgements at open evening based on head's speech and the facilities available for SEN.
- **Hess et al (2006)**: parents were in favour of their child learning alongside children without SEN.
- **Palmer et al (2001)**: some parents felt that mainstream teachers already had enough to deal with – large classes, diverse pupils needs and poor conditions.

School variables:

Jenkinson (1998) – because of perception that there were negative attitudes or lack of attention by teachers, large class sizes, lack of availability of funding for teacher aides, and lack of suitable programs.

Ysseldyke, Lange and Gorney (1994) – the authors also give a break-down of the figures according to the disability identified by respondents on the survey questionnaire; a higher figure of 50% dissatisfaction is reported by parents of children with emotional behavioural disorder, learning disability, mental retardation and multiple disabilities. The authors identify a profile of reasons for the choice of provision made by parents: 'an education system that meets their special education needs, where there is frequent communication with parents, where their child receives personal attention, and where their child can attend school with siblings or friends'

Palmer et al. (2001) This study was looking at the potential inclusion of children with SLD.

School Variables

- **Nearness / Convenience for Travel**
- **Bagley et al (2001):** parents of children with SEN in two out of their three case study areas rated this in their top three influences on choice of school.
- **Jenkinson (1998):** found no significant difference in the schools proximity to home for either special school or mainstream school pupils.

School variables: Jenkinson (1998) – However, It may be significant that this study reports the views of parents living in the state of Victoria in Australia where there has existed an extensive school bus service since the 1940s, which is free to those in rural areas, with buses that are accessible to disabled pupils.

Other variables

- **Beliefs about Mainstream Teachers Skills, Knowledge, Capacity and Attitudes**
- **Palmer et al (2001):** parents believed mainstream teachers would be overburdened by pupils with SLD.
- **Hess et al (2006):** most important factor is the teacher's perceived level of caring and open communication.
- **Jenkinson (1998):** concerns by parents of children with SEN that they could become socially isolated in mainstream and educational programmes needed to be within their capacity.
- **Ryndak et al (1996):** 5 out of 13 parents interviewed believed the mainstream teacher had not wanted their child with SEN in their class.
- **O'Conner (2006):** concerns by parents that some teachers and support staff in mainstream schools lack sufficient training and expertise.

Other variables: These factors can be seen to demonstrate the concerns of parents of children with SEN that the individual needs of the child remain central when choosing a school.

Other variables

- **Influence of others – professionals, family, friends etc.**
- **Bagley and Woods (1998):** majority of parents had talked to other parents with children with similar SEN whose child was already at the school being considered.
- **Ryndak et al (1996):** some of the parents in their study report feeling powerless and 'deferring' to expert opinions.
- **Kenny et al (2005):** some parents report reluctance by schools because professionals regard mainstream as inappropriate for these pupils (Down's syndrome).

Other variables: The influence of others on the school choice may be particularly important for the parents of children with SEN because a key difference for these parents, in comparison to parents of children who do not have SEN, is that when making a choice of secondary provision, the decision is often influenced by advice received from the child's primary school and other professionals, particularly at the annual review of their statement.

Conclusions

- It would appear that there are some broad and recurring themes in the literature around the subject of secondary school choice, but within this there is also considerable diversity which, given the diverse nature of the SEN of the pupils, is not particularly surprising; however this factor is not the only one associated with the different choices and outcomes and there is therefore a need to consider this within a broader social and political context. Palmer et al (1998) conclude from their research that 'parents can be expected to have varying views regarding inclusive placement options based on a broad range of interacting variables rather than on a singular determinant', this conclusion resonates well with the picture that is emerging from this review of the literature.

Where do Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs Transfer to at Change of Phase from Primary to Secondary School and How do Parents Choose Which School Provision is Most Suitable for their Child?

First Purpose of the Study

- To examine the LA data on where pupils with a statement of SEN transfer to at change of phase from primary to secondary provision.
- Three cohorts of pupils looked at: all pupils with a statement of SEN currently in years 7,8 and 9 who had received a statement by year 6.
- Explores the provision that they transfer to: mainstream school, Resourced provision, special school, home tuition, independent special school.
- Specific sub-group: pupils attending a mainstream primary in year 6 – how many transfer to mainstream high, how many to RP and how many to special?

