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Inclusive Education Policy, the General Allocation Model and Dilemmas of Practice in Primary Schools

by

Margaret Egan

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, School of Education, National University of Ireland, Cork.

Supervisor: Dr Paul F. Conway

Head of School: Professor Kathy Hall

June 2013

Dedication

I wish to dedicate this PhD thesis to those at the centre of my life, Padraig, Sylvaine, Aisling and Mary in acknowledgement of their constant and consistent support and encouragement, which has sustained me throughout the five years of this process.

Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES ..... **IV**

LIST OF TABLES ..... **V**

LIST OF ACRONYMS ..... **VI**

DECLARATION ..... **VIII**

ABSTRACT IX

Background ..... *ix*

Research Aims ..... *ix*

Methods and Sample ..... *ix*

Results ..... *ix*

Conclusion ..... *x*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... **XI**

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION **1**

1.1 INTRODUCTION 1

1.2 PUZZLEMENTS: DEVELOPING THE RESEARCH QUESTION 6

1.2.1 Predominance of Withdrawal as a Model of Support: Inclusion? *7*

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY 9

1.3.1 Resource/Need Match Dilemma *9*

1.3.2 Dearth of Research Evidence *12*

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS 15

1.4.1 Sub questions: *15*

1.5 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY 16

1.6 AUTOBIOGRAPHY 17

1.6.1 The 'I' as an Undergraduate *19*

1.6.2 The 'I' as Teacher *19*

1.6.3 The 'I' as Researcher *20*

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMING 21

1.7.1 Post-structuralism and Special Education *21*

1.7.2 Policy Analysis *24*

1.8 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS RESEARCH 27

1.9 TIMELINE 28

1.10 OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS 29

1.11 CONCLUSION 31

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW **33**

2.1 INTRODUCTION 33

2.2 ESTABLISHING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 38

2.2.1 Pragmatism *38*

2.2.3 Policy Analysis *42*

2.2.4 Structure/Agency Dichotomy *48*

2.3 CONTEXTS OF INFLUENCE AND TEXT PRODUCTION 58

2.3.1 Segregation and Inclusion in Ireland *58*

2.3.2 The General Allocation Model Text *62*

2.4 DECONSTRUCTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION 69

2.4.1 The Inclusion Debate *74*

2.4.2 Dilemmas of Difference within the Context of Practice *76*

2.5 Deconstructing the Needs/Resource Match Dilemma ... 78
2.6 Deconstructing Perspectives on Disability ... 82
2.6.1 Psycho-medical Paradigm ... *83*
2.6.2 Sociological Paradigm ... *85*
2.6.3 Organizational Paradigm ... *86*
2.6.4 An Overall Critique of Paradigms in Special Education ... *88*
2.7 Deconstructing the Interconnection between Deficit Thinking Social Class and Special Education Placement ... 91
2.7.1 Home/School Discontinuity ... *96*
2.8 From Deconstruction to Reconstruction ... 98
2.8.1 Adhocracy ... *99*
2.9 Conclusion ... 100

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY ... 102

3.1 Introduction ... 102
3.2 Fieldwork ... 104
3.2.1 School A: Boys' School ... *106*
3.2.2 School B: Girls' School ... *106*
3.2.3 School C: Mixed School ... *107*
3.3 Theoretical Framework: Policy Analysis ... 109
3.4 Research Paradigm ... 111
3.4.2 Affordances and Constraints of the Paradigm Choice ... *114*
3.4.4 Qualitative Studies in Inclusive/ Special Education ... *116*
3.4.5 Mixed Method Research Design ... *119*
3.5 Methodology ... 120
3.5.1 Case Study ... *122*
3.5.2 Interviewing in Educational Research ... *123*
3.6 Data Analysis ... 128
3.6.1 Grounded Theory Approach to Data Analysis ... *130*
3.6.2 Using Qualitative Data Analysis Software ... *131*
3.6.3 Discourse Analysis ... *136*
3.6.4 Utilising the Pobal Haase Index of Affluence and Deprivation ... *139*
3.6.5 Reflective Memos ... *141*
3.7 Authorial Stance of the Case Researcher ... 143
3.8 Ethical Issues ... 146
3.8.1 Informed Consent ... *147*
3.9 Reliability and Validity ... 149
3.10 Conclusion ... 151

CHAPTER 4 CLAIMS ... 153

4.1 Introduction ... 153
4.2 Claim One: Discursive Features of Policy Text as Spaces for Manoeuvre ... 161
4.2.1 Conditionality ... *162*
4.2.2 Multiplicity ... *163*
4.2.3 Opaqueness ... *166*
4.2.4 Singular Diversity: Absent Recognition of Intersectionality ... *167*
4.3 Claim 2: Context of Practice: Where Policy Text is Captured ... 170
4.3.1 Withdrawal: "they go out and they never come back" ... *171*
4.3.2 Intersectionality with Social Class ... *180*
4.3.3 Local Constructions of Dis/Ability and Interconnection with Social Class ... *194*
4.3.4 Professional Agency ... *206*
4.3.5 Parental Agency ... *216*

4.3.6 Home/School Discontinuity ... *220*
4.4 Claim Three: The GAM as a Dilemma within the Dilemma ... 224
4.4.1 'We did well out of the GAM': Ordinary Schools are Different ... *227*
4.5 Conclusion ... 229

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION: DILEMMAS AND DIRECTIONS ... 233

5.1 Introduction ... 233
5.2 Theme A: The 'Inclusiveness' of our Inclusive Schools ... 238
5.3 Theme B: The Interlocking Nature of Social Class and Segregated Special Education Practice ... 242
5.4 Theme C: Methodological Pluralism to Refine a General Allocation ... 245
5.5 Theme D: Today's Policy Solutions as Tomorrow's Dilemmas ... 247
5.5.1 Needs/Resource Mach Dilemma – Lessons Learned ... *247*
5.6 Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice ... 249
5.6.1 Home/School Discontinuity: 'The way we do things here' ... *249*
5.6.2 Policy Investments targeted towards Prevalence of Need ... *250*
5.6.3 Classrooms as Dilemmatic Spaces ... *251*
5.6.4 From Bureaucracy to Adhocracy to negotiate Dilemmatic Spaces ... *254*
5.7 Conclusion ... 257

References ... 262

Glossary ... 293

Appendices ... 298
Appendix A ... 299
Department of Education and Science (DES) (2005). Circular SP ED 02/05: Organisation of Teaching Resources for Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Primary Schools Dublin: Government Stationary Office. ... *299*
Appendix B ... 300
Letter to Chairperson of the Board of Management of Management requesting participation of school staff in the study. ... *300*
Appendix C ... 301
Letter to the Principal requesting participation in the study. ... *301*
Appendix D ... 302
Letter to teaching staff requesting participation in the study. ... *302*
Appendix E ... 303
Semi-Structured Interview Schedule. ... *303*
Appendix F ... 304
Categorising of codes using NVivo 9: Phase One ... *304*
Appendix G ... 305
Categorising of Codes utilizing NVivo 9: Phase Two. ... *305*
Appendix H ... 306
Categorising of Codes utilizing NVivo 9: Phase Three ... *306*
Appendix I ... 307
Individual Student Profile with respect to Household Status according to the Pobal HP Index. ... *307*
Appendix J ... 308
Calculations for Affluence and Deprivation among the School Population and Students with SEN. ... *308*

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Vignette: Withdrawal as model of support 6
Figure 1.2 From withdrawal to disaffection to drop-out 8
Figure 1.3 A childhood memomory 17
Figure 1.4 Timeline of research study 29
Figure 2.1 Themes emerging from the Literature Review 36
Figure 2.2 The policy cycle (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992) 46
Figure 2.3 The continuous policy cycle (Ball, 1994) 47
Figure 2.4 Interconnection between local notions of ability, social class and school ordering 90
Figure 2.5 A Model of schooling /the intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status ..92
Figure 3.1 Policy cycle 109
Figure 3.2 Four genres of educational research 113
Figure 3.3 Principles of educational research (Borko et al., 2007) 115
Figure 3.4 Types and descriptions of qualitative research 117
Figure 3.5 Summary of methodological framework for the study 121
Figure 3.6 Instrumental case study in three settings 123
Figure 3.7 Grounded theory approach to data analysis 130
Figure 3.8 Data sources 132
Figure 3.9 Transcription into NVivo 133
Figure 3.10 The 'I' in the research 144
Figure 4.1 An adaption of the policy cycle: conceptual framework 155
Figure 4.2 Policy cycle 'reframed' 157
Figure 4.3 Interconnection between constructions of ability/social class/special education 198
Figure 4.4 Intersectionality between LSES and special education placement 182
Figure 4.5 Number of children in special education classified by HP Index 188
Figure 4.6 Interconnection between local notions of ability, SES and special education 198
Figure 4.7 Sociological theories to explain social construction of HI disability 210
Figure 4.8 Transactions of the GAM in the context of practice 214
Figure 4.9 Structure/Agency interplay and the management of diversity 223
Figure 5.1 Vignette: The 'I' and the reader in conversation 237

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Overview of key literature reviewed for the research 35
Table 2.2 Approximate number of students with LI disabilities for the year 2012-13 68
Table 3.1 School A: Boys' school 106
Table 3.2 School B: Girls' school 107
Table 3.3 School C: Mixed school 108
Table 3.4 Policy cycle contexts (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992) 110
Table 3.5 Policy cycle, extended contexts (Ball, 1994) 111
Table 4.1 Claims 158
Table 4.2 Emerging categories 160
Table 4.3 Demographic data highlighting disproportionality in special education 181
Table 4.4 Chi-squared analysis to illustrate significance of disproportionality 183
Table 4.5 Socioeconomic profile of students in special education 185
Table 4.6 Life circumstances of the students in special education when compared with overall student population 187
Table 4.7 Teaching hours allocated under the GAM and the RTH model in the three schools 226

List of Acronyms

ADHD	Attention deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
BESD	Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulty
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DCSF	Department of Children, Schools and Family (UK)
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DfE	Department for Education (UK)
EADSNE	European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education
EBD	Emotional Behavioural Difficulties
EHA	Education for All Handicapped Children Act (USA)
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
GAM	General Allocation model
HSE	Health Service Executive
HI	High Incidence (disability)
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Act (USA)
IEP	Individual Education Plan
INTO	Irish National Teachers Organisation
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
LI	Low Incidence (disability)
LS/RT	Learning Support/Resource Teacher
MGLD	Mild General Learning Disabilities
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCLB	No Child Left Behind (US)

NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NDA	National Disability Authority
NDS	National Disability Survey
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NIDD	National Intellectual Disability Database
NPSD	National Physical and Sensory Database
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSER	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services
REI	Regular Education Initiative
RTH	Resource Teaching Hour (Model)
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENO	Special Educational Needs Organiser
SERC	Special Education Review Committee
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation has not been submitted to any other institution, and is, except where otherwise stated, the original work of the researcher.

Signed_____

Margaret Egan

Date_____

Abstract

Background

Inclusive education is central to contemporary discourse internationally reflecting societies' wider commitment to social inclusion. Education has witnessed transforming approaches that have created differing distributions of power, resource allocation and accountability. Multiple actors are being forced to consider changes to how key services and supports are organised. This research constitutes a case study situated within this broader social service dilemma of how to distribute finite resources equitably to meet individual need, while advancing inclusion. It focuses on the national directive with regard to inclusive educational practice for primary schools, *Department of Education and Science Special Education Circular 02/05,* which introduced the General Allocation Model (GAM) within the legislative context of the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (Government of Ireland, 2004). This research could help to inform policy with 'facts about what is happening on the ground' (Quinn, 2013).

Research Aims

The research set out to unearth the assumptions and definitions embedded within the policy document, to analyse how those who are at the coalface of policy, and who interface with multiple interests in primary schools, understand the GAM and respond to it, and to investigate its effects on students and their education. It examines student outcomes in the primary schools where the GAM was investigated.

Methods and Sample

The post-structural study acknowledges the importance of policy analysis which explicitly links the 'bigger worlds' of global and national policy contexts to the 'smaller worlds' of policies and practices within schools and classrooms. This study insists upon taking the detail seriously (Ozga, 1990). A mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis is applied. In order to secure the perspectives of key stakeholders, semi-structured interviews were conducted with primary school principals, class teachers and learning support/resource teachers (n=14) in three distinct mainstream, non-DEIS schools. Data from the schools and their environs provided a profile of students. The researcher then used the Pobal Maps Facility (available at www.pobal.ie) to identify the Small Area (SA) in which each student resides, and to assign values to each address based on the Pobal HP Deprivation Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012). Analysis of the datasets, guided by the conceptual framework of the policy cycle (Ball, 1994), revealed a number of significant themes.

Results

Data illustrate that the main model to support student need is withdrawal from the classroom under policy that espouses inclusion. Quantitative data, in particular, highlighted an association between segregated practice and lower socioeconomic status (LSES) backgrounds of students. Up to 83% of the students in special education programmes are from lower socio-economic status (LSES) backgrounds. In some schools 94% of students from LSES backgrounds are withdrawn from classrooms daily for special education. While

the internal processes of schooling are not solely to blame for class inequalities, this study reveals the power of professionals to order children in school, which has implications for segregated special education practice. Such agency on the part of key actors in the context of practice relates to 'local constructions of dis/ability', which is influenced by teacher habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). The researcher contends that inclusive education has not resulted in positive outcomes for students from LSES backgrounds because it is built on faulty assumptions that focus on a psycho-medical perspective of dis/ability, that is, placement decisions do not consider the intersectionality of dis/ability with class or culture. This study argues that the student need for support is better understood as 'home/school discontinuity' not 'disability'. Moreover, the study unearths the power of some parents to use social and cultural capital to ensure eligibility to enhanced resources. Therefore, a hierarchical system has developed in mainstream schools as a result of funding models to support need in inclusive settings. Furthermore, all schools in the study are 'ordinary' schools yet participants acknowledged that some schools are more 'advantaged', which may suggest that 'ordinary' schools serve to 'bury class' (Reay, 2010) as a key marker in allocating resources. The research suggests that general allocation models of funding to meet the needs of students demands a systematic approach grounded in reallocating funds from where they have less benefit to where they have more. The calculation of the composite Haase Value in respect of the student cohort in receipt of special education support adopted for this study could be usefully applied at a national level to ensure that the greatest level of support is targeted at greatest need.

Conclusion

In summary, the study reveals that existing structures constrain and enable agents, whose interactions produce intended and unintended consequences. The study suggests that policy should be viewed as a continuous and evolving cycle (Ball, 1994) where actors in each of the social contexts have a shared responsibility in the evolution of education that is equitable, excellent and inclusive.

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There are many who travelled this research journey with me to whom I owe sincere gratitude. Initially, I wish to acknowledge the support and encouragement of my supervisor Dr. Paul Conway. His words are gold and I valued each nugget of his guidance. Sincere thanks also to the staff of the School of Education, University College Cork, and in particular to Professor Kathy Hall for her consistent motivation and pastoral care.

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For his tireless collaboration in analysing my quantitative data, I wish to thank Dr. Brendan O'Keeffe. His expertise in the processes and patterns in Human Geography contributed significantly to my efforts. In particular, I am grateful for his assistance in the application of the Pobal HP Deprivation Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012), which enhanced the analysis of data.

My sincere gratitude to Dr. Finn Ó Murchú for his empathy throughout the journey and for consistently focusing my efforts on the finish line.

Finally, I wish to thank Pádraig, my partner in life, for his constant affirmation and love. I acknowledge that he reared our three daughters while I buried myself in the research process. Therefore, I need to apologise to Sylvaine, Aisling and Mary for my absence in your lives. I can only hope that there were moments of quality moments spent with you, collectively and individually, while the thesis stole the hours.

[1]The referencing convention used throughout is Harvard, which conforms to the British Standards Institution (1983) BS6371:1983. Recommendations for citation of unpublished documents. London, BSI.
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British Standards Institution (2000) BS5261-1:2000. Copy preparation and proof correction. Design and layout of documents.London, BSI.[1]

Chapter 1 Introduction

> … the financing of special needs education is one of the most important factors in realising inclusive education. If [resources] are not in accordance with the current inclusion policy, it is very unlikely that inclusive education will occur. Moreover, it is demonstrated that all funding mechanisms entail certain incentives, some of them even rewarding the segregation of pupils with special educational needs. It is therefore necessary to challenge these mechanisms and to change policies in such a way that inclusive education is more easily implemented…
>
> (Meijer, 1999, p. 11)

1.1 Introduction

Inclusive education is central to contemporary discourse internationally reflecting societies' wider commitment to social inclusion. However, the complexities arising out of resourcing education for inclusion merits consistent and continuous examination and provides the central rationale for this current study. The opening quote emphasises that resourcing is one of the most important factors in realizing inclusive education. Therefore, this study is significant as it examines a general funding model to provide additional teaching supports to students in inclusive settings. It analyses how inclusive education becomes 'live' in primary schools. This research constitutes a case study situated within this broader social service dilemma of how to distribute finite resources equitably to meet individual need, while advancing inclusive education.

The study focuses on the national directive with regard to inclusive educational practice for primary schools, *Department of Education and Science Special Education Circular 02/05*, (DES, 2005) (see Appendix A), which introduced the General Allocation Model (GAM) within the legislative context of the EPSEN Act (Government of Ireland, 2004). The GAM was introduced to ensure that all schools would have additional teaching support to meet the needs of students with high incidence (HI) disabilities and those who required learning support, i.e., scoring on or below the 10th percentile in school-based standardised assessment in Literacy or Literacy and Maths. The model currently supports the majority of children with learning needs in primary schools.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has recently published a Policy Advice Paper (NCSE, 2013) on how students with special educational needs (SEN) should, in the future, be supported. The Minister for Education and Skills in Ireland, Min. Ruairi Quinn (2013), is currently calling for research that would help inform policy with 'facts about what is happening on the ground'. This study, which took place over the past five years, is a timely

response to the Minister's call. The study provides empirical data to support and expand upon the NCSE's (2013) proposals to the Minister on how best to review and revise resource allocation systems to support students with SEN in inclusive settings. The study suggests that the varying procedures administered for referring students to special education should be investigated, and, if necessary, challenged because, as the opening quote suggests, 'it is demonstrated that all funding mechanisms entail certain incentives, some of them even rewarding the segregation of pupils with special educational needs' (Meijer, 1999, p.11). The need for greater understanding of how local school processes get translated into placement of so many students from LSES backgrounds into special education is argued for in this research. Disproportionality or overrepresentation of minority groupings is well-documented in the international literature. However, this study suggests that an explanation of *why* is rare. The study analyses how schools 'do' inclusive policy in this moment in time in order to reform policies in such a way that inclusive education results in positive outcomes for all students.

The trajectory towards integration, initially, and then inclusion, began over thirty-five years ago in the USA and emerged from the civil rights movement. The evolution of special education was strongly influenced by social developments and court decisions in the 1950s and 60s especially the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka* (1954), which challenged the segregated education system due to race. The USA's Supreme Court declared that education must be made available to all children on equal terms. In 1975 USA Congress passed Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children (EHA) Act. This was a landmark piece of legislation as it supported the notion of integration. To ensure compliance with the act, school districts were required to provide a continuum of alternative placements which would ensure the 'Least Restrictive Environment' (LRE) for all. LRE introduced the resource teaching hour (RTH) model where students with special educational needs (SEN) are placed in regular schools and 'withdrawn' to the resource room for direct teaching by a special education teacher for specified time periods (Kavale and Forness, 2000). Madeline Will, the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) in the USA, in a keynote address at the Wingspread Conference on *The Education of Special Needs Students: Research Findings and Implications for Policy and Practice*, was critical of this special education approach, of 'pull-out' of students into special settings:

> Although well intentioned, this so-called "pull-out" approach to the educational difficulties of students with learning problems has failed in many instances to meet the educational needs of these students and has created, however unwittingly, barriers to their successful education
>
> (Will, 1986, p. 412)

Will's address was regarded as ground-breaking and changed the face of education in the USA. Participation in class-based learning became the definition of inclusion. The Regular Education Initiative (REI) (1986) followed, which was authorised as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990 and was reauthorized in 2004.

The inclusion movement has been endorsed internationally by UNESCO's Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action in Special Education (1994), which has been ratified by all European countries. While having a greater impact in Europe than elsewhere, the Salamanca Statement reflects the United Nation's (UN) global strategy of Education for All (EFA), which insists that mainstream schools can, and should develop practices and structures that will facilitate an effective response to diversity (Farrell and Ainscow, 2002). The Conclusions and Recommendations of the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) (2008) *Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future* suggest that policy makers should acknowledge that inclusive education must aim to promote school cultures and environments that are child-friendly, conducive to effective learning and inclusive of all children (UNESCO, 2009).

The concept of inclusive education is a relatively new phenomenon within the Irish education system (MacGiolla Phádraig, 2007; Meegan and MacPhail, 2006). While legislation and policy in the USA (EHA, 1975 and the REI, 1986 and IDEA, 1990, 2004) and indeed in the UK (Education Act, 1980, which followed the influential Warnock Report, 1978) were strongly advocating for inclusive education, the Irish government was cautious, adopting an approach that 'tried to balance economic considerations with educational principles' (MacGiolla Phádraig, 2007, p.289), arguing that the issue of integration was a very complex one which could not be fully addressed in a White Paper (1980). Over a decade later, they still maintained that due to demographic and geographical features, it was not always possible to provide a high quality education for *all* children with SEN in an integrated setting (MacGiolla Phadraig, 2007). However, the 1990s did see considerable developments in government policy towards inclusive education.

This increased attention by the Irish government to inclusive education since the early 1990s is illustrated by the *Special Education Review Committee (SERC) Report* 1993, the Report of the Government Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, *A Strategy for Equality* (1996), the Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998), the Equal Status Act (Government of Ireland, 2000). Significantly, in November 1998, the then Minister for Education and Science, Min. Martin, announced that there would be 'an automatic response to need'. A discussion document from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (1999), *Special Educational Needs: Curriculum Issues, the Comprehensive Initiatives for Assessment and Delivery of Special Education Services* followed and it introduced the resource teaching hour (RTH) model to support the inclusion of children with professionally assessed needs. Every child with a psychological/medical assessment could now apply for and receive additional, individual teaching hours under the RTH model. It is noteworthy that within six years of Ireland's first Education Act a further act was introduced. The enactment of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004 (Government of Ireland, 2004) ensures 'that the education of people with such needs shall, wherever possible take place in an inclusive environment' (Government of Ireland, 2004, p.5). The Disability Act (Government of Ireland, 2005) further provides for children and adults with disability.

Following on from the EPSEN Act, 2004, Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) introduced the General Allocation Model (GAM), within the legislative context of the Act. The new model expanded the learning support caseload to include students assessed as having HI disabilities previously supported by the RTH model, for example students with specific learning disability, borderline mild/mild general learning disability (GLD). The introduction of the GAM also provided for the retention of the resource teaching hour (RTH) model of individual application to the Department of Education and Science (DES) for students who have more complex and enduring special educational needs arising from low incidence (LI) disabilities, i.e., an assessed syndrome, autism, severe emotional and behavioural disorder, hearing impairment, moderate general learning disability, multiple disabilities, physical disability, severe and profound GLD, specific speech and language disorder, visual impairment (See Glossary and Appendix A).

It has been acknowledged by the National Council for Special Education (Deforges and Lindsay, 2010) that Government reports, studies and evaluations, in addition to legislative changes, have resulted in more students with SEN attending mainstream schools. There are 40,000 students supported by extra teaching resources in Irish schools (NCSE, 2013). However, there are significant difficulties associated with multiple systems of resource allocation for students with SEN in Ireland (NCSE, 2013). Moreover, other research commissioned by the NCSE indicates that while teachers generally have a positive attitude towards inclusion, practice is acknowledged as challenging and does not always result in encouraging students to achieve their full potential (Rose, et al., 2010). Furthermore, it could be argued that in the current economic climate of austerity there could be an emphasis on a 'back to basics' approach to teaching and learning. Such an approach often places increased emphasis on standardized school-based assessment in literacy and numeracy, which could lead to a schooling culture that is 'pitted against' (Sugrue, 1997, p. x) creating inclusive classrooms where all students can be holistically nurtured and developed. Sugrue spoke of 'the emotional maelstrom of contemporary classrooms':

> Classrooms, therefore, are sites of struggle where teachers on a daily basis, grapple with these complexities as they seek to give meaning and coherence to contemporary versions of teaching traditions; where back-to-basics in its various guises is pitted against more humane, just and equitable versions of classroom practice which is frequently located within a progressive ideology of schooling.
>
> (Sugrue, 1997, p. *x*)

It could be said that Irish classrooms are still 'sites of struggle', where teachers are consistently 'grappling' with an increasingly diverse student population. The Irish system is in a time of transition, moving towards legislatively mandated inclusive schools and classrooms (Rose et al., 2010) under proposed new systems of resource allocation to meet need (NCSE, 2013). The NCSE (2013) acknowledge that 'any proposal to change the current system has the potential to evoke considerable anxiety among schools and parents' (p. vii). This point echoes the views of Sugrue (1997) who suggests that times of transition can cause crises and that 'some practitioners seek to reduce complexity and uncertainty by clinging to established pedagogical recipes' (p. x) or a traditional approach, which is a useful observation that focuses the lens of this research study.

Based on an exploration of the literature and my own practice in the field, I came to this process of investigation with many uncertainties which then informed my research questions.

The trajectory towards developing the questions is significant to the study as it provides anecdotal evidence that insisted upon more formal data collection and empirical school-based research to investigate the GAM as policy in text and as policy in practice.

1.2 Puzzlements: Developing the Research Question

In keeping with the concerns raised by Will (1986) over thirty years previously, much anecdotal evidence gathered through my work as a teacher educator raised similar issues with regard to the level of *withdrawal* of some students from their classrooms. The following vignette presents an example of such evidence:

> A group of six fourth-class students were sitting at tables in a large classroom. The children had been withdrawn from their mainstream classroom for learning support in a separate setting. I was visiting an enthusiastic learning support teacher who was undertaking a post-graduate qualification in special education. The focus of the lesson was inferential comprehension. Students were asked to 'Lámha Suas' to indicate examples of 'meaning inferred' as the teacher read various passages. All students were motivated and engaged in the teacher-led activities. The lesson was clearly within their zone of proximal development (Vygotosky, 1987) which is appropriate and recommended.
>
> However, the hour-long lesson made me question this school's model of inclusion. Why were these highly motivated students withdrawn from classroom-based learning? It was obvious that their achievement levels in literacy did not fall within or below the 10th percentile as mandated by policy as criteria for receipt of learning support. Who decided that these students should be withdrawn from their peers and classroom teacher to go to the learning support teacher for discrete lessons? It made me wonder about the level of attainment of those who remained included in the classroom. Was it all about attainment and standardised scores on arbitrary tasks? The model that I observed presented itself as streaming at a very early stage in these students' lives.
>
> One little boy in particular had his hand up consistently, a real eager beaver. I questioned how long he would remain thus motivated. Was he not participating enthusiastically in his classroom? Why was he not allowed participate in his classroom constantly and consistently? Was this 'model pupil' going to become disaffected by being acquired by the label 'Learning Support'? As the six pupils picked up their folders to leave the room they warmly said to their teacher 'See you at one for maths Miss!' Another hour of pull-out was forecast!

Figure 1.1 Vignette 1: Withdrawal as model of support

This vignette (Figure 1. 1) presents an 'inclusive school' in Ireland, in which the inclusion of students with high incidence (HI) disabilities and learning needs are supported by the GAM. Such anecdotal evidence raises significant concerns with regard to levels of withdrawal of some students from classroom-based learning. Evidence on the ground, albeit anecdotal, seemed to suggest that school structures and practices can be resistant to change and that new, well-intentioned policies can be manipulated by clinging to established practices in a conscious or unconscious effort to reduce complexity and uncertainty. The observations of discomfort mirrored the fears articulated by the European Agency for the Development of Special Needs Education (EADSNE) (Meijer, 1999) Report in relation to funding models that can 'reward' the segregation of students. Withdrawal of students from classroom-based activity seems to be common practice in schools under the GAM despite a policy and legislative context of inclusion.

1.2.1 Predominance of Withdrawal as a Model of Support: Inclusion?

The children in the vignette (Figure 1.1) were *withdrawn* from their classroom and peers for two class periods daily. It was not clear *why* these children were being withdrawn to a separate setting for English and Maths instruction. Significantly, the school was described as being an 'advantaged' school by the L/S teacher. Yet, in Ireland we have no such label to describe schools. As a mixed gender, 'advantaged school' this L/S teacher (who was appointed through GAM funding) stated that the school had 'done well' out of GAM, as an 'advantaged' school they did not have any children scoring on or below the 10^{th} percentile in literacy or numeracy. Therefore, class teachers prioritized need within the class and the L/S teacher withdrew the children the class teacher deemed as needing extra support, which reflected the practice throughout the school. This experience and other anecdotal evidence made me question if what I was witnessing was a greater level of inclusive education or simply a return to segregation dressed in new clothes. The reality for students in this school was that they were streamed in accordance with their 'ability' as perceived by classroom teachers and scores on standardized tests, which gave them a class-based ranking of 'ability'.

Subsequently, and on the same day, I visited another L/S teacher in the same city and for the same purpose, mentoring and assessment of teachers undertaking a post-graduate qualification in special education. This particular teacher had over thirty-five children on her caseload, all of whom were being withdrawn from their varying classrooms. She stressed that

this school had 'done badly' under GAM as they did not have adequate human resources to meet student need. Although not a designated school under Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), many children came from LSES backgrounds. The school had a significant number of students scoring on or below the 10th percentile in English and Maths. The capacity of the GAM to meet need in this school, it was suggested by this teacher, was insufficient.

Both of these schools were resourced by a nationally-mandated 'general' allocation model to support such needs in inclusive settings. In agreement with Sugrue, my experience at the coal-face suggests that 'in these complex and uncertain times, caring for and challenging learners create serious moral and practical dilemmas for teachers, the intensity of which vary significantly depending on the social context of their works' (1997, p. x). The two schools were considered 'mainstream' by the State, i.e., they held no specific designation, such as DEIS status (See Glossary). Yet the latter school presented with 'greater need' due to its specific student profile. It is interesting, however, that a commonality between these schools was shared, i.e., the practice model of supporting children's inclusive education in both schools was to withdraw the students from their classroom peers. My own lived experience forced me to reflect upon this approach and how inclusion 'gets done' in schools as the vignette in Figure 1.2 illustrates:

> Arriving late on the Saturday morning to join my PhD cohort, I quietly slipped into the back of the group who were all actively engaged and participating in learning about activity theory. As I sat in the back of the classroom I began to empathise with the student with SEN. Sometimes this student too has experienced life at the back of the classroom, his education conducted on the margins. Maybe he came late to school like me because life happens while we are doing other things. It is possible that his baggage was heavier than that of his peers, and I don't mean his books! For some reason, he sits at the back, not invited to participate, not feeling worthy of participation, geographically integrated but not included. Then I began to think and almost panic about the prospect of my supervisor withdrawing me from the cohort for direct teaching in some rudimentary PhD-type skills. Such an approach would announce to the full cohort that I had significant deficits that needed to be addressed. I realised that if I was withdrawn to be treated separately I would never again feel part of the cohort. I would become disaffected and would probably soon 'drop-out'.

Figure 1.2 Vignette 2: From withdrawal to disaffection to drop-out

In summary, based on such experiences and reflection on anecdotal evidence, I realised that I held a rather unique vantage point to investigate the phenomenon due to the varying positions I have held in the field of education. I had dilemmas with regard to school structures and practices that speak of inclusion but can result in segregation. As a teacher, I had practiced in these structures. Upon reflection, it seemed apparent to me now that teachers and other professionals in the field have significant power to order and group students, a power that I had executed as a teacher. Often such selection and ordering are based on standardised assessments, intelligence tests or local perceptions within school of what it is to be intelligent. Much research over the past three decades suggests that there is a social class bias in psychometric assessments and standardised testing generally, which has implications for diagnosis, labelling of children and ultimately for school ordering and decimation of finite resources. A critical examination of this field seemed warranted. Therefore, this research is a direct response to a 'felt need' (Elliot, 1991) arising out of the puzzlements experienced.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

The current study analyses *Department of Education and Science Special Education Circular 02/05* (DES, 2005), which provides 'guidance for mainstream primary schools on the deployment and organization of the teaching resources that were allocated…under the general allocation model' (p. 1) (see Appendix A). Therefore, it is a case study within the broader context of service provision. It sets out to unearth the extent to which the GAM is addressing the needs/resource match dilemma, i.e., infinite individual needs being matched by finite resources, while also advancing inclusive education.

1.3.1 Resource/Need Match Dilemma

All social systems are faced with the dilemma of matching finite resources with individual needs. Resource allocation is arguably the most significant policy issue of the twenty-first century democratic society, which is emphasised in the opening quote to this work. Choices with regard to allocations of resources are inevitable and those choices are often complex, difficult, and morally problematic, and clear inter-county differences can be observed with respect to how such decisions are made (Wilkinson and Picket, 2009).

Justice, the primary moral concern of all democracies and social service provision systems, requires that the benefits and burdens of such services be distributed according to morally relevant and transparent criteria. Resourcing mechanisms are designed to ensure that access by users to services align with stated policy objectives. The Report by the EADSNE (Meijer, 1999, p.11) has been highly influential throughout Europe and argues that 'if the financial regulations are not in accordance with the current inclusion policy, it is very unlikely that inclusive education will occur'.

Knowing what resource allocation decisions to make would be quite simple if we could agree on the *criteria* to guide allocations. However, examination of international experience has shown that there is no consensus about what allocation decisions should be made (Maddox, 1999, Shevlin 2013). The stated aim of the GAM is to provide for the majority of students with SEN without recourse to psychological or other clinical assessment, i.e., needs being met immediately without the necessity to categorise or label the student. However, what is clear is that there are increasing dilemmas with regard to prioritising needs, all of which are resource sensitive.

In 2010, the European Commission in its document *Organisation of the Education system in Ireland* highlighted that there were 19,000 adults in Irish schools 'working solely with pupils with SEN' (p. 214). In their recent press release the NCSE (2013) confirmed that 10,575 SNAs were made available to schools during the school year 2012/2013. This represents a significant increase from 300 in 1997. There are now 9,950 resource and learning support teachers in schools compared with 2,000 in 1998. This number includes 3,160 resource teachers in post-primary schools, which does not have a GAM system to address need. This year (2012/2013), €1.3 billion, or 15% of the overall education budget, was spent on supporting special education (NCSE, 2013). The State's annual expenditure on special education increased from €468 million in 2004 to €1.3 billion in 2011, representing a percentage increase of 178 per cent at a time when the State's total income from tax returns fell by €1.5 billion (€35.7 billion in 2004 to €34.2 billion in 2011) (NCSE, 2013). This level of expenditure remains current. The NCSE highlights that the 'economic challenges' that are common to most countries in the West currently have serious implications, stating that 'providing additional and different resources for some children requires a cost effective system which ensures equitable delivery of resources, according to level of need' (Desforges

and Lindsay, 2010, p. 1). This advice has been recently echoed to the Minister for Education and Skills in their Policy Advice Paper (NCSE, 2013).

It is noteworthy that in Ireland currently there is no accurate census data relating directly to SEN. This issue relates to a lack of interagency communication around data sets and anomalies and ambiguities with regard to definitions and criteria. For example the EPSEN Act (2004) offers a broader definition of SEN that heretofore, defining SEN as

> a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health, or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition.
>
> (Government of Ireland, 2004)

The NCSE undertook 'one of the first attempts to estimate the cohort of the population with SEN in 2006' (Banks and McCoy, 2011, p.3). Its *Implementation Report* (NCSE, 2006) found prevalence of SEN to be 17.7%. More recently, a key task for Banks and McCoy (2011) was to 'estimate the numbers of children with SEN based on new and unique data' (p.4) from the *Growing up in Ireland* study (Williams et al., 2009). Analysis based on the study combined two sets of participants, parents and teachers, to 'generate a new estimate of SEN prevalence as defined in EPSEN' (Banks and McCoy, 2011, p. 4). Their analysis 'points to an overall prevalence rate of 25%, with boys' showing higher levels [of SEN] than girls' (p.4), which represents a significant proportion of school population.

This study acknowledges that inclusion policy and practice are resource sensitive at multiple levels. While there is international consensus that 'provision of appropriately resourced policies, services, personnel and communities is central to achieving inclusive education' (Flatman Watson, 2009, p. 278), in the current economic climate in Ireland resources are *finite* and their *efficient* use is of critical concern to those who provide funding for such services. In order to secure value for money in an approach to matching student need with finite resources, it is important to have evidence of what is effective practice.

The GAM was introduced to resolve the need/resource match dilemma within inclusive settings, stating that through 'the allocation of additional teaching resources to schools under the terms of the GAM [it] is intended to make possible the development of truly inclusive schools' (DES, 2005, p. 3). Therefore, the research examines whether or not the aims of the GAM are being realised and with what consequences/outcomes for students. The study represents a timely quest within a context of little or no published research on the

funding model, which could help to inform policy with "facts about what is happening on the ground" (Quinn, 2013).

1.3.2 Dearth of Research Evidence

Inclusion, as a philosophy, value and an objective of policy and practice is still relatively new in the history of education. When this study was conceived, Shevlin et al. (2008) acknowledged that research in Ireland was limited because of the 'comparatively recent nature of inclusion initiatives' (p.142). These key researchers in the field highlighted that the conceptual understanding of SEN was seriously deficient and that this factor affected the coherence of policy and service delivery. The National Disability Authority (NDA) (2002) highlighted that research on inclusion within an Irish context had been extremely limited, acknowledging that it was almost impossible to provide a comprehensive overview of inclusion practice. More recently, Rose et al., (2012) suggested that 'the literature on special and inclusive education in Ireland provides an indication of the need for a clear research focus upon specific aspects of an emerging change within educational provision' (p. 369). Rix et al.'s (2009) systematic review of the literature relating to pedagogical approaches to effectively include children with SEN is of note. 80% of the studies that emerged from the search were USA-based with only 10% coming from the UK. There were no Irish-based studies retrieved in the systematic search of the literature. While acknowledging that systematic reviews often miss out on data that small scale studies can provide, it remains noteworthy that in the Irish context Banks and McCoy (2012) have also highlighted the general lack of a research base in the Irish context. They assert that 'despite the recent policy emphasis on educational inclusion little is known about children with special educational needs in Ireland' (p. 3).

It must be acknowledged that Shevlin et al. (2008) set out to address this lack of research in the Irish field. They recorded the policy changes within Ireland and examined how primary school stakeholders perceived the impact of these rapid changes on provision. It must be highlighted also, that recent research commissioned by the NCSE is welcomed and these are cited extensively in this study. It is interesting that Shevlin et al. concluded in 2008 that while the move towards inclusion seemed irreversible in Ireland, many critical issues needed to be addressed in order to ensure that high quality inclusive learning environments

are established for all students. One such issue relates to levels of participation of some social groups in inclusive classrooms, which is noteworthy.

Panofsky (2003) in her article on learning and social class admits that there has been little work done on low-income learners as a social group within the activity context of the school, particularly when the school is viewed as a social field in which social fields mediate learning. Dewey, and others over a century ago, began encouraging teachers to take more account of the social dimensions of schooling and the social dynamics between teacher and learner. Anecdotal evidence gathered through my lived professional experience suggested that school cultures are agentive in who stays 'in' and who goes 'out' (to the L/S teacher), which has implications for who is perceived 'smart'. This, in turn, could suggest that intelligence is socially constructed at school, which has implications for the GAM and school ordering generally.

Furthermore, while certain levels of withdrawal may be appropriate and even recommended (DES, 2005) for all students at varying times in their lives, many researchers agree that special education has 'relied too heavily on deficit thinking and must now enhance existing practices with alternative perspectives that consider the socio-cultural contexts in which children with disabilities learn' (Trent et al. 1999, p. 277). A reluctance to embrace new approaches may well be explained by Sugrue's (1997, p. x) observation that in uncertain times 'teachers rely less on informal teaching strategies such as individualization, group and project work'. Hardiman, Guerin, and Fitzsimmons (2009) echo this view and highlight that a lack of empirical evidence into the efficacy of inclusion practices internationally continues to present as a challenge with regard to influencing policy and practice in Ireland.

Empirically, it is not an easy task to ascertain the success of inclusion given the methodological limitations that can arise, for example, a lack of consensual definitions in the field of special/inclusive education, a range of individual case-study research which makes generalisation of findings impracticable, difficulties in securing matched and control groups and the variety of inclusive support and provision experienced by individual students (Farrell, 2000). Moreover, Thomas and Loxley (2007) contend that inclusion seems 'something of a disadvantage when looked at alongside the seemingly solid epistemological and empirical foundations of special education – a new kid on the block, still to prove it has any substance beyond ideology. In deconstructing special education, which is the starting point of this study, it was necessary to examine the assumptions underpinning the empirical and rational

arguments behind special education, which, according to Thomas and Loxley (2007), have become identified with a 'a kind of special, privileged knowledge' (p. 2). They contend that it has been on this *solid knowledge* that the edifices of special education have been confidently built.

Interestingly, with regard to policy intention and implementation, Gomez (2011) suggests that policy implementation can be resisted due to lack of *participation* from key stakeholders such as teachers, a view that is shared by Coughlan (2012) with regard to Irish education policy. All too often, it is a small group with a certain knowledge (power /agency) who are involved in devising policy with little consultation or participation from those involved in its implementation. The current study embraces teacher participation. It focuses on teachers and the implementation of policy texts because according to O'Brien (2001) the key resource to successful inclusive education lives inside teachers' heads. Barton (1997) observes that the professional opinions of teachers, their values and voices have been consistently ignored within the process of devising and implementing education policy. Therefore, it is necessary to unveil teacher attitudes, beliefs and values.

Attitude is understood as 'a settled way of thinking or feeling, typically reflected in a person's behaviour. A belief is defined as an acceptance that something exists or is understood as true, especially one without proof. A value is taken to mean principles or standards of behaviour; one's judgement of what is important in life (Oxford Dictionary).

Many national and international studies have shown that the *attitudes* of principals and teachers towards inclusion and towards students with disabilities are a powerful influence on the success or failure of inclusion (Drudy, and Kinsella, 2009; Kinsella and Senior, 2008; McDermott, 2002; Ostrosky et al., 2006; Skidmore, 2004;Winter and O' Raw, 2010), 'the leadership of the head-teacher is a key factor in making this (inclusion) happen' (Department for Education and Skills, 2004, p. 32). Policy makers can often advocate for inclusion without understanding the cultural and pedagogical challenges teachers face and the administrative and organizational burden principals encounter to operationalize the policy (Nind and Wearmouth, 2006). Therefore, policy makers can benefit from an investigation the challenges principals and teachers encounter in practice and the outcomes of current practices for the major stakeholders, students. The Minister for Education and Skills has recently stated that

> the more we know about educational outcomes the better we can fine-tune our interventions. We have limited resources, so when we get new evidence that intervention in this way or that way would have better outcomes – that's when the Department of Education has to respond
>
> (Quinn, 2013)

In summary, it is critical that the voices of key stakeholders in the implementation process inform policy formulation in order to realize a convergence and harmony between policy text and practice in relation to inclusive education that will have 'better outcomes'. The following questions framed the investigation.

1.4 Research Questions

The study centred on how participants, in local activity settings, were actively engaged in GAM implementation. The aim of this study was to examine the influences of different social actors in devising and implementing this new model of support for students in mainstream primary schools. The research set out to unveil the consequences of this model by analysing the perceptions of the actors with regard to its effects on the major stakeholders, students. The following questions were addressed:

1. In the context of the GAM in primary schools as a means to resolve the pupil need/resource match dilemma, to what extent is inclusive education advanced?
2. In deconstructing special education and constructing 'inclusion', are we reconstructing special education?
3. What are the consequences of the GAM as a funding policy for inclusive education?

1.4.1 Sub questions:

- How are students selected for support?
- In what ways, and by whom, are students 'ordered' in schools?
- How do teachers and principals consider and understand disability?
- Could the category, high incidence (HI) disabilities, be a social construct? If so,
- To what extent is special education part of the problem, since the understanding of dis/ability is an important background for provision and special arrangements?
- Whom does the GAM support?
- Is there evidence of an under or overrepresentation of a particular socio-economic grouping being supported by the model? If so, why?

- To what extent is there a Resource Teaching Hour model (RTHM)/ GAM dilemma? If so, why?

The research emphasised the value of collaborative voices and shared responsibility in developing policy and practice. Narratives arising out of interactions with participants in the Irish primary school system could lead to greater understanding of the complex world in which all children live and learn. The research was therefore a collaborative approach between the researcher and school practitioners to unearth a current reality of inclusive policy in practice.

1.5 Context of the Study

In order to gain greater insight into this policy model, and how it is unfolding on the ground, I went into contexts of practice, namely various primary schools, and interviewed key actors in the implementation process. Site selection was influenced partly by pragmatic reasons, ease of access, but more so by my desire for sites to be 'ordinary', 'regular mainstream schools'. I chose one geographic area for commonality of population/demographics, but with schools which were diverse with regard to gender. The case study of the GAM was analysed in an all boys' school, an all girls' school and a mixed school. These three types of school were chosen as a purposive sample because allocation of GAM resources was based on these three categories, plus specific criteria was allocated for DEIS schools. Qualitative semi-structured interviews (individual) were conducted within these primary school contexts with principals, class teachers, learning support teachers and learning support/resource teachers. The context of the investigation and the overall process is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

I was conscious throughout the investigation that my own views had changed over the course of my career. At this moment in time, I admit that I believe that students who are supported by the GAM can, and should be, educated in inclusive, mainstream settings, i.e., students with HI disabilities and learning difficulties undiagnosed. It could be argued that the complexity of need that children with Low incidence (LI) disabilities may experience could call for a spectrum of provision to address a continuum of need, including special education in specialised settings within and beyond the mainstream setting. Therefore, this investigation

focused on students supported by the GAM, students with HI disabilities and learning support needs specifically. Therefore, I acknowledge that I hold a particular stance.

Due to my authorial stance, it is critical to present a brief autobiographical account of the 'I' in this research, which is outlined in greater depth in Chapter Three. While I now work as a teacher educator, I am particularly fashioned by my background as teacher:

> I started as a person intellectually fashioned by a particular idiom, acquired through my affiliation to a civilization that prevailed in the places where I had grown up, at this particular period in history.
>
> (Polanyi, 1958, p. 145)

I feel that having been a teacher allows me to respect the complexities of classroom life and the dilemmas teachers have when uniting policy with practice. Therefore, I felt that this research could have the potential to contribute to the evolution of policy in practice.

1.6 Autobiography

My passion for teaching, inclusive practice and special education has been shaped by what Lottie (1975) describes as my 'apprenticeship of observation' in life generally and during my career within the education system. I must acknowledge that particular life experiences most certainly played their part:

> The pungent odor was everywhere, a mix of bleach and human urine. The sound of screeching, crying and the mumbling of an unknown language rang through the large day room. Children moaned and yelled and rolled around large mats while nurses in white uniforms tried to grapple with them. Some children didn't seem able to move from the mat on the floor. I wondered why they didn't run out to play in the garden where I had spotted a swing.
>
> A little girl, my own age, at least she was my height, danced around my mother with great glee. She had stolen my mother's right hand. It wasn't surprising that she loved my mother, all my friends did. But what did make me anxious was that Mary's face was different to any other girl I knew. I remember rationalizing that she must have some type of illness. I hoped that her condition was not contagious because I didn't want my Mam to catch it. So I clung to my mother's body to protect her from Mary or was it to protect me from an experience that I had no understanding of? The unknown begets fear.

Figure 1.3 Vignette 3: A childhood memomory

I recall vividly this first encounter with children with SEN as described in Figure 1.3. My aunt, a Mercy nun, was Matron or Director of Care in a residential institution for children and young people with moderate to severe and profound GLD. What I could not have understood at the time was that my aunt held a philosophy of mainstreaming; if the young people were not accessing mainstream society then she ensured that the mainstream came in or she brought them out to the mainstream. Every opportunity for social engagement was utilised.

My 'sheltered' life had only introduced me to 'typically developing' children who were white and spoke my language. Crying and screaming meant that one was in severe pain or very frightened. Seeing so many children, who I perceived to be in pain or frightened, was deeply upsetting. Mary, a girl who looked about my age, was neither moaning nor crying, yet she caused me the greatest anxiety. Mary was different, she looked different. Nobody had explained to me that in many ways Mary was the same as me, a little older and that like me she loved music and dancing. I did not know that Mary had facial characteristics that were in keeping with Down syndrome.

This initial encounter with the boys and girls in the 'unit', which was governed by the Department of Health, had a profound impact on me as a child. Uncharacteristically, I did not speak for two days. There is no doubt that I was traumatised but I know now that the trauma was due to ignorance and lack of any prior knowledge or any explanation. Interestingly, I do not remember any subsequent explanations either. It seems that in the 1970s in Ireland some things were left unsaid and often, unquestioned.

With Sr. Carmel's inclusive philosophy, she consistently encouraged people to visit. 'Her children' were 'taken out' on trips regularly, which included visits to my home where we 'lived together'. I learned the significance of inclusion; all of us have a basic need and human right to live together in society. I celebrate that we have moved on from such an extreme medical model of the child who was 'cared for', predominantly by religious orders and/health care workers, to an acknowledgement of *the right* of all children to appropriate education as well as appropriate care. Much has been done in a young state over the past forty years.

Thomas Edison once said that the Educator is a person who makes hard things easier. I wanted to be a teacher from a young age and the decision was strongly influenced by optimistically feeling that I could make 'hard things easier' for those who seemed to learn

differently. In keeping with the literature regarding young teachers, I believed that I could make a real difference in the lives of children and their parents.

1.6.1 The 'I' as an Undergraduate

As an undergraduate, I recall visits to special schools and settings. While in the School for the Deaf, I remembered a girl from my primary classroom days crying because her brother had gone back to his Special School for the Deaf in Dublin. I did not understand then why he could not go to the Boys School with my brothers and stay with his family. When I visited a school for 'The Mild' I had no concept as to why these children were in a 'special school'. I did not understand why they did not attend a mainstream school with their siblings and neighbors.

During the Easter holidays of my final year as an undergraduate, I worked with a boy who had 'done badly' in his mock Intermediate Certificate. I must admit that I did not adopt any visual or kinesthetic approaches to my teaching or to his learning. I simply read the text books of subjects he liked but found difficult; Science, Geography, History. These readings I recorded for him on tape. This boy had no problem with the more applied subjects such as Woodwork and Metalwork. As it turned out, he also did well in the three subjects he listened to on his tape. Mark had difficulty with literacy, not with the conceptual content of these curricula. Years later I realized that this bright student probably had dyslexia. At the time, I was not aware of any *dys* or more importantly the educational implications of such a *dys* for student learning. Now I question if a label was even necessary. Small adaptations meant that this boy could be successful in school. These experiences, while in college, were meaningful. These were influential 'observational apprenticeships'.

1.6.2 The 'I' as Teacher

I was a classroom teacher for fifteen years. I realise, both from my experience, and research literature on primary schooling in Ireland (Conway, 2013; Kelly and Leavy, 2013; Sugrue, 1997), that there are complex, changing and conflicting sets of circumstances at play in primary classrooms. When I started teaching there was no withdrawal/ pull-out of students in the particular school; one might say, we all *pulled in and pulled together*. While 'pulling-in and pulling together' I realised that our 'advantaged school' had students with diverse needs, some of which were not being addressed due to our limited professional knowledge

and experience. Basically, I believed that we did not have school capacity to include all effectively. I actively pursued the quest to engage in continuing professional development (CPD) and to secure the appointment of a remedial teacher for the school, in conjunction with my Principal. The Principal was initially against seeking such a post, strongly articulating that *all* his teachers were *remedial* teachers as teaching the so-called 'hard to teach' was the real nature of teaching. His philosophical stance on the teacher is indeed valid and it was a commendable approach to his process of selecting staff. However, the reality was that we needed greater capacity/resources to address divergent, individual needs. I did the Remedial Certificate Course in Mary Immaculate College in 1989/90 and while I did not take up a position as a remedial teacher at the time, the process of undertaking the course made a huge difference to the school and to my teaching and understanding of teaching and learning. It caused me to reflect at a deeper level with regard to my *attitude* towards issues such as diversity and inclusion. This deconstruction, construction and reconstruction of attitude forced me to question my beliefs, values and my own stance within the field, what McDonnell (2003) refers to in his work as the *deep structures* that form school culture.

While my experience of *pulling in* and *pulling together* seemed to be insufficient in my early teaching, it was not surprising that new approaches were adopted. As the L/S teacher, many years later, the predominant model of support I embraced was that of withdrawing students from their classrooms to L/S/ Resource room, the separate setting. I never asked the boys, who were withdrawn for support, how they felt about being *pulled out* of their classes. I never questioned the impact of this practice on their sense of belonging to a community of learners, a feeling that Baroness Warnock (2005) states is necessary for inclusion, which is in keeping with the philosophical stance of Dewey. I considered including the voices of students in this study as I wanted to ask this question. However, I realised that there were serious ethical issues at stake here. I had no power to do anything with potential responses from the main stakeholders, the children. The focus therefore remained on teachers' narratives.

1.6.3 The 'I' as Researcher

In order to present the positioning of the 'I' in this current research, I readily admit that I am now questioning if there should be a return to *pulling in and pulling together*, which the literature describes as co-teaching. To me, however, pulling in and pulling together

means much more than teachers working collaboratively. It is about teachers, parents and multidisciplinary teams collaborating together to use resources efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of all students. It is about the 'village rearing the child'. Admittedly, such a view highlights that my approach to matching needs to resources in inclusive settings has come full-circle over my career to date.

As a researcher who was a teacher, I firmly believe that it is critical that the voices of practitioners be heard in the construction of this policy/practice analysis. I am writing this thesis as an educational researcher and not as a teacher, which is also a critical distinction. But my apprenticeship years provide me with a fine-tuned listening ear to the teacher voice. By grounding the research in the multiple realities of teachers' work, as they live out these dilemmas in complex classrooms, some situated certainty may be restored to an important and evolving educational process.

1.7 Theoretical Framing

Trying to categorise all educational and psychological research into a few paradigms is an impossible task as Mertens (2005) admits, the lines between them are not altogether clear in practice. However, framing the thesis appropriately was crucial. It was important to have a particular world-view which began with deconstruction, to make the sometimes invisible visible. This section provides a brief overview of the theoretical framework adopted for this research process, which will be elucidated in greater depth in Chapter Two and Three. *Policy analysis* is the analysis of complex social issues, from 'an interest in the workings of the state to a concern with contexts of practice and the distributional outcomes of policy' (Ball, (2006, p. 43). Therefore, this study lives within two worlds of research, that of educational and sociological. It adopts a post-structural approach to policy analysis in relation to the GAM to support inclusion in mainstream primary schools.

1.7.1 Post-structuralism and Special Education

This study embraces a post-structural approach to analysis. Critical of positivist approaches, this study adopts a particular interest in the language associated with special education. It sets out to deconstruct language, ideas and practices associated with disabilities,

particularly those associated with HI disabilities, which have direct implications for the funding model, the GAM. The thesis argues that terms such as 'the norm' and 'disability' need not be antithetical but may be seen as concordant in the sense of being linked with respect (Farrell, 2012). Adapting aspects of 'deconstruction' (Derrida, 1967, 1997; Skrtic, 1991, 1991a, 1995, 2004), my argument is that the acceptance of concepts such as mild 'disability' or 'HI disabilities' has a negative effect on the development of 'truly inclusive schools', the stated aim of the GAM (Circular 02/05, DES 2005). The concept of 'disability' assumes identification, labelling and the creation of 'otherisms' resulting in segregation rather than inclusion. It is the 'dis' that separates. This post-structural research regards HI disabilities as a social construct that can and should be challenged. Within a discussion of intolerance, Myers and Speight (1994), cited in Abreau and Peloquin (2004), argue that societal *-isms* can emerge from a perception of difference and that 'such –'isms' surface in a hierarchical way that grasps difference as *lesser*. Many such –isms exist in daily discourse: favouritism, chauvinism, ethnocentrism, ageism, and racism. For the purpose of this thesis, these constructions are referred to as *other-isms* rather than use the –ism abstraction. Reflecting Abreau and Peloquin's (2004) construction of other-ism, the interpersonal message conveyed through any other-ism might be this: 'You are not at all like me. You are quite other than me. Your otherness separates us' (p. 354).

Tomlinson (1995) consistently points out that 'even in democracies, powerful social groups attempt to control and dominate weaker social groups and treat them differentially and unequally' (p. 122). Significantly, one of the key themes that emerged from this study of the GAM, which will be presented and discussed in Chapter Four, is the overrepresentation of students from Lower Socio Economic Status (LSES) backgrounds in special education placement. The overrepresentation of minority groupings has been well documented in the literature (Artiles, et a., 2011; Valencia, 2010) but what has often been absent from such research findings are theories to explain the structure and agency that operates to produce such a phenomenon. Consistent with the overarching sociocultural framing of this study, *agency* is defined as 'the socioculturally mediated capacity to act' (Ahern, 2001, p. 12). By contrast, structure is the recurrent patterned arrangements or factors of influence, such as social class, religion, gender, ethnicity, customs, culture, legislation, policy, which direct or constrain the choices for action available. From a sociocultural perspective, agency is a social act that does not take place in a vacuum. Thus teachers, for example, can speak from an 'I'

perspective and from a 'we' perspective (van Lier, 2008). This research paid particular attention to the collapse of dichotomies often evidenced in research and society and research generally, i.e., structure/agency; macro/micro; policy/practice; constraint/action; global/local without reducing one to the other (see Section 2.2.4 for fuller account).

Since the problems we face are not fixed and static, neither should be our confrontation of these problems. Critical thought and action depends on our ability to overcome isolating forces through the development of deliberative habits of inquiry and interaction. Viewing reality construction as a site of contention opens up the space for deconstructive and polemical approaches to the making and remaking of reality as a political act. Heavily motivated by the post-structuralist approach to analysis of Thomas Skrtic (1991a; 1991; b; 1995), who is influenced by Derrida and Foucault, I adopted critical pragmatism as a mode of enquiry.

1.7.1.1 Critical Pragmatism as a Mode of Enquiry

Critical pragmatism, sometimes referred to as neo-pragmatism, is a philosophical term that emerged in the 1960s. It reintroduced many concepts from pragmatism. In this study critical pragmatism refers to a post-structural version of pragmatism developed by Richard Rorty, drawing inspiration from John Dewey and William James. This form of pragmatism is also heavily influenced by critical theorists, namely Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Many contemporary critical pragmatists emphasise the poly vocality of power, pluralism, inclusiveness and the incomplete, partial, and contingent nature of reality. Critical pragmatists value involvement and participation and, therefore, embrace an understanding of multiple realities as the tool for a participatory orientation toward praxis and change. As Denzin and Lincoln (2000) discuss, a critical pragmatist view of cultural realities becomes a politics of resistance and possibility and a moral call for everyone to intervene in public life and interrupt the uncontested flow of inequality. Studies informed by critical pragmatism pay close attention to the components of generic social processes of inequality reproduction within institutions such as stigmatization, "othering," marginalization, alienating emotional labor, subordination, the formation of symbolic boundaries, the selective transmission of cultural and social capital, the regulation of discourse, the scripting of mass events, and more.

Within critical pragmatism, no principles of truth are absolute; no realities transcend the local conditions under which they emerge. Experience and interaction are the sites where knowledge takes shape, and dialogue is the process through which consensus is achieved. The critical salience of pragmatism is grounded in the key insight that the greatest obstacles to meaningful democracy are not fixed institutional or economic arrangements; rather, they are the fluid and discursively constructed forces that isolate and preclude the generation of social intelligence. In owing its existence to the framework provided by Marxism, what most versions of critical theory miss, even those versions which are most appreciative of pragmatism, according to Kadlec (2006) is that fixed principles can take us only so far in developing critical capacities. They can help us identify some of the forces of subjugation and exclusion that emerge in formal structures but because they rely on fixed principles they cannot help us really grapple with the complexity of those relations and develop the kind of creativity that might help us meaningfully challenge and transform those relations in unexpected ways. As a result, fixed principles are unfortunately best suited to the generation of unnecessarily rigid views of the workings of power. The central point here is that 'much is missed when we impose artificial arrests on a world in flux, as not only does this impede our ability to perceive deeper and more nuanced relations of power that constrain and repress, this also stunts our ability to perceive and cultivate new possibilities for change' (Kadlec, 2007, p.23). The fundamental tenet of critical pragmatism is that genuinely critical reflection is not merely about identifying structural obstacles to democracy but is also about identifying new opportunities to confront and dismantle the obstacle and to reconstruct for democracy. Cultivating both the taste for and ability to identify developing patterns, discern connections between seemingly disparate forces, and appreciate the fluidity of signs and symbols in such dynamic work is what is required to tap into the democratic potential of lived experience. Post-structural theories and a critical pragmatic approach to methodology were usefully applied to frame and support this policy analysis (see Sections 2.2 and 3.4 for a fuller account).

1.7.2 Policy Analysis

The GAM was introduced by the DES (2005) in order to meet the needs of students with HI disabilities and learning difficulties without recourse to individual assessment and diagnosis to secure such resourcing as was necessary, heretofore. The research set out to

unearth the assumptions and definitions embedded within the policy document, to deconstruct central concepts, to analyse how those who implement policy in primary schools understand it and respond to it, and to investigate its effects on students and their education McSpadden McNeil and Copolla (2006). This analysis is concerned with the theoretical and conceptual aspects of policy making and implementation and is related to the wider aspects of politics, power and influence.

Education policy, generally, sets out to address the social construction of a 'problem' a 'dilemma' or 'issue'. In this case, policy relates to how best to support the inclusion of children with High Incidence (HI) disabilities and learning difficulties in primary schools under a GAM of teaching resources. Policies that respond to such resourcing issues do not emerge in a vacuum, but reflect compromises between competing interests and by their nature are dilemmatic, growing out of dilemmas, and subsequently leading to further potential dilemmas for those living within the context of practice (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992; Ball, 1994). Conceptually, the thesis is strongly framed within the continuous policy cycle (Ball, 1994).

The 'policy cycle' has provided a framework to analyse policy in-depth internationally. The concept of the 'cycle' was developed by Stephen Ball, Richard Bowe and Anne Gold (Bowe, et al., 1992). Initially the concept referred to three contexts in which policy lives. Ball (1994) later extended this concept to include two additional contexts, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two. The concept of the policy cycle relates to where and how policy is made and remade in different contexts. At the heart of the concept lies the *structure/agency* debate. Analysis adopting this framework examines the extent to which the state determines the policy making process and as a consequence, the opportunity for participation by other actors, in particular, those key stakeholders in the implementation phase to interpret, and more importantly, to reinterpret the policy text in practice. It may seem that the evaluation of a policy model is straightforward. It could be argued that the process should include document compliance by those involved in the implementation practice and student outcomes measured by improvements in achievement and participation levels overall. However, good and valuable analysis needs to recognise that when policy is implemented on the ground, things can become complex in the activity of lived experience (McSpadden McNeil and Coppola, 2006). This study recognised that schools are complex

arenas, filled with humans who interact, and are situated within the dynamics of particular cultures and communities, their histories and within larger bureaucracies.

Therefore, this study argues that policy does not impact on a static world when it is implemented in the context of practice. To assume that a policy 'handed down' from the DES has 'a linear impact on a static organisation is to miss the real story of impact on complex and messy organizations and on a variety of individuals' (McSpadden McNeil and Coppola 2006, p. 683). Such assumptions were commonly found by McSpadden McNeil and Coppola (2006) in their policy research studies and they list them as follows:

1. Assumption: Policy is the rational governing of schools
2. Assumption: Indicators are objective measures
3. Assumption: Policies can be written and implemented in ways that are technically universal and therefore culturally neutral
4. Assumption: Educational policies have nothing to do with power; they are always constructed to shape the work of schools with the best interests of the children in mind.

Such *functionalist assumptions* are deconstructed in this study. It illustrates how the actors in the context of practice receive policy, interpret and reinterpret it. School management and teachers, the main actors in the implementation process, live in the context of practice (Bowe, et al., 1992). They can interpret definitions, guidelines and regulations in differing ways and through their *agency*, albeit constrained by structures, such as policy texts and institutions, they can *remake* the policy intention and text in practice.

The study presents and analyses evidence that suggest that recent legislation (Education Act 1998; the EPSEN Act 2004) and the GAM policy (DES, Circular 02/05), while espousing the development of inclusive education; have created a 'new quilt of inclusive and exclusive policies and practices' (Tisdall and Ridell 2006). Therefore, whilst transformative legislation and policy exists, segregated practices remain as a result of such deeply held assumptions held by teachers that influence conceptualisation of dis/ability, discourse and practice. The study will argue that because these assumptions are so deeply and somewhat unconsciously held, the resulting conceptualizations, discourse and practice are resilient to change. The interplay between structure and agency reinforces the power of professional groups to include and to exclude students. Therefore, it is critical to analyse the

inner perceptions of these key actors, to listen to the voices articulating the processes within the context of practice to really unveil the impact of policy on students within the policy *context of outcome* in order to inform a context of 'reframed' political strategy. Otherwise, the study argues, restructuring policies do not of themselves effect improvement but serve to nurture the status quo.

The study, therefore, builds on Ball's concept of the policy cycle (1994) in relation to the GAM of teaching resources to support inclusive education in mainstream primary schools in Ireland by adopting critical pragmatism. Critical pragmatism will be discussed in detail in Chapters Two (Section 2.2) and Three (Section 3.4). However, it is important to note at this point that it is accepted within this paradigm, that all assumptions, personal and otherwise, require reflection, evaluation and reappraisal. With regard to education policy, critical pragmatism is both a way to continually engage in reflective practice, to evaluate and reappraise what a social profession does (critical practice) and a method to evaluate and reappraise *how* it carries out appraisal of its practice (critical discourse). Therefore, it lends itself to post-structural mode of deconstruction and extends it by its consistent emphasis on *reconstruction*. Critical pragmatism is a philosophy that seeks change and is emancipatory, which is critical to policy analysis for reform.

1.8 The Significance of this Research

I had a valid and timely puzzle, which warranted investigation. By adopting a particular theoretical framework it is hoped that methodologically and conceptually the study represents a significant contribution to the field of education policy. The study uncovers the intersectionality between social class and placement in special education. Data expose the deficit discourse of teachers, which highlights the resilience of the psycho-medical perspective of students and their families, a form of discourse that 'pathologises' people from a LSES grouping. While the intersection of social class and education has been widely discussed in research literature (Artiles, 2011; Ball et al., 2012; Reay, 2010), the study argues that insufficient attention has been paid to the implications of social class for inclusive practice in non-designated mainstream schools. The study highlights that while policy may claim to be transformative, practices remain resistant to change as a result of discourse and

action that are grounded in deficit assumptions that are resilient to change (Skrtic, 1991a), which reinforce the power of professional groups. The study explores how the social construct of the 'norm' becomes discriminatory through the process of special education referral and classification, which, in turn results in disproportionality in special education. In summary, this thesis is suggesting that careful analysis of social processes that generate and define student dis/ability is required in order to resource and support children in inclusive education equitably.

1.9 Timeline

Figure 1.4 below provides an overall picture of the research process. It was significant that the research be completed before the introduction of the revision to GAM. While the data acknowledges many positives of the GAM, it also highlights that the model is not without its flaws, according to those implementing the model in practice.

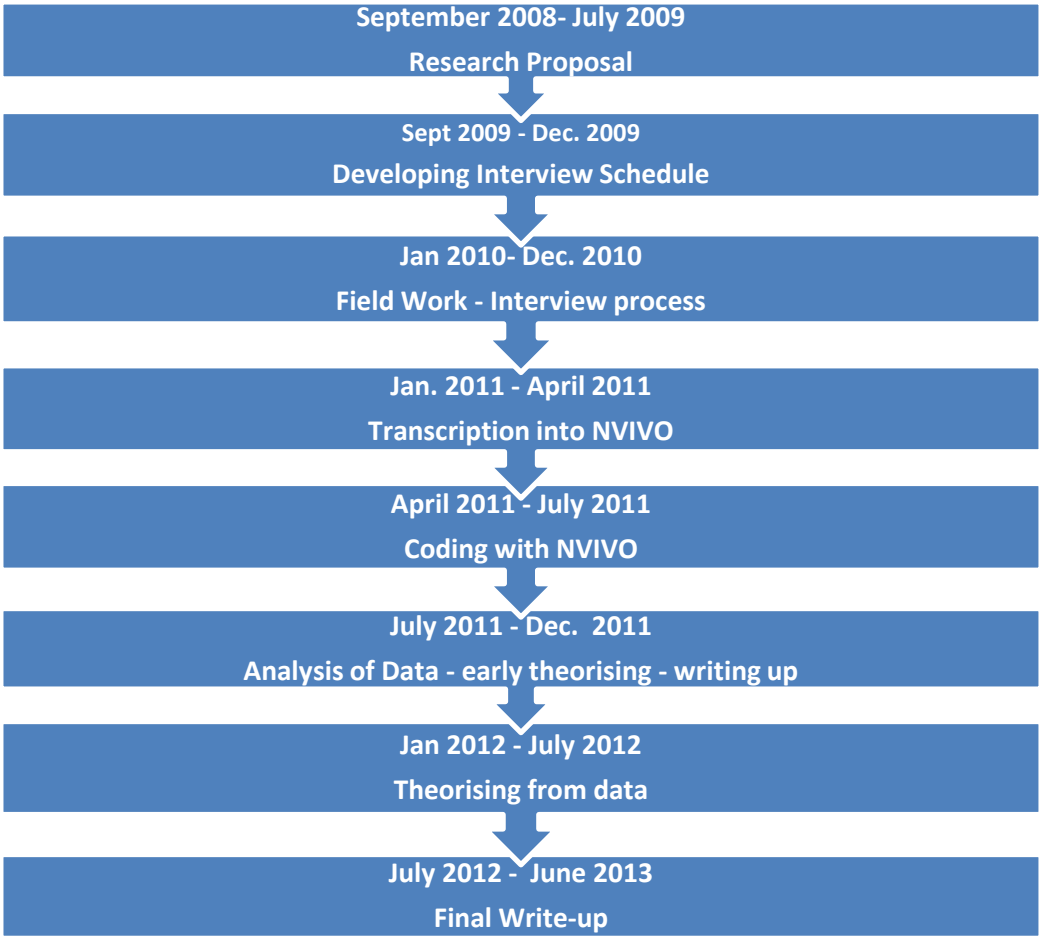


Figure 1.4 Timeline of research study

The study is the culmination of five years research unearthing the inclusiveness of inclusive schools under inclusive education policy at this moment in time.

1.10 Overview of the Thesis

The research set out initially to analyse and critique the inclusive education policy document that introduced the workings of the GAM, to examine the grounding assumptions that influence the text, discourse and action (Ball, 2003) within the framework for analysis of the Policy Cycle (Bowe, et al., 1992; Ball, 1994; Cochran-Smith, 2013).Chapter One has provided an introduction and overall context for the research. It presented the 'I', who is the

dominant research tool, in a comprehensive and honest manner. The chapter provided a rationale for the current research. It specified the questions that were investigated during the process and briefly foreshadowed the theoretical framework informing data analysis in light of the research questions posed in the study.

Chapter Two presents, in more detail, the theoretical framework, which sets a context for understanding the emerging themes from the data. It describes the context of influence and text production of Circular 02/05, which introduced the GAM. The chapter critically analyses and deconstructs the salient theories associated with special and inclusive education and also, the sociology of education.

Chapter Three identifies the methodology, which was used in the research process to effectively gather data to construct the reality of inclusion at the coalface. The three research sites are presented in the chapter. This section provides descriptions of the mainstream primary schools and the participants of the study. In keeping with a post-structural approach and a critical pragmatic paradigm to investigation, which seeks to construct knowledge from the participants, the methodology is predominantly qualitative but includes quantitative data to triangulate key findings.

Chapter Four presents data under warranted claims, which are interlinked with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter Two. This chapter provides evidence of the constructs being grounded in the data. Chapter Five is the conclusion. It provides a summary of the research, its theoretical implications and contributions to the field.

As the principle research instrument in this policy analysis, I am conscious to remind readers that

> We are all in some ways involved in this process of influencing and being influenced by people and events, which is a process of making history. Academic study in this area ought to start from a point of discovering and articulating our own place within the weave of ideas that make up policy and its realization in people's lives.
>
> (Clough, 2000, p. 6)

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter illustrated that inclusive education is central to contemporary discourse internationally reflecting society's commitment to inclusion. The legal frameworks influencing inclusive education, particularly in Europe and the USA, were outlined. Mittler (2000) highlights 'that we no longer need to weigh the evidence for and against something most countries have decided to do anyway' (p. vii), which has also been articulated by Shevlin et al. (2008) in Ireland. The GAM was introduced in Ireland to remedy what was viewed by many as the negative impact psychologically diagnosing students perceived under a psycho-medical model as having *deficits within.* It represented a shift in perspective from labeling the individual student to secure entitlement to resource teaching hours. However, the debate over the implications of the GAM as an organizational model to facilitate inclusive practices is ongoing and does not present an uncontested solution.

This study suggests that translating a structural reform into change that is meaningful for students is a complex endeavour. This research is not about highlighting a superior or preferable approach but rather about revealing current text, discourse and actions at a moment in time. It is about problematizing and deconstructing in order to unpack that which influences policy process behaviours. This chapter set out to provide a context for the work and a rationale for the research. Certain puzzlements presented from my work in the field that needed to be unpacked. A rationale for undertaking the research was provided and reasons for the adoption of a particular theoretical framework and a critical pragmatic paradigm was presented.

The study acknowledges the importance of policy analysis which explicitly links the 'bigger worlds' of global and national policy contexts to the 'smaller worlds' of policies and practices within schools and classrooms. It is a glo-na-cal heuristic approach (Marginson Rhoades, 2002). Motivated by post-structural theorists such as Skrtic, I adopted critical pragmatism as a mode of enquiry under the umbrella of post-structuralism. The research paid particular attention to the collapse of dichotomies often evidenced in policy research and society generally i.e., macro/micro; policy/ practice; structure/agency; constraint/action; global/local, without reducing one to the other. The conceptual framework of policy as cycle provided such affordance. The analysis in this research consistently makes visible the constraint and agency of those living in each of the contexts while focusing in particular on

the context of practice. Habitus, capitals and fields are key Bourdieuian theoretical concepts that have been expanded in this study because the concepts are linked directly to constraint/agency in the varying contexts of the policy cycle. I consistently analysed who has agency, whose knowledge counts; what knowledge is valued and therefore which knowledge is valuable, transmitting cultural and human capital to those who can avail of it/ benefit from it. Knowledge becomes power in the Foucauldian sense, while those who are not included are constructed as 'other' and cannot avail of such capital and thus the status quo remains. Studies informed by critical pragmatism pay close attention to the social processes of inequality reproduction within institutions, this process of 'othering'. Therefore, there was coherence between the paradigm and the conceptual framework, they were completely interwoven, which was really important. Analysis of the datasets, guided by the paradigm and the conceptual framework revealed a number of significant themes.

In keeping with the perspectives of Dewey, the work of Skrtic, and other post-structural theorists, the current thesis emphasises the democratic principles of voice, participation, and inclusion. By highlighting these democratic themes and analysing levels of constraint and agency held within the differing contexts of the policy cycle in the study, it is hoped to show special education professionals, advocates, and consumers that inclusion is far more than a new service delivery model. In its broadest sense, inclusion is the new cultural logic of postmodernity.

In summary, the study is an example of researchers and practitioners working together as translators of current inclusive educational policy cycle for the wider community and it may suggest directions for the context of 'reframed' political/policy strategy, which will be discussed in-depth in Chapters Four and Five.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

> … policy enactment involves creative processes of interpretation and contextualisation – that is, the translation of texts into action and the abstractions of policy ideas into contextualised practices – this process involves 'interpretations of interpretations' (Rizvi and Kermis, 1987), although the degree of play or freedom for interpretation varies from policy to policy in relation to the apparatuses of power within which they are set and within the constraints and possibilities of context…
>
> (Ball et al., 2012, p.3)

2.1 Introduction

The literature on policy analysis within the disability arena, though growing, is still relatively new due to the nature of change within special education. Although many will argue that there has been a 'policy revolution' in the area of special education, globally and domestically, this has not necessarily been followed by an 'implementation revolution'. The initial reliance on policy reform to drive changes in practice was originally seen as desirable. Unfortunately, these very policies are being seen as *barriers* to achieving the spirit of the law (Skrtic, 1991; Tomlinson, 2012; Will 1986). In agreement, Day (2007, p.21) states that 'change as a result of research, policy and legislation can be slow and is often resisted'. This is because discourses affect efforts to change schools. The sense of 'how things are done around here' is strong in schools, and this discourse makes change especially difficult (Toll, 2002). McSpadden McNeil and Coppola (2006) agree emphasising that agency at a localised level is powerful. Depending on policy to change practice has a long history of failure. For example, in McLaughlin's (1990) reanalysis of the RAND Change Agent Study (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978), two major findings were that policy cannot change practice easily and policy cannot mandate what matters.

There is a taken for granted understanding of 'policy' in much of the literature on education policy and indeed special/inclusive education policy. It is viewed as an attempt to solve a problem, an issue or a dilemma. This solving of the problem has led to the 'policy revolution' and is often seen as the 'closed preserve of the formal government apparatus of policy making' (Ozga, 2000, p.42). Ball et al. (2012) warn that if policy is only seen in these terms, 'then all the other moments in the processes of policy and policy enactments that go on in and around the schools are marginalised or go unrecognised' (p.2).

In keeping with Ozga (2000), this thesis sets out to remove policy from its 'pedestal', and make it accessible to the wider community:

> … I am arguing - implicitly and explicitly - that policy is to be found everywhere in education, and not just at the level of central government, and that there is virtue in engaging with policy in this way, because it contributes to a democratic project in education.
>
> (Ozga, 2000, p. 2)

The current study acknowledges the importance of policy analysis which explicitly links the 'bigger picture' of global and national policy contexts to the 'smaller pictures' of policies and practices within schools and classrooms. The study is particularly concerned with the 'jumbled, messy, contested, creative and mundane social interactions… the policy activity of negations and coalitions building that somehow links text to practice' (Ball et al., 2012, p. 2). The emphasis of this research is on the processes of translation and contextualisation involved in the realisation or enactment of policy in the 'small worlds' (Ball, 1998) of local settings. However, it does consider the wider contexts of policy and the common elements in contemporary, international inclusive education policy. While Ball's (1998) paper on *Big Policies/Small Worlds* focuses on the globalisation and the marketization of education and its implication for education policy in the small world of schools, the focus of this study is a converse approach, focusing on 'small worlds' where 'big polices' are enacted.

Several factors are responsible for the wide variety of practices internationally to realise inclusive education policy. A key factor, highlighted by the literature, is the way in which inclusion is resourced (Flatman Watson, 2009; Meijer, 1999; 2003). Therefore, this research contributes to the international field of research because the investigation focuses on a nationally driven general allocation model to resource inclusive education. There is no published analysis of the GAM policy in Ireland. However, while there is a dearth of evidence generally relating to special /inclusive education policy, as highlighted in Chapter One, it must be acknowledged that recent research commissioned by the NCSE contributed significantly to the literature reviewed for this chapter.

The organisation of the literature, Rose et al. (2009; 2010) advise, is an essential process that enables the researcher to read broadly while maintaining a focus on the specific research focus and the questions that must be addressed in the investigation. Overall, the study concerned itself with policy. Therefore, policy analysis provided the initial basis for investigating the literature. The search process for the literature review began using the

online database Academic Search Premier, standard databases such as ERIC, BEI, EBSCO, Ingentia and the Web of Science using the words 'education policy', 'inclusive education policy', 'special education', 'funding models' 'perspectives on disability', which revealed the majority of the research in this field. While there was significant evidence of the use of Ball's conceptual theories in education policy generally, there was little evidence of the framework being employed to examine special/inclusive education policy. Therefore, the detailed and inductive process of reviewing the literature informed an understanding of policy as cycle (Ball, 2004). Table 2.1 provides an overview of the key literature reviewed.

Table 2.1 Overview of key literature reviewed for the research

Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992; Ball, 186,1990, 1994, 1997, 1998,2003, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012; Cochran-Smith, 2012.	**Policy as Cycle**
Skrtic (1987;1991; 1995; 2005) Clough and Corbett, 2000; Hehir 2009; Thomas and Loxley 2007; NCSE Reports (Winter and O'Raw, 2010); Desforges and Lindsay, 2011; Banks and McCoy, 2011; Rose et al. 2010, 2012) EADSNE Reports: Meijer 1999, 2003, 2009)	**Context of Influence** Inclusion debate: the ethics and rights discourse; Theories of Special Education; Inclusive Education Discourse; Paradigms for understanding Financing of Special Education – European Studies
Ball (1994.....); Skirtic (1987 ...); Slee (2001); Bourdieu, 1978; Foucault; Norwich (2008); Rose et al. (2010) Shevlin, et al.,(2008).....; GAM: Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005)	**Context of Text Production/Practice** 'Policies are viewed...as instruments of power/knowledge relations through which the identities and experiences of children with SEN are constructed' (Allan, Brown and Riddell, 1998, p. 30) Dilemmas for inclusive Education: Construction of difference/Management of difference Needs/Resource Match Dilemma
Artiles et al.2011; Anyon, 2009; McDermott, 2002; Hall 2008; Hatt, 2012; Tomlinson (1982); Keogh and Whyte (2008); Valencia (1999, 2010); Benjamin (2002)	**Context of Practice/ Context of Outcome** Social Construction of dis/ability Disproportionality of LSES students in special education. Deficit thinking School hierarchies/student subordination
Bourdieu(1978.....) Lareau (2000; 2002)	**Context of Practice/ Context of Outcome** Social tools: habitus; 'field'; i.e., Teachers/parents believing in the game thus they play it Social Capital: Home Advantage; parents get to know and to influence the game in the interests of their child Children whose parents do not have such capital are at a disadvantage. Home/School discontinuity
Skrtic (1991....) Ball (1994.....)	**Context of Political Strategy (Reframed)** New Paradigm for understanding is required, a move away from psychometrical to a more ecological, sociocultructural construct and management of disability Adhocracy to meet the dilemmatic nature of special/inclusive education

Figure 2.1 below illustrates the fundamental themes, which emerged from an inductive and deductive search of the research literature.

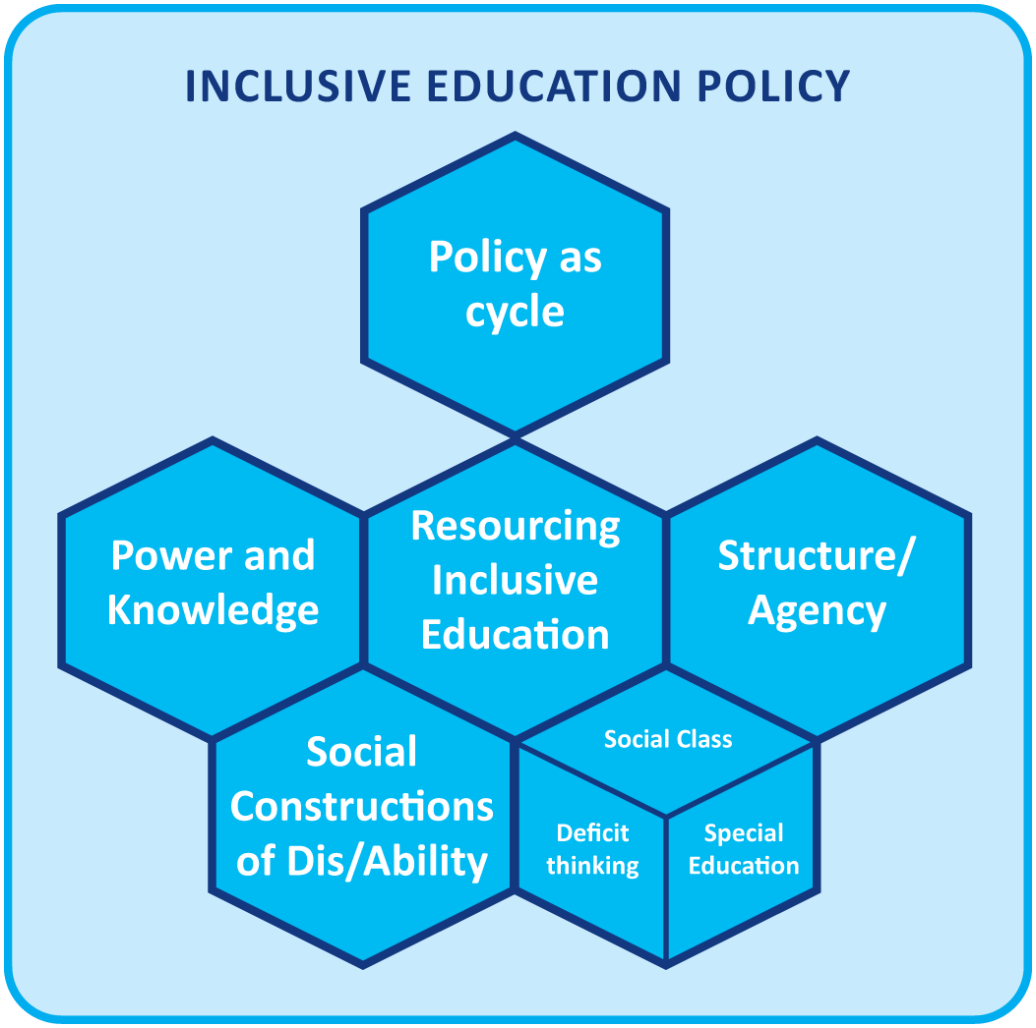


Figure 2.1 Themes emerging from the Literature Review

McSpadden McNeil and Copolla (2006) concur with the advice of Ozga (2000) and Ball (1994; 2003; 2006) and Ball et al, (2012), highlighting that because educational practice is highly complex '…an analysis of the impact of policy on practice must itself be complex, capable of drawing on more than one theoretical framework, employing multiple methodologies' (Ball et al., p. 681). They state that 'good policy impact studies should encompass not only the official versions and intended impacts but also unofficial versions that take into account unequal power relations, and cultural interpretation' (p. 681). The analysis adopted for this study requires the researcher to unpack the assumptions and definitions embedded within the policy and to consider how those who receive and enact the

policy in schools understand it and respond to it. McSpadden McNeil's (2006) highlight that the context in which policy is devised and produced can be centralised, 'a small group with the 'knowledge', having engaged in little or no consultation with those who participate in its implementation' (p. 683), with the result that 'expert knowledge residing in the target organisation or people is not incorporated into the making of the policy or into thinking through its possible implications' (p. 683). This lack of consultation can often lead to a resistance on the part of those who must participate in the implementation of the policy (Coolahan, 2012; Gomez, 2010). As Ball et al. (2012) highlight that policy is done by and done to teachers; they are actors and subjects, subject to and objects of policy. Ball and his colleagues assert that policy is written onto bodies who have agency albeit that they are somewhat constrained by the written policy. Moreover, they suggest that 'policy is not done at one point in time' (Ball et al., 2012, p.3). Similarly, Kamler and Thompson (2006, p. 11) remind us that 'knowledge is always constructed by language, and by the historical circumstances and specific environment in which it arises'.

In order to understand the socio-historical context, which is necessary for any policy analysis, this chapter provides a brief account of the historical context that led to the introduction of the GAM as a resourcing model to support the inclusion of the majority of children with SEN and learning difficulties in Ireland. The study recognises that policy is a process of becoming, influenced by what went before, changing from the outside in, changing within and changing from the inside out. The argument is that such a view can usefully inform policy evolution in the 'policy revolution'. The approach could then lead to an 'implementation revolution' that will not present as a *barrier* but alternatively, will have the potential to lead to dramatic and more positive change and improved student outcomes.

In an effort to embrace a more positive theoretical trajectory, the present chapter discusses the continuous policy cycle (Bowe, et al., 1992; Ball, 1994) as the conceptual framework within which the GAM is analysed in order to reach greater understanding of it as a process. Such a framework considers the macro, meso and micro levels in relation to the structure/agency debates, highlighting the need for an integrated conceptualisation that links all levels of analysis. In keeping with a critical pragmatic paradigm and a post-structural approach to research, the chapter continues with *a deconstruction* of some of the big ideas in the field of special/inclusive education nationally and internationally as they relate to the

contexts of the GAM policy. Finally, a trajectory towards the reconstruction of special/inclusive education is discussed.

2.2 Establishing the Theoretical Framework

Modern social theorizing is foundational; it presupposes that theory reflects reality and that there is one truth (Bernstein, 1983). As such, it regards knowledge or truth as a monologue, a single paradigmatic, theoretical, or disciplinary perspective (Skrtic and Sailor (1996). Skrtic and Sailor (1996) describe it as a one track conversation. Conversely, post-structuralism is based on the anti-foundational (perspectives and relativist) view that all cognitive representations of the world are historically and linguistically mediated and constructed and that, as such, there are no independent criteria for adjudicating among theoretical claims (Best & Kellner, 1991; Skrtic and Sailor, 1996). An anti-foundational, post structural view means that theories, at best, provide partial perspectives on their objects and, moreover, that there is no cognitively certain way to establish a particular paradigm, theory, or discipline as the ultimate frame of reference for interpreting (and thus acting upon) the social world (Bernstein, 1983, 1991; Ricoeur, 1981; Rorty, 1979, 1991). It purports that there is no single truth.

Such an approach relates directly to pragmatism, proposing a radically inclusive, participatory form of social discourse in which all theoretical perspectives are accepted or rejected on the basis of their contribution to the realization of democratic ideals, rather than whether they are true in a foundational sense (Bernstein, 1991; Davidson, 1984; Rorty, 1989).

2.2.1 Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a method of deconstructing, constructing and reconstructing 'social knowledge, practices, discourses, and institutions, under conditions of cognitive uncertainty' (Skrtic and Sailor, 1996, p. 273). While the goal of modern social enquiry may be to justify social practices by revealing that they are based on a true representation of the social world, the objective of pragmatism is to *reconstruct* social practices and institutions by reconciling them with moral ideals (Bernstein, 1971; 1991; Rorty, 1982, 1989, 1991; Skrtic, 1991; Skrtic and Sailor, 1996). In line with Dewey, Skrtic and Sailor (1996) maintain that such

reconstruction is a way to reframe problems in new theoretical languages on a journey towards positive change. The manner in which we make these decisions towards change can take one of two forms of pragmatism:

1. Naïve Pragmatism, or
2. Critical Pragmatism.

Naïve pragmatism is premised on unreflective acceptance of the world. It values functional efficacy. It accepts the explicit and implicit assumptions behind social discourse and actions. Naïve pragmatism 'is socially reproductive, instrumentally and functionally reproducing accepted meanings and conventional organisations, institutions, and ways of doing things for good or ill' (Cherryholmes, 1988, p.151). Professional practices and professional discourses are shaped by what some describe as *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1978), historically situated presuppositions that shape and give meaning to thoughts, actions and language (Foucault, 1972; Kuhn, 1970, Skrtic, 1987, 1991; Skrtic and Sailor, 1996). These suppositions are grounded in unquestioned assumptions that are reflected in values, beliefs, interests and interpretations contained in the knowledge tradition or *habitus* of the professions and are often unconsciously held (Bourdieu, 1978). Skrtic (1991) refers to this *unquestioned habitus* as a type of naïve pragmatism held by a particular social group that influence action significantly with implications for a *functionalist perspective* of the world.

Functionalism views the individual as the passive product of the society. Social organizations and actions are to be understood in terms of functions they perform for society. Functionalists see the fulfillment of the functions of organizations and the actions of its members as a means to ensuring continuity and stability, the status quo. Skrtic (1991) argues that the functionalist worldview institutionalizes 'the mutually reinforcing theories of organisational rationality and human pathology in society and in education' (p. 152). Furthermore, Skrtic writes:

> Given the assumptions and values of functionalist education, we can understand special education as a more extreme version of functionalist education, more extreme both in an objectivist and microscopic sense. As such, the field's guiding theories of human pathology and organized rationality yield an approach to diagnosis and instruction premised on diagnostic-prescriptive teaching and behavioristic theory.
>
> (Skrtic, 1991a, p. 105)

Such functionalist education is embedded in psycho-medical perspectives without consideration of the impact of other social and environmental factors (Deforges and Lindsay, 2010).

Functionalism presupposes that social reality is objective, inherently orderly, and traditional, and thus that social and human problems are pathological (Foucault, 1954/1976). Ball (1986) describes functionalism as taking its primary focus as the whole society and the maintenance of social integration. He identifies the successful continuance of the society with the successful internalization of basic norms and values in individual personalities and the development of particular social organizations like the church, the family, the education system, which operate to achieve this socialization process:

> Individuals learn to behave according to the social position that they will take up in the society, behavior is constrained and formed according to established expectations
>
> (Ball, 1986, p. 8)

Such established 'expectations' relate to naïve pragmatism.

Critical pragmatism, on the other hand, problematizes these assumptions that form expectations. Critical pragmatism is what results when a sense of crises is brought to our choices and when it is accepted that all assumptions, personal and otherwise, require reflection, evaluation and reappraisal (Cherryholmes, 1988). Critical pragmatism, when it is applied to teaching, is both a way to continually engage in reflective practice, to evaluate and reappraise practice and a method to evaluate and reappraise how it carries out appraisal of its practice (critical discourse). Critical pragmatism is not about seeking a 'monological truth', it is not about certainty or objective knowledge. Conversely, the 'goal of critical pragmatism is education, or self-formation; it is a pedagogical process of remaking ourselves as we think, act, write, read and talk more about ourselves and our practices and discourses' (Skrtic, 1991, p.29). Critical pragmatism is about continually searching for 'a new and more interesting way of expressing ourselves, and thus of coping with the world. From an educational …point of view, the way things are said is more important than the possession of truths' (p. 29).

As a post-structuralist, Skrtic (1991; 1995) embraces Derrida's (1982) method of *deconstruction* to reveal implicit contradictions in special education, i.e. special education

demands flexibility of thought and action, or adhocracy, (significant levels of agency on the part of individuals and institutions) but is positioned in a bureau-crating setting (is constrained within inflexible structures). Conceptually, Skrtic notes that adhocracy and bureaucracy are incompatible, they are a contradiction in terms. Therefore, his position holds that there has to be a new way of coping with an emerging world, there needs to be radical organisational and cultural change to meet increasing diversity. In developing his theory, Skrtic adopted critical pragmatism in two ways:

1. As a method of inquiry
2. As a recommendation for a mode of professional practice and discourse in the field of education

Thomas and Loxley (2007) in their seminal text, remind their readers of the significance of engaging in a critical pragmatic way to problematise key concepts in the field. They suggest that the very words which have been used to discuss not just special education but also key concepts, such as '*intelligence*' have been taken to have a straight forward meaning, a Derrida's (1978) *'logoi'* or unproblematised assumptions of individuals or social groups about their worlds, which may be subsequently developed into '*local theories'* (Clarke et al. 1998) or local constructions about what is 'smart', who is smart, about dis/ability, about how to order pupils in schools, and what and how to teach particular children. Derrida, however, highlights that there is no ordinary, uncontaminated language, and calls for interrogation and critical analysis of what is said and unsaid, which is critical to policy analysis.

In educational policy research, the orientation of what is said and done has shifted from a macro focus on central authorities to incorporating a micro focus on the multiple (often contradictory) policy practices within individual institutions (McSpadden McNeill and Copella, 2006). However, this new focus has not gone uncontested, and debate has revolved around the relevance of modernist conceptualizations of power (suggesting constraints by macro authorities) against post-structuralist conceptualizations (suggesting agency for micro-level actors). The next subsection offers the theoretical framings and practical possibilities to facilitate a moving beyond dualisms of macro–micro by applying a hybridized model which views policy as a *process* that incorporates text, discourse and action in a number of contexts where constraint and agency exist and co-exist at micro, mezo and macro levels.

2.2.3 Policy Analysis

Much of the impetus for change within special education in Ireland recently has come from changes in policy emanating from the Education Act, 1998 and the EPSEN Act, 2004 (Government of Ireland,1998). This reliance on altering policy to drive changes in practice was originally seen as desirable. Unfortunately, depending on policy to change practice has a long history of failure, as highlighted in the introduction to this chapter.

By the end of the last century, approaches to education policy and its analysis had become a topic of heated debate, internationally. In particular, 'globalization' and the 'global knowledge society/economy' were becoming dominant discourses. Globalisation has been closely associated with a shift towards a market ideology which privileges economic discourses and is associated with neoliberalism. As Bottery (2006) maintains, economic globalization 'captures the discourses' of other forms such as cultural, social, political and environmental globalization. Policy effects of globalisation are associated with the increasing adoption of market forms for the delivery of services which were once organised by the state and financed through taxation (such as education or health). There is the increased 'commodification' of these services, it could be argued. For education, policy globalisation means that states are under increasing pressure to compete economically, hence a strengthened focus on human capital acquisition – skills, knowledge, standards and lifelong learning, especially in the western world (Lall, 2007). States are taking a stronger, controlling role on curriculum and pedagogy which results in increased regulation (Conway, 2013). The evaluative state focuses on outputs. This has been coated in discussions about *efficiency and efficiency* of education provision (Ball, 2003). Education policy moves to centre stage in a 'global knowledge society/economy' as governments became more interested in harnessing education to 'efficiently and effectively' serve 'the national interest' in the global marketplace.

An extension of this debate relates to accountability and the measuring of *effectiveness and efficiency* by focusing on student achievement. There seems to be a precept that the quality of education can be measured by test score results and that this in turn has a bearing on the value for money the particular institution provides. It is also significant to note that it is those who are tested will be viewed as those who are valued. Recent circulars in Ireland relating to the State's new drive toward developing literacy and numeracy skills in

order to build a 'smart economy' have provided exemptions for some children based on perceived disability (see section 2.3.2 for further discussion). Such exemptions hold significant implications for constraint and agency, the agency to order students and the constraint placed upon children and their families.

However, while globalization does have potentially significant implications for the nature of nation states and their ability to control their own policy agendas, globalization is not simply a top-down, homogenizing phenomenon to which nation states must passively respond. Increasingly more finely nuanced understandings of globalization are being developed and the dialectics between 'the global' and 'the local' are being highlighted (Vidovich, 2007). Marginson et al., (2002) offer a 'glo-na-cal agency heuristic' which emphasizes that organizations and individuals actively engage with globalization at many levels from the global to the national to the local (glo-na-cal); that is, they focus on differential mediation of global trends in different contexts. However, older 'state-control' models of education policy came under challenge as the state was increasingly conceived in more decentred, marketised terms, and it is within this context that changing approaches to education policy emerged.

The key question at the heart of policy analysis is the extent to which the *State* determines the policy making process and as a consequence the room available for other actors, especially those involved in implementation, to re-interpret the policy text in practice. There is some degree of difference between state controlled and state-centred explanations of the role of the state in policy formulation, however both see the state as the primary actor and do not engage greatly with contributions to education policy made by actors outside the state. State controlled models see the state as determining in all policy making. State-centred explanations see the state as dominating but also acknowledge other influences. Dale's (1989) position is state-centred. He argues that the state has to fight to secure active consent, to secure hegemonic control and as a result there are inherent contradictions and conflicts with different levels of the state. Gerwitz and Ozga (1994, p. 126) noted that

> … insufficient attention was being paid to analysis of the role of the State in education, to the contradictory demands upon it and to the economic and political constraints which helped determine the pattern of provision. It seemed to us that there was overmuch attention being paid to (relatively superficial) change, to education politics and to politicians and to superficial noise and activity in the policy making arena.

However, Gerwitz and Ozga still argue that a central position should be allocated to the state in policy analysis because the state is more than just another actor as it is able to employ legitimate coercion, shape institutional features, define and enforce conditions of ownership and control, and secure active consent, which consequently constrains the actions of other actors.

The work of Ball and colleagues during the 1990s was instrumental in foregrounding studies of policy as a 'messy' process, highlighting the agency of individual practitioners at the micro level:

> Our empirical data do not suggest that the State is without power. But equally it indicates such power is strongly circumcumscribed by the contextual features of institutions, over which the State may find that control is both problematic and contradictory.
>
> (Bowe, et al., 1992, p. 10)

Earlier still, Ball (1990, p.22) asserted that 'policies embody claims to speak with authority, they legitimate and initiate practices in the world, and they privilege certain visions and interests'. Bowe and his colleagues (1992) reject the top-down linear model from origin to practice. Alternatively, they draw attention to the structure/agency interplay by monitoring the 'loci of power' and see policy process as …

> … a continual process in which the loci of power are constantly shifting as the various resources implicit and explicit in the texts are recontextualised and employed in the struggle to maintain or change views of schooling
>
> (p.10)

They criticise the state control approach for the detachment of the policy generation from implementation, which reinforces tidy, managerial, linear models and its focus on macro-based theoretical analyses that 'silence' the voices of key stakeholders, teachers, students and parents.

> Despite the very real sense in which teachers have been excluded from the 'production' of [policy], we still want to argue that a state control model distorts the policy process….the image implicit in the conception of distinct and disconnected sets of policy-makers and policy implementers actually serves the powerful ideological purpose of reinforcing a linear conception of policy in which theory and practice are separate and the former is privileged.
>
> (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992, p. 10)

Bowe, et al., (1992) insist that 'policy is not simply received and implemented in a 'linear manner, rather it is subject to interpretation and then "recreated"' (p. 22). Their argument is

that policy writers cannot control the meanings of their texts (1992, p.22). Policy texts are made by people for people. In the social world people enjoy agency within constraint. The central point with regard to 'interpretation' and 'recreation' that Bowe et al., present is based on the work of Barthes (1970; 1986) with regard to 'readerly' and 'writerly' texts.

Barthes (1986) argued that readerly texts consider the reader as *a consumer* of text that is fixed and finished, *a product.* It 'conceals all traces of itself as a factory within which a particular social reality is produced' (Barthes, 1986, p.63). The reader employs no agency. Kalmer and Thomson (2006) observe that the reader has no role other than to 'ingest' (p. 126) the meaning 'already determined by the author' (p. 126). One cannot interpret, interact or play with the static text to 'make it go' (Barthes, 1986, p. 246).

Writerly texts on the other hand, expect the reader to *co-produce* meaning. Such texts are available for 'infinite play' (Kamler and Thomson, 2006, p. 126), which is noteworthy. They 'exhume… cultural voices or codes… [they] discover multiplicity instead of consistency… [and] signify flux instead of stable meaning' (Barthes, 1970, p. 246). The reader's role is to *rewrite* text for themselves, allowing the reader to be co-producer of meaning. Bowe at al. (1992) view policy texts as *writerly* and they insist at all times that 'new possibilities can arise when 'national' policies intersect with local initiatives' (p. 23). They argue that one needs to understand the histories and ideologies of the people who receive policy texts and what drives them to implement policy in the way that they do. Therefore, policy authors, they contend, cannot *control the meaning* of their texts even if they do try because the reader as a 'co-producer' is deliberately encouraged to engage in creative interpretation. It is assumed that the reader will derive meaning based on their own prior knowledge, experience and purposes.

In keeping with the notion of writerly texts (Barthes, 1970), McSpadden McNeil and Coppola (2006) define policy as 'a governing directive that addresses key purposes and processes *guiding* an organisation or attempting *to shape* the behaviour of a population' (p. 684). They emphasise that policies are not *regulations* (readerly texts) but *guides* that are open to the interpretation. Readerly [policy] texts, in contrast, impose a non-negotiable, functionalist meaning on the reader and are in keeping with a regulation, e.g., policy relating to the legal age to drive. Furthermore, Bowe at al. (1992) stress that the policy process does

not just begin when the policy is launched and received as a text by the people who implement it.

> The production of the text itself is not one static moment, but a *process*. Texts themselves are the products of compromises and power struggles. They have interpretational and representational history and a 'policy sediment' builds up around them, which in effect means that there are never really any completely 'new' policies.
>
> (Bowe et al., 1992, p. 23).

The notion of a policy 'cycle' is useful, therefore, because it refers to where and how policy is made and *remade* in different contexts, which holds significance for the current thesis. Bowe, et al. (1992) introduced the concept of a 'policy cycle' (see Figure 2.2 below) which allows for the recontextualisation of policy through three primary policy contexts:

- Context of influence, where interest groups struggle over the construction of policy discourse and where key policy concepts are established;
- Context of policy text production, where texts represent policies, which relate to time and site production;
- Context of practice, where policy is subject to interpretation and recreation:

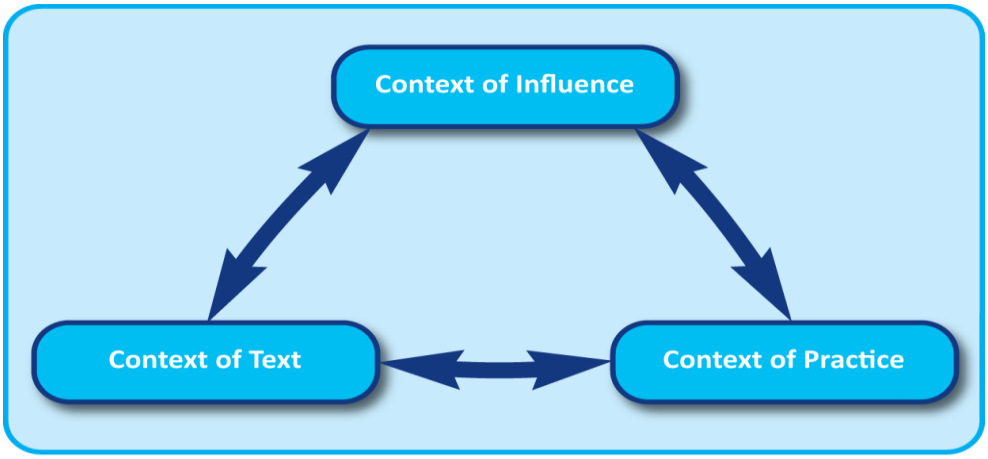


Figure 2.2 The policy cycle (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992)

Each of the three contexts illustrated in Figure 2.2 have public and private arenas of action and all contexts experience levels of constraint and in some cases even the repression or ignoring of certain interest groups altogether. This model sees the policy process as 'fractured, dislocated, only occasionally exhibiting a linear form' (Scott, 1996, p. 133). From this perspective, according to Looney (2001), policy can never be described as

authored, it is always an overlay. This model acknowledges that policy may be altered in the implementation phase and transformations may come about as texts are recontextualised

> Policies will be interpreted differently as the histories, experiences, values, purposes and interests which make up any arena differ. The simple point is that policy writers cannot control their meanings.
>
> (Bowe et al., 1992, p.22)

This concept replaces the simplicity of the linear with the complexity of the cyclical. Thus policy is understood as process, multi-layered, each layer requiring its own analysis, and each analysis having to take account of the other layers in the process.

In keeping with critical pragmatism and reconstruction to ensure greater social justice, Ball (1994) extended this conceptual framework to include two further arenas:

- The 'context of outcomes', which is concerned with the impact of policies on existing social inequalities,
- The 'context of political strategy', which is concerned with identifying strategies to tackle the inequalities as highlighted in Figure 2.3.

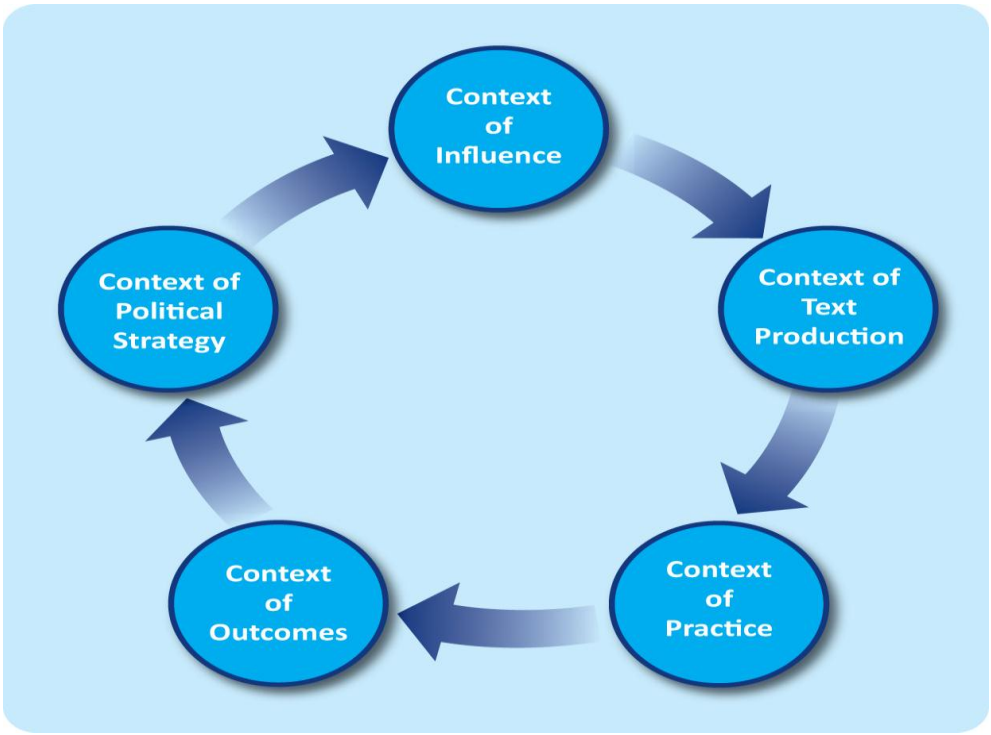


Figure 2.3 The continuous policy cycle (Ball, 1994)

According to Ball (2006, p. 44) 'policy texts are set within these frameworks which constrain but never determine all the possibilities for action', which holds specific implications for the

context of outcomes, for students and their families, which could inform political strategy. In Bourdieu's sociology, policy analysis sets out to examine *agency* in a constrained world and to show how agency and structure are implicit in each other. Ball (2006) insists that policy analysis requires an understanding that is based on the changing relationship between *structure and agency*, and their interpretation.

2.2.4 Structure/Agency Dichotomy

> It is important to recognize policy processes as inherently political in character and involving compromises, trade-offs and settlement
>
> (Taylor *et al*., 1997, p. 26)

'Compromises, trade-offs and settlements' can relate to the structure-agency dichotomy, which focuses on the relationship between individualism and holism. It is one of the main dialectics in policy analysis. The structure/agency dichotomy relates to whether individuals or social structure should be given primacy in explaining social ontology (Lall, 2007). Bourdieu (1978) holds that structure and agency are implicit in each other rather than being two poles of a continuum. Ball (1998) agrees that it is not a zero-sum game but that relations shift and change and that the world is effectively 'in flux'. Ball relates this in particular to the debate of policy as text and policy as discourse. Discourse, the product of agency becomes a part of the structure and can consequently limit who speaks and who is heard. In this context, structure is most often treated as constraint and not as an enabler of change for action. The policy effects of the *structure-agency debate* are context dependent. In certain circumstances human agency opens up the possibility of the transformation of structures. There are periods when structures are changeable, and individuals, or individuals acting collectively, are able to reshape these structures.

It is clear that there has been considerable debate among sociologists of education about the macro-micro gap in educational analyses. It could be argued that educational research remains divided largely into the study of large-scale phenomena such as national policies on the one hand, and case-studies of individual schools and social interaction on the other. Such research approaches suggest a structure/agency dichotomy, which makes it difficult to conceptualise adequately the processes involved in social change (Shilling, 1992). Archer (1998) offers an approach, *analytical dualism*, as an alternative to the structure /agency dichotomy. She argues that much social theory suffers from the generic defect of

conflation where, due to a reluctance or inability to theorize emergent relationships between social phenomena, causal autonomy is denied to one side of the relation. In this respect, she maintains, that autonomy may be denied to agency with causal efficacy only granted to structure (*downwards conflation*). Alternatively, it can take the form of autonomy being denied to structure with causal efficacy only granted to agency (*upwards conflation*). Finally, it may take the form of *central conflation* where structure and agency are seen as being co-constitutive i.e., structure is reproduced through agency which is simultaneously constrained and enabled by structure (Graeber, 2011).

The most prominent example of central conflation is Giddens (1987) structuration theory. In *The Constitution of Society* he examines phenomenology, hermeneutics, and social practices at the inseparable intersection of structures and agents. The theory of structuration is a social theory of the creation and reproduction of social systems that is based in the analysis of both *structure* and *agents* without giving primacy to either. Further, in structuration theory, neither micro- nor macro-focused analysis alone are sufficient. While not objecting to structuration on *philosophical* grounds, Archer (1984-2007) does object to it on *analytical* grounds: by conflating structure and agency into unspecified movements of co-constitution, central conflationary approaches preclude the possibility of sociological exploration of the relative influence of each aspect. Archer's (1998) conviction rests on the premise that in order to properly analyze the emergence, reproduction and transformation of cultural systems and social structures, one should focus on the dynamics between the system and socio-cultural interactions. While recognizing the interdependence of structure and agency (i.e., without people there would be no structures) she argues that they operate on different timescales. At any particular moment, antecedently existing structures constrain and enable agents, whose interactions produce intended and unintended consequences, which lead to structural elaboration and the reproduction or transformation of the initial structure. So while structure and agency are interdependent, Archer argues that it is possible to unpick them analytically. By isolating structural and/or cultural factors which provide a context of action for agents, it is possible to investigate how those factors shape the subsequent interactions of agents and how those interactions in turn reproduce or transform the initial context. Archer (1998) calls this a *morphogenetic s*equence. The conceptual framework of the continuous

policy cycle provides such affordance for analysis, it could be argued as the interplay between structure/agency is acknowledged and can be scrutinised.

2.2.4.1 The Social Professionals: Structure/Agency Interplay

Between 1870 and 1930 modern professionalism was institutionalized as a response to the social and political unrest following the Industrial Revolution and emergence into a modern society. Based on the premise of the 'foundational' view of knowledge and scientific practice (Heskell, 1984) professionals were given authority and autonomy because of their grounding in science. The view was that professionals had access to 'objective knowledge', a knowledge that was needed to solve the social, political and economic crises of the time. It was understood that professionals would come to such solutions in a neutral and objective manner, in the interest of society and without personal gain. Therefore, modern professionalism is constructed as a monologue, professionals prescribe and clients and society accept such prescriptions and prescriptive advice without question as it is passed from those with the 'knowledge' (Heskell, 1984).

A post-structural perspective creates epistemological and moral crises in the professions, according to Skrtic (1986, 1988 and 1991). In line with Foucault, Derrida and other postmodern theorists, antifoundationalism or a post-structural perspective undermines the modern view that professional 'knowledge' is objective. Post-structuralists view science as a form of cultural tradition that yields 'possible knowledge' depending on the world view or paradigm adopted by the observer (Kuhn, 1962). Therefore, the perspective seeks to question the knowledge of professional practices and discourses as there is no real truth or absolute 'knowledge'. This undermines the authority and autonomy once held by the professions and in doing so has created a crises because 'the act of choosing among possible knowledges becomes a moral and political act with profound implications for ethical practice and a just society' (Skrtic and Sailor, 1996, p. 274).

Anti-foundationalism has introduced 'text' as a metaphor for social life (Geertz, 1983), which is significant for the field of research. As texts, it is understood that individual and institutional practice can be viewed as discursive constructions that can be read or interpreted in a number of ways, none of which is an absolute, in a foundational sense, but each of which hold political and moral implications. This perspective concerns itself with

who has the power to interpret reality for others and by doing so to order society (Foucault, 1980). Foucaultian analysis concerns itself with the way knowledge becomes power. In this sense, Foucault argued that the classical view of political power based on sovereignty and rights has been subverted by 'disciplinary' or 'professional' power. This type of power, he articulated, is exercised through the knowledge, practices, and discourses of the human sciences which establish the 'norms' for society. In such a normative society, he suggests, 'we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the [knowledge claims of the human sciences] which are the bearers of the specific effects of power' (1980b, p. 94). Foucault's stance is summarized succinctly by Philp (1985, p. 67):

> In workplaces, schoolrooms, hospitals and welfare offices; in the family and the community; and in prisons, mental institutions, courtrooms and tribunals, the human sciences have established their standards of "normality." The normal child, the healthy body, the stable mind . . . such concepts haunt our ideas about ourselves, and are reproduced and legitimated through the practices of teachers, social workers, doctors, judges, policemen and administrators. The human sciences attempt to define normality; and by establishing this normality as a rule of life for us all, they simultaneously manufacture— for investigation, surveillance and treatment— the vast area of our deviation from this standard.

Foucault's work focuses on the various modes by which modern society turns human beings into subjects for investigation, surveillance and treatment. Such practices involve various forms of medicalization, objectification, confinement, and exclusion. In education it presents the psycho-medical view of the student, or deficit thinking, which insists upon professional and clinical assessment (investigation/ surveillance), diagnosis, and intervention (treatment), confinement (in special settings) resulting in exclusion (from the mainstream classroom). Foucault's ideas (1963, 1976, and 1998) have been used to examine disability as simply a natural material phenomenon. Foucault views the materiality of the body as associated with the 'historically contingent practices that bring it into being' (Tremain, 2002, p. 34), which is molded by time and class. The materiality of disability and disability itself are naturalized effects of disciplinary knowledge/power. In this way the social professions have had the power to construct disability and create special education programmes as a rational response to non-normative needs.

It could be argued that social professions have the power to construct 'insiders' and outsiders, "otherisms", a subordinate population and shifts the blame of school failure to students through medicalization, and objectification investigation, surveillance, treatment, confinement and exclusion discourses and practices. According to Benjamin (2002a; 2002b), the dominant discourses of dis/ability within institutionally and systematically located power creates an 'intellectually subordinated population'. To further illustrate the power of the social professionals, Taylor (1991) in her seminal publication *Learning Denied*, the embryo of which appeared as an article in the *Harvard Educational Review*, tells of her family's dispute with public school and special education bureaucracy. It is a personal story of reliance on a legalistic, decision-making process that allows social professionals forget that there is a real child involved. The book describes the prevailing assessment paradigm that reduces teaching and learning to scores on standardised tests, conducted by professionals who have had little contact with the child's education; where the lens is on what the child cannot do (deficit model) as opposed to what the child can do. Patrick's life was determined by the label that was so strongly sought after and acquired through assessment and diagnosis by social professionals.

According to much post-structural research literature, referring children for assessment is often based on subjective evaluations of non-normative behaviour (Anyon, 2009; Artiles et al., 2011 De Valenzuela et al., 2006; Skrtic, 1991, 1995, 2005; Tomlinson, 1982). In this way the social professions have had the power to construct disability (particularly mild disability) without any scientific, neurological or empirical evidence and in doing so present special education as a rational response to non-normative needs. Artiles et al. (2011) in their analysis of inclusion policy on five continents highlight the observation of the important role that social constructions play in determining who is included within the parameters of the norm and who is relegated to the margins. It could be argued, based on the literature reviewed, that as a result of compulsory/mass education, and inclusion policy, schools are experiencing students who are divergent from that which might be considered the norm, in traditional classrooms. The divergent students are removed from the mainstream, those outside the norm are squeezed out and functionalism can justify such action (Sharp and Greene, 1975).

Hatt (2012) in her recent ethnographical study in a kindergarten classroom explains 'smartness' as a cultural construct rather than a biological capacity with implications for schooling practices and ultimately, policy. Much like the Irish study conducted by Keogh and Whyte (2006) with regard to 11 and 12 year old perceptions of "smartness", both studies highlight that what children learn about "smartness" in school has powerful implications. Hatt (2012) concludes that determinations are made about who is and is not smart based on the teachers' knowledge of students' socioeconomic backgrounds, which is highly significant to this study. These studies make visible the power-laden discourse that construct difference among pupils, resulting in the inclusion of some and the exclusion of others, while paradoxically, implementing inclusion policy. The grounding assumptions held by teachers which informs their agency is associated with Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*.

'Bourdieu's theory proffers socio-cultural explanations for why under-represented groups remain excluded from the educational process' (O'Brien and Ó Fathaigh, 2005, p. 6). It serves to locate the schooling experience of students within the cultural context of their social and material histories. His theory challenges *deficit thinking* about underachievement and differentiated resources from their distribution within social structures. O'Brien and Ó Fathaigh suggest that Bourdieu achieves this by 'expanding upon an analysis of cultural barriers to participation and relating subsequent investigation to actors' own lived experience' (p. 6). The whole notion of *Habitus, Capitals, and Fields* are key theoretical concepts that are useful to analysis in this study because they relate to structure and agency in the varying contexts of the policy cycle.

In Bourdieu's (1977a, p. 72) own words, *habitus* refers to 'a set of durable, transposable dispositions' which regulates mental activity to the point where individuals are often unconsciously aware of their influence'. In essence, the habitus concept is a way of explaining how social and cultural messages (both actual and symbolic) shape individuals' thoughts and actions. According to (O'Brien and Ó Fathaigh, 2005) habitus is not a static concept since it allows for individuals to mediate these messages, even to the point of resisting embodied beliefs. The habitus is thus not wholly structured, though it still remains strongly influenced by historical, social and cultural contexts. McNulty Eitle (2002) in her research demonstrated that parents, teachers, counselors and other school personnel are embedded in localities that shape their racial ideologies, beliefs about intelligence, which

cause them to act in discriminatory ways, and provide varying opportunities to activate cultural and social resources, which directly relates to the theories of Bourdieu.

2.2.4.2 The Parents: Bourdieu's Concept of Capital purchasing Agency

According to Bourdieu (1986), some people have greater power to acquire finite resources than others; some have greater resources than others to support the education of the child, which has implications for school ordering. Ccertain social groups are more capable of mobilising their own deeply held beliefs on the value of education. Often such values are shaped by habitus or a general set of outlooks influenced by parental/peer expectations, social position, which affords them advantage in utilising the formal education system (O'Brien and Ó Fathaigh, 2005). 'Social class factors are particularly strong in guiding [such] mediated thought and action (Bourdieu calls this 'class habitus')' (O'Brien and Ó Fathaigh, 2005, p. 68/69). Consequently, those in higher-class groupings are more likely to value schooling thus increasing the likelihood of reproducing their social position (Rudd, 2003, p. 7). Tomlinson suggests that the marginalisation and exclusion of students have been sanctioned by so-called 'wisdom' – those with the knowledge influencing, producing and implementing practices and curricula on those who cannot have a say as they don't have the knowledge of power to say.

Bourdieu, like many social theorists, sought to expose the unquestioned structures that underpin practices and behaviours of people in the social world. He explained the functioning of our social world and how it is consistently reinvented by particular social classes. His theoretical framework illustrates how persons become dominant or will be dominated based on forms and levels of capital. He defines capital as any resource worth fighting for:

1. Economic capital: income and assets
2. Cultural Capital: formal education, specialist training, lived experiences and socialisation processes
3. Social capital: membership of social networks
4. Symbolic capital: prestige, status, viewed by community as having power.

Capital, in various forms – economic, cultural and social – is deployed by Bourdieu in theorising the nature of the reproduction and the maintenance of class position or advantage. For Bourdieu

> … it is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognised by economic theory
>
> (Bourdieu 1986, p. 242)

Bourdieu uses the symbolism of capital as an economic metaphor. Social capital is a form of power, a currency, a resource, it can be utilised, traded, exchanged, drawn upon, invested or cashed in. Social capital is a form of energy, a force; it is a capacity, a facility that can be deployed and activated towards some desired goal. Social capital 'may serve as currency' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 503), it can 'facilitate certain actions' (Coleman, 1988), and it can be used to 'pursue shared objectives' (Putnam, 1996). Bourdieu was interested in theorising a general economy of capitals, how they were accumulated, exchanged and utilised. He was concerned with how the social relations of groups and classes are reproduced, and particularly in the role of culture in this process. The social and cultural elements of family life that facilitate compliance with teachers' expectations can be viewed as a form of *cultural and social capital*. The concept of capital enables researchers to view culture as a resource which parents can use to enhance the lives of their children and therefore, it is a form of capital which can be transmitted from one generation to the next. Therefore, it affords the reproduction of advantage.

Lareau (2000; 2011), influenced by the theories of Pierre Bourdieu (1977-1992) details the daily workings of social class in affecting parents' ability to pass on their advantage or conversely their disadvantage to their children. Bourdieu (1977a; 1977b; 1984; 1987) has argued that social class alters cultural resources. Empirical work, using Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, suggests that exposure to high status cultural resources are associated with educational success. Bourdieu's (1977, 1991 and 1992) theory suggests that social capital operates as a tool of cultural reproduction in explaining unequal educational achievement. Tomlinson (2000, p. 129), influenced by the works of Bourdieu, explains how cultural reproduction occurs:

> It is the way in which some families are able to give the things that make education important. Schools should only test things they know the children have experienced and have been taught. That perpetuated the whole notion that some children could not actually participate in mainstream education. You had to create a special sub-system.

Such an explanation is in keeping with Skrtic's (1991) notion that those who are non-normative are squeezed out, thus creating a sub culture who are educated on the margins.

Significantly, Lareau (2000) does highlight that working-class parents and middle-class parents share a *desire* to help their children, where they differ is in the type and number of resources (social capital) they bring to the task and the *range of actions* they perceive as appropriate, who they perceive as being responsible for the child's education and school-like activities. This relates directly to Bourdieu's concept of *fields*, a structured space of forces and struggles, consisting of an identifiable network of relationships that impact upon the habitus of individuals. Education is thus regarded as a *field* since it sets its own rules that regulate behaviour within (O'Brien and Ó Fathaigh, 2005). It aligns with the notion of the 'game'. Those with higher levels of social and cultural capital will know the game and its rules and can employ this 'knowing' to purchase resources and/or to manipulate the rules to their own advantage. Strategies (actual and/or symbolic in form) are thus employed by individuals to distinguish themselves from other groups and place them in advantageous positions via the effective utilisation and exploitation of capital (Rudd, 2003).

In keeping with the notion of *habitus*, Lareau (2000) highlights the work of some scholars who have suggested that 'teachers treat working-class and lower-class families differently from upper-middle-class ones' (p. 15). Critically, she cites studies that have pointed to correlations between social class and educational track placement. Such research has argued that the content of the material and quality of teacher-student interactions varies by class as well (Anyon, 1981; Aggleton and Whitty 1985; Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Mickelson, 1987; Oakes, 1982, 1985). Lareau's (2000) research suggests that as children enter higher grades, parents with little formal education are increasingly less able to help their children with school work. She found that working-class parents are less likely to create social networks with parents of their children's friends than middle-class parents (social capital). As a result, they miss out on the world of school (*field*), depending on formal communications from the school such as report cards or reports of inappropriate behaviour. She discovered that working-class parents often lack confidence in their ability to address pedagogical issues, and that they are ideologically inclined to view family and school as separate. Lareau (2000) suggests that this is not idiosyncratic but rather an integral part of class culture that helps limit involvement, despite parents' interest in their child's well-being and success. This perspective suggests that working-class parents see those responsible for schooling living in the world of school, home and school boundaries or these *fields* are not crossed. This factor places huge constraint on their agency to influence their children's

education. Lareau (2000) points out that social class does affect the way in which children's lives are shaped in school: 'Teachers ask for parent involvement; social class shapes the resources which parents have at their disposal to comply with teachers' requests for assistance' (p. 2).

International research has shown that parental engagement (of various kinds) has a positive impact on many indicators of student achievement (Emerson et al. 2012). Houtenville and Conway (2008) found that parental effort (the combination of all kinds of engagement) has a large effect on student achievement compared with school resources (e.g. per pupil spending on teaching). Although parental support is positively linked with school success, and parental involvement is legislated for in the internationally community including Ireland (EPSEN Act, 2004), the lack of such support from a teacher's perspective is not random, according to Lareau (2000). She contends that 'social-class has a powerful influence on parent involvement patterns'. Extant research highlights that in the area of promoting language development, reading to their children, talking children to the library, engaging in fieldtrips etc., middle-class parents consistently take a more active role and are therefore more agentive in this field, which has significant implications for resourcing their children's education.

In summary, this section (2.2) presented the lens for analysis of the data that will be presented in Chapter Four. The policy cycle is adopted as the conceptual framework for the study. The analysis, which involves deconstruction and reconstruction, is influenced strongly by post-structural theorists. Such an approach is in keeping with Ball's (1994) advice in relation to policy analysis:

> In the analysis of complex social issues – like policy – two theories are probably better than one…… the complexity and scope of policy analysis - from an interest in the workings of the state to a concern with contexts of practice and the distributional outcomes of policy – precludes the possibility of successful single theory explanations. What we need in policy analysis is a toolbox of diverse concepts and theories – an applied sociology rather than a pure one…. [replacing] the modernist theoretical project of abstract parsimony with a somewhat more post-modernist one of localised complexity.
>
> (Ball, 1994, p. 14)

In order to understand 'localised complexities' it is necessary to expose the big ideas in the field, in order to gain more finely nuanced understandings 'the global' and 'the local' (Vidovich, 2007), or the glo-na-cal as Marginson and Rhoades (2002) describe it. Merging the literature with the chosen conceptual framework will elucidate the structure/agency that

exists within each of the contexts of the policy cycle (Section 2.3-2.8). This elucidation will then form the basis of the discussion of the claims in Chapter Four, which will be further theorised in Chapter Five.

2.3 Contexts of Influence and Text Production

The context of influence (see Figure 2.3) is where interest groups struggle over the construction of policy discourse and where key policy concepts are established (Ball, 2004). This is where policy is usually initiated. It is here that policy discourses are constructed and where interested parties struggle to influence the definition and social purposes of education (Bowe, et al., 1992). According to Bowe and his colleagues, the private arenas of influence are rooted in social networks in and around political parties, in and around government and legislative processes. The discourse forming process is often supported and sometimes challenged in the public arena of action by the media and also by other public action groups such as committees, unions which contribute to the context of influence. Research suggests that inclusion does not 'emerge out of a social vacuum, but within a particular social space that is filled by the interplay of history, knowledge, interest and power' (Clarke et al., 1999, p. 171). In considering inclusive education policy and how it is funded, it is necessary to present significant contributions to the context that has had influence.

2.3.1 Segregation and Inclusion in Ireland

As recently as 1993 the State refused to educate certain groups of children whom they claimed to be uneducable within the meaning of Article 42 of the 1937 constitution. This exclusion from education led to the High Court case in 1993 of O' Donoghue v. Minister for Health and Ors (1996) 2 I.R. Justice Rory O'Hanlon found the State negligent in having failed to provide Paul O'Donoghue with his constitutional right to free primary education. The judgement placed responsibility on the State to make provision as is necessary to enable all children to reach their full potential. In a subsequent case in 2000, Sinnott v. Minister for Education and Ors (2001) 2 I.R 545, Justice Barr ruled that the State be obliged to provide lifelong education for people with severe/profound GLD. This ruling was successfully challenged by the state which is now obliged to make provision for children up to the age of

eighteen. These high profile cases were to pave the way for others. The cases demonstrated the potential of public interest litigation to convince a political system to the call for reform, illustrating the agency of some parents and the macro/micro structure/agency interplay.

The Special Education Review Committee (SERC, 1993) reported in the same year as the O'Donoghue case. It represented the first serious attempt since the 1960s to address special education policy and provision in Ireland. The SERC (1993) Report acknowledged the right of the child with SEN to an appropriate education, determined by the child's *needs*. It promoted the concept of *a continuum of provision* while favouring placement in the mainstream setting. The report provided the blueprint for the development of inclusive education in Ireland and it continues to influence policy right up to the present. Griffin & Shevlin (2007, p. 53) have described it as 'a credible attempt to improve system capacity in relation to special education provision'

In 1996, the DES commissioned a study of remedial education in Irish primary schools, which was published in 1998 (Sheils, et al., 1998). It examined how the recommendations of the SERC Report (1993) were being followed. It concluded that remedial teachers 'spend about 85% of each school week working with individuals or small groups who have been *withdrawn* for remedial work' (p. xi). Approximately 50% of all schools with a remedial teacher did not have a policy document on remedial education. The study highlighted significant variation between remedial programmes and classroom-based work. Sheil, et al., (1998) observed that the link between parents and the work of the remedial teacher were not sufficiently communicated in order to be effective for students. The *Learning Support Guidelines* (Government of Ireland, 2000) were published to address the lacunae uncovered by the Sheil et al. (1998). The *Guidelines* recommend 'policies which emphasise the enhancement of classroom-based learning for all pupils' (Government of Ireland, 2000, p. 9). MacGiolla Phádraig (2007, p. 295) acknowledges that a key theme running through the *Guidelines* is that 'learning support should be *a collaborative process* involving class teacher, learning support teacher, principal and parents with a strong emphasis on the development of whole-school policies on learning support and on targeting the identified learning needs' of the students who are achieving on or below the 10th percentile in Literacy and/or Literacy and Maths. It is recognised that the *Learning Support Guidelines* marked a 'significant stage in the development of government policy towards inclusion' (MacGiolla Phádraig, 2007, p. 295).