First Purpose of the Study: The sub-group of pupils attending a mainstream primary school is important because it relates directly to the second purpose of the study.

Second Purpose of the Study

- To provide qualitative data about the process of choosing a school for parents of statemented pupils.
- Multiple case study methodology used to examine factors influencing parent's decisions leading to three different outcomes: child transfers to either a mainstream high, RP or special school.
- Evidence in literature that child's SEN can impact on this decision but well documented so desire to explore other factors.
- Decision to control for child's SEN by identifying a sub sample of current year 7 pupils all of whom attended mainstream primary in year 6 and all who have the same statement banding
- Aim to recruit six cases: 2 at mainstream high, 2 in RP and 2 in special school.

Second Purpose of the Study: A group of pupils who all had the same needs identified under the LA banding system: 5A - General learning difficulties; 5C – Speech and language difficulties; 5G – Mild social and relationship difficulties. Potential threat to validity – although the needs are identified as the same in the statement they may not be the same in reality.

Socio-cultural and activity theory

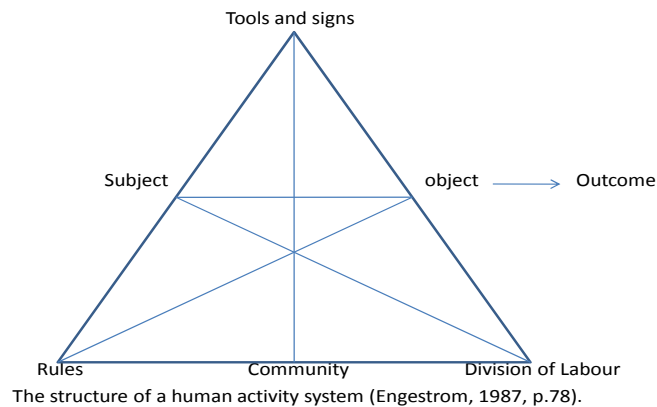


Figure 6: The structure of an activity system

Socio-cultural and activity theory: Socio-cultural and activity theory originally developed by Vygotsky and Lontiev in the context of developmental social psychology. Later Engestrom (1999) expanded the basic triangle to incorporate 'social/collective elements in an activity system, through the addition of the elements of community, rules and division of labour whilst emphasising the importance of analysing their interactions with each other' (Daniels, 2001, p.89). Daniels gives a summary of Engestrom's conception of activity:

'Activity is a collective, systemic formation that has a complex mediational structure. An activity system produces actions and is realised by means of actions. However, activity is not reducible to actions. Actions are relatively short lived and have a temporally clear-cut beginning and end. Activity systems evolve over lengthy periods of socio-historical time, often taking the form of institutions and organisations' (Daniels, 2001, p.86).

Research design

- The first question relating to the destination of pupils with SEN was answered by looking at data held by the LA on all pupils with a statement of SEN in specific cohorts (current years 7,8 and 9)
- Second question 'why do parents' of SEN pupils make the choices they do?' – depth of data required therefore qualitative approach appropriate.
- Multiple case study approach selected because considered to be able to provide data that is both robust and contains depth. Uses case study methodology developed by Yin (2009).

Research design: Desire to explore some of the factors identified in the literature, how they interacted and impacted on parents' decisions.

Method for gathering statistical background data

- Data on all pupils with a statement of SEN in year 7, 8 or 9 from September 2009;
- The current school attended by these pupils;
- A history of all previous schools attended by these pupils with dates;
- Data on statement banding/ category for all pupils, with dates of commencement and any changes to banding;

Multiple Case Studies

- Considered more robust than single case design.
- Logic of choice of participants is 'replication' design like that of multiple experiments rather than a 'sampling' design (Yin, 2009).
- Theoretical framework identifies when the replication of phenomena are likely to be found – a literal replication; and when a replication of phenomena are unlikely to be found but for predictable reasons – a theoretical replication.
- Theoretical framework used to generalise to other cases.