Over the past fifteen years, much progress has been made in developing a legislative framework for *a rights-based model* of inclusive education provision in Ireland. The legislation in Ireland mirrors the conditions stated in the UK legislation, which were significantly influenced by the Warnock Report (1978). This seminal document introduced the concept of 'special educational needs' as opposed to 'handicap'. Influenced strongly by The Warnock Report, the right to equality of, access to, and participation in education of 'a person with a disability or who has other special educational needs' is now formally recognised in the Irish Education Act 1998 (Government of Ireland,1998, section 7.1. a). This right is reinforced further in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004 (Government of Ireland, 2004). This ground-breaking legislation confers statutory rights on children and young people with special educational needs to be educated in 'an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless inconsistent with the best interest of the child or

- the effective provision of education for the other children…
- as far as is practicable
- as resources permit...
- an education [which is] to be appropriately supported, and effective'.

(Section 2, a, b)

There is an immediate suggestion of dilemma in the word 'unless', which is noteworthy as such dilemma in policy discourse is evident internationally and has been a feature of Irish educational documentation since the SERC Report (1993). Meaney et al., (2005), explain that while the EPSEN Act (2004) recognises the *entitlements* or *rights* to education of students with special educational needs and students who do not have special educational needs, 'it is silent, however, on how the respective rights of each group might be managed (p. 37). Meaney et al. (2005) see it as an effort on behalf of the legislature to balance the interests and rights of all (see Section 2.1). If a system has 'opt out clauses' such as *unless, as far as is practicable, as resources permit*, a dual system of 'special' and 'mainstream' will have to be maintained. These 'opt out clauses' provide an arena for what is described in the USA as the 'inclusion debate' and the dilemma of whether or not to recognise and serve diversity (Norwich, 2008). This arena is further explored in Section 2.7.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was established by the Minister for Education and Science on December 24th, 2003 in accordance with section 54 of the Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998). Its functions are set out in Section 20 of the EPSEN Act, 2004. The NCSE reported to the Minister on the implementation of the EPSEN Act, *Implementation Report*: *Plan for the Phased Implementation of the EPSEN Act* 2004 (NCSE, 2006). In keeping with the UNESCO's Guidelines (2005; 2009) the *Implementation Report* and subsequent guidelines identified gaps in the existing system and highlighted key areas for investment. It set out forty one actions to be undertaken. It articulated strongly that implementation will require that quality practice be recognised to address such current systemic deficits. It emphasised that implementation is about

- considering the child and family first,
- ensuring that teachers are equipped to participate in inclusive classrooms,
- that adequate resources are provided and
- that the service model is consistently evaluated.

These recommendations are in line with Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education's (CSIE's) *Index for Inclusion* (Ainscow and Booth, (2002) and reflective of the most recent Inclusive Schools Framework produced by the NCSE (2011) in Ireland. It was envisaged that implementation of the EPSEN Act (2004) would be carried out over a period of 5 years following the submission of the report to government. However, due to the current economic climate in Ireland full implementation of EPSEN has been postponed. The recent policy advice paper to the Minister (NCSE, 2013, p.3) recommends that the EPSEN Act be 'fully implemented as soon as resources permit'.

Following on from the Act in 2004 and prior to the Implementation Report a directive was sent from the DES to 'Boards of Management, Principal Teachers and all Teaching Staff in Primary Schools' with regard to the *Organisation of Teaching Resources for Pupils who need Additional Support in Mainstream Primary Schools* Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) (see Appendix A). This directive evolved from its predecessor DES Circular 24/03 (DES, 2003, p.1), which acknowledged that

> The current process [of resource allocation within schools] has enabled the allocation of significant resources within the education system. However the Department is aware that some schools feel restricted as to how they might deploy special needs resources and it wishes to clarify the flexibility that schools might employ in this regard.

DES Circular 24/03 introduced the notion of *flexibility* within schools to cater for the strengths and needs of students. It suggested a desire for school to be more agentive in addressing needs. It is noteworthy, that in accordance with Madeline Will's (1986) concerns in relation to the implementation of the EHA and the resource teaching hour model in the USA twenty years previously (See Chapter One), the Department of Education and Science (DES) was beginning to raise concerns about the provision of human resources to schools under the RTH model. Specifically, 'there was some disquiet at department level that the very significant levels of resources allocated to schools under the terms of Circulars 8/99 and 8/02 were being somewhat misapplied' (MacGiolla Phádraig, 2007, p. 297). Circular 24/03 (DES, 2003) criticised the manner in which 'resource hours' were managed in schools and the over reliance on the *withdrawal* of students from classroom-based learning: 'the practice has developed in recent years of using resource hours for individual tuition only. An exclusive reliance on this approach is contrary to the principle of integration in teaching and learning (DES, 2003, p.2/3). Furthermore, it emphasised a more sociocultural perspective of belonging to a community of learners and it acknowledged that teaching and learning is distributive:

> although children with SEN may learn at a different pace and in a different way from other children, they need to belong to a peer group and to mix with children of different abilities in a variety of situations. Research on mixed ability teaching illustrates that children of lower ability benefit greatly and children of average or above ability are not academically disadvantaged.
>
> (p. 2/3)

Circular 24/03 (DES, 2003) emphasised that 'wherever possible additional support should be provided in the mainstream classroom' (p. 2/3) with the effect of 'minimising the disruption to the normal class programme that can happen if individual children are being withdrawn at different times for tuition' (p. 2/3). This circular contains the clearest expression to date of the advantages of inclusion as a means of supporting students with special educational needs. It highlighted that the withdrawal of students from class was indeed contrary to best practice. This circular paved the way for the subsequent circular, Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005), which is the focus of the current research.

2.3.2 The General Allocation Model Text

In September 2005, Special Education Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) (See Appendix A) was issued to all teachers in Ireland in order 'to provide guidance for mainstream primary

schools on the deployment and organisation of the teaching resources that were allocated under the general allocation model' (p. 1). The main aim of the GAM was 'to make possible the development of truly inclusive schools' (p. 2). This model was introduced to reduce the need for individual applications and psychological assessments to the DES for students with SEN arising from high incidence disabilities. Individual application to the DES under the RTH model had created a backlog of more than 7,000 applications in the DES for SEN support. The capacity of National Educational Psychological Service to meet the demand for psychological assessment was inadequate (pers. Comm., Senior Government Official, DES). The circular it introduced a revised system for students with special educational needs. Under this system, the overall category of special educational needs was now divided into high incidence (HI) disability and low incidence (LI) disability (students with learning needs at stage III of the continuum, a concept introduced by Circular 24/03 (DES, 2003):

> The general allocation of additional special educational needs teaching resources is … intended to enable schools to cater for the needs for all pupils with learning needs requiring teaching support in addition to that provided by the class teacher, other than those pupils with complex and enduring needs for whom the school has been given a specific individual allocation of resource teaching….pupils with learning needs at stage III will continue to receive a differential allocation of teaching support [under the RTH model].
>
> (Circular 02/05, DES, 2005, p. 4/5,)

The GAM was introduced to ensure that all schools would have additional teaching support to meet the immediate needs of students with high incidence disabilities and those who required learning support. It also provided for the retention RTH model of individual application for pupils with incident (LI) disabilities as listed in the document's Appendix 1. The aim of the model, according to the DES, was to set up a system in schools that would be *more effective and efficient* than here to fore. It could be argued that such a statement suggests that existing models were *inefficient* and *ineffective.*

The aims of the revised system were strongly influenced by the EADSNE (Meijer, 1999) Report on the *Financing of Special Education: A Seventeen-country Study of the Relationship between Financing of Special Education and Inclusion;* the UK Report entitled *The Distribution of Resources to Support Inclusion* (DFES, 2001) and the subsequent EADSNE Report *Special Education Across Europe Trends in Provision in Eighteen European Countries* (Meijer, 2003), according to a personal communication with a senior Government Official (Jan., 2011). These reports strongly criticized 'pupil-bound budget

systems' particularly for 'pupils with milder special needs', which suggested a move away from categorisation of children in order to secure resources. The reports highlighted an increase in decentralization of resources to be managed at a more local level, which is reflected in C.02/05 (DES, 2005, p. 3) as it set out to 'deploy additional teaching resources in a flexible manner'. Findings in these European reports suggested that 'generally, it appears desirable that funds are spent on special *education* itself in inclusive settings, instead of on bureaucratic procedures such as diagnosis, categorization, appeals and litigation' (1999, p. 13). It could be well-argued that the GAM marked a significant paradigmatic shift from diagnosis, categorisation and individual labelling to access resources for the majority of students with SEN, in accordance with these European trends.

2.3.2.1 Categorising for Eligibility

Many suggest, however, that it is difficult to address the needs/resource match dilemma without recourse to categorising students (Florian 2006; Nilholm, 2008; Reindal, 2008). It is interesting that The Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO, 2008) submitted a review of the GAM, which concluded that at that time the teachers' union of the opinion that the GAM was generally working well for students in the 'categories' covered by the model. It is worth acknowledging that the INTO submission lacks clarity with regards to the methodology used to secure opinion in relation to the GAM. It does not indicate *who* was consulted in gathering data to draw the conclusions made. At any rate, it is interesting that the INTO used the word 'categories' despite the intention of the GAM to shift focus from such a perspective.

It could be argued that while the GAM does not necessitate psychological or other formal assessment to draw down teaching resources, placing children within *some category* is still required for eligibility for learning support under the GAM (DES, 2005, p.2) (see Appendix A), i.e., scoring under the 10^{th} percentile on standardised tests; having mild GLD, specific learning disabilities or dyslexia; having mild social, emotional and behavioural needs. From the school year 2010/2011 the GAM must also support children from the Travelling Community. The Minister for Education and Skills has recently enforced revisions to the GAM. Consequently, (since school year 2012/13), the GAM now encompasses language support in a single allocation for all primary schools (Circular 0007/2012, DES, 2012. Currently, allocation under the GAM is based on the number of

classroom teaching posts in each school in the previous school year. The deployment of resources between language support and learning support rests entirely with the school principal. Therefore, criteria for eligibility have significant implications for assessment and referral procedures in the context of practice and the agency of the social professionals as outlined in 2.2.4.1 above.

The controversy relating to assessment has recently been reflected in Ireland by Desforges and Lindsay (2010), who were commissioned by the NCSE (2010) to analyse *Procedures Used to Diagnose a Disability and to Assess Special Educational Needs: An International Review*. One of their key findings suggests that a more interactionist/ecological approach to assessment should be favoured, which marks a significant move from the traditional psycho-medical perspective and towards a more socio-cultural paradigm or bio-psycho-social perspective (see Glossary).

It could be argued that inclusive education in Ireland has been further complicated by the emphasis on standardised testing and summative assessment (DES, 2011). For example, Circular Letter 0056/2011 *To Boards of Management, Principal Teachers and Teaching Staff of Primary Schools* details the *Initial Steps in the Implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy as* follows in Section 6:

- 'English-medium schools will be required to implement standardised testing in English reading and Mathematics during the period May/June for all students in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes with effect from 2012 onwards
- Irish-medium schools will be required to implement standardised testing in Irish reading, English reading and Mathematics during the period May/June for all students in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes with effect from 2012 onwards
- You are requested to ensure that standardised testing is implemented in your school on an annual basis in the relevant classes beginning in May/June 2012'.

In this assessment context, it is interesting to note that the government supports the view that in some cases

> Students may be excluded from standardised testing if in the view of the school principal they have a learning or physical disability which would prevent them from attempting the tests or, in the case of migrant students, where the level of English required in the test would make attempting the test inappropriate.

It is now the responsibility of the principal of an individual school to decide who is tested within a standardised system and who is 'squeezed out' of the national testing system. How then will it be decided if a student is eligible for support under GAM? For example, eligibility for GAM support demands that children are identified as scoring on or below the 10th percentile in these standardised assessments in Literacy and/or in Literacy and Maths or as having high incidence disability which must be diagnosed.

It is noteworthy that Lipsky and Gartner (1997) in their comprehensive review of school effectiveness research highlight that school reform and inclusive education have largely proceeded along separate tracks in the USA, with little attention being paid to students with SEN. More recently, Hehir (2009) reflects the tension felt in the USA when he poses the following questions which are equally relevant to the Irish context and to this study:

> Is our role simply to comply with law or to comply with the spirit of the law? Are we simply providers of services, or do we produce results? In an age of standards-based reform and inclusion, what is the proper role for general education, and to what degree are regular educators accountable for students with disabilities? Are the only important results of our efforts performance on standards-based tests, or do we have a more robust agenda? Do we accept dominant negative societal attitudes towards disability or do we seek to change the world through education?
>
> (p. 3)

Categorising children according to disability or performance on standard-based tests can develop negative attitudes towards the learner; the label can consume the identity of the individual and in doing so can stigmatise the child or cause the learner to become disaffected (MacDermott, 1999). Many in the field (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011; MacDonnell, 2003; Deforges and Lindsay, 2010) agree that standardized assessment procedures reinforce the deficit model (see Section 2.6) and fail to address the quality of teaching and learning experienced in school. Murphy (2008) suggests that a schooling system that is narrowly focused upon academic achievement fails to meet the holistic needs of the child and will inevitably result in underachievement and overall disaffection with the learning process. Within the context of practice, while constrained, actors have significant agency in this regard.

2.3.2.2 The GAM and the Structure/Agency Interplay

The GAM was introduced to provide school administrators with greater agency, referred to as 'flexibility', to discriminate teaching resources. It is noteworthy that 'decentralising approaches' are praised in the EADSNE Report (Meijer, 1999) and also by its

more recent recommendations to policy makers on the *Key Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education* (2009). However, it is interesting that the European Report recommends that *funding* be delegated from central, national level to regional districts to serve regional institutions (schools), which ultimately will be 'more cost-effective' (1999. p. 26). This Report noted that within such structures, tools are more accessible and can be used to implement and maintain specialist strategies and services more efficiently. The actual funding to support need (GAM and RTH model) is still a matter for national government and the Department of Finance. It could be suggested that while those in the context of practice are agentive, they are constrained by government, particularly the Department of Finance, which constrains the DES, particularly in relation to funding models.

2.4.2.3 The GAM and the Needs/Resource Match Dilemma

It must be acknowledged that dilemmas exist in the allocation of resources under the GAM. The prevalence of need and the manner in which it is addressed remains elusive (Banks and McCoy, 2011; NCSE, 2013). The NCSE (2013, p.116) acknowledge that 'it is not possible to identify the total number of students supported through the GAM as schools determine how these hours are used … and the DES does not hold details of the number of students supported through this mechanism'.

It is noteworthy that the GAM introduced a weighted system of resource allocation, whereby all schools received a specific teacher allocation determined on a combination of school types, and on school enrolment. In the development of the GAM it was recognized that all boys' schools tended to have more incidences and that therefore mixed schools would have greater incidence than all girls' schools. This recognition was based on international research of all types of SEN, including autism, a low incident category not catered for by the GAM. While it is acknowledged that the boy:girl ratio is higher for boys with specific learning disability, the same cannot be said for other categories covered by the GAM, for example mild GLD or Down syndrome with mild GLD. Allocations of such kind could be viewed as discriminatory.

Many in Ireland (Ombudsman for Children, 2012) believe that Down syndrome should be recategorised as a LI disability because it is an 'assessed syndrome', which is categorised as a LI disability by the DES as indicated in Table 2.2. Currently, students with Down syndrome are supported according to their level of GLD.

Table 2.2 Approximate number of students for whom resource teaching hours (RTHs) were allocated to schools for low incidence disabilities for the academic year 2012-13 (NCSE, 2013)

Category	Primary	(n)	Post-primary	(n)	Total	(n)
Assessed syndrome		217		63		280
Autism		4487		2052		6539
EBD		4143		2643		6786
Hearing impairment		693		417		1110
Moderate GLD		524		209		733
Multiple disabilities		1890		675		2565
Physical disability		3345		2190		5535
Severe EBD		862		398		1260
Severe & profound GLD		34		7		41
Specific speech and language disorder		4932		912		5844
Visual impairment		294		215		509
Total		21,421		9,781		31,202

According to the Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore (2013) consideration is being given to reclassifying Down syndrome as a low-incidence disability in all instances regardless of assessed cognitive ability.

Based on estimates from the DES for the school year 2011/2012 (NCSE, 2013), 66,175 students out of a population of 509, 040 primary students are 'potentially' supported by the GAM (p. 117). However, these prevalence estimates do not consider students with mild speech and language difficulties or mild social or emotional difficulties and students with mild co-ordination or attention control difficulties associated with identified conditions such as dyspraxia, ADD, ADHD, categories included for eligibility under the GAM in Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005). It could therefore be estimated that the GAM, as currently operationalized 'potentially' caters for more students than indicated by the recent advice paper to the Minister by the NCSE (2013).

Moreover, it must be acknowledged that the level of support allocated to schools originally under GAM was based on the enrolment for September 2003. School population has increased and continues to increase since its introduction. For example, the population of

those aged between 0-14 has increased by 30% in the last six years. Therefore, evidence suggests that schools can no longer be considered as being appropriately resourced to meet need, which was a stated intention of the GAM policy.

Significantly, in the absence of published research in relation to the GAM's capacity to support more children, the Minister for Education and Skills has indicated the agency of state by announcing revisions outlined in 2.3.1 above that place greater strain on resources that have neither been reviewed nor revised. Travers (2012), in a key note address at the Irish Learning Support Association (ILSA) conference, suggests that the GAM 'is crude and not sophisticated enough to allow scarce resources to be deployed in an equitable fashion where schools with the needs receive the level of support required to address those needs…' (March 2012). Travers (2012) argues that DEIS schools should be removed from the GAM and proposes matching resources with needs on a school by school basis for the schools in DEIS bands.

Finally, Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) emphasises that the GAM was introduced to develop 'truly inclusive schools'. No definition is provided in the document in relation to what constitutes a 'truly inclusive schools'. It is important to highlight that the discourse of the field is fraught with ambiguity, even for those involved. Inclusion itself is an elusive concept (Ainscow, 1999; Slee, 2000; Thomas, 2002). Florian (1998) agrees, stating that while there are many definitions of inclusion in multiple contexts, no single definition has been universally accepted. Terminology within special education can be quite problematic generally (MacGiolla Phádraig, 2007) as 'different sources use different descriptions and categorisations' (Meegan and MacPhail, 2006, p. 54). It is therefore critical to examine what is meant by inclusion internationally and nationally as it provides the *context of influence* and the backdrop to this study overall.

2.4 Deconstructing Inclusive Education

Over a decade after Florian's (1998) assertion that there is no single definition of inclusion, Winter and O'Raw (2010) in their review of the literature commissioned by the NCSE admit that a single definition of inclusion is still elusive, which reiterates the

observations of Thomas and Loxley (2007). Inclusion remains a controversial concept in education because it relates to educational and social values as well as our individual sense of human value (Meegan and MacPhail (2006). Inclusion is made up of many currents of beliefs, attitudes and values, many different perspectives, varying struggles and myriad forms of practices. It is fair to say that some view inclusion as a policy driven by unrealistic expectations that money can be saved and that schools have capacity.

This study understands inclusion as having its origins in social justice, human rights and deinstitutionalisation. This rights-based philosophy has influenced all developments in special education internationally over the past two decades. Booth (1999) defines inclusion in terms of two linked processes:

1. Increasing participation of the learner
2. Reducing exclusion from the curricula, culture and communities of neighbourhood mainstream centres of learning.

Such an approach is in line with John Dewey's *social conception,* which acknowledges the importance of *contex*t in all teaching and learning. Dewey (1948) considers *participation* as key and his theory articulates the view that intelligence is as a result of participation in democratic forms of socialisation, a view that is somewhat in keeping with Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of communities of practice and the programme of research undertaken by Brown (1997) in *Fostering Communities of Leaners (FCL).*

It must be acknowledged that originally the concept of inclusion in education related primarily to people with disabilities and learning difficulties. More recently, the concept of inclusion has expanded to embrace those who are at risk of marginalisation or exclusion for whatever reason. Some of the reasons are associated with ability, gender, race, ethnicity, language, care status, socioeconomic status, disability, sexuality, or religion, a shift that will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Two. According to Benjamin (2002) and Topping and Maloney (2005), and more recently highlighted by the Winter and O'Raw (2010), it is inappropriate to focus on any single factor such as disability as many of these factors interact to act in combination and can result ultimately in marginalisation and exclusion, which is particularly relevant to the current study. This broader, sociological view of inclusion is reflected in Ofsted's (2001) advice to schools in the UK, which encourages schools and teachers to focus on a wide range of vulnerable groups. This government's advice states that 'inclusion is more than a concern with one group of pupils such as those who have been or

are likely to be excluded from school. It is about equal opportunities for all children and young people whatever age, gender, ethnicity, attainment or background' (2001, p.1). Such an inclusion movement seeks to redress barriers to learning and participation and instead to provide resources to support learning and participation (Ainscow, et al., 2006).

Early educational integration practices have been criticised on the grounds that students with SEN were sometimes present in the classrooms without participating or learning (Mittler, 2000). Norwich (2002) questions if inclusive education involves the deconstruction of the field of special education and the construction of a mainstream system that will meet the needs of all. Belonging to a community of practice (Rogoff, 2008) Baroness Warnock, insists is critical: 'the concept of inclusion must embrace the feeling of belonging, since a feeling appears to be necessary both for successful learning and for more general well-being' (Warnock, 2005, p. 15). Many socio-cultural theorists agree:

> Perhaps the single most compelling principle to be derived from social constructivist theory is the right and necessity of …children with disabilities to belong (Kunc, 1992) to be viewed as legitimate and contributing members of a community…the principle of community implies the presence of both diversity and equitable participation….classrooms that function as communities must accommodate and value everyone….one of the teacher's primary goals is to assure that all children are able to participate as fully as possible in the routines and rituals of the classroom culture.
>
> (Mallory and New, 1994, p. 329)

Wenger (1998) insists that the learning that is most personally transformative is that which involves membership in such classroom communities or inclusive schools. This principle creates many challenges for those involved in the policy cycle because it is widely agreed that 'the enrolment of young children and students with disabilities in regular classes has been one of the most significant pedagogical challenges for education systems over the last decade' (Dixon and Verenikina, 2007, p. 192). These Australian researchers agree that inclusion is a philosophy but state that as such it does not directly inform pedagogy or curriculum. However, having the pedagogical strategies and approaches to assure that all students are able to participate in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2008) is fundamental to inclusive teaching and learning. According to MacGiolla Phádraig (2007), such an approach distinguishes integration from inclusion. Mittler (1995, p. 36) provided a similar distinction

> …inclusive education starts with radical school reform, changing the existing system and rethinking the entire curriculum of the school in order to meet the needs of all children. In contrast, integration does not necessarily assume such a radical process

> of school reform. Children may receive a modified or adapted curriculum but have to fit into existing structures.

It is widely accepted in the literature that inclusive schools are those that make 'major adjustments to their organisation and processes in response to their diverse populations' (Nind and Wearmouth, 2006, p. 116). Many in the field describe the inclusive school as one that 'caters for the needs of all learners where all learners are valued and respected' (Dixon and Verenikia, 2007, p. 193). The UNESCO Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All (UNESCO, 2005) reflect this rights-based approach and define inclusion as:

> … a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves… a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.
>
> (UNESCO, 2005, p. 13)

More recently still, its *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education* (UNESCO, 2009, p. 8) further describes inclusive education as

> A process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve education for all (EFA). As an overall principle, it should guide all education policies and practices, starting from the fact that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society…

The Policy Guidelines present three pillars:

1. Inclusion and quality are reciprocal;
2. Access and quality are linked and are mutually reinforcing;
3. Quality and equity are central to ensuring inclusive education.

These key principles suggest that the ultimate goal of inclusive education is to *widen access* to education and to promote *full participation* and opportunities for all learners vulnerable to exclusion to realise their potential (EADSNE, 2009).

In Ireland, Drudy and Kinsella (2009) citing Ainscow, (1999) assert that in contrast with integration, inclusion implies the introduction of a more radical set of changes through which schools restructure themselves in order to embrace all children, by adapting curricula, teaching methods, materials and procedures, and thus become more responsive to the diverse needs of their students. They insist that the concept of inclusion is related to the recognition

of the diversity of modern societies. In 2008, the NCSE commenced a debate on what constitutes inclusive education with its Consultative Forum, a statutory committee established under the EPSEN Act (2004), for the purpose of advising the NCSE. One of the key objectives of the NCSE's Consultative Forum was to suggest a definition of inclusive education that would reflect the Irish context. The forum's review of the literature confirmed that there is no one agreed definition. It was finally agreed that a definition of inclusive education in the Irish education system would be a combination of the UNESCO definition and the descriptions included within the DES (2007) *Post-Primary Guidelines for Inclusion of Students with SEN*, which defines Inclusion as a process of:

- Addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners through enabling participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and
- Removing barriers to education through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements, to enable each learner to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her attendance in school.

Winter and O' Raw (2010, p. 39) in their review of the literature for the NCSE present a combination of both of the above definitions stating that inclusion is a process of …

> … addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners through enabling participation in learning, cultures, and communities and removing barriers to education through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements, to enable each learner to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her attendance at school'.

This definition reflects a socio-cultural perspective. It uses terms such as 'diversity', marking a distinct move away from 'deficit' discourse and the more traditional psycho-medical perspective. It provides a broad definition of inclusion, emphasizing the significance of participation, access and benefit from attendance at school, which is viewed as the mainstream. Such a definition is in keeping with that put forward by Ainscow, et al., (2006) who suggest that inclusion has come to mean that schools should concern themselves with increasing the participation and broad educational achievements of all groups of learners who have been historically marginalised.

While the argument around whether inclusion as a philosophy should be accepted or not now seems redundant (Dixon and Verenikia, 2007; Mittler, 2000; Shevlin and Rose, 2008; Shevlin et al. 2009). It must be acknowledged that current debate centres on the *degree* to which inclusion should occur and the strategies and resources required to support

inclusion. Currently, there are two influential perspectives on addressing and responding to need in the literature: one emphasises the additionality for the individual child (identified as an individual approach to disability), and the other the inclusivity of the system (identified as a social approach to disability) (Norwich, 2002).

It is evident from the literature reviewed that there are tensions and debate. Sowell (1995) describes the debate as a divide in visions between the 'vision of the anointed' and the 'vision of the benighted' (p. 187). The former group are in favour of full inclusion while the latter group are inclusionists who favour a more cautionary approach.

2.4.1 The Inclusion Debate

In keeping with Warnock (1978) the 'benighted inclusionists' view inclusion as a process. They respect a full spectrum of provision within contexts of practice. They believe that the mainstream classroom teacher and the special education teacher can work together to help children with SEN participate in and benefit from inclusive education that will potentially facilitate further schooling and assist children with SEN to leave school with the skills necessary to participate to a level of their capacity, in the social and economic activities of society (EPSEN, 2004; Fuchs and Fuchs, 2000). Fuchs and Fuchs (1994; 2006) support a cautionary approach and argue that there is a limit to how much the regular classroom can be expected to change. They put forward what they consider to be a 'pragmatic approach to inclusion'.

Many educational researchers argue that mainstream class placement is not the least restrictive learning environment (subsection 2.2) for some children (Dymond and Orelove, 2001; Kaufman and Hallahan, 2005). Positive attitude on the part of teachers is recognised as crucial to successful inclusion. In a review of a large body of evidence on teachers' attitudes to inclusion it was found that teachers' attitudes to the process were highly influenced by 'the nature and severity of the disabling condition presented to them (child-related variables) and less by teacher-related variables' (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002, p. 129). Sometimes there is opposition from parents of both children with and without SEN about classrooms containing a wide variety of needs and abilities and of schools failing to meet such needs and fulfil student potential (Leyser and Kirk, 2004; Rose, 2001).

Those in favour of full inclusion or radical inclusion view inclusion in the mainstream school environment as a basic human right. The primary goal of the full inclusionists is seen

as focusing on abolishing special schools, viewing them as responsible for mainstream education's failure to accommodate diverse needs. They believe that the primary job of the teacher is to help children with disabilities establish friendships with their non-disabled peers. According to full inclusionists, friendship making, attitude change and social skills can only develop in regular classroom settings; 'from a holistic, constructivist perspective, all children simply engage in a process of learning as much as they can in a particular subject area; how much and exactly what they learn will depend upon their background, interests and abilities' (Stainback and Stainback, 1992, p. 72). Full inclusionists insist that this placement must be on a full-time basis to ensure participation and a sense of belonging to the school community.

It is sufficient to understand at this juncture that the main difference between the pragmatic inclusionist and full inclusionist is that they advocate for different children with differing needs. Most pragmatic inclusionists are concerned about students with high incident disabilities including mild general learning disabilities, sensory impairments and mild behavioural disorders, the focus group of the current research. Pragmatic inclusionists argue that while the regular mainstream setting is the appropriate environment for these students to receive an appropriate academic education, they support a continuum of provision, including specialist settings for students with more complex needs (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1994; 2000). They highlight the notion that parents need options. Therefore, while they support inclusion in the mainstream school they acknowledge that the child may be supported by a special education teacher in a separate setting in order to develop the child's full potential.

It is clear from the research literature that many tensions remain between those who are considered radical or full inclusionist and pragmatic inclusionists. It is often argued that the full range of placement options, including special schools and special classes, must be retained, acknowledging that a full spectrum of provision ensures that responsible choices can be made with regard to appropriate placement for each individual with SEN (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1993; 2000; SERC, 1993; Vaughan and Schumm, 1995; Westwood, 2013). It could be argued that such an individualist focus leads to the retention of deficit thinking. Benjamin suggests that inclusion depends on how schools produce 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. She suggests that inclusion is more about sensitivity to difference rather than pedagogical methods and that if we want schools to be more inclusive then we must recognise difference. Such a position is part of a long standing dilemma, i.e., whether to acknowledge and value

difference or not (Norwich, 2008), which has implications for eligibility criteria for resourcing inclusion.

2.4.2 Dilemmas of Difference within the Context of Practice

Social life is essentially dilemmatic. One such dilemma in the field of education is the issue around commonality over difference: 'as either option has some negative implications or risks associated with stigma, devaluation, rejection, or denial of opportunities' (Norwich, 2008, p. 287). The dilemma of difference in relation to students with disabilities is

- whether to identify, and how, or not
- curriculum (how much of a common curriculum is relevant)
- placement (maintaining a spectrum of provision).

In Norwich's (1994) early work on teacher perspectives on inclusion and the dilemmas they faced, most participants saw dilemmas around these three aspects. It represents what Meaney et al. (2005) in Ireland describe as a balancing act to provide for the best interests of all. Norwich (2008) concludes that this can be difficult for professionals in the field and that 'resolutions can leave residual tensions', which he acknowledges involves 'accepting some crucial losses' (p. 302).

The classification system in special education has been a tool to organise information of students' needs and has served among other things: to understand the differences among students and to rationalise the distribution of resources; and it has been requisite to receiving special educational and related services (Florian et al. 2006, p. 37). To be labeled 'special' certainly has implications for identity and the way in which those involved in the referral process view the child. Firstly, it represents a transformation from one state to another from being 'mainstream', 'non-special', 'normal' to being 'special or 'other'. By having been identified as having 'special' needs there are immediate implications for school practice, which positions a child into different and possibly new sets of social relations (Thomas and Loxley, 2007) with teachers, peers, and all school staff or what Munro (1997) refers to as a continual 'labour of division'. This making of difference seems endemic in school organisations and legislative and policy documents in Ireland as highlighted throughout this

chapter. It could be argued that 'this making of difference' presents as a barrier to inclusion, if not in theory, at least in practice.

The dilemma is whether to view difference as 'a problem to be fixed' by institutional systems such as education or a human phenomenon to be celebrated and cherished in a plural society. Considered as a feature of society, difference might be said to enjoy mixed fortunes as Munro (1997, p. 17) highlights in the following quote:

> Sometimes difference is in vogue; it is a thing to be welcomed and may be referred to wholesomely in such terms as 'diversity'. On other occasions… it is viewed as something more shadowy, even malevolent, with any difference being treated as deviant.

The key issue seems to be whether difference is to be welcomed and valued or is it to be something 'shadowy', 'malevolent, 'deviant'. This dilemma has had several attempts at resolution over time ranging from specialised placement to geographical integration towards a common administrative framework to attempt to develop a 'school for all' or EFA. In applied terms, it questions how to offer students who have differing needs an education that is equitable for all.

It is clear that dilemmas exist for policy and practice According to Norwich (2008) there has be a lack of interest in the perspective of dilemmas in educational research analysis, which may be usefully applied. There is evidence in educational policy theory and research that 'dilemma' is used interchangeably with terms such as 'problems', 'issues' 'questions'. According to Norwich, 'dilemma' refers to something more specific, a situation when there is a choice between alternatives which are unfavourable. He suggests that the neglect of this perspective for analysis may be because dilemmas do not have definitive solutions. Lampert (1985) in her seminal work views the teacher as a 'dilemma manager a broker of contradictory interests, who builds a working identity that is constructively ambiguous' (p. 178). Several factors are responsible for the wide variety of actions and the localised complexities in the context of practice to realise this movement towards inclusive education. A key factor highlighted by the literature is the way in which inclusion is resourced (Meijer, 1999; 2003) (see opening quote to Chapter One). Meijer (1999) concluded that the resourcing of special needs education is one of the most important factors in realising inclusive education, stating that if resourcing regulations are not in accordance with the current inclusion policy, 'it is very unlikely that inclusive education will occur' (p. 11).

Ireland is experiencing transition from a time of economic prosperity to a period of austerity. During a time of transition and transformation, all levels of society are being forced to consider changes to how key services and supports are organised in a period when the overriding imperative is one of economic consolidation. Resource allocation choices are inevitable and those choices are complex, difficult, and morally problematic making them *dilemmatic.* Justice, the primary moral concern of all social service provision systems, requires that the benefits and burdens of such services be distributed according to morally relevant criteria. Resourcing mechanisms are designed to ensure that access by users to services align with stated policy objectives. Knowing what resource allocation decisions to make would be quite simple if we could agree on the criteria to guide allocations. However, examination of international experience has shown that there is no consensus about what allocation decisions should be made.

2.5 Deconstructing the Needs/Resource Match Dilemma

It is noteworthy that the EADSNE Report (Meijer (1999) unveiled a potential consequence of resourcing models to support inclusion, highlighting that the research 'demonstrated that all funding mechanisms entail certain incentives, some of them even rewarding the segregation of pupils with special educational needs' (p.11). As stated earlier, the report produced findings, which had a significant influence on the introduction of the GAM (DES Official, Feb. 2011, personal communication). For example, a decentralized system of funding was recorded as having positive effects. Systems where local authorities make resourcing decisions based on information from school support services and other advisory centers were seen to be 'very effective in terms of achieving inclusion' (p.12), which is noteworthy. Countries, where finance systems directly funded special schools by means of the more students in special schools the more funds, received most criticism. The criticism pointed to specific behaviours of parents, teachers and other stakeholders, which resulted in less inclusion and more labeling, which is most interesting.

The research report revealed that significant sums of money were being spent on non-educational matters such as litigation, diagnostic procedures to categorise students in order to

secure resource provision. Student-bound budgeting was viewed as having 'clear disadvantages' (p.12). It is noteworthy that the student-bound budget system was revealed as *not* being 'advisable for children with milder special needs', in particular. This group represents children with HI disabilities and is the group now served in Ireland by the GAM. The report went on to suggest that generally, it appears desirable that funds are spent on (special) *education itself,* in an inclusive setting, instead of on bureaucratic procedures such as diagnosis, categorisation, appeals and litigation, which is of note. Furthermore, the report stated that while mainstream schools were sometimes eager to have children with SEN with enhanced budgetary implication, school organisations and interactional practices preferred students (with budgets) who were relatively *easy to teach* and 'who did not cause them too much additional work' (p.12).

The report also acknowledged that parents will always attempt to get the best for their child and, as a result, will seek to secure maximum levels of resourcing. This finding relates directly to Bourdieu's theory of cultural/social capital and Lareau's (20020 work in relation to home advantage and unequal childhoods, those with the power can ensure access to key resources in the best interest of their child (see Section 2.2.4.2). As previously detailed, Bourdieu's cultural capital merges all the advantages that an individual may have because of their education, knowledge or skills that enable them to achieve a higher status in society (Zion and Blanchett, 2011). Social capital refers to group networks (parent networks) that facilitate the acquisition of these same advantages. These frameworks for analysis are useful in a radical critique of all social service provision.

It is interesting to note, that while there was much shifting discourse with regard to special education, integration, and inclusion in the field of education in the 1980's and 1990's throughout Europe, there was also an increased focus on reforming health services. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 1998), in their study of fifty-one countries in the European region, documented three themes in health system reform likely to have been discussed in any European society in the 1980's:

- 'The balance of public and private responsibility for health care financing and control
- Decentralisation of authority and responsibility for decision making, and
- Patients' rights' (cited in Maddox, 1999, pg. 817).

The three themes outlined by the WHO (1998) above could well apply to pillars influencing the trajectory towards inclusive education in Ireland and elsewhere. For example, the word '*health care'* could easily be substituted by the word *education,* and '*patients' rights'* with '*children's rights',* as provision of inclusive education is currently viewed as *a rights-based* issue, nationally and internationally.

It is evident that social systems are faced with the dilemma of matching finite resources with individual needs. For example, Maddox (1999), in his review of reform within the NHS in the UK over the 1990's, admits that he arrived to his research on medical reform with 'particular questions':

- What was the appropriate ratio of physicians and hospital beds to population? and
- Whether it was justified to invest more resources in the belated implementation of the NHS's initial (1948) promise to develop group practices in health centres in the interest of improving quality of care.

In response to the questions he posed initially, he quickly discovered that 'the proper ratio of particular resources to population…had no fixed answer' (p. 815). Earlier, the Black Report (Townsend and Davidson, 1982-1988) criticized the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK for economising without due concern for equitable access. Recently, the Health Service Executive (HSE, 2011) in Ireland stated that

> …the traditional health and social care model is primarily episode-based and demand led. The Population Health Model … takes a more proactive approach …Its primary focus is to reduce health inequalities. It takes account of all the factors… demographics, socio economic factors, chronic disease, health technology and legislation….the opportunities to sustain a healthy population can be increased when funding is rebalanced towards reducing health and social inequalities and disease prevention. Experience elsewhere suggests that this approach is likely to be the least expensive model in the long run.
>
> (HSE, Feb. 21, 2011)

It is clear that the 'least expensive model' is important in service provision. This has implications for targeting resources efficiently and effectively. In pursuit of this goal, the HSE has analysed the current provision of posts in proportion to total population and population health needs with reference to the Haase-Pratschke Deprivation Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012) to identify which areas are least well served. Minister O' Reilly (Department of Health, 2012) said, in his announcement of such Centres, that 'at a time of

scarce national resources, it is essential that such posts should be targeted at areas of greatest need'.

Alexander (2010) in his article *Speaking but not listening? Accountable talk in an unaccountable context* analysed policy change in education over a 14 year period 1984-1998 in the UK. He notes that each policy was introduced by a new minister determined to make his or her mark. He observes that not one of the policies was properly evaluated and furthermore, not one was allowed to run its course before being replaced by another. The EADSNE report (Meijer, 1999) stressed the importance of evaluating models regularly. In the absence of any published review of the GAM it is interesting that the Minister for Education in Ireland announced revisions to the GAM for the school year 2012/2013 onwards. Human resourcing to schools is now based on teacher numbers identified student need. It could be argued that this may result in parents and schools seeking formal assessment to guarantee support under the RTH model.

The dilemma, with regard to those who can and cannot afford the formal assessment to secure eligibility, is constantly encountered by schools and parents. This dilemma relates the balance of public and private responsibility in order to address individual need with finite resources (WHO, 1998). Many parents would argue that *the rights of the child* are not always served appropriately by *public services* in health and/or education. The media have reported many parent voices that use the word '*fight'* to describe their plight to gain access to and benefit from rights-based, public services.

With regard to categorisation to secure resourcing, the Audit Commission in the UK which considers efficiency in public services identified persistent problems with the *Statement system*, which is similar to the RTH model in Ireland. The criticism is that it places unlimited demands on finite budgets. It must be acknowledged that all social systems reform include confronting the possible need for rationing, and equitable, as well as efficient, allocation and use of scarce resources. Reindal's (2008) study within the Norwegian context states that however negative one can be regarding classification systems, it is difficult to abolish them altogether. Florian et al. (2006) argue that there can be no public policy without classification. The classification system in special education has been a tool to organise information of students' strengths and needs and has served among other things: 'to understand the differences among pupils and to rationalise the distribution of resources; (Florian et al. 2006, p. 37). According to Nilholm (2006), one cannot overestimate the

importance of particular perspectives regarding special educational issues, since 'it underpins what we will see, how we will interpret it and how we will act' (p. 433).

Many argue that the *concept of disability* is the heart of the matter in special education (Clarke, et al. 1997). Definitions and understandings of disabilities have evolved from varying perspectives. Therefore, in accordance with a post-structural perspective, it is necessary to deconstruct the dominant ideology because 'until one examines the diverse orientations from which learning disabilities have arisen, the field appears to be in a state of chaos' (Reid and Hresko, 1981 p. 13).

2.6 Deconstructing Perspectives on Disability

Ainscow (1998) suggests that the notion of 'perspective' with regard to special education should be understood as: 'alternative ways of looking at the phenomena of educational difficulty based on different sets of assumptions that lead to different explanations, different frames of reference and different kinds of questions to be addressed' (p. 8). Cross-European analysis (Meijer, 1999; 2003) reveals that some countries still segregate high proportions of their pupils, 5%, in special schools and special classes, while others recorded less that 1% in separate provision. These differences, the report acknowledges, are the results of many factors including differences in history, policy, demographics and geographical factors. Significantly, the reports also highlight the impact of societal views on people with disability and the resulting approaches in provision.

International researchers highlight the need for a theoretical foundation for special/inclusive education that can analyse policy and practice (Clarke at. al. 1998). According to Thomas and Loxley (2007), much critique that paved the way from special education and towards inclusion emerges from committed theoretical positions and epistemological premises. Slee (1997) provides a summary of the differing perspectives from which disability have been viewed and critiqued. He highlights five perspectives:

1. The Essentialist Perspectives
2. Social Constructionist Perspectives

3. Materialist Perspectives
4. Disability Movement Perspectives.
5. Postmodern Perspectives

Other viewpoints are also presented in the literature, for example, Clarke et al. (1998) have been highly influential. Farrell (2012) provides a comprehensive account of current perspectives in the field. It is necessary to unpack these perspectives in order to problematize, or look behind, special education as perspectives provide a lens for a particular understanding at a particular point in time within a specific field. This section presents three main epistemological standpoints.

2.6.1 Psycho-medical Paradigm

The historical origin of disability research emerges from the psychological and medical perspectives. While terminology has changed from the 'slow learner' and the 'handicapped child' (Burt, 1937; Schonell, 1942), such a paradigm continues to exercise a strong influence on the field of special education research, policy and practice. This paradigm conceptualizes special needs as those arising from deficits within the child, focusing on the neurological, psychological make-up of the child. This perspective is in line with Kant's *individualistic conception* of subjectivity, which is subjectivistic in its educational implications and ignores the social, material or political conditions for the subjectivity. This reflects the criticism made by Deforges and Lindsay (2010). The only issue of concern to such a perspective is what individuals can and cannot achieve (Vislie, 2006). Intervention consequently, tends to be quasi-clinical in character (Skidmore, 1996), refining assessment instruments to detect specific deficits, engagement in task analysis to address such 'flaws' in a structured, step by step approach embracing a somewhat therapeutic approach. The dominant epistemological view adopted by researchers within this paradigm is positivist-empiricist, characterized by testing hypotheses by means of clinical or field trials.

Fundamentally, the paradigm is linked to deficit thinking, which firmly roots the blame for a particular problem on an individual. According to Valencia (1997, p. *x)* the two word phrase was 'invented' by a small group of scholars in the early 1960s who launched an attack on the orthodoxy that claimed that poor people and people of colour caused their own social, economic and educational problems. Many acknowledge that children from lower-

socio economic status (LSES) groupings and ethnic minority students continue to experience school failure, attaining low scores on standardised tests, for example, and as such are prime candidates for cultural deficit thinking discourse (Mehan, et al., 1986; Artiles et al, 2011; Artiles 2011; Valencia, 1997; 2010). The consequence of such thought and discourse is placement in special education programmes.

Trent et al. (1998) examine the origins of deficit thinking from a 'social control' perspective, which is in line with Foucault's (1972) critique. According to Comber and Kamler (2004) 'sustainable reforms are frequently curtailed by 'deficit views' and children growing up in poverty' (p. 293). They highlight that pervasive deficit discourses are dominant in educational settings. They argue that school failure is a product of such discourse and add that the blame is placed on certain groups in society as lacking and responsible for their lack. Ball (2003) suggests that at this point in time, 'educational policy and school orderings are potently classed – that in a number of respects they reflect and enhance the social and economic interests and concerns of the middle classes' (p. 3), mainstream education as a social practice of society (Skrtic, 1991). Trent et al. (1999) agree that beliefs arising from deficit thinking contribute to values and attitudes about race and notions of dis/ability, which eventually provide a 'rationale' for separate, special education, the theme of powerful articles down through the years (Dunn in 1968; Deno, 1970; Artiles and Trent, 1994). Illich (1971) identified school as the problem rather than the solution to inequity. He believed that school mechanisms (age-based classes, teacher-focused, and compulsory attendance) served to discriminate against some and to privilege others. Valencia (1997) was critical that 'no sustained analysis of this theory [deficit thinking] appears in the literature' (p. xi). His seminal texts (1997 and 2010) considers the conceptualisation of deficit thinking as

1. A process of blaming the victim
2. A form of oppression
3. Pseudoscientific in its pursuit of knowledge
4. A dynamic model, changing according to the temporal period in which it finds itself;
5. A model of educability, i.e., it contains suggestions or actual prescriptions for educational practice

6. A model so controversial that dissent, and in some cases, heterodoxic is inevitable' (Valencia, 1997, p. xi).

While the concept is held in disrepute there is mounting evidence to suggest that deficit thinking is experiencing *resurgence* in this current neoliberal context and at a time of economic crises, where resources are finite and needs are prioritised.

According to Tomlinson (2012), the psycho-medical perspective has gained renewed momentum in this market-driven economy. The needs of parents for their children to be resourced on the basis of medical or therapeutic diagnosis compounded by the needs of teachers who must 'raise standards' to exclude troublesome and disruptive children from their classes, and the needs of an expanding number of professionals and practitioners, including neuroscientists and 'brain experts' to expand their client-base are explanations offered for 'the rise in the SEN industry' (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 267) that is rooted in a psycho-medical perspective. Clarke et al. (1997) highlight that disabilities cannot be understood independently of social contexts, and should rather be thought of as processes which take place when a person with a specific set of characteristics meets a particular setting. These social theorists, in keeping with many others (Artiles et al. 2011; Deforges and Lindsay, 2010; Slee, 1997; Tomlinson, 2012; Zion and Blanchett, 2011) believe that generally speaking, disabilities can be social constructs which are generated in the course of social processes.

2.6.2 Sociological Paradigm

The sociological perspective has been well-represented in the UK with seminal works in this paradigm from Tomlinson (1982), Bine's (1986), Barton (1988) and Slee (1991) among others, which is based on a form of structuralism or neo-Marxist sociology. This paradigm views special education as a *sorting mechanism* contributing to the reproduction of existing inequalities by syphoning off non-normative children to an alternative, lower-status educational track (Skirtic, 1991). The social professionals are key actors in the social arena of education and their agency has particular implications for this sorting process (see Section 2.2.4.1).

According to Thomas and Loxley (2007), Tomlinson is one of the most articulate critical theorists from the social constructionist's approach. Her research has paid particular

attention to the institutional and professional interests at play in the growth of special education: 'I have been concerned in my work in special education to use critical theories to question the part professionals and practitioners play in the social and cultural reproduction of a particular class in our society' (Tomlinson, 1987, p.39). Tomlinson (2000) has been influenced by Stephen Rose at the Open University and Edward Boyle, a Conservative minister from 1960-62, who were among the first to examine the 'pernicious influence of fixed notions of IQ' (p.129). Tomlinson suggests that 'many children don't have the opportunity for intelligence to be created and then we blame them and their families for it' (2000, p. 129). Tomlinson (1982) uses the metaphor of 'safety valve' to describe the function of the special education system, allowing some children to stay within classrooms while others are removed. As portrayed in the seminal works of Skrtic (1991) and Illich (1971) she connects its emergence to the development of mass public, compulsory education.

The Warnock Report (1978) and subsequent Education Act (1981) in the UK reflect a paradigmatic shift from the psycho-medical to the sociological paradigm, abolishing the ten 'categories of handicap' and introducing instead the concept of SEN. Such a shift influenced policy and legislation in Ireland as reflected in the SERC Report (1993), the Education Act (1998) and the EPSEN Act (2004).

Criticism of the sociological paradigm argues that it has a tendency towards abstract, hypothetical arguments, with concepts from general sociological theory being taken and applied to the field of special education without empirical evidence. A third tradition of research has emerged and draws on the theoretical concepts formulated in the contexts of the literature on effective schools and school improvement.

2.6.3 Organizational Paradigm

This paradigm views special education needs or disability as arising from deficiencies in the way in which schools are currently organized. Concomitantly, the solution offered from this organizational paradigm is to restructure schools completely to remove these deficiencies. Drawing on the work of Miller and Mintzberg (1983), Skrtic analyses schools as 'professional bureaucracies' in which teachers work in relative isolation from one another, tending to fit the needs of students to their repertoire of skills, rather than engaging in problem posing and problem solving, adopting a solution-focused approach to meet the

varying needs of all students. Skrtic (1991a and b) succinctly suggests that school failure has been reframed as two interrelated problems – 'inefficient organizations and defective pupils' (p.54), which draw together the organizational paradigm and the psycho-medical paradigm.

Educational administration was compelled to rationalize its orientation along the lines of scientific management principles, Skrtic contends. Thus, special education, emerged, in his opinion, as a vehicle to remove the 'defective' students in the interest of maintaining rationalized order in the traditional classroom. He goes on to say that all this practice and discourse is shaped by teachers grounding assumptions believing that

1. Disabilities are pathological conditions – *deficits within*
2. Differential diagnosis is objective and useful
3. Special education is a rationally conceived and coordinated system of services that benefits diagnosed (labeled/categorised) pupils
4. Progress results from rational technological improvements in diagnostic and instructional practices.

(Skrtic, 1991b, p. 54)

Skrtic's theory articulates the view that the medical discourses and practices, locating the blame within the individual as opposed to within the school organisation, are preventing progress in general education because this epistemology provides a smoke screen for advancing some students, which fails to ask the question about 'why schools fail to teach so many children successfully' (Ainscow, 2007, p. 3), which is noteworthy. Skrtic (1991) concludes that special education distorts school failure and by doing so prevents mainstream, public education from seeing that it is not living up to its democratic ideals of equity and excellence.

Skiritc (191 a, b and 1995) contends that it is public education's democratic ends that are contradicted by the bureaucratic means that were used to actualise universal education policy. Illich's (1971) critique of public education, twenty years earlier, was remarkably similar, asserting that public education begins with the assumption that there are a preset 'things' that all people should learn, that the social professionals can determine what these 'things' are, and that people can be trained to deliver these things in a functionalist manner. He challenged the field to question these notions and alternatively to ask 'what kinds of

things and people might learners want to be in contact with in order to learn [what they want to learn about] (p. 78)

Skrtic puts forward the case for a reconfiguration of school organisations as *Adhocracies* with greater use of collaborative approaches, teamwork and the continuous coordination of practice through informal communication within a community of practice. The adhocratic school (Skrtic, 1991a and b) is in keeping with Villa and Thousand's (1992) concept of the heterogeneous school which was a model based on 'zero reject' and supported full inclusion in keeping with philosophy supported by Stainback and Stainback (1992). The concept of the adhocratic school also echoes Klingner et al. (2005) 'culturally responsive schools' and Ainscow's (1991; 1993) 'effective schooling'. Adhocracy argues that students experiencing difficulties should be viewed as indicators of the need to reform. Many researchers (Westwood, 2013), including those mentioned in this section, argue that schools that are effective are effective for all students including those with disabilities. Though terminology varies, the common conceptualization of disability within this paradigm is that disability is caused by organizational pathologies, pathologies in the way schools are currently organized and that these can be overcome by reforming schools as organizations, which is an interesting perspective which may be of value to Ireland at a time when policy is considering how best to support students with SEN in schools (NCSE, 2013).

It must be acknowledged that that there are a number of unresolved issues in relation to the conceptualization of disability within the organizational paradigm. The primary criticism rests on analysis of the internal organizational characteristics of a school in isolation of other factors which may be implicated in the creation of disability. It views the school globally and ignores the individual interactions between teacher and student, or student and student, through which teaching and learning take place. It is weaker still in its interrogation of the macro-level influences, i.e., national education policy. The organizational paradigm has been accused of being too simplistic a model for the complex process of organizational development (Skidmore, 1996).

2.6.4 An Overall Critique of Paradigms in Special Education

In summary, many authors have criticised all perspective. Critique of the psycho-medical model is based on several elements as Nilholm (2006) summarises. These include

- the reliability of diagnostic categories
- the notion that diagnoses has important implications for educational processes
- the stigmatising effects of such diagnosis
- the segregated educational arrangements made for students as a result.

Nilholm (2006) also cautions that a 'common critique' (p. 432) may blur distinctions between varying perspective which, while differing, remain critical of the 'traditional'. Clough, in the book *Theories of Inclusive Education* (Clough and Corbett, 2000; 2009), reminds us that it is important to locate our own thinking in terms of the historical perspectives of others. Some of the theorists they interviewed have been influenced themselves by several models and a few would see themselves as representative of only one model.

It is necessary to acknowledge that any critique of the perspectives must recognise that many children with disabilities have *complex medical conditions* and in such cases few would contest the need for psychological and medical expertise in diagnosis and intervention. It is without doubt that advice from such professionals is most useful to teachers, students and their families. However,

> … the difficulty arises when illicit attempts are made to apply this framework to an infinitely extensible set of putative syndromes or disorders for which reliable evidence of a neurological or organic basis is entirely lacking, and where diagnosis rests on value-laden judgements about behavioural and cognitive norms…
>
> (Skidmore, 1996, p.36)

For example, according to much recent research literature, referring children for assessment is often based on subjective evaluations of non-normative behaviour (Anyon, 2009; Artiles et al., 2011; De Valenzuela et al., 2006; Skrtic, 1991; 1995; 2005; Valencia, 2011). Mc Coy, Banks and Shevlin (2012) citing Holt (2004) highlight that schools ' serve to reproduce norms of learning and development … [which] serve to define children who fall below such norms as less-able' (p. 120). Citing Dyson and Gallannaugh (2008) they note that 'because the norm is arguably set in terms of those groups that schools find it easiest to deal with, it is not surprise that other groups … are disproportionably likely to be identified as being deviant and specifically as having SEN' (p. 120). In this way, many argue that the social professions have the power 'to construct disability' (particularly mild disability) without any scientific or empirical evidence and in doing so present special education as a rational response to non-normative needs (see Section 2.2.4.1). In accordance with the work of Artiles et al. (2011) Artiles (2011) and Valencia (2010), the literature suggests that many studies have

investigated the correlation between local constructions of dis/ability leading to school ordering which seems to be interconnected with social class (See Figure 2.4 below) and those who have and have not the opportunity to create intelligence.

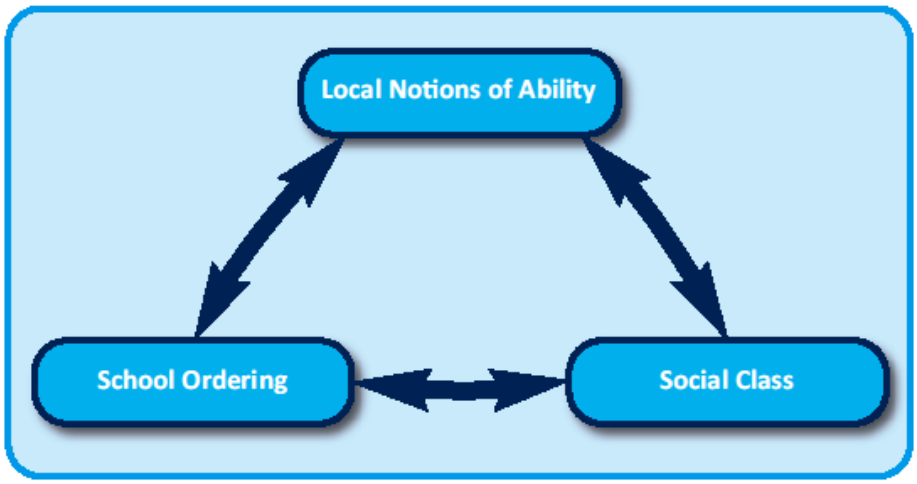


Figure 2.4 Interconnection between local notions of ability, social class and school ordering

The relationship between the educational system and social inequality is one of the most fundamental issues in the sociology of education (Reay, 2010). *Interactional theories* suggest that an essentialist, psycho-medical view of the person which supports assessment and referral to 'experts' serves individual interests and facilitates social control (Foucault, 1978; Skrtic, 1991; 2005; Anyon, 2009). *Institutional theories* can explain placement in special education as a system that developed to mask school failure (Skrtic, 1991; 2005; Tomlinson, 1987). *Structural theories* articulate the view that categorisation of students reflects a wider social issue in society, that of inequality and stratification of people to serve market demands. Such theoretical discourses, practices and consequences for the individual may be thought of as 'ways of 'objectification', 'objectivising of the subject in what I shall call 'dividing' practices. The subject is either divided in himself or divided from others…' (Foucault, 1982, p. 298). Stangvik (1998) adopts Foucault's perspective and suggests that to analyse scientific language, 'dividing practices' and the manner by which people are 'turned into objects' is most relevant to special education.

2.7 Deconstructing the Interconnection between Deficit Thinking Social Class and Special Education Placement

International research highlights that in modern industrialized societies, it is very difficult to alter patterns of class inequality in schooling (Shavit and Blossfeld, 1993; Lareau, 2000; Ball, 2003; Power, 2012). Even when educational systems have been radically transformed and expanded, the privileged have retained their relative advantages, which have critical implications for levels of agency in schooling and in society (Bourdieu, 1974; Mehan et al., 1986; Ball, 2003; Ruben, 2008). Ball (1986) poses the question with regard to school organizations – do some produce better outcomes than others or are schools primarily a reflection of the characteristics of their student intake (p. 68)? He admits that the sociology of education in Britain since the 1930's has primarily focused on social class and educational opportunity, stating that a great deal of research has been conducted in the tradition of 'political arithmetic' (Hogben, 1938, cited in Ball 1986) describing and exploring the relationship between social class differences in access to and achievement in education. He calls for a greater emphasis on exploring the consequences of discourse and practice on students, highlighting that class is never more damaging or indeed potent as when discourse and action results in 'classed' policy being neutralized, becoming common sense or understood and taken for granted as 'good policy' (Ball, 2003).

In their attempt to get closer to the processes that facilitate or 'handicap' social mobility, Mehan et al. (1986) describe the day to day practices of educators when teachers decide to 'promote students, retain them, or place them in special education programs' (p. 2). These researchers present a status attainment model of social stratification (Bielby, 1981, p. 6), which is useful as it helps to conceptualise the intersectionality between deficit thinking, social class and schooling, on attainment status, see Figure 2.5:

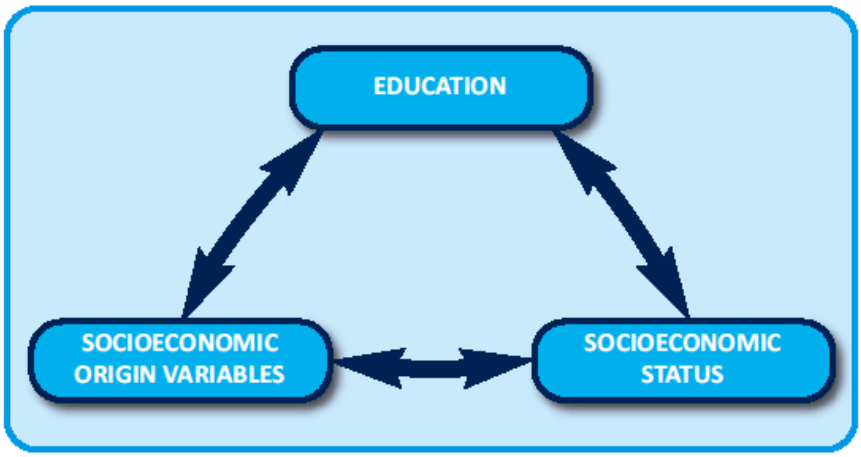


Figure 2.5 A model of schooling and the intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status (Bielby, 1981)

Mehan et al., (1986) go on to illustrate that some theories on the influence of schooling on social status view school as a *mediator* or a channel of social mobility; others view school as a *transmitter* of status, privileges transferring from one generation to the next, reproducing and maintaining the status quo in society (Ball, 2003). Similarly, Passeron and Bourdieu (1990) explain this phenomenon within a social reproduction framework. They named cultural and social capital as the means by which individuals in society contribute to their socioeconomic status along the continuum from marginalisation to elitism (see also 202 above). Like Illich and Skrtic cited extensively in 2.6, they cite the educational system as a primary institution that perpetuates the cycle of social reproduction.

Deeply held assumptions about inferior intelligence among students of minority groupings represent one of the most enduring legacies of Western racism (Klinger, et al. 2005; Artiles et. al. 2011). In 1968, Lloyd Dunn's seminal article, *Special Education for the Mildly Mentally Retarded: Is Much of It Justifiable?* highlighted the fact that students of colour and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds were overrepresented in special classes for children deemed to have mild mental retardation (the majority of students with HI disabilities). Despite exposure, these deficit beliefs have been institutionalized in the policies and practices internationally (Steele and Perry 2004; Zion and Blanchett, 2011). Categorical views of intelligence as a measurable construct affect the way teachers and schools think about students. The construct of eligibility for majority of children with high incidence disabilities is tied to IQ measurement, which means that cultural minorities continue to be

more likely to be found deficient, since there is little doubt that these measures reflect the cultural, social, and linguistic knowledge of society's mainstream (Artiles et al., 2011). Psychometric assessment alone for the identification of high incidence disabilities is based on a narrow view of intelligence that fails to take into account the social and cultural nature of learning (e.g., Hilliard, 1994; Rogoff, 2003; Rowe, 1991, Samuda, 1998). Thus, as many scholars have argued, what is needed is either a paradigm shift or no mental measurement. The National Research Council (Donovan & Cross, 2002), in concluding its consideration of assessment issues, called for a focus on children's *intervention needs* rather than a search for *intrinsic disability*, and for an end to the requirement for IQ measurements as a "primary criterion" for eligibility (p. 313). This report also emphasized that children's academic achievement falls along *a continuum*, the cut-off points for 'disability' or 'giftedness' are 'artificial and variable' (p. 26).

Similar views have been espoused in Ireland. One of the key findings of the *Procedures Used to Diagnose and to Assess Special Educational Needs* (Deforges and Lindsay, 2010) report is that 'diagnosis of disability should not be a prerequisite to an assessment of SEN', rather an emphasis needs to be placed on an interactionist/ecological policy model. This statement marks a shift in paradigm because Deforges and Lindsay (2010) highlight that diagnosis of disability currently in Ireland are underpinned by the medical model which they reject in favour of the 'interactionist/ecological model' (p.5), which holds significance for this current thesis.

The notion of a continuum of performance is equally central to an understanding of children's behaviour in school settings. Much research has emphasised that norms regarding what behaviours are considered socially appropriate vary across cultures (Harry and Kilingner, 2006; Obiakor et al., 2002; Townsend, 2000), yet school personnel tend to judge students' actions through a narrow, white, middle class, mainstream lens (Artiles et al., 2011). Many conclude that even the application of well-designed rating scales cannot exclude subjectivity in judgment (Banks and McCoy, 2011; Klingner et al., 2005). The ambiguity of the process is exacerbated by historical cultural and racist beliefs, which contribute to an overrepresentation of minority groupings in disproportionately segregated programs (Artiles, 2011; Artiles et al., 2011; Banks and McCoy, 2011; Klingner et al., 2005; Zion and Blanchett, 2011).

Furthermore, the educational system works on the assumption that failure must be documented first to secure assistance for struggling learners (Berdine, 2003; Westwood, 2013). However, it is well documented that students who show signs of learning difficulties in early years' settings need targeted early intervention to enable them to 'catch up' with their peers (Westwood, 2013). While practices are improving in Ireland in relation to such proactive approaches, there is no guarantee under the 'Staged Approach to Intervention' (DES, 2003; 2005; 2007a) that children receive such intensive and warranted intervention before they are identified as having *a deficit within*. Early and effective intervention is dependent on the agency of teachers on the ground. This relates to teacher *capacity*, which holds serious implications for initial teacher education (ITE) and continuous professional development (CPD). There are the consequential implications for the funding of resources in the context of practice, in particular human resources, which has implications for the GAM.

Another major challenge in addressing disproportionate representation, according to the research, is the widespread gap between what we know from evidence about 'what works' and what actually gets implemented by teachers in practice. Klingner et al., (2005) citing the National Research Council report, recognise that 'between the articulation of what we know from research and best practice and a change in everyday practice lies a wide chasm' (p.382). Interestingly, they believe that this gap exists because research has not sufficiently addressed issues of social class, language and culture and the varying contexts within which practice takes place (Artiles et al. 1997; Artiles et al. 2011; Zion and Blanchett, 2011), or the role of the teacher as a knowledge generator as well as a knowledge user (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999).

At primary level in Irish education, for example, there has been little research on significant issues such as ability groupings (Conway, 2002; Davis et al., 2003). More significantly, there is less examination on who is grouped and why. Carr (1988) did show that primary teachers group by ability on the basis of Literacy and Maths and once formed these groups remain more or less static, which is noteworthy. Conway (2002) suggests that moment-by-moment transactions between students, teachers and curriculum in schools require attention in Irish classrooms, which for the most part remain largely secret gardens.

Savage (2003, p. 535) talks about 'a new kind of class paradigm, recognising the mutual constitution of markets, classes and individuals'. Reay (2006), Lareau (2000; 2011), Lynch and Lodge (2002) and other social theorists have explored social class *processes* in the

classroom. These new understandings of class, as everyday processes and practices, have had little impact on educational policy, discourse and practice. While there is a growing recognition of the salience of class processes within health (Wilkinson, 2005) and housing (Glennerster et al 1999), within education training and policy, classrooms are routinely presented as classless, according to Reay (2006). Lawler (2005) goes as far as to argue that the working classes have either been absorbed into the middle classes (the 'respectable' ones) or 'consigned to a workless and work-shy underclass' (the 'rough') (2005, p.434). Indeed, Vincent, Ball and Braun (2008) highlight that members of the 'underclass' are portrayed as 'outsiders' to mainstream society, the un-reachables, the alienated, the disaffected, living morally adrift lives. Citing Auletta (1982 p. xiii), they illustrate that 'this underclass generally feels excluded from society, rejects commonly accepted values, suffers from behavioural as well as income deficiencies'. The grouping comprises a flexible variety of poor 'others', often understood as the 'passive poor' (Auletta 1982). Therefore, they have no agency to negotiate the complex world of school.

According to Tomlinson (1987) 'Critical theorists have noted the way that education often helps to reproduce the children of blacks, minorities, working-class – and the handicapped – into inferior, powerless, social positions' (p. 34). However, despite legislation and policy to end racial and social exclusion, it is clear that notions of intelligence or concepts such as 'abelism' allow discrimination to continue (Zion and Blanchett, 2011).

Such local notions of dis/ability constructed in the context of practice are therefore framed by home advantage or home disadvantage. According to Thomas and Loxley (2007), Bourdieu 'has done most to explicate this process of reproduction … pointing to the role of cultural and social capital in this [reproduction]. Lareau (2000) highlights the importance of researchers looking at inter/intra-institutional linkages and also examining *why* social class affects parent involvement in schooling, which is of significance to the current research. Comber and Kamler's (2004) work with regard to disrupting deficit discourses and redesigning new pedagogies to reconnect with children's life worlds seeks to address such constructions of 'disability'. They, like Hicks (2001), explain dis/ability as home/school discontinuity.

2.7.1 Home/School Discontinuity

Hicks (2001), in her case study of a boy called Jake, illustrates the cultural divide that exists between the middle class culture of school and the value set within a working class home. She highlights the discontinuity that can exist between home and school with regard to literacy learning for a young student. As a result the boundaries between school reading practice and cultural practices that shaped his life as a young reader at home were difficult for Jake to negotiate and consequently he becomes disaffected at an early age. The ecocultural activity of Jake's home needed to be inextricably linked to schooling. The fact that it was not caused discontinuity and marginalised this young student.

McDermott (2001) observes Adam, a nine-year-old boy, and his peers in their learning environments. Adam, the subject of the research, 'suffers' from an official label, he has a learning disability. The world of school is organised to make Adam's disability visible. Adam 'stood out as a problem' in contexts that were 'school-like'. Consequently, in school-like environments Adam presents with perceived deficits, his label confirming the perception for other actors in this world or field. According to Hall (2008) identity is occasioned in the everyday. Johnston (1973) cited by Hall (2008) states that 'identity is what you can say you are according to what they say you can be'. Many people are involved in Adam's and Jake's 'problem'. Mc Dermot reminds us that Adam can only be 'disabled through his interactions with others' (2001: 66). Adam's LD is 'all over the classroom…everyone stands in some relation to it… LD is distributed' (2001, p. 67).

In Ireland, Conway (2002, p. 63) advocates for 'rigorous critical engagement and reflection on the nature of whose knowledge is taught in school, and how and why it is taught', which echoes the seminal views of Illich articulated in 1971 (see Section 2.6). It is clear from Adam's and Jake's learning environment that schools/classrooms are not neutral. The two powerful case-studies highlight difference in status and prestige, knowledge and experience of the actors within this world. It points to a way of being that can affect the ways in which school communities interact with each other. De Valenzeula et al. (2000) in their paper on the relevance of sociocultural theory to professional development in special education agree stating that

> it is a reality in today's society that schools do not treat all students equally. Not all students have an equal opportunity for access to best practice many students…. carry labels of a disability that may trigger stereotypes and inappropriate assumptions of an inability to perform academically. Some families are viewed by school personnel as less capable…
>
> (p. 113)

Significantly, Avaramidis and Norwich (2002) argue that there is 'an interdependence of the individual and the social… [consequently] attitudes should not be viewed as solely personal, but arising out of interactions with others in the system' (p.144) (e.g., the school and its culture)'. A sociocultural perspective urges schools to reflect upon the home culture of their students and that which exists within the school context in order to protect against 'home-school discontinuities', schools viewing some children and parents as 'others' and parents perspectives also viewing school as 'another world'. In line with Wenger (1998), and socio-cultural theorists generally, Rogoff (1994, 1995) highlights that all development is based on participation in sociocultural activity, embedded in specific social and cultural settings, which comprise one's ecocultural niche. Harry et al. (1999) contend that getting to know this 'ecocultural activity setting' provides a basis for working within the family's value system rather than imposing predetermined or stereotypic beliefs about what is culturally normative and valued. In order to move away from the 'blame game' and the 'pathologisation' of the LSES classes (Valencia, 1999; 2010), a more *sociocultural* approach to teaching and learning provides a forum to position children in environments where they *feel smart*. In contrast to traditional approaches, such as, behaviourism; and Piaget's theory on cognition, which limits development to stages and ages, and remains within the focus of how smart are you; socio-cultural theories assume that learning itself is a social act and is culturally rooted within 'communities of learners (Browne, 1997; Lave and Wenger, 1998, Rogoff, 2003). It introduces a new way of thinking about intelligence as it asks not how smart are you but in what contexts are you smart?

In summary, the genesis of disproportionate representation is located beyond the borders of special education and requires a solid understanding of the *intersection* of culture, learning, disability, and the socio-historical and sociocultural constitution of educational processes and outcomes (Artiles et al. 2011; Artilles, 2011; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Gilborn, 2008; Klinger et al. 2005; Valencia, 2010 ; Zion and Blanchett, 2011). Two issues are associated with the persistence of culturally, socially and linguistically diverse

overrepresentation in special education: namely the issues related to understanding the complexity of the problem and also difficulties associated with the use of research to address it. The current study sets out to redress this latter issue in some small way by bringing the intersectionality of special education placement and social class centre-stage.

2.8 From Deconstruction to Reconstruction

What must be assured is that special needs education has a perception of disability that functions as a platform for identifying difficulties and differences that do not *disempower or* dis/able people, as the individual psycho-medical approach has been accused of doing (Sim et al. 1998; Valencia, 2010). The aim of deconstructing inclusive education and perspectives on disability, therefore, is to clear a path for special educators and educators generally to *reconstruct* inclusive education in a way that is consistent with the ideals of democracy, equity, equality and excellence, to reconstruct schooling in culturally responsive ways (Artiles et al., 2011; Klingner, 2005; Skrtic, 1991a, b and 1995; Zion and Blanchett, 2011). Skrtic (1991a) explains that it is due to the resilience of the psycho-medial model in school culture and discourse that students who fail within the rational, functionalist bureaucracy are thought to be pathological. If alternative perspectives, influenced by more sociocultural approaches, are put forward in such traditional organisations, these could violate the prevailing paradigm, constructing uncertainty leading to what Dewey describes as a crisis in the field of practice. According to Dewey, crises can lead to positive developments. Such development, according to Skrtic and Sailor (1996) depends on the way in which the professions *reconstruct* their knowledge, discourses and practices. Reconstructing the professions is fundamentally concerned with making choices among possible truths, or knowledge in which their discourses and practices are grounded. Dewey (1925/1981a) noted with regard to such decisions:

> Selective emphasis, choice, is inevitable whenever reflection occurs. This is not an evil. Deception comes only when the presence and operation of choice is concealed, disguised, denied.
>
> (p. 34).

In this regard, he suggests, pragmatists are participatory democrats; they promote the democratic values of liberty, equality and, above all, community (Dewey, 1917/1981b,

1931/1989). The affinity between participatory democracy and pragmatism is that both are premised on dialogical discourse, on equal participation by all in the developmental conversation of humankind (Dewey, 1927/1988b). Moreover, in his response to the historical crisis of the early 20th century, Dewey (1927/1988b) explained that the transformation to participatory democracy required the revitalization of *local* democratic communities because, in its final actuality, social reconstruction 'is accomplished in face to-face relationships by means of direct "give and take"'(p. 371).

Significantly, in Skrtic's (1991) reconstruction of public education draws on the concept of 'give and take' through voice, participation and inclusion. Skrtic highlights what he describes as a moment of possible truth in his deconstruction and reconstruction stating that 'as long as resources are constant and students differ, no teacher, whether in a general or special education classroom, can escape the necessary choice between higher class means (excellence) and the narrower class variance (equity)' He articulates the view that specialisation and professionalisation hold a finite repertoire of standard practices for a corresponding set of infinite diverse needs producing a situation where atypical students must be forced into the available repertoire (a problem of excellence) or out of the classroom through pull-out or withdrawal practices (a problem of equity). Human diversity is inevitable, resources are limited. This issue is dilemmatic. An adhocracy, which Skrtic (1987; 1991a, b; 1995; 2005) proposes, is a group of reflective, problem-solvers who take an educational issue and reflectively derive best possible solutions.

2.8.1 Adhocracy

Skrtic (1987) presented what he described as the best example of adhocracy in the 1960's, the Apollo Program of NASA's Manned Space flight Centre. It could not use a *standard programme* or repertoire of skills to put man on the moon because there was none. Instead, it had to create and recreate in an adhoc basis as it went along. Similarly, teachers must be prepared for the 'non-standard', not only for cognitive diversity in their classrooms but also for social and cultural diversity (Levin et al., 2012). According to Darling-Hammond (2010) teachers need targeted preparation and support in reaching students whose social, economic and cultural background may differ from their own. Darling-Hammond reminds that this is not simply the provision of targeted initial teacher input but also depends on a commitment to providing teachers with adequate time, ample resources, and an appropriate

workload so that they can become collaborative, self-directed professionals, the teacher which Skrtic's adhocracy demands.

In the adhocracy, the prevailing bureaucratic paradigm is questioned and this event, caused by an actor acting on a different set of values, beliefs and assumptions can convince others to adopt such an alternative perspective. Thus, the grounding assumptions that influence values, beliefs and assumptions can create altered paradigm of interaction. As noted by O'Brien and Ó Fathaigh and cited earlier (see subsection, 2.2.4.1) *habitus*, while resilient to change is not static, if teachers can engage in critical pragmatism to deconstruct such individual and collective habitus. According to Skrtic (1995) schools that operate more effectively and equitably do so because they operate more like adhocracies than bureaucracies.

To summarise, it could be argued that Skrtic's (1991) restructuring proposal represents an integrated theoretical framework between critical social theory and organizational theory, leading to a more sociocultural perspective of disability, which holds significant implications for inclusive policy and practice. Such a perspective serves to address the criticisms of paradigms highlighted in section 2.6, that in isolation all paradigms are reductionist, aiming to explain the complex phenomena of disability in terms of a 'single, unidirectional model of causation' (Skidmore, 1998). In keeping with Skrtic (1991; 1995), Darling-Hammond (2010) and Zion and Blanchett, (2011) call for a paradigm shift in education policy that will ensure equity and equality. An integrated paradigm, such as that offered by Skrtic (1995; 1996; 2005) serves as a syncretic blending of existing paradigms and focuses on the context of practice, not just as an organization but as a cultural activity setting.

2.9 Conclusion

It is widely agreed that a strong theoretical basis is necessary to the understanding of special education and inclusion in postmodern society. Following the advice of Clarke et al. in 1998 and Schon (1983), the researcher is conscious that any form of purposeful action implies a theory. In any research there must be a set of assumptions of the nature that if 'this part of the phenomenal world is such that action of the sort y is likely to produce

outcome x' (Clarke et al., 1998. p.2). These assumptions are theoretical and they move a study beyond a simple description of a model or observed phenomena towards an explanation of how those phenomena come to be, how they interact and how, if acted upon they may result in positive social change (Clarke et al., 1998; Benjamin, 2002).

This chapter set out to highlight Ball's (1994) continuous policy cycle as the conceptual framework for this study. Ball's work has been highly significant in broadening the terrain of education policy studies from the macro level to also include the micro level within individual schools and classrooms. Ozga (1990, p. 360) also emphasises the importance of bringing together 'structural, macro level analysis of education systems and education policies and micro level investigation. More recently, Ball et al. (2012) continue to advise that analysis must explore the *overall* and the *localised outcomes* of policy, incorporating a micro focus on the multiple (often contradictory) policy practices within individual institutions.

This study, by adopting critical pragmatism within the conceptual framework outlined contributes to an international body of policy analysis on inclusive education. It describes special educational policymaking as a discursive struggle, 'a power/knowledge interplay constituted within a realm of contradictory beliefs, values and discourses that frame the context within which the education of disabled children is envisioned and realised' Liasidou, 2009, p. 1). The argument put forward in this study suggests that the implementation site (Bowe, Ball, Gold, 1992), i.e., the school, is a highly complex arena. The analysis of the impact of the GAM policy must therefore be complex, employing a variety of theoretical perspectives, analysing multiple levels of governance and organization within the policy cycle as presented in Figure 2.2. Ball (2006, p. 43) suggests that a 'toolbox of diverse concepts and theories is required to analyse policy, which he refers to as an applied sociology rather than a pure one. Liasidou (2005) agrees, stating that analysis of inclusive education policy should take place within an 'eclectic conceptual framework'. The current thesis sets out to engage in this analytical task. Chapter Three presents the methodological approach and methods used to execute this task. The chapter provides a rationale for their adoption.

Chapter 3 Methodology

> …it seems to me imperative to make explicit the intentions and procedural principles that we have put into practice in the research project whose findings we present…The reader will thus be able to reproduce in the reading of the texts the work of both construction and understanding that produced them…
>
> (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 607)

3.1 Introduction

The complexity of inclusion merits consistent and continuous examination, which provides the central rationale for this work as outlined in Chapter One. The various factors affecting inclusive education policy both nationally and internationally were explored in Chapter Two. In the spirit of a growing commitment to a more inclusive approach to educating all children, this study investigates the views of key stakeholders in the context of practice, in particular. The study aimed to examine GAM as set out in the document *Department of Education and Science Special Education Circular 02/05,* (DES, 2005) within the legislative context of the EPSEN Act (Government of Ireland, 2004). The intention of the funding model is to support inclusive education. Therefore, the research is an examination of a particular form of education policy. It is a case study of the GAM in mainstream primary schools. The following questions were addressed as outlined in Chapter One:

1. In the context of the GAM in primary schools as a means to resolve the pupil need/resource match dilemma, to what extent is inclusive education advanced?
2. In deconstructing special education and constructing 'inclusion', are we reconstructing special education?
3. What are the consequences of the GAM policy?

In considering these major questions, more fine-grained issues were addressed in order 'to track significant and compelling narratives to '…explore the definitional contours of the policy…. to pursue discrepant explanations...', which was necessary 'to understand how policies affect the lives and learning of the children they are intended to help' (McSpadden, McNeil and Coppola, 2006, p. 681). These sub questions framed the mining in the field and were as follows:

- How are students selected for support?
- Who has the power/agency to order students in schools

- How do teachers and principals consider and understand disability?
- Could the category, high incidence (HI) disabilities, be a social construct? If so,
- Is special education part of the problem, since the understanding of dis/ability is an important background for provision and special arrangements?
- Whom does the GAM support?
- Is there evidence of an under or overrepresentation of a particular socio-economic grouping being supported by the model?
- If so, why?
- Is there a Resource Teaching Hour model (RTHM)/ GAM dilemma?
- If so, why?

The study took place at three mainstream, state funded primary schools located in the south west of Ireland. Purposive sampling (Creswell, 2008) was adopted. All three schools were self-identified as practicing inclusive education and had school policies on SEN and inclusion that were collected for analysis. The study sought to understand the transactions of the GAM and its inclusive education policy intentions and practices in the varying contexts of the policy cycle (Ball, 1994), with particular emphasis on the context of practice, seeking the perspectives of the participant teachers and principals

McSpadden McNeil and Coppola (2006, p.681) assert that good policy impact studies 'encompass not only the official versions and intended impacts but also unofficial versions that take into account such factors as varied definitions of what constitutes accurate data, unequal power relations, and cultural interpretations'. The research set out to unearth the assumptions and definitions embedded within the policy document, Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005), to deconstruct central concepts in special and inclusive education, to analyse how those who enact policy in primary schools understand the text and respond to it, and to investigate its impacts on children and their experience of inclusive education.

Initially, the three sites where the case of the GAM was investigated, a boys' school, a girls' school and a mixed gender school are described and the participants are introduced briefly, in the section entitled Fieldwork. The next section discusses further the conceptual framework for this policy analysis as outlined in Chapter One and described in Chapter Two. Section 3.4 presents the research paradigm, with its epistemological and ontological implications, which offers a rationale for the chosen methodology. Here, the methodology

and methodological instruments utilized for this study are outlined. Semi-structured interviews are discussed in detail as this was the main instrument of investigation. Analysis of quantitative data, used to triangulate emerging themes, is also discussed. The data analysis process, including the use of NVivo 9 (QSR International, 2010) for transcription and coding, are described in section 3.6. The implication of the authorial stance is acknowledged as the researcher is the main methodological tool. Finally, the last two sections consider the ethical obligations of the study and the overall reliability and validity of the research.

Numerous studies with a policy implementation focus have documented the importance of local contexts in understanding the variable effects of policy (see McDonnell and Elmore 1987; Hargreaves, 1994; McSpadden McNeill and Copella, 2006; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Therefore, the GAM is examined as an instrumental case study (see section 3.4) in three sites, comparing knowledge claims among actors with different social locations in an attempt to situate local action and interpretation within a broader cultural, historical and political investigation (Vavrus and Bartlett, 2006).

3.2 Fieldwork

The study took place at three mainstream schools located in Ireland. Informed consent was requested from each Board of Management (see Appendix B). Participation in the study was voluntary, which was outlined to all principals (see Appendix C) and all teachers (see Appendix D) in writing. The three schools in question were within the same geographical location. The schools were typical of those in a mixed urban setting with children coming from diverse social and cultural backgrounds but represent three distinct types of school from a gender perspective:

- All Boys' Primary
- All Girls' Primary
- Mixed Primary

The student population in all three schools was diverse, representing, to a greater or lesser extent, a wide socioeconomic spectrum. In terms of SEN, two schools identified *more than a*

third of the children as having learning needs that were served by the GAM or the RTH model. All three schools self-identified as practicing inclusion.

Semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis were the two qualitative research methods employed in the enquiry to help uncover the most valuable factors (Bryman, 2006) that contribute to the enactment of the GAM and inclusive education policy generally. Qualitative interviews (individual, n=14) were conducted within these primary school contexts with:

- Principals
- Class Teachers
- LS/Resource Teachers.

The study sought to understand inclusive education policy implementation from the perspectives of the participants. The purpose of interviewing was to uncover their perceptions of inclusion practice, and the GAM as a funding model to support inclusive education, from their experience. It should be noted that two of the principals, Eibhlín and Mary, were full time classroom teachers at the time of the study. The third principal, Mairead, in School C, the Mixed School, had been a full-time classroom teacher before taking on her senior management role as administrative principal. She did highlight however, that she but still involved in classroom teaching for varying reasons.

A common semi-structured interview schedule was developed around seven areas of the study (see Appendix E). National and school policy documents were used in the documentary analysis. The sample encompassed the Education Act (1999), the EPSEN Act (2004) and the key policy implementation document *Special Education Circular SP ED 2/05* (DES, 2005) (see Appendix A). The relevant SEN and inclusive education policies from the three schools were also collected and analysed. The documents, therefore, provided information about the respective schools' aims and provision of support for inclusion practice and acted as a triangulation to the views of the teachers and principal teachers interviewed. Moreover, triangulation of data was complemented by gathering quantitative demographic data that was subsequently mapped to the Haase Deprivation Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012) to better understand the GAM caseload. Triangulation was a validity procedure used throughout this study for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories. The next subsection introduces the three sites in which the GAM as a case was studied.

3.2.1 School A: Boys' School

The Boys' school had a population of 98 boys. At the time of the interviews (formal, informal follow-up interviews, conversations to member check there were four classroom teachers including a teaching principal. It had three learning support/resource teachers. The following names are fictions but serve to introduce the individual participants, vignettes from whom will be presented in Chapter Four.

Table 3.1 School A: Boys' School

Boys' School Population	98
Principal	Emer
Teacher(s) of Infant Class(es)	Nuala
Middle Classes' Teacher	Eibhlín
LS/ Resource Teacher	Deirdre Fiona
% from LSES	31%
% identified with SEN	GAM 22.4% RTH Model 15.6% Total 38%

The school had 25 teaching hours under GAM and 41 hours under the RTH model of funding.

3.2.2 School B: Girls' School

The Girls' school had a population of 105. There were four class teachers, which included the teaching principal. There were two learning support/resource teachers, the second teacher was shared with another school. The following participants were interviewed:

Table 3.2 School B: Girls' School

Boys' School Population	98
Principal	Mary
Infant Teacher(s)	Aisling
Middle Classes' Teacher	Dora
LS/ Resource Teacher	Ciara
% from LSES	31%
% identified with SEN	GAM 27% RTH Model 7.6% Total 34%

This girls' school had 17.4 GAM hours and 30 hours under the RTH model of funding. The significant difference between the boys' school and the girls is that the boy's school had a greater number of teaching hours under the GAM due to its weighting system (see 2.3.2). The boys' school had double the number of boys' identified with LI incidence disabilities. Follow-up telephone interviews for member checking explained this difference in relation to LI disabilities relating to student behaviour, which reflects the literature with regard to boys being more lightly to be referred for assessment, particularly in relation to behaviour (Banks and McCoy, 2011).

3.2.3 School C: Mixed School

School C was a much larger school in the same location with a population of 418 boys and girls. At the time of the study, the school had sixteen classroom teachers, three learning support teachers, one resource teacher and one resource teacher for the Travelers. During the course of the research process, the school lost the latter post and supporting students from this background was amalgamated into the GAM caseload (see 2.3.2). The category of teacher interviewed was similar in all three schools. The following teachers participated:

Table 3.3 School C: Mixed School

Boys' School Population	98
Principal	Mairead
Infant Teacher(s)	Vivien
Middle Classes' Teacher	Ellen
LS/ Resource Teacher	Molly Áine
% from LSES	12%
% identified with SEN	GAM 13% RTH Model 1% Total 14%

Interestingly, by comparison to its neighboring schools, 12% of the overall population came from LSES backgrounds. This represents a significant difference in school profile, albeit that the schools are in the same geographical area. The three schools are within 0.5km radius. This school had 60 hours under GAM and 25 resource teaching hours, i.e., one full post. Although this school had a population four times greater than the boys' school, it had only 25 Resource teaching hours when compared to 41 hours in the boys' school.

This demographic information was discovered while interviewing the three principals and analysing school policy documents, which had significant implications for the need to analyse such information quantitatively. There were also ethical implications; this particular quantitative process involved requesting specific addresses for the pupils on the GAM and the RTH model caseload. The detail of this approach is discussed in Section 3.5 and 3.6 under quantitative data methodology. Section 3.8 describes the ethical implications that were considered.

The theoretical framing of the study and the paradigm chosen to undertake the research were of paramount importance in addressing the research questions that had arisen from the puzzlement described in Chapter One (Section 1.2), which provided the rationale for

the investigation. While Chapter Two described the policy cycle (Ball, 2004) and education policy generally, the next section elucidates on the chosen theoretical framework for the study.

3.3 Theoretical Framework: Policy Analysis

This study emphasises the linkages between critical policy analysis and critical social research, and is interested not only in what is going on and why, but in revealing social inequality so that something can be done about it. As discussed in Chapter Two, the policy cycle framework (Bowe, Ball, and Gold, 1992; Ball, 1994), as illustrated in Figure 3.1 below, provides an analytical frame to facilitate greater understanding of how the GAM policy was devised, how it is enacted, and to construct from data, its impacts and consequences for students and for policy reform. Within the cycle or feedback loop, one context can inform the next, which has the potential for 'informed revisions' within each context of the loop.

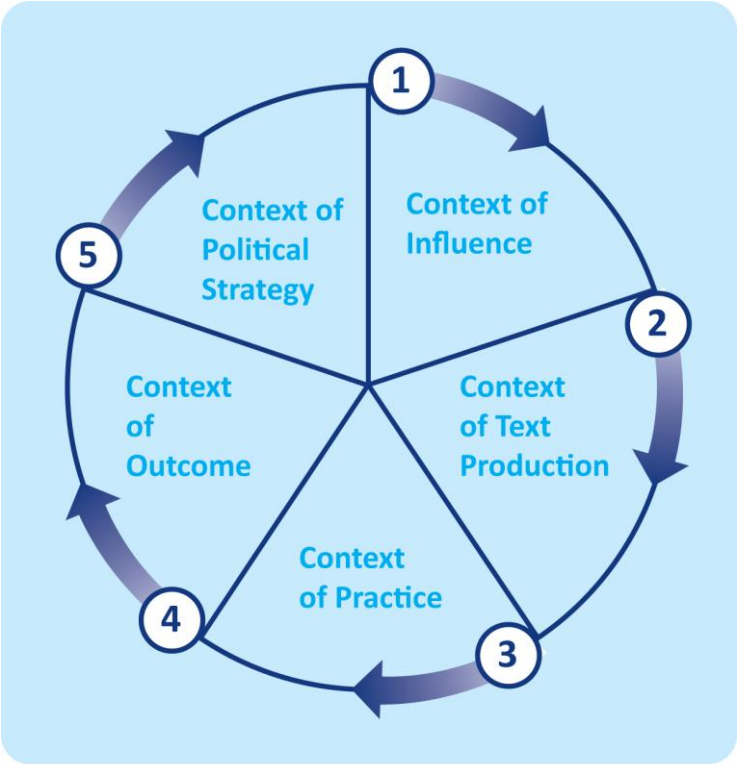


Figure 3.1 Policy cycle

The research questions were developed inductively from the literature review as well as from the professional experiences of the researcher as an educator and an interest in the phenomenon. Often in policy and policy analysis, certain key stakeholders are ignored while certain others hold significant power. Aware of this power, this policy analysis set out to uncover the continuous and consistent interplay between structure and agency (Archer, 1982; 2010; ball, 1994; 2003; 2012). The researcher appreciates that each of the three cycles outlined in Figure 3.1 are contexts in which action occurs, actors are agentive, while recognising also, that all contexts are bound by structures and therefore involve compromise. There is an acknowledgement that constraint exists within structures that are in themselves formed by agents. In this regard, the concept of policy as cycle is a useful framework.

The research questions concerned themselves in particular with the three contexts set out in Table 3.4 below, with a particular focus on the context of practice, the small worlds where big policies are implemented.

Table 3.4 Policy cycle contexts (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992)

Context of Influence Is where Interest Groups struggle over the construction of policy discourses and where key policy concepts are established.
Context of Policy Text Production Is where Texts represent policies. Texts have to be read in relation to time and the site of production, and with other relevant texts
Context of Practice Is where policy is subject to interpretation and recreation

In-depth analysis of the findings and emerging themes considered Ball's (1994) extended version of the policy cycle (see Table 3.5 below) as findings have implications for students in the context of outcomes and suggests the potential for rethinking in future context(s).

Table 3.5 Policy cycle, extended contexts (Ball, 1994)

Context of Outcomes Is where the impact of policies on existing social inequalities is seen
Context of Political Strategy Is where one identifies political activities which might tackle such inequalities

In keeping with Ozga (2000), Ball (1994) and McSpadden McNeil and Coppola (2006) note that good, valuable policy analysis needs to recognise that when policy is implemented on the ground, things can become far more complex in the activity of lived experience. School management and teachers, can interpret definitions, guidelines and regulations in differing ways. Therefore, it is critical to analyse the inner perceptions of these key actors, to listen to the voice articulating the processes within the context of practice, to really unveil the impact of policy on students, to reveal their lived experience in the context of outcomes (See Table 3.5 above).

A social profession must have a way to order the complex world in which it lives. A paradigm provides such a framework, an accepted way to view and interpret the world (Kuhn, 1970).

3.4 Research Paradigm

The work of Thomas Kuhn (1962, 1970) has had a major influence on the concept of paradigm and paradigm shifts over the past thirty years. Kuhn (1962) revolutionised the common understanding of scientific investigation. An accepted paradigm is what Kuhn (1970) describes as essential for scientific enquiry because it unrandomises nature enough to allow scientists to know what data are, what methods and tools are necessary to retrieve them, and what concepts or theories are relevant to their interpretation. It is noteworthy that while Kuhn reserved his conception of paradigms and paradigm a shift exclusively for the physical sciences, his influential work has extended to the social sciences.

Lincoln and Guba (2000) identified three questions that help define a paradigm:

1 The ontological question asks, "What is the nature of reality?"
2 The epistemological question asks "What is the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the would-be-known?"
3 The methodological question asks, "How can the knower go about obtaining the desired knowledge and understandings?"

O'Sullivan (2005) describes an educational policy paradigm as one which embraces 'cultural forms which govern the substance and processes of educational policy making' (p. 10). It involves, he states, regulating what is defined as a meaningful problem, how it is to be thematised and described, what is to be considered worthy as data, which is to be recognised as a legitimate participant and with what status, and how the policy process is to be enacted, realised and evaluated.

The current post-structural study is framed within a *critical pragmatic paradigm*. It incorporates elements of systematic design, emerging design and the constructivist design into the research. In accordance with post-structuralism, the study draws on critical theory which assumes that knowledge is subjective. Critical theorists generally, view society as structured by class and status, as well as by race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. They see marginalised groups as oppressed by a patriarchal capitalist society. The power relations implicit in the data are unpicked in this study with a specific focus on social structures and the constraint/agency interplay.

3.4.1 Ontology and Epistemology

The ontological stance in this research relates to establishing a theory of what exists. In keeping with the nature of the critical pragmatic paradigm, it was understood from the outset that a variety of mental constructions would be voiced and gathered in the research process and that perceptions of reality could change throughout the process of the study. Schwadt (2000, p. 197) describes such constructivist thinking in the following way:

> In a fairly unremarkable sense, we are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge. Most of us would agree that knowing is not passive – a simple imprinting of sense data on the mind – but active mind does something with those impressions, at the very least forms abstractions or concepts. In this sense, constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it.

The goal of this study is to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge. This present study is concerned with the theoretical and conceptual aspects of

policy but it also considers the wider aspects of politics, power and influence in accordance with post structuralism. Pragmatists avoid the use of metaphysical concepts such as truth and reality, which is in keeping with a post-structural stance. 'What is healthy about a pragmatic social science of mixed and multiple method is… it allows a number of projects to be undertaken without the need to identify invariant prior knowledges, laws, or rules governing what is recognised as 'true' or 'valid'. 'Only results count' (Merten (2005, p. 27). It was felt that a reality of policy would emerge through the process of the overall study, constructed by the participants. The study was rooted in what Borko et al. (2007) describe as an *interpretive research genre.*

These authors present four genres that have been central in empirical education policy research (see Figure 3. 2 below).

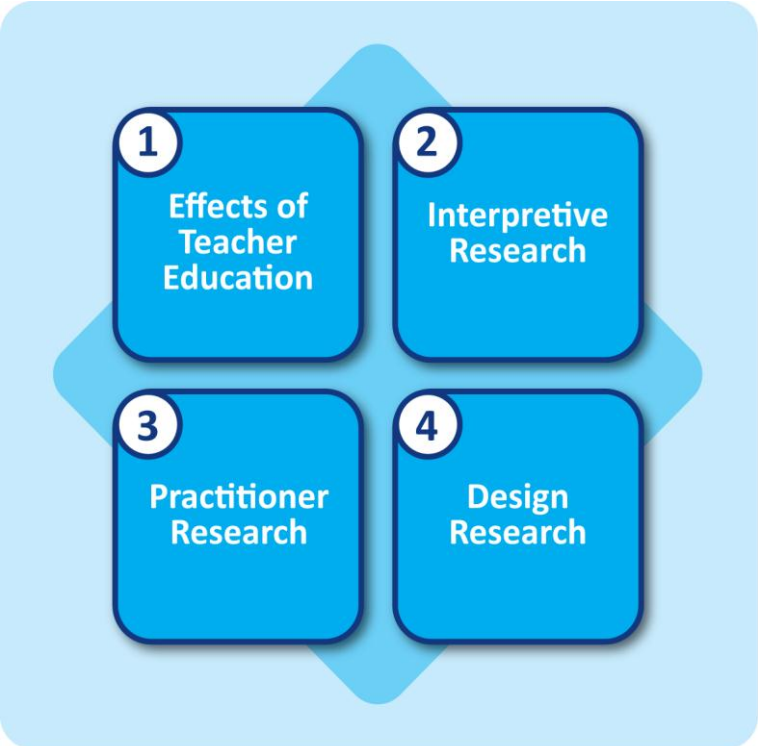


Figure 3.2 Four genres of educational research

According to Borko et al. (2007), interpretive research is a search for local meanings. These authors suggest that interpretive studies have given the field 'an image of teaching as a complex intellectual endeavour that unfolds in an equally complex sociocultural context' (2007, p. 4), a view supported by the work of McSpadden McNeil and Coppola (2006) cited

earlier. These types of policy studies are about teachers making sense of the 'sociocultural organisation of the classroom and the learning and development of students whose lived lives and experiences [are] different from their own' (Borko et al. 2007, p.4).

As a researcher in this study, the inquirer and the inquired-into were interlocked in an interactive process, one influencing the other. Ontologically, the aim of the research is to understand the complex worlds of lived experience of key stakeholders in inclusive education policy implementation, that is, teachers. The research privileges 'insider' perspectives (Borko et al. 2007). The researcher set out to capture local variations through fine-grained descriptions of local activity settings and through the consistent interpretations of how the actors make sense of their socio-cultural contexts and activities. Therefore, the data collection process was interactive and personal. The concept of objectivity was replaced by conformability (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). As a parent, teacher, and educator of teachers, the researcher does not make the claim of objectivity in the sense of personal distance. Rather, validity of claim was ensured through analysis of multiple sources of data gathered by the mixed methods chosen which were influenced by the paradigm and research genre.

Epistemologically, the chosen paradigm, critical pragmatism, emphasises that 'research is the product of the values of the researcher and cannot be independent of them' (Mertens, 2005, p. 13). 'Rather than positioning oneself as a distanced observer, relational researcher, or socially and historically contextualized researcher, the pragmatist is free to study what interests… is of value.., study it in the different ways that [I] deem appropriate, and utilize the results in ways that can bring about positive consequences within [my] value system' (Merten, 2005, p. 27, citing (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p. 30). In keeping with post-structural theorists, the researcher aimed to reveal the issues of power and privilege, of structure and constraint. In accordance with critical pragmatism, the criterion for judging the affordances of the paradigm and its methods, with its implied relationship between the researcher and the researched, is whether or not the process achieves its purpose, i.e., addressing the research questions with a view to influencing more positive social consequences for inclusive education

3.4.2 Affordances and Constraints of the Paradigm Choice

The study brought together 'structural, macro-level analysis of education systems and education policies and micro-level investigation especially that which takes account of

people's perceptions and experiences (Ball, 1994, p. 14). It recognised that policy is not just about fundamental concepts in the field, but that it is also about processes and outcomes (Ball, 1994, p. 15). Therefore, the choice of paradigm was informed by a need to move between the macro and micro levels, from classroom and whole school to a systemic level and back again to the coal-face, at all times seeking to capture the voices, perspectives and experiences of the many actors. This particular paradigm affords such a quest.

The research concerned itself with the contexts of influence and text production of Circular 02/05 (DES 2005). It focused, in particular, on the context of practice of policy implementation (primary schools). An interpretative genre lends itself towards particularisability, not generalisability (Erickson, 1986), focusing on descriptions of unique settings, and interpretations of how the actors make sense of policy as text, discourse and action in their individual 'sociocultural contexts and activities' ((Borko et al., 2007, p. 5). The study sought to privilege the insiders' perspectives. Participants' voices and discourse are at the core of this research. An interpretive genre affords this type of investigation. The following principles, outlined in Figure 3.3 were adhered to when designing the research study.

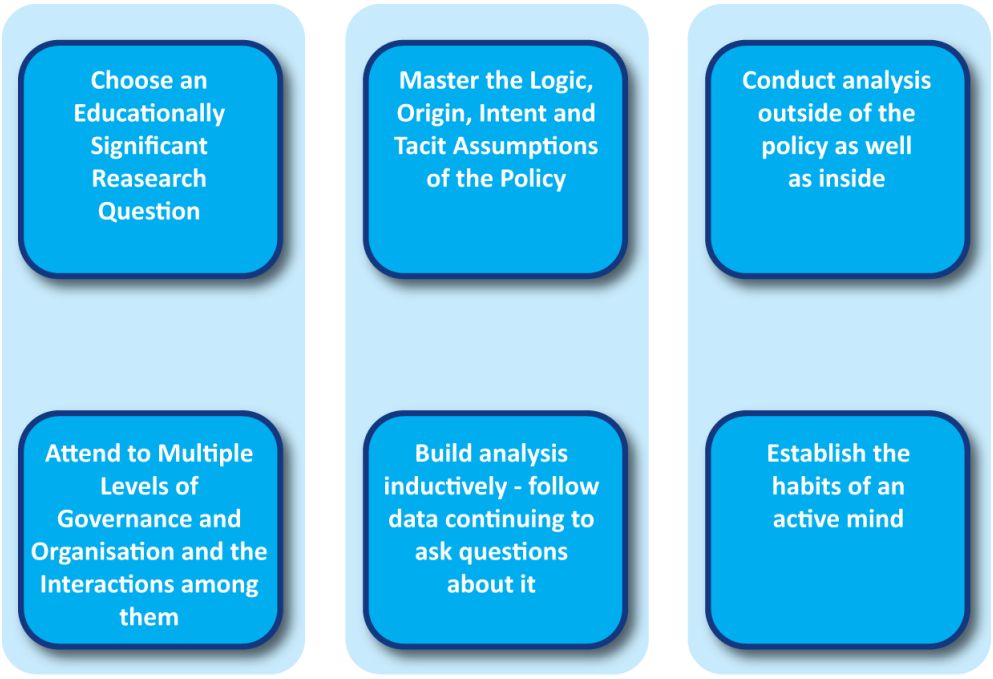


Figure 3.3 Principles of educational research (Borko et al., 2007)

As illustrated in Figure 3.3, an educationally significant case, the GAM and its transactions, was chosen to investigate. The study aimed, at all times, to attend to multiple levels of governance and organisation and the interaction between them, while building analysis inductively. The main affordance of an interpretative genre is that it facilitates knowledge being constructed *inter* the *views* of the interviewer and the interviewees (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The research, therefore, was predominantly qualitative. Qualitative advocates such as Guba and Lincoln (1982) place high priority on direct interpretations of events and experiences and lower priority on the interpretation of quantitative data.

3.4.4 Qualitative Studies in Inclusive/ Special Education

Qualitative research has a long and distinguished history in the human disciplines. The work of the "Chicago school" in the 1920s and 1930s established its importance in the study of human phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The work of Dewey, in particular, exemplified the significance of qualitative approaches in other social and behavioural sciences such as education. In recent years, qualitative research in the field of social science has risen in prominence, 'qualitative methods – ranging from participant observation to interviews to discourse analysis – have since the 1980s become key methods of social research' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 11). Qualitative research has become a general term under which we 'subsume the range of types of studies within this tradition' (Malone, 2010, citing Eisner and Peshkin, 1990, p. 1). The qualitative genre is broad, complex and ever increasing and therefore, according to Brantlinger et al. (2005), it is difficult to present one clear definition. These authors present a definition that is flexible enough to be inclusive of qualitative genres: 'a systematic approach to understanding qualities, or the essential nature, of a phenomenon within a particular context' (p. 195). They explain that confusion about qualitative research is partly due to the fact that such approaches developed simultaneously in separate fields. For example, psychology refers to symbolic interaction while philosophy may use the term phenomenology. Research in anthropology is increasingly associated with ethnography which may be described as naturalistic enquiry in education or life story or oral history in history. Discourse analysis and interpretive work, common in cultural studies may be described as conversation analysis in sociology and sociolinguistics. Brantlinger et al. (2005) suggest that as the boundaries between disciplines blur it has become clear that these distinctive terms have similar meanings and are now often used

interchangeably. They present a synthesis of types and descriptions of qualitative research as outlined in Figure 3.4 below:



Figure 3.4 Types and descriptions of qualitative research

Multiple design and methodological options are represented under the qualitative research umbrella as outlined in Figure 3.4 above, representing post-positivism, feminism, critical theory and post-structuralism (Malone, 2010). While each of these theoretical perspectives may necessitate differing ethical standpoints for the researcher, Codd (1988, p.235) has argued that for some time

> the field of policy analysis has been fraught with argument over its purpose and methods… a widely accepted view, however, takes policy analysis to be a multidisciplinary field that cuts across existing specialisations to employ whatever theoretical or methodological approach is most relevant to the issue or problem under investigation' .

The key point is that qualitative designs do produce science-based evidence that can inform policy and practice as such studies involve empiricism, knowledge derived from sense experience and/or careful observation; knowledge production, about perspectives, settings and techniques; particular research skills and tools, systematic use of particular qualitative methods; the production of scientific evidence, valid information about the physical, material, and social worlds; the coherent articulation of results, papers presenting findings from qualitative studies which have implications for the field (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 3) concur:

> Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experiences; introspection; life story; interview… that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives.

The choice of research methods depends upon what you are trying to find out (Silverman, 2011). Silverman suggests that if the researcher wishes to explore every-day behaviour then qualitative methods may be favoured. The main strength in adopting a predominantly qualitative approach to this study was that it explored attitudes and how attitudes relate to what 'gets done', in the implementation of policy, i.e., in the context of practice (Silverman, 2011). Therefore, the study used naturally occurring data that was dealt with in a critical pragmatic paradigm. Qualitative research was used inductively and deductively. For example, as a researcher and former teacher, personal experience to the phenomenon being studied was brought to the table. Therefore, some findings were anticipated others were unearthed while researching the phenomena.

Central limitations of this type of research are also acknowledged (Borko et al., 2007). Firstly, there is the lack of 'shared conceptual frameworks and designs, which makes it a challenging task to aggregate findings and to draw comparisons' (p. 5). They also acknowledge a second limitation; the phenomena described usually focuses primarily on the perspectives of teachers. Such acknowledgement provided the rationale for the critical pragmatist to consider an approach to triangulate data, in order to produce warranted claims (Dewey, 1947) As a pragmatist, the researcher was aware that the blending of quantitative and qualitative research paradigms, could lead to the 'incompatibility thesis' (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) and should not be 'mixed'. However, Petrou (2007 b.) contends that a 'false dualism' has been created between the quantitative and qualitative paradigms and that the differences are exaggerated (Petrou, 2007). While criticised in some circles, pluralism in social science research is now considered to be acceptable, if not desirable (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Jones (2007) verifies the latter view, proposing that in educational research there has been pressure towards using the two methods alongside each other. It is thought that a mixed-method approach can be optimally fruitful in answering important research questions (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

> ...multi-methodological approach to studying issues in teacher education offers the best hope for producing knowledge that is useful for policy and practice.
>
> (Cochran-Smith and Zeichner, 2005, p. 743)

Influenced by Cochran-Smith and Zeichner's contention, a multi-methodological approach to study 'the issue' was adopted finally.

3.4.5 Mixed Method Research Design

The use of mixed-method research design is becoming increasingly popular, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2006) 'because many situations are best investigated using a variety of methods' (p. 27). They highlight that such an approach can show the results (quantitative) and explain why it was obtained (qualitative). The next section describes the design frames and methods adopted in this mixed methods research to address the questions posed.

3.5 Methodology

'Methodology is the strategy, plan of action, process, or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice of methods to the desired outcomes' (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). The focus of this research was to engage with and listen to the voices of some of the main stakeholder in the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools, to elicit a reality of inclusion in practice. Sikes, Lawson and Parker (2007) state that 'understandings and actions are mediated by personal, subjective and emotional experiences rooted in the things that have happened to people in the contexts they inhabit' (p. 358).

Theoretical paradigms, ontology, epistemology and the nature of knowledge a researcher seeks to produce influence the choice of methodology. When epistemological considerations guide the selection of data collection and analysis methods used the adoption of the method produces knowledge that is both adequate and legitimate. This research is a case study of the GAM as case study researchers may focus on a program, event, or activity involving individuals. (Stake, 1995). There are no procedures that are associated exclusively with the case study, 'for in its examination of the singular, the one thing, it is allowed to use whatever procedures and methods it wishes in doing this' (Thomas, 2011). Thomas explains that 'the case study is not a method nor is it a set of procedures. Rather, it is a focus' (p.17). A pragmatic, mixed-methods design was chosen as the most appropriate approach to address the questions. The methodology used included concurrent collection of both quantitative and qualitative data to provide an in-depth analysis of the GAM in three sites. Figure 3.5 provides a framework of methodological decisions:

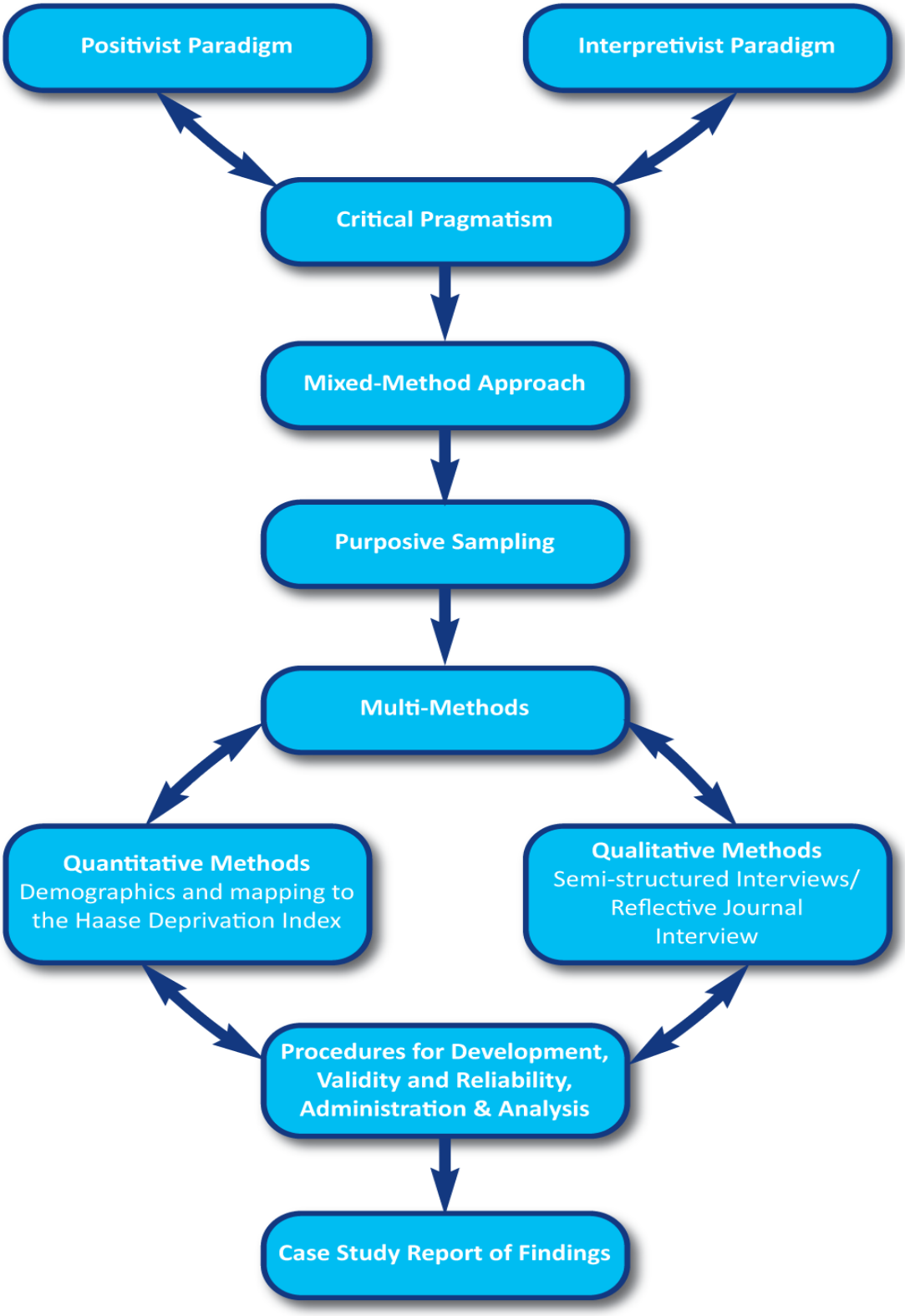


Figure 3.5 Summary of methodological framework for the study

In keeping with critical pragmatism, case study methodology was used because the methodology fitted the questions posed (Merriam, 1988), and because it is 'an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena' (Stake, 1995, p. 2).

3.5.1 Case Study

A qualitative case study is an 'intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit (Merriam, 1998, p.21). Compared to other methods, the strength of the case study method is its ability to examine, in-depth, a 'case' within its 'real-life' context (Yin, 2006, p. 111). A case study has been defined by Creswell (2005) as an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection (p. 439). Bounded means that the case(s) is separated out for research, in terms of time, place and the physical boundaries. At the planning stage the researcher began by drawing boundaries related to the following:

- What or who do I want to study?
- On what aspect of the whole do I want to focus attention?
- What time period can I cover?

The defining characteristic of a case study is that it is an examination of a particular group or phenomenon. In this case, the 'phenomenon' studied was the policy cycle of the GAM with a particular focus on the context of practice. Therefore, site selection was critical to the investigation.

The case of the GAM was examined in three sites or settings, i.e., three primary schools in Ireland. This type of case study is instrumental case study because it serves the purpose of 'illuminating a particular issue' (Creswell, 2005, p. 439). The researcher wanted to hear the stories of the actors involved in the implementation of this policy document. The researcher set out to discover if the model was advancing inclusive education for all students in primary schools, examining who the model was supporting, which children and why. The study was set within the 'boundary' (Stake, 1995) of the GAM. It is about the particular, within particular settings, at a particular time, national policy and implementation within the local as Fig. 3.6 illustrates.

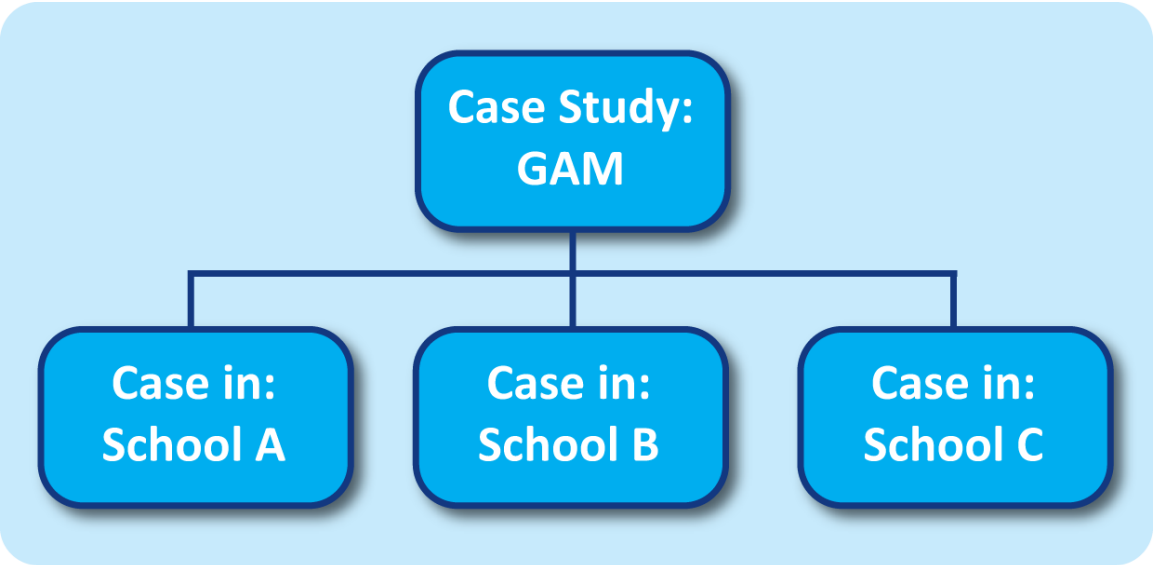


Figure 3.6 Instrumental case study in three settings

The varying sites where the case was examined, illustrated contextual sensitivity of how an apparently stable phenomenon is actually implemented by its participants (Silverman, 2011). . It did not seek to generalise. Setting such limits is a key element of case study (Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2011).

While mixed-methods were applied, the lack of previous research on the topic demanded a predominately qualitative approach, stories from the field needed to be voiced and recorded (Stake, 1995). Therefore, the predominant data collection procedure was engagement in semi-structured interviews. Subsequently, follow-up interviews proved necessary for clarification and members' checking. According to Brenner (2006) interviewing has been a staple of qualitative research.

3.5.2 Interviewing in Educational Research

> If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk to them
>
> (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009)

Interviews have the potential to yield valuable insights into people's life experiences, attitudes, opinions and aspirations, according to Rose and Grosvenor (2001). They remind us that interviews are valuable for gathering data which would otherwise be inaccessible even to other research tools such as questionnaires and observations. Brantlinger et al. (2005, p. 199) contend that 'people are storytellers, who have lived storied lives'. Therefore, the semi-

structured interview was adopted as the main data collection tool because such interviews seek to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, unfolding the meaning of their experiences, and uncovering their lived world to scientific explanations (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

An interview is an individual face-to-face interchange between two people initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Cohen et al, 2000). Interviewing is an effective means of gaining information about the initiative from the participants' view point (Elliot, 1991). Mertens (2005) suggests that the interview is the preferred method when one wants to fully understand someone's impressions or experiences, given that it allows '…the respondents to say what they think and to do so with greater richness and spontaneity' (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 81 cited in Opie and Sikes, 2004, p.111).

Audio-taped semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals, class teachers and learning support/resource teachers in three primary schools. An initial framework, based on the research questions, guided the interview broadly. Initially, an interview schedule was designed (see Appendix E). This tentative protocol allowed me to question in a flexible manner, which is more effective than using a rigidly structured format. The interdependence of human interaction and knowledge production was central to this study. Therefore, it was important that the interviews facilitated ease of participation, as these interactions were the starting point for the study. The rationale for choice of data collection tool was based on the decision that in-depth information from the context of practice was required to address the research questions and that such rich narratives would satisfy the demands of the study in terms of reliability and validity (Rose and Grossvenor, 2001).

3.5.2.1 Interview: Theory or Method

The nature of the current 'reality' of inclusion can only be discovered through interaction with the main stakeholders, in other words, data evolving from the context of practice and emerging claims that are socially constructed from the data. Extant research literature advocates researchers working alongside practitioners in order to construct realities, 'using the views of stakeholders in order to move schools and other centres of learning in a more inclusive direction' (Ainscow, 2007, p. 4). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) consistently

highlight that interviewing is an interactive craft, a process where the interviewer and the interviewee produce knowledge through their interactive relationship. As a pragmatic researcher, I engaged with a range of actors in activity settings conducting layered interviews, listening to the 'voices', returning for member checks, clarifying meaning during follow-up telephone conversations, in a quest for an understanding of a current reality of the GAM. The adoption of semi-structured interviews for this study is very much in keeping with Hargreaves' study, *Changing Teachers, Changing Times: Teachers' Work and Culture in a Postmodern Age* (1994). Hargreaves interviewed forty teachers while the current study engaged in the same process with fourteen such participants. Hargreaves describes his approach to the research as listening to the teachers' voices telling about their work and comparing their descriptions with claims about their work from literature:

> Throughout the study, I have attempted to sustain a creative dialogue between different theories and the data, in a quest not to validate any presumed perspective, but simply to understand the problem in their social contexts, as experienced by teachers'
> (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 122)

Such research and others provided the rationale for the adoption of semi-structured interviews with teachers to better understand the context of practice within the policy cycle (Ball, 1994).

3.5.2.2 Undertaking the Interview

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) present seven stages of the research process involving interviews:

1 thematising the interview project,
2 designing,
3 interviewing,
4 transcribing,
5 analysing,
6 verifying and
7 reporting.

They insist on the value of conceptualising an interview topic in advance of interviewing and planning the entire process through the seven stages before engaging in the overall process, advice which has been taken on board for the purpose of this research project.

Unstructured interviews rarely happen spontaneously (Rose and Grossvenor, 2001, p. 113). It is important that the researcher pays attention to the establishment of a mutual trust

'that allows for the free flow of information' (Spradley, 1979, p. 78, cited in Rose and Grossvenor, 2001). The allocation of time to engage in the process contributed to a relaxed atmosphere. An appointment for such an encounter was critical to allow the principal and teachers to speak openly and at length without interruption.

The greatest challenge for the researcher as a methodological instrument in the study was to choose questions that encourage the informants to talk expansively (Brenner, 2006). Therefore, I began with 'big questions' and proceed in a funnel shape, working down towards detail (see Appendix E). These first 'grand tour' (Spradley, 1979) questions were critical as they set the tone. They provided an insightful cue for the participants as to what is expected during the process. These broad questions were close to the participants experience and expertise (Patton (2002) cited in Brenner (2006). In this way, an atmosphere that was relaxed and secure was realised from the onset. Creating a positive, interactional rapport is crucial. The power differential between the participant and the researcher needed to be addressed in order to create an atmosphere where the participant could speak more than the researcher because researchers are often seen in a position of power. Therefore, to address this 'power differential', all interviews were held in the participant's school building. As the researcher, I was an invited guest.

Furthermore, encouraging probes such as nodding and saying things like 'interesting…tell me more…..' established a form of empathy between the participant and the interviewer while critically ensuring a neutral stance. It is important to be mindful of the use of challenging questions and strategically where these can be used, while again remaining neutral. Leading questions offering an opinion could begin like this: 'Some teachers feel that inclusion is not for all students, what you think? It was important to refrain from responses such as 'I agree', 'that's excellent'.

Probing effectively is a critically skill for any interviewer. Encouragement probes give the informant feedback. It is noted in the literature that the 'practiced interviewer' will use detailed probes such as specific questions to clarify and extend meaning (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). During all the interviews, silent probes provided 'wait time' for processing, deeper consideration, a temporal space to follow a line of thought. By restating what the participant had said it acted as a classification probe, thereby offering an opportunity to self-correct or clarify what was meant. While research guidelines warn that such probing needs to

be used judiciously and naturally, as a novice it was important to include potential probes in the planning stage of the interview schedule in order to elicit a greater depth of data.

Effective interviewing is a skill that can be learned according to the literature (Kavale and Brinkmann, 2009 Rose and Grossvenor, 2001), but research reminds us that the good interviewer must have some prerequisite qualities:

> An interest and respect for the people as individuals, and flexibility in response to them; an ability to show understanding and sympathy for their point of view; and above all, a willingness to sit quietly and listen.
>
> (Thompson, 1988, p. 196)

I was open to advice in order to learn the craft. The experience gained from the pilot phase was taken on board for the next stage. Interview questions were reviewed following this pilot phase.

3.5.2.3 Piloting

The piloting process was undertaken with a former colleague who is a school principal. I also piloted the process among two class teachers and four L/S /resource teachers. They highlighted problems with certain items, particularly those of a sensitive nature and/ or the language used by the instrument. Obtaining this feedback from teachers, two of whom had used the technique in post-graduate work, was helpful in making revisions. Piloting also indicated the potential length of the interview and indicated a guide time which informed appointment arrangements.

The limitation of piloting a semi structured interview is that it does not facilitate in-depth responses. It is also true that inclusion relates to policy matters and to practice within specific school contexts, each is somewhat unique. Advice outlined by Merten (2005, pp. 199-205) in conducting pilot interviews and subsequent engagement with participants was consistently consulted.

3.5.2.4 Recording the Interview

The interviews were recorded on a digital recorder. The sound files were transferred to NVivo 9, which requires password access. These hour-long interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the interview had taken place. The original recordings were destroyed subsequently.

The issue of analysis of data was pertinent at the planning stage and throughout the overall process. In accordance with Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), Brenner (2006) refers to

five phases; transcription, description, analysis and interpretation and display. She emphasises that while these phases are presented in a linear fashion, the process is cyclical in nature, the researcher engaging in the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis was a recursive process throughout the study (see Figure 3.7) beginning with initial data collection being thematised in order to glean emerging themes. Patterns were developed inductively from the data and deductively from the conceptual model and theoretical framework (Ball, 1994; Skrtic, 1991). The data analysis was undertaken with the data collection process through a process of 'categorical aggregation' which allows the researcher to understand the progression of the study along with changing views that emerge throughout (Tinkler, 2004). Initially, data analysis concerned itself with the broad research questions. Analysis of data arising in the first stage of interviews with the three school principals led to changes in the interview schedule, the overall research plan, a change from a purely qualitative approach to mixed methods. Ultimately, analysis of these initial interviews altered the timeline for the study as the necessity for more in-depth analysis emerged. Transactional knowledge facilitated a deeper understanding of what was being said and where it was being said, emphasising the fact that the researcher is the data collection instrument Specific strategies were used to reduce the threat of 'elite bias', that is, overweighting data from Miles and Huberman describe as articulate, well-informed, usually high status informants and the threat of the 'holistic fallacy' (Miles and Huberman 1994) which can occur as the researcher becomes more certain that his/her conclusions are correct (Bums & Grove 1987).

As outlined in Figure 3.7, a grounded theory approach was adopted for analysis as it links the choice and use of methods to desired outcomes of theory development and/or theory, which is grounded in data. 'As a systematic process, grounded theory exhibits the rigor quantitative researchers like to see in an educational study' (Creswell, 2005, p. 396).
A grounded theory approach (Bryant and Charmaz 2007) presented a systematic process as it offered a step-by-step pathway for data analysis. Therefore, this study analysed a distinctive

form of data, language and text and the process depended on an interpretative, critical pragmatic philosophy. The interactive or the hermeneutical and dialectical approach sought to elicit multiple perspectives in order to yield better interpretations of meaning. These were compared and contrasted through a dialectical interchange involving the juxtaposition of conflicting ideas, forcing reconsideration of previous positions (Mertens, 2005). This led to triangulation among the data to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation (Stake, 1995). In this way, the narrative account is trustworthy because multiple forms of evidence were reviewed and interrogated (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

Recording in general provided a paper trail of how data was distilled. Using a qualitative software package to code (see 3.6.2) served as a tool for transparency because the production of this audit trail was considered as a key criteria on which the trustworthiness of the claims, presented in Chapter Four, were established. The logging of data movements and coding patterns, and mapping of conceptual categories and thought progression, rendered all stages of the analytical process traceable and transparent, facilitating the production of a more detailed and comprehensive audit trail than manual mapping of such a complicated process can allow. Significantly, quantitative values were attached to codes arising directly from the participants' voices. For example, social class was referred to specifically by all but one participant and overall it was referred to three hundred and forty three times over the fourteen hours of interview transcripts. The quotes that reflected this code and constructed this theme were carefully chosen to reflect the views of the participants. More than one extract was chosen in order to clearly articulate the voices that provided the data (see Chapter Four). Such quantitative analysis of the qualitative data highlighted the themes that emerged as significant.

The researcher actively searched and checked the data for reasons why conclusions should and should not be trusted (Miles & Huberman 1984, Bums & Grove 1987). The researcher paid particular attention to any exceptions to the claims or what is referred to as disconfirming evidence in this grounded theory approach to data collection.

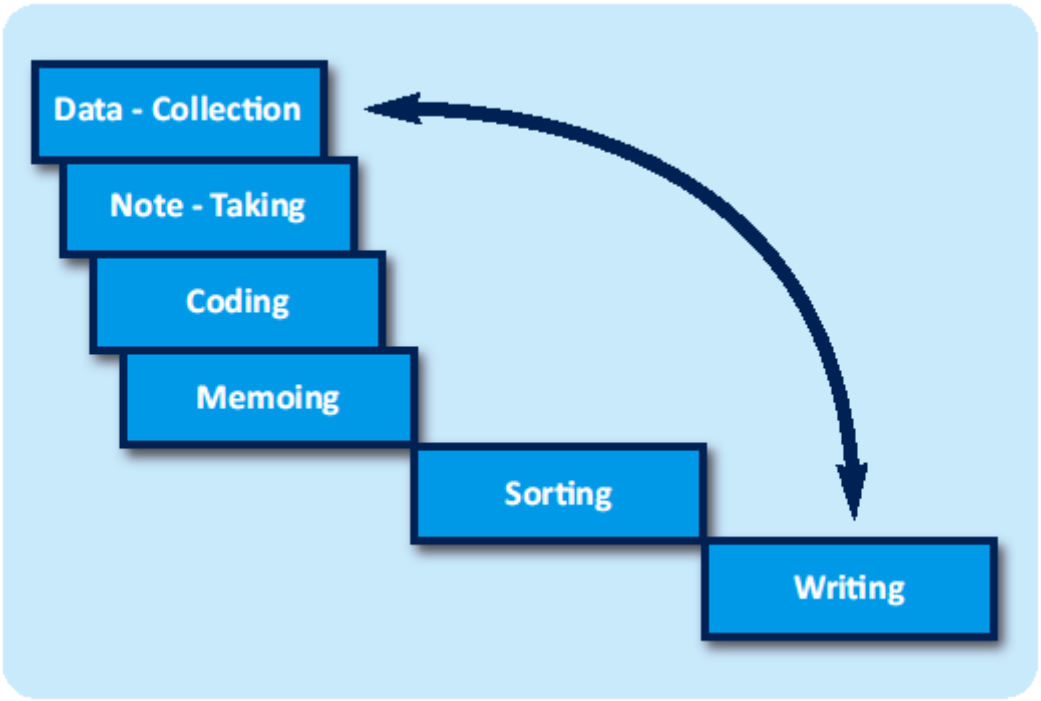


Figure 3.7 Grounded theory approach to data analysis

3.6.1 Grounded Theory Approach to Data Analysis

Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed grounded theory in the late 1960s, which emphasises the discovery of concepts and hypotheses based on actual field data from participants. They believed that a theory emerging during data collection can 'fit the situation being researched and will work when put into use, better than a theory identified before a study begins (Glasser and Strauss, 1967, p. 3). However, it is critical to acknowledge that an initial theoretical framework did exist (Ball, 1994; Skrtic, 1991; 1995) which influenced the approach to the research. Overall analysis therefore was more in keeping with Charmaz' approach (Charmaz, 2006 and Bryant and Charmaz, 2007), which facilitates a more flexible approach appreciating the prior knowledge that the researcher brings to the study.