Multiple Case Studies: The framework is developed from the findings in the literature review. Literal replication – parents are likely to choose a mainstream school for their child when a given set of factors are present; theoretical replication – parents are unlikely to choose a mainstream school but for reasons anticipated by the prediction of a different set of factors being present.

Case Selection

- Theory development occurs *prior* to data collection therefore case selection depends on the theory.
- Desire to look at factors other than the child's SEN.
- Aim to identify other socio –cultural and historical factors impacting on choice, therefore following case selection:
- Six year 7 pupils with 5A, 5C and 5G statements attending mainstream primary in year 6:
 - 2 transferred to mainstream school;
 - 2 transferred to RP in a mainstream high school;
 - 2 transferred to special school
- Prediction of similar results where outcome the same but contrasting results where outcome is different but for reasons which might be anticipated.

Case Selection: Impact of child's SEN on choice of provision is well documented therefore desire to consider other factors. However, as discussed above potential threat to validity of assuming that the same banding is consistent with pupil's needs in reality.

Method and Analysis

- Semi-structured interviews with parents – desire to produce rich data to provide insights into the processes that constitute parents' decision making.
- Interview questions dictated by case study questions: what it is we want to find from each case.
- underpinned by the theoretical framework arising from the review of literature and the theoretical interests of socio-cultural and activity theory.
- The interview transcriptions were analysed using a start list of codes (Miles and Huberman, 1994) derived from the theoretical framework and activity theory. The coded data is then transcribed to a checklist matrix.

Method and Analysis: Data was analysed and grouped in relation to the interests of activity theory so for example: where parents were concerned that the child would not be bullied or isolated in the mainstream school this was analysed as an aspect of the community and where parents described having to battle for the school they wanted for their child this was analysed as a rule – in other words about who is suitable for admission to this school.

Results of SEN statistics

All pupils with a statement of SEN attending a mainstream primary school in Y6	Total number of pupils	Pupils who transferred to a special school in year 7	Pupils who transferred to a mainstream school with resource provision in year 7	Pupils who transferred to a mainstream school in year 7	Pupils who transferred to a special school out of borough in year 7	Pupils who transferred to home education in year 7
2006/7 (current year 9)	117	22	20	73	1	1
2007/8 (current year 8)	118	15	15	87	1	0
2008/9 (current year 7)	92	9	10	72	0	1
Totals	327	46	45	232	2	2

Table 17: Results of SEN statistics in the LA

Results of SEN statistics: This table shows three cohorts of pupils with a statement of special educational needs who were attending a mainstream primary school in Year 6 and who are currently in years 7, 8 and 9. The second column gives the total number of pupils with a statement in each cohort; the subsequent columns show the different destinations of these pupils at change of phase at the end of year 6 and the number of pupils transferring to each type of provision.

Multiple Case Study: Who Took Part

Interview	Who took part	Ethnicity	Interpreter ?	Audio or recorded notes ?	Types of provision attended	Interview location
Interview 1	Pupil's mother	Pakistani	No	Audio	Mainstream	Primary school
Interview 2	Pupil's mother and grandparents	Pakistani	Yes	Notes	Mainstream	Home
Interview 3	Pupil's mother and sister	Pakistani	Sister interpreted for mother	Audio	Special	Home
Interview 4	Pupil's mother and father	Pakistani	Yes	Notes	Special	Home
Interview 5	Pupil's mother and father	White British	No	Audio	RP in Mainstream	Home

Table 18: Multiple case studies: who took part?

Multiple Case Studies - Who Took Part: The fact that four of the five families were from a Pakistani ethnic background and in three cases the parents did not speak English as a first language may be significant factor in determining the outcomes for pupils in this study; however, this had not been raised in the literature and so was not focused on in this study but may be an important focus for future studies.