It is important to note that all codes and categories were constructed directly from the data, the words and phrases voiced by the participants. According to Charmaz (2000; 2011), in a grounded theory approach to data analysis, the researcher receives direction from analysis of one set of data which leads to analysis of the next set of data. According to Darmody and Byrne (2006, p. 125)

> …analysis is not separate from coding, while at the same time it is not synonymous with it. Coding facilitates thinking and theorising about the research topic to develop themes, thus aiding the analysis…

Therefore, categories were built systematically. The categorising and coding process to organise and analyse data was facilitated by the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 9.

3.6.2 Using Qualitative Data Analysis Software

Internationally, there has been controversy among researchers as to whether or not specialised software can facilitate data management and analysis (Darmody and Byrne, 2006). Indeed, some researchers can mistake software for methodology rather than a methodological tool (Darmody and Byrne, 2006; MacMillan and Koeing, 2004). As Darmody and Byrne (2006, p. 122) remark, 'these conflicting opinions and the suspicion regarding the use of software [such as NVivo] are often caused simply by a limited knowledge regarding these programmes and their capabilities as well as insufficient training in the use of qualitative research methods on the part of the researcher'. It must be stressed that in using qualitative data analysis software in this project, the researcher did not capitulate the hermeneutic task to the logic of the computer; rather the computer was used as *a tool for efficiency* and not as a tool which in and of itself conducted analysis to construct arguments and draw conclusions. As Fielding and Lee (1998, p. 167) explain, qualitative researchers 'want tools which support analysis, but leave the analyst firmly in charge'.

Importantly, such software serves as a tool for transparency. Arguably, the production of an *audit trail* is the key criteria on which the trustworthiness and plausibility of a study can be established. Qualitative analysis software's logging of data movements and coding patterns, and mapping of conceptual categories and thought progression, render all stages of the analytical process traceable and transparent, facilitating the researcher in producing a more detailed and comprehensive audit trail than manual mapping of this complicated process can allow.

The following section documents how the qualitative software programme facilitated the coding process, as well as the constant re-ordering of what was said, and the recoding as the 'the ideas about the research became clearer' (Darmody and Byrne, 2006, p. 123).

3.6.2.1 The coding process

During phase one of the coding process, "Sources" were set up. This can be described as 'demographic data coding'. This initial coding was used to record information about the participant. For example, Mairead, Female, Principal, School C, Mixed school (see Figure 3.8). The general age (e.g. 20-30 years) and/or teaching experience of each teacher could be logged here also, but this information was provided in the opening narratives of the teachers as the Interview Schedule (see Appendix E) provided such a 'welcome' or opening question, the rationale for which was to put the participant at ease while also gathering valuable information with regard to teacher profile.



Figure 3.8 Data sources

Oral transcripts of the recorded interviews were transferred from sound files to NVivo. Initially, transcription of the first three transcripts was recorded on MS Word, which was then 'imported' to NVivo and therefore, these are contained in a separate folder to all the subsequent 'Audio' files (See Figure 3.8 above). The audio files were imported into NVivo

from stored files on the computer, which were taken directly from the data recorder. The interviews on the data recorder were then destroyed for ethical reasons, which will be described in Section 3.8 below. Subsequently, these audio files were transcribed in NVivo in a written format (See Figure 3.9).

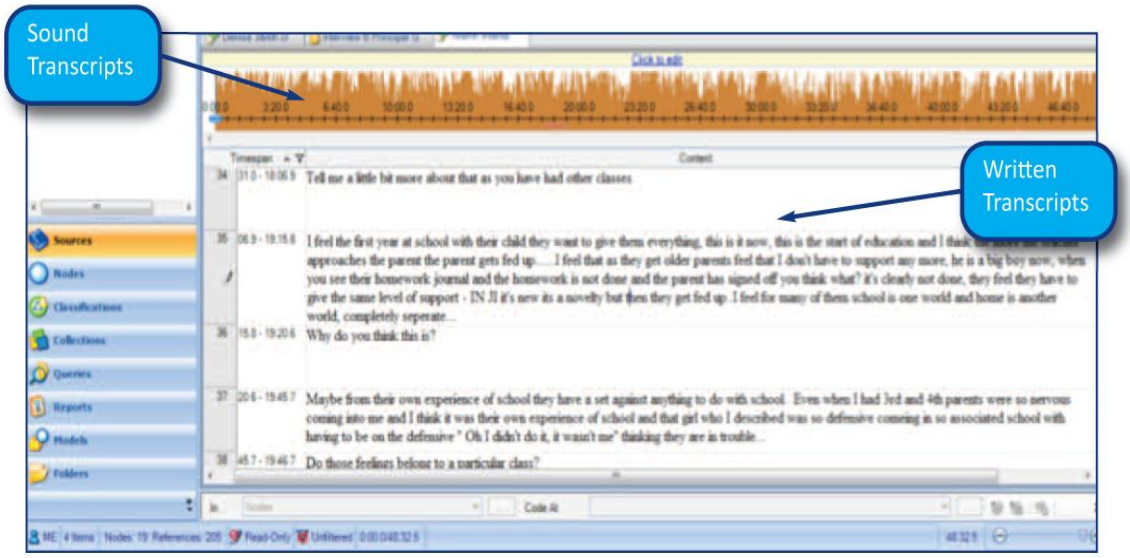


Figure 3.9 Transcription into NVivo

Open coding involved broad participant driven open coding of the chronological transcripts supported with definitions so as to deconstruct the data into general themes. These themes had clear labels and definitions to serve as rules for inclusion of units of meaning (text segments) which were coded from the transcripts (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Coding at this initial stage (see Appendix F) was in keeping with a grounded theory approach as all segments were coded. This involved highlighting segments from their source position and coding them as the code emerged from narratives. Appendix F illustrates that initially seventy-eight open codes were established from the transcripts of the teacher.

Phase two of the process then involved re-ordering codes identified and coded in phase one into more extended codes by creating sub-codes (see Appendix G). By rereading and with further analysis of the audio and written transcripts, further themes and concepts began to emerge from the data which had not been evident from the interview schedule. For example, 'social class' was not a theme reflected in any question on the initial interview schedule, but it emerged clearly from the three interviews with the principals in the

investigation sites either explicitly or implicitly. Therefore, systematic analysis of the coding did not only allow for the exploration of themes and theoretical frameworks informed by the research design but also allowed for themes to continue to emerge from the wider context of the data (Darmody and Byrne, 2006). Consequently, codes were further expanded to one hundred and forty-nine (see Appendix F) when interviews were listened to again, when member checking had taken place and when follow-up telephone interviews were conducted. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe member checks as 'the most crucial technique for establishing credibility' (p. 314) in a study. It consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants so that they can confirm or disconfirm the credibility of the information and narrative account. With the lens focused on participants, I systematically checked the data and the narrative account with all participants during the interview process and during follow-up meetings. According to Creswell and Miller (2000) the participants add credibility to the qualitative study by having a chance to react to both the data and the narrative being constructed. Guba and Lincoln (1981) state that the determination of credibility can be accomplished only by taking data and interpretations to the sources from which they were drawn and asking people whether they believe or find the results plausible (Guba & Lincoln 1981). Sandelowski (1986) concurs that qualitative data is deemed credible if it reveals accurate deceptions of individuals' experiences and that the people having that experience would immediately recognise such narrative as their own. At varying stages of data analysis I returned to the study sites and discussed interpretations of the study findings with key participants. During this phase two of the coding process NVivo quantitatively highlighted that some statements had been coded in more than one code, which suggested a need to group related codes under categories. In this way, codes were organised into a framework that made sense to further the analysis of the data.

Phase three involved data reduction, consolidating codes. This phase also included distilling, re-labeling and merging axial codes into selective codes or categories to ensure that labels and rules for inclusion accurately reflected coded content. The 149 codes and sub codes that were clustered into fourteen categories (see Appendix H). This data reduction involved consolidating codes into a more abstract and conceptual map of a final framework of themes for reporting purposes, which represented phase four.

Further phases were concerned with writing *analytical memos* against the higher level codes to accurately summarise the content of each category and its codes and to cross reference against other data to propose empirical claims against such categories. These memos (see 3.6.4 for further detail) considered five key areas:

1. The content of the cluster of codes on which it was reporting
2. The patterns that were emerging, where relevant. This phase was also used to identify *exceptional cases* as well as shared experiences
3. Situating the code(s) in the storyboard involved considering the relatedness of codes to each other, and their importance to addressing the research question and sequencing disparate codes and clusters of codes into a story or narrative which is structured and can be expressed in the form of a coherent and cohesive narrative to be presented in the Chapter Four
4. Considering background information recorded against participants and considering any patterns that may exist in relation to participants' profiles, for example, principals, third and fourth class teachers, infant class teacher, learning support teacher/ Resource teacher
5. Considering primary themes in the context of relationships with the theoretical framework, the literature as well as identifying gaps in the literature.

The final phase related to validation, which involved testing, validating and revising analytical memos (see 3.6.4) so as to self-audit proposed findings by seeking evidence in the data or *warrants* for the claims beyond textual quotes to support the stated findings and seeking to expand on deeper meanings embedded in the data. This process involved interrogation of data and forced the consideration of elements beyond the category itself; drawing on relationships across and between categories and cross tabulation with demographics, observations and research literature. This phase resulted in evidence-based findings or what is called *warranted claims,* which are presented and discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Each claim was validated by being rooted in the data itself and relied on the creation of reports from the data to substantiate claims. At this point in the process, a theory

emerged from the interrelationship between the axial and selective coding to themes and the theoretical framework and paradigm of the overall research.

Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 156) state that as an overarching theoretical scheme or 'central category' is identified, theory development becomes a 'recursive search for consistency and logic' (p. 156). The focus of the study was a balance between the generation of theory and the provision of meaningful description of policy transactions in the context of practice, in particular. In this thesis, the aim was to construct 'low level theory' applicable to immediate and specific situations (policy contexts) rather than 'grand theories', which are of greater abstraction and applicability (Creswell, 1997). This thesis asserts that the low level theory, constructed in this research from the overall analytical process, is helpful in understanding the phenomena under investigation. Clarke et al. (1998) argue that the 'business of theorising is not simply necessary in special education, but is inevitable… and that any form of purposeful action at the very least implies a theory' (p. 2).

In the context of any research work, it is important to remain mindful that the use of NVivo or any qualitative software is *not* data analysis. Rather it is a methodological tool that facilitates analysis to a greater extent by allowing easy access to the data for continuous reviewing and theory building (Darmody and Byrne, 2006). This approach facilitated systematic analysis of the *official* and unofficial *stories,* which set out to lay bare the 'real' impacts of the GAM, which later contributed to the building a theory of what exists, from an ontological perspective. Consequently, in keeping with post-structuralism, analysis and deconstruction of discourse was central to the overall process of investigation.

3.6.3 Discourse Analysis

> Foucault argues that nothing has meaning outside of discourse …
>
> (Kamler and Thomson, 2006, p. 11)

Kalmer and Thomson (2006, p. 11) describe discourse as 'a particular formation of stories and practices, which constructs both knowledge and power relations'. A discourse 'defines and produces what we know, what and how we talk about an object of knowledge, and it influences how ideas are put into practice' (Kalmer and Thomson, 2006, p. 11). Therefore, analysis concerned itself with

- what is said
- what is not said
- what is hidden in the document.

Ogza (1990) reminds researchers that those involved in the thought and action of policy miss out on the bigger picture of what is not thought about, what is not said. Liasidou (2005, p. 4) stresses that it is important to explain the processes that might have taken place *prior to* the production of texts. She states that documents need to be interpreted in the light of specific factors involved in their production and context, such as personal, social, political and historical relationships. It is significant, in this regard, that the document analysed for the purpose of this study opens by providing *Background* to the circular (See Appendix A), illustrating the importance of setting the GAM within a context. It is also noteworthy that initial claim presented and discussed in Chapter Four concerned itself with the context of influence and the context of text production of the Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005).

In analysing policy as discourse, it is important to be aware that too often 'only certain voices [are] heard as meaningful and authoritative' (Ball, 2006, p. 49). Ball (2006) reminds us that as a social society we are 'enmeshed in a variety of discordant, incoherent and contradictory discourses but that we need to recognise and analyse the existence of dominant discourses, regimes of truth, erudite knowledges – like neo-liberalism and management theory - within social policy' (p. 50). It was important, therefore, to identify recurrent patterns and contradictions that constitute the dominant voice and prevalent discourse. These patterns enabled me to justify the claims made. Liasidou (2005) asserts that the search for patterns and exceptions alone are inefficient in serving the scope and aims of policy analysis research, as '…policy is occasionally incoherent, fragmented and fraught with incessant struggles over its constitution and definition' (p.4). Foucault inaugurates a new kind of approach to historical research and implicitly a new approach to textual analysis. For Foucault, history turns in on itself, something to be used in the present for the future; it is not a 'reality' even of the past. Historical 'truths' emerge from certain contexts and time specific 'snapshots'. History is constituted by power and knowledge relations and dominant voices within its discourse.

In the exploration of what is said and what is not said, I considered the theme of knowledge/power. In Foucauldian terms, power is productive; 'relations of power are not in super-structural positions, with merely a role of prohibition or accompaniment; they have a directly productive role, wherever they come into play' (Foucault, 1981, p. 94). Ball (2006) reminds us that while textual interventions can change things significantly, we must remember the way in which things stay the same or the way things change in certain settings depending on who has been empowered. Ball (2006) suggests that the 'way things get done' influences and becomes embedded in the discourse of policy and the routine practices of social institutions 'leading to a status quo of how we perceive ourselves and others, how we relate to and deal with those 'others' and in particular how class boundaries are maintained, trajectories and resources defended, and social advantages ensured…' (Ball, 2003, p. 2).

In keeping with the theoretical framework for analysis, the context of outcome relates to an analysis which concerns itself with the issues of justice, equality and individual freedom, analysing policy impact and interactions with existing inequalities and forms of injustice, which insists upon the quest to identify a set of political and social activities which might tackle such inequalities more effectively, an essential component of Foucault's specific intellectuals. Such research is about Foucault's genealogy, which sets out to unmask power for the use of those who suffer it, which he considers to be the real political task. Therefore, my current analysis considered 'the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent, and to criticise them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked so that we can fight them' (Rabinow, 1984, p. 6, cited in Ball (2006, 54) and reconstruct for democracy.

It is critical, at this point, to highlight that early interviews with the three principals indicated a phenomenon that is well documented in the literature, i.e., that a student's socio-economic status is likely to influence whether or not he / she will be designated as requiring special education support, and that children from deprived or disadvantaged households are more likely to be designated as such than are other children. The initial interview schedule did not consider this factor as the researcher was naïve to the emergence of such a theme in non-designated, 'ordinary' mainstream schools. However, this phenomenon was strongly articulated in initial interviews with principals and therefore, further data collection was required to reveal the full range of evidence.

3.6.4 Utilising the Pobal Haase Index of Affluence and Deprivation

A data base of students in receipt of special education recorded if the parents / guardians of the relevant students were in receipt of a medical card, living in social / local authority housing and if they were employed or unemployed. This data was available on enrolment forms for all students in each of the three schools. This section outlines the steps taken to test the hypothesis emerging from early analysis and suggested in the literature that children from deprived or disadvantaged households are more likely to be designated as requiring special education than are other children.

Having received the consent of the Boards of Management and principals, the researcher accessed an anonymised database of all addresses of those children who had been selected for special education placement via the GAM and RTH models (see Appendix I). An address for each student was supplied by the Girls' School and the Boys' School. In order to test for any association between SEN and socio-economic deprivation, the researcher also applied data from the Haase Index of Affluence and Deprivation (Haase and Pratschke, 2012). This allowed for greater probing of the hypothesis, as this composite Index is based on socio-economic variables that are more extensive than those listed in the previous paragraph. Moreover, the Haase Index, which has been in use in the local development sector since it was first published in the early 1990s has proven to be a robust and consistent measure of affluence and deprivation, with a high level of spatial and temporal comparability (ADM, 1995, 2001; Haase and McKeown, 2003 and Haase and Pratschke, 2005). In addition, the Haase Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012) is gaining increased currency among public sector bodies in ensuring that policy interventions and investments are targeted towards the areas of greatest need. For example, the Department of Health have used the Index to locate Primary Care Centres, in order to target resources towards greatest need.

Values on the Index of Affluence and Deprivation range from -30 (extremely disadvantaged) to +30 (extremely affluent), based on a weighted aggregate of the data in respect of the above, and with a score of zero representing the national average (see Haase, et al. 2012 for further discussion of the methodology and application of the index, and Haase, Pratschke, and Gleeson, (2012). Also, the All-Island Deprivation Index, available at www.airomaps.nuim.ie accessed on 05.03.12).

The Haase Index was first applied to the 1991 Census of Population, and it has been in constant use since then. Up to 2006, the smallest spatial unit at which the Index could be

applied was the Electoral Division (ED), of which there are 3,440 in Ireland. While this level of geographical analysis has proven to be a very valuable and resourceful tool in appraising the impacts of public policy and in informing local development strategies, the scale of EDs did not allow for *micro-level penetration* in some densely populated urban areas (Gleeson et al., 2009). In respect of the more recent censuses (2006 and 2011), this limitation has been rectified, such that most census variables, and all those that are required for the compilation of the Haase Index have been published at ED and Small Area (SA) Levels, which is significant to fine-grained analysis. Small Areas as defined by the Central Statistics Office have a mean of 92 households. Therefore, SA-level data are extremely refined geographically, and enable the researcher to quantify with confidence elements of the lived experience of the student involved in the current study, which was critical.

The student database referred to previously (see Appendix I) contain the home address of each student in special education placement in two of the schools. The researcher then used the Pobal Maps Facility (available at www.pobal.ie) to identify the SA in which each child resides, and to assign values to each address based on the Haase Index and all of its components (see Appendix J). This allowed the researcher to calculate the composite Haase Value and the respective values for each of the Index components in respect of the student cohort.

While the schools were not in a position to provided individualised addresses for their entire student cohort, all schools advised the researcher of the boundaries of their catchment areas. When the combined catchment area of the three schools was mapped, it was observed that over 85% of students came from within two adjoining EDs (Electoral Divisions). The researcher then extracted the Haase scores and other socio-economic data for these two EDs, and generated a bundle of composite scores for the catchment area based on weightings of the populations of the two constituent EDs[2]. Thus, the researcher now had:

- Precise figures for the Haase Index value and each associated variable for the schools' catchment area for both 2006 and 2011 and
- The corresponding Haase Index and associated variables for the students with SEN alone for both years (see Appendix I).

[2] The catchment area has a total population of 4,046 (2011), with 39% residing in ED A and 61% residing in ED B. Thus, the composite score on the Haase Index and for all the associated variables was weighted to take account of the population levels.

This enabled direct quantitative comparisons of the home and neighbourhood circumstances of students in the special education caseload and all students on a range of relevant variables. This quantitative approach was complemented by interviews among key stakeholders, which allowed for discussion and greater understanding of the relevant processes.

The data for this study were collected among the participating schools during the school year 2009/2010. Extended interviews and member checking continued into the following school year but all demographic data relate to 2009/2010. The 2006 census immediately predates this year. This is the most important reference year for the datasets, given that students were allocated (or not) to special education prior the commencement of this study - and in some cases up to five years previously. Since then however, the 2011 census results have become available with the final set of variables at ED and SA levels was published at the end of 2012. Therefore, the analysis undertaken for this thesis also utilises 2011 as a reference year. Moreover, the researcher has taken the median values between 2006 and 2011 as being indicative of 2009/10, which is important. By undertaking a comparative analysis for three separate reference years, the researcher has ensured that the hypothesis has been very extensively probed (see Appendix I and J). The results of this process are presented and discussed in Chapter Four and Five and form a substantive piece of the overall research.

In order to further complement the data collection and fieldwork, and aware of Elliot's (1991) proposition that keeping a reflective journal of memos is a useful process, the author systematically reflected upon all relevant quantitative and qualitative data on a continuous basis throughout the study period.

3.6.5 Reflective Memos

Much of the data collected was 'rich', providing a sense of what it was like at the time (Anderson, 1996; Elliot, 1991). The researcher was conscious that it was necessary to move beyond description of the events i.e., the 'bald facts of the situation', in an effort to make sense of what has happened and why i.e., to reflect (Elliot, 1991; Mc Niff, Lomax and Whitehead, 1996). The memos stimulated reflection and facilitated personal learning from the experience (Drake, 2009). The entries contained insight into the researcher's feelings, interpretations, hunches and explanations (Elliot, 1991). The reconstruction of events, emotions and perceived accomplishments and/or shortcomings facilitated 'reflection in

action' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002). This means of data collection and analysis facilitated self-triangulation of data analysed.

It was necessary to utilize a systematic procedure for analysing data. According to Stake (1995, p.97), 'the case researcher recognises and substantiates new meanings'. I recognised a problem and have studied it, 'hoping to connect it better with known things'. In my writing I make these new connections more comprehendible to others. According to Eisenhart (2006, p. 568), the 'most prominent function of qualitative data representation is to depict for the reader the experience of the researcher in the field', to invite the reader into the lived experience of the participants. Fundamentally, 'we seek to understand them. We would like to hear their stories' (Stake, 1995, p. 1). Moreover, as I embarked on the work, I became increasingly concerned with what to represent, how to represent it, and finally what I wished to do with it. Erickson (1986) provides clear functions of qualitative data, which guided my actions:

1. The reader to experience vicariously the phenomena under study
2. The researcher to illustrate instances of key findings and analytic concepts
3. The researcher to reveal the full range of evidence, both for and against the findings reached and
4. The reader to appraise the theoretical and personal grounds of the researcher's perspective, particularly as it changed during the course of the study.

With regard to functions 1-3 above, data gathering and data analysis was a recursive process throughout the study as described in Section 3.6.

Finally, it is necessary to cite Erickson's (1986) (see 3.7 above) advice with regard to the necessity for the reader to appraise the theoretical and personal grounds of the researcher's perspective, particularly as it changed during the course of the study. Kamler and Thomson (2006. p. 79) warn that 'writers need to invest a convincing degree of assurance in their propositions, yet must avoid overstating their case and risk inviting the rejection of their arguments. In the current study, readers are given information upon which to make judgments about the appropriateness of the researcher's findings and conclusions. Clough and Corbett (2009, p. *ix*), remind us that 'whatever texts are, they are made by people and for people. It is people who give them meaning', which is significant and relates directly to the structure/agency interplay and writerly texts (2.2.4). Slee (2001, p. 114) notes that

> … There is no such thing as innocent reading. Words are received and put through our own interpretative sieve as we construct meaning from the page. This process is shaped by our theoretical or ideological disposition, experience and, of course, out attendant limitations. Consequently there is a need to think carefully about the language we use …

Finding the appropriate authorial stance is complex, in Goldilocks terms, it needs to be 'just right' (Kalmar and Thomson, 2006). Respect for my authorial stance, therefore, is critical for overall validity and reliability. The work reflects a particular time in my life's history. My views on inclusive education have evolved over my career, which dates back almost thirty years. I realise that over the course of a career, such as mine that

> Individuals' ideas may change – sometimes radically – over the course of a career, and are in a dynamic relationship with policy contexts; this is to say that they may directly *influence*, as well as be *influenced by*, the development of policy.
>
> (Clough, 2000, p. 4)

Consequently, my views were deconstructed and questioned over the course of the research and documented in the reflective memos. The 'I' in the research is constantly revealed, which is crucial because for seemingly familiar situations that turn out to be strange, being-there narratives usually depict the researcher's emerging recognition and understanding of strange features in a familiar setting, for example, a school or classroom. In this case, the researcher is transformed from complacent actor to one with deeper insight into his or her own everyday world (Erickson. 1986). I acknowledge that I may well go on to adopt new ideologies in the future. This is the nature of the PhD process. The 'I' is presented also in the final chapter as a result of such consciousness. It is acknowledged throughout the study that the 'I' is not neutral. I am a human who interacts with the participants, a traveller (Kavale, 2009) on the research journey, one who asks questions. Cohen et al. (2000) highlight that the art of asking questions and listening is not a *neutral* tool. Therefore, it is obligatory to discuss the authorial stance of the researcher.

3.7 Authorial Stance of the Case Researcher

The researcher is the main research instrument in this study. As Eisenhart (2009) reminds researchers, data is never transparent or value-neutral. It is interpreted and represented by the researcher, who faces decisions about how to represent data, what to select

and always concerned about that which is selected is representative of the people and events being studied. 'All we have is talk and texts that represent reality partially, selectively, and imperfectly (Riessman, 2002, p. 228, cited in Eisenhart, 2006, p. 568). Issues of reliability and validity are critical to all research. Epistemological questions about objectivity of knowledge and the nature of qualitative research were reflected upon at every stage with the knowledge that the researcher is the main methodological instrument in the study. Therefore, acknowledging the 'I' in the investigation is critical.

Benjamin (2011) discusses three 'I's in any research process, which is a useful perspective in painting the researcher in this study. However, it is difficult to separate the personal from the professional both of which live in political context. Therefore, the 'I' is cyclical as shown in Figure 3.10.

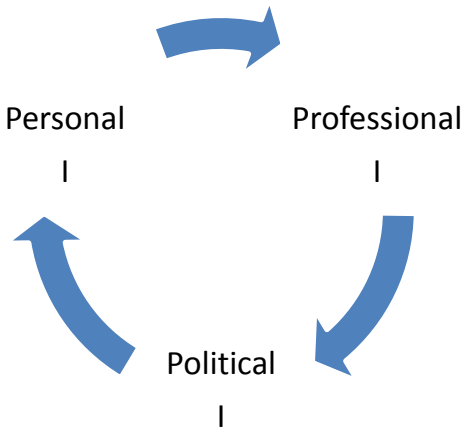


Figure 3.10 The 'I' in the research

The 'I' in this research may be seen as a revolving door through which knowledge enters and exits. The 'personal' and 'professional I' were described in some detail in Chapter One. The 'political I' acknowledges that from an ideological perspective, I am an inclusionist though not a full inclusionist. Fundamentally, I believe that equitable access and participation in mainstream education for students with special educational needs is a basic human right and the necessary foundation for a more just society. I am, what is referred to in the literature as, a 'pragmatic inclusionist' (see Section 2.4.1). While I do have apprehensions that the significant needs of students with severe disabilities and many complex needs may not be appropriately, effectively or efficiently met in mainstream classes, as a pragmatic inclusionist I see the mainstream classroom as the most appropriate setting for *most* students.

The post-structural approach of this study focuses on interviews with school staff as a 'production site of knowledge' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 53). 'Tales' from the research experience are glued together by interpretative comment by the researcher. Such interpretations are influenced by a lived experience as a former member of a school staff with a particular interest in students experiencing difficulties, my pragmatic inclusionist stance, my participation with those interviewed, and the conceptual framework (Ball, 1994) placed on data emerging from the approach to the data collection and analysis. Stake (1995, p. 9) insists that '…the function of the qualitative researcher during data gathering is clearly to maintain vigorous interpretations'. Interpretation is critical in making new connections more comprehendible to the reader. 'On the basis of data, researchers draw their own conclusions' according to Stake (1995, p. 9). Critical pragmatism helps a case study researcher 'to deconstruct and thereby justify lots of narrative description in the final report (Stake, 1995, p. 102). My role as interpreter and gatherer of interpretations was central (Stake, 1995, p.99), believing that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered. I was a *traveller*, not a *miner*. As human beings we construct knowledge of the world based on our experiences. Human construction of knowledge seems to begin with sensory encounters with external stimuli (Stake, 1995). Knowledge construction is a mixture of human construction and the external world. New perceptions are linked with prior knowledge. Stake (1995) identifies three realities:

1. External reality, capable of stimulating us but of which we know nothing other than our interpretation of this external stimuli
2. Reality formed of those interpretations of stimulation, an experiential reality, not verified
3. Rational reality, a universe of integrated interpretations.

The second and third levels blend into each other. Two people sharing the same experience shape their own reality. While each human being has his/her own version of the world, for the most part, it seems as though they populate the same world as everyone else. Views held by majorities, especially respected authoritative people, are held credible, even factual (Stake, 1995). My aim then, was to construct a sophisticated, rational reality, a robust integration of interpretations that can withstand skepticism. Although the reality constructed of a moment in time is to a great extent, of my own making through interpretation, however, it is fundamentally a collective making. 'The emphasis is on description of things that readers

ordinarily pay attention to, particularly places, events, and people, not only commonplace description but "thick description", the interpretations of the people most knowledgeable about the case' (Stake, 1995, p. 102). For this reason alone, qualitative data are powerful. According to Eisenhart (2009), they make good stories and knowledgeable claims. It is significant that the 'good stories' present as objective. I realise that all data collection is political and value-laden. Therefore, it is important to reveal the 'I' and to also admit a changing 'I' during the process of the research.

The 'transformations' that occur to the 'I' are acknowledged in the data, highlighting in these vignettes that the researcher was really fully present – physically, cognitively and emotionally – in the scenes of action under study (Eisenhart, 2006, pp. 573-574). The settings and participants that I engaged with, in the research process, were also dynamic and diverse. Therefore, my methodological tools needed to be flexible, to ensure that data emerged naturally and dynamically. Modification in questions asked was constant depending on emerging themes and relevant theories. The specific paradigm allowed for variety, enabling an informal style and a wide-ranging exploration of ideas. While research questions guided the initial methodological framework (see Appendix E), the methodological implication of having multiple realities presumed that methods could not be definitively set.

To summarise, the researcher endeavoured to establish and maintain a neutral stance and did not present her own perceptions during the data collection process. Neutrality, which refers to the freedom from bias in the research process (Sandelowski 1986) was consistently addressed.

Identification of the purposeful sample, seeking informed consent from the Board of Management of the school and from each of the individual principals and teachers, (See Appendices B, C and D) insisted that ethical considerations be at the forefront of the research process. Ethics were reflected upon and acted upon throughout the duration of the study, over the four years of the investigative cycle and beyond.

3.8 Ethical Issues

The study is one that involves children with SEN and their inclusion in mainstream school contexts. Consequently, ethical implications were to the forefront of procedures.

Ethics are a matter of balancing one's social responsibilities (Berg, 2004) or what Cohen et al. (2000) refer to as the 'costs/benefits ratio'. Such responsibilities include responsibility to oneself, one's discipline or profession, to the pursuit of knowledge, the society, and the research participants (Berg, 2004). Ultimately ethical practice is realised through the individual's own values and ethics (Merriam, 1998; 2000). The ethical justification for the research was considered 'situationally, case by case' (Berg, 2004, p. 70), because behaviour is determined by situation (Cohen et al., 2000). The ethical guidelines of the British Research Association were adhered to throughout the process from early planning through to conclusion of the work. Approval from the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC) of University College Cork was granted for the study.

Ethical issues such as negotiating access, gaining entry, seeking active, informed consent from participants (Berg, 2004; Cohen et al., 2000; Mertens, 2010; Rossman, 2011), were considered. The participants were informed of the nature and purposes of the study. This was outlined in a document seeking consent to carry out the study in each of the schools with the individual participant (see Appendices B, C and D).

3.8.1 Informed Consent

In keeping with the experience of Malone (2003), there were multiple ethical dilemmas that arose during this enquiry. As a former teacher, I was now returning to the field and as it were, I was conducting research 'in my own back yard' (Malone, 2003, p. 800). In many respects this field or 'yard' had implications for coercion and resistance as the participants may have seen themselves as 'colleagues', the 'family that shared the same 'backyard' and could have been reluctant to show any resistance to engagement in the process. Rossman (1984, p. 125) suggests that 'all research may be coercive, especially when done at 'home'.

Informed consent of the principals and teachers was sought in advance and at the earliest possible stage in the study. However, informed consent suggests that had insight into the future process and that therefore, I could and would protect the participant. The reality for a constructivist researcher working within a predominantly interpretive genre precluded being able to predict what would emerge in the field about which those being listened to are supposed to be informed. A code of ethics was drawn-up and agreed to by all participants prior to the study. A broad interview protocol was outlined to the participant (see Appendix

E) but in the nature of the grounded theory process, the questioning framework, while remaining semi-structured, evolved throughout the process. I began with three settings where I hoped to find answers to some of the questions I held in relation to the day to day transactions of the GAM in 'ordinary' schools. I was like a detective pursuing clues to a mystery and piecing together a puzzle, not knowing what the jigsaw would reveal (Malone, 2003). Therefore, while the principals and teachers were assured that at no time would they be at risk or deceived, I could only relate what initial questions were, the level of involvement in relation to time but I could not know at the outset what they would tell me or how I would feel about what they told me. Stake (1995, p. 1) reminds case researchers that we go out to understand the lived worlds of those or that which we are interested in. 'We would like to hear their stories. We may have reservations about some things the actors tell us, just as they will question some of the things we will tell about them', which raises critical ethical issues. But as Stake highlights, I entered the sites with a sincere interest in learning how the participants function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while I was there, learning and reflecting.

I did stress to the participants and the management of the schools that confidentiality would be assured as the primary safeguard against any exposure (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Fictitious names were used throughout. A guarantee of individual anonymity and that of the school, staff and community was outlined in writing (See Appendices B-D). At each stage of the project the principals and teachers were assured they could withdraw from the project at any stage. At the initial stage, I did not know what tangents would emerge. These tangents became a focus of the study. Such a tangent may well be considered as a political minefield for those playing in this 'backyard' (Malone, 2003).

Ethical problems also emerged when presenting and analysing data because the data have been filtered through my theoretical position (Merriam, 1998). I accept responsibility for all decisions made about what data collected, data collection methods utilised, what data I presented, as well as approaches to data analysis. I may have unwittingly excluded data that contradicted my findings. Brueggemann (1996) reminds us that 'rhetoric, politics, and the personal are very much with us; and they are with us as we do fieldwork, as we write it down, write it up, and as we represent ourselves and the 'others' we study in this writing' (p.19). To reduce the potential bias of the study, I put measures in place including member checks and peer examination, as well as leaving an 'audit trail' (Merriam, 1998; 2011; Merten, 2005) for

the reader in order to establish the validity and reliability of the study. In particular, full transcript of interviews conducted during the study have been stored in a confidential file, which only the 'I' and the Supervisor have access to. Finally, I conditioned myself to be neither an advocate of, nor a critic of the discourse I observed (Berg, 2004). For example, the analysis undertaken in this study does not imply that there is malice on the part of school staff with regard to specific practices. However, an unavoidable analysis of the incentive structures in policy forced the adoption of a critical lens, to deconstruct such practices using critical pragmatism, which revealed 'the impact of policies on existing social inequalities' (Ball, 1994), which will be discussed at length in Chapter Four and will be summarised in Chapter Five. Every effort was made to ensure that the claims presented in these chapters are valid and reliable.

3.9 Reliability and Validity

Writing about reliability and validity in any inquiry is challenging on many levels. There are multiple perspectives about it (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998; Schwandt, 1997) and articles and chapters (e.g., Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Lather, 1993; Maxwell, 1992). Rigour and validity of qualitative research have been widely debated in the international literature (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Morse and Richards, 2002). The current study holds that qualitative research can be as rigorous as quantitative, the rigour depends on the researcher and the required skills and knowledge at hand (Morse and Richards, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 354-355) encourage the researcher to be cognisant of several issues in analysing and interpreting data, including:

1. data overload;
2. the problem of acting on first impressions only;
3. the availability of people and information (for example, how representative these are and how to know if missing people and data might be important);
4. the dangers of only seeking confirming rather than disconfirming instances;
5. the reliability and consistency of the data and confidence that can be placed in the results.

These were of significant consideration for this research study. The *purposive sample* was carefully chosen and monitored to ensure that the emerging data was reliable. The systematic procedure undertaken was fundamental to the methodological approach. Some believe that the use of software packages to assist qualitative studies brings with it 'a sheen of scientific rigour' to the process (Sin, 2003, cited in Darmody and Byrne (2006, p. 123). In keeping with such views, understanding of the technical side of using NVivo 9 further facilitated the maintenance of rigour in the process.

The research acknowledges at all stages that every researcher is individually 'positioned' or has a particular authorial stance. As a qualitative researcher, the aim is to establish trustworthiness in representing the fieldwork experiences with fidelity by illustrating that as a researcher I have "been there" and have actively constructed meaning to be trustworthy representations of the what is 'real' to the participants. I acknowledge that I was travelling a journey as a researcher where I am experiencing

> …reservations about the things the people tell us, just as they will question some of the things we will tell about them. But we enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn (Stake, 1995, p. 1).

Representational authority depended on the way in which I engaged with the participants, the way I listened to the things they were telling me, the way in which I clarified meaning with them, and I realised consistently that they may question the things I tell about them. But in order to have any authority over data, I put aside my many presumptions while I was in the field learning. As a critical pragmatist, I was interested in how they, the participants, function in their ordinary pursuits. My quest at all times was to represent the lived experiences for my participants, which was vigorous and in the genuine pursuit of their reality in a place in time. It involved the social construction of others' voices in order 'to provide as insightful, accurate, and comprehensive an account as possible of "what is going on" in social worlds beyond our own' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

Trustworthiness was also achieved by analysing my own representations and that of others in light of well-established theories and well-known 'rhetorical, political, institutional, and disciplinary conventions' of persuasion' (Eisenhart, 2006, p. 577). Therefore, revealing the 'I', highlighting my identity as a researcher and that which influences my stance was important in order to establish a greater trustworthiness. Cuba & Lincoln (1981) have

proposed that in qualitative research, conformability, which is achieved by establishing auditability, applicability should be the standard by which neutrality is judged. Sandelowski (1986) argues that 'auditability' is achieved when the researcher leaves a clear "decision trail" concerning the research from its beginning to its end. The researcher in this study asserts that auditability has been attempted in this study by clearly describing each stage of the research process, explaining and justifying what was done and why. Establishing auditability was a critical ethical consideration throughout the process of investigation.

3.10 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter outlined the steps taken to enhance the likelihood of eliciting rich data from the field. The chapter restated the theoretical framework. It presented the chosen paradigm which held implications for methodological aspects of the research. Throughout this chapter, the reader gains detailed information regarding the ethical obligations, issues of validity and reliability and data analysis procedures relevant to this study. The choice of approach to analysis in this study was based on the research paradigm, which was critical pragmatism and an overall interpretative genre (Borko et al, 2006). A 'reality' was constructed on the basis of the interpretations of data with the help of the participants who provided the data, which is in accordance with the interpretive genre. The study, while predominantly inductive, was also deductive. Analysis was influenced by the theoretical framework (Ball, 1994; Skrtic, 1991) and the lived experience of the researcher, who had worked in the context of practice, and who consistently reviews the literature on special and inclusive education as a faculty member of the Department of Special Education in a college of Teacher Education. Analysis drew from qualitative and quantitative inquiry by staying open to the data while aiming to produce arguments and theory logically and systematically from the data arising. As Figure 3.7 suggests, analysis was cyclical from the collection stage to the writing phase and back again to further data collection and analysis. The use of NVivo 9 and the application of the Haase Index allowed data to be systematically analysed, which facilitated the construction of theory and it helped to consider the emerging themes in a wider theoretical context of the existing international literature. According the Morse and Richards (2002, p. 150):

> If the researchers' observations and participants' accounts are explored within the theoretical body of social support literature, the study can be tried against other situations, and moves from description to analysis.

The claims and the analysis of the emerging themes that will be presented in Chapter Four and synthesised in Chapter Five encompass not only the *official versions* and intended impacts of the GAM but also the *unofficial stories* and transactions, some of which were unique to one setting, while implementing a *national policy* when officially, it may be rational to think that a similar pattern should emerge across these contexts of practice. The 'unofficial policy stories' take account of how actors *interpret* and *enact* policy text in the context of practice, analysing the cultural and organizational interpretations, while also, considering unequal power relations. In particular, the study considered how those who receive the text, and enact the policy in school, understand it and responds to it. Throughout the stages of analysis and in keeping with post-structuralism, these assumptions were heard, questioned and deconstructed. McSpadden McNeil and Coppola (2006) believe that it is only through research in contexts of practice that is 'fine grained' to track significant and compelling narratives, sensitive enough to explore the definitional contours of the policy and persistent enough to pursue discrepant explanations can we truly understand how policies affect the lives and learning of the children they intend to help. The study examined levels ever closer to the student to understand the actual impact of the policy on children and in doing so, learned more about the inner processes of schooling.

Chapter 4 Claims

> Policies for educational justice [must] embrace complex issues. These involve not only the political economy of schooling – of concerns of access and equity – but also issues of identity, difference, culture and schooling. That is, the way things are named and represented, the manner in which difference is treated and the way in which the values and norms which govern life in schools are negotiated and established. These are all matters central to the concerns both of social justice and education'.
>
> (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 151)

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter One the research study was introduced, a case study situated within this broader social service dilemma of how to distribute finite resources equitably to meet individual need, while advancing inclusive education. It focused on the national directive with regard to inclusive educational practice for primary schools, *Department of Education and Science Special Education Circular 02/05,* (DES, 2005) (see Appendix A), which introduced the GAM within the legislative context of the EPSEN Act (Government of Ireland, 2004). This chapter presents the research claims and analyses. It discusses these in relation to the conceptual framework of the continuous policy cycle (Ball, 1994 and Cochran-Smith, 2013) as illustrated in Figure 4.1 below and the research literature presented in Chapter 2.

In accordance with McSpadden McNeill and Coppola (2006), the study digs beneath and beyond the policy document of *Department of Education and Science Special Education Circular 02/05,* which introduced the workings of the GAM, within the legislative context of the *EPSEN Act* (Ireland, 2004). As outlined in Chapter One, the GAM was introduced as a model to facilitate greater levels of inclusion. The rationale for its introduction was to reduce the need for individual applications and psychological assessments to the DES for students with SEN arising from high incidence (HI) disabilities (Circular 02/05, DES, 2005). The Circular acknowledged that 'the transition to a general allocation system is a major change for schools when compared to the previous model' (p.13) of individual application for resource teaching hours (RTH). Paragraphs 6.2 and 6.10 of the Circular (DES, 2005) states

that ‘a review of the general allocations will be undertaken after three years of operation’… and that further reviews will occur at regular intervals thereafter’ (p.13). To date, no such review has been published.

In order to gain greater insight into this policy model, and how it is unfolding on the ground, it was necessary to go into contexts of practice, namely various primary schools as outlined fully in Chapter Three. According to Levin et al., (2012) ‘policymakers and educators alike will appreciate the balance between large-scale research data and case examples that demonstrate how several critical issues play out in schools for teachers and students’ (p. 269). The analysis concerned itself with the *official stories* and *unofficial stories* (McSpadden McNeil and Coppola, 2006) of the policy process. As a result, in keeping with a post-structural approach, the study *deconstructs* teacher narratives to reveal particular school discourse that is influenced by teacher habitus. In doing so, the study makes the familiar strange.

As a practitioner and teacher educator for twenty years, the researcher recognised that the context of practice is a highly complex arena. This study is not simply an exercise to enquire if the GAM as policy has had its intended impact, i.e., greater levels of inclusion for the majority of children. Such a study would suggest that policy is liner, and the research merely investigating levels of compliance at the implementation phase. Alternatively, this study adopts a critical pragmatic approach and deconstructs the meaning of policy and considers its ‘enactment’ (Ball et al., 2012) as opposed to it ‘implementation’. Figure 4.1 highlights that the focus of the study was in the lived-world of the context of practice, while understanding the impact of each cycle on the other within the loop. The semi-structured interviews conducted within the context of practice explored the ways in which teachers are *agentative* within *structural constraint*. This study examined which particular policy text is selected, interpreted and translated by ‘actors’ into practice.

The study suggests, therefore, that policy is ‘enacted’ as opposed to implemented. The latter concept oversimplifies the policy process, this study argues. Moreover, in accordance with the conceptual framework of policy as cycle (See Figures 4.1 and 4.2 below), the study acknowledges that ‘enactment’ is not a ‘moment’ but a process of interpretation framed by structural, institutional and interactional factors involving a range of agents operating within the constraint that these factors apply which allows for agency that ‘re-constructs’ structures, institutions and social interactions (Ball et al., 2012). This study argues that in certain

circumstances human agency opens up the possibility of the transformation of structures, with intended and unintended consequences. There are periods when structures are changeable, and individuals, or individuals acting collectively, are able to 'reshape' and sometimes, 'recreate' these structures.

1. Context of Influence Is where Interest Groups struggle over the construction of policy discourses and where key policy concepts are established.	2. Context of Text Production Is where Texts represent policies. Texts have to be read in relation to time and the site of production	3. Context of Practice Is where policy is subject to interpretation and recreation	4. Context of Outcome Is where the impact of policies on existing social inequalities is seen	5. Context of Political Strategy Is where one identifies political activities which might tackle such inequalities
• Ideological, economic and political culture • Legislation – EPSEN Act (2004) • Previous Circulars relating to Special Education, C.24/03 • Discourse • Official and unofficial influences • European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (1999) • Capacity of NEPS to assess students in order to make individual application for resource eligibility	• Rationale • Major actors • Key concepts • Agenda served • Compromises • Intended consequences - Inclusion • Discursive Features providing a space for manoeuvre – agency – leading to segregated practices • Dilemma	• Local Interpretations • Local practices • Structure/Agency • Active responses • Passive responses • Resistance - Agency • Individual responses- Agency • Problem/solution framing • Dilemma • Intended consequences • Unintended consequences • Impact on localized groupings • Policy intention reshaped	• Impact on the child • Impact on diversity/equity • Impact on 'the development of truly inclusive schools' • Reproduction of social inequality - Constraint/Agency of parents - Constraint/Agency of practitioner - Constraint/Agency of state	• Review or not to review? • Revised political rhetoric • Power relations • What agenda • Who's agenda • Current ideological, economic and political culture



Figure 4.1 An adaption of the policy cycle: conceptual framework (Ball, 1994; Cochran-Smith et al., 2013)

In summary, the study uncovered some current paradoxes of 'inclusive policy'. For example, the main model to support inclusion is *withdrawal* from classroom-based teaching and learning for varying periods of the day under this inclusive policy agenda.

Quantitative data confirmed qualitative findings of the significant *disproportionality* of children from lower socioeconomic status (LSES) backgrounds in special education who are segregated daily. Research on the overrepresentation of African American and Hispanic students in special education is well documented. Building on the work of Artiles (2011) and Valencia (2010), this thesis problematizes and deconstructs the relationship between students from lower SES backgrounds and placement in special education under *funding model policy* supporting inclusive education. Crucially, the intersectionality between social class and placement in special education is brought centre-stage, so to speak. The study exposed the deficit discourse of teachers, the pathologisation of LSES grouping, the dominance of the psycho-medical model and the power of the social professionals to order students. It highlights that while policy may claim to be transformative, practices. i.e., discourse/ action that are grounded in psycho-medical perspectives of students experiencing difficulties are resilient to change. The thesis argues that such discourse/action in the context of practice results in the exclusion of some, many of whom are from LSES backgrounds. A consequence of the GAM is the construction of intellectual hierarchies; this is linked directly to the social class background of the student, regardless of gender.

Ball (1994; 1998; 2003) and his colleagues (2012) advise that analysis must explore the overall and the localised outcomes of policy, incorporating a micro focus on the multiple (often contradictory) policy practices within individual institutions. It is therefore appropriate to carefully analyse the social processes that generate and define student dis/ability in the context of practice. This study specifically examined the *structure/agency* interplay within mainstream schools with regard to inclusive policy and its impact on children, which according to data from this study, is resulting in social inequality, which relates to context of outcomes. Therefore, this study argues for the construction of a new context, one of '*Reframed Political Strategy'* to reform the subsequent contexts of the loop (Figure 4.2) and in doing so this study extends Ball's (1994) concept of the policy cycle.

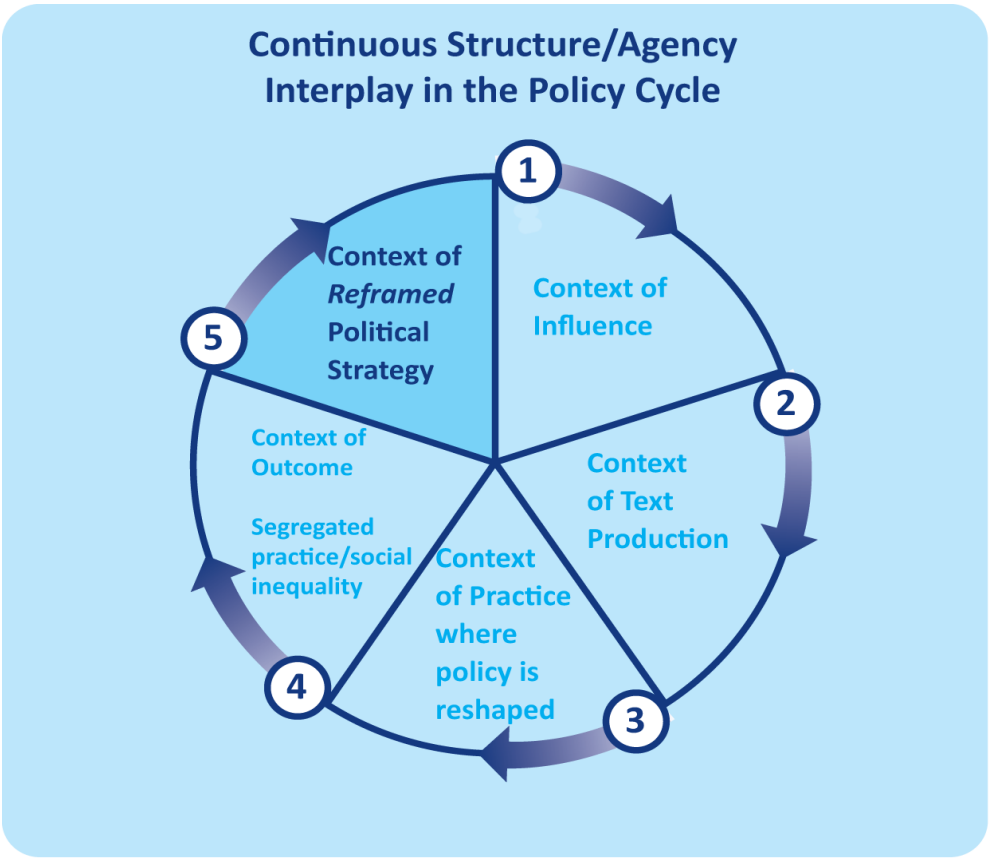


Figure 4.2 Policy cycle 'reframed'

To be more specific, Figure 4.2 presents a framework to understand the overriding structure/agency interplay within and between all contexts that allows policy text (structure) (1, 2) to be recreated by professional agency in the context of practice (3) with implications for the context of outcome (4), which can inform the context of political strategy (5), resulting in 'reframed political strategy' (5). Such 'reframed political strategy' can better inform the context of influence (1a) and lead to a process (cycle from 1a-5a) of policy evolution towards more equitable education for all (4a). It is hoped that the study will contribute to the context of '*reframed' policy strategy*, to better inform political activities, which might tackle *identified contradictions* to policy intention and other impacts of the transactions of the GAM on children resulting in social inequalities being reinforced and reproduced.

Table 4.1 below presents the major claims that emerged from the data. An outline of what warrants these assertions or claims is provided. 'Warranted assertions' can be described as the outcome of successful inquiries that may be modified, corrected, or even discarded as

further evidence becomes available (Dewey, 1941). These assertions emerged directly from analysis of the data (See Table 4.2), which in accordance with critical pragmatism, is a combination of quantitative and qualitative enquiry. The next three sections of the chapter are an analysis and discussion of the three major claims and the related sub-claims in relation to the theoretical framework.

Table 4.1 Claims

Claims	Stated Claim	Sub Claim	Warranted Assertion (Dewey 1941)	Analytical Dualism: Structure /Agency (Archer, 1998)
Claim 1	The text of Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) through its discursive features provides a space for maneuverer, for actors to be agentive.		• Conditionality • Multiplicity • Opaqueness	'space for action' (Ball, 2012) Agency to 'enact policy' rather than simply implement it
Claim 2	Policy intention is captured and reshaped in the context of practice – inclusive policy becomes segregated practice and increased social inequality.		• Singular diversity • Policy intention – 'to develop truly inclusive schools'. • Predominant model of support is withdrawal from classroom-based learning. • Sustained segregated practice • Vignette: *"They go out and they never come back"*	Policy 'enacted' in the context of practice: Agency of actors constrains inclusion and represents a barrier to inclusive education – inclusive education policy is captured and recreated
		Claim 2a Intersectionality between segregated practice and lower socioeconomic status backgrounds of the students.	• Up to 83% of special education caseload are from LSES backgrounds • 94% of students from LSES backgrounds are in special education placement • All students in special education cohort are from areas that are more disadvantaged than the schools' catchment based on the Haase Index	Actors' agency to select, refer, diagnose and order students: agency to 'construct dis/ability' within constraint of policy document.
		Claim 2b Power of professionals to refer children for assessment which has implications for school ordering, i.e. segregated practice. It relates to local constructions of dis/ability which are influenced by teachers' attitude beliefs and values (habitus).	• All teachers asserted that formal assessment is important (n=14) • Teachers believe that differential diagnosis is useful • Most students sent for assessment come back with a diagnosis • Implications for School ordering and • Reproduction of social inequality.	The agency of the social professionals for investigation, surveillance and treatment of students
		Claim 2c Social Capital: Power of parents to refer and secure diagnoses to ensure eligibility to enhanced resources.	• Social Capital intersection with Social Class of Parents (Haase Index)	Agency of the individual parent with a particular cultural/social capital over the social structure
		Claim 2d A consequence of the GAM is the construction of intellectual hierarchies within the context of practice.	• the mainstream child, • the GAM child, • the RTH model child	Discourse that constructs some as more dominant
Claim 3	The GAM, in addressing the resource/needs match dilemma, is recreating dilemma in the context of practice.		• Teaching as dilemma management (narratives n=14)	Structure/Agency inextricably linked resulting in need for actors to manage dilemma

The order of the claims/assertions outlined in Table 4.1 above build the overall argument that policy texts, while issuing constraint with regard to implementation, also provide spaces for actors in the context of practice to employ agency to 'enact policy' and reshape policy intention. As Mussella, (1989, p.100) contends 'it is not easy (and sometimes impossible) to identify which implementation practices will lead to the desired outcomes and what unintended, and undesired, outcomes will emerge'. Critical pragmatism insists upon deconstruction, problematizing and unpacking issues such as power and knowledge, structure and agency. The final claim suggests that 'some conflicts cannot be resolved and that the challenge is to find ways to keep them from erupting…' (Lampart, 1985, p. 193), which brings deconstruction towards reconstruction. This study concludes that the work of managing dilemmas… requires 'admitting some essential limitations…' (p. 193) in these dilemmatic spaces (See Table 4.1 above). The study's concept of reconstruction recommends adhocracy, (Skrtic, 1991) as an approach to teaching and learning, where school staff view *dilemmas as constructive.* Not only can the context of practice adopt adhocracy but the policy cycle, in general, can benefit from such a flexible and dynamic approach that demands a sharing of responsibility to problem-pose and problem-solve. In this way, the study merges the concept of adhocracy (Skrtic, 1987; 1991) with the conceptual framework of policy as cycle (Ball, 1994) to extend the conceptual framework and in doing so this study contributes to the field and its research literature.

In summary, the study concerned itself fundamentally with 'the everyday world of policy in contemporary Irish schools, i.e., the small worlds. It is predominantly about how schools 'do' policy, how policies become 'live' and 'get enacted' (or not) in schools (Ball et al., 2012, p. 1). Table 4.2 illustrates that which emerged from the coding of interviews conducted with all 14 participants (see also Appendices F, G, H, Paper trail of NVivo9 coding). This qualitative data and further quantitative data provided the warrants for the claims made in this thesis as outlined in Table 4.1.

Table 4.2 Emerging categories

149 Codes Re-coded to 11 Categories	Interview Coded	Citations Coded
1 Deep Structures i.e. Attitudes/ Beliefs/Values	12	275
2 Social Class	14	343
3 Social Capital	13	137
4 Resource Teaching Hour Model	13	184
5 Power of Social Professional	14	376
6 Local Constructions of Ability	13	553
7 Initial Teacher Education	11	86
8 GAM	14	237
9 Withdrawal as a Model of Support	14	169
10 Adhocracy in a Community of Practice	13	149
11 Dilemma	13	111

While the focus of the study rests within the context of practice (Context 3, see Figure 4.1 and 4.2), initially however, it was necessary to examine the policy text, Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) and its context of influence and the context of text production, 'where interest groups struggle over the construction of policy discourses and where key policy concepts are established and put in writing', as outlined in Figure 4.1. In this way, the analysis examined the extent to which the state determines the policy process and as a consequence, the opportunity for participation by other actors, in particular, those key stakeholders in the context of practice, to interpret and more importantly, to reinterpret the policy text in practice and by doing so, to recreate policy.

This first warranted claim will argue that policy makers (who themselves are constrained as servants of the state) at a macro level provide actors at a micro level with a space to manoeuvre, a space for action (Ball et al., 2012) to re-interpret policy text (which may be viewed as a constraining structure) and as a consequence, to recreate it, which relates to the structure/agency interplay. It is demonstrated that 'all funding mechanisms [policies] entail certain incentives, some of them even rewarding the segregation of pupils with special educational needs' (Meijer, 1999, p.11) providing empirical data that echo other European research findings. The presentation and discussion of this claim begins in a typically, post-structural mode, with a 'deconstruction' of the text (Circular 02/05, DES, 2005. See Appendix A) in order to analyse its discursive features.

4.2 Claim One: Discursive Features of Policy Text as Spaces for Manoeuvre

According to Ball (2006, p. 44) 'policy texts are set within frameworks which constrain but never determine all the possibilities for action'. Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) begins by stating its 'main purpose', which is 'to provide *guidance* for mainstream primary schools on the deployment and organisation of the teaching resources that were allocated [recently] under the general allocation model' (2005, p. 1). Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) presents as a policy document that seeks to 'shape an aspect of an organisation or activity at its core' (McSpadden McNeil and Coppola, 2006, p. 684). Interestingly, and unlike all other DES circulars, Circular. 02/05 was posted to *all* teachers in Ireland. Moreover, its presentation style was different; it was a bound publication with a glossy, coloured cover in contrast with a series of white pages sent to the school principal and its chairperson of the Board of Management. Such features may suggest that those involved at the context of text production, the centralised group, wanted *this* policy document to be noted, and implicitly, to be implemented in accordance with the text and its intention. Such an approach presumes that the power differential favours the policy makers, control coming from centralised policies to contexts of implementation (Gomez, 2010; Hatcher and Troyna, 1994; Gerwitz and Ozga, 1994). It may be that policy makers presumed that teachers in the context of practice would embrace policy text as the rational governing of schools (McNeil and Coppola, 2006), believing that policies are written and implemented in ways that are technically universal and culturally neutral, i.e., that they are 'readerly' texts (Barthes, 1970; 1986). If those in the context of influence and/or the context of text production (centralised groups) held such presumptions then a 'general model' of funding to support need would seem logical and rational (McNeil and Coppola, 2006). It could be implemented with validity in all contexts of practice, one could argue.

However, it is worth noting that Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) is a policy document that is in keeping with the definition of policy presented in Chapter Two (Section 2.2), it is a *governing directive* that addresses key purposes and processes guiding an organization or attempting to shape the behaviour of a population. It is *not* a *regulation*. It is not fine-grained, nor is it specific, like a regulation relating student age and compulsory schooling, or, legal age to drink, for example. Its main purpose is 'to provide guidance…' (p. 1) to schools.

It does not dictate. Similarly, Ball (1994 p. 19) insists that 'policies don't normally tell you what to do, they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed, or particular goals or options are set.

Therefore, this study argues that the text of C.02/05 (DES, 2005) provides for such 'circumstances'. The discursive features provide actors in the context of practice with 'a space to manoeuvre', albeit within constraint of policy 'guidance'. It gives individual institutions opportunities to negotiate within structures, and for individuals, within these social arenas, to activate agency and to construct recreated structures or maintain the traditional and established modes of practice, despite reforming policy. Such a perspective could explain a resilience to change and may suggest an explanation for Ball's (2003) observes as the status quo, noting that in education policy, the more things change the more they stay the same (see Chapter 2, Section 2.7). Human agency opens up the possibility of transformation of structures in which policy lives. The following discursive features of the text allows for teacher agency to manipulate policy intention:

- Conditionality
- Multiplicity
- Opaqueness
- Singular diversity focus

It is important to note that the policy document, C. 02/05 (DES, 2005) was issued within the legislative framework of the EPSEN Act, 2004, which this thesis suggests is loaded with conditionality. Therefore, the GAM is framed within such *conditionality* as the next section will show.

4.2.1 Conditionality

It is highlighted in Chapter 1 that inclusive education policies reflect current legislative responses (Liasidou, 2008). Therefore, C.02/05 (DES, 2005) should reflect the intention of Education Act 1998; and the EPSEN Act 2004 in Ireland. As stated in Chapter 2, the first Education Act in Ireland was ratified in 1998, insisting on the provision of an appropriate education for *all* children. The *right* to equality of, access to, and participation in education of 'a person with a disability or who has other special educational needs' is formally recognised in Education Act 1998 (section 7.1. a). The *rights* of children and young people with special educational needs to an appropriate education, equality of opportunity

and meaningful participation in society are strengthened further in EPSEN Act (Government of Ireland, 2004). However, it seems that such 'rights' are *conditional*, according to this latter legislative text, a text that is central to the context of influence of the GAM policy. For example, Section 2 of EPSEN Act (2004) confers statutory rights on children and young people with special educational needs to an 'Education alongside other children who do not have special educational need'. However, it places conditions on that *right,* stating that inclusive education will be provided 'unless' the 'inclusive education' is 'inconsistent with the best interest of the child or the effective provision of education for the other children…' The text of the legislation (EPSEN Act, 2004) also states that inclusive education can only be provided 'as far as is practicable' and 'as resources permit…' The legislative text of the EPSEN Act is fraught with such 'clauses of conditionality' (Slee, 1996, 2001). Such conditionality provides those who inhabit the contexts of the policy with a 'space to manoeuvre'.

Moreover, the legislative text talks about the 'effective provision for the other children', which begs the question, who are these other children in a legislative context that insists on an inclusive education for all (Education Act 1998). Such discourse serves to construct 'otherisms' in a single, national education system. Therefore, a space to manoeuvre is afforded to social professionals working within the context of practice to maintain a *dual system of education* in Ireland, special education for some and mainstream education for others. This agency, it could be argued, subverts progress towards inclusion.

If policy reflects legislation, it is interesting to note that there is no reference to legislation in the text of Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005). However, the GAM policy does operate within this legislative context and therefore, *conditionality* is inherent on its transactions. It is not surprising, therefore, that in such a legislative context (context of influence) that the text presents with multiplicities (see 4.2.2), vagueness (see 4.2.3) and a limited view of diversity (see 4.2.3) that subsequently provides spaces for actors in the context of practice to be agentive and to interpret and to reinterpret policy text.

4.2.2 Multiplicity

Despite the sustained political and legislative advocacy of inclusion, this study argues that Circular. 02/05 (DES, 2005) can be characterised as *a hybrid document*, attempting to bridge the old forms of segregation, and integration, with 'truly inclusive schools' (p.2). As

discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the *unofficial story* is that the EADSNE Reports (Meijer, 1999; 2003) on the funding of special education influenced change of the funding model to support inclusive education in Ireland (personal communication, DES Official, Jan 2011). The Agency's 1999 Report was particularly influential and it recommended a move away from categorisation of students towards more general allocation of resources to local settings and authorities to meet need (see Section 2.3). However, it is noteworthy that this seventeen country report is not referenced in Circular.02/05 (DES, 2005) so is not acknowledged as being present in the context of influence. Circular 24/03 (DES, 2003) *is* cited extensively throughout Circular 02/05 (DES 2005). This circular strongly criticised the RTH model for its 'exclusive reliance on individual tuition', stating that such a model is 'contrary to the principle of integration'. The latter phrase highlights the hybrid nature of policy documents at this time.

The concept of *integration,* for the majority of children, was proposed by the SERC Report in 1993 (See Chapter Two, Section 2.3.1). This conflation of the two terms, integration/inclusion would seem to suggest a lack of conceptualisation of the difference in the nature of each as a concept. Paradoxically, while 'special education' is used throughout the policy document, (Circular 02/05, DES, 2005), there is no mention of the concept of inclusive education, other than the stated 'rationale' for its introduction 'to make possible the development of truly inclusive schools' (p.3).

As a hybrid document, Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) presents further multiplicities. While the document introduces the workings of the GAM 'to make the *previous* system of allocating resources based on individual application more effective and efficient for those pupils with HI disabilities' it consistently discusses the two funding models throughout its text, the RTH model and the GAM. The RTH model remains current and serves children at 'Stage Three of the Continuum of Support' (NEPS, 2007), children, who are described in Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) as having Low incidence (LI) disabilities. It is worth noting that while the RTH model was welcomed initially, it soon became clear that government had identified limitations. Personal communications with a Senior Government Official in the DES (Jan, 2011) (unofficial stories) revealed that increased demand for individual assessment resulted in a significant lack of capacity within NEPS to administer psychological assessment to secure resources to match individual need, which was necessary under the RTH model. By Sept 2003, there were a total of 7,000 applications awaiting response from the DES for

individual RTH provision. This was a key factor that influenced the necessity to review current funding policies and was a significant point taken into consideration when the government began its review of the RTH model prior to the introduction of the GAM in 2005 (pers.com DES Official, Jan 2012). Therefore, as highlighted in Chapter Two (Section 2.3), Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005), claimed to mark a distinct move away from categorising individuals to secure resources, which had resulted in much individual withdrawal to the resource room as a model of practice. While Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) introduced the GAM as a shift away from categorization of students for resource eligibility it could well be argued that the GAM still insists upon the coding of children for eligibility, as highlighted in Chapter Two (see subsection 2.3.2) which again provides for a multiplicity of interpretation. The discursive features of this text suggest that children continue to be categorised.

Circular 24/03 (DES, 2003) maintained that an exclusive reliance on using RTH model for individual tuition only is contrary to the principle of integration, it is remarkable that the GAM policy text (Circular 02/02, DES 2005) continues to allow for 'additional teaching in the classroom', 'or in small withdrawal groups'. The text of Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) also acknowledges that 'some pupils may also require additional one to one teaching support'. It would appear, therefore, that the GAM continues to facilitate withdrawal from the classroom, while a previous policy document spoke against such an approach. It seems that the core message of the text is contradictory, providing discursive multiplicities, which offer scope for varying interpretations in the context of practice.

It is also worth noting that the GAM has no currency at post-primary level. Such a 'general' system does not exist for post-primary students. This factor has implications for those who do not have an official diagnosis. Moreover, it is striking that there is no reference to the two key categories referred to in Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005), LI disabilities and HI disabilities in any education legislation (Education Act, 1998; EPSEN Act, 2004), this leads to further ambiguity when texts present with such multiplicity, vagueness, lacking in clarity that is required to understand key concepts that relate to ideology and to practice.

In summary, analysis of the discourse of the text of Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) reveals that what prevails in education policy texts is a 'discursive multiplicity' (Taylor, 2006, p. 434) of a new form of hybrid texts, discourses and identities that subvert attempts to

realise inclusive education. The next section further identifies the vagueness of the discourse that has been suggested in this section.

4.2.3 Opaqueness

Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) states clearly that the GAM was introduced to make the previous system of allocating resources based on individual application more effective and efficient for those pupils with HI disabilities. This whole statement is opaque, it could be argued.

Firstly, HI disability is an umbrella category introduced in Circular 02/05, as stated in 4.2.2 above. HI disability refers to the majority of children with 'disability'. However, this definition is not made clear in the circular. While the EPSEN Act (Government of Ireland, 2004) provides a definition of SEN (see Glossary of Terms), there is a significant lack of consensus relating not only to terminology used by the DES but also in its systems to support need. For example, the GAM support is provided directly by the DES and caters for, among others, children with high incidence disabilities, as outlined. This funding system is administered and monitored directly by the DES and its Inspectorate. The RTH model on the other hand is allocated and monitored by the SENO, working for the NCSE, a DES agency, and it supports children with low incidence disabilities. Under recent GAM revisions, which will be discussed in the final chapter of this work, neither post can now be amalgamated to form full-time posts within the system(s). This could suggest that some students with SEN are more valued than others, that some teachers are more important than others, that one model is more significant than another. At any rate, this study argues that the approach creates 'otherisms' at multiple levels, constructing hierarchies within the education system. This study suggests that funding models to support inclusive education in primary schools are creating 'other-isms' as defined in subsection section 1.7.1, reflecting Abreau and Peloquin's (2004), construction of other-ism, 'You are not at all like me. You are quite other than me. Your otherness separates us' (p. 354).

Secondly, the GAM was introduced to deploy additional teaching resources in a flexible manner, leading to more effective and efficient delivery of services. There is not definition in the circular with regard to *effective* and *efficient* or how either could or would be measured, neither is there indication of *who* decides what effective/efficient mean.

Thirdly, the text (DES, 2005) insists that 'Whenever possible, pupils with the greatest need should be taught by the teachers who have the relevant expertise and commitment…' (p. 3). It is not clear who or what decides 'the greatest level or need' which could reinforce the importance of psychological and other multidisciplinary professional assessment. Furthermore, there is no detail on how expertise or commitment is to be measured in the context of practice in order to address varying levels of need.

With regard to developing expertise, Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) does recommend that the training, experience and expertise of teachers be taken into account in deciding which pupil(s) to assign to which teacher, echoing the sentiment of the SERC report (DES, 1993) The INTO in their submission to the DES in 2008 (See Chapter Two) stated that on-going professional development will require significant investment in training for all those involved in the context of practice if inclusion is to be realised. However, there is an absence of any statement relating to this critical issue of investment in initial teacher education (ITE) and/or continuous professional development (CPD), despite an international consensus with regard to the necessity to build school capacity to manage diversity. Key statements in the circular are vague and obscure.

It could be argued that the GAM, while referring to high incidence disabilities and learning difficulties, seems vague with regard to multiple diversity that teachers encounter in the context of practice. Teaching resources were allocated in 2005 under the GAM to schools with differing pupil/teacher ratios allocated to boys', girls, and mixed schools and those designated as disadvantaged. The interlocking nature of multiple diversity, gender, race, social class) is well documented (Artilles, 2011; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Gilborn, 2008; Valencia, 2010) but, while not fully ignored in C.02/05 (DES, 2005), this study argues that it is not fully addressed. The interconnection between gender and SEN is acknowledged, but the interlocking nature of multiple diversity, is absent.

4.2.4 Singular Diversity: Absent Recognition of Intersectionality

Gender is the only, singular diversity, acknowledged in providing GAM resources to 'ordinary' schools. Therefore, as a funding model to address need, the GAM policy could be accused of focusing on a singular diversity, i.e., gender, and could therefore, while dilemmatic (to acknowledge/not acknowledge diversity), be viewed as discriminatory. It

could also be argued that by acknowledging a 'singular diversity' (gender) it serves to 'hide' certain diversity, such as, social class, for example. Consequently, this thesis argues that the GAM policy text presents as a 'classless' policy document, which fails to acknowledge the reality of the context of practice, the challenges teachers encounter and the complexity of this social arena. Such policy can serve to *constrain* actors but it can also lead to an agency, whereby teachers are *forced to hold on to* long-established modes of practice, in the face of such constraint. Such *agency* leads to the creation or re-creation of particular structures in schools, which may not be conducive to inclusive education.

Notably, in the development of the GAM, it was recognized that all boys' schools tended to have more incidences of SEN and that therefore, mixed schools would have greater incidence than all girls' schools, with all boys' school presenting with the greatest needs. While there is international recognition that the ratio for certain SEN is higher for boys, no reference is made to any research literature that provided a rationale for such an approach to resource allocation. Recently, McCoy and Banks (2011) acknowledged that the 'decision to allocate more resources to boys' than girls' schools is based on the SERC Report' (1993) (See 2.3.1), which stated that the boys to girls ratio in learning support was 3:2 and that the ratio of boys to girls with a specific learning disability is 7:3. The census conducted with regard to prevalence of SEN in 2002 and published in 2003 by the DES showed that 65% of children receiving support for high incidence disabilities were boys or 3:2 (INTO, 2005). However, it is significant that the majority of children with high incidence disabilities have borderline mild/mild general learning disabilities including Down syndrome and that the recent Irish study admits that analysis of SEN prevalence among nine-year-olds using data from the *Growing up in Ireland Study* (Smyth et al., 2009) suggests that gender differences among students with MGLD are not as distinct as previously thought, which is significant.

The study argues that while dilemmatic, diversity must be acknowledged and that prevalence of support *need* should be a consideration if schools are to be funded adequately. How schools use these resources is another matter. Policy must insist that these resources are utilised in an inclusive manner and not serve as tools to segregate. Chapter Five will discuss how such an approach has implications for mind-set as well as appropriate resourcing.

Furthermore, it is necessary to emphasise that the level of support allocated to schools originally under GAM was based on the enrolment for September 2003. It is a fact that

school population has increased and continues to increase. For example, the population of those aged between 0-14 has increased by 30% in the last six years. Therefore, evidence suggests that schools can no longer be considered as being *appropriately resourced* to meet diverse needs, which was a stated intention of the GAM policy.

In summary, policy can provide incentives for those in the context of practice to implement policy which contradicts the intention of policy text to develop truly inclusive schools. This support the views of Bowe, et al., (1992) that policy is a continual process in which the 'loci of power are constantly shifting as the various resources implicit and explicit in the texts are recontextualixed and employed in the struggle to maintain or change views of schooling' (1992, p. 13). As a result of the discursive features presented in Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005), it could be argued that *the hybrid text* has provided a space for agency of the key actors in the context of practice and as a result has facilitated the construction of macro and micro layers within the primary education system;

1. the general/mainstream education model,
2. the GAM, and
3. the RTH model.

This may suggest that funding models to resolve the need/resource match dilemma facilitate the management of diversity by constructing dis/ability, providing separate settings for children perceived and coded as non-normative (the mainstream child; the GAM child, the RTH child), which ultimately masks general education failure to teach all. The discourse analysis of the text relates directly to the context of influence and the context of text production, specifically to the central influence of state, i.e., a particular government. Within this context, there are structures (state, economic climate) and agency (individuals at the central table, mainly government Minister(s) and civil servants with the DES), which result in struggles over the varying perspectives, programmes, and influencing policy texts from other jurisdictions, as noted (see Meijer, 1999; 2003). The participants of such contexts are often referred to the 'power elite'. Ball and his fellow researchers criticise the state control approach for the detachment of the policy generation from implementation, which reinforces tidy, managerial, linear models and focuses on macro-based theoretical analyses that 'silence' the voices of teachers, students and parents. When those voices are included, they argue, they are as 'potentially free and autonomous resisters or subverters of the status quo' (Bowe et al,

1992, p. 6), as discussed in Chapter Two. Ball (2006) states, that policy analysis requires an understanding that is based on the changing relationship between *constraint and agency,* and their interpretation. He believes that it necessary to account for agency in a constrained world, and show how agency and structure are implicit in each other, rather than being the two poles of a continuum. This study, in line with the work of Archer (2010), suggests that structure is a human product and this 'product', in turn, shapes people and influences their actions and interactions. Therefore, this study examines the relative interplay of structure/agency and ultimately argues that the result of such agency on the part of key actors in the context of practice is that policy text can be 'captured', as it were, and can be reshaped within the context of practice, creating and recreating structures. In this way, a dialectical relationship in social theory is understood as opposed to a dichotomized version, national policies, social institutions and human actions are taken to be mutually constitutive, and human agency in context remains a vital unit of analysis rather than just text for the explanation of meaning (Jansen and Peshkin, 1992).

4.3 Claim 2: Context of Practice: Where Policy Text is Captured

This study argues that whatever the aspirations of legislators and policy makers, when it comes to policy enactment, funding models to support the inclusion of all children are more about exclusionary practices than inclusion, 'demonstrating that all funding mechanisms entail certain incentives, some of them even rewarding the segregation of pupils with special educational needs' (Meijer, 1999, p.11), which constrains the evolution of inclusive education and also the lives of children and their families. Specific qualitative and quantitative data in relation to Claim 2 (see Table 4.1 above) is presented in this section. Four sub claims construct this overall claim which relates to the inclusiveness of our school despite policy intention.

The discursive features of the text (C.02/05, DES 2005) can provide the foundation of blame. The text (DES, 2005) gives teaching resources and 'permission' to the actors in the context of practice to withdraw students from classrooms. The GAM allows for 'additional teaching in the classroom', 'or in small withdrawal groups'. It acknowledges that 'some pupils may also require additional one-to-one teaching support'. Because the text is not *a*

regulation, as noted earlier, there are no limits placed on levels of 'withdrawal' allowing for teacher agency to shape practice with implications for the ordering of students in schools. Data from this study highlight that the predominant model of support provided by the extra teaching resources is withdrawal of children from mainstream classes. Such a 'structure' within schools is directly related to the agency of teachers.

The interconnection between segregated practice and the social class of the students is a key sub claim discussed in this section. Analysis of further sub claims suggests that *mild disability* and HI disability generally, is a social construct. Many students from lower SES backgrounds are in separate special education programmes, suggesting that they have a disability, or learning difficulty. The power of the social professionals and that of some parents who can either apply or lever cultural and social capital is seen to be highly agentive in the social process.

This study argues that there is a *disconnect* between home and school, which data in subsequent subsections will illustrate. Home/school discontinuity is a more useful construct in understanding students' lived experience of schooling as opposed to constructing them as learning disabled.

4.3.1 Withdrawal: "they go out and they never come back"

The term 'going out' was consistently heard (169 references) in the narratives of teachers as coding on NVivo data sheet illustrates in Table 4.2 above (see also Appendices, F, G and H). In 1986, Madeline Will, recognised that the then 'resource teaching hour model' was over dependent upon *'pull out'* of students into special settings as outlined in Chapter Two . Interestingly, a key claim articulated in this study, albeit, almost thirty years later, mirrors Madeline Will's concern. It was established, early in the study, that *withdrawal* of students from the mainstream classroom was the predominant model of support in the school. Therefore, the meaning, context and implication of withdrawal of students from classroom-based learning was explored in depth with all participants (n=14). The following is a question posed and a response from the Infant Teacher in School A, the All Boys' school:

> *<u>Researcher:</u> The children supported by GAM do you think you could include all these children in your classroom, without any withdrawal?*
>
> *<u>Nuala</u>: Yes, it can be done definitely because at the moment I have said that I have sent off three assessments of needs, they could come back with reserouce hours but at the moment I am coping fine with them but I do feel like that with attention, to focus*

on task, an SNA or a resource teacher in the class with them would be of benefit to them, but it's hard not to withdraw a child …

Researcher: …Why?

Nuala: It's kind of the norm I think, yes it is the ***norm*** *in schools, it is just done, accepted. Sometimes a teacher feels they can't cope, the class teacher feels they can't cope, a certain subject or lesson where they need a bit of support in the class but it's never "right let's sit down and work this out and you come in to the class this time, this term and let see how it goes" but no withdrawal is just the norm it's the done thing and* ***we continue with the way the system works****, it's a tradition, a culture..*

Nuala, Infant Teacher, School A, Boys' School

This extract eloquently illustrates that professional action (agency) in the context of practice is governed (constrained) more by institutionalised, cultural norms than by rational, knowledge-based pedagogy designed to improve instructional effectiveness. Things are 'done' in certain ways because they have always been done that way, '*it's a tradition, a culture…*'. To do anything else in this context, each unique, would not make sense. From this perspective it might be suggested that teaching is a ritualized activity that takes place in a ritualized environment. Much research concur that teachers learn to teach by modeling people they have seen teach, former teachers who got their teaching from previous models (Lortie, 1975). Therefore, it seems that action in the activity centre of the context of practice is passed on from generation to generation, artifacts of a professional subculture which result in constraint and therefore, contribute to a resistance to change. Resistance also reflects a particularly powerful agency, this thesis argues. Nuala went on to illustrate this agency and resistance to change in relation to the way 'policy gets done' or the school rituals that exist to support the needs of students '*… [it's] no more than the stigma of kids going out once they have that label it's hard to change that label and they live with it, so, withdrawal is the same, it's hard to change'.* 'Going out', it seems becomes a'sticky label' (Rose et al., 2012), just like any form of categorisation, which is noteworthy. Evidently, once a child 'goes out' it gains a label, they live with it, much like McDermott's (2001) findings in relation to Adam (see Chapter Two). Adam's self is a view of himself in relation to others in a given context. Johnston (1973) cited by Hall (2007) in her article describing the case study Daniel, states that identity is what you can say you are according to what they say you can be. McDermott (2001) reminds us that Adam can only be 'disabled through his interactions with others'

(2001, p.66). Adam is agentive within constraint, 'the limits of the positions made available in the moment-by-moment interaction with others' (Hall, 2008, p. 345) illustrating that the self is relational and dynamic and influenced by participating in social contexts. This view is in stark contrast to the essentialist view of intelligence and fixed notions of ability. Nuala goes on to articulate the difficulties associated with the 'withdrawal label' and student self-concept: '*I presume they perceive themselves as weaker and maybe in need'.* Nuala raises further concerns, concluding that '*the whole system needs to change'*:

> Researcher*: Did you ever ask a child about how he felt about being withdrawn?*
>
> Nuala: *I don't think I have, you would be very afraid of the answer because what are you going to say if they say "No I don't like going?" "Well sorry you are going to have to go anyway,* ***that's the way it works here****, the system" Like you can tell from some of them that they like going 'cause they bounce out the door whereas some are a little slower to go out and they are saying "Bye, Jake, bye Tony, nearly like don't forget me! And you are trying not to withdraw them while you are doing your cores so they could be going out when you are doing art or PE and they are asking "hey, am I not there to do that?" so you try and juggle it but it is very difficult, sometimes it is like punishment being withdrawn...****we need to change the whole system****...*

This study suggests that these 'sticky labels' constrain the agency of the child. As outlined in Chapter Two, socio-cultural theories assume that learning itself is a social act and is culturally rooted within 'communities of learners' (Lave and Wenger, 1998). This thesis argues for an approach that asks *not how smart are* you but in *what contexts are you smart*.

With regard to segregated practice that removes students from the classroom to the Learning Support/Resource room, Carmel, the Learning Support teacher in the Girls' School also admits that the *ritual of withdrawal* is hard to change:'*... it's very much part and parcel of the day here as there are so many going in and going out that maybe when you are in school here it's part and parcel of every classroom here, it's the way the system works here…'* Overall, across the fourteen interviews, there are one hundred and sixty nine references to 'withdrawal' and seventy nine relating to 'stigma' (See Table 4.2 and Figure 4.3 above), the latter relating directly to the former, the student 'suffering' stigma by being withdrawn from the classroom, which is highly significant. All teachers acknowledged that the effects of 'withdrawal' were linked to the age of the students. There was consensus among all those interviewed (n=14) that during the early years of school, being withdrawn for 'special intervention' was viewed as positive. This factor that has major implications for the

importance of early intervention as teachers of Infant classes shared:

> *I think at this age they love it. They see it as a treat. One child going out and you'd often hear another saying "when am I going out?" This age they don't know what it is they don't realise that they are going out for one on one time because they are weak; they just see it as a fun time. Whereas up long the story is very different, they are more unconscious of it, 5th and 6th. The other class members know that these are weak;* ***they are given a label without even having a label****. Actually, this would be an issue for 3, 4 5, 6th. The first half of our school, they just don't realise what is going on, but up along they do, they are street wise they know*
>
> *Aoife, Infant teacher, Girls' School*

The Infant teacher in the Boys' School and the Mixed School agreed based on their experience in the context of practice:

> *I think* ***it gets harder as they get older****, definitely, the going out, they are more aware, they themselves know why they are going and the others know why they are going and I also don't know how beneficial it is in 6th class to go out, I don't know how beneficial it is. I don't know how much more they would learn at that stage of their reading, you know if they have been there since S.I. obviously. I used often ask that because it's not that I didn't want them leaving the room but it's very difficult at that stage if the problem is still very much there, and I don't know how this is going to sound but* ***I don't know if it makes any difference at this stage and really for what it does to their self-esteem would they not be better off in...****[the classroom]*
>
> *Vivien, Infant Teacher Mixed School*

While Vivien is currently teaching Infant classes, she has experience teaching all classes in a variety of schools. She believes that being withdrawn *'makes no difference at this stage'* to the child's educational progress and like all teachers interviewed she suggests that the stigma begins at an older 'stage': '***God I think it (the stigmatising effect) starts in third class…'.*** Despite such clear views on the negative impact of withdrawal for students from third class onwards, this is how inclusion 'gets done' in all three of the settings where the GAM was analysed.

Furthermore, with regard to the relationship between structure and agency, it is noteworthy that throughout Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005), constant and consistent reference is made to '*additional* teaching support' allocated to pupils, the class teacher, the school. This thesis argues that any approach that is seen as an 'add-on' will always be interpreted as that which is outside the norm, not considered mainstream. Therefore, the discursive feature allows for 'add-on personnel' for children who may be perceived as somewhat outside the

norm. It is noteworthy that there is no mention of *co-teaching* as a model of support in the circular introducing a 'new' approach to support (Circular. 02.05, DES, 2005). The nearest reference to it is on page 5, which discusses 'logistic factors, such as timetabling for in-class additional teaching support and for withdrawal of pupils from mainstream classes'. This issue again highlights the multiplicity of discourse presented in the text. Co-operative teaching, by definition, presumes a sharing of responsibility among all teachers in the context of practice. It suggests 'a pulling-in and a pulling together' (see Chapter One, the 'I' in the research), a more socio-cultural approach to all teaching and learning. The research literature refers to co-teaching as a service delivery option designed to address the needs of pupils in an inclusive classroom by having a class teacher and a LS/RT, teach together in the same classroom to meet the needs of students and teachers (Scruugs, Mastropieri & McDuffie, 2007; Murawski & Dieker, 2008). The principles of the approach insist that teaching interventions occur in the *same classroom* during the same class period; that both teachers *share responsibility* for planning, preparation, delivery of lessons, supporting pupils, monitoring, assessment and recording; and that there is *mutual ownership and joint accountability* (Hentz & Jones, 2011). According to this literature, the outcomes of the approach are that both teachers and students benefit from their shared involvement in the teaching and learning process.

It was evidenced by all the participants in the study that co-teaching had been considered and trialed at varying levels and at various stages. While withdrawal from the classroom was the predominant model of support (90%) it must be acknowledged that co-teaching is or has been practised in some format, in all three schools:

> *My personal experience is that it has worked very, very well for me and as a class teacher with multi-grade classes, **I love it when the general allocation teacher can comes in**. It's just fantastic for me, to come in and assist with literacy lesson or a lesson in maths or even a lesson on SPHE where we can break up the groups because of the behavioural difficulties and things like that. Break up the groups into smaller groups, I feel I get more done as a class teacher. From a class teacher's point of view it's certainly very satisfactory to me.*
>
> *Eibhlín, 3rd/4th Class teacher, Boys' School*

It interesting that Eibhlín, while positive about the approach, also acknowledges that co-teaching, involving two teachers working collaboratively, with shared responsibility and that it should be 'a marriage made in heaven' rather than a 'made match':

> *A huge amount of it [participation in co-teaching] depends on the personalities of the teachers in the room. Some teachers love another teacher to come in and teach with them. Some teachers are more hesitant about it.*

Similarly, Murphy's (2011) findings in relation to the practice of co-teaching in Irish post-primary schools highlight the importance of teacher compatibility. It is interesting to note that he found that teacher compatibility was more to do with teachers' habitus than any other factor, such as pedagogical approaches. Such a finding supports this thesis in relation to the powerful role of teacher habitus influencing action in the context of practice. This teacher habitus is highly agentive in the construction of school culture, or the way things are done, the tradition, which holds significant implications for students in the context of outcome (see Figure 4.1 and 4.2) and their families.

Other practicalities come into play when new models of practice encounter the complex area of the context of practice as highlighted in Emer's comments:

> *…other teachers would have reservations, significant reservations about in-class support; they feel that two adults in the classroom can be very confusing. Often there is an SNA in the room as well, it's three voices, it's distracting for pupils, it can be intimidating for teachers and you know these are all things that need to be considered…*
>
> *Emer, Principal School A, All Boys' School*

Emer, as principal, is supportive of co-teaching, but her narrative illustrates that while the principal of a school is seen to have particular agency (Spillane, 2012), such power can be constrained by the agency of all actors in the arena. Murphy (2011) concurs, stating that 'the extent to which a principal needs to be an advocate of team-teaching is obviously context-sensitive to the school and the teachers involved' (p.299), which is endorsed by the following comment:

> *Now there are other teachers … and this is the kind of school we are in, that everybody's opinion counts, in-class support is not going to be forced on anybody here … I think it is very important that number one, as a staff, that the staff get on well, and the staff have a good relationship with each other, and I don't think anybody should be told, "right in this school it is only in-class support or in this school it is only withdrawal"*
>
> *Emer, Principal, Boys' School*

The participants living in the context of practice in this study realised that 'imposed models of practice' presented challenges when they encountered the practicalities of practice. This acknowledgement suggests that top-down approaches may not be as powerful as the concept of 'implementation' implies. Teachers hold agency to 'enact'. Teachers in all three schools felt that co-teaching was a model of support that should *not be* forced on staff. The teaching principal in the Boys' school while articulating the benefits of co-teaching, from her own direct experience, acknowledged that the approach was individual-sensitive stating that '*A huge amount depends on the personalities of the teachers involved'.* She considered that a balance of approach, 60% co-teaching and 40% withdrawal was 'the ideal'. The principal in the Girls' School agreed that co-teaching was not the magic solution:

> *…in-class support is all very well and good for certain levels but there are certain pupils who might have significant behavioural problems who must be withdrawn to work on programmes but because levels can be so low and behaviour can be so poor that they need withdrawals first before they can come back into the room to work with little groups or to work in the classroom so both models are good…*
>
> *Mary, Principal, School B, Girls' School*

In relation to 'a balance of approach', according to teachers in the three schools, that despite trials and pilots, there was very little co-teaching in place, about 10%, and that this form of co-teaching was not based on a 'shared responsibility'. It was in the form of classroom support, *one teacher lead/one teacher supports*, this support being tied to children on the support teacher's caseload. As Travers (2006) notes, there are many barriers currently to in-class inclusive methodologies. These barriers include teacher attitudes towards inclusion, inherent system constraints in the education system, pedagogical issues and conceptualisation of roles within the system (Travers, 2006, p. 165).

In summary, what was unearthed in this study is noteworthy and of serious concern as illustrated by this narrative from the principal of the Girls' school and reflective of practice in all three schools:

> *I remember reading about remedial… that a child had a capacity level and they weren't reaching this capacity and therefore* ***they were remediated*** *over a period of time… and* ***then they would be perfect*** *and box ticked and back to the classroom. But I have to say over my years' experience I have thought how idealistic that notion is! I have only ever thought it applied to a child who had been in hospital for a while and had missed a little bit of school and got a little bit of support, a child who had no difficulty, I might add...*
>
> *Researcher: Innate ability?*
>
> *Absolutely, absolutely, this child was flying along and missed everything and came back and was remediated and was back to normal! ….*
>
> *Researcher: Went back to the classroom?*
>
> *Yes, back in. Here [in this school] the children in GAM need continuous support – I have no doubt that there are children within our GAM system who have a particular capacity but there are such a pleat rah of other compounding things going on in their live, like not being in school, not having their books, not having anyone who thinks that education is important… my experience over the years is* ***if they go out they never come back…***
>
> *Mary, Principal B, All Girls' School*

This direct quote from the principal reveals much about the transactions of the GAM, illustrating how some children are included and why some are left outside of the mainstream. It emphasises the segregated reality within the context of practice, albeit under the implementation of inclusive education policy. It also suggests why *disproportionality* occurs. She acknowledges that children supported by GAM may have 'innate ability' but because of the challenges associated with their LSES backgrounds they need continuous support. Currently, such support means that they are segregated, they are the students who 'go out'. Significantly, '*if they go out they never come back*', despite teachers' views disputing the efficacy of withdrawal for the older primary school student and the highlighted negative impact on the student's self-concept. McCoy and Banks (2012) cited extensively in Chapter Two, highlight that children with SEN, particularly those identified with learning disabilities, face 'considerable barriers to fully engage in school life. They are considerably more likely to

not enjoy their time spent at school', a finding which they suggest holds up when account is taken of their social and cultural background.

Deeper analysis in this study of *who* the 'GAM students' are, (see Section 4.3.2) has significant implications for children coming from Lower socio economic status (LSES) backgrounds. The *stark disproportionality* of children coming from LSES backgrounds was only discovered by listening to the 'unofficial stories', the narratives of the actors in the context of practice, which was then confirmed by quantitative data sourced from school management at a later stage in the research process. Later demographic evidence corroborated the qualitative data provided by the stories, unearthing the link between local constructions of dis/ability, LSES and school ordering, as illustrated in Figure 4.3 below. While the intention of legislation and the GAM policy is to develop inclusive education for all children, it seems that text and discourse 'provide particular opportunities for parties to the implementation process… with a space to manoeuvre' (Ball et al., 1992, p. 13/14). Ball (2003) suggests that at this point in time, 'educational policy and school orderings are potently classed – that in a number of respects they reflect and enhance the social and economic interests and concerns of the middle classes' (p. 3), mainstream education as a social practice of society.

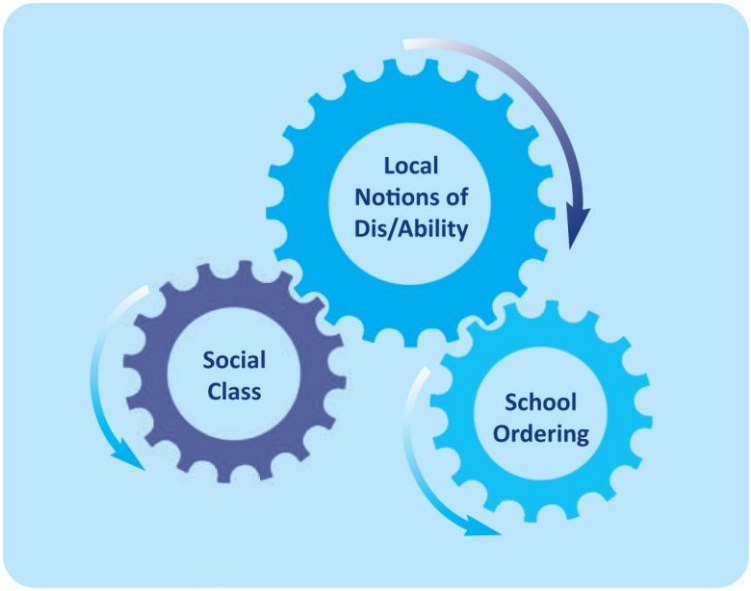


Figure 4.3 Interconnection between Local notions of dis/ability, school ordering and social class

The next section presents data from the context of practice but speaks to the context of outcome (see Figure 4.1 above), highlighting how inclusion 'gets done' to children and how they are ordered and constructed as 'other' in the context of practice. Findings relating to overrepresentation are well documented in the field of Race Studies (Artiles, 2011; Artiles et al., 2011; Etiles, 2002). This study presents and discusses overrepresentation in relation to social economic status, which serves to extend these theories. In accordance with Slee (2002) and Skrtic (1991; 1995; 2005) this thesis argues that although inclusive education has gained much strength and popularity, not all children are benefiting from it, which relates directly to the context of outcome (Ball, 1994). This current study reveals that social class minorities, or children from LSES backgrounds, are disproportionally referred for assessment. The agency to refer leads to a greater propensity to produce a diagnosis. Data from many teachers provides evidence that '*all children we send for assessment come back with a diagnosis'* and are then placed in segregated education settings, albeit, in mainstream school, when compared to their middleclass counterparts. The thesis contends that the social professionals, consciously or unconsciously, are powerfully agentive in this process.

4.3.2 Intersectionality with Social Class

The schools that were selected for this study are located in an urban area with a population of just over 4,000, with another c. 1,000 people living in the immediate rural hinterland. This contiguous catchment area is covered almost exclusively by the three schools under study. While investigating the working practices of the GAM in the three sites, section 4.3.1 illustrates that the predominant model of support for children in the three mainstream schools is withdrawal to the Learning Support room. Table 4.3 illustrates *who* is being withdrawn and supported by special education resourcing models in the three mainstream schools. Data from this study suggests that many children with learning difficulties and HI learning disabilities in these primary schools are from lower socioeconomic status (LSES) backgrounds and the claim argues that they are disproportionately represented in the special education programmes. The LSES are defined in the methodological chapter of this thesis as an unemployed head of household, possession of a medical card and residency in social/local authority housing as indicated on school enrolment documents.

Table 4.3 Demographic data highlighting disproportionality of students from lower SES backgrounds in special education

School	Population	Lower SES in overall population	Special Education GAM&RAM	Lower SES in Special Education	Overall Population from Lower SES in Special Education
A: Boys' Raw Score %	98 100%	30 **31%**	22+15+ 37 **38%**	16+12=28 **76%** p<.001	28/30 **93%**
B: Girls' Raw Score %	105 !00%	32 **30%**	28+8=36 **34%**	24+6=30 **83%** p<.001	30/32 **94%**
C: Mixed Raw Score %	418 100%	52 **12%**	54+6=60 **14%**	24+2=**26** **43%** p<.001	26/52 **50%**

There are 98 students in the Boys' School. 30 boys come from Lower LSES backgrounds. In this school, 37 boys are in receipt of special education, 28 of these boys come from LSES backgrounds. 28 boys out of a total of 30 (93%) of boys from this background are being withdrawn from classroom-based learning each day.

There are 105 girls attending the Girls' School, 32 girls come from LSES. There are 36 girls in receipt of special education, 30 of the 36 (94%) of the special education cohort are

from LSES backgrounds. Two girls from this background remain in class for all teaching and learning.

The Mixed School has a population of 418 pupils. 52 of its students are from LSES backgrounds. There are 60 attending special education, 26 of whom are from LSES backgrounds. 26 out of a total of 52 (50%) students from this background are in special education placement. Only 12% of the overall school population comes from LSES background as opposed to up to 31% in the neighbouring single-sex schools (see Table 4.3 above and Figure 4.4 below).

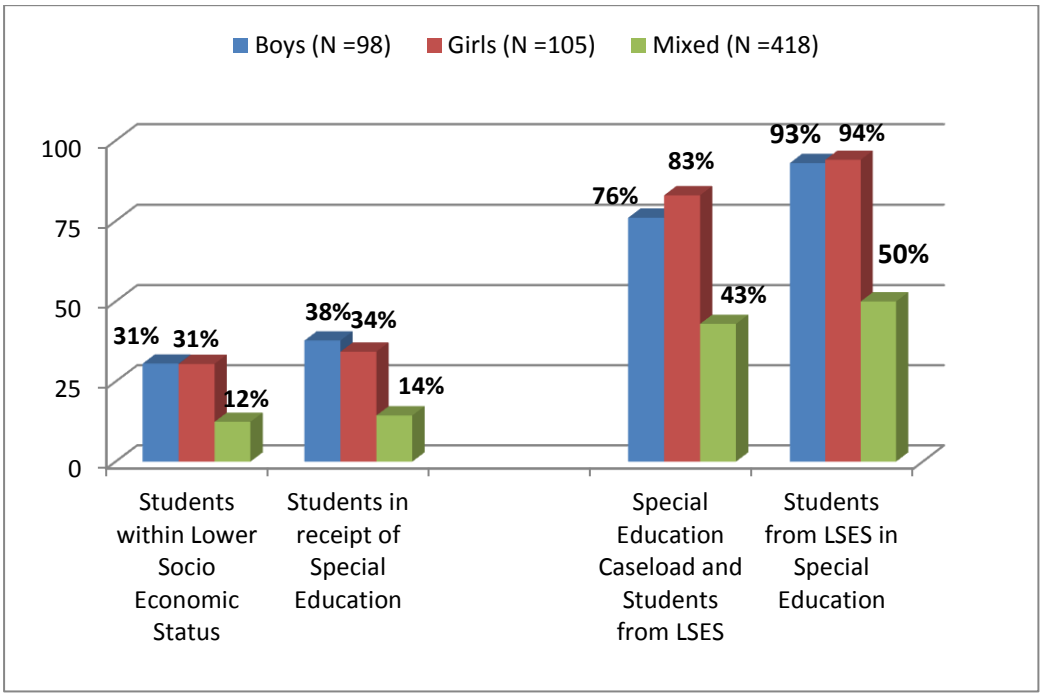


Figure 4.4 Intersectionality between lower SES and special education placement

For the Boys' School a *Chi-square goodness of fit test* (see Table 4.4) indicates that there is a significant difference in the proportion of pupils within LSES in receipt of Special Education (n=28; 76%) compared to the value of 31% of pupils within the LSES sector (n =30) in the boys school general population [x^2 = 34.525, *df* =1, p<.001]. The Two-Tailed P Value is less than 0.001 highlighting that by conventional criteria this difference is considered extremely statistically significant; in other words, it is *not* the sample one expects.

Table 4.4 Chi-squared analysis to illustrate significance of disproportionality

School	%Low SES in Overall Population	% Receiving Support	% of Students from Low SES Receiving Support
A All Boys'	31%	38%	**76%** [x^2 = 34.525, *df* =1, *p*<.001].
B All Girls'	30%	35%	**83%** [x^2 = 46.1, *df* =1, *p*<.001]
C Mixed	12%	14%	**43%** [x^2 = 55.783, *df* =1, *p*<.001]

Chi-square goodness of fit test for the Girls' School indicates that there is a significant difference in the proportion of pupils within the LSES grouping in receipt of special education (n=30; 83%) compared to the value of 31% of pupils within the LSES grouping in its general population (n=32) [x^2 = 46.1, *df* =1, *p*<.001]. This data is highlighted in Table 4.4 above.

In the Mixed school the Chi-square goodness of fit test indicates that there is a significant difference in the proportion of pupils within LSES in receipt of Special Education (n =26; 43%) [x^2 = 55.783, df =1, p<.001] compared to the value of 12% of pupils within the LSES sector (n=52) in the overall school population as indicated in Table 4.4 above.

In order to further investigate the presenting empirical link between the socio-economic background of students and their participation in special education classes, the schools were asked to supply the home addresses of all those being withdrawn for special education. The Boys' School and the Girls' School supplied this data (see Appendices I and J). The researcher then applied the data set to the Pobal Haase-Pratschke Deprivation Index (see Appendix I) (or Pobal HP Deprivation Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012), a factor

analysis to facilitate inter-temporal comparisons. Since 2010 the Index has been referred to as the Pobal Haase-Pratschke Deprivation Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012) in recognition of the funding provided by Pobal following successive releases of the Small Area Population Statistics. The Small Area data from the most recently available Census of Population (2011) and Census of Population (2006) provides a socio-economic profile of a population at neighbourhood level based on indicators as presented in the table below. Based on a household level profile for each child, this method allowed the researcher to assign numeric values to each individual child who is in a special education class in a mainstream school based on the value for his / her neighbourhood. The data were then aggregated to provide mean values for those in receipt of special education, which can be compared with the aggregate values for the schools' catchment area. As the table shows, the neighbourhoods from which the children in the special classes come are considerably more disadvantaged than the schools' overall catchment area as illustrated in Table 4.5:

Table 4.5 Profile of socioeconomic profile of students in special education and in the catchment of the schools

2011 DATA	Relative Index Score	Lone Parent ratio	Population with Primary Education Only	Population with 3rd Level Education	Unemployment Rate - Male	Unemployment Rate - Female	Proportion in Local Authority Rented Accommodation
Students with SEN	-3.01	26.41	16.08	28.95	32.48	20.33	19.02
School Catchment	0.53	22.33	14.13	35.66	26.38	15.89	10.53
SEN Relative to Catchment	-3.54	4.08	1.95	-6.71	6.10	4.43	8.49
Proportion SEN Relative to Catchment		17.17	22.18	-20.19	14.91	10.30	27.44
2006 DATA							
Students with SEN	-3.56	23.62	21.58	26.69	9.38	6.54	14.95
School Catchment	7.34	21.08	15.87	35.71	6.91	5.78	8.37
SEN Relative to Catchment	-10.90	2.53	5.71	-9.02	2.47	0.76	6.58
Proportion SEN Relative to Catchment		12.02	35.97	-25.25	35.74	13.21	78.65
2009 REFERENCE YEAR							
School Catchment	**3.93**	**21.71**	**15.00**	**35.68**	**16.65**	**10.84**	**9.45**
Students with SEN	**-3.29**	**25.02**	**18.83**	**27.82**	**20.93**	**13.43**	**16.99**
SEN Relative to Catchment	**-7.22**	**3.31**	**3.83**	**-7.86**	**4.28**	**2.60**	**7.54**
Proportion SEN Relative to Catchment		**13.23**	**20.33**	**-28.26**	**20.47**	**19.34**	**44.37**

The data for this study were collected in 2009/10. Therefore, Table 4.5 presents an assessment of the socio-economic profile of the SEN students and those of the entire catchment area (see Appendix I, also) with reference to the Census of Population closest to

that point in time, i.e. 2006 and 2011. In order to enhance the accuracy and comparability of the data, the table also presents data for 2009, whereby values are a median between the 2006 and 2011 values. Thus, the data presented in the table take account for the changes in the national and local economy at the onset of the current recession to 2011. Indeed, as the table illustrates, deprivation has increased throughout the schools' catchment area between 2006 and 2011.

Table 4.5 shows that in 2006, the schools' catchment area was notably more affluent than the state having a value on the HP Index of +7.34. However, by 2011, the gap between the local and the national had narrowed, and the score for the local catchment area had dropped to 0.53. Meanwhile, the neighbourhoods from which the students with SEN come registered more disadvantaged for both Census of Population, with scores of -3.01 and -3.56 in 2011 and 2006 respectively (see Appendix I). It is noteworthy that the data indicates that the circumstances of children in special education and their families had not changed despite the economic climate.

When the data for the 2011 Census of Population were used to provide the reference set against which the life circumstances of the students with SEN can be compared / contrasted, Table 4.6 highlights that relative to students in the entire catchment area of the three schools, children in special education in the Boys' School and the Girls' school are more disadvantaged according to the following variables:

- Lone Parent Ratio
- Primary Education Only
- Third Level Education
- Unemployment Rate (male and female)
- Proportion living in Local Authority Rented Housing

Table 4.6 Life circumstances of the students in special education when compared with overall student population

Household Profile (HP Index Variables)	2011 % by comparison to overall catchment	2006	2009/2010
Lone parent	17% more likely	12% more likely	**13% more likely**
Adults have primary education only	22% more likely	36% more likely	**20% more likely**
Adult has a third level qualification	20% less likely	25% less likely	**28% less likely**
Unemployed male	15% more likely	35% more likely	**20% more likely**
Unemployed female	10% more likely	13% more likely	**19% more likely**
Live in local authority housing	27% more likely	79% more likely	**44% more likely**

When the same exercise is undertaken, using the 2006 Census of Population data as the reference, Table 4.6 illustrates the figures that emerge in respect of students with SEN relative to the entire school catchment, analysing the same variables. It is noteworthy that intermediate values were then assigned, based on the median of the 2006 and 2011 Census

results because the demographics related to student population in school year 2009/2010. It can be observed that, relative to the entire school catchment area, students in special education at the time are:

- 13% more likely to come from a household headed by a lone parent,
- 20% more likely to come from a household in which the adults have primary education only,
- 28% less likely to come from a household in which an adult has a third level qualification,
- 20% more likely to come from a household with an unemployed male,
- 19% more likely to come from a household with an unemployed female, and
- 44% more likely to live in local authority accommodation.

Moreover, as the following graph (Figure 4.5) shows, over two-third of those receiving special education are from neighbourhoods that are more disadvantaged than the national average and *all* are from areas that are more disadvantaged from the schools' catchment area. Interestingly, this graph also shows that there are equal numbers of boys and girls receiving special education, thereby suggesting that the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and special education holds up across genders.

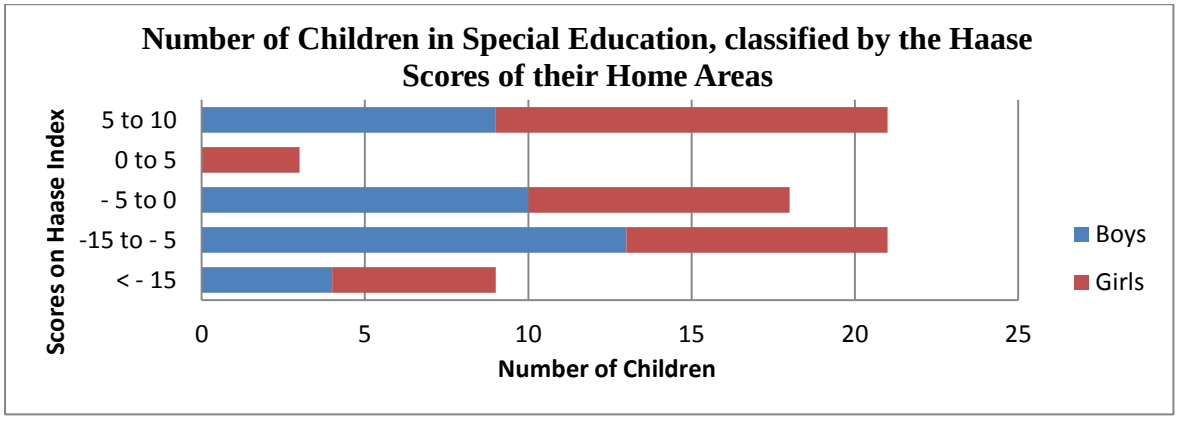


Figure 4.5 Number of children in special education, classified by the HP Indes scores of individual home addresses

The neighbourhoods from which those in receipt of special education are also characterised by below average population growth, with many estates actually experiencing population

decline. It is noteworthy that the HP Index is the only deprivation index at the international level which permits true comparison of deprivation scores over time.

Interestingly, Figure 4.6 illustrate profiles from the Pobal HP Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012), suggesting that twenty five students (34%) in the special education grouping are living in catchment areas of affluent neutral (0) to affluence (1+ - 15+ on the Index). In other words, Figure 4.6 shows that over *two-thirds* of those receiving special education were from neighbourhoods that are more disadvantaged than the national average and all are from areas that are more disadvantaged from the schools' catchment area, which is significant. However, the raw data presented in Table 4.3 above, illustrate that taken together, fifty eight out of seventy three (80%) students attending special education in the boys' school and the girls' school live in social housing and hold a medical card (as specified in school's enrolment forms). Therefore, according to this empirical data only fifteen students out of seventy three (20%) of the special education caseload, when the two schools are combined, are from families that do not live in social housing or hold a medical card. It is worth reiterating that *94% of boys* and *93% of girls* from LSES backgrounds are in special education placement at the time of the study.

This statistical anomaly demanded further analysis of Small Area data mapping and member checking with regard to addresses of the children in the special education caseload. This in-depth investigation revealed a small social housing estate in a catchment area classified on the Pobal HP Index as being affluent neutral (0) to affluent (1+ - 15+ on the Index). Analysis unearthed that this social housing estate was 'nested' in a catchment area that is, it could be argued, uncharacteristic of social housing.

The thesis suggests that much can be learned from this particular emerging feature of data analysis. Firstly, it suggests that while the Pobal HP Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012) is the only deprivation index at the international level which permits true comparison of deprivation scores over time, it has limitations with regard to fine-grained distillation to illustrate somewhat unique lived-experience of families in smaller housing estates not represented by SA mapping. Secondly, by revealing such a limitation of the Index, it suggests the methodological value of continuous cross referencing of all quantitative and qualitative data. It highlights the value of living in the 'local' in order to understand such lived experiences. Triangulation of this nature is critical in uncovering the real nuggets.

Moreover, the significance of social class in the interlocking nature of gender, race and class is emphasised in Figure 4.5 and 4.6. Data shows that there are *equal numbers of* boys and girls from LSES background receiving special education, thereby suggesting that the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and special education holds up across *gender,* which is highly significant. In the absence of accurate census data relating directly to SEN due to a lack of interagency communication around data sets and anomalies and ambiguities with regard to definition, this study, though small, provides such empirical data. While there is some consensus between recent *estimates* published in the NCSE's Prevalence Report (Banks and McCoy, 2011) which suggests 'stark differences in SEN prevalence between children from working class backgrounds and their middle class counterparts: the former, particularly boys, are more likely to be identified as having a SEN' (p.6). Empirical data from this study illustrates that social class trumps all other diversity including gender. These findings raise important questions over the adequacy of the GAM to target resources at greatest need.

Furthermore, as highlighted in the Prevalence Report (Banks and McCoy, 2011), in taking the 'broader definition' of SEN the Implementation Report (NCSE, 2006) found the prevalence of SEN to be 17.7 % which was in line with Annual Primary School Census or schools returns for 2007-08. The three schools in this study are 'ordinary', mainstream, schools without designation. Yet, 38% of the boys' and 34% of the overall girls' school population are identified with a SEN, which is double the national average. The mixed school, on the other hand has below the national average with 14% attending special education. For the boys' school and the girls' school, 31% and 30% of the schools ' population, respectively, come from LSES backgrounds, while students from LSES backgrounds in the mixed school represent 12%. These features hold significant implications for a *general* allocation of funding to 'mainstream' schools because empirical data in this study shows that schools are different.

Significantly, one principal explained that this factor, i.e., catering for differing social classes, presented the real challenge to the provision of inclusive education for her as a teaching principal:

*…**the mix between socioeconomic backgrounds (a tired gasp)… you have far more work to do if you are trying to marry the children who deserve to have a more challenging curriculum and the children who need to be supported with the basic curriculum**… there is more need for teacher input, there is far more need for some recognition of that need, allocation on the basis of that need'*

Mary, Principal Girls' School

Researcher: Is it marrying the children with SEN or marrying the children coming from differing social classes?

The two social classes, absolutely, it's very difficult

Mary

Class teachers articulated a similar view point, which is synthesised in this comment from Vivien in the mixed school: '*...I think alot of things could be changed. Inclusion is about more than SEN, they don't have to just have a learning difficulty, it's the background they are coming in from really that can be the greatest diffeerence...'* The correlation of this perspective and agreement among all the participants (n=14) with regard to family background and the challenges of this 'difference' were significant and represents a key finding.

It is only in recent times that analysis of inclusion policy is interrogating the vital role that social constructs play in determining who is included within the parameters of the 'norm' (Artiles *et al*., 2011; Berhanu, 2008; Hatt, 2012). Darling Hammond (2010) dissects the anatomy of inequality in schooling by exposing how factors such as social class, tracking and unequal schools resources perpetuate the opportunity gap in the education system. This study builds on Artiles et al.'s (2011) recent international comparative work on inclusion as it offers *empirical data of disproportionality* of students from LSES in special education. It adds to comparative international studies by presenting an Irish perspective. The presentation of these findings seek to highlight that class is never more damaging or indeed potent as when discourse and action results in 'classed' policy being neutralized, becoming common sense or understood and taken for granted as 'good policy' (Ball, 2003). Evidence from the study suggest that school structures seem to perceive policy and actions to 'enact' policy as being culturally neutral, nothing to do with power; purely constructed to shape the work of schools with the best interests of the children in mind (McSpadden McNeil and Copella, 2006). This study encountered naïve pragmatism on the part of actors within the context of

practice who fail to question why special education presents in their schools as a rational response to the management of diversity, in particular social diversity.

It is significant also, that the findings of this study provide timely *statistical backup* for the assertion made by the NCSE in its recent Prevalence Report, mentioned earlier, that

> …stark differences in SEN prevalence between children from working class backgrounds and their middle class counterparts: the former, particularly boys, are more likely to be identified as having a SEN… These findings raise important questions over the adequacy of current funding mechanisms for children in need of additional supports.
>
> (Banks and McCoy, 2011)

These reports show significant differences in SEN prevalence between children from lower socioeconomic status (LSES) backgrounds and their middle class peers. The reports highlight that children from Lower Socio Economic Status (LSES) backgrounds, particularly boys, are more likely to be identified as having a SEN. What is revealed in this study is empirical data to highlight the power/agency actors in the context of practice hold, to refer children for psychological assessment and to subsequently order and segregate students in schools, which will be further analyzed and discussed in 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 of this section.

While the proportion of children being withdrawn from class from LSES backgrounds is disproportionate to the overall population in all three schools, it is notable that 50% of students for LSES backgrounds are remaining in class with their peers for all learning in the mixed school, compared with two students or 6.7% from this background in the Boys' school, and, two girls or 6.25% of population from LSES backgrounds remain in class for all teaching and learning in the Girls' school. All others from this social grouping are withdrawn to 'support their inclusion'. In School C. the GAM is serving a significant number of children from other social classes, i.e., many middle class children are being withdrawn in School C. It can be assumed that children, careless of background, can have support needs. Therefore, School C presents with the expected, one could argue. What is significant is that school C is mixed with regard to gender but only 12% of its overall school population is from LSES backgrounds. Much research suggests that in the context of HI disability and special education models, an increase in student diversity in inclusive settings leads to more competition for resources and in economic climates of austerity 'students from disadvantaged

groups are more likely to be assigned to special education classes using exclusionary and stigmatizing labels' (Anyon, 2009, p. 54), which is noteworthy.

School C might be described as a more 'middle class school'. However, in Ireland there is no such school designation. The point that this study wishes to emphasise is that all three schools are classified by the State *as ordinary mainstream primary schools* with no special designation. This thesis argues, based on evidence, that schools are not equal, which has significant implication for a funding model that provides 'a general allocation' to all ordinary mainstream school nationally. Eitle (2002) in her research using a unique sample of USA public school districts (n=981) examined the effects of local racial and political-economic structures, school district characteristics, and school desegregation policies on representation of black students in special education programmes. She demonstrated that as districts become less segregated there is less disproportionality in special education programmes in schools. Her theory suggests that the more minority presence decreases, the more likely it is that white, middle-class parents are not battling for resources so special education placement of children from diverse backgrounds is less likely. Her argument is that 'parents, teachers, counselors and other school personnel are embedded in localities that shape their racial ideologies, beliefs about intelligence, ability to act in a discriminatory way, and opportunity to activate cultural and social resources' p.579). Over 30% or the overall population in the School A and B live in segregated housing. The findings in this current study provide concrete evidence of Eitle's theory in relation to social class and referral process.

Each teacher in the study was asked who the GAM supported. The following quote provides a window to the response received from all teachers in the boys' and girls' school and from four of the teachers in the mixed school:

> *Socially disadvantaged a lot of them, definitely. You see the parents went to school in the same situation and weren't getting help either so how do they get out of that. Education is the one way of getting them out of that and if they are not getting the extra help how do you get them out of that. Maybe the parents didn't get it either because when their parents went to school there was definitely no such thing as learning support for them*
>
> Carmel, Learning Support Teacher, Girls' School

By adopting a post-structural approach and critical pragmatism this phenomenon of overrepresentation of students from '*socially disadvantaged'* backgrounds in special

education programmes under policy models to support inclusive is deconstructed in order to present a greater understanding of the lived lives of those in schools. This thesis argues that it is public education's democratic ends (access to participation in and benefit from an appropriate education for all, espoused in the Education Act, 1998; EPSEN Act, 2004) that are contradicted by the bureaucratic means that are used to actualize universal education policy, within the context of practice. Students whose needs fall on the margins or outside of the standard repertoire of programs must be squeezed out of the classroom if they cannot be squeezed into the repertoire of the classroom curriculum. The transactions of the GAM in the context of practice can then be understood as the structural/institutional and interactional practice that has emerged to contain and maintain this contradiction in public mainstream education, which purports to provide for all in inclusive settings.

The next section sets out to make visible the *deficit discourse* that construct dis/ability among pupils resulting in exclusion while paradoxically, implementing inclusion policy. The findings in this section are discussed in conjunction with and build on recent international comparative work on inclusion. The section focuses on social class and how it is implicated with conceptions of dis/ability (Artiles et al., 2011) within the context of practice.

4.3.3 Local Constructions of Dis/Ability and Interconnection with Social Class

Findings above (4.3.2) reveal significant disproportionality of students coming from lower socio-economic status (LSES) backgrounds being withdrawn from classroom-based learning when compared to the general population of each mainstream school. The thesis argues that a possible reason for such overrepresentation is the important role that social constructs plays in determining what indices are included within the parameters of the norm and what is regarded as 'other'. 'Educators will inevitably operate with constructions of learners' identities whether or not these are soundly based, according to Gerwirtz and Cribb (2009, p.47). Deficit discourse (see Chapter Two, Section 2.6) was evident in the narratives of all teachers interviewed which related directly to children from LSES backgrounds: '… *you are supposed to start with what they [children form LSES backgrounds] know and build from there, whereas what you found was that* ***they know so little****…*'(Mary, Principal School B, Girls' School). The principal in the Boys' School held similar views:

> *…literally I have been shocked, shocked and disheartened…when pupils come to me unable to speak, babbling…they come from homes where they haven't been taken to developmental clinics…Well sometimes it's a lack of education on behalf of the parent….A huge amount of parents here would not be aware of the level a child should be at …*
>
> Emer, Principal Boys' School, School A

Children from lower socio-economic status backgrounds are described by teachers as '*…having significant difficulty…going back generations, I would have* ***whole family histories*** *and I would say to the class teacher* ***give them simple work****…*' (Áine, L/S teacher, School C, Mixed School), '*… not having anyone who thinks that education is important…'* (Carmel, L/S teacher, School B Girls' School). Freda, the L/S/Resource teacher in School A, the Boys' School, stated that some students had ability but the home background had an enormous, negative impact:

> *… They may have the ability but there is* ***no expectation from home****… we have seen other family members who may have finished post-primary, had the ability but are not working now. That is very frustrating* ***because in learning support you are usually dealing with children who do not have this ability so when you get it and there is no expectation from home it is very frustrating…***

Mary, the Principal in School B, the Girls School agreed, stating that children from LSES backgrounds lacked '*the capacity to feel that you are capable, capable of school work – they don't live in that world…' Significantly*, teaching in a middle-class school, and/or having a predominance of middle-class children in a given class, the experience for this principal was quite different and more positive for her:

> *…* ***a middle class environment*** *and all the wonderful work and all the wonderful ideas,* ***you were really rocking with them****…Oh even their stories were so creative because they read so much…I know myself this year I have a 6th class that come* ***from that type of background environment****, where education is cherished and promoted, encouraged and all outside, all, I don't mean limited education, all education experience outside,… and* ***I see how easy it is for them to learn and be in the system***
>
> Mary, Principal Girls' School, School B

In accordance with the work of Artiles et al. (2011) Artiles (2011), Slee (2001) and Valencia (2010), the literature suggests that many studies have investigated the correlation between local constructions of dis/ability leading to school ordering which seems to be interconnected

with social class (See Figure 2.4 and Figure 2.5, Chapter Two) and those who have and have not the opportunity to create intelligence. This study provides *empirical evidence* to explain well documented research that the psycho-medical or clinical discourses which privilege the role of professionals are powerful in selecting, sorting, ordering and labelling students. The actions or agency of professionals are viewed as a rational response because many teachers confirmed that 'everyone *we send for assessment comes back with a diagnosis'* (Áine, L/S Teacher, Mixed School). Foucault's work is useful in understanding the various modes by which modern society turns human beings into subjects for investigation, surveillance and treatment. Varying forms of medicalisation, objectification, confinement, and exclusion are brought to bear. In education the psycho-medical view of the student, insists upon professional and clinical assessment (investigation/ surveillance), diagnosis, and intervention (treatment), confinement (in special settings) resulting in exclusion (from the mainstream classroom). As outlined in Chapter Two, Foucault's theories (1963, 2003, 1976, and 1998) have been used to examine disability as simply a natural material phenomenon. Foucault (2002) views the materiality of the body as associated with the 'historically contingent practices that bring it into being' (cited in Tremain, 2002, P. 34), which is moulded by time and class. The materiality of disability and disability itself are naturalized effects of disciplinary knowledge/power. In this way, the social professions have had the power *to construct disability* and create special education programmes as a rational response to non-normative needs. Where disability has continued to be seen as politically neutral, it has stayed as an unexamined assumption of the discourse (Tremain, 2002; Skrtic, 2004). By adopting a post-structural perspective, and challenging this assumption, it is possible to 'resist the ones that have material-ised it' (Tremain, 2002, p. 35), those who have socially constructed disability. Skrtic, Foucault, Derrida and other post-structural theorists believe that reproduction of the classes in this way is 'controlled' by social professionals (see Section 2.2.4).

Skrtic's theory articulates the view that these medical discourses and practices, locating the blame within the individual as opposed to within the school structure, are preventing progress in general education because this epistemology provides a smoke screen for advancing some students and fails to ask the question about 'why schools fail to teach so many children successfully' (Ainscow, 2007, p. 3). Skrtic (1991) concludes that special education distorts school failure and by doing so prevents mainstream, public education from

seeing that it is not living up to its democratic ideals of equity and excellence, which relates directly to Bowles and Gintis (1976) 'reproduction theory'. Such lessons can be applied in the Irish context as data from this study provide evidence of the resilience of the psycho-medical paradigm in school discourse, which has particular resonance when speaking about those from LSES backgrounds.

The data from the three schools highlight that children from this background and their parents are portrayed as 'outsiders' to mainstream society, the un-reachable, the alienated, the disaffected, living morally adrift lives. The views of teachers reflect points of convergence with Auletta 1982 p. xiii, (cited in Vincent, Ball and Braun, 2008, p.7) assertion about the way in which some are presented in research literature: 'This underclass generally feels excluded from society, rejects commonly accepted values, suffers from behavioural as well as income deficiencies'. Teachers view this grouping as 'a variety of poor 'others', often understood as the 'passive poor' (Auletta 1982). It is noteworthy that Comber and Kamler, (2004) in their article *Getting out of Deficit: Pedagogies of Reconnection,* state that sustainable reforms are frequently curtailed by 'deficit views and children growing up in poverty' (p. 293). They highlight that 'pervasive deficit discourses are still so dominant in educational settings of practice' (p. 293), which is evidenced again in this extract from one of three principals interviewed:

> ***The education system is largely a middle class system*** *and we do have a lot of aspirations and we write up our long term plans 'The child will be enabled to' and* ***these objectives are really so far removed from the child from a working class background… when you listen to their language and how far removed these objectives are from their world….***
>
> Mary, Principal Girls' School, School B

While this current study does not refer to race, the construct of interconnectivity, put forward by Leonardo and Broderick (2011) who explore the ways the construct of "smartness" intersects both with race and ability ideology systems, is relevant to this study as outlined in Figure 4.6 below:

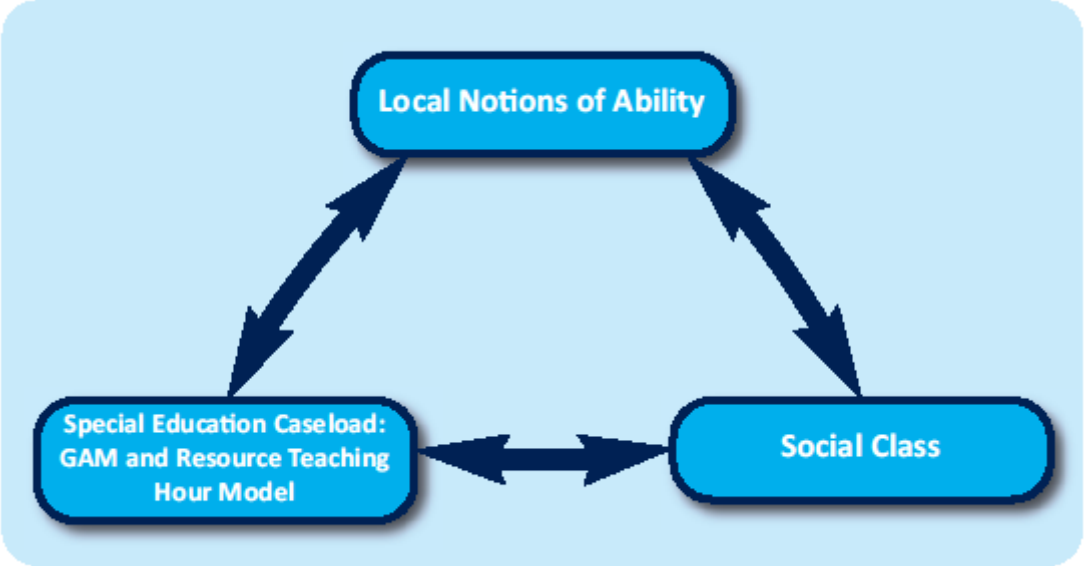


Figure 4.6 Interconnection between local notions of ability, social class and special education placement

Leonardo and Broderick (2011) argue that 'smartness' is nothing but false and oppressive, and as such, any attempt to theoretically rearticulate or rehabilitate smartness may serve to illuminate, but will ultimately fail to dissolve, the normative centre of schooling.

As discussed extensively throughout Chapter Two, categorical views of intelligence as a measurable construct affect the way teachers and schools think about students. Deeply held assumptions about inferior intelligence, even without standaradised measurement, among students of minority groupings represent one of the most enduring legacies of Western racism. Despite exposure of their questionable nature by Gould (1981) and numerous other scholars, these beliefs have been institutionalized in the policies and practices of our public schools (Steele and Perry, 2004). The construct of high incidence disabilities for GAM eligibility, for the most part, is tied to IQ measurement and scores on standardised assessment, which means that minorities continue to be more likely to be found deficient, referred by actors in the context of practice to 'experts' and diagnosed as 'other' since there is little doubt that these measures of intelligence reflect the cultural, social, and linguistic knowledge of society's mainstream. It is significant that this view was only articulated by one teacher in the study:

> *For the GAM children they are supposed to be on or below the 10th percentile…then* ***you wonder about the accuracy of such evaluations****, how the child is feeling on the day,* ***the social bias of these tests they are debatable measures****…*
>
> *Nuala, Infant Teacher Boys' School*

The decontextualized testing for the identification of high incidence disabilities and learning support needs is based on a narrow view of intelligence that fails to take into account the social and cultural nature of learning (Conway, 2002; Hall 2008; Rogoff, 2003; Samuda, 1998). In Ireland, Keogh and Whyte (2008) highlight that 'schooling only recognises and accredits a narrow range of talents and abilities, which automatically alienates from the educational system those students whose talents and abilities are not assessed in school' (p. 20) (see Section 2.6 and 2.7).

The *essentialist view* of intelligence as that which can be measured, defining the individual as a person with a given set of talents or abilities that is fixed with little potential for cognitive development, impacts on teaching practices, according to Conway (2002). He highlights that students coming from LSES backgrounds, high poverty and or/minority communities, typically experience diluted curricular experiences, involving task decomposition and infrequent opportunities to engage in higher order thinking (Anyon, 1981; Oakes, 1986; Oakes and Lipton, 1999; Keogh and Whyte, 2008). Áine, the L/S teacher in the Mixed School provided evidence of such a diluted curriculum approach as opposed to suggesting differentiation of teaching and learning. She stated that she 'tips off' classroom teachers to do '*…simple things, easy things with that child because I'd know the family, I'd have had generations of them at this stage and they are not able…'*. Similarly, the Principal in the Girls' school, while talking about differentiation, certainly made a distinction between types of curricula, which related directly to middle-class children and the curriculum that children from LSES backgrounds required: '*…when you talk about differentiation and accommodation as a teacher you have far more work to do if you are trying to marry the children who deserve to have a more challenging curriculum and the children who need to be supported with the basic curriculum'.* According to Conway (2002), teachers may rely on drill and practice of basic skills in an effort to 'fix' the defects of the individual or the deficits a student brings to the school, which is in keeping with the data presented by most of the participants in this study, most of whom highlighted the need to teach the 'basics in literacy and maths' in special education settings. As outlined in Chapter Two, Conway (2002)

highlights that the OECD review of Irish Education in 1991 'raised serious concern about the dominance and widespread prevalence of a transmission model of teaching, low level cognitive demands in classroom teaching, and low levels of pupil involvement in the learning process in Irish schools' (p.64). It seems that this model is resilient to change. More recently McCoy, Banks and Shevlin (2012) highlight that teachers continue to 'adjust their classroom planning according to the intake of students to the school. In particular, teachers in more disadvantaged contexts tend to focus more on core literacy and numeracy skills and to draw more on teacher-centred teaching methodologies rather than more student-centred approaches' (p. 124). Psycho-medical perspectives and static assumptions about intelligence on the part of the teacher view pupils as a container with holes, arriving to school without the rudimentary skills required for 'learning'. According to Skrtic (1991; 1995), the discourse of special education, with its grounding assumptions in the psycho-medical model and deficit thinking, and more significantly, its key concepts, such as 'intelligence' have been taken to have straightforward meanings, a Derrida's (1978) *logoi*. However, many agree that there is no uncontaminated language (Derrida, 1978; Thomas and Loxley, 2007).