Cases 1 and 2: Mainstream School

- Generally a high degree of correspondences between cases, but differences from the theoretical framework;
- Both children had 'friends' going to the high school;
- Both had family members who had been to/were attending the high school;
- Both sets of parents perceived the high school to be open and supportive of children with SEN;
- Both sets of parents visited just one school- the school chosen;
- Both sets of parents felt they had made the choice without the support of the primary school;
- Both sets of parents were happy with the choice of schools available.

Cases 1 and 2: Mainstream School: It appeared that these parents had made the choice by discussion within the family and little involvement of school or professionals. They seemed to be basing their decision on their knowledge of the school – other family members had attended or were attending.

Cases 3 and 4: Special School

- Less correspondence between cases and differences from the theoretical framework:
- Neither child had friends going to the special school;
- Both sets of parents visited special schools on the suggestion of the primary school; neither visited a mainstream school;
- Both sets of parents felt that they had been persuaded that a special school was in the best interests of the child;
- Both sets of parents had spoken to friends and family who had questioned the decision to send the child to a special school;
- Neither set of parents were happy with the choice of schools available to them.
- Transport to school was an issue for both sets of parents and had meant that they did not really have a choice of (special) school.

Cases 3 and 4: Special School: In both of these cases the parents did not speak English as a first language and this could be significant because of its potential impact on the position of these parents to access the information they require to make an informed choice and their capacity for self advocacy in a process that can be interpreted as being under the scrutiny of the LA.

Case 5: RP in mainstream

- The parents had a friend whose child went to the RP and they had talked to them about it.
- Another boy from his class at primary was going.
- Parents wanted a school that focused on the acquisition of independent living skills.
- Parents perceived the school to be open and supportive of children with SEN.
- The parents did not perceive that an ordinary mainstream place could meet the pupil's needs.
- Parents had visited two special schools as well as the RP on the suggestion of the primary school.
- Parents were happy with the choice of school available, *however* they recognise that they were **lucky** to obtain a place for their child because of scarcity of places – other parents would be disappointed. Gaining a place involved a 'battle'.

Case 5: RP in mainstream: The factors that were important in this case were a combination of those that were identified in the theoretical framework for the other two outcomes which is perhaps to be expected as this provision provides combined aspects of both the other two. A significant theme to emerge from this interview was the perception of the parents that to obtain a place in a RP was like engaging in a battle with the LA.

Parents of SEN pupils choosing a mainstream high school for their child viewed as an activity system.

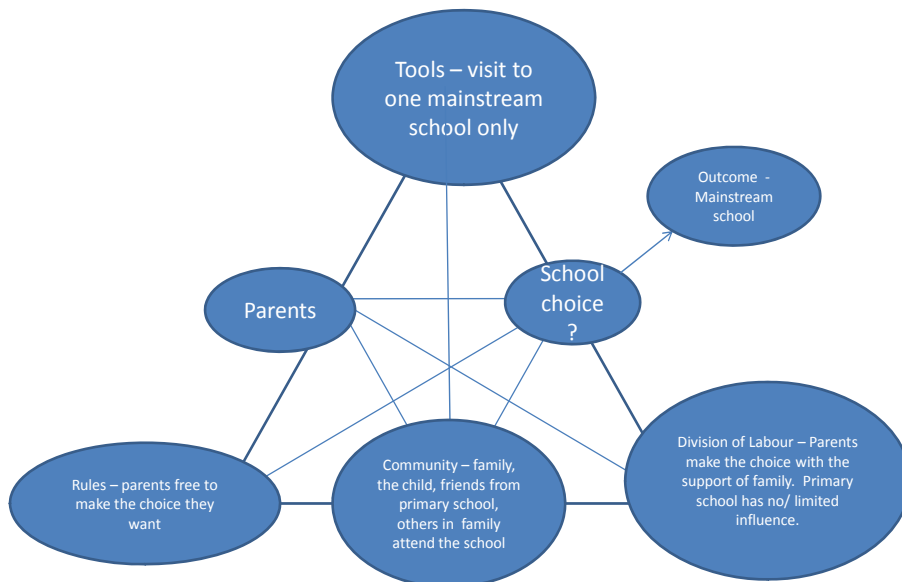


Figure 7: Parents of SEN pupils choosing a mainstream high school for their child viewed as an activity system (N=2):