Discourse can relegate some children to a lower status (Benjamin, 2002). Beliefs arising from deficit thinking contribute to values and attitudes about race and social class and notions of intelligence and ability, which eventually provided a 'rationale' for separate, special education (Artiles et al. 2011; Dunn 1968; Deno, 1970; Valencia, 2010) and an overrepresentation of minority groups in special education. Garcia and Guerrra (2004) in their article on *Deconstructing Deficit Thinking*, highlight the notion that teachers can feel that the school is doing an adequate job and that as teachers they are doing their best, working with programmes that have proved successful in the past. When such programmes are *imposed* on a diverse learning population without the desired effects Garcia and Guerrra (2004) suggest that

> …deficit beliefs are [then] likely to be reinforced, and the cycle repeats itself. In other words, school reform efforts stall or fail because deficit beliefs become a filter that blocks educators' abilities to examine their assumptions and to look beyond traditional solutions and meaningful change.
>
> (p. 151)

Due to such deficit beliefs, Reay (2006) reminds that 'pupils have widely differing possibilities and potentials for being included both academically and socially within

classrooms. These possibilities are dependent, to varying degrees, on social class, gender, perceived academic ability and ethnicity' (p. 172). In Ireland, Keogh and Whyte (2005), through their ethnographic research contend that beliefs about the nature of intelligence, by the age of 11/12, play a pivotal role in achievement motivation – feeling smart in the classroom appears to increase motivation to achieve in school. This is in line with the work of Dweck (1999; 2007) and students' own constructions of dis/ability.

4.3.3.1 Feeling Smart is Being Smart

According to Dweck (1999), research shows that children's theories of intelligence predict and influence difference in achievement and motivation. More recent research findings by Dweck and colleagues (Blackwell, Trzesniewski and Dweck, 2007) confirms that adolescents who endorse more of an incremental theory of malleable intelligence also endorse stronger learning goals, hold more positive beliefs about effort, and make fewer ability-based, ''helpless'' attributions, with the result that they choose more positive, effort-based strategies in response to failure. The feelings and beliefs of the older students in primary schools about intelligence are of particular concern to their teachers in this study also, as teachers' narratives revealed. The feelings and beliefs of the older students in primary schools are of particular concern as teachers' narratives revealed. All teachers (n = 14) stated that from third class up 'going out' (to the L/S room) was stigmatizing. The student going out knows that it is because he/she is not 'smart' (Keogh and Whyte, 2008) and his/her peers know that the reasons also relates to dis/'ability'.

> *I suppose it depends on individuals as well* ***but when they are withdrawn I do think it raises anxiety*** *and when they come back in they can feel edgy and cagey they cannot know what is going on they don't want to ask the person who is sitting beside them, they don't want to look silly or stupid or not knowing what is happening…*
>
> *Eibhlín, 3rd and 4th class Teacher, Boys' School*

This practice of 'plucking' the student from the classroom is reflected upon also by a teacher in learning support, a post sanctioned by the GAM:

> *Well, (sigh)* ***it must be difficult for the child****. You are in the middle of whatever subject it is and all of a sudden you have to stop, whether you are enjoying it or not - all of a sudden stop, finish the task or not finish the task more likely and stand up and go out and just be sat down and I think resource/L/S sessions can be intense and I don't mean that in a very bad way but it's just you are saying" Come on, next one, next one,," and it just must be hard, just hard to be brought like that, plucked from your*

*class and brought out and then all of a sudden the child may start thinking, **"Why me, why am I being brought out?"***

Deirdre, L/S Teacher, Boys' School

Keogh and Whyte (2008) in their Irish research concluded that students concept of 'smartness' has significant implications for motivation and achievement and that all too often 11 year olds are disaffected about school and fail to see how it relates to their lives. Keogh and Whyte's study illustrates that young students' concept of intelligence is dynamic and is associated with who 'presents' as smart in school, i.e. doing well in classroom-based tests. One can see how intellectual hierarchies or 'otherisms' are created in schools, which this quote highlights:

*Yes, they were teased because of it (withdrawal), **they were teased,** they were taunted, **it was hugely a them and us situation, who could do it, who was withdrawn;** whereas this class would have milder personalities but at the same time we are capping the amount of children being withdrawn and it's as much in-class support as we can and it really doesn't highlight unlike withdrawal, children are sitting in groups of 6 and while 4 might be able to work independently, teacher can stand beside 2 who needs that bit of extra support*

Aoife, Infant Teacher Girls' School

The Infant teacher in the Boys' echoed these views:

I think they (peers) label them,** they may not even have a specific word or label for it but they label them just the same - you see your groups in the yard who plays together and you notice the LS kids stick together and the regular kids, and again I know I'm not being PC here but they will play their soccer together, **you can spot it in the yard..

Nuala, Infant Teacher, Boys' School

Barton and Tomlinson (1981; 2012) and Tomlinson (1982; 2012) argue that the identification of students with learning disabilities and subsequent placement in special education is a form of social control to minimize problem behaviours in mainstream classrooms (See Section 2.6). Stangvik (1998) adopts Foucault's perspective and suggests that to analyse scientific language, 'dividing practices' and the manner by which people are 'turned into subjects' is most relevant of special education. Structural theorists argue that school ordering relates directly to the creation of social hierarchies (De Valenzuela, 2006) and the subordination of those with SEN (Benjamin, 2002). Post-structural analysis unveils the structural practices that reproduce social inequalities, dominant groups deciding normative learning behaviours. This relates to meritocratic individualism, a concept which provides an understanding of how

the hierarchical social order exists in school (and in society), which according to Drudy and Lynch (1993), provides 'a smoke screen behind which privilege is perpetuated – albeit through cultural rather than economic practices' (1993, p. 60), i.e., internal sorting systems, which leads to the creation of subordinates.

The data from this study, it could be argued, suggest that there is a subordinate population in schools where the GAM was investigated, which is in line with the recent work of Benjamin (2002a) in her book *Micro Politics of Inclusive Education*. According to Benjamin (2002a; 2002b), the dominant discourses of dis/ability within institutionally and systematically located power creates an '*intellectually subordinated population'*, and consequently, a binary system in schools. From her own ethnographic research she identifies, three distinct levels. The current thesis also identified this tertiary, hierarchical system:

- Discourse of Success (based on numerical targets in academic subjects/pupils who are making the grade – 60%), i.e., the mainstream population
- Consolation discourse (not making the grade – 40%), i.e., The GAM population
- Charity/tragedy discourse ('really disabled', a small number), i.e., LI disabilities population.

The following quotes speak to this point

> *...some children that we have here and I'm not saying ...but* ***they need to be in special schools,*** *we're still trying to cater for them under the GAM and that is the difficulty. They are operating at a much slower pace. ...****mild general, I think they are the ones who suffer most.*** *Others might have difficulties but they will be able to get themselves involved because they have the IQ but those who don't, they find it much more difficult… Now I think it could be solved if those children…. were on a low incident (Resource Model)…*
>
> Mairead, Principal C, Mixed School

> ***….****In this school the GAM needs to support more than those below the 10th percentile. Yes, absolutely, absolutely adamant about that!....* ***those below the 10th percentile, it's really, they nearly always fall into low incident category*** *– if they are below the 10th percentile for me there is a whole pleat rah of stuff going on for them and most probably will have a diagnosis of L.I. in which case thankfully they are catered for (under the resource model)…*
>
> Mary, Principal B, Girls' School

Significantly, many teachers articulated the view that due to the high numbers needing support under the GAM, it was now these children who were going to receive *less* support,

due to increasing demand and lack of capacity of the GAM. The consequence of this imbalance is that it is this 'GAM population' who were now reflective of the *tragedy discourse, illustrated in medicalised language such as 'suffer'...* Interestingly the 3rd and 4th Class teacher in the Boys' school referred to the child within GAM as being "the God help US child", depending on the capacity of the allocation as to whether or not his needs were supported, unlike the RTH model which guaranteed teaching hours to the individual child. The principal of the Girls' school and each one of her staff emphasised that their GAM allocation was not sufficient:

> *HI disability categories are meant to be included under the GAM so* ***it is up to the teacher to include****...so we will include them... the trouble is...****where there is a large volume of need… their support gets watered down, it is clearly defined under L.I. disability pupil (resource teaching hour model)…*** *HI Disability categories should be automatically entitled to hours,* Down syndrome definitive! Dyslexia… Speech and Language Difficulty… I'm sorry but that child doesn't fall in anywhere… he is certainly not average… that child is at a horrendous loss
>
> *Mary*

Most of the teachers interviewed believed that the 'GAM child' was at a loss as he or she depended on the capacity of the GAM as allocated to the school, some of which had greater demands placed on it than others, which, it was suggested, related directly to the social class background of the child. Therefore this principal emphasised that other factors needed to be considered in allocating the finite resources under GAM:

> ***Parental Employment, living in, owning your own home … how many of you read to your child … Those factors have a huge, huge, huge bearing…*** *I know myself this year I have a 6th class that come from that type of background environment, where education is cherished and promoted, encouraged and all outside, all, I don't mean limited education, all education experience outside,... and I see how easy it is for them to learn and be in the system... and I have the opposite scenario in my fifth class for whatever combination of reasons – they are lucky to get in the door in the mornings... and maybe have a lunch... and half a uniform... I consider that those children need support from us, thankfully, we have L.I. hours plus GAM hours, this year ...*
>
> Mary, Principal B, Girls' School

It is significant that this principal highlighted support needs arising out of 'factors' or conditions that are included in the Pobal HP Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012) to indicate affluence or deprivation. It strongly supports the need to refer to the Index with regard to

identifying *social needs* rather than simply educational needs which may be helpful in making decisions with regard to the allocation of general funding in any area of social provision including community development, intergenerational learning, adult and continuing education and family support. While this thesis is critical of findings that suggest that children coming from LSES background can be *constructed* as having a HI disability through the pathologisation of the individual and the family without scientific evidence of disability, it does support the notion that many children need support with the transition from home. However, this is not to say that they have a disability. This study critically questions the level of disproportionality of students from LSES backgrounds in special education programmes. It argues that the phenomenon is better described as *home/school discontinuity* (see subsection 4.3.6).

Due to such local constructions of dis/ability, this study strongly argues that the context of practice holds the agency *to reshape* inclusive policy intention and text. Findings in this study concur with much international evidence (Anyon, 2009; Artiles *et al*., 2011; Mehan et al.1986; Skrtic, 1991, 1995, 2005) that the referral of most students for assessment is subjective, based on the teacher's judgement. The principal in the Girls' School highlighted a common feeling among the fourteen participants that for some students, i.e. those from middle class backgrounds, '***it is easy for them to learn and be in the system…'*** by implication then, she is suggesting that for *others, i.e., those from LSES backgrounds,* it is not easy. As a result of the challenges that these students present teachers with, many are referred for formal assessment to outside professionals and the majority of these referrals result in diagnosis, which could explain the disproportionality of students from LSES backgrounds in special education programmes as the empirical All teachers and principals (n=14) insisted that the assessment by the psychologist was *useful*.

The study is not suggesting any *malice* on the part of teachers; indeed, the researcher was a teacher and as a teacher, acted in a similar manner as an actor in the 'enactment' process. What the thesis is highlighting specifically, is that professional behaviour in school is governed more by cultural deficit thanking, which in turn constructs *cultural norms*, which leads to institutional/teacher action that constrains the lives of some children and their families. Teachers' constructions of dis/ability are highly influential in ordering students in school, which can hold implications for social stratification. Teachers have agency to select students, to refer them for assessment, which in turn has major implications for *who* is

withdrawn from class. Such action within the context of practice has significant consequences for children in the context of outcomes (Ball, 1994, see Figure 2.3). This teacher agency constructs who is 'smart' (Keogh and Whyte, 2008), which has major implications for learning, motivation to learn, school engagement and peer interaction. Based on evidence from this study, students coded as eligible for GAM support can be ordered in such a way that 'they never come back' to the mainstream and are always viewed as 'other'.

It could be argued that stakeholders in all contexts of the policy cycle (Ball, 1994) fail to engage in critical pragmatism to deconstruct the grounding assumptions that underpin current teacher perspectives, their habitus, which forms school cultures. i.e., to really examine the structure/agency at play in the social arena of the school. The consequence of such culturally driven actions is *constraint* in implementing reforming policy, which provides an explanation for 'a policy revolution' that fails to realize 'an implementation revolution'.

4.3.4 Professional Agency

According to much post-structural research literature, referring children for assessment is often based on subjective evaluations of non-normative behaviour as opposed to scientific evidence of neurological deficits effecting cognition (Anyon, 2009; De Valenzuela 2006; Skrtic, 1991, 1995, 2005; Artiles et al., 2011). In this way the social professions have had *the power to construct disability* (particularly mild disability) without any scientific, neurological or empirical evidence and in doing so present special education as a rational response to non-normative needs. Thus, this study argues that the concept of HI disability needs to be understood within the broader social, historical, political and economic contexts.

Findings in this study provide specific data to concur that the referral of most students for assessment is subjective, based most often on the teacher's or school principal's judgement or some measure of lack of achievement in school, e.g., standardised test. The findings provide evidence that most students sent for assessment come back with a diagnosis: '***Anyone we send for an assessment comes back with a diagnosis, which is great*'** according to Áine, the L/S teacher in School C, the Mixed School. This view was articulated by most teachers (n=12) interviewed. According to these teachers such agreement between the social professionals '*affirms our judgement, our gut instinct, which is a good thing…*', a statement offered by Áine's colleague, Molly, another L/S teacher in School C. Therefore, consistent

data reveals that the consequence of referral from the context of practice is diagnosis and the child receives the label. It could be argued that HI disability is a socially contrived construct 'deployed against minorities enforcing social marginalisation' (Slee, 1998, p.128). Using the medical model, disability is considered to be 'neurological', *disabilities are pathological*, impairments based within the brain of the individual. However, the reality is that students are identified based on behaviors that are *associated* with the brain impairment not by any proof of cellular injury. It is not necessary to demonstrate that a child has a neurological deficit or impairment by producing scan imagery, it is only the child's performance on a psychometric assessment or standardized assessment, which one could argue have a particular social bias, or behaviors in the educational setting that in some manner relate to behaviors of children with a neurological disorder. Many researchers (Anyon, 2009; De Valenzuela et al., 2006; Skrtic, 1991, 1995, 2005; Artiles, 2011) strongly annunciate that the symptoms associated with mild behavioural difficulties, mild and specific learning disability (HI disability category), lack both universality and specificity. This study suggests that the notion of a continuum of performance is equally central to an understanding of children's behaviour as it is to their cognitive ability in school settings, which also has implications for referral and diagnosis for HI disabilities. Much research has emphasized that personal and cultural norms are inextricable linked to which behaviours are considered normative or non-normative (Cartledge and Kourea, 2008; Klingneret al., (2005). Norms regarding what behaviours are considered socially appropriate vary across cultures, and yet school personnel tend to judge students' actions through a narrow, white, middle class mainstream lens:

> *Some children can't understand the word 'no' and my experience is that discipline is difficult.* ***I feel that this comes from home*** *where there is no discipline, they are just allowed to do whatever….*
>
> Ellen, 3rd and 4th Class Teacher, Mixed School, School C

As discussed in Chapter Two, (see Section 2.9) formal assessment of children's behaviours, cannot exclude subjectivity in judgment (Banks and McCoy, 2011; Gresham, 1993; Motta, Little, & Tobin, 1993;), which is exacerbated by historical racist beliefs and practices reflected in a "punishment paradigm" (Artiles, 2011; Kilingner et al., 2005; Maag, 2001). Much research suggests that the referral is often based on the teacher's or principal's judgment of behaviour or an interpretation of the child. This finding support the data presented in the recent NCSE's Prevalence Report (Banks and McCoy, 2011), which

highlights teachers' subjectivity in referring pupils for assessment, which evidence a social and a gender bias towards boys from LSES backgrounds. The combination of attitudes, beliefs and values of teachers (their habitus), historical racism, policy interpretations and local constructions of intelligence places the most vulnerable students at increased risk of inappropriate labelling and isolation. These serious outcomes reveal the fallacy of applying a categorical mind set to what is essentially a continuum of human behaviour.

In relation to this categorical mind-set, it is noteworthy that all teachers (n=14) in the study felt that referring a child to an outside professional for assessment was *important*. While such an assessment is not necessary for inclusion within the GAM for support, and while all teachers disagreed with children being labelled, significantly, each participant highlighted, very strongly, that '*the assessment'* was critical and in '*the best interest of the child'*. It provided a '*passpor*t' or an 'insurance policy' if ever required in future life. In fact, all teachers interviewed felt that the RTH model (individualised hours based on assessment and diagnosis of the individual) was the most effective model as this support was *guaranteed*, assessment and diagnosis being directly linked to specific resources being given to the individual with the diagnosis. Therefore, in accordance with Skrtic's theory of the assumptions that underlie special education, this data suggest that teachers believe that

- Differential diagnosis is objective and useful.

(Skrtic, 1987; 1991; 1995; 2005)

Moreover, it was interesting that many of the teachers felt the psychologist was *not* the most appropriate person to assess a child, stating that the professional would be unfamiliar to the child and that the clinical setting could cause the child anxiety and would lead to underperformance in any assessment. However, all stated that the assessment by the psychologist (educational and/or clinical) was useful. Teachers are agentive in making the decision to refer. Teachers suggested a rationale: '*…we don't have all the expertise…'*. This statement was echoed by almost all teachers (n=12). It seems that in the context of practice the role of the expert is privileged, according to the data from this context. In not having the 'expertise' it seems that these further, grounding assumptions are currently held by teachers:

- Special Education is a rationally conceived and coordinated system of services that benefits diagnosed (labeled/categorised) pupils and that…

- Progress results from rational technological improvements in diagnostic and instructional practices.

(Skrtic, 1991, p. 152)

It is significant that the past 100 years have seen the development of mechanisms, referral procedures, instruments to assess and practices that have had the aim of identifying students to provide a rationale to move them to segregated settings. Skrtic (1987; 1991; 2005) argues that student disability and special education emerged as institutional categories in response to 'a dramatic increase in student diversity and bureaucratization of schools' (Skrtic, 2005, p. 149). The solution to meeting the challenge faced by increased diversity has been to remove students with learning difficulties from classroom-based learning with their peers and to provide them with special education either in special schools or classrooms in mainstream schools. Much post-structural research in the field, while limited in number of studies, suggests that humanitarianism was secondary to the desire to operate effective and efficient school organisations, those students who were non-normative were removed from the mainstream. In this way, special education has operated as a filtering device to render more manageable the majority of the system. As a post-structural researcher it is important to question whose interests are served (Slee, 1995; Tomlinson, 2008; 2012; Ball, 1998). This study focus on a funding model that provides teaching resources and therefore, its enactment has significant implications for the distribution of educational opportunity in terms of gender and social class according to qualitative and quantitative data emerging for this study.

When you unite the attitudes, beliefs and values of the teachers it could be argued that the social professionals in the context of practice have the agency to socially construct the GAM caseload and HI disability as illustrated in Figure 4.7:

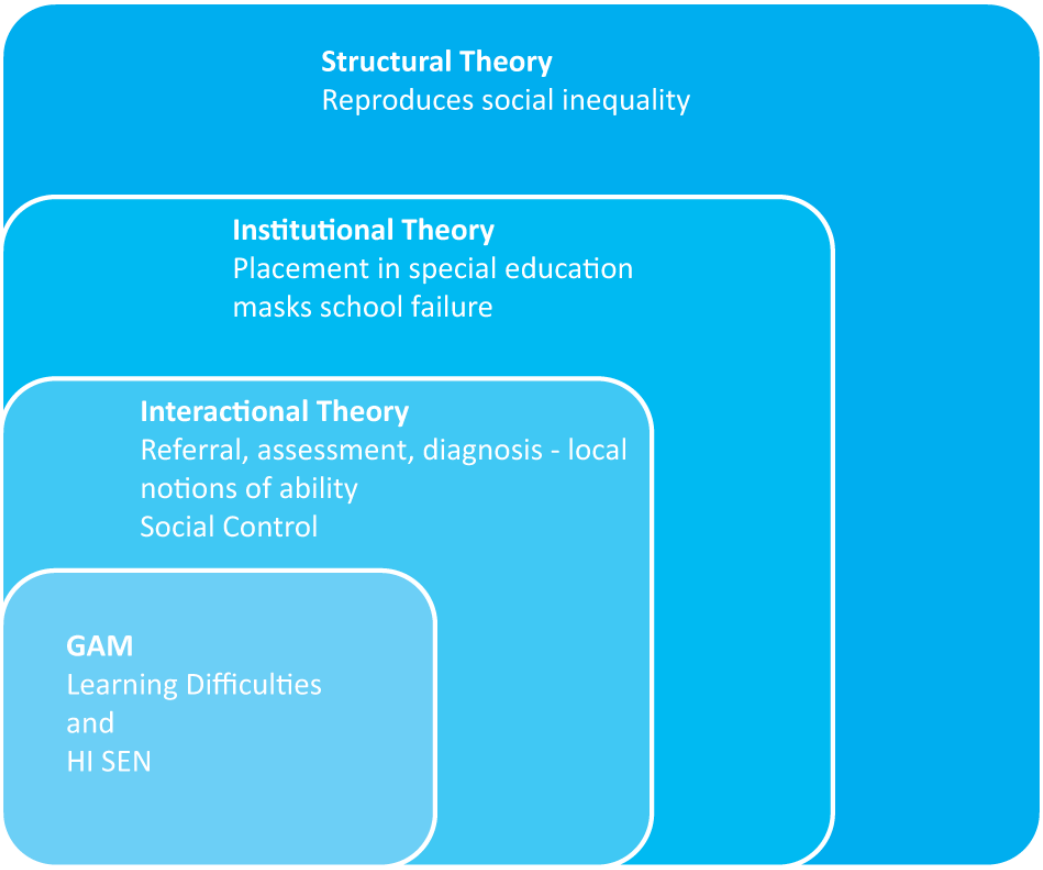


Figure 4.7 Sociological theories to explain social construction of HI disabilities and GAM caseload

As discussed in subsection 2.6.4 interactional theories, premised on an essentialist or psycho-medical perspective, privileges the role of 'expert', therefore differential diagnosis is seen as objective and useful (Skrtic, 1991). Foucault's work lends to such an understanding and to the various modes by which the social professionals have the agency to turn human beings into subjects for investigation, surveillance and treatment, the individual captured within *the panoptic gaze*, which evidenced in the narratives of teachers. Practices involving various forms of medicalization, objectification, confinement, and exclusion in education were shared. The discourse observed in all the interviews reflected a psycho-medical view of the student, or deficit thinking with regard to individuals, which insists upon professional and clinical assessment (investigation/ surveillance), diagnosis, and intervention (treatment), confinement (in special settings) resulting in exclusion (from the mainstream classroom). In this way, the social professions have had the power to *construct dis/ability* and can therefore

view segregated practice as a rational response to non-normative needs. The findings from this research support Skrtic's theory that

> …schools are performance organisations, standardised, non-adaptable structures that must screen out diversity by forcing students with unconventional needs out of the system…in effect shifts the blame for school failure to students through medicalising and objectifying discourses, while reducing the uncertainty- of student diversity by containing it through exclusionary practices…they respond to [legislative and policy] mandates… signalling compliance with the letter of the law that are largely decoupled from meaningful practices…
>
> (2005, pp.149/150)

If schools cannot squeeze students in to what was described by one principal as the '*middleclass curriculum*', Figure 4.8 above illustrates how these structures and institutions, through their interactions, can squeeze students out and often the consequence is that '*they never return'*, they take the exit ramp from the mainstream. Instead of examining quality teaching and focusing on school structures, there is a tendency to transfer *blame* to the child. Schools, while purporting to educate all in accordance with legislation and policy, reinforce the notion that there is a 'normal' way of learning and behaving and if one does not conform then it is because of individual deficits.

Significantly, the Desforges and Lindsay (2010) state clearly that while traditional 'diagnosis of a condition has been a precursor to the assessment of needs' they go on to state that 'this does not necessarily follow conceptually' (p.2). One of the key findings of the *Procedures Used to Diagnose and to Assess Special Educational Needs* report is that 'not all countries require the diagnosis of disability when assessing SEN and in making provision' (2010, p.3). In fact, these authors, who were commissioned by the NCSE, recommend that 'diagnosis of disability should not be a prerequisite to an assessment of SEN' and that an emphasis should be placed on an interactionist/ecological, or bio-psycho-social approach (see Glossary) policy model. This marks a significant move in perspective as 'most systems of classification of disability are underpinned by *the medical model*, a model which we reject in favour of the interactionist/ecological model' (p.5). The intention of the GAM policy is *'to* make possible the development of truly inclusive schools' (DES, 2005, p. 3) without recourse to assessment or identification. However, it is significant that all teachers in this study argued that the approach that labels or categorises children as having specific need, i.e., the RTH model, provides '*a greater guarantee of additional resourcing to meet that individual*

need' (See Section 4.4), according to most teachers interviewed (n=12). This creates a GAM/RTH model dilemma for teachers and parents as it influences the provision of appropriate resources.

Furthermore, there is international consensus that 'provision of appropriately resourced policies, services, personnel and communities is central to achieving inclusive education' (Flatman Watson, 2009, p. 278). However, this study argues that in the current social and economic climate, schools are faced with increasing demands for accountability, predominantly measured by results or attainment on standardised tests. Such an accountability climate provides a built-in incentive to facilitate a system to deal with the dilemma of difference. Policy text(s) provides those involved in each context of the policy cycle with a space to manoeuver. This study contends that such a space that policy provides, has particularly negative implications for those supported by the GAM and other special education models. For example, Circular Letter 0056/2011(DES, 2011b) to Boards of Management, Principal Teachers and Teaching Staff of Primary Schools details the *Initial steps in the implementation of the national literacy and numeracy strategy*. Section 6 states that

> Students may be excluded from standardised testing if in the view of the school principal they have a learning or physical disability which would prevent them from attempting the tests or, in the case of migrant students, where the level of English required in the test would make attempting the test inappropriate…

According to this policy document, it is now the responsibility of the principal of an individual school to decide who is included within a standardised testing system and who is excluded. This provides principals with significant agency. The argument of the study is that the GAM provides principals with a coding mechanism and consequently a rationale for the exclusion of some. Many of these students will not be 'norm referenced' due to perceived deficits, which could be based solely on the perspectives of the principal. These students will fall below the radar of accountability. In addition the NCSE (Desforges and Lindsay, 2010) agree with much research that the 'economic challenges' that are common to most countries in the West currently have serious implications for inclusive education, stating that 'providing additional and different resources for some children requires a cost effective system which ensures equitable delivery of resources, according to level of need' (p. 1).

Darling-Hammond (2010) warns that by 'testing without investing' we are violating a student's right to educational equity (p. 73).

In summary, the power of professionals in the context of practice is highly agentive in social constructions of dis/ability, the study argues, which may explain the overrepresentation of children from LSES backgrounds being supported by the GAM. Increasingly, analysis of inclusion policy is interrogating the vital role that social constructions play in determining who is included within the parameters of the 'norm' (Artiles *et al*., 2011; Berhanu, 2008; Hatt, 2012). Attitudes, beliefs and values held by teachers are a *habitus* that constrains agency. The habitus of the teachers, the key actors in the context of practice, provide individuals with agency to create a culture, a structure, an institution, interactions that maintains the status quo. Consequently, school interactions of referral and assessment, institutional practices where children are ordered, are accepted as rational responses to a child failing in school, blaming the child without consideration of the interactions in the context of practice. In other words, a child failing in school is viewed as pathological not organisational. Findings from this current study illustrate how individual teacher's construction of the child's dis/ability, and inflexible bureaucratic structures to manage diversity within the context of practice, construct some children as 'included' while some are constructed as 'other' who remain on the margins of the schooling system. The study contends that such unquestioned teacher assumptions (naïve pragmatism) form school culture, and a structure that constrains reform intended by policy text and intentions. Therefore, despite political and ideological rhetoric espousing inclusion the findings of this thesis reveal that many children with HI disabilities and learning needs are left on the margins. The 'transactions' or processes of the GAM have significant consequences for the reproduction of inequality in the context of practice as it currently operates. A visual representation of the theoretical understanding of the processes of the GAM in the context of practice is presented in Figure 4.8 below:

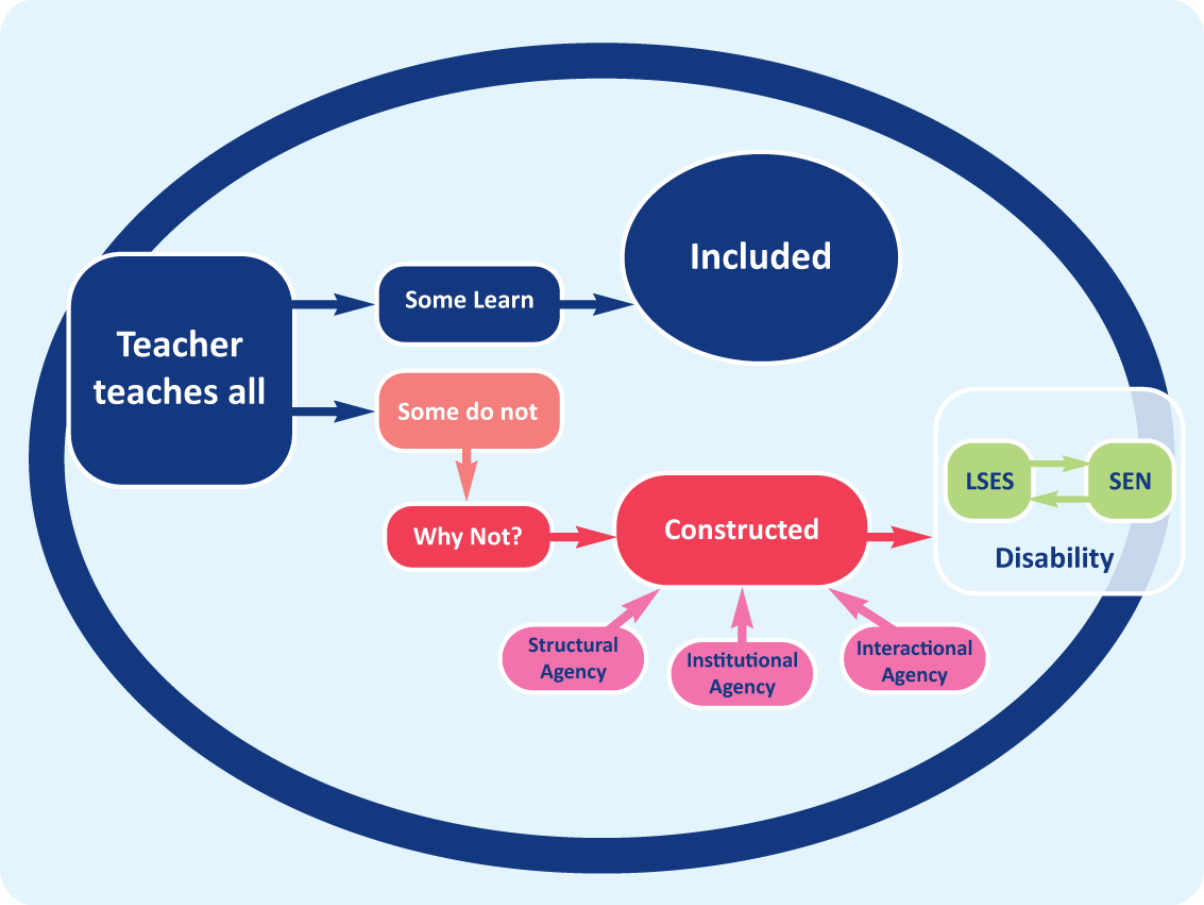


Figure 4.8 Transactions of the GAM in the context of practice

This figure illustrates the argument of this claim that policy is captured in the context of practice. In our diverse schools, the teacher teaches all in the context of practice. What is revealed in this study is that 'some learns' and are included in the mainstream. It is unearthed also that 'some do not learn' and are constructed as having a disability/SEN and are withdrawn from classrooms daily for special education. Many of these students are from lower SES backgrounds. Through this 'construction process' they are squeezed out of the inclusion zone and remain on the margins of the system. Post-structural research directs our attention to the political and symbolic power in the construction process. This study argues that it is essential to carefully analyse the processes that generate and define student need in order to resource needs. It could be argued that categorisation and placement in special education programmes reflect and serve special interests and therefore, need to be understood within larger historical, political, social and economic contexts (Anyon, 2009; Barton and Tomlinson, 2012; Skrtic, 1991; 1995; 2005; Tomlinson, 1982; 1995; Anyon, 2009).

Skrtic, under the influence of Foucault was interested in discerning how cultural formations were made to appear rational and unified, how particular discourses came to be formed, and what rules lay behind the process of formation. In doing so, he sought to produce an account of how it constituted legitimacy and shaped the thinking of a particular period. For example, in the case of the nineteenth century psychiatry and psychopathology, Foucault shows how the term madness came to be applied to certain types of behaviour and how in its very designation by what it was not, it helped to establish our conceptions of the rational and the sane. The varying discourses hold unequal power bases. In the same way in which '*deviance*' has been understood in different times in history, this study argues that special education could be regarded as a way of managing deviance based on a particular world view, this *individual, psycho-medical* epistemology.

Bourdieu's (1977; 1984; 1987) theory proffers 'socio-cultural explanations for why under-represented groups remain excluded from the educational process' (O'Brien and Ó Fathaigh, 2005, p. 6). Bourdieu challenges deficit thinking about underachievement and instead examines differentiated resources and their distribution within social structures, 'expanding upon an analysis of cultural barriers to participation and relating subsequent investigation to actors' own lived experience' (O'Brien and Ó Fathaigh, 2005, p. 6). According to DiMaggio (1997) citing Gramsci (1990), culture, embedded in language and everyday practices, constrains people's capacity to imagine alternatives to existing arrangements, which may explain the resilience of the psycho-medical perspective among key stakeholders in the context of practice. He acknowledges the significance of Bourdieu and highlights that people act as if they use cultural elements strategically to pursue valued ends or advantage for themselves and the next generation.

It is interesting to analyse the discourse of teachers when talking about parents from the varying social groupings, namely those from LSES. The whole notion of *habitus, capitals, and fields of force* are key theoretical concepts that are arising from data in this study, how certain social groups' values and beliefs influence perceptions of the '*capacities' (local constructs of dis/ability)* of '*others*'; and how belonging to a certain social group can afford (parents and students) advantage or disadvantage in utilizing the formal education system. For example, all principals and learning support teachers spoke about parents of pupils from LSES backgrounds as not having the *knowledge* (Emer, Principal A), the

capacity (Mary, Principal B), *the where with all* (Mairead, Principal C), to support their child's education and by implication that the school had to do this (for them), which places greater pressure on the GAM. It is clear from the data that teachers expect parents to support their children's schooling. What is not clear is *how* this desire is transmitted or communicated to parents, and what this expected support demands of parents.

4.3.5 Parental Agency

Parental involvement is positively linked with school success, which is acknowledged by all participants and is reflected in this observation offered by Áine, the L. S. Teacher in School C, the Mixed School '*... when you have them linking in with what you are doing it makes a huge, huge, huge difference. It's a winning situation all 'round ...'*. However, all teachers (n=14) spoke of the *lack* of support from parents, which again, they link directly with social class. Predominantly parents from LSES backgrounds did not engage in such support:

> <u>Researcher</u>: *Tell me about parental support and the pupils on your GAM caseload?*
>
> *"I'd say no, no support. Best will in the world but no. Willingness yes, in a lot of cases, the capacity no. I know we should be helping parents, teaching them how, giving them workshops… sometimes you just have to understand that they just don't have that capacity."*
>
> Mary, Principal Girls' School, School B

Although parental involvement is legislated for in the internationally community, including Ireland (Education Act, 1998; EPSEN Act, 2004), a lack of support from parents from LSES backgrounds is highlighted by many teachers in this study, which is not random, according to Lareau (2000). As discussed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.7), De Valenzeula et al. (2000) highlight that 'some families are viewed by school personnel as less capable…' (p.113). Lareau (2000) argues that the reason for parents' lack of participation in school activities is not as simple as having or not having the "skills" or "capacities" or "knowledge". She reminds us that it is much more complex (see 2.4.2 for fully discussion). Lareau acknowledges that 'Teachers ask for parent involvement; social class shapes the resources which parents have at their disposal to comply with teachers' requests for assistance' (p. 2), which is directly linked to Bourdieu's social and cultural theory (2.4.2). Teachers as well as principals stated that the parents in this LSES group, while they did care about their children, they did not know or

realize that their child was receiving *extra support* in school, there was no objection to it or to they being *withdrawn* from class because they were not aware, despite having signed consent forms to agree to their child being withdrawn for learning support. Lareau (2000) suggests that parents from LSES backgrounds leave schooling to school, whereas parents from higher SES grouping use their contacts and experience (social and cultural capital) to provide advantage for their children. Nuala, a classroom teacher in the Boys' school reflected on reasons why parents from LSES backgrounds are reluctant to engage with the school:

> *Maybe it's from their own experience of school, they have a set against anything to do with school. Even when I had 3rd and 4th, parents were nervous to come into me and I think it was their own experience of school, having to be so defensive, thinking they are in trouble, "Oh it wasn't me…don't blame me"…*

Lareau's work mirrors this finding that working-class parents are less likely to create *social networks* with parents of their children's friends than middle-class parents (*social capital*). As a result, they miss out on the world of school (*field*). As discussed in 2.4.2.2, Lareau suggests that this is not idiosyncratic but rather an integral part of class culture that helps limit the agency of these parents, despite interest in their child's well-being and success. Culturally, according to Lareau, working-class parents see distinct boundaries between home and school. These *fields* are not crossed as this study echoes: *I feel for many of them that school is one world and home is another world, completely separate'* (Nuala, Infant Teacher, School A, Boys' School).

This *discontinuity* between home and school constrains the agency of these parents to influence their children's education. Data suggests strongly that social class has a powerful influence on parent involvement patterns, as Mary, the Principal in School B, the Girls' school notes: '*Some parents you would be lucky to get them in for a parent/teacher meeting once a year, it might be a sister or a partner, partner/father…and often then the parents of children you are trying to support, supporting under the GAM, you don't get to see them at all…'.* Interestingly, in relation to Parent/Teachers meetings the NCCA's (2008) research *Reporting to Parents in Primary School: Communication, Meaning and Learning* describes the value teachers place on oral engagements with parents. Lareau (2000) points out that 'Teachers ask for parent involvement; social class shapes the resources which parents have at their disposal to comply with teachers' requests for assistance' (p. 2).

It is interesting to note that all teachers interviewed (n=14) felt that parents from LSES had difficulty in supporting homework, which was the predominant home/school support that teachers request. Teachers felt that this was particularly the case as students entered higher classes, i.e., from third class up. Lareau's (2000) suggests that as children enter higher grades, parents with little formal education are increasingly less able to help their children with school work. While almost all teachers commented about the challenges faced by parents in this regard, the following quote is representative:

> ***There are times when you wonder about giving these children homework because essentially what you are doing is giving them an unachievable task!*** *Other than they have that kind of support that little bit of help "I'm a bit stuck on and can you help, move me along to the next step"… build memory, saying well done… more prevalent in senior end than in the junior end…parents feel they have some capacity to help the smallies but as its goes on up! Whether they feel they don't have the capacity, I don't know…*
>
> Mary, Principal Girls' School, School B

> *Mammy and Daddy might not have the structures at home to sit down and do the homework with them…some do not have the facilities of a table, the time, or the experience and the knowledge on how to do the homework, or the inclination to do homework with the child.* ***The child doesn't have the support****….*
>
> Eibhlín, Principal, Boys' School, School A

The implied meaning here is that because parents do not provide the necessary support for education at home, the GAM in school must compensate. The L/S teacher in School A, Boys' School and School C, Mixed School were particularly conscious of the need to be aware of the home environment as Molly, the LS teacher in the Mixed School highlights:

> *It's only when somebody talks and you listen to see the kind of person they are. And I think that's really useful …knowing the environment they're going back to try and achieve these things. And* ***it's important for me to take account of that because it means, one of the spin off reasons would be that more work needs to be done in school.*** *It cannot always, perhaps, be achieved at home, even if parents are willing. And so it's important to take account of that in any plan drawn up for the child*

Molly suggests that parents are willing to help. Lareau explains that where parents differ, is in in the type and number of resources (social capital) they bring to the task and the range of

actions they perceive as appropriate, who they perceive as being responsible for the child's education and school-like activities.

It is noteworthy, that some parents use all forms of *capital* to provide advantage for their children, which is clearly highlighted in the following Principal's vignette:

> *…**here a child wasn't given resource hours because he was diagnosed as having mild dyspraxia**, which meant he would be supported by GAM. Now again, **it comes back to your resources and how hard you fight…his Mammy and Daddy were in the fortunate position that they could afford to** privately fly with him over to Wales, where they had him assessed by a team…, where he got diagnosed as having a more severe form of dyspraxia … **the parents did say it was an extremely expensive assessment…it took three days to do all the assessments but he got all the resources that he needed…***

It is interesting to note this Principal's conclusions:

> ***I think he was failed by the Irish system, he would have been failed by the general allocation model but because he had the resources, now he has a full-time SNA to himself, now he has five hours resource, now he has touch-typing programmes… Basically he has everything**… so he would have been a child failed had he the parents who did not have the knowledge or the skills to research this or have the means to travel and even his mother has taken up the role in the dyspraxia association… she is into us informing us… it is great as we use the programme he got with other children who would not have those resources but would be presenting with similar difficulties…*
>
> Emer, Principal A Boys' School

It could be argued, based on this data that *capital,* in all the forms that Bourdieu outlines (see Chapter Two, section 2.4) can purchase agency with powerful implications for the resourcing of a child and his education. As Bourdieu (1986, p. 242) contends it is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory. The parents described in this quote not only had the *financial capital* but had the *cultural* and *social capital,* the knowledge of particular assessment clinics, the field knowledge of the interconnection between diagnosis A or B and its implication for resourcing their child in school. This parent continued to increase her social capital by joining networks, the Dyspraxia Association, and subsequently, became a key member of the schools' Board of Management. Lareau notes (2000) that 'possession of high status cultural resources does not automatically lead to a social investment. Rather, these cultural resources must be effectively activated by individuals, in and through their own actions and decisions' (p.:178). Strategies

(actual and/or symbolic in form) are thus employed by individuals to distinguish themselves from other groups and place them in advantageous positions via the effective utilisation and exploitation of capital (Rudd, 2003). The strategies employed by this parents became meaningful because they exhibited symbolic relevance, i.e. others, (Emer, the class teacher), as well as the actors themselves (parents), recognized these strategies as significantly valuable. O'Brien and Ó Fathaigh describing 'playing the game' in Bourdieuian terms, which is relevant to the findings in this study:

> Symbolic power is said to have its greatest expression in the general (albeit, erroneous) acceptance that 'the rules of the game are fair' (i.e. in educational terms, 'the meritocratic system is even-handed'). 'Misrecognition' (a Bourdieuian phrase taken from Marx's idea of 'false unconsciousness') thus occurs when those in more disadvantaged contexts 'play the game without questioning the rules. This amounts to, what Bourdieu terms, 'symbolic violence.
>
> (p.70)

Lareau (2000; 2011) highlights the importance of examining why social class affects parent involvement in schooling, which is of significance to this research. While Bourdieu focuses mainly on the *advantages* of social capital to the individual, this study considers advantage and it corollary, *disadvantage* when analsying the agency afforded to some to draw upon resources in the varying policy cycle contexts, particularly, the context of practice. In this way, the study extends the work of Bourdieu. This study argues that parents and children as well as teachers, are major stakeholders in the policy context of practice but because of their social background they hold varying degrees of agency. The 'game' of school in the Bourdieuian sense, is better understood by middle-class parents it could be argued. This study asserts that not knowing the game leads to a home/school discontinuity, which emerged strongly from the data analysed.

4.3.6 Home/School Discontinuity

It is significant, that many teachers suggest that the curriculum and school text books, despite debate on the matter, still present a middleclass perspective as Aoife notes:

> ***You have to think that the curriculum is upper class****, when you look at your books your readers, stories represents the upper middle... the core subjects, they are more middle class, take for instance the English programme, Sunny Street, Lucy gets a new red bike and stuff… i's still the same fmily make up, it's mammy, daddy, sister, brother, there is no single mammy in Sunny Street stories…*

Mary, the principal in this school, the Girls' school agrees: '*...it's a bit like Roddy Doyle, you nearly have to come from their world…**the curriculum is a middle-class curriculum and that's it'***. It could be argued, therefore, that children coming from a middle-class background do not experience the same *transition challenges* from home to school, which relates directly to Comber and Kamler's (2004) work discussed in Chapter Two (2.9.2). Their work illustrates the cultural divide that exists between the middle class culture of school and the value set within a working class home.

The argument put forward by this study, based on the narratives of teachers, is that *discontinuity* does exists and furthermore, that it must be recognised as *discontinuity* between home and school and neither as student *deficiency* nor indeed, student *disability.* This study suggests, therefore, that the focus of early intervention for all students should be on *transition programmes* from home to school and not *separate special education programmes*, which remove students from the classroom, and according to narratives, very often once 'they go out', they never fully return and continue to be educated on the margins of mainstream schooling. The message that this study articulates is that if 'they go out', for early intervention, which does not seem to be stigmatising for the child according to the narratives outlined above, the emphasis, at all times, must be on a return to the mainstream which is relevant to the child's 'ecocultural niche'.

A sociocultural perspective urges schools to reflect upon the home culture of their students and that which exists within the school context in order to protect against home-school discontinuity, schools viewing some children and parents as 'others' and parents perspectives being similar towards school staff in 'the building up there', away from their lived lives. In line with Wenger (1998) and socio-cultural theorists generally, Harry et al. (1999) citing the works of Rogoff (1994, 1995), highlight that all development should be based on participation in socio-cultural activity, embedded in specific social and cultural settings, which comprise one's ecocultural niche. They contend that getting to know this ecocultural activity setting provides a basis for working within the family's zone of proximal development rather than imposing predetermined or stereotypic beliefs about what is culturally normative and valued. As discussed in Chapter Two, Hicks (2001), in her case study of a boy called Jake, illustrates the ecocultural activity of Jake's home needed to be inextricably linked to schooling (specifically literacy learning) in order for this young student to succeed (see 2.7.1 for fully discussion.

Conway (2002, p. 63) advocates for 'rigorous critical engagement and reflection on the nature of whose knowledge is taught in school, and how and why it is taught'. It is critical to analyse the kind of knowledge that is valued within the education system. Comber and Kamler's (2004) work speaks to disrupting deficit discourses and considers redesigning new pedagogies to reconnect with children's life worlds, which is useful.

In summary, discourse analysis of teacher narratives noted that 'teachers treat working-class and lower-class families differently from upper-middle-class ones' (Lareau, 2000, p. 15), which links in to the point made in Chapter Two and at the outset of this section that schools are not neutral and that some families are viewed by school personnel as less capable (De Valenzeula et al. (2000). The studies cited by Lareau and extensively outlined in Chapter Two, argue that the content of the material and quality of teacher-student interactions varies by social class as well, which is exemplified vividly by the following quote:

> *….they (the middle class children) were in an environment at home where they pick up about the environment, they have heard about global warming, whereas we who are going to teach about that subject tomorrow morning, you found…* ***you are supposed to start with what they know and build from there, whereas what you found was that they know is so little…***
>
> Mary, Principal, Girls' School, School B

This current study acknowledges that extant research highlights that in the area of promoting language development, reading to their children, talking children to the library, engaging in fieldtrips etc., middle-class parents consistently take a more active role and are therefore more agentive in this *field*, which has significant implications for resourcing their children's education. Albeit through the voices and narratives of teachers, data from this study concurs with Lareau (2000) that parents from higher SES grouping use their cultural/social capital to provide advantage for their children, as stated above. Some parents have more power (agency) than others to negotiate resources to the advantage of their child, which has implications for school ordering and ultimately ordering in society and the reproduction of the social classes. Figure 4.9 illustrates that parents' as well as the social professionals are agentive in the construct dis/ability. It is necessary to acknowledge such a construction process to understand the GAM transactions more fully. Such processes need to be challenged because this study argues that they are barriers to inclusive and equitable education. These constructions advantage the advantaged and disadvantage the

disadvantaged, further marginalising the already marginalised. Figure 4.9 represents an extension of the theoretical framework emerging from data offered earlier in Figure 4.8:

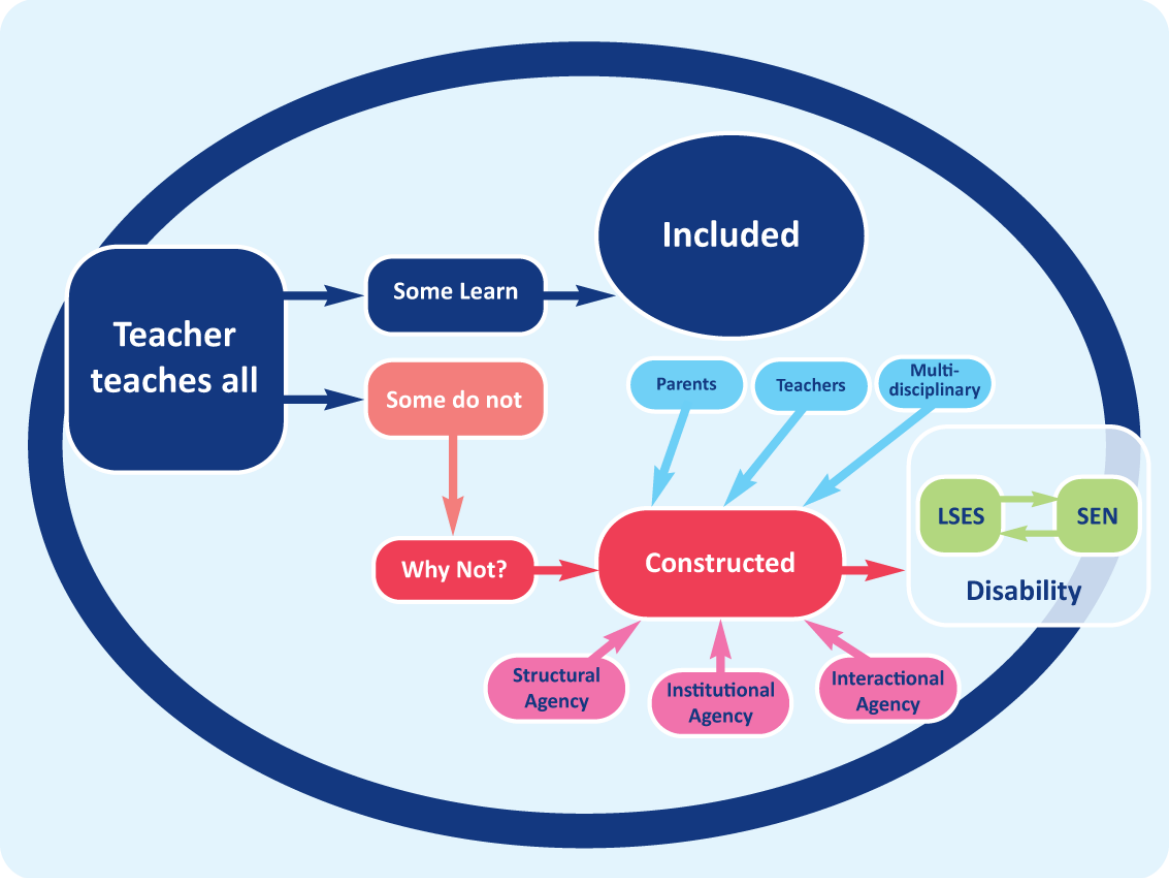


Figure 4.9 Structure/Agency interplay and the management of diversity in the context of practice

This study supports the finding of Lareau and Weininger (2003) which concur with Ball's theory (2003) that 'in nearly all economically advanced countries, schools play a crucial and growing role in the transmission of advantage across generations' (p. 568). The post-structural research is therefore, about unmasking power. It is interesting that Benjamin, citing Apple (1995, p. xv), states that 'difference seldom wins out over dominance'' which has 'implications for unequal power relations played out in social and cultural relations and practices'. It appears that the context of practice is a complex arena which support the framework adopted for this study of policy. Data in this section (4.3) highlight that local constructions of dis/ability are framed by home backgrounds, which results in 'unequal childhoods'. This study directs our attention to the political and symbolic power in this

construction process, which is critical. Therefore, it is about making the familiar stage, the rational irrational, while acknowledging that solutions to resolve the needs/ resource match dilemma are not simple.

4.4 Claim Three: The GAM as a Dilemma within the Dilemma

It must be acknowledged that recent initiatives with regard to inclusive policy and practice present with huge commitment across many countries, including Ireland. Not surprisingly then, the teachers encountered in this in-depth study are enthusiastic and supportive of inclusion as an ideology. All teachers in the study were asked to provide their own definition of inclusion. The majority of teachers (n = 12) spoke explicitly about the importance of the 'feeling of belonging' to their class for all students. All teachers (n=14) associate inclusion with classroom-based learning

> *... **Inclusion for me is keeping them in their own classroom**, absolutely I want every child in the classroom with teachers coming into support ...*
>
> *Eibhlín, 3rd and 4th Class Teacher, Boys' School*

There are one hundred and eleven references to dilemma in the data coded and analysed. All teachers highlighted that the *classification* of students is dilemmatic. It was clear from teacher narratives that either option, to recognise difference or not, has some negative implications or risks associated with stigma, devaluation, rejection, or denial of opportunities' (Norwich, 2008, p. 287). As stated in Chapter Two, Meaney et al. (2005) in Ireland explain that this dilemma arises out of an effort to provide for the best interests of all. Norwich (2008) concludes that this can be difficult for professionals in the field and that 'resolutions can leave residual tensions', which he acknowledges, involves accepting some crucial losses' (2008, p. 302). Other dilemmas voiced relate to the curriculum; to provide the same/ different, functional/academic. Dilemmas remain with regard to placement; special school, special class, withdrawal to special setting within a mainstream. Interestingly, Lampert (1985), points out that 'one can be committed to a particular ideology (such as inclusion) or its opposite (placement of some special education setting) while recognising the limitations of taking any single-minded view of such a complicated process as teaching and learning in schools' (p.193).

While section 4.3 clearly points to the power of professionals to select, refer, assess, diagnose, and order students, evidence highlights that all teachers believe that labelling a child is contrary to their personal ideology, as this quote suggests:

> *<u>Researcher:</u> So you have worked with both models, can you give me your opinion..?*
>
> ***I don't know really, the GAM would be better than sending a child off to have a psychologist assessment... but that's if we got enough hours with the GAM, as a girls' school with our needs, we don't…***
>
> Eva, third and Fourth Class Teacher Girls' School

Dilemmas arise for teachers because it seems that labelling does provide a key rationale for segregation but it seems that it secures greater resources for the student:

> *I suppose I like the idea that if you have the resource label you have a full multidisciplinary team behind that label…*
>
> Emer, Principal Boys' School

> ***I think the assessment document is vital**, I can't say definitely, but **paper is the only way of ensuring that anything is dealt with properly if it's on paper, if someone else has said it, it counts…***
>
> Aoife, Infant Teacher Girls' School

> *They get more individual hours when they are assessed but it's just the timeframe that it takes and you have to fight to get those resource hours it just takes so long from when a child is initially sent referred to the time when you actually do get those hours there could be a year gone in the child's education before they get it whereas with the GAM the child can get help straight away if it is available, if there are hours available in the school, **it's up to the principal to decide who gets what hours, whereas with the other one you are fighting for the hours for maybe a year, there is greater flexibility with the GAM…***
>
> Molly, L/S Teacher Mixed School

> *Well Time is important, if you are going to meet the need of any child you are going to need support, so that child is going to need support, going out to LS, so **a label in our system is the only way we can get that support,** it's the only way, **I'm not looking for children to have labels that they are going to have to carry with them for the rest of their lives, that is very sad, we are going to have a generation in the next 10 years who are going to start applying for mortgages and find out that at age 7 they were assessed and got a label,** a diagnosis and how is this going to affect them and that application we will know in 8-9 years; will it be considered from a clinical perspective, how will it be viewed we don't know yet but if we want to get support for that child now, aged 7, this is the way we have to go but **these are factor that children are going to have to carry with them** when they are 22/25/30 years old if they are filling a form ethically..*
>
> Emer, Principal Boys' School

It was interesting to listen to the L/S teacher in the Girls' school, Ciara stated that

> *It is not possible to implement a 'national system' as all schools are different, a national system can't work, a general system does not work*

Significantly, most teachers highlighted concern in a 'general' system of resource allocation. They felt that a national system to address need in ordinary mainstream schools failed to recognise need. Teachers stated consistently that the principal or SEN co-ordinator of every school should be consulted by the state in order to disseminate resources to schools fairly. All teachers acknowledged that individual schools had unique needs that only those at the coalface truly recognised and understood these demands on resources. This lack of consultation in relation to GAM resourcing was consistently reiterated. It seems from the narratives of teachers that there is a lack of feedback mechanisms to the state on the workings of the GAM. This study suggests that these observations by teachers have significant implications for the need to refine the GAM and for broadening its criteria to meet such needs.

It is interesting to note that Ciara felt that it was unfair that their 'brother school' (Boys' School) received greater staffing when GAM was introduced in 2005 (see 4.2.4 and absent recognition of intersectionality). She stated that these brothers and sisters were '*coming out the same door'* but were being discriminated against because of gender. She felt that this fact needed to be urgently redressed, which is noteworthy. The hourly allocation granted to the three schools is highlighted in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Teaching hours allocated under the GAM and the RTH model in the three schools

School	School Population	% Low SES	General Allocation Model Hours	Resource Teaching Hours
A All Boys'	98	31	25	41
B All Girls'	105	30	17.4	30
C Mixed	418	12	60	25

Ellen, the 3rd and 4th class teacher in the Girls school agreed that the criteria for allocation under this 'general system' did not consider social diversity in its allocation to 'ordinary schools':

> *The way they have it done, boys' , girls' , mixed, DEIS, I suppose they have to nationalise part of it but if there are more girls' coming from disadvantaged backgounds in an all girls' school then they would be entitled to more time than the cut off, like a boys' school*

As stated in 4.2.4, it could be argued that Circular (02/05, DES, 2005) considers a limited diversity, i.e., gender, and that such an approach could be considered discriminatory (see Chapter 2, subsection 2.4.2.3).

The INTO believes (personal communication 21.11.09) that there is an arguable case for an increase in provision under the GAM for the most acutely disadvantaged schools. Such a view is not argued by this thesis but such schools are not the focus of this study. However, what this study highlights is that those within the context of influence and text production failed to recognize that all schools are different and that many non-designated schools have varying level of social diversity. Data from the context of practice, which will be discussed in the next sections of this chapter, reveal that all participants felt that prevalence of need in non-designated schools is not considered by the GAM. This factor was highlighted as a major flaw of the funding model. Such insights hold implications for the context of 'reframed' political strategy to ensure that resources are targeted at need and not at overall school population and the gender of that school's population. Such an approach, the study argues, is overly simplistic in resolving the needs/resource match dilemma.

4.4.1 'We did well out of the GAM': Ordinary Schools are Different

Interestingly, one of the two learning support teachers interviewed in the mixed school, Áine, consistently repeated:

> *Well, we are lucky in this school because it is an advantaged school…..*

In relation to their allocation under GAM specifically, she went on to say:

> …***we did well out of the GAM****, we did really, I mean when I hear about* other *schools and their needs! We are very lucky. The DES needs to listen to principals and all the great work they do, they are the ones that know the needs of the children in their school not some central authority…*
>
> Áine, L/S teacher, School C, Mixed School

The Principal in the Girls' School believed that 'advantaged schools' did not need the teaching time they were allocated under GAM, which is consistent with Áine's remarks as quoted above. In fact, both L/S teachers in the Mixed School acknowledged that their need was less than other schools in the area because their school was *advantaged*. This school was referred to by all staff interviewed (n=5) that the school was an 'advantaged' school. The Principal in the Girls' School, Mary, referred to a particular 'advantaged' school she knew where *all* pupils scored on or above a STEN of 5 in standardized tests of literacy and Maths, She went on to say that despite such recorded outcomes on standardized tests, this 'advantaged school' had a greater staffing allocation under the GAM:

> *In their Sten score – 5! Now that was wonderful news for parents, a wonderful experience for teachers and their GAM allocation is greater than mine. No I don't mean mine personally, I mean our school and it's not that scores are the be all and the end all of children, it's not but it is a determining factor in terms of the amount of need children have and I also think the mix between socioeconomic backgrounds (a tired gasp)…* ***there is far more need for some recognition of that need, allocation on the basis of that need.***
>
> Mary, Principal Girls' School, School B

In summary, while allocation of resources under that GAM was somewhat similar in the three schools because they are mainstream, non-designated primary schools, what did emerge however, was that the Mixed School served a more 'advantaged' school population, which had implications with regard to meeting need in the context of practice:

> ***We can take pupils up to the 40th*** *and then review it and see how they are getting on, it might be memory skills, reading, word attack skills, spelling and you go back over things like that. Sometimes it can be an overall thing - I am a great believer in memory development, especially with boys. I suppose we are lucky too Margaret, we are in a very advantaged school and honestly* ***we wouldn't have that many that would be going in accordance with the circular, about three or four at most scoring below the 10th percentile out of 418 pupils overall***
>
> Áine, L/S Teacher, School C, Mixed School

This school had 60 hours of teaching allocated under the GAM and yet, upon the school's own submission, had only three or four pupils scoring under the 10th percentile. The school had a further twenty-five resource teaching hours. Therefore, this thesis argues, based on the qualitative and quantitative data that 'ordinary' mainstream schools are in fact *different* and cater for *differing needs*. Teachers live in complex social worlds, which according to the data privilege one group over another. A one-size-to-fit-all approach to resource allocation or a general, national model presents as less than appropriate for all these 'ordinary' schools. All

participants felt that schools should be consulted to a greater extent with regard to need and allocation of resources. This reinforces the importance of considering policy as cycle, the context of practice informing the context of influence and text production, each having a shared responsibility for agency and constraint in order to realize policy that is inclusive. Data may suggest that a *redistribution* of current resources should be considered by government so that 'pupils with the highest level of need [can] therefore have the highest level of support' (C. 02/05, DES, 2005), which paradoxically, is a stated aim of the GAM.

Furthermore, in addressing the main question posed by the research, whether or not the GAM is leading to the development of 'truly inclusive schools', its stated intention according to its text, it is necessary to reiterate one of the most serious findings of this research:

…they go out and they never come back…

For the majority of children supported by GAM, 'going out' forever is how inclusion is done to those who are identified as having 'need'. These findings and analysis have serious implication for society with regard to equity:

> *We have so many GAM children here in this school and as a result the timetable is tight….there are kids you would like to go out to LS as they need support but literally* ***you can't fit them in*** *so if they have their Resource hours they are going to get their hours*
>
> Nuala, Infant Teacher, Boys' School

Data from the context of practice, highlights that many key stakeholders (n=14) ideologically believe that to label a child is inappropriate but they still believe that the approach that labels children provides a greater guarantee to additional resourcing. Desforges and Lindsay (2010) admit that there exists an associated tension between both resistance to diagnostic labeling in the case of some disabilities and a desire for it in others. Data highlights that the context of practice is a dilemmatic space.

4.5 Conclusion

This study set out to get closer to the day to day processes of schooling, where teaching practices promote, retain or place students in special education. The routine sorting of students have the consequence of providing or denying educational opportunity. The

disproportionality of a particular social class being served by the GAM, and special education generally, in the three participating schools, is significant. By exploring the possible reasons for such overrepresentation, fodder is provided for the debate around the contribution schools make to inequality. Three major claims were presented and discussed in this chapter. Firstly, it is asserted that the text of Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) through its discursive features provides a space for manoeuvre, for actors in the context of practice to be agentive. The study focused primarily on the context of practice. Therefore claim two arises from a particular focus of the study, the context of practice: it is asserted that policy intention is captured and reshaped in the context of practice, i.e., inclusive policy results in segregated practice. The outcome for students is increased social inequality, the claim argues. In order to understand why this is so the claim is distilled to illustrate the processes involved in the enactment of the GAM teaching supports in the context of practice. The following sub-claims were then presented:

- Claim 2a: Intersectionality exists between segregated practice and lower socioeconomic status backgrounds of the students.
- Claim 2b: Power of professionals to refer children for assessment highlights the agency of the social professionals to order students in the context of practice. This local construction of dis/ability is influenced by teachers' habitus and a psycho-medical perspective of the child.
- Claim 2c: Power of parents to refer and secure diagnoses to ensure eligibility to enhanced resources illustrates their agency to utilise social and cultural capital.
- Claim 2d: A consequence of the GAM is the construction of intellectual hierarchies within the context of practice, the result of which is increased social inequality in the context of outcome for students and their families.

Data from this study provides evidence that schools may well be agents of society, ensuring a particular ordering, maintaining the status quo (Ball, 2003). Barton and Slee (1999, p. 7, cited in Benjamin, 2002) insist that 'conceptions of 'ability' and 'failure' have and continue to be constituted in and by the practices of schooling', which brings together the key concept of structure/agency interplay and the need for analytical dualism in all analysis of policy as adopted in this study, which observed this interplay in analysing the processes of the GAM,

particularly in the context of practice. The study also acknowledges, that reform to address inequality, is not simple. Finally, therefore, the study claims that the GAM, in addressing the resource/needs match dilemma, is recreating dilemma in the context of practice. International research highlights that in modern industrialized societies, it is very difficult to alter patterns of class inequality in schooling (Artiles et al. 2011; Ball, 2003; Ball 2012; Lareau, 2000). Even when educational systems have been radically transformed and expanded, the privileged have retained their relative advantages (Bourdieu, 1974; Mehan et al., 1986; Erikson and Johnson, 1996; Ball, 2003; 2012; Ruben, 2008).