Parents of SEN pupils choosing a special school for their child viewed as an activity system

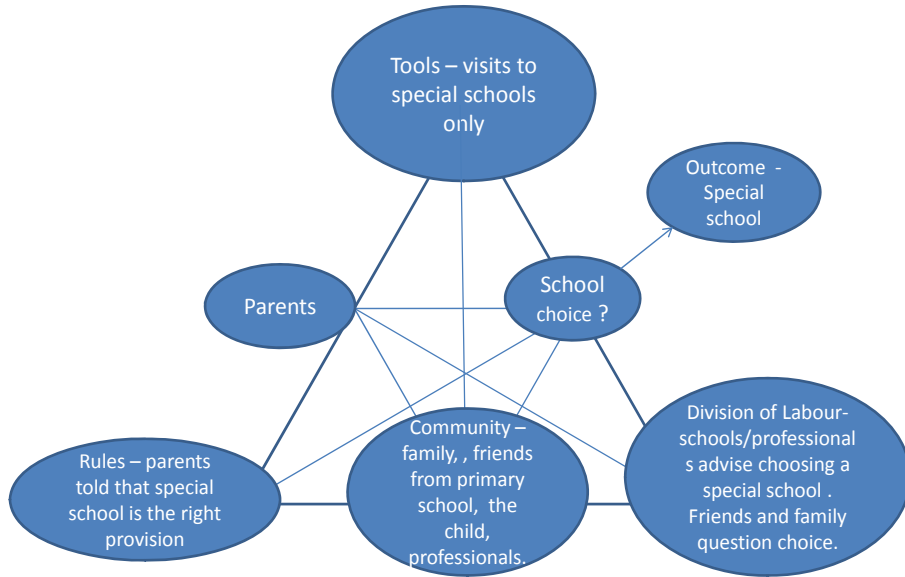


Figure 8: Parents of SEN pupils choosing a special school for their child viewed as an activity system (N=2):

Parents of SEN pupil choosing a Resource Provision for their child viewed as an activity system (N= 1)

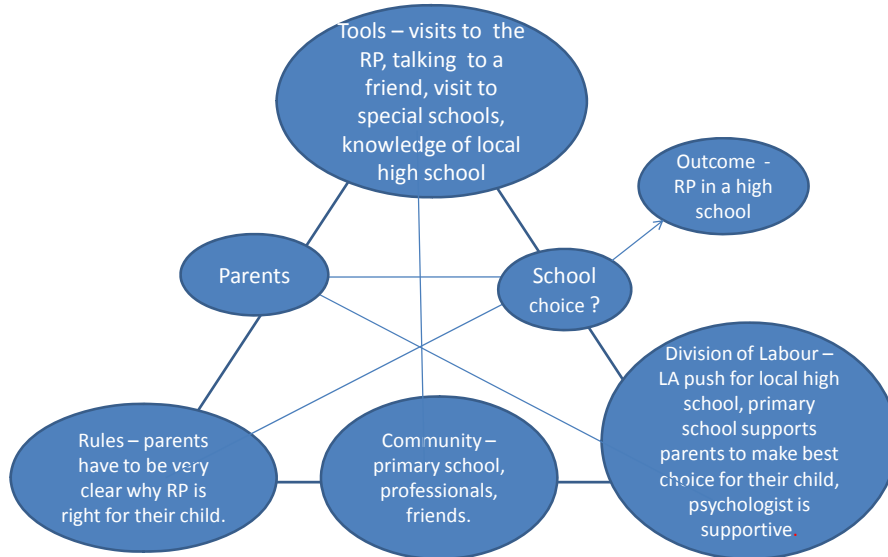


Figure 9: Parents of SEN pupil choosing a Resource Provision for their child viewed as an activity system:

Conclusions

- Implications for future professional practice of EPS
- Implications for the LA and schools
- Implications for future research