From discussion and analysis of these claims presented in this chapter four overarching themes emerged. These form a summary and will be discussed from a theoretical stance in the final chapter:

A. The 'Inclusiveness' of our inclusive schools
B. The insufficiently understood interlocking nature of SES and segregated practice
C. Methodological pluralism is required to 'refine' a 'general allocation' to meet the needs/resource match dilemma, because schools are different.
D. The importance of viewing policy as *cyclical* as today's policy solutions create tomorrow's dilemmas, which must inform future cycles and 'reframed contexts'.

An assumption in the field that school administration as it currently operates is rational and that its failure is due to those with pathological deficits is heard throughout teacher narratives. The data suggests that Lower SES population is being pathologised. This thesis is about making the rational irrational. It is about uncovering and exposing the unacknowledged normality of the middle classes (Ball, 2003; Reay et al 2007) and its corollary, the equally unacknowledged pathologising and diminishing of the lower social classes (Lawler, 2005; Reay, 2004; Skeggs, 2004), Bourdieu, like many social theorists including Skrtic (1991; 1995), sought to expose the unquestioned structures that underpin practices and behaviours of people in the social world. He explained the functioning of our social world and how it is consistently reinvented by particular social classes (See Chapter Two), which relates directly to the structure/agency interplay. Bourdieu illustrates how persons become dominant or will be dominated based on forms and levels of capital as discussed in Chapter Two and again in 4.3 above. What is unveiled in this study is that those

seen as ‘expert’ or having the ‘power’ or possessing ‘social and cultural capital’ have an impact on educational resources and how and why they are distributed.

To summarise, in the activity setting of the school, while enacting the GAM interpretations/constructions of dis/ability seem to be inextricably linked to social class. These constructions directly influence school ordering. The dominant discourses of dis/ability within institutionally and systematically located power create an intellectually subordinated population. One of the real dangers in the current period of development, according to the emerging data from this study, is that while the surface structures are being requested to change, for example, by introducing and implementing the GAM to facilitate greater levels of inclusion, the existing deep structures or habitus of teachers, which collectively form school culture, remain in place. Moreover, the thesis argues that if those issues that underlie relations of power, control, dominance and subordination, are not identified and transformed, exclusion and marginalization will be reproduced even under the most well-intentioned and most well-supported policies.

In conclusion, this study, by adopting a post-structural perspective within the conceptual framework of the policy cycle (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992; Ball 1994) contributes to an international body of policy analysis on inclusive education. It describes special educational policymaking as a discursive struggle a power/knowledge, structure/agency interplay, constituted within a realm of contradictory beliefs, values and discourses that frame the context of practice. The study challenges the psycho-medical perspective or individualistic view of the child, exploring and analyzing the interplay of power relations and the role of key social participants in the construction of dis/ability and in the overall policymaking process. Teachers, as well as students and parents, are active agents in the inclusion process. Observing and documenting the reality emerging from these key participants uncovered data, which, this thesis argues, can inform future policy action and contexts within the policy cycle of a revised GAM within the future roll-out of the EPSEN Act, and other developments in education policy in Ireland.

Chapter 5 Conclusion: Dilemmas and Directions

> National policy-making is inevitably a process of bricolage; a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalising theories, research, trends and fashions, and not infrequently a flailing around for anything at all that looks as though it might work. Most policies are ramshackle, compromise, hit and miss affairs that are reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected through complex processes of influence, text production, dissemination and ultimately recreation in contexts of practice.
>
> (Ball, 1998, p.126)

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter considers what has been learned; why it is worth learning and how the study contributes to theory, policy and practice. The GAM was introduced as a solution to an over-emphasis on professional assessment, diagnosis and categorisation of students to draw on resources to support student need in inclusive education settings. What is unearthed in this study is that Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005), the policy document that guided the organisation of teaching resources provided under the GAM, is 'nuanced and inflected through complex processes' (Ball, 198, p.126) and ultimately is recreated in the contexts of practice. The consequence is that inclusive education has not resulted in inclusion for many students, particularly those from LSES backgrounds because the movement is built on faulty constructions of dis/ability that do not consider the intersection of dis/ability with social class.

In this chapter, I adopt a theory-informed stance illustrated in four overarching themes arising from the claims mounted in the previous chapter to discuss the overall work, which are

A. The inclusiveness of our inclusive schools is less than inclusive
B. The insufficiently understood interlocking nature of SES and segregated practice
C. Methodological pluralism is required to 'refine' a 'general allocation' and devise a 'revised model' to target resources at greatest need.
D. Policy must be viewed as cyclical as today's policy solutions create tomorrow's dilemmas, which, in turn, must inform future cycles and 'reframed contexts'.

Much anecdotal evidence provided an embryo for this investigation. Some observations of discomfort had been gathered during the course of my work which troubled my understanding of resourcing models to support inclusive education. Anecdotal evidence suggested that the

GAM was not trouble-free, while presenting as 'a rational response' to the resource/needs match dilemma. I had a growing puzzlement about how inclusion was 'being done' in mainstream primary schools, i.e., I was questioning the 'inclusiveness' of our inclusive schools. This problem space provided the rationale for the study five years ago, which is outlined in Chapter One.

Firstly, the aim of the study was to investigate the GAM as a funding model to address the need/resource match dilemma, while advancing inclusive education, in mainstream primary schools. Secondly, while there is on-going discussion and debate in Ireland as to whether current systems of resource allocation are the most effective and/or efficient (NCSE, 2013), in the absence of any published research in relation to the GAM, there was a dearth of evidence. This study contributes to the evidence-base, by exploring the gap in the research and the nature of that gap. In this GAM/ Circular 02/05 (DES, 2005) policy context, questions needed to be asked and addressed. This chapter draws together the empirical and theoretical responses to the questions posed by the research, with regard to the case of the GAM, which was investigated in three sites, a Boys', a Girls', and a Mixed primary school.

The case study of the GAM employed the use of mixed methods, as described in Chapter Three. It encompassed document analysis as well as investigation of the case in three schools, involving interviews with learning support teachers, learning support/resource teachers and classroom teachers and principals. It adopted discourse analysis of the policy document C.02/05 (DES, 2005) and schools' policy documents. A grounded approach was used to analyse the narratives of all the participants'. Data emerging from document analysis and the semi-structured interviews were triangulated with quantitative data based on school demographics. The quantitative data was then applied to the Pobal HP Index of Affluence and Deprivation (Haase and Pratschke, 2012) to analyse the socio-economic profile of the catchment area of all three schools and in particular, to further analyse the profile of individual students in special education placement in order to understand the interlocking nature of SES and SEN, which emerged as a key claim. This analytical approach was worthwhile.

This research study is no less relevant now than when it was first conceived. The Minister for Education and Skills, Mr Ruairí Quinn (2013) in his address to a recent Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) conference stated that Ireland must move towards a situation 'where our overriding concern is with the education experiences and

outcomes that we are providing for children [with SEN]'. Minister Quinn also stated that resources were limited and therefore 'the more we know about educational outcomes the better we can fine-tune our interventions'. He stated that evidence of practice resulting in positive/negative outcomes for students would ensure a response from his department. This study provides empirical data about what is 'happening on the ground' in relation to students with SEN. Therefore, this study will contribute to the requested evidence-base that may serve to inform a future response from government.

The study highlights the interplay between policy contexts and within contexts, highlighting power relations. It could be assumed that funding models, in particular, are highly regulated by a central state authority, namely the Department of Finance, which places constraint on the Department of Education and Skills, which in turn, constrains the agency of those involved in the context of practice. For example, the Minister for Education and Skills consistently refers to 'limited resources', which constrain his actions. Within this constraint, he illustrated significant agency, by introducing revisions to the GAM commencing in the school year 2012/2013 without any published research on the model's efficacy/efficiency in practice. The economic climate and the agency of those in the context of influence and the context of text production may suggest that the agency of the actors in the context of practice is constrained. This study argues, however, that such constraint still provides for agency for those in the context of practice to 'enact' policy.

The study revealed the processes by which teachers construct and reconstruct multiple messages about policy in the context of practice. By uncovering teachers' attitudes, beliefs and values, their collective *habitus* that constructs *field*, school culture is made visible. Deconstructing this field and individual and collective habitus contributes to an understanding of that which influences school ordering and ultimately special education placement. On a substantive level there are lessons for sociology in education as the study points to the independent power of social class in shaping key interactions in the context of practice. The study brings the intersectionality of social class and special education centre-stage.

This study began from the premise that the GAM, as a model to fund inclusive education, had a social justice agenda of making education *less unequal*, to reduce, if not eliminate, disadvantage and the need to label students. As such, it presented as a more bio-psycho-social (see Glossary) approach to addressing student need. However, what I

discovered in this study reflects Power's (2012) observations of education policy in England, i.e., the ways in which funding models are being utilised in the context of practice embody different assumptions among the actors about what counts as a 'socially just education system' and what 'obstacles' prevent it from being realised.

This study insisted upon taking the detail seriously (Ozga, 1990) in order to understand the bigger picture. In this way, the small worlds of policy enactment can inform the bigger worlds about just how many domains of injustice need to be confronted and challenged, 'how fragile and incomplete the policies have been in removing obstacles to participatory parity and how difficult is the task of building a more socially just education system' (Power, 2012, p. 489). Education Minister Ruairí Quinn (2013) has recently said that the challenge of ensuring the education system eliminates disadvantage is 'an incredible one'. I agree that an 'incredible' approach is required, i.e., radical reform is necessary but is also feasible if the policy cycle is adopted in the way suggested by this study. Human arenas are complex and dilemmatic. A feedback loop from these arenas is critical to 'reframe political strategy' (see Figure 4.2). Each context can inform the next from lessons learned through lived experience.

As I approach the final paragraphs, I am thinking of what I have told you and all I have left unsaid because some 'tales' emerged stronger than others as the story unfolded. These 'little stories' I will tell in another way on another day. At this point, it is important to reintroduce the 'I' to you who have travelled this journey with me. The research was an unsettling process. I often found myself to be inconsistent, a 'dilemmatic being' in a dilemmatic space as I listened to and analysed teacher narratives. The view of self as 'inconsistent' brought me back to an evolving 'I', which must be re-visited because this thesis is understood to be a 'writerly' text (see section 2.2.3). Therefore, the writer and the reader are co-producers of meaning (Barthes, 1970). You, the reader, can interpret and reinterpret meaning from the text I have written because we are condemned to an endless play in difference with the continuing deferral and dispersal of meaning as Derrida (1978) reminds us. That is the nature of writerly texts. It is timely, therefore, to engage the current 'I' and you the 'reader'/'interpreter' in a post-research conversation now that a more complex understanding of the GAM transactions has been tabled and more probing generative questions have been asked over the analytical journey that you have accompanied me on having read the 'writerly text':

I am still the 'I' that was disturbed by experiencing children in institutions who were considered uneducable. I am the 'I' who was confused and upset for my class peer, Betty, who cried when her brother had to go back to Cabra to 'his school'. I wondered why he couldn't go to school with my brother and go home with Betty. I am the 'I' who learned through my naïve interaction with a young teenager that there are many who have difficulty with literacy but who are 'able' and can learn. I am the 'I' who was unsettled that we lacked the support of experts, when I questioned our capacity as 'classroom teachers' to pull-in and pull together.

Ten years later, I described my classroom as 'Heuston Station' with X number going out to 'learning support' and Y number going out to 'resource', geographical destinations in our school. Subsequently, it was I who engaged in this practice of withdrawal of students from their class peers. As SEN co-ordinator, I calculated the '5 hour children' and the '4 hour children' and the '2.5 hour children'. I was not only implicated but highly agentive in referral, assessment, categorising and in ordering students in our school. I, with my team, withdrew many from classroom-based learning. I never asked the boys how this 'school ordering' made them feel. As a naïve pragmatist, I rarely questioned 'the way things were done', the norm in our school, a structure that actor agency created and I had played my part in its creation.

I am now the 'I' who meets these young men on the streets where I live. Sometimes I have to think hard to remember their first name. Sadly, I can always remember 'their hours', 2.5 for mild GLD, etc. Some of these former students have their own babies now. They proudly introduce their son or daughter and we both admire the child, who is full of potential, who will later be constructed as able or…. I now want to ask these boys what I did to them. How did I construct their identity? I want to hear how they felt about the way things were done in school under 'inclusive education policy'. Can I tell these boys that it's all done differently now? Another vital study is forecast.

The 'you' as reader of this writerly text might well ask did I simply go out to test a hypothesis based on such extensive anecdotal evidence, which is a fair question to ask. Admittedly, I did enter the field with experience that led to a range of puzzlements. However, I made every effort to leave all assumptions behind in order to unearth current evidence. As a teacher educator, it had been a while since I acted in the context of practice. I wanted to listen and to hear from the current 'I' in that context. Despite my lived experience, I was still disturbed by the way in which so many students are provided with an 'exit ramp' from the mainstream. I have had to consistently ask why I was so surprised, did I not know that disadvantage leads to greater disadvantage. My naivety possibly relates to my own school experience: the 'I' had gone to her local primary and post-primary school. Both schools were socially diverse. We all learned and played together. I now realise that when and where there was no withdrawal we all learned to live together.

Also, as a naïve pragmatist, I thought withdrawing children to remedy their deficits meant that we were supporting learning; we were saving children's education lives. Over the course of this study I am forced to look back at my lived experience and at the evidence provided in the study to conclude that the way things are done, intentionally or unintentionally, paradoxically provides this 'exit ramp' from the mainstream for many students in our 'inclusive schools' in this, our 'inclusive democracy'. It seems that the roundabout back to the mainstream is rarely provided. All too often, many students are exiled to the margins, and to quote one participant in the study, 'they never come back'.

Figure 5.1 Vignette 4: The 'I' and the reader in conversation

I realise, because of this lived experience (as illustrated in Vignettes 1-4) that we have to do 'inclusion' differently. We can all be agentive in the policy cycle. At this point in the thesis' narrative, it is essential to return to the overarching themes introduced earlier to illustrate what is learned since the embryo emerged, in order to present the significance of the work and its contribution to theory, practice and the research literature.

I approached the research guided by a conceptual model of the [continuous] policy cycle (Ball, 1994; Cochran-Smith, et al., 2013). In this study the aim was to construct 'low level theory' applicable to immediate and specific situations (policy contexts) rather than 'grand theories', which are of greater abstraction and applicability (Creswell, 2012). The study asserts that the low level theory, constructed in this research from the overall analytical process, is helpful in understanding the phenomena under investigation. Therefore, the chapter will now begin with the first overriding theme which makes visible the inclusiveness of our inclusive schools.

5.2 Theme A: The 'Inclusiveness' of our Inclusive Schools

It is noteworthy that the study makes visible the often invisible 'inclusiveness of schools'. Chapter Two (Section 2.4) illustrates that inclusion is an inherently contested concept, which takes place in an inherently paradoxical space, 'inclusive schools'. What is exposed in this research study is that which 'parades as inclusive schooling' (Touraine, 2000, p.283) but which, in practice, segregates students daily. Bourdieu's key concepts of habitus and field are useful to understanding. Influenced by habitus and field ('the ways things are done' in 'the building up there') actors in the context of practice have the power/agency to construct 'others' who are sent on an 'exit ramp' to the margins of our education system. Moreover, what is unearthed is that all too often they never return (see Figures 4.8 and 4.9) and that many agents are involved in this process as Figure 4.9 illustrates.

By interrogating inclusive education policy with a critical pragmatic lens this study found it is necessary to reveal the answer to a fundamental question: 'inclusion into what" (Artiles and Kozleski, 2007; Artiles, 2011). The 'what' is revealed to be classrooms that are less than inclusive. McCoy and Banks (2012) concur stating that 'there is limited evidence of an inclusive education system' in Ireland (p.94). Therefore, this study asserts that all

stakeholders in education must question the nature of the mainstream into which students are included, in order to examine the concomitant inequitable conditions that have been highlighted in this study, particularly in relation to students from LSES backgrounds and their families.

This study set out to get closer to the day-to-day processes of schooling, where teaching practices promote, retain or place students in special education. This routine sorting of students has the consequence of providing or denying educational opportunity. The study provides empirical evidence that inequality and inequity pervade the landscape of education, suggesting that funding models (the GAM and the RTH model) to address the needs/resource match dilemma are in fact contributing to social inequality and, while perpetuating to develop inclusive education, these funding models are leading to segregation and an intellectually subordinate population in schools. Moreover, empirical data illustrate that 'students least likely to encounter widely available educational resources at home are also least likely to encounter them in school' (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 22). Data also affirms Conway's (2002, p.62) observations that 'while the education system has in many respects been an effective agent of social and economic change in Irish society it has been considerably less effective in combating long standing societal inequalities'. These observations of discomfort mirror the seminal work of Illich (1971) cited extensively in Chapter Two that school is the problem not the solution to in/equity because it creates mechanisms to discriminate against some and to privilege others. Power (2012) in her recent study, reflects somewhat fatalistically, that 'education is paradoxically situated as not only one of the main causes of inequality, but also the solution to these very same inequalities' (p. 473). The study suggests that many agents are involved in the process.

The study argues that parents and children, multidisciplinary professionals, as well as teachers, are major actors in the policy context of practice (see Figure 4.9). The research unearths that due specifically to their habitus and their social /cultural capital, the various actors hold varying degrees of agency. It emerged strongly that school culture, described by many teachers as 'the way we do things around here', which is constructed by teacher agency and collective habitus, remains grounded in deeply held assumptions that are influenced by the psycho-medical perspective of the student. For example, in keeping with Skrtic's (1991) analysis in the USA, teachers in the three schools believe that differential diagnosis is objective and useful, and therefore, the role of the expert with the professional knowledge is

privileged, particularly with regard to assessment. The assessment that labels/categorises is valued by all teachers in the study. Teachers view special education that withdraws students from classrooms daily as a rationally conceived and coordinated system of services that benefits diagnosed (labelled/categorised) students. They believe that progress in the field results from rational technological improvements in diagnostic and instructional practices.

Deconstruction of special/inclusive education in the study questions several factors that have been associated with the traditional professional knowledge. For example, the reliability of diagnostic categories that present as absolutes, with no consideration of social and environmental factors or spectrum of dis/ability, i.e., a bio-psycho-social understanding (see Glossary, see Section 2.6 and section 4.3 for fuller discussion). Data illustrates that the process of referral and diagnosis is linked to local constructions of dis/ability that not only 'pathologises' the child but also the family. This study empirically unearths the correlation between local constructions of dis/ability and social class, leading to school ordering, and the construction of those who have and have not the opportunity to create intelligence (see subsections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3).

These models as currently organised and operationalized in the context of practice, are reproducing certain social groups into powerless social positions that exclude them from the mainstream. Ultimately, data from this current study suggest that there is an intellectually subordinate population emerging in schools under funding models to support inclusive education. In keeping with Benjamin's (2000) ethnographic research in the UK, three distinct hierarchal levels can be identified in the schools where the GAM was examined based on analysis of teacher narratives:

a. Discourse of success (based on numerical targets in academic subjects/students who are making the grade – 60%), i.e., the mainstream population
b. Consolation discourse (not making the grade – 40%), i.e., the GAM student population
c. Charity/tragedy discourse ('really disabled', a small number), i.e., LI disabilities student population.

There is the dominant population of the mainstream. The 'GAM population' are close to the mainstream but not close enough to be fully included. The third group seem to be a minority within a minority, and are referred to with a type of charity/tragedy discourse. This group hold individual hours with 'another' teacher and more often than not this means 'another'

place in the school. This data holds major implications for the *context of outcomes* for students. Student outcomes are critical, not just for students themselves but to inform future intervention and policy direction. The study suggests that there is an absence of feedback mechanisms, whereby practitioners can provide data or information on the progress and impacts of particular policies, which could inform future 'reframed' contexts for action (see Figure 4.2). For example, this study revealed the agency of the teacher in the referral process, especially in relation to the GAM, as assessment from other professionals is not necessarily required for eligibility. The study illustrated that many students are withdrawn from classroom-based activity daily to receive support from a teacher appointed under GAM. Empirical data highlighted that a disproportionate number of these students are from LSES backgrounds. This type of information needs to inform future directions. Moreover, all too frequently, if students are withdrawn this approach continues for their entire schooling, which holds major implications for the context of outcomes. From a theoretical perspective the study elaborates on Ball's findings in 1998, that policies are 'reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected through complex processes of influence, text production, dissemination and ultimately recreation in contexts of practice' (p. 126). This quote provided the opening to Chapter Five, setting the backdrop to the particularisations, not generalisations, uncovered in this research. Furthermore, it emerged that contexts of practice are not all the same. The profile of 'ordinary' schools differs greatly but this is not currently recognised by policy. This study argues that a feedback loop is necessary and would be explicit and implicit in a continuous policy cycle framework.

In summary, that which presents as inclusive policy is less than inclusive in the reality of some students' lives. Moreover, what poses as classless policy, in practice holds significant implications for students and families from LSES backgrounds. It could be argued, that in many respects, that the context of practice through its institutional and interactional agency strips families of their already limited agency. By highlighting the level of agency in the context of practice to recreate 'top-down policy', this study illustrates the ineffectiveness of 'bottom-up/ top-down dichotomy. Alternatively, this study highlights that centrally-formulated policies are applied with variations in different local contexts. Policy is 'enacted' (see Chapter 4) not implemented. To suggest that policy gets 'implemented' is to presume a top-down, rational, functionalist approach. The language of 'implementation' strongly suggests, 'an unequivocal governmental position that will filter down through quasi-

state bodies and into the schools….' (Bowe et al., 1992, p. 10). This study indicates that the context of practice is far too complex and messy for such a simplistic understanding of policy processes. Enactments are collective, collaborative, and agentive, constrained and are made up of dilemmas, 'they bring together contextual, historic and psychosocial dynamics into a relation with texts and imperatives to produce action and activities that are policy' (Ball et al., 2012, p. 71). They insist that 'policy is not simply received and implemented within this arena, rather it is subject to interpretation and then "recreated"' (1992, p. 22). This study provides empirical data that policy is recreated through the agency of actors in the contexts of practice.

By unpicking and analysing structure/agency over time, analysing varying antecedents and consequences as this study has done, lessons can be learned which could provide an information mechanism, informing a context of 'reframed' political strategy and subsequent 'reframed' policy contexts as the cycle revolves and policy evolves. This is why it is important to learn what we have learned in this study in relation to developing a greater understanding of the complex nature of inequalities and how difficult a task it is to build a more socially just system.

5.3 Theme B: The Interlocking Nature of Social Class and Segregated Special Education Practice

As stated in Chapter Four, Claim 2 argues that students from LSES backgrounds are disproportionately represented in the special education programmes in all three schools. As identified by the school management and indicated in Table 4.3 and Figure 4.4 respectively, there are thirty children coming from LSES backgrounds in the Boys' School, which represents almost a third of its overall school population. Twenty-eight (93.3%) of these boys are removed from classrooms for special education support daily. Only two boys from this background, or 6.7% of the overall student population, remain in class all day with their peers. Twenty-eight out of a total of thirty-seven boys or 76% of special education caseload are from LSES backgrounds.

It is noteworthy that this 'disproportionality' is not altered by gender. Thirty out of thirty-two girls (93.75%) from a LSES background are withdrawn daily; two girls, or 6.25%

of the student population from this background, remain in class for all teaching and learning in the Girls' School. Thirty out of thirty-six girls or 83% of special education caseload in special education programmes are from LSES backgrounds. The significance of social class in the interlocking nature of gender, race and class is emphasised again in Figure 4.5. In summary, data shows that there are *equal* numbers of boys and girls from LSES backgrounds receiving special education, thereby suggesting that the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and special education holds up across gender.

It is interesting that 12% of the Mixed School's population is from a background defined as LSES, yet 50% or twenty-six out of fifty-two students are withdrawn daily from classroom-based learning. The overall percentage of students from this background in the special education cohort is 43%. It could be asserted that the GAM caseload is almost social class specific, with up to 83% of its caseload coming from this background in the Girls' school. In the absence of accurate census data relating directly to SEN due to a lack of interagency communication around data sets and anomalies and ambiguities with regard to definition, this study, though small, provides real empirical data. There is some consensus between this study and recent *estimates* published in the NCSE's Prevalence Report (Banks and McCoy, 2011) which suggests 'stark differences in SEN prevalence between children from working class backgrounds and their middle class counterparts: the former, particularly boys, are more likely to be identified as having SEN' (p.6). However, empirical data from this study illustrates that social class trumps all other diversity, including gender, which is noteworthy.

Furthermore, recent findings from the ESRI (Banks and McCoy, 2013) also highlight that the socioeconomic background of schools was found to affect a number of key aspects of school practice, including teaching methods used, time allocated to subjects, and the approach to discipline. These were found to vary by school social mix, suggesting that school principals and teachers adapt their practices to reflect student composition. The narratives of teachers in this study confirm such findings. While Banks and McCoy focus on the comparison between practices in ordinary schools and DEIS schools, this study builds on the work of these authors as it uncovers such varying practices within the 'ordinary' school. Moreover, Banks and McCoy (2013) suggest that disproportionality or 'over-identification' may be due to the subjective nature of EBD identification' (NCSE, 2013, p.29 citing Banks and McCoy, 2012). EBD is an LI disability. It is noteworthy that the current study builds on

and expands these findings making visible an 'over-identification' of students with HI disabilities and learning support needs also in special education placement as the study focuses on the GAM caseload, which does not serve students identified with LI disability.

In taking the 'broader definition' of SEN as articulated in EPSEN Act (2004), overall prevalence of SEN is now estimated at 25% (Banks and McCoy, 2011). The three schools in this study are 'ordinary', mainstream, schools without designation. Yet, 38% of the boys' and 34% of the overall girls' school population are identified with SEN, which is double the national average (17.7%) suggested by the Implementation Report (NCSE, 2006). The mixed school, on the other hand, has below this national average with 14% attending special education. For the boys' school and the girls' school, 31% and 30% of the schools' population respectively, come from LSES backgrounds, while students from LSES backgrounds in the mixed school represent 12%. Based on the narratives listened analysed in this study, some 'ordinary' schools have greater need than others. The GAM support is accused as not providing adequate teaching resources in the two schools with this greater level of need. It could be argued that teachers are constrained when resourcing models are not perceived as *adequate* to support levels of need. This study contends that as more pressure is placed on the GAM's human resourcing to meet need, there is a risk that the capacity of the model will become even more constrained, increasing demands being placed on decreasing budgets and resources. It could be argued that that GAM as currently operationalized, based on number of classroom teachers as opposed to student need

> …. is crude and not sophisticated enough to allow scarce resources to be deployed in an equitable fashion where schools with the needs receive the level of support required to address those needs…
>
> (Travers, 2012)

Such limitations on resourcing could lead to a status quo, the study suggests. The social professionals, who know the *field*, could return more traditional practices of referral, assessment and diagnosis which would *ensure* the allocation of resourcing under individual application or the RTH model. According to Sugrue (1997) in times of transition actors are forced back to more traditional actions, which serve to maintain the status quo. These features hold significant implications for a *general* allocation of funding to 'mainstream' schools because empirical data in this study show that 'ordinary' schools are different, which raises

important questions over the adequacy of the GAM to target resources at greatest need. This study argues that the profile of schools in necessary to fund schools adequately.

The Haase Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012) is gaining increased currency among public sector bodies in ensuring that policy interventions and investments are targeted towards the areas of greatest need. Therefore, this research study suggests that the application of the Index could be used effectively at a *national level* to indicate levels of social need, and in doing so, could serve to refine the GAM to ensure that key resources target those with greatest needs more efficiently and effectively. Furthermore, the study also suggests that it is vital to ensure that these resources address inequality and not contribute to it, by segregating students in schools, removing them from classroom-based learning on a daily basis. These suggestions may be useful to inform future directions in the context of the current proposals from the NCSE (2013) to the Minister for Education and Skills proposing an 'expansion of the learning support service' (p.87) or the GAM. It seems that a revised GAM and a 'revised and updated' (p. 92) *Special Education Circular 02/05* is the favoured direction of the NCSE in its advice to the Minister. Therefore, this study is most timely as its findings can contribute to 'the next phase' and the establishment of a working group to develop the proposed 'alternative model' (p.95).

5.4 Theme C: Methodological Pluralism to Refine a General Allocation

As described in Chapter Three, the Pobal HP Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012) uses *a series of indicators* from the most recent census to measure the affluence or deprivation of all parts of the country. These figures are used to generate maps that are detailed to individual street level, based on 'small-area statistics', or pockets of the population of, on average, between 80 and 100 households. This Index is of particular significance given the economic changes that have occurred nationally during the period 2006-2011. The change in the Index scoring and in each measured category is also calculated, meaning that to a national, regional and local level the increase or decrease can be easily viewed. Empirically what is unearthed in this study echoes the seminal work of Mehan et al. (1986), i.e., school practices are

'handicapping the handicapped', disadvantaging the already disadvantaged, marginalising those already marginalised.

Haase's premise is that deprivation and affluence are geographical phenomena and that the 'neighbourhood effect' is associated with and is a determinant of an individual's socio-economic status. Similar theses have been advanced by social and health geographers (Pringle et al., 1996; Hourigan, 2012), and such patterns are evident from several extensive empirical studies (Humphreys et al., 2011). By extension, therefore, this study argues that interventions that address deprivation should be area-based, holistic and multi-sectoral, rather than sector specific. This integrated approach to development has become the hallmark of area-based community partnerships in Ireland (O'Keeffe and Douglas, 2009).

The tapestry of the varying social arenas of social policy provision was further uncovered with closer analysis of Figure 4.6, (Subsection 4.3.2), which showed a statistical anomaly. Analysis unearthed a social housing estate that was 'nested' in a catchment area that was, it could be argued, 'uncharacteristic' of social housing. This particular phenomenon of social housing being 'nested' in an affluent catchment area made me consider Slee's (2001) provocative question posed in his article *Driven to the Margins: disabled students, inclusive schooling and the politics of possibility* cited in Chapter Two, which asks 'do we want to live together?' (p.386). The Index fails to provide a profile of these families as they are 'hidden', in an affluent catchment area. The reliability of the Index to indicate areas of deprivation could suggest that LSES groupings are ghettoised and thus register as 'areas of deprivation'. It could be suggested, therefore, that social housing also provides an 'exit ramp' to the margins for families from LSES groupings. Certain types of catchment areas are constructed as separate to ensure that we 'do not have to live together'. Data suggests that families are marginalised not only by education policy but also by social housing policy. Such social phenomena could be described as the dominant dominating the dominated.

While controversy exists in relation to the Primary Care Centres, currently, posts are being allocated to the areas 'most in need', taking into account the HP Index. Minister Reilly (2012) announcement introducing these Centres stated that 'at a time of scarce national resources, it is essential that such posts be targeted at areas of greatest need'. However, the GAM and recent revisions to GAM, announced by the Minister, fail to acknowledge such key criteria relating to diversity, this study contends. Now the GAM funding is based on teacher numbers in a school as opposed to student need. This study argues that such an approach to

address the needs/resource match dilemma is far too simplistic. The study emphasises that in the allocation of such scarce resources to non-designated schools it is critical to acknowledge that mainstream, non-designated primary schools are not the same, as is illustrated in the data. Methodological pluralism could inform the context of 'reframed political strategy' with regard to school profiles in order to refine and revise the GAM to address student need more effectively, efficiently and more equitably, this study argues. In keeping with Power's (2012) article on education and inequality, this study illustrates that solutions to the complex nature of funding mechanisms to address inequality and to support more inclusive education are not simple. They are highly dilemmatic.

5.5 Theme D: Today's Policy Solutions as Tomorrow's Dilemmas

In summary, the study argues that the GAM, in addressing the resource/needs match dilemma, is recreating dilemma in the context of practice, not least in relation to the classification of students into hierarchies. The GAM was introduced to address the dilemma of categorisation. However, the classification system in special education has been a tool to organise information of students' strengths and needs and has served among other things: 'to understand the differences among students and to rationalise the distribution of resources; and it has been requisite to receiving special educational and related services' (Florian et al. 2006, p. 37). However aware we may be of the negative and problematic effects that classification, categorisation and labelling can have in educational settings, Florian et al. (2006) argue that there can be no public policy without classification, which is echoed by the teachers in this study. The argument in this current study, however, is the need to challenge the faulty assumptions that lie behind the processes of such classification systems.

5.5.1 Needs/Resource Mach Dilemma – Lessons Learned

Research in Ireland (Smyth et al., 2009; Smyth and McCoy, 2009; Banks and McCoy, 2011; Banks and McCoy, 2012; NCSE, 2013), has shown that children from LSES groups are already experiencing the effects of multiple disadvantage before SEN is taken into consideration. This study has illustrated this 'multiple disadvantage through its use of the Pobal HP Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012), illustrated in Tables 4.5 and 4.6 (see also

Appendices I and J). This study suggests that disadvantage and deprivation are not recognised in 'ordinary' schools under current funding models. Children coming from areas of deprivation as indexed by the Pobal Haase Index are not seen and therefore, their social and educational needs are not factored in the way they are in DEIS schools. This study argues that it is arbitrary to resource schools based on the number of classroom teachers, without consideration of diversity of school population and its needs. 'Ordinary' mainstream schools are different, as this study illustrates empirically. A profile of the school is necessary in considering its needs.

The study contends that the Pobal Haase Deprivation Index could be used to indicate key criteria to *redistribute* resources in 'ordinary' schools in a more systematic manner. It is significant that narratives from principals and teachers highlighted support needs arising out of factors/conditions that are indicators of deprivation/affluence on the Pobal HP Deprivation Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012), which strongly supports the need to refer to the Index with regard to identifying social rather than simply educational needs. Such reference may be helpful in making decisions with regard to the allocation of general funding in any area of social provision including community development, intergenerational learning, adult and continuing education and family support. It is evident from the claims of this thesis, that such resources need to be directed towards breaking the cycle of inter-generational education disadvantage, by promoting a 'whole of household'/'whole community' approach to education and not one that involves segregation or targeting of children in schools based on the economic means of their parents rather than their educational needs and potential.

Moreover, according to the Minister for Health, Dr James Reilly (2012), this 'shift in emphasis to community-based services is good for patients, clients, health professionals, acute hospitals and it delivers the best value. Efficiency and effectiveness are core concerns to all public services providers in this current climate'. Based on the Minister's assertion it could be argued that providing actors with more agency at a community level could be more efficient and effective across sectors. This study contends that valuable lessons can be learned from such inter/departmental analysis of policy.

5.6 Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice

This study provides evidence of educational outcomes for many students and highlights the need for all those involved in policy to 'rethink' the way in which inclusion is done to students. This study provides a timely response to the need for research nationally but its contribution is of significance also to International contemporary theory, policy and practice. For example, the ESRI recently noted that 'despite the recent policy emphasis on educational inclusion little is known about children with special educational needs in Ireland' (Banks and McCoy, 2012, p.12), which is noteworthy. Minister Quinn (2013) said Ireland must move towards a situation 'where our overriding concern is with the education experiences and outcomes'. He said research would help inform policy with 'facts about what is happening on the ground'. This reiteration of the Minister's call emphasises the value of this small but in-depth study of what is happening on the ground. From and international perspective, the overrepresentation of students from minority groups is well-documented in the research literature (Artiles et al., 2102; Abram, 2011 et al. 2011; Skiba, et al. 2006; Valencia, 2010; Zion and Blanchett, 2011). This study builds and expands on such research as it brings the intersectionality between social class and placement in special education centre-stage. The study highlights empirically, disproportionality of students from LSES backgrounds in special education programmes. It critically questions *why* this is the case. Moreover, recent international and Irish research (Artiles et al., 2102; Abram, 2011 et al. 2011; Banks and McCoy, 2012; NCES, 2013; and McCoy et al., 2012) have highlighted concern in relation to placement on students' self-esteem and peer interactions. This study consistently reiterates the point that we need to think differently about the difficulties encountered by many of our students. The study argues that the phenomenon of disproportionality in special education could be better understood as *home/school discontinuity* as opposed to disability.

5.6.1 Home/School Discontinuity: 'The way we do things here'

While this thesis is critical of findings that suggest that children coming from LSES backgrounds can be constructed as having a HI disability through the pathologisation of the individual and the family, it does support the notion that many children need support with the *transition* from home to school. However, this is not to say that they have a *disability*.

There is evidence in this study of schooling being implicated in social reproduction. Bourdieu's theories of cultural and social capital usefully explicate this social reproduction (see 2.2 and 2.5 for fuller discussion). Bourdieu focuses mainly on the advantages of capital to the individual. This current study considers Bourdieu's theories in relation to advantage and it corollary, disadvantage, while analyzing the *agency* afforded to some in the policy cycle contexts. This research paid particular attention to the moment-by-moment social interaction in the context of practice. Based on individual teacher *habitus* that collectively form school culture, the *field* becomes/remains middle class and thus teachers assert that 'the curriculum is middle class and that is it' because, it could be argued, middle class actors are enacting its text. Therefore, it is understandable that the transition to 'the building up there' is challenging for many of our students coming from 'another world', i.e., from LSES backgrounds as narratives suggest.

A sociocultural perspective or a 'whole community' approach to schooling could harmonise this discontinuity, the study suggests. Extra teaching resources granted to schools could be usefully employed in this harmonising process. The way in which teaching resources are used in schools, this study argues, is more to do with mind-set, how teachers frame issues of social justice, social class, disability, and inclusion. The study emphasises that it is critical that funding to provide these teaching resources is targeted at greatest need, which may be related to 'transition needs' for many students form LSES backgrounds as opposed to need arising from locally constructed disability. For this reason, resources need to be targeted at a 'whole community' approach to intervention in order to realise education that is holistic and inclusive.

5.6.2 Policy Investments targeted towards Prevalence of Need

The study ultimately argues that policy investments, such as the GAM, could be targeted towards the areas of greatest need more efficiently and effectively by examining the profile of families (see Appendix I and J) to better understand the context of practice in 'ordinary' schools. Similar to Power's (2012) insightful article on the inescapable nature of inequity, this study acknowledges that the politics of education have sequentially attempted to address injustices in economic, cultural and political domains. She illustrates that in England this has resulted in 'a changing orientation from a politics of redistribution to a politics of recognition and, in recent years, to a politics of representation'. It could be argued,

that the intention of the government by introducing the GAM, was to *redistribute* resources by allocating a general model as opposed to individual funding. The RTH model represents the 'politics of recognition' (Power, 2012) as each child has to be 'recognised' by their disability in order to draw down individual funding to support recognised 'disability' needs. Power cites a third approach that has been evident in England, i.e., a politics of *representation*, which tries to remove obstacles to the mobilisation of power at individual, group and social class level through empowerment. This approach, I suggest, is about 'redistributing agency'. Therefore, policy analysis must always focus on the interplay between structure and agency and on who has/ has not agency, the analytical approach to this study. A 'whole community' approach to education respects and expects the participation of all stakeholders in the *field*, everyone plays the game. It is about 'living together'.

Furthermore, by approaching reform as if schools are machine bureaucracies through which new policies can be inserted in to existing structures fails to recognise this structure/agency interplay, in particular the level of agency of the actors in the context of practice. This study argues that school organisations are currently decoupled from the work of inclusive education. For example, qualitative data from this study suggest that work in classrooms is generally co-ordinated by the class teacher who works closely with a class of students but only loosely with colleagues due to restrictions of time for collaborative encounters. However, this study reveals that it is not wholly due to the restrictions of time, but is often more to do with 'the way things have been done', the tradition, the culture of practice in a school, a structure formed by teachers' agency which is powerfully agentive in the creation of this 'norm'. For these reasons, co-operation remains rare. Teachers, parents and multidisciplinary teams working together co-operatively as a community of practice having shared responsibility is less than evident in current school organisation as witnessed in this study. Data from this study suggests that the social area of school is far from being a 'machine bureaucracy'. This study asserts that schools are dilemmatic spaces'. For example, teachers are grappling with the practice of inclusion while being highly supportive of it as an ideology, which is consistent with international trends.

5.6.3 Classrooms as Dilemmatic Spaces

In this study, teachers consistently provided a definition of inclusion as 'belonging to a classroom'. Yet, in practice, children are withdrawn daily from classrooms.

With increasing levels of diversity in mainstream schools, currently, it could be argued that teachers are experiencing crisis. Therefore, this study agrees with Sugrue's assertion cited in Chapter Two, that classrooms remain 'sites of struggle where teachers on a daily basis, grapple with these complexities as they seek to give meaning and coherence to contemporary versions of teaching traditions' (Sugrue, 1997, p. *x*) Rix et al. (2009) recently highlighted that many schools in England and Wales do not see themselves as having 'the skills, experiences or resources to provide effectively for children with SEN' (p. 86). These researchers go on to say that 'meeting these needs presents a very demanding brief for an unsupported classroom teacher'. Moreover, it could be suggested that schools are sites of struggle for many students, also. Due to a revealed home/school discontinuity, this study asserts that many students are forced to engage with the dominant culture or to resist it and be marginalised.

The trajectory towards inclusive schooling could be understood then as a time of transition, experienced as crisis for key stakeholders in the context of practice. It is noteworthy that Sugrue maintained that 'some practitioners seek to reduce complexity and uncertainty by clinging to established pedagogical recipes' (p. x) in a time of crisis. This study argues that such an explanation can potentially explain resilience to change or the reproduction of the status quo despite transformative policy texts. This point is worth noting to inform the context of 'reframed political strategy' (see Figure 4.2).

This study contends that a time of crisis provides a context for meaningful action. In accordance with Dewey, Skrtic (1991a) asserts that a crisis in knowledge is a necessary prelude to growth of knowledge. Skrtic and Sailor (1996) argue that such a crisis requires theoretical discourses and new theoretical frameworks to solve the social and political issues that have been created within the field. They explain that 'theoretical discourses are responses to historical crises, to the turbulence created by disintegration of once-stable social arrangements and established modes of thought' (p. 271). Skrtic and Sailor (1996) maintain that such discourses 'represent important opportunities that stem from humans' capacity to reframe their problems in new theoretical languages on a journey towards positive change' (p. 271). Therefore, this study suggests that crises can be accepted as dilemmatic but also as an opportunity for *reconstruction*. It is interesting that Lampert (1985), in her seminal work, presents a concept of teaching as "dilemma management" and that 'the work of managing dilemmas… requires admitting some essential limitations …' (p. 193). The study also argues

that teachers negotiate *dilemmatic spaces*. This study suggests that a dilemmatic perspective in understanding the social processes of inclusive education may be useful for reconstructing education policy that is inclusive.

In order to do the important work of teaching, Lampert (1985) suggests, one needs to have resources to cope with equally weighted alternatives when it is not appropriate to express preference between them. Teachers need to be able to take advice but to be able to engage in critical pragmatism to know what to do when advice is contradictory to lived experience. Lampert queries if 'it is our society's belief in the existence of a solution for every problem that has kept any significant discussion of the teacher's unsolvable problems out of both scholarly and professional conversations about the work of teaching' (p, 193). Rix et al. (2009) advise that teachers should be encouraged to recognise that within the complexities of a diverse mainstream classroom their effectiveness will be dependent upon their understanding that their role involves including children with SEN, their belief in their ability to adapt their teaching and curriculum and their willingness and ability to encourage participation in communal learning experiences through the use of flexible groupings and roles. They conclude by saying that approaches that 'effectively include children with SEN in mainstream classrooms are not about the teacher alone, but are rooted in the community of learners – including other practitioners – with which they work' (p. 93). The adhocric school is reflective of such an approach. This study contends that is about 'pulling-in and pulling together' to solve dilemmas effectively and efficiently. This study emphasises that having *the capacity* to do so is critical and highlights specific implications for ITE and CPD. The study asserts that when teachers need to be comfortable with a self that is complicated and sometimes inconsistent, a 'dilemmatic being' working in a 'dilemmatic space'.

This study agrees with Darling-Hammond (2010), cited in Chapters Two and Four, that in order to negotiate dilemmas, teachers require targeted preparation and support in reaching students whose social, economic and cultural background may differ from their own. The study suggests that teachers need to be able to reflect upon and confront their own habitus (Bourdieu, 1986), which has implications for initial teacher education and continuing professional development. There must also be a commitment to providing teachers with adequate time, ample resources, and an appropriate workload so that they can become collaborative, self-directed professionals.

Most participants (n=12) in this study spoke about schools "working it out for themselves" and that learning from one another in a community of practice was one of the most effective forms of continuing professional development (CPD). The argument of this study in its contribution to policy and practice is that the policy cycle must be dynamic, flexible, and adhocric in order to address dilemmas that naturally present in social arenas of school and society as a whole. The climate into which policy is born is ever-changing and dynamic. This study suggests that 'solutions' cannot be arrived at or be final in social arenas because human interaction presents with naturally occurring dilemmas constantly. The theory put forward in this study asserts that it is critical for actors in the context of practice to engage in critical pragmatism as a mode of research and practice so that the agency they hold as social professionals can be applied in more culturally responsive ways. This involves all actors adopting a perspective that views policy as *a continuous cycle*, not *a solution*, where agents in each of the social contexts have a shared responsibility in the evolution towards a policy of inclusive education that is more equitable and excellent than heretofore.

5.6.4 From Bureaucracy to Adhocracy to Negotiate Dilemmatic Spaces

Theoretically, the thesis requests a renewed attention to equity and social justice, to critically examine what it means to be included and the nature of spaces in which students are 'included'. Otherwise, inclusive education might just become a push for assimilation, particularly for those students who have been historically marginalized and who constitute the majority of students in special education programs (Artiles, Trent, & Palmer, 2004; Artiles and Kozleski, 2007), as data in this study unearths empirically.

This study asserts that a new conceptualisation of inclusion is required. Policy as a continuous cycle is understood as continually searching for 'new and more interesting way of expressing ourselves, and thus of coping with the world' (Rorty, 1979, p.359) (See Chapter Two Section 2.2.1). From this perspective, policy can be understood as an overlay (Loony, 2001), a framework for action. This study argues that policies will be interpreted differently as the histories, experiences, values, purposes and interests which make up any arena differ. The simple point is that policy writers cannot control their meanings (Bowe et al., 1992, p.22). The framework is about each context informing the other, the small worlds informing the big worlds, in order to construct an inclusive education that is responsive to human diversity.

This study suggests that the reconstruction of inclusive education should consider the following:

1. Student disabilities are organizational pathologies
2. Differential diagnosis is subjective, potentially harmful to students and to mainstream education as a whole
3. Segregated forms of special education are non-rational and serve the interests of professionals and specialised knowledge base
4. Progress in the field as it stands is non-rational, and that inclusion demands a radical and a revolutionary process, a form of "Adhocracy".

Adhocracy is about the construction of a problem-solving organisation designed to explore creative solutions to each unique need and where all individual are valued and respected. In Adhocracies, teachers engage in critical pragmatic ways within the context of practice, with dilemmas that are often context specific to an individual school and to an individual child. This new framework presumes that agents in the context of practice can decide what is best for their students, in a particular community of practice, at a particular time. It has a particularly socio-cultural focus and has implications for teachers learning within a community of practice, in a dilemmatic space. It is a 'glo-na-cal' approach (Marginson, and Rhoades (2002), where the local is agentative within the national, which is agentive within the global and that each context can learn from the other (see 2.2.3 for fuller discussion). The adhocracy places its professional workers in a reciprocal coupling arrangement premised on collaborative problem solving among professional teams. Consequently, when faced with a 'dilemma', the community come together in an effort to find creative and novel solutions as opposed to pigeonholing a student as having deficits within. Adhocracy engages in divergent thinking aimed at innovation as opposed to convergent thinking and the protection of the status quo at the expense of the individual student. Instead of determining how to 'fix' diverse students' 'deficits', professionals' biases, or society as a whole, the aim is to promote the creation of conditions that support multiple stakeholders in the creation of educational systems that are responsive to diversity.

Touraine (2000) provides a set of principles which could inform such a template. He suggests that

> …education must shape and enhance the freedom of the personal Subject. …A child who comes to school is not a blank sheet of paper on which a teacher can write

> knowledge, feelings and values… education must make motives and objectives converge; a cultural memory must converge with the operations that allow individuals to play a part in the world of technologies and commodities.
>
> (p. 26)

Touraine describes a form of education that gives central importance to diversity (both historical and cultural) and to the recognition of [the stranger] or 'other'. He asserts that the approach must embrace 'the will to compensate for unequal situations and inequality of opportunity … taking real and observable inequalities as its starting point in order to actively attempt to compensate for them. This study agrees with Min. Quinn's recent remarks that our over-riding concerns should be for student outcomes, all outcomes for all students.

Therefore, this study recommends the following universal reforms:

- A more equitable redistribution of resources to meet need, taking the Pobal HP Deprivation Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012) into account;
- the elimination of withdrawal of students from the classroom, unless for intensive early intervention, the focus of which must remain on a return to mainstream;
- a redefinition of what constitutes ability and disability and how this is measured
- a redefinition of what constitutes learning and achievement and how it should be measured
- greater collaboration between parents, students, professional teams, including multidisciplinary teams, in the context of practice, which will demand
- capacity building to ensure critical pragmatic modes of research and practice;
- the restructuring of funding models and school organisations to reflect such reforms.

This study agrees with Skrtic (1991a and b) that bureaucracies construct an exit ramp for those viewed as outside the norm. The significant point is that schools can be responsive if they are well resourced to act like adhocracies, with professionals who inhabit them having the *capacity* and *willingness* to act like reflective and collaborative practitioners, engaging in critical pragmatism as a mode of practice and as a mode of enquiry in order to problem-solve. Inclusive education is about all students having access to high quality teachers, curriculum, and resources (Conway, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999). The quality of the teacher and their teaching remains 'the most important factor in student outcomes' (OECD, 2005, p. 12). Moreover, data from this study suggest that teachers affect student learning by the expectations they hold for their students. Students affect one another by their levels of achievement and expectations (McDermott, 2002; Keogh and Whyte, 2008). Principals can

make a real difference to all, according to extant research literature (Spillane, 2012). Therefore, it could be logically concluded that the key to effective schools 'lies in the *people* who populate particular schools in particular times and their interaction with these organizations. The search for excellence in schools is the search for excellence in people' (Clarke at al., 1984, p. 50).

This study concludes that people matter most in school reform. On this very point, it is appropriate to draw from the legacy of Bernstein and his three conditions for democracy, cited in Slee (2001):

1. People must feel they have a stake in society, i.e., there is a condition of reciprocity;
2. People must feel confidence in the political arrangements;
3. People must believe that these arrangements will in fact enable them to realise their stake.

A 'reframed political strategy' and subsequent 'reframed policy contexts', which this study argues for, must be informed by a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the complex web of the social, political, cultural, economic interplay within which education, reform, and 'disability' exist. The approach suggested in this study is grounded in the belief that all culturally, socially and linguistically diverse students can excel in academic endeavours when their social background, heritage, and experiences are valued, respected and used to facilitate their learning and development. This study presents a framework to create an education space that is fully participatory that protects against 'exist ramps' and those who have the power to decide who is in and who is out. In such a system there are no gatekeepers who manage inclusion/exclusion.

5.7 Conclusion

This study evolved into an evaluation of the status quo, to make visible the sometimes invisible, in order to bring about change that seeks to be more socially just and equitable The study used critical pragmatism to reveal and question the way in which larger numbers of children are now regarded as having SEN. The study argues that acquiring such labels and being treated as less-able is the result of complex social, economic and political

considerations and the transactions of the interplay between structure/agency in varying policy contexts. Through an examination of the levels of explanation offered by the participants in this study it is suggested that special education provision can provide a legitimation for the exclusion of significant numbers of students from the mainstream, many of whom are withdrawn from classroom-based learning for extended years. What is unearthed is that policy in the context of practice can disadvantage the already disadvantaged.

This study suggests that policy makers can err in assuming that the context of practice is a rational, machine bureaucracy that is capable of rational-technical change. However, much evidence is provided to indicate the interplay between constraint and agency and the power of key actors in the context of practice (teachers, parents) to negotiate policy text in their social arena of practice and to recreate its intention. Finch (1984) reminds policy analysts of the need to be concerned about grass roots policy change as well as providing information 'upwards to remote 'policy makers' ' (p. 231). This study argues for a view of policy that is cyclical and constantly evolving.

It is vital to acknowledge at this point that the participants in this study are committed and eloquent educators. Their narratives deepened my knowledge of local processes that seem to contribution to social reproduction and the status quo. A pervasive reticence to discuss issues of discrimination may itself serve as an obstacle to addressing problems of social class disparity. Ultimately, these narratives extend multiple sources from international research literature that suggest that serious efforts to address the critical problem of unequal placement in special education will necessarily be complex, interactive, and responsive to local needs (Ahram, 2011; Harry and Klingner, 2006; Skiba, 2006). This study suggests placing such discussions on these matters centre-stage.

This study acknowledges that *some* students need special education support. I am a special education teacher educator. I am committed to 'the different and the extra' that special education can provide, when required. The thesis is not advocating the dismantling of special education. It is suggesting strongly that the varying procedures administered for referring students to special education should be investigated, and, if necessary, challenged. The need for greater understanding of how local structure/agency gets translated into placement of so many students from LSES backgrounds into special education is argued for

in this research. Disproportionality or overrepresentation is well-documented in the international literature. However, this study suggests that an explanation of *why* is rare. The study has sought to address these lacunae.

The study contends that there is an absence of feedback mechanisms with regard to the effectiveness of funding models, in this case the GAM, and its impact on students. Teachers are key stakeholders and want to inform policy decisions. Rose et al. in (2010) in their review of the literature remind us that a commitment within policy has little impact until such time as that policy is translated into working practices that enable successful learning outcomes to be achieved. Therefore, it is critical to analyse the inner perceptions of the key actors, to listen to the voices articulating the processes within the context of practice to really unveil the impact of policy on students within the policy context of outcome in order to inform a context of 'reframed' political strategy. Otherwise, the study argues, restructuring policies do not of themselves effect improvement but serve to nurture the status quo. Within the conceptual framework of policy as a continuous cycle, a feedback loop is expected, one context informs the next, which has the potential for 'informed revisions' within each context of the loop as illustrated in Figure 4.2: Policy cycle 'reframed'. These *reframed contexts* will reform policy, ensuring better outcomes for many students.

This study argues that 'ordinary' schools are different and thus it is critical to have access to schools' population profile to address needs effectively and efficiently. The Pobal HP Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2012) could be usefully applied at national level to develop an informed data-base of students' socio-economic profile. School returns in September would simply provide students names and addresses. Central administration could then map this data at individual street level, based on small-area statistics. As stated in Chapter Four, this Index is of particular significance given the social and economic changes that have occurred nationally in recent years.

Another argument put forward by this thesis, based on the narratives of teachers, is that *discontinuity* between home and school does exist and it must be recognised as discontinuity and not as a disability. The focus of early intervention for all students, therefore, should be on *transition programmes* and not *separate programmes* which remove them from the classroom. The lived experience of many students is that if they go out they

do so for their entire school life. Alternatively, the proposal from this study is if students 'go out', the emphasis, at all times, must be on their supported return to the mainstream.

Schools are faced with increasing diversity. Therefore, the study concludes that the social arena of the context of practice is dilemmatic and necessitates a dynamic approach. This study argues that it is public education's democratic ends (inclusive education) that are contradicted by the bureaucratic means (schooling) that are used to actualize universal, inclusive education policy, within the context of practice. Students whose needs fall outside the perceived 'norm' are squeezed out if they cannot be squeezed into the repertoire of the classroom knowledge, pedagogy and curriculum, a curriculum that is described as middle-class by many of the participants. The 'blame' is all too often placed on the student and thus children and their families are pathologised, while the social arena is understood as rational. The study argues that all stakeholder in the policy cycle need to 'think otherwise' about the politics of exclusion and inclusion in schooling.

Paradoxically, and in keeping with the concept of cycle, I am returning to the notion of 'pulling-in and pulling together' (see Vignette 1, Figure 1.1) in a community of practice, where all should enjoy the following interrelated rights:

- to individual enhancement including critical understanding of the past and new possibilities for the future:
- to be included socially, intellectually, culturally and personally;
- to participation (Bernstein, 1996, pp. 6/7).

This notion of 'pulling-in and pulling together' is a potentially useful concept; it does not suggest a solution but rather a *means*. The GAM was introduced as a solution to an over-emphasis on professional assessment and categorisation to draw on resources to support need. The study has suggested that today's policy solutions can result in tomorrow's policy problems, a key claim. Therefore, the concept of policy as cycle is meaningful because it suggests an endless quest to negotiate dilemmas that present naturally in any human arena.

An alternative perspective is offered, 'adhocracy', in order to move away from functionalist bureaucracies, which by definition cannot accommodate diversity. The term 'adhhocric' may be somewhat unfortunate as it conjures up an image that is less than progressive. However, the concept constitutes a cultural and teaching capacity of the highest standard where all 'pull-in and pull together' to negotiate dilemmas. As emphasized in Chapter Two (see section 2.4), having the pedagogical strategies and approaches to assure

that all students are able to participate in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Rogoff et al., 1998) is fundamental to inclusive teaching and learning. According to MacGiolla Phádraig (2007), such a strong pedagogical approach distinguishes integration from inclusion. Mittler (1995) asserts 'inclusive education starts with radical school reform, changing the existing system and rethinking the entire curriculum of the school in order to meet the needs of all children (p.36). Teachers must be well prepared not only for cognitive diversity in their classrooms but also for social and cultural diversity (Artiles et al., 2011; Levin et al., 2012),

This study insists that in complex human arenas we must acknowledge diversity in its broadest sense, while recognising the structure/agency interplay that exists that cause some to dominate others, rendering them powerless. A useful and challenging question is, 'can we live together?' Such a question should become the organising principle for reconstructing all social service provision, including education. Knight (2000), in keeping with Bernstein (1996), suggests that inclusion must be incorporated in a general education where 'ends' and 'means' are inseparable: 'the principle of inclusion becomes a 'means' contributing to defined ends… 'inclusion' is not treated as an end in itself' (Knight, 2000, p. 7). This serves to address the scepticism about whether the goal of inclusion is attainable (Asch, 2001). Inclusion must be an endless quest for a society in which human beings are appreciated for their abilities and talents, assisted based upon their holistic needs, and where differences in social class are not opportunities for exclusionary and discriminatory treatment where the dominant dominate minorities. This represents a shift from schools being sites of struggle for teachers, students and their families.

The study suggests that policy should be viewed not just as a continuous cycle but an evolving, well-informed cycle (Ball, 1994) where actors in each of the policy contexts have a shared responsibility in the evolution of education that is equitable, excellent and inclusive. The only term in this dynamic system would then be 'education', not 'special education' or 'inclusive education' as all education would be special and inclusive.

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Glossary

While recognising that there are no simple definitions, consideration of semantics within an Irish context is critical. This glossary provides working definitions which may be Useful before related matters are dealt with in greater depth in this thesis

Behaviour Any observable, measureable and countable action.

Bio-psycho-social approach This approach systematically considers biological, psychological, and social factors and their complex interactions in understanding the person and to inform intervention.

Borderline Mild General Learning Disability A child with this category of general learning disability will have an intelligence quotient (IQ) assessed in the range of 70-79.

Child The most recent legislation on the education of persons with special educational needs (EPSEN, 2004) defines the 'child' as a person not more than eighteen years of age.

Classroom Support The most common first response to a child's emerging needs where these needs are different or additional to the needs of other children. Classroom support involves the class teacher incorporating simple informal problem-solving approaches to support a child's emerging needs.

Collaboration A process that enables groups of people with diverse expertise to combine their resources to work together towards a common goal over a period of time.

Communication The process by which one person formulates and sends a message to another person, who receives and decodes the message. It is a holistic term and includes language and speech.

Constructivist Approach An approach where the person actively constructs their own knowledge and understanding based on their experiences.

Continuum of Support Support provided to children with special educational needs is described in terms of a continuum. This reflects the fact that individual special needs may vary from mild and/or transient needs to more complex and/or enduring needs. The continuum of support involves a graduated problem solving model of assessment and intervention in schools at three distinct levels: Classroom Support; School Support and School Support Plus.

Co-teaching The class teacher and the resource or learning support teacher share responsibility for planning and delivering instruction in mainstream classes.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM V) (APA, 2013)

Differentiating Making changes to a task that make it more accessible for a child. Varying the **content** (what is learned), **process** (how the content is taught) and **product** (how learning is observed and evaluated) to take account of the interests, needs and experiences of individual children.

Disability The total or partial loss of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the loss of a part of the person's body or the presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness or the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body or a condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction or a condition or illness or disease which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgements or which results in disturbed behaviour (Government of Ireland, 1998, p. 6).

Down Syndrome A genetic condition caused by an error in the cell division in the 21st chromosome. It is the most common form of identifiable learning disability.

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 Provides for inclusive education for children and young people with SEN unless specialised placements are considered to be more appropriate. It specifies procedures for the assessment of special educational needs and for the provision of supports and services.

Educational Psychologist (EP) An individual, trained in psychology and education, who studies how children and young people learn, think, feel and behave. EPs carry out psychological assessments and also work with individual children, groups of children and school staff to support learning and behaviour.

General Allocation Model (GAM) A general allocation of teaching resources, devised by the Department of Education and Skills (Ireland), to enable schools to provide additional teaching time to children with learning difficulties and high incidence disabilities, without having recourse to making applications on behalf of individual children.

High Incidence Disabilities A term used by the Department of Education and Skills (Ireland) to categorise disabilities which have a higher occurrence in the general population. The categories of disability in this group are borderline mild general learning disability, mild general learning disability or a specific learning disability.

Individual Education Plan (IEP) A written document prepared for a named child. It specifies the learning targets that are to be achieved by the child over a set period of time and the teaching strategies, resources and supports necessary to achieve these targets.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) A range of technologies such as computers, software and communication devices.

Intervention A deliberate and systematic effort to support a student.

Learning Support (LS) Teacher A teacher who provides additional teaching support to children who have difficulties in literacy and numeracy. In addition s/he may work with children who have learning difficulties arising from, for example, mild general learning disability, mild speech and language difficulties and mild co-ordination or attention control difficulties.

Low Incidence Disabilities A term used by the Department of Education and Skills (Ireland) to categorise disabilities which have a lower occurrence in the general population. The various categories of low incidence disabilities are set out in Circular SP ED 02/05 and include moderate general learning disabilities and severe/profound general learning disabilities.

Mild General Learning Disability A child with this category of general learning disability will have an intelligence quotient (IQ) assessed in the range of 50-70.

Moderate General Leaning Disability A child with this category of general learning disability will have an intelligence quotient (IQ) assessed in the range of 35-50.

National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Established under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 to plan and co-ordinate educational provision for children and young people with SEN.

National Educational Psychologist Service (NEPS) Established by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to provide a psychological service to schools.

Occupational Therapist (OT) Focuses on the development of motor, sensory and self-care skills in individuals with physical and/or sensory disabilities.

Parallel Teaching Two groups and two teachers jointly plan the same content, Using the same materials but may Use a different style.

Peer Tutoring One learner (the tutor) supports another learner (the tutee) to practice a newly acquired skill.

Physiotherapist A health professional who evaluates and improves movement with particular attention to physical mobility, balance and posture.

Resource Teacher (RT) A teacher who provides additional teaching support to children who have more complex and enduring special educational needs arising from low incidence disabilities, i.e., an assessed syndrome, autism, emotional and behavioural disorder, hearing impairment, moderate general learning disability, multiple disabilities, physical disability, severe and profound GLD, specific speech and language disorder, visual impairment.

Resource Teacher Hour (RTH) Model A resourcing model that provides additional teaching support to children who have more complex and enduring special educational needs arising from low incidence disabilities, i.e., an assessed syndrome, autism, emotional and behavioural disorder, hearing impairment, moderate general learning disability, multiple disabilities, physical disability, severe and profound GLD, specific speech and language disorder, visual impairment.

Special Education Support Service (SESS) A service established by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to manage, co-ordinate and develop a range of services to support the professional development needs of teachers in the area of special education.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Defined in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 as 'a restriction in the capacity… to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health, or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition'.

Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) An individual, employed by the National Council for Special Education (**NCSE**), who is responsible for allocating additional teaching and other resources to support children with special educational needs at a local level.

Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Assists school authorities in making appropriate provision for children with special care needs arising from a disability.

Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) Provides support to individuals who have speech, language and communication disorders.

Staged Approach to Assessment, Identification and Programme Planning This is a system set out in Circular SP ED 24/03, which advises schools on approaches to assessment, identification and appropriate intervention planning for children with additional learning needs. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) has also developed guidelines and a resource pack on the staged approach (DES, 2007).

Student Defined by EPSEN (2004) in the same manner as it is in the Education Act (1998), a 'student, in relation to a school means a person enrolled at the school' (Education Act, 1998, S.2(1)).

Syndrome A group of recognisable characteristics that occur together.

Team Teaching Teachers plan jointly and share leadership of the class and may involve multiple group formats.

WHODAS 2.0 covers 6 domains: **Cognition** – understanding & communicating; **Mobility**– moving & getting around; **Self-care**– hygiene, dressing, eating & staying alone; **Getting along**– interacting with other people; **Life activities**– domestic responsibilities, leisure, work & school; **Participation**– joining in community activities.

Appendices

Appendix A

Department of Education and Science (DES) (2005). Circular SP ED 02/05: Organisation of Teaching Resources for Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Primary Schools Dublin: Government Stationary Office.

Appendix B

Letter to Chairperson of the Board of Management of Management requesting participation of school staff in the study.

Appendix C

Letter to the Principal requesting participation in the study.

Appendix D

Letter to teaching staff requesting participation in the study.

Appendix E

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule.

Appendix F

Categorising of codes using NVivo 9: Phase One

Appendix G

Categorising of Codes utilizing NVivo 9: Phase Two.

Appendix H

Categorising of Codes utilizing NVivo 9: Phase Three

Appendix I

Individual Student Profile with respect to Household Status according to the Pobal HP Index.

Appendix J

Calculations for Affluence and Deprivation among the School Population and Students with SEN.